Swedes get virtuous

Sweden as a nation is on a health kick, drinking less and exercising more. Alcohol volumes are declining, including wine, but Swedes are now thinking more about their tipple – and willing to spend more.

In the idealised outsiders’ perception of Sweden, beautiful, healthy people exist happily in harmony with nature and society, among the picturesque woods and islands. According to Wine Intelligence’s recent Sweden Landscapes 2018 report, such values and behaviours are not a million miles away from the country’s relationship with the wine category.

Sweden was once renowned as a committed spirits drinking country, with the long winters leading some Swedes to tip into alcohol dependencies. The 21st century version of Sweden is moving in a very different direction. It is becoming increasingly more socially acceptable to pass on an alcoholic beverage, with younger Swedes in particular preferring to hit the gym or the bicycle rather than the bar or drinks cabinet.

In this new era, spirits sales have been hit the hardest; however still wine has also been in steady decline over the past few years. The silver lining to this new behaviour is that by and large Swedes are willing to spend a bit more when they do decide to crack open a bottle.

Recent tax increases have made the added spend unavoidable, but our study shows that there is a growing interest in wine in Sweden and a desire to find quality over quantity. Interest in the category is growing and with a prosperous economy now, many wine drinkers have the money to spend on their hobby. Our results show that food-matching is becoming an increasingly important factor, and the chance to share a nice bottle that pairs well with a meal is an increasingly appealing pastime. In fact, 74% of regular Swedish wine drinkers consider matching their wine and food to be the most important factor when selecting wine, which is a significant increase on the past year.

Wine sales are controlled by the monopoly, Systembolaget, but fewer people are buying wine from there. In the past year more are popping overseas or buying on a ferry, or cruise, to find better value for money or new wines that aren’t available under the monopoly. Experts also report that consumers are becoming more open to alcohol-free wines, which can also be bought in stores outside the Systembolaget.
In contrast, sparkling wine continues to see an increase in volume. As is the case in so many markets, Prosecco is the driver for this and is riding high on a fashionable wave. The same is true of craft beer, and industry experts suspect this is also partly to account for the slight dip in still wine volumes. The interest in microbreweries and different beer types and flavour profiles is stepping on the toes of the wine category.

Walking side-by-side with the health trend is a propensity for alternative wines. There has been a huge uptake on organic products, including wine; the nation’s favourite Prosecco happens to be organic. There is also a growing interest in vegan wines, and not just from self-confessed vegans. Across our alternative wine measures, we are seeing an increased desire for wines that are perceived to be healthier.

Nobody knows how long the craft beer bubble will last, but we can be confident the health trend is here to stay. It may look like a direct threat to the wine industry, that is not necessarily the case. Wine has every chance of being part of Sweden’s healthier future.

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**Nuusbrokkies / News Snippets**

**Amazon has already begun automating its white-collar jobs**

Algorithms have usurped Amazon’s retail decision-makers. The e-commerce company once relied on humans to predict demand of certain products, such as anticipating and ordering a glut of the season’s hottest toys ahead of the holiday season. But that the decision-making process has slowly transitioned towards automated ordering and communication with manufacturers, leaving humans in the lurch. This trend isn’t surprising at an automation-minded company like Amazon, but it’s indicative of a wider trend in analytics-based jobs: The algorithms are coming. Whether it’s insurance adjusting or product buying like Amazon’s workers, there could be software that does an increasingly better job for a lower cost than a human salary. The transition within Amazon is credited to two forces. The company launched a pilot project called “hands off the wheel” that automated demand forecasting and negotiating prices with vendors, and the rise of the Amazon Marketplace, where vendors can bypass Amazon’s buyers and sell their wares directly on the site on their own. “Computers know what to buy and when to buy, when to offer a deal and when not to,” said Neil Ackerman, a former Amazon executive who now manages the global supply chain at Johnson & Johnson. “These algorithms take in thousands of inputs and are always running smarter than any human.”

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**Other Wine Producing Countries**

**The future of English wine is with PGIs**

Cellar door tourism and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) is where the future of English wine lies.

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Note: 2017 information: 2 000 ha wine-grapes, 502 vineyards and 147 wineries.