



WINE MARKET REPORT

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Surge in Core Wine Consumers

WMC Poll: Some Young Adults Adopting Fast

The number of U.S. core wine consumers, those who drink at least once a week, surged in a surprise finding in the **Wine Market Council's** biennial poll of 1,000 consumers. The increase appeared in large part due to the equally surprising fast adoption of regular wine drinking by some young adults.

Full results of the survey, conducted by the national polling firm of **Merrill Research and Associates**, will be released next week, but a glimpse of the findings provided to several industry groups over the past several weeks revealed a "significant uptick" in core wine drinkers, a group that had declined in total numbers when the poll was last taken in 2000, according to John Gillespie, president of the wine trade group. The Wine Market Council also will release details of its new promotional campaign next week which, in part, will stress the "authenticity" and historical roots of wine.

Gillespie said it appears the most likely explanation for the surprising expansion of core wine consumers, who overall constitute just 10 percent of the adult population but historically drink nearly 90 percent of the wine, is that a significant number of young adults quickly moved from being extremely occasional wine drinkers into core status.

"It looks like there was some penchant there for wine drinking, some positive aspect [in their cultural mindset], and that all of a sudden it just kicks in and they go from almost zero wine drinking to being a core wine drinker, and almost entirely of red wine, and without becoming a marginal consumer at all," said Gillespie. "It used to be that we all thought that wine drinkers started out gradually or that they started with White Zinfandel and gradually progressed, but that dynamic may have changed with these young adults."

The latest survey will look at differences in wine drinking and wine attitudes between generations as well as examine the Hispanic population. Additionally, some questions were added on pricing trends, the acceptance of alternative closures and "Two Buck Chuck" wines. *WMR*

Screwcaps and 'Openers' For Holiday Season

Some key leading wine brands will be bottled with alternative closures and "openers" this holiday season, including the first screwcapped Napa brand by one of the major producers.

Beringer Blass Wine Estates will launch a new brand bottled in a screwcap in late August in 20 initial markets, with national roll-out expected by the end of the year. The brand, Two Tone Farm, will have an initial run of 25,000 cases and marks the first time one of Napa's largest producers has dedicated an entire brand to screwcaps.

The winery decided to make the move after watching the successful consumer acceptance of two of its imported Australian wines—Riesling for Wolf Blass and Riesling for Annie's Lane.

"We think fine wines are just fine in screwcaps and we see this as a big trend coming in the wine business and we hope to be on the crest of that wave of change," said Moira Cronin, spokeswoman for Beringer.

The brand will sell at \$12 per bottle and feature the Merlot and Chardonnay varietals.

Gardner Technologies also announced it was making its new "opener" available to wineries worldwide in September after the Napa company spent months of showing it to prospective winery clients. The Metacork has: 1) a hard plastic casing that serves as a capsule; 2) a top that twists off, revealing a cork inside; 3) creating a drip-resistant pouring feature; 4) that can be removed so the bottle can then be sealed with a plastic twist-top similar to a bottle cap. A limited amount of Fetzer's 2001 Barrel Select Sonoma County Merlot and Clos du Bois' 2002 Sonoma County Chardonnay will use the Metacork and Amusant Wines' Napa Valley Cabernet, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc will all use the Metacork. *WMR*