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A New Study Finds the Spritz Boosted Prosecco Exports Worldwide

Researchers say the cocktail’s 2011 recognition helped turn bar culture into a measurable driver of Italian wine trade

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A new academic study from Italy argues that a cocktail better known for aperitivo hour has had a measurable effect on global wine trade.

Researchers at the University of Turin and the University of Verona found that the international rise of the Spritz helped lift exports of Prosecco, the sparkling Italian wine that is the drink's main ingredient. Their paper, "The Spritz Effect: Impact of Informal, Cultural Channels on Sparkling Wine Trade," was published in the journal Applied Economics.

According to the study, a key turning point came in 2011, when the International Bartenders Association officially recognized the Spritz and added it to its list of cocktails. The researchers say that move helped turn the drink into a globally recognized consumption format, giving Prosecco greater visibility abroad and supporting demand in foreign markets.

The authors said their work is the first to show, through econometric analysis, a causal link between the formal recognition and spread of the cocktail and growth in Prosecco exports. To test that relationship, they combined Google Trends data with international trade models and statistical techniques designed to isolate the effect of the cocktail's popularity from other factors.

Their results show that rising interest in the Spritz was associated with a significant increase in Prosecco exports. The study also took into account the possible role of tourism to Italy, suggesting that travel may have helped spread familiarity with the drink and with Prosecco itself, but did not fully explain the export gains on its own.

The researchers said they did not find the same pattern for competing sparkling wines such as Spain's Cava. That difference, they argue, points to a more direct connection between the global spread of the Spritz and the commercial success of Prosecco rather than a broader rise in demand for all sparkling wines.

The findings add weight to an idea long discussed in the beverage business: that drinking rituals, bar culture and recognizable serves can shape trade flows as much as traditional marketing campaigns. For producers, importers and tourism operators, the study suggests that cultural consumption habits may become a practical tool for building international demand, especially when a wine is tied closely to a simple and repeatable cocktail order.

That could matter beyond Prosecco. In wine, beer and spirits, producers have increasingly tried to connect brands with occasions, travel experiences and signature drinks that are easy for consumers to recognize across borders. The Italian research indicates that those links may do more than raise awareness; they may also support export performance when they become embedded in everyday social habits.

The study also offers a fresh lens on how “Made in Italy” products travel internationally. Rather than moving only through formal advertising or distribution networks, some products may gain ground through informal cultural channels such as nightlife, hospitality and tourism. In this case, the researchers argue, a familiar orange cocktail served in bars around the world helped strengthen the position of one of Italy’s most important sparkling wines in overseas markets.