

MARKET WATCH

California Steps It Up

Quality imports and market fragmentation are driving innovation

BY JEAN DEITZ SEXTON



Sparkling wines like XXIV Karat and André (top left and right) are taking novel approaches to innovate the category and attract new customers. Winemaker Adam LaZarre (above) is working with Wine Hooligans to recreate the Cycles Gladiator brand.

“It’s a double-edged sword,” says Dennis Carroll, founder of the marketing company Wine Hooligans. “The market is fragmented—you can get in, but it will be crowded.” He sees consumers migrating to more earthy wines. “Wine drinkers in their 20s are so much more sophisticated. They’ll move toward the European style,” he notes. Wine Hooligans is rereleasing the Cycles Gladiator brand (\$10 to \$12 a 750-ml. bottle), which was previously owned by Hahn Family Wines. Carroll has brought back the original winemaker, Adam LaZarre, and expects to do 60,000 cases this year. He also has reintroduced the Stephen Vincent brand (\$12 to \$14) and the Goyette label (\$15 to \$17).



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