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Collectible spirits at U.S. auctions have lost nearly 20% of their value in 2026

First Growth Technologies reported the decline in rare-bottle valuations, but its release omitted key details about the sample and methodology

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Collectible spirits sold at U.S. auctions have lost nearly 20% of their value so far in 2026, according to a market update distributed Wednesday through GlobeNewswire by First Growth Technologies, a U.S. price-data company that tracks the secondary market for rare bottles.

The reported decline applies to collectible distilled spirits in the auction market, not to regular retail sales or overall liquor consumption. The announcement described the move as a year-to-date drop in valuations for rare spirits sold at auction in the United States. It did not provide a same-period 2025 comparison or a dollar figure showing the absolute amount of value lost.

The figures came from First Growth Technologies' Spirits Market Journal, which the company says tracks pricing information from more than 60 auction houses and 2.7 million transactions. The company presented those figures as the scale of its broader database. The release did not say how much of that activity came from the U.S. sample used for the 2026 auction-market reading.

The announcement was distributed on Oct. 21 by GlobeNewswire, a press release service, and framed the decline as evidence of a correction in the collectible spirits segment. That matters for investors, collectors, brokers and merchants because auction prices often shape expectations for inventory values and future resale prices in the secondary market.

The release did not spell out several key parts of the methodology. It did not specify the exact cutoff date used for the year-to-date calculation. It also did not say what base currency was used, how the index or valuations were weighted, or how much of the change reflected bottle-specific price declines versus shifts in the mix of items sold. Without that detail, outside analysts have limited ability to separate whether the market is weakening across categories or whether lower prices reflect a different composition of bottles coming to auction in 2026.

First Growth Technologies is a pricing-information provider with commercial ties to bottle trading, a factor that may be relevant for readers evaluating the data. The company's figures may still offer a useful signal on auction conditions, but the information comes from a market participant rather than an independent public agency

or academic source.

The announcement did not provide a category-by-category breakdown. It did not say whether the decline was concentrated in whiskey, rum, Cognac or other segments of the rare spirits market. It also did not identify whether the largest weakness came from the highest-priced bottles or from more commonly traded collectible lots. That leaves open the question of whether the downturn is broad-based or mainly affecting parts of the market that had risen the fastest in earlier years.

Auction results are closely watched because they can influence pricing far beyond the sales room. Dealers, collectors and lenders sometimes use recent auction transactions as reference points when valuing stock, negotiating private sales or assessing collateral. A drop of nearly 20% in a single year can therefore affect decisions about when to sell, how to price holdings and how much risk participants are willing to take in a market built around scarcity and brand prestige.

At the same time, auction markets can be volatile and may not reflect conditions in stores, bars or mainstream wholesale channels. High-end collectible bottles trade in smaller volumes than mass-market spirits, and prices can move sharply when buyer demand shifts or when supply from private collections changes. Because the release did not include a homogeneous 2025 comparison for the same period, it does not by itself show whether 2026 marks a break from a longer trend or an extension of weakness that began earlier.

The company’s use of the phrase “nearly 20%” suggests a substantial drop, but the release did not publish the precise percentage to more decimal detail in the summary provided. It also did not identify whether the result was based on hammer prices alone or on prices including buyer’s premiums and other transaction costs, another factor that can affect comparisons across auction houses.

For market participants, the most immediate significance is practical rather than theoretical. A softer secondary market can put pressure on owners who bought with the expectation of quick gains, and it can force reassessments of insured values, reserve prices and lending terms tied to collectible bottles. It may also influence whether consignors decide to sell now or wait for stronger demand.

Still, the release should be read as a signal from one provider rather than as a full picture of the spirits business. The data do not describe consumer drinking trends, bar demand or off-premise liquor sales. They speak only to the niche market for collectible distilled spirits sold through auctions, where pricing can diverge sharply from the broader industry.

In that narrower market, the message from the latest published tracking is clear: U.S. auction valuations for collectible spirits are down by close to 20% in 2026, based on data cited by First Growth Technologies, even as important questions about the size of the sample, the calculation method and the drivers of the decline remain unanswered.