



# Going Global

## World Lager

**We know the other man's grass is always greener, but does it also hold true that the other man's beer is always hoppier, more refreshing or just more appealing?**

The sales figures certainly show no sign of UK consumers taste for exotic lagers diminishing. CGA data for the year to May 2014 shows that world lager sales in the on-trade were up a very healthy 7% by volume and an even more impressive 10% by value, to £1,373m. The fact that value growth is outpacing volume indicates that consumers are prepared to pay higher prices for imported brands.

Authenticity plays a big part in this trend, believes Neil Kitching of Cave Direct. The company imports the Paulaner range of beers from Germany, along with its stablemate brands including Hacker-Pschorr and Hopf. "People are looking for provenance and real history, and Germany is definitely thought of as one of the great brewing nations."

The fact that Germans are less reserved than the Brits in celebrating their beer culture also helps. "Pubs are very keen to use a brand like Paulaner to add authenticity, and this year we have seen a big upsurge in interest from pubs running Oktoberfest events." Paulaner beer steins and ceramic fonts are available to add to this authentic feel.

Other brands highlighting the food and drink culture of their home nation include Czech lager Krušovice, which has focused on food matching at trade events.

### The Light and The Dark

Krušovice has taken a cue from fellow Czech brand Budweiser Budvar in offering both golden and dark variants in the UK market.

Also with a darker variant is Krombacher, which spotlights its range in London's beerhall-style Bierschenke venue. With the flagship Krombacher Pils reporting UK volume sales up by 48% in the first nine months of 2014, the brand has launched the Bavarian-style Krombacher Hell, initially as an on-trade exclusive.

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### Cafe Society

SABMiller has taken the approach a step further for its Czech beer brand Kozel. The Via bar in West India Quay has been reinvented as a continental style beer café, featuring a Kozel-branded bar, authentic Czech food benches and even an entrance arch replicating the one at the Kozel brewery.

Nigel Wright, chief operating officer of Via owner TGG, says: "Customers in and around West India Quay were ready for something a bit different. Kozel's image is a perfect fit for the traditional, stripped-down feel we wanted for the site."

Another SABMiller brand, Pilsner Urquell, is served from 880-pint copper tanks at a number of pubs, with weekly refills delivered



## Euro Stars

Although Germans and Czech brands are doing well, Genna Burchell, brand manager for Spanish brand Estrella Damm at Charles Wells, makes the point that "Spanish and Italian world lagers are the main driver of category growth".

CGA data shows that Estrella Damm itself accounted for 20% of category growth for world lager in the year to May 2014, despite being listed in only 6% of world lager stockists. Promoted as the 'Beer from Barcelona', it is supported by branded POS and glassware as well as a white ceramic font.

These lagers from sunnier climes are also capitalising on the new-found respect for canned beer in trendier circles. These include Portugal's Sagres brand, sold in cans by JD Wetherspoon, as well as Estrella Damm. Burchell says: "As well as responding to consumer trends, the can has real benefit for outlets and is easy to stack and serve, cools quicker and is great for those events when bottles or glasses aren't suitable."

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## The Craft Effect

John Critchley, commercial director of importer Morgenrot, sums up: "Consumers are showing more of an interest in where and how different beers are made and with what. Lager is still showing the biggest growth within our portfolio, with our Alhambra, Windhoek, Quilmes and Krombacher Pils all having strong years.

"The craft trend isn't turning people away from lager, it is just making consumers appreciate different styles of lagers and also what a good quality lager with real provenance is."

Peter Karsten agrees "The rise of craft beer has definitely helped the world beer sector as a whole. Yes, competition has increased which obviously makes it difficult but it is great for consumer choice. Furthermore, it is helping to breed an increasingly adventurous consumer who is looking for real provenance, quality, interesting beer styles and flavour profiles as opposed to just something wet, fizzy and alcoholic. This shift has definitely been one reason for the growth our brands have seen

## World Champions

In the face of so much activity, the major brewers are also putting heavyweight support into maintaining their market share in the world lager sector. AB InBev has major plans for Corona, while Carlsberg UK is promising that world beer will be an "area of focus in response to the exploding demand" during 2015. Carlsberg UK claims an 18 percent share of world beer in the UK market, with San Miguel, the number one draught world lager in the on-trade and Staropramen the best-selling Czech beer. Staropramen has been backed by a training programme for bar staff which focuses on the authentic 'Prague head' serve delivered by a bespoke tap on the Staropramen front.

directly from the brewery in Plzen. Pilsner Urquell master brewer, Robert Lobovsky says: "The tanks ensure that the beer is kept at the right temperature and in perfect condition until the time it is poured into the glass."

## Not The Usual

Not all world lagers take the traditional approach. Belgian brand Vedett has developed links with live music through a 'Boom Box' tour of food and drinks festivals, and support for the Bushstock new music festival. Vedett has also extended its successful personalised bottle label promotion to include personalised branded travel card holders.

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## Transatlantic Style

US brewers have a long track record in reinventing European beer styles. Huber, founded in 1845 by German and Swiss immigrants has produced a bock continuously since 1899 - excluding the Prohibition period - and dark lager Huber Bock is now available in the UK through distributor World Beers alongside the lighter Huber Premium.

Director Peter Karsten comments: "We've been inundated in the last few months from outlets searching for dark lagers and bocks, possibly due to the increased German interest post World Cup."