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Prosecco producers angered by 'illegal' serving in UK bars

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- 2015-01-08T17:30:00+00:00 **Thursday 8 January 2015**
- by Chris Mercer

Italy's Prosecco winemakers have complained that UK pubs and bars are damaging their image by falsely labelling sparkling wine that is served on tap.



The winemakers' consortium for **Prosecco DOC** and **DOCG** appellations in northern **Italy** accused bars in the UK of breaking European Union rules. It did not name specific venues.

Its concern follows the rise of Prosecco served on draught at several UK bars, rather than out of bottles. The UK is a key export market for Prosecco producers and competition with both some Champagne brands and English sparkling wine is increasingly fierce.

Since 2009, only winemakers in designated areas of northeast Italy, and working to specific rules, can label their sparkling wines as Prosecco. But this is still being ignored by some in the UK, said the **Consorzio Tutela del Vino Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco**.

'This is illegal and it represents counterfeiting for both the Italian producer and British consumers,' said the consortium.

One UK bar group that specialises in supplying Italian sparkling wine on tap in the UK, Frizzenti, strongly

denied wrongdoing and said it 'fully supports' EU rules.

Prosecco consortium figures show that the UK is the third most important export market for sparkling DOCG wine from Italy. The UK imports around 5m bottles annually, with an ex-cellar value of 22.4m euros.

Many UK retailers have reported spikes in consumer demand for Prosecco in the past couple of years. **Marks & Spencer** and the **Co-operative Group** were among those reporting a surge in Prosecco demand over the recent Christmas period, while discounter **Lidl** told **Decanter.com** that its Prosecco volume sales tripled in December.

The picture was more mixed for some retailers. London-based **The Sampler** saw Prosecco sales increase by 3% over the Christmas period, but Champagne sales rose by 10%, owner **Jamie Hutchinson** told **Decanter.com**.

The chart below, based on a survey of more than 1,000 British consumers by market research group Mintel, suggests that Prosecco is now bought as commonly as **Champagne** in the UK, albeit Prosecco is cheaper.

The study, which covered buying habits in the first half of 2014 and was published last October, found that only 29% of those surveyed thought Champagne was worth the extra money.

