

Raise the bar: rethinking your alcohol range

Shoppers are drinking differently and expecting more from your alcohol range. Here's how you can create new opportunities for category growth

Convenience stores remain the key destination for on-the-go and impulse purchases, with shoppers buying around social occasions rather than planned missions. The summer season brings a buzz of out-of-home activities guaranteed to boost your alcohol sales. As people head out to sporting events, barbecues, picnics and get-togethers with friends, they'll look to your store to provide occasion solutions.

These occasions are fuelled by the need for immediate consumption, making them particularly well-suited to the convenience channel while shifting shopper behaviours continue to influence the

category. Younger customers are reshaping drinking trends by moderating consumption and seeking high-quality products across both sharing and on-the-go formats. Updating your range is key to meeting these changing expectations and appealing to this powerful demographic.

Quality over quantity

Customers are drinking alcohol less frequently in response to emerging health and wellness trends but trading up when they do. The 'drink less but better' mindset is shaping category performance, which will be vital to harness during summer social occasions when shoppers are willing to spend more for quality and experience.

This shift is clear in the wine category, as premium options priced at £7 and above have grown by 1.7%, whereas those priced under £7 have fallen 7% year on year¹. There's a £8-9 sweet spot that sees the most sales uplift.

New Zealand and Chilean white wines are seeing

In the UK, 22.7 million drinkers said they had moderated their alcohol intake in the past year, helping to drive alcohol-free beer sales up by **13.7%**

(Source: Drinks Retailing, Analysis: What Will Drive Category Growth in 2026, 03.02.26)

successful sales, and Malbec is gaining popularity. More than a third (34%) of shoppers are making spontaneous in-store wine purchases, so ranging is becoming increasingly important². Read the **Focus On Wine guide** for more information on bestsellers and effective ranging.

This growing demand for quality flavours and value is evident in the surge of world lager and craft-style beer options, which now account for 33.8% of the total value within the UK beer market³. Customers are seeking internationally inspired flavours to elevate drinking occasions, so by investing in drinking trends such as fruit-flavoured lagers your store can remain competitive within an increasingly dynamic market.

Ready, steady, go!

It's no surprise that RTDs and alcoholic RTDs (ARTDs) are one of the fastest-growing segments in UK convenience, currently outperforming many traditional alcohol categories⁴. The category is undeniably driven by the ease, portability and

premium appeal of the RTD format, being highly suited to impulse-led purchases.

Emerging brands and flavours have positioned the format to sit where indulgence and convenience cross over. Canned cocktails, spritz-style drinks and spirit-based RTDs are leading growth, supported by new product development and flavour innovation.

Which format?

As social occasions increase during the summer season, maintain a balance of different formats. For the shoppers on their way to large gatherings, offer 440ml and 568ml multipack formats of **bestselling ciders and beer**. Single cans of cocktails, large bottles of beers and wine are perfect for immediate consumption and smaller occasions.

Chilled availability is key to success here. Products that are both cold and visible in chillers consistently outperform ambient stock. Consider having secondary sittings of chilled drinks, particularly during warmer periods.

(Source: ¹Drinks Retailing, Analysis: What Will Drive Category Growth in 2026, 03.02.26)

(Sources: ²Accolade Original Research "Blueprint for Growth" 2024; ³Nielsen IQ, RMS, year to January 2026; ⁴SmartView Convenience 52w Value & Units MAT 23.03.2)

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TOP TIP

Use social channels to spotlight chilled beer, wine and spirit ranges, new flavours and no/low options for summer get-togethers. Keep content responsible and age-appropriate, helping adult shoppers find the right drinks when social plans come together.

(Source: NielsenIQ, *How Moderation is Changing the UK Beverage Basket*, 11.11.26)

40% of RTD sales occur in summer, making the chiller a vital factor

(Source: Nielsen, *Impulse RTD, Unit ROS, MAT to 04.01.25*)



Placement near snacks, barbecue ranges and meal solutions can work to increase basket spend.

Less alcohol, more occasion

No and low alcohol continues to grow in visibility and is becoming a powerful behavioural shift in the drinks market, with 54% of UK consumers reducing their alcohol intake⁵.

A tight range of bestselling, known brands is more effective than over-ranging the category. Alcohol-free lager remains the strongest performer, particularly when positioned alongside mainstream beer. A limited range of no and low wine can also be popular. Check out the **Focus On No and Low Alcohol guide** for advice on building your range.

Small pack formats drive 90% of no and low sales,

so they should be prioritised. Chilled availability is again crucial – when cold and ready to drink, no and low products feel more aligned with summer consumption occasions. The key is ensuring no and low feels part of the same social mission as the wider beers, wines and spirits range.

(Sources: ⁵NielsenIQ, *How Moderation is Changing the UK Beverage Basket*, 11.11.25; ⁶Circana, *Symbols & Independents*, 52w MAT to 13.09.25)



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