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St. Patrick's Day Drives On-Premise Sales

Jessica Infante March 21, 2022 at 3:37 PM

Sales of draft beer by volume more than doubled (+118.5%) on St. Patrick's Day (March 17) last week, compared to the same day in 2021, according to on-premise business tracking firm BeerBoard.

"St. Patrick's Day was officially welcomed back in 2022," BeerBoard wrote in its post-holiday report. "Our world changed just days prior to St. Patrick's Day in 2020, with COVID-based shutdowns implemented across the globe. 2021 continued to be bumpy, where restrictions remained moderate or, in some cases, in full effect."

Compared to St. Patrick's Day in 2019 – the last one before the pandemic caused the closure of bars and restaurants – 2022 recorded +9% volume growth on-premise.

New York City and Chicago, which were both under strict on-premise restrictions last year, saw significant boosts in on-premise business this year. Volume at bars and restaurants in New York City increased +507% over 2021 levels. In Chicago, volume increased +628%. In Syracuse, New York, BeerBoard's hometown, on-premise volume increased +151% over the same day in 2021, and Guinness was the No. 1 poured beer. It was No. 3 in New York City (Bud Light was No. 1) and No. 5 in Chicago (Coors Light was No. 1).

Nationwide, Guinness was the eighth-most poured beer of the day, while normally it falls "just outside the top 10 brands," according to BeerBoard. Overall, stouts' volume increased +137% nationwide. The style was the sixth-most poured style of beer, up from its usual spot at No. 11.

Other styles to post an increase in volume include light lagers (+116%), lagers (+74%) and IPAs (+169%). The top three brands poured on the holiday were Bud Light, Michelob Ultra and Coors Light.

For the week leading up to the holiday, early celebrations drove a +27% increase in overall on-premise sales, compared to the same time last year, according to on-premise market research firm CGA.

“It’s fair to say that the channel is continuing to build back at speed,” CGA client solutions director for the Americas Matthew Crompton said in a press release.

Of the five key states CGA tracks, California (+56%), New York (+50%) and Illinois (+42%) recorded the largest increases in velocity compared to the same week last year, although all tracked markets were positive. Sales velocity in Florida increased +13% over the same weekend last year, followed by Texas (+8%). Both states had fewer on-premise restrictions than California, New York and Illinois.

Sales velocity in all tracked markets posted double-digit growth over March 14, 2020, when on-premise restrictions were not yet in place, but public concern over the spreading coronavirus was mounting.

Nationwide, week-over-week sales velocity “has been steady, with slightly negative trends,” CGA reported. Sales velocity declined -2% and -1% for the first two weeks of March, respectively. However, the metric is trending upward in three of CGA’s key markets: +4% in Illinois, +3% in California, and +2% in Florida. Texas (-3%) and New York (-1%) both posted declines.

In the lead up to St. Patrick’s Day, NBWA chief economist Lester Jones foreshadowed a good week of on-premise sales, as draft beer (kegs) had a 8% share of beer volume for St. Patrick’s Day — the first time draft has reached 8% in more than 105 weeks.