Why young people stop drinking wine

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 20 Novembre 2024



Millennials are abandoning wine due to high costs, poor marketing, and perceived elitism. Blogger Nate Westfall explains the impact of pandemic-driven price increases, ineffective wine advertising, and exclusive winery experiences. He calls for more inclusive and affordable approaches to revitalize the wine industry and attract younger consumers, stressing the urgency of action.

My recent editorial criticizing **demagogic crusades** against wines deemed too expensive sparked numerous comments, most of which supported my thesis. However, as expected, there were also dissenting opinions worth discussing.

I will return to those dissenting opinions soon, but today I want to highlight a critical aspect that reinforces my

argument about the **risks of overemphasizing "too expensive" wines**.

This reflection was inspired by Nate Westfall, a blogger who published an article on Medium with the telling title: **"I'm a Millennial, and This Is Why I Stopped Drinking Wine."**

The opening of Westfall's article is unequivocal: "Identifying why so many millennials are abandoning wine has never been difficult for me. While much of the wine industry is busy attending panel discussions, online courses, and endless debates about why we are losing market share among young people, I've always known the reasons."

Westfall continues, "A solution to this persistent problem will not only restore wine to its former glory but also define the next era of the industry."

Westfall, 34, was born in 1990 and identifies as part of the so-called **"peak millennials"**, the largest cohort in the U.S. population, with approximately 4.75 million people (plus another 4.74 million 33-year-olds born in 1991).

"Like many of my peers," Westfall writes, "my wife and I are doing well. We're not wealthy, but we can afford small luxuries if we want to. This means there's still room in the budget for a wine club subscription."

Westfall describes himself as a young wine enthusiast but reveals: **"However, I canceled all my wine club subscriptions and haven't purchased a single bottle for myself in over a year."** A surprising confession from someone who once seemed to fit the profile of an ideal wine consumer. What caused this change?

The first reason, believe it or not, is **cost**.

"The most obvious factor that reduced my interest in buying wine is the **cost**," writes Westfall. But how can an

economically stable U.S. citizen struggle to purchase wine?

Westfall offers an explanation: “At the start of the pandemic, after the first government stimulus checks, the wine industry collectively raised prices. Economically, it made sense to manage limited inventory. However, with inflation rising, the middle consumer segment has been excluded from wine as a regular consumer good. Many of us have switched to cheaper alternatives like beer, seltzer, or pre-mixed cocktails.”

If Westfall’s concerns were limited to price alone, one could argue this is merely an American problem, where even **domestic wines** are often more expensive than imported ones.

However, Westfall also criticizes the wine industry’s **poor marketing strategies**. “I’m amazed at how rarely I see examples of wine marketing. I’ve never seen a wine ad on a streaming service, and social media has long stopped showing me wine-related content. Wine marketing remains heavily focused on baby boomers, which is ineffective for millennials.”

Westfall doesn’t stop there: “When I visit a winery today, I feel unwelcome. In the past, I remember having extraordinary experiences. Today, wine culture seems to project exclusivity, targeting only wealthy customers and creating an elitist environment that alienates younger generations.”

Finally, Westfall suggests his recipe for reversing this trend: **“The key to revitalizing wine lies in returning the industry to its roots—creating more inclusive, affordable experiences, with a greater market presence and a welcoming environment for all.”**

The U.S. blogger raises points that may not be new but are undeniably **urgent**. The wine industry cannot afford to wait for things to change on their own or for markets to recover without making meaningful adjustments.

The truth is evident: **the time for excuses is over.**

Key Points

1. Millennials cite **high costs** as a primary reason for abandoning wine.
2. The wine industry’s marketing strategies are **outdated and ineffective** for younger audiences.
3. **Exclusive winery environments** alienate younger consumers, creating a barrier to entry.
4. Pandemic-era price increases and **inflation** have pushed consumers to cheaper alternatives.
5. A shift toward **inclusive, affordable experiences** is essential to revitalize wine culture.