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THE WINE AND SPIRIT WEEKLY

LWTF NEWS

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Strong impact of Conference

More than 200 top executives in the trade – with more than just a sprinkling of European buyers and producers – were given plenty to muse about following the third LWTF Conference on Monday at the Olympia Conference Centre

THE INTRIGUING theme “Why aren't you getting your share?” was addressed by eight different speakers representing different aspects of the wine business. The conference got off to a highly impressive start with a dramatic video burst highlighting consumer confusion to the Bucksfizz music of “Making Your Mind Up”.

This set the stage for Chrissy Burns to put over the consumer viewpoint, gleaned during the many hours of one-to-one research with wine consumers. Supplying companies have to listen (and to respond) to what the consumers are thinking, if they are to get them to trade up. “The trade must undertake dialogue with the consumer which is meaningful to the consumer. By knowing as much about the consumer as about its product would enable the trade to sell a lot more wine.”

Allan Cheesman, Sainsbury's trading director, offered some solutions on how retailers could do more to respond to consumer expectations, and Michael Paul, director of Southcorp Wines Europe, gave a seven-point checklist to producers who seriously want to grow their own, as well as retailers brands.

John Emerson, director of EEM Advertising, highlighted the difference between selling commodities and marketing brands and gave some interesting answers to producers who were not lowest cost producers and not possessing major clout with



major multiples, but needed to sell above £4 per bottle and wanting better returns from business than was possible with multiples.

David Kemp, director of ABN Amro Bank, ended the pre-morning session with the effects of a single currency in the single market – now made very much more likely under the new Labour Government.

The second stage of Monday's conference was kicked off by Geoffrey Wheating, strategic planning manager of Express Newspapers, who questioned how effective was the role of the influencers? Wheating's outspoken views have been forged through first hand drinks experience and the different world of IT and computer games markets.

Jane Hunt, director of Wines of South Africa, revealed recent research had convinced her that there is a long-term commitment from importers to make a feature of South African wines. Core consumers, too,

had interesting perceptions on the relevance of the different wine producing countries regarding levels of quality, and what is important to them when considering a purchase.

Jason Danziger, director of wine purchasing for the Pelican Group, gave his advice on what the on-trade looks for in its suppliers of wine and how much its marketing of wine differs from the off-trade. Customer reassurance on the one hand and a wide choice on the other are an integral mix for the successful restaurant wine list.

The conference was wrapped by Gareth Hammond, business sales manager of Stats MR (AC Nielsen), who compared the trends of the past with some predictions for the future. While wine remains the least branded of any liquor market, this seems now likely to change. The top ten brands are growing by 10 per cent annum, four times the rate of the total light wine market last year.

What's on this week

- **Wine Traders:** Two of Italy's winemakers, Stefano Inama and Elisabetta Forado, will be showing barrel-fermented Soave.
- **Zonin UK:** Over 40 wines from the portfolio of over 150 will be available to taste each day, including single estate wines from Aquileia, Oltrepo Pavese, Piemonte, Veneto and Tuscany.
- **Eaux de Vie:** Everyday between 11 and 1 pm there will be a Pastin Janet tasting, followed in the afternoon by the New Ragnua, Sabourin, Marquis de Puysegur Armagnac and Grappas Bonaventura Maschio.

Harpers Wine of the Show

YOU THOUGHT the polls were over! *Harpers* is on the lookout for the most stunning wine being shown at the London Wine Trade Fair. We are inviting ALL visitors to come to the *Harpers* stand and let us know which wine you rated best at the show. It may be an undiscovered Ukrainian or a tried and tested claret. Simply write your top wine (just one) on the back of your business card and return it to us before leaving the Fair. *Harpers* is located on stand D4, opposite the main entrance. The winning wine will be announced in *Harpers* in June. Please do take part – this could be the most representative wine election ever.