

U.S. wine consumption passes France's

By Ryan Flinn, Bloomberg News

The United States passed France as the world's largest wine-consuming nation for the first time, lifted by its larger population and an interest in wine-and-cheese culture among young Americans.

Wine shipments to the United States climbed 2 percent to 329.7 million cases last year, according to Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates, a wine-industry consulting firm in Woodside. That compares with 320.6 million for France.

While the French still eclipse Americans in per-capita consumption, the U.S. wine industry is benefiting from a population of almost 311 million people – five times the size of France's – and more young people becoming interested in the drink. Marketers also are using social media to reach a new generation of consumers, said Jon Fredrikson, the firm's president.

“Wine is really gaining traction in the U.S. – it's becoming an accepted part of everyday life,” Fredrikson said. “That's a radical change over the past two decades.”

The retail value of U.S. wine sales rose 4 percent to \$30 billion in 2010, according to Gomberg, Fredrikson. California's output accounted for 61 percent of the volume. The state's worldwide wine shipments climbed 2 percent to 241.8 million cases.

“With the U.S. being the biggest, it means we're a target for everyone in America and around the world that produces wine,” Fredrikson said. “Everyone wants to be here.”

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