

# The bottle that doesn't rotate disappears

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*In the first half of 2026, the wine market shows smaller, more frequent orders and more selective lists. Carlo Alberto Sagna explains how restaurateurs and wine shop owners build assortments around real rotation, why the premium segment must communicate clear value, which wines attract interest, and what to expect for the rest of the year.*

Rather than a generalized contraction, what emerges is a change in the way of buying and building assortments. Restaurateurs and wine shop owners are reducing stocks, increasing the frequency of orders and evaluating the role of each individual label with greater care.

In this scenario, the premium segment also continues to find space, but can no longer rely only on price, reputation or the

prestige of the denomination. **Identity, coherence and a concrete reason to buy are needed.** We spoke about it with Carlo Alberto Sagna, commercial director of Sagna, a historic Italian company specialized in the distribution of high-end wines and spirits.

## **We have reached mid-2026. What assessment can you draw for Sagna and for the market compared with the same period of 2025?**

The market remains complex and marked by an uneven trend. The geopolitical and macroeconomic context, shaped by conflicts and international tensions, continues to affect the confidence and planning capacity of operators. **Compared with the same period of 2025, we see above all greater selectivity in purchases.** Customers evaluate more carefully the real rotation of labels, their intended use and the overall economic sustainability of the assortment. Awareness has grown of the weight that each label can have on margins and on the balance of the wine list or the by-the-glass offering.

For Sagna, this means operating in a less expansive and more reasoned market, in which the quality of selection, the reliability of service and the ability to support customers through consultation, training, events and masterclasses become even more important. **We therefore do not see only a reduction in consumption: we see a market that requires more precise, motivated and sustainable choices over time.**

## **How are the purchases and assortments of restaurants and wine shops changing?**

Caution is evident. **In general, we receive smaller but more frequent orders, with greater attention to liquidity and warehouse management.** Planning remains indispensable, especially for the most requested labels or in moments of strong seasonality, but many customers prefer to keep lower

stocks and restock with greater continuity. One increasingly buys according to actual rotation. External factors, such as the weather and the course of the season, also directly affect consumption and purchasing decisions.

After the post-pandemic phase, during which many lists had expanded, today we are seeing a return to more targeted selections. I would not speak of an impoverishment of the offering, but of a more conscious construction of the assortment. **Venues look for breadth where it is truly useful and depth only in the categories where there is concrete demand or potential to develop.**

**Each label must have a clear function:** by the glass, pairing, aperitif, everyday consumption or a bottle intended for a special occasion. The goal is to build more coherent and sustainable lists, both from an economic and from a quantitative point of view.

**Which price ranges are holding up best?  
Does the premium segment continue to have space?**

**The ranges that manage to communicate their value clearly are holding up.** Accessible labels with a recognizable identity continue to perform well, as do premium products when they offer coherence, reputation and a credible story. The most delicate range is often the middle one: expensive enough to require a conscious choice, but not always distinctive enough to be perceived as unique.

In our case, the average price exceeds 35 euros and the catalog sits almost entirely in the premium segment. **For us, however, premium is not a simple price range: it is the result of research work based on quality, authenticity and the solidity of the production project.** Demand continues to exist, but it is more selective. Restaurateurs, wine shop owners and

end consumers ask for stronger reasons before recognizing a certain value in a bottle.

## **Which wines are attracting the most interest in 2026? And how do international labels perform compared with Italian ones?**

In 2026, the wines that are working best combine recognizability, drinkability and gastronomic versatility. **Whites show good momentum, both when they come from prestigious territories and when they suit the aperitif and more immediate consumption.** Champagne, Burgundy and the Loire remain important reference points. Fresher reds, less extracted and with low alcohol content, also meet current taste well. Sparkling wines continue to occupy a central position, while rosé has now become a more stable presence, especially in certain seasonal and territorial contexts.

Among the Italian areas showing the greatest vitality, we note interest in several territories of Sicily, in Maremma and in the Aosta Valley, which is entering lists with greater continuity. Curiosity toward the New World also remains alive. **International wines maintain a strong appeal, but the relationship between fame, price and rotation has become more delicate.** Champagne retains significant attractiveness thanks to its recognizability and the symbolic value of the category. Denominations such as Chablis and some Loire territories also continue to be very requested.

**In the higher price ranges, however, selling requires more careful work.** Consumers compare prices more, seek information and are less willing to recognize value in products lacking a clear identity or an adequate positioning on the market. In parallel, many Italian wines benefit from an effective combination of territoriality, perceived quality and economic accessibility. Wine tourism also plays an important role: the

possibility of linking the wine to a visited territory or to a lived experience strengthens the story and can facilitate sales.

## **Looking at the second half of 2026, what are your expectations for the wine market?**

**Rather than a clear recovery, we expect a consolidation of the dynamics observed in the first months of the year.** We therefore foresee a market that is still selective, characterized by prudent consumption and strong attention to rotation, stock management and the correct positioning of labels.

Much will depend on the general climate of confidence, the economic context and the course of the season, which continues to affect consumption significantly in the out-of-home sector. **We believe, however, that those rewarded will be above all operators capable of building coherent assortments, understandable to the consumer and economically sustainable.**

## **What are today's main critical issues in the relationship between distributors, restaurants and wine shops?**

The main critical issues concern price pressure, credit management and staff training. Competition imposes greater attention to margins on the whole supply chain, while on the financial front great prudence is necessary. At the same time, many venues must deal with a very broad offering, staff not always sufficiently prepared and increasingly informed consumers. **It is therefore not enough to put a label on the list: one must know how to explain its value, identify the correct positioning and turn it into a truly sellable proposal.**

In this context, the relationship between distributor and

customer must go beyond simple supply. Continuity of service, logistical efficiency, commercial support and training are needed. **The distributor must help restaurants and wine shops build assortments consistent with the venue's identity, its clientele, its territory and the real possibilities of rotation.**

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## **Key points:**

1. **Order smaller quantities more often to protect liquidity** and keep stock aligned with real rotation.
2. **Give every wine a clear role** on the list: by the glass, pairing, aperitif, everyday drinking or special occasion.
3. **Premium wines need a clear identity**, coherence and a credible story to justify their price.
4. **Favor recognizable, drinkable, versatile wines**, such as whites, fresher reds, sparkling wines and rosé.
5. **Support clients with training, consultation and logistics**, helping them turn each label into a sellable proposal.