

WINE STANDARDS BOARD

Guidance Notes for the Labelling of Wines imported into the UK

1. Introduction

The Wine Standards Board is the body established in the UK for the enforcement of the European Wine Laws. A team of regionally based inspectors is central to this purpose, and inspections form their core work. Whenever infringements are found, movement controls can be imposed requiring remedial action. These can be inconvenient and costly to the trader and, by offering guidance and advice, the Board seeks to minimise such occurrences. Further information on the work of the Wine Standards Board can be found at www.wsb.org.uk

2. Wines from the USA entering the UK market

A number of frequently occurring labelling faults are associated with wines imported from the USA. These are listed below, and the EU requirements stated in a manner intended to be helpful and to assist compliance. These notes are for guidance only, and are not intended to supplant the official EU Regulations – which can be found at [www. http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/reg/en_register_036055.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/reg/en_register_036055.html). Producers are requested to channel any requests for further information through their UK agent/importer.

3. Common Labelling Faults

3.1 Wines Exceeding 15% vol. Total Alcohol

Wines exceeding 15% total alcohol are permitted only from specified Third Countries that have Bilateral Agreements with the European Community.

- Wines exceeding the maximum permitted total (i.e. actual + potential alcohol) level of 15% vol. are usually higher alcohol red wines or sweet white wines (with high residual sugar). This excludes Liqueur Wines.
- Infringements are detected by:
 - i. inspection of import VII documents, that state actual alcohol figures in excess of 15%; from wine labels stating 15%+; and/or
 - ii. requiring importers to supply details (if necessary by independent analysis at their expense) of residual sugar levels for late harvest wines labelled as less than 15% vol.

3.2 Non-Compliance with Field of Vision Requirements

- EU law requires mandatory items of information to be placed in the same field of vision (apart from importer's details and lot mark).
- Where a USA domestic label is used, which does not include the nominal volume and country of origin - and the alcoholic strength is shown in incorrect format - these may be shown on a slip label combined with other mandatory items (geographical indication + importer and lot mark).

3.3 Incorrect Statement of Alcoholic Strength

Wines with USA domestic labels that are outside 0.5% tolerance are not acceptable and must be labelled specifically for the UK market.

Frequently alcoholic strength is shown to the nearest 0.1%. However EU regulations require it to be shown to the nearest 0.5% and within this tolerance.

For sparkling wines the tolerance is 0.8%.

For example a still wine, with actual alcohol stated on the VII as 14.2% may be labelled as either 14% or 14.5%.

3.2 Missing Nominal volume

The minimum requirement is for the nominal volume [750ml or 75cl] to be placed on a slip label. This must comply with the minimum height requirement (4mm).

3.3 Country of Origin Not Shown

Still wines

United States of America (or USA) must be shown in one of the following formats:

- “Wine of United States of America”
- “USA Wine”
- “Wine Product of USA”

Sparkling wines

In order to be treated as the equivalent of European quality sparkling wine, the wine must be described as country + (quality) sparkling wine e.g. USA Sparkling Wine. Without this expression, wines are not entitled to show specified items of information including vine variety, vintage, production term (eg traditional method), geographical indication.

3.4 Missing Importer Details

Must be shown with prefix “Importer” or “Imported by”, accompanied by the address of the head office of an importer within the European Community.

3.5 Missing Geographical Indication

Wines must show a geographical indication authorised by USA authorities (e.g. an AVA) in order to state various optional items of information, including a vine variety and vintage. This indication should be part of the description of the wine included on the VII form.

3.6 Unauthorised Descriptions

Surgeon General Health warning

Should not appear on wines for EU market. Often solved by overlaying USA domestic labels with slip label with mandatory items including importer details.

3.7 Incorrect Descriptions

The following terms are prohibited:

- ***Table Wine*** – term restricted to European wines as defined
- ***Vine Varieties*** - if more than three are shown, they must appear on a label not in same field of vision as mandatory items. The height of lettering is restricted to 3mm.
- Any reference in descriptive text to European Quality Wines.

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