



In France, the art of living and wine continue to have an intergenerational link

Paris welcomed more than 36,000 smiling visitors from well over 100 countries in February, all of them with something in common: an interest in – or love for – wine.

Concerted efforts have been made over the years to diversify wine packaging away from traditional glass bottles towards PET, from natural corks to synthetic polymer stoppers and plastics (or metal) screw caps, and to new forms of bag-in-box. But what makes different generations of people pop open a wine bottle? A study carried out by the IWSR and Wine Intelligence on behalf of Wine Paris & Vinexpo Paris 2023 attempted to find out.

Reading between the wines (sic), France's baby boomers (aged 55 and above) represent almost half of wine consumers across the country and are oriented towards routine purchases several times a week. The 'pour' decisions of Gen Z and millennials (ages 18-39) are more focused on social situations, and they are also more open to the notion of discovery, be it new flavours, wine pairings or packaging concepts. Half of those aged between 25 and 39 say they buy their wine online.

In France, the art of living and wine continue to have an intergenerational link, with transmission and discovery the watchwords. UK consumers were found to exhibit similar traits across the age groups, with younger wine drinkers shown to like to wine down (sic) with a wide variety of other alcoholic beverages, particularly spirits, cider and cocktails. The alcohol repertoire for older generations tends to be shorter, with boomers listing beer/craft beer and gin as other options.

Partners *in wine*

Dominique Huret mulls over the latest wine packaging innovation and trends on display in Paris

Across the five halls at Vinexpo Paris, there was a considerable amount of creativity, both in terms of the packaging and the wines themselves. And younger people are seemingly more open to the idea of new packaging concepts.

UK-based Frugalpac, which has been providing bottles for Cantina Goccia in Italy, was in the French capital to promote its first customer project in the country. It comes on the back of Somewhere In Provence, the Var-based wholesaler and importer, investing in a filling line with a filling capacity of more than one million bottles per year. Since January, the company has been offering a Frugal Bottle filling service under the brand name La Bouteille qui Cartonne.

As the name implies, although not quite a 'carton bottle', Frugalpac's Frugal Bottle is made of two half-shells of recycled cardboard weighing 79g, encasing a 5g PP pouch coated with a thin layer of aluminium to prevent water ingress. The 84g bottle – said

to be five times lighter than a glass one with a carbon footprint six times smaller – is closed with a Stelvin screw cap and has the same dimensions as a classic 750ml Bordeaux.

The shelf-life of the wine is 12 months for whites and rosés, and 18 months for reds. "But 85 per cent of the wines are consumed within the year of their production," says Thomas de Lagarde, sales and marketing manager of Somewhere In Provence. "Once empty, the components can be separated prior to recycling. The main drawback concerns the bottling process, which is done by gravity and not by vacuum and requires changing the spout and adding nitrogen. This impacts the speed of the line. We have set a minimum order volume of 5,400 bottles."

Currently, Somewhere In Provence imports the cardboard from the UK, but it is looking to source locally. "With the Frugal Bottle, I found a solution where only the material changes, while the design of the red wine bears a red colour paper label and the same

for rosé and white,” says de Lagarde. “This should not disturb the consumer. We propose quality French wine, organic or High Environmental Value-certified, with an additional ecological promise linked to its packaging.”

Frugalpac chief executive Malcolm Waugh points to France as the country that has shown the most interest in his company’s bottles – and encourages more French companies to follow the lead of Somewhere In Provence. “The Frugal Bottle is currently produced in the UK and soon North America,” he says. “Frugalpac calls on brands, co-packers and packaging companies in France and the rest of Europe to invest in the Frugal Bottle assembly machine technology.”

PP pouches continue to have quite a low profile within the glamorous world of wine. One of the latest ways to distribute drinks is Ma Petite Carafe, a French machine that is promoted as being ‘a new way of consuming wine, simpler and more eco-responsible’. The dispenser allows wine to be served in carafes, for takeaway or on-the-spot consumption. The wines are packaged in 5-litre PP refill pouches, preserving the quality of the wine for up to eight weeks after opening. This avoids the issue of opened bottles and oxidised wines that must be thrown away.

The combination of machine and eco-refill ‘enhances the value of all the work done from the vineyard to the cellar by serving each wine perfectly and respecting its integrity’, according to its inventor. The serving capacity of the machine is more than 100 glasses an hour.

Another PP pouch innovation on display was the Bibaxe bag-in-box produced by Vignoble Marchais, which is a classic cardboard bag-in-box housing a 5-litre pouch. It is the design of this container that stands out, with the printing done upside down to suit supermarket shelves, as it needs to be reversed in order to dispense the wine.

“Our solution is aimed at simple wines to share with friends” explains winemaker Philippe Marchais. “Bibaxe wants to simplify the act of buying wine for young people. It is ideal for four people or more, and can be placed in the middle of the table for a festive moment.”

Made of Forest Stewardship Council-certified cardboard with vegetable ink, the bag and the container are easily separable, according to the company. Marchais adds that Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC), which defines the geographical areas where wines are made in France, has shown interest in this solution. There are 363 AOCs for wine and spirits in France and this controls everything from how the grapes are grown to what wine varieties are in the bottle.

Polylactic acid also made an appearance in Paris, but with vodka rather than wine. French converter Lyspackaging provided what it calls the Veganbottle to cognac brand



Above: A French wine company recently confirmed it would use the Ocean Nomacorc closure

Left: The Bibaxe is a classic cardboard bag-in-box housing a 5-litre pouch

Below: Frugal Bottle is made of two half-shells of recycled cardboard encasing a PP pouch



“Choosing Nomacorc Ocean for our wine has been a natural decision on our path towards sustainability”

José and Antonio Rallo, Donnafugata

A De Fussigny for its Summum vodka. The product is sold locally to wine merchants and organic stores.

Absent from the fair but certainly not far from the lips of several delegates and presenters at the show was the Nomacorc Ocean recycled plastics closure, manufactured by caps and closures producer Vinventions. According to the company, it’s the world’s first wine closure to be made from 70 per cent certified Ocean Bound Plastic (OBP), with 30 per cent virgin plastics – and, as well as resembling a traditional cork, it has the same food-contact suitability as its counterparts.

A company certified by the non-governmental organisation Zero Plastics Ocean collects the recycled OBP used for Nomacorc Ocean. After a special treatment, the OBP is returned to its monomer state with properties said to be identical to virgin raw material.

“The raw material for these closures comes from the coastal regions of Southeast Asia,” explains Romain Thomas, Nomacorc product manager for Vinventions. “This OBP accumulates in coastal areas and cities that lack effective collection infrastructure. For us, this is an effective way to tackle pollution.”

The first wine to use the closure was Sicilian label Donnafugata, which launched it on the back of its mission towards environmental and social sustainability.

“We have been committed to producing wines that are respectful of the environment and of mankind for more than 30 years,



from the incorporation of eco-sustainable practices in the winery to the protection of biodiversity and initiatives that help maintain traditions,” according to José and Antonio Rallo, owners of Donnafugata. “We have reinforced our commitment – in line with the goals of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – by joining SOSTain Sicilia, a sustainability programme for Sicilian wineries. We have grown up on the shores of the Mediterranean and its waters surround our vineyards.

“Choosing Nomacorc Ocean for our wine has been a natural decision on our path towards sustainability, which does not stop continuing.”

Bordeaux wine company Maison Bouey also recently announced it would use the Ocean Nomacorc closure for its eco-designed Oh La Vache! wine.

Such creative packaging concepts are definitely attracting new generations of wine drinkers. **EP**