

2021



Top 10 Trends

& TIPS FROM
HOME TASTING
TO A KOMBUCHA
MOCKTAIL

Bubbling under

SPARKLING WINE
COCKTAILS
AND OTHER
EMERGING
TRENDS

Simple
hit cocktail
Vermouth & Tonic

FUTURIST
MARKKU WILENIUS

**"We're not
who we
used to be."**



**DRINKS
THE KONMARI
WAY**

**IPA BECOMES
A FIRM
FAVOURITE**

**VEGAN
DIET,
VEGAN WINE**

**ROSÉ - THE
TRENDIEST WINE
OF THE YEAR**

We keep an eye on the latest trends

ALKO'S selections are built by professionals with a passion for their areas of expertise. We closely follow domestic and international trends, phenomena and societal changes. In this 2021 trend review, our experts have compiled some of the most interesting trends and phenomena in the beverage industry.

It is important for us to listen to our customers with a keen ear, and the trends tell us about their wishes. We want to inspire and delight people by offering them a wide, diverse and high-quality range of products, while also giving them an opportunity to make responsible choices.

We all see and feel the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. People are doing more home cooking and investing in food and drink. We value things that feel familiar and safe. We are interested in green choices, local and small-scale production and domestic ingredients. At Alko, we believe that these things are here to stay, even when the pandemic is over.

Futurist **Markku Wilenius** reflects on the pandemic's role as a driver of change and sheds light on some trends that will change the world and our everyday lives. According to Wilenius, learning about product cycles makes these products more important to us and opens up new perspectives on the world.

I hope reading our trend review will also open up some new perspectives for you!



Anu Koskinen, Executive Vice President, Assortment and Procurement, is planning a virtual at-home tasting with some friends.

Trend review 2021

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**Did you know that Alko
experts go through more
than 12,000 product
samples every year?**

1. Adventures in a glass and on a plate

MORE PEOPLE ARE BECOMING ENTHUSIASTIC about food all the time, and eating in restaurants has become quite commonplace. Finns are also increasingly willing to cook fine-dining-style food, and know how to do it.

This trend has been further reinforced by the coronavirus: when you spend a lot of time at home, you want to invest in food and shared moments. And when people put time and effort into cooking, they also want to combine their carefully planned meal with the drink that best complements it.

In 2020, this trend was reflected, for example, in the prices of the red and white wines people bought: Finns wanted to invest in wines that cost around EUR 13, a slightly higher price range than before. The importance of good beverages has increased in other ways as well – another fact confirmed by Alko's latest selection satisfaction survey.

If eager home cooks want to try different things on their plates, they are also increasingly adventurous when it comes to what they pour into their glasses. In the past, they would have paired the fillet steak cooked to perfection in a *sous-vide* water bath and given only a flash in the pan with a full-bodied red wine. Now the wine might be replaced with an elegant rosé champagne or, on the other hand, *crème brûlée* might be combined with a heavily hopped IPA. The latter can also be found in Alko's non-alcoholic selection.

Most of the energy in alcoholic beverages derives from alcohol, not sugar: one gram of alcohol contains 7 kilocalories (kcal). Therefore, non-alcoholic beverages are significantly lighter than their alcoholic counterparts.

Knowing your sugars

**The stronger and
sweeter the beverage,
the more energy
it contains.**

The drier the wine, the less sugar it contains. Wines containing up to 9 g/l of sugar are considered dry. The sugar content is the highest in sweet wines: more than 45 g/l. The sparkling wines with the lowest sugar content, very dry sparkling wines, can be identified by the label marking *Brut Nature*, *Extra Brut* or *Brut*.

For example, one decilitre of non-alcoholic cider contains only about 10 kcal, whereas the same amount of alcoholic cider (4.5%) contains about 60 kcal. From the viewpoint of weight management, the alcohol content and serving volume play a bigger role than the sugar content of the drink.

Wines always contain some natural sugars. If the wine is deliberately left semi-dry or semi-sweet, the remaining sugar is called residual sugar. In wine, you cannot always taste the sugar as sweetness – it may be masked by, for example, the high acidity of the wine. In Alko stores, you can see the wine's sugar content on the price tag and, in the online store, on the product card.

Lager beer, which contains 5.2 percent alcohol, has about 40 kcal per decilitre, whereas the same amount of non-alcoholic lager has only 20 kcal. Thanks to high-quality low-alcohol and non-alcoholic beverages, you do not need to make compromises on how you pair the food and beverages in tasty combinations.

2. What's in your glass reflects your diet

MANY PEOPLE HAVE A SMARTWATCH on their wrist to monitor their sleep and encourage them to stay mobile. Health and well-being are also emphasised on the plate. People want to eat food that improves their sleep and prevents stress. The diets may even be quite strict, tailored to promote personal well-being.

What people drink also increasingly reflects their diets. For example, those following a vegan diet choose a vegan wine, while many of those avoiding sugars and carbohydrates observe the sugar content of beverages. On the Alko website, you will find information on, for example, alcohol and a ketogenic diet.



In September 2020, more than 32 per cent more champagne was sold in Finland than in the previous year, while in other parts of the world demand has fallen.

Tip!

If serving sushi at a party, pair it with green jasmine tea, lager, Riesling wine with a high acidity, or a festive Blanc de Blancs champagne.

3. Festive everyday life, relaxed parties

PEOPLE NO LONGER care whether it is a holiday or a weekday if they want to pamper themselves and their loved ones with good food and culinary experiences. On an ordinary Tuesday evening, they might bake special treats or sour-dough bread raised with love and care.

On the other hand, when having a party, for many people, the main thing is just spending time together. The food served may be quite relaxed, or the guests may be asked to bring something with them. One option is to serve take-away sushi or pizza.

Restaurants also offer food packages to order that can be given the finishing touches at home. The packages come with beverage recommendations, or you can get them from Alko's customer service.



Did you know?

A report by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) shows that the coronavirus pandemic and the related restrictions reduced the estimated total consumption of alcohol by Finns during the first wave of the pandemic in spring and summer 2020.

The visual image and Instagram-worthiness affect the way restaurants are decorated and packages designed. The current fashion trends in photography include sharp lights, long shadows and pastel tones.

Yellow is one of the two Colours of the Year 2021 introduced by the Pantone Color Institute. It symbolises cheerfulness and hope.

PANTONE
13-0647
ILLUMINATING

4. Making alcohol-free choices

PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN MOCKTAILS and other non-alcoholic beverages does not seem to be subsiding. The sales of non-alcoholic beverages have grown at a tremendous rate, and a sober curious approach, being curious about an alcohol-free lifestyle, is a growing trend. Last year, Alko sold 571,000 litres of non-alcoholic beverages – almost one glass per every Finn and more than three times as much as in 2014, for example. In particular, the demand for non-alcoholic beers and mixers has increased.

Craft juices made of high-quality ingredients are a growing international trend. In Great Britain, for example, craft juices have become even more popular than non-alcoholic beers in some cases.

People are increasingly drinking non-alcoholic mocktails with their meals, as well. For inspiration, look at the stylish drink menus of restaurants, which use tonic waters, herbs and tannin-containing tea extracts in their drink mixes.

Non-alcoholic mocktails are increasingly being served with food.



Marja, what exactly is sober curious?

"Sober curious is a way of thinking in which people take an inquisitive approach to not drinking alcohol and call their own drinking habits into question. Young people in particular have begun to wonder why they are consuming alcohol and what role it plays in different situations. They don't want to do something just because it comes with the territory when meeting friends, for example. The phenomenon is linked with responsible consumption in general. In the same way as responsible consumers consider how the clothes they buy are produced or whether to buy them or not, people also want to make informed choices when it comes to alcoholic beverages."

Marja Aho, Sustainability Manager at Alko, intends to learn new mocktail recipes this year.

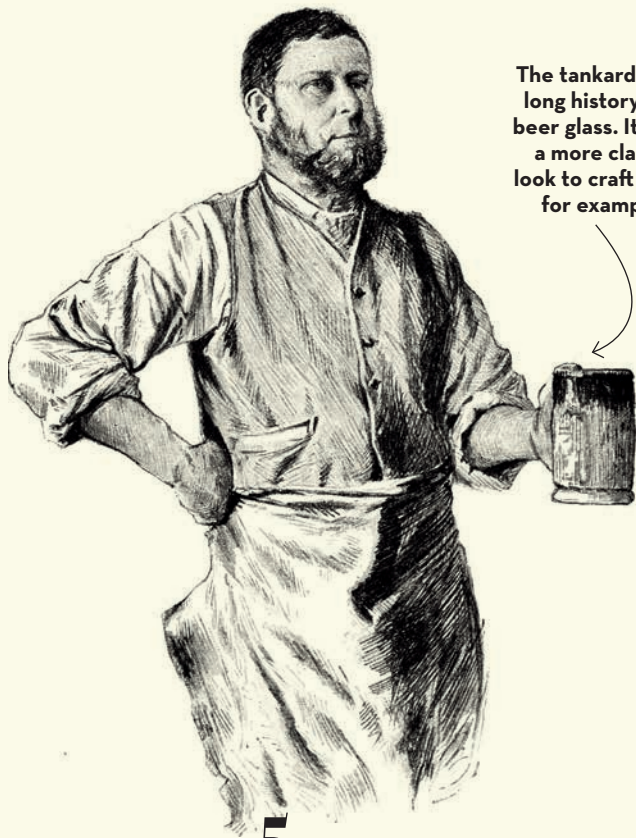


Non-alcoholic kombucha mocktail

Kombucha can
also be flavoured
with lemon
or ginger.

Juice of half a pink grapefruit
1 dl kombucha
5 cl ginger ale
Half a lime, sliced
Sprig of rosemary
Thin slice of ginger
(2 cl syrup)
Ice

Crush the lime slices at
the bottom of a glass.
Add the grapefruit juice,
kombucha and ginger ale.
Add the ice and mix thoroughly.
If you want a sweeter drink,
add syrup to taste.
Garnish with a rosemary sprig
and a slice of ginger.



The tankard has a long history as a beer glass. It gives a more classic look to craft lager, for example.

5.

The return of the classics

THE WILDEST food and drink trends had to give way, as the coronavirus pandemic made people seek things they find familiar and safe. In the same way as, for example, potatoes have made a comeback in the culinary world, people have taken a step back in the direction of classics in their choice of drinks. Having a well-known brand has also contributed to what Finns currently prefer to drink.

Well-known classic drink styles and brands rank the highest in sales statistics. For example, in red wines, the popularity of wine countries widely known by Finns, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and Australia, has grown, and in white wines, Germany, Italy and Spain have increased their popularity. The longing for familiar tastes has also been reflected in the popularity of the traditional beer countries Belgium and Germany.

IPA, the new favourite

Finns are traditionally lager drinkers: more than 90 per cent of all beer consumed in Finland is lager. Now the bitter India Pale Ale, or IPA, is also finding its way into the glasses of the general public. Last year, the demand for top-fermented beers grew by nearly one-fifth, with IPA leading the way. IPA is, to some degree, becoming like the lager of specialty beers: a basic product and a new classic.

"The IPA trend is closely linked to the microbrewery boom", says **Kasper Kukkonen**, Category Manager at Alko. "More and more people are finding their way into beer tasting as a hobby through IPA. The trend has made IPA interesting among the big breweries as well."

As a beer style, IPA is in perpetual motion, developing all the time. After strongly hopped IPAs, the latest trend has been easier enjoyability, tropical aromas and even smoothie-like features.



Anri, what is it that attracts people to traditions?

"Instead of running after every new trend, we are now returning towards simpler manufacturing methods that let the great flavours to flourish fully. In recent years, for example, the world of beer has been a bit like a candy store with all kinds of wild flavours. Now we have again started to appreciate the old beer brewing traditions, the malt, the hops and the water."

This year, **Anri Lindström**, service and product trainer, is doing classical French cuisine with all the liver pâtés and delicious sauces.

How to arrange an at-home tasting

» At a tasting, you can also taste beverages other than wines, such as beers. You can arrange a non-alcoholic tasting with, for example, tonic waters or non-alcoholic wines. Alko customer service and chat can help you with choosing the drinks.

» If you have a small number of participants at a wine tasting, take advantage of Alko's selection of small bottles of wine. You can do comparisons even with a single wine: how do different glasses, temperatures of the drink, or decanting affect the taste, for example?

» The aroma constitutes a large share of how you experience the flavour of a wine, and the right kind of glass brings out the aromas better. The wine glass must have room for swirling the wine. A good glass for beer is a tulip-shaped glass, such as a wine glass, when you are doing a home tasting.

» When doing a tasting, it is also a good idea to serve water and some white bread with wine, to cleanse the palate. Mild finger foods, such as cream cheeses, also go well with wine.

» Within each type of flavour, the drinks are arranged from the lightest to the most full-bodied, so that they do not mask each other, and each flavour can be tasted at its best.

» When evaluating drinks, there are no wrong opinions. It is even a growing trend among professionals to discuss what kinds of moods each drink evokes.

Visit the Alko website for full instructions and comprehensive information on how to do tastings at home.



You can also do tastings with a single wine, beers or even tonic waters.

6. Virtual tastings and experiences

IN THE DIGITAL AGE, it is easy to enjoy experiences from the comfort of your own sofa. The coronavirus era has further accelerated the phenomenon when it comes to the drinking culture. Different tasting events have moved online, and wine enthusiasts meet each other over the internet. A workplace team building event may take employees on a winery tour over a remote connection.

With wine tourism having stopped, virtual events can be almost the only channel for small operators in particular to reach their customers. Similarly, Finnish producers and importers have become active and have started organising different virtual events and tastings.

During the coronavirus epidemic, many people have met friends and arranged get-togethers on a screen anyway. Similarly, you can arrange a tasting event remotely from your own home.

7.

Climate concern visible in the wine selection

HOW DO YOU SAVE THE PLANET? More and more people want to avoid waste. Concern for the climate is growing. Vegetarianism and veganism are no longer something only a small circle of people dabbles in.

Environmental responsibility is a major trend in the world of beverages. The number of products granted a Green Choice marking, indicating their environmental friendliness, is growing rapidly – already, one in three products in the Alko selection bears such a marking.

You can now also find a new Carbon Neutral label on products sold in Alko. Among beverage producers, the wine sector has been at the forefront of climate action, as climate change and extreme weather events are already affecting production conditions in wine-growing regions.

29%

Growth in sales of organic products in litres in 2020 compared to the previous year.

1,000

Alko has in its selections over 1,000 products with organic certification, over 1,000 vegan products and over 1,000 eco-friendly packages.

116%

Growth in sales of vegan products in litres in 2020 compared to the previous year.

Did you know?

The latest Green Choice marking indicates how carbon neutral the product is.



CARBON NEUTRAL

The new symbol is used for marking products for which carbon dioxide emissions from production have been reduced and the remaining emissions have been compensated. To be granted the label, the product must have earned a certification verified by a third party, which is displayed on the product packaging.



ECO-RESPONSIBLE PACKAGING

This label is used for marking lightweight packages and packaging with environmental certification. More information on the weight limits required for the marking can be found on the Alko website. Environmentally friendly carton and wine pouches are easy to find in the Alko selection, even without any additional markings.



SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION

The label indicates that measures have been taken to promote sustainable development during beverage production. The requirements for certification vary slightly between countries, with typical measures including reducing water and energy consumption and using renewable energy.



ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Organic farming maintains the soil's natural fertility. Organic production does not use synthetic chemicals. Organic wines also contain lower quantities of sulphites, or sulphur compounds, and other contaminants.



VEGAN

Vegan beverages have been produced without using any animal-based components or materials. For example, standard wine production may use gelatine or egg in the clarification process.



BIODYNAMIC

Biodynamic farming meets the requirements of organic production. The main difference are the biodynamic products used by farmers for purposes such as helping the growth of vines and pest control.



NATURAL WINE

Natural wines are farmed using natural methods without the use of synthetic chemicals or pesticides. In production, the use of preservatives and additives, such as sulphites, is avoided, and the wines are rarely clarified, filtered or stabilised.

The use of Finnish ingredients and seasonal thinking can be seen in beverages flavoured with berries or spruce tips.

Many of us are already familiar with microbreweries, and interest in local production is growing stronger.

214

Finnish microbrewery beers in the Alko selection

327

foreign microbrewery beers in the Alko selection

13%

growth in sales of microbrewery beers in 2020



Can you see the trend in drinks, Santeri?

"Using ingredients from local nature and taking the growth seasons into account are also trends in how drinks are garnished. For example, a sparkling wine cocktail may be garnished with fresh birch leaves or spruce tips, or you can use rhubarbs from your own garden to season your vermouth & tonic. In early spring, blood orange and black pepper is a great combination."

Santeri Saarinen, product and service trainer at Alko, can hardly wait for the spring harvest of spruce tips.

8. Local, please!

PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN the people behind the products. They value domestic origin, local production and craftsmanship. Increased local tourism has also further increased interest in smaller operators. In addition to microbrewery products, this applies to such produce as distilled alcohol-free spirits, liqueurs and farm wines from small producers.

The demand for products from small producers grew by a quarter in Alko in the summer of 2020. Small-scale producers, in particular, introduce novelties of the favourite styles, such as IPA beers.

The use of Finnish ingredients and seasonal thinking are also visible in beverages: using berries and spring spruce tips as flavourings is a good example of this. One of the traditional dishes for the early spring is lamb and cabbage stew made from Finnish ingredients. Pair it with a fresh and sturdy Finnish pilsner or a slightly more aromatic ale.

9. Cocktails the KonMari way

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF life and getting rid of everything you do not need, known as “the KonMari Method”, can also be seen in people’s glasses and on their plates – the simpler the recipe and the higher-quality the ingredients, the better. People are interested in what can be substituted for what: how can I prepare this with the ingredients I happen to have at home?

PANTONE
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ULTIMATE GRAY

The other of the Pantone Color Institute’s two Colours of the Year 2021 is Ultimate Gray, which reflects perseverance and a firm foundation.

Vermouth & Tonic
is a good example
of the trend of using
just a few ingredients.

Vermouth & Tonic

8 cl clear sweet vermouth
1 dl tonic water
a slice of cucumber
a few basil leaves
ice cubes

The non-alcoholic version of the drink is created by replacing the vermouth with a distilled alcohol-free herbal spirit or an elderflower juice concentrate.





**Try it!
Put together
a pink dinner using
rosés throughout
the meal.**

10.

Rosé – many trends combined

TREND: ADVENTUROUSNESS AND BOLD COMBINATIONS

Rosé is used increasingly often to bring colour to the dinner table as an accompaniment to food – even throughout the meal. Today, we have a wide selection of rosés, from gastronomic champagnes to basic wines. The classic rosés from Provence, France, go well with fish courses and salads. There are also more full-bodied alternatives from, for example, Chile or the United States, for meat dishes.

TREND: FRESHNESS

The autumn showed that the demand for rosés does not subside when the evenings get darker. People are now seeking freshness in their drinks, which is reflected in the popularity of rosés, and sparkling and white wines. The total demand for white wines is just about to pass that for reds.

TREND: ROSÉ + PROSECCO

Rosé prosecco combines two megatrends, the rosé and sparkling wine. The first rosé proseccos were added to the Alko selection towards the end of 2020. They are made from the traditional prosecco grape glera, and they get their tint from pinot noir. With these approachable sparkling wines for socialising, Italy is increasingly challenging Spain as the most popular producer of sparkling wines.



Markku Wilenius is Professor of Futures Studies at the University of Turku and Dean at the Dubai Future Academy, and he is particularly interested in biodynamic wines. "I'm fascinated by the idea that the cultivation process takes into account the entire ecosystem, including its cosmic dimensions."

What next?

In futurist Markku Wilenius' visions, by the wine shelves at Alko, we will learn not only about grape varieties but also about carbon farming. He lists four trends that will change the world and our daily lives.

TEXT ANNUKKA OKSANEN

"WE ARE NO LONGER WHO WE USED TO BE", says futurist **Markku Wilenius**.

The pandemic, continuing for a second year, has revolutionised many people's worlds. It has caused a great deal of suffering, but it has also proved how tremendously adaptable people are. A small virus also opens up opportunities for something completely new.

"We can now evaluate our past life and its operating models in a completely new way. We find ourselves in a transformation laboratory", Wilenius says.

Things we used to consider quite normal before the pandemic may suddenly seem strange or stupid. We also miss our old life. Such a change of perspective may act as a major force of change.

Markku Wilenius is Professor of Futures Studies at the University of Turku; UNESCO Chair of Learning for Transformation and Planetary Futures; and Dean at the Dubai Future Academy. Based in Dubai, he analyses data and draws future scenarios from a global viewpoint.

Wilenius perceives time in waves lasting a couple of generations each. The previous wave was driven by building a digitalized world and increasing labour productivity. The current wave, which will carry us until the 2050s, is powered by resource efficiency. Instead of paying attention to the price only, companies and consumers are starting to take account of the human, environmental and energy costs of things.

Wilenius distinguishes four trends that are transforming the world and, along with it, people's everyday lives.

1. Mankind rethinks its relationship with nature

THE FIRST TREND IS BIOSPHERISATION, which Wilenius defines as actions that will keep the earth inhabitable for humans, even for future generations.

"Over the last decade, it has become quite clear that the climate is changing everywhere. We are now beginning to see the impact of climate change for real. This is part of a bigger question of how we will organise the interrelationship between man and nature", Wilenius says.

He believes that after the pandemic, we will start

paying real attention to climate change. We have had time to think. Citizens will get alarmed when they start seeing the effects of global warming. The change will not come only from above but also from grassroots level. This may include, for example, consumer interest in carbon-neutral beverage production.

"We will begin taking action because we understand there is no time to waste", Wilenius says.

2. Favourite wine with lab-grown meat

WILENIUS HAS NAMED THE SECOND TREND technification. Some professions disappear, new ones emerge. Customer service is increasingly being provided by bots. Most people have already noticed how their own lives are being revolutionised by the development

of technology and artificial intelligence.

For Wilenius, however, the matter at the heart of technification is that it enables us to create more resource-efficient systems.

"The biggest problem in society is that we overexploit natural resources. At best, we can create production and consumption systems that outsmart the existing ones, and reduce material intensity", he explains.

A good example is lab-grown meat. That already exists: Singapore was the first country in the world to approve the sale of lab-grown chicken meat to consumers. Its production causes hardly any CO2 emissions. At the same time, it eliminates the ethical problems associated with meat production.

"On the other hand, we don't need much meat but rather more vegetables", Wilenius points out.

More and more Finns seem to agree with him. New vegetarian products have at times disappeared from shop shelves at lightning speed, and people have shared on social media hot tips on where to buy them. Many people have adopted different plant protein products in their diets, at least alongside meat. The change is already visible in the statistics. According to the Natural Resources Institute Finland, total meat consumption fell by almost two per cent in 2019.

Lab-grown meat is already here: Singapore was the first country in the world to approve the sale of lab-grown chicken meat.

3. The melting pot of tastes

WILENIUS' THIRD MAJOR force of change is humanisation. This means that people have better opportunities to shape their lives according to their wishes and to make choices that are in line with their preferences. According to Wilenius, in the future, we will move around more because people are less and less tied to one particular place, culturally and technologically.

“Humans were created to be nomad”, he says.

Cultures will continue to mix. It is increasingly easy to live exactly where you want to settle. During the coronavirus pandemic, tourism has collapsed but, on the other hand, the pandemic has dramatically accelerated the development of teleworking technologies.

In everyday life, migration and cultural mixing can be seen, for example, as increasing diversification of the food supply: the larger the Italian community in the country, the more flourishing the Italian culinary culture. The more people travel or otherwise learn about the culinary cultures in different countries, the more eager they are to taste novelties. While today's 50-year-olds considered pizza an exotic dish in their childhood, for today's children tacos and sushi are everyday food.

Internationalisation is also reflected in the rapidly increased knowledge of beverages among Finns – and in their drinking habits. We have gone from spirits to wines. Finns learned to drink non-alcoholic cocktails after first having gulped them down in bars in London and New York.

4. Cities on human terms

THE FOURTH MAJOR TREND is urbanisation. Because of the pandemic and remote work, many people have started to think about moving to the country. However, worldwide, migration is mostly flowing into urban areas. Modern cities are built on the terms of the economy and technology.

“This is about to change. People want the cities to be greener and more like living rooms for them. They will be built more human-size and -shape than before.”

The phenomenon is also visible in Finnish cities, even though they are small on a global scale. The restaurant world on Senate Square in Helsinki last summer was an excellent example of this. The city-dwellers were ecstatic about being able to enjoy themselves sitting in the main city square, which normally

stands practically empty. Rarely has rosé tasted as good!

Previously, people used to think that it is important to attract companies to an area through tax deductions and other financial incentives. Now companies are increasingly interested in how attractive their potential locations are to people. Pleasant living conditions attract a skilled workforce, and that is what companies need.

THE TRENDS IDENTIFIED BY the researcher also increasingly steer Alko's customers in the direction of responsible consumption and, on the other hand, towards not basing their way of life on consumption. According to Wilenius, we have become stuck in overindulging ourselves through consumption.

“We are gradually moving on to fulfilling our higher-level needs. This also means people will start to consider how their own consumption affects the world.”

The typical way of thinking among modern people is to consider what's in it for them or how they can benefit from it. According to Wilenius, such a perspective is in the process of turning around, so that people will start thinking what they can give to the world. Such a change is fundamental in nature, and it will not happen overnight.

According to Markku Wilenius, due to its strong tradition of serving as an educator, it would

be natural for Alko to teach its customers how nature works. He is thinking about turning Alko into a learning environment where customers, through their favourite drinks, could familiarise themselves with, for example, regenerative agriculture, or carbon farming, and the environmental impacts of products in general.

“After all, beverages are agricultural products, aren't they? And some products may even have a positive impact on climate change mitigation.”

As you get acquainted with the product and its cycle, its importance to you increases, and, at best, it opens a new perspective on the world to you. You learn to appreciate the product more, so you enjoy it better and consume it using a higher degree of judgement.

And, according to Wilenius, better judgement is what we all need to learn.

What if we don't want to give anything up?

“All I can say to that is that, eventually, as people, we have to give everything up. Giving things up and evolving is part of what it means to be human. And now we're in a situation where we have to change and give things up. All our actions have an impact.”

**According to Wilenius,
we have become stuck
in overindulging
ourselves through
consumption.**



Maija Itkonen, Chief Innovation Officer, which food inventions will next shape our everyday lives?

"While we already have meat products and meat substitutes on the shop shelves, the range of different proteins will be much wider in the future. We will require higher quality from the vegetable proteins, and, on its own, being meatless will no longer guarantee shelf space for a product. Nutritional values and the ingredients used will also play a role when the trends of purity and minimalism find their way into plant proteins. As a rule, new products do not need to mimic meat, but innovative products may be recognised for their own values. In the future, we will also see lab-grown meat and various algae-, yeast- and cell-based protein products in ordinary shops. The sky is the limit for our imagination."

Maija Itkonen is the founder and Chief Innovation Officer at Gold & Green Foods, which manufactures Pulled Oats and other plant-based protein products



Entrepreneur Saku Tuominen, what kinds of experiences do Finns and the world thirst for now?

"2021 will be a kind of a hybrid year, a mix of the old and the new, and some new combinations. Instead of being passionate about or against, say, natural wines, we do not need to take sides. We can just say that both will do, as long as the quality is good. When it comes to food trends, I believe that instead of the compulsion to name the trend of the year ("this year's thing is the Southern Peruvian Kitchen" or "the ingredient of the year 2021 is turnip cabbage"), classic, high-quality food will make a comeback – say, a French brasserie or an excellent Italian. Less fuss, more quality."

Saku Tuominen is an entrepreneur, restaurateur and non-fiction writer



Mika Kauppinen, Senior Category Manager at Alko, what's up after 2020?

"The common view within the beverage industry is that it will take a long time to recover from the crisis when it is over. The Nordic monopolies and Alko have earned praise for having been able to provide opportunities, predictability and stability to the sector in a difficult situation, as well as flexible entry to the selection. Potential consumer behaviour after the crisis raises discussion: Will the trend of ease, and the demand for handy packaging continue? Will people continue to increasingly choose what they find familiar and safe? And what will happen to investing in everyday life and quality and responsible choices? We must intensify our efforts to keep a pulse on consumers, as some people will want to try something completely new."

Mika Kauppinen is Senior Category Manager at Alko



Pia Pohja from the Finnish Food and Drink Industries' Federation, which trends are now visible around the country?

"Domestic origin has become an even stronger trend in consumers' food and beverage choices in 2021. In our mind, we associate Finnish food with things such as good taste and trust in the quality and the origin of ingredients. Environmental values and responsibility are also increasingly emphasised in the choices consumers make. According to the Finland Eats survey, half of Finns believe that they can help slow down climate change with their own food choices. The direction of the sustainability trend has been visible for a while, and food companies have responded to consumers' wishes with new product innovations and an increased offering of vegetarian choices, among other things."

Pia Pohja is Director General of the Finnish Food and Drink Industries' Federation

Easily from the online store

Like online shopping in general, Alko's online sales are also growing rapidly. In 2020, both order volumes and the number of registered customers almost doubled from the previous year. These tips will help you get familiar with the trend and get the most out of online services.

1. Benefit from the whole selection

The Alko online store offers you a selection of more than 10,000 products, no matter where you live in Finland. You can order any product to your local Alko or pick-up point. The delivery period for online orders is 4-5 business days, and normal delivery to the store is free of charge.

2. Avoid the crowds

When shopping online, you can browse the products at leisure in your own home and at any time you want. We collect the products purchased online and make them ready for you to pick up. You can also order, for example, beverages for Midsummer and pick them up from any Alko on the way to your summer cottage.

3. Make precision shopping easier

Check the stock volume of your nearest store and the availability of your favourite drink. The same selection and features are also available on the mobile app, in which you can easily check, for instance, the opening hours of stores.

4. Get inspired

Alko serves you with the same level of professionalism online as in stores. There is a chat service to assist you, as well as a huge amount of tips and inspiration for each season. When shopping online, you can also get recipes for what to serve, and even help for counting the volume of beverages you will need, for example.

5. Find your favourites

Take advantage of lists and notes from your previous purchases. If we have run out of a product, in the My Account section, you can order a reminder to inform you when the product becomes available again. By logging in, you can see your order history. You can create a taste profile for yourself and use it for exploring taste types and product selection.

Small trend gallup

How are the prevailing trends reflected in the lives of Alko customers and in the work of sales staff?
This is how people in three Alko stores across Finland answered the question.

THE INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED AT THE BEGINNING OF 2021 IN THE ALKO STORES OF MUNKKIVUORI IN HELSINKI, TAMMISAARI AND JOENSUU CITY CENTRE. IN EACH ALKO, THE RESPONDENTS INCLUDED 15 CUSTOMERS AND A SALESPERSON.

"During the coronavirus era, I've been drinking more wines. I've learned to like wine in a new way."

Female, 20, Joensuu

"During the coronavirus era, I haven't been drinking so often with my friends, with places being closed and all. There are pros and cons in this matter."

Male, 26, Tammisaari

"I would like to reduce my alcohol consumption now that I've turned 50. I want to do well in the years to come, as well."

Male, 50, Joensuu

"People are asking for vegan beverages a lot; the popularity of veganism does show."

Alko salesperson, Joensuu

"I'm interested in environmentally friendly packaging. I follow what is going on around the world, and the five grandchildren I have made me think that it's a high time for me to start taking the environment into consideration."

Male, 66, Helsinki

"It does affect my purchase decision how environmentally friendly the product is. I want the bottle to be recyclable."

Female, 23, Helsinki

"My choices reflect environmental issues less than I would like them to. I would like to take more account of the environment. It would require doing more background research on the products I consume, and I don't have time for that."

Male, 25, Helsinki



Send an Alkotoive to request your favourite beverage to the Alko near you

Using the Alkotoive web service, launched in September 2020, you can request any of Alko's more than 10,000 assorted products to the Alko store near you. In the first two months, we received almost 15,000 requests. Around one in five requests have already found their way to the shelf of the desired store.

Most of the requests have concerned red and white wines and beers. Regionally, red wine and white wine were highlighted in the Helsinki metropolitan area, sparkling wine in Southwest Finland, beers in Western Finland, and liqueurs and spirits in Northern and Eastern Finland.

You can make your Alko request at [Alkotoive.fi](https://alkotoive.fi).

Food recipes are the most popular content on the Alko.fi website, and in 2020, the top spot was taken by a red wine sauce. Another popular site was the punch calculator, which can be used for calculating the amount of punch and its alcoholic content.

BUBBLING UNDER

+5 up-and-coming beverage trends

Sparkling wine cocktails

The fresh and easy sparkling wine cocktails combine modern and classic features: the drinks bubbling in the glass are now Spritz, Hugo, Bellini and Kir Royal. You can mix sparkling wine with various liqueurs, juices and syrups – even sorbet!

Portugal as a wine country

Distinctive Portuguese grape varieties and fresh flavours appeal to Finnish wine lovers. In 2020, the sales of Portuguese wines shot up by 72 per cent from the year before, and Portugal took its position as the fourth best-selling red wine country, leaving behind such contenders as Australia and France.

Ecological and recognisable packaging

Packaging has a big impact on the beverage's carbon footprint – the lighter the package, the better for the climate. When people are making purchase decisions, the distinctive appearance of the packaging also plays an increasing role. Cartons, aluminium cans and plastic bottles are more ecological than glass bottles, but they are yet to make a breakthrough. Rosés and white wines are already available in single-serving aluminium cans.

Labelling of additives in wines

Wine additives are a hot topic of debate, especially in the United States. The European Union is also discussing the timeframe within which additives are to be listed on wine bottle labels. Unlike in other food industry products, they do not yet need to be defined in beverages. On the Alko website, you will find a guide to the most commonly used additives in alcoholic beverages.

Domestic hop varieties

Interest in beer-brewing traditions has also awoken the interest in Finnish hop varieties. The Natural Resources Institute Finland is currently studying the suitability of Finnish hop varieties for cultivation and beer brewing. Organic hops could also be a potential export product for Finland. Will we be seeing more Finnish hop varieties in beers?

