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American wine's global ascent: the surging export market

How US wineries are expanding their reach worldwide

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In the ever-evolving landscape of international trade, the United States is making significant strides in the global wine market. Historically overshadowed by the longstanding viticultural traditions of countries like France and Italy, American vintners are now expanding their horizons, seeking to establish a more pronounced presence in wine shops, restaurants, and bars around the world.

Exports by the Numbers

A notable shift has been observed in the export dynamics of American wines. California, a state synonymous with American winemaking, reports a 10 percent growth in international exports over the past decade. This growth is a testament to the increasing global demand for American wines, particularly from California. Despite a general decline in wine sales, exports have brought in $1.46 billion, with significant growth in markets like Japan, South Korea, Mexico, and Eastern Europe.

Oregon and Washington are also making their mark, with Oregon experiencing a 4 percent increase in export sales last year, and Washington seeing a 30 percent increase in the number of wineries exporting. New York wineries have seen a dramatic increase in exports, jumping from $57,115 in 2020 to $796,824 in just three years.

Opportunity for Family Brands

Small, family-owned brands are finding success in key international markets. For instance, Elk Cove in Oregon has been exporting since 1985, helping to establish Oregon's reputation for high-quality Pinot Noir. Currently, about 10 percent of Elk Cove's production is exported, with Canada and the UK leading, followed by markets like Australia, South Korea, and Nordic countries.

Similarly, Scheid Family Wines in California sees exports representing 15-20 percent of their revenue, with mid-tier priced wines gaining traction in Canada, Scandinavia, and South Korea.

Super-Premium Opportunities

High-end American wines are also finding their place in the global market. Lithology in Napa, for example, reports strong growth in markets like Zurich, the UK, and Singapore, with their high-priced bottles appealing to collectors and connoisseurs. Daou Family Estates in Paso Robles is another example, with their high-end Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux blends being exported to over 60 countries.

Opportunity in Non-Wine Regions

Expansion is not limited to traditional wine-consuming countries. Mexico, Latin America, and certain African nations are emerging as significant markets for American wines. Companies like Quintessential are pushing into markets like Japan, India, and others in 2024.

A Positive Reception

The positive response to American wines is evident. Events like the Wine Institute's Global Buyers Marketplace in Napa Valley highlight the growing interest in American wines. Small producers like Oceano Wines are finding new opportunities in markets like Canada, Greece, Germany, and India.

In summary, the American wine industry is experiencing a significant upturn in its global presence. With an increasing number of wineries venturing into exports and finding success in diverse markets, the future looks promising for American vintners on the world stage.