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London Wine Fair Attendance Drops 8%, but Quality Connections Soar

London Wine Fair Shines Despite Dip in Numbers

Friday, May 24, 2024



The London Wine Fair 2024, held at the iconic Olympia from May 20-22, might have seen a slight dip in both visitor and exhibitor numbers, but the event still left a sparkling impression. In a world where bigger isn't always better, the focus this year was squarely on the quality of interactions, and it paid off in spades.

This year, the fair welcomed 9,243 visitors, an 8% drop from 2023. Exhibitor participation also saw a minor decrease, with 401 companies setting up shop compared to last year's 417. However, this smaller turnout did not dampen the spirits of those present. Instead, it created a more intimate and engaging atmosphere. The significant jump in the use of the Essential Planner—from 12% last year to an impressive 41%—is a testament to the event's enhanced focus on meaningful connections.

One of the standout features was the visitor-to-exhibitor ratio, which was a strong 23:1. This ratio underscores a more focused and engaged audience, a detail not lost on the exhibitors. Major industry players like Mentzendorff, Freixenet Copestick, and Wines of South Africa made a triumphant return after years away, adding to the fair's allure.

The fair was a melting pot of global wine cultures, with notable pavilions from New Zealand, South Africa, and even Japan showcasing a fascinating selection of sake. Key companies like Buckingham Schenk and Freixenet Copestick brought a diverse array of wines to the table, enriching the overall experience for attendees.

Hannah Tovey, head of the fair, struck a positive note despite the industry's challenging climate. "We are extremely pleased with the 2024 edition of LWF, especially given the industry is experiencing some of the toughest trading conditions in recent memory," Tovey remarked. She highlighted the overwhelmingly positive feedback from exhibitors and the vibrant energy that permeated Olympia.

"Despite these challenging times, we have had overwhelmingly positive exhibitor feedback, thanks to delivering a truly excellent and innovative event, which has reinforced the London Wine Fair as unmissable for serious players. The energy at Olympia from those participating was palpable. Business was being done with everyone from the national multiples to Michelin star restaurants, regional wholesalers, and independent retailers. Of course, we would like to see more of the leading UK agents back on the Trading Floor; this is something our industry leaders have vocalised too as essential in restoring the UK wine industry to robust health. We are already working hard to achieve this for 2025," she added.

Feedback from exhibitors was notably upbeat. Miles Beale, CEO of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA), lauded the fair for drawing a significant portion of the UK wine community. Patrick McGrath MW, CEO of Hatch Mansfield, expressed satisfaction with their expanded stand and the diverse mix of visitors, including independents, national retailers, and fine wine merchants. Alex Green, sales and marketing director at Beyond Wines Ltd., was particularly impressed with the high number of crucial meetings with major buyers.

Looking ahead, the London Wine Fair 2025 is slated to return to Olympia from May 19-21. There's a buzz of anticipation for an even more robust turnout and, hopefully, better WiFi. With plans already in motion to further enhance the quality of interactions, the fair is set to continue its reign as a premier event for the wine industry. Whether you're a sommelier, a retailer, or just a wine enthusiast, mark your calendar. Next year's fair promises to be an unmissable date on the wine world's social calendar.