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American wine and spirits face persistent boycott in Canada as consumer resistance remains strong

New research shows most Canadians unwilling to return to U.S. alcohol brands despite potential end to trade restrictions

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American wine and spirits producers are facing a significant challenge in the Canadian market, according to new research released by IWSR, a London-based beverage alcohol market analyst. The report, which will be officially published on June 26, reveals that 69 percent of Canadian drinkers have not only stopped purchasing U.S. alcohol products but also do not plan to buy them again, even if current sales restrictions are lifted.

The survey was conducted in May and included responses from 1,970 Canadian consumers. The findings indicate that the reluctance to purchase American wine and spirits is consistent across gender and income levels. However, there are notable differences based on age and location. Among Canadians over 60 years old, 84 percent said they were “very unlikely” to buy U.S. alcohol in the future. In contrast, this sentiment drops to 56 percent among younger Canadians aged 19 to 35.

Regional differences are also apparent. In Winnipeg, 85 percent of respondents said they plan to continue boycotting American alcohol products. In Calgary and Edmonton, the numbers are lower but still significant, with 55 percent and 54 percent respectively expressing an unwillingness to purchase U.S. brands. When the data is grouped by larger regions—Ontario, Quebec, the West, and the Maritimes—the overall attitude remains united against American alcohol.

Richard Halstead, chief operating officer of consumer insights and custom analytics at IWSR, noted that such strong opinions are unusual in their research. Typically, consumer attitudes form more of a bell curve rather than a clear majority taking one side.

The backdrop for this shift in consumer behavior is the recent imposition of tariffs by the White House on certain Canadian goods, which led to retaliatory measures affecting American wine and spirits in Canada. While some industry professionals have observed a softening in anti-American sentiment among their clientele, the data suggests that most Canadian drinkers remain firm in their stance.

Brad Royale, corporate sommelier for Concorde Entertainment Group in Calgary, which operates more than 20 venues in Alberta and Ontario, said he has noticed less vocal opposition to U.S. products recently. However, he acknowledged it is difficult to determine whether guests are choosing American wines out of preference or national

loyalty.

Billy Woon, wine director for Oliver & Bonacini Hospitality in Ontario, has been working to replace California wines as inventory runs low at restaurants like Canoe and Jump. He has turned to red wines from Spain and South America as alternatives and has also increased offerings from local Niagara producers such as Cloudsley Cellars and Westcott Vineyards.

Woon emphasized that guests are open to trying new options and that there is a wide variety of wines available from both Canada and abroad. He said his team’s focus is on providing a great experience for guests by offering choices they can trust.

Despite some signs of change at individual venues catering to tourists and business travelers, the IWSR report makes clear that American wine and spirits brands face an uphill battle in regaining their former position on Canadian shelves. The long-term impact of these consumer attitudes remains uncertain as both countries navigate ongoing trade tensions.