

THE

tastingpanel

MAGAZINE

MODERN MOONSHINERS

INTRODUCING
OLES MOKY MOONSHINE'S
NEWEST BRAND
AMBASSADORS



OLE SMOKY'S MASTERS OF MOONSHINE convened at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains in May to immerse themselves in the history and culture of the Tennessee-based brand. Pictured clockwise from right are Carlos Ruiz, Kenny Strong, Madeline Bishop, and Ginny Edwards, Ole Smoky's first crop of Brand Ambassadors.

XXX

THE FOUR BRAND AMBASSADORS
LEARNED ALL ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES
TO REPRESENT OLE SMOKY WITH
HELP FROM THE COMPANY'S THREE
MASTER DISTILLERS: AUDIE KEAR,
ERIC VANCE, AND JASON KING.

XXX



TOKAJI ASZÚ



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THE tastingpanel

MAGAZINE

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Fringe Salon for
our Ole Smoky
cover shoot.

The World's Most Popular Wine

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony J. Sclafani". The signature is fluid and cursive, with varying line thicknesses.

In the hospitality business, you hear it all the time: “I’ll have a glass of Chardonnay, please.” Or, the more generic rendition: “I’ll have a white wine . . . [pause, as if a decision is being made] . . . Make it a Chardonnay.” (The decision was made in the car.)

Do not despair—it’s all part of the territory. Let’s face it: Chardonnay, that traditional Burgundian white variety, is the world’s most popular wine grape. The problem with this hardy variety, though, is that it doesn’t give a #&\$% where it grows. Sort of like that friend you had a secret crush on in college who’d seemingly flirt with anyone, just not with you.

Perhaps that’s an unfair comparison, though, as Chardonnay is in fact a noble variety of fine breeding. It produces some of the world’s greatest wines, among them Chablis, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet, and the Big Bopper itself, Le Montrachet. Notice I didn’t say “white wines,” as the aforementioned can hold up to the best of any color.

True, your average patron isn’t bellying up to the bar and ordering “Corton-Charlemagne,” as most will unfortunately take anything you give them. But since Chardonnay grows in a plethora of places around the world, it makes wines in an incredibly wide range of quality: It can be priced from \$5 to \$1,000 a bottle, and yes, it can taste like heaven or hell.

For those looking to break their customers out of this rut: What if you were to say, “Here, try this—if you don’t like it, it’s on me,” and hand them a glass of Albariño, Vermentino, or Grenache Blanc? What do you suppose the reaction would be? My guess is that nine out of ten would say, “That’s nice, I like it!” and perhaps branch out without any prompting next time. As for the outlier, give them their requested glass of Chardonnay and apologize. Some lost causes just can’t be helped. ■

UPfront

A Diamond DOWN UNDER

*Nobilo Marks 75
Years of Crafting
Wines from New
Zealand's Finest
Vineyards*



**Dave Edmonds is the Winemaker
for New Zealand's Nobilo Wines.**

by Courtney Schiessl



Equally likely to be found in boutique wine shops as chain supermarkets, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is one of the most ubiquitous wines in the world. But when the late Nikola Nobilo first planted vines on New Zealand's North Island 75 years ago, Sauvignon Blanc was virtually unheard of in the country's sparse vineyards—and it might have stayed that way if not for this forward-thinking vintner.

As the iconic Nobilo winery marks its diamond anniversary this year, it also celebrates the innovative vision and commitment to quality that puts Nobilo at the forefront of modern New Zealand winemaking. When Nikola immigrated to New Zealand with his wife Zuva from their native Croatia in 1936, they brought along 300 years of family winemaking history. Though the first grapevines were planted in New Zealand in 1819, a combination of the destructive phylloxera pest and legislative challenges hindered the development of the country's wine industry until

the 1970s, making Nikola one of New Zealand's earliest commercial vintners.

The first Nobilo vines were planted in Huapai, located northwest of Auckland, in 1943, but the winery has since become synonymous with Marlborough wines. That's because Nikola helped launch this now-blockbuster South Island region, which currently yields the fruit for all Nobilo wines: By the early 1970s, when other Marlborough projects were just getting off the ground, the seasoned vintner was encouraging other winemakers to eschew hybrid grape varieties in favor of more noble *Vitis vinifera* vines.

The two grapes in which Nikola saw great potential were Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. His vision clearly took root, as the varieties represent the two wines for which New Zealand is now known. Sauvignon Blanc in particular boomed internationally, as the variety comprised 86 percent of the country's wine exports in 2016, according to New Zealand Winegrowers. In recognition of Nikola's role in developing New Zealand's wine industry, he was awarded an Order of the British Empire medal before his death in 2007.

Classic Wines from Noble Grapes

Fittingly, Nobilo's wines center on the Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir grapes the winery's founder believed in early on. Current Winemaker Dave Edmonds upholds Nikola's vision to produce wines with freshness and balance, crafting three bottlings that express the diversity New Zealand—and the Marlborough region in particular—has to offer.

Though Marlborough is a familiar appellation on wine labels, there's more to this area than meets the eye. Located on the northeastern tip of the South Island, sunny, dry Marlborough



A piece of Nobilo history from the 1970s: Mark Nobilo was the former Vineyard Manager and youngest of founder Nikola's three sons, all of whom joined the family business.

is comprised of six subregions, each of which creates a nuanced style of wine. The most prominent of these areas are the Wairau and Awatere valleys, which is why Nobilo focuses on these two regions in particular.

The Wairau Valley tends to emphasize the characteristic tropical fruit notes of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, while the smaller Awatere Valley coaxes out the herbal side of the grape to produce wines with a fine thread of minerality. Nobilo slightly favors fruit from the Awatere Valley, which is responsible for creating the winery's signature bright, crisp-fruited, herbal-accented style of Sauvignon Blanc.

Known for its classic flavors and approachability, the top-selling Nobilo Sauvignon Blanc is crafted from fruit grown throughout Marlborough. It features everything New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc lovers have come to expect—ripe grapefruit, pineapple, and grassy green pepper notes—while remaining remarkably well-balanced. Though the palate is abundant in flavor, the finish is clean and cool with a snap of brightness that wholly refreshes.

If the Nobilo Sauvignon Blanc is about everyday value, Nobilo's Icon Collection aims to showcase the renowned quality



of Marlborough by sourcing from the region's best vineyards. The Nobilo Icon Sauvignon Blanc, the flagship wine of the estate, is primarily crafted from grapes in the Wairau, Rapaura, and Awatere subregions. By blending fruit from several areas, the finished wine combines their attributes to balance full, round fruit with lifting acidity.

While Sauvignon Blanc is certainly the breakout star of New Zealand winemaking, Pinot Noir is one of the fastest-growing segments of the country's production and export markets. The award-winning Nobilo Icon Pinot Noir exemplifies Marlborough's phenomenal ability to produce a cool-climate wine with sunny fruit flavors

and fine acidity. Edmonds specifically seeks out vineyards with more difficult growing conditions in order to create a more complex Pinot Noir accented with spice and berries.

Some might assume that as Nobilo moves into the next 75 years of winemaking, it would feel pressure to reinvent itself in order to stay current. On the contrary, the estate aims to continue upholding the ideals behind its steady ascent in the New Zealand wine industry. Inventive winemaking, a commitment to quality, and a mission to showcase the best of Marlborough's vineyards in all their diverse excellence: Those priorities will propel Nobilo—and New Zealand—forward. ■



Nobilo's Sauvignon Blanc, Icon Pinot Noir, and Icon Sauvignon Blanc are all produced from grapes grown in the Wairau and Awatere valleys in Marlborough, New Zealand.



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PHOTO: VAN GALICK

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in growing my American
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put my favorite cocktail
on your menu?

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-Tito

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company staple. The
orange adds a bit of
sweetness, the lime
adds a bit of tartness,
and mixed together it
tastes fresh and clean.



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Rhone Rangers Announce New Executive Director

This June, the Board of Directors for the Rhone Rangers—a national nonprofit dedicated to wine education and the promotion of American Rhône varietals—named Kim Murphy-Rodrigues as their new Executive Director.

Rodrigues is an industry veteran with experience in general management, new business development, and marketing in both the wine and produce industries. She has worked with notable wineries such as Wild Horse, Robert Hall, and Summerwood Winery & Inn. “As the Rhone Rangers celebrate 20 years of promoting American Rhône wines, I am thrilled to share their mission in educating wine enthusiasts about the incredible nuances of Rhône varietals and opening doors to the next generation of winemakers, viticulturists, and wine business professionals,” Rodrigues said in a statement.



Michter's to Hold First 10 Year Rye Release in More Than a Year

Michter's Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann has approved the 2018 release of Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Rye. Shipments of the 2018 release began in early July amid a continuing shortage of Michter's whiskey. "We have been expanding our operations, but great whiskey takes time," says Michter's President Joseph J. Magliocco. "At Michter's, we've made a conscious decision to continue to take the costly and time-consuming steps we do rather than adopt practices that would increase our supply more quickly."

The suggested U.S. retail price for a 750-milliliter bottle of Michter's 10 Year Rye is \$160.





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Giovanna, Riana, Alycia, and Angelina Mondavi served as the honorary chairs of the 38th annual Auction Napa Valley charity event in early June.

More Than \$13.6 Million Raised at 38th Annual Auction Napa Valley

At the slam of the last gavel on June 2, just over \$13.6 million dollars had been raised during the 38th annual Auction Napa Valley charity event. This year's honorary chairs were sisters Angelina, Alycia, Riana, and Giovanna Mondavi, fourth-generation members of the iconic winemaking family.

At Saturday's live barrel auction, U.S. Congressman Mike Thompson greeted guests with glasses of Charles Krug Sauvignon Blanc. Of the 110 specially made lots of prime Napa Valley Cabernet available for guests to bid on, most were primarily Cabernet or Cabernet blends from the 2016 vintage.

VGS Chateau Potelle was the top earner, raking in \$114,300. Other standouts were Will Harlan's 2016 The Mascot (\$47,200); Chappellet Vineyard Pritchard 49 (\$38,550); Peju's masterfully crafted The Experiment; Stewart Cellars' absolutely stunning Beckstoffer George III; Nell Côte, made by rising-star wine-maker Ry Richards; Mi Sueno by Napa legend Roland Herrera; and a dynamite Block 5 bottling by Frank Family. Samantha Rudd of Rudd Oakville Estate also announced a \$1 million contribution from the Rudd Foundation in honor of her father, the late Leslie Rudd.

—Jonathan Cristaldi

Christopher Harris Takes Over the Wine Program at Chicago's Michelin-Starred Entente

Christopher Harris may be young, but he's making a name for himself in Chicago's restaurant scene. After developing the wine list for the two-Michelin-starred restaurant Smyth + The Loyalist, Harris is taking control of the wine program at Chicago's Michelin-starred Entente.

According to Harris, Entente's wine program is focused, fun, and approachable. "We strive for balance between classic producers as well as those who are emerging into their limelight," he says of the carefully curated list.



Napa Valley Boutique Wine Tours Aim to Offer Guests Rare and Memorable Experiences

Andrew Kiken, a former partner and Sales Director at Reverie Winery, is putting his Napa knowledge to work with his company Boutique Wine Tours. Kiken says he aims to create memorable interactions between clients, winery owners, and winemakers rather than just following a tasting-room route as Napa Valley Boutique Wine Tours seeks to network with local sommeliers to create lasting partnerships and positive guest experiences. For information, visit hiddenwinetours.com. ■

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Michael's Head Chef Miles Thompson's newest happy hour menu features a sandwich with muffuletta from Santa Monica butchers Peads and Barnetts.

Classic Santa Monica Restaurants Highlight Revamped Spring Menus

On an unassuming strip of Olympic Boulevard in Santa Monica stands a pink building with a neon cocktail sign. Even though the Buffalo Club opened in 1994, the restaurant and bar evoke an era reminiscent of the early 1960s: Entering the building feels like taking a step onto the set of *Mad Men* given the dark, romantic lighting, white tablecloths, and leather banquets. I wouldn't have batted an eye if Don Draper himself had been sitting at the bar in one of his signature suits, smoking a cigarette and drinking a whiskey neat.

The Buffalo Club's cocktail menu is an homage to pre-Prohibition cocktails, including expertly made Manhattans and Aviations. Executive Chef Patrick Healy's recently

revamped food menu also adheres to classics like cassoulet or tableside boeuf bourguignon, which he learned to make with help from Julia Child herself. For those seeking something a little more modern, a burrata and beet salad or grilled Thai snapper can also be found on the menu. Go for the atmosphere—stay for the drinks!

Meanwhile, down by the beach, fine-dining restaurant 1 Pico in the chic Santa Monica hotel Shutters on the Beach recently welcomed new Chef de Cuisine David Almany, formerly of Osteria Mozza in L.A. and Singapore. While hotel fare can often be staid and boring, the new menu at the 25-year-old establishment spotlights fresh seafood and Mediterranean flavors through striking dishes like squid ink chitarra, spot prawns, and

chili flakes or New Zealand grouper with a spicy tomato marmalade, tahini, and oregano. With a bar menu featuring seasonal cocktails and a section dedicated to Margaritas—we're partial to the Japanese with Kikori Whiskey, El Silencio Mezcal, and yuzu liqueur—and a picture-perfect view of the beach, 1 Pico is a must for summer dining.

Finally, with young Head Chef Miles Thompson's recent nomination for the James Beard Rising Star Chef award and all the accompanying buzz, you'd think classic eatery Michael's was the hottest new restaurant opening in the city. A recent visit for happy hour on a Tuesday meant a packed bar, which is understandable given the daily \$1.79 cocktail (one per guest, please) and casual, tasty dishes like Sichuan pork dumplings with black vinegar sauce and a sandwich featuring muffuletta from local butchers Peads and Barnetts. A special Negroni was also being served in honor of Negroni Week.

Happy hour soon shifted to a sampling of some of Thompson's newest dinner dishes, including peruviana beans with black sesame, cherries, and chili oil and pappardelle with rabbit legs, thyme, and porcini. And no meal at Michael's would be complete without the fantastic pork collar, currently on the menu in a new iteration with sword lettuce tonnato, pickled wasabi, and black vinegar. ■

—Jesse Hom-Dawson

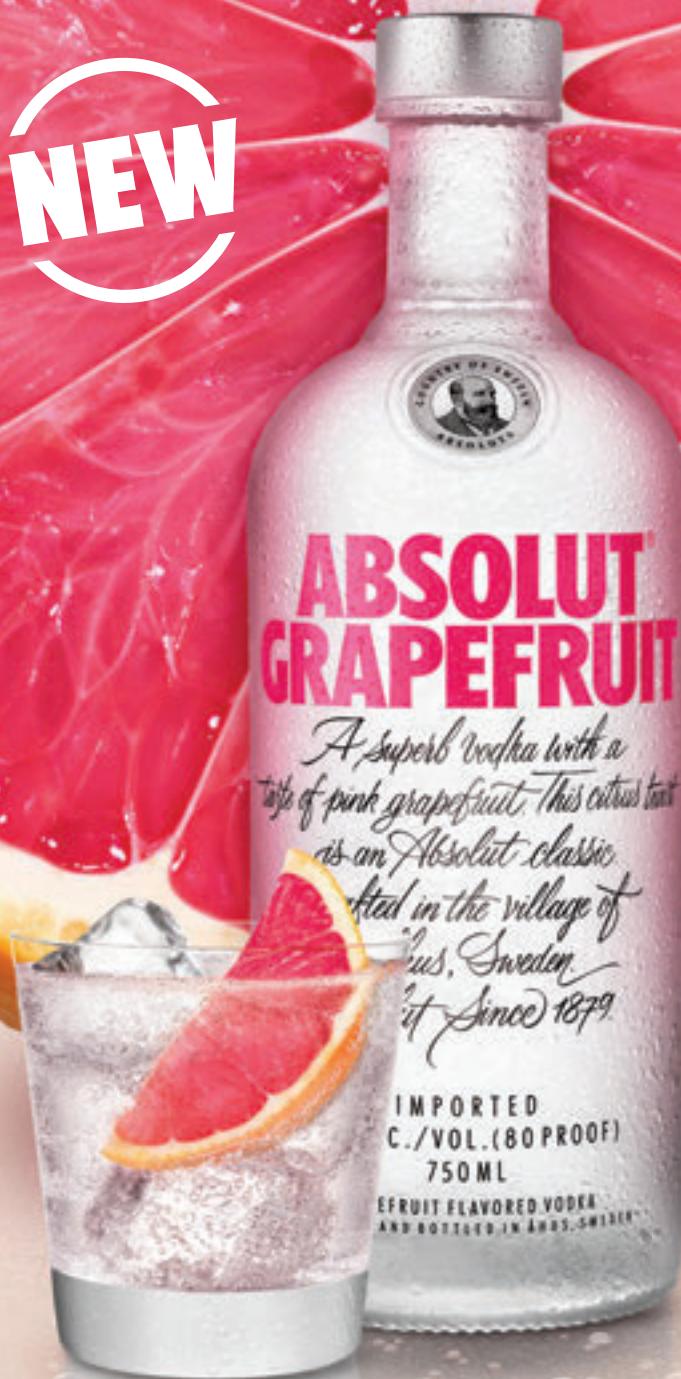


Fresh seafood dishes like squid ink chitarra with spot prawns are the focal point at 1 Pico in Santa Monica, CA.

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The Ransom Note is a monthly column by The Tasting Panel's East Coast Editor, David Ransom. Each month, David connects readers with some of the people, products, and events making news along the Eastern Seaboard.



PHOTO: MEGAN DEANGELO

Breakout Sparklers for Summer Sipping

A lineup of Trentodoc wines from Italy's Trentino region.



PHOTO: DAVID RANSOM

Claudia Manetta of La Marca with the new Luminore Prosecco Superiore DOCG.

Summer might be the most fitting time of year to relax with a glass of sparkling wine you don't have to think too hard about—but that doesn't mean you can't think about the wine's attributes at all. Last month I tried a number of wonderful sparkling wines that gave me pause as I dwelled on their merits.

First, I got to spend some time with the wonderful, quality-driven Trentodoc *metodo classico* wines (with various producers, prices, and importers) of northern Italy's Trentino region. No indigenous grapes here: Instead, these wines are made primarily from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and age beautifully, making them more akin to the wines of Lombardy's Franciacorta than the Veneto's Prosecco.

Sparkling wine production in Trentino dates back to the early 20th century, when Giulio Ferrari started making *metodo classico* wines in the region. In 1993, Trentodoc became the first wine of its kind granted DOC status in Italy, and 51 producers are currently involved with the Istituto Trento Doc, the region's promotional body. For more information, visit trentodoc.com.

Speaking of Prosecco, I spent a delightful cocktail hour with La Marca Prosecco's Claudia Manetta to celebrate the launch of

Luminore, a limited-release Prosecco imported by E. & J. Gallo from Italy's highest-quality designation of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG. At an SRP of \$30, Luminore is a next-level sparkling wine from the leading Prosecco brand in the U.S. market. It shows pleasant notes of green apple and is geared toward the fine wine retail and on-premise market.

Finally, at an awards dinner sponsored by Wines of Bordeaux at Chef Marcus Samuelsson's Red Rooster in Harlem, I tried a delightful Crémant de Bordeaux rosé from producer Jaillance (the wine is imported by Baron Francois). Crémant de Bordeaux gained AOC status in 1990, and the Cuvée de l'Abbaye Brut Rosé (\$15) is vinified in the *méthode traditionelle* style from handpicked Merlot. Aged 18 months before release, this salmon-colored bubbly is everything a summer sparkler should be: light, refreshing, and incredibly versatile. ■



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*Food & Wine, 2009 | Wine Enthusiast, 2014

CHARLES SMITH WINES



Beverage Director Alex Bell and co-owner Marco Fiorilo at Aviary Wine & Kitchen in Austin, TX.

Spreading Their Wine Wings

AUSTIN'S AVIARY WINE & KITCHEN BOASTS A DIVERSE LIST OF ECLECTIC BOTTLEDGS *story and photo by Lori Moffatt*

On a sun-splashed corner of South Lamar Boulevard in Austin, Texas, turquoise walls, peacock taxidermy, and vivid paintings by local artists set an eccentric stage for an equally eclectic international wine list at the recently revamped Aviary Wine & Kitchen.

Seated at tables or at the blond butcher-block bar top within view of the open kitchen, guests mingle with sommeliers as Beverage Director Alex Bell and co-owner Marco Fiorilo pour Moroccan red blends, Greek Xinomavro, Spanish Parellada, and other intriguing options you'd be hard-pressed to find elsewhere in the city. "I put myself through college working with wine in fine-dining restaurants, but it wasn't until I spent a year in Rome that the passion took over," Bell says. "Wine came to represent romanticism, poeticism, and history—and it's the only working time machine I'll ever have access to."

After earning a degree in creative writing, Bell honed his wine chops at Tria in Philadelphia and Max's

Wine Dive in Austin before taking the Beverage Director position at Aviary. "At Tria, they approached wine in a comfortable, inviting, engaging way. They celebrated the great three fermentables—wine, beer, and cheese—and I've taken that with me," he explains. "At Max's, I helped build their wine-training program, the bulk of which I brought to Aviary. You can't run a space with so many esoteric, unusual wines without a solid foundation of education. We've opened up every single bottle of our list of 120-plus [wines] to our staff."

Fiorilo says as vendors get excited about new offerings at the restaurant, they "oftentimes bring [the Aviary team] new bottles first." "They're not afraid the wine is going to stagnate here," he adds. "Our servers have the skills to get behind a wine, explain it, and really sell it."

While Fiorilo's an outspoken Bordeaux enthusiast who's currently giving his palate a break with colder-climate whites like Grenache Blanc, Bell's heart still belongs to Italy. Neither

obsession prevents them, however, from offering "a lot of diversity in the list," Bell says. "We want to push boundaries, excite and ignite our guests, and challenge their palates with things like rustic field blends, unfiltered wines, and spontaneous fermentation."

A monthly wine class for guests delves into these topics while also exploring categories like Champagne, rosé, and other varieties with special meaning to the team. "When we opened in 2006, we started with quite a bit of French wine on the menu, and that hasn't changed," Fiorilo says. "After all, can you ever have too much French wine?"

For more on Aviary Wine & Kitchen, visit aviarywinekitchen.com. ■

Freelance writer and agave lover Lori Moffatt covered Texas travel topics for more than two decades at Texas Highways, the state's award-winning monthly travel magazine. When she's not writing about cocktails, wine, art, and pop culture from her home in Austin, she's traveling, making art, and practicing Spanish.



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94 POINTS **WINE ENTHUSIAST**

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Please drink responsibly.

Facing our food (literally): Tasting Panel Managing Editor Jesse Hom-Dawson (right) butchers up some pork chops with Electric City Butcher instructor Steve Sabicer as a Duroc pig head looks on.



PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWMING

Face Your Food: In Defense of Hands-On Meat Eating

by Jesse Hom-Dawson

As *The Tasting Panel*'s resident epicure and the descendant of a long line of Chinese chefs, I have strong opinions in the kitchen (and out, but that's another story). That's why we're introducing this monthly column, **Cheat on This**, to delve into some of the issues, trends, and events impacting kitchens and tabletops around the country.

As an avid carnivore, I understand that eating meat comes with certain responsibilities. Environmental impact and sustainable farming practices are important factors in deciding where our meat comes from, but I believe there's another aspect that's often overlooked: respecting the animals we eat.

I've encountered many meat eaters who are repelled by the sight of an uncooked steak or a whole fish but would chow down on chicken nuggets without a second thought. They seem to believe that as long as the meat doesn't blatantly look like an animal, it's fair game, but avoiding the fact that we're eating something that was once alive only distances us from reality while making ethical consumption

harder to achieve. I believe we should see the animal at all stages—alive, dead, butchered, and in its final cuts—as often as possible to be informed of the process it takes to feed ourselves. It's a hardline notion, but if you can't face your food, perhaps you shouldn't be eating it in the first place.

It's easy to talk the talk, but in order to walk the walk, I recently attended a butchery class at Electric City Butcher in Santa Ana, California, to get up close and personal with my favorite meat: pork. While I've butchered a few pig parts in my time, I'm always willing to learn from the masters, so I arrived to the class with an open mind and an empty stomach. There, half of a Duroc pig—along with its head—awaited us on the worktop table. Electric City Butcher sources its pigs from two Northern California establishments: Stemple Creek Ranch, where animals are 100 percent grass-fed, and Rancho Llano Seco, which specializes in grain-fed pigs.

Under the guidance of co-owner Michael Puglisi and fellow instructor

Steve Sabicer, we first learned the difference between primal, sub-primal, and fabricated (or secondary) cuts. After the sub-primal cuts are further broken down, they're sent to restaurants and retail stores, while the fabricated cuts are sold to the consumer as chops, tenderloin, bacon, and other household meat products.

Puglisi and Sabicer also made sure to explain that Electric City practices "whole-animal" butchering, meaning they use as much of the animal as possible in sausages, pâté, head cheese, and other products to minimize waste.

The level of transparency seen through hands-on experiences like this allow us to form a closer connection to our food (the added benefit of supporting small businesses while joining in Electric City's mission to reduce waste doesn't hurt, either). With our busy lives, it's unrealistic for us to face our food every day, but it's important to recognize what our meals consist of and where they come from if we want to maintain a diet that's not only healthy, but conscious as well. ■

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Scotch Makes Bold Moves for Summer

by Ian Buxton

How do you follow up a scenario where a single bottle of your malt whisky sells at auction for just over \$1 million—and moments later another is knocked down for a cool \$1.1 million?

These weren't any old whiskies, of course, but two of the rarest and most sought-after releases from the iconic Macallan distillery. Distilled in 1926, they were bottled at 60 years old with labels designed by British pop artist Sir Peter Blake and Italy's Valerio Adami. Only 12 of each were produced, and they've turned out to be the most extraordinary investment imaginable: Buyers at Bonhams Hong Kong dug deep in their pockets to secure these rarities.

So now the distillery has announced a limited release of an even older single malt: The Macallan 72 Years Old in Lalique – The Genesis Decanter (42% ABV). Just 600 bottlings will be available worldwide at a suggested retail price of \$60,000 each. Beyond the meticulous packaging, the whisky, according to the distillery, is "reminiscent of a time gone by [and] carries an exquisite balance of strong, sweet oak with the peaty spirit shaping its refined character." Hard though it is to imagine, I presume at least some of the hand-blown decanters will be opened; most, however, will be bought as investments or trophies with the hope of a stellar future return.



The occasion for the release of this venerable spirit is the opening of the remarkable new Macallan distillery in Speyside. It's certainly the most expensive and visually dramatic Scotch whisky distillery ever built: Designed by internationally renowned architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, the new building incorporates a visitor centre and fits spectacularly—if subtly—into the surrounding landscape of rolling hills. Visitor numbers are projected to double.

The project, which reputedly over-shot its budget considerably with a completed cost somewhere in excess of \$185 million, is either a remarkable statement of confidence in the long-term future of Scotch whisky in general and the brand in particular, or something of an act of corporate vanity. It allows Macallan to take a leadership position in luxury brand marketing and, if required, increase production by up to one-third to meet anticipated demand for the next decade.

Critics will be looking for the brand to falter, but the evidence of the past two decades shows the Macallan team has a remarkable knack for calling future markets and anticipating consumer trends. It will be fascinating to watch the industry reaction both in private and in public, as well as the performance at auction when the first Genesis Decanter appears for resale.

Meanwhile, Elixir Distillers, soon to build its own new Islay distillery, has announced an extension of its core range of Islay single malt Scotch whisky brand, Port Askaig. Two new whiskies will be available through ImpEx Beverages in the United States, with the Port Askaig 8 Year Old aged in refill American oak casks (45.8% ABV; \$65) and a limited-edition 14 Year Old

aged in bourbon barrels (just 420 bottles; 45.8% ABV; \$100).

Finally, also arriving soon from Islay are new Port Charlotte expressions and packaging from Bruichladdich. I hope to taste and report back next issue. ■■



Built into the surrounding landscape, the new Macallan distillery in Speyside is a design marvel that cost in excess of \$185 million.



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The seven-drink cocktail flight at José Andrés' barmini is a nostalgic look back to childhood.



PHOTO: REY LOPEZ

Stirring Up Summer

How do you follow up one of the most popular eateries in all of Washington, D.C.? With another one, of course. Rose Previte's international street food at Compass Rose has been a neighborhood staple for four years, and her second restaurant, Maydan, fuses North African and Middle Eastern cuisine.

I was the (very grateful) plus-one of a good friend and fellow booze writer recently for dinner, when we grabbed a table overlooking the fire pit that serves as the restaurant's focal point. The space is gorgeous—exposed brick, copper touches, and vibrant dry-brushed walls—but not as stunning as the food and drink itself. The Za'atar, an herbal take on the Martini, features local products District Distilling Co. Wild June Gin and Capitoline Blanc Vermouth, as well as a handful of sumac and thyme, a spritz of argan oil, and an olive garnish. Whatever you decide food-wise, get #AllTheCondiments so you can dip everything from grilled eggplant to lamb kebabs in harissa, chermoula, and other delicious options. The skin-contact section of the wine list, meanwhile, offers funky orange wines from Georgia and Greece.

It was a flavorful, fun culinary trip of a night, but let's face it: Most of the time adulting is no picnic, and sometimes we crave those carefree days of childhood. Fortunately, the team at José Andrés' barmini has created a whimsical seven-cocktail flight that taps into that thirst for nostalgia. The carrot- and ginger-based jarmini comes in a baby food jar topped with a sugar snap pea espuma, while the Abracadabra with honey vodka, Singani, coconut, lavender, and lemongrass finds its magic in the form of color-morphing butterfly pea flower and ice cubes that instantly form from water poured into a metal canister. (I'm still scratching my head over that last bit.)

For the Saturday Morning Cartoons cocktail, my friend and I were given boxes of Chef Crunch cereal to pour into bowls containing brandy, black walnut, cereal milk, and vanilla (yes, we ate it all with a spoon). And after building a path for our Lego minifigure, we were rewarded with a smoky, spicy mezcal and amaro libation, its surface frozen over with liquid nitrogen.

So many fabulous women work within the city's beverage industry, and I was lucky to moderate a recent panel featuring three of them during the latest installment of "What She Said" at the POV lounge in the W Hotel. Emily Bruno, founder and Director of Business Operations at Denizens Brewing Company; Rachel Gardner, co-founder and Head Distiller at Republic Restoratives Distillery; and Maydan's Previte talked about the paths to their respective careers, challenges they continue to face, and the future of women leading in the workplace. Spoiler alert: It looks to be as strong and vibrant as a finely crafted Negroni. ■■■

FUNKY DRINKS,
MOLECULAR MIXOLOGY,
AND A PANEL OF DC'S
FEMALE BEVERAGE PROS
HAS US THIRSTY FOR
MORE THIS MONTH

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS



PHOTO: JAKE EEMEN

An herbal take on the Martini: the Za'atar at Maydan featuring gin, vermouth, sumac, thyme, and argan oil.

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, kellymagyarics.com, or on Twitter and Instagram @kmagyrics.

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Movers & Shakers

ForceBrands is the leading recruiting and staffing firm for the beverage, food, and beauty industries. We offer executive recruiting services, board of director assembly, and industry-specific job boards including BevForce—which connects global beverage companies with future leaders.

Elizabeth E. Jackson has been named Regional Manager at **Swish Beverages**. She had been Regional Manager at Purity Vodka AB.

Sheila Sandine has been named Market Manager at **Stillhouse Spirits Co.** She had been State Brand Ambassador-Licor 43 at Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits.

Dan Liguori has been named Vice President/General Manager—Spirits at **Mark Anthony Group**. He had been CEO at Zodiac Spirits Inc.

Vincent Cruz has been named Global Director of Supply Chain at **Mikkeller**. He had been Vice President of Supply Chain at Hu Kitchen | Hu Products.

CAREER CORNER

Three Ways Recent Graduates Can Make Their Candidacy Stand Out to Employers

If you recently threw your graduation cap skyward in celebration of your new diploma, you may already be thinking about your next venture—or, more specifically, planning exactly where you'll be putting your degree to work.

Read on for some pro-tips on how to make yourself stand out as an entry-level job seeker. And whether you're entering the workforce for the first time or are a seasoned professional, you may also stand to benefit from additional education.

BE SPECIFIC: One of the biggest mistakes candidates make when applying for a role is speaking too generally and expressing how "open to anything" they may be in their job search. Specify your conversation to the role and to the company, research the employer in advance, and ask questions that are closely related to the job description.

KNOW YOUR SKILLS: This sounds intuitive enough, but entry-level candidates can sometimes have a difficult time seeing how their education can transfer directly into the workplace. Even if a candidate has no work experience, they can easily rely on skills they've learned during team sports or other leadership opportunities. In other words, be confident and leverage the experience you've gained outside the classroom.

INCLUDE A COVER LETTER: It's a good rule of thumb to always include a cover letter when applying for a role, but this is especially key when you have a lean resume. If you don't have the experience or location that meets a job's given requirements, you must explain in detail why you want to work there and/or if you have plans to relocate. This will not only make you stand out but will greatly increase your chances of getting a call from the employer. Remember, your cover letter tells the story your resume can't. ■■

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Eric Pfeil

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AT
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Success doesn't happen overnight in this industry, but it does happen with consistent dedication to service.”

As the Executive Vice President on the leadership team at Breakthru Beverage Florida, Eric Pfeil supports the company's core operations and strategic vision. Get an inside look into what it's like to help lead one of the top North American distributors of the world's leading luxury and premium wine, spirits, and beer brands.

ForceBrands: What do you find most rewarding about your role as Executive Vice President at Breakthru Beverage Florida?

Eric Pfeil: I love watching successful people take great brands and programming and drive more success. I enjoy working with our suppliers to develop sustainable programming, which drives brand volume and growth, and then putting these programs into place. From there, it's very impressive to watch our teams go out to our customers and activate these programs successfully.

FB: How do you describe the culture at Breakthru and what attracted you to it?

EP: Aggressive. Determined. Never-lose attitude. The success of our culture is driven by people who work together to drive our suppliers, initiatives, and brands.

FB: What advice do you have for job seekers looking to join the beverage industry?

EP: We have an incredible industry. Every day, it's something different; it's not sitting at a desk—it's getting out working with the customer, driving initiatives, building rapport, and making lasting relationships. Success doesn't happen overnight in this industry, but it does happen with consistent dedication to service.

FB: And lastly, just for fun, describe your ideal happy hour—what are you drinking and where are you drinking it?

EP: I love sitting around with people who really enjoy each other's company—laughing, discussing, and coming up with ideas. Depending on the mood, my ideal drink is either tequila or whiskey, followed by wine . . . or it's wine followed by tequila or whiskey! ■

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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.



BRAITHE TIDWELL

Wine Director at Brennan's Restaurant in New Orleans, LA

Open since 1946, Brennan's is a legendary institution in New Orleans. How have you maintained tradition through your wine selections while also keeping the list relevant?

Brennan's cellar has a long and rich history, and we are lucky enough to have some old wine lists in the cellar dating back 40–50 years to see what the focus of the program was back then in its original glory. Burgundy and Bordeaux have always had a large prominence on the list, and since New Orleans loves its French wines—particularly Burgundy—Brennan's has one of the most diverse collections of Burgundy in the country. The other side of the list, however, needs to be competitive, thoughtful, and innovative. With tourists coming into the city from all over the world, it's important that we are relevant to everyone who wants to enjoy wine at Brennan's.

Executive Chef Slade Rushing's Creole menu features influences of French and Spanish ancestry. What is your strategy when picking wines that will pair well with such rich flavors?

I love working with Slade! He and his wonderful wife, Allison, are a very important part of the culinary community here in New Orleans. When it comes to pairing, we've developed a good language with each other. Slade is very good at finding buzzwords that describe the flavors of his dishes, which allows me to understand the focal points of each dish and begin to build the flavors and nuances of a wine around his words. I'm very lucky to be working at the "Champagne House of the South." Our wine list has a multitude of the Grand Marques of Champagne, Grower Champagne, and sparkling wines from around the world. When all else fails, I know I can always pair with a fantastic bottle of bubbles!

BEN SCHRADER

Creative Director of Scratch Restaurant Group in Los Angeles, CA

How did you first get into bartending and managing?

My passion for cocktails began when I was living in New York City. A close friend and I would host cocktail soirees in his apartment in Astoria in Queens after coming home from performing our respective Broadway shows. We would invite a small group of people over every Sunday night and offer a limited menu of what we were experimenting with that week, essentially doing a cocktail tasting for friends. Tending bar was akin to hosting and performing, so I took to it quickly.

You personally oversee the bar at Sushi I Bar, an eight-top, speakeasy-style sushi joint that offers a 17-course tasting menu. What philosophy do you have when it comes to creating drink pairings?

My approach is similar to a chef combining ingredients for a recipe. If I start with blueberries, for instance, I know that a cloudy nigori sake will take on the color and flavor of those mild berries beautifully. Sage and pine pair nicely with blueberry, so the next step is figuring out how to incorporate them into the mix so we have a cocktail that's undeniably new and unmistakably Japanese. With pairing sake, it's really just about understanding the nature of the varietal you're pouring. When we serve a fatty toro sushi, for instance, it's paired with our Chikurin Junmai Ginjo, a sake with a higher acidity. That acid combined with the fattiness of the fish creates an explosion of flavor that can't be beaten. ■■



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN SCHRADER

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@chefroll.com.



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Five Minutes With...

ITALIAN WINE CENTRAL
CO-FOUNDER/EDUCATION
DIRECTOR

Geralyn Brostrom

by Michelle Metter



Geralyn Brostrom is the co-founder and Education Director of Italian Wine Central (IWC), an online resource and provider of the Italian Wine Professional certification. Brostrom also serves on the Board of Advisors for SommCon and will be leading talks on Italian wine at SommCon Washington, D.C. this month and SommCon San Diego in November.

As an educator, what role do you feel technology plays in the way wine professionals learn today?

I see technology interwoven every day, from students taking classes online to them accessing information from around the world to inform their studies and their work. That said, the human element still reigns supreme and wine is a great medium

for the old and the new to exist side by side. People long to taste together even if one student is in Rome and the other in Nashville.

How do you think technology shapes the way sommeliers interact with and make recommendations for their customers?

Platforms such as SevenFifty and the multitude of apps that aggregate data—both regarding product availability as well as consumer-preference side—can help somms be more efficient and have informed conversations with customers.

Why did you choose a career in education?

I've always gotten a thrill from helping others learn and seeing that look in their eyes when they ultimately "get it." I like breaking down complex ideas and sorting through mountains of information, reorganizing it, and presenting it in an understandable way. That's also the way I learn.

Who do you see taking part in the certificate study for the Italian Wine Professional credential you offer?

Mainly working professionals who need more Italian wine knowledge to be successful and credible in their jobs. Second to that are serious enthusiasts.

Why Italy as the cornerstone of the education you offer?

Three reasons: First, explaining to others the sheer diversity that Italy has to offer makes it a natural fit for my intellectual side. Second, I had been working with Italian wine in earnest since 2002 and when I went out on my own, my colleagues kept asking for it! And third, as an Italian citizen, all things Italy feel like a second skin to me.

What is a common misperception about Italian wine you wish people would forget?

That Italian wine is just too complicated to learn—it is complex, but completely manageable.

Where do you think the growth opportunities are for educators in the industry?

I would say there is a huge opportunity for people who are educated about wine in buying, selling, and marketing, especially in brand management. Brand managers who know their product and how it fits into the product landscape, who can also communicate that in an effective and memorable way, will find lots of opportunity.

If you were to give a book out of your library to a fellow wine professional, what would it be?

A book on humor—I am fascinated by the study of humor. We simply don't laugh enough.

You have five minutes and one glass of wine. Who are you with, what are you drinking, and what's playing?

My husband, Rosato, and Ella Fitzgerald. ■■

The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal are proud to serve as the media sponsors of SommCon D.C. (July 22–24) and SommCon San Diego (November 14–16). For schedule and registration details, visit sommconusa.com.



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WHAT WE'RE

Eating

Vive la France

THE RETURN OF THE CLASSIC FRENCH BISTRO IN AMERICAN DINING by Merrill Shindler

There was a time when those of us who eat for a living were confidently reporting that French cooking was as dead in the culinary centers of America as Napoleon's horse. Sushi was everywhere, regional American cooking was the culinary wave of the future, and Italian had kicked French out of the top spot when it comes to special-occasion dining. But, as ever, the wheel spun around, and the classic bistro roared back to draw crowds who act as if they've never seen steak frites before. And honestly, they've been missed. Welcome back, beef tartare—where you been all this time?

Restaurateur Stephen Starr's Le Diplomate in Washington, D.C., may well be the most bistro-ish restaurant this side of Chez L'Ami Louis in Paris. When you enter, the first thing you see is a large table covered with bread, behind which a fellow spends the entire evening slicing the selections and placing them in baskets. The menu is a compendium of French Bistro Greatest Hits, with cassoulet on Wednesdays and bouillabaisse on Fridays (naturally, there's also escargots à la

Bourguignonne, onion soup gratinée, moules-frites, and skate Grenobloise). You can sit inside or stretch outside along the sidewalk where buskers perform; the Eiffel Tower may not be in sight, but the Washington Monument is near.

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, where French cuisine had presumably faded into distant memory, chefs Ludo Lefebvre, Jon Shook, and Vinny Dotolo have been swimming against the current: first with their tiny, prix-fixe storefront Trois Mec and now with Petit Trois, their full-service bistro in the San Fernando Valley (it follows a much-smaller Hollywood location of the same name).

Breakfast diners can begin their day with a "Mec Muffin" of Parisian ham and American cheese, salmon rillette on a baguette, or a confit chicken leg under a mountain of frisée. As the day goes along, there's a Big Mec double cheeseburger, and for those living large, there's Brittany wild sole meunière with rice pilaf and lemon brown butter for \$89. It takes 30 min-

The Mec Muffin with Parisian ham and American cheese at the new Petit Trois in Southern California's San Fernando Valley.

utes to prepare, allowing you to work your way through a half-liter carafe of blanc, rose, or rouge before your food arrives. Finally, Michael Mina's Margeaux Brasserie can be found in the Waldorf Astoria Chicago, which means you don't have to venture far off the map. Indeed, the décor is pretty darned elegant for a brasserie, which is traditionally more a place to go for drinks than for food. But Chicago isn't Paris, in either actuality or appetite, so this brasserie serves a full selection of dishes in Midwestern-sized portions.

There's a côte de boeuf with shallot confit and roasted garlic served for two (though it will probably feed four), and the steaks run from filet mignon, to coulotte and New York strip. Dover sole meunière is served whole and roasted, while dry-aged Rohan duck breast (bred by D'Artagnan) is given a multinational touch with both French chanterelles and Michigan cherries. And on the cheese front, there's a baguette appetizer slathered with truffle butter, garlic confit, and melted camembert. I love cheese enough to consider ordering the dish for dessert: It would look great with a maraschino cherry on top. ■■

PHOTO: KRISSEY LEFFEBVRE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARGEAUX BRASSERIE



Steak is the star of the show at Michael Mina's Margeaux Brasserie in the Waldorf Astoria Chicago.

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INVIGORATING OFFERINGS

by Izzy Watson

Hungary truly distinguishes itself from other European destinations in terms of thermal water erupting from under its surface. Approximately 1,450 sources can be found across the country. The capital Budapest itself is a miracle of nature; thanks to the more than 100 thermal water sources and roughly two dozen thermals baths within the city borders, the city is known as “the spa capital of the world.”

Hungarian viniculture is nonetheless as important as thermalism, and wines coming from the country’s various terroirs show a diversity that is rare indeed. A myriad of styles and tastes make Hungary one of the most complex wine-producing countries in the world.

Most tourists arrive in Budapest, so why not enjoy what the spa capital has to offer in terms of thermal water and wine? The presence of Neo-Baroque and Art Nouveau architecture and design is exemplified in a variety of styles; two of the city’s most popular baths were built during these periods (Neo-Baroque style for Széchenyi and Art Nouveau for the Gellért Bath). Any wine from any Hungarian region would serve as a satisfying choice after a healing bath-

ing program, and the capital offers a plethora of options in its wine bars and fine-dining restaurants.

Next is Lake Hévíz—located near Lake Balaton’s western end—which claims the title of the largest thermal lake in Europe. Hévíz not only offers beautiful scenery with floating water lilies and rising steam, but aims to provide renewal of both body and soul. While visiting Balaton, drink Olaszrizling (Welschriesling), Pinot Gris, or wine from a Hungarian indigenous type, Kéknyelű—which comes from dolomite or basalt soils—and take in the sunset from one of the cozy winery terraces on the foothills.

In the northwestern corner of the country, Sopron is famous for its Kékfrankos (Blaufränkisch) red wines, but don’t hesitate to ask for a Cabernet Sauvignon or a Syrah from this region’s winemakers. For those planning a visit to Sopron, two names deserve the limelight: the settlements Bükkfürdő and Sárvár, which both have healing thermal sources. The former, a tiny town east of the Alps, has a range of spa and wellness hotels, as does Sárvár, which is home to one of the Royal Spas of Europe, a beautiful botanic garden, a boating lake system, and a Renaissance castle.



The Gellért Thermal Bath in Budapest is an example of Art Nouveau architecture in a city known as the “spa capital of the world.”

And a visit to Hungary wouldn’t be complete without a stop at the Andrásy Rezidencia Wine & Spa, the only five-star hotel in the Tokaj wine region offering unique culinary and wellness experiences.

After encountering one of the above-mentioned destinations, there is one final task for any visitor: Try to say cheers Hungarian-style! When clinking glasses, locals say *Egészségedre* (pronounced “egg-esh ay-ged-reh”) which literally means “to your health”—the perfect way to toast to a regenerating thermal program and an equally invigorating glass of wine. ■

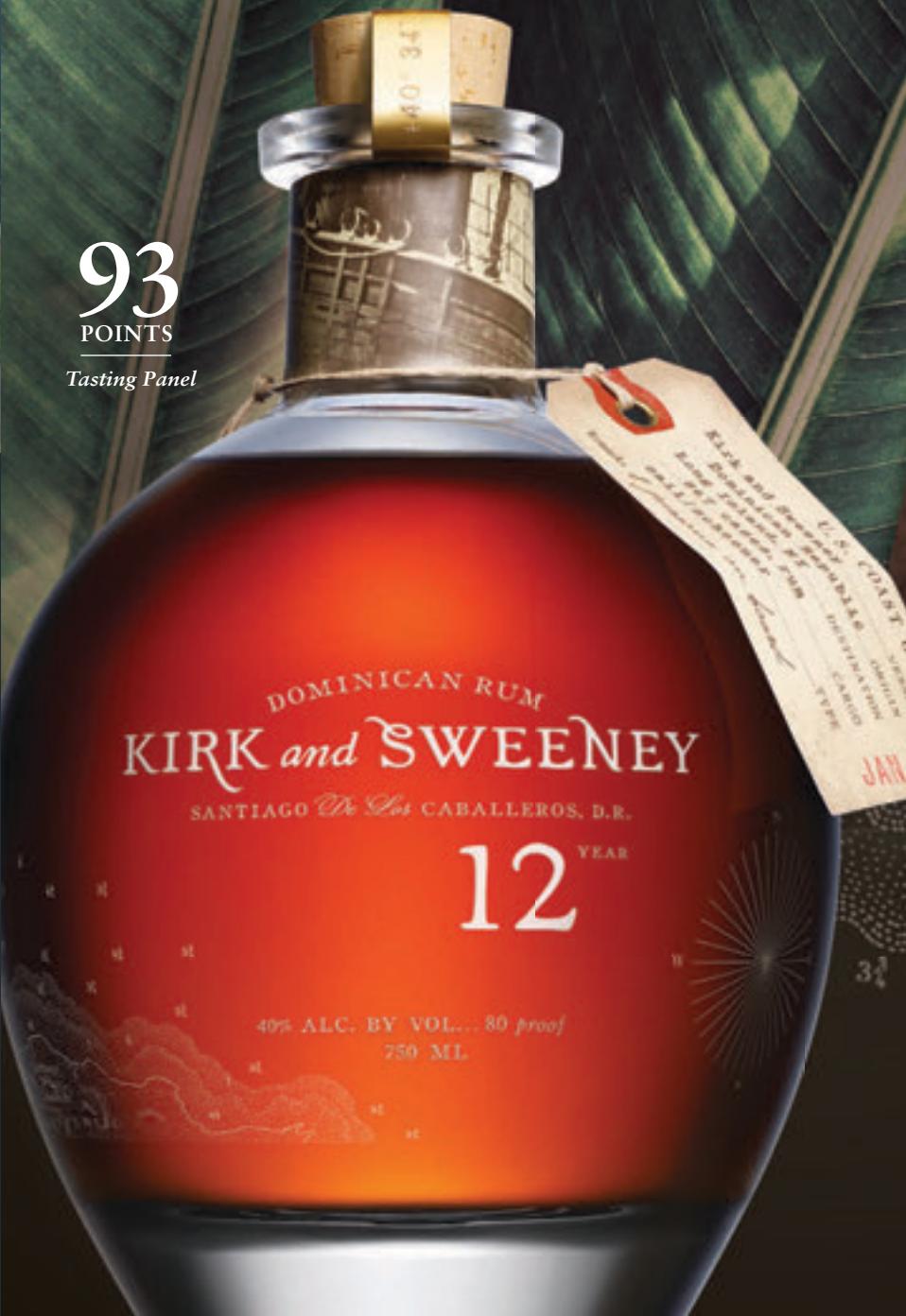
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BRIAN BARTELS REMINDS
US THAT OUR GREATEST
TOOL BEHIND THE BAR IS
OUR OWN HUMANITY

Tools of the Trade

When it comes to the topic of bar tools, I generally think of the physical equipment that helps me do my job: tins, strainers, mixing glasses, spoons. There's something comforting and easy about the weight of these objects in my hands, and after so many hours spent handling them, I inherently know how to best engage them as I work.

This changed in early April when I attended Pernod Ricard USA's Bartender Advocacy Convention at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. One segment that resonated particularly strongly concerned the less-obvious tools of our trade and was led by Brian Bartels, Bar Director of Happy Cooking Hospitality and author of *The Bloody Mary: The Lore and Legend of a Cocktail Classic, with Recipes for Brunch and Beyond*. While the day-long event included thoughtful discussions spanning many aspects of the industry, from the chemical interplay of acid and sugar to managing high-volume bars, Bartels' recurring theme was that these so-called tools bartenders regularly overlook are often rooted in our own humanity.

There are many reasons to bartend, be it a love of the industry or the spirits themselves, but as our interactions increasingly unfold online, Bartels said bars have become a last resort for what he calls "social protein": leaving it up to bartenders to "take some heart and soul and give it back to the world."

While it's a moving sentiment, it would have felt abstract if Bartels hadn't broken down the concept into several small actions we can easily perform to manifest that "heart and soul" behind the bar. Some of these actions are simple and concrete, like making more eye contact with guests and enthusiastically welcoming newcomers into your space.

Bartels elaborated on other skills like active listening, clear communication—including nonverbal cues like body posture—and anticipating the needs of guests and coworkers alike. These behaviors are more subjective and require practice to engage as skillfully as we would our tins or shakers, but just like our tools on the bar, they help us to do our job more effectively while making a lasting impression.

While the seminar was far from what I had expected, it ended up being a much-needed reminder of my favorite aspect of our industry. Every day, we get the opportunity to connect with strangers and show them a little bit of warmth. Like Bartels says, "Kindness is a garnish that is guaranteed fresh and always in season." ■

by Mara Marski



PHOTO COURTESY OF PERNOD RICARD

Brian Bartels, author and Bar Director of Happy Cooking Hospitality, led a discussion aimed toward helping bartenders connect and engage while on the job at Pernod Ricard's Bartender Advocacy Convention in Los Angeles.



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Man with The Plan

AUSTRALIAN WINEMAKER **NEIL MCGUIGAN**
SEEKS TO CAPTURE AMERICANS' ATTRACTION
TO FOOD-FRIENDLY WINES by Fred Swan

The McGuigan family's celebrated involvement in Australian wine began in 1880, with dairy farmer Owen McGuigan taking side jobs in Hunter Valley vineyards. Today, Chief Winemaker/CEO Neil McGuigan presides over a prominent, multi-award-winning winery with products—including both Australia's best-selling bottle and a profound, ageworthy statement wine—that sell in 40-plus countries. The range expresses the modern Australian sensibility: wines that are fruit-forward yet mouthwatering and food-friendly.

I recently had lunch with the gregarious McGuigan, who, despite being less well-known in the United States, is a household name in Australia. He believes, however, that the current state of the industry has presented an ideal opportunity to change that: The success of Australian wine on American shelves has long ebbed and flowed with currency exchange rates, but now the Aussie dollar is weak.

"I've seen a dramatic evolution in our wine culture," McGuigan tells *The Tasting Panel*. "Per capita wine consumption is higher than ever, with 50 percent growth since 2000. Wine is prominent on television shows, which were once dominated by other drinks, and we see that Americans are increasingly looking for refreshing wines which complement food."

One of two primary product lines McGuigan offers in the U.S., McGuigan The Plan includes wines that are very accessible in both profile and price. The fruit-forward Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, and red blend all hail from southeastern Australia and retail for just \$12—excellent values by the glass or bottle. Uniquely Australian, the line features packaging with a blueprint design that pays homage to preceding generations of McGuigans who have stayed the course since 1880.

Those seeking complex, long-lived Shiraz with prevalent regional character, meanwhile, will appreciate McGuigan Hand Made Shiraz (\$40). The fruit comes from low-yielding vines in Langhorne Creek, located about an hour southeast of Adelaide. Warm, sunny days and cool nights courtesy of brisk ocean breezes deliver ripe and deeply colored grapes that retain plenty of freshness.

Together we tasted the 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014 vintages, which show very well and express distinct personalities driven by the particulars of each. They are long, full-bodied and intensely flavorful with fine, well-integrated tannins balanced by attractive acidity. Their black-fruited cores are enhanced with notes of chocolate, dark mineral, eucalyptus, and nuanced wood.



◀ McGuigan's The Plan line includes wines that are very accessible in both profile and price.



McGuigan The Philosophy, the company's icon wine, is made with fruit from Australia's Clare Valley.

McGuigan The Philosophy (\$125), the company's icon wine, is made with fruit from the Sevenhill area of Clare Valley and Shiraz from Auburn in Clare Valley's southern edge. The 2013—fermented in open top, concrete tanks—is 56% Cabernet Sauvignon and 44% Shiraz. Aged two years in French oak with an additional two in bottle, it's lush with fine, chalky tannins, yet juicy and loaded with dark chocolate, sweet black fruit, cherry, and roasted oak. ■



McGuigan Chief Winemaker Neil McGuigan has been named International Winemaker of the Year a record four times by the prestigious International Wine & Spirits Competition in London, making McGuigan the first winery to achieve this feat.

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APÉRITIFS

ZUCCA'S “COOL FACTOR” HEATS UP



Zucca Brand Ambassadors Alex Room and Deanna Powell oversee the Pacific Northwest and the Northeast, respectively. Follow them on Instagram at [@roomspirits](#) and [@deedisaronno](#).

THE VINTAGE ITALIAN APÉRITIF FINDS NEW LIFE IN BARS ACROSS THE U.S.

by Jill Sieracki / photos by Timothy Murray

It's hard to believe a spirit could be around for nearly 175 years and still be considered "under the radar." And yet, that's exactly how many American drinkers would describe Zucca Rabarbaro, a member of Disaronno International's esteemed portfolio that's been solely owned by Disaronno parent company Illva Saronno for nearly 30 years.

According to Zucca lore, Ettore Zucca developed the original recipe for his wife, Tilde, after she was advised to take a formula of rhubarb rootstock—commonly said to "cleanse" the body, among other medicinal uses—and other herbs to aid digestion. "Rhubarb rootstock is one of the most widely used herbs in Chinese medicine still today," says Alex Room, Zucca Brand Ambassador for the Pacific Northwest.

While this rootstock—one of the smokiest herbs on the market—serves as the foundational flavor profile of Zucca, other ingredients like bitter orange, gentian, and cardamom are easily detected on the tongue. The reddish-black liquor has a decidedly smoky aroma that conjures the alluring scent of an upscale cigar bar, and the silky texture establishes a sweetness on the palate before evolving to a bitterness on the finish.

This complexity makes Zucca an acquired taste, not unlike many of the classic cocktails modern-day connoisseurs consider must-haves—including the Negroni, which is now so heralded it's earned its own annual weeklong celebration. In Italy, Zucca is most commonly served at the end of a meal as a digestif, and in Milan, Room says Zucca is often mixed with the Italian soda Chinotto over ice in a tall glass with a lemon twist. "Chinotto has very similar botanicals as Zucca and they pair really well together," he adds.

According to Room, Zucca is currently experiencing a "resurgence" even in establishments that are less cocktail-focused. "Bartenders are getting into these types of apéritifs and serving it to you after dinner, then also mixing it into cocktails," says Deanna Powell, Zucca Brand Ambassador for the Northeast.



Young Kim, Beverage Director at The Flatiron Room in Manhattan, serves the Zu-groni de Oaxaca with Zucca. Other popular NYC bars that feature the apéritif include Amor y Amargo, Death & Co, Marlow & Sons, Dead Rabbit, and BlackTail.

APÉRITIFS

ZUCCA SPRITZ

- 1 part Zucca
 - 4 parts Prosecco
 - 1 part soda water
- Pour Prosecco in a wine glass filled with ice. Add Zucca and top with soda water. Garnish with an orange peel.



ZU-GROMI DE OAXACA

- 1 part Zucca
- 1 part mezcal
- 1 part sweet vermouth
- 3 drops Bittermens Xocolatl Mole Bitters

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass with a large ice cube. Garnish with an orange peel.

The Great Zucca Takeover

In fact, Zucca has already become a menu staple at many of the top cocktail bars in the U.S. At the iconic Seattle bar Canon, owner Jamie Boudreau mixes Zucca into a house cocktail called the Swagger, a refreshing blend of gin, Dubonnet, and grapefruit juice (Boudreau also featured the drink in his recipe compilation *The Canon Cocktail Book*). At San Francisco's Trick Dog, Zucca has also been served with gin, bitter lemon soda, and blood orange syrup in a drink named Grandma's Sweater, and in New York, you can find Zucca in cocktails both at the NoMad and Saxon + Parole. "That's how you know your brand is great: Guys like these are going out of their way to work with it themselves," Powell says.

Master mixologists and leaders in the craft cocktail community are certainly helping lead Zucca's resurgence: The bottle features prominently on the cover of spirits expert Brad Thomas Parsons' 2016 book *Amaro: The Spirited World of Bittersweet Herbal Liqueurs, with Cocktails, Recipes, and Formulas*, making it seem even more "of the moment." "Being in the industry, Zucca is something that's got a little underground 'cool factor' to it as well," Room says. "It's not your mainstream beverage."

That doesn't mean Zucca can't easily translate into some of the most well-established drinks in the business. In fact, Room says bartenders are frequently doing "variations on classic cocktails with trending spirits" like Zucca, which works particularly well with mezcal, twists on the aforementioned Negroni, and spritzers. "That's just the innovative bartending world we have today that's really bringing some of these classic products into modern life," he adds.

At The Flatiron Room in Manhattan, for example, Beverage Director Young Kim's propensity for mixing Zucca with the bar's vast whiskey collection has been well-received by guests. "It's the changing palates of the consumer in the U.S.," Room says. "People are going from sweet and heavy and drinking soda to something that's more bitter and light."

During the summer months, bitter cocktails tend to cede their presence on bar menus, but Zucca's versatility bolsters its staying power. "If I'm hosting a brunch or going out on the weekend, what I'll do is have it served with a sparkling wine or Prosecco with a little grapefruit soda and poured into a wine glass on ice, maybe with a grapefruit twist," Room says. "That's something you can enjoy all day long in the sun."

Once you've tried Zucca in a traditional cocktail you already know and love, explore further by trying it on the rocks with an orange twist (a go-to for Room's wife) or opting for what he calls the "bartender's handshake": a chilled Zucca shot. After all, it's only taken Americans 175 years to come around to what the Italians knew all along: Rhubarb rootstock is where it's at. ■■■



THE UNIQUE
STORY OF A
PRODUCT
BEYOND
COMPARISON
COMING NOW

Dating all the way back to 1845, the Zucca story is an Italian tale about a family that had faith in unique a product, one created with a very special ingredient: the rhizome of the Chinese rhubarb plant. Ettore Zucca was inspired by a revitalizing rhubarb-based infusion that his wife Tilde used to drink. To enhance its properties , Ettore turned it into a unique alcoholic drink which he used to offer his friends.

TYPE: Rhubarb

ALCOHOLIC CONTENT: 30°

COLOUR: Ebony

AROMA: Distinct hints of rhubarb and fine Chinese herbs

TASTE: Pleasantly bitter, balanced, lingering long on the palate



FOOD PRODUCTS

Olives processed by The Olive Press in Sonoma, CA, come in a variety of colors, but the ideal ratio is 70–80 percent purple to black and 20–30 percent green.

FROM ORCHARD TO BOTTLE

THE OLIVE PRESS
BRINGS THE SONOMA
COMMUNITY TOGETHER

BY IZZY WATSON



Twice a year, during the harvest months of October and November, Sonoma residents gather at The Olive Press to mill their own freshly handpicked olives and create a community oil. After participants bring olives in varying degrees of ripeness and color, the olives are pressed before the oil is bottled in new plastic or glass containers.

The Olive Press is the brainchild of Edward Stolman, who had a vision of creating the first olive mill in Sonoma while establishing values of quality, care, and sustainability. As Stolman neared the end of his life, he asked Fred and Nancy Cline—who have 30 years of experience with Cline Family Cellars, Jacuzzi Family Vineyards, and The Mizpah Hotel—if they would take up The Olive Press mantel and carry it forward. Honored to continue in his footsteps, the Clines purchased The Olive Press in 2013.

Five years later, they're mindful of upholding Stolman's integrity, quest for excellence, and attention to detail at the business he loved so dearly—now known as one of the most highly awarded olive oil producers in the nation. The company's staff admits to an obsession for optimizing flavor, crafting their olive oils from orchard to bottle in a selection that ranges from delicate to robust.

"We believe sustainable practices, carefully tended fruit, and mindful farming builds the foundation for quality. Our mission is to always delight our customers with artisan foods and collectibles that they can enjoy and savor as part of their healthy and happy life," says Nancy Cline. "To that end, we don't compromise in our process and insist on using only the best hand-harvested fruit, traditional milling, patient racking, taste evaluation, and small-lot bottling. We are proud and honored to help educate, share, and sustain the rich tradition of making olive oil with our local community and worldwide customers. Our mantra is to uphold Ed Stolman's vision and carry it forward from the sun, to the soil, to the branch, to the bottle, and to the table." ■



Located at the gateway of Sonoma Valley in California wine country, The Olive Press welcomes visitors and residents to enjoy the most highly awarded and acclaimed extra virgin olive oils made in the United States. The Olive Press also celebrates local artisans by offering a community press to neighbors near and far for their homegrown olives.



Visit theolivepress.com for information on this season's Community Press.



EVENT RECAP



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE THOMAS COLLECTIVE

Italian Wine & Food Institute founder and President Lucio Caputo speaks during the Gala Italia awards presentation in New York.

On a Roll

THE ITALIAN TRADE COMMISSION LAUNCHES ITS TASTE THE PASSION CAMPAIGN IN THE U.S. *by David Ransom*

This spring saw the launch of a new initiative by the Italian Trade Commission geared toward elevating the image and prestige of Italian wines in the United States. The three-year program was officially unveiled in New York at the Italian



Lucio Caputo, founder and President of the Italian Wine & Food Institute, with Italian Trade Commissioner Maurizio Forte.

Wine & Food Institute's 33rd annual Gala Italia, the longest-running promotional event for Italian wine in the U.S.

Italian Wine – Taste the Passion, a \$25-million program slated through

2020, will focus on a series of initiatives to bolster awareness of Italy's vast and diverse winemaking industry without focusing on any particular regions. "The Italian wine landscape is incredibly diverse with so many different wine-producing regions and appellations, and the production and quality of Italian wines across all of Italy has never been higher," says Maurizio Forte, Commissioner of the Italian Trade Commission. "We feel the time is right to get people to think of Italian wines in a more modern way."

As part of the campaign, the Italian Trade Commission collaborated with some of Italy's most influential promotional entities to set up a series of programs to help Americans, both trade and consumers, immerse themselves in Italian wine culture. Included are education programs intended to expand knowledge of the country's enological heritage, as well as a Facebook page that regularly features interesting tidbits on Italy's wines, wine producers, and winemaking history.

On the trade-specific side, the commission will implement a number of

informational programs to help members of the industry better understand and source Italian wines. The creation of a "Wine Desk" within its New York offices aims to help foster and maintain close relationships between members of the trade and Italian companies and wine producers. Another key element will be the creation and maintaining of a "Newcomers List" of Italian wine producers looking for representation in the U.S. marketplace, as well as the formation of sponsored partnerships with retailers and restaurant groups to help with promotion and education.

At this year's Gala Italia, Forte received the Italian Wine & Food Institute's Special Award of Merit for his own substantial contributions to the growing importance of Italian wine. "I am personally honored to have received an award this year," he told attendees. "We all owe a lot to [Italian Wine & Food Institute founder and President Lucio] Caputo, who has dedicated his entire life to raising awareness of Italian food and wine culture here in the U.S. He has done a tremendous job in this respect." ■



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Washington, D.C. - September 24
Atlanta - September 25
Houston - September 26

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SUMMER SIPS

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**GNARLY HEAD
BRINGS WINE
TO ITS RIGHTFUL
PLACE AT THE
GRILL**

BY EMILY COLEMAN

A bold barbecue pairing:
Gnarly Head Chardonnay
and baby back ribs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GNARLY HEAD

Ghen summer arrives, it's a surefire sign that grills and smokers will start working overtime as backyard barbeques and parties on the patio give us a reason to toast the season. With a brand story based on bold wines and gifted grilling, Gnarly Head wines found the perfect partner in grill master Steven Raichlen: The James Beard Award-winning author has written more than 30 cookbooks on the subject, including *Planet Barbecue!*, *How to Grill*, *The Barbecue Bible*, *Project Smoke*, *Best Ribs Ever*, and the new *Project Fire* in addition to creating and starring in television programs like *Barbecue University* and *Primal Grill*. (He's also appeared on iconic series like *Iron Chef* and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.)

A world-renowned authority on barbecue and grilling, Raichlen shared his well-seasoned pairing expertise: "At the heart of barbecue is wood—you need it if you want to smoke your food, and you can use it to grill. Wine also has wood at the heart of it, especially red wines. Both are based on the soulful flavor of wood, which makes them a natural fit for each other. Barbecue, with its intense smoke and spice flavors, calls for a wine big enough to stand up to it."

With these principles in mind, Raichlen says "Gnarly Head's wines are perfect for pairing for barbecue." "They are fruit-forward and can stand up to and complement the foods that are grilled and smoked," he adds. "They're also reasonably priced, so they're a good fit for outdoor cooking."

Launched in 2004, with a mission to make an outstanding California Zinfandel, Gnarly Head began crafting wine with grapes thoughtfully chosen from the old-vine vineyards of the Lodi AVA. According to Gnarly Head Viticulturist Bud Bradley, the brand's name is based on the intensely flavorful fruits of the gnarled, head-trained vines represented in the Gnarly Head logo and grown in the rich yet porous sandy loam soils surrounding the city of Lodi. Consider that mission accomplished: Gnarly Head's Old Vine Zinfandel continues to rank as the number-one Zinfandel in the U.S. by volume.

Today, Gnarly Head offers much more than big red wines, with three bold white varietals for summer and beyond all crafted in a style that makes them perfect for pairing with proteins. The full

Gnarly Head portfolio includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, and a variety of adventurous red blends.

Gnarly Head's new kid on the block, though, is the 1924 line. Inspired by the rebellious Prohibition era and a natural match for anything bold, blackened, and barbequed, these wines include Gnarly Head 1924 Double Black Red Blend, a dark blend with layers of blackberry, raspberry, chocolate, and caramel, and 1924 Double Black Cabernet Sauvignon, a rich full-bodied Cab with notes of French vanilla and espresso.

Raichlen developed several new dishes inspired by these bold but structured wines. When creating any barbecue recipe, he says he first looks to a protein that's "big-flavored," affordable, and emblematic of summer before considering the grilling technique, which he often relies on to put a twist on the dish. In two savory recipes, Raichlen featured beef but went beyond the way the summer staple is typically prepared. His Gnarly Head grilled beef jerky and wood-grilled Gnarly Head gorgonzola burger served with red wine jam are exactly what you would anticipate for an ideal summer barbecue, managing to embrace trends and break the mold at the same time.

Beyond its alliance with Raichlen, Gnarly Head will continue to take the barbecue scene by storm with upcoming grilling promotions. In partnership with leading U.S. charcoal brand Kingsford, Gnarly Head challenges barbecue lovers to show off their favorite pork ribs recipes in the tenth annual Gnarly Head Ribs Recipe Challenge for the chance to win a \$5,000 grand prize. Gnarly Head also sponsors prominent barbecue events year-round like the Memphis in May Festival's World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, Naperville Ribfest, Ribfest Chicago, and St. Louis' Q in the Lou. Raichlen will also be joining Gnarly Head this fall with his Grilled Gnarly Jerky at Music City Food + Wine Festival in Nashville, Tennessee.

In keeping with the authentic and unexpected style of its wine, Gnarly Head recently launched the new "Go for Bold" campaign. Gnarly Head makes it easy to follow this motto with its 13 bold varietals and blends, encouraging consumers to celebrate the season—rain or shine, red or white—with their favorite bottle of Gnarly Head wine. ■



Gnarly Head 2016

Chardonnay, Central Coast,

CA (\$15)

A pineapple-lime burst of sunshine greets the nose of this light, lithe white that's super-summer fresh. Ginger snap and peach make up some of the standout flavors edging up against a crisp, lively acidity.

92 —Meridith May

Gnarly Head 1924 Limited

Edition Double Black

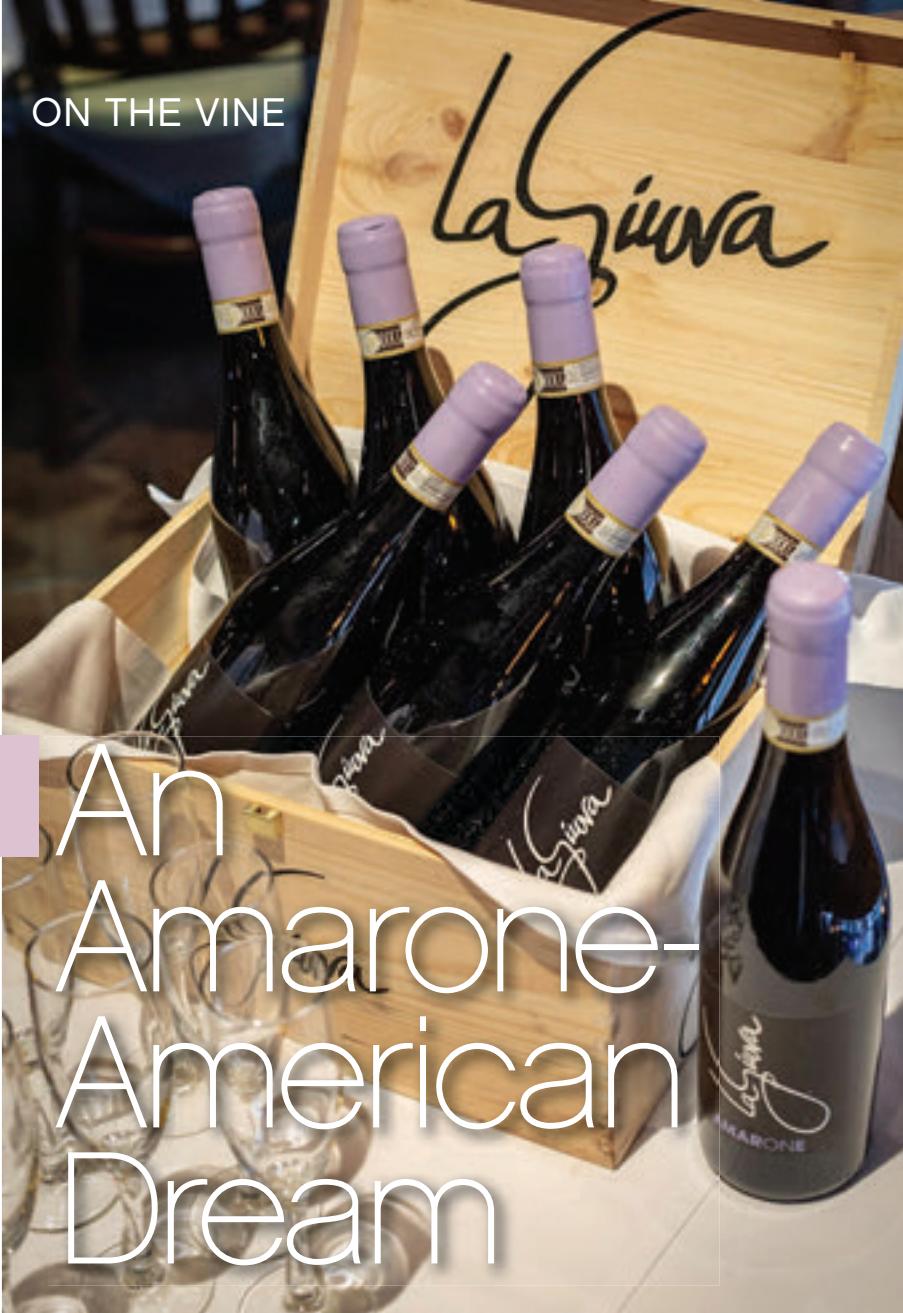
Cabernet Sauvignon,

Lodi, CA (\$15)

The year 1924 signifies a dark time for the wine business, as it was in the midst of Prohibition. But a light does shine on this year as well: It's when Delicato winery planted its first vineyards. Perhaps there were some black-market sales behind the scenes, but times have changed and this tribute wine makes a stand for approachability and food-friendliness. Just-juiced black berries are fragrant with a hint of vanilla, while the dense, creamy texture delivers a juicy core of black fruit and black licorice. Dark chocolate tannins make their way to the long finish.

92 —M.M.





An Amarone-American Dream

LA GIUVA WINES MAKE THEIR U.S. DEBUT, MOVING GOALPOSTS AND SCORING A WIN by Cliff Rames / photos by Tim Murray

Alberto Malesani had a dream, though it wasn't a grand vision of thrilling last-minute goals or another crowd-frenzying championship victory. No, his days as one of Italy's most successful and celebrated soccer coaches—though he is still a rock star in his native Verona—are so 2003. That was when Malesani retired from soccer and began working on his lifelong dream: to return to his hometown in the Veneto region (specifically the Valpolicella province) of Italy, plant indigenous grapevines, build a state-of-the-art winery, and produce wines worthy of a place on

the wine list of one of New York City's most iconic steakhouses.

Malesani clearly recalls the moment when his mission became illuminated. While hungrily walking the sidewalks of Manhattan, he stopped to peer at slabs of finely aged steaks hanging in a restaurant window that were waiting to be seared on a flaming grill. "At that instant I knew I wanted to make wine good enough to be served with those beautiful cuts of meat," Malesani says. "It became my goal, my passion, my driving force—one day I would dine on steak while sipping my Amarone at Bobby Van's Steakhouse."

◀ A rare and precious nectar: A very limited amount of La Giuva Amarone DOCG 2013 will soon be available in select U.S. markets (Boston, Miami, New York, and Washington, D.C.).



Enovation Brands National Brand Ambassador Filippo Lapides; Alberto Malesani, founder of La Giuva; and Enovation Brands Northeast Business Unit Director Keri Kennedy-Morgan.



Alberto Malesani's American dream comes true: La Giuva wines recently made their New York premiere at iconic midtown Manhattan restaurant Bobby Van's Steakhouse.

This May, in a private dining room near Times Square, Malesani's vision was fully realized. Among polished crystal glasses and silverware, bottles of La Giuva Il Rientro Valpolicella Superiore DOC and La Giuva Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG stood tall on white tablecloths at Bobby Van's. Gathered around the tables was a VIP group of trade buyers and journalists peppering Malesani with questions, his face beaming as we sampled the vinous fruits of his 15-year journey and nodded our approval.

Hosted by Enovation Brands, the event marked the official New York

launch of La Giuva wines. Filippo Lapedes, National Brand Manager for Enovation Brands, says the La Giuva Valpolicella Superiore and Amarone are initially slated for distribution in just a few “privileged” markets, including as Boston, Miami, New York, and Washington, D.C. An excellent Recioto, meanwhile, is due in the fall. “Only a limited amount of each wine will be imported and distribution will be focused on prestigious on-premise accounts,” Lapedes explained.

For Malesani, the road back to Bobby Van’s wasn’t an easy one. Purchasing a ready-made winery or investing in commercially popular wine regions like Tuscany or Piedmont would have been more economical and convenient. Instead, he opted to start from scratch, spending three years searching the hills of Valpolicella until he found the perfect site northeast of Verona in the Squaranto Valley: a rugged, little-known area



Enovation Brands Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing Eric Rabinoff, Northeast Business Unit Director Keri Kennedy-Morgan, and District Manager Marc Nasser, along with Roberto Alessandrini, Sales Representative at Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, celebrate the New York launch of La Giuva wines at Bobby Van's Steakhouse in New York City.

characterized by steep hills and gorges forged by prehistoric volcanic eruptions. Surveying the site, Malesani intuitively knew he could produce world-class wines there. “The olive oils from the area were exceptional, so I knew in my heart that grapes could succeed, too,” he says. At 350 meters (roughly 1,150 feet) above sea level, the Squaranto Valley’s rocky, calcareous, and well-drained marine fossil soils made grape-growing incredibly challenging at first. “It took a lot of time and money to break the stones and discipline the soil,” Malesani adds with a laugh. Growers in the more popular western side of Valpolicella seemed

skeptical of his actions. “But seeing my success, and tasting the purity and freshness of my wines, they are now searching for vineyards near me,” he says. “Crazy or not, I really believe in this terroir.”

La Giuva produces its wines from a blend of grapes indigenous to the Valpolicella region: Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, and Oseleta. Malesani monitors the progress of the vines (which he calls his “babies”) with a precise eye for detail honed by years on the soccer field. Every morning he drives his pickup truck into the vineyards to inspect them, and when he travels, he watches them via a vineyard webcam connected to an app on his smartphone.

All grapes are organically farmed, hand-harvested, and air dried in crates (the winery’s elevation ensures steady circulation of cool, dry mountain air) before fermentation. The grapes for the Il Rientro dry for 20 days, while the berries designated for the Amarone do so for three months. “Without drying, Corvina is nothing,” Malesani says, adding that drying reveals character and complexity while imparting structure, elegance, and a brilliant ruby color to the blend (the other varieties add red-fruited aromatics and enriched flavors). La Giuva wines are clean, precise, rich, and complex, delivering a pure expression of *Val Squaranto* at consumer-friendly prices. The packaging—elegant yet hip—is both eye-catching and stylish.

Paul Modica, General Manager of Bobby Van’s Steakhouse, told *The Tasting Panel* that his decision to include La Giuva wines on the restaurant’s wine list was a no-brainer. “The majority of our clientele are international guests who are more likely to order Italian wine over Californian Cabernet,” Modica explained. “La Giuva Valpolicella and Amarone really complement our well-versed wine list and pair perfectly with our numerous pasta and meat dishes.” Modica suggests salmon, veal, or duck with the Valpolicella, and with the Amarone, he touts “Bobby Van’s well-marbled bone-in ribeye, of course!”

As the evening came to an end, Malesani smiled as he looked out over the Bobby Van’s dining room while sipping a glass of La Giuva Amarone. “This is the completion of my dream,” he said contentedly, a gleam in his eye not unlike those lights in Times Square. ■

INTRODUCING LA GIUVA

La Giuva Il Rientro Valpolicella

Superiore DOC 2014 (\$50) Ruby red and garnet-tinged in color, this wine features alluring Zin-like notes of cherry compote, licorice, and forest floor woodiness that waft from the glass, followed by the faintest whiff of vanilla flower. The romance continues on the palate, where a silky yet vibrant mouthfeel gives way to dried cherry, sugar plum, and earthy spice flavors that linger like a sweet, comforting friend.

La Giuva Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG 2013 (\$100)

Dark, rich, viscous, plush, and full-bodied, this Amarone melds ripe Marasca cherry and rich dark chocolate notes into a pool of pleasure in which complex flavors of cocoa-dusted dried cherry, blueberry, and licorice swirl. They gracefully coalesce into a long, satisfying emulsion of sticky tannins and sweet fruit.



Produced from partially dried Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, and Oseleta grapes grown in the Squaranto Valley east of Verona, La Giuva Il Rientro Valpolicella Superiore DOC 2014 and Amarone DOCG 2013 are now available in the U.S.

La Giuva is imported by Enovation Brands, Inc.

Can't Stop the Music

"ROCK 'N' ROLL CHEF" KERRY SIMON'S LEGACY OF COMFORT LIVES ON AT **CARSON KITCHEN** IN LAS VEGAS

by Mara Marski

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARSON KITCHEN



Matt Harwell, the General Manager at Carson Kitchen in Las Vegas, tries to keep the legacy of late chef Kerry Simon alive at the restaurant.

A Multicultural Comfort Cocktail

In addition to functioning as Carson Kitchen's General Manager, Matt Harwell also plays a key role in the beverage program. His newest mezcal cocktail, The Communication Breakdown, adds even more gravitas to the agave spirit with fresh citrus, Domaine de Canton French Ginger Liqueur, Contratto Bitter Italian liqueur, and a hint of lavender. "Mezcal is a beautiful spirit with a rich history, but many people think they don't like it because of a single bad experience," Matt says. "This drink is crisp, clean, and easy-drinking, and while it's not spirit-forward, it lets the mezcal shine while still remaining approachable for inexperienced drinkers."



Communication Breakdown

- 1½ oz. Del Maguey Vida Mezcal
 - ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
 - ½ oz. fresh lime juice
 - ½ oz. simple syrup
 - ½ oz. Domaine de Canton French Ginger Liqueur
 - ½ oz. Contratto Bitter liqueur
 - 1 dash Bar Keep Lavender Bitters
- Shake all ingredients and strain into a Collins glass over fresh ice. Top with Fever Tree Ginger Ale and garnish with a sprig of lavender.

A black and white photograph of the Empire State Building in New York City, viewed from a low angle looking up. The building's Art Deco spire is prominent against a dark sky.

**“Make your mark in New York
and you are a made man.”**

— Mark Twain

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BRAND SPOTLIGHT



Jack Glover, General Manager of New Zealand-based Mud House Wines, sails on *The Galen Diana* in the San Francisco Bay with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge in the background.



Above at left, the Mud House 2015 Central Otago Pinot Noir. At right, Mud House Wines' Claim 431 Central Otago Pinot Noir is "where we spend a little more time with what we target in the vineyard—how we manage the vines, the canopy, and the clone selection, as well as how we pick and create a gentle oak profile," says General Manager Jack Glover.

Tethered to the Water

NEW ZEALAND'S MUD HOUSE WINES WERE FOUNDED THROUGH A LOVE OF SAILING *story and photos by John Curley*

Jack Glover watches the waters of the San Francisco Bay roil around him, and although the setting is beautiful, it's plenty dangerous, too.

The winds register at a strong 35 knots, and we're in a particularly treacherous patch of the swirling waters. The deep underwater channel beneath the Golden Gate Bridge sometimes causes vortexes to form on the surface; the powerful whirlpools can trap smaller vessels, setting them spinning in circles.

But we're not in danger. *The Galen Diana*, a 49-foot Jeanneau sailboat captained by Rodney Mayer, glides under the bridge mostly unperturbed. Passengers lean over the rails to get a look at the underside of the bridge, but they quickly retreat and huddle behind the canvas to escape the wind.

Glover, General Manager of Mud House Wines, is guiding a tasting onboard while simultaneously providing a glimpse into his homeland of New Zealand. It makes perfect sense that he's here on the boat, as his life and brand are inextricably linked to the water—both in spirit and in practice. An adventurous sailing couple from the U.K. founded Mud House after building

a boat in their backyard and setting out to see the world. When they reached New Zealand, they figured they'd seen enough and had found what they were looking for. "They fell in love with Marlborough," Glover says. "Whether they had the intention of owning vineyards or if they just bought some land on a whim, I'm not sure."

The couple literally put down roots, planting a vineyard and building a house using mud bricks. When locals began calling it the Mud House vineyard, the name stuck. In 2014, Australian company Accolade Wines acquired Mud House Wines, which helped the brand increase exports significantly. Today Mud House ships 400,000 cases of its leading varietal, Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, to 80 countries around the world. "It's the torchbearer for New Zealand, and the fact that you can find it pretty much anywhere in the world speaks to its popularity and to Accolade Wines' distribution reach," Glover says.

By the time he's begun leading the tasting on the boat, Glover has been on a two-and-a-half-week trip across Canada and the United States, mostly meeting with trade and distributors as

he helps introduce Mud House's Pinot Gris. Of course, he's brought some Sauvignon Blanc to share with passengers as well, as you can't travel from Marlborough without some of the variety in tow. There's also a Riesling and several Pinot Noirs—one of which, named Claim 431, is a single-vineyard expression that may be headed to the U.S. market this fall.

The Pinots hail from the Bendigo subregion of Central Otago on New Zealand's South Island. Named after a gold discovery site, it was planted in 2003 and is the warmest section of the region. "It seemed to be able to go into those darker fruit spectrums while still retaining good acidity, really good tannin, and the other good things you love about Pinot," Glover says. The soils there have been formed from glaciers grinding the schist rocks into smaller bits of gravel and other fine particles. "Yes, Central Otago is full of schist," Glover jests.

Too soon, *The Galen Diana* heads back to port. As Captain Rod clicks the "iron key," the diesel engine begins to rumble. The sun has broken through the marine layer, and as the overcast disappears, so does the wind. ■



In Conversation with

Carl Corsi,

TECHNOLOGY TRAINING
MANAGER FOR SOUTHERN
GLAZER'S WINE & SPIRITS
OF CALIFORNIA

You've trained the SGWS salespeople on technology for the past six years.

Did you come from a tech background?

Not at all. My background had always been in the hospitality industry with a focus on wine and spirits. Just before coming to work as an imported wine specialist for SGWS, my last two restaurant jobs were as the Sommelier/Bar Manager at Aqua [the now-closed restaurant owned by Michael Mina] and the General Manager at Top of the Mark in San Francisco.

So, you were hired by SGWS as a salesperson. How did you make that switch to being a technology trainer for your peers?

As more technology was introduced to the sales force, training was set up and presented by the techies. Some of the trainings were painful to sit through because of the disconnect in com-

munication between the sales team and techies. I went to the SGWS California sales executives and proposed that someone with sales experience along with wine and spirit expertise would be more effective at training the sales force on technology.

Was this new position an easy sell?

Adding a new position is never easy, but the SGWS leadership is very forward-thinking. The position of Technology Training Manager was established and has been expanded over time.

Did you have a lot of training experience when you started as the tech trainer?

Mostly I relied on my experience as a restaurant manager where training new staff and product training are constant. Since then I have more formally

refined my training skills. For example, I'm certified as a Master Trainer by the Association for Talent Development.

What sort of technology do you train the sales force on?

We have a lot of proprietary applications like our ordering system that are important. Mostly it's getting them knowledgeable about the applications they use every day like Microsoft Excel, OneDrive, and Outlook. Since some people use laptops and some use iPads, I have to be well-versed on both.

You have to know the various technologies so well that you can teach others to use them. How do you keep up with new applications and constant upgrades?

It's really very simple. I enjoy doing what most people hate to do: I read the manuals—every page. ■■

BADGES OF HONOR

**KIRK AND SWEENEY RUM
PROVES IT'S A BRAND WORTHY
OF PRIDE FOR SONOMA'S
SEBASTIANI FAMILY**

BY MATT JACKSON / PHOTOS BY JENNIFER OLSON



The Sebastiani name is synonymous with Sonoma wine, of course, but the family's connection to the city itself has deep roots that trace back several generations. "I was born and raised here, my wife was born and raised here, and so were my dad and grandfather," says August Sebastiani, founder of 3 Badge Beverage Corporation. "Sonoma is a great place to be."

Sebastiani affirmed his commitment to his hometown when his company bought a declassified firehouse from the City of Sonoma in 2015, retrofitting it to serve as 3 Badge's headquarters. "We completely rebranded our company to 3 Badge because of this building's connection to my family," Sebastiani



August Sebastiani is the President of 3 Badge Beverage.

explains. His grandfather was a volunteer firefighter, and the company's name holds special meaning: "The three badges we refer to are my grandfather's active badge that lived in his wallet for 30 years, his retired badge, and the honorary badge that was given to my grandmother when he passed away," Sebastiani recounts reverently.

3 Badge produces several wines and craft spirits, but among its enticing offerings is the Kirk and Sweeney line of Dominican rums. Before its development, Sebastiani had a moment of clarity regarding the generally unappre-



Dylan Holcomb, the Beverage Director at Caribbean restaurant Bang Up to the Elephant! in Denver, CO, develops cocktails for 3 Badge Beverage.

ciated brown spirit. “The ‘aha moment’ for me with rum came in a restaurant in Sonoma. They had a rum list on the back page of the dessert menu, and they were bringing out rum in a snifter like it was a brandy,” he recalls. “I had never taken it seriously until I saw it in that venue.” The revelation eventually inspired the launch of 3 Badge’s Kirk and Sweeney 12 Year Old Rum. Named after an old rum-runner that ultimately became a training vessel for the U.S. Coast Guard, the brand serves as an homage to this history, as Coast Guard confiscation tags hang from the neck of each bottle.

According to Sebastiani, one major point of differentiation between Kirk and Sweeney and other rums is the method behind the age statements. “When Kirk and Sweeney was first launched, it was hard to find a vertical age statement in rum, let alone 12, 18, and 23 years,” he says. “Now we’re even working on an XO.” In regards to aging, Kirk and Sweeney adheres to a non-solera style of maturation. “When aging, we marry the barrels from the same year,” Sebastiani explains. “The angel’s share becomes much more substantial because it’s not new rum being added, so you get a lot more of that mellowing oak influence where

the flavors of caramel, molasses, and syrup come through.”

Dylan Holcomb, Beverage Director at Caribbean restaurant Bang Up to the Elephant! in Denver, Colorado, says he discovered 3 Badge products while at a party for a friend with “horrible taste in liquor.” At a loss, he took a chance on a distinctive-looking bottle sitting amongst the dross. “I saw 3 Badge’s Uncle Val’s Gin, took a quick drink, and stared at the glass completely blown away by how good it was,” he says. After Holcomb enlisted another friend with connections to 3 Badge to make an introduction, he now develops cocktails for the 3 Badge brand (in addition to featuring his creations at Tales of the Cocktail, he also serves as the resident mixologist on Fusion television show *HOTMIXOLOGY*).

When it comes to rum specifically, Holcomb says he sees Kirk and Sweeney as an “approachable” entry point into the broader category. “Kirk and Sweeney is the perfect gateway rum for novice drinkers,” he says. One of Holcomb’s most popular cocktails at Bang Up to the Elephant!’s 22-seat bar is the Kirk and Sweeney My Thai; a riff on the classic drink, his version is an aromatic powerhouse of Kirk and Sweeney 12 Year Old Rum,

lemon juice, cream of coconut, and a housemade Chinese five-spice curry syrup. Swizzled in crushed ice in a Collins glass, this drink isn’t your sailor grandfather’s Mai Tai.

And while Holcomb is an expert mixologist, he can often be found contemplating the depth and breadth of spirits on their own. “Rum is as diverse and rich as any Cognac or whiskey,” he says. “When I drink my Kirk and Sweeney, I prefer to drink it neat in a snifter.”

Despite being a relatively new brand, Kirk and Sweeney is already making a name for itself within the wide-ranging rum category. “The brand is up more than 30 percent in dollars and case sales in the past year. Distribution is growing by double digits, and the 18 Year is our fastest growing expression,” Sebastiani says. With business also showing significant growth in Europe, Kirk and Sweeney looks to be a product on which the Sebastiani family can proudly stamp their name. “Kirk and Sweeney is a brand that we’re very excited to sell. We’re looking forward to a long, healthy future,” Sebastiani says. “My family has been in this for 120 years—I’m looking to continue that and build a brand that people can be proud of.” ■

Kirk and Sweeney My Thai

Created by Dylan Holcomb

- 1½ oz. Kirk and Sweeney 12 Year Old Rum
- 1 dash Angostura bitters
- 1 oz. lemon juice
- ¾ oz. Chinese five-spice curry syrup
- ½ oz. cream of coconut
- 1 Thai basil leaf

Combine all ingredients in a Collins glass. Add crushed ice and swizzle. Top with fresh crushed ice and garnish with Thai basil leaf and dehydrated lime.

Although Holcomb prefers to drink his rum neat, his My Thai cocktail with Kirk and Sweeney 12 Year Old Rum is a hit at Bang Up to the Elephant!



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



Lindsey Young and Fred Dame, MS.

A Conversation with Lindsey Young

BEVERAGE DIRECTOR/SOMMELIER, PARK TAVERN, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

photos by Hardy Wilson

Q **Fred Dame:** Ah, nothing like being in San Francisco on a beautiful day in famed Washington Square. **Lindsey, does it ever get old coming to Park Tavern?**

Lindsey Young: No, it doesn't. I've been here almost four years because it's a great place to work. We have an amazing staff serving excellent food in a gorgeous setting.

Q It seems like a great place just to stop by for a glass or two. How many wines by the glass are on the list here? Right now, 20. We have three sparkling, seven white, three rosé, and seven red. It's important to have diverse selections since about 50 percent of our sales are by the glass. I find that by-the-glass options are a great way to introduce new and interesting varietals to our

guests that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to try.

Q Wow, 50 percent—that must keep the waitstaff busy!

It certainly does. Our large bar and communal area drive a lot of the glass sales.

Q What percentage of red versus white is sold?

Lindsey Young oversees a wine list of more than 300 bottles at Park Tavern in San Francisco.

I would venture that 70 percent of what we sell is red.

Q Surprising! I would expect that from a steakhouse, but not here. Is it the menu that drives those sales?

I think that's just a reflection of our guests' general preferences, not necessarily the food. Our menu is contemporary California cuisine focusing on seasonal ingredients served in a classic tavern style. We specialize in the sort of comfort food that makes everyone happy.

Q OK, so what is the top dog of red wine sales? I would venture Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

California Pinot Noir, by far.

Q Amazing. I know you work the floor here so I would venture that has a big effect. But considering the percentage of by-the-glass sales, I'm still surprised. How many customers ask for recommendations from the list?

About 50 percent. Most guests have an idea of what they're looking for, so I listen and then offer them a selection that fits the criteria. Because tables are generally ordering a mix of seafood and meat, Pinot Noir is a common go-to. Although I absolutely love Pinot, I like to offer lighter red alternatives that the guest may not have otherwise considered.

Q I get it. When I came in today, I asked you to select a wine from the by-the-glass list that we could taste together. I have to admit I wasn't expecting Saumur! But what a wonderful selection the Château de Brézé Clos de Midi is. Tell me about it.

This winery has been around since the 15th century and has a storied history. It was a favorite of the nobility in Europe in the 1600s, and it's a superb example of what Chenin Blanc can be.



Q Chenin Blanc? By the glass? Fantastic! This wine is bone-dry with no residual sweetness and a delicate floral and red-apple character. Delicious.

Yeah, it has laser-sharp acidity with beautiful minerality and excellent power and concentration. It pairs well with our diverse cuisine. The wine is imported by The Source, which brings us really fantastic wines.

Q What are your annual wine sales?

I'd say about 20 percent of total restaurant sales. We do serious volume, allowing for a lot of movement on the wine list, which means there's always something new and exciting. The staff really loves learning about it and our regulars enjoy getting to try new things.

Q How often do you do staff training?

It's pretty much daily. We have a 30-minute lineup before service to go over menu changes, pairing opportunities, and list additions. We have a serious ongoing training program and we recently put a large number of the staff through The Court of Master Sommeliers Level 1 course. You were one of the instructors! I regularly put together study guides for the regions of the world represented on the list, incorporating descriptions of our wines from those regions.

Q How many wines are on the list?
Q About 300.

Q What about wine dinners?

Yes, we recently partnered with Aperture Cellars on a wine dinner we held in our private dining space, the Eden room. It was very successful and

we look forward to doing them more routinely. We also do monthly wine dinners at Petit Marlowe, and we have a Tuscany-themed dinner this coming Monday with Giovanni Folonari of Tenuta di Nozzole.

Q How many wine salespeople do you see each week?

I manage to sit down with about six distributors each week. There are so many of them and I try to give everyone an opportunity.

Q How about sales of wine versus spirits and cocktails?

It's about even but I have to give an edge to wine. Weekends really push the cocktail sales with brunch being especially strong for spirits. Mid-week wine sales are very strong.

Q What does Lindsey like to eat and drink?

I am an adventurous diner. I love lots of different cuisine but have a real love affair with Spanish tapas. My guilty pleasure for wine is, of course, Champagne.

Q Of course it is—what was I thinking asking that question? And what trends should we be watching for in the near future?

I've been seeing a trend toward the planting of lesser-known varietals in California. We have such a diverse climate, so there's a lot of room for experimenting. I've recently tasted great Trousseau Gris, Sémillon, and even Aligoté.

Lindsey, thanks for not saying orange wine. Good luck with your MS exams in the future! ■

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.

Prices are for 750 ml. bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC



92 **Sangiacomo Family Vineyards 2016 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast**
(\$55) Juicy with mineral notes and ripe pear; elegant and balanced; long, fresh, and stylish with finesse and nuance; the first wine from the family farming this world-famous vineyard.



92 **Tablas Creek Vineyard 2016 Côtes de Tablas, Adelaida District, Paso Robles**
(\$35) Raspberry hue; spicy, smooth, and exuberant with lush and tangy fruit; dense and well-balanced with a lengthy finish. 

VINEYARD BRANDS

95 Testarossa Winery 2016 Barrel Selection Niclaire

Pinot Noir, California (\$90)
Bright ruby color; soft plum and berry nose; smooth, lush texture; meaty and rich with balance, depth, and complexity; another winner from this consistently underrated producer.

91 Tangent 2016 Stone Egg Albariño, Paragon

Vineyard, Edna Valley (\$32)
Bright, flavorful, and tangy with racy acidity and a refined style; clean and luscious; produced from estate grapes fermented separately in a concrete egg-shaped tank.

92 Ponzi Vineyards 2015 Reserve Pinot Noir,

Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$65) Meaty and dense with ripe cherry and savory notes alongside salinity and spice; another winner from this historic family winery, which celebrated its 45th anniversary during this vintage. 

VINTUS WINES



92 Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Upshot Red Blend,

Sonoma County (\$28) Deep ruby red; smooth and weighty with notes of earth and chocolate; juicy and long with style and finesse; a product of an excellent winery that's become one of Sonoma's best.

IMPORTED

92 Bodega Chacra 2017 Barda Pinot Noir,

Patagonia, Argentina (\$30) Lovely, bright cherry on the nose and palate; crisp, balanced, and fresh with tangy acidity; grown on slightly sandy soils in Chacra's youngest vineyards and aged ten months in French oak.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS

92 Tenuta di Nozzole 2013 La Forra Sangiovese

Riserva, Chianti Classico DOCG (\$50) Deep earth and berry nose; polished and flavorful with complex structure and tangy fruit; another stylish Folonari success.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS

92 Château La Nerthe 2017 Châteauneuf-du-Pape,

France (\$60) Smooth, dense, and luxurious with ripe aromas; a lovely, perfectly balanced Rhône blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, Clairette, and Bourboulenc from one of the best producers in the region.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS



89 Rich Wine Company 2015 Rich & Spicy

Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15) Silky and bright with tangy plum and succulent spice; dry, rich, and deep; long and balanced. 

92 Tenuta di Nozzole 2015 Chianti Classico

Sangiovese Riserva, Chianti Classico DOCG (\$30) Smooth and lush with ripe berries and spice; tangy, racy, and complex with a long finish; another classic Folonari wine.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS

VALUE

91 Benoît Mérias Montlouis 2014 Les Maisonettes

Chenin Blanc, Montlouis-sur-Loire, France (\$27) Produced from 100% organic Chenin aged on the lees in Burgundy barrels; bright and tangy with green apple notes; silky, fresh, and racy; crisp, long, and intense.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

92 Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Te Mana Road

Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$45) Deep ruby color with an earthy and bright cherry nose; velvety, dense texture with aromatic berry fruit. 

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS

90 Boutinot Wines

Feudo Maccari 2017 Olli Grillo, Terre Siciliane IGP (\$20)

Typically used in the production of Marsala, this Sicilian grape proves it can make lovely table wine; clean, velvety, and aromatic with abundant flavor.



KOBAND WINE &
SPIRITS

BLUE REVIEWS

91 Fasoli Gino 2014 Pieve Vecchia Soave, Bianca

Veronese IGT (\$21) Pleasing golden color; rich and mellow with ripe fruit; toasty, lush, and balanced with lasting acidity. 100% Garganega grown on sandy soil by a winery adhering to organic and Biodynamic practices.

M.M. IMPORTS

88 Château Chantal Celebrate Semi-Dry Sparkling, Old Mission Peninsula, Michigan

(\$15) Despite committing the serious infraction of using the word "Champagne" on the label, this is a pleasant semi-sweet sparkler: clean, smooth, tangy, and long. 



88 Snowbirds

Vintners 2016 Grüner Veltliner, Lake Chelan AVA, Washington (\$18) Crisp, refined, ripe, and dense from this "vacation-inspired," sustainably made brand; polished, simple, and balanced; a nice domestic take on this Austrian variety.

90 Steele Wines 2015 Writer's Block Syrah, Cana Springs Vineyard, Lake County (\$18)

Dark, juicy, and fragrant with blackberry and spice. Jed Steele does it again with this clean, rich, and balanced wine.

90 Ponzi Vineyards 2017 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon

(\$19) Elegant and bright with minerality and flavorful fruit notes that linger; a smooth and tangy winner from Oregon. 

VINTUS WINES

91 Domaine La Croix Montjoie 2014 Bourgogne-Vézelay L'Impatiante Chardonnay, France (\$21)

Silky with tangy citrus, crisp, bright minerality, and elegant structure; 100% Chardonnay hand-harvested from clay- and limestone-based soil.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

92 Domaine Raphaël Chopin 2015 Régnié La Ronze, Régnié AOC, France (\$24)

Deep, dark ruby color; smooth and sumptuous with cassis and cherry, this is what Beaujolais should aspire to be. 100% Gamay manually harvested from schist and pink granite soil.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

90 Baileyana 2017 Rosé of Pinot Noir, Paragon Vineyard, Edna Valley

(\$24) Medium-light pink with a strawberry nose; smooth, dry, and crisp with racy acidity; smooth texture with a long finish. 

92 Silver Wines 2013 Cabernet Franc, Santa Barbara County

(\$25) Creamy and juicy with lively plum and deep berry fruit; rich, elegant, and balanced; an excellent effort from this talented producer.



91 Pighin 2016 Estate Pinot Grigio, Collio DOC, Italy

(\$18) Fresh, bright, and austere with minerality, citrus notes, fine structure, and length from a producer that takes this variety seriously.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS

90 Tenuta Campo al Mare 2017 Vermentino Bolgheri, Bolgheri DOC

(\$20) Lush and smooth with tangy acidity and fresh fruit; rich and balanced, it's yet another lovely bottling from the Folonari family.

KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS



90 Divum Wines 2016 Chardonnay, Grava Vineyard, Monterey AVA

(\$20) Silky and bright with a soft and creamy texture; lush but showing a lively pineapple structure; a complex well-made wine at a good value. 

88 Château Souverain 2016 Chardonnay, North Coast AVA

(\$14) Clean, balanced, and long from a California winery dating back to 1944; silky, fresh, and simple yet appealing.



91 Tiki Sound 2017 Sauvignon Blanc

Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16) Fresh, spicy nose; crisp, racy, and tangy; bracing and lively, this is a charming wine without the usual regional funk. 

WINE TREES USA

91 Bonny Doon Vineyard 2017 Vin Gris de Cigare, Central Coast AVA

(\$18) A light pink blend of six Rhône varieties: 57% Grenache, 18% Grenache Blanc, 9% Mourvèdre, 6% Roussanne, 5% Carignane, and 5% Cinsaut. Tangy and bright with soft edges; a good impression of a Provençal rosé. 



SPIRITS

91 Dos Ron
16-Year
Rum, Dominican
Republic (\$50)

Deep amber color with a highly aromatic, spiced nose; refined, complex, and dense; dry and spicy with a lasting finish.

RHINO GLOBAL
ENTERPRISES

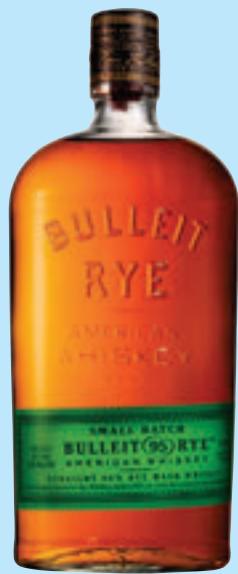


91 Colina Colada
Ron Con
Horchata (\$25)

Pleasingly creamy with almond notes and lovely toast; balanced, long, and suave; made from a centuries-old family recipe blending Caribbean rum with fresh dairy cream, cinnamon, lemon, and other distinctive flavors.

RHINO GLOBAL
ENTERPRISES

92 Re:Find Cucumber Vodka,
USA (\$26) Fresh-cut cucumber
nose with a crisp, clean base vodka
made from grapes; smooth and floral;
long and balanced.



93 Bulleit Rye
Whiskey, USA

(\$28) Rich and toasted; spicy, deep, and lush with grass and caramel notes; a pure and classic rye from this top producer.

DIAGEO NORTH AMERICA

92 Alipús Mezcal Ensamble,
Mexico (\$65) Vivid nose with
spice also strongly present on the palate;
smoky, earthy, and textured; 80% Espadín
agave and 20% semi-wild Bicuise.

CRAFT DISTILLERS



92 1792 Full
Proof
Kentucky
Straight
Bourbon
Whiskey, USA
(\$45) Lush and
nuanced nose;
silky, sweet, and
toasty with no
hard edges; a
mellow, dense,
and long cask-strength spirit.



95 Caorunn
Gin,
Scotland (\$35)
Exceptionally smooth,
rich, and deep with
complex, dignified
flavors; the Scots show
the English how it's
done with this Double
Gold winner at the
2018 San Francisco
World Spirits
Competition. ■■

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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: JEREMY BALL



WINES



San Simeon 2017 Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$24) This is a new, progressive, silkier style for San Simeon, with a nose of black cherry liqueur. Round-bodied rose petals and rhubarb flow with savory notes of tobacco and black pepper lengthening the flavors at mid-palate. Black cherry and espresso beans fulfill their destiny on the finish. **93**

RIBOLI FAMILY



Tenshen 2016 Red, Santa Barbara County (\$25) Wine entrepreneur Alex Guarachi partnered with Central Coast winemaker Joey Tensley to create one of the top-selling wines in the U.S. A blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, and Merlot comes together for a mouthwatering array of blackberry, lilac, and savory undertones. **92**

GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS



Eden Rift Vineyards 2016 Estate Pinot Noir, Cienega Valley, Monterey County (\$48) Sourced from a remote mountain property 20 miles from Monterey Bay, these grapes are grown on marine-influenced, calcareous subsoil. Under vine since 1849, Eden Rift is certainly one of the oldest continually producing estate vineyards in California. The wine's gamey nose is sweetened by pomegranate and seasoned by basil, while the acidity is refined with a punctuation of red fruit at the start that goes darker and more plummy toward the finish. Chalky tannins add to its considerate mouthfeel. **93**



Diora 2015 La Petite Grace Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$30) Sourced from the Santa Lucia Highlands (72%) and Diora's family-owned San Bernabe Vineyard (27%), this Pinot Noir sees a hint of Grenache and Petit Verdot shape its elegant fruit and texture profile to achieve richness and length. Mulled cherries make for a spicy and frisky aroma, and the palate excites: High-toned red fruit—strawberry and rhubarb—wash against cocoa-espresso nibs. This is a delicate, soulful wine. **93**



DELICATO FAMILY WINES

Worthy of a smooch.



French-style double bizou.



Wildly infatuated.



Seriously smitten.



Head over heels in love.



Castoro Cellars 2017

Rosé, Paso Robles (\$20)

Cherry bark and strawberry are indulgent aromas coming from this blend of 52% Syrah, 23% Grenache, 16% Albariño, and 9% Chardonnay. The dry—not chalky—mouthfeel stays dusty on the front palate and evolves to a juicier flow by the finish. Fresh, crisp celery root, watermelon, and wet stone make this a sturdy, standup rosé with a sipping ABV of 12.2%. **92**



Balletto Vineyards

2016 Pinot Noir,

BCD Vineyard,

Russian River

Valley (\$46)

Soil tilled with chocolate? That's the initial impression of this special sustainably farmed, single-vineyard Pinot Noir that's both estate-grown and -bottled. Additional scents of dark summer plum also appear in the flavor profile, with blueberry, cherry, and sweet tobacco playing into the mélange. There's structure to this wine's round body, which has fine acidity and a bold nature. **92**



Henriot Blancs de Blancs

NV, Champagne, France (\$59)

This all-Chardonnay assemblage is made up of 30% reserve wines, mainly from the Côte des Blancs. After an introduction of honeyed floral aromas and delicate pastry scents, the fine bubbles dissipate quickly to release notes of key lime, orange blossom, toasty egg bread, and an array of citrus and stone fruit. It finishes on a mineral note—breezy and lean. **93**



Opaque 2015 Darkness Red Blend, Paso Robles (\$30)

Though the majority of this wine is Zinfandel, it blends in Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, Petit Verdot, and Petite Sirah, so the moniker for this big red is spot on. Blackberry on the nose and palate defines the Zin as mocha, raspberry, and black coffee meld into this athletically structured wine. This is Anthony Riboli's California voice for a Côtes du Rhône style with fine-tuned acidity and approachable tannins. **94**



RIBOLI FAMILY



Franciscan Estate 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$23)

These grapes are sourced from the finest real estate in Napa Valley: The Oakville, Rutherford, and Oak Knoll District AVAs make up this blend of 81% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot (the remainder is Petit Verdot and Malbec). The expressive nose illuminates scented attributes of black plum, licorice, and blue flowers. Tight tannins grip the palate, but there's a juicy underbelly of dark chocolate and black cherry with acidity in all the right places. **93**



CONSTELLATION BRANDS



Acumen Wines 2014 PEAK Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak AVA, Napa Valley

(\$150) Acumen, a Napa Valley wine estate on the mountain slopes of Atlas Peak, farms 116 organically certified acres of vines across two vineyards: Attelas and Edcora, ranging in elevation from 1,300–1,600 feet above sea level. Danish-born Director of Winemaking and Executive Manager Henrik



Poulsen has worked with some of the world's most renowned winemakers, including Denis Malbec, Jean Hoefliger, and Michel Rolland. This 96% Cabernet Sauvignon offers up a sturdy nose of clean, just-picked mountain blueberries and brush with a leather backdrop. Concentrated flavors of espresso bean, chocolate cedar, blackstrap molasses, and cherry liqueur work together to build a statuesque red with bold tannins. **97**



Estancia Estates 2016 Stonewall Vineyard Reserve

Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia

Highlands, Monterey

County (\$27) What a show-piece! The cool, foggy climate of the Santa Lucia Highlands lends its stellar reputation to this luscious single-vineyard red. Aromas of sweet cherry and rose petals permeate, but it's the silky mouthfeel that really intensifies the experience. Rhubarb and white pepper make a fine pair while a backdrop of molasses lengthens the juicy finish. **94**



CONSTELLATION BRANDS



Altamana 2015 Constanza Vineyard Malbec, D.O.

Maule, Chile (\$46) From a 5-acre, non-irrigated vineyard caressed by cool nights and sea breezes, this majestic red ages for 15 months in the "ICÔNE Elegance" series of French oak. We tasted the 2014 vintage last year, but this year, it surpassed expectations. Blackberry is spiced just so, with a well-built body and firm, grainy tannins. The ripeness and complexity stay through to the seemingly unending finish. **93**



KOBAND WINE & SPIRITS



RED I.Q. 2015 Washington State

Red Wine, Horse Heaven Hills,

Red Mountain, Walla Walla, and

Rattlesnake Hills, Washington (\$14)

A blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 12% Petit Verdot, and 2% Malbec, this great-value red is juicy, ripe, and tart with notes of cranberry, black plum, and black tea. The liquid melts across the palate into a fine acidity before releasing earthier components on the finish. **90**



Malene Wines 2017 Camp 4 Vineyard Rosé of Mourvèdre, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara

County (\$35) We have been tasting many styles within this trending category, but what makes this a standout is not only its flavor profile, but its texture and what I refer to as "alertness." The tones are wideawake: fresh, clean, savory, and focused. Winemaker Fintan du Fresne's new project, Malene, explores rosé with an elevated attention to its potential, specifically with Rhône varieties. This Bandol-style wine is ageworthy with a nose of mountain brush and raspberry. White plum and apricot brighten the palate and grassy, heather notes broaden it. Rose petals, paprika, and nutmeg stylize it even further. **95**



PHOTO: SHANNON MCMILLEN



Black Stallion 2016 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$20) Apple pie and vanilla make for a patriotic nosing. The palate speaks to crisp Asian pear, stone-y undertones, brown butter, and toffee oak. A lovely acidity keeps it fresh and food-friendly. **92**

DELICATO FAMILY VINEYARDS



Pata Negra Cava Brut Reserva NV, Spain (\$15) Made in the traditional method, this pretty sparkler offers aromas of ripe green apple, orange peel, and honey. The delicate effervescence carries mineral notes and crisp pear. Bread dough enters mid-palate and finds balance in a lemon verbena finish. **91**

J. GARCÍA CARRIÓN



Bimini Gin, USA (\$32) From the White Mountains of New Hampshire, this juniper-forward gin has a garden mélange of aromas: lemon peel, lavender, allspice, and coriander. The garden goes full bloom on the palate, with a brininess that accents the heather and blue floral notes while also allowing a sweetness to permeate from grapefruit and verbena. **92**



Broken Shed Vodka, New Zealand (\$27) Crafted from New Zealand whey—the Kiwis call it "milk honey"—and a custom process of water re-balancing, charcoal filtration, and blending makes for an expressive white spirit. The nose is graceful with vanilla and tropical fruit, and the palate's buoyancy adds a wonderful mouthfeel lifting up flavors of peach and butterscotch before the salty finish. **92**

BROKEN SHED IMPORTS, LLC



Jaume Serra Cristalino Cava Brut Rosé, Spain (\$11) This blend of 80% Trepat and 20% Pinot Noir has a deep cranberry hue. A nose of raspberry and cherry pit leads to bright, fresh notes of watermelon and strawberry. Tiny bubbles are pleasant on the palate, as is an underlying middle of wet stone. This charmer is a great value. **90**

J. GARCÍA CARRIÓN



Amaro dell'Etna, Italy (\$40) More than 26 herbs went into this aromatic amaro, produced from a 1901 recipe with roots on the Mount Etna side of Sicily. The essence of orange peel is no coincidence: The distillery is located among orange groves. The satiny liquid is a paradoxically cool stream of lava that's luxurious and decadent on the palate. There's no cloying sweetness and the bitter cherry, anise, coffee bean, and black tea notes are delicately balanced. **93**



M.S. WALKER

SPIRITS



Santa Teresa 1796 Solera Rum, Venezuela (\$45) This single-estate rum is made from sugarcane grown on Santa Teresa property; the blending and bottling is also done on-site. The slow blending of 30 rums (through three styles of distillation) come together for spirits aged anywhere from four to 35 years. The nose continues to evolve, so as we sip, we return to grab additional olfactory notes of apricot and orange liqueur, as well as a defined salinity. The palate feel is luxurious: Chocolate-covered orange peel and new saddle become a liquid jewel that melts across the mouth, and the finish has a sweet resin-y quality. This overdelivers. **95**



Slaughter House American Whiskey, USA (\$39) Featuring a nose that speaks to orange peel, almonds, and resin, this 88-proof whiskey is finished and bottled in Napa, California. An approachable easy-drinker, it has verve on the palate with lean notes of tangerine rind, heather, and honey. **92**

SPLINTER GROUP SPIRITS



Award of Excellence



J. Lohr 2015 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$100)

Further proof that Paso Robles has the ability to craft some of the world's finest Cabernet Sauvignons, this is the third vintage of this wine. It's a tribute to founder Jerry Lohr from esteemed blocks of Clone 337 in the high-elevation calcareous soils of the Beck Vineyard, located in the region's Creston District. Blended with 11% Malbec and aged for 18 months in French oak, it was then transferred to a new set of barrels for a "flash" of two months to accentuate its ageworthiness. Rich, ripe plum accents the aromas and leads to a seamless palate of dry, dusty tannins and Old World acidity. Coffee bean and dark chocolate intertwine with dark summer berries and spiced tobacco. It's a teeth gripper 'til the end. **98**



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WSWA'S BRAND BATTLE
SETS THE STAGE FOR COMPETING
SPIRITS PRODUCTS

BRAND WINE & SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF AMERICA BATTLE

2018



The Brand Battle judges at WSWA's 75th Annual Convention & Exposition included Charlie Merinoff, Co-Chairman, Breakthru Beverage Group; Steve Slater, Executive Vice President/General Manager—Wine Division, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits; Meridith May, Publisher/Editorial Director for *The Tasting Panel*, *The SOMM Journal*, and *The Clever Root*; Marc Sachs, Vice President of Supplier Business Development, Republic National Distributing Company; Bill Rancic, author and restaurateur; and Syd Ross, Co-CEO, Great Lakes Wine & Spirits.

PITCH Perfect

by Bill Brandel / photos by Tony Tran

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAZZA ILLUSTRATIONS



Mixologist extraordinaire Tobin Ellis, who served as the host and moderator of Brand Battle, is the owner of BarMagic, an award-winning hospitality design and consulting firm in Las Vegas.

Not unlike the popular TV show *Shark Tank*, which introduces aspiring brands to investors and millions of viewers, the Brand Battle competition at the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) 75th Annual Convention & Exposition puts wine and spirit entrepreneurs in front of some of the country's most important distributors and trade media representatives. For the industry, that's a priceless opportunity: It's a win in itself to have an in-person "meeting" with these decision makers when it comes to promoting a burgeoning brand.

In fact, the goal of the competition is to showcase how the three-tier system of distribution succeeds in introducing new products to the market. While the judges had the power to choose the top contenders, an audience of more than 200 industry influencers also chimed in with their votes. This year's convention in Las Vegas ended on a high note for the contestants, who performed a timed pitch and tasting for the judges after the screening of their "sizzle reels."

BRAND BATTLE

WINE & SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF AMERICA
2018



Marsh Mokhtari is the co-founder and Master Distiller of Gray Whale Gin.

BRAND BATTLE CHAMPION GRAY WHALE GIN

Takes Home The Title

Every year, the California gray whale makes a 12,000-mile migration from the warm lagoons of the Baja Peninsula to the cold waters of the Arctic. This small-batch gin, made in California with locally sourced botanicals, celebrates this incredible mammal's journey.

A member of 1% For the Planet, which requires companies to donate at least 1 percent of their sales to environmental causes, Gray Whale Gin also supports the international organization Oceana in its efforts to protect the world's oceans and the gray whale's natural habitats.

Gray Whale Gin co-founder Marsh Mokhtari hosts Food Network's *Extreme Chef* and also holds a degree in medical physics. As the Master Distiller at Golden State Distillery, Gray Whale's parent company, he's created a highly memorable spirit that wowed the judges and the audience—resulting in an overwhelming number of votes.

Marsh explained that tasting Gray Whale is akin to traversing the Pacific coastline, as its ingredients are sourced along the West Coast: from citrus to fresh mint, the umami flavors of kombu sea kelp, and a finish of California almonds.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAY WHALE GIN

Almonds are among the ingredients sourced along the California coast for Gray Whale Gin.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAY WHALE



The handcrafted Gray Whale Gin came in first place at the WSWA Brand Battle competition.

SECOND PLACE: ROSÉ PISCINE

With a pool-safe bottle that doesn't require pre-chilling, Rosé Piscine checks off all the boxes as a product built for drinking outdoors. The semi-sweet wine is meant to be sipped on the rocks: a traditional style enjoyed throughout Western Europe.

Rosé Piscine is made with Négrette, an indigenous varietal from southwest France. A small, dark, and tough-skinned grape known for its powerful aromatic qualities, the fruit is sourced in Côtes du Frontonnais, which is located just southwest of Gaillac and north of the city of Toulouse on the western bank of the Tarn river.



Blake Helppie serves as the Managing Director for Rosé Piscine.

THIRD PLACE: KOHLER DARK CHOCOLATE

In 2016, Herb Kohler, Executive Chairman of Kohler Co. (the same company behind an expansive line of high-quality fixtures and decorative kitchen and bath products) combined his love for brandy with his branded Original Recipe Chocolates. Aged two years, the brandy is produced in California and naturally infused with Kohler's dark chocolate. A second product, Kohler Mint Chocolate Brandy, has also been launched.



In addition to Kohler's Dark Chocolate Brandy, the judges also sipped on Kohler Chocolate Mint Brandy.

Gerald Allison, Business Manager for Kohler Original Recipe Chocolate Brandy, presented the product to the judges.





THE OTHER WORTHY COMPETITORS

UNICORN TEARS GIN LIQUEUR



Kristian Bromley is CEO/Managing Director for Firebox, the parent company of Unicorn Tears Gin Liqueur.

After Firebox launched Unicorn Tears Gin Liqueur in its home-base of London in January 2017, the company's CEO/Managing Director, Kristian Bromley, hopes to bring the brand stateside thanks to the contacts he made at Brand Battle. "We use a free-range unicorn herd and a closely guarded extraction process," Bromley noted cheekily of Unicorn Tears' production. "Real unicorn tears provide the iridescent sparkle and glittery finish to this 80-proof spirit."

Unicorn Tears Gin liqueur, launched in the U.K. in January 2017, is part of the "Mythical Spirits" range created by the London-based company Firebox.



Religion, New Zealand's first tequila company, recently made its U.S. debut.

RELIGION TEQUILA

Originally founded as New Zealand's first tequila company (its parent company is Dirty Liquor, LLC), Religion has arrived in the U.S. as it seeks to distinguish itself as a premiere organic brand. Founder Aidan Uttinger is a self-described "tequila prophet" and entrepreneur who says he sees a gap in the industry for genuine, authentic brands with compelling stories. After tasting the spirit, the judges all claimed they were believers.



Aidan Uttinger is the founder of Religion Tequila.

BLUE MARBLE ULTRA-PREMIUM COCKTAILS



Blue Marble Ultra-Premium Cocktails CEO Alan Miller with fellow co-founder Danyelle Rabine.

These colorful, recyclable 200-milliliter cans contain all-natural, ready-to-drink, pre-mixed cocktails and spirits in 12 flavors, including Greyhound, Vodka Soda, and Mojito. Blue Marble Ultra-Premium Cocktails co-founder/CEO Alan Miller—a veteran diagnostic and surgical innovator who has pioneered award-winning patented products—continues his entrepreneurial endeavors with the company as its Mixologist. “One of our goals, with these recyclable cans, is to keep plastic out of the ocean,” Miller says.

Miller’s fellow co-founder Danyelle Rabine is a businesswoman and philanthropist who heads up public and investor relations for the company. She also hails from the medical profession, with experience as an educator, technician, and recruiter.



The Blue Marble Ultra-Premium Cocktails line comes in 12 flavors, including Greyhound, Vodka Soda, and Mojito.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EARTH DELICACIES

GINJA9

A Portuguese sour cherry liqueur with no added colors or preservatives, Ginja9 follows a recipe dating back to the Portuguese monks of the 17th century, when sour cherries were infused in alcohol distilled from rice and cereal. Ginja9 is traditionally served in a dark chocolate “cup,” a particularly gratifying way to consume this silky-smooth liquid.

Alexander Dias, the founder of Ginja9’s Los Angeles-based parent company Earth Delicacies, imports unique products from around the world. “I love sharing a piece of my beloved Portugal with the rest of the world,” Dias told the Brand Battle judges. “Ginja9 is one of the country’s best delicacies.” ■

Ginja9, a Portuguese sour cherry liqueur, is typically served in dark chocolate “cups.”



Alexander Dias is the founder and CEO of Ginja9’s parent company, Earth Delicacies.



MOST
EXPERIMENTAL
BARTENDER

Jill Anderson's winning "luxury format" serve at Glenfiddich's World's Most Experimental Bartender competition features two wood rounds branded with the Glenfiddich emblem and topped with ox horns filled with freshly foraged herbs (including lavender, heather, and lemon thyme) meant to emulate the rugged spirit of Scotland itself.

RUSTIC ELEGANCE REIGNS SUPREME





Ten U.S.-based bartenders vied for a spot in the finals of Glenfiddich's World's Most Experimental Bartender competition at the company's distillery in Dufftown, Scotland, in April. Pictured in back from left to right are Joseph Bennett, Jeremy Campbell, Shaun Stewart, and Seamus Banning; in front from left to right are Oscar Sinisterra, Ben Golden, Young Kim, winner Jill Anderson, Hemant Kumar Pathak, and Stephen Kurpinsky.

JILL ANDERSON OF CHICAGO WILL REPRESENT THE U.S. IN GLENFIDDICH'S MOST EXPERIMENTAL BARTENDER COMPETITION BY KATE NEWTON / PHOTOS BY JOHN PAUL

It's rare that experimentation can be described as the lifeblood of any 130-year-old institution, but when you step onto the grounds of Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland, the sense that something surprising could be found around every corner is so abundant that it rivals the scent of malted barley permeating the crisp, clean air.

That infectious spirit certainly made an impression on the group of ten U.S.-based bartenders who visited the esteemed distillery in April as part of Glenfiddich's fourth annual World's Most Experimental Bartender competition. After spending several days together in Edinburgh and Speyside, the participants convened at the distillery to showcase an original cocktail featuring a Glenfiddich expression as part of an impeccably crafted "serve" they hoped would capture the attention of the judges: Ian Millar, Glenfiddich's Global Brand Ambassador and a venerated whisky expert; Sonia Lessuck, Associate Brand Manager for Glenfiddich; Jenna Elie, creator of the popular blog Whisky A Go Girl; and Kate Newton, Senior Editor at *The Tasting Panel*.

Needless to say, the competition was steep: After the bartenders navigated the judges through immersive presentations so impressive that they bordered on sensory overload (for more on each of the ten qualifying serves, see the April 2018 issue of *The Tasting Panel*), the panel selected Jill Anderson of The Drifter in Chicago as the winner. With her Heather & Hearth serve, Anderson will vie for the title of World's Most Experimental Bartender when she returns to the Glenfiddich distillery alongside representatives from 15 other participating countries in November.



Jill Anderson (second from left) of The Drifter in Chicago celebrates after her win with judges Ian Millar, Glenfiddich's Global Brand Ambassador; Sonia Lessuck, Associate Brand Manager for Glenfiddich; Jenna Elie, creator of the popular blog Whisky A Go Girl; and Kate Newton, Senior Editor at *The Tasting Panel*.

A WORTHY AMBASSADOR FOR A “WORLD-CLASS SPIRIT”

While Anderson's collected yet laid-back presentation (she was the only competitor to make herself a cocktail to toast alongside the judges!) made a lasting impression, her serve's ability to simultaneously act as an homage to Scotland, Glenfiddich, and her farm, Willowthorne, south of Chicago lent it an alluring authenticity that proved irresistible.



Glenfiddich Brand Ambassador Mitch Bechard with winner Jill Anderson.

Anderson presented the serve—made with Glenfiddich 14 Year Old, Drambuie, Green Chartreuse, cardamom, housemade coffee bitters, and a lemon-twist garnish—in indentations carved into unfinished wood rounds branded with the iconic Glenfiddich stag. The wood rounds also served as the base for two carved ox horns filled with herbs, including lavender and heather she had foraged near the distillery in a moment of what she called “last-minute inspiration.” The Glencairn glasses themselves, meanwhile, were smoked with rosemary to supplement the serve’s herbal character.

“Because we live and die by the seasons at the farm, I wanted something that was able to translate with whatever season it was in,” Anderson explained.

“I first presented the serve in late November when we had rosemary and lemon thyme; my hope was to come to Scotland and have that available to me, but at the same time I wanted to go out and see what I could actually grab.”

By evoking both the Scottish landscape and her farm alongside a cocktail incorporating “luxury” ingredients, Anderson said she sought to communicate the concept of duality through her serve. “I’m a farmer, but I call myself a gentle lady farmer,” she said with a smile. “I like my fast cars, my good food, and my shoes, but I also like to hang out on the farm. I wanted this to be a very rustic serve, but the cocktail itself is very elegant.”

At The Drifter, the tiny, speakeasy-style bar where Anderson serves as Bar Manager, Heather & Hearth offered a rare opportunity to serve a large-format, shared cocktail that didn’t skimp on high-quality ingredients or a compelling backstory. “This was really popular in our bar, because everything there is extremely visual,” Anderson said. “We have these old wooden tables that date back to Prohibition, so they looked absolutely gorgeous and created a lot of buzz and excitement. For a tiny bar, we’re fairly high-volume, so this was something I was intending to be replicated—it’s something Glenfiddich could take and put in other bars if they’d like.”

And while Anderson had selected the Glenfiddich 14 Year Old for the “floral elements” it imparts, she said she’s open to trying other variants of both the spirit and the herbs for the version she’ll present in the final. “The idea with the herbs in the bar is that the cocktail or the garnishes will change slightly depending on seasonality,” she explained. “Glenfiddich works so hard

to ensure that what is in that glass is a world-class spirit, so if I get to add to that, I better make sure what’s in that glass is world-class as well. I can have all the bells and whistles in the world, but if what’s in that glass isn’t impressive, I’ve failed. Coming into this competition, the one thing I was absolutely confident in is that I made a great cocktail.”

The aforementioned last-minute inspiration came in many forms, but the most personal source for Anderson was the small, leatherbound book she passed around to her fellow competitors to sign in the days leading up to the competition. When she began her presentation, she told the bartenders they’d “unknowingly helped [her] with [her] serve” and started a tradition she hoped to continue in her future travels. “I think for me what really brought home the idea of sharing was that little book and being able to get everybody to sign it and create this sense of community and camaraderie, and being able to have that in conjunction with the presentation of the cocktail,” Anderson later told *The Tasting Panel*. “It helped me remember and really understand what the competition was all about—it helped keep me grounded.”

As she looks ahead to the finals, Anderson said she’s honored to not only represent the U.S., but to serve as an ambassador for her fellow stateside competitors. “I think what I’m looking most forward to is keeping in touch with the people I’ve met here, taking inspiration from them and their programs and serves, and being able to move that forward to represent the U.S. in the finals,” she says. “I’m not just representing the U.S. as an abstract thing: I’m representing *them*, and that is massive for me.”

THE ROAD TO GLENFIDDICH

Established in 1887, William Grant & Sons now commands a global footprint that extends far beyond the realm of whisky. In addition to Glenfiddich, the company’s portfolio today includes Balvenie, Monkey Shoulder, Hendrick’s Gin, and Reyka Vodka.

But it all started with the brand emblazoned with the

now-iconic stag: Glenfiddich ranks among the top single malt Scotch whiskies in the world, but its humble beginnings hardly indicated the growth and sheer output it would eventually achieve.

The distillery produced 14 million liters of whisky in 2017 alone, but 130 years ago, it was simply the fulfillment of a dream 20 years in the making. With his family growing rapidly, William Grant sought to “stand on his own two feet,” according to Gregor Campbell, one of two William Grant &

THE HONORABLE MENTIONS: SEAMUS BANNING AND STEPHEN KURPINSKY

While the judges can only officially name a first-place winner, they recognized two more competitors with honorable mentions for their inventive and highly memorable serves: Seamus Banning of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Stephen Kurpinsky of San Diego, California.

Banning's Eye of Balor serve—an ode to the ancient Celtic god—infused Glenfiddich 12 Year Old with the multifaceted flavors of szechuan peppercorn, coriander, rosemary, thyme, bay leaf, orange peel, and lemon peel by slowly funneling the spirit through a Kyoto drip tower (typically used to make cold brew coffee) containing the mixture of herbs, peels, and spices. In

an effort to create what he called an "all-inclusive experience," he served his Old Fashioned-inspired cocktail in hand-carved limestone rocks glasses alongside a highly rated Ashton Symmetry Belicoso cigar.

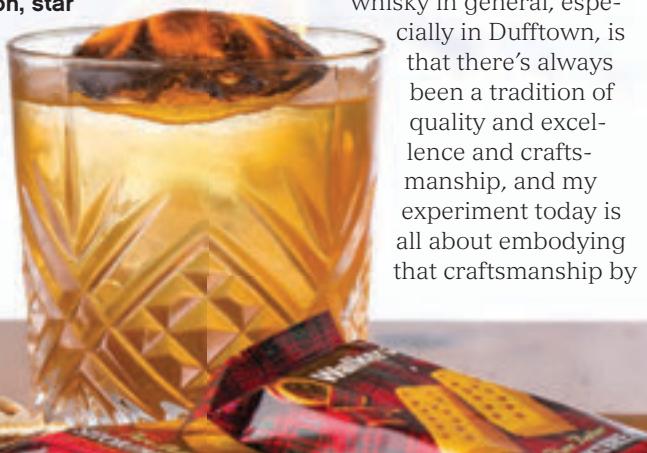
While the judges didn't actually smoke the cigars during the presentation, they experienced a similar effect as they lifted the glass dome over Banning's cocktail to release the smoke of dried jasmine buds and rosemary. "For people who don't smoke cigars, but maybe want that little bit of flavor, this is a really great way to introduce that," Elie said.

Kurpinsky, meanwhile, also served a riff on an Old Fashioned in his Dufftown by Candlelight serve. He began his presentation by recalling his first night behind the bar: Within the first hour, a man sat down and ordered a dram of the Glenfiddich 12 Year Old. "I certainly didn't think that years later I would be standing in front of all of you in Dufftown in Speyside getting a chance to visit this beautiful facility here," Kurpinsky said. "What I take from this whole experience and really

whisky in general, especially in Dufftown, is that there's always been a tradition of quality and excellence and craftsmanship, and my experiment today is all about embodying that craftsmanship by



Stephen Kurpinsky flambéd a syrup of vanilla bean, cinnamon, star anise, coffee beans, coriander, orange peel, sugar, and 151-proof demerara rum to complement the Glenfiddich 15 Year Old Solera Reserve in his Dufftown by Candlelight serve.



Sons team members who led the bartenders on a tour of the distillery.

After working briefly at a limestone quarry, he wanted to open his own in order to better support his family, but after a deal for land fell through at the last minute, Grant—by then the father of seven sons and two daughters—was left adrift. The family nearly moved to the Caribbean to establish a sugar plantation instead ("If they had done that, you might've been drinking Glenfiddich rum," Campbell quipped), but they



After infusing Glenfiddich 12 Year Old with a mixture of herbs, peels, and spices using a Kyoto drip tower, Seamus Banning presented an Old Fashioned-inspired cocktail

alongside an Ashton Symmetry Belicoso cigar as part of his Eye of Balor serve.

doing everything for this cocktail in front of your very eyes."

After flambéing a syrup of vanilla bean, cinnamon, star anise, coffee beans, coriander, orange peel, sugar, and 151-proof demerara rum to bring out the spice characteristics of the Glenfiddich 15 Year Old Solera Reserve, Kurpinsky added aromatic bitters and Pedro Ximénez Sherry to further enhance the beautiful Sherry notes that end up in the final product of Glenfiddich 15. And, of course, any bartending competition wouldn't be complete without some pyrotechnics: Served with Walkers Shortbread, Kurpinsky's cocktail also featured dehydrated lemon slices set aflame before the judges savored their first sip. ■

remained when Grant took a job at the well-established Mortlach Distillery instead.

He soon developed a passion for whisky, and after spending years toiling as a bookkeeper and, eventually, distillery manager, he left at age 47 and purchased a site in the Conval Hills that remains Glenfiddich's home today. On Christmas Day 1887 the first spirit ran from the stills, "and as of the Christmas Day past, we've been in production continuously for 130 years under the same family ownership," Campbell said.

SHERRY

Sails the World

**BARTENDERS TRAVEL TO JEREZ,
SPAIN, TO COMPETE IN THE 2018
TÍO PEPE CHALLENGE**



The judges with Eduardo Nava (third from left), the 2018 Tío Pepe Challenge winner from Mexico. The judges were Vicky González, International Marketing Manager for González Byass and fifth-generation member of the González family; González Byass Brand Ambassador Álvaro Plata; Joao Vicente, winner of the 2017 Tío Pepe Challenge; Daniele Dalla Pola, famed mixologist and owner of Nu Lounge in Bologna, Italy; and JP Fetherston, Beverage Director for Drink Company in Washington, D.C.

by Jesse Hom-Dawson

With the Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, this past winter and the FIFA World Cup currently dominating the attention of millions of soccer fans around the world, 2018 has proved an exciting year for a little friendly competition between countries.

These international rivalries extend far beyond sporting events, however: Yet another competition, the 2018 Tío Pepe Challenge, has also been unfolding across the globe with representatives from 13 countries. And while the U.S. didn't make the cut for the World Cup, American bartenders were able to compete in the challenge this year for the very first time.

It's fitting that Tío Pepe—the beloved Spanish Sherry brand owned by the bodega González Byass and renowned by the international bar community—would play host to a cocktail competition extending from Shanghai to Melbourne to New York City. Culminating in a final showdown in Tío Pepe's hometown of Jerez, Spain, the competition began with masterclasses in each locale; during the sessions, González Byass Brand Ambassador Álvaro Plata taught attendees about the finer points of the category and how to pour Sherry with a *venencia*, a tool traditionally used to extract the liquid from the barrel.

These tips would come in handy during the semifinals, where contenders tested their Sherry knowledge through a blind tasting and demonstrated their proficiency with the *venencia* in addition to creating an original Sherry-based cocktail. The 13 lucky competitors traveled to Jerez for the finals, where they presented their cocktails to the panel of judges: Plata; Vicky González, International Marketing Manager for González Byass and fifth-generation member of the González family; Daniele Dalla Pola, famed mixologist and owner of Nu Lounge in Bologna, Italy; JP Fetherston, Beverage Director for Drink Company in Washington, D.C.; and Joao Vicente, the winner of the 2017 Tío Pepe Challenge.

While inspiration for the cocktails

THE WINNER



MEXICO

Name: Eduardo Nava
City: Mexico City
Establishment: Licorería Limantour

Cocktail: Gurrumino

- 60 ml Tío Pepe Fino
- 30 ml canary seed orgeat
- 10 ml yuzu juice
- Garnish: carrot



was varied, it always seemed to channel a personal touch or specific experience: Jiani Duan from China was inspired by the tea her grandfather used to brew for her, while Eduardo Nava from Mexico drew inspiration from Mexico City's hummingbirds, which are believed to bring good luck.

After mixing cocktails and participating in the blind tasting in the hours leading up to the final round of the competition, the finalists spent the evening in front of an audience of judges, friends, family, press, and members of the González family to showcase their *venencia* skills. It was a close contest, but in the end, Eduardo Nava from Mexico was crowned the winner. "Sherry gives a complexity of flavors to a cocktail, and

it's a good base for low-alcohol cocktails. Tío Pepe was the ideal Fino for my recipe because of its freshness and flavor," Nava said. "I'm very happy and grateful for winning, but more than anything I'm motivated to continue learning, working, and sharing experiences like the Tío Pepe Challenge. It's an experience I will never forget!"

With such a global presence represented in this year's competition, we can only wait patiently to see which newcomers might rise to the challenge in 2019.

*Although The Tasting Panel generally prints recipes in ounces, international recipes are typically measured in milliliters.



AUSTRALIA

Name: Kristian Leombruni

City: Melbourne

Establishment: GoGo Bar

Cocktail: The Papparouli

- ▶ 50 ml González Byass Viña AB Amontillado
- ▶ 20 ml blanco tequila
- ▶ 40 ml pepper
- ▶ 15 ml lemon
- ▶ Tonka bean and apricot orgeat
- ▶ Egg white



BELGIUM

Name: Andres Claeys

City: Antwerp

Establishment: Tapabar

Cocktail: Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding)

- ▶ 45 ml González Byass Viña AB Amontillado
- ▶ 5 ml González Byass Solera 1847 Cream
- ▶ 40 ml housemade blood orange cordial
- ▶ 20 ml Italicus Rosolio di Bergamotto
- ▶ 15 ml Del Maguey Vida Mezcal
- ▶ Coriander



CHINA

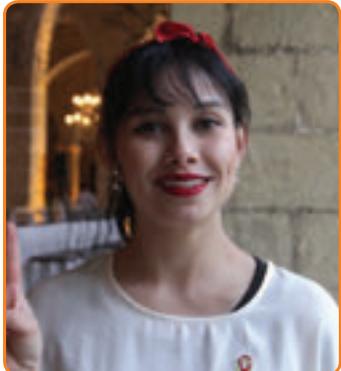
Name: Jiani Duan

City: Shanghai

Establishment: Bar Mall Fun

Cocktail: Grandpa's Tea

- ▶ 50 ml González Byass Alfonso Oloroso
- ▶ 30 ml jasmine green tea-infused London No. 1 gin
- ▶ 15 ml jasmine syrup
- ▶ 1 dash grapefruit bitters



COLOMBIA

Name: Janeth Avila

City: Bogotá

Establishment: La Brasserie

Cocktail: Pepe Martini

- ▶ 60 ml Tío Pepe Fino
- ▶ 50 ml housemade cinnamon and ginger liqueur
- ▶ 20 ml orange juice
- ▶ Candied grapefruit



DENMARK

Name: Roy Atarodi

City: Copenhagen

Establishment: Strøm Bar

Cocktail: Lola Flores

- ▶ 30 ml González Byass Apostoles Palo Cortado 30 Year Old Solera
- ▶ 20 ml Sanguinello blood orange cordial
- ▶ 20 ml Balvenie 12 Year Old DoubleWood Scotch Whisky
- ▶ Garnish: Manzanilla olive



GERMANY

Name: Claus Liebscher

City: Münster

Establishment: Lilies Lokal

Cocktail: Levante

- ▶ 50 ml González Byass Alfonso Oloroso
- ▶ 20 ml González Byass Noé PX
- ▶ 30 ml walnut-infused Nomad Outland Whisky
- ▶ 20 ml fresh lemon juice
- ▶ 20 ml orange syrup
- ▶ 10 ml vanilla-caramel syrup
- ▶ Egg yolk



NORWAY

Name: Max Verrier

City: Oslo

Establishment: Bar *ISM

Cocktail: Ceniza

- 50 ml Tío Pepe Fino
- 25 ml Bonal Gentiane Quina
- 10 ml Bruichladdich Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky
- 7½ ml simple syrup
- Garnish: black olive powder



ITALY

Name: Nicolò Rossi

City: Bergamo

Establishment: Barrier

Cocktail: Bulerías

- 50 ml Tío Pepe Fino
- 10 ml housemade sage gomme syrup
- 10 ml blanco tequila
- 5 ml Fernet Branca
- 5 ml lemon juice



SPAIN

Name: Eduardo Martínez

City: Albacete

Establishment: Destil-Art

Cocktail: Triunfo

- 20 ml Lepanto Brandy de Jerez
- 10 ml González Byass Vermouth La Copa
- 50 ml González Byass Alfonso Oloroso
- 5 ml flower-infused Aperol
- 1 barspoon saffron honey
- Garnish: orange twist



SWEDEN

Name: Madelaine Akerlund

City: Göteborg

Establishment: Familjen

Cocktail: Go Green

- 60 ml Tío Pepe Fino
- 50 ml green tomato syrup
- 20 ml fresh lemon juice
- 3 tsp. Marcona almond olive oil



UNITED KINGDOM

Name: Cameron Moncaster

City: London

Establishment: The Mandrake Hotel

Cocktail: Sea, Spice, Citrus, & Soil

- 50 ml Tío Pepe Fino en Rama 2017
- 30 ml blood orange sherbet
- 5 ml saffron
- 2.5 ml Italicus Rosolio di Bergamotto
- 60 ml Vichy Catalan sparkling water



UNITED STATES

Name: Valentino Longo

City: Miami

Establishment: Four Seasons Surfside

Cocktail: Call Me Cristoforo

- 1½ oz. Tío Pepe Fino
- ½ oz. González Byass Néctar PX
- ½ oz. Yellow Chartreuse
- 1 oz. tomato and strawberry shrub
- 1 oz. Cedrata Tassoni soda ■■

THE TASTING PANEL'S
PALATES PICK OUR
**TOP TEN FAVE
CHARDONNAYS
UNDER \$17**

CHARDS THAT PUNCH ABOVE THEIR WEIGHT CLASS

► BEST CHARDONNAY UNDER \$17

After tasting more than 75 Chardonnays over the past several months, our team battened down the hatches to choose our ten best from the bunch. While there were many fine competitors, these wines stood out for taste, character, mouthfeel, balance and all the other important attributes that make a wine noteworthy. These wines work hard for the retailer and the restaurateur by offering outstanding value for customers in this competitive, high-volume segment.

These ratings are based on scores within this tasting group of wines.

**Edna Valley Vineyard
2016 Chardonnay,
Central Coast (\$15)**
Ginger, chamomile, and savory lemon verbena make a cocktail for the soul and the nose. Green apples spruce up the palate, reminding us of granny's summer pies with that little bit of crust firming up the mid-palate. Ripe pineapple notes are juicy and sweet, but it's the rare appearance of apricot nectar blending seamlessly with subtle hints of toasty oak that puts this entry over the top for us. Texture played an important role in showcasing a wine that significantly overdelivers with finesse and quality for the price. **94**



PHOTO COURTESY OF EDNA VALLEY VINEYARDS

"I could not be happier doing what I'm doing," says Edna Valley Vineyards Winemaker Kamee Knutson. "Winemaking is the perfect mix of science and creativity, especially at Edna Valley Vineyard, where I'm able to work with some truly amazing fruit sources throughout the Central Coast. It's really the greatest reward to craft Edna Valley Vineyard wines and see them enjoyed by wine lovers everywhere."

E. & J. GALLO



**Noble Vines 2016
446 Chardonnay, San
Bernabe Vineyard,
Monterey County (\$13)**
Light and delicate scents of bright lemon-lime give way to a palate of white peach, pineapple, and crisp apple. Savory tones of basil and a coconut roundness are seared by a lean acidity. From the San Bernabe Vineyard in Monterey's "sweet spot"—with its warm days and cool nights—this is an expressive, modern

white wine. **93**

DELICATO FAMILY VINEARDS

**Estancia Vineyards
Chardonnay, Monterey
County (\$12)** From the Pinnacles Vineyard on the east side of the Salinas Valley, this is a creamy, dreamy white. Orange peel and apple aromas linger alongside flavors of honeyed peach and pineapple. The flavors are vibrant, as is the lovely acidity, and the finish is luscious with banana cream pie and baking spices. **93**

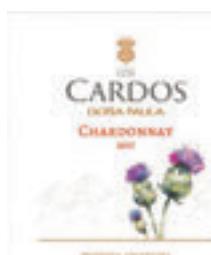
CONSTELLATION BRANDS



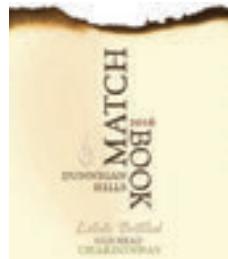
**Doña Paula 2017
Los Cardos
Chardonnay,
Mendoza,
Argentina (\$14)**
The striking nose consists of pineapple, lemon spice,

and chamomile. The acid is tense while the fruit is opulent: a sensational combination. Complex notes of tarragon and heather mingle between citrus and white peach. **93**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



**Matchbook
2016 Old Head
Chardonnay,
Dunnigan Hills
(\$15)** Aged six months in previously used barrels, this golden straw-colored wine carries a toasted aroma with a smooth, buttery mouthfeel full of creamy fruit, almond paste, and melon preceding a long finish with a bit of minerality. **92**



**Van Ruiten Family
Winery 2016
Chardonnay, Lodi (\$14)**

There's a touch of Old World acidity and flavor in this citrus-kissed white. On the nose, complex, earthy notes meld with lemon blossom as the palate gears into a leaner mode with grapefruit, apple cinnamon, and a vanilla-oak finish. **92**



**J. Street Wines 2016 XIX
Chardonnay, California (\$16)**
With an inspired label created by in-house artists, this small-lot Chardonnay offers up caramel-coated peaches on the nose. Bright acidity, savory herbs, and spices lead to a delicious mid-palate for mango and papaya fans. The long finish brings it all together. **92**



**Heavyweight 2016
Chardonnay, California**

(\$13) A fragrant jasmine nose opens up to a smooth, rich mouthfeel and lemon meringue that warms the palate, ending with a touch of oak. **91**

SCOTTO CELLARS



**River Road 2017
Un-Oaked Chardonnay,
California (\$13)** This young 100-percent-stainless Chard carries a zesty citrus aroma and pale green hue. Fresh and crisp, it exhibits a slight sweetness, light body, and green apple flavor: a good option for those who shy away from buttery, oaky Chardonnays. **90**



**Black Cabra 2016 Chardonnay,
Mendoza, Argentina (\$10)** From the Argentine Andes, this primarily stainless-steel-tank-fermented white features sensuous aromas of gardenia and sugared pineapple. Delicate and zippy, it offers a bright freshness that caught our attention. **89**

VINO DEL SOL

COVER STORY

MODERN MOONSHINERS

INTRODUCING
OLE SMOKY MOONSHINE'S
NEWEST BRAND
AMBASSADORS

BY MARA MARSKI / PHOTOS BY VAN GALLIK



OLE SMOKY INTRODUCES ITS NEWEST HIRES to Gatlinburg, TN, the home of the moonshine empire's three distilleries. Brand Ambassadors Ginny Edwards, Kenny Strong, Madeline Bishop, and Carlos Ruiz are pictured here at the Roosevelt Lodge in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains.



The team takes a break from the whirlwind that is Moonshine University—the educational portion of Moonshine Camp—to enjoy some time getting to know each other.

ough the production and sale of moonshine in Tennessee was legalized in 2010, for many the term still conjures an image of backwoods hillbillies gathered around a homemade still. But a stylish young group of city folk who recently gathered at the sumptuously appointed Roosevelt Lodge in the foothills of Tennessee's rolling Great Smoky Mountains represent an image completely at odds with this outdated connotation. The bartenders' love of Ole Smoky Moonshine has drawn them to the brand's birthplace as advocates of the spirit: They are, without a doubt, modern moonshiners.

This spring, after a rigorous selection process, Ole Smoky announced that this group of four had become its newest crop of Masters of Moonshine. In addition to bragging rights and a new title, Ginny Edwards, Kenny Strong, Madeline Bishop, and Carlos Ruiz earned contracts to represent Ole Smoky as the company's new Brand Ambassadors. Each was strategically chosen to represent their respective markets: Seattle-based Edwards representing the West, Cleveland's Bishop in the Midwest, New Jersey's Ruiz chiming in for the Northeast, and Strong, from Orlando, representing the South.

The group met for the first time this

May in eastern Tennessee's Gatlinburg, where they spent the better part of a week diving deep into the history and culture of Ole Smoky. Moonshine Camp, as it's affectionately known, consisted of Moonshine University—an in-depth review of the brand's facts and figures, including its marketing and PR strategies—as well as an intensive look into the production process.

Camp excursions included a trip to the Pittman Center, where New Product Development Manager Matt Lane gave



Ginny Edwards and Madeline Bishop share a laugh in the grass at Moonshine Camp.

the new recruits a tour of his laboratory. This exclusive behind-the-scenes look at Lane's workspace and projects spanned from his experiments with mash bills to his well-stocked flavor pantry, culminating in a top-secret sampling of some of his newest creations. Also on the itinerary was a visit to the bottling line, where Thomas Hamilton,

Ole Smoky's Director of Operations and Supply Chain, gave the team an immersive review of the brand's multiple production lines, which fill more than 38,000 units daily.

Of course, no moonshine-related excursion would be complete without a visit to The Holler, Ole Smoky's main distillery in nearby downtown Gatlinburg. There, the Masters experienced the facility as if they were one of its 2.1 million annual visitors through a comprehensive tasting of 13 of the brand's most popular flavors. Afterward, Master Distiller Eric Vance took them behind the curtain to explore the inner workings of the distillery, including the mash tuns, stills, and the new-make moonshine pouring off of the condenser.

Despite the rigorous education on seemingly every facet of the brand, the campers still made time for play: enjoying local food and the city's Ole Smoky-centric cocktail menus; whitewater rafting through a section of the Great Smoky Mountains; and spending a night sharing ghost stories in the backyard of the lodge. Ultimately, though, the camp's integral mission was to introduce the new ambassadors to the company—and to each other. Read on for an introduction of each of the 2018 Ole Smoky Masters of Moonshine, who intend to bring the spirit out of the backwoods and onto the backbar.

GINNY EDWARDS, SEATTLE, WA



Seattle-based Master of Moonshine Ginny Edwards gets meditative while sporting sunglasses that would make John Lennon proud.

How did you end up behind the bar?

I've been enamored with food and beverage since I was a kid. One of my first visceral memories is of being in a restaurant and ordering a Shirley Temple. There was something about the way it tasted and the pretty waitress who brought it, and I fell in love. As soon as I was old enough, I started to hostess and I worked up to bussing, then serving, but I always wanted to get behind the bar. It's like a stage, and as an only child, I wanted all eyes on me. It was a gravitational pull from the beginning.

How would you describe your style as a bartender?

I like creating seasonal, easy-drinking, balanced cocktails, and I have a less-is-more philosophy. It's easy to wow people with a nine-ingredient drink that has four dashes of this, a barspoon of that, and a dust of whatever, but it's harder to give people that same "aha moment" with only three ingredients.

What are your biggest influences behind the bar?

Hands down, my inspiration behind the

bar comes from two places: seasonality and my guests. There are definite tastes that mirror seasons—florals in spring transition to summer berries and melon, then into fall with cinnamon and spices. Every season has a place and flavor and this is where my menus tend to gravitate.

I also listen to what my guests want. A woman came in and said, "I once had a Martini that tasted like an Orange Creamsicle—can you do that?" Yeah, sure I can. So, I mixed up a drink and had a "wow" moment. I called over my bartenders and next thing I know, it's on the menu.

What's exciting to you about being a "modern moonshiner"?

There's a certain amount of mysticism behind moonshine, but it's so deeply seated in our history as Americans. To see it get reinstated in 2010 and to look at how it's moved to the forefront of the marketplace is incredible. For me, it's the versatility of moonshine—it's an inherently rebellious spirit—and the opportunity to introduce consumers to it on the West Coast where it has almost no exposure that I find the most exciting.

ANOTHER ROUND WITH GINNY

What's your go-to moonshine camp cocktail?

Ole Smoky Mountain Java with Buckeye and cream, garnished with a crushed pretzel salt and sugar rim. Dessert cocktails are my jam.

What's on your camp playlist?

"Drunk Me" by Mitchell Tenpenny. Ironically, it's about being sober.

How do you describe your camp style?

Hmm, how about girl from the city trying real hard? Or punk rock meets a Disney musical.

How would your friends describe you?

An actual quote from a friend: "If Rainbow Brite and Dorothy from *The Golden Girls* had a few drinks at the local dive."

KENNY STRONG, ORLANDO, FL

How did you end up behind the bar?

I got my start working in a wine bar as a busser. I'd never been exposed to craft cocktails but seeing how much effort goes into them at a high-end bar fascinated me. I knew I wanted to work my way up so I could get behind the bar, and after I decided that, there was no looking back.

How would you describe your style as a bartender?

At my current bar, approachability is key. I like to make drinks everyone will like—still craft cocktails, but something that appeals to everyone.

What are your biggest influences behind the bar?

My best friend is a great bartender and he mentored me. I've learned everything from him. The owners of the wine bar where I got my start also really inspire me because they're so talented and passionate. They went out of their way to pass the torch to me, and that guidance enhanced my skills, but it made me want to raise the bar so I could compete with them creatively on their level. That has always pushed me to do better.

What's exciting to you about being a "modern moonshiner"?

I love being able to pull this product out of the past and away from the limitations of the "backwoods" to make it timely and approachable. I work at a moonshine bar, and every day I get to make contemporary moonshine cocktails while introducing new people to the craft behind the spirit.

ANOTHER ROUND WITH KENNY

What's your go-to moonshine camp cocktail?

A moonshine Margarita. I make mine with Ole Smoky Margarita Moonshine, Some Beach Cream Liqueur, fresh pineapple, and orange juice. It's like a tropical skinny Margarita.

What's on your camp playlist?

Kanye West just dropped a new album and I will definitely be listening to a lot of A\$AP Rocky and Pusha T. I really like hip-hop and I work faster behind the bar when I get a beat in my head and start to move with it.

How do you describe your camp style?

I like to wear designer clothes, but it's hot in Florida so I usually dress down unless I'm going out.

How would your friends describe you?

Very chill.



Orlando-based Kenny Strong finds a moment to himself to steal a sip of Ole Smoky Blue Flame.

MADELINE BISHOP, CLEVELAND, OH

How did you end up behind the bar?

I got my start cocktailing in culinary school. In my final section at the Culinary Institute of America, we went through front-of-house training where we touched on mixology and it sparked my interest. I read everything I could get my hands on: Jerry Thomas, Dave Wondrich, Jim Meehan, and the manuals from Death & Co. and The Dead Rabbit. When I got into cocktailing, it felt like I'd found something that I didn't know I had been missing. I don't have any plans to get back behind the line, but I don't feel like I've lost anything culinarily because of the depth of creation that's possible in modern cocktails.

How would you describe your style as a bartender?

This is an old reference, but you know how in *Chocolat*, Juliette Binoche wins over the townspeople with the perfect chocolates for them? That's my style behind the bar. I love to get to know my guests so I can pair them with drinks that match their souls. For me, it's not just about flavor science—it's people science, which is an equal mix of creation and hospitality.

What are your biggest influences behind the bar?

Sean Muldoon and Jack McGarry of The Dead Rabbit [in New York] are longtime influences of mine. They dug through the trenches of cocktailing, starting as Irish bar guys, and they just kept pushing until they became the best bar in the world—twice. I just got to visit The Dead Rabbit for the first time and I literally cried when I walked through the door.

I'm also a book nerd and that's where a lot of my inspiration comes from. *The Drunken Botanist* [by Amy Stewart] is a favorite of mine. I identify very deeply with the idea that you don't serve people to get them drunk; you serve them because there is something special in every creation.

What's exciting to you about being a "modern moonshiner"?

I know there are people who look down on moonshine in the bar community, but this spirit has so much history and purpose. I'm excited to use my skills and knowledge to continue generations-old moonshine traditions in a modern fashion.

I used to make moonshine when I was younger and this experience feels like everything is coming full circle. Except instead of drinking moonshine in my backyard with my friends, I get to do it on a national scale with a bunch of friends I've yet to meet.



Cleveland-based bartender Madeline Bishop holsters her trusty slingshot to ham it up for the camera at Moonshine Camp.

ANOTHER ROUND WITH MADELINE

What is your go-to moonshine camp cocktail?

I'm usually a straight sipper, but for camp I'd pick a dessert-y Buckeye Old Fashioned.

What's on your camp playlist?

I bounce from '90s alternative rock to death metal to Luke Bryan. (For some context, in high school I was an emo girl who also rode horses and worked on a farm.)

How do you describe your camp style?

I don't have a defined style, but I'm a country girl and everything I wear is functional—I'm all about pockets and shoes I can move in. My hair is usually up and I don't do much makeup.

How would your friends describe you?

Sassy and short seem to be the unifying words.

CARLOS RUIZ, MORRISTOWN, NJ

How did you end up behind the bar?

In 2010, I interviewed for my first fine-dining job as a busboy and lied on my resume. I researched online and starting name-dropping, but the hiring manager immediately knew I was lying. He was very gracious, though, and said it was clear that I wanted to work, so he gave me a shot.

My first week there I fell in love with the bar program. It was the first time I'd ever seen a Nick and Norah glass—well, any glass that wasn't just an Old Fashioned—and everything was beautiful. I thought, "I want to be that guy making those drinks," so a month later I asked the head bartender to train me as a barback.

He kept saying no, but I started coming in on my days off to help him break down cardboard or stock bottles. One day, as service was starting, he was in the basement when a couple came in and ordered cocktails. I decided not to bother him and made the drinks myself. He came upstairs and asked who made them. I said, "I did." He asked, "With what specs?" I said, "Yours—I've been studying your cocktail bible," and he finally gave in and gave me a shift a week.

How would you describe your style as a bartender?

My style is globally inspired. I like to experiment with ingredients from all over the world, but I always end up giving my drinks a Peruvian flair, because that's where I'm from.

What are your biggest influences behind the bar?

My biggest influence is my heritage. I use a lot of traditional Peruvian ingredients like lime, sesame oil, *chicha morada* (a purple corn-based drink made with pineapple, apple, and spices), cucumber, and *lucuma* (a fruit that has an almost caramel-like taste). I make cocktails approachable for American drinkers, but I like to have my heritage show in my craft.

What's exciting to you about being a "modern moonshiner"?

I think pisco and moonshine are similar in that they are both steeped in culture and history but sort of looked down on, and it's a cool challenge to change this perception.

Since the Ole Smoky White Lightnin' is pretty neutral, I want to introduce it in a frozen cocktail with some fresh fruit that screams summer, like a frozen peach Daiquiri. I think playing off the current trends will help show people that moonshine doesn't just belong in the South.

ANOTHER ROUND WITH CARLOS

What is your go-to moonshine camp cocktail?

A moonshine Southside.

What's on your camp playlist?

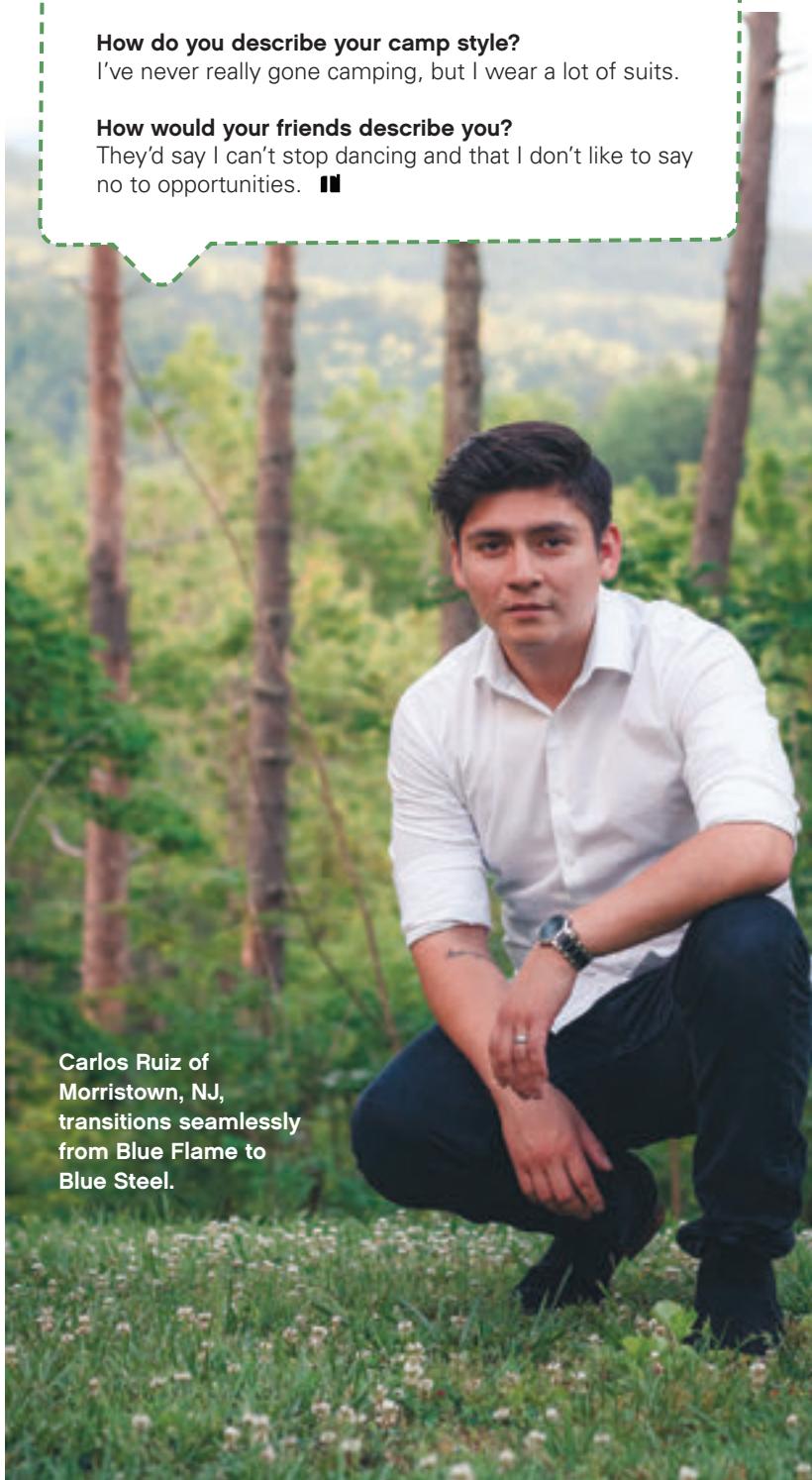
A little bit of everything, but for sure some oldies: Marvin Gaye, Elvis, Michael Jackson, Chaka Khan—that's my girl right there.

How do you describe your camp style?

I've never really gone camping, but I wear a lot of suits.

How would your friends describe you?

They'd say I can't stop dancing and that I don't like to say no to opportunities. ■■■



Carlos Ruiz of
Morristown, NJ,
transitions seamlessly
from Blue Flame to
Blue Steel.

ITALIAN WINES

AS THE ITALIAN WINERY APPROACHES THE CENTURY MARK, **KETTMEIR** RENEWS ITS COMMITMENT TO "PROGRESS WITHIN TRADITION"

The
FLAVORS
of
ALTO ADIGE

BY DAVID GADD / PHOTOS BY RYAN DEARTH

The Alto Adige landscape includes Lake Caldaro.

FOR NEARLY A CENTURY, Kettmeir has been at the forefront of winemaking in the verdant hills of northern Italy's Alto Adige. The lush Alpine winegrowing region set against the backdrop of the towering Dolomite mountains—a UNESCO World Heritage site—borders Austria to the north and is also known by its German name, Südtirol.

The northernmost wine region in Italy, the Alto Adige—Südtirol DOC was established in 1975, but it was as far back as 1919 that Giuseppe Kettmeir began crafting wines from this superb terroir. The area offered ideal conditions for grape cultivation with its range of soil types, altitudes, and temperatures, giving the resulting wines a strong sense of place.

Today, as it approaches its 100th anniversary next year, Kettmeir aims to renew its commitment to Alto Adige with a strong sense of environmental responsibility, as well as pride in its enduring local traditions and the 60 grape growers who supply fruit for the wines. A new "brand identity" recently revealed a modernized heraldic crest and a subtle revision of the Kettmeir name on the labels; the letters' edges have been shortened and softened, the font geometry has been improved, and the spacing has been extended slightly for a cleaner, more contemporary look. At the winery in Caldaro, Italy, the showroom is also being revitalized to reflect today's Alto Adige—Südtirol lifestyle, which combines elements of Italian and Mitteleuropean culture and cuisine.

What has not changed is the quality of the Kettmeir wines, which still proudly reflect the brand's motto: Progress Within Tradition. While Kettmeir is widely known in Italy for sparkling wines, its importer, Santa Margherita USA, stresses in the American market the distinctive qualities of two of Kettmeir's still wines, Pinot Bianco and Müller-Thurgau: varietals that vividly showcase the terroir of Alto Adige and express its gastronomy and lifestyle.

STEPPING FROM THE SHADOWS: KETTMEIR PINOT BIANCO

While Pinot Grigio has become the white varietal most associated with northern Italy, Kettmeir is especially proud of its Pinot Bianco. Known as Pinot Blanc in France, this white-skinned mutation of Pinot Noir finds an ideal home in the vineyards of Alto Adige. At Kettmeir, Pinot Bianco is grown in loose-textured, mainly calcareous soils and is vinified and matured in stainless steel for a fresh, clean taste uninfluenced by oak.

Straw-yellow in color with greenish highlights, the Kettmeir Pinot Bianco (\$22), now in its 2017 vintage, is a beautiful accompaniment to hors d'oeuvres or seafood. For those who insist on Pinot Grigio, Kettmeir's version is exemplary.

TASTING NOTES

Kettmeir 2017 Pinot Bianco, Alto Adige—Südtirol, Italy (\$22) It's no wonder this white is fabulous with food: The aromas waft from a tangy seasoning of tarragon and the minty quality of rosemary sprinkled thoughtfully over lime and tangerine. Lithe and lean, this high-pitched white has a crisp-peach-on-wet-stone taste with a timbre of magnolia and honeysuckle on the finish.
93 —Meridith May

Kettmeir 2017 Pinot Grigio, Alto Adige—Südtirol, Italy (\$22) The trio of sweet, savory, and tart impresses the nose with pineapple, basil, and lemon curd. From there, the wine offers a creamy base with a contrasting thread of minerality; searing acidity, meanwhile, works its way through to the end. In between, a harmonic balance of complexity is accented by verbena and mowed grass.
92 —M.M.



The Kettmeir Pinot Bianco and Müller-Thurgau at Venice Ristorante in Denver.

Kettmeir 2017 Müller-Thurgau, Alto Adige—Südtirol, Italy (\$22) Pungent aromas of summer apricot and peach stimulate the senses. The creamy texture is a mouth-filling dream with sweet almonds and white floral notes. The expected minerality melds with stone fruit and accents the lean acidity. Baked orange rinds find a saline finish.
93 —M.M.

ITALIAN WINES



The versatile Kettmeir Müller-Thurgau makes an ideal restaurant wine.

A WINE FOR ALL REASONS: KETTMEIR MÜLLER-THURGAU

In 1882 in Germany's Rheingau region, the botanist, viticulturalist, and enologist Dr. Hermann Müller began a breeding program at the Geisenheim Grape Breeding Institute in hopes of creating a grape that would combine the aromatics, complexity, and acidity of Riesling with the early-ripening ability of Silvaner. The end result was the Müller-Thurgau variety, propagated and planted extensively at the end of the 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th. (Müller himself had doubts that Silvaner was the true parent of the grape that bears his name, and Müller-Thurgau later proved to be a cross between Riesling and the table grape Madeleine Royale.)

The Kettmeir Müller-Thurgau (\$22) is grown in limestone soil on high slopes in the Soprabolzano zone northeast of Bolzano. It's vinified using a short maceration of the skins at low temperatures and in a reduced environment to optimize the extraction of perfumes; fermentation follows in steel at a controlled temperature of 14–15 degrees Celsius (57–59 degrees Fahrenheit). Pairing suggestions include seafood risotto, grilled fish, or any fried foods. ■

ALTO ADIGE GOES MILE HIGH

In Denver, Colorado, Chef Alessandro Carollo is at the top of his game. Born in Sicily, the Venice Ristorante owner began his restaurant career in Palermo at age 14, later working in Florence, Venice, and the Ionian Islands before setting his sights on California in 1996.

He was hired by Italian concept II Fornaio, and just a year and a half later, he was given the opportunity at age 23 to become Chef-Partner at the concept's Denver location. After opening two more II Fornaio locations in Colorado, he opened his own restaurant, Venice Ristorante, in 2002.

Today, Venice Ristorante's two locations (as well as a sister restaurant, Chianti, and a catering company) are the premier Italian dining destinations in the Mile High City. What better place to discover the high-altitude wines of Alto Adige?

Carollo's wine program is extensive, with roughly 1,000 bottles at the downtown Denver location and 100 wines by the glass on the list, as well as 25 additional daily by-the-glass offerings for happy hour. The restaurant's cellar is housed in a striking glass wine room that emphasizes the chef's passion for wine.

While Carollo buys the wines, the program—which he describes as 60 percent Italian, 30 percent California, and 10 percent “rest of the world”—is overseen by General Manager/Sommelier Eric Carter. Presented to guests via an iPad, the list features Kettmeir's fragrant Pinot Bianco and bright, appealing Müller-Thurgau; both make superb pairings with the restaurant's Venetian-style seafood, as well as with other northern Italian dishes such as Chef Carollo's *pollo alla valdostana*—chicken with prosciutto and fontina cheese.

“I'm the kind of person who really works in the restaurant,” says the hard-working chef. “Some days I go to two or three restaurants. People want to see your face.”



Chef Alessandro Carollo, owner of Denver's Venice Ristorante, tastes Kettmeir wines against the backdrop of his stunning glass wine room.

COCKTAIL SHOWDOWN

A BLOOM IN THE DESERT

TRADE MEMBERS
SPOTLIGHT THE NEW
ROSA 22 APERITIVO ROSÉ
AT A LAS VEGAS
COCKTAIL COMPETITION
IN THE PALMS
CASINO RESORT

BY XANIA V. WOODMAN / PHOTOS BY MONA SHIELD PAYNE

The timing couldn't have been more apropos for the launch of Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé, a new aromatic apéritif from the century-old Riboli Family Wine Estates. Temperatures in Las Vegas during the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) 75th Annual Convention & Exposition still hovered around springtime levels during the event's run from April 30–May 3, and, just like the expansive views from a dining room at the top of the Palms Casino Resort on May 1, summer was well within sight.

Despite the lure of the city lights, all eyes on that particular evening were firmly set on Rosa 22's rosy-pink bottle. "As a family company that's been around for 100 years, this is a first apéritif for us," said Dante Colombatti, Marketing Director for Riboli Family Wine Estates, of the fruit-forward Aperitivo Rosé. With its delicate infusion of botanicals, the so-called "*spirit-tif*" is a reverential nod to the life's work of the company's founder, Santo Cambianica, who emigrated from Berzo San Fermo in Lombardia, Italy, in 1910. Cambianica later founded San Antonio Winery in downtown





The judges for the Rosa 22 competition: Riboli Family Wine Estates Winemaker Anthony Riboli; Michael Ploetz, Food and Beverage Director at Las Alcobas in Napa Valley, CA; Tasting Panel Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May; and Dante Colombatti, Marketing Director for Riboli Family Wine Estates.

Los Angeles in 1917—thus establishing his family's legacy in the wine business.

Colombatti, along with Winemaker Anthony Riboli, make up half of the fourth generation of Riboli Family Wine Estates, which, with the creation of Rosa 22, now expands its portfolio to include apéritifs. In an effort to create what Riboli describes as “something unique, something special,” the company worked closely with botanists and producers in the Piedmont region to craft a recipe containing all things quintessentially Italia: mandarin orange, peach, cardamom, gentian, coriander, and other native ingredients. “It’s amazing how this product is made: in a truly artisan fashion and all steeped on-site,” Riboli said.

At 16% ABV and with a suggested retail price of \$25, Rosa 22 functions as a sort of halfway point between Campari’s bitterness and Aperol’s sweetness and viscosity. “Hopefully, this product fits a niche that’s not yet filled,” Riboli said. While it’s a natural fit for a spritz, Rosa 22—the name being an ode to Riboli’s Stella Rosa portfolio of northern Italian wines, as well as to the 22 botanicals, fruits, and herbs in the formula—is as versatile as can be.

To prove that point, Riboli and Colombatti gathered with more esteemed judges—*Tasting Panel* Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May and Michael Ploetz, Food and Beverage Director at Las Alcobas in Napa Valley, California—for a cocktail competition in the newly renovated Palms. Each of the eight competitors—most of them bar managers, owners, and beverage directors and all official judges of the WSWA spirits and wine competitions—were invited to prepare their submitted recipes live for the panel. (Read on for Q&As with each.)

Decked out in eye-popping pink right down to the crystal chandeliers, the debut affair was also attended by roaming Venetian carnivale ladies. “I was blown away by what we saw and what we tasted,” Riboli said of the event.

Several submissions focused on Rosa 22’s delicate floral qualities and easy-drinking character, such as the “quintessential ‘patio pounder’” created by Cari Hah, Bar Manager

at Big Bar in Los Angeles’ Los Feliz neighborhood. Her delightful cocktail, Got 22 Problems but a Peach Ain’t One, combined the bright aperitivo with peach tea-infused gin, lemon juice, raspberry syrup, egg white, and aromatic bitters to tie for third place with Jason Asher, owner of Barter & Shake in Phoenix, Arizona. Asher, who declared that “Rosa 22 is unlike anything [he’s] ever tried,” highlighted the aperitivo’s rose, grapefruit, and gentian elements with a Moroccan spiced gin, strawberries, rhubarb and lemon juice, rhubarb bitters, and a foam made from Stella Rosa Imperiale Prosecco in his Belle of the Ball cocktail.

Another competitor seemed particularly excited to be in Las Vegas, as it provided an excuse to soak up some sun. “We don’t have spring in Chicago,” quipped second-place winner Jon McDaniel, Beverage Director at Gage Hospitality Group in the Windy City, but he could imagine himself enjoying two, three, or even more of his refreshing entry, Prendi il 22. The drink quadrupled down on Rosa 22’s Italian heritage, combining the aperitivo with Cynar, amarena cherry syrup, Lambrusco, lemon juice, and rhubarb bitters.

It was, however, a less obvious casting of Rosa 22 that caused the judges to sip up and take notice. Jared Sowinski, Director of Beverage at The Phoenician resort in Scottsdale, Arizona, aimed to look past Rosa 22’s warm-weather appeal for his cocktail. “I was impressed with the refined elegance that Rosa 22 possesses and the immense layers of flavors and nuances captured in the spirit,” he said. “I decided that I wanted to truly showcase the diversity and complexity of Rosa 22 with a confident and timeless cocktail.”

His submission, Inverno—the Italian word for winter—serves as an ode to the Manhattan, Boulevardier, and Old Fashioned as a split base of Rosa 22 and Punt e Mes vermouth, bourbon, and orange cream bitters served with a flamed orange peel. “This cocktail embraces any occasion, yet evokes the comfort of winter,” Sowinski said. The judges hardly required convincing, unanimously declaring Sowinski a winner and his Rosa 22 creation a cocktail for all seasons.

FIRST PLACE: JARED SOWINSKI



What did you like about working with Rosa 22? I like the refined elegance this spirit possesses, as well as its layers of flavor and nuance.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Balanced with flavors of orange, red fruits, cardamom, botanicals, and a subtle sweetness.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22? Negroni, Manhattan, Boulevardier, spritz, and Kir Royale.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? I think the versatility of the spirit will lend itself to be used in many different drinks and profiles. I would use my cocktail on the menu and add it to the backbar for further use and volume.

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? Jigger/shaker.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? Experiences and adventures bring new foods and aromas, which bring new combinations that can be recreated and brought to cocktails to tell that story.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Drake and hip-hop.



INVERNO

*Created by Jared Sowinski, Director of Beverage,
The Phoenician, Scottsdale, AZ*

- 1 oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- 1 oz. Punt e Mes
- 1 oz. Woodford Reserve Bourbon
- 3 dashes Bittermens Orange Cream Citrate Bitters

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass and add ice. Stir well to chill, strain into a rocks glass over ice, and serve with a flamed orange peel.

SECOND PLACE: JON MCDANIEL



What did you like about working with Rosa 22? A unique product that reflects a growing category but still stays true to the traditions of the Italian aperitivo.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Lots of balanced fruit and herbaceous qualities leading with watermelon, bitter melon, strawberry, and Bing cherry.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22? It's a versatile spirit that could work with a sweeter style of bourbon or with gin—this could replace any Italian bitter liqueur.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? This would work specifically in my Italian concepts. The aperitivo category is hotter than ever and it could be featured in patio cocktails in a simple mix with Prosecco or more complex as a secondary spirit.

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? A blowtorch. No questions please!

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Really poppy '80s rock like Foreigner, Toto, Huey Lewis and the News, and Genesis.



PRENDI IL 22

Created by Jon McDaniel, Beverage Director, Gage Hospitality Group, Chicago, IL

- 1½ oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- ¾ oz. Cynar
- ½ oz. lemon juice
- ¼ oz. amarena cherry syrup (from the jar or can of cherries)
- 2 dashes Fee Brothers Rhubarb Bitters

Build into a large wine glass, fill with ice and top with 3 oz. of Cleto Chiarli Vecchia Modena Lambrusco. Garnish with a layered lemon swath, basil leaf, and skewered amarena cherry.



THIRD PLACE: CARI HAH

What did you like about working with Rosa 22? It has a very pleasing light aroma and flavor that can be an accent or the main event in a cocktail. It's not overly bitter so I think a wide range of people would enjoy it.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Light floral notes, sweet citrus, and light bitterness.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22? Negroni or Paper Plane.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? It would go beautifully in a low-ABV spritz.

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? A good shaker, good mixing spoon, and precise jigger.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? Inspiration comes from everywhere, but I focus on highlighting and respecting the spirit so often that if I'm given a spirit to work with, I will design a cocktail around its flavor. Also, I get a lot of inspiration from food I love.

Follow Hah on Instagram @carisunnie.



GOT 22 PROBLEMS BUT A PEACH AIN'T ONE

Created by Cari Hah, Bar Manager, Big Bar, Los Angeles, CA

- ¼ oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- ½ oz. raspberry syrup
- ¾ oz. lemon juice
- 1½ oz. summer peach tea-infused Plymouth Gin
- 1 egg white
- Angostura bitters



As guests were seated for dinner, wax domes filled with the aromatics of Rosa 22 were cracked open to reveal a neat taste of the apéritif inside.



Business Development Manager Chris Riboli, Marketing Manager Dante Colombatti, and Winemaker Anthony Riboli welcomed guests with a carnivale theme to celebrate Rosa 22.



THIRD PLACE: JASON ASHER

What did you like about working with Rosa 22? Rosa 22 truly lends itself to gin cocktails. The notes of rose and grapefruit complement the gin botanicals and beg for sparkling wine.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Rosa 22 has notes of rose and grapefruit that complement strawberry. It's unlike any aperitivo on the market.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22? Rosa 22 is incredibly versatile in classic cocktails such as the Paloma, French 75, Sidecar, and countless more.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? We would definitely feature Rosa 22 in cocktails directed toward a light and refreshing style. We would use it with wine, gin, citrus, and berries.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? I'm inspired by food. I find that the culinary world drives interesting flavor combinations. I love challenging myself with those flavors that are often out of the box.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Silence is golden!



BELL OF THE BALL

*Created by Jason Asher,
Owner, Barter & Shake,
Phoenix, AZ*

- ½ oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- ½ oz. rhubarb juice
- ½ oz. lemon juice
- ¾ oz. simple syrup
- 1½ oz. Ophir Gin
- 1 dash Sun Liquor Rhubarb Bitters
- 1 strawberry (muddled)
- 4 oz. Stella Rosa Imperiale Prosecco Foam

Follow Asher on Instagram @asher52.

TARIK BOUSLAMA

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Fresh/unripe and clean red fruit, rhubarb, and red flowers.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? I think it will be a great addition to the spring and summer cocktails, so I will feature it in our warm-season bar program.

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? A strainer.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? A cocktail I had at this rooftop restaurant in Florida.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Reggae.

Follow Bouslama on Instagram @BTarik1114.



FRESACORTA

Created by Tarik Bouslama, Beverage Manager, Four Seasons Hotel, Denver, CO

- ▶ 1 oz. Rosa 22-infused strawberries
- ▶ 1 oz. mint-infused vodka
- ▶ Fresh lime juice
- ▶ Franciacorta (or Champagne) to top



KRISTINA COX

What did you like about working with Rosa 22?

It's got tons of flavor and is very versatile.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22? Grapefruit, roses, and coriander.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22?

Any spritz style—just top it with some Brut sparkling wine.



FENNEL 'N' ROSES

Created by Kristina Cox, Bartender, Tartine Manufactory, San Francisco, CA

- ▶ 1 oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- ▶ 1 oz. lemon juice
- ▶ ¼ oz. blood orange juice
- ▶ ¼ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ ¼ oz. fennel liquor
- ▶ ¼ oz. Suze
- ▶ 1 oz. Dolin Blanc Vermouth
- ▶ 1 oz. soda water

Follow Cox on Instagram @LA_Girl_Btender.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program?

Definitely as a modifier and to enhance lots of drinks.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? Creating something amazing and making people happy.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Funk or jazz.

MAC GREGORY

What did you like about working with Rosa 22?

Trying a great new and wine-based secret ingredient.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22?

Flower petal and edible daisies.

What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22?

Highballs!

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? Metal straws—save the planet.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails?

Mixology is my passion.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Top 40, dubstep, and hip-hop.



TAYLOR22 HIGHBALL

Created by Mac Gregory, Corporate Beverage Director, Pacifica Hotels Worldwide, Irvine, CA

- ¾ oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- ¼ oz. Clear Creek Distillery Pear-in-the-Bottle Pear Brandy
- 2 oz. Colonel E.H. Taylor Small-Batch Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon
- 1:1 Mixwell soda water and Mixwell Young Ginger
- Femminello Ovale Italian lemon twist



CHARLES RILEY

What did you like about working with Rosa 22?

It has a nice soft and creamy flavor and balanced texture. The color is awesome.

What are your neat tasting notes for Rosa 22?

I found it to show hints of pomegranate and an array of botanical flavors with spice, dried rose petals, hints of tropical fruit, and a very pleasant, slightly bitter finish. Delicious!



What sort of classic cocktails could get a twist with Rosa 22? As a matter of fact, I did a classic cocktail: a Negroni. It went so well and actually was an improvement to the classic Negroni. I would think it might do well in a Kir also.

How do you see this product fitting into your beverage program? I have already featured the Rosa 22 Negroni at a few events in our hotel bar. We have a page for "Classic Cocktails that Tell a Story," and this is a natural for that category.

What's your can't-live-without bar tool? My old handy bartender spoon with a bended long handle.

Who or what inspires you to make cocktails? Cocktails are an essential part of my overall beverage program and I believe you have to strive for uniqueness and superior quality while being on trend. I also know the classics will never die and I believe that whichever cocktail you prepare, it needs to be the best damn cocktail your guest has had this year. Keep that as your focus and you won't go wrong.

What kind of music do you listen to when you're doing R&D? Classic rock 'n' roll with the occasional Tejano and county western. I know, you don't need to say it . . . ■■■



ROSA NEGRONI

Created by Charles Riley, Regional Director of Food and Beverage, Omni Mandalay Hotel at Las Colinas, Irving, TX

- 1½ oz. Rosa 22 Aperitivo Rosé
- 1½ oz. The Botanist Gin
- Splash of sweet vermouth

WHISKEY, ~ meet ~ **EGG**



Knob Creek and
a Big Green Egg:
a grill master's
happy place.

**KNOB CREEK AND BIG GREEN EGG'S
WHISKEY & EGGS EVENTS
SHOWCASE INNOVATIVE EXPRESSIONS**



by Matt Jackson

Kodka and caviar. Rum and cigars. Whiskey and . . . eggs? That last pairing shouldn't quite be taken literally: Last year, Knob Creek partnered with Big Green Egg—the kamado-style ceramic cooker known for its pronounced green dome—to launch the Whiskey & Eggs events that began popping up at food and wine festivals all over the country. The two brands know a little something about legacy and flavor, so they developed the Whiskey & Eggs experience to engage the public on what seemingly unconventional partnerships can do for the enjoyment of food and drink.

Knob Creek, a mainstay on backbars all over the United States, has long been synonymous with the pre-Prohibition style of whiskey. Since sixth-generation Master Distiller Booker Noe brought Knob Creek to the forefront of the American market 25 years ago, next to nothing has changed when it comes to the hard work and dedication it takes to produce such an authentic, robust spirit. "We stay true to the standards and pillars that our brand was founded on," says Megan Breier, West Coast Bourbon Ambassador for Beam Suntory. "Knob Creek has, and always will, offer the same big, full flavor and hard-earned whiskey that our fans know and love."

"BY STAYING TRUE TO WHAT OUR BRAND WAS FOUNDED ON AND OFFERING UNIQUE INNOVATIONS, CONSUMERS KNOW THAT KNOB CREEK CAN BE ENJOYED NO MATTER WHERE LIFE TAKES YOU."

That's where Big Green Egg and Knob Creek staked out their common ground. Ed Fisher, founder of Big Green Egg, encountered kamado-style cookers while on military duty in the Pacific. While these cookers made great-tasting food, they were very fragile due to their clay construction, so Fisher improved on the design by using high-grade ceramics that could better withstand high cooking temperatures. Wildly popular among serious grillers, the Big Green Egg has become a coveted piece of outdoor cooking equipment.

"We're hoping that each Whiskey & Eggs event offers an opportunity to engage with local trade, consumers, media, and influencers," Breier says. "We activate at food-focused festivals, like BottleRock Napa Valley and Music Tastes Good here in California, for example, to offer an experience that we feel ties in nicely for the Knob Creek and Big Green Egg brands, as well

as to the local market in which the festival is located."

The Whiskey & Eggs events have proved a fitting launching pad for the newest addition to Knob Creek's lineup: Knob Creek Cask Strength Rye. Aged for nine years in the distillery's oldest rackhouse, this expression clocks in at a proof of 119.6; in addition to being named Best Rye Whiskey at the 2018 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, it's gained traction with mixologists and consumers alike. "It's important to get our whiskies into the hands of bartenders and show how they can be enjoyed neat or in a classic or modern cocktail, and how the ingredients in a cocktail together can create a truly unique representation of Knob Creek's flavor," Breier says.

On the nose, this powerful rye displays notes of candied orange peel and spicy clove as a palate infused with citrus and cinnamon gives way to a dark oak and black peppercorn finish. This is a whiskey meant to be sipped and savored: If the flavors don't influence one to do so, then the proof most certainly will.

Food pairings sit at the center of Knob Creek programs like Whiskey & Eggs, which highlights the perfect union of grilled fare and great bourbon. "When you come to a



Whiskey & Eggs event, we don't hold back on delivering big experiences that showcase our flavor—whether that's in a cocktail or in food fresh off the grill," Breier says. "Another one of our favorite pairings includes various country hams. The flavors, textures, and finish of those make them wonderful pairing options for our full Knob Creek portfolio."

Knob Creek maintains its adherence to founding principles spanning three decades by following the lead of Master Distiller Fred Noe and his son, eighth-generation distiller Freddie Noe. "Together, they work each day with our distillery team to shepherd the brand and deliver what Knob Creek fans have come to know and love," Breier says. "By staying true to what our brand was founded on and offering unique innovations, consumers know that Knob Creek can be enjoyed no matter where life takes you." ■

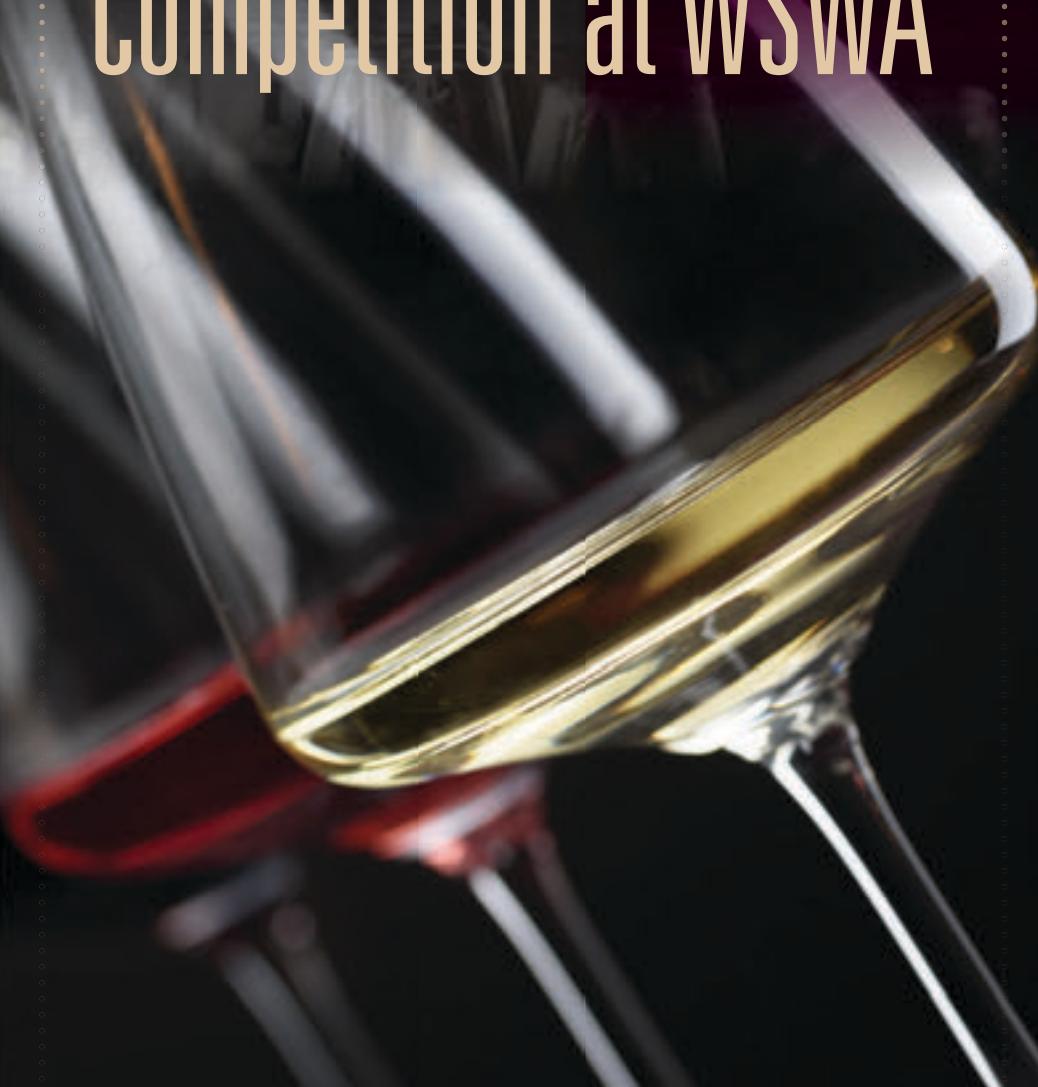


WINE & SPIRITS
WHOLESALERS
OF AMERICA

Every year, retailers, distributors, imports, and brands from around the world converge at the annual Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Convention & Exposition. Held this year in Las Vegas, the 75th annual event featured Wine & Spirits Competitions that assembled 40 of the nation's top wine and spirits industry experts. After collectively tasting through 268 wines and 407 spirits, the judges awarded 42 Best in Show awards and a number of Double Gold, Gold, and Silver Medals across a myriad of categories.

We are listing the Double Gold and Gold Medals here. Suggested retail prices are provided when supplied by entrants. For a full listing of the awards, visit wswaconvention.org.

Results of the 2018 Wine & Spirits Competition at WSWA



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THE JUDGES

WINE JUDGES

- Rick Arline**, Sommelier, NoMad, Los Angeles, CA
Martin Beally, Company Wine Director, Wild Ginger
Brandon Boghosian, Beverage Director, University Club, Seattle, WA
Tarik Bouslama, Beverage Manager, Four Seasons, Denver, CO
Lindsey Geddes, Owner, Vegas Vine, Las Vegas, NV
Mac Gregory, Corporate F&B Director, Pacifica Hotels, Irvine, CA
Nikki Guard, Wine Director, Tag Restaurant, Denver, CO
Renee-Nicole Kubin, Wine Director, Château du Sureau, Oakhurst, CA
Craig Ledbetter, Wine Manager, Fred Meyer Johnson Creek, Portland, OR
Jon McDaniel, Beverage Director, Gage Hospitality Group, Chicago, IL
Michael Ploetz, F&B Director, Las Alcobas, Napa, CA
Charles Riley, F&B Regional Director, Omni Mandalay Hotel, Irving, TX
Cassandra Sakai, Wine Director, Girl and the Goat, Chicago, IL
Jennifer Schmitt, Beverage Manager, Upland, Miami, FL
Jared Sowinski, Beverage Director, The Phoenician, Scottsdale, AZ
Nico Snyman, Head Sommelier, Aureole, New York, NY
Lee Spires, Wine Syndicate Director, Aqua by El Gaucho, Seattle, WA
Brandon Tebbe, Wine Manager, Rose.Rabbit.Lie, Las Vegas, NV
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Mitch Bechard, Brand Ambassador, Glenfiddich
Natalie Bovis, Owner, Liquid Muse, Santa Fe, NM
Michael Carlisi, Owner, Douglas Room, San Francisco, CA
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Kristina Cox, Bartender, Tartine Manufactory, Chicago, IL
Brett Esler, Bartender, Whistler's, Austin, TX
Chad Michael George, President, Join or Die Concepts, Denver, CO
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Zach Patterson, Owner, Melrose Umbrella Co., Los Angeles, CA
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Travis Sanders, Bartender, Pennyroyal, Seattle, WA
Sam Spoehr, Bar Manager, Bludso's, Los Angeles, CA
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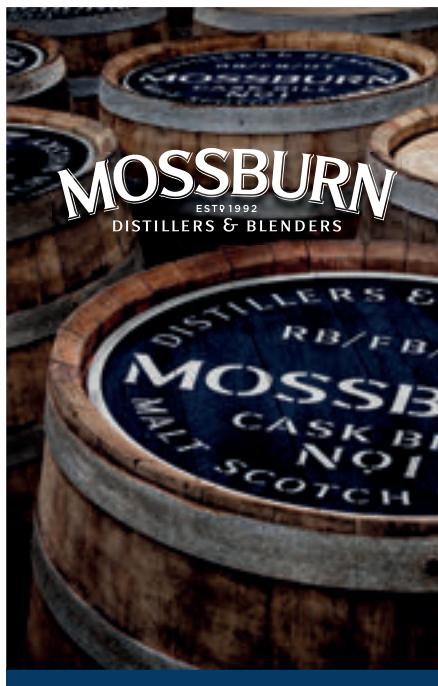
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BEST BAROLO

Dogliotti 1870 2013 Barolo, Italy (\$38)
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BEST SWEET/SEMI-SWEET SPARKLING

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BEST PROSECCO

Fashion Prosecco Extra Dry, Treviso, Italy (\$15)
TU-BE GLOBAL SPIRITS

BEST FLAVORED SAKE

Haikara Yuzu Asian Citrus, Japan (\$29)
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BEST CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Hawk and Horse Vineyards 2013 Block Three Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills, Lake County, USA (\$50) HAWK AND HORSE VINEYARDS

BEST CHARDONNAY

Hidden Jewel 2016 Unoaked Chardonnay, California, USA (\$13)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

BEST PETIT VERDOT

J. McClelland Cellars 2014 Petit Verdot, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley, USA (\$40)
SCOTTO CELLARS

BEST SAUVIGNON BLANC

Lonely Cow Wines 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$14)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

BEST ALBARIÑO

Maryhill Winery 2017 Proprietor's Reserve Albariño, Otis Vineyard, Columbia Valley, USA (\$20) MARYHILL WINERY

BEST FRUIT-FLAVORED WINE

MYX Fusions Sangria Tropical, Spain (\$10)
MYX BEVERAGE, LLC

BEST OTHER WHITE VARIETAL

Réva 2016 Bianco, Langhe, Italy (\$34)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

BEST PINOT GRIS

Rock Point Wines 2016 Pinot Gris, Rogue Valley, USA (\$15)
DEL RIO VINEYARDS

BEST MONTEPULCIANO D'ABRUZZO

San Lorenzo 2012 Oinos, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo Colline Teramane, Italy (\$35)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

BEST PETITE SIRAH

San Simeon 2014 Estate Reserve Petite Sirah, Paso Robles, USA (\$22)
RIBOLI FAMILY WINE ESTATES

BEST SAKE

Sesshu Otokoyama Namazume Junmai, Japan (\$25)
WINE OF JAPAN IMPORT, INC.

BEST ROSÉ

Toi Toi 2017 Sara's Rosé, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$15)
USA WINE WEST

BEST RED BLEND

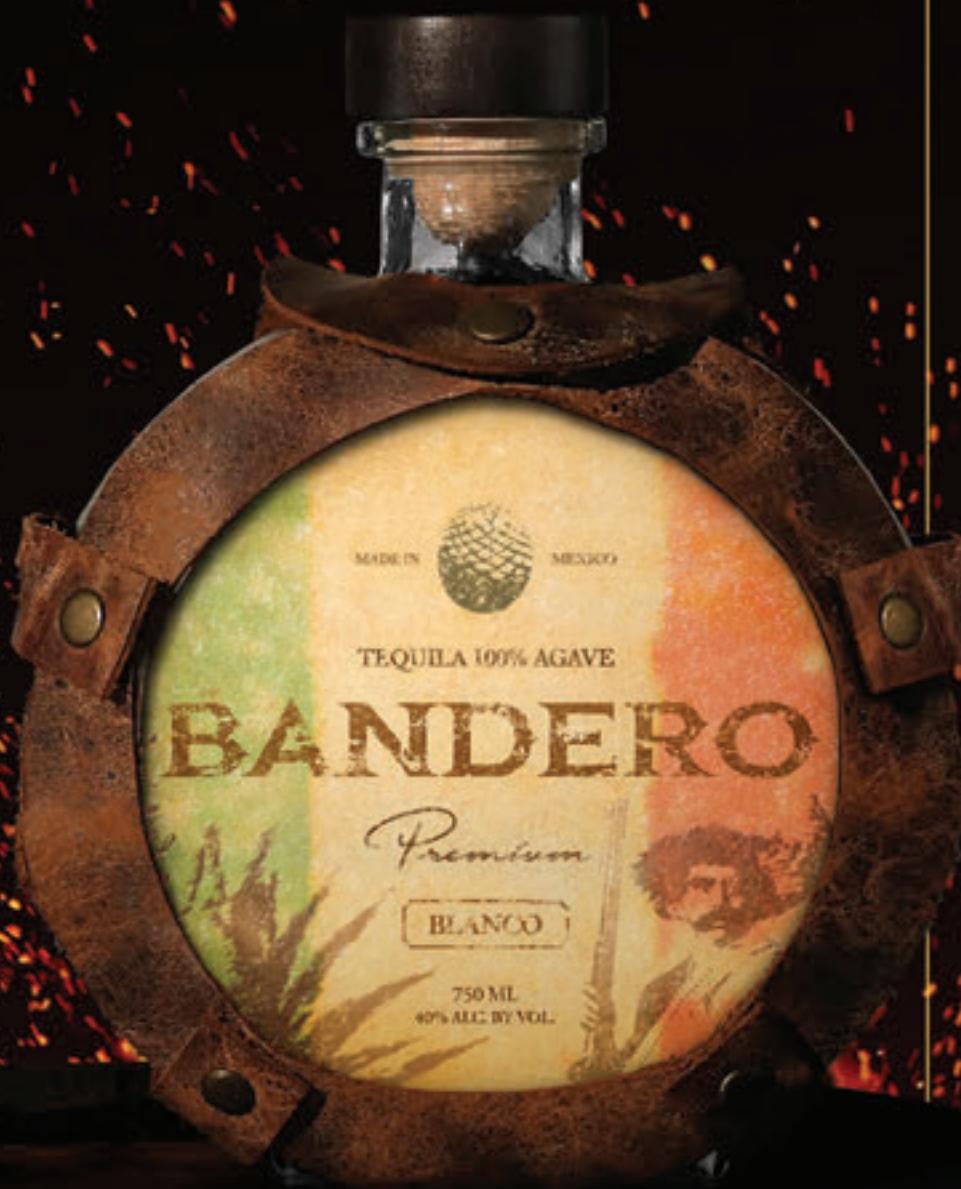
Viña San Juan 2017 Merlot Syrah Tempranillo, La Mancha, Spain (\$12)
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- Babich Wines 2015 Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$19)**
BABICH WINES LTD.
- Babich Wines 2017 Rosé, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$14)**
BABICH WINES LTD.
- Balverne 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County, USA (\$30)**
NOTRE VUE ESTATE WINE GROUP
- BuzzTallz Classic Cocktails Ruby Red Grapefruit, USA (\$3.50)**
SOUTHERN CHAMPION
- Casas del Toqui 2013 Gran Toqui Cabernet Sauvignon, Cachapoal Valley, Chile (\$25)**
- Familia Otero Ramos 2015 Cafetin Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$17)**
- Helena Valley Winery 2016 Helena Red, Retzer Vineyards, Niederösterreich, Austria (\$20)**
HELENA VALLEY WINERY
- Lonely Cow Wines 2017 Rosé, New Zealand (\$14)**
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY
- Maryhill Winery 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, USA (\$26)**
MARYHILL WINERY
- Mileștii Mici 2005 Purpuriu de Purcari, Moldova (\$15)**
ASAP IMPORTS CO.
- Minhas Winery Dragon's Tears Pineapple Wine, USA (\$10)**
REGAL BRAU BREWING COMPANY
- Minkov Brothers 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Thracian Valley, Bulgaria (\$18)**
BULGARIAN MASTER VINTNERS
- Napa Smith Winery 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, USA (\$30)**
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY
- Neu & Ice Semi-Seco Cuvée Especial NV, Cava, Spain (\$13)**
GLOBAL COMERC
- Obvious Wines 2012 N°01 Dark & Bold Red Blend, Paso Robles, USA (\$18)**
OBVIOUS WINES
- Pagos del Rey Pulpo 2016 Albariño, Rias Baixas, Spain (\$14)**
FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTÍS USA
- Pine Ridge Vineyards 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, USA (\$64)**
CRIMSON WINE GROUP, LTD.
- RB 2014 Rare Black Blend Dark Red Wine, California, USA (\$13)**
SCOTTO CELLARS
- Simple Life 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, California, USA (\$13)**
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS
- Simple Life 2016 Chardonnay, California, USA (\$13)**
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS
- Simple Life 2016 Pinot Noir, California, USA (\$13)**
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS
- Stella Rosa Green Apple, Italy (\$12)**
RIBOLI FAMILY WINE ESTATES
- The Crusher 2016 Pinot Noir, California, USA (\$15)**
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS
- Ultimate Provence 2017 Urban Provence Rosé, Côtes de Provence, France (\$24)**
PROVENCE ROSÉ GROUP
- VINI 2016 Rosé, Thracian Valley, Bulgaria (\$10)**
BULGARIAN MASTER VINTNERS

GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

- Babich Wines 2014 Headwaters Organic Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$24)**
BABICH WINES LTD.
- Babich Wines 2017 Black Label Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$13)**
BABICH WINES LTD.
- Balverne Wines 2016 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, USA (\$20)**
NOTRE VUE ESTATE WINE GROUP
- Balverne Wines 2017 Forever Wild Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley, USA (\$18)**
NOTRE VUE ESTATE WINE GROUP
- Bread & Butter 2016 Pinot Noir, California, USA (\$15)**
WX BRANDS
- BuzzTallz Classic Cocktails Chocolate Tease, USA (\$3.50)**
SOUTHERN CHAMPION
- Chronic Cellars 2017 Pink Pedals Rosé, Paso Robles, USA (\$15)**
WX BRANDS
- Guldkulá White Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru NV, Champagne, France (\$69)**
GULDKULÁ CHAMPAGNE AB

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HELENA VALLEY WINERY

Hidden Jewel 2016 Pinot Noir, California, USA (\$15)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

Il Brunone 2003 Vinsanto del Chianti Classico, Toscana, Italy (\$40)
R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY

Minhas Winery Dragon's Tears Blueberry Wine NV, USA (\$10)
REGAL BRAU BREWING COMPANY

Over The Barrel Jammy Red Semi-Sweet Red Wine, Spain (\$20)
REGAL BRAU BREWING COMPANY

Proemio Wines 2017 Single Vineyard Red Blend, Maipú, Argentina (\$15)
TESTA WINES OF THE WORLD

The Crusher 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, California, USA (\$15)
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

The Crusher 2016 Petite Sirah, California, USA (\$15)
DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

Viña San Juan 2017 Chardonnay Verdejo Viura, La Mancha, Spain (\$12)
FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS USA

SPIRITS DIVISION

BEST IN SHOW

BEST GRAPE BRANDY

Alvisa Organic 10-Year-Old Brandy, Spain (\$33)
ALVISA ALCOHOL GROUP, SL

BEST PISCO

BarSol Pisco Selecto Acholado, Peru (\$33)
HOTALING & CO.

BEST PRE-MIXED COCKTAIL

Blue Marble Ultra-Premium Cocktails Bloody Mary, USA (\$4)
BLUE MARBLE ULTRA-PREMIUM COCKTAILS

BEST FRUIT AND NUT LIQUEUR

Bols Ginger Liqueur, Netherlands (\$13)
LUCAS BOLS USA

BEST GENEVER

Bols Genever, Netherlands (\$80)
LUCAS BOLS USA

BEST FLAVORED WHISKEY

Cask & Crew Walnut Toffee Whiskey, USA (\$25)
ROC HOUSE BRANDS

BEST UNAGED WHISKEY/MOONSHINE

Copperhead's Southern Shine Apple Pie, USA (\$30)
COPPERHEADS SOUTHERN DISTILLERY INC.

BEST CREAM/DAIRY LIQUEUR

Creamy Creation Café O'Joy, USA (\$15)
CREAMY CREATION

BEST RUM

Denizen Aged White Rum, West Indies (\$20)
HOTALING & CO.

BEST FLAVORED TEQUILA

Dirty Cinnamon and Pineapple Infused Tequila, Mexico (\$20)
XPHORIA SPIRITS, INC.

BEST FLAVORED TEQUILA

Dirty Cinnamon and Pineapple Infused Tequila, Mexico (\$20)
XPHORIA SPIRITS, INC.

BEST GIN

Eau Claire Distillery Parlour Gin, Canada (\$38)

EAU CLAIRE DISTILLERY

BEST BOURBON

Elijah Craig Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$30)
HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

BEST MEZCAL

Espíritu Lauro Mezcal Ensemble Espadín y Karwinskii, Mexico (\$98)
PREISS IMPORTS

BEST AÑEJO TEQUILA

G4 Tequila Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$140)

G4 TEQUILA

BEST REPOSADO TEQUILA

Lunazul Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$40)

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BEST SOJU

Moon Young Coconut Soju, Canada (\$12)

VI PRODUCT USA

BEST SCOTCH

Mossburn Distillers Speyside Blended Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$40)

NICHE IMPORT CO.

BEST AMERICAN RYE WHISKEY

Pikesville Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$50)

HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

BEST FLAVORED/SPICED RUM

Recipe 21 Coconut Rum, USA (\$14)

ROC HOUSE BRANDS

BEST BLANCO TEQUILA

Sangre de Vida Corazón Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$40)

ICONIC BRANDS INC.

BEST EAU-DE-VIE

Schladerer Williams-Birne Black Forest Pear Brandy, Germany (\$50)

NICHE IMPORT CO.

BEST WORLD WHISKEY

Vicomte 8-Year-Old French Single Malt Whisky, France (\$44)

VENTURI BRANDS LLC

BEST VODKA

Xellent Swiss Vodka, Switzerland (\$39)

VENTURI BRANDS LLC

DOUBLE GOLD MEDALS

Backstage Southern Cinnapepper Whiskey, USA

BACKSTAGE SOUTHERN WHISKEY

Bandera Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$45)

ROK IMPORTS

Be Tini Spirits Lime Tequila Margarita, USA (\$18)

BE TINI SPIRITS

Bird Dog Apple Flavored Whiskey, USA (\$20)

WESTERN SPIRITS BEVERAGE COMPANY

BOM BOM Coco Mochanut, USA (\$22)

BOM BOM BRANDS

BuzzBallz Biggie 1.75-mL Chocolate Tease, USA (\$20)

SOUTHERN CHAMPION

Carmelita's Spiced Orange Rum, USA (\$25)

CARMELITA'S RUM

Cask & Crew Warm Orange Roasted Whiskey, USA (\$25)

ROC HOUSE BRANDS

Casta Tribal Mezcal 302 Ensemble, Mexico (\$80)

GRUPO EMPRESARIAL TRIBAL SAPI DE CV

Chula Parranda Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$40)

CHULA PARRANDA

De Borgen Malt Genever, Netherlands (\$45)

HOOGHOUDT/AMERICAN SPIRITS EXCHANGE LTD.

De Borgen New Style Genever, Netherlands (\$30)

HOOGHOUDT/AMERICAN SPIRITS EXCHANGE LTD.

De Borgen Old Style Genever, Netherlands (\$40)

HOOGHOUDT/AMERICAN SPIRITS EXCHANGE LTD.

Dented Brick Distillery Hugh Moon White Whiskey, USA (\$27)

AURORA WINE AND SPIRITS

Dingle Distillery Vodka, Ireland (\$50)

HOTALING & CO.

DQ Vodka – Distilled Quality, Sweden (\$75)

DQ VODKA AB

Genevieve Genever-Style Gin, U.S.A (\$65)

HOTALING & CO.

Koloa Rum Company Kauai Coffee Rum, USA (\$33)

KOLOA RUM COMPANY

KVINT Divin Surprise, Moldova (\$36)

ASAP IMPORTS CO.

Moon Sugar Beet Soju, Canada (\$12)

VI PRODUCT USA

Nooku Bourbon Cream, USA (\$32)

OLD ELK DISTILLERY

Original Jel Shot Co. Frosty Mug (Root Beer), Taiwan (\$4)

ORIGINAL JEL SHOT CO.

Original Jel Shot Co. Sin-O-Shot (Cinnamon), Taiwan (\$4)

ORIGINAL JEL SHOT CO.

Prime Uve Bianche, Italy (\$42)

DISTILLERIA BONAVENTURA MASCHIO

Ricura Horchata Cream Liqueur, USA (\$18)

PRESTIGE ROYAL

Rousse Premium Vodka, Bulgaria (\$17)

SILVER STATE SPIRITS

Sagamore Spirit Sagamore Reserve Double Oak Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$50)

SAGAMORE SPIRIT

Shottys Blue Raspberry Party-Ready Gelatin Shots, USA (\$10)

SHOTTYS

St. Patrick's Irish Cream Liqueur, Ireland (\$11)

MINHAS MICRO DISTILLERY

Stroh 160 Spiced Rum, Austria (\$33)
NICHE IMPORT CO.

Tanteo Chipotle Tequila, Mexico (\$40)
TANTEO SPIRITS LLC

Xphoria Canadian Small Batch Whiskey, Canada (\$24)
XPHORIA SPIRITS INC.

Xphoria Platinum Vodka, Canada (\$23)
XPHORIA SPIRITS INC.

GOLD MEDALS

3 Kilos Gold 999.9 Vodka, Holland (\$50)
PRESTIGE ROYAL

Alamo Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$18)
MINHAS MICRO DISTILLERY

Andrew John's Premium Gin, USA (\$20)
SOUTHERN CHAMPION

Bareksten Old Tom Botanical Gin, Norway (\$45)
OSS CRAFT DISTILLERY AS

Basil Lush Kiwi Cooler, Canada (\$8)
VI PRODUCT USA

Burnett's Vodka, USA (\$9)
HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

Carmelita's Barbados Rum, Barbados (\$25)
CARMELITA'S RUM

Carmelita's Dark Spiced Rum, USA (\$25)
CARMELITA'S RUM

Casta Tribal Mezcal 203 Ensemble, Mexico (\$70)
GRUPO EMPRESARIAL TRIBAL SAPI DE CV

Creamy Creation Lemongrass Ginger Liqueur, USA
CREAMY CREATION

De la Rosa Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$64)
RED-ROSE TEQUILA LLC

De la Rosa Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$60)
RED-ROSE TEQUILA LLC

Deadhead Dark Chocolate Rum, Mexico (\$40)
ICONIC BRANDS INC.

Denizen Merchant's Reserve Rum, Switzerland (\$30)
HOTALING & CO.

Dented Brick Distillery Antelope Island Rum, USA (\$27)
AURORA WINE AND SPIRITS

Espirito Corsa Mezcal Buen Bicho Joven Espadín, Mexico (\$55)
PREISS IMPORTS

Evan Williams 1783 Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$20)
HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

Evan Williams Single Barrel 2010 Vintage Bourbon, USA (\$30)
HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

Hammer & Son Geranium Gin, England (\$30)
HAMMER & SON LTD.

Hammer & Son Old English Gin, England (\$32)
HAMMER & SON LTD.

IrishAmerican Classic Blend Original Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$40)
IRISHAMERICAN TRADING COMPANY

Koloa Rum Company Kauai Coconut Rum, USA (\$33)
KOLOA RUM COMPANY

Marie Brizard L'originale Anisette, France (\$20)
MARIE BRIZARD WINE & SPIRITS

Monaco Cocktail Tequila Lime Crush, USA (\$3)
ATOMIC BRANDS

Monaco Cocktail Tropical Rush, USA (\$3)
ATOMIC BRANDS

Mossburn Whisky Distillers No. 7 Miltonduff Distillery Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$70)
NICHE IMPORT CO.

Original Jel Shot Co. Candymelon (Watermelon), Taiwan (\$4)
ORIGINAL JEL SHOT CO.

RATU 5 Year Old Spiced Premium Rum, Fiji (\$39)
RUM CO. OF FIJI

Sagamore Spirit Cask Strength Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$70)
SAGAMORE SPIRIT

Sea Vodka, Lithuania (\$19)
HIWWS INC.

St. Patrick's Cookies and Cream Liqueur, USA (\$11)
MINHAS MICRO DISTILLERY

The Muff Liquor Company Muff Gin, Ireland (\$59)
THE MUFF LIQUOR COMPANY

Tom's Town McElroy's Corruption Gin, USA (\$30)
TOM'S TOWN DISTILLING CO.

Tom's Town The Pendegast Machine No. 1 Antique Gin, USA (\$39)
TOM'S TOWN DISTILLING CO.

VOGA Italia Vodka, Italy (\$40)
EVOLUTION BRANDS, INC.

William Peel 3-Year-Old Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$33)
MARIE BRIZARD WINE & SPIRITS



ANTELOPE ISLAND RUM

GOLD MEDAL:
WSWA Wine & Spirits Awards 2018
Las Vegas, Nevada



SALT LAKE CITY, UT



HUGH MOON WHITE WHISKEY

DOUBLE GOLD MEDAL:
WSWA Wine & Spirits Awards 2018
Las Vegas, Nevada



On hand to judge the Call for Cocktails competition were "King Cocktail" Dale DeGroff; Philip Dobard, Director of the Museum of the American Cocktail in New Orleans and Los Angeles; author Wayne Curtis (who also joined the judges for the Iron Mixology competition); Nick Nistico of Damn Good Hospitality and Breakthru Beverage Nevada; and "The Cocktail Guru" Jonathan Pogash.

Leading the Way

THE CALL FOR COCKTAILS AND IRON MIXOLOGIST COMPETITIONS ASTOUND AND INSPIRE AT THE WSWA 75TH ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION

by Xania V. Woodman / photos by Mona Shield Payne

10 a.m. comes mighty early on the third day of a beverage conference—especially one with a schedule as jam-packed as the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) 75th Annual Convention & Exposition held April 30–May 3 in Las Vegas. Master of ceremonies Tony Abou-Ganim, however, certainly rose to the occasion as he arrived right on time to hand out a full slate of awards.

First up: Call for Cocktails, in which ten mixologists presented 14 original cocktail entries representing 13 brands. The drinks were judged on four criteria: taste (40 points), creativity/originality (25 points), presentation (25 points), and overall impression (10 points). The rules only require that the creations qualify as a "fancy" cocktail, meaning competitors were in no way limited to, say, an apéritif, long, or dessert drink. Success, Abou-Ganim explained from his place at the podium, could be measured by affirmative responses to the following questions: "Would I finish the drink? Would I order another one? Would I

recommend it to a friend?"

The judging panel consisted of "King Cocktail" Dale DeGroff; "The Cocktail Guru" Jonathan Pogash; Philip Dobard, Director of the Museum of the American Cocktail in New Orleans and Los Angeles; author Wayne Curtis; and Nick Nistico of Damn Good Hospitality and Breakthru Beverage Nevada.

While it was perhaps expected for the winning recipe to come from the whiskey, tequila, or rum rounds, it was actually the work performed in the gin and vodka portion that truly captured the judges' attention. "It was very enlightening for me, because vodka technically by law is odorless, flavorless, and colorless. But with all of these drinks, the vodka or gin showed through and we were able to find it in the drink," said Pogash. "I thought they represented the spirits used in each of those cocktails really well. It was very enjoyable—probably my favorite round."

Vastly increasing his chance of winning by entering four cocktails, Troy Clarke, Director of Mixology & Spirits

Education for Martignetti Companies, won the panel over with his A Tale from Two Ts cocktail, which featured Tito's Handmade Vodka, Earl Grey tea syrup, grapefruit and key lime juices, and buttermilk panna cotta. "[Clarke's] winning cocktail was really quite good," Pogash said. "It had that perfect balance—a little dry, not cloyingly sweet—and the presentation was beautiful."

Ryan Wehrenberg of Western Spirits Beverage Company and Mike McSorley of Dented Brick Distillery claimed second place, while Las Vegas swept the People's Choice awards: Joy Herrin of Chica in the Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian came in first, followed by Rob Amato of John Drew Brands and Max Solano of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of Nevada in second and third, respectively.

"One of the hallmarks of this and a lot of the competitions that I judge is that presentation is sort of leading the way," Dobard noted while giving some constructive criticism. "We're in danger of losing the spirit. A great cocktail



Troy Clarke (second from right), Director of Mixology & Spirits Education for Martignetti Companies, won first place with his Tito's Vodka-based cocktail A Tale from Two Ts. Las Vegas cocktail legend Tony Abou-Ganim (left) acted as Master of Ceremonies.

should look good, taste good, and smell good, but more than anything else, it should glorify and elevate the base spirit. So, I think if we can combine the theatricality that's a big part of today's cocktail scene with a glorification of the spirit, I think we've got the makings of culinary greatness."

Already looking to next year, DeGroff concluded by noting that none of the entries classified as a strong, spirit-forward stirred drink. "Creativity and presentation sometimes can become a fog through which you can't find your way, and you should really think about being simple and straightforward a little bit more," he said. (Hint, hint.)

After a brief break, the afternoon brought on the Wholesaler Iron

Mixologist Competition, in which WSWA Wholesaler Mixologists compete to create original cocktails in a timed competition incorporating secret ingredients. Seven mixologists created their best apéritif and long drink from the pantry of spirits and modifiers they'd brought with them, but they also had to utilize the revealed contents of a provided basket: a variety of beets, strawberries in varying formats, and desert honey.

With the addition of author Wayne Curtis to the panel, the judges declared Breakthru Beverage Illinois' Beverage Development Manager Natalia Cardenas the winner in the drink category and Clarke for his apéritif. But it was Cardenas who took the title of Iron Mixologist for her outstanding



Ryan Wehrenberg of Western Spirits Beverage Company took second place with his Dented Brick Distillery cocktail.

overall performance in both categories.

Nistico, a six-time winner himself, was particularly delighted by Cardenas' presentation, which included setting the scene of a picnic complete with grass for the judges to smell before sipping. "Natalia really highlighted each ingredient she used, and it shined through really nicely. She did a great job serving balanced cocktails," he explained. "You know, we always ask, 'Would you have another one?' Her long drink? I could have had five of them, and her apéritif I could have kept drinking all day. That's what it's all about—likeability in the cocktails—and she was the top!"

"She came in with a theme," DeGroff added, "and just executed it—flawlessly." ■

THE WINNING RECIPES

CALL FOR COCKTAILS WINNER:

A Tale from Two Ts

Created by Troy Clarke, Director of Mixology & Spirits Education, Martignetti Companies

- 2 oz. Tito's Handmade Vodka
- 1 oz. Earl Grey tea syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. grapefruit juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. key lime juice
- One large spoonful panna cotta

Build in a mixing glass with ice, then stir and strain into a Highball glass. Garnish with shortbread cookie crumble and the zest of both key lime and grapefruit.



Breakthru Beverage Illinois' Beverage Development Manager Natalia Cardenas took home the title of Iron Mixologist for her Fifth and Meridian cocktail.

IRON MIXOLOGIST WINNER:

Fifth and Meridian

Created by Natalia Cardenas, Beverage Development Manager, Breakthru Beverage Illinois

- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Cutwater Three Sheets Barrel Aged Rum
- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. orgeat
- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. simple syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. fresh lime juice
- 1 barspoon Rare Tea Cellar Strawberry Shrub
- 1 barspoon Perfect Purée Strawberry Purée
- $\frac{1}{2}$ barspoon Rare Tea Cellar Watermelon Powder

Combine ingredients, serve over ice in a Collins glass, and top with club soda. Garnish with a microplaned, freeze-dried Satsuma orange.

the clever root

fruit.flower.farm.leaf

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The Clever Root is inspired by everything that grows: from farm to fruit, leaf to herb, and the working tastemakers who buy, forage, prepare, and grow these ingredients for the dishes served at the country's top restaurants. We'll introduce wine and spirits to unique dishes and let sommeliers and mixologists chime in on tasting notes and suggested pairings.

The Chef will be our celebrity featured throughout our quarterly, seasonal publication. And, as a twist, we will lend an informed, academic voice to the burgeoning cannabis industry.

For more information, contact
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STAND-OUT SPIRITS

EXCEPTIONAL VODKAS THAT SHINE IN A CROWDED CATEGORY

BY EMILY COLEMAN

As more and more vodka brands launch seemingly every day, it's become increasingly difficult for newcomers to stand out in the crowd. A few years ago, vodka sought to set itself apart as a category by offering a virtual cornucopia of flavors, but times have changed: The spirit has turned a corner, and distilleries have shifted their focus to quality over mere gimmicks. To make their mark, vodka brands are creating marketing campaigns and packaging geared toward grabbing consumers' attention, but above all else, the most successful distilleries rely on craftsmanship and the enduring excellence of the spirit. Here are some extraordinary vodka brands (and one vodka substitute) worth trying this year.



THE LIQUID OF LUCK: JIU JIU VODKA

located on New Zealand's beautiful South Island, Golden Bay Distillery uses all-natural ingredients that have a low impact on the environment for its products, including Jiu Jiu Vodka. The water used for this triple-distilled, charcoal-filtered grain-based spirit comes from a local, crystal-clear aquifer: It's arguably among the clearest spring water in the world, making this pure-tasting vodka an ideal choice in a cocktail, with soda, or on its own over ice.

Jiu Jiu Vodka comes in two styles: **Jiu Jiu Blue Label (40% ABV; \$38)** and **Jiu Jiu Supreme (50% ABV; \$45)**. With its higher alcohol content, the Jiu Jiu Supreme becomes a superb backbone for a Dry Martini. Beautiful on the inside and out, the packaging takes inspiration from around the world to create an eye-catching vessel worthy of the liquid inside.

GOLDEN BAY DISTILLERY





THE BEST OF FRANCE: **GUILLOTINE VODKA**

Given most consumers think of vodka, they list potatoes or wheat as the top ingredients. Many would never dream of a vodka made from grapes, but once they taste Guillotine, they'll become converts to this elegant rendition of the spirit.

Made from Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay grapes grown in France's Champagne region, Guillotine Vodka recently won the French Vodka of the Year award at the ninth annual New York International Spirits Competition. To make the **Guillotine Originale (\$50)**, the grapes are handpicked and distilled at a 100-year-old distillery using French artisanal techniques. **The Heritage expression (\$80)** then sees this base spirit aged in Cognac and Armagnac barrels made from Limousin oak.

"Guillotine Vodka was designed to deliver an ultra-premium experience and provide a spirit of the utmost caliber while honoring the traditions of our people," says Paul Berkmann, President of Guillotine parent company Bastille Day.

BASTILLE DAY

A SWEDISH CLASSIC **RETURNS TO THE U.S. MARKET**

Sweden's original and top-selling O.P. Anderson Aquavit has been reintroduced to the United States.

Aquavit is the national drink of Sweden, and though it's relatively unknown outside of Scandinavia, O.P. Anderson's celebrated reputation in the region dates back to the company's founding in 1891. Lightly aged and made with fennel, cumin, caraway, and anise, O.P. Anderson's flavor profile packs a memorable punch.

In Sweden, Aquavit is most traditionally consumed neat after the recitation of a drinking song. For those looking for a gentler, less rowdy way to imbibe, O.P. Anderson Aquavit is a great substitute for gin or vodka in many traditional cocktails, like a more savory take on a Negroni or a spicier Bloody Mary. It also pairs well with hearty Scandinavian cuisine like smoked trout and salmon.





KEEPING IT SIMPLE: **RÅVO**

The people of Sweden are masters at minimalism in everything they do. Their design, fashion, and general way of life revolves around keeping things simple and balanced by focusing on quality above quantity.

When it comes to the art of spirit-making, the makers of **Råvo (\$22)** maintain this passion for the uncomplicated and direct. Named for a combination of the Swedish words for “raw” and “vodka,” Råvo is produced in the rural province of Västergötland. This region of the country harbors natural spring water and endless fields of winter wheat, making it the perfect source for this vodka.

The company’s straightforward approach to the spirit itself, as well as the design of the bottle and its marketing strategies, allows it to produce more than just an incredible vodka: It enables it to sell Råvo at a very affordable price point. The choice to forgo the frills to offer an approachable spirit comes at a time when the super-premium vodka category is losing steam and consumers are asking for value and transparency over the unnecessary embellishments of other brands. If your customers seek a high-quality vodka outside of the mainstream, Råvo is just the right expression to have behind the bar.

PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL





A FRESH LOOK: **PRAIRIE ORGANIC SPIRITS**

Phillips Distilling Co. has been crafting USDA-certified Prairie Organic Spirits in Princeton, Minnesota, for the past decade. Organic yellow corn grown on family farms in central Minnesota without the use of any pesticides, herbicides, or GMOs serves as the foundation of these gluten-free expressions: **Prairie Organic Vodka (\$20)**, **Prairie Organic Gin (\$20)**, and **Prairie Organic Cucumber Flavored Vodka (\$20)**. Each is distilled in copper pot stills before the grains are recycled as animal feed for nearby farmers.

These fresh-tasting spirits recently received a packaging makeover. Launched in April, the redesign features a wooden cap and a custom hammered bottle—a reflection of the work ethic of the farmers. The color palette of the labels shifted slightly to include earth tones and common elements across the line, and the vodkas also have a new, longer bottleneck for easier pouring. With this packaging refresh and its recently updated website, Prairie Organic Spirits will be turning heads and delighting palates everywhere this summer.

PHILLIPS DISTILLING CO.

LET CITRUS SHINE:

ABSOLUT GRAPEFRUIT

A flavor captures the feeling of summer quite like citrus. It also works well with and in vodka, which explains why citrus makes up the largest share of the flavored market within the category. To add to its already successful line of citrus expressions—including Lemon, Orange, and Lime—Absolut launched **Grapefruit (\$20)** this summer to capture the natural flavors of a perfect warm-weather fruit and the third most popular citrus flavor after lemon and lime. Guests can enjoy this spirit, which contains no added sugar, by simply adding soda or incorporating it in a wide range of cocktails.

With a launch supported by 360-degree activation, Absolut Grapefruit should rise to the top of customers' lists. Bring on the summer cocktails in all their glory!





AN ARTIST'S PALATE: **GLASS DISTILLERY VODKA**

Gany internationally renowned glass artists, including Dale Chihuly and Lino Tagliapietra, have found a home in Washington State. The region has an abundance of studios dedicated to the craft, so it's no wonder that this art form would inspire other creative mediums like spirit-making.

An entrepreneur, artist, pilot, and chef, Glass Distillery founder Ian MacNeil is a true renaissance man who pulls inspiration from all aspects of his life and pours them into his various passions. Merging his love for art and the Pacific Northwest, he established his Seattle-based distillery to produce a line of vodka made with ingredients sourced from around the state while paying homage to local glassblowers through the brand's name and distinctive bottle shape.

The flagship expression, **Glass Vodka (\$40)**, utilizes Washington wine made from Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay grapes to craft an elegant spirit that undergoes a natural filtration process using diatomaceous earth. For its **Glass Kona (\$50)**, meanwhile, the distillery sources Hapuna Kihei coffee from Hawaii that's hand-roasted by Seattle's Seven Coffee Roasters and cold-brewed Japanese style before it's infused into the base of the original expression. **Glass Nectar (\$50)** imparts a hint of artisan Washington honey to the vodka, while **Glass Spice (\$50)** blends the base spirit with Ceylon cinnamon from Sri Lanka.

In addition to its Glass line, the distillery also produces **Selkirk Vodka (\$30/375 ml)**. An extremely rare type of distilled spirit that bridges the gap between vodka and whiskey, Selkirk is created by aging Glass Vodka distillate in charred new American oak barrels for more than 15 months.

Much like Washington itself, where the mountains meet the sea in a sweeping landscape, Glass Distillery and its vodkas meld inspiration from distinct places into a memorable experience every guest can enjoy. ■

THE TOUR DATES

Denver: July 15
Napa: July 17
Austin: July 19
Washington, D.C.:
July 22*

Trade scholarships are available to cover the \$150 tuition fee.

CRU ARTISAN COLLEGE

Now in its fifth year, the **CRU ARTISAN COLLEGE** will once again partner with the Wine Scholar Guild to host an ambitious three-city academic tour led by Banfi Wines' most outstanding winemakers. Each city will host a full-day learning experience that includes in-depth, razor-focused seminars, culinary pairings, and cash prizes for volunteered competitive blind tastings.

For more information, email Tasting Panel Events Director Francesca Marciano at Francesca@TastingPanelMag.com.



Dean Lars Leicht leads a seminar in the Cru Artisan classroom at the San Francisco Wine School in spring 2017.



Andrea Sartori, Family Proprietor of Sartori di Verona, addresses the Cru Artisan College grads in Washington, D.C., last year.



The 2017 Cru Artisan College students of Chicago participate in a competitive blind tasting for a cash prize.

*There will also be a special 90-minute "encore performance" seminar at SommCon in Washington, D.C., on July 22 at 3 p.m.

THE TOP-LEVEL SYLLABUS

Milestones: Driving Wineries in Iconic Regions

As Castello Banfi celebrates its 40th anniversary and Sartori di Verona celebrates its 120th, the educational cadre of the Cru Artisan College have crafted a particularly reflective syllabus for the 2018 tour.

- This year will also offer additional seminars in a more condensed format to heighten the scholastic experience.
- View a sampling of this year's schedule here and visit the Cru Artisan College website at cruartisancollege.com for the most up-to-date curriculum.
- **A full day of back-to-back seminars will run from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Alta Langa Introspective

Italy offers one of the most diverse selections of rosé in the world based on various grape varieties. In the Alta Langa DOC of Piemonte, Pinot Noir is grown on hilltop vineyards in a mix of clay and calcareous soil.

Cuvée Aurora Rosé

Washington State Perspective

Thanks to the Missoula Floods, Washington provides unique soil profiles enabling us to explore key varieties.

Pacific Rim Riesling and more

Verona Retrospective

In its 120 years of business, Sartori di Verona has amassed a vast collection of wines which will serve as the focal point of this seminar.

Sartori di Verona Ferdi, Valpolicella, Regolo, Amarone, Corte Brà, and I Saltari Amarone

Abruzzo Luncheon

Home to Montepulciano, one of the most beloved grapes in Italy, Abruzzo also ranks the variety among its most widely-planted.

Cerulli Spinazzi Cortaldo, Cerasuolo, and Torre Migliori

Coyam Super Chilean Component Tasting

The Cochagua Valley offers a patchwork of colluvial-based soils. When these profiles are combined with its climate, the Cochagua Valley enables winegrowers to grow organically, and, in the case of Emiliana, Biodynamically.

Emiliana Coyam

Castello Banfi Brunello Builder Perspective

No producer has advanced the clonal development of Brunello (Sangiovese) more so than Castello Banfi.

Castello Banfi

Marsala Florio Introspective

The development and aging of a serious Marsala is very precise process.

Targa Marsala Superiore Riserva and Florio Fernet

Graduation and Diploma Awards

THE PROFESSORS



Alberto Lazzarino,
Directing Winemaker,
Banfi Piemonte,
Strevi, Italy

Professor Lazzarino has served as the Principal Winemaker at Banfi Piemonte since 2002 and is a graduate of the prestigious Agricultural University of Alba, one of the world's leading enology schools.



Andrea Sartori,
Family Proprietor,
Sartori di Verona,
Negar, Italy

Professor Sartori is the great-grandson of Sartori di Verona founder Pietro Sartori and is now at the helm of the family company, which is one of the Veneto's leading wine producers. The former president of Italy's producer trade group, the Unione Italinia Vini, Sartori will help impart generations of family experience at Cru Artisan College.



Gabriele Pazzaglia,
Cellarmaster,
Castello Banfi

Armed with a degree in winemaking with a specialty in viticulture, Montalcino native Gabriele Pazzaglia started at Banfi as a Technical Cellar Assistant in 1999. Professor Pazzaglia has received his doctorate in enology from the University of Florence and manages Banfi's Horizon vinification winery, as well as winemaking for ASKA.



Enrico Cerulli,
Family Proprietor,
Cerulli Spinazzi,
Teramo, Italy

With his family roots in Abruzzo dating back generations, Professor Cerulli's passion lies in producing high-quality wines from the Colline Teramane subregion, Abruzzi's only DOCG. Cerulli places a particular focus on the Montepulciano grape, using 100% DOCG fruit in his winemaking.



Benedetta Poretti,
Family Proprietor,
Florio, Italy

Professor Poretti's family, which built Italy's best-known spirits brand, Disaronno, took stewardship of another iconic Italian name—Florio—in 1998. A student of natural sciences, she loves exploring the relationship between nature and sustainability through the world of wine.



Noelia Orts,
Winemaker,
Emiliana Organic
Vineyards, Chile

Professor Orts, along with Álvaro Espinoza, is responsible for Emiliana's world-class Biodynamic wines, Coyam and Gé. Orts graduated from the Polytechnic University of Valencia with a degree in viticulture and enology; in 2009, she pursued a master's degree in enology and viticulture at the University of Chile and subsequently joined the Emiliana team in 2011.



Nicolas Quille,
Winemaking Director,
Pacific Rim,
Washington State,
U.S.

Although he's the only U.S.-based wine producer in our faculty, Professor Quille is a native of Lyon, France, where he is a third-generation member of the wine business. After working in Burgundy, Dijon, Reims, and Champagne, Professor Quille came to the United States in 1997 and landed in Washington State to earn his MBA.

TAKING INVENTORY WITH . . .

MICHAEL ROSSI

EXECUTIVE CHEF
(AND CERTIFIED SOMMELIER),
THE RANCH, ANAHEIM, CA

by Jessie Birschbach



PHOTO: BRADLEY BLACKBURN

Michael Rossi likes to say that "being the chef of a restaurant is like inviting people into your home every night." In this case, his home—or perhaps the word *estate* is more appropriate—is The Ranch in Anaheim, California, where he serves as the Executive Chef. Established in 2012, the property encompasses 53,000 square feet of venues, including a restaurant, saloon, events center, and 2-acre organic vegetable farm growing roughly 70 varieties of heirloom tomatoes.

Rossi's charming chef analogy makes sense given the root of his love for food and wine. "I grew up in a big Italian family in Orange County, so it all started around the table for me," he explains. After graduating at the top of his class from the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco and training under celebrity chef Roy Yamaguchi, Rossi also spent time in Italy working with Bruno Barbieri at the two-Michelin-starred Locanda Solarola in Bologna.

While in Italy, he planted 1,500 Barbera vines and harvested grapes in Bordeaux, but perhaps it was his time spent helping open Disney's Napa Rose restaurant in Anaheim that really fueled his desire to become a Certified Sommelier. Master Sommeliers like Fred Dame, Tim Gaiser, and Michael Jordan would hang out frequently at the restaurant, where Jordan served as a manager and an "amazing mentor," Rossi says (it was Jordan, in fact, who recommended him for the position of Executive Chef when The Ranch opened).

The Ranch boasts a wine cellar of more than 10,000 bottles, allowing for out-of-the-ordinary offerings like a list of 50 wines by the glass, a substantial large-format collection, hard-to-find cult wines, and an extensive Port and Madeira collection. The garden, meanwhile, allows Rossi to remain in line with The Ranch's farm-to-table, seasonal approach. "That's why we're able to cook all these different foods but still keep it fresh and Californian," he explains. "If you understand the nuances of wine and terroir, cooking the food to pair with it is like connecting the dots." It's no wonder, then, that guests of The Ranch have no trouble seeing the big picture. ■■■

THE “5” LIST

MICHAEL ROSSI'S TOP FIVE FAVES:

People who aren't afraid to eat. I like to spoil customers and tell them "my inner grandma made me do it."

When customers trust me. I always tell people if you're going to try escargot for the first time, try it here.

Telling a good story. It gives meaning to food and wine.

Travel, because I like to learn new things.

I love cooking, and luckily, it's my job.

MICHAEL ROSSI'S TOP FIVE PET PEEVES:

I have a lot of compassion for people with Celiac disease, but people who just cut out gluten for dietary reasons are something else.

Smoking between courses. It messes up the flow of the experience!

Chefs who don't allow modifications. Just tell me what you like and you don't like.

Tardiness. I have a meeting every day at 2:30 with my kitchen staff. This creates accountability.

Obliviousness. There's glass between our kitchen and the dining room, but sometimes people will come into the kitchen and take a phone call!

#RED WHITE & nue

VODKA

Red, White & Nue Cocktail

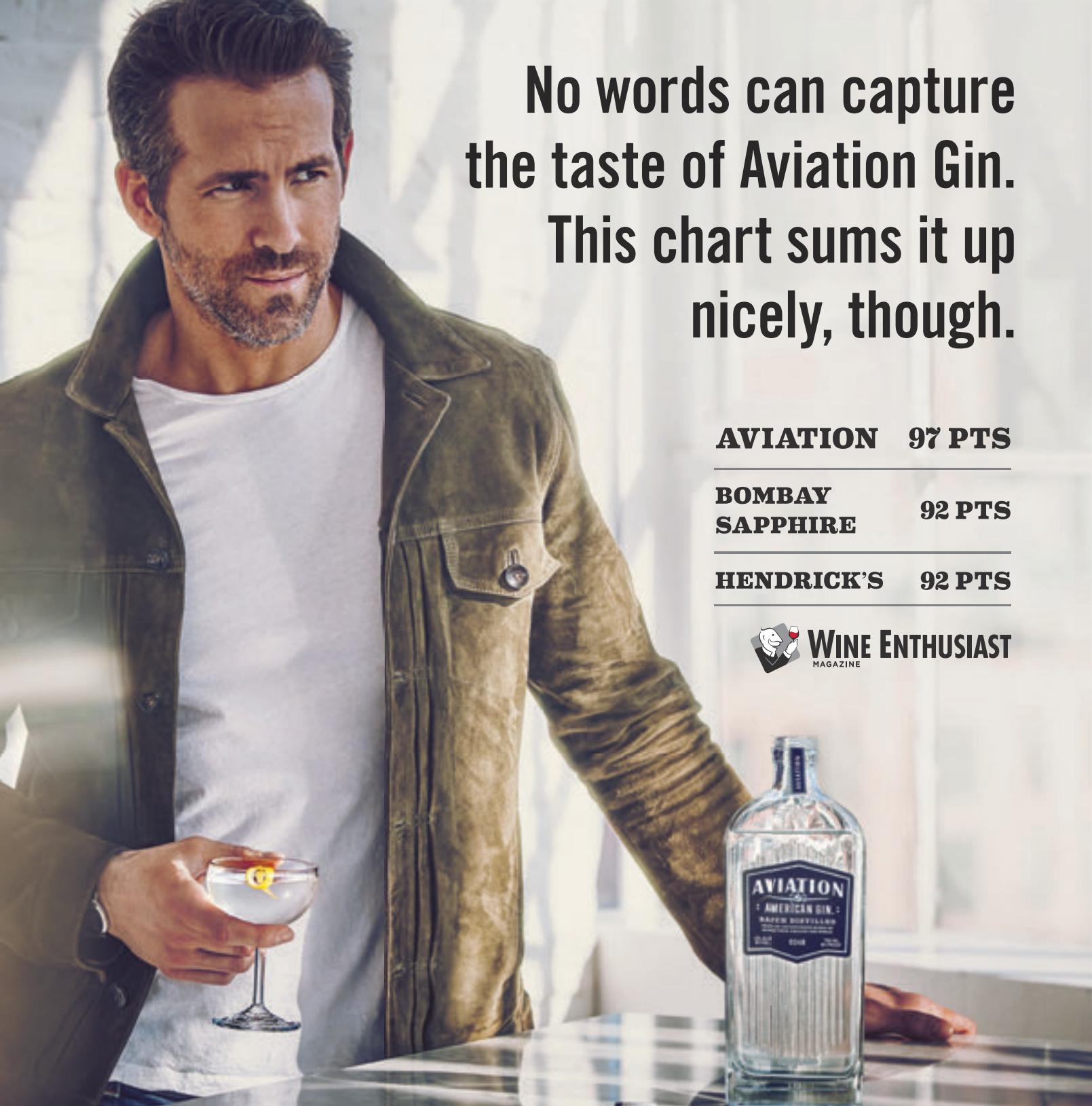
Ingredients:
1 ½ oz Nue Vodka
1 ½ oz lemonade
1 ½ oz watermelon juice
Blueberries & watermelon
for garnish



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the taste of Aviation Gin.
This chart sums it up
nicely, though.

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BOMBAY SAPPHIRE 92 PTS

HENDRICK'S 92 PTS



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