

# Alcoholic Drinks - Overview Of September's New Product Launches

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This monthly summary highlights some of the most interesting product launches in September, with a focus on the direction the alcoholic drinks industry is taking in terms of innovative developments.

## Message on a bottle

Positioning, heritage credentials, shelf visibility and visual impact are as vital for an alcoholic drinks brand's equity as its flavour profile, ABV content and production back-story.

Communicating this all-encompassing message is a burning issue on key players' agendas, particularly against the bleak backdrop of stagnant disposable incomes and uniform consumer retrenchment which are still holding the majority of Western markets captive.

This holds especially true for higher-end variants that cannot rest on their pre-recessionary laurels as manufacturers are implicitly acknowledging underlying consumption shifts through revisiting their bottle designs, packaging and labelling.

History, tradition and clear geographical references are the contemporary buzzwords of choice as an avalanche of re-launches reshape the increasingly competitive environment.

A prominently displayed signature – albeit not necessary – definitely seems to help.

## The Six Isles from Ian Macleod

A packaging upgrade for the Scotch whisky brand has been rolled out globally with the purpose of emphasising its premium positioning. A two-part label features gold embossing and depictions of the six islands which all contribute whisky to the blended malt, namely Islay, Jura, Skye, Mull, Orkney and Arran.

## Lemon Hart from Mosaik

The Lemon Hart & Son logotype has been retained within a diamond-shaped hallmark, accented with a gold foil embossed sash, diagonally cutting across the face label.

The international update, which will be rolled out across all markets, is completed by the reintroduction of the brand's original pinch-neck bottle structure, plus a metal closure, along with a Lemon Hart signature decorated neck sleeve.

## Tequila Herradura from Brown-Forman

The front of the bottle now features a metal horseshoe inset to establish it as the core brand icon – herradura means 'horseshoe' in Spanish. The closure has also been updated, while an embossed ribbon seal unifies the line extension that will take place across all markets.

While the Añejo and Reposado expression names remain the same, Herradura Blanco is now identified as 'Silver' in the US and 'Plata' in the majority of the world – to leverage consumer familiarity, according to Brown-Forman.

## Economising: post-recessionary standard?

According to official statistics, the US exited its longest recession since the 1930s back in the summer of 2009. At the same time, different levels of government intervention, ranging from quantitative easing to currency depreciation, provided a boost to troubled Western economies, essentially postponing the post-recessionary hangover.

Nevertheless, and while top-line figures seem to support some economists' bullish projections, middle and working-class disposable incomes are still under threat, credit is still drying up, a jobless recovery is fast becoming the new norm and uncertainty continues to cripple the potential for discretionary spending.

Within this context, and regardless of key alcoholic drinks players' optimism-sprinkled projections, the demand for lower-end variants and the newfound frugality's unabated momentum continue to bring economy launches to the forefront. Still.

## Seven Premium Private Brand Bordeaux from 7-Eleven and Seven & I Holdings

The Japanese-based parent company of 7-Eleven, Seven & I Holdings, has developed a Private Brand wine produced in Bordeaux, France to be sold worldwide.

Having received French certification for both the red and white varieties under French wine laws, it will be sold under the Seven Premium Private Brand in more than 13,000 retail outlets, including Ito-Yokado, 7-Eleven and Sogo and Seibu stores.

The wine will cost ¥798 for a 750ml bottle in Japan, 20-30% less than typical Bordeaux wine. It will then be rolled out in China and other parts of Asia, potentially capitalising on the country's strong credentials throughout the region.

#### Rokk from Diageo

Positioned as an upper-standard imported vodka brand, Rokk's affordability is undoubtedly targeting the massive pool of cash-strapped consumers in the US, costing US\$12.99 per 750ml bottle.

With the unemployment rate stubbornly stuck at 10% and the poverty rate in the country being the highest since 1994 according to Census Bureau figures, Diageo is in dire need of a new, economy-oriented champion to fight off looming saturation and declines in the beleaguered US market.

#### Pop culture and that popping sound

Andy Warhol famously suggested that 'Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art'.

And what better segment within the alcoholic drinks industry to test-drive the claim than champagne, whose recent resurgence did not make manufacturers and producers complacent, far from it.

In a last ditch attempt to expand drinking occasions and established audiences, new launches are moving away from the traditional, conservatively static positioning that has become the category's second nature.

#### Andy Warhol from Dom PÃ©rignon

Andy Warhol-influenced bottles of 2002 Dom PÃ©rignon will be available in three of London's leading department stores - Harrods, Harvey Nichols and Selfridges - for £120 a bottle. Will the iconic design justify the luxury positioning?

#### Angel from Vanquish Wine

Feminine design, a flavour profile that is targeting female drinkers, a brand name that focuses on women and the backing of pop singers Mariah Carey and Sinitta provide more than enough clues as to the brand's demographic of potential buyers.

The champagne has a starting price of £640 on-line, with high-profile nightclubs in the UK selling it for £750, while it has already been launched in the US through Southern Wine & Spirits.

#### Shedding some light on the on-trade

Although the ongoing and much-vaunted shift from the on- to the off-trade translated into companies pragmatically reassessing their priorities and strategies, clubs and bars are retaining their role as an important channel both in terms of revenue and in familiarising consumers with brands that they will later seek out in retail.

Within this context, radical or borderline gimmicky innovation is expected to provide increasingly colourful " or luminous - displays as companies attempt to capture an ever-greater share of diminishing sales and millennials' terminally short attention spans.

#### 'STR' from Heineken USA

An aluminium bottle that has been designed to react to the black light commonly found in bars and clubs, illuminating to show a pattern of stars and trails when lit by neon, exemplifies Heineken's latest attempt to fight off competition in the US on-trade whilst also securing visibility.

A limited period release supported by special events and promotions, the bottle could spawn a wave of such activity in other troubled markets if it proves successful.

As the nights grow longer, ushering in some fittingly autumnal weather, Euromonitor International will continue to register and comment on the latest launches from around the world.

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