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# THE PACKAGING & PRESENTATION OF WINE

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The UK wine trade faces tough times. The duty escalator on alcohol combined with the government's belt tightening measures mean that households are focusing even more on better value wines (WSTA 2012).

In this context, wine merchants need to drive consumer value to maintain sales. Beyond a further focus on quality in wine selection, the presentation of wine, with the relatively recent changes in the EU regulations, is set to play a key role. Wagner et al. (2010) deem wine packaging '*the single most important interface with the consumer*'. Why? What makes the presentation of wine successful?

This paper first aims at listing all the visual components of wine packaging. Then, the presentation of wine and what it can and must express to be successful in the UK will be discussed. Finally, two examples will provide further insights on what makes good and bad wine packaging.

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## I. THE COMPONENTS OF WINE PACKAGING

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Although the label can play an essential role in the consumer decision at the shelf, there are many more components to the presentation of a wine.

The **container**, its shape, size and weight are key visual aspects when considering a wine. According to Martin Campion, Product Manager at Laithwaites, '*taller, heavier glass bottles tend to be perceived as more premium*'.

Similarly, the **type of closure** can play a role in the perceived value of the wine (Marin & Durham 2007). The **capsule** surrounding the closure usually complements the label's design.

The **label** is an essential component of the presentation of wine. The front label design and back label information are, along with price, grape variety and recommendation, decisive influencers in the purchase of wine (McGarry Wolf & Thompson 2010, Vinitrac 2008).

The label can be complemented with **add-ons** such as stickers or collarettes. While most are used to communicate awards, they can also help identify a wine as belonging to a sub-range (Image 1).

Since 48.1% of all wines in the UK are sold in supermarkets (Datamonitor 2010), the influence of **shipping cases** is only relevant in more specialist outlets or independent shops (Image 2).

**Image 1. Example of add-on sticker (Red Heads sub-range)**



**Image 2. Examples of shipping cases displayed in Talking Wines shop (Cirencester, UK).**



Table 1 below lists the various components of wine packaging.

**Table 1. Components of wine packaging**

Container	Closures	Bottle Info	Shipping cases	Bottle Add-ons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bottle</li> <li>• Box</li> <li>• Bota-bag</li> <li>• Tetra-pak</li> <li>• Plastic</li> <li>• Multi-packs</li> <li>• Aluminium (cans)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural cork</li> <li>• Synthetic cork</li> <li>• Constructed cork</li> <li>• Screw cap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front label</li> <li>• Back label</li> <li>• Micro labels</li> <li>• Capsules</li> <li>• Printed corks and neck labels</li> <li>• Barcodes &amp; numbered bottles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of materials</li> <li>• Inserts</li> <li>• Cases form design when placed together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collarettes</li> <li>• Stickers</li> </ul>

Source: based on Wagner et al. (2010)

## II. WHAT WINE PACKAGING CAN AND MUST EXPRESS

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Focusing on the UK, this section aims at discussing the legal, societal and commercial considerations of wine packaging.

Primarily, the wine packaging must be legally eligible for sale in the destination market. The UK, as part of the European Union is subject to the rules set by the European Commission. The rules concern all wines, produced either in or outside the EU and are enforced in the UK by 'Defra, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and local authorities, the latter being responsible for all enforcement in the retail sector' (FSA 2011).

At the centre of these rules are the labelling provisions from the EU Regulations 479/2008 and 607/2009. These state mandatory and optional information to be featured on the label depending on the type of wine (mainly still or sparkling), where it was produced (EU or Non-EU), and if it is from a protected area of origin (i.e. with a geographical designation of origin) or not (Table 2). These rules also apply to all wine containers sold in the UK.

**Table 2. EU packaging requirements by style and origin of wine**

	STILL WINES		SPARKLING WINES
	Produced in EU	Produced in Third country (NON-EU)	Produced in EU or Third country (NON-EU)
Label	<p><b>1) PDO/PGI</b>  <b>Mandatory:</b>                      &gt; Country of origin*, wine                      &gt; Geographical designation*                      &gt; Traditional expression and/or PGI/PDO*                      &gt; Bottler details*                      &gt; Nominal volume* (e.g. 75cl)                      &gt; Actual Alcoholic strength* (e.g. 11.5% vol.)                      &gt; 'Contains sulphites' statement in English if SO2 &gt; 10mg/litre                      &gt; Lot number</p> <p><b>Optional (providing not misleading):</b>                      &gt; Vine variety (min. 85% of stated variety)                      &gt; Vintage (min. 85% of stated year)                      &gt; Trademark                      &gt; Residual sugar level                      &gt; Traditional terms                      &gt; Vineyard terms                      &gt; Community PGI/PDO/SO2 symbol</p> <p><b>2) Wine without geographical designation</b>  <b>Mandatory</b>                      &gt; Country of origin, type of wine*                      &gt; Bottler's details*                      &gt; Nominal volume*                      &gt; Alcoholic strength*                      &gt; 'Contains sulphites' statement in English if SO2 &gt; 10mg/litre                      &gt; Lot number</p> <p><b>Optional (providing not misleading):</b>                      &gt; Brand name                      &gt; Colour                      &gt; Residual sugar description (e.g. dry, medium dry)                      &gt; Vine varieties and/or vintage if approved under a Varietal Wine Certification Scheme.</p>	<p><b>1) With geographical indication</b>  <b>Mandatory:</b>                      &gt; Wine/country*                      &gt; Geographical indication*                      &gt; Nominal volume*                      &gt; Actual Alcoholic strength*                      &gt; 'Contains sulphites' statement in English if SO2 &gt; 10mg/litre                      &gt; Lot number                      &gt; Importer's details</p> <p><b>Optional (providing not misleading):</b>                      &gt; Vine variety (min. 85% of stated variety)                      &gt; Vintage (min. 85% of stated year)                      &gt; Trademark                      &gt; Residual sugar level                      &gt; Traditional terms                      &gt; Vineyard terms                      &gt; Community PGI/PDO/SO2 symbol</p> <p><b>2) Wine without geographical designation</b>  <b>Mandatory</b>                      &gt; Wine/country of origin*                      &gt; Bottler's details                      &gt; Nominal volume* (e.g. 75cl)                      &gt; Alcoholic strength* (e.g. 11.5% vol.)                      &gt; 'Contains sulphites' statement in English if SO2 exceeds 10mg/litre                      &gt; Lot number</p> <p><b>Optional (providing not misleading):</b>                      &gt; Brand name                      &gt; Colour                      &gt; Residual sugar description (e.g. dry, medium dry)</p>	<p><b>Mandatory:</b>                      &gt; Wine / country (provenance)*                      &gt; Category of product, one of the following defined terms i.e. sparkling wine, quality sparkling wine, aerated sparkling wine*                      &gt; Indication of sugar content*                      &gt; Nominal volume*                      &gt; Actual alcoholic strength*                      &gt; EU product – The producer or a vendor                      Third country product – the producer and importer                      &gt; 'Contains sulphites' statement</p> <p><b>Optional (providing not misleading):</b>                      A. For sparkling wines with protected designation or geographical indication and aerated sparkling wine recognised as Varietal:                      &gt; Vine variety (min. 85% of stated variety)                      &gt; Vintage (min. 85% of stated year)</p> <p>B. For sparkling wine with protected designation or geographical indication                      &gt; EC wines: agreed term from eBacchus                      &gt; Third Country wines: description                      &gt; Community symbol</p> <p>C. For sparkling wines with protected designation or geographical indication and quality sparkling wine                      &gt; 'Bottle fermented', 'Bottle fermented by the traditional method', 'Traditional method' or 'Classical method' or 'Classical Traditional Method'                      &gt; Crémant for white or rosé quality sparkling wines with protected designations of origin or with a geographical indication if they meet certain criteria</p>
Cork/closure	No wine-specific regulation.		
Bottle	Some bottle size proscribed. Nominal volume subject to Weights & Measures Act.		
Add-ons	No wine-specific regulation. Any claim made on the add-on cannot be misleading.		

\*: must be visible on label without having to turn the bottle

Source: UK Foods Standard Agency, Guide to wine labelling (2011)

Taking the example of still wine produced in the EU with a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), the following details are compulsory and must be visible without having to turn the bottle (Figure 1):

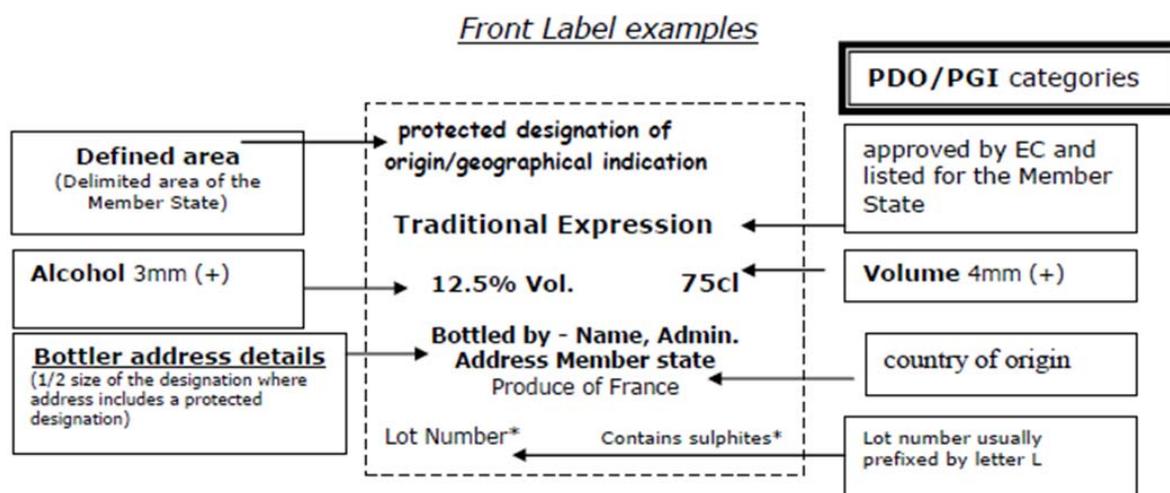
- Country of origin e.g. 'Produce of France'
- A traditional expression and/or Protected designation of Origin e.g. 'Saint-Émilion'
- Bottler details e.g. 'Mis en bouteille au Chateau Ausone a 33330 Saint-Émilion, France.'
- Nominal volume expressed in litres, centilitres or millilitres in figures e.g. '75cl'
- Actual alcoholic strength e.g. '13.5% vol.'

Other compulsory details can be placed somewhere else on the container. In this example, these are:

- The lot number
- 'Contains sulphites/sulfites/sulphur dioxide' in English when the sulphur dioxide exceeds 10mg/litre.

The winemaker or shipper can then add optional details. Following the same example, these could include vine variety, vintage, colour, traditional terms (e.g. *Reserva* in Spain), trademarks (brand name), agreed vineyard terms, the Community symbol and the logo for contains sulphur dioxide.

**Figure 1. European compulsory label details for a PDO/PGI still wine produced in the EU**



\* may appear elsewhere on the bottle  
 These examples are not a strict interpretation of the legislation; the position of the text is advisory

Source: UK Foods Standard Agency, *Guide to wine labelling* (2011)

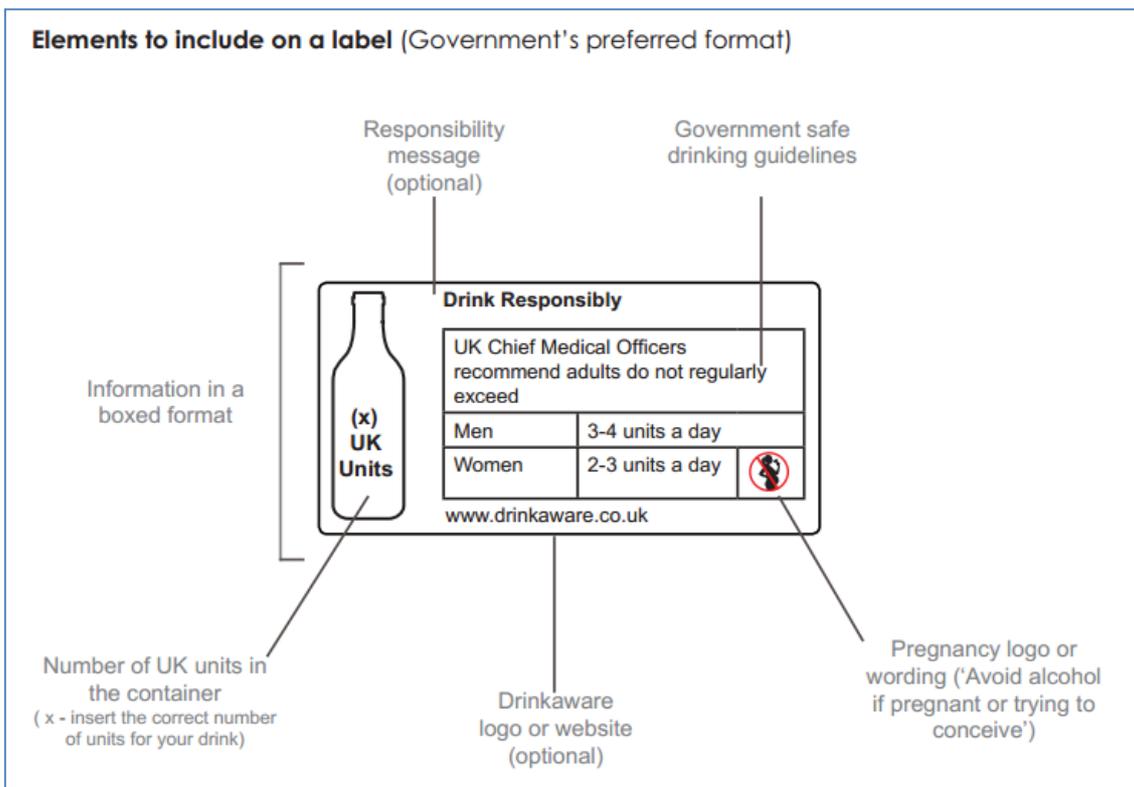
There are no wine-specific regulations for bottles, corks, closure systems or add-ons.

The EU regulations offer little debate on what can and must be expressed visually on wine packaging and the work of the Foods Standard Agency to simplify the wine labeller's task is outstanding. However, wine packaging presents much more than legally-abiding facts about the wine's colour or bottler. It is therefore important to consider wine packaging in relation to the society and the consumers it is sold to.

With the ever-growing concern about alcohol consumption in the UK, many wine companies such as Laithwaites –which, according to Martin Campion, Product Manager there, designs 50% of its wine range in-house– committed to a voluntary health labelling scheme to '*better inform consumers about responsible drinking*' (WSTA). Design guidelines state as mandatory information the number of UK units in the container and in a 125ml glass, the official recommended drinking guidelines and a warning for pregnant women. Optionally, wine labellers can also add a responsibility statement (e.g. 'Please drink responsibly') and the website address for [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk), an informational website (Figure 2).

From a business standpoint, the financial return of such vast (re)labelling exercise is close to nil as there is little evidence of its influence on purchase. However, the value of taking part is neither aesthetic nor financial but educational and political. In a society ridden by a heavy-drinking culture, wine merchants ought to take and show their responsibility voluntarily before the government makes it mandatory. While currently optional, following the market's responsible drinking guidelines should therefore prove essential.

**Figure 2. Drinkaware back label guidelines.**



Source: Drinkaware.co.uk

Beyond legal and responsible information, a wine will express a lot more to its consumer depending on the way it is designed and marketed.

Packaging and design are essential in modern marketing and wine marketing in particular. Authors have recently enriched McCarthy's 4Ps (Place, Product, Price, Promotion) with another P for Packaging (Sin 2006) to highlight the importance of product aesthetics in our shopping decisions in general and in wine in particular (Batt et al. 1998, 2000). As Dumaine (1991) noted, '*consumer increasingly make brand choices based on aesthetic value and distinctiveness of visual design*'.

Wine is a product, which quality is difficult to assess visually. Conversely, consumers were found not to conduct any extensive external search prior to purchase and mainly rely on the point of sale and labels (Chaney 2000). Simply put, consumers shop with their eyes (Chaney 2000) and 80% of purchase decisions are made within 4 seconds in the store (Saatchi 2005). Key visual elements of wine packaging will consequently create an impact.

Consumers will initially process the visual quality cues of a wine packaging. The container type, its shape, its colour influence the perception of consumers. Lockshin et al. (2000) note: '*quality-conscious consumers process various perceived signals of quality, [...], such as price, producer, brand, vintage, region, awards, ratings and recommendations*'.

Then, the wine personality conveyed by the packaging is another element that consumers will be sensitive to. Wine is a unique product as it is more likely to be used for

symbolic or experiential motivations rather than utilitarian (Charters 2006). Wine packaging also makes a statement about its buyers (Thomas 2000); Champagne being a typical example (Mortan et al 2004). So, when considering a wine, consumers look for something that will suit their lifestyle, their aspirations as well as their tastebuds.

Different types of wine design appeal to different consumers. Tony Auston (2008), a US wine label designer, lists brand positions according to their desired target groups. A traditional label (classic font plus engraved illustration on a cream background) attracts consumers looking for a safe purchase; a demystifying label -presenting the wine as a mass consumer beverage– appeals more to the Gen-Y and Millennials while an 'understated elegance' (minimalist and high quality) tempt status-seeking consumers.

True, the front label holds the main appeal but other elements have a key role to play. The presence of a back label with some key information on the aromas and flavours, the winery and the wine's story has a positive impact on purchase (McGarry Wolf & Thompson 2010). Eventually, the association of quality cues and the personality conveyed by the packaging contribute to create a cohesive set of visual elements that make a wine unique, hence recognisable and attractive to pre-defined customers. *'The union of the label, bottle type, cork, capsule, shipping carton and point of sale material visually tells a story and creates the gestalt of the wine brand'* (Auston 2008).

Wine packaging is *'the ultimate expression of the positioning of the wine. It must somehow capture the essence of your key message [...], it must serve as a billboard for your brand, attracting the attention of your customers as they stare at a wall of competing brands [...] and reassure them [...] that the wine is of good quality.'* (Wagner, Olsen & Thach 2010).

The presentation of a wine will automatically express more than mandatory legal or important responsible facts. Based on the combination of all its elements, the packaging of a wine will create an image in consumers' mind. For this image to resonate and drive purchase, a wine's packaging must explicitly evoke a unique, identifiable and hence attractive brand to specific consumers.

### III. A CASE STUDY IN WINE PACKAGING

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This section reviews two different examples from the same country but targeted at different types of consumers.

From the previous section, the following success criteria for wine packaging can be established:

- Compliance with the EU regulations (critical)
- Shelf standout (critical)
- Clear presence of visual quality cues related to the wine's origin or type (critical)
- Clear positioning i.e. form a unique cohesive visual ensemble (better the sum of its part) that imparts a personality that will appeal to the group of consumers targeted in the purchase environment (critical)
- Quality and clarity of the information on the back label (important)
- Compliance with Drinkaware guidelines (important)

#### A. A good packaging: La Métropole Cuvée Classique, £7.49, Coop

Images 3, 4, 5 & 6. La Métropole packaging



From a legal and ethical standpoint, this wine packaging is excellent. The label features all legal requirements and follows the Drinkaware's responsible drinking guidelines.

The shelf standout of the wine is excellent with the prominent bright, bold red colour contrasting effectively with the rest of the label and bottle.

From a quality perspective, all the essential cues are there: the bottle shape, the capsule and closure are all traditional French. The dominance of the red colour on the label visually reinforces the wine colour while the relatively larger two-part front label suggests superior quality. From a positioning point of view, the wine is clearly targeted at more modern, non-connoisseurs wine drinkers. The image of a woman's face, the simple description of the style of wine on the front help demystify the wine while the shabby-chic vintage retro style of the label makes it attractive. This stylish and seductive approach is carried through on all elements of the packaging visible to the consumer: the capsule print, the back label (red hair forming a frame). La Métropole's white wine also respects the same design style and codes. Finally, the back label contains a brief description of the wine's origin, a clear description of the flavours to be expected, a story about the brand name and some simple and precise food pairings.

This product is legally compliant, has a very strong shelf standout versus any other French wine in Coop and a unique brand personality (retro, simple & seductive) that is consistently communicated on the packaging and within the range. All this creates a perception of quality and value that will positively influence its buyers before consumption. The range design was prized and praised by the Harper's Design Awards judges, who commented '*La Métropole was thought to capture a sense of 'joie de vivre'; it was immediately identifiable as a traditional French wine brand, but with a modern twist*' (Bottlegreen).

## **B. A poor packaging: Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand Pomerol 2005, £23.50, Talking Wines**

**Images 7, 8, 9 & 10. Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand Pomerol packaging**

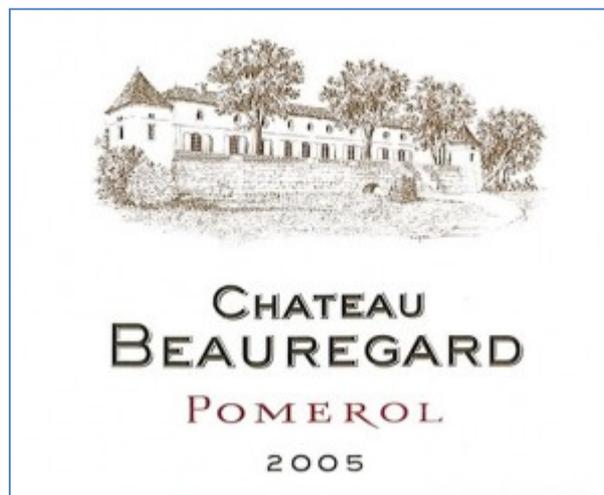


From a legal standpoint, the packaging does comply with the AOC/PDO appellation system and EU regulations. The wine was probably not initially designed for export so only uses traditional terms in French that British wine connoisseurs would understand.

The wine was found in an independent warehouse/shop next to other premium Bordeaux e.g. Saint-Julien. The wine's bottle has the standard Bordeaux shape but the label's style and colours are too common to really stand out amongst other Bordeaux.

The most striking aspect of this label is the poor quality perception created by the packaging compared to its relatively high price (£23.50). Pomerol and 2005 are both well-known worldwide for being of outstanding quality and constitute two undeniable strengths compared to other Bordeaux in the shop. This wine, however, clearly fails to capitalise on them. True, 'Pomerol' is the most prominent word on the label but the prestige stops there. The vintage is printed in a basic and common black font on a brown-coloured background that makes it difficult to read. Furthermore, instead of capitalising on the 'Chateau' heritage cues (history, grandeur, prestige) like Chateau Beauregard (Image 11), the designer has made the choice to highlight the domain's vines in a basic drawing. The capsule further lowers the perceived value of the wine by using the 'Vignerons Indépendants' label, most often used for Vins de Pays.

**Image 11. Chateau Beauregard's heritage style label**



This wine would normally entice more affluent wine drinkers as they are more likely to recognise the vintage, understand the French traditional terms and recognise famous Pomerol Chateaux. Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand, despite its location near Chateau Pétrus, does not yet have the recognition and hence the power to only capitalise on its name to sell.

The brand personality will not appeal to wine connoisseurs looking for prestige. The label only shows a basic drawing of vines, the Pomerol name, a poorly placed vintage and the name of the Chateau. If it wasn't for the Pomerol name and the French label, this wine could easily be mistaken for a New World boutique winery at half the price.

The absence of a back label and any information on the wine's uniqueness or superiority does reinforce the low-value personality of the packaging.

This prestigious and certainly palatable 2005 Pomerol clearly failed to attract wine connoisseurs in the UK as its presence on the shelf, while most 2005 Bordeaux have been sold out, testifies. Its main downfalls are the misuse of the quality cues associated with the prestigious Chateaux and absence of back label. This contributes to create a brand personality of modesty –if not poor value- that will certainly not attract connoisseurs or non-connoisseurs looking for a prestigious or status-driven purchase.

For the 2009 vintage, the winery launched new labels that rectify some of these mistakes with a more cohesive heritage-centred label with the traditional Pomerol cross, a back label in French and English containing information about the terroir and a different capsule style. (Image 14).

**Image 12, 13 & 14. Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand 2009 Pomerol – New packaging**



This section has examined two different types of wine packaging and highlighted two different approaches to wine packaging. La Métropole was clearly designed with the consumer in mind: all elements of the packaging converge to contribute to create a visible, approachable and cohesive brand personality to non-connoisseurs, drive a sense of value and seed positive expectations before consumption. Meanwhile, the Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand label designers started with the domain in mind and relied almost solely on its origin and appellation brand name (Pomerol). The packaging fails to really stand out and communicate the basic quality cues that would make affluent consumers purchase it. The evaluation of both wines is summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3. Evaluation summary for La Métropole and Pomerol**

	La Métropole - £7.49	Pomerol – £23.50
Compliance with EU regulations	Compliant	Compliant
Responsible (Drinkaware)	Excellent	N/A
Shelf standout	Excellent	Average
Quality cues versus wine style	Excellent	<b>Poor</b>
Wine personality - Attractiveness for target - Consistency across packaging - Consistency across range - Fit with outlet	High Excellent Excellent Excellent	<b>Low to Medium</b> <b>Poor</b> Not applicable Good
Back label information	Best in class	<b>No back label</b> (only barcode)
<b>OVERALL EVALUATION</b>	Excellent.	Average

This paper listed all the components of wine packaging, discussed the key legal, societal and marketing requirements to make it successful before applying these to two practical examples.

The first section established that wine packaging consists of the container, the front and back labels, the closure system, the capsule, add-ons and the shipping case.

The second section highlighted that there are very clear mandatory visual requirements for the wine to be sold in the UK. The section also highlighted that taking part in the UK Drinkaware responsible labelling scheme is becoming essential. Finally, the section highlighted the power of a label in consumer's eyes and minds. Consumer-centric and cohesive marketing and design approaches ensure that the positioning and the brand personality of the wine are most impactful.

The last section applied these learnings to two practical examples. La Métropole was highlighted as a good packaging for its impact on shelf, its vibrant and cohesive personality that is very well adapted to its target market. Meanwhile, the 2005 Chateau Saint Benoit de Ferrand wine selected showed that it lacked consumer focus and missed out on the basic quality cues that premium Bordeaux should visually communicate.

As the example of Chateau Saint-Benoit de Ferrand highlighted, poor packaging practices can be rectified and there is no doubt that winemakers willing to centre their marketing and design approaches around the consumer will deliver value to both intermediaries and consumers to emerge stronger from the UK wine trade current slowdown.

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