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Australians increasingly choose wine for the experience, Wine Australia says

New research found 61% pick drinks by occasion, prompting a national campaign built around festivals, tastings and travel

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Australians are increasingly turning to wine as part of broader food, travel and social experiences, according to new research from Wine Australia, which says consumers now place as much value on setting, atmosphere and connection as they do on what is in the glass.

The industry body said its latest findings show a clear shift in how people approach wine when they go out. Some 59% of Australians surveyed said they want their choice of drink to improve the overall experience of dining or socializing, while 61% said they choose drinks based on the occasion.

The data is shaping Wine Australia's national campaign, "We make a wine for that," which is designed to encourage consumers to explore the country's range of wine styles, regions and producers through events and in-person experiences. The campaign comes as Australian wine producers continue looking for ways to deepen domestic engagement by linking wine more closely with tourism, hospitality and local food culture.

Wine Australia said the message rests on the breadth of the country's production. Australia grows more than 120 grape varieties across 65 wine regions, giving producers and event organizers a wide base for tastings, pairings and destination-led promotions. The organization argues that this diversity gives consumers more reasons to move beyond familiar labels and varieties and try wines tied to specific places and stories.

Beginning in August, that strategy will be visible through a series of events around the country aimed at both regular wine drinkers and people who are newer to wine. The calendar includes regional festivals, guided tastings, long lunches, cellar door programs and restaurant collaborations that present wine as part of a larger cultural outing.

Among the events highlighted by Wine Australia is the Dark Side of Wine festival in Rutherglen, Victoria, where wineries host evening programs built around candlelight and firelit spaces. In Queensland, Taste Port Douglas will offer a four-day food and drink program. In New South Wales, The Hidden Cellar is promoting an underground wine experience intended to draw visitors looking for something less conventional than a standard tasting room visit.

South Australia's offerings include the Coonawarra Roadshow in Adelaide, where consumers can meet producers directly, and the Kangaroo Island Wine Dinner, which focuses attention on a lesser-known part of the country's wine story. In Sydney, Infinity by Mark Best is hosting "To Infinity and Aphelion," a dining event pairing Aphelion wines with a menu centered on regional sourcing. In Western Australia, Olive Farm

Wines is presenting “Italian Vibes,” while in Canberra the Saturday Social Club x Linear Wines event will bring together local wines and shared plates.

The emphasis on experience reflects broader changes in consumer behavior that have affected food and beverage businesses well beyond wine. Producers, restaurants and tourism operators have increasingly tried to sell not only products but also occasions that feel distinctive and worth sharing with friends or online. For wine in particular, that means tastings are being framed less as technical exercises and more as social events tied to meals, travel and discovery.

Polly Mackarel, an award-winning sommelier and head sommelier at Infinity by Mark Best, said she sees growing curiosity among consumers who are willing to move beyond their usual choices.

“Consumers are becoming more adventurous in the way they explore wine,” Mackarel said. “Every day, I see people stepping outside their usual choices, whether that’s trying an unfamiliar variety, discovering a new region or trusting a recommendation and finding something completely unexpected.”

She said wine remains appealing because it can connect drinkers with a producer, a place or a shared moment around a table. That connection has become more important as diners look for experiences that feel personal rather than routine.

Dorianne Neimard, head of wine at Merivale, said the hospitality group plans to use August to showcase Australian wines across several venues as part of that same push toward discovery. She said supporting domestic producers while offering guests memorable experiences has become central to the company’s wine strategy.

“Across August, we’re proud to showcase a curated range of Australian wine offers across a selection of our venues, giving customers the opportunity to discover and explore the breadth and quality of Australian wines,” Neimard said.

She added that introducing customers to new wines is part of how venues can strengthen both guest loyalty and support for local winemakers at the same time.

For Australia’s wine sector, the campaign also points to a practical business goal. By encouraging consumers to engage with wine through festivals, restaurant events and regional visits, producers can create more direct contact with buyers at a time when competition for discretionary spending remains strong. Experiences can also help smaller regions and lesser-known varieties stand out in a crowded market.

That matters in a country where wine tourism has long been tied to regional economies. Events that bring visitors into cellar doors, restaurants and nearby accommodations can spread spending across local businesses while giving wineries another route to build recognition. A tasting or dinner may introduce consumers not only to one bottle but also to an entire region they may later revisit.

Wine Australia’s campaign leans heavily on that idea of discovery close to home. Rather than focusing only on established prestige regions or classic varieties, it presents Australian wine as something broad enough to suit many settings: city dinners, weekend getaways, casual tastings or large public festivals. The underlying message is that domestic wine can meet consumers wherever they are looking for an experience that combines food, place and social connection.

As August events begin across the country, wineries and hospitality groups will be watching whether that message translates into stronger attendance and broader interest in local wines. For now, Wine Australia’s research suggests many Australians already see wine less as a standalone purchase and more as part of how they choose to spend time with others.