

Wine at Conad, an assortment that evolves with consumers: Alessandra Manzato's vision

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Alessandra Manzato, Conad's Group Category Manager for Grocery Food and Beverages, explains how the retailer outperformed the wine market in 2025 despite declining still red wine sales, driven by sparkling wine growth and the rise of the domestic aperitif. She details Conad's cooperative model, balancing national strategy with local assortment choices and strengthening its private label wine offer.

In the Italian retail landscape, wine is no longer just a bottle to place on the shelf, but the beating heart of a radical transformation in consumption habits. With Alessandra

Manzato, Group Category Manager for Grocery Food and Beverages at Conad, we explored how large scale retail is navigating this perfect storm: on one hand the structural decline of classic red wines, on the other the unstoppable rise of a “domestic aperitif” that is changing the geography of conviviality.

In this analysis, a business model emerges that rejects the flattening effect of large scale, favoring instead a complex, yet effective, dance between national strategy and territorial sensitivity. Manzato takes us behind the scenes of a category that, between rationalizing product references and enhancing the private label brand, seeks to stay true to tradition while continuing to capture the lifestyle of an increasingly informal, demanding and value conscious customer.

Conad stated it “outperformed the market” in wine in 2025, containing the decline in volume while growing in value. Without going into reserved strategies, what were the underlying reasons behind this performance?

Conad’s performance, superior to the market, is reflected in the 2025 closing figures and is also confirmed by medium term trends, the result of stronger growth in sparkling wines and a more contained slowdown in wine overall. These results can be attributed to a management of levers that rides and anticipates changes in our customers’ needs, made effective by the distinctive characteristics of our system, which allows us to combine a national vision with knowledge of territorial specificities.

The domestic aperitif is talked about as

an increasingly central “moment.” Is this a trend that Conad intercepted proactively, or something you saw emerging from sell out data and then rode? And above all, do you think it is structural or could it fade?

The domestic aperitif is not a passing fad, but the expression of a structural shift in consumption. Conad gradually intercepted it through data and chose to interpret it actively, rethinking assortments and consumption occasions. **It is a trend consistent with more informal lifestyles, with the destructuring of meals and with a search for convenience without giving up conviviality and gratification, and for all these reasons, it is here to stay.** Wine, especially in its freshest and most versatile expression, plays a central role in this evolution.

Still red wines continue to lose ground structurally. When an entire subcategory declines persistently, at what point does the decision to reduce the number of references kick in? And how is that choice communicated to suppliers who may be long standing partners?

When a subcategory declines structurally, the decision is not defensive but strategic: fewer references, more clarity in the offer. **In the case of the more structured still red wines, we work on greater selectivity, keeping the iconic denominations while reducing redundancies.** Dialogue with suppliers is transparent and focused on the long term: the goal is to realign the category with the customer’s real consumption occasions, rather than to exit it.

The Conad model, cooperative, with a network of associated entrepreneurs, has one particular feature: assortment decisions are never entirely centralized. How much does this structure impact the management of the wine category? Is it an advantage in terms of local roots, or does it complicate the consistency of the national offer?

The cooperative model is a competitive advantage, because it guarantees territorial roots and local relevance, without losing brand consistency thanks to a shared category framework, clear segment roles and common quality and positioning objectives. **The combination of central vision and local flexibility allows us to respond better to an increasingly polarized and selective market.** This balance is even more important in a category like wine, where origin, identity and local tradition hold key value for the consumer. In this context, the private label brand is the true common thread of Conad's offer: a tool of trust that makes quality accessible, guides the customer's choices and gives the category consistency at a national level.

Key points

- 1. Conad's wine sales outperformed the market in 2025, growing in value despite a volume decline.**
- 2. The domestic aperitif trend is structural, reshaping assortments toward fresher, more versatile wines.**
- 3. Still red wines are being rationalized through fewer, more selective references, not category exit.**

4. **Conad's cooperative model blends national strategy with local assortment flexibility** across its network.
5. **The private label brand works as a trust tool**, ensuring national consistency and accessible quality.