

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

# THE tastingpanel MAGAZINE

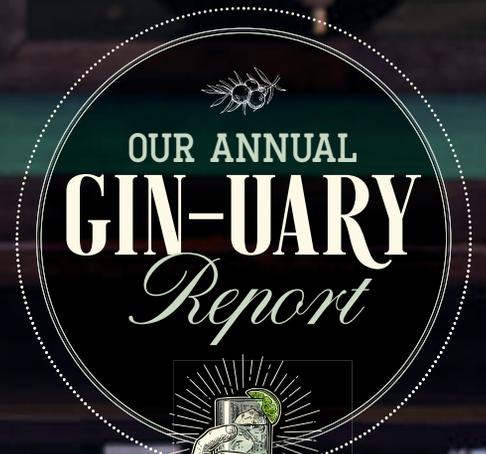
*London*

*London*

# GIN- SPIRATION

Sam Galsworthy,  
Co-Founder of London's  
Sipsmith Gin.

**SIPSMITH GIN  
LEADS THE UK CRAFT  
SPIRITS MOVEMENT**



NOTHING ADDED.  
NOTHING REMOVED.

NEVER CHARCOAL  
FILTERED

*Distilled from Wine Grapes*

*gv* glass vodka



MADE IN SEATTLE FROM THE FINEST WASHINGTON STATE GRAPES / PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY 40% ALC / VOL

# THE tastingpanel MAGAZINE

January/February 2018 • Vol. 76 No. 1

editor in chief

**Anthony Dias Blue**

[ablue@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:ablue@tastingpanelmag.com)

publisher / editorial director

**Meridith May**

[mmay@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:mmay@tastingpanelmag.com)  
818-990-0350

vp / associate publisher

**Rachel Burkons**

[rburkons@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:rburkons@tastingpanelmag.com)

managing editor

**Jesse Hom-Dawson**

[jesse@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:jesse@tastingpanelmag.com)

senior design director

Michael Viggiano [design@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:design@tastingpanelmag.com)

vp, sales and marketing

Bill Brandel [bill@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:bill@tastingpanelmag.com)  
818-322-5050

## CONTRIBUTORS

Kelly Balch, Jeremy Ball, Michelle Ball, Andy Barnham, Claire Barrett, Natalie Bovis, Michael Cervin, John Curley, Lyn Farmer, Tia Gavin, Chris Howard, Judi Laing, Tim Murray, Jeremy Parzen, Mona Shield Payne, Josh Reynolds, Benjamin Rusnak, Felix Sanchez, Izzy Watson, Kate Webber, Hardy Wilson, Deborah Parker Wong

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A perfect martini should be made by filling a glass with gin then waving it in the general direction of Italy." —Noel Coward

Published eleven times a year  
ISSN# 2153-0122 USPS 476-430

Chairman/CEO: Anthony Dias Blue  
President/COO: Meridith May

Subscription Rate: \$36 One Year; \$60 Two Years; Single Copy: \$6.95  
For all subscriptions, email: [subscriptions@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:subscriptions@tastingpanelmag.com)  
Periodicals Postage Paid at Van Nuys and at additional mailing offices

Devoted to the interests and welfare of United States restaurant and retail store licensees, wholesalers, importers and manufacturers in the beverage industry.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:  
The Tasting Panel Magazine  
6345 Balboa Blvd; Ste 111, Encino, California 91316,  
818-990-0350

©2018 The Tasting Panel Magazine. All rights reserved.  
Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited.

senior wine editor

Jessie Birschbach [jabs@sommjournal.com](mailto:jabs@sommjournal.com)

copy editor

Kate Newton [kate@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:kate@tastingpanelmag.com)

special projects editor

David Gadd [dgadd@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:dgadd@tastingpanelmag.com)

east coast editor

David Ransom

rocky mountain editor

Ruth Tobias

editor-at-large

Cliff Rames

vp / finance director

Anna Russell [anna@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:anna@tastingpanelmag.com)

events associate

Mara Marski [mara@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:mara@tastingpanelmag.com)

administrative assistant /  
social media manager

Tracy Pretlow [tracy@tastingpanelmag.com](mailto:tracy@tastingpanelmag.com)

contributing editors

Mitch Bechard, Ian Buxton, Randy Caparoso, Emily Coleman, Fred Dame, Richard Carleton Hacker, Matt Jackson, Kelly Magyarics, Karen Moneymaker, Merrill Shindler, Xania V. Woodman

[www.Facebook.com/TastingPanelMagazine](http://www.Facebook.com/TastingPanelMagazine)  
[@TastingPanel](https://twitter.com/TastingPanel) on Twitter and Instagram



# January + February = GINUARY!



PHOTO: JOHN CURLEY

*The Jan./Feb. issue is our only combined issue of the year, providing the perfect excuse to dub it “Ginuary.” Our annual gin category report starts on page 77.*

As we kick off our 11th year, *The Tasting Panel* is proud to be *the* national voice for the wine and spirits business. We feel proud to have been on-topic for well over a decade when reporting the trends—and even some of the passing fads—that have impacted us all.

Reflecting the “best in class” spirits and wines from 2017, our Yearbook lists the high-scoring, over-delivering liquid sensations of the year as reported by our editorial team. This special section (starting on page 105) gives some insight on which brands—from the thousands of products we tasted over the course of last year—have achieved substance, perfected style, and staying power in our industry. It’s a true testament to the talented people behind these shelf-worthy labels.

For 2018, we look to the thought leaders—mixologists, wine buyers, restaurateurs, distributors, and educators—who will give us their expert opinions on emerging trends for the coming year . . . and possibly years to come. These are the people on the front lines who influence all of us and make our publication viable.

Whether the spirits trends are culinary cocktails, regionally-inspired ingredients for signature drinks, or barrel-aged concoctions created on-premise, the base spirit still has to be superior to make these ventures fly. On the wine side, selections on wine lists have never been more diverse and exciting, and we’re happy to be part of that evergrowing passion on the part of wine buyers, sommeliers, and their enophile clientele.

I always hoped *The Tasting Panel* would be around for at least a decade, but I didn’t imagine its growth would be so phenomenal. Our readership continues to grow, reaching top professionals of the highest caliber, as well as those talented up-and-comers who will continue to set a positive tone for the future of this important industry.

It’s a neverending pursuit, but we’re having the time of our lives in the name of drinkable exploration. ■■

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

—Meredith May

Meredith May

Estd.  1976

# NAPA

CELLARS



NAPA CELLARS. A TRUE NAPA VALLEY CLASSIC SINCE 1976.



## Scholarships & Wine Education

**MIAMI AND HOUSTON  
HOST LAST STOPS  
OF TREASURY WINE  
ESTATES' SEVEN-CITY  
LUXICON TOUR**

Our publications *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal* are proud partners with the SommFoundation, and our success of bringing \$25,000 worth of scholarships to deserving wine buyers is due to the forward-thinking trade program of Treasury Wine Estates (TWE): the seven-city LUXICON TOUR. It's the leadership of industry members like TWE that allow our publication to amplify our national voice for promoting wine education with the SommFoundation, an organization dedicated to mentorship, learning, and personal growth.

This article recaps our last two stops on the tour (see the December issue of *The SOMM Journal* for an article on the first five cities), and we are already gearing up for a more expansive and intensive scholarship program for 2018!



LUXICON

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

CITY TOUR:

Atlanta

Boston

Houston

Las Vegas

Miami

New York City

San Francisco

LUXICON TOUR

*Les Amis de la Vigne*  
3V

ESTD 1876  
BERINGER

U ST JEAN

Chateau Minuty

Eric Hemer, MS, MW, Senior Vice President and Corporate Director of Education for Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits of America, joined Treasury Wine Estates Education Director Gillian Ballance, MS, DSW, in hosting Luxicon's workshop and tasting in Miami.



PHOTO: BENJAMIN POLSKAK

## Luxicon Tour *Wows* Miami

by David Ransom / photos by Benjamin Rusnak



Attendees were asked to blind taste six Treasury wines before evaluating them on paper and submitting their results to the teachers. There were three victors: Tim Bubar, Lead Sommelier at the Faena Hotel (left); Adrian Lopez, Sommelier at Los Fuegos by Francis Mallmann in the Faena Hotel on Miami Beach (second from left); and Éric Blais, Wine Director at USS Nemo in Naples, Florida (second from right). Also pictured are Gillian Ballance, MS, DSW, Treasury Wine Estates Education Director, and Eric Hemer, MS, MW, Senior Vice President and Corporate Director of Education for Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits of America.



The tasting at Eden Roc in Miami included a walk-through of the Court's Deductive Tasting Language Chart and Deductive Tasting Format, a few tips on best practices, and a discussion on the importance of smell in evaluating wines.

Treasury Wine Estates rolled into Miami this past November for the penultimate stop on its seven-city U.S. Luxicon tour, a tasting program created to promote the wine company's impressive portfolio to a new generation of sommeliers. Previous stops on the tour were made in Atlanta, Boston, Las Vegas, New York, and San Francisco.

Luxicon offered attendees the opportunity to taste through current releases of Treasury's most iconic wines, including Beaulieu Vineyards Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Penfolds Grange Hermitage, Château Minuty Cuvée 281, and Beringer Private Reserve Chardonnay, among others. More than 50 aspiring sommeliers from both coasts of the Sunshine State flocked to the Eden Roc Hotel on Miami Beach to take part in this interactive program, which also included an educational workshop on preparing for the Master Sommelier exam from the Court of Master Sommeliers.

Two industry leaders conducted the workshop and seated tasting: Treasury Wine Estate's own Education Director Gillian Ballance, MS, DSW, and Eric Hemer, MS, MW, and the Senior Vice President and Corporate Director of Education for Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits of America. "The Luxicon workshop was designed to give young somms insider tips on studying while walking them through the agony of prepping for the exam," said Ballance of the seminar, which focused on tasting evaluation, terminology, and suggested technique for getting the most out of studying for the exam. "I think you can never know enough," she added.

Exercises included a walk-through of the Court's Deductive Tasting Language Chart and Deductive Tasting Format (available on the Court's website at [mastersommelier.org](http://mastersommelier.org)), a few tips on best practices, and a discussion on the importance of smell in evaluating wines ("The nose is the most important part of tasting," said Hemer). Attendees also blind-tasted six Treasury wines, which they were asked to evaluate on paper before submitting their results to the teachers.

The three highest-scoring attendees were each awarded \$1,200 scholarships toward furthering their wine education. "It was a tight race," said Ballance of the process to pick the winners. "In the end we had to resort to a raffle to break the tie." That ultimately determined the victors: Adrian Lopez, Sommelier at Los Fuegos by Francis Mallmann in the Faena Hotel on Miami Beach; Tim Bubar, Lead Sommelier at the Faena Hotel; and Éric Blais, Wine Director at USS Nemo in Naples, Florida.

Kyle Ferchland, Luxury Trade Marketing Manager for Treasury, said the program represented a "great opportunity for Treasury to present its luxury portfolio to the next-generation somms." "This year's response has been wonderful," he added. "We hope to build on it next year."

# A “Win-Win-Win” in Houston

by Jeremy Parzen / photos by Felix Sanchez

It was a picture-perfect November afternoon in Houston’s Museum District when Ballance and fellow Master Sommelier Jack Mason of Pappas Bros. Steakhouse arrived to lead another Deductive Tasting seminar on the final stop of the Luxicon tour.

The more than 30 wine professionals in attendance—mostly buyers for the city’s top fine dining destinations—took in sweeping views of the city from the 11th floor of the swank Hotel ZaZa as Ballance and Mason led the group through the nuts and bolts of how to prepare for a blind tasting exam. Many of the guests were Advanced Sommelier and Master Sommelier candidates who were present not only to absorb the insights the two veteran sommeliers had to offer, but to vie for one of three \$1,200 scholarships.

Following the seminar, each guest was invited to take part in a blind tasting of four red wines selected by Ballance, with the top tasters taking home a check from the Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation (SommFoundation). Just as she did in Miami, Ballance devoted the first 40 minutes of her talk to the Court of Master Sommeliers’ famed “Deductive Tasting Format,” a finely-tuned tasting methodology that allows the sommelier to hone in on the country, appellation, grape variety, and vintage of the wine in question.

Through the evaluation of “sight,” “nose,” and “palate,” sommeliers who sit for exams can eliminate a series of incorrect answers as she or he identifies clues to the wine’s origin and character. For example, Ballance noted that ripe fruit might point to a New World country, while under-ripe notes could be an indicator of Old World origins.

To demonstrate the process, Mason walked the group through a blind tasting of a white wine (he handily pegged the wine as a California Chardonnay from the 2015 vintage). To follow up, Ballance then offered her colleague a second wine—this time, a red—to be tasted “on the clock” like a real examination. After humbly pointing out that he had to repeat the blind tasting three times before he obtained his Master Sommelier pin, Mason was heartily applauded by the group as he identified the wine as a 2013 Chianti Classico.

Following the seminar, guests attended a Treasury Wine Estates walkaround tasting where Ballance and Mason announced the scholarship winners: Monica Townsend, Sommelier at Camerata at Paulie’s; Menno Ozinga, Wine Buyer at La Griglia; and Steven McDonald, Sommelier at Pappas Bros. Steakhouse, each received a check to support them in their pursuit of higher education in fine wine. It was a “win-win-and-win,” noted a Houston-based wine writer in attendance, “even for their restaurant guests.” ■■



**The winners of Houston’s blind tasting: Monica Townsend, Sommelier at Camerata at Paulie’s (second from left) and Menno Ozinga, Wine Buyer at La Griglia (second from right). They’re pictured with Jack Mason, MS, of Pappas Bros. Steakhouse and Gillian Ballance. Not pictured is third winner Steven McDonald, Sommelier at Pappas Bros. Steakhouse.**



**Wine professionals took in sweeping views of the city from the 11th floor of the swank Hotel ZaZa as Ballance and Mason led the group through the nuts and bolts of preparing for a blind tasting exam.**

# contents

January/February 2018 Vol. 76 No. 1

## special features

**77 PUT A GIN IN IT**  
*The Tasting Panel Selects Our Favorite Spirits for an Incredible Gin-uary*

**105 LOOKING BACK AT THE CLASS OF 2017**  
*Our Favorite Wines and Spirits We've Reviewed the Past Year*

## cover story

**68 THE GIN REVOLUTION**  
*London's Sipsmith Brings True Craftmanship to a Traditional Spirit*

## up front

**6 SCHOLARSHIPS & WINE EDUCATION**  
*Miami and Houston Host Last Stops of Treasury Wine Estates' Seven-City Luxicon Tour*

## features

**50 SEASIDE CELEBRATION**  
*Miami's Top Somms Gather to Explore Rhône Valley Vineyards*

**54 JUST THE RIGHT BLEND**  
*Wemyss Malts' Three Bottlings Stand Out Within the Growing Category*

**92 AIN'T NO RULES IN KENTUCKY**  
*Visionary Distiller Fred Noe Celebrates Knob Creek's Anniversary Release*

**96 FINDING CLOSURE**  
*At Sommcon San Diego, The Tasting Panel Led a Seminar on the Positive Effects of Natural Cork on Fine Wine*



# 48

PHOTO: CLAIRE BARRETT

..... JUST IN

# LIME

FOR THE SUMMER

NEW

## MALIBU LIME MOJITO

2 PARTS MALIBU LIME  
3/4 PART FRESH LIME JUICE  
1/2 PART SUGAR  
3 PARTS SODA  
FRESH MINT LEAVES



MALIBU® Caribbean Rum With Lime Liqueur. 21% - 24% Alc./Vol. ©2017 Pernod Ricard USA, New York, NY

SIP EASY. ENJOY MALIBU RESPONSIBLY.

# contents

January/February 2018 Vol. 76 No.1



PHOTO: TIM MURRAY

# 54

## departments

- |           |                                   |           |                                           |            |                                           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>4</b>  | Letter from the Publisher         | <b>40</b> | Traveling Hungary                         | <b>76</b>  | Event Recap: Lebanese Wine Day            |
| <b>14</b> | Industry Spotlight                | <b>42</b> | Public Relations: J.A.M. PR               | <b>84</b>  | Behind the Scenes with Fred Dame, MS      |
| <b>20</b> | ForceBrands Hot Shot: Holly Berry | <b>44</b> | Trade Association: WSWA                   | <b>86</b>  | Celebrations: Disaronno                   |
| <b>22</b> | Scotch Report                     | <b>46</b> | Sparkling: Mionetto                       | <b>89</b>  | Italy: Stemmari                           |
| <b>24</b> | The Ransom Note                   | <b>48</b> | On the Road with Jack: Detroit            | <b>92</b>  | New Releases: Knob Creek 25th Anniversary |
| <b>26</b> | Sin City Sips                     | <b>58</b> | Furmint Ambassador: PlumpJack Balboa Café | <b>100</b> | Pairing Suggestions: Wine and Cannabis    |
| <b>30</b> | Profile: Geoff Whitman            | <b>60</b> | Blue Reviews                              | <b>101</b> | Rum: Ron Abuelo                           |
| <b>34</b> | Somm's List                       | <b>64</b> | Publisher's Picks                         | <b>102</b> | Travel: London Hotels                     |
| <b>36</b> | Capitol Chill                     | <b>72</b> | Beer: Heineken                            |            |                                           |
| <b>38</b> | ForceBrands Movers & Shakers      | <b>74</b> | What to Do: Corkage                       |            |                                           |



## Robert Young Estate Winery Breaks Ground on New Luxury Hospitality House

Family-owned since 1858, the Robert Young Estate Winery—one of California’s most renowned winemaking properties—has broken ground on its new hospitality and tasting house.

The new building, expected to open this summer, will be named the Scion House to honor the six generations that have farmed this stunning Alexander Valley property over the past 160 years.

The Scion House will feature a new entrance located at 5102 Red Winery Road in Geyserville, just north of Healdsburg. “The convenient location, elegant design, and sweeping 360-degree views of the Alexander Valley guarantee everyone will have a memorable wine country experience,” says Mark Evans, General Manager of Robert Young.

The convenient location, elegant design, and sweeping 360-degree views of the Alexander Valley guarantee everyone will have a memorable wine country experience.



## M.S. Walker Welcomes Peter Ruggie as General Manager of New York and New Jersey Operation

M.S. Walker has appointed Peter Ruggie as General Manager of the company’s growing wholesale distribution operation in New York and New Jersey, reporting directly to Jeffrey Allen, who has been named Chief Operating Officer NY/NJ. Ruggie brings 25 years of management and operations experience, most recently serving as General Manager of Martin Scott Wines NY/NJ.

Working directly with M.S. Walker’s management team, Ruggie will support business plan execution and the division’s operational activities as the company continues its significant growth in these dynamic markets. Ruggie will develop and enhance key supplier relationships, as well as oversee the brand management department and compliance and logistics protocol.

BRANDY  
**ODESSA**  
PREMIUM QUALITY

SMOOTH  
NEW PLAYER



PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY  
ODESSA BRANDY 40% ALC/VOL.  
IMPORTED BY GLOBAL SPIRITS USA, L.L.C  
GLOBALSPIRITSUS.COM





# The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey Arrives in the U.S.

The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey is inspired by the long tradition of whiskey-making on the North Coast of Ireland. This newly-arrived single malt is consciously aged for four years in former Sherry butts, allowing it to achieve a depth of flavor from the wine-imbued barrel that surpasses the spirit's years.

The Sexton offers a perfect balance of rich, dried fruits and subtle oak notes with a smooth finish, which is unexpected for a young single malt; meanwhile, the striking, hexagonal black bottle contributes to the aesthetic of any bar's shelf.

The term "Sexton" is derived from the Medieval Latin word "sacristanus"—meaning custodian of sacred objects—and is used to

describe a man who prepares graves and is the last to witness the body before it's laid to rest.

Master Blender Alex Thomas, who spent more than 13 years honing her craft, is at the helm of this new release. "It's exciting to bring The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey to the United States during a time when the Irish whiskey category is experiencing record-breaking growth," she says. "After years of experimenting with different cask profiles and laying the liquid to rest for just the right amount of time, I'm pleased to share a rich and deeply-flavorful Irish single malt."

*The Sexton is imported by Proximo Spirits.*



It's exciting to bring The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey to the United States during a time when the Irish whiskey category is experiencing record-breaking growth."

2018 COMPETITION: APRIL 13-15

# DO YOUR SPIRITS NEED A LIFT?

There is simply no more reliable, prestigious, or widely recognized indication of spirits excellence than a San Francisco World Spirits Competition medal.

And winning one can raise your spirits' visibility, sales, and reputation like nothing else.

Enter online at [www.sfspiritscomp.com](http://www.sfspiritscomp.com)



SAN FRANCISCO WORLD  
**SPIRITS** COMPETITION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Anthony Dias Blue  
Editor-in-Chief of *The Tasting Panel* Magazine

**DON'T DELAY!** ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, MARCH 16

   @SFWSPIRITSCOMP / #SFWSC

Follow us on social media for spirits industry news, market insights, and Competition updates



## Rhonda Carano Becomes New Senior Executive Officer and Manager of Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery

Rhonda Carano, Co-Founder of Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery alongside her late husband Don Carano, has assumed the position of Senior Executive Officer and Manager for the Ferrari-Carano family of brands after Don passed away on October 3, 2017.

Like Don, Rhonda is a second-generation Italian-American and a native of Reno, Nevada. The Caranos first fell in love with Sonoma wine country in the late 1970s while visiting to source wines for their hotel/casino, the Eldorado Resort Casino. Since Ferrari-Carano is the shared vision of Don and Rhonda, who co-managed the company since its inception in 1981, the transition to Rhonda's new role will be seamless.

"As a team, Don and I shared a dream," Rhonda says. "His insight and visionary approach in the wine industry back in the early 1980s—particularly his love for acquiring special vineyard sites—is the backbone of Ferrari-Carano's philosophy of creating memorable wines from vine to bottle."

Rhonda drives Ferrari-Carano's growth strategies and brings to the role 40 years of experience in business management, marketing, advertising, and creative design at Eldorado Resorts Inc.; Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery; Lazy Creek Vineyards; Seasons of the Vineyard Tasting Bar and Boutique; Vintners Inn; and John Ash & Co. Restaurant.

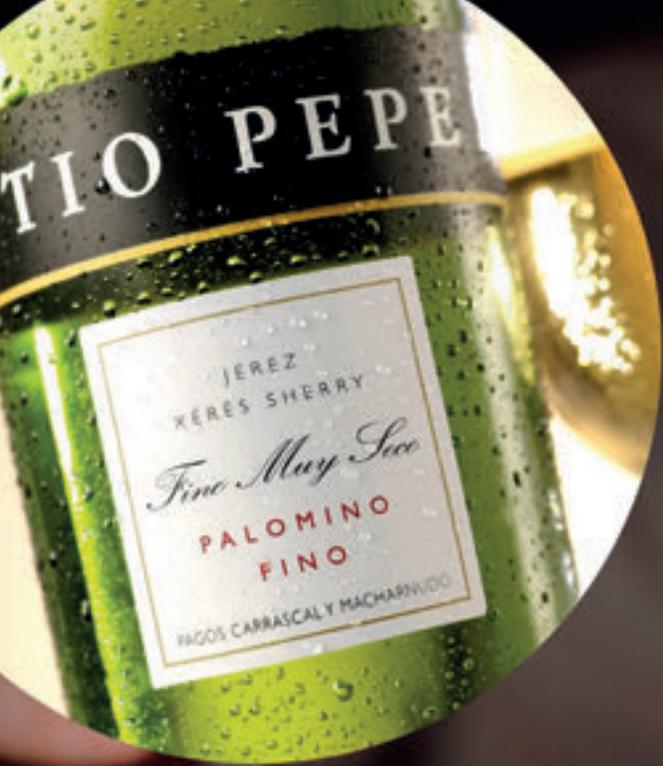
## French American Vintners appoints Rick Bonitati as CEO of St. Francis Winery & Vineyards

The French American Vintners Board of Directors appointed Rick Bonitati as CEO of St. Francis Winery & Vineyards in Sonoma Valley and Senior Vice President for the Western Operations of French American Vintners. Bonitati comes to St. Francis Winery and French American Vintners most recently from Paul Hobbs Wines, where he was Chief Operating Officer.

In addition to St. Francis Winery, the Western Operations of French American Vintners includes several highly-recognized wineries, including Sequoia Grove Winery in Napa, Résonance Vineyards in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, and Domaine Carneros (in joint partnership with the Taittinger family) in Carneros.

The board also announced that Robert Aldridge has been named Vice President of Finance for the Western Operations French American Vintners, in addition to his current role as COO/CFO of St. Francis Winery. ■■





SHOW US YOUR SHERRY SKILLS  
AND YOU COULD

# WIN A TRIP TO SPAIN

WHEN THE TIO PEPE CHALLENGE  
COMES TO THE U.S.

---

Now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year, The Tio Pepe Challenge is an international mixology competition for creating cocktails with Sherry.

The cocktail competition offers bartenders from around the world the opportunity to discover the infinite possibilities of Sherry wines and, with the guidance of our experts, demonstrate their knowledge, venencia skills, creativity and talent in crafting signature cocktails.

For more information on how to enter, visit:

[www.tastingpanelmag.com/thetiopepechallenge](http://www.tastingpanelmag.com/thetiopepechallenge)



TioPepeWine TioPepe





PHOTO COURTESY OF TOTAL BEVERAGE SOLUTION

# Holly Berry

HUMAN CAPITAL EXECUTIVE,  
TOTAL BEVERAGE SOLUTION

**A**s a Human Capital Executive at Total Beverage Solution, Holly Berry oversees the human capital strategy and execution for the full-service importer and supplier. With 20 years of experience in human resources, Berry is a seasoned expert when it comes to hiring, inspiring, and retaining top talent. Read on to learn more about her career and what she finds most exciting about the beverage industry.

**ForceBrands:** You joined Total Beverage Solution last year after working across various industries. What inspired you to join the beverage industry?

**Holly Berry:** I began my career as an Occupational Health Nurse for a luxury automobile manufacturer, where I was initially responsible for workplace health, wellness, safety, and absence management. My mentors encouraged me to obtain an MBA in Human Resources Management, which

allowed me to take on additional roles in employee relations, training, development, talent acquisition, and more. I was drawn to Total Beverage Solution because of the opportunity to work with people who are passionate about world-renowned beer and acclaimed wine and spirits from across the globe.

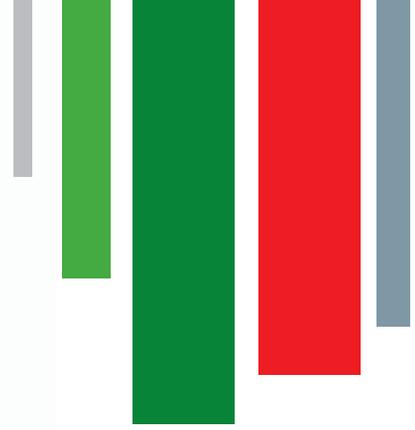
**FB:** What do you find most exciting about the state of the beverage world right now?

**HB:** It is exciting and rewarding to be involved in an industry that is not only rich in history and heritage, but that's innovative and constantly evolving. Wineries, breweries, and distilleries continue to redefine and hone their craft to create recipes and styles reaching a wide range of consumers—from novice to expert. Total Beverage Solution's portfolio is an excellent example of this juxtaposition of tradition and innovation; it offers selections from producers like New Zealand's Kono Winery, which

honors its rich Maori heritage through sustainable winemaking practices, yet is innovative in its methods to produce award-winning wines like Kono Sauvignon Blanc.

**FB:** You attended ForceBrands' HR Collective event last fall, where we discussed the state of the modern workplace. What do you foresee as the biggest hiring challenge for 2018?

**HB:** I believe acquiring top talent in 2018 will be impacted in three major ways. First, it's a candidate's market. Due to the low unemployment rate and skill shortages, star candidates will have multiple options, leading to the second concern: The time to fill an open position will likely increase due to competition. Thirdly, companies will need to differentiate themselves to be able to stand out as an employer of choice. Candidate expectations have changed, requiring companies to be agile and adaptable to win the war for talent. ■■



# BOOST YOUR BUSINESS WITH BREWERY FRESH HEINEKEN DRAUGHT

With Blade you deliver a premium Heineken draught beer experience to enhance your beer sales. Discover what this new table-top draught system can do for your business.

## WHY CHOOSE BLADE?



**FRESH 30 DAYS FRESH.**  
The unique BLADE system guarantees you enjoy brewery-fresh draught.



**Plug & Play PLUG & PLAY.**  
Just insert spout. No keg deposit. No maintenance. No costly line cleaning or need for CO<sup>2</sup>.



**LESS WASTE MORE PROFITS.**  
With nearly 100% yield, the BLADE system ensures less waste.



**EXPERIENCE DRAUGHT BEER WHERE YOU NEVER IMAGINED.**  
• Footprint: 11.4"L x 18.5"D x 23.2"H  
• Total unit weight: 38 lbs.



**30 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.**  
No questions asked return.

**BLADE™**  
BREWLOCK COUNTERTOP DRAUGHT SYSTEM

For more information, call 866.508.5970 or email us at [consumeraffairs@fivepointstradingcompany.com](mailto:consumeraffairs@fivepointstradingcompany.com)

To order, call MicroMatic at 833-MYBLADE (833.692.5233) or contact your Five Points Trading Company Distributor Rep.

**LOOK FOR AVAILABILITY IN YOUR MARKET!**

# The Year in Scotch

A REFLECTION ON SOME OF 2017'S MOST MEMORABLE RELEASES

by Ian Buxton

The final few months of 2017 saw more than the usual flurry of new releases from Scotland's distilleries, due to a recovery in export sales and welcome news of the re-opening of three iconic distilleries thought to be lost forever.

stood out came from the independent boutique blenders at Compass Box. Bottled at 46% ABV, **Phenomenology** (\$180 SRP) was released with an invitation for drinkers to share their own tasting notes with the company before any official description was available.

Another well-loved American favourite is Dewar's, which has elected to replace its no-age-statement Signature blend with **Dewar's 25 Years Old** (\$225, 40% ABV)—a decision that goes against the market trend. Remarkably, Dewar's Master Blender Stephanie MacLeod has been able to identify supplies of aged whisky to blend together; the blends are then sent for an additional period of maturation, or double-ageing, to add more depth and smoothness.

As part of an additional step unique to the new 25-year-old expression, the whisky was then filled into a set of freshly-disgorged casks from Dewar's Royal Brackla single malt distillery for an extra period of finishing. Look for layers of rich fruit, floral notes, and delicate honey with a hint of smoke.



With that in mind, welcome to Johnnie Walker's new expression: the **Blue Label Ghost and Rare** (SRP \$399, 46% ABV). It's the first in a series of special releases crafted by blending irreplaceable whiskies from "ghost" distilleries that have long since closed—among them Cambus and Pittyvaich—with other sought-after Scotches.

Each edition will be crafted with one incredible whisky at its heart. Having finished my all-too-small press sample, this will have to be a New Year purchase if my Christmas wish list has been ignored!

Considering that the rush of new releases has slowed somewhat, I now have the opportunity to mention some whiskies I simply didn't have room to include in recent issues. One that

Speyburn is a longstanding U.S. favourite thanks to its combination of excellent quality and value-for-money pricing, so the announcement of a limited release of **Speyburn 15 Years Old** was a welcome one. Bottled at 46% ABV, the single malt is available through importer 375 Park Avenue Spirits with a very reasonable suggested retail price of \$65. The handsome new packaging sets off this classic Speysider's notes of dark chocolate, vanilla, orange, raisins, and spice. The rich taste and long-lasting finish is perfect for cold winter days.



Speaking of limited releases, just 74 bottles of the **Bowmore 1966** from Islay survived the long wait in the famed No. 1 Vaults. This \$25,500 whisky is packaged in a handmade crystal decanter featuring sterling silver adornments and housed in a handcrafted cabinet made from Scottish oak. My tasting sample appears to have been mislaid in the mail, however.

Until next issue! ■■■

# — Spring Fed — MARYLAND SPIRIT



Signature 83



Cask Strength

Experience the nation's only waterfront distillery  
in Baltimore, Maryland.

**TOURS & TASTINGS**  
— DAILY —



Savour our spirit responsibly.

SAGAMORESPIRIT.COM



#SPIRITOFMAGAZINE

301 East Cromwell Street, Baltimore, MD 21230

# In the Spirit of Giving

## TWO NEW YORK CITY EVENTS AIM TO HIGHLIGHT THE CHARITABLE ESSENCE OF THE HOLIDAYS

by David Ransom

Late fall ushers in that time of year we all love and dread at the same time. November centers around Thanksgiving with its tryptophan-laced starchy excess, and the December holidays are preceded by a rapid slew of stress-filled shopping days: Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday, and, last but certainly not least, Giving Tuesday.

Fortunately, there's solace to be found in the "giving" part. It's what I love most about this time of celebration, and in that spirit, I recently attended a pair of wonderful events in New York City where "giving back" served as a focal point of the evening's theme.

I had the pleasure of sitting with Michael Mondavi's daughter Dina during a dinner at the James Beard House to celebrate the launch of Canvas Blanc de Blancs, a sparkling wine developed exclusively for Hyatt Hotels by Michael and his son Rob. Dina, the evening's host, also provided white and red wines from the Mondavi portfolio to pair with the five-course meal.

The event benefitted the James Beard Foundation's scholarship fund, which has given more than \$7 million to date to help further the education of culinary arts students. Hyatt flew in chefs from a number of its properties to create the dishes, and Canvas (SRP \$20), produced in Italy, was the perfect accompaniment for the white truffle-themed menu. It's available exclusively at Hyatt Hotels or online at [canvaswines.com](http://canvaswines.com).

Next, at Bagatelle in the Meatpacking District, I attended Tour Paraqay—a stop on the Peruvian MasterChef fundraising tour that organizers described as an effort to "promote poverty eradication through education." The event featured a handful of top Peruvian chefs, including Mitsuharu Tsumura of Maido in Lima, recently named top restaurant at the Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants awards; Miguel Aguilar of Surfsh Bistro in New York; and event host José Luján of PachaLab in Cusco (Miami-based Venezuelan chef César González, owner of seven restaurants including Bocas Grill, also participated). Beverage sponsors included two Peruvian Pisco producers—Pisco Portón and Pisco 100—and Beer Cusqueña, all of whom had plenty of product on hand to quench the thirst of the charitably-minded attendees. ■■

PHOTO COURTESY OF RINA, OH



Hyatt Hotels Corporate Director of Food & Beverage John O'Connell and *The Tasting Panel's* East Coast Editor David Ransom with Dina Mondavi of Michael Mondavi Family Estate at the James Beard House in New York City.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ATIF ALI



Jose Lujan of PachaLab, Mitsuharu Tsumura of Maido, José Luis Chávez of Mission Ceviche, and César González of Bocas Grill at the Tour Paraqay fundraiser.

# C'MON



# EAT YOUR FRUIT, AND DRINK IT TOO.



Shine Responsibly®

©2018 Ole Smoky Distillery, LLC, Gatlinburg, TN  
All Rights Reserved. OLE SMOKY, OLE SMOKY TENNESSEE MOONSHINE and SHINE RESPONSIBLY are registered trademarks of Ole Smoky Distillery, LLC.

OLESMOKY.COM  
@OLESMOKY

# Shakers on the Move

FOR THESE LAS VEGAS BARTENDERS, 2017 MARKED A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

by Xania V. Woodman

Looking for someone? Plenty of Las Vegas bartenders shuffled the deck in 2017, changing roles and, in some cases, trading their bar aprons for business suits. Here's where to find a few of our city's most prominent slingers in the new year.

Herbs & Rye lost its first female bartender, **Emily Yett**, last January when she decided to leave the award-winning steakhouse after two years to seek opportunities in bar management and training. Sydell Group (NoMad, The LINE, and Freehand) came calling in May to invite the



**Chris Leavitt is Red Rock Resort's new Property Mixologist.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF STATION CASINOS

2016 Speed Rack Las Vegas champion to join the opening team of Primrose in the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino (soon to split into two resorts, the Park MGM and the NoMad Las Vegas) as the 361-seat restaurant's Beverage Manager.

The verdant, vegetable-forward concept is a breath of fresh air in a city built on beef and sultry environs. Here, Yett has given American classics a touch of Mediterranean and French flair; her ode to the Dirty Martini, for example,

features vodka infused with kalamata olives and pickling spices combined with Fino Sherry.

With the purchase of Palms Casino Resort, Station Casinos—which owns and operates 19 other southern Nevada properties—is revamping its image. Charged with establishing the company's cocktail culture is **Dan D'Agostino**, who left his role as a Senior Brand Ambassador for Casa Noble Tequila to become Station's Corporate Director of Beverage. D'Agostino cherry-picked his dream team, including former Wynn Resorts Property Mixologist **Damian Cross** (now Executive Mixologist, Station Casinos); Herbs & Rye Bar Manager **Adam O'Donnell** (now Property Mixologist, Green Valley Ranch); and The Sand Dollar Lounge/Herbs & Rye slinger **Kinson Lau** (now Property Mixologist, Santa Fe Station).

Former Carson Kitchen barman **Chris Leavitt** has already been promoted from his initial position as Lead Bartender at T-Bones Chophouse to Red Rock Resort's Property Mixologist. Texas Station bartender **Nadine Medina**, meanwhile, was promoted to the lead position at Onyx in Red Rock.

The new year will be a productive one for this passionate team, with the transformation of Onyx to an American whiskey-focused concept by February; the opening of a new rum-centric lobby bar in Green Valley Ranch by March; and the much-anticipated reveal of the makeover at The Palms. ■■



**Emily Yett, formerly of Herbs & Rye, joined the opening team of Primrose in Monte Carlo Resort and Casino as its Beverage Manager.**

PHOTO: STEFANI MERRIWEATHER

# Discover. Indulge. Celebrate.

## 2018 World of Pinot Noir

March 2-3

Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara



**Plan your Pinot Noir Adventure | [WorldofPinotNoir.com](http://WorldofPinotNoir.com)**

**Two days of seminars | Pairing dinners by renown chefs | Pinot Noir parties  
Grand Tastings featuring more than 250 premier Pinot Noirs**

**TASTE HUNDREDS OF WORLD-CLASS WINES**

Austria - Burgundy - Mendocino - Monterey - New Zealand - Oregon  
Santa Barbara - Santa Cruz - San Luis Obispo - Sonoma - South Africa



# THE BIG DEAL

## WINE & SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF AMERICA

75<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION

April 30 - May 3, 2018 | Caesars Palace Las Vegas

### Celebrating 75 years as *the* premier industry event

that connects America's distributors with suppliers, importers and exporters!

Register as a wholesaler or distributor to find new brands, brand extensions, cutting-edge products and services and to take part in sessions on industry hot topics. Participate as an exhibitor to network with industry decision makers and innovators and to gain exposure for your existing or new brands, products or services. If you are seeking initial or expanded distribution in the United States, the WSWA 75th Annual Convention & Exposition is where you need to be.

### REGISTRATION IS OPEN

For information on exhibits and suites, registration fees, sponsorship, and the most current Schedule of Events visit [wswaconvention.org](http://wswaconvention.org)

For sponsorship inquiries please contact **Cindy Nachman-Senders, [Cindy@wswa.org](mailto:Cindy@wswa.org)**

### CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Dynamic General Session Speakers
- U.S. Beverage Alcohol Forum (USBAF)
- Brand Battle
- Sessions on Industry Hot Topics
- Increased Media Presence: Trade and Lifestyle Outlets
- Wine, Spirits and Mixology Competitions
- 2 Exhibit Halls
- Over 400 Suppliers
- 80 Lower Level Hospitality Suites
- 120 Traditional Hospitality Suites



#### Stay connected!

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.  
View Convention highlights on YouTube.  
Visit [wswaconvention.org](http://wswaconvention.org) for links.

# AS AN EXHIBITOR OR SUITE HOLDER AT THE WSWA 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION YOU CAN ENTER ONE OR ALL OF THESE EXCITING COMPETITIONS!

All competitions will take place at Caesars Palace Las Vegas

SPONSORED BY:

THE **tastingpanel**  
MAGAZINE

THE **SOMM** JOURNAL

the **clever root**  
fruit. flower. farm. leaf



## WINE & SPIRITS **TASTING COMPETITION**

Tuesday, May 1, 2018  
10:30 am - 5:00 pm



## CALL FOR COCKTAILS **MIXOLOGY COMPETITION**

Wednesday, May 2, 2018  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm



## WHOLESALE **IRONMIXOLOGIST COMPETITION**

Wednesday, May 2, 2018  
1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

**Go to [wswaconvention.org](http://wswaconvention.org)**

for more information on competitions and for competition entry forms.



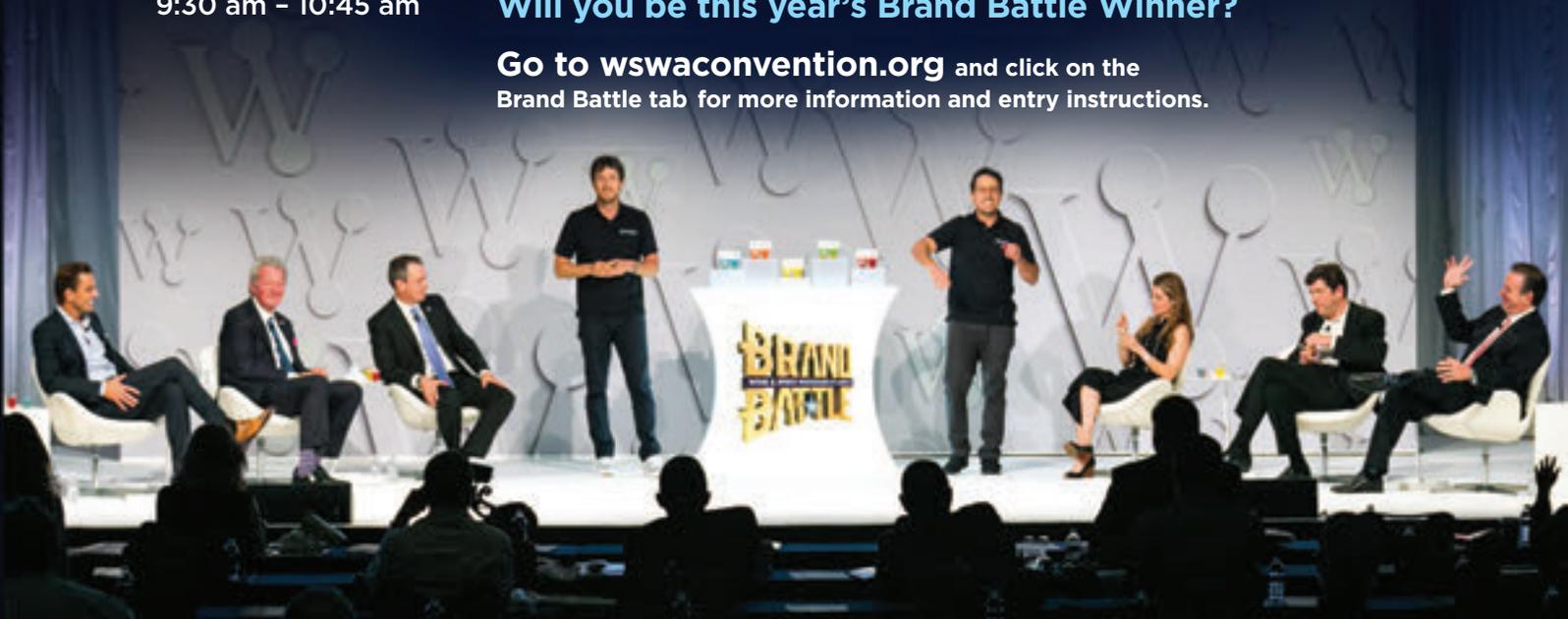
Thursday, May 3, 2018  
9:30 am - 10:45 am

## ENTER THE BRAND BATTLE

If you have a great brand with a compelling story, and a strong business and marketing plan, Brand Battle is the perfect platform for you. We are looking for people who can pitch their brand to our panel of industry insiders in front of a live audience. Our experts will provide contestants with their candid feedback on the brand, presentation, and approach.

**Will you be this year's Brand Battle Winner?**

**Go to [wswaconvention.org](http://wswaconvention.org)** and click on the Brand Battle tab for more information and entry instructions.



Geoff Whitman, Executive Vice President of Sales for John Anthony Family of Wines, has long made building strong relationships the focal point of his successful career in winemaking, distribution, and sales.

# The Connector

JOHN ANTHONY FAMILY OF WINES' GEOFF WHITMAN IS AN EXPERT IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

by Kate Newton / photos by Josh Reynolds

If you ask Geoff Whitman, he'll say he just might be able to trace the inception of his illustrious career in the wine industry back to an evening more than 20 years ago. The Executive Vice President of Sales for John Anthony Family of Wines still recalls it well: Then the bar manager at the Wine Cask in Santa Barbara, Whitman stepped away from his usual turf to wait on a table occupied by none other than Julia Child and Robert Mondavi.



**The John Anthony Family of Wines portfolio includes JaM Cellars' Butter Chardonnay, flagship brand John Anthony Vineyards, and FARM Napa Valley.**

Despite knowing admittedly very little about wine at the time, Whitman clearly made an impression. Child and Mondavi returned the next three nights and asked to be served by

Whitman, and several years later, he took a position at the Robert Mondavi Corporation after working as a fine wine salesperson in Los Angeles for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits. There, he began to expand his prowess in the distribution realm as he rose up the chain to eventually oversee sales for CWUS Western U.S. on-premise national accounts.

Many of the close relationships he built during that time have informed his approach to business throughout his career. "After 20 or so years of making these relationships, they've all made me the person I am today," Whitman says. "These are people you're going to be lifelong business partners with, but more importantly, they're like lifelong friends. I don't agree with the sentiment that business and friendships don't mesh, because this business is so social."

Whitman's own interest in winemaking has launched a slate of side projects over the years, including Ledbetter Wines with close friend and soul/R&B singer-songwriter Chris Pierce and Spaceman Wines with former Boston Red Sox pitcher Bill "Spaceman" Lee. Whitman also served as Co-Owner/Managing Partner and Assistant Winemaker for Rob, Jr.

and Lydia Mondavi's wine brands Spellbound and Medusa while working as General Manager of Michael Mondavi Family Wines and handling all of Folio's export business.

When he divested his partnership with Rob Mondavi, Whitman landed at John Anthony Family of Wines, which encompasses its high-end flagship brand John Anthony Vineyards as well as newer labels FARM Napa Valley and JaM Cellars. The latter is known for its incredibly successful Butter Chardonnay: "Since 2009 we've gone from 1,000 cases to nearly 1 million cases produced in 2017," Whitman says. "We finally won the Impact Hot Brand award even though we've had triple-digit growth every year for seven years."

Whitman credits John Anthony Family of Wines Founder and CEO John Truchard for giving him the chance to assemble a sales team he calls "hands down the best in the wine business" (members include Art Pinn, Kerry Guilfoyle, and Bill Stevens). "You realize you run in such small circles, but they touch these great, big, gigantic circles out there," Whitman adds. "Connecting people is not for any direct benefit of my own; it's because I like to see friends do well and I love to put good people next to each other." ■■



# EASY-TO-LOVE WINES THAT LIVE UP TO THEIR NAMES

**JaM**  
CELLARS

**IMPACT HOT BRAND AWARD WINNER**



*"We made these wines in the style that we and our friends love to enjoy. We hope you do too!"*

John and Michele, Vintners – the "J" and the "M" in JaM

Visit [JaMCellars.com/Trade](http://JaMCellars.com/Trade)

# CALLING ALL WINE AND SPIRITS BUYERS!

**We want to  
invite YOU to  
our events!**

From Somm Camps to speed tastings, from cocktail competitions to blind tasting pop quizzes with cash on the line, *The Tasting Panel* and its sister publications *The SOMM Journal* and *The Clever Root* host some of the most exciting, must-attend events in the industry.

We'll be all over the country in 2018 and want to make sure you're on our invite list! To secure your spot at one of our many events, email [Francesca@TastingPanelMag.com](mailto:Francesca@TastingPanelMag.com).

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2017



**San Francisco Bartenders Took a Cooking Class with El Tesoro Tequila**



**The Luxicon Tour Made a Stop in Boston**



**DC Bartenders Struck a Pose at the National Archives Spirited Republic Cocktail Competition**



**Rhône Valley Vineyards Hosted a Casino Night for Chicago Somms**

**DATES TO WATCH  
FOR IN 2018:**

**Global Garnacha Symposium April 24 at Copia Napa  
Cru Artisan College 2018 May 14–18 in Denver, Seattle, and Napa  
... and many more!**



# CORK BY THE NUMBERS

**70%**

OF ALL WINE STOPPERS IN THE WORLD ARE MADE FROM CORK.

**88%**

OF WINE SPECTATOR'S TOP 100 WINES ARE FINISHED WITH CORK.

**93%**

OF CONSUMERS SAY NATURAL CORK SIGNIFIES QUALITY WINE.

**100%**

NATURAL CORK - THE ONLY CLOSURE PROVEN OVER TIME TO FORM A PERFECT SEAL AND ALLOW WINE TO DEVELOP.

Cork,  
it's more than a detail.



# CHEF'S ROLL | SOMM'S LIST

PRESENTATION IS EVERYTHING

*We've partnered with Chef's Roll & Somm's List, the global culinary and wine professional networks, to learn more about beverage experts from across the country.*



PHOTO: HEIDI GELDHAUSER

## MATT PIACENTINI

*Owner of The Up & Up in New York and Co-Owner of Clyde Common and Pépé Le Moko in Portland, OR*

**Does your approach on spirits, cocktails, and atmosphere change when working at The Up & Up in New York to Clyde Common or Pépé Le Moko in Portland?**

Being a full-time NYC resident, my involvement in Portland involves more big-picture, conceptual aspects of the place. The bar at Clyde Common is first and foremost a hotel bar, but it was always supposed to have a broader appeal. With Pépé, we were able to do a much more focused idea: in particular, making super-good versions of under-appreciated drinks. On the other hand, The Up & Up is a New York City bar through and through. The atmosphere, the music, the design, and especially the spirit and cocktail offerings are all exactly what we want them to be.

**What are some of your own personal tips for creating a cocktail menu that is well-rounded and creative, but that also sells?**

Make sure the drink that's going to be most popular is the one you're going to make money off of. Use a super-friendly ingredient to broaden people's comfort zones; we want to give people what they want, but we also want to expand their horizons if we can. At The Up & Up, we encourage our bartenders to come up with drinks and submit them for menu inclusion. ■■

PHOTO: TALIA KLEINPLATZ, TWO FOR THE BAR

## JAY CARTER

*Bar Manager at Cooks & Soldiers in Atlanta, GA*

**Cooks & Soldiers takes the Gin and Tonic seriously, offering guests four different specialty cocktails that showcase different variations of gins, mixers, and garnishes. What inspires the "Tonic of the Week"?**

It's at the intersection of curiosity and circumstance. I began utilizing the flavor bible for combinations that work well, then started mixing and matching things I liked along with the items suggested. As I progressed, I started factoring in the different ways the tonic's flavor was experienced with different spirits, as well as different methods of getting certain elements in the tonic to be more present on the palate.

**What's the anatomy of your perfect Gin and Tonic?**

I'm a fan of a good barrel-aged gin—Ransom Old Tom is my go-to—and Fever-Tree Mediterranean Tonic, garnished with some lemon and lime peels as well as a little cardamom. The combination results in a bit of oak and vanilla from the gin, mixed into a mélange of aromatic and citrus notes that epitomize refreshing for me.



***If you are a mixologist or wine professional interested in being featured here or want more information on Chef's Roll and Somm's List, please email [featured@chefsroll.com](mailto:featured@chefsroll.com).***

# From Our Casa

TO YOUR CASA



## PATA NEGRA

CAVA

Pour a glass of Pata Negra Cava and sit back as life's richest pleasures bubble to the surface.

Those vibrant flavors, clean aromas, and balanced structures are the culmination of a Spanish farming tradition stretching back five generations.

Pata Negra Cava - from our casa, to your casa.



PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY

| [cavapatanegra.com](http://cavapatanegra.com)

| Follow us: @cavapatanegra





The igloos at The Watergate can seat two to eight people.

# A Chill in the Air

WASHINGTON, D.C. IS AFLUTTER WITH STIRRED GIN COCKTAILS, WHISKEY SIPPING IN IGLOOS, AND FRENCH WINE

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS



PHOTO: KYLE SCHMITZ

The Martinis at Bar Charley run ten selections deep.

The Martini is definitely having a moment right now in D.C., with creative takes on the always-in-style gin and vermouth classic popping up all over town (OK, vodka sometimes rears its head in some of these variations, and I'll give 'em a pass.)

Nowhere are the choices more prolific than at Bar Charley. The bar makes a mean 50/50, but its two most eclectic recipes are the Smoky, a St. George Terroir Gin-based sip that gets a whiff of peat smoke from an Islay Scotch; and the Hi Ho, which Co-Founder Gordon Banks told me takes the Martini in a “slightly different, less boozy direction” with Hendricks Gin, orange bitters, and white Port instead of vermouth. All of Bar Charley’s liquid iterations work with Chef Adam Harvey’s fun pupu platter featuring wagyu skewers, Maryland blue crab tater tots, Old Bay wings, seared pork belly skewers, and half-smoke pierogis.

After checking out The Watergate Hotel’s new afternoon tea menu (which starts with a glass of Champagne in the tony lobby, obviously), I headed to the terrace outside The Next Whiskey Bar, where several luxe igloos were installed for cocktailing and canoodling. The 12-foot domes are decked out with heaters, sofas, candles, fuzzy pillows, and sumptuous blankets. I settled in and cozied up to The Smoking Gun with I.W. Harper Bourbon, tangerine cordial, and Angostura bitters.

Residents in the District tout the largest per capita wine consumption in the country, and a new French-inspired wine bar in Brookland gives them yet another venue to socialize with fellow enophiles. Lauren Winter of design company Edit Lab and Sebastian Zutant, former Partner/Beverage Director at Red Hen and All Purpose, recently opened Primrose in partnership with Greg Algje and Nathan Beauchamp of Tiger Fork (Zutant actually crafts his own wine via his winery The Lightwell Survey, part of Early Mountain Vineyards in Madison, Virginia). Deciding between the Sébastien Riffault Les Quarterons Sancerre and the Sauvignon Blanc from the veritable father of Virginia wine, Jim Law of Linden Vineyards, is the ultimate dilemma: It’s best to just order both, *bien sûr*. ■■

*Kelly Magyarics, DWS, is a wine, spirits, and lifestyle writer and wine educator in the Washington, D.C. area. She can be reached through her website at [kellymagyarics.com](http://kellymagyarics.com), or on Twitter and Instagram @kmagyarics.*



PHOTO: SCOTT SUCHMAN

Primrose is a new wine bar in D.C.’s Brookland neighborhood.

# CRYSTAL CLARITY MEETS EXCEPTIONAL SMOOTHNESS

---

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST  
100% PURO AGAVE TEQUILA



**HORNITOS<sup>®</sup>**  
**✓ SHOT WORTH TAKING<sup>™</sup>**

# Meet The BevForce Bottleman

He's a charming and savvy guy who represents our distinguished staffing services—exclusively tailored for the beverage industry.



## HEAD & CAP

Ready to open up opportunities with a heady assortment of the most unique and authentic beverage brands around.

## BRIEFCASE

An overflowing resource for hiring and career advice—offering job descriptions and salary advice for employers and career coaching to job seekers.

## SHOES

Old-fashioned bootstrapped shoe-leather with good souls. Ideal for going the extra mile for our clients and finding the perfect fit for candidate and company culture.

learn more at [bevforce.com](http://bevforce.com)

**ForceBrands**  
BevForce | RECRUIT + STAFF

Copyright © 2017 BevForce, LLC. All rights reserved.  
BevForce® is a registered trademark of BevForce, LLC.

# ForceBrands Movers & Shakers

BevForce | EXECUTIVE SEARCH + JOB BOARDS

ForceBrands is the consumer product industry's leading recruiting firm. We offer executive recruiting services, board of director assembly, and industry-specific job boards including BevForce—which connects global beverage companies with future leaders.

The Movers & Shakers newsletter features the latest new hires at the leading global beverage companies. Visit [forceb.co/MOVINGSHAKING](http://forceb.co/MOVINGSHAKING) to sign up for the Movers & Shakers newsletter or to report your job move or recent hire.

**John P. Bilello** has been named CEO at **Sweet Amber Ventures, Inc.** He had been SVP Sales at Double Cross Vodka.

**Chris Lacey** has been named VP Sales and Marketing at **Golden State Cider.** He had been Constellation Brand Manager at DBI Beverage.

**Amanda Brigham** has been named Georgia State Manager at **Keel Vodka.** She had been On-Premise Sales Representative at General Wholesale Company.

**Michelle Yukhtman** has been named Senior Brand Manager at **Proximo Spirits.** She had been Brand Manager at Pernod Ricard USA.

## CAREER CORNER

# How to Update Your LinkedIn for the New Year

Whether you're looking for a new job in 2018 or simply want to refresh your LinkedIn, January is the perfect time to refresh your virtual résumé. ForceBrands' recruiters share some pro-tips on how to stand out, get noticed, and build a more powerful profile.

### Take a professional headshot

A professional headshot on LinkedIn can go a long way to demonstrate that you care about first impressions and are serious about your work. Hiring managers say the right photo can make a difference in getting noticed among the crowd of candidates if you're seeking new opportunities.

### Highlight your experiences

Instead of simply listing your roles with their respective employers and dates, go one step further and jot down some of your responsibilities and accomplishments. This shows people what you're capable of achieving and will increase the likelihood of someone endorsing your skills.

### Join groups

It goes without saying that LinkedIn is one of the most powerful tools available for online networking. With more than 450 million users and growing, it's a great platform for meeting new and interesting people. Connect with hiring managers or employees who work at companies that interest you—in other words, get linked in.

### Get in front of recruiters

If you're open to new opportunities, there's a place to confidentially mark that on your profile so that only recruiters can find you. Even if you're not looking, it may benefit you to keep an open mind: new year, new you? ■■

Want to connect with beverage industry leaders? Tap into BevForce at [bevforce.com](http://bevforce.com) or email [info@bevforce.com](mailto:info@bevforce.com) for more information.

# BURNSIDE

is a newly released collection of bourbon and whiskey expressions aged with Quercus Garryana; glorious Oregon Oak! Meticulously blended and matured, these are the spirits of our city that feel as appropriate today as they would have 100 years ago and fits comfortably in the “Keep Portland Weird” aesthetic. “Innovated in 2012 – Mastered in 2017.”

– Mel Heim, Eastside Master Distiller/Blender, VP Operations



[WWW.EASTSIDEDISTILLING.COM](http://WWW.EASTSIDEDISTILLING.COM)





The City Park Ice Rink next to Vajdahunyad Castle in Budapest is a picturesque venue for the perfect wintertime activity.



# The Winter Wonderland of Budapest

SEASONAL  
ADVENTURES  
ABOUND IN THE  
CITY'S BAZAARS, ICE  
RINKS, THERMAL  
BATHS, AND MORE

by Izzy Watson

The Hungarian capital may be vibrant and beautiful throughout the year, but it definitely holds a particular charm in the winter. The streets are dressed in glistening lights and the alluring scent of roasted chestnuts, cinnamon-flavoured chimney cakes, and mulled wine fills the air as Budapest residents head outdoors to visit the exciting attractions their city offers.

Regardless of the frigid temperatures, tourists will find it's definitely worth bundling up and leaving their hotel room to explore the city center of the Hungarian capital. Start by taking a stroll on the illuminated Andrassy Avenue, with its line of trees covered in sparkling fairy lights. And while many of the winter bazaars have already taken place at this point in the season, visitors in future years can wander the rows of wooden stalls brimming with a colorful variety of Hungarian merchandise, including ceramics, uniquely-designed clothes, jewelry, candles, toys, and other handcrafted products. Freshly-roasted and baked delicacies are also sold at the various food stalls, offering passersby a chance to gorge on Hungarian specialties like goulash or spicy sausages.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HUNGARIAN TOURISM AGENCY



Those seeking more winter adventures should also pay a visit to one of the largest cultural hubs of the capital city: the Budapest Palace of Arts (Müpa). Located in a magnificent contemporary building on the scenic Danube bank, this stunning establishment hosts an abundance of events, including the Winter Open Air festival with its lineup of concerts, children's programs, and theatre and circus performances. There is also the neo-Renaissance Hungarian State Opera House, which opened in 1884 and is considered one of the best opera houses in the world due to its excellent acoustics. The venue hosts both operatic and ballet performances, as well as guided tours.

Another highly sought-after experience in Budapest during the winter season is ice skating in the picturesque City Park Ice Rink, located right next to the Vajdahunyad Castle. One of the largest and oldest ice rinks on the continent, it actually turns into a boating lake once the weather gets warmer. Numerous outdoor ice-skating rinks can be found throughout the city, allowing visitors to feel the crisp winter air while enjoying the scents wafting from the nearby stalls or restaurants.

### Warm Coffeehouses and the Hills of Buda

Those looking to warm up after exploring the city all day can purchase a steaming hot beverage from one of Budapest's numerous coffeehouses. Many of these places offer a variety of artisan coffees or gourmet hot chocolate specialities, while cozy teahouses dressed in vibrant hues welcome you with colorful beanbags and fluffy pillows, as well as, of course, a wide selection of teas.

Visitors to Budapest definitely should not miss out on the experience of taking a walk along the Danube (the beautiful banks from Gellért Hill to Margaret Bridge have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site). If you're lucky enough to catch a snowstorm while you are in the city, you can also wander around in the hills of Buda. Normafa is one of the must-see places here, not only because of its spectacular view over Budapest, but also because it's a favorite sledding spot for local families. Take in the merry atmosphere as children ride past you—or, if you're up for it, bring a sled and hit the slopes yourself! ■■



**The Hungarian State Opera House is renowned throughout the world for its excellent acoustics.**



**Food stalls in Budapest offer hot snacks like spicy sausages or chimney cakes (pictured).**



**Winter in Hungary offers snow-capped views and a chance to explore seasonal activities in the capital and beyond.**

# A Belief in Strong and Enduring Perceptions at J.A.M. Public Relations



J.A.M. Public Relations  
Owner Michelle Armour  
and her dog Pinky.

“We work with clients to understand what makes them unique—what defines them? We help tell their story in a compelling and authentic way.”

story and photo by Michael Cervin

Based in Berkeley, California, J.A.M. Public Relations opened its doors 15 years ago; today, owner Michelle Armour says she and her staff of five run a full-service agency that aims to “help wineries get noticed, stand out, and enhance their image and reputation.” *The Tasting Panel* sat down with Armour to find out how J.A.M. keeps the wine PR flowing.

In addition to public relations, J.A.M. provides direct-to-consumer strategy and marketing support, including product launching and label redesign. Armour says her staff prides themselves on building long-term relationships not only with stalwarts like Duckhorn Vineyards and Spottswoode Winery, but with smaller producers like Cobb Wines and Albatross Ridge as well. “We have a very holistic approach to image building,” she says. “We work with clients to understand what makes them unique—what defines them? We help tell their story in a compelling and authentic way.”

That can be a lengthy process, since PR is a marathon, not a sprint. “When people read a winery’s name in an article or review for the first time, they may not notice it. The second time they see that name, they recognize it,” Armour explains. “The third time, their interest is piqued.”

Obtaining that level of brand awareness is crucial now more than ever with so many wineries vying for success in the current market. For J.A.M., traditional press coverage still rules. “Press can have better impact than ad buys or marketing campaigns because it’s an impartial third-party endorsement,” she says. And while many wineries view favorable press as an end result, Armour says J.A.M. instead stresses that “positive press is a tool that needs to be used properly. Once a client gets press, we work with them to maximize it.”

There are many ways to do this, but first and foremost, Armour says wineries should make an article easy to find on their website and display it in their tasting room. “It’s a missed opportunity if you’re not sharing great press with your customers who buy your wine and want to join your wine club,” she adds.

And while J.A.M. of course utilizes social media, it’s not a “silver bullet”—though it can be a powerful tool when executed properly. Armour says she instead relies on an approach that centers around “strong and consistent” sampling programs. “Our clients achieve better recognition, deeper market penetration, higher sales, and greater wine club retention as a result of press coverage from sampling,” she explains. ■■

traditional spirits  
with a great future!



www.enjoythefutureofwines.eu



**ENJOY THE NEW  
OLD WORLD WINES**



CAMPAIGN FINANCED WITH AID FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA





# “A BIG DEAL”

75 YEARS  
IN THE MAKING

The Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America 75th Annual Convention & Exposition returns to Las Vegas April 30–May 3. Pictured here are Cindy Nachman-Senders, Senior Consultant, Meetings and Conventions, and WSWA President and CEO Craig Wolf.

# WSWA TO HOST ANNUAL CONVENTION AND EXPOSITION APRIL 30–MAY 3 IN LAS VEGAS

BY KATE NEWTON

For all the technological innovation and new brands coming online in the alcoholic beverage industry, it remains a business of relationships. That's especially true when it comes to suppliers forging connections with wholesalers serving as brand builders and marketing experts for their products in markets across the country.

One of the industry's marquee events for this type of face-to-face networking is the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Annual Convention & Exposition, which began just ten years after the end of Prohibition and continues today as a dynamic, must-attend annual gathering for suppliers, distributors, and business leaders from around the world. Despite many dramatic changes in the beverage sphere over the years, the convention all but solidified its unrivaled reputation decades ago as "the industry's leading event in uniting wholesalers and suppliers under one roof," said Craig Wolf, WSWA's President and CEO. With that said, it's not difficult to fathom how the 75th year's tagline—"The Big Deal"—practically wrote itself.

Cindy Nachman-Senders, who serves as WSWA's Senior Consultant for Meetings and Conventions, says that while some fads have left less memorable impressions, "the current craft trend has resulted in an uptick in the number of companies that turn to the WSWA Convention & Exposition as the launch pad for their new brands." "In a brief three days, brands are able to be seen by the top decision makers representing distribution in all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Canada," she continues. "Networking with WSWA members also often results in valuable insight and guidance for those new to the industry, but existing brands find value in their participation as well."

Planned for April 30 through May 3 in Caesars Palace Las Vegas, this year's convention will not only feature an engaging slate of speakers, exhibit halls, and competitions, but a few new additions and improvements as well. "I often refer to it as a six-ring circus," Nachman-Senders says. "There is something for everyone: If you are a wholesaler and want

to seek out new brands or meet with established portfolio partners, we offer that, and if you are a supplier and want to launch a new brand or brand extension, expand distribution, or just have private meetings with current partners, we offer that, too."

*The Tasting Panel*, *The SOMM Journal*, and *The Clever Root* will also return as sponsors of the Wine & Spirits Tasting Competitions. "We encourage suppliers to enter their brands into our popular competitions as a means to elevate their exposure," Nachman-Senders says. "We also encourage entry into our action-packed Call for Cocktails competition, in which 12 original cocktails are pre-selected to compete live on our competition stage. To increase the odds of being one of the finalists selected, we recommend brands work with a professional mixologist to craft their entry. Mixologists are a key component to brands' success, and we feel it is important to promote their value."

The convention and exposition will also feature the tenth anniversary of the Wholesaler Iron Mixologist Competition, in which up to eight wholesalers' top mixologists must create innovative cocktails in a timed contest with a secret ingredient unveiled right before the event begins. Nachman-Senders describes it one of the "most interactive and exciting" attractions of the week for spectators: "We offer a viewing and tasting gallery during the competitions for those who wish to watch the action unfold, cheer on their favorite brands or competitors, or sample the innovative creations."

As for new events, a "rotating stage" named the Diamond Ring will make its debut in the Augustus Ballroom Exhibit Hall, with various programming that includes tastings of the Double Gold and Best in Show winners of both the 2017 and 2018 Wine and Spirits Tasting Competitions. Selected entrants for the third annual Brand Battle—a *Shark Tank*-inspired program that challenges new brands to promote their product and story to a panel of industry experts in front of a live audience—will also make a pre-competition appearance in the ring. Brand Battle will unfold during what Nachman-Senders calls the "information-packed" U.S. Beverage Alcohol Forum (USBAF) held the final morning of the convention.

In previous years, keynote speakers for the convention's general sessions—planned for the mornings of May 1–2 this year—have included General Stanley McChrystal, Terry Bradshaw, Nando Parrado, and Frank Abagnale. While the 2018 speakers have yet to be announced, they'll undoubtedly provide a thought-provoking pause in the action; a new wholesaler-only session, meanwhile, will create yet another opportunity for discussion and engagement.

Nachman-Senders says she encourages both first-time and returning attendees to visit the convention's website at [wswaconvention.org](http://wswaconvention.org) for the current schedule of events, as well as details on convention registration, hotel accommodations, exhibit options, sponsorship opportunities, and entry instructions for Brand Battle as well as for the tasting and mixology competitions. "The Convention & Exposition is packed with opportunities to network, learn, and watch trends in the making," she continues. "When you put all of that opportunity together under one roof—it's a pretty 'big deal.'" ■■

SPARKLING



# A Tribute to *prosecco*

EDITOR-AT-LARGE  
JOHN CURLEY  
CELEBRATES A CUVÉE  
ANNIVERSARIO WITH  
**MIONETTO**

photos by John Curley



**The Mionetto  
Cuvée Anniversario  
Valdobbiadene  
Prosecco Superiore  
DOCG Millesimato  
Brut Nature.**



**Thanks to Mionetto USA CEO Enore Ceola, the brand has continually grown in both sales and reputation in the U.S. for the past two decades.**

**M**ionetto is justifiably proud—and fond—of the grape growers behind its premium Prosecco, so it makes sense the historic company would turn to them when the time came to produce a 130th anniversary cuvée.

Founded in 1887, Mionetto is based in the small village of Valdobbiadene in Italy’s Veneto region: the very heart of the area where Prosecco was born. During a recent trade gathering at San Francisco’s Piperade restaurant, Head Winemaker Alessio Del Savio and Mionetto USA CEO Enore Ceola told industry leaders that the grapes used to produce the special-edition release came from three winegrowers that have worked with the company for generations.

The lunchtime guests tasted five of Mionetto’s base wines from Friuli, Treviso, Conegliano, Valdobbiadene, and Cartizze as Del Savio described the terroir of each region. Attention then shifted to the finished Proseccos from Treviso, Valdobbiadene, and Cartizze, but it was all a prelude to the main attraction: the Mionetto Cuvée Anniversario Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Millesimato Brut Nature. Bottled in 2016 and released in time for Mionetto’s anniversary, the cuvée aims to celebrate the company’s heritage while also serving as an accurate representation of wines made 130 years ago, Del Savio told the guests.

To that end, he insisted that all grapes used in the cuvée’s production come from Valdobbiadene-based growers (all three are located within ten miles of the winery) that had longstanding relationships with the company, and that the flavor profile be bone dry. Del Savio explained in Italian as Ceola translated: “When I started to think about creating this cuvée, I asked myself, ‘Where do we start?’ It was likely that the Prosecco back then didn’t have any sugar—you didn’t add any, and the fermentation would have gone through it all, so it was most likely a zero-sugar wine. Some of the vines are 30 years old, and the sustainable farming practices, combined with pneumatic presses, impeccable yeast, and low-temperature fermentation, add to the perfection of this special-anniversary wine.” ■■



**Alessio Del Savio is the Head Winemaker for Mionetto and has been with the company for 17 years. He created the Mionetto Cuvée Anniversario Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG to pay homage to the company’s 130-year heritage, as well as to revive a style of Prosecco produced without sugar.**



# GENTLEMAN JACK TAKES ON DETROIT

TENNESSEE WHISKEY TAPS INTO  
THE SIGNATURE INNOVATIVE SPIRIT  
OF THE MOTOR CITY

BY NATALIE BOVIS, THE LIQUID MUSE / PHOTOS BY CLAIRE BARRETT



Eric “ET” Tecosky, National Brand Ambassador for Jack Daniel’s, led a tasting of the company’s portfolio during a recent luncheon at the Detroit Foundation Hotel.

One could argue that the word “innovation” applies to Detroit more than any other American city: With its many historical ups and downs, exploring the Midwestern metropolis can often feel like stepping through a time portal.

Once America’s fourth largest city and the wealthy cradle of the automotive industry, Detroit, especially its inner city and industries, were hit hard when the economy plummeted—leaving once-majestic buildings vacant and many residents out of work. Fast-forward to 2018, however, and downtown Detroit is in the midst of renaissance: The culinary and mixology scene is growing rapidly as locals seek out opportunities to quench the thirst of both returning and new inhabitants. Established mixologists from Chicago and New York, meanwhile, are simultaneously eyeing a chance to swoop in as big fish in this emerging market.



**The Gentleman Jack Detroit Bar Lab crew from left to right: Jarmel Doss, Adam Sarkis, Luke Nevin-Gattle, Carol Donovan, and Traci Czech.**

Motivated by the renewed inspiration bursting forth in Motor City, I was excited to create an innovation-themed brand immersion experience for the iconic American spirits brand Jack Daniel's and its luxury expression, Gentleman Jack whiskey. Jack Daniel's National Brand Ambassador Eric "ET" Tecosky regularly hosts bartender trips in various cities throughout the U.S., and the regional participants win these local immersion experiences by way of an online cocktail contest. During our three days together, the group learns about Tennessee whiskey and connects with the Jack Daniel's brand by delving into activities tied to both the trip's theme and locale.

Once the bartenders arrived, we beelined straight to the newly-opened Detroit Foundation Hotel for a meal; formerly the Detroit Fire Department headquarters, the historic building now utilizes its three massive doorways once used for firetruck entrances as impressive, sun-filled windows in the restaurant and bar. Tecosky led our guests through a portfolio tasting including traditional Old No. 7, Gentleman Jack, Jack Daniel's Rye, Single Barrel Barrel Proof, and the

ultra-premium Sinatra while peppering the presentation with details about the adventurous life of Jack Daniel himself.

The highlight of each immersion experience is the cocktail lab, during which the bartenders wow us (and each other) with the creations that earned them a spot on the trip. They also conceptualize a new recipe reflecting the trip's theme, and the interactive talent showcase features local ingredients as well as, of course, a whole lot of Gentleman Jack whiskey. Photographer Claire Barrett captures their drinks and bartender portraits, and the video crew interviews each bartender to create individual digital reels.

By the end of the lab, everyone is tired, happy, and ready to celebrate—and like with any occasion worth remembering, cocktails and food play a central role in our trips. With new restaurants popping up each month in Detroit, we had some exciting options to choose from. For our dinner the first night, we went to Grey Ghost, where the welcoming staff had a big bowl of Gentleman Jack punch waiting on our table. A modern and swanky restaurant in an evolving neighborhood, Grey Ghost captures the electrifying spirit of today's Detroit.

Our celebratory second-night dinner, meanwhile, unfolded at Cliff Bell's jazz supper club. Rumor has it that when the building was still in ruin, an investor saw photos of the dilapidated rooms and decided to restore them; the gold-leafed ceilings and banquettes, not to mention the talented musicians, certainly harken back to Detroit's golden era.

Getting to know American cocktail and culinary culture through these activations has given me an even deeper appreciation for the talented bartenders in cities large and small, famed and still developing. As Carol Donovan, a respected bartender from Chicago who participated in our trip, puts it: "By showing me these parts of Detroit, Gentleman Jack inspired me to consider the past when I look to innovate in the future. Appreciating what came before and celebrating that even as I create something new is my favorite takeaway from the experience. My approach to cocktail creation has been forever tweaked because of my experiences on this trip!"

Shared innovation keeps our cocktail community moving forward throughout the country, and I'm thrilled to be a cog in the wheel of Gentleman Jack's outreach. ■■

*Bartenders who wish to be considered for future contests can contact Natalie Bovis at [natalie@theliquidmuse.com](mailto:natalie@theliquidmuse.com).*

**"BY THE END OF THE LAB, EVERYONE IS TIRED, HAPPY, AND READY TO CELEBRATE—AND LIKE WITH ANY OCCASION WORTH REMEMBERING, COCKTAILS AND FOOD PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN OUR TRIPS."**

**GENTLEMAN DILL-IVER**  
*Created by Jarmel Doss*



- ▶ 1½ oz. Gentlemen's Jack
- ▶ ½ oz. The Peat Monster Malt Scotch Whisky
- ▶ ½ oz. Smith & Cross Rum
- ▶ ½ oz. petit shrub
- ▶ ½ oz. Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao
- ▶ ½ oz. Pineapple Demerara
- ▶ 2 drops saline

Stir all ingredients in a mixing glass. Add one barspoon of lemon juice to a glass with one large ice cube. Pour cocktail over ice and top with four drops of dill tincture.

SPEED TASTING



# Seaside CELEBRATION



**The “reveal” behind each wine tasted at the event was led by Daphné Payan, Brand Ambassador for Rhône Valley Vineyards, and wine educator Lyn Farmer.**

## MIAMI'S TOP SOMMS GATHER TO EXPLORE RHÔNE VALLEY VINEYARDS

by Lyn Farmer / photos by Benjamin Rusnack

Atop the gorgeous rooftop of La Côte at The Fontainebleau hotel in Miami Beach, some of Miami's best sommeliers joined *The Tasting Panel* for lunch and a speed tasting focused on five wines from a region worthy of careful attention: the Rhône Valley Vineyards. The area is the second-largest AOC producing region in France, and the U.S. is the Rhône Valley's largest export market in value. The Rhône Valley Vineyards' official association Inter Rhône has been on a year-long tour of the United States, celebrating the Rhône Valley lifestyle through a series of “Wine O’Clock” events. Each somm and wine buyer had a chance to guess what was in the glass before wine educator Lyn Farmer, CSW, WSET, stepped in to reveal the identity of each wine. Read on for a walk-through of the panel's tasting notes and some background on each corresponding sub-region.



The group of Miami area buyers stunned in their branded Rhône Valley Vineyard sunglasses. Pictured are Daphné Payan, Brand Ambassador for Rhône Valley Vineyards (far left); Carol López-Bethel, Swirl Wine Consulting (second from left); back row, Liza Meli, BarMeli; Julian Romero, Sommelier, Frenchman's Creek Country Club; Maria Martinez Romero, Lost Tree Country Club; Lyn Farmer, WSET educator and author of this article; Timothy J. Bubar, Faena Restaurant Group; Diego Rech, Villa Azur; Marija Mijic, The Matador Room; front row, Osvaldo Gomez, La Petit Maison; Haunah Klein, Boulud Sud/db Bistro Moderne; Jennifer Schmitt, Advanced Sommelier, Starr Restaurants; Jennifer Wagoner, Stripsteak by Michael Mina; Brian Grandison, Hakkasan; Susie Yoonathan, Consultant; and Gonzalo Hernandez, Consultant.



Jennifer Schmitt, Advanced Sommelier and Beverage Manager at Starr Restaurant Group (at right), tastes the 2012 Ventoux, Château Pesquié, Artemia. She praised the wine's "savory and long-lasting" finish in her notes.

## *Hermitage, Cave de Tain, Grand Classique, 2015*

The legendary wines of Hermitage come from just 338 acres (or 137 hectares as of 2016) of vines in the Northern Rhône. The appellation primarily produces red wines made from Syrah (although the law allows up to 15% white wine to be blended in, this is almost never done). White wine made from Roussanne and Marsanne comprises about 28 percent of the total wine produced in 2016 and has always been in great demand: In the early 1800s, Hermitage Blanc was the most sought-after and expensive wine in the world. Total production in Hermitage varies per year: In 2016, 3,292 hectoliters of wine, or roughly 36,212 cases, were produced.



Despite its small size, Hermitage has long served as the business hub of the Northern Rhône and is home to many of the region's legendary producers. The Cave de Tain cooperative is based in the area's main town, Tain, and has been producing wine for more than a century; the cooperative recently completed a 10-million-euro renovation to keep its equipment and facility up to date. Drawing on sites farmed by dozens of small growers, the Cave de Tain sources grapes from the full range of Hermitage soils, from granite to stony clay and sand, and thus provides a wonderfully-integrated example of what Marsanne can achieve in the Rhône.

Normally, Hermitage Blanc requires several years to begin showing its luscious finesse, but this 100% Marsanne from Cave de Tain is already offering appealing notes of honey, peach, and lemon (the wine is notable, too, for its creamy texture). All in all, it's a surprisingly affordable example of all the pleasures of Hermitage Blanc, with qualities that will only become more pronounced and enjoyable with age.

### **Tasting Notes:**

"Ripe pear, marzipan, toasted almond; rounded texture and mouthfeel; moderate acidity and a waxiness. Delicate florality on the finish." —*Jennifer Wagoner, Lead Sommelier, StripSteak by Michael Mina*

"Citrus, lemon zest, light honey, black tea, and oaky aromas like coconut. On the palate, slightly oaky; malolactic or secondary with bread/yeast, pears, and ripe green apple." —*Julian Romero, Sommelier/Bartender, Lost Tree Club*

## *Côtes du Rhône, Vidal-Fleury, 2013*

Unlike the Northern Rhône, where the only permitted red grape is Syrah, growers in the Southern Rhône have an astonishing array of grapes to choose from. This large appellation is the source of some of the greatest wine values in France today—mostly Grenache with additional dimension primarily from Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Cinsault.



A respected estate and négociant like Vidal-Fleury has the capability to pick and choose wines from throughout the appellation's roughly 79,000 acres (32,000 hectares) as of 2016; as a result, it can craft wines of great nuance at a very reasonable price. Vidal-Fleury has been an acclaimed producer since the 1780s (Thomas Jefferson, who visited the domaine in 1787, was a fan) and over the centuries has built up not only its own vineyard holdings, but strong contacts with independent growers as well to assure its "entry-level" Côtes du Rhône is a wine of great depth and purity of fruit. This Côtes du Rhône from Vidal-Fleury is a blend of 65% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre, and 5% Carignan.

### **Tasting Notes:**

"Nice spice nose with aromatics jumping out of the glass. Fresh-cut rosemary and thyme combined with dark black cherries and a touch of crushed rock. Well-balanced." —*Brian Grandison, Sommelier, Hakkasan*

"Blackberry, blueberry, and coffee. Prune-y with white pepper and a hint of smoke. No fruit evidence on the mouthfeel." —*Diego Rech, Sommelier, Villa Azu*

"Ripe black fruit on the nose with ruby red color and medium-plus tannin." —*Carol López-Bethel, Swirl Wine Consulting*

## *Côtes du Rhône Villages, Les Dauphins, 2015*

Les Dauphins is a cooperative of winemakers specializing in Côtes du Rhône. This group not only concentrates on the "CdR" appellation, but many of the more exclusive appellations in the region's upper hierarchy as well. With more than 1,000 acres of Certified Organic vineyards, the cooperative is among the leading organic producers in the Rhône Valley, though it also produces many non-organic wines.



Côtes du Rhône Villages is a step up from the baseline Côtes du Rhône, which is restricted to a group of 95 specified communes in the Southern Rhône Valley and carries the added requirements of a minimum alcohol level (12.5% ABV for reds). Additionally, any red blend carrying the appellation name must contain at least 40% Grenache and at least 25% Syrah and/or Mourvèdre; other varieties, meanwhile, can only make up 5% of a blend. In practice, this means Côtes du Rhône Village wines tend to have a more acute focus on the vibrant red fruit of Grenache and a specific terroir.

Throughout the Rhône Valley, 2015 is one of the most acclaimed vintages in recent decades. Many vintners were particularly impressed with the depth of color and intensity of flavor in the wines, as well as the firm but well-balanced tannins; these wines will largely be long-lived, yet they're still quite accessible in their youth. This is clearly to the benefit of Côtes du Rhône Villages—a wine intended for relatively early consumption.

### **The Panel Says:**

"Medium concentration color with red ruby to the edge. Aromas of red and black cherry; slightly floral with violets and roses. Dry with medium-body, medium acidity, and medium-plus finish." —*Oswaldo Gomez, Sommelier, La Petite Maison*

"Very perfume-y nose with lots of herbal quality and great ripe fruit. Savory and round with smooth tannin." —*Timothy J. Bubar, Lead Sommelier, Faena Group*

## **The Inside Scoop from Inter Rhône**

Each region in France has a different hierarchy and system of classifying its vineyards. In the Rhône Valley, it's simple: The Côtes du Rhône appellation is the largest and covers 171 villages in the north and south (but mostly in the southern Rhône). Next up the ladder is the Côtes du Rhône Villages appellation, which covers 95 villages—20 of which may adhere their specific name to the label. It's an elastic system where a village can be promoted or even declassified. This tier offers great value because it's an indicator of the pathway to the next level up, which also happens to be the highest classification at the top of the ladder: a Cru of the Côtes du Rhône. There are eight Crus in the Northern Rhône and ten Crus in the Southern Rhône Valley. For instance,

## *Gigondas. Ogier, Dentellis, 2014*

Grenache is still the dominant variety in the Southern Crus of the Côtes du Rhône and can constitute up to 80% of a blend, with Syrah and Mourvèdre each allowed up to 15%. All the other red varieties of the Côtes du Rhône (except Carignan) can make up no more than 10% of the blend. This recipe still allows striking variety among producers and assures a vibrant array of flavors in the glass.

Ogier's Dentellis cuvée of Gigondas consists of 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre. To maintain the vibrant red fruit of the Grenache, the wine was aged for just 12 months in large casks called *foudres*; these casks are anywhere from one to forty years old and hold 6,000–8,000 liters each. This permits the mellowing effect of micro-oxygenation without adding any wood character to the finished wine.

### **Tasting Notes**

"Intense ruby color and great extraction. Garnet hues. Long finish on palate. Intense and warm. Figs and blueberry compote with thyme and rosemary notes." —*Maria Martinez Romero, Sommelier, Lost Tree Club*

"Black cherry and brandied red currants. Slight citrus tone with orange oil. Dried geranium with thyme blossoms and lavender. Hot stones/granite and crush green peppercorn linger on the finish." —*Jennifer Schmitt, Advanced Sommelier/Beverage Manager, Starr Restaurants*



## *Ventoux, Château Pesquié, Artemia, 2012*

The Rhône Valley vineyards also extend further southward with seven additional appellations: Grignan-les-Adhémar, Ventoux, Luberon, Côtes du Vivarais, Duché d'Uzès, Clairette de Bellegarde, and Costières de Nîmes.

Mont-Ventoux to the northeast of Avignon in the Southern Rhône features extraordinary geographical and vinous elements. The mountain itself, rising more than 6,000 feet above sea level, is sometimes called the "Giant of Provence." It has an undisputed effect on the surrounding area: UNESCO has recognized the area as a "biosphere reserve."

Characteristics of the biosphere include a high level of sunshine in this eastern part of the Côtes du Rhône, as well as the emphasized effect of the nearby Mediterranean to the south. The Mistral also sweeps in from North Africa, bringing with it a drying wind that protects the vineyards in its path from mildew, rot, and other maladies associated with excess humidity.

Artemia, Château Pesquié's top cuvée, is a 50-50 blend of Grenache and Syrah from separate vineyards that the winery believes shows "the amazing potential of the Ventoux terroir." While the thin-skinned Grenache struggles to produce deep color in wines, that's never a problem with the deeply-pigmented Syrah. Grenache brings moderate tannins, high acidity, and red fruit, while Syrah contributes medium acidity and more powerful tannins while tilting more to black fruit. All in all, the wine shows depth, concentration, and elegance without sacrificing finesse and freshness—all enveloped in a lushness on the palate from aging in bottle for five years.

### **Tasting Notes:**

"Balanced with blackberry and anise; round, full, and juicy. My favorite!" —*Liza Meli, Owner, BarMeli*

"Warm blackberry and cranberry, red beets, and fennel frond. Sarsaparilla and fresh violets. Smoky palate with warm mushroom fricassee. Savory finish and long-lasting." —*Jennifer Schmitt*

"A blend of a lot of different fruits on the nose—a hint of blackberries and blueberries together with tobacco and red berry flavors. On the palate, a longer finish with baked cherry pie." —*Marija Mijic, Sommelier, The Matador Room*



**The Takeaway** From Hermitage to the Ventoux, this incredible seaside celebration showcased the great diversity of the Rhône Valley. The blind tasting luncheon served as part of the successful "Wine O' Clock" event series, created to promote the Rhône Valley Vineyards with an educational, entertaining approach. ■■

this tasting offered a lovely Southern Cru of the Rhône Valley that was formerly a Côtes du Rhône Villages with a geographic indication back in the 1970s—Gigondas. Crus of the Côtes du Rhône have much stricter standards in the vineyards and cellars, and grape sourcing is restricted to the specific appellation. Northern Rhône Crus comprise of about 5 percent of the region's production, while Southern Rhône Crus produce about 12 percent.

*\*Please note that the information in this article has been determined by the Inter Rhône's pyramid hierarchy of the Côtes du Rhône and Rhône Valley wines. Inter Rhône is the official association of the Rhône Valley.*

SCOTCH

# Just the Right BLEND

WEMYSS MALTS' THREE  
BOTTLEINGS STAND OUT WITHIN  
THE GROWING CATEGORY

by David Ransom / photos by Tim Murray

Wemyss Malts Master Blender William Wemyss says, "The right blend delivers the same flavors into the mix as a single malt would. I think a lot of the big blending houses are missing the boat by not focusing on this important sector of the industry."





The line of Wemyss Malts whiskies available in the U.S. through Palm Bay International: Peat Chimney, Spice King, and The Hive.

**W**hile most whisky aficionados think making single malt whisky is the ultimate goal to which Scotland's producers aspire, a growing number of brands are being managed instead by a dedicated group of Scotch malt whisky blenders. Those producers—who work with established whisky houses to gather barrels for blending their own unique bottlings, yet not necessarily for distilling on their own—feel there is room for blended malt whiskies at the top, as well. (Blended malts are blends of single malts that all come from malted barley with no grain, and should not be confused with the more common blended Scotch whisky.)

William Wemyss (pronounced “Weems”) is one such blender, and his Wemyss Malts brand currently leads the charge in the production of first-rate, craft-blended Scotch whisky. William's family history in whisky-making can be traced back to the 19th century, when distiller John Haig of John Haig & Co. (who hasn't heard of Pinch?) built his flagship distillery on the family's land near Wemyss Castle in the Kingdom of Fife.

William has had a long love affair with Scotland's native spirit and founded Wemyss Malts in 2005 with the aim to create first-rate blends. “Ninety-two percent of all Scotch whisky sold is blended whisky,” William said recently while hosting a blending session in New York City for key members of the trade. “Our whisky house was started to create blends of single malts, known as blended malts, where we select barrels from more than one malt distillery. The main advantage is that it gives the Master Blender more choice of casks with which to work their magic.”

To that end, each of the Wemyss Malts bottlings—The Hive, Spice King, and Peat Chimney—are named not through the common practice of identifying the distilleries or regions from which their base spirits originate, but by the taste and aroma characteristics of the blend. It's a practice that, according to Wemyss, allows the consumer to more easily understand the style being purchased.

As part of another key initiative, Wemyss also aims to capitalize on increased interest from the cocktail community toward using malt whisky in its repertoire. “Blended whiskies are much more cost-efficient to use in cocktails,” William said. “The right blend delivers the same flavors into the mix as a single malt would. I think a lot of the big blending houses are missing the boat by not focusing on this important sector of the industry.”



Consultant Robert Cunningham and Rachel Jacobi of Southern Glazer's Artisanal Spirits Division discover what's involved in creating a blended Scotch whisky at the Wemyss Malts blending workshop in New York City.

## SCOTCH



A detailed blending setup greeted attendees of the Wemyss Malts Blending Workshop.



Attendees welcome William Wemyss during the workshop.

## The Whiskies

Though Wemyss officially defines itself as an independent bottling company, it also releases a wide range of extremely limited-production single-cask single malts and has recently built its own distillery at Kingsbarns to better manage and expand its production. The core of the Wemyss Malts portfolio consists of the aforementioned award-winning blended malt whisky range: The Hive, Spice King, and Peat Chimney. Wemyss uses up to ten separate “base” single malts when creating the three blends, all of which are non-chill-filtered.

### THE HIVE

Up to ten single malts are used in this blend (46% ABV, SRP \$70), with the signature malt coming from Speyside. The Hive exemplifies the area’s style— known for producing malts with sweet and rich characteristics that show floral and honey notes—while building in hints of cinnamon, ginger, and orange.

Sommelier Nicolas Prieto, an attendee at the New York tasting who works as an Event Services Manager/Sommelier at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, named The Hive as his favorite of the trio. “It’s approachable and easy to drink, good with or without food, and best of all, its flavors easily mix with both cold- or warm-weather cocktails,” he explained. “People sometimes think that because the whisky comes from a single malt it’s of better quality, but this is not always true. Personally, I think a high-quality blend is even better than a single malt, and the Wemyss blends happen to fall into this category.”

### PEAT CHIMNEY

Roughly ten single malts are also used in the base blend for the Peat Chimney (46% ABV, SRP \$70).

The signature malt hails from Islay, a region known for the heavily-peated and smoky characters of its malts. Aromas of freshly-doused campfire and earth fill the palate, while underlying notes of cardamom and coriander mingle with crisp aromas of lemon.

“It was a perfect blend for my palate and is a whiskey I would buy for my own enjoyment,” said consultant and educator Bob Cunningham during the tasting. “While I was not familiar with the Wemyss blends previously, this experience demonstrated their inherent worth and complexity, and I would encourage everyone to try the full range of their blends.”

### SPICE KING

The Spice King (46% ABV, SRP \$70) features a blend of at least ten single malts, with the signature malt coming from the Highlands— an area known for producing deeply-flavored malty and spicy whiskies. Spice King exhibits notes of toasted oats, peppercorns, and heather with enhanced spiciness and an interesting undertone of maritime salinity.

Johan Hagstrom of Bevy and The Living Room at New York’s Park Hyatt Hotel selected Spice King as his top blend of the evening. “As a bartender, I have used both single malts and blended whiskies in my drinks for different reasons, one being price,” he said. “I don’t think there is less value to a blended scotch, as long as there is passion and craft put into the production; on these principles, Wemyss delivers.”

# William Wemyss WEIGHS IN

by Kate Webber / photo by Josh Reynolds



With the release of his blended malt Scotch whiskies to the American market, William Wemyss aims to prove that putting a spotlight on the flavor profiles of blended malts can help consumers effortlessly discover their favorite styles of Scotch. We recently checked in with William for his thoughts on the production and release of the blended malts, as well as his family's distillery.

## **How are your blended malts different than those produced by other independent bottlers?**

The philosophy behind these whiskies is to use the flavor profile to identify the bottling, rather than a specific single malt distillery name. We start with a flavor profile like that of The Hive, then select single malt barrels that fit that flavor profile. For The Hive, we want a fruitier, lighter spirit matured in bourbon barrels to create a sweeter, more honeyed product. When consumers think of sweeter flavors, they think of Speyside, so we describe The Hive as a Speyside style. That doesn't mean that every one of the single malts we use has to be from the Speyside region—we just blend to find that sweeter style. For the consumer, that name helps them find the flavor.

## **What led you to create these blended malts?**

Our family started in the wine trade. We had a wine business in western Australia and we still have a wine business in France. The more I learned about wine and the power of blending, I saw an opportunity in the Scotch whisky industry to bring that approach to Scotch.

## **Why is blending so important?**

For us, this is about flavor as opposed to bottling somebody else's casks. We're keeping it understandable for the consumer by concentrating on flavor profiles rather than the fixation on a specific distillery, while at the same time maintaining very high quality.

Say you're a master blender: If you're selecting from one single distiller's single malt, it's like wearing a pair of handcuffs. You can only select casks from that distillery and of a certain age for your product. But if you can select from more than one single malt, suddenly you can paint your expression on a much greater canvas.

That's the goal of master blenders, to create a consistent product from batch to batch, and that's exactly what the wine industry is doing. They're blending different grape varieties from different soils and different terroirs to create a consistent product time after time. When you look at the Grand Cru Classé of Bordeaux—Château Haut-Brion, Latour, Lafite—they're all blends.

## **And now you've built your own distillery?**

We did. We just built our family's first distillery at Kingsbarns, near St. Andrews in Fife. It opened on St. Andrew's Day [November 30] in 2014. It's on the 15th hole of the Kingsbarns golf links, so when you've had a terrible round of golf, you can pop up for a whisky and a gin—or the other way around, when you've had a hole-in-one, you can pop in to the visitor's center and celebrate. ■■

*Wemyss Malts are imported by Palm Bay International.*



Balboa Café's long-time bartender Mike Fogarty is a San Francisco classic in his own right.

# Fogarty Meets Furmint

THE HUNGARIAN GRAPE IS ON TREND AT A CLASSIC SAN FRANCISCO CAFÉ

by Deborah Parker Wong  
photos by Christopher Howard

One of the oldest cafés in San Francisco, the PlumpJack Balboa Café originally served as a butcher shop that also grilled the occasional burger. To say the restaurant, which opened its doors in 1913, conjures feelings of nostalgia would be an understatement: The bar that runs almost the length of the main room harkens back to the Balboa's pre-Prohibition roots, while its veteran bartender Mike Fogarty presents a familiar face for even the most stalwart regulars.

Fogarty has been a fixture of the Bay Area restaurant scene since 1966, with a career that's included stints at Perry's, Liverpool Lil's, and the long-shuttered Washington Street Bar & Grill (fondly known as the Washbag). He clearly relishes the trade, and can be found behind the bar catering to Balboa's lunch crowd on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays alongside General Manager Jesse Caetano. The restaurant attracts a steady crowd of multi-generational regulars, and Fogarty says there's no shortage of Millennials who appreciate this San Francisco classic. "We see the children and grandchildren of regular customers who have been dining with us for decades," he adds.

The Balboa has clearly established a level of trust with its clientele that extends to its wine-by-the-glass program—if Fogarty will pour it, they'll drink it. "Three Martinis at lunch may be a thing of the past, but those Martinis have largely been replaced by white and rosé wine," he says.

Fogarty's been doing a brisk business in recent months with the MÁD Dry Furmint, which fits right in with the lineup of crisp, unoaked white wines always in high demand at the Balboa. Made from Hungary's dominant white grape, Furmint is not as overt as a grassy



**This team is MÁD about Furmint (left to right): Jesse Caetano, General Manager of Balboa Café; Attila Balla, President of Vinum Tokaj International; Károly Kovács, Co-Owner of Szent Tamás Winery; Enikő Magyar, Project Director of Wines of Excellence; Antoinette Cattani, U.S. Sales Manager for MÁD Wines; and Tamás Nagy, Wine Educator and Marketing Manager for Szent Tamás Winery.**

Sauvignon Blanc, weightier than a Grüner Veltliner, and more expressive than a Pinot Grigio; most importantly, it pairs well with hearty salads while also standing up to the Balboa's classic burger and fries.

MÁD Furmint reached the Balboa Café as part of the Vinum Tokaj International's wine promotion program. Attila Balla, President of Vinum Tokaj, and Enikő Magyar, Project Director of Wines of Excellence, have worked together to introduce the little-known—until now—Furmint to the U.S. wine community with support from MÁD's North American distributor Southern Glazer's.

### The Future of Furmint

Furmint makes up more than 70 percent of plantings in Hungary's Tokaj region, and 90 percent of the 10,000 acres devoted to the grape—including six single vineyard sites of Grand Cru quality—can be found within two hours of the capital city of Budapest. While the wine is a long-revered staple in its home country, dry Furmint was just introduced to the U.S. market in 2017.

Produced by the Szent Tamás Winery in the village of Mád, the MÁD Furmint provides a perfect point of entry to the wider range of styles produced from this versatile grape. Recent DNA profiling identified the variety as a natural crossing between the once-widespread Gouais Blanc and an extinct local cultivar. While Furmint shares its Gouais Blanc parentage and adaptability with both



**Jesse Caetano, General Manager of Balboa Café, enjoys a glass of Szent Tamás Furmint.**

Chardonnay and Riesling, the grape's structure and intriguing mineral expression decisively sets it apart.

According to Tamás Nagy, Szent Tamás' Wine Educator and Marketing Manager, MÁD Furmint's minerality can be attributed largely to the region's layered sedimentary and metamorphic soils rich in bentonite, rhyolite (compressed volcanic ash), and andozite. "The vines take up minerals from the groundwater, which is a rich solution of ionized minerals," Nagy says. Because the grape lends itself to reductive, oaked-aged, and late-harvest

wine styles, Furmint can satisfy as both a commune-level wine for everyday enjoyment or a stand-in for a single-vineyard white Burgundy.

While Furmint wines like those produced by Szent Tamás account for less than 5 percent of Tokaj's total production, they're gaining recognition as more varieties from Cru sites enter the market. The ferrous soils of the winery's eponymous Szent Tamás vineyard east of Mád are a composite of red clay, zeolite, rhyolite, and quartzite and earned Cru-quality classification in the early 18th century; fragments of obsidian, pumice, and perlite further enrich them with trace elements and minerals.

While we don't judge the quality of any wine based solely on technical analysis, mineral expression and structure are Furmint's calling cards. With the addition of this grape, which stands tall next to world-class dry varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Pinot Gris, sommeliers and chefs have created pairing menus and opted for cuisines that match the character of the crisp, refreshing natural acidity in these wines.

With the MÁD Dry Furmint getting rave reviews at the Balboa, Fogarty and Caetano are introducing their wine-savvy patrons, many of whom are already familiar with the region's sweeter wine styles, to the expressive Szent Tamás single vineyard wine for the first time. "If you enjoy world-class white wines, it won't be long after trying a dry Furmint before you're wondering what else it has to say," says Caetano. ■■

# Anthony Dias

## BLUE *REVIEWS*

Presented by  **BLUE LIFESTYLE**

In each issue, Editor-in-Chief Anthony Dias Blue selects a wide range of the best wines and spirits from among the more than 500 he samples over the course of a month. The reviews are subjective editorial evaluations, made without regard to advertising, and products are scored on a 100-point scale:

**85-89: VERY GOOD**

**90-94: OUTSTANDING**

**95-100: CLASSIC**

Once products are selected for publication, producers and importers will be offered the option of having their review accompanied by an image (bottle photo or label art) for a nominal fee. There is no obligation to add an image, nor does the decision affect the review or score in any way.

 The "twisty" icon indicates wines sealed with a screwcap closure.

For additional Blue Reviews, go to [www.bluelifestyle.com](http://www.bluelifestyle.com).

Prices are for 750 ml. bottles unless otherwise noted.

### WINES

**96** **Flora Springs 2014 St. Helena Rennie Reserve Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$150)** Dark and velvety with lush flavors of plum, berry, and sweet oak; mellow, refined, and intense with tangy style and hints of vanilla and spice; long and balanced; fresh and elegant.

**92** **Black Kite Cellars 2015 River Turn Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$60)** Bright crimson color; silky and succulent with racy acidity and crispness; fresh and savory with balance and excellent length; another lovely Jeff Gaffner wine.

**92** **Buglioni 2012 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DOCG, Italy (\$58)** Deep ruby color; rich and earthy nose; intense and meaty with plum, berry, and spice; dense, ripe, and long with serious concentration. 60% Corvina, 20% Corvinone, 10% Rondinella, 5% Croatina, and 5% Oseleta.

WILSON DANIELS

**90** **Carmel Winery 2012 Limited Edition, Galilee, Israel (\$70)** Smooth berry nose; silky and bright with tangy, fresh berry fruit; balanced, juicy, and complex. Kosher: 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Petit Verdot, and 4% Malbec.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

**91** **Donnafugata 2012 Tancredi, Terre Siciliane IGT, Italy (\$40)** Edgy flavors and a savory style; smooth, long, and rich; more evidence of the Sicilian renaissance from a label with a diverse portfolio of elegant Mediterranean wines.

FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS



**93** **Foley Estates 2014 Barrel Select Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills (\$60)** Pale with an intense berry nose; silky, crisp, and elegant; fresh and balanced; a lovely Burgundian Pinot made by Kris Curran, Sea Smoke's original winemaker.

KOBRAND CORP.

**91** **Fonseca Bin No. 27 Finest Reserve Porto, Douro, Portugal (\$21)** A blend of select reserve Ports chosen for their full-bodied palates; dark ruby color; smooth and dense with toasty notes and rich, ripe, and deep flavors. 

KOBRAND CORP.

**91** **Camba Vineyards and Winery 2015 Old Vine Estate Zinfandel, Russian River Valley (\$49)** Bright and lush with a creamy texture and lively blackberry fruit; tangy and long from one of the best producers of this variety.

CONSTELLATION BRANDS

**93** **Hickinbotham 2014 Clarendon The Revivalist Merlot, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$75)** Toasty nose with lush plum and berry fruit; crisp and deep with a lovely style and long finish; made by Aussie master Charlie Seppelt and California superstar Chris Carpenter.

JACKSON FAMILY WINES

**92** **Ilaria 2014 Malbec, Napa Valley (\$40)** Vibrant ruby color; rich and dense with ripe plum and blackberry; lush and balanced with a long spicy finish; from husband-and-wife winemakers Anna and Mario Monticelli.



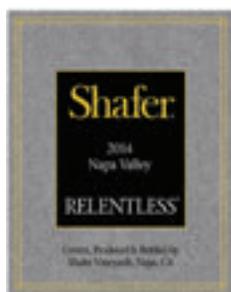
**93** **Mira Winery 2014 Hyde Vineyard Merlot, Napa Valley (\$65)** Deep cardinal hue with a smooth nose of plum and earth; flavorful and concentrated with blackberry and notes of chocolate, mocha, and spice; from a famous Carneros vineyard.

**94** **Sergio 2014 Dr. Reid Vineyard Malbec, Napa Valley (\$75)** A very limited, single-vineyard release from the same producers as Ilaria; lush and rich with intensity and depth; complex and toasty; balanced and long. A stunning example of this great variety.

**91** **Valerie's Vineyard 2016 Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$40)** Smooth cherry nose; juicy and bright with tangy fruit and crisp acidity; clean, fresh, balanced, and exuberant. The 14th vintage to hail from this Biodynamic, one-acre Carneros vineyard.

LOOSEN BROS. USA

**91** **Ruffino 2014 Modus Sangiovese Blend, Toscana IGT, Italy (\$25)** Clean, smooth, and juicy with notes of spice, plum, and ripe berries; fresh and showing hints of violets; a seamless blend of equal parts Sangiovese, Cabernet, and Merlot.



**93** **Shafer Vineyards 2014 Relentless, Napa Valley (\$92)** Dark ruby color with a smoky nose; dense and full-flavored with ripe blackberry fruit; spicy with a long finish. 89% Syrah and 11% Petite Sirah from a vineyard site located in the foothills of the Vaca Mountains south of the Stags Leap District.

**90** **Viña Maquis 2011 Viola, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$55)** Deep scarlet hue; silky and edgy with tangy plum and notes of earth; from a South American winemaking family producing elegant wines indicative of the region's diverse terroir; 85% Carménère and 15% Cabernet Franc.

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

**92** **Dr. Loosen 2016 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese, Mosel, Germany (\$34)** Silky with a lively tension between sugar and acid; polished with a lengthy finish; another Ernst Loosen masterpiece from a dramatically-steep vineyard.

LOOSEN BROS. USA

**93** **Carl von Schubert Maximin Grünhäuser 2016 Abtsberg Riesling Superior, Mosel, Germany (\$64)** Plush peach nose; lush, elegant, and dry yet ripe and deep; tangy, rich, and complex; a stunner from one of my favorite Mosel wineries.

LOOSEN BROS. USA

**96** **Taylor Fladgate 1968 Very Old Single Harvest Port, Douro, Portugal (\$300)** Tawny, brickish color; lovely, toasty rancio nose; silky and sweet with creamy, rich, and complex flavors; layered, mature, and very long; the fifth in a limited-release series.

KOBRAND CORP.

## VALUE WINES

**90** **Avalon Winery 2015 Red Blend, California (\$12)** A blend of Zinfandel, Cabernet, Tannat, and Petite Sirah from a sustainably-minded winery. Deep ruby color; clean nose of berries and spice; smooth with round blackberry and plum fruit; fresh, rich, and juicy with ripe style and excellent balance; an incredible value.



**89** **Firriato 2014 Chiamonte Nero d'Avola, Terre Sicilane IGT, Italy (\$16)** Earthy and clean with juicy cassis and plum; bright and racy with minerality and spice; tangy with a lengthy finish.

RIBOLI FAMILY VINEYARD

**88** **Bonterra Vineyards 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$16)** Smooth plum nose; clean and luxurious with tangy, fresh berry fruit and racy, crisp style; well-balanced with a lasting finish from a Certified Organic winery.

**88** **Villa Wolf 2015 Pinot Noir, Pfalz, Germany (\$15)** Refreshing and polished with dry flavors; spicy and savory; a silky and balanced lighter-style Pinot. ☺

LOOSEN BROS. USA

# BLUE REVIEWS

**88 Castoro Cellars 2016 Estate Chardonnay, Paso Robles (\$16)** Bright gold color; smooth texture and creamy style with toast, vanilla notes, and ripe fruit; rich and well-balanced with a lasting finish.



**91 Catalina Sounds 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$13)** Vibrant citrusy nose; juicy orange and lime with a silken texture and tangy acidity; fresh, clean, and racy; an amazing value. ☺

REGAL WINE COMPANY

**91 Steele Wines 2016 Viognier, Lake County (\$19)** Aromatic nose; smooth and softly juicy with tangy acidity and bright floral notes; further proof of Jed Steele's skills after a nearly 50-year career in winemaking.



**88 Crowded House 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$10)** Graceful and refreshing with lively acidity, citrus, and grass; bright with balance and style; remarkable at this price. ☺

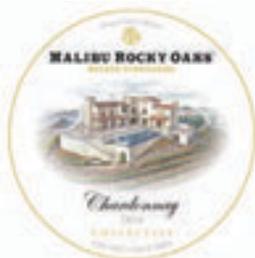
REGAL WINE COMPANY

**90 Gruet Winery 2016 Sauvage NV Brut Sparkling, USA (\$20)** Clean and fruity with balance and depth; a fresh and tangy wine made in the exacting méthode champenoise and very reasonably priced.



**92 Ricardo Santos 2017 Semillon, Mendoza, Argentina (\$16)** Deep golden color; sumptuous with ripe tropical fruit and a creamy texture; notes of vanilla and toast; balanced, satisfying, and long. ☺

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS



**89 Malibu Rocky Oaks 2016 Chardonnay Collective, California (\$17)** Fresh and smooth with clean, ripe fruit and a sleek texture; stylish, balanced, and long; an excellent value from an oceanside vineyard.

**91 Firriato 2016 Jasmin Zibibbo, Terre Sicilane IGT, Italy (\$19)** Juicy and bright with some Muscato spice, but not sweet; fresh, dry, and racy with minerality and a tangy style. Drink this with oysters.



## SPIRITS

**93 Aeremoor Cloud-Sourced Vodka, USA (\$37)** Delicate vanilla nose; buttery mouthfeel with subtly sweet flavors; elegant and glossy; balanced and lovely. Distilled from sugarcane.

**93 Boondocks American Whiskey, USA (\$50)** A mellow whiskey aged 11 years and made by renowned master distiller David Scheurich; showing toasted marshmallow and vanilla; oaked, rich, and charming.

**91 Havana Club Añejo Clásico Rum, Puerto Rico (\$22)** Medium amber color with a toasty nose; lush and creamy with rich vanilla and spice; long and balanced; a worthy homage to the original.

**92 Henry McKenna Single Barrel 10 Year Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$30)** Deep amber color with a lush, warm style and notes of toasted oak, spice, and dried fruit; velvety and luscious with depth and complex intensity.



**92 Martini & Rossi Reserva Speciale Bitter Liqueur, Italy (\$27)** Scarlet hue with a bitter, herbal nose; a smooth and spicy effort with sweet vanilla, nice balance, and a long finish; Martini's answer to Campari.

BACARDI

**95 Parker's Heritage Collection 11 Year Old Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$130)** Smooth, toasty, and intense with rich spice and vanilla notes; balanced (when watered) and showing notes of cherry, caramel, and hickory smoke; nuanced and masterful.

**92 Ragtime Rye American Straight Whiskey, USA (\$41)** Distilled from New York State-grown rye; spicy, earthy, and smooth; rounded and complex; a very balanced and authentic label from the Brooklyn-based New York Distilling Company.

# Make Room for Mezcal

EXPLORING A SAMPLING OF EXCEPTIONAL MEXICAN SPIRITS FROM KIMO SABE

**ASK ANY MIXOLOGIST:** Even in winter, mezcal is hot! While it's similar to tequila, which is made from the blue weber strain of agave, mezcal is produced using different varieties of the plant. Most people think mezcal has a strong smoky characteristic, but that's only one flavor of its multitude of complex notes. Considering the variety of methods and agave species available to make mezcal, the spirit is technicolor in taste compared to the more black-and-white profile of tequila.

Among the most impressive of super-premium mezcals to enter the market are those made by Kimo Sabe. This high-quality brand chooses carefully-crafted spirits and blends them to create signature expressions. Below are some selections that embody the future of the category.



**91** Kimo Sabe Mezcal Joven, Mexico (\$36)

Clear and smooth with silky texture and peppery notes; lush and toasty with a hint of sweetness; a modern, elegant, and lush take on an ancient spirit.



**92** Kimo Sabe Mezcal Reposado, Mexico (\$36)

Pale amber color; smooth, luxurious, and smoky nose; balanced with notes of pepper, complex spice, and oak; silky and long.



**94** Kimo Sabe Mezcal Añejo, Mexico (\$54)

Light gold color with a polished agave nose; spicy with hints of licorice, vanilla, and caramel; creamy, elegant, and exceptional with a lengthy finish.



**96** Kimo Sabe Cinco de Noviembre Mezcal, Mexico (\$511)

Sleek, earthy, and peppery nose; velvety texture with an elegant but rustic style; floral and rich with spice notes and intense agave flavors; balanced with a long, dense finish. A truly exceptional product. ■■

In each issue, The Tasting Panel's Publisher and Editorial Director Meridith May selects her favorite wines and spirits of the month. Check here for the latest arrivals in our offices, the hottest new brands on the market, and an occasional revisited classic.

# Publisher's PICKS

PHOTO: DAVID GADD



## WINES



**Hanna Winery 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$38)** Lush and lively with currant and cherry overlays in deep mocha territory. This is truly an ode to Alexander Valley's ability to showcase round tannins (although they are also cocoa-dusted with this wine). Plum and blackberry brood while coffee notes brew. Fruit is grown on Red Ranch's hillside vineyards for this blend of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Malbec, and 5% Merlot. **93**

TERLATO WINE GROUP



**Silverado Vineyards 2014 Estate-Grown Mt. George Merlot, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$40)** Broad, easygoing tannins and a nose of mocha and plum lead into a well-structured and ripe Merlot. Expansive notes of sage and orange bitters are beautifully balanced with coffee bean-kissed purple fruit and a weaving of graphite. As a note, Mt. George Vineyard is located on the eastern edge of Coombsville and was the site of one of the first grape plantings in Napa Valley in the 19th century. The soils are deep and gravelly from volcanic rock and ash. **94**



**The Four Graces 2016 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$20)** Aged in 100% stainless steel, the aromatics are defining: Pineapple and white flowers are charming. On the palate, a rich pear nectar sidles with a lean, crisp mineral tone. The duality of texture and mouthfeel is sensational. The acidity is anxious, marking a line of delineation for grapefruit and wild flowers. **92**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES



**Brassfield Estate Winery 2015 High Serenity Ranch Pinot Gris, High Valley AVA, Lake County (\$22)** This wine's lean, edgy texture is an altered state from the rich aromas of apple pie and pear tart. As it opens up, the "clean slate" on the palate anchors flavors of anise and lemon blossom. **92**



**Sobon Estate 2015 Rocky Top Zinfandel, Amador County (\$18)** Ridge-top cobbly loam grown on a vineyard site that predates Prohibition is sustainably dry-farmed. A nose of sweet cherry, caramel oak, and cinnamon toast gives way to a largesse on the palate. Orange peel, plum, lilac, anise, and forest bramble meld for a complex, sophisticated, and delicious red. A hint of white pepper dries the tongue on the finish. **93**

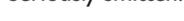


  
 Worthy of a smooch.

  
 French-style double bizou.

  
 Wildly infatuated.

  
 Seriously smitten.

  
 Head over heels in love.



**Ponzi Vineyards 2015 Avellana Chardonnay, Chehalem Mountains AVA, Oregon (\$63)** Delicate aromas of salted pineapple, lemongrass, and coconut chamomile are expressive. The tightrope acidity allows the fruit to shine: caramel melting on a lemon wedge. **95**



**Landmark Vineyards 2015 Kosich Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$55)** An alluring, deep, dark purple/carmine-hued wine with a nose of cherry oak and dark chocolate. The palate maintains flavors of red beets, cracked pepper, cherries, and red plums. A silky texture with depth: finishes with tilled soil, soy sauce, and black olives. **93**



**Francis Ford Coppola 2014 Nimble Vineyards Syrah, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$40)** Grainy tannins and velvet-cushioned liquid combine for a texturally enjoyable experience. Vanilla-coated cherry, bright acidity and an undercore of cinnamon-plum make this blend of 96% Syrah and 4% Petite Syrah memorable. **92**



**Schug Winery 2016 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast AVA (\$25)** From the western portion of Carneros and the Petaluma Gap, low-yield vineyards in a cool, windy climate keep the acidity high in this brightly-lit Pinot Noir. An earthy nose with a hint of spicy black tea leads to a peppered, lean palate with touches of nutmeg, and clove. Cherry skin and orange peel are sweet and bitter on the nice, firm, and ripe ending. **91**



**Ron Rubin Winery River Road 2016 Stephanie's Cuvée Pinot Noir, Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$30)** Bright cherry and sweet blueberry with earth-laden undertones. Tannins are soft and refined. Balance is defined. **90**



**Barrymore by Carmel Road 2016 Pinot Grigio, California (\$22)** From its caramel-pear nose to its spectacular silky texture, this is certainly a stunning wine from the winery's collaboration with Drew Barrymore. The blend of 79% Pinot Grigio with 21% Chardonnay really addresses its mouthfeel and flavor profile. Crisp white grapefruit, lychee, and peach tones are lifted due to 100% stainless steel fermentation, and white pepper dots the finish. **93**



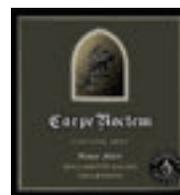
**Cellardoor 2013 Garnacha, USA (\$22)** With Garnacha (76%) sourced from Fountain Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills AVA in Washington and Tempranillo (24%) hailing from Knolls Vineyard in California's San Joaquin County AVA, this is another tribute to multi-state blending with talent. Aged 17 months in French and American oak, this small-production, Spanish-style wine is perfumed with sweet meats (think roast beef in soy sauce). Full-bodied, ripe flavors of plum and toffee-cherry meld with dark chocolate. This is a food-loving wine with loads of personality. **92**



**Metzker Family Estates 2015 Laurent Fort Ross Vineyard Pinot Noir, Fort Ross-Seaview AVA, Sonoma County (\$55)** Feminine and lean-bodied with notes and aromas of red roses and cola. Dried cranberries come in mid-palate along with white pepper, over-ripe strawberry, and tobacco. **92**



**Aberrant Cellars 2015 Carpe Noctem Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60)** Carpe Noctem—meaning "seize the night"—is an unfiltered Pinot Noir that offers up a delicious nose of red apple and rhubarb. The deeper, sensuous notes run through the flavor profile, with tobacco, teeth-gripping cherry skins, and black tea. **91**



**Raeburn 2016 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$25)** The 2016 vintage was a testament to good phenolic development: The wine's round, but its dry "coffee" tannins and concentrated, bright fruit flavors are impressive. With scents of mocha cranberry and baking spices, the palate opens to savory herbs and dried hibiscus. The blue-and-black berried fruit becomes juicier as the wine continues to develop. **90**



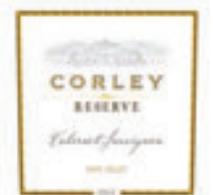
**Ackerman Family Vineyards 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$85)** From Certified Organic vineyards off the winery's Stonehaven estate, this wine is indulgent with black, inky fruit and graphite on the nose and palate. Dry, sturdy tannins keep it structurally sound. Gripping and intense—but still luxurious. **93**



**Aridus Wine Company 2014 Petite Sirah, Cochise County, Arizona (\$40)** Scott and Joan Dahmer run Aridus Wine Company out of Willcox, Arizona, in a winery that was once an apple warehouse. They source grapes from Arizona, New Mexico, and California, but the grapes for the Petite Sirah were all from Arizona. Leather and violets permeate the nose and palate. Spiced cocoa, beets, and plum liqueur also play a flavor role. Elegant and lush, with spiced cedar tannins and a dot of white pepper. **92**



**Monticello Vineyards 2014 Corley Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90)** A rush of dark mocha berry perfumes the air. On the palate, luscious, spiced earth and black licorice find common ground with ripe red fruits (cooked strawberries). Coffee tannins are firm in a velvety texture—aged 26 months in French oak. **94**



# Publisher's PICKS



**Bogle 2014 Phantom Red Blend, California (\$18)** A lot of TLC seems to go into this blend of 42% Petite Sirah, 34% Zinfandel, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Merlot. Aged for 24 months in one- and two-year-old American oak gives this a spiced vanilla backbone in a creamy body. Brooding black fruit is luscious and bold and black pepper gives it more edge. Great value. **89**



**Bervini 1955 Millesimato Extra Dry Prosecco DOC, Veneto-Friuli Giulia, Italy (\$19)** From a third-generation family estate where the cellars are in the Province of Pordenone, straddling two DOC zones of Prosecco and Friuli Grave. With soft, delicate bubbles and a nose of bread dough, slate, and pears, the flavors intensify to an apple pie lushness. It finishes dry, with notes of candied pineapple. **90**



WINETREES USA

## Best Value!



**Louis M. Martini 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$20)** With fruit sourced from Dry Creek Valley and Alexander Valley, a plethora of perfectly-ripe fruit is layered in this juicy red. Cherry liqueur and toffee-mocha-oak on the nose is luxurious, while blackberry and plum surge on the palate to jam with anise and mocha intertwining with snappy dry tannins. This has an Old-World profile. We tasted the wine in an exclusively-crafted Riedel Louis M. Martini Cabernet Sauvignon glass with a laser-cut rim and a longer bowl. The concentrated layers of flavor were perceived when sipped in a different wine glass. **92**



E. & J. GALLO WINERY



**Lang & Reed 2016 Chenin Blanc, Napa Valley (\$27)** This special wine is made up of 100% Oak Knoll fruit—still a rare variety for the Napa Valley, where only 14 acres are planted to Chenin Blanc. Lanolin and white flowers consume the nose; the result is so fragrant and pretty, one might hesitate to take the first sip. Fresh butter makes for a creamy palate (much lees-stirring took place!). There's also an undercoat of slate and a searing, tight acidity, but 13% ABV keeps it a fresh-tasting easy-drinker. **93**



## SPIRITS



**3 Kilos Vodka Gold 999.9, Holland (\$35)** Packaged in a bottle shaped like a gold bullion, this eye-opening vodka has a pretty nose of vanilla and pink grapefruit. Soft on the palate, its creamy texture layers tones of blue fruit and toffee on the tongue. The wet stone finish is clean. **90**



PRESTIGE ROYAL



**Astral Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$40)** Crafted by Master Sommelier Richard Betts, this copper pot-distilled, 92-proof blanco tequila is made from Highland organic agaves grown on a single estate. This double-gold medal winner from our San Francisco World Spirits Competition is labor intensive: Mature agaves are slow roasted in traditional hornos and use native yeast fermentation, which takes eight times longer than conventional fermentation. The nose engages with sweet lime and brown sugar while floral flavors of lilac and creamy magnolia paint the palate. A distinct salinity forms a path through vanilla bean and grapefruit. The finish is luxe: You can taste the terroir. **94**



DAVOS BRANDS

## Two Incredible Bourbons!



**Tommyrotter Napa Valley Heritage Cask Straight Bourbon, USA (\$70)**

Rebellious American artists from the 1920s formed a group called The Tommyrotters' Club with a motto to "create for creation's sake." Using an American grain mash bill of corn, rye, and barley, this is the Indiana-based distillery's first bourbon whiskey. This 95-proofer is made from 15-year-old bourbon and finished for three months in freshly-emptied Napa Valley Cab barrels. With a nose of peaches dipped in chocolate, it leads down a glorious trail of flavors. Spiced nutmeg and orange peel interplay with oatmeal and melted butter. Baked apple and peaches linger on the palate for a warm, deep, and resonant middle-to-finish. **95**



PHOTO: LUKE COPPING



**George Remus Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$45)**

Produced at an historic, 170-year-old distillery in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, George Remus is a high rye blend of whiskeys aged more than four years. The brand was named for a Cincinnati attorney who was behind one of the nation's most successful bootlegging operations of the Prohibition era; legend has it he inspired Jay Gatsby of *The Great Gatsby*. Aromas of peach and brown sugar exude from the glass on the frontline, and the nuances of baked apple, cinnamon, and jasmine tea are composed and elegant. The palate is restrained, even at a proof of 94. Cocoa-powdered pears, cake batter; and fine cedar wood are slightly peppered—even with a fleck of ginger—making this spirit warm and exact. **94** ■■



# LODI

IN LOS ANGELES

**COME SEE AND TASTE WHY LODI RULES!**

## WINERIES ATTENDING

Bokisch - Durst - Heritage Oak  
Ironstone - Klinker Brick  
LangeTwins - M2 - Michael David -  
Oak Farm - Oak Ridge - Paskett - Prie  
Scotto's Wine & Cider - St. Amant  
Uvaggio - Van Ruiten - Viaggio

## TRADE TASTING INVITE

**WHO:** THE WINES OF LODI  
**WHAT:** TRADE TASTING  
**WHERE:** MARINA CITY CLUB /  
MARINA DEL REY  
**WHEN:** FEBRUARY 21, 2018  
1:00 PM- 4:00 PM

## LODI RULES

LODI RULES for Sustainable Winegrowing is California's original sustainable viticulture program. This program truly began from the ground up, with grape growers deciding it was important for the future of the Lodi region. Our certification process is rigorous, based in science, voluntary, and third-party accredited and audited.



**SIGN UP AT [WINELA.COM/LODIINLA](http://WINELA.COM/LODIINLA)**

**TLC@WINELA.COM OR CALL 310-451-7600**

wine **LA**



**GALLERY**  
LOS ANGELES



Los Angeles

T.J. Martell Foundation  
*Leukemia, Cancer and AIDS Research*

COVER STORY

# the GINI *revolution*

Sam Galsworthy, Co-Founder of London-based Sipsmith Gin, often delivered bottles on his scooter during the company's early days in 2008.



# LONDON'S SIPSMITH BRINGS TRUE CRAFTSMANSHIP TO A TRADITIONAL SPIRIT

by Ian Buxton / photos by Andy Barnham



The botanicals in Sipsmith Gin lend themselves well to the juniper-forward London Dry style.



**N**ot every revolution can be rooted exactly in a time and place. We can, however, date the beginning of the U.K.'s craft distilling revolution to December 9, 2008, in a former garage on a quiet residential street in the unfashionable west London suburb of Hammersmith.

What's more, we know the names of the co-conspirators who planned this insurgent movement and set out to challenge the established order of Britain's previously-comfortable distilling dynasties. Meet Jared Brown, Fairfax Hall, and Sam Galsworthy: founders of Sipsmith Ltd., makers of traditional London Dry Gin, and the architects of a craft-distilling movement that has changed Britain's drinking habits forever.

But what, you might ask, is so revolutionary about "traditional" gin? As Galsworthy explains, the trio set out to "bring gin home to London" where they could produce it "the way it used to be, and the way it should be." But, remarkably, even from those early days—with Galsworthy making deliveries of individual bottles on his scooter—they had a fervent ambition to take their product global.

## A TIRELESS PURSUIT OF A DREAM

To fully understand why their accomplishments were so radical, however, we have to step back in time. In 2005, childhood friends Hall and Galsworthy were both working in the drinks industry, albeit for different companies, and had seen a nascent craft-distilling movement gather pace in the U.S. They felt this was the future—but not in the U.K., where legislation dating back to the middle of the 18th century controlled the size of stills that could be used, effectively blocking the production of artisanal-scale small-batch spirits.

They consulted experts, who all agreed their quixotic dream was impossible. The tax authorities would not approve a distillery on the scale they proposed and, anyway, big brands dominated the market. Faced with such well-founded scepticism, Hall and Galsworthy made the obvious choice: They immediately quit their jobs, downsized their homes to raise cash, and set about changing the law.

Now stop, go back, and read that last sentence again—it's a remarkable measure of their tenacity, passion, and commitment. The vast majority of budding entrepreneurs faced with the same enormous barriers would have halted before taking their dream any further, but Hall and Galsworthy refused to give up. After nearly two years of persistent lobbying, they persuaded the government to lift the restrictions on the size of stills that could be operated in the U.K. and, on that fateful December day in 2008, received their precious license.

That license was, of course, unprecedented in more than 250 years, so there was no standard form. Accordingly, their original authority to distill—now in pride of place in their visitor bar—had to be written out by hand (the nervous tax officer actually got the date wrong on the paperwork).

Distilling began immediately in a custom-designed German CARL still, representing a six-figure investment by the team. They also recruited Brown, an author, mixologist, and distiller, to take charge of production for the fledgling venture, which had taken the name Sipsmith.



Sipsmith currently offers three expressions of gin: its original London Dry Gin, the 114-proof V.J.O.P.—which stands for Very Juniper Over Proof—and a sloe gin.

In English, a “smith” denotes a craftsman, and it was silversmith Charles Hall, Fairfax’s father, who made the link between the “sip”—suggesting sharing, quality assurance, and trial—and their craft as distillers. So the Sipsmith moniker was solidified, and the product immediately captured the imagination of key bars and mixologists in the capital.

## “LONDON GIN” RETURNS HOME

London had once been a major distilling centre. Back in the 18th century, a wave of gin consumed the city’s poorer classes in something approaching an epidemic of hard drinking and illegal distilling. Within a century, though, gin had become almost respectable, and iconic brands such as Gordon’s, Booth’s, Tanqueray, Beefeater, and Gilbey’s were distilled in the city.

Yet one by one they moved out until only Beefeater and a small private label producer remained making London Dry in London. The term itself came to indicate a style rather than a geographical indicator; most “London” gin was actually made in Scotland on an industrial scale.

But the Sipsmith team still had the same local aspirations, and along with the all-important legal clearance, they now had a premises, a still, a recipe, and the beginnings of a brand. They began making their Sipsmith London Dry Gin using the traditional “one-shot” method of distilling, meaning they only mix their end distillate with water to cut it to bottling strength. The two-shot method used in many larger distilleries, by contrast, sees a more intensely-flavoured distillate being stretched with more base spirit, then

diluted with water; both are legitimate production methods, but Galsworthy insists their approach “gives a smoother, more rounded mouthfeel.” “We simply feel it’s the right way to do it,” he adds.

Along with its gin, Sipsmith also originally produced vodka, a sloe gin, and its mighty V.J.O.P. Gin (that’s Very Juniper Over Proof, and the name tells you exactly what to expect—a 57% ABV/114-proof gin that simply explodes with juniper). Vodka has diminished in importance for Sipsmith, however, and the brand has built its name and considerable reputation on the London Dry Gin and its variations.

Despite purchasing a second, larger still, Sipsmith had outgrown its original premises within five years and moved to Chiswick, another London village. The distillery can be found there today, in a modest, light industrial building sandwiched amongst a row of terraced houses. That move was a function of success: Sales had grown so fast that a third still was required to keep up with demand, and there was simply no room for further expansion in the first distillery.

Meanwhile, a fourth still, also by CARL, has just been commissioned, speaking to Galsworthy’s ambition to found a brand that “will be around in 200 years’ time.”

### A “GUIDING LIGHT” FOR GIN CONSUMERS

Sipsmith first entered the U.S. market with a soft launch in San Francisco in 2013. The approach was deliberately lowkey; though understated in a typically British way, word of the gin’s quality soon spread amongst leading mixologists, and it rapidly became a fixture at the top bars in key cities and major U.S. markets.

With that solid base and growing reputation to build upon, the new still will certainly be needed as the brand’s expansion in the U.S. is supported by the company’s new majority owner Beam Suntory. The Japanese company purchased a controlling share in Sipsmith in December 2016, but thus far the original founders remain in place; the brand is still controlled from London and global expansion is firmly in line with the original vision.

“We aim to be the guiding light for

has hardly shied away from innovation, offering experimental micro-distilled gins to their Sipping Society members (a quarterly subscription service that has delivered such delights to members as Strawberries & Cream Gin Liqueur; Hot Cross Bun Gin; Cherry & Cacao Gin Liqueur; and spicy Peter Piper Gin).

Some of these trials trickle down from the fortunate membership to the general market. One example—hopefully available in the U.S. soon—is the delicious Lemon Drizzle Gin, which would join London Dry, V.J.O.P., and Sloe Gin in the stateside brand lineup.

Sipsmith broke the mould for U.K. craft distilling, and in the wake of their launch, nearly 100 small distilleries now operate in Britain. While many have gone on to push the boundaries of gin’s flavour profile with strange and wonderful combinations of botanicals, it’s true to say most would never have existed without Hall and Galsworthy’s irreverent challenge to two centuries of orthodoxy.

Aspirant distillers still visit the distillery as if on a pilgrimage, unwittingly acknowledging Sipsmith’s leadership in the craft movement. But, challenged to assess the impact of these new entrants, Galsworthy is sanguine. “The consumer can be paralysed by choice,” he claims, adding that “while there will be a shakeout, the classics we hope will likely survive, and that is why we believe we’ll be around for a long while yet.”

That single-minded objective has distinguished Sipsmith from its very conception. No one sells their house unless they’re very sure of their purpose, and fortunately this particular gamble paid off spectacularly for Hall and Galsworthy. With some 30 percent of output destined for export, overseas demand is “growing like billy-o” in the U.S., Australia, and northern Europe, as well as Japan. The Beam Suntory powerhouse can only turbocharge this growth, and the U.S. is central to those ambitions.

“We have worked tirelessly to share our gin of the highest quality with discerning sippers,” says Galsworthy. “In this new chapter, we have found the perfect partners to take Sipsmith to all four corners of the globe.” You can expect to hear much more from these revolutionary Brits. ■■

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIPSMITH



**Sales proved to be so popular for Sipsmith’s gin that the company now has three stills at its distillery in Chiswick.**

Today, sales continue to boom. Galsworthy is coy on precise numbers, but trade reports suggest Sipsmith’s growth has exceeded 50 percent annually for the past three years.

the consumer in gin,” says Galsworthy, noting that the Sipsmith product remains true to a traditional style of juniper-led gin made in small batches, and always in London. Yet the company

## BEER

Heineken USA President and CEO Ronald den Elzen said Tiger, Singapore's wildly-popular premium Asian lager, "will be a gamechanger for decades to come" in terms of international growth.



# A WORLD OF

# OPPORTUNITY

HEINEKEN USA SPOTLIGHTS INTERNATIONAL PORTFOLIO, MARKETING STRATEGIES, AND, OF COURSE, NEW PRODUCTS AT 2017 NATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS CONFERENCE

by Kate Newton

Heineken's globally-focused philosophy has seeped into every facet of the business since its founding nearly 150 years ago: Its eponymous flagship label proudly holds the title of the first international craft beer, its products are available in more than 190 countries, and its prestigious lineup of craft beer brands from around the world has emerged as the industry up-and-comer to watch in 2018 and beyond.

With that in mind, the fact that Heineken USA's annual National Distributors Conference (NDC) last October in Dallas, Texas, carried the theme "A World of Experience" seemed like a bit of a no-brainer. Here's a recap of some of the most memorable developments and company milestones *The Tasting Panel* and hundreds of fellow attendees drank in during the immersive two-day event.

### Around the World with Five Points

During his keynote speech, Heineken USA President and CEO Ronald den Elzen said that while "Heineken has stood for quality and inventiveness for over 140 years," its Five Points Trading Company division emerged in 2017 as the company's most promising vehicle for "tapping into the waves of tomorrow."

Chas Littlefield, General Manager of Five Points, anticipates 2018 will be "a breakout year" for the young venture. At NDC, Littlefield lightheartedly likened Five Points' globe-trotting portfolio as the beer equivalent of the famous 1993 *MTV Unplugged* episode featuring Nirvana: Made up of Red Stripe, Tiger, Birra Moretti, Newcastle, Murphy's Stout, Sagres, and Prestige, it distinguishes itself in a crowded market by providing "a stripped-down" and hyperlocal alternative to the mainstream. "It's a lot of brands, but we truly have a world of opportunity," he added.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEINEKEN USA



NDC attendees had the opportunity to sample some new products, including Strongbow Rosé Apple, during the conference's Expo showcase.



Chas Littlefield, General Manager of Heineken's Five Points Trading Company division, says its portfolio of seven beers from around the world provides a hyperlocal alternative to mainstream brands.

Under Five Points' leadership, production of Red Stripe amber lager recently returned to its birthplace of Jamaica, while Newcastle is set for a brand relaunch with new packaging in the early months of 2018. At the conference, however, all eyes were on Five Points' relative portfolio "underdogs" Prestige and Tiger: the first beer to hail from Haiti and Singapore's wildly-popular premium Asian lager, respectively. Both brands have enabled Heineken USA to explore how much potential lies in prioritizing products with proven appeal in expatriate communities while making them "locally relevant" for American consumers, as well.

Littlefield said Tiger held "the most far-reaching potential of all of our brands" in terms of growth as he announced plans for Heineken USA to add 8,000 new placements and grow the brand's U.S. business by 80 percent in 2018. Effectively targeting the Asian-American demographic—the country's fastest-growing multicultural segment with roughly \$1.7 trillion in purchasing power—through Tiger "will be a gamechanger for decades to come" in terms of the company's future growth, den Elzen added.

### Make Room for Cider (and Some New Gadgets)

Heineken's cider brand Strongbow hails from the U.K., where the category is slightly more popular than it is stateside . . . for now. As a member of the company's "Core Four" lineup and the number-two cider brand in the U.S., Strongbow "enlarges" Heineken's presence in the market while acting as a natural bridge for wine consumers, den Elzen said.

With cider "projected to return to growth" in 2018, according to Heineken USA's Vice President of Marketing for Portfolio Brands Jessica Robinson, Strongbow is seeking to access the roughly 35 million-plus non-beer drinking consumers in the U.S. by launching a new Rosé Apple flavor this spring: an alternative to wine that refreshingly walks the line between crisp and sweet.

Other innovations discussed at NDC include a new-and-improved interface for Taproom by Heineken, the company's online distributor and partner platform; expanded on-premise engagement with StarBar (a program that teaches bar professionals how to pour the perfect Heineken); the new Red Star Solutions app that allows trade members to generate sell sheets with "locally-relevant insights"; and The Blade, an easy-to-use draught unit with minimal maintenance needs and a small footprint. Heineken's 18-pack Coolerpack cardboard packaging that doubles as an ice bucket will also see accelerated distribution in 2018.

### Occasion-Based Branding

With beer down 2.2 percent in 2017, Heineken USA's Senior Brand Director Quinn Kilbury shifted the conversation to the company's plan for long-term success in a shifting climate. As Heineken USA Chief Marketing Officer Nuno Teles later elaborated, brand loyalty is down: "It makes marketing even more challenging and interesting," and facing those challenges starts with a "very strong brand portfolio," he told the NDC crowd.

With spirits and wine increasingly chipping away at beer's share of the alcoholic beverage market—especially among Millennial consumers—Heineken USA is implementing a major shift in its marketing strategy in the new year.

That shift can be summarized as "occasion-based programming" that matches a Heineken brand with every beer-friendly scenario: casual hangouts with friends, which account for about 30 percent of beer volume in the U.S., with Dos Equis; a potluck or barbecue with Tecate or Tecate Light, the country's fastest-growing light brand; and celebrations and parties with a cold bottle of Heineken. Expect to see plenty of occasion-focused advertising and activations from Heineken both on- and on-premise in 2018—after all, "at the end of the day, beer is the first social network," Tecate President Esther Garcia quipped during the conference. ■■



# A Perspective on CORKAGE

## THE PROS AND CONS OF “BYOB” IN THE MODERN CULINARY ERA

by Judi Laing

There are few things more perplexing than the idea of going to a restaurant and bringing your own food and drink. Why not just stay home? But the lure of being served with gracious hospitality in a lovely restaurant where one doesn't have to clean up the mess of a meal is a powerful incentive to dine out.

So, assuming bringing food to a restaurant is unacceptable—unless you have a very restrictive diet—which genius first proposed bringing their own bottle of wine while dining out? According to Los Angeles restaurateur Piero Selvaggio of Valentino and his legendary wine cellar, the present incarnation of corkage started in earnest more than a decade ago, when he called it a “social phenomenon” and “one of those new fashions” that put a squeeze on his restaurant's bottom line.

One of the best sommeliers and wine directors I know is the great Peter Birmingham, whose tutorial concerning corkage *vis à vis* a restaurant's bottom line is instructive: “Corkage has a trickle-down effect. When there are nine bottles of corkage to one bottle that's purchased, it influences negotiations for salaries.” In other words, restaurants calculate compensation based on how much wine employees sell. If the customer brings in their own wine, then that must affect the wine steward's income.

Despite these drawbacks, corkage is a fact of life in the hospitality industry. In fact, it's so ingrained that directors must come up with tactics that at least somewhat level the playing field so they can sell enough wine to meet their ROI: For example, for every bottle a customer brings in for corkage, their corkage fee could be waived if they buy a bottle from the wine list. This way, wine is still being sold off the wine list and the customer is happy to avoid paying that fee. Surprisingly, at Valentino, Selvaggio says patrons inquire about corkage more often than any other topic.

With that being said, it's often difficult to track down a restaurant's formal corkage policy. To help quell that frustration, I launched an online directory on *CorkageOnline.com* that lists restaurants' corkage policies for wine, beer, and spirits. Its goal is to provide a time-saving resource for both restaurant employees fielding calls and customers searching for corkage fees: Customers know in advance what the corkage policy is, making a wine director's life a little easier. And that's a good thing to know before “popping the question.” ■■

37TH ANNUAL



# KAPALUA Wine & Food *Festival*



**JUNE 7-10, 2018 • KAPALUA RESORT, MAUI**

**INTERACTIVE WINE TASTING SEMINARS • CELEBRITY CHEF COOKING DEMOS**  
**EVENING GALAS WITH LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

Join Host Master Sommelier Michael Jordan, MS, CWE and a contingent of world-renowned winemakers, celebrity chefs and Maui's own culinary stars.



**MAUI**  
COUNTY



*Montage*

tastingpanel

clever root

[kapaluwineandfood.com](http://kapaluwineandfood.com)



## EVENT RECAP

# A New Age

## LEBANESE WINE DAY IS A SUCCESS IN SAN FRANCISCO AND LOS ANGELES

by Izzy Watson

Conceived in one of the oldest sites in the world for wine production, wines from Lebanon have been sought after for centuries by kings and commoners alike. The Mediterranean country's rich heritage of indigenous grapes has recently attracted renewed attention, and that interest was on full display during the Lebanese Wine Day winemaker tour in California this past November.

The event brought 27 different producers to San Francisco and Los Angeles to showcase their wines to members of the trade, with the first Lebanese Wine Day unfolding in San Francisco at the historic and recently-renovated Merchants Exchange Club in the Financial District. The day began with a master class presented by renowned wine speaker Jean Reilly, MW, and a second class followed in the afternoon. A walkaround wine tasting ran concurrently, where guests had the opportunity to meet face to face with winemakers and representatives from the Lebanese government. The producers then headed to Los Angeles, where they offered up their wines during another tasting at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

The winemakers and producers were thrilled to acquaint the American market with the wines of Lebanon in both cities. "We are very excited about our successful trip to California and to have shared our wines with members of the wine trade," said Louis Lahoud, Director-General of the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture. "These tastings were a great way for us to raise awareness about Lebanese wines and demonstrate their unique place in the U.S. market."

Heavily influenced by the French, Lebanon's most widely-planted varietals include Cinsault, Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Mourvèdre, and Syrah. In recent years, the country's wines have garnered numerous accolades and recognition from the press as representing an "emerging area." The unusual climatic conditions of the Bekaa agricultural valley—hot and arid, with cool nights—result in long-lasting wines that encompass both aromatic whites and strong-bodied reds.

Lebanese Wine Day was sponsored by the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and managed by Eventions, a full-service event management company located in Beirut, Lebanon. ■■





OUR ANNUAL  
**GIN-UARY**  
*Report*

# PUT A **GIN** *in it*

THE TASTING  
PANEL  
SELECTS OUR  
FAVORITE  
SPIRITS FOR  
AN INCREDIBLE  
**GIN-UARY**

by Emily Coleman

*Congratulations!* You made it through another rollercoaster of a year. For the gin category, though, 2017 brought nothing but upward mobility: After hitting \$1 billion in sales in 2016, the spirit experienced another fruitful year full of exciting news and expressions.

Although many distillers have historically been lured into the industry via the whiskey category, we're all well aware it takes a considerable amount of time to produce these aged spirits. Few new enterprises have the resources to wait years before they start turning a profit, so distilleries often turn to gin production as they let their barrels rest and whiskey mature. Luckily for us gin lovers, this trend has spawned countless fresh brands within the category.

The innovation in flavor profiles brought about by these distillers and their fellow producers has changed the perception of gin in the minds of both bartenders and consumers. It's no longer just about the juniper; it's about facilitating creative freedom and a delicate balance between the elements, as well as allowing space for each botanical to shine in perfect harmony. Much like the locavore movement, gin distillers now look to their surrounding region for inspiration and are able to develop spirits with a sense of place that sets them apart from the competition.

With seemingly endless numbers of styles and flavor profiles, bartenders have more opportunity than ever to put new twists on classic drinks and craft interesting and jaw-dropping cocktails that will keep their customers fully invested in the gin craze. No one knows where 2018 may take us, but here's hoping the category will continue to impress and reap success.



## *On the Rocks (and Shore):* **SILENT POOL GIN**

According to legend, John Lackland—who reigned as King of England in the early 13th century—once saw a woodcutter’s daughter bathing in a pool near the forest. He frightened the young woman further into the water, where she eventually drowned. Visitors to the spring-fed pool, located about 30 miles southwest of London on the Albury Estate in the Surrey Hills, claim they can still see the maiden late at night.

Inspired by this folktale, the aptly-named Silent Pool Distillers—founded by a group of friends with a shared passion for spirits—calls this beautiful landscape home. In a nod to the past, the team decided to restore a 19th-century wood-fire steam boiler; a hand-built copper still from the Arnold Holstein Company of Germany and stainless-steel tanking from the Vipara Valley in Slovenia rounds out the distillery’s specialized equipment.

Silent Pool sources an impressive 24 botanicals for its flagship expression, and the distillery painstakingly introduces them to the base spirit to produce a complex and balanced gin. Bosnian juniper berries, licorice root, bitter orange, cassia bark, orris, cardamom, cubeb, grains of paradise, local honey, and bergamot macerate in the base liquid; a gin basket in the still with fresh orange and lime peel, dried pears, Macedonian juniper, lavender, and Polish angelica, meanwhile, brings bright citrus notes.

The distillers separately strip the delicate botanicals—rose petals, Makrut lime leaves, linden, chamomile, and elderflower—of their oils and aroma before adding them to the gin, ushering in layers of floral notes. The expression all comes together in a multi-chambered fractioning column.

Whether or not you believe in the story of the doomed swimmer, Silent Pool demands notice for its conscientious approach to distilling and a clear respect for its natural surroundings.

SILENT POOL DISTILLERS





Monkey 47 Founder Alexander Stein

## A Unique Gin

Through a passion for quality, founder Alexander Stein has brought to life this unique gin from the Black Forest "Schwarzwald." Monkey 47 draws on the eccentric recipe of Montgomery Collins, creator of the Schwarzwald Dry Gin. Collins' idea for a new type of Gin was to combine native plants found in the Black Forest with the exotic spices of India. Over one third of the ingredients in Monkey 47 are inspired by the Black Forest, including lingonberry, which gives the Gin its unforgettable taste.

Encased in brown pharmaceutical glass, Monkey 47 is protected from harmful UV rays, and its hand drawn label brings to life a stamp from the Victorian colonial era. To keep a proper seal on the Monkey's antics, each bottle is corked with the highest-grade raw Super Flor. Monkey 47 is a species rara and is as delicious neat as it is in a Gibson.



NEW LITER SIZE  
& PRICE COMING  
JANUARY 2018

### Drink Responsibly

MONKEY 47® Schwarzwald Dry Gin. Product of Germany.  
Distilled from Molasses. 47% Alc./Vol.  
©2018 Imported by Pernod Ricard USA, New York, NY.

### MONKEY 47 GIBSON

2 parts Monkey 47  
1 part dry vermouth  
2-3 cocktail onions

Stir ingredients in a mixing glass with ice until well chilled. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass, and garnish with cocktail onions.

OUR ANNUAL  
**GIN-UARY**  
*Report*



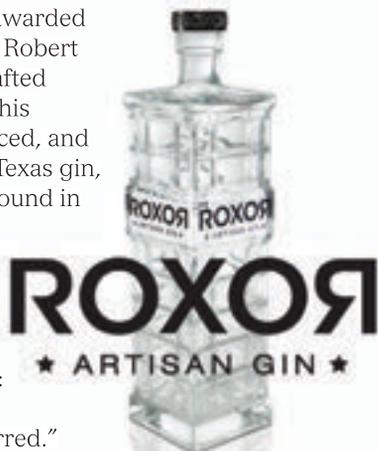
*From the Kitchen:*

## ROXOR GIN

James Beard–awarded chef and Ph.D. Robert Del Grande crafted the recipe for this modern, balanced, and approachable Texas gin, which can be found in a distinctive decanter-quality skyline bottle with its palindrome name: “on the ROX, shaken, OR stirred.”

ROXOR Artisan Gin (SRP \$30) features 12 botanicals, including fresh citrus zest, hibiscus flowers, cocoa nibs, and pecans. “Soft steeping and distilling” results in a gin that leads with perfume notes while maintaining a complexity that’s intriguingly pleasant at 90 proof.

NEW ARTISAN SPIRITS, INC.



*For the Connoisseur:*

## NOLET'S SILVER DRY GIN

Built in 1691, the family-owned Nolet Distillery in Schiedam, Holland, is run by tenth-generation distillery owner Carolus Sr. and his sons Carl Jr. and Bob. The trio created NOLET'S Finest Gins as a celebration of their family's heritage and challenged themselves to use off-the-beaten-path ingredients and botanicals; NOLET'S Silver Dry Gin (SRP \$50) features Turkish rose, peach, and raspberry.



Each botanical used is individually macerated and then distilled before being added to the neutral grain spirit. NOLET'S is a perfect gin for the base of a cocktail: You can taste

the passion and tradition that goes into every sip of this fine expression.

## *A Worldly Expression:* **FORDS GIN**

Created with the professional bartender in mind, Fords Gin (SRP \$28) took a chef-like approach in formulating its brand by looking at the flavors found in the ingredients of classic cocktails. Directly pairing those flavors with botanicals took the company toward conceiving a London Dry–style gin, and Co-Founder and industry veteran Simon Ford collaborated with eighth-generation Master Distiller Charles Maxwell to launch the spirit in 2012. “Gin is the quintessential spirit for cocktails, and we make Fords Gin for that purpose,” says Ford. “Martinis, Gin and Tonics, Negronis, Tom Collinses, Gimlets, and so on—it’s gin’s relationship to cocktails that makes it such a great category.”

The gin begins with a neutral base of English wheat and botanicals sourced from the venerable Joseph Flach & Sons, the 125-year-old London-based importing company. It features the traditional foundation of juniper and coriander seed—hailing from Italy and Romania, respectively—and balances those with seven other botanicals: lemon peel from Spain, bitter orange peel from Morocco and Haiti, grapefruit peel from Turkey, angelica root from Poland, cassia bark from India, jasmine from China, and orris root from Italy and Morocco. Maxwell steeps these botanicals for 15 hours and distills the gin in 500-liter stills to create a London Dry gin perfectly suited for any gin-inspired cocktail.

THE 86 CO.



*Flying Through the Years:*

## AVIATION AMERICAN GIN

A nostalgic faction of the mixology community is increasingly seeking out tributes to the pre-Prohibition era in their preferred cocktails—but they're hesitant to leave the current time period altogether, especially with so much exciting innovation on display. Aviation American Gin is one of those rare labels that can transport consumers to the past as it sets its sights firmly on the future.

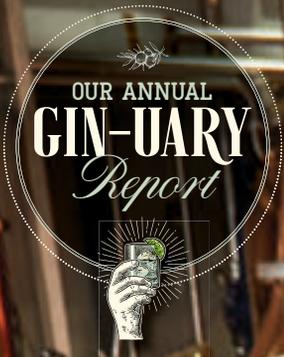
The spirit's namesake is the Aviation Cocktail, which made its debut in Hugo Ensslin's *Recipes for Mixed Drinks* (widely published in 1917, the book was revived with a new centennial edition in 2017). Considered to be the last known book of its kind released before Prohibition, *Recipes for Mixed Drinks* evolved from a little-known pamphlet of both standard and unconventional cocktails to a staple revered by many a modern mixologist.

The handcrafted, small-batch gin is produced at House Spirits Distillery in Portland, Oregon. Conceptualized a decade ago by Co-Founders Ryan Magarian and Christian Krogstad (who also serves as Aviation's Master Distiller), Aviation Gin forgoes the juniper-heavy characteristics of traditional English gins in favor of a more balanced, smooth taste.

This brings other enticing flavor notes, including French lavender and Indian sarsaparilla, to the forefront after the blend of globally-sourced botanicals is macerated and distilled. The resulting versatility enables the 84-proof spirit to meld seamlessly into both contemporary cocktails and nostalgic drinks like its namesake.

Ensslin would no doubt be surprised by the influence his book holds on the industry all these decades later, considering he spent his days as the inconspicuous head bartender of the Hotel Wallick in New York City's Times Square (a victim of Prohibition, the hotel closed in 1939). But the Aviation—which mixes gin with lemon juice, maraschino liqueur, and crème de violette—is one of many creations he popularized that continues to pop up on bar counters today. With the option to feature Aviation Gin as its base, it's no wonder the cocktail is still flying high. —Kate Newton





## *The New Kid on the Block:* **LOCH & UNION**

Several years ago, Colin Baker, Founder and Master Distiller of the new spirits producer Loch & Union, was working at a Big Four accounting firm in Orange County. Feeling unfulfilled, he threw himself into his passion for home brewing and realized he'd rather devote himself to pursuing a career he loved instead. After he quit his job, Baker flew to London to learn the art of craft brewing; his studies eventually took him Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, where he entered a graduate program in brewing and distilling. In Scotland, he became enamored with Scotch whisky and again followed his heart as he switched the emphasis of his master's degree to distilling.

Upon returning to the States, Baker sought to realize his dream of opening his own distillery. To capture the best flavor profiles, he chose high-quality wine barrels from the Napa Valley as the focus of his barrel-aging program and decided to establish the distillery itself there as well. After all, that's where Seguin Moreau and Demptos—two of the world's most famous cooperages—are located, where the essence of countless grape varieties mature in barrels, and where an abundance of winemakers pioneer groundbreaking techniques.

Once the site for the distillery was determined, Colin teamed up with long-time friend Matt Meyer, who met while studying together at the London School of Economics, to be co-founder

and run the business-end of operations. Three more personnel additions soon followed: Two of Baker's former Heriot-Watt classmates, Jesse Saunders and Gordon Russell, joined on as Lead Distiller and Head Distiller, respectively, while Gian P. Nelson, another friend of Baker's as well as a former Marine and winemaker, was hired as Chief Distiller.

As the first batches of its whisky began mellowing in barrels, Loch & Union concentrated on moving its first product—a world-class gin—to market. It took more than a year to develop the flavor profile with select botanicals from around the world and distill it in the company's new cooper-pot stills from CARL, the renowned German manufacturer. "We all love gin and poured an incredible amount of research into developing a fabulous recipe we could release right away, since gin requires no aging," Baker notes. "We can think of no better way to introduce the Loch & Union brand to the world than with our sublime gin."

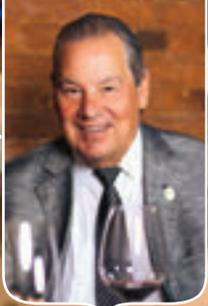
While the brand and its spirits are approachable, Loch & Union doesn't sacrifice nuance in either its flavor or production process to ensure premium quality. Baker says, "The consumers Loch & Union will appeal to know about spirits; they seek out high quality and know it when they find it. The products they buy and consume are a part of a lifestyle. On the other side, Loch & Union spirits will also appeal to the occasional spirits drinker—



people who recognize and appreciate fine quality when they do reach for a whisky or gin.”

As industry newcomers, Baker says the Loch & Union team looks forward to working closely with accounts to create innovative signature cocktails featuring their gin and future creative expressions, allowing the portfolio to seamlessly integrate with these key accounts’ existing programs in Napa Valley and beyond. “We have worked tirelessly over the last three years to build our distillery,” concludes Baker. “We’ve developed relationships with the best people and firms around — from equipment manufacturers and the sources of our ingredients to our fantastic marketing/PR team and distribution partner. I am confident that this concerted effort, blended with our passion, will propel Loch & Union toward its full potential.” ■■





BEHIND THE SCENES WITH **FRED DAME, MS**

# A Conversation with **ALEXIS IACONIS**

WINE DIRECTOR, **BARNDIVA**,  
HEALDSBURG, CA

photos by Tia Gavin



Alexis Iaconis, Wine Director at Barndiva in Healdsburg, and Fred Dame, MS, VP/Prestige Accounts for American Wine & Spirits (a division of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of CA).

**Q Fred Dame: It's a rainy day here—that would have helped a few weeks ago. It seems like it was yesterday that the fires were raging.**

**Alexis Iaconis:** Yes, it was a terrible time. I have to say that our neighbors were amazing, as were our customers. We had people driving from all over Northern California to support our business. It was the best of times and the worst of times.

**Q How long has Barndiva been here? I have enjoyed so many wonderful meals I can't remember!**

Fourteen years. Our owners originally wanted to make it an event location, but the city fathers weren't buying, so they opened the restaurant without any experience in the business. They live on the second story of the building. Sometimes things just work out.

**Q The décor here is so European, with lovely antiques and so many unique touches.**

They spend a lot of time in Europe searching, and we are always making interesting changes to the décor.

**Q How many seats are there?**

There are 50 on the restaurant side and 50 on the Gallery Bistro side right next door. We also have seating for 60 outdoors when the weather accommodates.

**Q How many wines on the list? It seems to have grown!**

We now have 600 wines on the list and 25 wines by the glass: ten white, ten red, and five sparklers. Fifty of the wines are champagne and sparkling—we love our bubbles! Our owners have a passion for Champagne. We also have a nice selection of dessert wines. The list is 50 percent U.S.A. and 50 percent international with an emphasis on Burgundy.

**Q How many covers a day?**

About 150–300 depending on the day and season. We are open for both lunch and dinner.

**Q Do you work with the chef on menu changes?**

Of course. The menu changes seasonally with monthly changes based on what is available fresh. We use a large amount of local seafood and produce.

**Q How about staff training?**

We do it once a week on Fridays and present the new wines by the glass, which change weekly. We don't have quizzes or tests. One of the sommeliers here tried that in the past . . . not a great success.

**Q What ratio of white to red do you sell?**

I would say 50-50. Our lunch business is very strong and we serve a large percentage of white and rosé wines there. At night, our local Pinot Noirs and Zinfandels are wildly popular. Local wines are 75 percent of our sales.

**Q I remember before you came that the list was much smaller.**



**Iaconis and Dame enjoyed a glass of the David Bruce 2013 Russian River Valley Chardonnay.**



**Iaconis oversees a hefty wine list of 600 wines at Barndiva.**

Correct. I had to convince the owners that we needed more appellations and multiple vintages. The local wine-producing community here really enjoys that part of our list. Our locals are 25 percent of our clientele and are very important to us—we often see many of them more than once a week.

**Q And the local wineries are supportive?**

Unbelievably so. They are great to us, and of course we reciprocate by featuring their wines.

**Q I was looking at your pricing—it's not as aggressive as some I've seen in the wine country.**

Very true. We vary our percentages based on price and availability, and are building a reputation for an affordable and fair wine list.

**Q What about wine-menu pairings?**

We do them for tasting menu offerings, mainly for large parties. We have a "Somm's Table" next door in the Bistro that features a six-course menu with pairings; that's for groups of six or more.

**Q How do you sell that?**

There is a whole section on our website that features the Somm's Table. We do a monthly wine club feature that offers specific wines by the bottle: glass and flight. Our website had been incredibly popular with our regulars and new guests.

**Q What does Alexis like to drink?**

I am currently having a love affair with wines from New Zealand. I love what's exciting and new and I really didn't pay much attention to the Southern Hemisphere for a while. Now I am really enjoying the wines and the prices are great.

**Q What's wrong with the world of wine that we need to fix?**

Giving the guest a chance to express themselves as to what they want to drink and not what we want to sell them. We need to do more listening! ■■

## CELEBRATIONS

The Wears Missoni Westside cocktail (recipe on pg. 88) was crafted to celebrate the collaboration between legendary liqueur Disaronno and Italian fashion brand Missoni. It also honored Creative Director Angela Missoni's 20th anniversary with the company.



NEVER GOING OUT OF

# Style

**DISARONNO** CELEBRATES  
ITS NEW COLLABORATION  
WITH **MISSONI** IN LAS VEGAS

BY JESSE HOM-DAWSON / PHOTOS BY MONA SHIELD PAYNE



## Benvenuto Frizzante

- ▶ 1 oz. Hendrick's Gin
- ▶ 1 oz. Disaronno
- ▶ 1 oz. lemon juice
- ▶ ½ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ 4 dashes Scrappy's Lavender Bitters
- ▶ 2 oz. Prosecco

Add all ingredients except the Prosecco into a shaker with ice. Shake vigorously and strain into a champagne flute. Top with Prosecco and garnish with an edible flower or lemon twist.

For all the fanfare that's been made about the Mansions at MGM Grand, the entrance to the private Las Vegas property—a small metal gate down a hallway from the MGM's casino—is purposefully unobtrusive. The luxe lodgings themselves, however, are anything but: The Mansions at MGM Grand house serene villas for the highest of high-rollers, transporting them to an oasis that seems miles away from the constant commotion of the Strip.

That oasis also served as the perfect venue for the recent West Coast launch of the #DisaronnoWearsMissoni bottle. Since 2013, Disaronno has partnered annually with a luxury Italian fashion house for its ICON project, and notable designers like Moschino, Versace, and Robert Cavalli have all worked with the brand to create limited-edition bottle designs. “The designers craft a gorgeous piece of art to showcase both their talents and Disaronno’s timeless bottle and liquid,” explains Paul Zahn, Director of Brand Ambassadors for Disaronno. “Additionally, Disaronno donates a portion of the proceeds from the ICON project to its charity partner Fashion 4 Development, which supports a variety of humanitarian efforts in Africa.”

Tastemakers, resident VIPs, and members of the press all showed up in Vegas to celebrate the launch of the newest bottle featuring Missoni’s signature chevron print, and guests were welcomed with the Benvenuto Frizzante cocktail—a play on a classic French 75. Local buyers and



From left: Mixologist Joseph Pereira; Francesco Lafranconi, Executive Director of Mixology & Spirits Education at Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits; Jesse Hom-Dawson, Managing Editor for *The Tasting Panel*, Lauren Ritchie, Brand Ambassador—South, Disaronno; Dan Molitor, Director of Beverage at Mandalay Bay; Dan D'Agostino, President of Beverage Development at Station Casinos; and Jonathan Worth, Assistant Director of Beverage at Mandalay Bay.



**Midas' Tears**

- ▶ 1½ oz. Writers' Tears Irish Whiskey
- ▶ 1 oz. Disaronno
- ▶ 3 dashes Bittercube Jamaican #2
- ▶ Edible gold

Add all ingredients into a mixing glass with ice. Stir for 30 seconds and strain into a chilled coupe.

**Wears Missoni Westside**

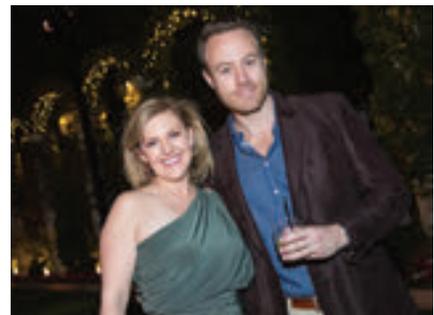
- ▶ 1 oz. Tito's Handmade Vodka
- ▶ 1 oz. Disaronno
- ▶ 1 oz. lime juice
- ▶ ½ oz. Ancho Reyes Verde liqueur
- ▶ ¼ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ Beet juice
- ▶ Mint leaves
- ▶ Cucumber

Add three cucumber wheels and eight bruised mint leaves into a rocks glass. Add two cucumber wheels and four bruised mint leaves and all ingredients (aside from beet juice) into a shaker with ice. Shake vigorously and strain into prepared rocks glass with crushed ice. Top glass with a crushed ice dome and layer beet juice on as a garnish.

top mixologists like Francesco Lafranconi, Executive Director of Mixology & Spirits Education at Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, mingled as a pianist played popular hits inside, and a string trio serenaded partygoers in the sumptuous outdoor courtyard amongst twinkling lights and water fountains.

Zahn says the collaboration between the two iconic companies unfolded effortlessly considering both share a similar "bold and bright" aesthetic, with Disaronno's expressed through its flavor and Missoni's through its instantly-recognizable zig-zag design. "Disaronno, much like Missoni, never goes out of fashion, so this year's partnership made total sense," Zahn adds.

The party also celebrated Missoni Creative Director Angela Missoni's 20th anniversary with the company through a specialty cocktail Zahn described as being "crafted in her essence." The drink, dubbed Wears Missoni Westside, skillfully layered



**Courtney Perna, Host of CBS' Las Vegas Now, and Paul Zahn, Director of Brand Ambassadors for Disaronno International.**

ingredients to create shades mirroring the #DisaronnoWearsMissoni bottle and was one of the many highlights of a soirée that brought fashion and glamour to the spirits industry. Zahn notes, "Consumers, trade, and spirits aficionados always look forward each year to seeing who Disaronno picked for its ICON project." And we'd say that this time, the Missoni collaboration wowed them all! ■■

# THE LIFE'S BLOOD OF

# Sicily

AT **STEMMARI**,  
WINEMAKER LUCIO  
MATRICARDI BRINGS  
THE HISTORIC  
ISLAND'S SIGNATURE  
RED VARIETAL TO LIFE

by **David Gadd**

**IT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE** that certain grape varieties become inextricably tied to one particular wine region. Much to the chagrin (or perhaps delight) of Barolo lovers, Nebbiolo has found little success outside Piedmont. Although Malbec grows readily elsewhere, it's in Argentina that it has built its modern reputation. And despite an Eastern European heritage, Zinfandel is now as tied to California as potatoes are to Idaho.

The grape forever linked to Sicily is the red variety Nero d'Avola. Named for the town of Avola on the island's southeastern coast, where it was selected by local growers several centuries ago, Nero d'Avola has since spread throughout Sicily.

Although Nero d'Avola is ubiquitous on the island—running like the life's blood of this deeply historic and tradition-rich place—its full potential has only recently been tapped. The pioneering Sicilian winery Stemmari is at the forefront of a movement to elevate Nero d'Avola into a varietal of international acclaim.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEMMARI

Harvest at Stemmari.

Stemmari was built by Trentino-based Gruppo Mezzacorona, which also owns sparkling wine producer Rotari, among other brands. Lucio Matricardi, Ph.D., who oversees wine-making at the group's facilities in both Trentino and Sicily, explains the rationale for the company's Sicilian venture: "In 1998 through 1999, we were looking for a warmer area to produce different types of wines from those we produce in Trentino. We started to appreciate Sicily as an amazing climate where you can grow any type of produce: fruits, vegetables, and, of course, grapes."

### A Sicilian Adventure

In 2000, Stemmari purchased vineyard land in Sambuca di Sicilia in the Agrigento province in western Sicily, as well as at Acate in Ragusa on the southeastern coast. "We decided to invest in the local varieties Nero d'Avola and Grillo. We replanted the grapes and built a new winery," Matricardi says. The state-of-the-art, solar-powered facility represents a \$150-million investment in the future of the island and both Grillo and Nero d'Avola. (By practicing sustainable viticulture and enology, Stemmari became the first winery in Sicily to receive EMAS [Eco-Management and Audit Scheme] certification.)

But there was much work to be done. "The problem with Sicily was

that the grapes were geared to produce bulk wine with high alcohol," explains Matricardi. "We found that all of the vineyards were on a pergola system [a charmingly rustic, traditional vine-training system that's unsuitable for the highest form of Sicilian wine production]. The first money we spent was to tear out the 600 hectares of vineyards and replace the pergolas with a vertical-shoot Guyot system." After that, the new vines would take five years to start producing fruit worthy of vinification.

The question of vine material was an issue Matricardi addressed early on. "To introduce a specific clone requires at least 20 years of experimentation with a given variety," he says. "Nothing had been done on Nero d'Avola for 100 years. Instead of clones, we used massal selection [field-selected old-vine grafts from the best-quality plants] to find superior material that was virus-free, and we started to propagate Nero d'Avola. It took three years."

### A Chameleon Grape

"Nero d'Avola is the chameleon of vines," says Matricardi, clearly enamored by the grape. "It has an amazing characteristic in that it adapts very well. It's a very happy variety, so no matter where you plant it, it will produce serviceable to extraordinary wines."

For example, the soils are sandy and light in Avola and absorb warmth very easily. "Here, Nero d'Avola gives an amazingly light, gentle, delicate wine, but with good acidity and cherry, raspberry fruit aromas," says Matricardi. "In Trapani, the northwestern part of the island where the climate and soils are completely different—clay, calcareous, more fertile, cooler—the Nero d'Avola is heavier and much more powerful. The Stemmari style of Nero d'Avola, influenced by the choice of the vineyard location, is a harmonious expression of the two styles: fresh, fruity, rich, and approachable with restrained oak."



Lucio Matricardi, Ph.D., oversees winemaking at Stemmari as well as at Gruppo Mezzacorona's Trentino facilities.

Nero d'Avola also constituted 80% of Stemmari's first red blend, Cantodoro, along with 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. "In the Cantodoro, we experimented to give Nero d'Avola more structure, more power, more longevity," explains Matricardi. "But even when you cultivate Nero d'Avola on richer soil, you will never reach 'Schwarzenegger' power"—hence the addition of oak-aged Cabernet. In an effort to explore Nero d'Avola's more feminine side, Matricardi also produces the lovely Stemmari Rosé made entirely from the variety.

### Made for Cuisine

A true and distinct food-friendliness is one of the most appealing aspects of Nero d'Avola (and also of its white Sicilian counterpart, Grillo). "Its natural acid keeps the wine alive, even with heavy foods such as salami and cheese," notes Matricardi, who practices night harvesting to avoid high daytime temperatures brought in from the African Scirocco winds. "So many cultures have arrived in Sicily, and its foods come from all over the world: Lebanese couscous, eggplant, lamb, pork, veal, fish, octopus, and arancini [Sicilian stuffed rice balls]." A personal favorite of the wine-

**Gruppo Mezzacorona invested \$150 million to establish the Stemmari winery.**



maker's to pair with the Stemmari Nero d'Avola is pasta alla norma, a distinctly-Sicilian preparation with eggplant and Pecorino cheese.

The Stemmari wines carry the new DOC Sicilia appellation—an official designation Stemmari took the lead in establishing to give Sicily's wines their own place in the international market—and their

modest price point makes them all the more attractive. Matricardi sums up the Stemmari project succinctly: "These are wines with 2,000 years of supporting evolution, grown and crafted in a modern and yet authentic Sicilian style." ■■

*Stemmari is imported by  
Prestige Wine Imports.*

## NEW YEAR. NEW WINES

*Stemmari's Grillo and its three Nero d'Avola-based wines are wonderful discoveries as we head into the new year.*



**Stemmari 2016 Grillo (\$10)** The tropical-scented Grillo ("cricket") is Sicily's most famous white varietal. Pair with baked fish or veal carpaccio.



**Stemmari 2015 Nero d'Avola (\$10)** The versatile Nero d'Avola is the island's calling-card varietal. Stemmari's version is an ideal match for roasted meats and for Sicilian foods such as arancini.



**Stemmari 2015 Cantodoro (\$15)** This ripe, concentrated blend of 80% Nero d'Avola and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon is a natural choice with grilled meats.



**Stemmari 2016 Rosé (\$10)** The 100% Nero d'Avola Rosé shows the strawberry notes typical of this grape. Charming as an apéritivo with appetizers.





Master Distiller Fred Noe proudly displays a bottle of Knob Creek 25th Anniversary Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey.

PHOTO: KELLY BALCH

# AIN'T NO RULES IN *Kentucky*

## VISIONARY DISTILLER FRED NOE CELEBRATES KNOB CREEK'S ANNIVERSARY RELEASE

by Deborah Parker Wong and Mara Marski



PHOTO: HARDY WILSON

Knob Creek's newest expression is a single cask celebration of the brand's 25th anniversary.

**B**ourbon, an American classic that fell on hard times in the mid-'90s, is no longer down on its luck. The spirit's sales now exceed 20 million cases annually and ultra-premium bourbon, up by 141 percent since 2010, is the category's fastest-rising star. With distilleries running 24 hours a day, seven days a week, producers like Beam Suntory—which completed a new seven-story rackhouse in Frankfort, Kentucky, in late 2016—are riding a wave of expansion intended to keep supply running well ahead of rising demand.

According to the company's Master Distiller Frederick Booker Noe III, Beam has more warehouses on the way and plans to boost production of Jim Beam and its small-batch labels—Knob Creek, Baker's, Basil Hayden's, and the eponymous Booker's—by 20 percent.

That's good news for both bourbon drinkers and Noe, who by all accounts is a living legend. Under his dogged, visionary direction, Beam marked a milestone in 2017 as Knob Creek celebrated its 25th anniversary. Launched at a point when the category itself had lost momentum, Knob Creek is a testament to both tradition and patience, and you'll find those qualities demonstrated in its very-limited anniversary release.

### True Single Barrel

For those who enjoy the rarity and expression of single cask bourbon, Noe has hit a high-water mark with Knob Creek's anniversary release (SRP \$130). It trades a consistent flavor profile—once the hallmark of the distillery—for an approach that ups the nuance while leveraging generations of distilling know-how.

"One hundred percent of the color and 70 percent of the flavor of these beauties

PHOTO: HARDY WILSON



**Fred Noe leads a group of Bay Area bartenders through a tasting of the Knob Creek 25th Anniversary expression.**

rels are destined for the San Francisco Bay Area.

**“No Rules” Noe**

Well known for his “no rules” philosophy, Noe gives Knob Creek fans a license to enjoy the product in any manner they see fit. “The flavors of higher-proof bourbon aren’t shy; they’re not going to disappear if you add water or ice,” he says.

This message especially resonates with a generation of bourbon enthusiasts whose enjoyment is driven by discovery. The category has on-premise growth to thank for the revival that began showing signs of life about a decade ago—a comeback that’s now reached fever pitch. “The world market is clamoring for the stuff,” says Noe, who spotted Knob Creek retailing

PHOTO: HARDY WILSON



**Beam Suntory West Coast American Whiskey Ambassador Megan Breier joined Fred Noe to celebrate the release of the anniversary expression.**

PHOTO: KELLY BALGH



**Los Angeles area bartenders Anthony Kaufman, Mick Lambuth, and Marsha Meyer inspect their whiskeys following Fred Noe’s discussion about his rules of tasting.**

comes from the barrel,” says Noe, holding aloft a pour for inspection. When Noe and his dedicated team combed the rackhouses for this commemorative release, they personally selected 300 extra-aged barrels that would yield the best representation of the Knob Creek tradition: big, bold flavor, nice aroma, and a long finish.

With proofs that vary by the bottle from a whopping 120–125, these single cask bottlings are as individualistic as the barrels that birthed them. Aged

for 12–13 years, Knob Creek’s 25th Anniversary bourbon is about as close to vintage variation as a spirit can get.

After the angels had taken their share, Noe discovered that each barrel held far less of the precious liquid than a standard Knob Creek barrel: “the biggest and boldest Knob Creek bourbon ever bottled.” Packaged as six bottles per case, all of which come from a single barrel, there are dozens of different expressions on the market. According to Noe, nine of the 300 bar-

for \$200 a bottle during a recent visit to Australia.

As a category, bourbon dexterously facilitates premiumization. When quality exceeds expectations for value, as it does in the case of small-batch products like Beam’s Basil Hayden’s (SRP \$40), there’s little hesitation on the part of the consumer to trade up within the portfolio. That may in fact be the only option for consumers when inventories run low, but it often has the reverse effect on producers by

stimulating instead of slowing demand for higher-priced products.

## Knob Creek Winds Its Way to California

Hundreds of miles west of the holy land of American whiskey production, California doesn't get to host whiskey royalty as often it would like. This past October, Noe visited both Northern and Southern California to celebrate new releases, regale spirits industry professionals with his stories from the still, and, of course, sample the merchandise.

Noe commemorated Knob Creek's 25th anniversary at an intimate luncheon in San Francisco, where area bartenders were among the first to taste the anniversary expression. The 120.6 proof was precisely balanced, with honeyed barbeque and toasty vanilla notes that carried a medium attack; the 122 proof had a softer nose and more apparent cherried fruit; and the 124.3 proof was a high-octane pour with a more significant attack supporting all of the desired flavors.

Not one to let grass grow under his feet, Noe has the eighth generation of the Jim Beam family already hard at work. His son, Freddie, fondly known

as "Little Book" for his resemblance to his late grandfather, is charged with developing a new blend each year. Noe described Freddie's inaugural effort, "The Easy"—which retails for \$80 and is made with 13-year-old corn whiskey, six-year-old American malt whiskey, six-year-old rye, and four-year-old bourbon—as "purse whiskey" for its light aromas, round, nutty flavors, and gentle attack that's already finding an audience with small-batch fans.

During a tasting in Los Angeles, Noe explained that when he started at Beam, his dad, Booker, put him to work as the night-shift bottling line supervisor—essentially the worst job he could find—to see if he was serious about the family business. "Thirty-five years later and they haven't run me off yet," he joked. "After I went to work, my dad said, 'I'm gonna teach you how to drink bourbon.' I said, 'Dad, I pretty much got that down,' and he said, 'I'm gonna teach you how to drink it properly.'"

When the time came for Freddie to start at Beam, Noe said "he wanted to learn everything about the business, so he had a regimented internship" that exposed him to every side of its operations. That included a stint in

Research and Development, where Freddie wanted to see if he could blend corn, rye, and malt whiskeys at the same percentage as the mash bill of Jim Beam and have it taste the same. Little Book spawned from Freddie's efforts to revisit this idea; in a tribute to his grandfather, it's bottled at cask strength and will continue with a unique release every year.

Once Noe walked through his family's personal rules for tasting (see the sidebar below), he led Los Angeles area bartenders through a sampling of Jim Beam Double Oak, Basil Hayden's Rye, the Knob Creek 25th Anniversary expression, and Little Book. Freddie was just named the eighth-generation Beam Family Distiller, and Noe says it's easy to predict what comes next for the company. "Freddie just turned 30 and I just turned 60: He's on his way in, I'm on my way out," he said as he gestured toward the bottle of Little Book. Something in his tone signaled to the room that they were witnessing a changing of the guard. "The company's in good hands; I still have projects to work on," Noe continued. "But there's a lot of fun I've got to have with my granddaughter, too." ■■



## Booker's Four-Step Tasting, As Told by Fred Noe

**COLOR:** "You can tell a lot about what you're drinking by the color. Lighter color means lighter flavor; deeper and darker is more complex."

**NOSE/AROMA:** "There's a little trick to nosing bourbon. When you stick your nose into the glass, part your lips. If you don't, you'll pull too much alcohol into your nose and it will overwhelm. If you part your lips, you can almost taste the whiskey before it's in your mouth."

**TASTING WITH THE "KENTUCKY CHEW":** "Take a sip of the bourbon, roll it all around, and really chew on it—pulling a little air in it while you chew. Because different parts of your mouth taste different things, you roll it around so you can assess all the flavors. I'll demonstrate the Kentucky chew because I need a little drink, and I want to make sure you're doing it right."

**ASSESS THE FINISH:** "The finish is the flavor the bourbon leaves behind. If you taste bourbon and you make a face, it's too strong. You need it to cut it down to where it's pleasing to your palate. If you want to add water, that's fine. If you want to add a soft drink, that's okay, too. My mom drank her bourbon with ginger my whole life, and I never saw my dad give her [expletive] about it."

**THE TAKEAWAY:** "Drink your bourbon any damn way you want to, and don't let anyone tell you how to do it. There ain't no rules back in Kentucky: We can drink out of the bottle, out of a nice glass, or we can drink out of a Dixie cup."

EDUCATION

CORK. ADDING VALUE TO WINE

Culture, Nature, Future

# FINDING *Closure*

AT SOMMCON SAN DIEGO, THE TASTING PANEL  
LED A SEMINAR ON THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF  
NATURAL CORK ON FINE WINE

by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

CLOSURE: Positive Effects of Natural Cork on Fine Wine

100%  
**COR**  
APPROVED BY N

At SommCon San Diego,  
The Tasting Panel and sister  
publication *The SOMM  
Journal* led seminars as  
the media sponsors of this  
well-attended event.



Pictured is Lisa Mattson, Director of Marketing for Jordan Winery. Jordan is among the wineries that are already spending \$1 per cork to ensure the highest quality possible.



Master Sommelier David Glancy, Founder of the San Francisco Wine School, moderated the seminar.

SommCon attendees compared Jordan Chardonnay's 2012 and 2015 vintages.



**W**ine closures have increasingly evolved as a trending discussion in recent years.

While natural corks have been around for centuries, issues with increased cork taint in the 1990s accelerated the expansion of screwcaps and synthetic corks into the world of fine wines. This loss in market share compelled the cork industry to invest heavily in research and development to improve quality while resolving lingering issues. As a result, new technology is constantly being introduced, which makes it difficult to stay up to date on where exactly the cork category stands today. With that in mind, it seemed pertinent to host a seminar entirely devoted to natural cork at the 2017 SommCon in San Diego.

Master Sommelier and moderator David Glancy opened the seminar by noting that attendees would be “looking at differences in ageability, in faults, in consumer perception, and in sustainability.” The panelists representing both the wine and cork communities included Peter Weber, Executive Director of the Cork Quality Council (CQC); Lisa Mattson, Director of Marketing for Jordan Winery; Katie Madigan, Winemaker for St. Francis Winery; and Jeff Meier, the President & Director of Winemaking for J. Lohr Vineyards. Each of the panelists, while admittedly advocates of natural cork, have decades of experience in their respective industries that imparted a personal perspective on the many topics discussed throughout the session.

### TCA-Free and the Future of Natural Cork

It's especially interesting to consider just how far we've come in our knowledge of cork contamination and other wine faults in just the past two decades. In the 1990s, six cork companies came together to form the Cork Quality Council (CQC), a nonprofit devoted to improving cork quality by fostering research and implementing standards for the industry. “One of the first things we did was try to explore the different chemicals that were responsible for taint,” Weber explained.

With multiple compounds initially suspected, that research yielded ambiguous results. We now know the presence of the chemical compounds 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA) can contaminate not just cork, but also barrels, pumps, pallets, and other materials employed in the winemaking process. As a direct response, guaranteed “TCA-free” corks have been recently introduced, with agglomerated corks like Diam among the first to enter the market. These corks are ground down so the particle batches can be tested before being molded back into a cork form.

TCA-free punch corks, however, have proven more difficult to produce; they only became available in 2015, with Portocork and Amorim emerging as two of the industry leaders. Their rigorous testing can detect the presence of TCA down to 0.5ppt (parts per trillion), well below the human threshold of 3–4ppt.

Jordan Winery, a staunch supporter of natural cork, adopted the TCA-free

ICON corks by Portocork just last year. “We're very excited,” Mattson enthused. “We do think it's a few years away from being perfect, but so far we like what we're seeing.” Since availability is still extremely limited, ICON corks make up only 10 percent of the winery's cork supply. They're also quite costly at \$1.20 each compared with the industry average of \$0.30, yet some wineries like Jordan already spend \$1 per cork to ensure the highest quality possible.

While the winery's leadership is intrigued by the promise of this innovative product, they're not completely confident in endorsing them *quite yet*. Jordan Winery has implemented its own extensive testing of corks for the last 40 years by evaluating them in batches for its 750ml/1.5L bottles and individually testing the corks for its large formats (3L and up). While the ICON corks are guaranteed to be TCA-free, they're still finding the compound in roughly 1 percent of these corks.

Traceability is also a crucial metric for Jordan Winery, which has the time and date etched into each bottle in order to track them back to their source. There are 6,000 corks in each of Jordan's lots and its main cork supplier, Scott Labs, allows them to trace each lot to the forest level. This means that if the consumer opens a tainted bottle, they can send the winery team a photo and enable them to pull the lot number and locate the source. “We know that we don't have a 100 percent



**J. Lohr Vineyards President and Director of Winemaking Jeff Meier.**



**St. Francis Winery Winemaker Katie Madigan.**

chance of it not having TCA, so we trace it," said Mattson.

### Oxygen and Wine

With vast improvements in the battle of TCA eradication underway, the CQC is also spending a fair amount of time researching the variance in Oxygen Transmission Rates (OTR) among different types of closures. While oxidation is a wine fault that should generally be avoided, very small amounts of oxygen are desired both for early consumption and aging.

A natural cork inherently contains oxygen. As Weber pointed out in the seminar, a cork is 24mm in diameter, but when it goes into the bottle, it's 18mm. "Cork is fundamentally different from other closures in that it lets oxygen into the wine through diffusion," he explained. "Basically, when you squeeze a cork, you're going to release 2–3 milliliters of oxygen. Most of it is going to go into the wine."

The CQC's study, which followed OTR in various quality levels of natural and synthetic corks over the course of 36 months, showed that a "dose" of oxygen delivered by the natural cork into the wine is released over a six-month period before leveling out. On the other hand, synthetic corks release oxygen through permeation, which appeared to continually increase the dose without limit.

For example, the greatest challenge with Stelvin—an aluminum closure system that originated in the 1960s—appeared to be that it allows

little to no oxygen into the bottle. This disrupts aging and may cause wines to be somewhat reductive early on. While wine aging is a complicated process with many unknowns at play, the study seemed to indicate that the initial release of oxygen from the cork at bottling is what allows the wine to develop over time. In regards to the transformation of wine over a ten- or 20-year period, Weber noted, "It's obvious that they are continuing to develop, the theory being that the oxygen is helping that development. Which is why, to me, the screwcap guys are trying figure out ways to induce more oxygen."

While we didn't have an opportunity for a side-by-side comparative tasting of a screwcap versus cork closure, Mattson discussed Jordan's own findings during the seminar. When screwcaps were beginning to take off in 2002, the winery bottled ten cases of its Chardonnay under Stelvin to compare with its traditional bottling.

Winemaker Rob Davis, who joined the winery in 1976, tasted the wines together once or twice a year; for the first five years he preferred the cork closure, as the wine seemed to develop better when young. However, at the ten-year mark, "the Stelvin got kind of interesting because it had the freshness we were losing on the natural cork," recalled Mattson. Yet, as one guest pointed out, if a consumer is purchasing a ten-year-old bottle of Chardonnay, aren't they looking for those aged characteristics?

### Consumer Perception

Numerous polls have been conducted over the years that reflect consumer preference toward natural cork. Weber showcased a study from June 2017 that overwhelmingly showed its 1,549 respondents prefer natural cork, especially for wines meant to age (93%) and for high-quality wines (97%). Panelist Katie Madigan, who's worked at St. Francis Winery since 2002, can attest to this demand: The winery, which transitioned to synthetic corks in the late 1990s, switched back to natural cork due to protests from customers. "Our main complaint with the synthetics was oxidation," Madigan explained.

J. Lohr Winery also struggled with an increase in cork taint in the early 2000s, and took steps to mitigate the issue by seeking a higher-quality product. A team traveled to Portugal to visit with producers and later received samples to help them decide which product they wanted to work with long-term. While the winery employs a number of

## At a Glance:

### Quick Facts You Should Know About Natural Cork

There is no cork shortage; we have enough cork available today to sustain production for 100 years.

Cork forests are increasing by 4 percent each year.

Cork bark can be harvested every nine years, and the trees can live for up to 300 years.

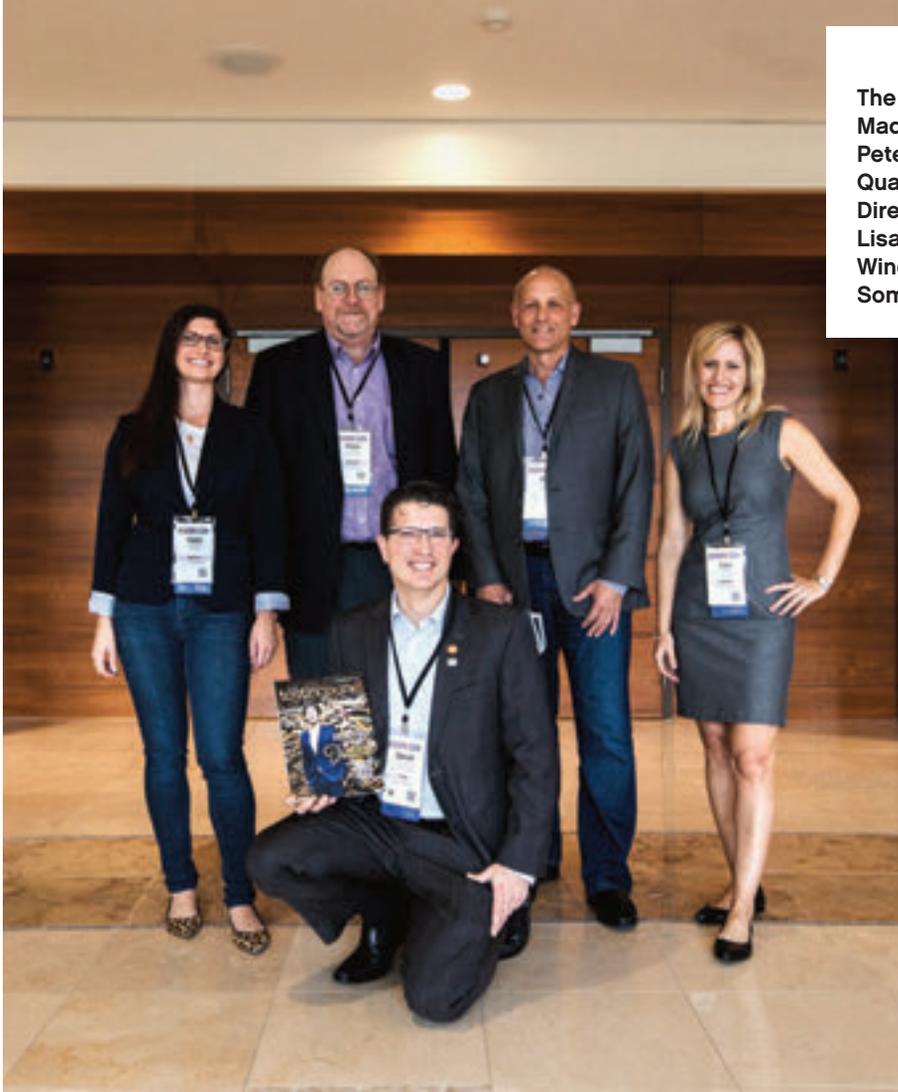
Corks are 100-percent biodegradable, renewable, and recyclable.

Cork trees harness carbon dioxide and are a net positive in the battle against climate change.

A wine is considered "corked" when TCA is present in 3–4ppt; that's the equivalent of eight drops of water in 800 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Current technology can detect TCA down to 0.5ppt—well below the human threshold.

Though screwcaps and synthetic corks are recyclable in theory, infrastructure is not currently in place to adequately do so.



The panel pictured from left to right: Katie Madigan, Winemaker for St. Francis Winery; Peter Weber, Executive Director of the Cork Quality Council (CQC); Jeff Meier, President & Director of Winemaking for J. Lohr Vineyards; Lisa Mattson, Director of Marketing for Jordan Winery; and in front, moderator and Master Sommelier David Glancy.

closures depending on the tier, they've seen a great reduction in TCA. "We've seen our phone calls almost go away from the consumer standpoint," said Meier, who has worked for J. Lohr Vineyards for more than 30 years. "We just have to keep everybody honest and do those tests to make sure that we're getting a product that has that lower percentage of TCA."

Regarding the use of natural cork, J. Lohr only employs that category of closures for its higher-end Vineyard Series and Signature Wines. "Our consumers, from a preference standpoint, love to see the cork for sustainability concerns and whatnot," Meier added. "But from a producer's standpoint, we're also concerned about giving the consumer the product that we intended to."

### Sustainability

From a sustainability standpoint, natural cork has no equal in the market. "They're natural, they're reusable, and they're renewable," Madigan emphasized. "There's just not a lot of waste from the cork tree." As a certified-sustainable winery, St.

Francis' switch back to natural cork can be partially attributed to self-evaluation: How could it be sustainable when it's using a wasteful product? "It really made us turn our attention back to closure and look at the various concepts," Madigan added. "What's best for us is natural cork."

In theory, screwcaps and synthetic corks are made from recyclable materials. With screwcaps specifically, the size of the cap is too small, which can cause them to fall through the metal grating at recycling centers. "With some of these alternative closures, yes, they may be recyclable, but the infrastructure to recycle them just isn't there," Madigan noted.

In addition, cork forests, or *montados*, provide great value to their home country's economy; this is especially true in countries like Spain and Portugal, which have undergone mass deforestation. "Fortunately the cork trees have value, so there's been a lot more planting," Glancy said. The *montados* are also considered to be one of the last barriers to desertification in these dry, semi-arid climates. ■■

## Tasting Notes

### Jordan 2012 Chardonnay,

**Russian River Valley:** A combination of stainless steel (1/3) and French oak (2/3) fermentation with partial malolactic fermentation makes for a surprisingly zingy wine despite nearly five years in bottle. There's green apple, hints of diesel, and subtle aromas of lemon curd. The palate is bright with a saline-like brine and a fullness reminiscent of par-baked pie crust. Aged for six months in 42% new French oak.



### Jordan 2015 Chardonnay,

**Russian River Valley:** 47% stainless steel and 53% new French oak fermentation gave the wine a subtle, aged character; some guests thought the two vintages had been switched. Almond cookie and barrel spice mingled with pear, and Meyer lemon aromas echoed on the palate.



### St. Francis 2014 Zinfandel,

**Giovanetti Vineyard, Russian River Valley:** This eight-acre parcel is planted to primarily Zinfandel, although DNA studies have shown there are around 20 different varieties in this 120-year-old vineyard. A beautiful wine with ethereal, perfumed Indian spiced aromas of coriander and chai mingled with black plum. Savory palate with hints of Darjeeling tea, plum sauce, and mouthwatering black fruit.



### 2015 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Creston District

**AVA, Paso Robles:** With the 2015 vintage, the J. Lohr's flagship wine is finished with ND Tech Corks, a guaranteed TCA-free punch cork produced by Amorim. Meier noted that this is structurally the "biggest wine J. Lohr produces." Rich, black fruit infused with umami-like aromas of hoisin and bone broth. A plush mouthfeel with round, silky tannins and a core of blackberries of chaparral.



PHOTO COURTESY OF J. LOHR WINERY



# PAIRING SUGGESTIONS

with **RYAN ARNOLD** and **JESSIE BIRSCHBACH**

While it's likely that many a hospitality industry professional has enjoyed the occasional end-of-shift joint for years, we've seen many of our more mainstream friends "come out of the closet" as cannabis users, advocates, and adventurers since our sister magazine *The Clever Root* launched two years ago. As these chefs, somms, mixologists, and winemakers

open up about their passion for the plant, discourse about its place in food and beverage continues to evolve. One sommelier who's recently jumped into the cannabis conversation is Ryan Arnold, Wine Director at the national restaurant group Lettuce Entertain You, which includes eateries like Mon Ami Gabi, Maggiano's, and Chicago's famed Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! While we're

not seeing cannabis creeping into any of the company's menus just yet, Arnold sees an industry-wide trend on the horizon. Our magazine strives to be a part of this developing dialogue, so we tasked Arnold and our very own in-house Senior Wine Editor, Jessie Birschbach, to suggest a few of their favorite wine and cannabis pairings.



**Ryan Arnold is the Wine Director for national restaurant group Lettuce Entertain You.**



**Jessie Birschbach, Senior Wine Editor for The Tasting Panel.**

## A TRIO OF PAIRINGS *by* **JESSIE BIRSCHBACH**

### **RYAN ARNOLD'S** *Perfect* **PAIRINGS**

#### **Savage White with OG Kush**

This wine, from South African winemaker Duncan Savage, blends Sauvignon Blanc with a little Semillon and some Chenin Blanc. It is medium-bodied on the palate with lemon peel, Makrut, and white peach. A little earth and lemon citrus from the OG Kush make this a marriage made in heaven.

#### **Retsina with Jack Herer**

Retsina is an herbaceous Greek wine that's been co-fermented with a little bit of pine. It's a great match with the super-savory Jack Herer, another classic.

#### **Saint-Joseph Syrah with Blue Dream**

Blue Dream transports me to Saint-Joseph in the Southern Rhône. This wine is all blue fruits—berries, currants, plums—making it a solid pairing with Blue Dream.

#### **Bubba Kush and California Cult Cabernet**

The powerful Bubba Kush indica strain has much in common with California Cult Cabernet. Although its genetic roots are likely of Afghani decent, its real home is in California. Similarly, the Cabernet Sauvignon grape may be from Bordeaux, but it's also made a name for itself in California. Both now thrive in their own respective categories in the Sunny State.

Bubba Kush is beloved for its bold dark chocolate and coffee notes. These two flavors typically come with premium Napa Cabs, thanks mostly to extended barrel aging in expensive new French oak. The weighty body of the dense Cabernet will also pair perfectly with the heavy feeling often experienced with Bubba Kush. Now if only California Cult Cabernet was as easy to come by!

#### **Kosher Kush and Oatmeal Stout**

The nutty, earthy flavor of an oatmeal stout will mirror the earthy and sweet dark fruit flavors of the potent indica strain Kosher Kush. The silky mouthfeel of the beer will also complement the smooth, full-flavored smoke of the only commercial strain of cannabis blessed by a rabbi.

#### **Sour Diesel and German Kabinett Riesling**

When blind-tasting a Riesling from the Mosel region in Germany, there is often a reliable tell: the petrol note on the nose, which is sometimes even just slightly smoky.

Sour Diesel is a sativa strain known for its racy, diesel-like aroma. Both sides of the pairing share this sometimes-polarizing quality, making for an excellent twosome (for the record, both Sour Diesel and Mosel Kabinett Riesling are two of my very favorites in each of their respective categories). The petrol adds to the high-acid apple and lemon, just-ripe white stone fruit, high minerality, and all the other austere complexity that follows in a sip of Riesling from the Mosel. Similar sentiment will ensue from an invigorating pull of Sour Diesel: a piney, diesel upfront followed by a citrusy, fruity finish and a relaxed, clearheaded effect. It's as if you've taken a deep breath of cold air on a steep bank of the Mosel River. ■■

*What are some of your favorite pairings?  
Email [Rachel@TheCleverRoot.com](mailto:Rachel@TheCleverRoot.com) to share your tasting notes with our readers!*

# Rum Around

Beer and spirits have often melded with fellow members of the beverage world in their methods of production, with beer aged in bourbon casks, bourbon aged in Sherry casks, and so on. Experimenting with these combinations presents seemingly infinite possibilities, and Panamanian rum producer Ron Abuelo is taking the concept to the next level with its high-end, globally-influenced Finish Collection.

Released internationally in 2016 and in the U.S. last year, the collection features three rums (all SRP \$75) aged for 15 years that are then rested in three different casks: the French-inspired Napoleon, aged in Cognac casks; the Spanish Oloroso, aged in Sherry casks; and the Portuguese Tawny, aged in Port casks.

Although each expression has its own distinct identity, they all have what Varela calls a “strong Abuelo personality.” “These are all sipping rums coming from the same single estate rum, but they’re transformed through their different finish,” he adds. “We spent a long time experimenting with finishes, but we settled on these three because of the unique character each cask provides.”

The rums rest for a year at around 40% ABV instead of the typical 60%, and each cask is only used once, as reusing them would make it impossible to duplicate the first cask use’s flavor. “Although of course you can enjoy each rum individually, it’s wonderful to try all three in a tasting to compare flavor notes,” Varela explains.

Ron Abuelo is also putting a focus on gastronomy by recommending culinary pairings for each rum. Start by pairing something light like ceviche to carry the citrus notes of the Oloroso, which also has a mineral dryness from the Sherry. Match up the Napoleon—which has more ripe, fruity flavors and toasted oak from the Cognac cask—with a robust entrée; finally, the rich Tawny, full of red fruit with a velvety palate, can effortlessly accompany a chocolate dessert. “I think it’s really exciting what we’re doing for aged rum,” Varela enthuses. “People from all over the world are loving our product, and we’re 90 percent of domestic spirits business in Panama. We’re always trying to establish ourselves in a crowded spirits market, and Ron Abuelo is really putting Panamanian rum on the map.” ■■

## RON ABUELO CONNECTS CULTURES FOR ITS FINISH COLLECTION

by Jesse Hom-Dawson



The Milestone in London serves traditional tea with cakes, cookies, and finger sandwiches in the afternoon.



# TWO LONDON

# *Genius*

THE MILESTONE  
AND HOTEL  
41 OFFER  
IMPECCABLE  
LODGING IN TRUE  
ENGLISH STYLE

by Anthony Dias Blue

The purpose of international travel is to immerse yourself in other cultures. That's why I had to laugh when I asked a friend where he ate during his recent trip to London. "Cut and Nobu," he responded proudly. Why, I asked myself, would you take the trouble to fly ten hours just to eat in places you can easily enjoy in Los Angeles or New York?

When I go to London, I want to fully experience English culture. I want to eat authentic English food and stay in the best traditional English hotels. I don't want to stay in a massive, impersonal place, either, so before I set off on a trip late last year, I found that every reliable source I researched pointed to two smaller options: The Milestone and Hotel 41. Read on for an account of my stays at these impeccable London lodgings.

# The Milestone

Close your eyes and imagine the perfect English city inn—a place where Churchill might go for a nightcap or the Duchess of Cornwall would show up for tea. Now open them: You've officially arrived at The Milestone.

Upon entry, you are greeted by a fully-liveried doorman and welcomed into the richly-paneled lobby; there, you are warmly received yet again by the uniformed staff. For the duration of your stay, the hotel's personnel will always greet you by name.

After a welcoming glass of Sherry, you will be escorted to one of the Milestone's 44 rooms or 12 suites. During our recent visit, my wife and I stayed in the huge, two-level Viscount junior suite, the centerpiece of which was an ornate four-poster king bed festooned with silk curtains.

The room has three large soundproofed windows that overlook Kensington Gardens, as well as a selection of carefully-chosen furnishings and art. There are bright flowers everywhere and fresh fruit is always on hand. In the marble bathroom, you'll find enough Penhaligon toiletries to open your own boutique.

Despite this luxurious and traditional ambience, all the modern technology is there. A huge flat-screen television faces the bed, and there's Wi-Fi, an iPod dock, and international video conferencing available. The basement, meanwhile, houses a fully-equipped gym.

A full English breakfast is served in the handsome Victorian Cheneston restaurant with a buffet of meats, cheeses, breads, and fruit. You can also order the signature eggs Benedict or some traditional kippers. In the evening, the restaurant offers fine, modern British cuisine with an extraordinary wine list, while an elegant tea is served—complete with an amazing display of cakes, cookies, and finger sandwiches—during the afternoon hours. You can also sip your way through the excellent selection of single malts in the evenings at the charming jockey bar.

Needless to say, The Milestone definitely provides the complete and thorough English experience. For more information, visit [milestonehotel.com](http://milestonehotel.com).



**London's Hotel 41 is the top-rated hotel in the city on TripAdvisor.**



**London hotel The Milestone evokes the image of a perfect English city inn.**

## Hotel 41

Located opposite the Royal Mews and behind Buckingham Palace, Hotel 41 holds the top rating out of 1,077 London hotels (The Milestone is number two) on TripAdvisor. The 30-room hotel sits atop another hotel, The Rubens at the Palace (a sister operation that is also highly rated).

The street-level, mahogany-paneled lobby gives a hint of what's to come. You are greeted by a charming young woman who offers a colorful selection of sweets to nibble on while you check in. She already knows what you expect during your stay, since you were sent a comprehensive questionnaire a few weeks before your arrival that allows you to provide your pillow preference and select your choice of amenities, including a yoga mat or an exercise bicycle in your room. You can also opt in for a pick-up at Heathrow when you land.



**Hotel 41's lavish lounge is the epicenter of the hotel and resembles a fine English club.**

After check-in, it's into the elegant elevator and up to the fifth floor. Before going to your room, it's essential to check out the executive lounge—the epicenter of Hotel 41. It's like a fine English club, only better: There's always upscale snacks and copious glasses of Champagne available, and a small freezer holds individually-packaged flavors of Jude's ice cream. There's a comprehensive collection of single malts and other spirits available, and special requests are cheerfully fulfilled by the charming and professional staff spearheaded by the gregarious Chief Steward. On Sundays, an English roast with all the fixings is served.

Each morning, a superb breakfast spread is laid out. As you settle into your big leather armchair with your freshly-brewed mug of coffee and plate filled to the brim, you'll believe—rightfully so—that you're in paradise. And then there are the rooms, each done up in chic black and white and offering all the amenities you can imagine. The Conservatory Suite, where we stayed, is on two floors with a sitting room downstairs and the bedroom and large bath above. The ceiling of the bedroom is glass and open to the sky; electronic shades can be drawn instantly to block out the morning light, but nodding off to sleep under the stars is a special experience.

The ratio of staff to guests at Hotel 41 is two to one. At any time of the day or night, any reasonable and most unreasonable requests will be fulfilled. Check in here and you may never want to leave the hotel. However, should you wish to venture out, the genial concierge will smoothen your experiences throughout the British capitol. Restaurant reservations, museum schedules, and theatre tickets are yours for the asking. For information, visit [41hotel.com](http://41hotel.com). ■■

*“When I go to London, I want to fully experience English culture. I want to eat authentic English food and stay in the best traditional English hotels.”*

# LOOKING BACK

AT THE

# CLASS OF

# 2017

A number of trends and notable events affecting the wine and spirits industry unfolded in the pages of our magazine in 2017: New mezcal brands brought the smoky spirit to the forefront of the cocktail community, and organic and globally-sourced ingredients increasingly defined the flavors found in many of the most well-received brands. We also welcomed eight new members into the Court of Master Sommeliers as wineries throughout Napa and Sonoma proved their resilience in the wake of the devastating Northern California wildfires.

In each January-February issue, *The Tasting Panel* features a Yearbook showcasing some of the wines and spirits that received scores of 92 and above throughout the previous year. This fond recollection of our 2017 makes us even more excited for the tasty tipples and sublime sips that will undoubtedly cross our paths in 2018!



## BEST MOUNTAIN FRUIT

### Arcudi 2013 Black Sears Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon,

Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$150)

Winemaker Tony Arcudi believes strongly in applying minimal intervention to his craft: not only to respect the various aspects of a particular growing site, but to emphasize them as well. Letting the personality and purity of the single vineyard come through in its wine is Arcudi's main objective for his very small production. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his Black Sears Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. Farmed organically and Biodynamically, Black Sears Vineyard sits atop the highest vineyard on Howell Mountain and is the first sub-appellation to receive its own AVA within the Napa Valley. The west-facing mountain tends to produce a more intense, powerful version of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon; this is a big part of why Arcudi has been named *The Tasting Panel's* "Best Mountain Fruit" in 2017.

*The fruit is from the highest vineyard on Howell Mountain, which is farmed Biodynamically at a 2,400-foot elevation. Aged in 100% French oak for 18 months, the wine is all about character and texture even more than the fruit and power it exudes. Rich and concentrated, you can pick out all the nuances you'd expect: leather, graphite, mountain brush, and so much more.* **95** —Meridith May, May 2017

*Proof that the brilliant 2012 was no fluke. Stunning and lush with smooth, concentrated mountain fruit; plum and dark berries, subtle toasty oak, vanilla, and hints of licorice; rich texture and great length.* **96** —Anthony Dias Blue, May 2017



## THE CLASS OF 2017 WINES

- 1,000 Vines 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Mariposa, CA**
- Abbot's Passage 2014 Due West Cabernet Sauvignon, Nuns Canyon Vineyard, Moon Mountain District, Sonoma County, CA** GUNDLACH BUNDSCHU
- Aberrant Cellars 2014 Confero Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, OR**
- Achaval-Ferrer 2014 Finca Altamira Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina** STOLI GROUP
- Akarua 2012 Bannockburn Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** SEAVIEW IMPORTS
- Akarua 2015 RUA Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** SEAVIEW IMPORTS
- Alamos 2015 Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina** E. & J. GALLO
- Allegretto Vineyards and Wines 2013 Ayres Family Reserve Tannat, Bella Collina Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Alpha Estate 2014 Hedgehog Vineyard Xinomavro, Amyndeon, Greece** DIAMOND WINE IMPORTERS
- Alta Colina Wine 2013 GSM, Adelaida District Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Alta Colina 2014 Marsanne, Claudia Cuvée, Adelaida District Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Alta Vista 2014 Terroir Selection Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS
- Amisfield 2013 RKV Reserve Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** PACIFIC RIM WINE LOGISTICS
- Ancient Oak Cellars 2012 Berger Vineyard Tò Érgon, Sonoma Mountain, CA**
- Ancient Peaks 2014 Renegade, Margarita Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Ancient Peaks 2015 Sauvignon Blanc, Margarita Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Ancient Peaks Winery 2013 Oyster Ridge Cuvée, Margarita Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**
- Angove Family Winemakers 2015 Warboys Vineyard Grenache, McLaren Vale, Australia** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- Apaltagua 2012 Grial Carménère, Colchagua Valley, Chile** GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS
- Arcudi Wines 2013 Black Sears Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley, CA**
- Astrolabe Wines 2015 Province Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand** USA WINE WEST
- Atze's Corner Wines 2015 Estate Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia**
- Austerity Wines 2015 Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA** CECCHETTI WINE COMPANY
- Austin Hope Wines 2014 Estate Syrah, Paso Robles, CA** HOPE FAMILY WINES
- Babylonstoren 2014 Nebukadnesar Bordeaux Blend, WO Simonsberg-Paarl, South Africa** CATAMARCA IMPORTS, LLC
- Baileyana 2015 Firepeak Chardonnay, Edna Valley, CA** NIVEN FAMILY WINE ESTATES
- Balletto Vineyards 2015 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, CA**
- Balletto Vineyards 2016 Rosé of Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA**
- Baracchi Winery 2012 Ardito, Toscana IGT, Italy**
- Bear Flag 2015 Zinfandel, Sonoma County, CA** E. & J. GALLO WINERY
- Beaulieu Vineyard 2012 Reserve Clone 4 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- Bella Union 2014 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** FAR NIENTE WINERY
- Benessere Vineyards 2014 Collins Holystone Vineyard Aglianico, Napa Valley, CA**
- Benessere Vineyards 2016 Pinot Grigio, Napa Valley, CA**
- Beringer Vineyards 2013 Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- Bird in Hand 2013 Nest Egg Shiraz, Mount Lofty Ranges, Australia** HP SELECTIONS
- Black Kite Cellars 2014 Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA**
- Black Kite Cellars 2015 Soberanes Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA**
- Black Stallion Winery 2013 Transcendent Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS
- Bodegas Paniza 2012 Viñas Viejas de Paniza Garnacha, Spain**
- Boekenhoutskloof 2014 Syrah, Coastal Region, South Africa** VINEYARD BRANDS
- Bouchard Père & Fils 2015 Beaune Clos Saint-Landry, Côte-d'Or, France** CHAMPAGNE HENRIOT
- Bouchard Père & Fils 2015 Premier Cru Beaune Clos de la Mousse, Côte-d'Or, France** CHAMPAGNE HENRIOT
- Bouchard Père & Fils 2015 Beaune du Château, Côte-d'Or, France** CHAMPAGNE HENRIOT
- Bouchard Père & Fils 2015 Vigne de L'Enfant Jésus, Grand Vin de Beaune-Grèves, Côte-d'Or, France** CHAMPAGNE HENRIOT
- Bouchaine Vineyards 2014 Estate Chardonnay, Carneros, CA**
- Boutari 2016 Moschofilero, Mantinia Winery Vineyard, Greece** TERLATO WINES INTERNATIONAL
- Breathless Wines NV Ratafia, Napa Valley, CA**
- Buty Winery 2015 Conner Lee Vineyard Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, WA**
- Byron 2014 Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, CA** JACKSON FAMILY WINES

**Cadaretta 2013 Windthrow Red Blend, Columbia Valley, WA** MIDDLETON FAMILY WINES

**Cadaretta 2014 Southwind Cabernet Sauvignon, Walla Walla Valley, WA** MIDDLETON FAMILY WINES

**Calcareous Vineyard 2013 Moose Red Wine, Paso Robles, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Calla Lily Estate 2014 Ultimate Red Pinot Noir, Carneros, Napa Valley, CA**

**Cambria Wines 2015 Benchbreak Estate Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, CA** JACKSON FAMILY WINES

**Camparo 2011 Barolo Boiolo, La Morra, Italy** THE ORGANIC CELLAR

**Campo alla Sughera 2011 Arnione, Bolgheri Rosso Superiore DOC, Italy** CURIOUS CORK IMPORTS

**Celler de Capçanes 2013 La Flor del Flor de Primavera Garnacha, Montsant, Spain** ROYAL WINE CORP.

**Capensis 2014 Chardonnay, Western Cape, South Africa** JACKSON FAMILY WINES

**Cardinal Rule 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Creek Valley, CA**

**Carrick Wines 2015 Bannockburn Chardonnay, Central Otago, New Zealand** PACIFIC PRIME WINES

**Castlepoint 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Martinborough, New Zealand** WINE DOGS IMPORTS

**Castoro Cellars 2015 Zinfusion Reserve Zinfandel, Paso Robles, CA**

**Cave Spring Cellars 2014 Riesling Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Canada**

**Cave Spring Cellars 2015 Estate Riesling, VQA Beamsville Bench, Canada**

**Cellardoor Winery 2013 Artist Series Iron Gate, Yakima Valley, CA**

**Center of Effort 2013 Chardonnay, Edna Valley, CA**

**Chamisal Vineyards 2013 Estate Pinot Noir, Edna Valley, CA** CRIMSON WINE GROUP

**Champagne Lombard Brut Nature, Le Mesnil sur Oger Grand Cru, France**

**Charles Heintz 2013 Valentina Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA**

**Château de Beaucastel 2014 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France** VINEYARD BRANDS

**Château Léoville Poyferré 2014 Pavillon de Léoville Poyferré, Saint Julien, France** ROYAL WINE CORP.

**Château Malartic-Lagravière 2014 Pessac-Léognan Grand Cru Classé, France** ROYAL WINE CORP.

**Chimney Rock 2014 Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** TERLATO WINE GROUP

**Clos de la Tech 2012 Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Vineyard Pinot Noir, San Francisco Bay, CA**

**Clos Du Val 2014 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Hirondelle Vineyard, Stags Leap District, CA** CLOS DU VAL WINE CO., LTD.

**Concha y Toro 2012 Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon, Alto Maipo Valley, Chile** EXCELSIOR WINES

**Copain Wines 2015 Tous Ensemble Pinot Noir, Mendocino, CA**

**Craggy Range 2016 Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Craggy Range 2016 Te Muna Road Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Martinborough, New Zealand** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Dobbes Family Estate 2015 Sundown Vineyard Viognier, Rogue Valley, OR**

**Domaine Carneros 2008 Le Rêve Blanc de Blancs, Carneros, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Domaine de Terra Vecchia 2016 Syrah-Nielluccio Rosé, Île-de-Beauté IGP, Corsica, France** GASKO & MEYER

**Don Sebastiani & Sons 2015 Don & Sons Chardonnay, Watnaugh Ranch, CA** DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

**Doña Paula 2016 Los Cardos Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

**Doña Paula 2016 Los Cardos Sauvignon Blanc, Mendoza, Argentina** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

**Donati Family Vineyard 2013 The Immigrant Barrel Reserve Bordeaux Blend, CA**

**Donelan Wines 2013 Two Brothers Pinot Noir, Sonoma, CA**

**Donelan Wines 2013 Cuvée Christine Syrah, Sonoma, CA**

**Donelan Family Wines 2013 Walker Vine Hill Vineyard Syrah, Russian River Valley, CA**

**Donelan Family Wines 2014 Nancie Chardonnay, Sonoma, CA**

**Donnafugata 2014 Ben Ryé Zibibbo, Passito di Pantelleria DOC, Italy** FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS

**Dr. Loosen 2015 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese, Mosel, Germany** EDWARD MOSELEY/LOOSEN BROS. USA

**Draxton Wines 2016 Nelson Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Dry Creek Valley, CA**

**Dry Creek Vineyard 2014 Merlot, Dry Creek Valley, CA**

**Duckhorn 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** DUCKHORN VINEYARDS

**Ehlers Estate 2013 1886 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA** LEDUCC FOUNDATION

**Eighty Four 2013 Malbec, Napa Valley, CA** SHAFER VINEYARDS

**Famille Perrin 2014 Les Sinards Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France** VINEYARD BRANDS

**Feliz Noche Cellars 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Santa Barbara County, CA** ONYX WINE

**Felton Road 2015 Block 5 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** THE COUNTRY VINTNER

**Feudo Maccari 2014 Saia Nero d'Avola, Sicily, Italy** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

## DEEPEST THINKERS

### Miner Family Winery 2016 Sauvignon Blanc,

Napa Valley (\$23)

Before making his entrance into the wine business, Dave Miner previously worked in the software industry. But just three years after he was named president of his uncle's winery Oakville Ranch Vineyards in 1993, Miner had channeled his great love for wine and keen business sense into establishing his own label: the Miner Family Winery.

The winery is located along the eastern hills of the Oakville appellation in the heart of Napa Valley; in 1999, more than 20,000 square feet of caves were carved into the hillside and now serve as Miner's cellar and events space (it also houses wine storage for other wineries).

Miner creates wines from a selection of high-profile California vineyards, and the Miner Family Winery 2016 Sauvignon Blanc particularly caught the attention of our Editor-in-Chief Anthony Dias Blue. The fusion of superb vineyard sites and thoughtful winemaking allows Miner to deliver elegant, expressive wines; for this reason, we've deemed the Miner Family Winery team the "Deepest Thinkers" of 2017.



*Smooth and peachy with silky texture and clean, invigorating style from a winery with nine vineyard sites; bright, tangy, and racy with balance, bracing flavors, and good length. 92*  
—A.D.B., September 2017

## PIONEERS OF EDNA VALLEY

### Niven Family Wine Estates

In the early 1970s, Jack Niven began planting grapes in the Edna Valley and helped spearhead the creation of the Edna Valley AVA in 1982. Today, the Niven Family Wine Estates are run by the second- and third-generation members of the family and produce a wide variety of wines and brands—all of which take advantage of the cool climate highly regarded in the Edna Valley.

Made with Niven Family estate-grown fruit, the Baileyana brand was created by matriarch Catharine Niven more than 30 years ago. The SIP-Certified Sustainable Tangent Wines Sauvignon Blanc and Albariño are grown in the Niven Family's historic Paragon Vineyard (planted in 1973, it's the region's oldest vineyard).

It's safe to say that without the Niven family, the Edna Valley might not be where it is today in the competitive landscape of California's wine regions. This prompted us to name the Niven Family Wine Estates as the "Pioneers of Edna Valley."

**Baileyana 2015 Firepeak Chardonnay, Edna Valley (\$28)** *Volcanic soil, rocky marine sediment, and clay loam compose the vineyards*

*for this superb interpretation of Chardonnay in California's Central Coast. It's rich with graceful, fine acidity, and the weight on the mouth feels just right. Winemaker Christian Roguenant was born in Beaune and knows he can't replicate Bourgogne wines, but he sure gets the gist of it with this beauty. Lanolin and buttered (sautéed) papaya give away the lees stirring (no ML here), and the sweet vanilla finish is a nod to the eight months aging in one-year-old oak. 93 —M.M., June 2017*



**Tangent 2015 Stone Egg Albariño, Paragon Vineyard, Edna Valley (\$32)** *Fermented and aged in concrete eggs, the floral notes fly out of the glass to greet you. You can smell—and taste—the seabed and its saltiness atop honeyed melon, Cara Cara orange, and dusted white flowers. 92 —M.M., May 2017*

**Flora Springs 2014 St. Helena Rennie Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, CA**  
**Foley Estates 2015 JA Ranch Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**Foley Estates 2015 Syrah, Sta. Rita Hills, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**Folie à Deux 2014 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES  
**Folie à Deux 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES  
**Folie à Deux 2015 Pinot Gris, Sonoma Coast, CA** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES  
**Forefathers 2014 Lone Tree Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Forefathers 2016 Wax Eye Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Franciscan Estate 2013 Magnificat Meritage Blend, Napa Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Franciscan Estate 2014 Cuvée Sauvage Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Franciscan Estate 2014 Magnificat Meritage Blend, Napa Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Fritz Haag 2015 Riesling, Mosel, Germany** LOOSEN BROS. USA  
**Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel, Gamba Estate Vineyard, Russian River Valley, CA**  
**Gamble Family Vineyards 2013 Paramount Red Wine, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Gamble Family Vineyards 2015 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Gary Farrell Winery 2014 Olivet Lane Vineyard Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, CA** VINCRAFT GROUP  
**Gary Farrell Winery 2014 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA** VINCRAFT GROUP  
**Gary Farrell Winery 2014 Russian River Selection Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA** VINCRAFT GROUP  
**Gerardo Cesari 2008 Ripasso Bosan, Valpolicella Ripasso DOC Superiore, Italy** OPICI WINES  
**Giesen Wine Estate 2013 Single Vineyard Selection Ridge Block Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand** PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINES & SPIRITS  
**Gnarly Head 2015 1924 Double Black Red Blend, Lodi, CA** DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS  
**Goldeneye 2014 Split Rail Vineyard Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, CA** DUCKHORN WINE COMPANY  
**Goldschmidt Vineyards 2013 Game Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, CA** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Goldschmidt Vineyards 2013 Katherine Goldschmidt Crazy Creek Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Goldschmidt Vineyards 2013 Yoeman Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Goldschmidt Vineyards 2015 Chardonnay, Singing Tree, Russian River Valley, CA** GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS  
**Greywacke 2014 Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand** OLD BRIDGE CELLARS  
**Grgich Hills Estate 2015 Miljenko's Selection Chardonnay, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Groth 2013 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Hahn Estates 2015 SLH GSM, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA** HAHN FAMILY WINES  
**Hahn Estates 2016 Pinot Gris, Monterey County, CA** HAHN FAMILY WINES  
**Halleck Vineyard 2013 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA**  
**Hawk and Horse Vineyards 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills AVA, Lake County, CA**  
**Hunter Wine Cellars 2014 Chasseur Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA**  
**Infiné 1939 2015 At Last Cuvée Bianco, Vigneti delle Dolomiti IGT, Italy** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL  
**Ingleside Vineyards 2014 Petit Verdot, VA** INGLESIDE VINEYARDS  
**Innocent Bystander 2015 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** OLD BRIDGE CELLARS  
**Invivo 2014 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** SEAVIEW IMPORTS  
**J Vineyards & Winery 2015 Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara, CA** E. & J. GALLO  
**J. Lohr 2016 Riverstone Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco, CA**  
**J. McClelland Cellars 2013 Oak Knoll District Merlot, Napa Valley, CA**  
**J. Wilkes 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles, CA** THE THORNHILL COMPANIES  
**Champagne Jean Diot Blanc de Blancs Brut NV, France**  
**Jordan Winery 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA**  
**Jordan Winery 2015 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, CA**  
**Joseph Phelps 2015 Freestone Vineyards Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, CA**  
**Kelly Family Vineyards 2013 Red Wine, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Kings Carey 2015 John Sebastiano Vineyard Grenache, Sta. Rita Hills, CA**  
**Koenig Vineyards 2014 Botrytis Single Berry Select Late Harvest Riesling, Snake River Valley AVA, ID**  
**La Follette 2014 Sangiacomo Vineyard Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, CA** WINE CREEK LLC  
**Ladera Vineyards 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Landmark Vineyards 2015 25th Anniversary Overlook Chardonnay, Sonoma County, CA**  
**Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2014 Taylor's Cabernet Sauvignon, Mountain Terraces Vineyard, Moon Mountain District, Sonoma, CA**  
**Leese-Fitch 2015 Chardonnay, CA** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.  
**Levendi Winery 2016 Nicoletta Rosé of Pinot Noir, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Leviathan 2013 Red Wine, CA**

# MOST RESOURCEFUL

## Clos de la Tech 2012 Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Pinot Noir,

San Francisco Bay AVA (\$102)

To label Clos de la Tech as one of the most resourceful California Pinot Noir producers would be an understatement: Established in 1994, the winery's Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards are so steep they must be farmed with a tractor connected to a cable system that was custom-designed by Owner TJ Rodgers.

Rodgers, founder and retired CEO of Cypress Semiconductor, and his wife, Valeta Massey, continue to oversee Clos de la Tech's three estate vineyards defined by their high-altitude terrain, high-density planting, and low yields. The one-acre, hand-farmed Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Vineyard—located by the couple's home in Woodside in the San Francisco Bay AVA—is the warmest of the trio due to its lower elevation in the Santa Cruz foothills, resulting in Pinot Noirs with a light yet richly-concentrated Burgundian character (the certified French clones are planted just 39 inches apart).

The 2012 Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Pinot Noir represents the first vintage produced at Clos de la Tech's underground winery, which enabled Rodgers and Massey to have complete control over every step of the winemaking process. After completing an extended cold soak, the vintage's grapes underwent traditional vinification methods—foot crushing, whole cluster fermentation with native yeast, malolactic fermentation on lees, and gravity transfer without pumping—before aging 16 months in Francois Frères French oak barrels (67% new).

The result is a nuanced and deep wine with a nose of cherry, cassis, cigar tobacco, earth, and sage with velvety and spicy cherry cola notes on the palate. Eighty-five cases of the 2012 were produced at 13.5% ABV; the winery typically produces 50–125 cases of the Domaine du Docteur Rodgers each vintage after harvesting an average yield of less than two tons per acre. With a vines-per-acre density among the highest in California, Clos de la Tech all but ensures its wines capture the attention of any discerning connoisseur.

*The top wine of T.J. Rodgers and his wife Valeta Massey, made on a one-acre vineyard in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains; spicy cherry nose; supple and juicy with elegance and finesse; refined and dazzling; long and impressive. 97 —A.D.B., September 2017*



## BEST COMEBACK

Hungary may have a long, proud, and ongoing tradition of producing sweet, botrytized wines in the Tokaj region—home to what have historically been considered among the greatest wines in the world—but young consumers have unfortunately been slow to seek out the country's native labels.

Tokaj once had a reputation for heavy and expensive wines, but no longer: A fresh new wave is moving through the Hungarian wine industry based on dry Furmint grape variety. The momentum of this trend prompted *The Tasting Panel* to officially declare 2017 “The Year of Furmint,” and we’ve been introducing our readers, as well as their on-premise guests and off-premise consumers, to this utterly charming white wine from Tokaj ever since.

Furmint’s aromatic style is immediately appealing, and its racy acidity and balance make it incredibly food-friendly. Hungarian wine is making a comeback in a big way, and dry Furmint will continue to be at the forefront of this growing movement. The wines are imported to North America by Vinum Tokaj International, LLC, which also acts as Furmint’s brand and market builder, and are distributed exclusively by Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits both in the U.S. and Canada.



**MAD WINE 2015 Dry by Tokaj Dry White Wine, Tokaj, Hungary (\$10)**  
*Golden color; lush and smooth with dry, juicy style; rich, mellow, and rounded with racy apple; tangy and long. 90% Furmint, 5% Hárslevelű, 5% Yellow Muscat. 92*  
—A.D.B., August 2017



**MAD WINE MÁD 2015 Furmint, Mád Village Integration, Tokaj, Hungary (\$20)**  
*Lush and silky with rich, juicy, and fresh fruit; clean, racy, and mouth-filling; generous, bright, and long. 100% Furmint. 92*  
—A.D.B., August 2017



**Szent Tamás 2013 Estate Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary (\$90)**  
*A high-end expression of dry Furmint from the historic Szent Tamás estate. Lush, rich, and deep with smooth texture, ripe fruit, and lovely balance; complex with a lengthy finish. 93*  
—A.D.B., August 2017

**Livio Felluga 2014 Sossó, Colli Orientali del Friuli DOC, Italy** MW IMPORTS (MIONETTO USA)

**Long Shadows Vintners 2014 Pedestal Merlot, Columbia Valley, WA** LONG SHADOWS VINTNERS

**Long Shadows Vintners 2014 Pirouette, Columbia Valley, WA** LONG SHADOWS VINTNERS

**Loveblock Wines 2014 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** TERLATO WINES INTERNATIONAL

**Loveblock Wines 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand** TERLATO WINES INTERNATIONAL

**Lucienne 2015 Lone Oak Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA** HAHN FAMILY WINES

**Luna Nuda 2016 Pinot Grigio, Vigneti delle Dolomiti IGT, Italy** BLUE RIDGE SPIRITS & WINE MARKETING

**MacMurray Estate Vineyards 2015 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, CA** E. & J. GALLO

**MAD Wine 2015 Dry by Tokaj Dry White Wine, Tokaj, Hungary** VINUM TOKAJ INTERNATIONAL, LLC

**MAD Wine MAD 2015 Furmint, Mád Village Integration, Tokaj, Hungary** VINUM TOKAJ INTERNATIONAL, LLC

**Maison Louis Jadot 2016 Rosé, Coteaux Bourguignons, France** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Marichal 2013 Grand Reserve Tannat, Canelones, Uruguay** GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

**Marimar Estate Vineyards & Winery 2014 Dobles Lías Chardonnay, Don Miguel Vineyard, Russian River Valley, CA** MIGUEL TORRES

**Marqués de Cáceres 2012 Gaudium Gran Vino, Rioja, Spain** VINEYARD BRANDS

**Marqués de Cáceres 2012 Rioja Reserva, Spain** VINEYARD BRANDS

**Martinborough Vineyard 2014 Home Block Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand** FOLEY FAMILY WINES

**Masi 2012 Costasera, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DCG, Italy** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

**Maximin Grünhäuser 2015 Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese, Mosel, Germany** LOOSEN BROS. USA

**Ménage à Trois 2016 Decadence Cabernet Sauvignon, CA** TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

**Mercer Estates 2013 Robert Willis Reserve Malbec, Horse Heaven Hills, WA**  
**Mercer Estates 2014 Eagle & Plow Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Horse Heaven Hills, WA**

**Metrick Wines 2015 Sierra Madre Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, CA** ALEXANDER JULES

**Michael David Winery 2014 Inkblot Petit Verdot, Lodi, CA**

**Michael David Winery 2015 Ancient Vine Cinsault, Bechthold Vineyard, Lodi, CA**

**Michael Pozzan Wines 2014 Sailor's Grave Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA**

**Midnight Cellars 2014 Estate Merlot, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles, CA**  
**Miner Family Winery 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, CA**

**Monte Zovo 2012 Amarone della Valpolicella DCG, Veneto, Italy**

**Moobuzz Wines 2015 Chardonnay, Monterey County, CA** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.

**Mood Wine 2015 Sangiovese Sweet on You Red Imola, Emilia-Romagna, Italy** SAMANDILA WINE IMPORTS

**Morgan Winery 2015 Highland Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA**  
**Mt. Beautiful 2015 Pinot Noir, North Canterbury, New Zealand** MT. BEAUTIFUL USA

**Mt. Beautiful 2015 Riesling, North Canterbury, New Zealand** MT. BEAUTIFUL USA

**Murrieta's Well Estate Vineyard 2015 The Whip White Wine Blend, Estate, Livermore Valley, CA**

**Murrieta's Well Estate Vineyard 2016 Dry Rosé, Livermore Valley, CA**

**Navarro Vineyards 2014 Cluster Select Late Harvest Riesling, Anderson Valley, CA**

**Navarro Vineyards 2015 Riesling, Anderson Valley, CA**

**Neudorf Vineyards 2015 Tom's Block Pinot Noir, Nelson, New Zealand** THE WINEBOW GROUP

**Nga Waka 2015 Three Canoes Lease Block Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand** CANOE WINE IMPORTS

**Noble Vines 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi, CA** DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS

**Northstar Winery 2012 Merlot, Columbia Valley, WA** STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES

**Okapi Wines 2013 Oak Knoll Chardonnay, Napa Valley, CA**

**Paraduxx 2015 Proprietary White Wine, Napa Valley, CA** DUCKHORN WINE COMPANY

**Parallel Wines 2014 Chardonnay, Russian River, CA**

**Parparoussis 2012 Agiorgitiko Nemea Réserve, Greece** CAVA SPILIADIS

**Parparoussis 2015 Assyrtiko, Achaia, Greece** CAVA SPILIADIS

**Parrish Family Vineyards 2012 Silken Red Blend, Paso Robles, CA**

**Pascual Toso 2014 Barrancas Toso Red Wine, Mendoza, Argentina**

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

**Patel Napa Valley 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, CA**

**Patel Napa Valley 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA**

**Patel Napa Valley 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley, CA**

**Patel Napa Valley 2013 Malbec, Napa Valley, CA**

**Patz & Hall 2015 Alder Springs Vineyard Chardonnay, Mendocino, CA** STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES

# MOST WELL-TRAVELED

## Goldschmidt Vineyards

Six wines from the globetrotting Goldschmidt Vineyards earned high marks from *The Tasting Panel* in 2017, and its New Zealand-born winemaker Nick Goldschmidt certainly made an impression as well. “Wine often lacks its sense of adventure, a sense of place and a reason for being,” the outspoken, good-humored Goldschmidt told us. “We don’t need another Napa Cab or a Russian River Chardonnay.”

Ever the rulebreaker, Goldschmidt decided to produce those very same varietals for his California-based Goldschmidt Vineyard label—he’s been making wine in the Alexander Valley and Napa Valley–Oakville appellations since 1990 and elsewhere since 1982—but on his own terms. Forefathers, meanwhile, is his international label that spans both New Zealand and North America. Read on for our tasting notes of these exemplary single-vineyard wines, which together make Goldschmidt the “Most Well-Traveled” label of 2017.

### **Forefathers 2016 Wax Eye Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$19)**

Produced from the 19-acre Wax Eye Vineyard on Hawkesbury Road on the cool Wairau Plain. Glacial, rocky soils offer the vines good water retention, and a sharp minerality plays with bright acidity. The nose displays dried pineapple and passionfruit, and on the palate, ripe melon offers a round mouthfeel and balancing texture. **92** —M.M., August 2017



### **Goldschmidt 2015 Singing Tree Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$16)**

A single-vineyard wine at an incredibly reasonable price. Goldschmidt looked for a unique site and found it in the Sebastopol

Hills on Goldridge sandy loam soil. Perfumed flowers, chamomile, and candied papayas play against a wet stone mid-palate, and the finish tastes like buttered cookie batter. **92** —M.M., August 2017



### **Forefathers 2014 Lone Tree Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$50)**

Grown on a 5.5-acre vineyard north of Geyserville, this dry-farmed red is lushly textured with maximum extraction that

crosses the boundaries of texture and flavor. With a savory palate and perfume of mountain brush (sage and lilacs), the spices are reined in with tart pomegranate and sweet blueberries. There’s a Mediterranean, Old World sense to this wine, and, like all of Goldschmidt’s Cabs, the alcohol is no higher than 14.5 percent. **95** —M.M., August 2017

### **Goldschmidt 2013 Game Ranch Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$85)**

Picked at 24.5 Brix, this wine smells of the outdoors: There is a sweetness on the nose and palate of blackberries, dates, and figs, but also a tobacco-spiced olive scent. While the tannins first appeared as tightly-wound, the walnut-espresso dryness quickly opened up to reveal a rounder body and classic Napa Valley traits. **96** —M.M., August 2017



### **Goldschmidt Vineyard 2013 Yoeman Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$75)**

The buxom wine smelled of the savory notes of a barrel room, which reminded us of a Napa Cab. It may have big

tannins, but it glides sleekly along the palate. “I think Cabernet should be spicy,” said Goldschmidt. “But when you’re over 14.5%, you are removing not only the terroir but also the flavor of the grape.” **94** —M.M., August 2017



### **Goldschmidt Vineyard 2015 Katherine Goldschmidt Crazy Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$25)**

Named for Goldschmidt’s middle daughter, the wine’s grapes hail from Crazy Creek, a

vineyard known to produce some iconic wines. Big, bright, blue fruit notes on the nose are meaty, with a chocolate espresso twist and dry tannins showing on the palate. It’s a little masterpiece with a dark chocolate finish that way overdelivers on price-to-quality. **94** —M.M., August 2017

## THE OVER-DELIVERERS



Some of our favorite wines this past year hail from South Australia and Venice, Italy, and they all shared the ability to knock us out with taste and texture while delivering in excess of the norm. Being overachievers gives them extra credit by the editorial “faculty,” but in addition to the 92 points they each received, we gave them an A for effort—and that’s going on their record!

**Cucina Mista Rosso Semi-Sweet Red, Italy (\$12)** *Grapes are sourced from the hills of the Veneto region along the Adriatic Sea. Varieties Raboso and Merlot are cold-fermented Charmat-style in stainless steel tanks, allowing for natural carbonation. Ripe plum and cherry greet the nose and palate, and you can taste the Italian terroir seasoned with cedar and nutmeg. Bright, pretty strawberry is accompanied by flavors of caramel butter on the finish.* —M.M.

**Cucina Mista 2016 Moscato d’Asti D.O.C.G., Italy (\$12)** *Limestone and sandstone are the perfect soils from the hilly Piedmont region for this iconic semi-sweet white wine of 100% Moscato. Also produced in the Charmat-style and fermented in stainless steel, the lovely fruit notes rise through the delicate carbonated liquid—only 5.5% ABV. An aromatic delight with scents of white tea and magnolia blossoms lead to flavors of pineapple and pear. The softest bubbles do caress, and the finish of apricot honey is memorable.* —M.M.

**Hopes End 2016 Red Blend, South Australia (\$12)** *Deep, sandy loam over limestone soils marks the terroir where Shiraz, Grenache, Malbec, and Petit Verdot grow for this deeply-engaging red from Angove Family Winemakers. Aromas of spiced oak and perfumed blackberry engage the senses. The flavors of violets, mocha-earth and cinnamon blueberry are indulgent yet held in check, and the plush mouthfeel offers an extended finish.* —M.M.

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



**Peachy Canyon 2015 Westside Zinfandel, Paso Robles, CA**  
**Peachy Canyon 2016 Concrete Blanc Viognier, Melange du Rhone Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA**  
**Pellegrini 2014 Toboni Oakwild Ranch Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA**  
**Penfolds 2015 Max’s Shiraz-Cabernet Blend, Australia** TREASURY WINE ESTATES/ SOUTHCORP WINES  
**Penner-Ash Wine Cellars 2015 Shea Vineyard Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, OR** JACKSON FAMILY WINES  
**Pepper Bridge Winery 2015 Sauvignon Blanc, Walla Walla Valley, WA**  
**Piña 2014 Wolff Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Yountville, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Presqu’île 2015 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, CA**  
**Priest Ranch 2013 Coach Gun Proprietary Red, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Provenance Vineyards 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Rutherford, CA** TREASURY WINE ESTATES  
**Quartz Reef 2015 Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand** WINE DOGS IMPORTS  
**Quivira Vineyards and Winery 2014 Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, CA** V2 WINE GROUP  
**Ravenswood 2014 Teldeschi Vineyard Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Remix Wines 2015 Somm Rosé of Tannat, Lodi, CA**  
**Rendarrio Vineyards 2014 The Rocker Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Ranch Vineyard, Templeton Gap, CA**  
**Renwood Winery 2014 Special Reserve Zinfandel, Grandpère Vineyard, Amador, CA**  
**Résonance 2014 Résonance Vineyard Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, OR** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**Riboli Family Wines 2013 San Simeon Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles, CA** SAN ANTONIO WINERY  
**Riboli Family Wines 2016 San Simeon Estate Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Margarita Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA** SAN ANTONIO WINERY  
**Robert Mondavi Winery 2014 Reserve Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Robert Mondavi Winery 2014 Maestro Red Blend, Napa Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Robert Weil 2015 Riesling Kabinett, Rheingau, Germany** LOOSEN BROS. USA/ SUNTORY  
**Roger Roessler Wines 2014 Lennox Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA** R2 WINE COMPANY  
**Roger Roessler Wines 2015 3BBL Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA** R2 WINE COMPANY  
**Rubus 2015 White Blend, France** KYSELA PÈRE ET FILS  
**Ruffino 2012 Riserva Ducale Oro, Chianti Classico Gran Selezione D.O.C.G., Tuscany, Italy** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Ruffino 2013 Riserva Ducale, Chianti Classico Riserva D.O.C.G., Tuscany, Italy** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Rusack Vineyards 2014 Ballard Canyon Estate Reserve Syrah, Santa Ynez Valley, CA**  
**Rutherford Hill Winery 2013 Merlot, Napa Valley, CA** TERLATO WINES INTERNATIONAL  
**San Antonio Winery 2012 Opaque Petit Verdot, Paso Robles, CA** SAN ANTONIO WINERY  
**San Antonio Winery 2014 Centennial Blend, Paso Robles, CA** SAN ANTONIO WINERY  
**San Lorenzo 2010 Escol, Montepulciano d’Abruzzo Colline Teramane Riserva D.O.C.G., Italy** R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY  
**Santa Margherita Vino Spumante Rosé Brut NV, Italy** SANTA MARGHERITA USA  
**Santa Margherita Rive di Refrontolo Prosecco di Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Superiore D.O.C.G., Italy** SANTA MARGHERITA USA  
**Scala Dei 2011 Cartoixa, Priorat, Spain** VINUM INTERNATIONAL  
**Scheid Family Wines 2014 Stokes’ Ghost Petite Sirah, Monterey, CA**  
**Schloss Saarstein 2015 Riesling Spätlese, Mosel, Germany** P. J. VALCKENBERG  
**Schloss Vollrads 2015 Estate Riesling Spätlese, Rheingau, Germany** SCHMITT SÖHNE WINES  
**Schloss Vollrads 2016 Riesling Spätlese, Rheingau, Germany** SCHMITT SÖHNE WINES  
**Schmitt Söhne 2015 Riesling Beerenauslese, Rheinhessen, Germany** SCHMITT SÖHNE WINES  
**Schramsberg Vineyards 2013 Méthode Traditionnelle Brut, North Coast, CA**  
**Schug Winery 2013 Heritage Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley, CA**  
**Sea Smoke 2014 Southing Pinot Noir, Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills, CA**  
**Sea Smoke 2014 Ten Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, CA**  
**Senses 2014 Hillcrest Estate Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA**  
**Seresin Estate 2013 Raupo Creek Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand** THE SORTING TABLE  
**Shafer Vineyards 2013 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Stag’s Leap District, CA**  
**Shafer Vineyards 2015 TD-9 Proprietary Blend, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Sidebar Cellars 2016 Kerner, Mokelumne River, CA**  
**Siduri 2015 Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA**  
**Silverado Vineyards 2013 Mt. George Vineyard GEO Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Simi Winery 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Simi Winery 2014 Landslide Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, CA** CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
**Sokol Blosser Winery 2014 Orchard Block Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills, OR**  
**Spottswoode Estate Vineyard & Winery 2013 Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Spring Mountain Vineyard 2012 Elivette Red Blend, Napa Valley, CA**  
**St. Francis 2014 Reserve Merlot, Sonoma Valley, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**St. Francis 2014 Reserve Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**St. Francis 2015 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County, CA** KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
**Steele Canyon Cellars 2013 J. McClelland Petit Verdot, Napa Valley, CA**  
**Stolo Family Vineyards 2016 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, San Luis Obispo, CA**

## MOST FRIENDLY

### Cellardoor Winery 2013 Iron Gate Artist Series, USA (\$30)

About 100 years ago in Lincolnville, Maine, a family gave work and shelter to a homeless man in need; a symbol permanently carved into their barn door indicates to others that, even today, they too might find refuge there. That same symbol can also be found on the Cellardoor label, and you can expect to encounter this same warm hospitality upon visiting the winery itself on its five-and-a-half-acre property in Lincolnville.

To complement its commitments to producing high-quality wines and offering guests gracious experiences, Cellardoor gives back to the community by contributing to efforts that combat homelessness and food insecurity. Goodwill is apparent in every aspect of Cellardoor's business practices, which is why this winery earned the title of *The Tasting Panel's* "Most Friendly" producer in 2017.

*Although this is a blend of 89% single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon and 11% single-vineyard Merlot from Yakima Valley, the winery itself is based in Maine. A Double Gold winner for Best Bordeaux Blend at last year's San Francisco International Wine Competition, this wine was inspired by the style of Margaux with New World terroir, sunshine, and ripeness filtered in. The result is a wine with depth and clarity, spicy black currant, tart cherry, and silky vanilla tannins. 92* —M.M., November 2017



## MOST ZIN IT TO WIN IT

### Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel, Gamba Estate Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$49)

With more than six generations of experience in wine grape-growing to its name, Gamba Vineyards and Winery are the masters of Zin. The company's limited-production wines preserve the heritage of Old Vine Zinfandel with some of the highest-quality fruit to come out of California, while also proving that the art of farming can make a great Zinfandel extraordinary. The Gamba family is committed to preserving what is quickly becoming a limited commodity—truly Old Vine Zin—and continues to express the unique qualities of each vineyard site with every vintage.

*This Zinfandel specialist has the chops. This wine—one of three distinct bottlings—is intense and rich with a strong concentration of berry fruit and a lovely style. —A.D.B., May 2017*



## WISEST SOUL

### Wente Vineyards 2016 Eric's Chardonnay, Livermore Valley (\$30)

If you've ever enjoyed a domestic Chardonnay, there's a very good chance the golden white is made from the beloved Wente clone found in roughly 80 percent of California Chardonnays. In the early 1900s, C.H. Wente planted two sources of budwood—imported cuttings from Montpellier, France, and the Gier Vineyard in Pleasanton—to his family's Livermore Valley vineyard, and over time, established the Wente clone of Chardonnay.

Wente Vineyards is the oldest continuously-operating family-owned winery in the country, as well as the producer responsible for releasing the first varietally-labeled Chardonnay (a 1936 vintage). Although the Wentes have created some of the most famous white wines in the New World, Eric's Chardonnay is a nod to the Old and is fermented in stainless steel tanks to retain the wine's aromatics and flavors: all the more reason Wente Vineyards is *The Tasting Panel's* "Wisest Soul" of 2017.

*Small-lot estate-grown fruit creates pizzazz in the glass. This energetic, creamy white offers fragrances of magnolia blossom, lilac, McIntosh apple, and vanilla bean; mirroring the aroma, the taste profile is extroverted and gregarious with a range of food. I love the weightiness with a finish of white tea and flower petal tannins. Aged sur lie for four months in stainless steel tanks. 93* —M.M., October 2017



## MOST EXPERIENCED

### Flora Springs 2014 Trilogy Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$80)

Napa Valley experienced a great vintage year in 2014, and this shows splendidly in the Flora Springs 2014 Trilogy. A blend of Bordeaux varietals—Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Petit Verdot—this stunner is one of the original Meritage wines (Trilogy has been Flora Springs' flagship wine since its first release more than 30 years ago).

Aged 22 months in 85% French oak and 15% American oak, the grapes are sourced exclusively from Flora Springs' estate vineyards in Napa Valley. The wine's storied history and full-bodied profile that lends itself well to aging has led us to name this wine 2017's "Most Experienced"!

*Smooth and ripe with lush, juicy plum and cassis; juicy and intense with lovely balance and finesse; notes of sweet vanilla oak and spice. 86% Cab Sauvignon, 8% Malbec, 6% Petit Verdot. 93* —A.D.B., March 2017



## MOST RESILIENT

### VinRoc Wine Caves 2014 Atlas Peak Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$125)

VinRoc, a micro-crafted Cabernet that packs flavor on a macro scale, derives its name from the rocky vineyard where it's produced. That vineyard sits on the eastern slope of Napa Valley above the fog line, and its grapes grow through volcanic rock and red soil before being micro-harvested at the peak of ripeness.

The grapes are then hand-sorted and de-stemmed before being fermented and barreled—one ton at a time—in French oak in VinRoc's cave-contained winery, where the label's team uses European equipment specifically designed for low-yield, high-quality winemaking. Though badly damaged by last October's wildfires, most of VinRoc's vines survived, and it continues to produce and sell wine as it and the surrounding area recovers: We can't think of a better reason to name VinRoc the "Most Resilient" vineyard of a very tumultuous 2017.



*Dark, rich, and concentrated with smooth texture and deep plum and berry fruit; toasty, elegant, and long; a stunning, cult-worthy wine that's a bargain compared to others in its class.* **96** —A.D.B., October 2017

## MOST DARING

### Ancient Peaks 2014 Renegade, Margarita Vineyard, Paso Robles (\$24)

Standing alone in the southernmost region of Paso Robles, the Margarita Vineyard is the only vineyard that sits in its own namesake American Viticultural Area—specifically, the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA. Missionaries, roughriders, gunslingers, and outlaws have roamed the area throughout the storied history of the estate.

Renegade, a Syrah-dominant blend with a bold and adventurous inclusion of Malbec and Petite Verdot, pays homage to these colorful characters and the vineyard's illustrious past with an intense yet elegant flavor. This wine defies conformity and earns it the title of last year's "Most Daring."



*Grapes grown on ancient sea beds and shale from Paso Roble's southernmost district—the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA—show themselves magnificently in what I suspect is this wine's finest vintage yet. Deep, ripe spiced plum and tarry blackberry are mouth-gripping and teeth-coating. This blend of 80% Syrah, 18% Malbec, and 2% Petit Verdot possesses a dense chocolate-violet middle with a mineral thread that's dappled with black plum and soy sauce.* **93** —M.M., March 2017

Swanson Vineyards 2013 Merlot, Napa Valley, CA VINTAGE WINE ESTATES  
Szent Tamás 2013 Estate Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary  
Tabor 2013 Limited Edition Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel ROYAL WINE CORP.  
Tasca d'Almerita 2011 Rosso del Conte Contea di Sclafani DOC, Italy THE WINEBOW GROUP  
Taylor Fladgate 1967 Very Old Single Harvest Porto, Douro, Portugal KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Tenuta di Biserno 2012 Biserno, Toscana IGT, Italy KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Tenuta Santa Maria alla Pieve 2010 Amarone della Valpolicella, Italy GRAPES ON THE GO/BERTANI  
Tenuta Sassoregale 2016 Vermentino, Maremma Toscana DOC, Italy SANTA MARGHERITA USA  
Tenuta Sette Ponti 2013 Sangiovese, Vigna dell'Impero, Tuscany, Italy KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Tenuta Sette Ponti 2014 Poggio al Lupo Cabernet Sauvignon, Tuscany, Italy KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Tenuta Sette Ponti 2014 Crognolo, Tuscany, Italy KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Tenuta Sette Ponti 2014 Oreno, Tuscany, Italy KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS  
Terlato Vineyards 2016 Pinot Grigio, Friuli Colli Orientali, Italy TERLATO VINEYARDS  
TerraMater 2015 Magna Limited Reserve Carménère, DO Valle de Curicó, Chile VARIOUS  
Testarossa Winery 2015 Diana's Chardonnay, CA  
The Calling 2014 Patriarch Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS  
The Farm Winery 2013 Cardinal Cabernet Sauvignon, Old Bailey Vineyard, Paso Robles, CA  
The Farm Winery 2014 Primal Scream Red Wine, Adelaida District, Paso Robles, CA  
The Prisoner Wine Company 2014 Saldo Zinfandel, CA CONSTELLATION BRANDS  
Calabria Family Wines Three Bridges 2015 Tumbaramba Chardonnay, Barossa Valley, Australia VINEYARD BRANDS  
Toi Toi Wines 2014 Clutha Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand USA WINE WEST  
Tolosa Winery 2013 Heritage Syrah, Edna Valley, CA  
Tolosa Winery 2015 Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, CA  
Tongue Dancer Wines 2015 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA LIQUID VINYL LIMITED  
Tonti Family Wines 2014 Old Vine Artisan Series Zinfandel, Russian River Valley, CA  
Trapiche Medalla Cabernet Sauvignon, Mendoza, Argentina THE WINE GROUP  
Trapiche Medalla Uco Valley Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina THE WINE GROUP  
Trapiche Terroir Series Finca Orellana Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina THE WINE GROUP  
Trapiche 2015 Gran Medalla Chardonnay, Mendoza, Argentina THE WINE GROUP  
Trenza 2013 Tinto Red Blend, San Luis Obispo County, CA NIVEN FAMILY WINE ESTATES  
Trinity Hill 2013 The Gimblett Gimblett Gravels Red Blend, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand TERROIR SELECTIONS  
Trombetta Family Wines 2014 Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA  
Troon Vineyard 2014 M\*T Reserve Red Blend, OR MIONETTO USA  
VDR 2014 Very Dark Red, Hames Valley Vineyard, CA SCHEID FAMILY WINES  
Velenosi 2012 Roggio del Filare, Rosso Piceno DOC Superiore, Italy DOMAINE SELECT WINE & SPIRITS  
Vik 2011 Red Blend, Apalta Valley, Chile MHW, LTD  
Villa Maria 2014 Single Vineyard Taylors Pass Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES  
Vilmart & Cie 2007 Cœur de Cuvée Brut Champagne, Montagne de Reims, France TERRY THEISE – SKURNIK WINES  
VinRoc 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak/Napa Valley, CA  
Wakefield Wines 2013 The Visionary Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley, Australia SEAVIEW IMPORTS  
Wakefield Wines 2014 St. Andrews Shiraz, Clare Valley, Australia SEAVIEW IMPORTS  
Wakefield Wines 2015 Jaraman Shiraz, Clare Valley, McLaren Vale, Australia SEAVIEW IMPORTS  
We Believe 2014 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, CA  
Weingut Johannisshof 2015 Riesling Johannisberger Klaus Spätlese, Rheingau, Germany MW IMPORTS (MIONETTO USA)  
Weingut Karl Schaefer 2014 Herrenberg Riesling Trocken, Pfalz, Germany P. J. VALCKENBERG  
Wente Vineyards 2016 Small Lot Estate Grown Eric's Chardonnay, Livermore Valley, CA WENTE FAMILY ESTATES  
Westwood 2015 Sangiacomo Vineyard Roberts Road Chardonnay, Annadel Gap, Sonoma Coast, CA  
Westwood 2015 Annadel Gap Vineyard Estate Pinot Noir, Sonoma County, CA  
Westwood 2015 Annadel Gap Vineyard Estate Syrah, Sonoma Valley, Sonoma County, CA  
Westwood 2015 Legend Proprietary Red, Annadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma County, CA  
Whitehaven 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand E. & J. GALLO  
Williams Selyem 2014 Categori Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, CA  
Wittmann 2015 Morstein Riesling, Rheinhessen, Germany LOOSEN BROS. USA  
Youngberg Hill 2014 Natasha Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, OR  
Youngberg Hill 2014 Nicolette's Barrel Select Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, OR  
Z. Alexander Brown 2015 Uncaged Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS  
Z. Alexander Brown 2015 Uncaged Pinot Noir, CA DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS  
Z. Alexander Brown 2015 Uncaged Proprietary Red, North Coast, CA  
Zina Hyde Cunningham 2014 Julia's Estate Vineyard Reserve Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, CA  
Zina Hyde Cunningham 2015 Adeline's Vineyard Chardonnay, Anderson Valley, CA

## MOST NATURAL BEAUTY

### St. Elder Natural Elderflower Liqueur (\$20)

*Sambucus canadensis*, better known as American elder, grows in the eastern half of the U.S. and has been used medicinally by Native Americans for centuries. To produce its Natural Elderflower Liqueur, St. Elder—based in Somerville, Massachusetts—uses a natural extract from the plant's small white petals and adds it to a liqueur base. The process occurs in small batches, producing a balanced and lively spirit with notes of sweet citrus and floral honey.

The liqueur displays its versatility as an aperitif with sparkling wine or as an ingredient in a wide variety of cocktails. With its reasonable price and beautiful flavor profile, the possibilities are ripe for the picking.

*Handcrafted from a natural extract of elderflower blossoms, this has a floral, juicy pear nose that makes you close your eyes as if you're sniffing a sweet-scented rose. The sumptuous palate serves up a caramel-doused summer peach, and the finish is clean, white petals in a bounty of texture.* **94**

—M.M., July 2017



## LUCKIEST OF THE IRISH

### West Cork Distillers

John O'Connell and his childhood friends, cousins Denis and Ger McCarthy, founded West Cork Distillers in 2003 to honor the Emerald Isle's culture the best way they knew how: by producing high-quality Irish whiskey.

Now in its 15th year, West Cork is the only Irish distillery that malts its own barley; uses entirely fresh, local spring water; and utilizes pot stills for all of its distillations. The West Cork 10 Year Single Malt sits in first-fill charred bourbon barrels and then rests for 110 days in Sherry butts; the distillery's West Cork Bourbon Cask, meanwhile, has a malt-to-grain ratio of 25–75 percent and is aged in bourbon casks before the malt also rests in Sherry butts for an additional 110 days. With only 2,500 bottles released of each new product to the U.S., West Cork's small-batch whiskeys perfectly capture the spirit of its namesake region and home country.

**West Cork 10 Year Single Malt (\$40)** *The nose hints of baked apples, but also crisp Gala apples with a hint of cinnamon. Musky sandalwood opens up further along with honeyed pancake batter. On the palate, the liquid slithers in a sensuous flow as the honey becomes brighter and the stream of stone fruit "juice" gets more unctuous through to the white pepper finish.* **96** —M.M., March 2017



#### West Cork Bourbon

**Cask (\$27)** *Aromas of brown sugar and figs, as well as hazelnut butter and nougat, are lovely openers. The gossamer texture is preternatural; it glides and melts, then glides and melts again. A pinch of Himalayan salt seems to just lightly pat the middle of the tongue as apricot and cedar intermingle.* **98** —M.M., March 2017



## MOST AWARDED MEZCAL

### Bozal Mezcal

As *The Tasting Panel's* "Most Awarded" mezcal producer in 2017, Bozal implements a time-honored, handmade artisanal approach in creating its take on the mother of all spirits from Mexico: mezcal.

The company aims to celebrate the spirit's origins by harvesting indigenous wild agave from steep hillside areas in Oaxaca and Guerrero, and the incredibly refined flavor found throughout Bozal's portfolio earned incredibly high praise from our publisher last year.

**Bozal Ancestral Papalote O Cupreata Mezcal (\$100)** *Perfumed notes of lavender clay and a subtle smoke interchange with myrrh and vanilla.*

*Texturally round and buoyant, the liquid seems to float across the palate in an ethereal caress of lemongrass and caramelized smoke, which evolves in an indulgent charred marshmallow finish. 96.8 proof. 99*

—M.M., August 2017

**Bozal Espadín-Barril-Mexicano Ensamble Mezcal (\$50)** *The nose on this blend—dotted with talcum powder (clay), lemon, and magnolia blossoms—is perfumed and extremely pretty.*

*The flavors of sweet, floral-driven earth and river rocks with a touch of salinity paint the palate as sweet lilac-vanilla takes you to the lingering, round, and creamy peaty-smoke finish. 94 proof. 100* —M.M., August 2017

**Bozal Cuixe Single Maguey Mezcal (\$80)** *The nose is delicately woody with sandalwood and black pepper. On the palate, grilled pineapple and a lanolin-based floral tone sweetness play alongside saddle leather and clay. The finish is generous. 94 proof. 95* —M.M., August 2017



### THE CLASS OF 2017 SPIRITS

**Agave Loco Pepper-Cured Reposado Tequila, Mexico**

**Alacrán Cristal Añejo Tequila, Mexico** DOZORTSEV & SONS ENTERPRISES, LTD.

**Amaro Montenegro, Italy** TOTAL BEVERAGE SOLUTION

**ArArAt Brandy Aged 5 Years, Armenia**

**Arkansas Black Straight Applejack, USA**

**Ayate Tequila Reposado, Mexico** SAVAGE & COOKE

**Azar Distilling Seersucker Southern Style Gin, USA**

**Facundo Eximo Rum, Bahamas** BACARDI U.S.A.

**Bache Gabrielsen Serénité Extra XO Cognac, France**

**Bache Gabrielsen XO Cognac, France**

**Bache Gabrielsen American Oak Cognac, France** THE WINEBOW GROUP

**Bainbridge Heritage Oaked Organic Doug Fir Gin, USA**

**Balcones "1" Texas Single Malt Whisky Classic Edition, USA**

**Balcones Baby Blue Corn Whisky, USA**

**Bauchant Orange Liqueur, France** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Bedlam Vodka, USA** GRAYBEARD DISTILLERY

**Bib & Tucker Small Batch White Whiskey, USA** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.

**Black Bart Navy Rum, USA** GREAT BRITISH TRADING LTD.

**Black Button Distilling 2017 Lilac Gin, USA**

**Blade and Bow Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA**

**Boardroom Spirits B: 100% Real Beet, USA**

**Boondocks American Whiskey, USA** ROYAL WINE CORP.

**Bottega Limoncino Sicilian Lemons and Grappa Liqueur, Italy** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Bozal Ancestral Papalote o Cupreata Mezcal, Mexico** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.

**Bozal Cuixe Single Maguey Mezcal, Mexico** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.

**Bozal Espadín-Barril-Mexicano Ensamble Mezcal, Mexico** 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.

**Bribón Blanco Tequila, Mexico** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Brotherhood Irish-American Blended Whiskey Aged 10 Years, USA** CONNACHT WHISKEY COMPANY LTD.

**Café Agave Toasted Coconut Cream Liqueur, USA** CAFÉ AGAVE CO.

**Café Agave French Vanilla Cream Liqueur, USA** CAFÉ AGAVE CO.

**Café Agave Café Mocha Cream Liqueur, USA** CAFÉ AGAVE CO.

**Café Agave Salted Caramel Cream Liqueur, USA** CAFÉ AGAVE CO.

**Calamity Gin, USA** SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINES, LLC

**CALL California Sipping Whiskey** SUKKAH HILL SPIRITS

**Campeón Añejo Tequila, Mexico** LEGACY GROUP USA

**Campeón Reposado Tequila, Mexico** LEGACY GROUP USA

**Campeón Silver Tequila, Mexico** LEGACY GROUP USA

**Caorunn Small Batch Scottish Gin, Scotland** 375 PARK AVENUE SPIRITS

**Caribou Crossing Single Barrel Canadian Whisky, Canada**

**Casa Dragones Blanco Tequila, Mexico**

**Cedar Ridge Silver Label Single Malt Whiskey, USA**

**Chairman's Reserve The Forgotten Casks Rum, Santa Lucia** SPIRIBAM

**Chairman's Reserve Original Rum, Santa Lucia** SPIRIBAM

**Chairman's Reserve Spiced Original Rum, Santa Lucia** SPIRIBAM

**Charbay Green Tea Vodka, USA**

**Charbay Meyer Lemon Vodka, USA**

**Chareau California Aloe Liqueur, USA**

**Chase English Oak Smoked Vodka, UK** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Chase Marmalade Vodka, UK** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Château Arton Fine Blanche d'Armagnac, France** ALTAMAR BRANDS

**Chamucos Añejo Tequila, Mexico** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Chamucos Blanco Tequila, Mexico** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Chamucos Reposado Tequila, Mexico** PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

**Contigo Tequila Plata, Mexico** SONOMA SPIRITS

**Cooperstown Distillery Cooper's Legacy New York State Bourbon Whiskey, USA**

**Copper & Kings 7-Year-Old Blue Sky Mining Muscat Brandy, USA**

**Copper & Kings Butchertown Reserve Casks Brandy, USA**

**Copper & Kings Zmaj Serbian Juniper Barrel Finished Absinthe Superior, USA**

**Copper & Kings American Craft Brandy Copper Pot Distilled, USA**

**Copper & Kings Destillará Intense Orange Curaçao Copper Pot-Distilled Apple Brandy Liqueur, USA**

**Cotswolds Dry Gin, UK** COTSWOLD IMPORTS

**Cráneo Organic Mezcal Artesanal, Mexico** 123 SPIRITS

**Crooked Fox Blended Bourbon Whiskey, USA**

**Crop Harvest Earth Organic Cucumber Vodka, USA** CHATHAM IMPORTS, INC.

**Crop Harvest Earth Organic Meyer Lemon Vodka, USA** CHATHAM IMPORTS, INC.

**Deadhead Dark Chocolate Rum, Mexico**

**Diplomático Rum Planas, Venezuela** DOMAINE SELECT WINE & SPIRITS

**Do Good Distillery Benevolent Czar Whisky, USA**

**Do Good Distillery Nighthawk Bourbon Whisky, USA**

**Don Ciccio & Figli C3 Carciofo Handcrafted Liqueur, USA** DOMAINE SELECT WINE & SPIRITS

**Don Q Gran Añejo Rum, Puerto Rico** DESTILERÍA SERRALLÉS

**Don Q Oak Barrel Spiced Rum, Puerto Rico** DESTILERÍA SERRALLÉS

**Don Q Signature Release Single Barrel Gold 2007 Limited Edition, Puerto Rico** DESTILERÍA SERRALLÉS

**Dos Maderas 5+3 Double Aged Rum, Spain** KINDRED SPIRITS

**Dos Maderas Luxus Doble Crianza Rum, Spain** KINDRED SPIRITS

**Dos Maderas PX 5+5 Triple Aged Rum, Spain** KINDRED SPIRITS

**Dry Fly Barrel Aged Gin, USA** DRY FLY DISTILLING

**Dry Fly Straight Triticale Port Barrel-Finished Whiskey, USA** DRY FLY DISTILLING

**Eastside Distilling Portland Potato Vodka, USA**

**El Fumador 100% Agave Azul Reposado Tequila, Mexico** SONOMA SPIRITS

**El Macho 100% Pure Blue Weber Agave Añejo Tequila, Mexico** SONOMA SPIRITS

**El Rey Zapoteco Ultra Premium Estate Joven Mezcal, Mexico** BOCK WINES & SPIRITS

**Elijah Craig Small Batch Bourbon Whiskey, USA** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY

**Empress 1908 Original Indigo Gin, Canada** FOUNDATIONS MARKETING GROUP

**Flaming Leprechaun Fiery Cinnamon Whiskey Irish Spirit, Ireland** 3 HEARTS OF IRELAND

**Flaming Leprechaun Irish Whiskey Special Reserve, Ireland** 3 HEARTS OF IRELAND

**Flores Zuta Osa Superior Slivovitz Plum Brandy, Serbia** BOZIC'S IMPORTS & WHOLESALERS

**Fremont Mischief Dark Northern Rye Whiskey, USA**

**Fremont Mischief Whiskey, USA**

**Fugitives Spirits Grandgousier Tennessee Whiskey, USA**

**Fuzzy's Ultra Premium Vodka, USA**

**Germain-Robin Millard Fillmore Brandy, USA** CRAFT DISTILLERS

**Germain-Robin Old & Rare Small Blend No. 2 Brandy, USA**

**Glass Vodka Distilled From Grapes, USA** GLASS DISTILLERY

**Glen Scotia Victoriana Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland** A. HARDY USA LTD.

**Glenfiddich Winter Storm Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland** WILLIAM GRANT & SONS LTD.

# AMERICAN ALL-STAR

## Michter's Distillery

Michter's can trace its lineage to 1753 in the Blue Mountain Valley of Pennsylvania, where John Shenk produced whiskey from America's then-favorite grain: rye. Local lore claims that General George Washington fortified his men at Valley Forge with Shenk's product, giving it the nickname "the whiskey that warmed the American Revolution."

Fast-forward more than 250 years later: Michter's has expanded into two locations in Louisville, Kentucky, where Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann prioritizes making the best spirit regardless of cost.

Heilmann painstakingly uses exacting and often time-consuming processes like toasting barrels prior to charring, barreling at lower proof, heat cycling, and chill-filtration to ensure that Michter's impressive legacy as the country's first whiskey company endures. The brand's arduous attention to detail has created an elegant portfolio of small-batch spirits that channel the American spirit of hard work and dedication: For this reason, we proudly name Michter's our 2017 "American All-Star."



**Michter's US\*1 Toasted Barrel Finish Rye (\$75)** Michter's US\*1 Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Rye is taken at barrel strength and aged for an additional time period in custom-made toasted barrels. Its nose delivers a message of grace and power, and notes of burnt orange peel, resin, caramel pudding, and peaches are impressive and amplified. The palate powers the flavors on peppered wheels, and the engine revs with cedar, pound cake, and apricot honey. Tobacco edges in with the fruit for a dynamic finish. 110 proof. **95**

—M.M., October 2017

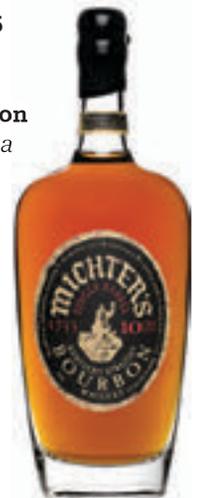
### Michter's 2017 Release 10 Year Old Single Barrel Bourbon

**(\$120)** Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann released this as a nod to Master Distiller Emeritus Willie Pratt's induction into a whisky publication's Hall of Fame—but we're celebrating on our own with each sip of this robust and expressive 94.4-proof spirit. Concentrated notes of apricot nectar, oatmeal with brown sugar, grapefruit rind, and sugared beets are aromatic and sensual. Lush, deep notes of sweet tobacco, bacon, orange zest, and black plum are palate pleasers. The finish offers a welcoming warmth. **96** —M.M., May 2017



### Michter's US\*1 Single Barrel Straight Rye (\$30)

The sweet coconut-caramel nose sways you in: a brass-rail aroma that wins you over at first sniff. And on the palate, a gentle soaking of the tongue from this 84.8-proof spirit is like having a cinnamon-covered butterscotch candy melt to reveal a red pepper core. The heat quickly lifts and the notes of summer peach and nectar of apricot are there hiding in the background, only to appear with each revered sip. **99** —M.M., September 2017



## BIGGEST RISK TAKER

### Red Eye Louie's

The name Vodquila speaks for itself, but it's not able to fully convey what makes the spirit unlike anything else on the market. The thermally-blended combination of blue agave tequila and six-times-distilled American vodka was born out of a light-hearted conversation: Red Eye Louie's Founder Chander Arora and his daughter were having fun one night combining different spirits, and the silky texture and distinctive flavor of the vodka and tequila mixture was surprisingly delicious.

Both Vodquila and the newly-released Rumquila—a dark, spicy, and rich blend of Puerto Rican rum and blue agave tequila from Jalisco—have emerged as pioneers in their own respective market categories. Vodquila won a Silver Medal at the 2016 Spirits International Prestige Awards, while Rumquila collected a Bronze at the 2017 San Francisco's World Spirit Competition before it even officially hit shelves. We'll definitely be keeping an eye on what innovations this spirits line has up its sleeve in the years ahead.

**Vodquila (\$20)** *A waft of raspberry jam and soft mocha tones is a pleasant perfume from this hybrid spirit. On the palate, a suede texture caresses the palate with dots of pepper and anise. It finishes gracefully with a generous fluidity.* **92** —M.M., April 2017

**Rumquila (\$20)** *A lovely amber hue fills the glass, while aromas of brown sugar, French toast, and earthy agave generate intrigue. Surprisingly lean on the palate, the spirit's hints of minerality spar with mocha-laden orange peel and peaches.* **93** —M.M., April 2017



- Glenmorangie Bacalta Private Edition Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland MOËT HENNESSY USA
- Grand Teton Distillery Born and Bred Potato Vodka, USA
- Gružanska Zlatna Nit Plum Brandy, Serbia LAV IMPORTS
- Guillotine Héritage Edition Vodka Révolutionnaire, France
- Guillotine Vodka Révolutionnaire, France
- Haikara Yuzu Sake, Japan
- Hanson of Sonoma Organic Espresso Vodka, USA
- Heritage Distilling Co. BSB 103 High-Altitude Brown Sugar Bourbon, USA
- J.R. Ewing Private Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE
- Jackson Morgan Southern Cream Whipped Orange Cream Liqueur, USA SPIRITS OF TENNESSEE
- Journeyman Distillery Bilberry Black Hearts Gin, USA
- Journeyman Distillery Last Feather Rye Whiskey, USA
- Journeyman Distillery Silver Cross Whiskey, USA
- Jura 10 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland WHYTE & MACKAY
- Kavalan Solist Amontillado Single Cask Strength Single Malt Whiskey, Taiwan ANCHOR DISTILLING COMPANY
- Kavalan Classic Single Malt Whiskey, Taiwan ANCHOR DISTILLING COMPANY
- Kelvin Slush Co. Organic Frosé Mix, USA
- Khortytza De Luxe Ultimate Perfection Vodka, Ukraine GLOBAL SPIRITS USA
- Khortytza Platinum Vodka, Ukraine GLOBAL SPIRITS USA
- Kilbeggan Single Grain Irish Whiskey, Ireland BEAM SUNTORY
- Knappogue Castle 16 Years Old Sherry Cask Finished Triple Distilled Single Malt Irish Whiskey, Ireland CASTLE BRANDS
- Knockmore Irish Whiskey, Ireland SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE
- KOVAL Single Barrel Bourbon Whiskey, USA KOVAL DISTILLERY
- Laughing Glass All Natural Pomegranate Low Calorie Margarita, USA
- Lejay Crème de Cassis, France ABCK CORP.
- Lone Whisker Aged 12 Years Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA
- Long Road Distillers 100% Michigan Red Winter Wheat Aquavit, USA
- Los Amantes Mezcal Añejo, Mexico PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL
- Los Amantes Mezcal Joven, Mexico PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL
- Los Amantes Mezcal Reposado, Mexico PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL
- Magnum Highland Cream Liqueur, Scotland MAGNUM IMPORTS
- Marble Distilling Co. Gingercello Reserve, USA
- Martell Blue Swift V.S.O.P. Cognac, France PERNOD RICARD
- Martell VS Single Distillery Fine Cognac, France PERNOD RICARD
- Michter's 2017 Release 10 Year Old Single Barrel Bourbon, USA
- Michter's US\*1 Single Barrel Straight Rye, USA
- Michter's Toasted Barrel Finish Rye, USA
- Midnight Moon American Whiskey, USA
- Mosswood Barrel-Aged 9 Year Old Whiskey, USA
- Mount Gay 1703 Master Select Limited-Edition Batch Rum, Barbados RÉMY COINTREAU USA
- Mulholland Distilling New World Gin, USA
- Nautical American Gin, USA
- New Amsterdam No. 485 Gin, USA E. & J. GALLO WINERY
- Nue Grapefruit Vodka, USA SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE
- Nue Peach Vodka, USA SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE
- Nue Original Vodka, USA SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE
- Oakheart Genuine Spiced Rum, Puerto Rico BACARDI LIMITED
- Odessa Brandy V.S.O.P., Ukraine GLOBAL SPIRITS USA
- Ole Smoky Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA OLE SMOKY DISTILLERY
- Parce Reserva Especial de Colombia Straight Colombian Rum Aged 8 Years TURQUOISE LIFE BEVERAGE BRANDS
- Pasote Añejo Tequila, Mexico 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY
- Pasote Blanco Tequila, Mexico 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY

**Pasote Reposado Tequila, Mexico** 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY  
**Patrón Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico** THE PATRÓN SPIRITS COMPANY  
**Pelican Harbor Black Rum, USA**  
**Pikesville Straight Rye Whiskey, USA** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY  
**Pomp & Whimsy Gin Liqueur, USA**  
**Porter's Apple Liqueur, USA** OGDEN'S OWN DISTILLERY  
**Portobello Road No. 171 London Dry Gin, UK**  
**Purity Vodka, Sweden**  
**Re:Find Limoncello Liqueur, USA**  
**Red Eye Louie's Rumquila, USA**  
**Red Eye Louie's Vodquila, USA**  
**Redemption Wheated Bourbon, USA** DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE AND SPIRITS  
**Revel Stoke Root Beer Flavored Whisky, Canada** PHILLIPS DISTILLING COMPANY  
**Rittenhouse Straight Rye Whiskey Bottled-in-Bond, USA** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY  
**Rock N Roll Platinum Tequila, Mexico**  
**Roofraiser Vodka, USA** DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY  
**Sacacuento Extra Añejo Mezcal Aged 3 Years, Mexico** PREMIUM MEZCALES  
**Sagamore Spirit Signature 83-Proof Straight Rye Whiskey, USA**  
**Salish Sea Organic Honeybush Liqueur, USA**  
**Salish Sea Organic Hibiscus Liqueur, USA**  
**Santo Puro Mezquila Agave Tequila/Mezcal Blend, Mexico** WILSON DANIELS  
**Savile Premium Rumtini, USA**  
**Short Mountain Organic Shine Unaged Tennessee Moonshine Whiskey, USA**  
**Silent Pool Distillers Silent Pool Gin, USA**  
**Singani 63 Bolivian Brandy, Bolivia** STEVEN SODERBERGH  
**Sonoma County Distilling Co. West of Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey No. 1, USA**  
**St. Supéry Andrew Jackson Dollarhide: Spirit of St. Supéry Brandy, USA**  
**Stonecutter Spirits Heritage Cask Whiskey, USA**  
**Stonecutter Spirits Single Barrel Gin, USA**  
**Straight Edge Bourbon Whiskey, USA**  
**Straw Boys Irish Vodka, Ireland** CONNACHT WHISKEY COMPANY LTD.  
**Suau El Mallorquín Brandy Aged 15 Years, Spain** STOLLER IMPORTS  
**Suau Orange Liqueur Desde 1851, Spain** THE MARSALLE COMPANY  
**Taildragger After Dark Rum, USA** TAILWINDS DISTILLING CO.  
**Tattoo Tequila Blanco, Mexico** TATTOO TEQUILA, INC.  
**Tattoo Tequila Reposado, Mexico** TATTOO TEQUILA, INC.  
**Teeling Whiskey Company 24 Year Old Irish Single Malt Whiskey, Ireland** INFINIUM SPIRITS  
**Tenure England Vodka, UK**  
**Tequila Década Silver, Mexico** DÉCADA SPIRITS, INC.  
**Tequila Revolución Añejo, Mexico**  
**Tequila Revolución Extra-Añejo American Cask, Mexico**  
**Tequila Revolución Reposado, Mexico**  
**Tequila Revolución Silver, Mexico**  
**The Glenlivet Founder's Reserve Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland** PERNOD RICARD  
**The Hillhaven Lodge American Whiskey, USA**  
**The London N°1 Gin, UK** VIN DIVINO  
**The Macallan Edition No. 2 Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland** EDRINGTON  
**Till American Wheat Vodka, USA**  
**Title No. 21 American Whiskey, USA** SOUTHWEST SPIRITS & WINE  
**Tito's Handmade Vodka, USA**  
**Trust Me Ultra Premium Potato Vodka, USA**  
**Trust Me Ultra Premium Wheat Vodka, USA**  
**Tuaca Originale Liquore Italiano, Canada** SAZERAC COMPANY  
**TX Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA** FIRESTONE & ROBERTSON DISTILLING CO.  
**Usqueabach 15-Year Blended Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland**

# MOST ECO-FRIENDLY

## Crop Harvest Earth Organic Vodka

Crop Harvest Earth's commitment to creating great-tasting products while supporting a healthier planet is on clear display in its production practices: Its vodkas can only be produced using USDA Certified Organic grain that's farmed without the use of artificial pesticides, chemical fertilizers, irradiation, or genetic modification. The vodka is then distilled so that no carbon treatment or charcoal filtering is required, leaving a smaller carbon footprint than most conventional production processes. As 2017's "Most Eco-Friendly" brand, Crop Harvest Earth's vodkas taste clean and pure—after all, that's how nature should make them.

### Crop Harvest Earth Cucumber Vodka (\$30)

*Cucumber is all grown up in this artisanal flavored vodka. Take a freshly-picked specimen and imagine the aroma of the earth, the savoriness of the green skin, and the fleshy, crunchy, and juicy core. That's what is recreated in this 70-proof spirit. A brininess on the finish leaves a friendly open door for creative cocktails.*

95 —M.M., July 2017

### Crop Harvest Earth Meyer Lemon Vodka (\$28)

*Light, charming Meyer lemon nose; silky and smooth with dry flavor yet bright and showing some sweetness on the finish; clean, pure, and delicate with balance and lovely style.*

92 —A.D.B., July 2017



## MOST SURPRISING

### Diplomático Planas Rum (\$29)

With its crystal-clear color, Diplomático Planas Rum passes for a young, mellow, and sweet spirit. But once it's tasted, its surprisingly intense flavor profile immediately conveys the nuances imparted by its six-year aging process, which is overseen by expert blenders and distillers. Produced in Venezuela's Planas Valley at the foot of the Andes mountains, the house of Diplomático represents generations of rum-making experience and owes its top-quality sugarcane to pure water, fertile soil, and nurturing tropical conditions.



*Clear, smooth, and delicate nose; silky and clean with elegant notes of vanilla and sugarcane. Balanced and supple with a creamy texture and a long, rich finish.*

92 —A.D.B., April 2017

## BEST NAME

### Dented Brick Roofraiser Vodka (\$24)

Marc Christensen started Dented Brick Distillery in Salt Lake City in 2013; one of five distilleries operating in the state, its Roofraiser Vodka (inspired when the distillery's roof had to be raised to fit the 28-foot vodka column still) is crafted from organic wheat and rye farmed on the Utah-Idaho border. Christensen calls Roofraiser a "unique vodka," explaining that "unlike typical vodka, it's got a round, viscous mouthfeel, and you can definitely taste the wheat and spicy rye with black pepper on the end."

*Roofraiser Vodka sends up heady scents of vanilla bean and soothing, soft, and creamy white bread. Sumptuous texturally, this spirit exudes jasmine and baking spices from start to finish.* 92 —M.M., July 2017



DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY

- Usqueabach An Ard Ri Cask Strength Blended Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland
- Usqueabach Old Rare 2014 Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland
- Usqueabach Reserve Premium Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland
- Valentine Mayor Pingree Single Barrel Straight Bourbon Whiskey Aged 10 Years, USA VALENTINE DISTILLING
- Valentine Mayor Pingree Straight Bourbon Whiskey Aged 10 Years, USA VALENTINE DISTILLING
- Valentine Liberator Old Tom Gin, USA VALENTINE DISTILLING
- Valentine Vodka, USA VALENTINE DISTILLING
- Van Gogh Pineapple Vodka, Netherlands 375 PARK AVENUE SPIRITS
- Van Gogh Vodka, Netherlands 375 PARK AVENUE SPIRITS
- Virus Vodka, USA
- Wansas Tequila Añejo, Mexico
- Wansas Tequila Reposado, Mexico
- West Cork Distillers Single Malt Irish Whiskey Port Cask Finish Aged 12 Years, Ireland M.S. WALKER
- West Cork Distillers Single Malt Irish Whiskey Rum Cask Finish Aged 12 Years, Ireland M.S. WALKER
- West Cork Distillers Single Malt Irish Whiskey Sherry Cask Finish Aged 12 Years, Ireland M.S. WALKER
- Wheatley Vodka, USA BUFFALO TRACE DISTILLERY
- WhistlePig FarmStock Rye Whiskey, USA
- Whistling Andy Pink Peppercorn and Pear Gin, USA
- Wild Moon Lavender Liqueur, USA HARTFORD FLAVOR COMPANY
- Wild Moon Lime Liqueur, USA HARTFORD FLAVOR COMPANY
- Wild Turkey Rare Breed Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Barrel Proof, USA CAMPARI AMERICA
- Wódka Vodka, Poland

## BEST VALUE

### New Amsterdam No. 485 Gin (\$14)

New Amsterdam may be a company known for its vodka, but its gin—which received 95 points from *The Tasting Panel* last year—brings the flavor at an incredible price point. A Western-style gin made with botanicals of anise, coriander, juniper, angelica, orange, lime, and vanilla, its base is five times distilled and cut with reverse osmosis-filtered water. New Amsterdam No. 485 Gin's citrus-forward flavor profile makes it a winner in any gin cocktail or sipped neat: but at this price, why not both?



*The exotic floral notes play well with sugared lemon and an orange-anise-sweet musk aroma, which may be angelica root. The palate is creamy, with lilac, cucumber, caraway seed, red fruit, vanilla bean, and a hint of cherry. The juniper is threaded throughout and makes a neat—and beautifully complex—character.* 95 —M.M., June 2017

E. & J. GALLO

# MOST VERSATILE

## Palm Bay International

With a portfolio representing producers from 16 countries and a distribution network spanning all 50 U.S. states, Mexico, and the Caribbean, Palm Bay International has become a premier name in the fine wine and spirits game.

Palm Bay International earned its venerable reputation while remaining true to the principles of quality and authenticity that served as the founding values of this third-generation, family-owned business. Eight marques representing four of its brands have earned spotlights in our 2017 Yearbook, landing Palm Bay the title of “Most Versatile” distributor.

### THE NEW CLASSIC

**Bauchant Orange Liqueur (\$23)** Produced by Maison Rouillet-Fransac—a Cognac manufacturer since 1838—Bauchant is a stunningly modern marriage of sweet and bitter orange and VS and VSOP Cognacs. The spirit, rested in used barrels, has earned recognition as 2017’s “New Classic” by adding a vivacious punch to traditional cocktails like Margaritas and Mimosas while serving as a coveted ingredient for discerning pastry chefs.

*Bauchant, a blend of fine Cognac and orange essence, is an aromatic charmer. Piquant and opulent, the multilayered nose offers orange rind, mango, and cinnamon apples. Bittersweet chocolate-covered oranges, white-grape raisins, and English toffee wind around the taste buds. Striking. 96* —M.M., July 2017



### LARGER THAN LIFE

**Bribón Tequila Blanco (\$20)** The Bribón—a man about town defined by a sense of adventure and a fearlessly sociable personality—is a larger-than-life figure in Mexican folklore. The wildly-versatile Tequila Bribón ensures this spirit represents what matters most to the tequila drinker: a reverence for the past, an enthusiasm for innovation, and an adherence to social and environmental responsibility.

*Bribón Tequila Blanco indulges the senses, first with its charming aromas of bright, clean, and fresh lime-kissed agave, then with another high note of blueberries and wild flowers. The stark purity on the palate is dotted with salted grapefruit peel, vanilla, and summer melon. 94* —M.M., April 2017



### DEVILISHLY DELIGHTFUL

**Tequila Chamucos** While Tequila Chamucos’ name is inspired by shadowy and nightmarish creatures of ancient Latin American folklore, the brand itself is a tequila purist’s—and environmentalist’s—dream come true.

The brand instituted organic farming practices in 1992 and refuses to use herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers in the creation of its ultra-premium handcrafted spirits. With such dedication to taste and sustainability, it’s easy to see why we named Chamucos the year’s “Devilishly Delightful” producer.

**Tequila Chamucos Blanco (\$45) 93** —M.M., April 2017

**Tequila Chamucos Reposado (\$50) 95** —M.M., April 2017

**Tequila Chamucos Añejo (\$60)** *This spirit delivers a captivating perfume of jasmine, brown-sugared agave, summer peach, and buttered toast that translates equally well on the palate. Rich and generously textured with a velvet creaminess, hints of tobacco and black pepper give this aged spirit extra oomph. 95* —M.M., April 2017



### MOST ROMANTIC

#### Los Amantes Mezcal

Inspired by the Aztec Goddess Mayahuel, who sacrificed her life for love—and from whose grave agave first grew, according to Aztec legend—Los Amantes is made from 100% agave grown in Tlacolula de Matamoros, Oaxaca, by small distilleries known as *palenqueros*. Founded by Ignacio Carballido and Guillermo Olguín in 2002, Los Amantes remains true to traditional Mezcal production practices; its name, meanwhile, literally speaks to the love poured into each bottle of spirit it produces.



**Los Amantes Mezcal Joven (\$53) 94** —M.M., April 2017

**Los Amantes Mezcal Añejo (\$80) 95** —M.M., April 2017

**Los Amantes Mezcal Reposado (\$65)** *An inviting perfume of agave, blueberry, and smoked lime precedes the delicate, gentle flavors and creamy texture that earmark this elegant spirit. Sandalwood and buttercream meld with an echo of minerality. 96* —M.M., April 2017

## BEST SUMMER SPIRIT

### Seersucker Southern Style Gin (\$25)

Seersucker's 84-proof Southern Style Gin is far from a traditional London Dry-style spirit with its botanical lineup of juniper, citrus peel, coriander, cardamom, clove honey, and mint. Even so, it's the perfect option to serve as a base spirit in refreshing gin cocktails—especially if you're looking to put a flavorful twist on a Gimlet, Gin and Tonic, or French 75. The gin is slow distilled in copper pots, resting before being cut with water to ensure a high-caliber small-batch product.

Azar Family Brands produces Seersucker, and its Founder/Master Distiller Trey Azar says that "the driving force behind Seersucker Southern Style Gin was a desire to create a spirit that is approachable, easy to mix, and honestly, just great tasting." "We worked for more than a year to accomplish the perfect flavor profile that is light on the palate and has recognizable Southern flavors, yet still maintains the nuances that a gin drinker appreciates," Azar adds. You can drink Seersucker all year round, but we're voting it as our favorite spirit of the summer!

*A refreshing gin for hot, humid days below the Mason-Dixon line . . . or anywhere else. Smooth citrus nose; lush and generous with soft texture and lovely balance.*  
**92** —A.D.B., July 2017



AZAR FAMILY BRANDS

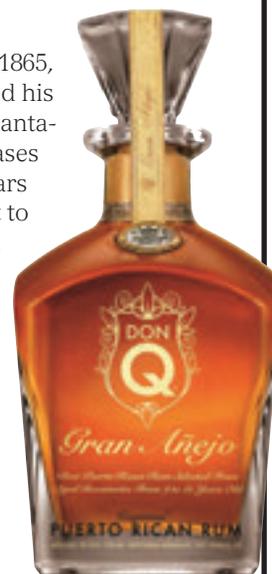


## MOST QUIXOTIC

### Don Q Rum

Don Q can trace its conception to 1865, when Don Juan Serrallés expanded his father's Puerto Rican sugarcane plantation to produce the family's first cases of rum. Since that moment 153 years ago, the brand's subsequent quest to make the perfect rum would seem idealistic to the point of unrealistic if it was not reinforced by a legacy of success. Don Q's undeniable dedication to quality encapsulates why we've named it the year's "Most Quixotic" brand.

With a commitment to the environment made evident by innovative waste reclamation processes, as well as a fierce loyalty to community of Ponce, Don Q continues to create a delicious range of rums while never losing sight of the vision of Don Quixote himself.



**Don Q 2007 Signature Release Single Barrel (\$40)** *A handsome hue of deep amber, the spirit's aromas of wheat bread, burnt orange, toffee, and peach tart zoom out of the glass. The unblended rum aged in American white oak offers body and structure with a curvy roundness. Apricot and butterscotch, meanwhile, add depth to a nectar-like mouthfeel. The touch of spice on the finish melds with orange peel and brown sugar.* **95** —M.M., June 2017

**Don Q Oak Barrel Spiced Rum (\$30)** *Made with three-year-old rum, nutmeg and allspice tickle the nose along with notes of orange pekoe tea and English toffee. On the palate, the smooth nature of this elegant creature sends up flavors of walnut, pears, honeyed toast, and ripe papaya. It's compelling and multi-layered, and gives you an entrée to the distinguished yet sippable side of rum.* **94** —M.M., June 2017



**Don Q Gran Añejo Rum (\$60)** *Warm cinnamon and mandarin notes lead from dry to sweet, while clove, cherry, coffee, vanilla, and roasted hazelnuts coat the palate. So rich and vigorous: add two ice cubes and you're sailing.* **93** —M.M., September 2017 ■■

# vinexpo newyork

vinexponeewyork.com

Experience the most dynamic wine and spirits trade event in the world's largest market

**SAVE \$50 ON REGISTRATION**

Use Code: **TASTINGPANEL**  
vinexponeewyork.com

**TWO DAYS OF**

Exhibitions / Tastings  
Conference Sessions / Master Classes  
Business Meetings & More!

**VINEXPO**  
THE WORLD OF WINE & SPIRITS  
Jointly organized with **diversified**  
CORPORATION

**VINEXPO**  
THE WORLD OF WINE & SPIRITS  
— MARCH 5 & 6 2018  
**NEW YORK**

# DO WHAT COMES NATURALLY

NO SUGAR ADDED. NO ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR. MIXED YOUR WAY



**ABSOLUT.**<sup>®</sup>  
OFFICIAL SPIRITS PARTNER

RECORDING ACADEMY  
**GRAMMY AWARDS** 60  
SUNDAY JAN 28 CBS

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY.

ABSOLUT® LIME, LIME FLAVORED VODKA, PRODUCT OF SWEDEN, 40% ALC./VOL. ©2018 IMPORTED BY ABSOLUT SPIRITS CO., NEW YORK, NY  
GRAMMY®, GRAMMY Awards® and the gramophone logo are registered trademarks of The Recording Academy®, and are used under license. ©2018 The Recording Academy.