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TRAVEL, P20

It's a win,
win, wine
situation



**Gear up for some clean,
canned & classic brews**

FOOD & DRINK, P 17

It's a win, win, wine situation!

The emerging wine trends for this year are in the promising range of clean, canned and classic brews, writes **Sonal Holland**

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he year 2020 was an unprecedented year for businesses across the globe, and the F&B industry worldwide has also greatly felt the impact of Covid-19. A recent news report indicated that the Maharashtra State Government's Excise Department had seen a 22% reduction in revenue between April and November of 2020 as compared to the same time last year, given the ban on alcohol sales for a major part of the Covid lockdown earlier this year.

With sales only opening up again in end-August, the industry has been playing catch-up ever since, to try and make back the significant losses faced over the course of the year. In the last quarter of 2020 however, there was some buoyancy and sales picked up.

Specialist wine stores

In 2021, more consumers are likely to seek out modern wine specialist stores to make their purchases. These are typically posh shops located within large food retail formats, shopping malls or multi-theatre complexes. They offer a wider selection of both domestic and international wines, better-informed staff and overall, a better experience for the consumer.



Another big trend that will continue into the New Year is the purchase of alcohol online. Ever since the Government has allowed online sales of alcohol, consumers have gravitated towards this highly convenient and pandemic-proof way of purchasing their favourite beverages. Given that the excise department has seen such a significant dip in revenue this year, I see no reason why the Government won't continue to encourage online liquor sales into the New Year, and even longer.

Boom in retail sales

There is no doubt that retail sales of alcohol will boom in 2021 and will take a lion's share of the pie. Traditionally speaking, retail sales have always constituted around 70% of all wine sales in the country. Now, due to the pandemic, there will be continued pressure on luxury restaurants and hotels to sell their wine, and especially to rationalise their wine pricing and mark-ups. While this has always been a sore point for restaurants and hotels, it will become even more the case now, with consumers now so used to the conveniences of buying alcohol online, receiving home deliveries, and more — all without the mark-up.

Wine, an affordable luxury

In a year where the affluent haven't had a chance to spend on themselves as much, through international holidays or luxury purchases, a quick and conven-

ient way to consume luxury is by spending on premium wines. Now more than ever, wine has become a luxury that the affluent can splurge on.

Wine in cans

With the recent introduction of wine in cans, the Indian consumer, who is younger and not as experienced in the world of wines, will have more opportunities to try and enjoy wines in 2021. Wine in cans is a more accessible and price-sensitive way for consumers to sample the beverage and with their introduction, the hope is that a younger, newer audience will convert to drinking wine.

Digital focus for Alcobev companies

Marketing, especially in the digital space, has been steadily growing in importance and significance over the last few years. Now more than ever, companies in the Alcobev space need to embrace the power of digital marketing, and not rely on only in-store visibility. With online liquor sales, the launch of apps through which consumers can buy their alcohol, and Whatsapp home deliveries, the need for digital visibility has never been higher. Companies should rethink their marketing strategies in 2021 with a focus on their websites, social media handles, and other online retail platforms.

Blush & Rosé wines

In 2021, rosé still wine from re-

gions all across the world — like French Provence, Italy, Spain and so on, will continue to rise in popularity. Rose wines are incredibly versatile, offering the lightness and freshness of a white wine, but the body and fruit of a red wine. They also pair very well with vegetarian food. One variant in the rosé category that will continue to enjoy popularity in the New Year is the blush-coloured styles of Moscato wines. It's a medium-sweet wine and low in alcohol, thus allowing for easy drinking. It's got great aromatics and is especially a hit among lady drinkers. As women continue to embrace wines in 2021, options like Moscato, which are perfumed, *sherbet*-like and not very expensive, will remain popular.

Let's hope for a New Year that we can finally raise a glass to. Cheers!

(The author is India's only Master of Wine, an educator, entrepreneur, and founder of a wine academy.)

