

Title: ' Marlborough Sauvignon brand tops US market '

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A Marlborough wine has replaced California's Kendall Jackson as the number one selling brand of Sauvignon Blanc in the US.

Nobilo Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc became the first New Zealand wine to top varietal sales, taking over from perennial leaders Kendall Jackson of Sonoma County in a IRI sales survey for the month of April - figures were measured by volume.

According to Joe Stanton, chief executive of ConstellationNZ, topping US Sauvignon Blanc sales has been the company's main goal since launching the brand six years ago.

'When we launched the brand we aspired to be the number one Sauvignon Blanc brand in the US, and to do that we had to focus on targeting what we saw as the 'traditional' US wine consumers,' he said.

To do this, Stanton said the company packaged the brand specifically for the US consumer by sealing the brand under cork, a move that meant going against the dominate screw cap trend in New Zealand.

Stanton said the company also tailored the colour of the brand's glass bottle for the US market, choosing the more popular flint white glass as opposed the French green.

Their success in the US market meant that Nobilo Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc would now set the benchmark for Sauvignon style, he said.

'We've always looked to create a wine in a distinctive Marlborough style that offers consumers both quality and consistency year-to-year.'

With wine from the recently harvested 2009 vintage set to hit the US market in September, Stanton believes the company will be able to further consolidate their position at the top of the US market.

'For us, 2009 has been a step up in terms of quality. It looks to be a better vintage than 2008, and this will help us build on our position.'

ConstellationNZ has a 40% share of all New Zealand wine sold in the US, with two of their other brands, Monkey Bay and Kim Crawford, also making the top five sauvignon sales list at number four and five respectively.