

# STAYING AHEAD of the curve

For drinks distributor Monarq, it is not enough to be reacting to trends in the market, the company is staying ahead of the game and have the next big thing on shelves today



Wolfburn Single Malt is the latest addition to Monarq's growing whisky portfolio

The constantly changing face of the drinks market is an opportunity rather than a challenge for drinks distributor Monarq, which is looking to offer customers the next top trend before they know they want it.

The strategy has paid dividends so far. About five years ago, Monarq began stocking Japanese whiskies in a market which was not yet ready for it – now brands such as Iwai and Akashi are among the company's best performers.

"We actually want to stay ahead of the trend," explains Managing Director Robert de Monchy. "Sometimes we are too early, like with Japanese Whiskies. About five years ago the market was not ready for this yet, now this is one of the hottest categories."

The whisky category is big business for Monarq and the company is about to boost its offering with the introduction of Wolfburn Single Malt Whisky, which is brewed in Scotland's most northerly mainland distillery. Its existing brands are also building their presence; Monarq is working with US craft spirits group Samson & Surrey and recently listed some of their spirits, including whisky brands like Widow Jane and FEW, with DFS, Dufry and International Shoppes in the USA.

But de Monchy and his team are not sitting still, and they have turned their attention to the next exciting prospect for the market. The success of the Porn Star Martini in the UK is set to spread across the market and the Monarq team are already prepared. "We see this cocktail crossing the Atlantic any moment," de Monchy says. "And [we] carry in our portfolio its main ingredient, Passoa."

On top of that, de Monchy says the team is watching the growth of Mezcal, Provence Rosé and Tequila in the Americas, as well as a growing interest in Vermouth thanks to the popularity of Negronis. "Fortunately, we hold leading brands in all these categories," he adds.

Speaking of trends, "Gin and tonic is definitely still trending, while Pink Gin is the latest in gin. Whisk(e)y and Bourbon are strong.

"Beer remains strong and rum is gaining interest lately."

Monarq's beer portfolio already features such names as Heineken, Sol, Duvel and Brooklyn Lager and that offering will be boosted by the company's new deal to be regional distributor for the Asahi Group, with brands such as Peroni, Grolsch and Asahi.

Recent investments by Monarq are

Monarq has recently signed a deal with the Asahi group to distribute its brands, including Peroni, in domestic and duty free markets



already paying off. At this year's Summit of the Americas show, the company launched Bravazzi Italian Hard Soda, to tap into the emerging hard soda trend in the US. "Hard sodas and canned wines are new trends that are to stay," de Monchy enthuses.

Monarq is also turning its attention to its impact outside the drinks world by becoming a certified carbon neutral company. "Climate change is particularly worrying," de Monchy says.

But whether it is spotting new trends, going green, or developing current successes, de Monchy is clear on one thing: "Change is the only constant. It is of utmost importance to constantly think ahead and act upon an ever-changing environment. This is natural for us, it's in our DNA. ☺