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WINE POSTS UNPRECEDENTED GAINS WITH HISPANIC CONSUMERS

More Hispanics Discovering Wine Than Any Other Ethnic Group

ST. HELENA, Calif. (April 10, 2006) – As the Hispanic community evolves in its tastes and preferences, they are also emerging as a leading wine consumer group. In fact, wine consumption among Hispanics is increasing more than any other ethnic group. According to a survey conducted by Wine Market Council, 31 percent of Hispanic wine drinkers are consuming more wine now than they were during the last few years, while only 11 percent of Caucasians say the same.

To address this growing Latin American influence, the Wine Market Council is responding by shifting communication to reach this important and influential group. “We are in the midst of a very exciting time in the wine industry. We are delighted to be witnessing the widespread acceptance of wine among Hispanics who are integrating it into their family and food-oriented culture,” said John Gillespie, President of the Wine Market Council.

While many Caucasians enjoy wine for casual, everyday occasions, fewer Hispanics do the same, seemingly held back by outdated wine myths. Research shows Hispanics are 50 percent more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to enjoy wine only for a special occasion or celebration. Special occasion or not, food and wine is always a winning combination for Richard Sandoval, award-winning chef and owner of the leading international group Modern Mexican Restaurants. He believes that, “When properly paired with the varied Latin food spices and flavors, wine is a meal’s best friend. It should complement – not complicate – the flavors of the food.” As he has integrated Latin American tradition into his own version of “Modern Mexican,” Sandoval has made wine an integral part of the total dining experience in his restaurants by going beyond the traditional margarita to enhance and balance those intense tastes.

South of the Border Blends

Hispanics display a strong sense of cultural pride when selecting and purchasing wine. Among Hispanic consumers, a greater proportion of wine consumption is in imported wines, compared to other ethnic groups. Fully one third (33 percent) of wine consumed by Hispanics is

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imported wine, compared to 22 percent among Caucasians and 30 percent among other ethnic groups. As a source for imported wines consumed by Hispanics, wines from Chile and Argentina are favored by a wide margin.

The most popular Chilean red wines are Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc represent the country's most acclaimed white wines.

Argentina, sharing a similar climate with Chile, produces many of the same wine varieties. Malbec is the star of Argentina's red wine scene. Additionally, the country's Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot varieties are equally deserving of celebration.

In addition to these notable Latin American wine producers, several other countries are gaining notoriety, such as Mexico. Cool ocean breezes found in the Valle de Guadalupe coupled with the small amounts of winter rain make it the primary grape growing region in Mexico. The area produces primarily Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Speaking the Same Language

So far, a handful of historically English-language based wineries are responding to the changing tide by creating wine labels in both Spanish and English. Additionally, some wineries are offering Spanish language winery tours. A few wineries are even taking it to the next level by hiring ethnic marketing managers to plan the most relevant and appropriate tactics to reach this growing consumer segment.

Hispanics are making an impact on the wine industry more than any other ethnic group "Current Hispanic consumption trends and increasing attention to this market by leading wineries around the world can together make for rapid and lasting growth of wine as a truly enjoyable part of the everyday lives of millions of adult Hispanic American consumers," concludes Gillespie. Many wine industry insiders agree that we've only seen a preview of the changes on the developing on the increasingly global landscape.

For more information on Wine Market Council, their research and additional wine tips, check out winemarketcouncil.com and wineanswers.com.

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

Modern Mexican Restaurants is a leading international restaurant group with outlets in New York City, San Francisco, Washington DC, Denver, Las Vegas, Mexico City and Dubai. Owned by legendary Chef Richard Sandoval, the group includes Maya in New York City and in San Francisco; Pampano in New York City; Zengo in Washington DC and in Denver; Tamayo in Denver; Isla in Las Vegas; and soon to open Maya in Dubai and Hip Kitchen in Mexico City. For more information on Modern Mexican, visit www.modernmexican.com