

Wine World Acquires Taste For Blockchain

Blockchain innovators are hitting the bottle with applications for the wine industry, as better tracking means happier consumers and stronger protection against counterfeiting. EY and Italian startup EZLab have just launched an Ethereum system that harvests information for the buyer.



By [Steve Silkin](#)

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The wine industry folks will be raising their glasses to [blockchain](#) as they grow and nurture the technology for marketing purposes and anti-counterfeiting measures.

The most recent move was by an Italian startup that launched an Ethereum-based tracking and consumer information system specifically designed for the wines of that country, where fake vintages are especially problematic. The venture is between professional services giant [EY](#) and [EZLab](#), a tech startup in Padua, Italy, that specializes in smart agriculture. Wine Blockchain collects verified information about the cultivation, production, and quality rating of the wine. Buyers can scan the QR code on the bottle with their phones to access the data. The goal is consumer quality.

According to an article on [DCE Brief](#), the technology will tackle a significant issue in the world of Italian wines, as counterfeiting issues have resulted in annual losses estimated at about 2 billion euros. The article cited [a survey](#) showing that 90 percent of Italian wine lovers want more and better information about their vino, and most indicated they'd be willing to pay higher prices for better authentication.

The first product to wear the technology's QR label will be Falanghina Wine by Cantina Volpone.

"The whole thing was tied to the physical world through the registration of the digital signature of the company owner so that there is not another individual who can be able to register something by using the Volpone name," [said](#) Gerardo Gabriele Volpone, the winery's digital and innovation consultant.

This week's EY-EZLab venture was preceded by Everledger's recent launch of a blockchain wine vault that was also designed in response to counterfeiting problems. On December 9, 2016, Everledger [secured](#) the origin of a bottle of 2001 Margaux, with the claim that it was the first company to have issued that kind of control for an "appellation contrôlée."

For anyone wondering about that vintage, it's priced in the \$500 to \$1,000 range. And let's hear what Wine Spectator has to say: "A pure, lovely beam of cassis and steeped plum notes is now in perfect harmony with the fine-

grained, lightly cedary and sandalwood-tinged structure. This has grace yet stays persistent, with the cassis accent echoing through the lengthy finish. An understated style, but all breed.”

Everledger worked with wine expert Maureen Downey to develop Chai Wine Vault to optimize provenance-authentication for fine wines. Chai Wine Vault was built on a Linux system, and permanently records information about wines, including photographs, ownership records, and Downey’s Chai Method that collects 90 data points for each wine.

“We hear daily from our industry partners on the threat fraudulent bottles pose to sales, trust and most importantly reputation,” Leoni Runge, Everledger’s fine wine guru, **said** when the service was launched in December. “Blockchain enables us to secure the identity of an asset in a way we haven’t been able to before. For the fine wine industry this means the opportunity to add a layer of transparency to every stage of a bottle’s journey across the supply chain.”

STEVE SILKIN

Steve Silkin is a journalist who has covered business and technology in Europe and the United States since the 1980s.

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