

Craft beers bubble over in popularity

CHICAGO, US: While spirits barely edged out beer as the most popular alcoholic beverage enjoyed by consumers between 2009 and 2010, the market has hardly fallen flat. According to latest research from Mintel, domestic beer is the clear favourite, followed by imported varieties; but 33% of all beer drinkers aged 21 and up are drinking less imported beer because they're drinking more domestic craft beer instead.



Only a modest percentage of beer drinkers (13%) say they prefer domestic craft or microbrew beers (compared to 43% for domestic and 22% for imported), but an impressive 59% say they like to try them, and 51% would try more craft or microbrew beers if they knew more about them. It seems consumer education is the key to cultivating growth in the craft/microbrew market, according to Mintel research.

Craft beers gain ground

"Craft beers have increased in popularity in the past five years, and enjoyed a boost in their consumer base," says Garim Goel Lal, senior analyst at Mintel. "Craft beer is most popular with the 25-34-year-old crowd, so manufacturers would be well to target this demographic and educate them more about artisan beers."

However, price is a deterrent for some drinkers when it comes to trying or purchasing craft beers. Forty-one percent of drinkers only enjoy craft/microbrew beers as a treat because they are expensive. Meanwhile, 29% report drinking less craft beer than they did a year ago because of the price. But the market still shows resilience, as 29% of consumers who reported drinking more beer than they did a year ago say they are drinking more craft/microbrew beer as an affordable luxury.

Good news for beer

"The recession hit many industries hard, and the beer market was no exception," notes Lal. "The good news is, it appears that the influence of the recession is becoming less pronounced on the beer market in terms of losing volume. The number of beer drinkers who are drinking less beer has decreased since 2009."

Mintel's research also found that the package their beverage of choice comes in is just as important as the beer itself for the consumer: 63% of beer drinkers prefer a bottle, 20% prefer to drink their beer from a can and 8% are partial to draft beer served from a large container. Just 2% prefer a keg.

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