

Drinks International



Special reports Vinexpo | Bordeaux

Spirits focus The International Spirits Challenge

Features Malt Whisky | Sparkling Wine

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Diageo appeals to 'gentlemen'

Diageo is rolling out its first US national TV ad campaign for super-premium Dutch vodka Ketel One.

The total spend for Gentlemen, This is Vodka will be \$12 million between May and September 2009.

Carl Nolet Jr, the 11th-generation Nolet who created the vodka, said: "This powerful campaign supports the rich framework of the Ketel One brand and positions us for significant growth."

Masterminded by Grey Worldwide, the campaign is centred on modern masculinity and showcases charismatic and elegant gentlemen engaging in "classic guy moments" during genuine and responsible drinking occasions.

Stella David quits Bacardi



Bacardi's chief marketing officer, Stella David, is leaving the company after 15 years.

"I have the opportunity to consider a variety of business options, so it was the right time for me to make this decision," she is quoted as saying. David leaves at the end of July. No successor has been announced.

The departure follows the announcement that Maurice Doyle, managing director of Bacardi's Global Travel Retail division, is also leaving in July to join William Grant & Sons as group marketing director.

Tobacco ban threat to travel retail/duty free

The travel retail/duty free channel could be hit by a World Health Organisation ban on tobacco products.

At the recent Tax Free World Association (TFWA) exhibition in Singapore, TFWA president Erik Juul-Mortensen warned attendees at the opening day conference that the retail channel faces a possible shut down of all tobacco products if the World Health Association is success-

ful in clamping down on the buying and selling of tobacco products.

The WHO is due to have its third session of "Intergovernmental negotiating body on a protocol on illicit trade in tobacco products" in Geneva between June 28 and July 5.

The organisation sees the purchasing of tobacco products, such as cigarettes, as an easy channel for people

wanting to smuggle and trade tobacco.

For the travel retail/duty free industry, losing cigarette sales would be a massive blow as tobacco products, along with spirits, are the principal reason passengers enter airport, ferry and border shops,

There is also a suspicion in the global drinks industry that what happens to tobacco may happen to alcoholic beverages.



Challenging minority labels

Absolut vodka has launched a campaign to challenge prejudice against sexual minorities.

The Pernod Ricard brand has released a naked bottle with no label.

Absolut claims its In An Absolut World There Are No Labels is an initiative representing a completely new approach to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) marketing.

Anders Olsson, director of the Absolut company, global travel retail, said: "For the first time, we're facing the world stark naked."

"We're launching a bottle with no label and no logo, to manifest the idea that no matter what's on the outside, it's the inside that really matters."

"We do it in support of the people who spend their entire lives branded with labels by others. As a brand, we also question the relevance of the LGBT abbreviation in marketing."

The limited-edition bottle will be launched in duty free/travel retail from June, with a global domestic launch following in September.



Bartending legend Peter Dorelli on the Beefeater stand at the Amsterdam Bar Show

Gin education campaign launched

Chivas Brothers has announced a year-long global campaign to educate the on-trade about gin. The Scotch whisky and premium gin arm of Pernod Ricard has formed the programme around its Beefeater and Plymouth gin brands.

Activities kicked off at the Amsterdam and Paris Bar Shows and future plans include presence at international trade shows in London (June) and New Orleans (July).

According to Chivas, the programme is

expected to reach more than 50,000 international decision makers from the spirits industry, including style bar operators and bartenders.

Nick Blacknell, brand director for gin at Chivas Brothers said: "Our brand ambassador programme is already having great international success and this educational drive will ensure that the most influential movers and shakers in the bar world have Beefeater and Plymouth firmly front of mind."

News digest

Asia seat of recovery

The global economic recovery will begin in Asia, according to Bacardi's regional director for Asia Pacific.

Aude Rocourt was speaking to Drinks International at the recent Tax Free World Association exhibition in Singapore.

"The US and European economies will take longer to recover," she said. "I am extremely confident about the growth in Asia. This is the right place to be."

She said that, while competitors are winding down their activities and cutting jobs, Bacardi is not planning any such moves.

She said that it was focusing on consumers, supporting retailers and looking to "add value" wherever possible.

Travel retail whammies

Maxxium global travel retail president Erik Juul-Mortensen said the travel retail sector had been hit by a "triple whammy" of falling passenger numbers due to the economic crisis, destocking among wholesalers and retailers and fluctuating currency rates.

He said the latter two had created "tensions" between suppliers and wholesalers and added that another huge issue for the industry was the practice of low cost airlines charging passengers to take an extra bag on to their flights.

With a picture of the Ryanair chief Michael O'Leary

behind him, Juul-Mortensen said charging €30 or £30 at departure gate was "moving the goalposts of the business model of duty free".

Branca in Rémy deal

Italian company Branca Distilleries is to become the Italian distributor for Rémy Cointreau Group.

Milan-based Branca, whose products include the bitter digestif Fernet Branca and the aperitif Punt e Mes, has signed an agreement with the French Rémy Cointreau Group to distribute its premium brands – Cointreau orange liqueur, Rémy Martin Cognac, Piper Heidsieck Champagne and Mount Gay rum – in Italy.

The agreement is part of Branca's plans to expand its product range at home and abroad through its associate company in Argentina Fratelli Branca Distilleries.

Singapore HQ choice

Rémy Cointreau International has opened a Singapore headquarters to house its global travel retail business and to act as a regional headquarters for its domestic business in Asia.

Rémy chief executive Jean-Marie Laborde said: "Singapore was a clear choice for Rémy Cointreau with an ideal geographical location and excellent transport infrastructure, an enviable reputation in conducting business and far-sighted

Mount Gay Extra Old rolls out globally this year



Russian Standard vodka has been released in a 35cl format



government policies which encourage foreign businesses to choose this location as their base."

Peter Sant, managing director Rémy Cointreau Global Travel Retail, will lead the worldwide duty free and travel retail team from the new office in Singapore with regional directors in key markets: Joel Lafon, based in Hong Kong covering Asia Pacific; Matthew Hodges in Paris looking after Europe; and Francois van Aal in Miami in charge of the Americas.

Biodynamic initiative

Only 15% of UK wine consumers would buy wine because it was biodynamic or organic, according to a survey from UK wine merchant Berry Bros & Rudd. In response, the company has launched an education initiative called Wine Matters to inform people about biodynamics.

The website, bbrblog.com/category/wine-matters (left),

includes topics and discussions from Berry's MW as well as industry experts.

Gancia distribution

Asti Spumante maker Gancia is to distribute Russian vodkas Stolichnaya and Moskovskaya in Italy.

Gancia is also Italian distributor of Absolut vodka. Managing director Paolo Fontana said there was great potential in the Italian market for premium brands such as Stolichnaya Elit, which could provide a strong competitor to Grey Goose and Belvedere in the hotel, restaurant and catering sectors.

Mount Gay roll out

Barbados rum Mount Gay Extra Old is rolling out across the world during 2009.

The rum launched in the US in April and global launch plans including Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and China.

Extra Old will launch offi-

cially in Barbados in July.

Earlier this year, the brand unveiled new packaging.

Mount Gay does not talk numbers but a spokesperson said: "Our production is matching our expectations and the launch in the US is a strong success. We are surpassing our objectives."

Russian 35cl format

UK-based supplier First Drinks has launched a 35cl variant of Russian Standard vodka.

Earlier this Spring, First Drinks announced a £40 million investment programme for its brands in 2009, which now includes the Rémy Cointreau portfolio.

Russian Standard joins Glenfiddich, Grant's and Three Barrels in offering smaller bottle sizes to customers.

The Russian Standard 35cl bottles are priced at £7.49.

The UK is the first market for this size and the plan is to roll out across Europe.



People & events

Leader Page

End of the tobacco road?

The travel retail/duty free sector is a particular one. On the one hand it seems oozing with affluence from being hermetically sealed off in airport departure lounges and ferry stores, along with passengers, from everyday market forces such as multiple retailers.

Yet being in a form of glorious isolation brings its own dangers and challenges. Events such as 9/11, the SARS outbreak and now swine flu, affect seriously – and in a very direct way – the whole outlook and possibly the *modus operandi* of TR retailers and their supply chain. For major suppliers such as Diageo, Pernod Ricard, Bacardi and Beam Global, travel retail is just another trading channel, along with on-premise, off-premise, sub-divided into regions. So their risk is spread across channels, countries and continents.

Undoubtedly, travel retail is the “icing on the cake”, with limited-edition bottles, exclusives, presentation packs of hand-blown crystal decanters in solid oak boxes...

In its cocoon, travel retail can be powerless and unable to affect change. This was highlighted in the opening address of the president of the Tax Free World Association's recent trade exhibition in Singapore. Erik Juul-Mortensen warned the audience about the World Health Organisation's attempt to clamp

Christian Davis
Editor



down on the illicit trading in tobacco (see News, p5). The threat is: If the WHO had its way, tobacco would be banned from duty free as it is the easiest way of trading in illicit tobacco (buying over the personal limit and buying for someone else or for selling on) – not forgetting that cheaper prices encourage people to buy and to smoke tobacco. Bearing in mind it is cigarettes and spirits that drive footfall in TR/DF, it is a huge threat to the sector's viability.

The WHO will not be in the same room, let alone negotiate, with the tobacco lobby, so it will be down to politicians and civil servants to fight tobacco's (and TR's) corner. The other suspicion is that what happens today with tobacco will happen to alcohol in the future. As Juul-Mortensen said: “We have to be vigilant, resilient, pool knowledge and play to our strengths.” Hear! Hear! to that.

Appointments

Foster's EMEA has made changes to its senior management. **Richard Trimby** will transfer from his position as commercial director Continental Europe to marketing director EMEA and global brands Rosemount and Lindemans. **Stuart Pickles** will succeed Trimby.

Diageo has appointed **Peggy Bruzelius** to the Diageo board. Her responsibilities will include membership of the audit committee, nomination committee and remuneration committee. Bruzelius is chairman of Lancelot Asset Management in Sweden.

New Zealand Winegrowers has appointed **David Cox** its new director for Europe. He replaces Warren Adamson. Cox was previously managing director of Brown-Forman Europe. Prior to that he worked for his family's business, Matthew Clark, as director of export, giving him a total of 25 years' experience in the wine trade. His twin brother heads up Wines of Chile UK.

Stock Spirits Group (SSG) has made **Francisco Tonarely** its managing director for the US. He takes over as president and CEO of American holding company Heritage Brands. He replaces Rob Cullins. Tonarely previously worked for Pepsi-Cola, Bacardi and Seagram in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Pernod Ricard's Chivas Brothers has appointed two brand ambassadors for Beefeater gin, **Tim Stones** and **Jacques Bezuidenhout**. Global brand ambassador **Dan Warner** will move to the US to cultivate the new super-premium Beefeater, 24.

Heineken has announced that **Jeremy Blood** has stepped down as managing director of its UK subsidiary Scottish & Newcastle, with immediate effect. In the interim, the existing management team will run the business on a day-to-day basis, reporting directly to **Didier Debrosse**, Heineken's regional president, western Europe.

New Zealand wine producer Winegrowers of Ara from Marlborough has made three appointments. **Julie Williams** becomes business development manager UK & Mainland Europe. She comes from Peter Lehmann UK. Based in Sydney, **Matthew Fitz-Gerald** joins Ara as business development manager for Australasia. He has worked for Brown Brothers, Foster's Australia and Southcorp. **Jane Bennett** becomes brand manager New Zealand, having worked for Constellation New Zealand and the Nobile Wine Group.

PLB Group has appointed **Laura Sullivan** to the newly created position of brand manager, with a focus on the Vergelegen South African wine agency signed to PLB recently. She joins from Champagne Lanson.

Mont Tauch, the Fitou-based southern French co-operative, has said goodbye to veteran marketing director **Katie Jones** and hello to **Antoine Leray** who becomes UK-based sales director.

Francis Brackley has become the new sales manager at award-winning English sparkling wine producer, Nyetimber.



David Cox



Julie Williams



Francisco Tonarely

Diary

● **New York Bar Show**
June 14-15
Jacob Javits Center, NYC
newyorkbarshow.com

● **Vinexpo**
June 21-25
Bordeaux
vinexpo.com

● **Topwine China**
June 25-27
INTEX Centre, Shanghai
topwinechina.com

● **China International Alcoholic Drinks Expo**
July 3-5
Beijing, China
alcoholicdrinksexpo.com

● **Vinitech America-Latina**
July 9-11
Santiago, Chile
vinitech.cl

● **Intervitis Interfructa Southern Africa**
July 28-30
Cape Town, SA
intervitis-interfructa.co.za

● **Los Angeles Wine Expo**
August 23-24
LA Convention Center
wine-expos.com

● **Alimentaria Mercosur**
September 8-10
Buenos Aires, Argentina
alimentaria.com

● **TFWA World Exhibition**
October 19-23
Cannes
tfwa.com

● **Wine for Asia**
October 22-24
Singapore
The Suntec
wineforasia.com

● **Rumfest UK**
October 24-25
London, England
rumfest.co.uk

Travel retail

Diageo GTME gets in gear for Johnnie Walker race promotion

Diageo Global Travel & Middle East (GTME) has launched a major global airport promotion to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the creation of Johnnie Walker Black Label, the best-selling duty free spirit brand.

The bulk of the promotion runs until November and closely follows the race programme of the Formula 1 motor racing season, both in terms of its timing and its content. (Diageo has sponsored the Vodafone McLaren Mercedes F1 team for the past five years.)

A key element of the promotion is an in-store competition giving passengers the chance to win full-size replica F1 helmets signed by Vodafone McLaren

Mercedes drivers Lewis Hamilton and Heikki Kovalainen, through either an instant scratch card or prize draw mechanic. More than 100 half-size helmets are also to be given away.

Other F1-related in-store activities include various branded gifts with purchases, and price-related offers.

In each region the airport promotions will be timed to coincide with the nearest grand prix, culminating with the final race of the season to be held in Abu Dhabi in November.

Diageo has created an internal awards scheme to incentivise its own sales staff and those of its retail partners to drive sales for the duration of the period.



Diageo has also produced a Johnnie Walker Black Label Centenary Limited Edition to mark the anniversary. This will sell at a premium to the standard product. It features a black glass bottle, which

displays 10 milestones in the history of the brand, and boasts real gold lettering.

Asian duty free operators have already received the limited-edition bottle and European travel retailers can expect to take stock of it in time for the European F1 season during the summer months.

Commenting on the overall promotion, Diageo GTME managing director Phil Humphreys said: "I'm confident that this is the most comprehensive and vibrant campaign we have ever created for one of our brands.

"It will drive new footfall and conversion, not simply as a one-off spectacular, but as a sustained impact throughout the year."

Glenmorangie unveils travel retail exclusive



Glenmorangie has confirmed its commitment to the duty free channel with the launch of a travel retail-exclusive expression.

Glenmorangie Sonnalta PX takes its name from the Gaelic word for "generous" (Sonnalta) and Pedro Ximenez (PX), a reference to the ex-sherry casks used to finish the whisky's maturation, giving it a characteristic dark colour and spicy taste.

Bottled at a strength of 46% abv, Sonnalta PX is priced in travel retail at £62.99 for a 1-litre bottle, and is the first in a series of limited-edition Glenmorangie expressions to be released as a part of a new Private Collection.

Glenmorangie chief operating officer Paul Skipworth said he expected the new product to do well in Asian duty free, where the brand continues to grow. "Asia continues to set the pace in duty free liquor in terms of the space allocated to the category. The quality of merchandising and customer service in the region is outstanding," he said.

German Wine Institute takes to the sky with Lufthansa

The German Wine Institute and flag carrier Lufthansa have agreed to a long-term strategic partnership to create a better appreciation of the country's wines among the airline's customers.

The deal will see German "wine queen" Marlies Dumsky – a young female winemaker elected to be Germany's wine ambassador for the year – present a tasting of exclusive wines to first class passengers on selected Lufthansa long-haul flights.

The airline will also list a Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) wine from Baden as part of its premium wine selection on long-distance flights later in the year.

The wine was selected by the German Wine Institute following a nationwide tender.



Lufthansa's business and economy class passengers will also be able to learn more about German wines through

an in-flight DVD and brochures provided by the institute.

Finally, there will be themed

promotions featuring German wines in Lufthansa's key lounges at various German airports.

Canadian ferry line opens shop

Black Ball Ferry Line has opened a duty free shop on board its flagship vessel, the MV Coho, which sails between the US and Canada across the scenic Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The new duty free shop is open seven days a week on the ferry line's 90-minute service between Port Angeles in Washington State and Victoria in the Canadian province of British Columbia.

The ferry line has stocked 25 spirit products, anticipating a healthy business among Canadian travellers used to high prices in their local liquor stores.



Early best sellers include Crown Royal Canadian whisky, Kahlúa liqueur, Absolut vodka and José Cuervo tequila.

Company spokesman Bill Eisenhauer said that Black Ball was actively looking to source local Washington and British Columbia wines to

extend the current liquor selection.

Last year Black Ball Ferry Line carried 375,000 passengers and 124,000 vehicles.

Berry Bros & Rudd returns to duty free

Berry Bros & Rudd (BB&R) has returned to duty free three years after the company closed its four shops at London Heathrow airport.

UAE-based operator Dubai Duty Free (DDF) has listed the wine merchant's Own Selection range of wines, which includes a Champagne, two ports, two sherries and a selection of premium wines from famous French wine-growing regions such as Bordeaux, the Loire valley and the Médoc.

The 10 wines will be stocked at DDF's two arrivals shops in Dubai airport's new Terminal 3, which is dedicated to Emirates Airline.

Arrivals accounted for more than 80% of the operator's total wine sales last year.

BB&R wine director Alun Griffiths said the company was "honoured" to be listed in such a "pres-

tigious retail environment", but ruled out BB&R running its own airport shops.

"It is purely a supply deal and if other duty-free retailers around the world want the endorsement of the BB&R brand in their stores then we would be delighted to discuss the idea of supplying them. We have no plans to open our own shops at airports at this time."

BB&R operated wine shops at London Heathrow for 12 years before closing them in 2006, blaming high running costs.

Wine sales at DDF last year grew 60% in value, accounting for more than 13% of its total liquor sales.



Highland Park 21 Year Old strength reduced

The Edrington Group has lowered the strength of its travel retail-exclusive Highland Park 21 Year Old variant, claiming the product has become a victim of its own success.

The Orcadian single malt whisky's new abv is 40% – significantly lower than its previous strength of 47.5%.

Highland Park global controller Jason Craig blamed the move on the product's success since its launch in October 2007. "Over 2,000 cases have been sold (per annum), exceeding our initial forecasts

by some way," he said. "With this in mind, we are keen to maintain the availability of our 21 Year Old expression, but changes have to be made to provide future quality and consistency.

"We intend to keep the same selection of cask types for the 21 Year Old and, as with all expressions of Highland Park, the colour will remain entirely natural."

Highland Park is now looking at the strengths of its 25 and 30 Year Old expressions, and hasn't ruled out lowering their abvs either.

Liquor shorts

● **Belvédère Duty Free** has appointed Kyndal India PVT the duty free and domestic distributor of Danzka vodka in the Indian subcontinent. Kyndal India had distributed Absolut vodka in India until the purchase of the brand by Pernod Ricard last year.

● **Maurice Doyle** will step down from his position as Bacardi Global Travel Retail Division (BGTRD) director at the end of July. Doyle, who has been with BGTRD since its inception in 2006, is joining William Grant & Sons as group marketing director.

● **Patrón** tequila has gained a further 12 duty free listings, extending its duty free coverage to more than 100 airports. The recent additions are Oslo, Copenhagen, Prague, Budapest, Brussels, Antalya, Frankfurt, Vienna, Berlin, Dusseldorf airports in Europe, as well as Istanbul and Fiji's Nadi airport.

● **American Airlines** (AA) has hired wine expert Ken Chase as its new wine consultant. Chase, who was previously a wine consultant with Delta Airlines, will be in charge of pairing wines with food served on all AA flights.

● **Brown-Forman** has appointed Olli-Pekka Lappalainen director of travel retail for Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

● **Pernod Ricard Travel Retail** is running a regional airport promotion in Asia for its Royal Salute 21-year-old premium Scotch whisky blend. Purchasers will get a limited edition travel bag and a chance to win a trip on the Eastern and Oriental Express from Bangkok to Chiang Mai in northern Thailand.

How low can you go?

EU wine reforms are opening up the market for technology which reduces alcohol levels. Jaq Bayles meets the pioneers behind the lighter wines

With the imminent reform of the EU wine market comes a huge opportunity for a lower-alcohol production method previously only allowed on an experimental basis in European countries.

ConeTech's Spinning Cone Column was introduced in California in 1991 and has since been used in other countries too – including Chile and South Africa – to adjust alcohol levels in wine, but EU regulations have meant that, until the reform on August 1 this year, European wines made using the method have not been able to leave the country of origin.

The change will mean new avenues for ConeTech and its winemaking partner, TFC. Tony Dann, president and chief executive of ConeTech, says: "The French industry has been very much in favour of adopting new solutions to old problems and putting things on the same playing field as the New World. It's been EU winemaking regulations that have stood in the way, but as of this year there's no impediment to the use of the practice of adjustment of alcohol."

He points out that conventional wine "has been heading into the stratosphere" with alcohol levels of 14% and 15% not uncommon. "That's a global problem – levels have been going up around the world for a number of years."

ConeTech's research in a number of countries found an "overwhelming demand for a lighter style of drink that delivers all the aroma and flavour of a good wine", according to general manager of the low-alcohol brand Sovio, Tony Cass.

"This has the potential to grow the wine market as a whole: consumers who previously would have shied away from higher alcohol wines at certain times, such as lunch-times or summer afternoons, now have a viable lower-alcohol wine alternative."

Indeed, Dann likens the lower-alcohol wines produced through the



Californian winemaker David Stevens says the Spinning Cone technology makes it possible to do something "quite spectacular at 5.5%"

Spinning Cone technology to Babycham, which he saw as a response to women "coping" when out drinking in pubs: "It was palatable, refreshing and sort of sophisticated. Our wines are a sort of 21st century Babycham."

While TFC winemaker David Stevens has been "tweaking" wines down to 8% or 9%, Sovio is his latest offering – a sparkling white Zinfandel Rosé with an abv of 5.5% which is listed in Tesco in the UK.

Stevens says: "I could not do this without the Cone. If you are going to make moderate alcohol wines you are left with four paths to do it.

"There's dilution with water or fruit juice – and there's not a lot of joy in that. If you use fruit juice you are not making wine any more, you are making some sort of alcopop.

"Then there's the wonderful euphemism of 'early harvest'. Fruit is designed to be consumed when it's ripe and at its most flavourful – do you eat early harvest bananas?"

"Another method would be reverse osmosis, which is a fancy name for filtration – it's wonderful if you want to reduce the alcohol just a little but the fact is that if you want to do it with considerable alcohol adjustment it's difficult to get the technology to work very well and bring the alcohol level down. A screwdriver is wonderful for screwing things into a wall but it's not a good hammer. The

Cone can reduce the alcohol down to zero," he adds.

As a sparkling winemaker Stevens says he is used to "fiddly percentages, 0.5% here, 0.5% there. The most important time of year is not the harvest – it's the blending. I was playing with the balance of acidity and sugar and the same balance is important for low alcohol wines."

Stevens adds: "I have learned more about being a winemaker in the past two years than in my career because everything becomes an issue and there's no text book I can go to. We are writing the book as we go. We are true pioneers."

As the ConeTech technology gets its break in Europe, Dann points out that, for low alcohol wines: "The most powerful propellant is going to be the tax factor in those countries that have a differential tax structure – Scandinavia, Russia etc.

"In the UK there's only one break at 5.5%, but the government and doctors are telling consumers to behave more responsibly and drink more moderately.

"But people don't do things because they are good for them. They do them because there's some benefit. The primary benefit has to be that it's a highly enjoyable product. But it helps enormously if there's an economic benefit."

Sovio is priced at £4.99 for a 75cl bottle.



Launches



Hennessy Black

Brand owner LVMH
Price US\$40-\$45 per 75cl
Markets US
Contact sean.daily@mhusa.com

The Moët Hennessy division of LVMH says the new limited release of Hennessy Black in the US is the Cognac producer's first major launch since Hennessy VS in 1961.

The company wishes to take the brand "beyond the Cognac category". Black is described as a blend of up to 45 individual eaux-de-vie, selected for their elegance and floral characteristics.

Ageing in French oak barrels previously used by Hennessy for at least five years is said to give a more gentle wood influence and the resulting Cognac is described as "lighter and fresher with scents of jasmine, daffodils and orange flowers delicately mixed with hints of citrus, honey and fresh grapes".

Hennessy Black has been released to the on-trade in 1-l bottles and 75cl bottles will be available to liquor stores from September.



Bacardi Dragon Berry

Brand owner Bacardi
Price US\$13.99
Markets US initially
Contact Courtney@corbinpr.com

Dragon Berry is the latest addition to Bacardi's range of flavoured rums. Aimed at 21 to 35-year-olds, it is a strawberry rum infused with dragon fruit and has been designed for mixing.

Made in Puerto Rico, it has an abv of 35% and comes a range of sizes: 200ml, 375ml, 750ml 1-l, 1.75-l.

Initially only available in the US, it will be rolled out globally.



Benromach 1969 Vintage

Brand owner Gordon & MacPhail
Price €575, £500
Markets 40 bottles will be available globally, not available in the US
Trade contact info@gordonandmacphail.com

Gordon & MacPhail has released a limited edition Benromach bottling to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Sir Robin Knox-Johnston's solo circumnavigation of the globe.

Benromach claims to be Speyside's smallest working distillery and just 40 bottles of a 1969 vintage have been produced.

Bottled at 43.8% abv it will be available from specialist whisky retailers.

Individually numbered, each bottle is presented in a bespoke tin and is accompanied by a booklet providing details of Sir Robin's story.

Along with an abstract image of Sir Robin's yacht, Suhaili, three rings are etched around the bottle – symbolising Sir Robin's age on completion of his circumnavigation. Sir Robin is the brand's global brand ambassador.



Chistaya Sila vodka

Brand owner Istok OJSC
Price 125 roubles
Markets Russia, Germany
Trade contact temp@istokgroup.ru

Chistaya Sila is a new vodka made in Beslan in the Republic of Northern Ossetia-Alania in the south of Russia. The name means "pure force" vodka.

The vodka is said to be made from natural glacial water. It is distilled from wheat and filtered at least 10 times through sand and charcoal. With an abv of 40%, it comes in a 50cl bottle.

It is said to be aimed at 25 to 45-year-old consumers who have "already reached success, are active, open-minded and seek a high quality and premium design in new products in affordable prices".

Istok says it is talking to its German distributor, which already takes its original de Luxe vodka, about also taking on Chistaya Sila.



Hibiki 12 Year Old blended whisky

Brand owner Suntory
Price €39, £39.99
Markets Belgium, France, Netherlands, Spain and UK

Japanese drinks giant Suntory has launched internationally a 12-year-old expression of its prestigious Hibiki premium blended whisky brand.

The brand is believed to have won 15 gold medals and trophies, including the title, "the world's best blended whisky" both in 2007 and 2008.

Aged in plum liqueur "umeshu" casks, it is described as sweet with a velvety texture and fruity aromas. It is made from malt and grain whiskies and is filtered through bamboo charcoal.

It is bottled at 43% abv and comes in a 24-facet decanter.



Mari Mayans – Hierbas Ibicencas

Brand owner Taste of Ibiza
Price €14-€15, £23.99
Markets UK and Ireland
Trade contact enquiries@taste-of-ibiza.com

Mari Mayans – Hierbas Ibicencas is an Ibizan herbal liqueur that has been produced on the Balearic island for more than 125 years.

It is said to be distilled from 18 local herbs & plants and flavours include rosemary, thyme, aniseed, fennel, chamomile, juniper berries and mountain mint.

Traditionally a digestif, the 26% proof liquor, which comes in a litre bottle, is now promoted as a cocktail ingredient or chilled shot. The company claims there is not a single bar, club, restaurant, cafe or hotel on the island of Ibiza which does not keep a stock of Hierbas.

The brand has become available recently in the UK and Ireland through Taste of Ibiza.



Walders Vodka & Vanilla

Brand owner Walders
Price €13.49, £13, US\$20
Markets Global
Trade contact walders.net

Walders, the Dutch creamy liqueur producer, has launched a new style: Vodka & Vanilla.

It is said to have a natural, dairy-free base and the blend takes three months to marry the components.

Aimed at 21 to 35-year-olds for both drinking at home and in bars and clubs, it has an abv of 17% and comes in the familiar 70cl curvy bottle. The company hopes to gain awareness and build sales through targeted sampling and trial.



Tullamore Dew 10 Year Old Single Malt

Owner C&C International
Price US\$40, €40
Markets US, Ireland
Contact tullamoredew.com

Available in both 70cl and 75cl sizes, Tullamore Dew's new single malt is a premium extension at the top end of the number two Irish whiskey brand, adding to the existing range of Standard, 10 Year Old Reserve and 12 Year Old Special Reserve.

Tullamore Dew Single malt is aged in a variety of old bourbon, dry oloroso sherry, Madeira and port casks and is described as having "intense malty, fruity and toasted wood aroma ... with a hint of sherry Christmas cake".

"We have been working towards a complete line-up of ages, flavours and qualities to meet growing consumer demand for Irish whiskey experiences," said C&C International marketing manager Ann O'Leary.

Launches



Berberana White Dragon Viura Sauvignon Blanc 2008

Brand owner United Wineries
Price £4.99/US\$8.99 / €4.99
Markets Global
Contact apherrasti@unitedwineries.com

United Wineries has given its leading international Spanish wine brand, Berberana Dragon, a complete overhaul, as well as adding a white offering.

The range, which is positioned as a modern, fun, easy-to-drink new wave range now has a white version – a blend of indigenous Viura and Sauvignon Blanc. It joins the Red Dragon (Tempranillo) and the Pink Dragon (also Tempranillo).

The wines come from the Vino de la Tierra de Castilla region and, in keeping with its relaxed, informal, style, it is now under a screwcap closure.



Glenfiddich 15 Year Old Distillery Edition

Brand owner William Grant & Sons
Price £37.99, €38
Markets France, Germany, UK, US and selected travel retail outlets
Trade contact info@glenfiddich.com

The non-chill filtered 15 Year Old Distillery Edition is aimed at whisky enthusiasts who are looking for new Glenfiddich with a higher strength, 51%.

The whiskies in the blend have been matured in American and European oak casks, including Oloroso sherry casks that are said to add a distinct character.

The taste is described as floral and spicy black pepper mingling with fruit and a hint of sherry wood with a velvety finish.



Pierre Ferrand Vintage 1972 Cask Strength Cognac

Brand owner Pierre Ferrand Cognac
Price US\$600
Markets US, Europe on request only
Trade contact savona@lisalori.com

Only two casks remained of the 1972 vintage. They were tapped last January by Ferrand cellar master, Frederic Gilbert, producing 600 bottles, which have been allocated mostly to the US market, targeting: "Cognac connoisseurs looking for a great, untouched Grande Champagne Cognac."

According to the company, at 43.8% this 1972 bottling is one of the only cask strength Cognacs available in the US. It is part of the Pierre Ferrand Collection Privée which includes vintages such as 1914.

Gilbert's tasting note includes: "candied fruits and apricots with a lush roundness and very long finish".



Tomintoul Speyside Glenlivet 14 Year Old

Brand owner Angus Dundee Distillers
Price £35, US\$55, €39
Markets World: selected markets
Trade contact dbaldwin@angusdundee.co.uk

Angus Dundee Distillers has added a 14 Year Old to its Tomintoul Speyside Glenlivet range of Scotch whiskies.

It is the first in the range with a higher strength, 46%, and as a result is said to retain the natural characteristics and subtlety of taste. It joins the Peaty Tang, 10, 16 and 27 Year Old variants and a 12 Year Old single malt finished in oloroso sherry wood. There is also a vintage 1976.



Agua del Desierto

Brand owner Campeny Destilerias
Price US\$9, €8,50
Markets Launching in Europe, US and Asia
Trade contact export@campeny.com

The first cactus cocktail mix in the world is how Campeny Distilleries describes Agua del Desierto.

It is said to be a citric cocktail made with Caribbean rum, lemon and cactus. Made in Barcelona, Spain, it is 14.7% abv and comes in a 70cl bottle.



Glengoyne 40 Year Old

Brand owner Ian Macleod Distillers
Price £3,750, US\$4,250, €5,7300
Markets Worldwide (250 available)
Trade contact iain@ianmacleod.com

This is Glengoyne's oldest, most valuable and best Highland single malt Scotch, according to Ian Macleod Distillers.

The Glencairn crystal decanter is hand blown and each has its individual number engraved on the base.

The piano-finished solid oak box has been lacquered 11 times and has gold plates on the front and a hand-stitched cream leather interior.

The 40 Year Old with its elaborate packaging is said to be the "embodiment of Glengoyne's famed unpeated and authentic real taste of malt". The natural strength 40 Years Old Highland Single Malt is regarded by the distillery to be "one of the finest whiskies it has ever produced".

The 250 decanters will be available from specialist whisky outlets, worldwide.



Irish Mist

Brand owner C&C International
Price £20, US\$24, €22
Markets Worldwide
Trade contact nora.mcnuilty@candcgroup.ie

C&C is relaunching Irish Mist, its Irish whiskey liqueur. A tall, clear, whiskey-shaped bottle replaces the old decanter shape.

Aimed at 25 to 35-year-olds, the company is targeting people who are "prepared to try new things and interested in something different".

It is made in Clonmel, County Tipperary, using Irish whiskey from various distilleries. With an abv of 35%, it is described as a blend of Irish whiskey, honey and natural aromatic spices. It is said to be an ancient recipe but has been in production for 60 years. It comes in various sizes: 1-l, 75cl, 70cl, 50cl, 37.5cl, 35cl, 5cl.



Laphroaig 18 Year Old

Brand owner Beam Global Spirits & Wine
Price £49.99, €50, US\$65
Markets US, Europe and selected markets in Far East and Australia.
Trade contact maxxium.com

The 18 Year Old replaces the 15 Year Old expression of this leading Islay single malt Scotch whisky.

With luxury packaging and an abv of 48%, it is expected to retail for around £50/€50. Beam Global and distributors Maxxium stress the 18 Year Old will be made available only in selected outlets and availability is limited.

Senior brand manager Bob Dalrymple said bottling at 48% meant the whisky did not have to undergo chill filtering.

Laphroaig 18 Year Old is described as having a "rich toffee taste that fades into a delicate hint of heather and peat smoke".

Naked truths

Anyone who has a ringing endorsement from Richard Branson of Virgin fame at the top of his CV must have something about him. Christian Davis meets entrepreneur Rowan Gormley

South African-born Rowan Gormley is a class A entrepreneur who happens to be passionate about wine. Virgin's Richard Branson, in his autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, says: "I recognised that Rowan would make things happen."

Qualified as a chartered account and an expert in LBOs (leveraged buyouts, where a significant percentage of the purchase price is financed through leverage or borrowing), he went to Virgin in 1994 as managing director of Virgin Direct PFS, where he formulated the company's strategy for entering the financial services market. Over five years he built a £3 billion business with 300,000 customers.

In 2000 he started the Virgin Wines Online dotcom business. From scratch he built a £20 million business and 500,000 customers. He says it had EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) of £1m and an annual growth of 47%.

In 2005 the company was sold to mail order giant Direct Wines. It is best known as Sunday Times Wine Club and Laithwaites, after its founder Tony Laithwaite who started in a warehouse in Windsor (not dissimilar to Gormley), importing wines direct from Bordeaux.

The great unknown

Direct is now a multi-million pound business based in a huge warehouse just to the west of London and is one of the largest direct mail wine clubs in the world. The company also majors on unknown wines, continually offering huge discounts to tempt new customers and prompt existing or lapsed ones. Notionally it appears a larger version of what Gormley wants to do. The reality though is different. Direct, with its scale and business model – bearing in mind its inevitable overheads – is not what Gormley is about and it was no surprise when he left in June 2008.

In December he launched Naked Wine. "I

was sitting in my garden (he lives in what he describes as "a ruined castle in Suffolk"), trying to come up with a business proposition that is going to work in this market."

The married father of three decided on four criteria: the price has to be right; it cannot be flash or gimmicky; it is "not just you but also for someone else"; it represents "real value – not fiction, not 50% off".

Gormley says: "A lot of people use knowledge as a weapon. Wine has become a bit like the art world – image more than substance. Like Tracy Emin's unmade bed. Is it art? Wine is a bit like that.

"The wine trade suffers a drought of imagination. The best idea it has had is: 50% off. I'm cynical. Now a lot of consumers are probably 50-60% happy with that. Then there is a chunk who are happy to pay over the odds for a label. Between those two are rational consumers who want something nice but do not want to pay through the nose for it. They go to farmers' markets and sign up to Fairtrade. We are trying to appeal to them," says Gormley.

"The trade is polarising. There is a race to the bottom with no rewards for anyone. The top end is going to shrink but we are trying to reverse

Customers know when a wine is an £8 bottle. We can put our customers in direct contact with winemakers. That's what this business is about



that. The idea is that customers spend a sensible amount of money, rather than spending on a name for 'conspicuous consumption' – and it helps someone else (a small winemaker)," says the 46-year-old.

Auction fever

Gormley and the rest of the Naked team recently ran a live auction in London. Fifty customers were invited to Australia House, where they tasted and scored a bunch of Australian wines not available in the UK.

The scores were added up and the top five were auctioned. In direct communication with the winemakers, the customers said how much they would be prepared to pay for the wine and the producers decided how much they were prepared to sell them for.

This operation typifies what Gormley is about: cutting out the middleman.



The irony...

Ironically, at the foot of a very good profile of Gormley on Timesonline, dated November 29, 2008, there is an "Ads by Google" panel with a link to Laithwaites (aka Direct Wines, Gormley's former employer and nemesis which bought Virgin Wines). "Buy Australian Wines – Save £50 – just £39.99 for 15 wines delivered to your door". Exactly the sort of thing Gormley hates and rails against.

Rowan Gormley CV

2000-2008 CEO Virgin Wine Online

Dotcom start-up at height of the dotcom boom
Recruited 500,000 customers with more than 75% of sales coming from existing customers

1994-2000 MD, Virgin Direct PFS

Formulated strategy for Virgin to enter the financial services market
Over five years, built Virgin Direct into a business with 300,000 customers
Borrowed an Australian draw-down mortgage concept, and turned it into a high end mortgage product – Virgin One account

1987-1994 Electra Capital Partners, investment director

Over seven years invested £100m into 22 deals with a final cash return of £280m

1984-1986 Arthur Andersen

Qualified as a chartered accountant in Johannesburg

"Some of the best winemakers are not salesmen. They are hiding their light under a bushel. If you are selling wine, you are paying, per case, £18 in tax, about £10 in duty and £12 for direct mail. That takes you up to nearly £50, so you have to set your prices so high to make the margin," says Gormley.

"Customers are not stupid – they know when a wine is an £8 bottle. It is a vicious circle. Some of the best winemakers are small winemakers (not literally). Production is expensive, they struggle to make a living and it is expensive to sell their wines.

"We want to put our customers in direct communication with winemakers. Ultimately that is what this business is about.

"Customers decide what they want to pay and winemakers decide at what price they want to sell – we work out the volumes. Everyone decides and there is transparency.

"It is fast and it is free. We do in one hour what normally takes nine months if producers are trying to get distribution – and they have to go the London International Wine Fair, get a suit, find accommodation...."

En primeur nerves

Gormley cites a BBC TV programme screened a few months ago which featured Berry Bros & Rudd.

Viewers saw Bordeaux wine buyer Simon Staples and his team at Berry's discussing and fretting about what Bordeaux en primeur prices for the latest vintage were likely to be.

They were all waiting for American wine writer supremo Robert Parker Jr to pronounce.

"Nobody could decide on what to charge. They all have to wait for Robert Parker," says Gormley, shaking his head dismissively.

"At our auction we had 50 customers,

bloggers, the twitterati and five tables with 20 wines. They scored wines out of five and we shortlisted five or 10. We asked customers what they were prepared to pay and winemakers decided what they were prepared to accept." Gormley admitted on the day: "I do not know what the hell is going to happen. I have to admit to having an uncomfortable night. At the very worst they will get a decent wine but may have paid too much for it."

Gormley is a maverick and iconoclast as far as the traditional wine trade is concerned. While he has ruffled feathers and many are wary and sceptical of him, he undoubtedly has a loyal following and his passion for the red or pale golden stuff does not cloud his entrepreneurial instincts.

He is a man on a mission, with a passion for wine, who also happens to know how to make money. A bit of a rarity in many quarters of the wine trade.

Hot spot

WHERE
Bordeaux-Lac Exhibition Centre
WHEN
June 21-24: 8.30-18.30
June 25: 8.30-16.30

Vinexpo is only for wine and spirits trade professionals and associated businesses (restaurants, duty free etc) Access badge required. Under 18s cannot attend

It is that time again – Christian Davis sets the scene for Vinexpo 2009

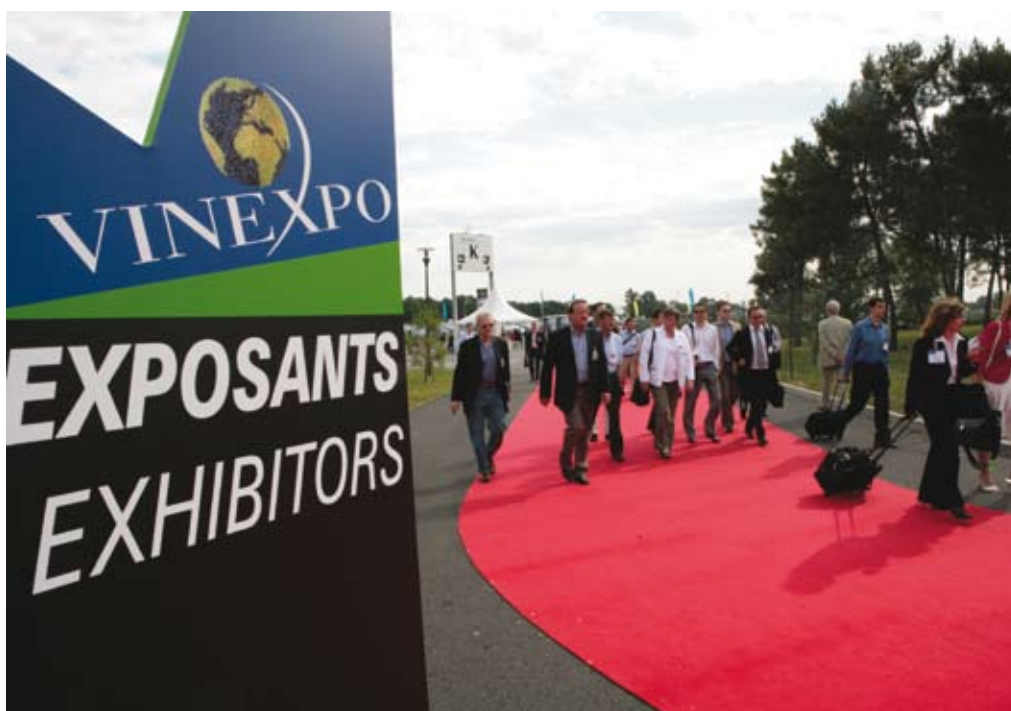
Bordeaux in mid June. Hot and humid. Yes, it is a Vinexpo year. The trade contemplates that long, long 40,000sq m exhibition hall, the bouncy bridge over the lac to the conference centre and the golf carts trundling up and down. Time to break out the sensible shoes and cool, breathable, smart – but casual – clothes.

The organisers say it is fully booked again: 2,400 wine and spirits exhibitors from 48 countries. An awesome collection. Can you afford to miss it?

Italy, France and Spain, which represent 52.5% of world wine production and export more than 5.6 billion bottles of still light wine, are there in force with national pavilions as well as individual companies such as Luigi Cecchi & Figli, Casa Vinicola Zonin, Gonzalez Byass, Hugel & Fils, Georges Duboeuf, Champagne Louis Roederer and Castel Frères.

And Vinexpo is hosting five new countries: Sweden, Belorussia, Egypt, Mauritius and Brazil.

Chile and Argentina will be occupying the same floor area as in 2007, while Mexican, Portuguese and South African companies have increased their space by



Jeanjean Group, which claims to be one of France's top five producers, will be unveiling its new Antoine Moueix range. These will be the first wines released from the Bordeaux house, which it acquired two years ago.

Jeanjean Languedoc will be unveiling its overhauled range of wines from the south of France, including new wines and new packaging.

Cahors-based producer, Rigal, also part of the Jeanjean Group, will be showing its new 'double vinification', Original Malbec Vin de Pays du Lot. Hall 1, BD131.



4.4%, 8% and 22% respectively.

A new record has been broken among the national and regional pavilions: a total of 20 wine-producing areas will group together small companies that are coming to exhibit their wines and spirits.

Major companies exhibiting include: Gruppo Italiano Vini (Italy); Marco Real, Domecq Wines España (Spain); Kendall-Jackson and Heaven Hill Distilleries (US); Skalli Family Wines, Georges Duboeuf, Rémy-Cointreau, Champagne Bollinger, Baron Philippe de Rothschild (France); Sogrape and Symington Family Estates (Portugal); Henkell & Co Sektkellerei (Germany); Concha y Toro and Santa Rita (Chile); Group Hess (Switzerland); Peñaflor (Argentina); Distell (South Africa) and De Bortoli Wines (Australia).

The exhibition will take up a total area of 90,000sq m, including the exhibition halls, the gardens, Club du Lac, the restaurants, the conference and tasting rooms and all the services.

Club du Lac

The 2009 Club du Lac features Baron Philippe de Rothschild, Concha y Toro, Champagne Deutz, Les Grands Chais de France, Lanson International, CVBG Dourthe Kressmann and Champagne Louis Roederer. These seven companies represent a total sales turnover of €1.66 billion.

Marketers by Vinexpo

Wine and spirits marketing will again be on show in the convention centre with Marketers by Vinexpo. Approximately 40 exhibitors from eight countries will display equipment and solutions on 800 sq m of stands.

Companies specialising in packaging, in equipment for cafés, hotels and restaurants or retailers, in services or marketing, include: Detesk (Czech Republic), Ravi Solution (Canada), Orcel & Romieu – Drop Stop (France), as well as Cipsa (Spain).

The International Sommelierie Association

Vinexpo will accommodate the general assembly ▶

of the International Sommelier Association (ASI). More than 80 sommeliers from all over the world will represent the 44 member countries of ASI on Saturday 20 June at the convention centre.

On Sunday June 21, ASI will preview details of the next ASI contest of the Best Sommelier of the World, Chile 2010. The best sommeliers in the world, Andreas Larson (2007), Olivier Poussier (2000), Philippe Faure-Brac (1992) and Serge Dubs (1989), who are all members of the ASI board, as well as ASI President Kazuyoshi Kogai, will be among the celebrities expected.

Conferences and tastings

Various conferences and tastings will take place in the convention centre and the rooms in exhibition Halls 2 and 3.

Topics include: “The future of the American market” by Wine Business Council, “Sommellerie and competitions – the new challenges of the sommelier’s profession by the Best Sommeliers in the World” by ASI.

Also “Supply marketing or demand marketing – what stage is the wine industry at?” by the French business school, Insec.

Tastings scheduled include “Masseto – the story of Merlot in Italy”; “The 6th Saint-Emilion Grands Crus Cup and The Lussac Saint-Emilion and Puisseguin Saint-Emilion Appellations Cup”; “A portrait of Burgundy – Burgundy wines tell you their stories”; “Organic in wine”; “The 2008 vintage of Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux”.

For further information visit the vinexpo website at vinexpo.com



Product news

La Différence and La Diferencia

French and Spanish wine brands La Différence and La Diferencia from Dedicated Wines will be in Hall 1, stand D119.

La Différence is an established brand in Canada, Dubai, Norway, and the UK. The Southern French brand claims to offer something different from France with varietals, regions and wine styles designed to appeal specifically to French wine lovers who are looking for “value, quality and discovery”. The line-up comprises five wines retailing at £4.99 in the UK, and a reserve wine at £7.99:

They include: La Différence Grenache Blanc Vin de Pays; Viognier/Muscato Vin de Pays d’Oc; Carignan Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes; Syrah Rosé Vin de Pays des Coteaux de l’Ardèche; Grenache Noir Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes; Reserve Côtes du Roussillon AOC.

La Différence is now also available in 3-litre bag in box and 25cl bottles.

The new La Diferencia – Life Beyond Rioja, launched at the London International Wine Fair, will be shown for the first time to international buyers from multiple retailers at Vinexpo 2009. La Diferencia is Dedicated Wines’ first venture across the French/Spanish border and there are two wines, both from the appellation Tierra Castilla y León:

La Diferencia Verdejo/Sauvignon Blanc 2008 and La Diferencia Tempranillo/Cabernet Sauvignon 2008.



Penfolds live at Vinexpo

Foster’s EMEA has set up an interactive wine tasting from Vinexpo for its premium Australian wine brand, Penfolds.

The webcasts will be received in five cities globally and fronted by Peter Gago, Penfolds’ chief winemaker on June 22 at 9am and 5pm GMT.

Gago said: “The focus for the tasting is on Penfolds Bin 389 (1976 to 2006), once referred to as the ‘poor man’s Grange’”.

Foster’s will be showcasing its core Penfolds range from Koonunga Hill to the latest releases from the Luxury & Icons selection, including the acclaimed Grange 2004. The Penfolds bespoke pouring area can be found at Stand CD12 in the Old World section of Hall 1.

Nicolas Feuillatte

Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte cellar master Jean-Pierre Vincent will be showing the new oak-aged 2004 Cuvée 225 rosé.

A blend of Chardonnay (40%), Pinot Noir (40%) and some red wine, it is reserved for the on-trade only.

Kleine Zalze

Kleine Zalze, the South African family estate, boasts on- and off-trade listings in some 20 markets worldwide. It will show new releases and the latest vintages in Hall 1, A328. They include:

● Kleine Zalze: “Premium level winemaking at an affordable price”: Chenin Blanc Bush Vines 2008; Shiraz/Mourvèdre/

Viognier 2007/8; Rosé 2009; Cabernet Sauvignon 2007/8; Pinotage 2007/8

● Kleine Zalze Family Reserve: “Best grapes from single vineyards, hand selected. Wines are matured in new oak barrels” – Sauvignon Blanc 2008; Cabernet Sauvignon 2006/7; Shiraz; Pinotage 2009

● Foot of Africa, the biggest selling South African wine brand in Sweden, now available to all markets: Chenin Blanc 2008; Cabernet Sauvignon 2007; Chardonnay 2008; Shiraz/Viognier 2007

● Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection: “Fruit-driven and value for money” – Chenin Blanc Bush Vines 2008; Pinotage 2007; Sauvignon Blanc 2008; Merlot 2008 and Gamay Noir Rosé 2009

● Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection: “Better quality grapes and use of quality oak barrels result in concentration, complexity and structure” – Chenin Blanc 2008; Cabernet Sauvignon 2007; Pinot Noir 2007

Sogevinus

Sogevinus Fine Wines is a specialist in wines from Portugal’s Douro valley – famous for port and increasingly now for DOC table wines.

The company sees itself as a Douro specialist. Its portfolio includes Kopke, Burmester, Cálem, Barros and Gilberts and it says it is a market leader in port Colheitas. It recently declared the 2007 vintage for Kopke, Barros, Cálem and Burmester and this year it has launched a rosé under the Kopke brand. Its stand is in Hall 3, T341. □



Quality – a price to pay?

At May's London International Wine Fair, Gallo vice president and general manager for Europe George Marsden called the UK one of the toughest wine markets in the continent.

Newly appointed Foster's EMEA commercial sales director for continental Europe Stuart Pickles agreed that duty hikes and supermarket price promotions are not only squeezing margins but also potentially damaging brand equity.

Marsden went so far as to say that the government was acting against the consumer's interest because the deadly equation of increased duty and deep discounting meant the quality of the product had to suffer.

Interestingly both companies have taken a bold decision to strive for value – even if it means a slip in volume.

Marsden said: "Not only are these factors leading to no room for investment, but the government is doing a disservice to the wine consumer. If people are buying wines for £4 a bottle, you're paying £2.09 a bottle for duty. So you're leaving less than £2 a bottle for the glass, shipping, stoppers – and the wine."

Marsden believes that on bottles that are available in the three-for-£10 deals, the amount left to make wine is pence, not pounds.

"The problem is the growth in three bottles for £10 – the government, as a result of increasing duty, is encouraging commoditisation in the industry.

"People are buying wine based on price."

Foster's Pickles said he is not willing to compromise on brand equity. He added: "One of the propositions is that you have to compromise on the wine – so that people are basically buying crap. We always fight on price but they (the supermarkets) are now making decisions completely independently.

"We have to be careful that this doesn't affect how people perceive our products."

But both Pickles and Marsden



**Pickles (left):
No compromise
on quality**

**Marsden
(right): Not
looking to
participate in
three-for-£10**



admitted that discounting is a necessary evil.

Pickles said: "If we can secure a listing for some of our more premium lines as part of a portfolio of brands then we will do a lower listing for one of our brands. Overall that benefits the portfolio and brand equity. It's not black and white."

Marsden said Gallo is striving not to appear in deep discount deals. "We're not looking to participate in three-for-£10 but you will find us occasionally. We want to clearly be in the £5-plus range. That will mean taking a hit in volume."

Though it's difficult to put an exact number on the volume hit, Marsden believes playing the long game will pay off: "If we invest in quality, yes there is likely to be a volume loss but over the next two to three years the Gallo brand equity will creep through."

Pickles named Wolf Blass as one of the brands affected by duty hikes.

"Wolf Blass has had a number of years of very strong growth. We've decided that on that brand we don't want to drive volume too hard. With the new duty rates, we don't make the same money that we used to."

The next step

So what can two of the world's largest wine companies (after Constellation) do about duty hikes and price promotions?

Pickles is against regulation. He has experience of operating in tightly controlled markets such as Canada and Sweden. He said: "We don't want

to push for regulation. I don't think the wine industry needs it. We operate in markets where it's very tightly regulated and there's talk of minimum pricing in UK.

"Our sense is not to push for regulation but to take a stance on our own products. We can choose to not participate in offers we feel are irresponsible – it's a debate that the politicians need to have."

Marsden said Gallo is working on its value offer to combat the attraction of discounts. He said: "We're investing in driving up quality. We've improved where we source the fruit. Most brands source from the Central Valley, you know, really nice, fruit-forward wines. But we're now sourcing fruit from the Lodi – a coastal region. The wines have much more character, greater distinction.

"We've also invested millions in our oak programme, including new oak barrels to add a richness and roundness."

As far as the duty argument goes, Gallo is working with trade organisations to lobby on duty hikes.

According to the Wine & Spirit Trade Association, the government's April budget announcement set in motion a 2% above inflation tax escalator on alcohol which, combined with last year's 17% leap in excise duty, will raise duty on alcohol by around 40% by the time of the London Olympics in 2012.

Marsden's message on this was clear and familiar: "We're not asking for handouts – we're just asking to be left alone."

Major players hit out at the UK's double bind of high duty and deep discounting. Lucy Britner reports

Bordeaux, with its fine and haughty city architecture, its grand châteaux and globally celebrated grand cru wines, presents an image to the world that is in many ways at odds with the wider reality of the region. Certainly the great Bordeaux properties such as Latour, Margaux, Le Pin, Cheval Blanc et al, have long carried a justifiable reputation for producing the greatest – and priciest – wines in the world.

Despite drops of up to 40% in pricing for some wines in the first tranche of en primeur offerings this year the image and perception of the region still remains inextricably linked to its top offerings. The concerns surrounding the en primeur market for 2008 wines have been widely reported, not least as the pricing issues are set against the backdrop of financial woe enveloping the world. The excellent 2005 vintage set unprecedented highs in terms of en primeur pricing but figures from Liv-ex, the virtual trading platform for fine wine, reveal that top flight 05s lost up to 40% of their value by the end of 2008.

For example, 05 Lafite, a château with a previously unassailable record of returns for investors, fell from a high of £10,000 a case in 2007 to a low of £6,000 towards the end of last year. Prices were again set relatively high for the more modest quality 06 and 07 vintages but, to the relief of the merchants and brokers dealing in en primeur, were dropped significantly for the majority of 08s.

“Berrys’ fine wine team was initially sceptical about Bordeaux 2008,” says Simon Staples, Berry Bros & Rudd’s fine wine sales and marketing director, “but returned from the tastings earlier last month surprised and delighted with some of the wines.”

However, he also adds a note of caution in the light of high [Robert] Parker scores released subsequent to the release of the first en primeur offerings. “This is not a year to speculate and no-one else (bar Parker) believes this vintage is outstanding.”

Everyday message

But, just as en primeur prices hit a more realistic and possibly sustainable level for would-be investors and enthusiasts, figures suggest that the underlying growth in the total Bordeaux category – a hard-fought chunk of the market against competing global wine regions – is also facing immense challenges as recession continues to bite.

In the UK, the region’s premier export market, Nielsen statistics reveal that against a flat overall market, France is down -7% by volume and -3% by value, with Bordeaux’s share decreasing -6% in volume and -2% in value to April this year. Similarly, Bordeaux is suffering to various degrees in markets around the world as growth

A wine for all seasons

Bordeaux may be famed for its select few top names, but the rest of the region is raising its appeal as an everyday drink. Andrew Catchpole reports

slows, potentially setting back several years of work in terms of promoting the wider appeal of Bordeaux.

It’s worth a spot of number crunching at this point to show just how the fine wine market – which still carries the quality image of the region as a whole – relates to the broader market that is Bordeaux.

Depending on where a line is drawn under the top end wines, these big hitting and collectable names account for perhaps 3-5% of the total production. Volumes may be surprisingly large, up to 100,000 bottles per property, but beneath this exalted level are another 5,000 properties bottling their own wine, plus 7,000 or more growers selling on to the open market, and a swathe of large négociant houses (merchants) that also propagate a variety of labels. In a bountiful year, the entire Bordeaux region may produce a little shy of one billion bottles of wine. If ranked as a producing country in its own right it would be double the size of Australia.

“One of the challenges we face is that consumers don’t realise that Bordeaux isn’t necessarily all about expensive

wines,” says Pauline Leonard, press attaché at the generic promotional body CIVB in Bordeaux. “Around 85% of Bordeaux producers are making wines that sell for £5-£15 and it is a central part of our strategy to change consumer perception and show that Bordeaux is a great everyday drink and one that is available to all.”

To this end, the CIVB has been actively promoting this message on a global platform through an ongoing four-year-old campaign that promotes this broader swathe of Bordeaux production, with activity tailored to individual markets but essentially carrying a similar message. In the UK this has centred on an

Everyday Bordeaux promotion with links to consumer wine magazine Decanter. And, against a backdrop of modest growth in overall wine consumption in traditionally strong export markets such as the UK, Germany, Holland and other European countries, plus double-digit growth (though from a small base) in emerging markets in Asia such as China, Bordeaux sales have also grown.

The campaign has been successful in several markets. Indeed, in the UK, until the global recession really hit home, the





Berry Bros & Rudd's Simon Staples says the fine wine team was "surprised and delighted" with some of the 2008s

Philippe Roy



past few years have seen the Bordelais grow their average off-trade price point to £5.55 (35% above the market average), with 19% growth in the £5+ bracket in 2008 alone. And emerging markets such as China (and many other Far Eastern countries) have experienced double-digit growth during this time. The big challenge, having done much to promote the 85% of Bordeaux wines that fall into the affordable and quality-driven but accessible category, is to ride out the current storm and once again pick up the momentum.

Continuing innovation

In the medium to long-term the Bordelais believe they are up to the challenge. Improved technology in the wineries, ongoing work in the vineyards (including an emphasis on more sustainable methods encapsulated by "agriculture raisonnée" – a system of environmentally considerate, integrated farming), revitalised marketing and a handover in many instances to a younger generation of forward-looking winemakers has undoubtedly continued to raise the quality bar for both lower and mid-range wines. The contribution of consultants and better exchange of information and ideas between winemakers themselves has also left its mark.

Prominent châteaux such as Thieuley are helping to present a more modern face for Bordeaux

Séverine Bonnie, owner and winemaker at Château Malartic-Lagravière, also doubles up as vice-president of a group of 18 estates that banded together in 2005 calling themselves Bordeaux Oxygène. In many ways this group captures the revitalised, modern face of Bordeaux, counting reasonably prominent châteaux among its numbers such as Smith-Haut-Lafitte, Thieuley, La Lagune and Clos Dubreuil.

The stated aim of this group is to work towards the top potential of each given appellation through exacting work in both vineyards and winery. But perhaps more significant is the dynamism Bordeaux Oxygène promotes through "the opening of our minds as well as our doors... we believe in travelling and exchanging opinions with the people we meet".

As Bonnie says, this type of evolution has been ongoing and it has also had a significant impact on Bordeaux's perception of itself and the perception of the region by the outside world.

"Bordeaux has always been quite open to

foreign people, to other ideas, and has always been a melting pot of merchants and ideas from elsewhere," she says. "Jean Michel Cazes and other big figures started a revolution in Bordeaux 20 years ago so this is nothing new, but the dynamism in the region has grown over this time and Bordeaux is now truly a very innovative region."

Perhaps most significant is the alignment – contrasting with old-fashioned sniffy indifference – of a top ranking château such as Angelus alongside the aforementioned Château Thieuley under the same broad banner of Bordeaux Oxygène. This suggests a united front that until recently was most prominent among producers in the New World.

Battling back

Another key shift in Bordeaux has been the attention paid to emerging markets. "For us and others in the group, markets such as the UK, Germany, Belgium and Scandinavia still remain very important, as are the US and Canada," says ►



How en primeur works

En primeur, or “opening offer” wines, are essentially a means by which top wine estates can improve their cash flow by selling wines while they are still maturing in barrel, rather than waiting until they are bottled.

In April/May each year, producers offer samples of the previous year’s harvest for tasting and assessment by wine merchants and journalists from around the world. Based on these judgments and the quality of the vintage, prices are set by the producers and entitlements to future stocks are released for sale to the trade.

In Bordeaux, the process developed in the 18th century, when wines were bottled by Bordeaux merchants, not on the producer’s estate. Today there are about 200-300 producers involved every year, depending on demand.

Generally, en primeur stocks are released in one, two or three “tranches” – literally “slices”, or batches – so that the producers can vary (ie, increase) the price according to the market.

There are, of course, risks associated with paying money to third parties for stocks of anything with a delayed delivery time, and there have been instances of fraud and failure to deliver, but the main advantage for the end consumer is that they can secure limited stocks with certified provenance at an advantageous price. Often the bottled product will already be worth more than the customer has paid when it is actually delivered, usually at least two years after harvest.

Bonnie. “But each year we have been growing in emerging markets such as Asia, with huge potential in places like China and other markets including Singapore, South Korea, India and Russia becoming increasingly important as part of our focus.”

Bordeaux’s large houses, such as Dourthe, have also been instrumental in delivering both recognisable brands to compete with New World and other branded offerings, plus a portfolio that includes a range architecture – and implied consistency of quality – across a broad spectrum of wines. This again has helped bridge the perceived gap between the high end and more everyday drinking wines of Bordeaux.

“I want the quality of Dourthe wines produced in different appellations to be a true expression of terroir, showing the Dourthe style which targets purity of fruit and balance in the wines,” says Patrick Jestin, chief executive of CVBG Dourthe Kressmann. “Each has to be true value for the consumer in each category they represent, whether a Grand Cru Classé such as Château Belgrave; Château Pey La Tour, a Bordeaux Supérieur; or Dourthe No1, an AC Bordeaux.” For Jestin, the ability to approach a market with this diverse range of levels of wine is more an opportunity than a handicap.

Dourthe, largely in line with its competitors and the CIVB, follows a natural pattern in terms of its approach to established versus emerging markets. “In emerging markets the organisation of the markets is not yet as established, with

distribution less concentrated than in a market such as the UK,” says Jestin. “Therefore the choice and quality of the distributing partner are key. And, unlike mature markets, most of the marketing budgets are allocated to education, training and tasting rather than price cuttings and promotion.”

It’s a point that established, mature markets would do well to heed (and not just in terms of Bordeaux). At both the top, investment-level end and among the more readily available, everyday drinking brands, plus those wines in between, Bordeaux, like its competitors, is continuing to eye up the massive potential of the emerging markets in the East and elsewhere.

“China, Russia and, to a lesser extent, other emerging markets, were the big Bordeaux export targets before the crisis,” says David Sichel at Maison Sichel. “But this crisis has had a serious effect with markets like Russia down 40%, which has killed off a lot of expectation.

“However, these markets are likely to eventually come back and continue to grow, so no-one is taking their eye off them.”

Sichel makes a further interesting point, though, that in mature markets such as the UK, more accessible Bordeaux – current downturn excepted – may have turned a significant corner after years of pressure from relative newcomers from both the New World and also emerging regions in its back yard such as the Languedoc and other value regions in Europe.

“Bordeaux has been battling back and the

effects of all the work that has taken place in both vineyards and wineries in the past decade or more is now coming to fruition in the glass,” says Sichel. “A lot of importers in Britain and other traditional markets are beginning to see Bordeaux as a new hot spot in their portfolio, with quality up a lot and prices delivering on the everyday drinking side.”

With the economic crisis still engulfing the globe it would be a brave, or even foolhardy, commentator who attempted to predict where and how Bordeaux will best continue its growth. But as an overall package, as Brand Bordeaux, the region seems increasingly likely to re-emerge as a strong contender not just for high-end wines, but also as a great source of value-delivering, quality, affordable wines. □



Patrick Jestin wants his Dourthe wines to be “a true expression of terroir”

Up for the challenge

The International Spirits Challenge 2009 has seen more entries than ever being tasted and deliberated upon by our expert judges – and the first results are in. Trophy winners will be announced at the prestigious ISC dinner in October



Meet the judges



Chairman Ian Wisniewski has been looking after the International Spirits Challenge for 10 years. He is a well-known spirits expert who has travelled the world to write books about tequila, vodka, malt whisky and cocktails. He has contributed to many drinks magazines.



Ben Hehir trained alongside cocktail supremo Dick Bradsell. He has worked at London's Match bar and set up the cocktail offering at Michelin-starred Joël Robuchon's restaurant L'Atelier. In 2007 Ben joined the team at Bamboo London as drink director. He runs the cocktail test kitchen and works on brand development for clients including Belvedere, Glenmorangie and Hennessy.



Ryder Butler has been in the hospitality trade for nearly fifteen years as a purchasing manager. Ryder met chairman Ian Wisniewski when the pair put together and sampled the largest collection of tequila and mezcal in the UK. This collection is housed at Navajo Joe's in Covent Garden, but is now somewhat smaller. Ryder's interest in tequila and mezcal soon spread to vodka, gin and rum.



Joanne Simcock started at G&J Greenall distillery 13 years ago as quality controller. She quickly advanced to quality manager, which carried the ultimate responsibility for product quality. During that time, Joanne developed a passion for new product development and experimenting with botanicals. In late 2006, she became the first female master distiller at G&J Greenall.



Alexander Zaitsev is a regular on the judging panel for the International Spirits Challenge. He is director general of Capital Style – a company established by the Moscow Chamber of Commerce to assist businesses. He has also chaired the vodka tasting committee.



Alexey Zaitsev is Alexander's brother. Alexey is a well-known Russian vodka expert and acted as Alexander's deputy on the vodka tasting committee. This was his first year on the International Spirits Challenge judging panel.



We saw a wider range of styles and individuality compared with last year, particularly among vodka and gin. This made the judging process more challenging, but also more interesting
Ian Wisniewski



The quality of each category was pitched appropriately although I felt the gins in the premium flight showed more interesting complexity in flavour delivery than the super-premium flight
Joanne Simcock



I like to have that herbal gin kick and not taste too much alcohol. You want a pleasant, stimulating drink
Ryder Butler



International Spirits Challenge

Vodka

GOLD

Vodka

Super premium
Russian Premium

Premium

Luksusowa – Pernod Ricard
Xerot Premium – Imported Brands
Stolichnaya – SPI Group
Poliakov – La Martiniquaise

Flavoured

Bulbash (Zubrovaya)
Wyborowa Lemon – Pernod Ricard



SILVER

Vodka

Super premium

Smirnoff Black – Diageo
U'Luvka – The Brand Distillery
Orzel – Stock Spirits Group
Nemiroff LEX Ultra – Nemiroff
Arctic Circle – Arctic

Premium

Arsenitch Premium Quality Vodka – Jaunalko
Count Pushkin – Distell
Svedka Vodka – Constellation
Ledo – JSC Alita
Premium Gera – JSC Alita

Standard

Lithuanian Gold – AB Stumbras

Flavoured

Prince Edward Wild Blueberry – Julie Shore/
Arla Johnson



BRONZE

Vodka

Super premium

Wyborowa Exquisite – Pernod Ricard
Karlsson's Gold Vodka – Spirits of Gold AB
Stolichnaya Elit – SPI Group
Chase Vodka – William Chase
Bear Force – S-Design

Premium

Snow Queen Vodka – Snow Queen Vodka
Wyborowa – Pernod Ricard
Wodka Gorbatschow Platinum 44 – Henkell & Co Sektellerei
Reyka Vodka – William Grant & Sons
Putinoff – Lidl UK
Flagship – Inter-Republican Winery Moscow
Vikingfjord – Arcus AS
Siwucha – Pernod Ricard Group
Danzka – Belvedere Scandinavia A/S
Grand Khaan – Spirit Bal Buram

Standard

S Serebrom Premium – Standart
Russian Bear – Edward Snell & Co
Dobra Shklianka (Wheat) – JV Dionis
Bulbash (Birch Buds) – JV Dionis

Flavoured

Wodka Gorbatschow Citron – Henkell & Co Sektellerei
Nemiroff Rye Honey – Nemiroff
Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion – Brown-Forman
Polska Cherry-Wyborowa – Pernod Ricard
Pshenichnaya Slezja S Beriozovym Sokom (Birch) – Aleant
Nemiroff Honey Pepper – Nemiroff
Finlandia Mango Fusion – Brown-Forman
Finlandia Lime Fusion – Brown-Forman

COMMENDED

Vodka

Super premium

Soyombo – APU Company
Oval 42 – Oval Vodka

Premium

Stalinskaya

Standard

Nipernaadi – Dunkri Kaubanduse AS
Wodka Zoladkowa Gorzka Czysta de Luxe – Stock Spirits

Flavoured

Pincer – Pincer Vodka
Pshenichnaya Slezja anisovaya (Aniseed) – Aleant
Nemiroff Birch Special – Nemiroff

International Spirits Challenge



Gin

GOLD

Gin

Super premium

Tanqueray No. Ten – Diageo

Premium

Martin Miller's Westbourne Strength –

Reformed Spirits Co

Martin Miller's Tenth Anniversary –

Reformed Spirits Co

SILVER

Gin

Super premium

Jensen's London Distilled Old Tom – Christian

Jensen/Bermondsey Gin

Beekeeper 24 – Chivas Brothers

The London Gin – Gonzalez Byass

Berkeley Square London Gin – G&J Greenall

Junipero – Anchor Brewing Co

Premium

Whitley Neill – Whitley Neill

Tesco Finest Classic Gin No.1 – Tesco

Goa Gin – World Wide Distillers

Beekeeper London Dry Gin – Chivas Brothers

Whitley Neill Limited Edition – Whitley Neill

Standard

Greenalls Gin – G&J Greenall



International Spirits Challenge

Gin

BRONZE

Gin

Super premium

Hendrick's – William Grant & Sons
Old Raj – Cadenhead's

Premium

Taste the Difference Blackfriars London Dry Gin – Sainsbury's
Tanqueray Export Strength – Diageo brands
Pink 47 – Old St Andrews

Standard

Cromwell Gin – Aldi
Stretton's Gin – Edward Snell & Co

Genever

Bols Genever – Lucas Bols



COMMENDED

Gin

Premium

Blue Ribbon – Oposit
Martin Miller's Gin – Martin Miller Reformed Spirits Co
Tesco 40% Gin Special – Tesco
London Hill Gin – Ian Macleod Distillers
Black Zephyr – Zephyr Imports

Standard

Castelgy Dry Gin – Lidl



Other white spirits

SILVER

Gammel Opland Ettermodnet pa Portvinsfat – Arcus

BRONZE

Svedka Vanilla – Constellation
Shosho Kikori – Wakashio Brewing Co

COMMENDED

Svedka Citron – Constellation

Finishing school

Cask finishes evoke an array of emotions among whisky drinkers. Gavin Smith reports on how distillers are refining processes to appeal to a variety of palates



The Arran distillery at sunset

Once upon a time it was all so simple. A Scotch whisky distiller filled “new make” single malt spirit into either ex-bourbon or ex-sherry casks, then put them into a warehouse, where they stayed until a sufficient period of ageing had taken place.

Then, during the 1990s, a new variation on the venerable theme of maturation appeared on the scene. The process involved was generally referred to as “cask finishing” or simply “finishing” and, as the Scotch Whisky Association explains: “Scotch whisky must be matured in oak casks for a minimum of three years. ‘Finishing’ is an extension of the maturation process, when the spirit is subsequently filled into empty casks that previously held other wines or spirits for a further relatively short period at the end of maturation.

“The cask used for finishing must have been drained of any liquid prior to its use and any change in the spirit will therefore result from its interaction over time with the wood of the cask.”

Glenmorangie was the first distillery to offer its own bottlings of “finished” whisky to the

consumer, and the brand has remained at the forefront of the process. Since launching its initial port finish, Glenmorangie has produced bottlings such as Tain L’Hermitage (Rhône Valley wine), claret and Côte de Nuits, some of which have become highly collectable.

Overall, port and sherry cask finishes have proved notably popular with consumers, and Glenmorangie’s current range includes Nectar d’Or (French wine barriques), Quinta Ruban (port pipes) and Lasanta (Spanish Oloroso sherry casks). Glenmorangie also recently introduced Sonnalta PX into the travel retail sector. It is a rich, sweet, complex dram, finished in Pedro Ximenez sherry casks.

As Dr Bill Lumsden, head of distilling and whisky creation, notes: “Glenmorangie pioneered cask finishing and we did it for three reasons. There was the obvious commercial aspect, in that it gave us a bigger range of whiskies and therefore more presence and a higher visibility on retailers’ shelves and back bars. Secondly, our style of whisky didn’t really lend itself to *full*

maturation in sherry or port casks or whatever; and thirdly, it allowed us to bring different aromas and flavours to our existing stock.

“The first port wood finish Glenmorangie, which appeared in 1994, had spent a much longer time in the ex-port casks than our whiskies do today,” adds Lumsden, “and it was really too ‘porty’. We were losing too much house character. I joined the company two years after it had been launched, and we went on to refine the finishing process.”

Varied expressions

While Glenmorangie is one of a number of companies offering finishes in their permanent line-ups, others prefer to present consumers with an ongoing and varied programme of expressions.

Particularly active among distillers operating expansive cask finishing regimes are Arran and Tullibardine, with finishes having played a particularly significant part in the business strategy of The Isle of Arran Distillers, whose

Malt whisky

Cask Finish Programme has been running since February 2003.

Arran distillery was only established in 1995 and, as managing director Euan Mitchell explains: “Finishing was a good way of introducing more people to the brand. In 2003, the Arran expression on the market carried no age statement and finishes gave us a new angle, a brand extension, and showed how adaptable the spirit is. We couldn’t add aged whiskies to the range because there weren’t any, so finishing was a way of using the stock differently.”

Arran aims to release four cask finishes each year, and in 2008 these comprised Sassicaia, Moscatel, Madeira and St Emilion. “We like to try different things and we will do around 6,000 bottles per release,” says Mitchell. “We’ve just done a German Pinot Noir for Europe, then there will be an Amontillado Sherry and a Austrian Blaufränkisch.

Also new from Arran is a Pomerol Bordeaux Wine Cask Finish, which was matured for eight years in conventional ex-bourbon barrels before spending six months in casks previously used to mature wine from the Château La Conseillante. The result is a clean and crisp malt with prevailing sweetness and hints of sweet and sour plum sauce and ginger biscuits.

Like Arran, the Perthshire distillery of Tullibardine also marketed its first finishes in 2003 and, according to manager John Black: “When we started out, rather than just offer a 1993 vintage bottling, we thought we would try out one or two cask finishes to give consumers a range of Tullibardine products, even from the same year. We did a lot of different things with 1993 spirit, and Sauternes, Moscatel and Marsala have done really well for us.”

Recent finishes from Tullibardine include Port Wood and Pedro Ximenez Sherry cask expressions of the 1993 vintage, with the Pedro Ximenez offering a nose of dates, almonds, ginger and chocolate, a viscous texture, and a palate of cinnamon, spice, ginger, honey, orange and dark chocolate. The distillers identify “...hints of the cereal notes of the original 1993 coming through at the back.”

Given its penchant for innovation, it is not surprising that Bruichladdich distillery, on the Isle of Islay, is noted for its embrace of finishing, or Additional Cask Enhancement (ACE) as “Laddie” supremo Mark Reynier prefers to call it.

One example is Bruichladdich’s “multi-vintage” Rocks, which was



Glenmorangie remains at the forefront of the finishing process

ACed for a short period in Grenache wine casks from the Banyuls region of south west France.

Reynier declares that: “Rocks is the classic aperitif cuvée – minimal peat, so deliciously fresh and fruity, with a surprisingly sophisticated flavour profile thanks to the French oak cask influences.”

Complex question

In common with other distillers, Bruichladdich has discovered that the choice of a secondary cask type which complements the style of spirit in question is absolutely crucial to finishing success. Arran’s Mitchell says: “We find anything with depth of sweetness works for us, for example Moscatel, Madeira and Sauternes.”

Some of the most respected Scotch malt whisky finishes are produced by the industry’s largest player, Diageo, which offers a number of finished whiskies from its Classic Malts range under the Distillers Edition banner.

Diageo maturation expert Jim Beveridge stresses the importance of retaining the “house” character of the whisky in question. “The critical thing is the flavour of the Classic Malts,” he says. “We must remain true to their core character. For example, you always recognise Distillers Edition Oban as Oban. It still has the classic Oban flavour. This is the main driver behind the choice of casks we use.

“We use a full-bodied Pedro Ximenez sherry cask for Lagavulin, but there’s no way you’d want to use that for Oban, for example. It’s not about the discernible



sherry but about the overall impact. We use more powerful sheries for more powerful whiskies such as Lagavulin and Talisker. It’s about matching the flavours in the sherry to the whisky.”

If matching spirit style with secondary cask choice is vitally important, so is gauging the length of time required for the finishing process. Euan Mitchell says: “It works over a fairly short timescale with Arran spirit, which is medium-bodied, sweet and fruity, with a spicy twist. Anything from four months to 10 months. We ▶

Malt whisky

are looking to add a new layer of flavour, not overwhelm. We are trying to give a different twist to the same story.”

Whyte & Mackay’s master blender, Richard Paterson, responsible for the Dalmore single malt, says: “With Dalmore I like to stimulate it for at least three years in a sherry cask, and with wine casks, for four or five years. The minimum for anything would be six months. It all depends on the style of your spirit, the style you want to create, and the cask type.”

Dalmore 1263 King Alexander III is a good example of the elaborate way in which it is possible to work with finishes. Paterson has taken the concept of finishing to a whole new level, going one better than the Lowland malt Auchentoshan, whose Three Wood is initially matured in ex-bourbon barrels, then in former Oloroso casks and finally in Pedro Ximinez sherry casks. King Alexander comprises vattings of Dalmore finished in vintage Oloroso and Madeira butts, vintage Bourbon barrels and Cabernet Sauvignon barriques.

In terms of timing, Tullibardine’s Black notes: “The length of finishing can vary from three months to more than a year, and getting that right is crucial. For example, Sauternes will give rapid colour change but the spirit will not pick up flavours so quickly. The secret is just when you stop.

“We do a rum finish now and you see very subtle colour and flavour changes. Sherry can easily overpower the whisky if you don’t get it just right. These are the hardest to do really well. There is more leeway with some other cask types where the influence of the secondary cask is more subtle.”

Good quality secondary casks are vital to good finishing, and Richard Paterson says that: “It’s important the cask comes from a reliable supplier. If they are wine casks and they have been lying for too long, the wine could almost have turned to vinegar.”

Divided opinion

Unfortunately for the genre, not all producers and bottlers share the same integrity and skill as those mentioned so far. There remains a group of consumers for whom finished whiskies will always be “second class citizens”. This may be



Bill Lumsden (left) is adamant that cask finishes are very high quality whiskies

Below right: Richard Paterson likes to “stimulate” Dalmore for three years in a sherry cask

Below left: James MacTaggart, manager of Arran Distillery where finishing helped introduced new consumers to the brand



based on ingrained traditionalism or on flavour preferences, but it may also be because the finished whiskies they have sampled have actually not been very good.

“I’ve tasted some pretty dreadful examples,” says Glenmorangie’s Lumsden. “The worst offenders tend to be sherry finishes – all you taste is a cheap, bitter sherry. I think there’s stuff out there that shouldn’t have seen the light of day. Most of the bad ones come from independent bottlers. There is much greater financial pressure on them to sell it, no matter what, than there is with distillers themselves.”

However, independent bottlers aren’t all bad – the long-established Gordon & MacPhail of Elgin deserves an honourable mention for its Private Collection range of finished single malts. Meanwhile Edrington has proved that blended whiskies can also benefit from a period of secondary maturation, having produced well received limited editions of The Famous Grouse Scottish Oak and Bourbon finishes.

“People who say cask finishes

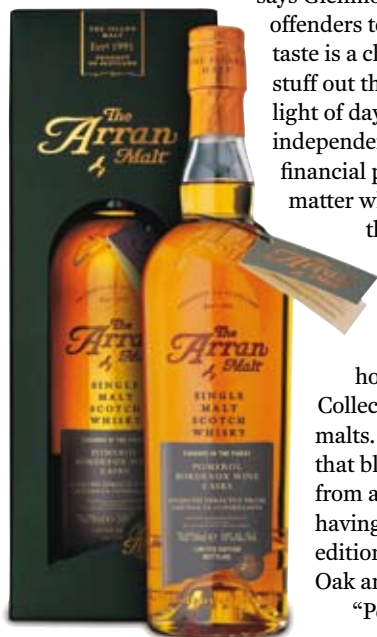
are ‘second class citizens’ are talking complete bollocks,” declares Bill Lumsden. “We are taking very high quality whisky and looking to change the flavour profile slightly. You can’t disguise bad spirit. Good ingredients and materials are essential at every stage.”

The pitfalls of poor finishing, according to Lumsden, include: “Using poor spirit, choosing a cask which does not give a sympathetic match with your house style, or letting the secondary cask dominate.”

Quality will out

Mitchell at Arran points out: “You have to be careful with Bordeaux, heavy red wines and fortified wines, and ultimately a finish will only be as good as the whisky going into the secondary casks. It might mask some faults, but you won’t get a memorable whisky at the end of the day.”

Love them or hate them, cask finishes are undoubtedly here to stay, and Lumsden makes an important point: “Previously, whisky was only racked into different casks if it wasn’t good or if it wasn’t maturing well. Cask finishing has brought a whole new range of flavours to drinkers and, arguably, it has been the only real Scotch whisky innovation in recent years.”



Bobbing along

In times of economic hardship, it's automatically assumed those who normally indulge in Champagne by the case will trade down to sparkling wine for their everyday fizzy tippie. But is this really happening? David Longfield investigates

Despite the global turmoil in financial markets and consequent contraction of formerly booming economies across the world, the suspicion is that top earners continue to enjoy their luxury lifestyles, but are maybe doing so in a less conspicuously extravagant way.

At the same time, it may also be true that sparkling wine consumers form a completely separate sector to those of Champagne, with a relatively small "grey area" of cross-over at the top end of sparkling wine – the likes of Moët's Green Point or Roederer Estate and Schramsberg from California – and the lower end of Champagnes.

In the global context, the sparkling wine market is a little hard to pin down. There are a vast number of producers in the world, and they tend to supply a large domestic market, targeting selected export markets and conducting their own research accordingly – reflecting what is, in truth, a highly fragmented market.

Outside Europe, many of the big names are an extension of a wider brand range: Lindauer (Montana), Stamp of Australia (Hardys), Cuvée Napa (Mumm), Casillero del Diablo (Concha y Toro). Within Europe, regionally designated examples are found largely in France, Spain (cava) and Italy (Prosecco in Veneto, Asti in

Sparkling wine is having little difficulty staying afloat despite the economic market

Far right: Harvest time for Freixenet

Piedmont and Franciacorta in Lombardy being the best-known), and each of these will have its own local representative body. Consequently there is no single generic association for "sparkling wine" in general, and no central resource for historical data.

Even a company as prominent in the sector as Pernod Ricard has only this year set up its Bubbles project, for the first time bringing together the French giant's sparkling wine and Champagne portfolios – including Perrier-Jouët, GH Mumm, Deutz, Montana Lindauer and Jacob's Creek.

Bubbles acts as a vehicle for customer marketing, with the company advising outlets on how best to merchandise its range and the best types of products to stock, according to the demands of the different distribution channels.

"We are doing a lot of work with sparkling generally," says Pernod Ricard wine development director Adrian Atkinson, "looking at the interaction between sparkling and Champagne, to see where we should be targeting our brands and for what occasions.

"It is a work in progress. We need to understand things more closely to know how it is all working, especially in the current conditions."



If Champagne sales suffer drastically, it does not seem that sparkling wine would benefit from any proportionate upside
Xavier Barlier
Roederer Estate

Regional variations

The UK is generally held to be one of the world's most dynamic wine markets and recent figures (Nielsen MAT to 18 April 2009) show non-Champagne sparkling wine value at £399 million in the UK total trade, up 7% from last year, with volume down 1% at 45 million litres. In the same period Champagne was at 20 million litres, down 13%, worth £657 million, down 4%.

This could be interpreted as evidence of an element of trading down, but equally it could simply be down to a seasonal fluctuation –





Stockphoto



although the Champenois would certainly be more concerned by such large downward shifts in what is their biggest volume market outside France.

However, as an illustration of the regional nature of sparkling wine globally, the US market and other export territories are doing so well for Mumm Cuvée Napa that Pernod Ricard has withdrawn the Californian premium label from the UK.

“The sparkling wine business is growing in the US, and Mumm Napa is outperforming the category,” says Lauren Simkin, general manager for wines and Champagnes for Pernod Ricard USA, quoting Nielsen stats for the most recent 52 weeks to May 2, which show the US sparkling category up 2.7% by US\$ value, with Mumm Napa registering +3.3%.

“The brand is also growing in export markets,” she adds. “Canada is our leading market and Mumm Napa sales there also are prospering.”

With about 80% of sales volume and value in the domestic US market, and in keeping with its global regional strategy, Pernod Ricard can afford to be selective about where it puts Mumm Napa. “As we grow the winery towards full capacity, our strategy is to maximise value,” says Simkin. “As

a result, we will focus our efforts towards those markets and customers that help us generate the most value. We are no longer exporting to the UK because that market has not proven to be as profitable as other markets.”

Ups and downs

So is the US seeing a large-scale shift from Champagne to sparkling? “Sparkling wine appeals to a different consumer than Champagne, and we tailor our communications strategies for Mumm Napa accordingly,” says Simkin.

Another premium Californian player, Roederer Estate, takes a similar stance. “In California and in the San Francisco Bay area specifically, the best California sparkling wines are not considered any less than French Champagnes,” says the company’s vice president, marketing & communication, Xavier Barlier. “As a result, if Champagne sales suffer drastically, it does not seem that sparkling wine would benefit from any proportionate upside.”

However, he adds: “The trend in [US] restaurants to offer less expensive menus, from \$50 down to \$35 for example. In that case, the sommeliers do shift from Champagne to sparkling wine and also Prosecco – a growing ▶

Putting in the fizz

Here are the five most commonly used methods of sparkling wine production

● Traditional method

This was formerly known as “*méthode Champenoise*” until the term was banned within the EU in 1985. The base wine is first fermented to about 10% abv, then bottled.

Yeast is added for a second fermentation in the bottle, producing carbon dioxide, which is trapped within the liquid, and eating up the wine’s natural sugars to produce a completely dry wine.

The process is expensive because the yeast residue then has to be removed by inverting the bottles, allowing the sediment to settle, freezing the necks and allowing the pressure in the bottle to force out the ice/yeast.

After this disgorgement, each bottle is topped up with a mixture of reserve wines and sugar syrup, according to the desired level of sweetness.

● Charmat method

This follows the same basic process as the traditional method, but in bulk, with the second fermentation in pressurised stainless steel tanks (“*cuve close*”) followed by refrigeration, filtering and clarification before bottling.

Perfected by the Italian Martinotti and fully industrialised by Eugène Charmat in France, this method is quicker and less expensive.

● Transfer method

This falls between the two above, with the second fermentation in bottles followed by disgorgement into a pressurised tank, where the sediment is filtered out. Pressure is maintained for re-bottling to preserve a good level of sparkle.

● Méthode ancestrale

In this process the wine is partially fermented in tank, then bottled with the remaining yeasts and undigested sugars.

Fermentation is started again until the yeasts have used up most of the residual sugar, but there is no disgorgement, meaning a sediment remains in the bottle.

Still used mostly in French regions such as Limoux, Die, Gaillac and Bugey-Cerdon.

● Injection method

This the cheapest and least effective method, in which carbonic gas is forced into the liquid under pressure, producing fat bubbles which dissipate quickly once a bottle is opened.



Riddling tables in the Freixenet cellars

player in the field – to stay in tune with the price of the menu.” With its Anderson Valley Brut multi-vintage priced at \$18-\$25 retail per 75cl bottle, Roederer Estate is well positioned to capitalise on such moves, allowing the company to keep its parent Champagne brand in the consumer’s mind: “A key strategic asset in these difficult market conditions,” says Barlier.

Freixenet cava is the world’s biggest international branded sparkling wine, according to Euromonitor global brand share rankings for 2007. International marketing director Martina Obregon says the company’s global consumer research shows there is parallel consumption of sparkling wine and Champagne. “It’s an occasion-based decision [but] for some/most consumer groups the Champagne occasion barely ever exists.”

Obregon offers three potential reasons why Freixenet sales are on the rise while Champagne



Gail Gilbert



Perez de Herrasti



Brown Bros pushes Italian style

Reflecting the Italian cultural influences of the region surrounding its headquarters in Milawa, north east Victoria, Australian family producer Brown Brothers has released to international markets a trio of new sparkling wines – Zibibbo, Zibibbo Rosa and Prosecco.

Zibibbo is a Sicilian synonym for the local grape otherwise known as Moscato di Pantelleria, making typically grapey, musky styles of wine. “The success of the Zibibbo range in Australia has been considerable,” says the company’s UK sales & marketing director Gail Gilbert. “Given a sparkling market down by 1.6%, the 29% value growth achieved with Zibibbo is a fantastic result.”

Brown Brothers Zibibbo is Australia’s number 1 sparkling wine in the A\$15-20 segment. Available at £7.99 in the UK, the white version has an abv of 6% and residual sugar of 100g/l, while the pink Zibibbo Rosa has 8% abv and 73g/l residual.

The Prosecco release targets increasing consumer interest in this light, soft, north east Italian sparkling style, and was “extremely well received” at the annual London International Wine Fair in May. “Prosecco is a natural extension of an influence that has led to [Brown Bros] production of Pinot Grigio, Sangiovese and Barbera,” says Gilbert. Off-dry at 14g/l residual, Brown Brothers Prosecco is on sale in the UK priced from £9.99 retail.



sales are in decline. “This can be attributed to various factors: consumers are trading down from Champagne; less out-of-home consumption (restaurants) in favour of in-home consumption where sparkling wine brands, particularly Freixenet, are very strong; and Freixenet brand strength versus the competition. Freixenet has a very strong brand and once trial is achieved our consumers tend to be very loyal.”

Andres Perez de Herrasti, sales director at United Wineries, which markets the Marqués de Monistrol cava brand, is positive. “The cava category has been in growth for a number of years, long before the current economic

downturn, as a result of new consumers coming to the category,” he says.

“Since the recession began we have also seen consumers trading down from Champagne to cava. The result of this is that consumers are beginning to realise that cava is not simply a cheaper version of Champagne but a wine with its own personality and style. A significant number of consumers will be loyal to the category when the recession is over and economic conditions improve.”

UK sales & marketing director for Australian label Brown Brothers, Gail Gilbert, agrees: “The industry figures we saw earlier in the year, MAT ▶

The Green Point vineyards lie on the ancient alluvial soils of the Yarra Valley, Victoria



to December, had shown a drop in volume of Champagne sales and an increase in sparkling wine. Remembering the credit crunch was top of mind during the Christmas period it was probably not surprising that consumers were looking for a less expensive beverage for their celebrations at that time. Since then we have seen significant improvement for Champagne and the sparkling wine category.”

Holding its own

With opinions highly divided over whether the first “green shoots of recovery” are now being seen in the world economy, the sparkling wine category appears at least to be holding its ground.

Freixenet’s Obregon says the brand is up 10% in volume and value growth over the past year, driven by some of its major markets, including Germany, Japan, France, Belgium, as well as the

UK. “We were observing dynamic growth rates in the premium segment of sparkling wine, which boosted value over volume growth (eg US, Japan),” she says.

But sounding a note of caution she says: “This stopped when the economic crisis started to hit. Now the situation has changed and, looking at the main markets around the world, we are observing that volumes are flat with value ▶

Ackerman adds X factor

If you’re looking for a sparkler with a story, consider Ackerman X Noir Brut Rosé, a salmon-pink fizz made from the little-known Chenin Noir grape – reputedly the oldest in the Loire Valley. With a traceable history stretching back at least as far as Henry Plantagenet, and then named Pineau d’Aunis, it was the black-skinned antecedent of modern Loire Valley stalwart Chenin Blanc.

To avoid confusion, current legislation forbids the use of the name Chenin Noir on the label, hence the choice of the secretive-sounding X Noir. It’s no secret in the aisles of the supermarkets of France though, where, as the most recent addition to the Ackerman single varietal sparkling range (also consisting of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc Rosé) it has rapidly grown to volumes of 160,000 bottles since its launch in the spring of 2007.

“This is huge in a short period of time,” says Bernard Jacob, managing director of Loire Valley giant Ackerman-Rémy Pannier. “It has achieved 65% distribution in French supermarkets and research has shown great appeal to under-35-year-old consumers and women.”

At 13g/l residual sugar it is at the upper end of the Brut spectrum, but it has a light, refreshingly cherryish style with a dash of white pepper interest to finish. The black bottle is, the company says, a reference to the fact that the grape variety dates back to “the dark mists of time”, while the fuchsia pink is to symbolise its “wild character”.

Outside France, Ackerman X Noir is also available in Belgium and the Netherlands, while testing is being carried out in Canada and New York.

An international flavour for Elyssia

Bringing familiar international names into the realms of Spanish tradition, Freixenet has launched Elyssia, the latest addition to its cava range.

The first to be released, Elyssia Pinot Noir Brut is a rosé blend of 85% Pinot Noir, grown near the town of Masquefa in the Alt Penedès region, and 15% of the local Trepat variety, resulting in a sparkling wine with raspberry and blackberry character.

Due for release in September, following a lengthier cellaring period in bottle of up to 15 months, Elyssia Gran Cuvée Brut is equally split between traditional and international varietals, with a blend of 40% Chardonnay, 30% Macabeo, 20% Parellada and 10% Pinot Noir.

The stratified, chalky soils of the Freixenet family vineyard La Freixenada, in Sant Quinti de Medlona, are ideal for the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir varietals, the company says, producing a more complex character of honeyed nuts, citrus and melon

According to Freixenet practice, each is produced by the Champagne method using double fermentation in the bottle.



Tide rises for Creek

Pernod Ricard's Orlando Wines has launched Jacob's Creek Blanc de Blancs, bringing its sparkling range to five. Priced £9.99 in the UK, the 100% Chardonnay is sourced from around Australia, and joins the existing Chardonnay/Pinot Noir, Rosé, Reserve and Sparkling Shiraz extensions.

First shipments are now arriving in the UK and the brand's revised packaging is, says wine development director Adrian Atkinson, the beginning of a new push. "Jacob's Creek has overtaken Veuve Clicquot [in the UK] in value," he says. "There is strength in Jacob's Creek – it's not just a value brand."

Jacob's Creek sparkling volumes total about 1.5 million cases globally, of which more than 750,000 cases are sold in Australia.

The UK takes about 350,000 cases while the brand is the top sparkling choice in Singapore, and other markets include New Zealand, US, Ireland and Scandinavia.



Henkell refreshes Deinhard

Germany's Henkell & Co has relaunched its entire Deinhard collection, including flagship sparkling wine Deinhard Lila. "Classical elegance and clear lines characterise the new design," the company says, adding: "The dynamic strength of the brand will be accentuated by the more pronounced appearance of the golden Deinhard lion."

The characteristic lilac-coloured diagonal sash on the Lila label forms the basis of the new design for the rest of the Deinhard sparkling range, setting the tone for a "fresh, uplifting and very summery look".

Deinhard Lila Dry Riesling won a gold medal at the 2008 Los Angeles International Wine & Spirit Competition, along with a Best Sparkling Wine award at the International Value Wine Awards in Canada.



slightly down. In the UK, shopper numbers, frequency and volume are down across the Champagne and sparkling wine sectors. Forecast for the year is that the sparkling wine market will remain flat or may actually dip to a small decline."

But Perez de Herrasti remains optimistic: "I would say consumers are buying more as a result of the trading down effect," he says. "Marqués de Monistrol has grown double digits in the past three years. Last year it was the fastest growing sparkling brand in the UK (+26%), worth £18m to the category. Other markets like Belgium, Japan and Norway are growing double-digits as well. On the whole, 2009/10 looks pretty good so far.

At Brown Brothers, Gilbert puts it simply: "My guess is as long as we have the credit crunch to deal with consumers will inevitably trade across, up or down the categories looking for value for money in whatever they choose to drink."

"Our strategy is to try to satisfy our consumers with a variety of styles, from fresh crisp Prosecco to the very sophisticated Patricia Vintage Brut, and to introduce innovative fruitier styles that capture the interest of new-to-wine drinkers and those who prefer the fruitier flavours. We believe our results champion a consumer demand for good wines in fruity styles that complement other categories rather than conflict with them."

Waiting game

For those in the fortunate position of being able to play on both sides, it may just be a question of waiting for the tide to turn. "Loyal followers of Champagne Louis Roederer Brut Premier do not shift to sparkling wine for their own consumption; they drink less and/or less often, but they stick to what they love," says Roederer Estate's Barlier. "When money is no object, like for VIP business entertainment, special personal occasions or five-star hotels and resorts, shifting is non-existent. It just happens that occasions are less frequent nowadays. It will certainly come back. We don't know when as of yet."

SPARKLERS BY NUMBERS

Sparkling wine, global market sizes (total volume, million litres)

	2008	2003-08 %	2008-13 %
Champagne (world)	236.4	11.4	10.7
Other sparkling wine*			
Germany	303.9	0.4	-0.3
France	151.4	11.8	8.2
USA	111.3	14.5	4.5
Australia	49.8	32.1	22.2
World	1523.2	19.4	15.8
Overall total (world)	1759.6	18.3	15.1

Source: Passport by Euromonitor International

*All types, including semi-sparkling

Wine – tasting

Bordeaux 2008 en primeur

An early view in March of the 2008 vintage from the Right Bank of Bordeaux revealed a selection of forward, berry fruit-focused wines.

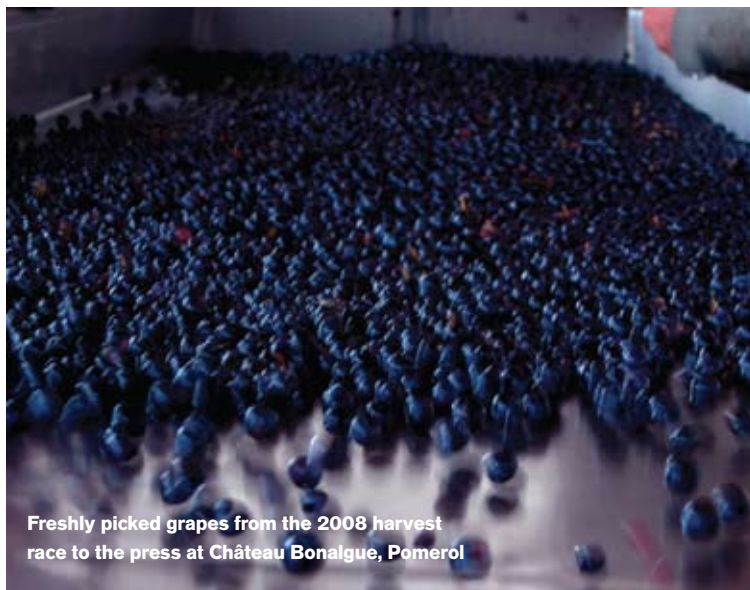
A difficult spring flowering stage featuring frost and mildew resulted in a small harvest of between 5.2m and 5.5m hl. The summer growing season produced greatly varying conditions, changing from heavy rainstorms or cool periods to hours of hot sunshine. But a long, late summer and autumn provided for good, slow maturation on the vine, running unusually late into October in some cases. Those vineyards which survived the

earlier conditions in relatively good health ended up producing very good red grapes.

At the time of the Cercle Rive Droite en primeur tasting, the wines were, of course, still incomplete, with anything between nine months and a year or more of barrel ageing still left to complete.

As with all barrel samples, this makes definitive conclusions very difficult (witness the controversy over some of Robert Parker's early pronouncements), but an overall impression can be gained of balance, ripeness and general quality.

Report: David Longfield



Freshly picked grapes from the 2008 harvest race to the press at Château Bonalgue, Pomerol

Wine highlights

Fronsac

The rich, berry fruit style stood out notably in a selection of wines from Fronsac, although these did illustrate the variation in styles likely to be found.

Château de la Dauphine (80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc) showed intense, juicy blackcurrant with a mocha/hazelnut complexity, while the **Haut Carles**, from Constance and Stéphane Droulers (95 Me, 4 CF, 1 Malbec) also had a touch of coffee bean on the finish following a bright, lifted black fruit-gum palate.

The **Château Moulin Haut-Laroque** (65 Me, 20 CF, 10 Cabernet Sauvignon, 5 Ma) was dense, with fuchsia and smoky plum/blackcurrant notes. And **Château Les Trois Croix** (90 Me, 10 CF) had an appealingly scented, berry-rich nose, with an inviting creaminess and good tannin balance on the palate.

Web:
chateau-dauphine.com
haut-carles.com
moulinhautlaroque.com
chatealestroisicroix.com

Saint-Emilion

In the headline regions, **Château La Commanderie St-Emilion Grand Cru** (85 Me, 15 CF) showed elegant development on the palate, with floral notes, blueberry/blackberry fruit, classic cedar and gentle tannin.

Some others on show from the same appellation were tight and raw, but **Château de Pressac** (70 Me, 20 CS/CF plus Carménère and Malbec) was deeply

coloured and full of black fruit aromas with hints of almond.

It was very immature, but had great length and uniformity of fruit weight.

On the other hand, **Château Ripeau** (80 Me, 20 CF), was the most approachable St-Emilion on display, with pure blackcurrant, cherry and fragrant cedar aromas, followed by a generous, open and creamy palate.

Web:
closdesjaconis.com (for La Commanderie)
chateau-de-pressac.com
chateauripeau.com

Pomerol

Topping the bill, though, were the classy Pomerols. The **Clos du Clocher** (75 Me, 25 CF) in particular promised longevity, with a full, creamy berry compote aroma followed by a herbal, cedar/sandalwood complexity with baked berries, fine-grained tannins and a mocha finish.

Château la Commanderie de Mazeyres (55 Me, 45 CF) was more savoury and toasty, with baked plum and blackberry fruit, elegantly combined but firm and persistent.



A delicious classic was found in **Domaine de l'Eglise** (96M, 4CF), with its leafy-fresh, floral, spicy cassis nose and creamy-ripe, pure fruit style with soft, easy tannin support.

But standing out as the top wine of the evening was **Clos l'Eglise Pomerol** (80M, 20CF), from Vignobles Garcin, with its deep, intense, plummy cassis nose mirrored by an equally deep, dense, full, unctuously creamy palate. Juicy, sweet blackcurrant and blackberry intensity was rounded off with a peppery flourish to finish, in a beautifully rounded package.

Web:
vignoblesbourotte.fr (for Clos du Clocher)
vignobles.fayat.com (for Commanderie de Mazeyres)
domains@borie-manoux.fr (for Domaine de l'Eglise)
vignoblesgarcin.com

The Cercle Rive Droite represents 135 properties from around the Bordeaux Right Bank regions, with the majority from Saint-Emilion, Pomerol, Fronsac and Lalande de Pomerol.

In his assessment of the 2008 vintage, Bordeaux oenologist and Merlot specialist Michel Rolland says: "Up until now, few estates had devoted so much thought and effort to their wine production.

"The result is clear, with well structured, concentrated wines, all the essential elements for a very good vintage... surprising in fact!"

Mosel madness A bridge too far

There is uproar in Germany over the construction of a 1.7km, four-lane motorway bridge across the river Mosel. The huge, 160m high bridge, supported by 16m wide concrete pillars, will emerge from a tunnel and cross the river between the major wine towns of Bernkastel-Kues and Traben-Trarbach.

With the new B50neu link road running along the top of the Mosel's right bank, it is feared that the finely balanced eco-systems of some of the world's finest Riesling vineyards in Ürzig, Zeltingen, Wehlen, Graach and Bernkastel, will be destroyed, increasing pollution (not least during the planned seven-year construction period), disrupting water supplies, altering wind patterns and throwing shade on to some of the best Grand Cru and First Growth Riesling vineyards.

The building project is the result of spending commitments made by local politician Kurt Beck, minister

president of the Rheinland-Pfalz region, on his rise to power more than a decade ago, and is the legacy of plans set in the 1960s to link the then US air bases at Bitburg and Hahn in the event of nuclear war.

In these post-Cold War times, the new rationale is to turn what is now Frankfurt-Hahn airport into a cargo hub, with a speedy link to the Netherlands.

In an interview on SWR television, one of Germany's most prominent winemakers, Dr Ernst Loosen, from Bernkastel-Kues, said: "You can see the forest on top of the hills here and those forests act as a water reservoir for these vineyards, and when this small ridge is sealed off by building a motorway on it, it can't retain the water and will be detrimental to the water balance of these vineyards, and they are the best vineyards of the middle Mosel."

And local campaigner Sarah Washington, based in Ürzig,

The new Mosel bridge is proposed to cross the valley between Rachtig and Ürzig



addressed an open letter to German chancellor Angela Merkel in April, saying: "The disturbance of this most particular Riesling habitat is an issue of international importance. I hope you will visit the bridge site at your earliest convenience to satisfy yourself that this is a sane project which leaves a sensible and desirable legacy for

future generations – as opposed to a foolhardy and scandalous disruption of an ancient craft in its natural environment."

Check the campaign website, b50neu.de, for full details, pictures, maps and links to other supporters.

Construction has already begun, but the hope is that it's not too late to stop it.

Brown is best

Reims-based Champagne producer Louis Roederer is switching from green glass to brown for its non-vintage and vintage cuvées.

Roederer is already bottling its 37.5cl sizes in the new colour glass and the 75cl size will begin rolling out in 2010.

"Green glass filters out 92% of ultraviolet light," says chef de cave Jean-Baptiste Lecaillon, "but brown glass gives better protection at 96%-98%."

Roederer's top-end deluxe cuvée Cristal will continue to be bottled in clear glass, with its signature yellow cellophane wrapper already achieving the higher level of 98% protection.

Costing a little more than green glass due to the smaller quantities produced, the move to brown glass is a question of house preference, adds Lecaillon. "Normally 92% protection is enough. This is all part of our search for perfection."

Top Penfolds wines are released

Foster's Group has released this year's batch of Penfolds Luxury & Icon wines, including the much-anticipated Grange 2004.

The Luxury & Icon range is designed to benefit from further maturation in bottle, and the earliest drinking window for any of them is given as 2012. For the Grange 2004, the company recommends anything from 2016 to 2050.

Penfolds chief winemaker Peter Gago says: "The wait for this Grange release has been much anticipated for good reason, and it is arguably the finest vintage since the stellar '90, '96 and '98 vintages. 2004 was outstanding in Magill, the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale, where the grapes for Penfolds Grange are grown."

The full 2009 Luxury & Icon range is: Grange 2004 (UK rrp £170); Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (£60); RWT Barossa Valley Shiraz 2006 (£50); Yattarna



Chardonnay 2006 (£40); Magill Estate Shiraz 2006 (£40); St Henri Shiraz 2005 RRP (£30); Reserve Bin A Chardonnay 2007 (£28).

Slimline KWV ups wine focus

As part of an ongoing restructuring programme, South African wine institution KWV is to sell its stake in rival liquor group Distell.

"We are unbundling the company now, to unlock value for KWV shareholders and to bolster our balance sheet in the new KWV," the company's chief executive, Thys Loubser, told Drinks International.

Loubser has made many changes in the two years since his appointment, bringing in a flatter management structure and new winemaking and marketing teams.

This divestment allows the company to "recapitalise seriously".

"We are tired of people saying we only make money because of Distell," added Loubser.

"This will help us to focus on KWV-related issues so that we can grow the business much quicker."

Bar zone

Bitter with a twist

To London cookery school Cucina Caldesi for an aperitivo masterclass with Salvatore Calabrese.

The master mixologist and proprietor of Salvatore at Fifty has teamed up with Campari for the Italian company's Aperitivo Moment campaign.

Gruppo Campari claims that the aperitif concept is enjoying an international revival, and that Campari's relatively low alcohol content (25% abv) and traditional bitter-sweet formula position it ideally to exploit a trend for consumers looking for brands with a trusted heritage.

Calabrese is reputedly "king of the Negroni" – the enduring Campari cocktail favourite – and he won the Campari Bartender of the Year prize in 1993 with his original Campari Nobile recipe (see right).

"Bitters stimulate your digestion – not just after dinner, but before," he says, recommending Campari and soda after a big lunch.

Campari is a grown-up drink, made to a secret recipe consisting of at least 68

botanical ingredients. Tasted neat, it opens up sweet with orange and cherry, picks up very strong herbs, menthol and spice in the mid-palate and finishes with tree bark bitterness, pithy grapefruit and liquorice: a challenging combination.

Each of the recipes featured in Calabrese's masterclass took aspects of Campari's complex character and "went with it", rather than trying to achieve any kind of clever contrast.

Orange peel twists, raspberry purée, a drop of Angostura Orange

Bitters, fresh mint or framboise all played on elements of the Campari style.

So the art of mixing the perfect Campari aperitivo, says Calabrese, is in achieving a balance of sweet and dry, lightness and freshness.

With eight willing "students", the session proved that each mixer makes his or her own style – and also that 40 years of experience in cocktails makes a huge difference.



Salvatore's Campari Nobile

25ml Skyvodka
25ml Campari
15ml Limoncello
25ml fresh orange juice
15ml raspberry purée
Bitter lemon

Stir all ingredients except bitter lemon in a Boston shaker. Add ice and shake. Strain into a highball glass with ice, leaving room to top up with bitter lemon (about 20% of the final mix) and finish with an orange peel twist. Garnish with mint sprig between two raspberries on a spear.

Italian Spritzer

125ml dry white wine
25ml Campari
Dash fresh lemon juice
Soda water

Pour white wine into a large glass with plenty of ice. Add Campari and lemon juice. Stir. Top with soda, stir. Twist orange peel on top and discard. Garnish with three fresh raspberries.

Green Goddess wins for Garcia



Akvinta Vodka has announced the winner of the UK Bartenders' Guild Grand Prix cocktail competition – Orlando Garcia (above) from the Royal Crescent Hotel, Bath.

His winning cocktail was the Akvinta Green Goddess.

Some 40 UK competitors entered their martini-style cocktails using Akvinta Vodka as the key ingredient, in the hope of winning a trip for two to Croatia, home of Akvinta.

Akvinta Green Goddess

60ml Akvinta,
10 ml Poire William
15ml lemongrass & ginger cordial
2 white grapes

Muddle the grapes and cordial together, then shake with the Akvinta and Poire William. Garnish with an orange twist and physalis.

Hunting for Holly

French black raspberry liqueur Chambord has created a competition to find the official cocktail of London's new West End show, Breakfast at Tiffany's.

The Hunt For Holly (Golightly) – to be played in the stage show by UK actor Anna Friel – will be open to professional bartenders from around the UK.

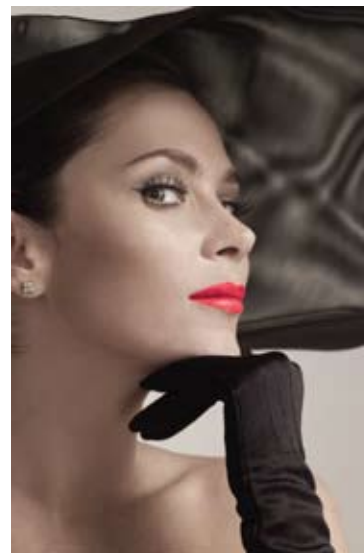
There will be an entry round and a semi-final featuring the 12 entries. Eight finalists will participate in the grand final on September 15 at La Vie en Chambord.

The event will be held at The Valmont Club in Chelsea, London.

Judges include Alex Turner, of Bacardi Brown-Forman, a representative from the UK Bartenders' Guild and Colin Ingram, who is producing the show.

Winners will enjoy having their cocktail served to thousands of theatre-goers.

They will also receive tickets to the Breakfast at Tiffany's show, a



weekend stay in a London hotel and a pre-theatre supper at Inamo restaurant in Soho.

For more details or to download an entry form, go to thehuntforholly.com or email thehuntforholly@intelligent-pr.com



Competition shows class in a glass

Illumination

50ml Claro
12.5ml Rhum Orange
12.5 Francoli pinot nero
grappa
2 dashes grapefruit
bitters

Add all ingredients to an ice-filled mixing glass. Stir briskly for 30 seconds. Fine-strain into a frozen 5.5oz martini glass.



The winner of the 16th annual Drinks International Cocktail Challenge is Illumination, which was mixed by Jim Wrigley and scooped the best white spirits aperitif and overall Cocktail Challenge champion drink.

The cocktail, containing Santa Teresa Claro rum, was chosen from 20 finalists at this year's Distil exhibition.

The live final was judged by key industry figures from ipbartenders, The Training School, consultancy

the Gorgeous Group and spirits experts.

Results

Best in category, liqueurs:

Noilly Prat – Noilly Cassis, mixed by Ludovic Miazga

Best in category, brown spirits:

anCnoc – Blackhill Breakfast, created and mixed by Scott Gemmell

Commended in the brown spirits category was **Auchentoshan**

– Floc d'Ecosse. presented by Nick Ravenhall.

There were also several commendations in the white spirits category:

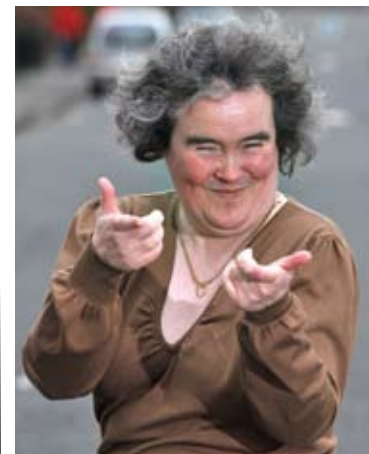
Wyborowa – Polish Fling, mixed by Matt Pomeroy;

Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion – Finlandia Grapefruit Passion by Pekka Pellinen;

Hendrick's – Aperitivo Singolare mixed by Esther Medina;

Wyborowa – Thyme Vesper by Matt Pomeroy; and

Tanqueray – Basilicum, mixed by Angus Winchester



Deadline

A touch of 'tache

It turns out Britain's not the only country that's Got Talent. A New Zealand bartender has created a cocktail to pay tribute to the reality show singing sensation Susan Boyle.

The Scot shot to fame on Britain's Got Talent as much for her unusual appearance as for her beautiful voice – now Kiwi Luke Dallow, owner of the Sale St bar in Auckland, has designed his drink to be “a bit cheeky, just like she is”.

The Susan Boyle contains vodka, wild strawberry and sour rhubarb liqueurs, blossom water, cranberry juice and mixed berries, topped with a creamy Frangelico layer and sprinkled with chocolate shavings. “When you take a sip, it'll leave a little moustache,” said Dallow.

Britner's Beers

DI's Lucy Britner shares her passion for a pint

June sees the launch of the biggest packaged beer competition in the world. The International Beer Challenge is, for the first time, safely under the wing of an international magazine – this one.

The essence of the competition will remain, with leading beer writer Jeff Evans in the driving seat.

And 2009 marks the seventh year Jeff has chaired the judging panel. This year he will be joined by brewers, beer writers, buyers and experts – not only from the UK, but from all over the world.

It's Drinks International's plan to ensure global beers are swished around global palates. Jeff has also finished penning his next book, *The Good Bottled Beer Guide* – volume seven.

Uniquely, the International Beer Challenge awards have always had a packaging element. It's important to recognise a consumer is drawn by

the appearance as well as the taste of a product.

Historically, this packaging element has been judged as part of the overall score of the beer.

But we thought about it and decided that it's fairly difficult to judge a small, Belgian trippel alongside the marketing might of something like, say, Budweiser.

So this year we've separated out the packaging element and tweaked it to include a few more specific headings – such as “information” and “relaunch”, for example.

The awards system will also be slightly different and more in line with the International Spirits Challenge's trophy, gold, silver and bronze arrangement. That way, you get a medal to show off to consumers.



As well as sticking close to Jeff, we've enlisted the coordinating skills of the Beer Exposed exhibition's mastermind, Des Mulcahy. Australian

Des's beer exhibition

attracted brewers from around

the world. His connections Down Under are likely to come in handy here, too...

The judging will take place in September and the expert panel will take two days to select medallists and an overall International Beer Challenge champion.

More information and International Beer Challenge entry forms will be available from June 10. Email des@coppertun.com

Departure zone

Akvinta parties on down with the ladies in Cannes

Akvinta, the super premium organic vodka from Croatia, made the most of the Cannes Film Festival by supporting some of the top parties throughout the festival.

And, while there are a plenty of people who might like to get their arms around international 'IT' girl Paris Hilton, being the owner of a vodka appears to be one way of doing it.

Akvinta's Russian boss, Dimitry Zhelezynak, is pictured flanked by the most famous daughter of the global hotel dynasty and a certain Christina Bucic – his girlfriend apparently... She's certainly tall.

The picture of a bottle of iced Akvinta next to Quentin Tarantino's name tag may be wishful thinking, but the vodka sponsored his new film, *Inglorious Basterds*, starring the glorious Brad Pitt, so maybe one or both of these megastars downed some Akvinta (which, by the way, is said to be made from hand-selected Italian wheat and Dalmatian spring water).

Only slightly overshadowed was the 16th international Oenovideo film festival – the 12 best films on grape and wine – which was held last



month in Nuits-Saint-Georges in the heart of Burgundy. Paris Hilton is not believed to have made that one. The Burgundians chased Robert Parker

out of the region so heaven knows what they would make of Paris. With her track record she'd probably need sanctuary in the famous hospice.

RENDEZVOUS WEIN & MUSIK



Music to drink wine by

The Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB) has helped produce a double CD of music to go with wine.

The director of the Concerto Classic Wein orchestra and AWMB manager Willi Klinger got together with some other musicians to identify pieces of music that fit Austrian wines.

The orchestra then performed the pieces especially to create the CDs, which cost €29.90.

Finch' han dal vino, or the Champagne Aria, from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is here, along with pieces from the likes of Beethoven, Bach, Bizet, Mendelssohn and Schubert – not forgetting Austria's very own Josef Strauss.

For anyone who fancies having a few tunes to sip or quaff their favourite tippable by, the address for ordering the CDs, is Concerto Classic Wien, Postfach 6P, 1094 Wien, Austria.

Or go to the website, bestellung@ccw.co.at

BOOK SHELF



● Hundred best Australian wines

Australia has not been having the best of it, what with forest fires and then floods. UK wine commentator Matthew Jukes, along with Quentin Johnson, gives the Aussie wine industry a much-needed fillip with the latest version of 100 Best Australian wines. Wines under £10 make up 28 of them and 86 are priced below £25.

Available: matthewjukes.com



Things to do airside



Fun with rum

● Flor de Caña, the "slow-aged" Nicaraguan rum has flordecana.com, through which interested parties can access a vast library featuring signature cocktails from top bartenders.

Exploring whisky

● William Grant & sons has created a website for "whisky explorers", which it says will help consumers find out all they've always wanted to know about single malt whisky – glenfiddich.co.uk/explorers

Trentino on the map

● Gruppo La-Vis, the large co-operative of wine producers in the northern Italian region of Trentino, wants to "put Trentino on the map". It has three wineries in the region – putting-trentino-onthemap.com

Night fever

● Nightscope.com claims to be the only global entertainment search engine allowing venues to upload event details and viewers to find out information any time, any where for free.