

# UNITED STATES

– IMPORTER –



Zac Brandenburg, left, with Brandon and Jared from the DRINKS team in Tuscany



Zac Brandenburg, right, with Gaetano Peragine of Abbazia at the Faviken restaurant in Sweden

## Using technology to encourage consumers to think outside the box

*Los Angeles-based DRINKS is working hard to disrupt a wine market that still bears the scars of prohibition. Its founder Zac Brandenburg is using technology to help suppliers and retailers tune in to changing consumer needs.*

By Ellen Budge - Photographs: courtesy of DRINKS

Founded in 2013, its goal is to make the digital wine buying experience seamless and convenient for consumers. Just as the ‘wall of wine’ in-store can be intimidating for consumers, so too can the internet. The “regulatory, logistical and consumer behaviour considerations of online wine purchases” described by Zac Brandenburg can also be daunting for retailers. So after acquiring Wine Insiders and “navigating the wine direct-to-consumer landscape first-hand”, DRINKS built a technology infrastructure from the ground up and developed its ‘Wine-as-a-Service’ platform for other retailers. “Wine alone is a \$70 B US market (off-premise) that presents tremendous revenue opportunity for retailers, yet only a small fraction of sales occur online”, says Brandenburg. The company now delivers wine to 1.5 million+ American households, with current best-sellers including French labels by Bernard

Magrez, Producta Vignobles and Georges Vigouroux. It uses celebrity endorsements such as Martha Stewart and chef Tim Hollingsworth to curate wines for specific audiences, the key to simplifying consumer choice. “We find that consumers gravitate towards curators they trust to help sift through the clutter and discover wines they may otherwise not have tried on their own”, comments Brandenburg. Consumer ratings and medals from wine competitions also provide third-party credibility and can encourage consumers to think outside the box. “In the future, we’ll continue to see the growth of the rosé category across all age groups and observe consumers exploring outside the most common varieties and formats – varietals from non-traditional regions, innovative blends and further experimentation with packaging formats”, predicts Brandenburg, who will continue to address demand for greater value, convenience and curation.