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Moët Hennessy shifts New York distribution to Southern Glazer’s for 2027

The move deals a major blow to Empire Merchants in a strategic market for luxury wine and spirits

Wednesday, November 25, 2026



Moët Hennessy said on Tuesday, November 24, that it will move its distribution business in the New York metropolitan market from Empire Merchants to Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits, a shift that will take effect on January 1, 2027.

In a statement to Shanken News Daily, a Moët Hennessy spokesperson said the company’s focus remains on serving customers and retail partners through the holiday season. The company said Southern Glazer’s and Empire will jointly manage Moët Hennessy USA distribution in metro New York during December to keep supply moving and support a smooth handoff before Southern Glazer’s takes over the market at the start of 2027.

The move is a major change in one of the country’s most important wine and spirits markets. Moët Hennessy’s portfolio includes some of the best-known imported luxury labels sold in restaurants, bars and retail stores. A distributor change in the New York area can affect how quickly those products reach accounts, how sales teams cover the market and how retailers plan inventory during a critical selling period. It also adds to the concentration of wholesale power in a strategic market for wine and liquor, with possible effects on access to major international brands.

The announcement comes as Empire faces questions about its position in New York. Shanken News Daily reported that Empire, described as the market’s second-largest wine and spirits wholesaler, has been the subject of industry speculation in recent days. The publication also said shortages of key Moët Hennessy brands, including Veuve Clicquot Champagne, had emerged during the holiday season and were tied to liquidity issues at Empire.

Moët Hennessy has long been one of the core suppliers in Empire’s portfolio. Shanken News Daily said Gallo is also expected to move to Southern Glazer’s in New York in 2027, though that shift was described as anticipated rather than confirmed. If that change also takes place, Empire would lose another major supplier in a market where scale and brand breadth are central to a wholesaler’s standing with retailers and producers.

The latest development strengthens Southern Glazer’s position in New York. According to Shanken’s Impact Newsletter, Southern Glazer’s is projected to generate $2.4 billion in New York revenue in 2026, making it the market leader. Empire’s 2026 revenue is projected at $1.5 billion, the newsletter said.

Empire was not always the smaller of the two companies. Shanken reported that Empire had been the largest wine and spirits wholesaler in the New York market for years, with revenue reaching $1.9 billion in 2015. Its business was hit in 2020 when Diageo left Empire’s book and moved to Southern Glazer’s portfolio, a change that shifted a large volume of spirits sales and weakened Empire’s position.

Empire still represents a broad set of suppliers. Shanken News Daily listed other important companies in its portfolio, including Proximo, William Grant & Sons, Delicato, Duckhorn, Treasury, Banfi, Silver Oak, Riboli, Herita, Kobrand and WX Brands. Even so, the loss of Moët Hennessy removes a high-profile supplier from the book in a market where prestige labels can carry outsized weight with on-premise and off-premise buyers.

For retailers, restaurants and bars, the practical issue in the near term is continuity of supply in December. Moët Hennessy said the temporary shared management arrangement between Southern Glazer’s and Empire is meant to avoid disruption as the market moves into the final weeks of the year, when Champagne and other premium wines and spirits typically see strong demand.

Empire was formed in 2007 through the merger of the New York operations of Peerless Importers and Charmer Industries. Peerless was owned by the Magliocco family, while Charmer Industries was owned by the Merinoff and Drucker families, according to Shanken News Daily.