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U.S. wine sales fell 3.8% in late October despite a Halloween bump

NielsenIQ said weaker consumer engagement drove 69% of the decline, with still wine losses overwhelming growth in sparkling and non-alcoholic wine

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U.S. wine sales remained under pressure in the four weeks ending October 31, even as Halloween demand gave the category a short-term lift, according to a NielsenIQ report based on retail measurement data.

NIQ said dollar sales for total wine, excluding wine-based cocktails, fell 3.8% from a year earlier, while volume declined 5.3%. Weekly dollar sales reached $381.3 million, up 2.3% from the prior week, a gain the report linked to seasonal demand tied to Halloween. Even with that increase, the wider drop in volume than in dollars showed that the category is still struggling to hold onto buyers.

The report said weaker consumer engagement was the main reason for the decline, accounting for 69% of category losses. Reduced product availability contributed 18%, and underperforming promotions accounted for 13%. NIQ said the gap between dollar and volume trends points to a need for sellers to balance premium products with lower-priced options as shoppers remain selective.

Still wine continued to be the biggest drag on the market. In the four weeks ending October 31, still wine dollar sales fell 4.7% and cases dropped 5.9%. Because still wine makes up the largest share of the category, its decline outweighed gains elsewhere.

Sparkling wine posted better results and continued to improve from recent trends. NIQ said sparkling wine dollar sales rose 2.2% and volume increased 0.9%. The gains suggest that celebratory and seasonal occasions helped support demand, even as the broader wine market weakened.

Non-alcoholic wine also remained one of the strongest growth areas in the category. Value sales increased 19.3% from a year earlier, while volume rose 15.3%. The report described non-alcoholic wine and sparkling wine as growth contributors, but said both segments are still too small to offset the weakness in still wine.

Among manufacturers, E. & J. Gallo remained the largest supplier by dollar sales, despite a 1.0% decline and a loss of 63,400 cases. The Wine Group ranked second, with dollar sales down 9.7% and case sales off by 268,000. Deutsch Family ranked third and was one of the few large suppliers to post growth, with dollar sales up 3.3% and case sales rising by 13,200.

Trinchero Family ranked fourth, with dollar sales down 4.2% and case sales lower by 34,200. Delicato Family Wines ranked fifth, with dollar sales down 7.2% and case sales off by 57,300. The report showed that the largest companies in the category are not moving in the same direction, with some gaining from brand strength and others losing ground more sharply.

NIQ also identified Deutsch Family, Moet Hennessy USA, Wagner Family Wines, Delegat USA and Constellation among the top manufacturers by dollar growth. Their reported dollar sales gains ranged from 2.5% to 8.1%. Delegat USA posted the largest percentage increase of that group at 8.1%, while Wagner Family Wines rose 4.6%, and both Moet Hennessy USA and Constellation increased 2.5%.

At the brand level, Josh ranked first by dollar sales and posted a 7.3% increase, with case sales up by 38,700. Barefoot ranked second and grew 1.3%, adding 40,200 cases. Bota ranked third, with dollar sales down 3.8% and case sales lower by 32,900. Sutter Home ranked fourth, with dollar sales down 3.6% and case sales off by 20,600.

LaMarca ranked fifth by dollar sales and recorded one of the strongest performances among major brands. NIQ said LaMarca dollar sales rose 15.7%, with case sales up by 23,500. In the separate ranking of brands by dollar growth, LaMarca and Josh were joined by Whitehaven, Kim Crawford and Made By James. Whitehaven posted a 23.7% increase in dollar sales and gained 8,600 cases, while Kim Crawford rose 7.5% and added 5,300 cases. NIQ listed Made By James among the top growth brands and said case sales increased by 12,200, though the report did not provide a year-over-year dollar comparison for that brand.