The Grocer

Focus On: Alcoholic drinks

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Feature one: Beer and cider

Contact Jimmy Nicholls Jimmy.Nicholls@thegrocer.co.uk

It's been a case of mixed fortunes for beer and cider. While Brits have been happily downing beer and lager – which have gained an extra £211m in take-home sales – cider has gone flat. It's in stark contrast to last year, when sales of cider were fizzing, and in contrast to other areas of the alcohol category, which are all thriving. Fruity ciders, in particular, are down – while more traditional apple ciders are bucking the trend with some encouraging growth. So are Brits ditching fruity cider for more traditional variants, or opting for beer and cider instead? To what extent has hard seltzer had an impact here? And to what extent was this simply the impact of a lacklustre summer?

Cider: Why have apple, pear and other ciders become less popular while their less fruity counterparts have thrived? Are these shoppers migrating to hard seltzer?

Lager: Seven of the top 10 lager brands have delivered growth in the past year. How have they done it? And what is determining the most popular?

Ale: Ale has recorded strong growth in the past year, according to Nielsen. What's behind this?

Craft: Brewdog Hazy Jane experienced outstanding growth this year, jumping from £5.4m to £23.6m in sales to become the sixth leading drink in ales and stouts. What can account for such exponential growth? And could we see similar booms in products from other craft beer producers?

Low/no alcohol: Many consumers are seeking to reduce their alcohol intake by switching to low and no alcohol beers and ciders. From table beers with around 3% ABV to beverages with only trace amounts, the category has exploded, with Guinness 0.0 hitting the shelves in August. How are consumers warming to the category?

4x Innovations: Four new products or product ranges that have not appeared in The Grocer, including launch date, rsp and hi-res image

Feature two: Spirits

By Emma Weinbren Emma.Weinbren@thegrocer.co.uk

Is this the year of whisky? With four of the top 10 fastest growing brands being whiskies – and only one a gin – the drink is clearly proving exciting to consumers. So can the spirit continue to excite drinkers? What kind of innovation are shoppers looking for? And how are other kinds of spirits faring as whisky gets so much attention?

Marketing: Have whisky brands changed their marketing/ranges in any way? And who are they targeting?

RTDs: The closure of hospitality meant that many have tried to remake cocktails at home. But some have also opted for the convenience of ready-to-drink cocktails. The result is that the segment grew by £60.9m in the past year, an increase of 15.3%.

NPD: With on-trade the traditional place for consumers to try new spirits, you might have thought that the flow of new products in the category would have slowed. Luckily for those who like variety, there was still plenty to be trialling. What has done best?

Whisky experiences: Johnnie Walker has launched its new experiential venue in Edinburgh. Is anyone else going down this route? And who else is this appealing to?

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Feature three: wine

By Daniel Woolfson Daniel.Woolfson@thegrocer.co.uk

As home cooking grew during the lockdown, so too did wine sales – some for the food, some for the chef. At the same time occasions for celebrating became scarcer, with champagne and other sparkling wine taking a hit as a result. So will the category bounce back to normal if pandemic restrictions remain lifted? Or are our wine-drinking habits going to persist?

Trade rules: The wine trade has been buffeted by changing trade regulations. Only in September the government began consulting on removing the requirement for wine imported to the UK to be accompanied by a VI-1 certificate. While some welcomed the move, others warned that a great deal of complexity remains. So how will these changing rules affect things going forwards?

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