

THE
tastingpanel
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CONFIDENCE

CIGAR BOX WINES IS POISED TO SHAKE UP THE POPULAR PREMIUM CATEGORY

Portonics work with a variety of garnishes.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PORT AND DOURO WINE INSTITUTE

Diversifying Port Consumption

CANNED PORTONIC BRINGS A NEW TWIST TO RTD TIPPLES

Port, the famed fortified wine from Portugal's Douro region, is most commonly enjoyed as a dessert wine. But it's also great in cocktails—one of the most popular examples being the Portonic, or Port and Tonic. The classic version combines one part White Port, dry or sweet, with two parts tonic water, served over ice with a slice of lemon; Rosé, Ruby, or Tawny Port can also be used, however, to make a refreshing drink that's perfect for enjoying at the start of a meal.

And now the Portonic has joined the wide world of RTDs, whose popularity has never been more apparent. Since 2018, the mixed drinks category—including malt beverages and pre-mixed cocktails—has been the most buoyant on the U.S. alcohol market. According to a Mintel report from November 2019, while “one in five drinkers [was] reducing their alcohol consumption . . . RTDs were the only

alcohol segment to experience an increase in consumption over a 2018 measure.” And per an IWSR analysis, U.S. consumers were the biggest contributors to a 43% increase in the global volume consumption of RTDs in 2020.

In response to this trend, the Port and Douro Wine Institute (IVDP) recently registered the Portonic at Portugal's National Institute of Intellectual Property and at the European Union Intellectual Property Office. Its goal is to diversify the ways in which Port can be consumed; as IVDP president Gilberto Igrejas commented, “New forms of consumption . . . will make it possible to gain relevance among young people, through new experiences associated with conviviality and life's good moments.”

The IVDP is strictly regulating the production of Portonics, just as it does the production of Port. Ready-to-drink

Portonics can be produced only by registered Port producers. They're required to contain at least 25% Port for an ABV of 5–8% (adjuncts such as flavorings are permitted only in accordance with general regulations). They may be packaged in any format approved by the IVDP, including bottles and cans, but the process must occur within the demarcated Douro region, and all labeling on the package—including the symbol ® to indicate that the brand is registered—must also be sanctioned by the institute. And of course, before a single drop can be sold, it too must first be approved by the IVDP, which conducts a range of chemical and sensory analyses on each product.

Stringent as these standards are, several brands have already met them and reached the market, so there's no time like the present to introduce the Portonic as the next big thing in happy hours. **V**