

A facelift for an old workhorse

While you were working long hours servicing the lines of holiday shoppers and diners, we didn't hear much from you. We have learned only to respond to specific requests during December and to leave you to the business of capitalizing on the season. Online sales rose by roughly 30% during the 2005 holiday season (according to Goldman Sachs, Harris Interactive and Nielsen//NetRatings) exceeding expectations once again. While you were busy breaking e-commerce records we found some time to enhance a favorite resource of the "wired" licensee.

Thousands of restaurants and retailers have discovered the convenience of researching products and pricing online through the Beverage Network website. A significant amount of business passes through this website every day from licensee to wholesaler for delivery the next day. Salespeople participate in this business either by receiving printed copies of assembled orders, or by reviewing completed orders on the site. Some are notified of orders by email or text message, others release the order after reviewing it; still others place orders on behalf of their accounts.

This past month the task of researching and ordering products online got a little easier. The tools for searching and ordering products have been upgraded and additional information is now available to help with your decisions.

The way this website works has not changed, but several key pages have been redesigned or enhanced to make them easier to use. Products and pricing still mirror the Beverage Journal however simple listings have often been enhanced to include labels, tasting notes and regional classification.

This extra information offers

"horizontal browsing" opportunities to cut across selections in search of additional options. For example, a search for "Chateau Montelena" turns up several results for this Napa winery. A click on the Zinfandel label, or product title, takes you to the item detail page which displays a wealth of information and links to related searches. Following a related search can take you to other Zinfandels from this wholesaler, or even all Napa Valley Zinfandels in the book, a trail that leads to a similarly priced Storybrook Mountain Zin, among others.

Broad searches for "Merlot" or "Barossa" are returned with tools that encourage you to refine your results by Category or Wholesaler. A search for Merlot suggests options that range from Chinese Still Wine to Imported Vodkas, and selections from dozens of wholesalers. Searches on Barossa return only Australian wines; however the option remains to refine your selection by wholesaler which could be a factor in your buying decision.

More and more licensees are keeping bevnetwork.com open on their desktop as they conduct business throughout the day. Consider replacing the post-it notes on your print version of the book by flagging an item for your Portfolio. This page is often used by restaurants to post regularly reordered items, but just as easily be used to bookmark products you are working with.

If you aren't familiar with the tools on bevnetwork.com this is a great time to take a fresh look. Give us some feedback on how it works for you and let us know how this can be a more powerful tool to make your job easier.

To learn more about services from Beverage Network visit Bevnetwork.com. You can contact Ian Griffith at ian@bevmedia.com or (212) 571-3232.