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Generational Shifts in Wine Preferences

From Baby Boomers to Gen Z, evolving trends in wine consumption

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Recent trends in wine consumption reveal notable shifts across different age groups, with younger and older generations showing divergent preferences. A significant change in alcohol usage patterns among young adults has been noted in the United States, as highlighted by a Gallup article titled "Young Adults in U.S. Drinking Less Than in Prior Decades." This report observes a declining trend in alcohol consumption among young adults over the past two decades. Concurrently, an increase in drinking habits is

seen among older Americans, with middle-aged adults maintaining a relatively constant level of consumption.

The wine industry, not isolated from these demographic shifts, has experienced similar trends. Silicon Valley Bank's "2023 State of the Wine Industry Report" indicates that consumers under 60 are now less involved in wine consumption compared to 2007, whereas those over 60 are increasingly turning to wine. This shift is also reflected in the slowing premiumization trend in the wine market, where older consumers continue to spend more on premium wines, while younger buyers show diminishing engagement with the category.

Delving deeper into these consumption patterns, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (SGWS) offers further insight into the specific wine preferences of various generations. They note that baby boomers, still the largest generation by population, continue to dominate wine consumption in terms of spending. This group favors traditional wine varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling. Additionally, their preference for red and white Burgundy wines persists, despite high prices and scarcity. The rising temperatures across the country have also led to an increased interest in chilled white wines among baby boomers, especially those moving to warmer climates.

In contrast, millennials and Generation Z exhibit different tastes. Natural wines, known for their lower alcohol content and sustainability appeal, are popular among these younger demographics. Rosé has become a particular favorite among millennials, epitomized by the phrase "Rosé all day." Red Zinfandel, with its "juicy" and slightly sweet flavor profile, has emerged as an appealing option for younger consumers beginning to explore red wines.

Across all generations, however, there seems to be a common preference for bubbly wines, including Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Prosecco.

Laura DePasquale, Senior Vice President of Sales and Commercial Operations at Artisanal Wine Domaine & Estates Artisanal Wines, a division of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, adds to this narrative. She notes that while Gen Z drinkers predominantly opt for natural wines, Bordeaux is gaining traction among this demographic as they begin

to appreciate its qualities. Millennials, on the other hand, display a consistent preference for Rosé. Meanwhile, baby boomers continue their long-standing appreciation for Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay.

These findings from SGWS not only highlight the varied wine preferences across different generations but also reflect broader trends in lifestyle, environmental consciousness, and cultural shifts influencing consumer behavior in the wine industry. As these trends continue to evolve, they offer valuable insights for winemakers, marketers, and retailers aiming to cater to a diverse and changing consumer base.