

STORES

Although much of supermarkets' alcohol offerings are similar, how they are displayed and sold varies widely, **John Ryan** finds in north-west London

How the major grocers'

Booze alley used to appear on supermarket planograms as the tangible reward for all that went before. This was the part of the journey that would leave the shopper feeling better about the whole experience as they pondered whether to buy a decent Rioja or a white Burgundy.

That, however, was then. Today, the space devoted to alcohol has sprawled and it could be anywhere on the route to the checkouts, and is likely to have an almost self-contained feel to it – in contrast to the long aisle that used to characterise the category everywhere.

Different approaches have also been adopted by the 'big four' and Waitrose, with price and quantity at one end of the spectrum and ease and selection at the other.

A drive around the north-west London district of Colindale and nearby Wembley does much to illustrate the different attitudes to the business of shifting bottles and cans.

For Waitrose, the large store at King's Cross was visited as it is one of the closer branches in size to those in Colindale.

Waitrose, King's Cross

The star of the wines, beers and spirits roadshow has to be Waitrose at King's Cross. Two aisles are devoted to wine and beer, ranging from the price-conscious to top-end products, and the display is reasonably standard.

Beyond this, however, things are different. School-gym climbing-frame-like pieces of equipment run along part of the perimeter, and these are divided into pigeonholes.

Each is home to a different wine, with some of the bottles being presented laid, wine-rack-style, while others are stood upright, allowing the

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shopper to inspect the label. Above this, pendant bulbs add a touch of glamour, with the wooden frames extending to make the lights part of the display.

In another area, there is a low, back-lit spirits display, which looks more like the kind encountered in the duty-free area of an airport.

The not-so-secret weapon that puts Waitrose ahead of the pack, however, is the wine bar.

Sit down in this part of the shop and, for a corkage fee, the shopper can choose a wine from the shelves and enjoy it in situ, while test-driving food from the deli-counter. This is about increasing dwell time, while offering customers the chance to try and then buy.

9/10

Tesco Extra, Wembley

This Tesco Extra is an almost textbook example of a supermarket, with two long aisles that are home to wines, beers and spirits.

That said, a fair amount has been done to add interest in the shape of light wood frames that run the length of one of the aisles, framing the wine section, and open-front boxes that are used to highlight particular categories such as malt whisky and 'World & Speciality Beers'.

Owing to the linear arrangement of the department, shelf-edge 'wobblers' are used to highlight specific drinks, and the gondola ends are, of



See more images of these grocers' booze sections at Retail-week.com/Stores



alcohol aisles stack up



course, promotional with a heavy emphasis on price. This is workaday stuff.

5/10

Morrisons, Colindale

When Morrisons opened its flagship in Colindale last year, it represented an aspirational line in the sand for the retailer and a revisit does little do dispel this.

Alcohol is contained in an area towards the rear of the shop, which is oblong and has low-rise equipment, allowing good sightlines, and has elements of a wine cellar as part of its design.

This means a number of wines are displayed in open-fronted wooden wine crates and the whole area has been given a vinyl floor in order to separate it from the rest of the store.

Along the perimeter there is a floor-to-ceiling chiller unit for beers and wines. At the opposite end of the space, the perimeter is stacked with spirits and 'Party Drinks'.

Although almost no natural daylight reaches this part of the shop, there is a light and fresh feel thanks to an overhead gantry of spotlights.

7/10

Sainsbury's, Colindale

Sainsbury's in Colindale is not a new store and it is hard to escape this sense when visiting the space devoted to wines, beers and spirits at the back of the shop.

In spite of some attempts to lift the look and feel with upper-perimeter graphics depicting grapes, wine glasses and suchlike, as well as sporadic mood photos showing charged goblets, this is a grab-and-go part of the store.

All of which is not helped by the fact that standard white neon tubes provide the ambient lighting, resulting in a space that appears like any other within the store. The same is true of the terrazzo flooring.

4/10

Asda, Colindale

Colindale's Asda outpost probably ruled the roost in its location until the arrival of Morrisons in 2016, and now it looks mildly like an also-ran.

In keeping with the brand's core values, there is a heavy focus on low price across the whole of the store, and the alcohol department is no exception to this.

Gondola ends shouting 'Asda Price' set the tone for the aisles that follow, where multi-buy options are given prominence by shelf-edge wobblers. Even the marketing of Courvoisier brandy coupled with branded chocolates is afforded the same treatment with a graphic detailing the 'famously low Asda Price'.

This is an old-fashioned layout with little to commend in terms of experience, other than the price.

3/10