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C&C Group Merges Matthew Clark and Bibendum

The new U.K. drinks distributor will combine logistics, wine expertise and sales teams under one brand this summer

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C&C Group is merging Matthew Clark and Bibendum into a single U.K. distribution business this summer, in a move that will reshape how drinks suppliers reach pubs, restaurants and other hospitality customers across the country.

The new operation will trade under the name Matthew Clark Bibendum, or MCB, and will combine Matthew Clark’s logistics network and scale with Bibendum’s wine portfolio and specialist sales team. C&C said the change is meant to simplify access for customers, widen opportunities for suppliers and create a more integrated offer for the on-trade at a time when hospitality businesses are under pressure from weak trading conditions and rising costs.

Matthew Clark and Bibendum have been under common ownership since 2018, when C&C bought them after the collapse of Conviviality, the drinks wholesaler. Since then, the two businesses have continued to operate with separate identities. Under the new structure, they will be brought together into one customer proposition with one aligned specialist team and a combined wine list.

A C&C spokesman said the integration would give customers access to the full range through a single team while removing duplication and barriers. The company said it expected customers to benefit from Matthew Clark’s value, range and service, along with Bibendum’s wine expertise and premium portfolio. C&C also said service levels would remain unchanged.

The merger is likely to draw close attention from wine producers, especially smaller importers and independent suppliers that have relied on Bibendum’s position in the premium on-trade. Bibendum has long been seen as a strong route into restaurants, fine dining venues and other higher-end accounts. C&C said those relationships would continue, and that dedicated wine specialists and regional support teams would remain in place.

The group said existing supplier agreements would stay in force. It argued that the combined business would give producers a broader view of the market and access to more customers across categories. Those categories include wine, beer, spirits, cider and soft drinks.

Rob Sandall, who spoke for C&C on the integration, said bringing the two businesses together was intended to simplify operations, reduce duplication and make better use of the company’s range, expertise and scale. He said the focus was on value, quality and service as hospitality operators face difficult trading conditions.

The transition will take place over the summer, with Matthew Clark and Bibendum continuing to operate separately for now before the full MCB proposition is rolled out later in the season. The move marks another step in the restructuring of businesses that were once part of Conviviality’s wholesale empire before its collapse in 2018.

C&C acquired Matthew Clark Bibendum that year with financial backing from AB InBev. The deal also included subsidiaries such as Catalyst, Peppermint, Elastic and Walker & Wodehouse. Since then, C&C has been trying to build a stronger position in U.K. drinks distribution while managing a market that has remained volatile for suppliers and operators alike.

For producers selling into Britain’s hospitality sector, the merger could change how they approach one of the country’s largest wholesalers. A single platform may make it easier to reach more accounts at once, but it also concentrates more buying power inside one business at a time when many suppliers are already dealing with tighter margins, slower demand and more cautious customers.