



AIR NEW ZEALAND BRINGS THE CHEER WITH SEATBACK HOME WINE DELIVERY

News / Airlines



Ordering a beverage from the seatback isn't novel, but ordering a case of wine to be delivered to your home is the new normal for passengers flying with Air New Zealand's latest entertainment systems.

Alongside the more usual TV, movie and audio options on offer on the IFE is the chance to purchase bottles — or, indeed, cases — of wine for home delivery. It's intuitive, fun and an excellent opportunity to while away a few minutes on board an aircraft.

The upgraded Panasonic Avionics touchscreens — a huge improvement on the previous generation to begin with — enable a significant amount of extra functionality, and the screens are responsive enough to make navigation a pleasure rather than a frustration for passengers.

The selection of wine is impressive (and, I can confirm through extensive professional investigation, delicious) and the prices very competitive. Brief notes are provided for each wine, and while these are useful they could be more comprehensive: information about alcohol percentages, a dry-to-sweet scale for whites, and a robustness scale for reds would all be particularly helpful in making what is essentially a sight-unseen (or taste-unsampled) purchase.

Shipping is reasonable within New Zealand — NZ\$5 (US\$3) — but increases for foreign destinations. Serious international wine fans unable to find some of the more obscure varietals at home might consider the cost of shipping to be reasonable, but it will turn off casual consumers. Air New Zealand flies to many of the destinations to which shipping is offered, so a development of

the product offering could be to cut the price of international shipping and use overseas parcel delivery companies for the domestic legs in the destination country.

With Air New Zealand not yet offering any sort of inflight connectivity, credit card transactions aren't live, with my order being processed on 4 December after a 2 December order.

Payment is through a non-live credit card swipe

The airline has partnered with New Zealand wine merchant Glengarry to process, ship and deliver the wine rather than fulfilling the orders itself, which is a smart move in terms of efficiency.

Given its buying power and sponsorship of the country's premier wine awards, however, it is notable that Air New Zealand hasn't taken a wider role in the backoffice function, or made a point of offering the wines awarded gongs in its own awards. That's especially true given the long memories of New Zealand winemakers over the carrier's selection of the Villa Maria conglomerate as exclusive supplier for much of its wine buy.

It strikes me that 2016 will see more onboard shopping opportunities like this as more airlines roll out increasingly capable inflight entertainment systems. Delta's 2012 deal with Amazon to provide free access to shop at Amazon.com over Gogo via passengers' own devices was ahead of the curve here. But the trick for many airlines will be to simultaneously ensure that the shopping is brand-positive — less SkyMall, more curated and unusual offerings — while offloading as much of the functionality as feasible to a partner like Air New Zealand is doing with Glengarry Wines.

Cheers to that.

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