

CONTACT: Michael Wehman
312-988-2344
mwehman@webershandwick.com

NATIONAL SURVEY SHOWS NEW GENERATION TURNING TO WINE IN RECORD NUMBERS

Twenty-Somethings Embracing Wine Before Their Time

CHICAGO – It's the ancient Chinese who are credited as being the first to create fermented, wine-like beverages, but it's a group of twenty-something Americans who are making history these days. A recent national survey of wine drinkers conducted by Wine Market Council shows that Millennials – the classification of young adults who turned 21 in the new millennium – are blazing trails and rooting themselves firmly in the terroir of the wine world.

“We're in the midst of a very exciting time in the wine industry. Never before have we seen younger generations so eagerly embrace wine in the way they are today. We're delighted to be witnessing such widespread acceptance of wine as a rewarding part of American culture by an age group much before history says is their time,” explains John Gillespie, President of Wine Market Council.

The survey shows that nearly 40 percent of Millennial wine drinkers are already core wine consumers, meaning they enjoy wine at least once a week. Traditionally, wine drinkers introduce wine into their lives in a more gradual way, perhaps enjoying a glass of wine once a month or when celebrating special occasions. “What's unique about Millennials is how quickly they are discovering and embracing wine as core consumers, rather than slowly incorporating wine into their lives as we've seen previous generations do,” says Gillespie.

-more-

Different Paths to Discovery

Historically, wine drinkers most often begin their relationship with wine by discovering white wines, which typically have more delicate flavors, and then progressing to the fuller, more robust red wine varieties. But new data shows that Millennials are also setting a new course when it comes to the *types* of wine they enjoy, with 46 percent of Millennials reporting that they regularly choose red wine versus those who choose white (34 percent) or blush (19 percent) wines.

The wine industry is excited by this changing tide and quick to respond to the demands of this younger, less conventional segment steering the marketplace in new directions. Millennials are attributed as a driving force behind the recent shift in labeling and packaging trends, including eye-catching, off-beat and colorful labels. “Millennials frequently cite attractiveness and label/bottle design as a key factor in selecting wines at retail,” says Gillespie. “They appreciate wines with a sense of playfulness as something appropriate for casual relaxation.”

And though packaging aesthetics may be important to Millennials, their interest in wine isn’t merely superficial. This group of young adults is curious about wine, but like many other areas of their life, they don’t feel confined by rules.

“Millennials, perhaps more than any other generation in recent history, thrive on blazing their own trail. They want to learn about wine in exciting and experiential ways, while at the same time feeling like they’ve made a spectacular discovery all on their own,” says *Wine and Spirits* contributing writer and wine educator Jordan Mackay. And since Millennials have grown up with the Internet, it’s no surprise that they are the generation most likely to visit wine-related web sites granting themselves carte blanche to the endless wealth of wine discoveries that can be unearthed online.

-more-

Changing Gender Stereotypes

Research also indicates that wine is a more gender neutral beverage for Millennials than for older generations. “Traditionally women have made up a higher percentage of the general wine drinking population. The Millennial wine drinking population is much more evenly split between men and women,” explains Gillespie. Experiencing wine has also become a very social activity for men and women. “For example, we’re seeing a dramatic rise in the number of

wine tastings offered that target younger wine drinkers. The informal and relaxed atmosphere of these tastings allow for groups of friends to learn about new wines and try them in a social setting,” adds Mackay.

Many wine industry insiders agree we’ve only seen a preview of the changes afoot. Current Millennial consumption trends coupled with older American generations’ growing preference for wine over beer, as demonstrated in a recent Gallup poll, sets the stage for great change in the wine world. If consumption continues to increase at current rates, the United States could someday be the world’s largest wine consumer, surpassing traditional European powerhouses such as France, Spain and Italy.

Internet survey of over 1,398 wine drinkers was conducted in July 2005 for Wine Market Council by Merrill Research, an independent research firm.

For more information on Wine Market Council research, check out winemarketcouncil.com.

###

Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry. For more information, visit winemarketcouncil.com or wineanswers.com.