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Japan’s Beaujolais nouveau imports are expected to fall 87.5% from their 2004 peak this year

Suntory forecasts 130,000 nine-liter cases, or 1.17 million liters, underscoring the long retreat of a once-prominent seasonal wine category

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Japan is expected to import 130,000 nine-liter cases of French Beaujolais nouveau this year, an 87.5% decline from the market’s peak in 2004, according to a forecast cited by Yomiuri Shimbun on Thursday, November 19.

The projected volume equals 1.17 million liters. At the 2004 high, Japan imported 1,040,000 cases, or 9.36 million liters. The reduction over the 22-year span comes to 910,000 cases, equivalent to 8.19 million liters.

The report was reproduced by Livedoor News and attributed the national forecast to Suntory. That means the figure is a company estimate rather than a final customs tally. The report did not give a monetary value for the imports.

It also did not provide a nationwide total for 2025. Without that figure, the available information does not allow a year-over-year calculation for Japan’s market. The 87.5% figure refers only to the change between the 2004 peak and the current year’s forecast.

Beaujolais nouveau is not a brand and not a separate wine appellation. The term refers to young wines made under the Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages appellations in France’s Beaujolais wine region. The Japanese import figure therefore measures demand for a specific seasonal wine category, not for French wine in general and not for imported wine as a whole.

Wine trade volumes are commonly reported in nine-liter cases, which equal 12 bottles of 750 milliliters. On that basis, the forecast points to about 1.56 million standard bottles entering Japan this year, compared with roughly 12.48 million bottles at the 2004 peak. The comparison shows how far the category has retreated from the levels seen when Japan was one of its most visible foreign markets.

The report’s figures quantify a long-term contraction in one well-known French wine segment in Japan. They do not show a collapse in the broader imported wine business, and they should not be read as a decline that occurred in this year alone. The drop covers more than two decades and is limited to Beaujolais nouveau imports.

The timing of the report also matters because Beaujolais nouveau is marketed as a fresh, newly released wine and is closely tied to a specific selling season. In Japan, that has long given the category a public profile beyond its share of total wine sales. Even so, the estimate cited on Thursday, November 19, suggests that the scale of those imports is now far below the early-2000s level.

For retailers, distributors and producers, the latest forecast offers a narrow but clear measure of how one once-prominent import category has changed. It tracks only Beaujolais nouveau shipped to Japan, expressed in case volume, with no published value data and no comparable national figure for 2025 in the report carried by Livedoor News.