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The JACK Pack



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DALE DEGROFF
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ANDREW POLLARD



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editor in chief

Anthony Dias Blue

ablue@tastingpanelmag.com

publisher / editorial director

Meridith May

mmay@tastingpanelmag.com
818-990-0350

vp / associate publisher

Rachel Burkons

rburkons@tastingpanelmag.com

managing editor

Jesse Hom-Dawson

jesse@tastingpanelmag.com

senior design director

Michael Viggiano design@tastingpanelmag.com

vp, sales and marketing

Bill Brandel bill@tastingpanelmag.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Cal Bingham, Randy Caparoso, Michael Caronchi, John Curley, Nathan DeHart, Diane Denham, Tasha Dooley, Albert Letizia, Michelle Metter, Timothy Murray, Ronnie Nettles, Margaret Pattillo, Mona Shield Payne, Mary Thompson, Izzy Watson, Hardy Wilson

CORRECTION

In our story on Jack Daniel's in our May 2018 issue, we stated that The Cottonmouth Club is located in Dallas, Texas. It's actually located in Houston. We regret the error.

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senior wine editor

Jessie Birschbach jabs@sommjournal.com

senior editor

Kate Newton kate@tastingpanelmag.com

special projects editor

David Gadd dgadd@tastingpanelmag.com

east coast editor

David Ransom

rocky mountain editor

Ruth Tobias

editor-at-large

Cliff Rames

vp / finance director

Anna Russell anna@tastingpanelmag.com

spirits editor

Mara Marski mara@tastingpanelmag.com

administrative assistant

Sierra Doxey

contributing editors

Mitch Bechard, Ian Buxton, Emily Coleman,
Richard Carleton Hacker, Matt Jackson, Kelly Magyarics,
Merrill Shindler, Xania V. Woodman

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Phone: 818-990-0350. **Contact:** Meridith May, Publisher

Email: Mmay@TastingPanelMag.com

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Everything in Moderation

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



I was sitting and staring at a blank computer screen while trying to decide what to write about this month when I suddenly received an email that solved my dilemma. It contained an announcement of a brand-new study from the American Heart Association's *Circulation* journal naming moderate alcohol consumption as one of five healthy lifestyle behaviors that could help people live longer.

Here's the full story, courtesy of the Distilled Spirits Council: "According to the study, 'Impact of Health Lifestyle Factors on Life Expectancies in the U.S. Population,' the five lifestyle behaviors were: having never smoked, a healthy body mass index, moderate to vigorous exercise, moderate alcohol intake and a healthy diet. Each was 'associated with a low risk of premature mortality' and 'following all five lifestyle behaviors significantly improved longevity for both men and women.'"

So, I've got one, maybe two, of those behaviors down. But this is not about me. Sticking to these five "low-risk lifestyle-related" behaviors, researchers found, might extend life expectancy for a 50-year-old woman by 14 years; for a man of the same age, it's 12.2 years. This is in comparison to people who don't adopt any of the five low-risk lifestyle factors—you know, like your overweight uncle Dexter.

Just for clarification, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a nutritional resource published every five years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, defines "moderation" as up to one drink per day for women and up to two daily for men (this only applies, of course, to adults of legal drinking age). According to the *Dietary Guidelines*, a drink-equivalent is characterized as 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (40% ABV), 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (5% ABV), or 5 fluid ounces of wine (12% ABV).

I don't know about you, but I will be monitoring my intake and measuring my daily consumption more precisely than I was before that email first graced my inbox. We can't all be perfect, but awareness is often the first step toward implementing healthier habits that can benefit us for years to come. ■■

UPfront

*Shining a
Light on*
Lake County

THE REGION'S NEW
WEBSITE REINFORCES
ITS STRONG PRESENCE IN
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

The view from prominent Napa
winegrower Andy Beckstoffer's
large vineyard investments in the
up-and-coming Red Hills Lake
County AVA.

by Diane Denham / photos by Nathan DeHart

The vineyards of Brassfield Estate Winery in the High Valley AVA sit in the mountains north of Clear Lake, where they benefit from clean air and intense sunlight.

Lake County has a reputation as a Northern California wine region that's a bit off the grid compared to Napa and Sonoma. But thanks to the recent launch of its new website, it's time for this unique area to continue to step out of the shadows that have obscured its many contributions to the wine industry.

Via the website, members of the trade and consumers can now access a wealth of information on the diverse terroir, as well as the local growers and producers, of this mountain-rimmed paradise. The home of the largest natural freshwater lake located entirely in California and a premier destination for avid bass fishermen, Lake County has also proven it belongs on the world stage as a winegrowing region.

Master Sommelier Bob Bath, an outspoken Lake County proponent, says the reason its wines largely fly under the radar is "primarily because the grapes have traditionally ended up in non-Lake County appellation wines. As a result, Lake County has been busy making everybody else look good and hasn't made as much of an impact in the marketplace with its own appellations."





Dancing Crow Vineyard's Sauvignon Blanc offers one of the region's distinctive expressions of Sauvignon Blanc.

This lack of recognition might also be due to the region's comparative remoteness, though it's not that far as the crow flies. Some of the county's vineyards are just 10 miles from the Napa County line, 60 miles from the Pacific Ocean, and a mere 100 miles from San Francisco. Napa and Sonoma have the advantage of easy access via the Golden Gate or Bay bridges from the city, but it takes a little more time to reach Lake County due to the mountain ranges surrounding it. If you're not a crow, these three ranges (the Mayacamas to the west, the Vaca Mountains to the southeast, and the Mendocino Range to the north) limit your routes; the main path traverses the length of Napa Valley, but it's a scenic journey to an exceedingly worthwhile destination.

The relative isolation also offers several benefits. When you arrive, you'll be breathing the cleanest air in California. This isn't just good for your lungs: It also happens to be beneficial for grape vines. Lake County vineyards, especially at mountain elevations, enjoy excellent ultraviolet exposure, which

produces thicker skins, better phenolic development, and, ultimately, more complex, flavorful wines.

But while Lake County might still be little known to outsiders, it's long been an open secret to many savvy wine professionals. Jess Jackson purchased vineyard land there in the 1970s and made Lakeport the home of Kendall-Jackson Winery in 1984. Prominent Napa winegrower Andy Beckstoffer also has large vineyard investments in the region, particularly in the up-and-coming Red Hills AVA. Currently, as land values in Napa and Sonoma continue to skyrocket, Lake County real estate is still a bargain.

Standout Sauvignon Blanc

Although many grape varieties perform well within Lake County's diverse terroir, Sauvignon Blanc is one of the standouts. The fruit's quality serves to attract vintners from other wine regions, most notably Napa Valley, where prohibitive farming costs have prompted growers to replace other varieties with plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon. This poses a dilemma for producers like Honig Vineyard and Winery, whose Sauvignon Blanc is popular with discerning consumers.

While Honig's limited-production reserve wine continues to be sourced from the winery's Rutherford estate, Lake County provides high-quality fruit for its popular value bottling. The 2017 vintage was made with 19 percent Lake County grapes. "I like the extra dimensions we get from Lake County," Winemaker Kristen Belair says. "We get more stone fruit and phenolic structure from those vineyards."

Thanks to Lake County's wide variety of soil compositions and elevations, you can find as many distinctive expressions of place and style in Lake County Sauvignon Blanc wines as you can in those from Sancerre, Bordeaux, or New Zealand. Stylistically, they range from exhibiting lean minerality (Dancing Crow's from the Red Hills AVA is a good example) to showing generous stone fruit notes (like Greg Graham from Big Valley). ■■

For more information on Lake County and its wines, visit lakecountywines.org



The first-ever Sauvignon Blanc Experience, held May 4–5, brought people and wineries to Lake County from around the world to explore, taste, and celebrate the grape and its wines.



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Monterey's Arroyo Seco



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THE TOUR DATES

Denver: July 15
Napa: July 17
Austin: July 19
Washington, D.C.:
July 22*

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are available
to cover the
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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 Satori 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 Spinozzi Cortalto, 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,
Negrar, 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 Italiana 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 in from the University of Florence and manages Banfi's Horizon vinification winery, as well as winemaking for ASKA.



Enrico Cerulli,
*Family Proprietor,
Cerulli Spinozzi,
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, Abruzzo'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 Gê. 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.



Heineken Taps Birra Moretti to Drive Tabletop Draught “Blade” Innovation

Heineken is looking to Italian import Birra Moretti for growth with its innovative new draught beer system, Blade. Birra Moretti will combine with Blade to deliver a premium, international craft draught beer experience and a “taste of home” to consumers in Italian restaurants, pizzerias, and other on-premise accounts that may have considered their beer volume too low to warrant the traditional draught system investment. Birra Moretti and Blade assist smaller-volume accounts in boosting their beer profits through a system that guarantees brewery-fresh draught for 30 days while producing less waste.

Birra Moretti and Blade are sold through Heineken USA’s Five Points Trading Company. Chicago, Boston, and metro New York are first up in the launch, followed by Baltimore, Albuquerque, and the New England states. Blade fits on a countertop in a 12-by-19-inch area, requires no cleaning, maintenance, or installation, and weighs just 38 pounds.

For more information, email Five Points at consumeraffairs@fivepointstradingcompany.com or order the Blade unit directly at ordertheblade@micromatic.com.

Rombauer Vineyards Founder Koerner Rombauer Dies at 83

Koerner Rombauer, Founder of Rombauer Vineyards and a beloved figure in Napa Valley over the past four decades, died May 10. He was 83.

Koerner is survived by his wife, Sandy; children, Sheana Rombauer and K.R. Rombauer III; and grandchildren, Reagan, Drew, Seth, Lane, and Ransome.

Rombauer wines are beloved around the world, partly due to Koerner’s outgoing personality and his contagious passion for wine. His habit of including everyone around him in his enjoyment became one of the cornerstones of Rombauer Vineyards.

A memorial will be announced at a later date.



Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits Announces New Appointment and Promotion

Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits announced in May that it has appointed John Wittig to the new role of Chief Transformation Officer, effective July 1, 2018. Wittig will be responsible for identifying and executing opportunities for profitable growth within Southern Glazer’s existing business units and in yet-untapped markets and product segments.

Wittig most recently held the role of President, East Region, for Southern Glazer’s. Gene Sullivan, currently the Executive Vice President and General Manager of Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits of Florida, will replace Wittig in this role and oversee the company’s operations in eight eastern U.S. markets, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands. A replacement for the Executive Vice President and General Manager of Florida position will be announced this month.



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Heineken Wants Beer Drinkers to Raise a Scarf in Support of International Soccer Play

With the U.S. men's national soccer team out of international competition in the upcoming FIFA World Cup, American fans are looking to other countries to find a new team to root for. As the official beer sponsor of Major League Soccer (MLS), Heineken has the international renown to help fans put their faith in another country's team by offering consumers limited-edition scarves to cheer on their new favorites.

"This summer program reinforces the connection between Heineken and soccer," says Heineken Brand Manager Rob Ryder. "There's no shortage of teams to cheer and no better way than by waving a country scarf while enjoying a cold Heineken."

Program activation is meant to drive retail purchases for the duration of the summer soccer season. Where legal, shoppers who buy any two 12-packs in the off-premise or any four bottles or draught beer on-premise can text a provided key word to 85500. After they receive a link to scan their receipt, they will be sent a limited-edition, country-customized Heineken soccer scarf.

Strongbow to Re-Introduce Its Original Dry Cider This Summer

Strongbow Hard Ciders will bring back its renowned Original Dry expression this summer. The original flavor—a dry cider made with a mixture of bittersweet and culinary apples for a crisp, less sweet taste—has seen more than 160,000 social media mentions since it was discontinued, with more than 100,000 loyal consumers requesting its return.

Like all Strongbow products, Original Dry contains no artificial flavors or colors. At 5% ABV, the expression will be available nationally starting in June 2018 in 16.9-oz. single-serve cans and 4-pack 16.9-oz cans. The cans will be available first in on-premise accounts with off-premise expansion to follow.



Award-Winning Guillotine Vodka Debuts in the United States

Founded in 2017 by Paul Berkman, Chairman of French company Bastille Day, Guillotine Vodka is set to make a splash in the U.S. market with a new campaign created by acclaimed photography studio BRAKHAX2. The campaign debuted in conjunction with the brand's launch at exclusive retailers and nightclubs across Southern California.

The all-natural French vodka derives its taste from Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay grapes from France's Champagne region.

In an effort to emphasize the brand's distinctive origins and tasting notes, the campaign team created vibrant visuals influenced as much by American pop art as they are by 18th-century French still-life paintings. Guillotine Vodka introduced its spirits and campaign last month at the 75th Annual Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Convention & Exposition in Las Vegas.

Tecate Light Launches New 20-Pack of 7-Oz. Bottles This Summer

This summer, Tecate Light will introduce a new 20-pack of 7-oz. bottles to its range of premium imported beer-package options. "The new packaging is a relevant proposition for warmer climates and meets the needs of many on-premise accounts and events that lead to increased sampling opportunities," says Gustavo Guerra, Tecate Brand Director at Heineken USA. "Plus, the convenient smaller size is perfect for outdoor occasions and other social gatherings." Launching this month, the new pack will be available to consumers in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and select areas of California.





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LOOK FOR AVAILABILITY IN YOUR MARKET!

Scheid Family Wines Promotes Dave Nagengast To Vice President of Winemaking

Scheid Family Wines (SFW) has announced the promotion of Dave Nagengast to Vice President of Winemaking. Nagengast has served as the company's Director of Winemaking since 2006 and will now direct the winemaking for all of SFW's individual wineries and brands, including Scheid Vineyards, Metz Road, District 7, Stokes' Ghost, VDR, Ranch 32, Ryder Estate, and GIFFT.

Nagengast, who joined SFW in 2002 as a consulting winemaker, was an early adopter of sustainable farming and winemaking practices. He previously held winemaking positions at Storrs Winery, Mirassou Vineyards, and San Martin Winery.



Knife Pleat to Open at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, California

Costa Mesa, California's South Coast Plaza—the largest shopping mall on West Coast—has announced that Knife Pleat, a new French restaurant by chef Tony Esnault and restaurateur Yassmin Sarmadi, will open in early 2019. A power couple in Southern

California's culinary scene, Esnault and Sarmadi are highly regarded for Spring and Church & State, two sought-after Downtown Los Angeles restaurants that have earned stellar

reviews from top critics. Both French restaurants have consistently placed in Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Jonathan Gold's annual "101 Best Restaurants" list for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Knife Pleat, which will be located in the exclusive penthouse on the mall's third level, measures 5,000 square feet and will accommodate 90 guests. The name, meant to be a play on food and fashion, is borrowed from a term referring to a precise pleat with folds pressed in one direction.



El Tesoro Tequila Unveils New Look

El Tesoro de Don Felipe Tequila in May introduced a new bottle and label for its core expressions, including its El Tesoro Blanco, Reposado, and Añejo tequilas. The new packaging celebrates the brand's heritage and captures Founder Don Felipe Camarena's time-honored production methods.

While the tequila remains the same, the new artisanal bottle and label visually communicate the traditional processes involved in making El Tesoro, including a tahona-stone closure to represent the traditional method of crushing piñas, agave flourishes to celebrate Camarena's estate-grown plants, and a batch number to acknowledge that each distillation of El Tesoro owes its unique flavor to the influence of Jalisco's climate and soil conditions. ■■

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Summer Lovin'

HAMILTON-INSPIRED COCKTAILS, A BEER PROMOTION AT A LUXE HOTEL, AND AN ECLECTIC GEORGIAN WINE LIST PROVE THERE'S NO JUNE GLOOM IN D.C. by Kelly Magyarics



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WATERGATE HOTEL



PHOTO: ANDREW PROPP

The Watergate Hotel's summer beer garden (left) features a chalet and games, as well as plenty of brews and bites. At right, Supra, which means "celebratory feast" in Georgian, pairs its authentic cuisine with a massive selection of Georgian wine.

Among Washington, D.C.'s many claims to fame is that the city has the highest per capita consumption of wine in the United States. While this fun fact isn't exactly shocking, it means hard-to-find options like saline-driven Assyrtiko from Santorini at Zaytinya and funky orange wine at The Red Hen are never too far away.

When I walked into the dining room recently at Supra and learned that the delegation from the Georgian embassy was in the private dining room, I knew this newcomer was legit. In Georgian, "supra" means a "celebratory feast" which certainly extends to wine at this restaurant in D.C.'s Shaw neighborhood. Many selections in Supra's massive collective of native wines see time in large earthenware vessels called *qvevri*, and the majority are incredibly food-friendly, like the stone fruit- and mineral-driven Rkatsiteli and the Otskhanuri Sapere, which could easily stand in for a fruity Pinot Noir. Match them all with *khachapuri*, the incredibly addictive cheesy bread

topped with an egg, for velvety, ooey-goopy deliciousness.

Meanwhile, at the Kennedy Center, new Executive Chef Matt Shourds has revamped the entire menu at the Roof Terrace. Standouts at a recent preview included seared scallops with shredded collards, cauliflower fennel puree, and chorizo emulsion, as well as an aromatic coconut Thai basil crème brûlée with a roasted pineapple *financier*.

If that weren't enough, the performing arts venue will welcome *Hamilton* for a three-month run in mid-June, when it will also debut a Ten Dollar Menu (named, of course, for the \$10 bill on which Alexander Hamilton's mug can be found) with cocktails inspired by the Broadway phenomenon. The Raise a Glass to Freedom beer cocktail mixes porter with spiced rum, lime, and brown sugar syrup—a play on a Colonial Era drink that draws on Hamilton's Caribbean background—while the Burr-bon Old Fashioned references duel partner Aaron Burr, who sealed the Founding Father's fate.

And if you think The Watergate Hotel is all about tony afternoon teas in the lobby and pricey pours of Scotch in The Next Whisky Bar, you're only half-right. During a recent progressive dinner at the iconic Foggy Bottom venue, I was surprised to encounter a real wooden chalet on the patio of signature restaurant Kingbird—part of a new beer garden that will be offering up brews and bites all summer long. I settled on a pint of Tröegs Dreamweaver Wheat from Hershey, Pennsylvania, Maryland crab fritters, and malt vinegar-dusted frites. To paraphrase the message found on the hotel's room keys, you don't have to break in to enjoy sunshine, suds, and a laidback feel here. ■■

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 @kmagyarics.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KENNEDY CENTER

Part of the Kennedy Center's *Hamilton*-inspired Ten Dollar Menu, the Raise a Glass to Freedom beer cocktail mixes porter with spiced rum, lime, and brown sugar syrup.

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The New Rioja

RECENT CHANGES BODE WELL FOR THE SPANISH REGION'S NEWEST RELEASES

story and photos by David Ransom



Tasting Panel East Coast Editor David Ransom with Viña Pomal's Alejandro Lopez Garcia at Boqueria in New York.

Known as one of the world's great wine-producing regions, the legacy of Spain's Rioja is most certainly secure, but that doesn't mean the region is ready to rest on its laurels. Over the past decade, significant changes have taken effect that are helping push the region toward the future while keeping it relevant in the ever-expanding lexicon of Spanish wines.

Last month I had the privilege of sitting down with two producers leading the way in Rioja. Over dinner at the meat-centric hidden gem The Cannibal Beer & Butcher in New York's Murray Hill neighborhood, I caught up with Grupo Baron de Ley's Director International General Manager Victor Fuentes and tasted through the company's El Coto de Rioja wines. With 2,000 acres under vine, Grupo Baron de Ley is the largest vineyard owner in Rioja.

Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, the El Coto line covers the full spectrum of Rioja production by offering an excellent value-driven portfolio that includes El Coto Blanco, Rosado, and Crianza, as well as Coto de Imaz Reserva and Gran Reserva. The first three are perfect for by-the-glass programs, while the Reserva and Gran Reserva are more suited to placing on wine lists. This year, in the wake of new labeling guidelines and regulations expanding what can be grown in Rioja to now include Verdejo, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc, El Coto is releasing its first varietally labeled 100% Verdejo and 100% Garnacha wines, as well as a barrel-fermented Chardonnay called 875m (an ode to the elevation of the Finca Carbonera vineyard where the grapes are grown). I got a sneak preview, and they tasted wonderful!

Next, over lunch at Boqueria with Bodegas Bilbainas Winemaker Alejandro López García, I tried the newest releases from Viña Pomal. Imported by Avenú Brands, the line of wines includes a Blanco (Viura-Malvasia), a Rosado made from Garnacha and Viura, a 100% Tempranillo Reserva, and a 90% Tempranillo/10% Graciano Gran Reserva. Also tasted were the three Viña Pomal offerings from the Vinos Singulares line, a new category created in accordance with the DOCa Rioja's move to allow single-vineyard designations on labels. Graciano, Tempranillo Blanco, and Maturana Blanca make up the first trio of releases. ■■



The Viña Pomal Vinos Singulares Tempranillo Blanco.



The lineup of El Coto wines at The Cannibal Beer & Butcher.

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Meet the 2018 Diageo World Class Bartender of the Year finalists from the Southwest and Midwest regions: Ryan Perry, Justin Ware, Trevor Scovel, and Katie Renshaw (back row); and Alexis Mijares and Casey Miller (front row).



All Together Now

LAS VEGAS ROLLS
OUT THE RED
CARPET FOR USBG
MEMBERS AND
DIAGEO WORLD
CLASS HOPEFULS

by Xania V. Woodman

Among its myriad blessings in all things spirits-related, Las Vegas just happens to serve as the national headquarters of the United States Bartenders' Guild (USBG). It's no surprise, then, that the city's local chapter was thrilled to welcome officers and members from all over the Southwest to a recent regional gathering at SLS Hotel & Casino.

While the main focus of the annual conference is to gather chapter leaders in the same room to share their best practices with national leadership, there were also plenty of opportunities for both education and recreation—this being Las Vegas—to warm everyone up before the attendees got down to guild business.

The conference brought out the big names for its seminar lineup, which included a sweet honey immersion by **Kim Haasarud** of Liquid Architecture; two beer classes by Guinness Brewery Ambassador **David Schroeder**; a session presented by **Patricia Richards**, a member of the USBG Health & Wellness Committee, titled "Overcoming the Dark Side of the Bar" with guests **Nectaly Mendoza** and **Giuseppe González** of Herbs and Rye; and "No Italy, No Cocktail," a study of the European country's considerable contributions to bartending presented by **Tad Carducci** of New York-based beverage consultancy The Tippling Bros.

Applause turned into a prolonged standing ovation for USBG Co-Founder and past National President **Jose Ancona** (also formerly the International Bartenders Association Vice President-North America) during the Liquid Legacy presentation. Unofficial guild historian **Livio Lauro**, also a former National President, appeared alongside local chapter Co-Founders **Bobby "G" Gleason**, **Tony Abou-Ganim**, and **Francesco Lafranconi**, while brand-sponsored visits to Sparrow + Wolf, The Sand Dollar Lounge, Evel Pie, Gold Spike, and Flock & Fowl kept everyone well-fed.

On the final night of the conference, the USBG group merged with the Southwest and Midwest regional finalists of the World Class Bartender of the Year competition, sponsored by Diageo, for a Spirited Storytelling dinner at Fleur by Hubert Keller. They then headed to another Mandalay Bay venue, Abou-Ganim's Libertine Social, where it was announced which six bartenders would move on to the nationals at Stitzel-Weller Distillery in Louisville, Kentucky, June 5–6: **Alexis Mijares** of Austin, Texas; **Justin Ware** and **Ryan Perry** of Houston, Texas; **Trevor Scovel** of Fort Wayne, Indiana; **Katie Renshaw** of Chicago, Illinois; and **Casey Miller** of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

And since no USBG gathering could be held without a proper Negroni, new reggae-inspired cocktail bar Jammyland served the drinks on its gloriously sunny patio in the Arts District. The venue was both the start and finish line of a charitable bike ride 35 guild members took through historic Downtown Las Vegas, raising \$5,750 for the Helen David Relief Fund—a nonprofit that provides support to women in the bar industry who have been diagnosed with breast cancer—before journeying back home. ■■



Founding Fathers: United States Bartenders' Guild Co-Founder **Jose Ancona** (center) was welcomed by Las Vegas chapter Co-Founders **Bobby "G" Gleason**, **Livio Lauro**, **Tony Abou-Ganim**, and **Francesco Lafranconi**.

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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.

Blair Finn has been named Northeast Area Manager at **Mahou San Miguel**. She had been a Sales Representative at Duvel Moortgat USA.

Jared Mathisen has been named Washington/Alaska Area Manager at **Phusion Projects**. He had been Area Sales Manager—Washington at Columbia Gorge Organic.

Jeffrey Travis has been named Market Manager—Upstate New York at **Stillhouse Spirits Co.** He had been Market Manager—Upstate New York at Western Spirits Beverage Company.

Jean-Marie Heins has been named Chief Marketing Officer at **Broken Shed Distilleries**. She had been Executive Vice President of Marketing and Sales Operations at Sidney Frank Importing Co., Inc.

Ryan Hicks has been named Trade Marketing Director at **WhistlePig Straight Rye Whiskey**. He had been Director of Brand Management at Empire Spirits Project.

CAREER CORNER

The Coveted Office Perk Employees Want Most

Beer taps, company retreats, free snacks—many a modern workplace seems to be brimming with perks. More than 50 percent of employees say that workplace benefits help them achieve a better quality of life—and happiness is, after all, the secret to workplace productivity.

There is, however, one perk employees seek more than others.

According to a survey conducted by Washington, D.C.-based research firm Clutch that polled more than 500 Americans working full-time, 41 percent of respondents said that having a flexible schedule—meaning an alternative to the traditional 9-to-5, 40-hour work week—was their favorite workplace benefit. More than 50 percent of employees also said it was the perk that most contributed to their happiness at work.

Flexibility allows employees to vary their arrival and/or departure times; under some policies, employees instead work a prescribed number of hours per pay period and be present during a daily “core time.” Because the modern workplace is designed around the idea of managing energy and not time, there is no one-size-fits-all format when it comes to setting workplace hours. Employers and employees should work together to create a schedule that best accommodates productivity. ■■

Want to connect with beverage industry leaders? Tap into BevForce at www.bevforce.com or email info@bevforce.com for more information.

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Christine Wang

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES AT GREENHOUSE AGENCY



Today's consumers are incredibly connected to the world around them, prompting beverage companies to find new ways to reach and engage with their audience. We checked in with Christine Wang, the Director of Human Resources at Greenhouse Agency—an experiential marketing agency behind some of the world's leading beverage brands—to discover what's driving the impact of a brand's experience in the current industry climate.

ForceBrands: What inspired you to pursue a career in human resources? Was there a specific industry you were most interested in joining?

Christine Wang: In college, I majored in business and was interested in a career in business management. After graduation, I started working for a restaurant chain assisting in various departments, but I naturally gravitated toward helping our employees, building relationships, and getting more involved in HR policy. I became convinced that a sincere and caring approach to employees makes a huge difference because it builds trust and cooperation. I eventually became an HR manager and I've never looked back.

FB: What do you find most rewarding about your role?

CW: I love finding new strategies to build our culture and employer brand in order to strengthen retention and attract top talent. Last year we rolled out our first company culture survey to get feedback from our employees and find areas that need action. I prioritize this kind of assessment to tailor new programs that will improve the employee experience, as I firmly believe the employee experience feeds into the client experience. When you take care of your people, your people will take care of your customers.

FB: Have you noticed any trends among beverage companies in particular when it comes to innovative marketing strategies?

CW: Beverage companies are currently looking to go beyond experiential to the exact moment of brand conversion. Our research has found that moments of conversion are driven by emotional association via integrated experiences and shareable moments. Today's consumers are incredibly connected to the world through their smartphones and desire affirmation of their personal experiences and values by sharing it with others. The number of likes and comments substantiate what that consumer was feeling at that "moment of conversion," which drives the impact of that experience and creates brand adoption and loyalty.

FB: From your experience working with people, how do you define a successful team?

CW: If I'm leading a team, I want to find people who complement each other's strengths. I think it's always key to maintain respectful communication and clearly define objectives. I also value diversity because a lot of what I do is problem solve, and different perspectives allow for a richer field of ideas and solutions. And I absolutely believe that a good leader has to be a good listener—some of the best ideas can come from people who might be reserved or shy, and a good leader has to be able to cultivate those ideas. That kind of recognition and awareness can turn a competent team into an amazing one. ■■



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At Arcwood Wine Bar in Tarzana, CA, patrons can choose from more than 50 wines to pair with dishes like Cuban-style charred corn and paella de mar with chorizo, prawns, and mussels.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARCWOOD WINE BAR

Wayfaring Wine Bars

THE SIMPLE JOY OF FINDING LOCAL GRAPES WHILE TRAVELING by Merrill Shindler

For those of us seeking a fine glass of locally produced wine while traveling, a terrible sadness arises when we're presented with a list of selections that can be found in supermarkets near and far. The wines may be eminently drinkable, but it's like finding a copy of the Mona Lisa in every museum you visit—what's the point?

And so we seek out wine bars, which have sprung up pretty much everywhere in America. Those in more obvious wine-producing states can now often surprisingly be found in the less-obvious suburbs, like the newly opened Arcwood Wine Bar in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles. Proudly calling itself "the people's wine bar," Arcwood pours roughly 50 wines—some global, but many local, including a fine The White Knight Viognier from Clarksburg, California, and a Moobuzz Pinot Noir from Monterey. Any option should go very nicely with the Cuban-style charred corn and paella del mar from the Latin-skewing menu.

If you're heading south to Disneyland, consider a stop at Vino Nostra in equally suburban Fullerton, where you can pair one of several tasty flatbreads with Cherry Pie Vineyard's Cherry Tart Pinot Noir from Napa or Tangle Oaks

Chardonnay from Mendocino.

Continue east and you'll eventually run into Vines & Hops in Scottsdale, where the list of Arizona-produced wines includes names like Provisioner, Sand Reckoner, Aridus, Stronghold Mangus, and Page Springs Cellars Mule's Mistake. Flights featuring your choice of three Arizona wines for \$17 provide a wonderful way to taste the local grapes alongside plates of artichokes, olives, figs, Marcona almonds, goat cheese, piquillo peppers, and, of course, chorizo—a local favorite.

Should you have a taste for the wines of the Pacific Northwest, the place to go in Seattle is Bottlehouse, where they serve Farmlands Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley in Oregon, and, from Washington State, Kerloo Majestic Red and Airfield Estates Cabernet from the Columbia and Yakima valleys, respectively. Don't miss the Omero Cellars Chardonnay (also from Willamette) served with pickled eggs, Aleppo peppers, and a braised oxtail rilette made in-house.

Finally, in the very rural town of Kula on the Hawaiian island of Maui—high above the Pacific on the road to the top of Haleakalā volcano—exploring enophiles should head for the vowel-heavy



Bottlehouse in Seattle, WA, serves the Omero Cellars Chardonnay from Oregon's Willamette Valley with pickled eggs, Aleppo peppers, and a braised oxtail rilette made in-house.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOTTLEHOUSE

Ulupalakua Ranch Store & Grill for a glass of Maui's fabled pineapple wine.

While it's not exactly subtle, it's decidedly local. Try it with Chef Will Munder's slow-roasted beef brisket from the Maui Cattle Company along with an Upcountry-grown Caesar salad of local Waipoli romaine lettuce, organic radicchio, and housemade Caesar dressing. With several varieties of meat sourced from the business' ranch on Maui and every vegetable arriving from its microfarm, the food is as regional as could be. It warrants mentioning that the view goes on forever—on a clear day, you can practically see Japan. ■■



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91 POINTS

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STANLEY WORRELL

Lead Bartender at Bar Tulia in Naples, FL



PHOTO: MICHAEL CARONCHI

Bar Tulia is the first bar in the area to show a deep appreciation for creating an immersive experience through its cocktails. What was the process of introducing this concept to Naples?

It has been an ongoing process with the main challenge being, in my opinion, having the guests build trust with our skills and knowledge of the craft to step outside their comfort zone. They were so accustomed to drinking spirits and soda, which we can obviously do, but we would rather educate them by drawing out their likes and dislikes—ultimately

turning them on to something great that they can continue to order on the regular. Now that we have built up trust with our guests, we get the pleasure of seeing the evolution.

Bar Tulia hosts a series that brings guest bartenders from throughout the East Coast to work for the evening. What has been a highlight for you?

Learning new techniques I may have never seen before, or even learning what not to do from others. I may even learn a new cocktail—for example, [Regent Cocktail Club Managing Partner] Julio Cabrera, one of America's best bartenders, taught us how to make classic cocktails from his homeland of Cuba. The most important thing about the series is that we're all building relationships with other bartenders within a cocktail culture that the general public may not even know about. It's been truly amazing hosting some of these talented individuals in Naples.

What is your process like when creating a new cocktail?

After choosing a location where I've traveled or have lived in in the past, I focus on the indigenous ingredients of that particular area or town. For example, the Las Conchas is a cocktail that uses green chiles, which I found a lot of in Santa Fe, New Mexico, while traveling there. My mom also used to cook with them. When making The Fallen Monk, a tiki cocktail, I was first inspired by the rum before I pulled fruits and spirits from other countries. I also try to focus on the "nose" of the drink instead of the palate, which usually results in a cohesive cocktail that people love.

What is your ideal cocktail, food/snack, music, and atmosphere mashup?

I'm a tiki guy all the way, so my ideal cocktail would be a rum-driven cocktail made with island spice, tropical fruit, and herbs. I grew up on the beach and love the sun and water, so I think rum and the tiki lifestyle represent my beachy soul well. My music choices reflect the same type of lifestyle—I listen to Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, and Gregory Isaacs. When it comes to my food preference, I love a good taco!

MEGHAN BALSER

Cocktail Curator at Herb and Wood in San Diego, CA



PHOTO COURTESY OF HERB AND WOOD

How are you incorporating more local spirits and products into your cocktails?

I want our program to reflect our connection with the San Diego bar community. Our Herb & Diego cocktail is made with Old Harbor Distilling Co. gin, crafted downtown in the East Village. My variation on a Vesper incorporates You & Yours Distilling Co. vodka, also distilled in the East Village. The Bourbon

& Thyme is made with Domaine Santé, a local grape-nectar sweetener, while the Mezcal & Coco ingredients include a local shrub company called Nostrum.

What are some ways you work with the kitchen when creating cocktails?

Some of the new cocktails include an extended edible garnish, so I have been working with our talented pastry team. The Coco & Mezcal has a dark chocolate "disk" topper and our Rye & Rye, my take on a classic Manhattan, has a mini rye pretzel.

What advice would you give an inspiring bartender about being successful in the industry?

My advice would be to always seek out knowledge and to get involved in the local bartending community. There is always an opportunity to learn something new and to make new connections.

What excites you most about the direction the industry is headed and the creativity you're seeing? Where are you hoping to take the bar program over the next year?

I'm most excited about bartenders breaking the "rules," coming up with unique and inspiring drinks, and pairing spirits that you normally wouldn't think would work together in a cocktail. I'm hoping to highlight more of what San Diego has to offer in the bar program over the next year, including spirits and produce.

With the recent legalization of recreational marijuana in California, are you incorporating it into any cocktails?

I am using CBD (cannabidiol) oil in one of our drinks, Herb & Diego. We are working with a local dispensary to create our own private-label oil for the bar. ■■

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



On the far left, Dr. Rachel Meyer, the Executive Director of the University of California Conservation Genomics Consortium and Owner of Shoots & Roots Bitters, discusses botany's effect on flavor at Pernod Ricard USA's Bartender Advocacy Convention in Washington, D.C. Pictured after Meyer from left to right are panelists Amber Cartwright, Product Manager—Beverage at flavors and fragrances manufacturer Givaudan; Megan Gaarder, Director of New Product Development at Pernod Ricard USA; and Devon Tarby, Owner of The Walker Inn, The Normandie Club, and Proprietors LLC.

Bringing Home the BACON

PERNOD RICARD USA'S BARTENDER ADVOCACY CONVENTION
SERVES UP A DAY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION by Mara Marski

Pernod Ricard USA has spent the better part of the past decade earning a reputation as a provider of high-quality education through its extensive BarSmarts programming. This April, the Bartender Advocacy Convention (BACON) welcomed bar industry professionals to a day of advanced-level instruction for its three-city tour in Los Angeles, Indianapolis, and Washington, D.C.

After a morning icebreaker session in L.A. complemented by Jameson-spiked lattes, the assembled guests made their way to Flavor Town—a panel session led by Rachel Meyer, Ph.D., the Executive Director of the University of California Conservation Genomics Consortium and Owner of Shoots & Roots Bitters; Amber Cartwright, Product Manager—Beverage at flavors and fragrances manufacturer Givaudan; Devon Tarby, Owner of The Walker Inn, The Normandie Club, and Proprietors LLC; and Megan Gaarder, Director of New Product Development at Pernod Ricard USA.

The far-ranging discussion shifted from panelist to panelist as Meyer gave an explanation of botany as it relates to flavor, Cartwright delved more deeply into how chemists isolate chemical flavorings, and Tarby demonstrated the differences between taste and flavor. Gaardner's concluding remarks, meanwhile, explored how she uses these components as a flavor scientist to develop new products.

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*, joined the conversation by highlighting a tool he said bartenders often overlook: the human element. He reminded attendees to exercise kindness, engage with their surroundings, and communicate effectively, explaining that as bars increasingly become havens for what he calls “social protein,” it's the job of a bartender to “take some heart and soul and give it back to the world.”

Leo Robitschek, Bar Director at New York City's Eleven Madison Park and the NoMad hotel, joined Pietro Collina, NoMad's Bar Manager, to share how they maintain a world-class bar program at an establishment that sees an average of \$25,000 in daily cocktail sales. The duo explained that much of their success is due to a strong company culture, a non-negotiable focus on continuous education, and well-established systems for consistency, quality, and speed. These systems



Pietro Collina, the Bar Manager for New York's NoMad hotel, demonstrates the techniques employed by NoMad bartenders to quickly craft large volumes of cocktails while maintaining quality and consistency.

permeate every aspect of operations at the establishment, from how they build menus to the way they organize documents distributed to staff, Robitschek and Collina said.

Kevin Denton, Pernod Ricard USA's National Mixologist and the leader of the BACON initiative, closed out the day by conducting a question-and-answer session with James Beard Award-winning chef Wylie Dufresne. Dufresne recounted his experiences serving as the Chef/Owner of New York's WD~50 and the process of reinvention he underwent when the restaurant closed. “It's not the end of the world when things don't work out,” Dufresne reminded the bartenders. “There are always more opportunities, so take a second, catch your breath, and move on.” ■■



Bartenders participating in BACON were presented with a wide range of spirits, flavors, acids, and equipment for a hands-on exploration of advanced cocktail creation.



FIVE MINUTES WITH ...

BEVERAGE DIRECTOR FOR
JOSÉ ANDRÉS'
THINKFOODGROUP

Andy Myers, MS

by Michelle Metter



Andy Myers has been in restaurants for all but 14 of his years: He found his love of wine while working at The Inn at Little Washington in Washington, Virginia, and never looked back. After a decade-long stint as Sommelier at CityZen with Chef Eric Ziebold, Myers moved on to become the Beverage Director for José Andrés' ThinkFoodGroup.

Myers, who passed the Master Sommelier exam in May 2014, will appear in two panels during SommCon D.C. on July 23. *The Tasting Panel* recently quizzed the gregarious somm on his favorite wine books, advice he'd give his industry peers, and how he caters to multigenerational palates.

What role does training play within your organization? With different concepts and wine lists, how do you prioritize your team's education?

Training is an essential and never-ending part of what we do. Given the ethnocentric nature of most of our lists, we find the first priority to be geography and then indigenous varietals. From there we're able to dial down more specific producers, regions, and so on.

SommCon just awarded ten conference scholarships to young sommeliers under 30. What role do you think these professionals will play in how the industry continues to evolve, and what's a pitfall they should avoid?

The younger generation of sommeliers will face a significantly more educated and diverse group of guests than us old guys dealt with at their age. It will be more important than ever before for them to stay current on industry trends and tastes. That said, I worry that the younger sommeliers are neglecting the classic regions and styles in pursuit of an unattainable and ever-shifting grasp of what is currently in vogue.

As a new generation of wine consumer comes of age, how does your approach change to accommodate them along with perhaps the more established palates of Gen X'ers or Baby Boomers?

Great wine is great wine. Regardless of age or experience, my hope is to always be able to put delicious wine in front of you. Even if you're enamored with fruitless, faulty orange things, there's a safe bet that delicious Champagne will make you smile.

If you were to give a book from your personal library to a fellow sommelier, what would it be?

Reading Between the Wines by Terry Theise, because you should never forget that wine is hilarious, religious, irreverent, and messy as well as delicious.

What advice do you give to somms who don't pass their early attempts at getting their Master Sommelier certification?

Fall down seven times; get up eight.

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

My old man; Domaine Weinbach 1999 Cuvée Ste. Catherine Riesling; and "You Never Even Called Me by My Name" by David Allen Coe. ■■

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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Central Europe's Treasure

HUNGARY'S LAKE BALATON IS A WINE REGION WORTH VISITING

by Izzy Watson



The Lake Balaton region was first planted with grapes in Roman times.



Badacsony, both the name of the mountain peak and the town beside it, features natural wonders and rare flora and fauna.



Lake Hévíz near Balaton is the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake and is a popular venue for wellness treatments.

Located in Western Hungary, Balaton is first and foremost Central Europe's largest freshwater lake. However, there are plenty of other reasons to visit the area, including its history and significance as a winemaking region with remarkable resorts.

The geographical traits of this freshwater lake—considered the “Hungarian sea” by locals—and its surroundings, including the thermal sources, volcanic soil, and basalt mountains, create a picturesque backdrop for winery trips and restaurant visits.

Lake Hévíz, near Balaton, is the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake. Rich in minerals like magnesium and calcium, it often serves as a venue for medical therapies and wellness treatments. The water temperature hovers around 77 degrees Fahrenheit in winter and 97 degrees in summer, and the water moves constantly, lending a massaging effect. After taking a dip, visit the area's historical relics and archeological excavations from the end of the Stone Age. It's no wonder this lake, together with the adjacent volcanic hills, were included in the recommendation list of the World Heritage National Hungarian Committee.

Famous for the basalt mountains on the northern shoreline of Balaton, Tapolca Basin, Badacsony, and its vicinity feature some of the country's most beautiful landscapes. Tapolca is home to many unique natural wonders, like the Stone Gate of Badacsony, the basalt organs of the Szentgyörgy Hill, and rare plants and birds, such as the gladiolus and protected greylag geese. Just like Siófok, Balatonfüred, the Káli basin, or even Tihany, Badacsony serves as a perfect location for year-round activities and events, including gastronomic and cultural festivals.

Lake Balaton gastronomy also means viticulture. The stunning Mediterranean-style vineyards, whose first vines were planted by the Romans, sit alongside tiny villages with amazing hospitality and breathtaking views. Whether travelers sip Juhfark, Riesling, Kéknyelű, Pinot Gris, or Furmint (previously developed as Tokaj's exclusive grape variety), they will experience a well-rounded wine that's clearly indicative of its origin and this region.

The complexity seen in Lake Balaton's viticultural developments and projects proves the area has a promising future—and absolutely merits a visit. For more information, visit hellohungary.com. ■■

Located in western Hungary, Balaton is Central Europe's largest freshwater lake.





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Mara Marski
is The Tasting
Panel's Spirits
Editor and
resident
bartender.

'Booch Meets Hooch

SUMMER MENUS ARE STEEPED IN BOOZY TEA COCKTAILS

by Mara Marski

While not a new trend, kombucha—a slightly bubbly black or green tea fermented with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (often shortened to SCOBY)—has become something of an obsession for those intrigued by its plentiful health benefits.

By adding their own alcoholic twist, bartenders have again managed to make a good thing even better by pioneering kombucha-based cocktails. Downtown Los Angeles' Prank Bar, co-founded by longtime barman Dave Whitton, has been an early adapter of the kombucha craze. "The natural carbon dioxide gives kombucha a beautifully light and bubbly taste along with incredible flavor profiles that play well with most spirits," Whitton says.

When asked about kombucha's popularity, Whitton attributes it to that aforementioned range of health benefits that often draws people to the drink. "Kombucha aids in digestion, increases mental clarity, functions as a mood booster, and is incredibly rich in probiotics," says Whitton, who is such a proponent of the tea that he actually brews his own at Prank Bar. The restaurant, which is also known for its culinary use of cannabis, has a terpene-infused kombucha menu with flavors that include an energizing mango, ginger, peach, and coconut blend with limonene terpene; the "cross-fizz" made with pineapple, mint, and pinene and limonene terpenes; and the "calmboocha" made with tart cherry, lavender, and linalool.

If Whitton is to be believed, this is just the beginning for boozy kombucha drinks. "I think we'll see a lot of inventive thinking with these cocktails, because everyone is always looking to be healthier and kombucha is just starting to find its voice," he says. ■■



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRANK BAR

Created by Dave Whitton at Downtown Los Angeles' Prank Bar, the Granny Gripple features housemade pineapple kombucha, reposado tequila, Laird's Applejack, ginger root, and limonene and pinene terpenes.

Cooling Down with Kombucha

While housemade kombucha works best for Dave Whitton at Prank Bar, there's plenty of alternatives available at retailers for people who aren't ready to SCOBY do-it-themselves. Options range from GT's Living Foods Original Kombucha to Brew Dr. Kombucha's botanical-focused line to Health-Ade's fruit-forward options like Blood Orange-Carrot-Ginger and Pink Lady Apple. If you're looking for your own inventive way to put kombucha behind your bar, here are two tried-and-tested kombucha-based drinks already on menus along the West Coast.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BREW DOCTOR KOMBUCHA



The Pelé Palmer

Created by Townshend's Distillery Head Distiller Seth O'Malley and Head of Operations Ray Nagler in partnership with the Portland Timbers (Available at the Providence Park Stadium, Portland, OR)

- ▶ 6 oz. Brew Dr. Mint Lemonade Kombucha
- ▶ 2 oz. Townshend's Sweet Tea Liqueur
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ▶ ½ oz. simple syrup

Cherry Pomb

Created by Noel Baum at Love & Salt in Manhattan Beach, CA

- ▶ 1 oz. lime juice
- ▶ ½ oz. cherry syrup
- ▶ ½ oz. agave
- ▶ 2 rosemary sprigs
- ▶ Health-Ade Pomegranate Kombucha

Muddle the lime juice, cherry syrup, and agave with one rosemary sprig. Shake then pour in a highball glass over rocks. Fill the rest of the glass with Health-Ade Pomegranate Kombucha and garnish with the additional sprig of rosemary.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOVE & SALT





RIVAROSE

DEPUIS 1909

RIVAROSE

BRUT

The Mediterranean
Sparkling Rosé



IGP MÉDITERRANÉE SPARKLING ROSÉ

A Whisk(e)y Wish List

by Ian Buxton

This month, let's start with a whisky you won't be seeing in the U.S. I'm keen to spread the news of the remarkable **Talisker Bodega Series**, which is launching with just 2,000 bottles of a 40-year-old single malt. This is one of the oldest and most valuable expressions from a distillery that can truly be described as iconic, and it will be eagerly sought by collectors and the growing investor community.

However, despite assurances that it would be available "worldwide," the U.S. will not receive an allocation as, sadly, the Scotch has only been produced in the European 70cl bottle size. Why do I mention it? Because if you can ask a friend with access to the product to ship it to you, trust that it will command respect for your discernment and good taste!

One intriguing new product you can and should purchase is **Jameson's Wild Seaweed Bitters** (46% ABV; SRP \$30). The first seaweed bitters available anywhere and a true celebration of Irish ingredients, it contains a highly concentrated infusion of Jameson Irish whiskey with a variety of herbs, including cinchona, wormwood, ginseng, and gentian. It's also infused with wild dillisk seaweed, which is carefully

hand-harvested in County Sligo and dried naturally on the shores of the Wild Atlantic Way by Damian Melvin, a second-generation seaweed harvester. The rich, intense, and well-balanced bitters invoke the aromas and flavors of the rugged Irish seashore while offering mixologists a great creative platform for innovative whiskey cocktails.



Jameson has also released its **Bow Street 18 Years Cask Strength** (55.3% ABV; SRP \$250) expression. The company's first cask-strength whiskey to be available globally finishes its maturation in Dublin's only Live Maturation House, located at the Jameson Distillery Bow Street. After spending 18 years in a collection of bourbon and Sherry casks, rare pot-still and grain Irish whiskeys are blended together in first-fill bourbon barrels for a final six to 12 months of aging. It's both a welcome return to the spiritual heart of Irish whiskey and another indication of the rebirth of Dublin distilling.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland's best-known distillery, **Bushmills**, has announced the 2018 release of its **16- and 21-year-old single malts** (both are 40% ABV; SRPs are \$100 and \$150,

respectively). Bushmills has doubled production of its younger whiskey, while the older expression features label information on the year it was bottled. The label provides a unique reference number, ensuring that the whiskey becomes "even more collectible," according to Master Distiller Colum Egan.

And, finally, our old friends at **Kilchoman** on Islay have just released the 2018 editions of their **Loch Gorm** (46% ABV; SRP \$105) and **Port Cask Matured** (50% ABV; SRP \$120). "I think the 2018 editions are probably the best versions of these expressions we've released to date, so I'm excited to see how they are received," says Kilchoman Founder Anthony Wills. But the best news, of course, is that both will be available stateside! ■■



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GARNISH WITH LIME.





Sagamore Spirit hand-selected Port, Shiraz, and Cabernet barrels to create its new, limited-release Vintner's Finish Rye expression.



Getting into the Rye Spirit

SAGAMORE SPIRIT LAUNCHES VINTNER'S FINISH RYE FOR LIMITED RELEASE by Jesse Hom-Dawson



Sagamore Spirit's first limited release, its Double Oak Rye Whiskey, recently won a Double Gold at the 2018 Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Spirits Competition.

Before Prohibition, Maryland was known for its rye: recognizable by its slightly sweet yet bold and spicy character and often made with corn added to the rye mash. After the repeal of Prohibition and both World Wars, production of bourbon in Kentucky and whiskey in Tennessee quickly resumed, and today both states enjoy notoriety for their respective spirits.

Maryland, on the other hand, struggled to recapture its pre-Prohibition reputation, but new distillery Sagamore Spirit has set out to make a name for itself—and its home state—by bringing Maryland-style rye back into the national spotlight.

Sagamore Spirit's five-acre distillery, which features a 27,000-square-foot process-

ing facility and 22,000-square-foot distillery building, opened in Baltimore's Port Covington neighborhood last year. Just 22 miles away lies Sagamore Farm, where the company's barrel-aging barn and source for its limestone spring water—with which the rye is proofed—is located near stables of thoroughbred horses and a three-quarter-mile racing track.

The company is fresh off a Double Gold win for its first limited release—Sagamore Spirit Reserve Series Double Oak Rye Whiskey, finished in a second “wave stave” oak barrel—at this year's Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) Spirits Competition, where it also won a Gold for its Cask Strength Rye expression. Sagamore Spirit's newest

limited release, the 98-proof Reserve Vintner's Finish Rye, features a blend of rye aged in premium red wine and Port casks and is available for a limited time in Maryland and Washington, D.C.

“We were eager to experiment with finishes,” says Sagamore Spirit President Brian Treacy. “Maryland-style rye whiskey, with its sweet corn and spicy rye, lends itself well to a secondary maturation, so aging our whiskey in Port and red wine barrels was intriguing. The Vintner's Finish whiskey gathered notes of dark cherry and a smooth smokiness we thought tasted spectacular. Taking risks is one of the best parts of making whiskey, and finishing our rye in wine barrels proved to be one well worth taking.” ■■

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WINES



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***-Charles Bieler, Joel Gott
and Roger Scommegna***



Launched in 2003 by Delicato Family Vineyards, the Bota Box portfolio features a wide range of varieties, including Chardonnay, Moscato, Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot, Nighthawk Black Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, Dry Rosé, Nighthawk Black Red Blend, and RedVolution.



Take Me Out to the Ball Game

BOTA BOX
ENCOURAGES
FANS TO ENJOY
ITS WINES AT
TAILGATES ACROSS
THE COUNTRY

by Emily Coleman

While it's often said that America's favorite pastime is baseball or football, fans of both sports often name tailgating as their favorite part of the game. Anyone who has ever tailgated knows that the spread of food and spirits can make or break your experience. Bringing the right items that impress your group while being easy to pack and use outdoors can pose a challenge, especially when shopping for a wine option that's both high-quality and practical in a sea of hefty glass bottles.

In an effort to solve this game-day problem for consumers, Bota Box houses wine in a recyclable, BPA-free plastic wine bag, which sits inside a recyclable box made of 90 percent post-consumer fiber. Creating 85 percent less waste than traditional glass packaging, it also cuts production and shipping costs, allowing the wine to overdeliver for its price tag. If your partygoers don't finish off a box, they can just bring it to the next game: Since the wine stays fresh for a month after opening, it doesn't fall prey to TCA/cork taint and oxidation. With this list of reasons to choose Bota, it's no wonder the company's sales have grown 22 percent since this time last year.

Launched in 2003 by Delicato Family Vineyards and named after the bags ancient Spaniards used to carry wine, the Bota Box portfolio features a wide range of varieties, including Chardonnay, Moscato, Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot, Nighthawk Black Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, Dry Rosé, Nighthawk Black Red Blend, and RedVolution. Each wine comes in the original three-liter Bota Box, which is equivalent to four wine bottles. Many options also come in other sizes: the 500-milliliter Bota Mini, equivalent to three glasses of wine, and the new 1½-liter Bota Brick, equivalent to two wine bottles.

The wide range of choices from this brand allows your customers to make every one of their guests happy, no matter if their team takes home a win or not. ■■

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Digging into the Unique Terroirs of La Bella Italy

Sunday, July 22, 3–4:30 p.m.

As an extension of Banfi Vinters' successful Cru Artisan College tour, four Italian winemakers/proprietors will review the indigenous grapes and terroir of their respective wine regions through a comprehensive enrichment tasting. Moderated by Banfi Vintners Director of Education Lars Leicht, the panel will feature Alberto Lazzarino of Banfi Piemonte leading the way through Piedmont; Gabrielle Pazzaglia of Castello Banfi covering Tuscany; Enrico Cerulli of Cerulli Spinozzi exploring the Colline Teramane DOCG in Abruzzo; and Andrea Sartori of Sartori di Verona leaving no stone, or gondola, unturned in the Veneto.



GAME OF WINES

Monday, July 23, 2–3:30 p.m.

Vintner is coming! Play Game of Wines with *The SOMM Journal* and *The Tasting Panel* to have a chance to win a first-place prize of \$1,000 and a second-place prize of \$500. You'll blind-sip through eight wines before the wines are revealed one by one by their producers during a fascinating seminar on terroir and taste profiles.

GAME OF WINES Thursday, August 16, 3:45–5:30 p.m.

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TWO OF WENTE
VINEYARDS' FIFTH -
GENERATION
WINEGROWERS
SHARE THEIR
EXPERIENCES IN
THE WINE INDUSTRY
AND BEYOND

Despite their
busy work lives,
sisters Niki and
Jordan Wente
always make
time for family.

by Emily Coleman / photos by Hardy Wilson

W

hen you grow up in a family with a professional legacy to uphold, the pressure can seem daunting. This sense of expectation can prompt many people to walk away entirely, instead opting to pursue something completely different and unexpected in their own careers.

Not so with Jordan and Niki Wente, fifth-generation family members of Wente Vineyards—the legendary Livermore-based winery established in 1883—and the daughters of fourth-generation winegrower Phil

Wente. Being part of a family business can make striking a work-life balance more challenging, so we spoke with the sisters about what they make time for outside of their busy careers.

Jordan Wente

As a mother and the Project Manager at Wente Vineyards, Jordan Wente jokes that “my life is family, family business, and family” . . . and that’s the way it’s always been. Growing up, Jordan was incredibly close to her cousins and siblings, who spent a lot of time together learning about wine from their parents and seeing the passion they had for the craft of winemaking.

Even though she says her father never pressured her to join the family business, she still decided to go against the grain after college to run congressional campaigns and educational foundations. In fact, it wasn’t until she was pregnant with her second child that she felt compelled to help preserve the Wente family legacy in hopes of one day passing the work down to her own children.

Once she officially joined Wente Family Estates, Jordan led the tasting room renovation of its artisan brand Murrieta’s Well and has enjoyed working on recent projects like the company’s first canned wine, Entwine, and this year’s new release, the 135th Anniversary Celebratory Chardonnay. “Marketing develops an idea and I get to take that idea, get everyone on the same page, and help bring the project to life,” she explains. “It’s an exciting challenge and I learn something new every day.”

Jordan’s three children, ages 1, 2, and 7, are already being introduced to the family business and the wine industry, whether they’re joining her for walks out to the vines or seeing the tractors roll by on the vineyard. “My kids keep me grounded and make me slow down and stop. When I’m with them, my inner child comes out,” she says. On top of spending time outside hiking and biking with her kids, Jordan says she also enjoys creative outlets like painting; while she can’t dedicate the time to those hobbies that she did before having children, she still makes time to draw at her desk to clear her mind.

Jordan spent time traveling and studying abroad in Asia and India during her school years, and now that she’s prepping for her CSW exam, she wants to visit wine regions all over the world once her kids are old enough to tag along. Until then, she says, “it’s one minute at a time.” “We’re grateful to be part of a lasting legacy and will do all we can to pass it down,” Jordan adds.

As fifth-generation family winegrowers at Wente Vineyards, sisters Jordan and Niki Wente are taking the reins for the winery’s future in marketing and viticulture, respectively.

“WE’RE
GRATEFUL TO
BE PART OF
A LASTING
LEGACY AND
WILL DO
ALL WE CAN
TO PASS IT
DOWN.”



Niki Wenté

Unlike her older sister, Niki Wenté knew from an early age that she wanted to work in wine. In addition to being raised in a home built by their grandfather that was tailored to be for a viticulturist, Niki grew up watching her dad work in the vineyards. At 14, she asked if she could shadow the Wenté Vineyards viticulturist for a summer and continued interning there every year. Not only did she enjoy the work, she had the ultimate teenage privilege of riding ATVs through the farm.

After graduating from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo—her one chance to live by the beach—Niki came home to work a harvest at her family winery. However, the Wenté family has a strict rule that any family member who wants to join the business must first complete five years of relevant work experience elsewhere before accepting a full-time role at the company. Niki then spent a year working in tech in San Francisco before returning to wine country for good, but instead of going back to Livermore, she landed at Huneus Vintners in Napa. There, Grower Relations Manager Nicole Hayden took her under her wing, teaching Niki about the business side of the wine industry as she learned how to create the network necessary to build a brand.

Niki rejoined Wenté Vineyards as the Viticulture Supervisor shortly thereafter and helped oversee last year's harvest. "The vines are looking the best I've seen in years, and I am very proud to be a part of it, especially my first year back with the family," she says. "I'm also proud of the wines that we crafted—they're tasting amazing."

One of Niki's passions outside of the office is as fulfilling as it is unconventional: rescuing animals. Two hawks Niki saved as they were pushed out of their nest now help patrol the vineyards to scare away critters; she also rescued both of her dogs—Dizzy, whom she found at a gas station in a box, and Riley, whom she adopted from Big Dawgs Rescue in Livermore.

Niki says she and her fiancé firmly believe in living life through experiences, which is why they buy each other trips rather than material possessions as gifts. "There is a whole big world to see," she says. "We just got back from London and Belgium, but one of my favorite places I have visited were the old wineries in the Tuscan wine region." It just goes to show that no matter where the Wentés travel, wine is always on their mind. ■■

SPARKLING

Breaking Out the Bubbly

End a sunny brunch on a sweet note with Clos du Bois Lightly Bubbled Rosé and berry tarts.



CLOS DU BOIS MAKES WAVES WITH A LITTLE SPARKLE

by Ruth Tobias



Clos du Bois Senior Winemaker Sue D'Agostini says the company's new releases aim to give wine drinkers "everything they love about a still wine with a little pop."

After nearly 45 years as one of the top-selling wine brands in the U.S., Clos du Bois has as much cause to celebrate now as ever. What better way to do so than by toasting to its success with a bottle of bubbly—or two?

Just in time for patio, porch, and picnic season, the winery aims to make a splash with its first-ever foray into fizz. The new releases, Lightly Bubbled Chardonnay and Rosé, are "truly in a league of their own right now," says Senior Winemaker Sue D'Agostini, insofar as they're not officially classified as sparkling wine. Rather, she explains, "the motivation from both a creative and business perspective was to craft a fun, modern version" of the category, infusing it with a gentle effervescence that's more in line with the trendy *pétillant* style: "giving wine drinkers everything they love about a still wine with a little pop."

Stainless-steel fermented from California grapes to 39 grams of residual sugar per liter, both wines technically fall within demi-sec territory, but they have the "bright acid" to ensure they're in keeping with the Clos du Bois philosophy of "balanced, approachable wines that are varietally correct," says D'Agostini. In the case of the Chardonnay, expressions of ripe pear and apple mingle with more tropical hints of pineapple and papaya, while the Lightly Bubbled Rosé—a Zinfandel-based blend—bursts with ripe watermelon and strawberry amid sparks of tart cranberry.

The extra touch of sweetness in what D'Agostini calls those "succulent, fruit-forward flavors" lends itself to just the sort of pairings a host might have in mind when arranging a leisurely al fresco brunch or "a summer soirée with friends." She recommends both wines as complements to breezy hors d'oeuvres like watermelon salad with feta, grilled shrimp, and blinis topped with goat cheese or tomato jam and crème fraîche.

The list of possibilities extends to highly flavorful fare as well, from Vietnamese spring rolls with sweet-chili sauce to Greek chicken salad and potato-pea samosas. And, of course, desserts work too: "The citrusy flavors in the Chardonnay go well with lemon cheesecake," D'Agostini notes, whereas "the Rosé pairs nicely with a strawberry dessert such as strawberry shortcake."

Ultimately, she says, "the idea here is to deliver wines that are easy to enjoy for a host of occasions"—spontaneous as well as planned—while expanding the Clos du Bois portfolio to include "a new category that consumers love." Apparently a little fizz can generate a lot of buzz. ■■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLOS DU BOIS

Bartenders at a recent Maker's Mark event in San Francisco tested their skills with wax as they deconstructed the brand's characteristic scents into a set of soy candles.



i am woman, HEAR ME POUR

MAKER'S MARK HONORS MARGIE SAMUELS AND FELLOW WOMEN OF THE WHISKY INDUSTRY

by Mara Marski / photos by John Curley



Tara Soltow, Beam Suntory's Field Marketing Manager for Northern California and Hawaii, demonstrates the Maker's Mark dipping process on a matchstick bottle.

Held annually on March 8, International Women's Day aims to recognize the achievements of women around the world while furthering conversations around global gender equality. On the eve of this year's celebration, Maker's Mark invited a group of San Francisco-area bartenders to help honor the many women-led contributions behind the iconic bourbon brand while also recognizing the women making their mark on the industry today.

Nearly 30 members of the trade joined Beam Suntory West Coast American Whiskey Ambassador Megan Breier to explore some of the lesser-known history of Maker's Mark, which Breier said "is powered by women." She went on to name-drop a few of those notable figures, including Margie Samuels, who co-founded Maker's Mark with her husband Bill

WOMEN IN WHISKY

Samuels, Sr. in the 1950s; Victoria MacRae-Samuels, who serves as Vice President of Operations at Maker's Mark; and Jane Bowie, who created a custom barrel-making program for the brand known as Maker's Mark Private Select.

The Mother of Maker's Mark

Despite some progress in recent years, the presence of strong female leaders in the male-dominated whisky industry has traditionally been rare—but not so for Maker's Mark. Back in the 1950s, after Bill Samuels, Sr. had returned from military service, his wife, Margie, demanded he find a hobby. After Bill finalized his mash bill by baking bread to experiment with grain percentage, Margie asked him what the bottle for the finished product would look like. He answered that he'd envisioned a standard bottle with square shoulders and the Samuels' family name written simply on the label, but as Breier tells the story, Margie's response was a resolute “no.”

Considering that Maker's Mark is known today for its iconic packaging—the instantly recognizable label style, the crest-like emblem, and the red wax that drip-dries in tendrils—one can surmise that Margie's insistence on originality makes her the mastermind behind it all. Her love of calligraphy also prompted her to create the award-winning label font.

One of the most lasting elements of Margie's legacy, however, can be found in the brand's name itself. A collector of English pewter, she loved the personalized “touch marks” often left as an artist's signature by pewterers and felt their family bourbon should carry the same level of artistry. This idea



Banter & Bliss Candle Co. Founder Sheena Tahilramani and Beam Suntory West Coast American Whiskey Ambassador Megan Breier honor Margie Samuels' place in Maker's Mark history with a day of education, celebration, and wax-working.



Alicia Walton crafts her cocktail tribute to Margie Samuels.



Pictured from left to right, bar industry professionals Cindy Liu, Danielle Taylor, Jillian Joy, Tim Froehlig, Karlo Pentic, Natalie Galatzer, and Justyn Meyers learn about the history of Maker's Mark before tasting through the brand's expressions.

led Margie to both the name “Maker's Mark” and its accompanying emblem.

As Breier explained to the bartenders, the “S,” “TV,” and star emblazoned on each bottle stand for “Samuels,” the Roman numeral four—the number of generations of family distillers—and the Samuels' former home of Starhill Farms, respectively. The family later discovered that their distilling heritage actually went back six generations from that time, but as Breier says with a laugh, “We can't let the truth get in the way of a good logo!”



SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED

Created by Alicia Walton

- ▮ 2 oz. Maker's Mark
- ▮ ¾ oz. Vermut Lustau vermouth
- ▮ ½ oz. Mathilde Peche peach cordial
- ▮ 1 bar spoon Leopold Bros. Aperitivo

Stir all ingredients with ice.
Serve up in a coupe with a
lemon twist.

In 2014, Margie was inducted into the Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame, becoming the fifth woman ever to be granted the honor. Each Maker's Mark label is still applied by hand before the bottles are wax-dipped individually to make sure Margie's vision for the bottle design is preserved.

The Wax Works

The first bottles of Maker's were hand-dipped in their iconic red wax by Margie in her kitchen fryer, imparting an eye-catching packaging feature that showcased the family's groundbreaking product. To explore this facet of the brand's aesthetic, Breier was joined at the San Francisco event by candlemaker and Banter & Bliss Candle Co. Founder Sheena Tahilramani, who helped the bartenders understand some of the nuances of working with wax.

With Tahilramani's guidance, the guests created their own set of four candles to deconstruct the aromas characteristic of Maker's: vanilla, caramel, and oak (the fourth candle combined the three into a bourbon scent). While the bartenders mixed their fragrances, poured their wax, and set their wicks, they sipped a Maker's Mark cocktail created by spirits superstar and local bar owner Alicia Walton. The Signed, Sealed, and Delivered served as Walton's tribute to Margie Samuels—the woman who designed the stamp, conceptualized the wax, and endowed the brand with an unrivaled legacy that persists today.

dressed to express

After learning the history behind the dressing of the bottle, the bartenders tasted their way through classic Maker's Mark, Maker's 46, and the brand's cask-strength expression. Breier offers her take on each of the three expressions below.

MAKER'S MARK: "Maker's is sometimes thought of as a 'classic bourbon,' but its mashbill actually makes it pretty unique. The wheat imparts extra sweetness and there's no rye in the bottle to add spice, so it's very smooth. For people who like red wine, Cognac, and sweet cocktails, this is a great whisky."

MAKER'S 46: "The 46 starts life just like traditional Maker's, but after five to seven years of aging, ten virgin French oak staves are inserted into the 53-gallon American oak barrels and the whisky rests for an additional nine weeks. This helps highlight bolder flavors of Original Maker's with the extra nine weeks of extraction from the additional aging. I love the Maker's 46 after dinner with just a cube of ice because all the different vanillas and caramels smell like crème brûlée.

As Maker's legend has it, Bill Samuels, Jr. created Maker's 46 after he had a nightmare that he walked upon his own gravesite and saw that his tombstone read, 'Bill Samuel's Jr.: He didn't [expletive] it up.' He said he interpreted this to mean that he had only ever carried on his dad's legacy and that it was time to rock the boat.

A few months ago, I had dinner with Samuels, Jr. and asked about the story after hearing it and telling it so many times. He confessed that he knew if he showed up at the distillery and asked to create a new product he would get pushback, but thought if he could play on a hint of fragility—or the risk that he was in some way dying—his idea might be heard. So, that's how 46 came about from an absolute lie."

MAKER'S MARK CASK STRENGTH: "Another Maker's innovation isn't really an innovation—we just didn't add any water. For this expression, we take Maker's directly from the barrel after it's been patiently aged to taste: It's uncut and unfiltered. Since it can be anywhere from 108–114 proof, it does have a little heat. And since none of the Maker's expressions are chill-filtered, the oil is left in and the cask strength is really viscous. It gives a nice long Kentucky hug." ■■

Maker's Mark® Bourbon Whisky, 45% Alc./Vol.
©2018 Maker's Mark Distillery, Inc., Loretto, KY

drink  smart®

A Worthy Pit Stop

WINE ICON DAVE PHINNEY SETS UP SHOP IN VALLEJO AT HIS NEW SAVAGE & COOKE DISTILLERY

by John Curley

PHOTO: MARGARET PATTILLO



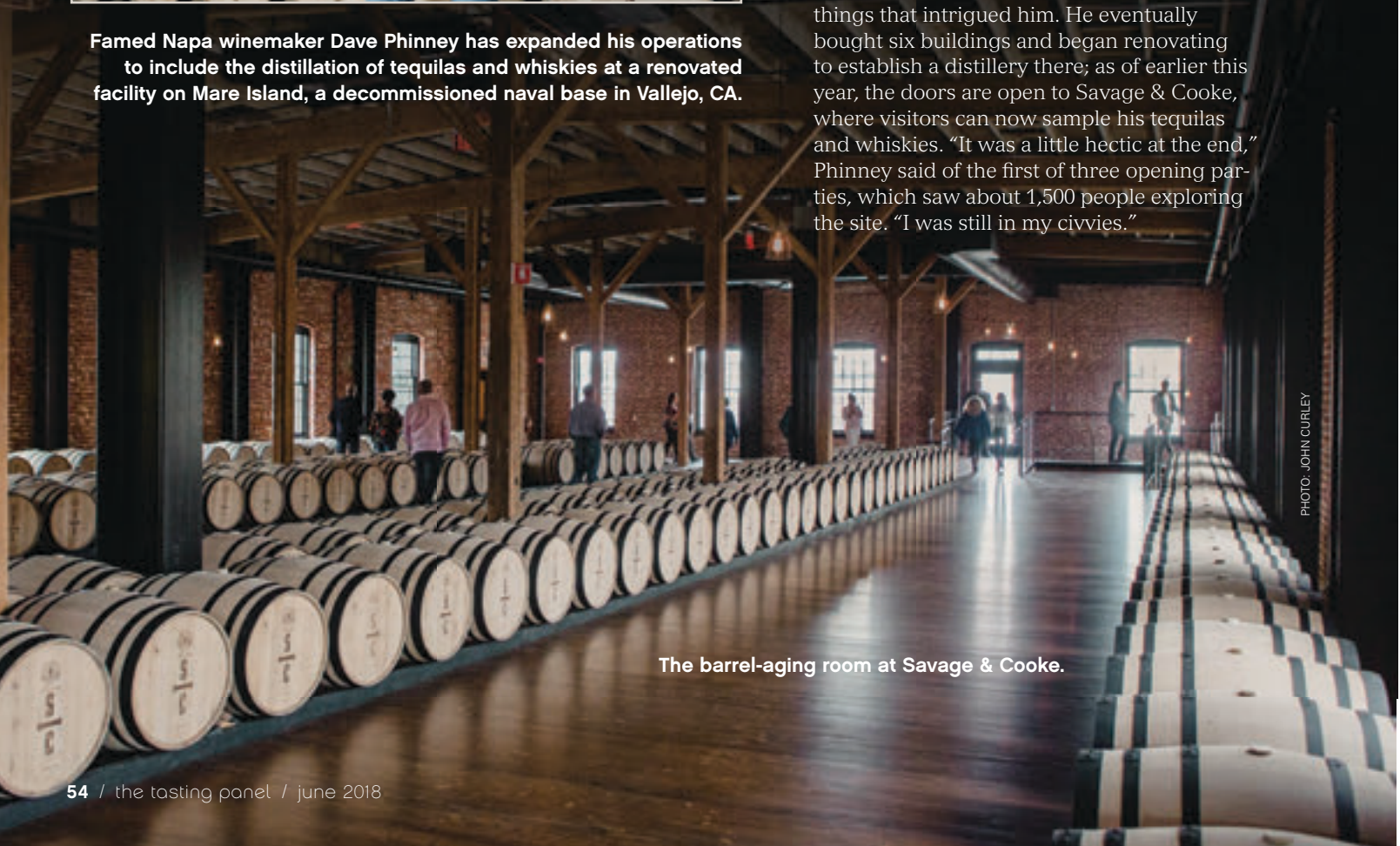
Famed Napa winemaker Dave Phinney has expanded his operations to include the distillation of tequilas and whiskies at a renovated facility on Mare Island, a decommissioned naval base in Vallejo, CA.

When Dave Phinney took a drive around a decommissioned and mostly-deserted naval base in the Bay Area a decade ago, he saw what few others could see: the future.

After he practically conquered the wine-making business with his Prisoner, Orin Swift, and Locations line of wines, a restless Phinney was anxious to get moving again. He'd been looking for locations to launch a distillery in Napa, but the process was wearying and time-consuming. A friend recommended that the next time he was making the trek from Napa to San Francisco, he should stop and take a look at Mare Island in Vallejo.

So, he took a ride through the spacious—if eerily empty—naval base and he saw some things that intrigued him. He eventually bought six buildings and began renovating to establish a distillery there; as of earlier this year, the doors are open to Savage & Cooke, where visitors can now sample his tequilas and whiskies. “It was a little hectic at the end,” Phinney said of the first of three opening parties, which saw about 1,500 people exploring the site. “I was still in my civvies.”

PHOTO: JOHN CURLEY



The barrel-aging room at Savage & Cooke.



Savage & Cooke distills its spirits through a copper pot still courtesy of Vendome.

PHOTO: JOHN CURLEY

Upon visiting, you can detect a change in the air: As the area continues its transformation, the gigantic buildings are slowly being taken over by artisans and entrepreneurs.

While homes are also being constructed in the area, the distillery currently doesn't experience much daily foot traffic due to a lack of neighboring businesses. Upon visiting, however, you can detect a change in the air: As the area continues its transformation, the gigantic buildings are slowly being taken over by artisans and entrepreneurs.

Savage & Cooke is initially offering two tequilas via its Ayate brand. A reposado and an añejo both age in American oak and Chardonnay barrels, with the añejo spending more time in the Chardonnay casks.

The distillery offers two whiskeys, as well: Second Glance American Whiskey rests at least five years in bourbon barrels before finishing in wine barrels from Phinney's Napa Valley Cabernet projects. Burning Chair Bourbon, meanwhile, ages at least four years in charred American oak barrels that also come from his Cabernet line.

Phinney happened to choose a prime spot on the former base: He's located right next to the ferry terminal that deposits passengers trekking from San Francisco and other Bay Area locales. "We hope to be part of the renaissance that's happening here," he said.

A winery is planned for another of the buildings Phinney bought at the site and will greet passengers disembarking from the ferry. Spirits and wine enthusiasts, take note—commuting to or from San Francisco through Vallejo may never be the same. ■■



PHOTO: MARGARET PATTILLO



PHOTO: MARGARET PATTILLO

Cooper & Thief Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc spends three months in Casa Noble Tequila Añejo casks.

Cooper & Thief Strikes White Gold

THE ALCHEMY OF AGING NAPA VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC IN CASA NOBLE TEQUILA BARRELS

by Ruth Tobias

PHOTOS COURTESY OF COOPER & THIEF

In the December 2017 issue of *The Tasting Panel*, we spotlighted a pioneering example of the emerging trend toward aging wine in spirits casks: Cooper & Thief's Bourbon Barrel-Aged Red Blend. To put it mildly, the release has proven the kind of commercial success that bears repeating. According to Cooper & Thief Vice President of Marketing John Seethoff, Cellarmaster Jeff Kasavan was so "thrilled by its reception" that he went all in on developing its sequel, through which he was determined "to explore how spirits barrel-aging could enrich the flavors of a white wine."

The inspired result promises to be yet another gamechanger. As with the flagship red, Kasavan approached his new project from the outside in—using wood rather than grape selection as his starting point. Seethoff explains that in "seeing tequila's recent rise in popularity," Kasavan deliberately selected barrels from acclaimed producer Casa Noble, which ages its añejo expression for a full two years (rather than the

one-year minimum). The winemaker felt that the "subtle heat and toasty vanilla flavors" the used casks would impart over a three-month aging period would highly complement the "refreshing acidity and citrus notes" of one of his personal favorite varieties: Sauvignon Blanc.

The grape now constitutes 78% of the final blend, supplemented by 12% French Colombard for a touch of "stony minerality" and a 10% mix of predominately Sémillon. Seethoff says the latter "adds to the structure and weight on the palate" with other white grapes that shall remain nameless, he teases. "Let's just say they're a mischievous blend that helps push the style in a minerally, lime-y Margarita direction," he adds.

The comparison to a potent cocktail makes sense considering the new release weighs in at a whopping 16.5% ABV. Seethoff acknowledges the

"key point of differentiation": "It's part of our overall brand proposition and a key attribute for this style of wine," he says. The effect is heady indeed, but the wine's cool green zing balances its spicy warmth with an ease that lends itself to experimentation at the table. "Kasavan specifically suggests pairing it with grilled lime-cilantro shrimp, poached swordfish, and fish tacos" as well as quinoa salad and pastas like fettuccine alfredo, Seethoff says. Other fun possibilities include milder Mexican dishes

like enchiladas suizas or *chiles en nogada* (stuffed poblanos in creamy walnut sauce); corn pie laced with cheddar; or *carciofi alla giudia* (Roman-style fried artichokes).

With triumph number two in the bag, what's next for the Cooper & Thief team? For now, they're keeping mum . . . but experience suggests the best bet is to expect the unexpected. ■■



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



WINES



**Saget La Perrière Guy Sadet
2015 Muscadet Muscadet-
Sèvre-Et-Maine Les**

**Clissages D'Or, Loire Valley,
France (\$16)** This 100% Melon
de Bourgogne is sur lie after
fermentation, adding the texture
one would expect. White petals
greet the nose with bright lemon
and a hint of saltiness. Crisp Asian
pear and fennel root mark the palate with a
generous mouthfeel—fresh and crisp. **90**



ESPRIT DU VIN



**Panther Creek 2016 Pinot
Gris, Willamette Valley,
Oregon (\$20)**

With a touch
of Muscat (3%) and a kiss of
Chardonnay (1%), this floral and
lithe beauty is further proof of
how well this grape performs in
the Willamette Valley. Scents of
marzipan, verbena, and honeysuckle
are refined as crisp acidity engages
flavors of mango, apricot, pear, and
vanilla. The creamy mouthfeel stays
long on the finish. **93**



BACCHUS WINEWORKS



**Youngberg Hill 2015
Natasha Pinot Noir,
McMinnville AVA, Willamette
Valley, Oregon (\$50)**






This
Pinot Noir from one block
on Youngberg Hill's 50-acre,
sustainably farmed estate with 20
acres planted to vines was named
after their daughter, Natasha. This
deep-hued, inky red exhibits black
cherry on the nose and palate.
The velvety texture offers a wide
frame for flavors of plum and
heather. Lengthy on the finish, this is a serious
Pinot Noir with finely grained tannins and a
unique character from this Oregon AVA. **93**



**Castoro Cellars 2015 Whale
Rock Vineyard Reserve Syrah,
Paso Robles (\$30)**

The influence
of whale fossils in this vineyard,
situated in the windy and cool
Templeton Gap District, creates
a surging minerality that weaves
through this expressive red. While
black pepper and plums permeate
the nose and palate, unique tones
of persimmon and cherry-over-
cocoa also affect the flavor profile.
This is a sturdy, delicious Syrah from
a winery that understands the true nature of the
grape and the region. **93**




Worthy of a smooch.

French-style double bizou.

Wildly infatuated.

Seriously smitten.

Head over heels in love.

Publisher's PICKS



Ravenswood 2015 Big River Zinfandel, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$39) From a 13-acre, 100-year-old vineyard straddling the Russian River and the Alexander Valley appellations, this elegant Zin is aged 19 months in French oak barrels. With a ripe cherry nose and a hint of bark, this thrilling red has a juicy nature that shines through. White pepper dots red-fruit tones and the palate weight gives it a true presence. **93**



CONSTELLATION BRANDS



Ravenswood 2015 Old Hill Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley (\$60) Century-old grapevines have been restored to yield grapes of complexity and generosity. Aromas of bramble, heather, and cocoa create allure as pepper/capsicum spices the palate and intertwines with fine tannins. It's a standout. **94**



Sonoma-Loeb 2016 Cold Creek Vineyard Viognier, Carneros (\$32) From two great winemaking families, the Loeb and the Chappellet, this label was founded in the early 1990s. Chappellet Winemaker Phillip Corallo-Titus crafts this wine from the Sonoma side of Carneros, where soils are rocky and gravelly. Aging for eight months in neutral French oak brings out a richness that Viognier can handle—and at 15.2% ABV, it still maintains balance. The flavors are fruity and savory, with stone fruit and pineapple melding with clove and vanilla. **91**



Nagy Wines 2013 White Hawk Vineyard Syrah, Santa Barbara County (\$20) Juicy and sexy with gritty tannins, peppered dried meat, and plum—and that's just the nose. The palate is round and graceful with blue petals and a splash of soy sauce. **91**



Z. Alexander Brown Uncaged 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$20) This red overdelivers from nose to palate. From its deeply rich dark chocolate aromas to its equally indulgent flavor profile, this is structure without tannic tightness. Blackberry jam pervades and the acid is bright for pairing with lighter fare (chicken, grilled fish) to the beefiest dishes. **93**



Chappellet 2016 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$35) Here's winemaker Phillip Corallo-Titus's Chardonnay, grown in Napa Valley's coolest marine-influenced regions. Following the nose of lemon curd and apricot, the palate offers concentrated flavors of lemon-lime and grapefruit with an edgy, vibrant acidity. It becomes increasingly creamy toward the finish with hints of butter and papaya. **93**



Gehricke 2014 Zinfandel, Ponzo Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$30) Spiced plum and scrub brush plus a sweet berry compote make up the marvelous perfume that comes off the richness of this single-vineyard Zin. The creamy, generous palate has flavors of nutmeg, clove, and late-summer blackberries embedded with a juiciness that keeps it mouthwatering. **94**

3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.



Gehricke 2016 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$32) Enveloped in minerality and perfumed with lemon oil and jasmine, this is a bright and sassy Chardonnay. While oak plays into the texture and taste in the most graceful manner, crisp McIntosh apple, candied pineapple, and lemon zest come into the fore and stay to the long finish. **93**



3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.



Hawk and Horse Vineyards 2014 Petite Sirah, Red Hills, Lake County (\$65) This small-production, exciting, show-off red grows in elevations up to 2,200 feet above sea level on rocky red volcanic soil. The Petite Sirah grapes are grown on a single acre of the 18-acre mountain vineyard site. Aromas of tobacco, violets, and espresso beans give it an immediate gravitas. The palate is tight with chalky tannins and soon opens with an expressive, chewy nature. Blue flowers are prominent but blueberry inches its way into the lengthy finish. **93**



Robert John Vineyards RJV 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90) Bold, peppered nose with a body that's generous and not tightly wound. Dark chocolate raspberry/blueberry notes coexist with a bright acidity. Ripe and structured! **92**



Kir-Yianni Diaporos 2015 Single Vineyard Xinomavro, Naooussa, Greece (\$57) Cassis and plum liqueur greet the nose as spice livens the dark fruit with nutmeg and clove. Tart rhubarb and teeth-gripping tannins show off for a searing acidity in this food-friendly, unique red (with an addition of 13% Syrah) from the slopes of the Vermio Mountains in northwestern Greece. **90**

DIAMOND WINE IMPORTERS



Castello di Amorosa 2017 Rosato, Morning Dew Ranch, Anderson Valley (\$39) This 100% Pinot Noir is grown on the winery's 12-acre, sustainably farmed estate vineyard in Mendocino County. Aged in a concrete fermentation egg, beautiful juicy red fruit and fragrant roses shine through. Great acidity, minerality, and a vibrant palate feel add to the tenor of this wine. **93**



WINERY DIRECT



Anaba 2015 Turbine Red, Sonoma Valley (\$35)

The grapes are sourced from the Landa Vineyard in the eastern foothills of the Mayacamas: a blend of 44% Grenache, 28% Syrah, 24% Mourvèdre, and 4% Petite Sirah. Earthy strawberry and Worcestershire serve as the initial aromas and are followed by an herbal/floral scent. On the palate, it's a mixed bag of flavors, almost as if each variety is chiming in with its own song. Black olive and anise are savory while black cherry and plum are ripe and sweet. This is deep and inky with good tannin structure and fine acidity. **94**



Francis Ford Coppola Winery 2016 Francis Coppola Reserve Pinot Noir, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$45)

This is a fragrant Pinot Noir with notes of spiced cherry and pomegranate. The round tannins and velvety mouthfeel all add up to a juicy red that's blessed with tart raspberry and rhubarb and seasoned with cinnamon and clove. The fruit stays uplifted with its fine acidity. **92**



Lloyd by Robert Lloyd 2015 Reserve Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills (\$50)

This Pinot Noir has so many expressions: earthy, rustic, gritty, and savory. It's a complete package that shows terroir from one of our favorite spots on Earth. Tobacco, shiitake mushroom, soy sauce, and plum help create the palette for the palate. **94**



Tenshen 2016 White, Central Coast (\$20)

This collaboration between Winemaker Joey Tensley and wine entrepreneur Alex Guarachi is a multi-layered blend of white Rhône varieties Roussanne, Marsanne, Grenache Blanc, Viognier—and OK, a hint of Chardonnay. You can imagine the weight just from the heady nose of lemon curd. The flavors include candied apple, Italian herbs chamomile, and lemon oil. The underlying minerality and a perfectly balanced influence of acidity make this both food-worthy and a great solo sipper. **92**



GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS

SPIRITS



Rossville Union Master Crafted Barrel Proof Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$70)

Drawn from 83 barrel reserves, this 112.6 proof is made in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, at one of the country's oldest distilleries. In fact, when it opened in 1847, Lawrenceburg was on its way to becoming known for its rye and has since developed a reputation for cultivating some of the finest Master Distillers in the U.S. The cask-strength experience here is amazingly serene on the nose with hints of honeyed apricot, orange zest, and chamomile. But once you get beyond that first sip, you'll feel some heat backed by caramel-laden apples and orange pekoe tea followed by a bold delivery of smoky cedar. **96**



High West Distillery 2018 Bourye, USA (\$80)

This super-premium spirit, which features a jackalope on its label, blends 11- and 12-year-old straight bourbon with 13- and 14-year-old rye. At 92 proof, the gorgeous, generous nose is more bourbon-oriented with sweet peach and black tea. Black pepper comes into play on the palate with caraway, baking spices, and jellied apricot preceding charred coffee bean, sage, and tobacco. **94**



Rabbit Hole Distilling Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$49)

This offers one of the most sophisticated noses I have come across: Stone fruit and sweet oak/sandalwood are honeyed and developed. The liquid stays steady and firm with each sip. On the palate, caraway enhances the fruit in a way that's reminiscent of a Speyside single malt in its complexity, character, and elegance. Orange rind and dark chocolate keep the bouquet as busy as the texture and flavor profile. **96** ■■



Value Pick of the Month



Dark Horse 2017 Rosé, California (\$10)

This is a light-colored dark horse that takes off at a fine gait. Earthy and raspberry-scented, its nose hits the ground running with a crisp pace. Strawberry and melon go neck and neck with acacia and jasmine. The finish line is complete with a steely, fruity length; it wins not only by a nose, but by a palate, too. This rosé is also available in 375-mL cans at \$6 SRP. **90**



Q&A

Kathy Morgan, MS,
Director of Wine Education for
Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits
of New York,

Interviews
Ryan Totman,
Wine Director at Corkbuzz NYC

Ryan Totman started working in restaurants as a dishwasher at 13 in his native Minnesota. After ascending through the ranks, he now serves as the Wine Director at the flagship Union Square location of Laura Maniec's Corkbuzz wine bar in New York City. Totman passed the Advanced Sommelier exam in 2016 and is now an active candidate for the Master Sommelier diploma. I recently met up with Totman at Corkbuzz to chat about his love of wine, education, and the importance of mentorship.

Ryan Totman is the
Wine Director at
Corkbuzz in New York
City's Union Square.

PHOTO: TIMOTHY MURRAY

Q Kathy Morgan: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. What led you from Minnesota to working directly for a Master Sommelier in one of the hottest wine bars in Manhattan?

Ryan Totman: I moved to New York around 2007 and met Laura Maniec when I was working for the BR Guest Hospitality restaurant group as a server at Ruby Foos [now closed], where she was the Corporate Beverage Director. I loved all of her beverage training classes: She had a way of helping everyone understand, not just talking to hear herself speak. I remember thinking, “Holy cow, I have a lot to learn!” When I approached Laura shortly after she opened Corkbuzz, she suggested I intern here. I spent a lot of time with her and Morgan Harris, who was the Wine Director at the time [Harris is currently opening seafood restaurant Angler in San Francisco]. After a few internships, they offered me a position as a runner. Right after I passed the Court of Master Sommeliers Certified Exam, I was offered a position as a sommelier in another restaurant, but I considered the people and learning opportunities you’re surrounded with here on a daily basis. I have no regrets.

Q So, Laura was clearly an important mentor. Who else shaped your career?

My mentors were definitely Chris Raftery [currently the Wine Director at Gramercy Tavern in New York City’s Flatiron District], who started working here just after I started, and Morgan Harris, too. When I was studying for my Certified Exam, Morgan talked to me on the phone for 45 minutes just offering me advice. Alex LaPratt, MS [the owner of restaurants Atrium Dumbo and Beasts & Bottles], understands service. He’s the first person to push in a chair and take a dirty napkin off the table. People give you respect because you learn a lot about wine, but it doesn’t mean anything if you can’t keep a water glass full.

Q What’s the most important thing you learned from Chris?

Practicality. Chris was highly tuned in and hyper-aware: always about knowing where every open bottle was, making sure everything was accounted for, really paying attention to cost percentages. He ran a tight program, and that’s helped me because it builds so much context for why you choose one wine instead of another. I was so thankful to have that strong benchmark.

Q How would you describe the sommelier community in New York?

Everybody has always been super supportive. We want to lend the time to help each other out, although we are really busy. We’re surrounded by so much; there are people pushing themselves really hard and it’s all being shared. I feel very thankful to be a part of this community in New York.



Master Sommelier Kathy Morgan.

Q What are you surrounded by? Give me an example.

It’s amazing to see the industry people who walk through this door and the people you get to meet at events. Today we had the Guild of Sommeliers Rhône Valley Masterclass, and less than a week ago we were drinking 1975 Robert Mondavi Reserve Cabernet with an MW. In between those things there are a few things I’ve had to say “no” to—I won’t be able to function if I say “yes” to everything. That’s not a complaint, though!

Q Are you doing any mentoring of your own?

Yes! Corkbuzz has a “blind-tasting happy hour” every weekday from 4 to 7: a flight of white or red for \$15. Laura wants us to always be leading with education. It’s interactive and engaging. We get a lot of sommelier students from the International Culinary Center and, if I have time, I can help them work through the wines. I enjoy sharing things I’ve learned, and maybe it’s something they can put in their pocket to help them later.

Q Corkbuzz also has wine classes. Do you enjoy teaching?

The classes are my favorite thing about working here. It’s fun to get people together and see them enjoy wine. The in-depth classes force you to learn a lot—if you’re not able to explain something, it just brings your own lack of understanding to the surface. I get excited about the Wine 101 classes a lot, too, just because I think the tools you get help people talk about wine while letting them know you don’t have to get wrapped up in precious descriptions. ■■

“I feel very thankful to be part of this community in New York.”

Crafting a *Smash Hit*

MUSIC AND WINE
COME TOGETHER FOR
Z. ALEXANDER BROWN

by Jesse Hom-Dawson

Music lyrics have long referenced whiskey and bourbon, but for those looking for something a little more refined, Delicato Family Vineyards and multiplatinum Grammy Award-winning artist Zac Brown have teamed up to release Z. Alexander Brown Wines.

According to Nielsen data, the brand became the number-one new wine brand of the year after its debut in 2016, thanks to its Uncaged line—named after Zac Brown Band's third studio album—featuring a Proprietary Red Blend, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Pinot Noir. This year has ushered in two new additions to the Z. Alexander Brown portfolio: the 2017 Uncaged Sauvignon Blanc from the North Coast and a 2016 Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay.

Z. Alexander Brown's
Uncaged releases:
Pinot Noir, Chardonnay,
Cabernet Sauvignon,
Sauvignon Blanc, and the
Proprietary Red Blend.





Musician and Z. Alexander Brown Proprietor Zac Brown with Winemaker John Killebrew.

With Napa Valley winemaker John Killebrew behind the wheel, the brand has proven it's more than just another celebrity-fronted label. Brown, who is intimately involved with every vintage, explains, "I've always been fascinated with wine because of its inherent connection to the land. For me, I'm always on a journey to discover new wines and how new appellations can set them apart—there are different characters that come out of the wine for different reasons. Like with music, you'll never master all of it, but the journey and the people you meet along the way . . . that's the good stuff in life."

The new releases continue Z. Alexander Brown's tradition of easy-to-drink wine at an affordable price point with its Uncaged 2016 Chardonnay from the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. During the production process, richer lots were pressed in French and American oak barrels with leaner lots fermented in stainless steel before malolactic fermentation. "All of the Uncaged wines are complex, juicy, and dynamic," notes Killebrew. "We wanted to craft a food-friendly, versatile Chardonnay in a bold style with excellent acidity and balance. This wine is true to the variety, with a bright acidity attributed to the cool climate of

Santa Lucia Highlands."

The Uncaged 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, meanwhile, features grapes "sourced from Napa Valley, warmer Lake County vineyards in the North Coast, and cool southern Suisun Valley vineyards just south of Napa County," according to Killebrew. "This Sauvignon Blanc expresses flavors indicative of the region in which the grapes were grown: Juicy, tropical passionfruit, mango, and guava flavors are balanced by lemongrass notes and rounded out with refreshing and zesty lime and lemon citrus flavors," he adds. Warm-weather dishes like fish tacos or lemon risotto meld particularly well with the bright acidity of the wine, making it an ideal option for the summer months.

With the brand's steadily growing popularity and a successful wine company like Delicato supporting its winemaking efforts, the release of these two new vintages will surely prove it's not just Zac Brown's music that's deemed a smash hit. ■■

The brand's newest releases are the 2017 Uncaged Sauvignon Blanc and a 2016 Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay.

Z. Alexander Brown 2016 Uncaged Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$20) Aged in a combination of oak and stainless steel, the expressive aromas of pineapple upside-down cake, caramel, and baked apple lend an imaginative air of depth and agility. With medium weight and a seamless texture, the wine features an acidity that's able to pop through the sumptuous flavors of tangerine, vanilla candles, and stone fruit, which come together in total balance. **92** —*Meridith May*

Z. Alexander Brown 2017 Uncaged Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$20) Lemon verbena combines a citrus floral perfume for this lighthearted white. On the palate, tart, mineral-driven stone and lime notes ascend with a vibrant acidity. Building character up the lean and edgy staircase of flavors are underlying flavors of pineapple and mango. This is a food-worthy partner with a touch of salinity of the finish, reminiscent of a Sancerre. Oysters, anyone? **93** —*M.M.*



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



94 **St. Supéry**
2014
Dollarhide
Vineyard
Cabernet
Sauvignon, Napa
Valley (\$100) Soft plum and berry nose; silky and bright with tangy plum and blackberry fruit; smooth, juicy, and deep; elegant, structured, and long with considerable aging potential.

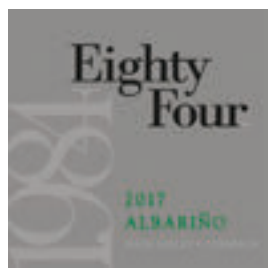


92 **The Prisoner**
Wine Company
2015 Cuttings
Cabernet
Sauvignon,
California, USA
(\$55) Lush nose; fresh, rich, and dense; dark, intense, and creamy with style and complexity you'd expect from wines at four times the price.

CONSTELLATION
BRANDS

90 **Scotto Cellars 2015 Masthead Sangiovese, Mohr-Fry Ranch, Lodi (\$30)** Soft chocolate nose; smooth and succulent with a nice earthy component; fresh, balanced, and crisp with a lasting finish.

94 **Flora Springs 2015 Hillside Reserve Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford (\$150)** Deep ruby color; silky, rich, and crisp with great structure; complex and elegant. Keep it in the cellar for a while.



91 **Eighty Four 2017 Albariño, Carneros (\$28)** A fresh and smooth effort from friends Elias Fernandez and Doug Shafer, who have been collaborating since 1984. Bright and firm; aromatic and racy with a long, balanced finish.

91 **Steele Wines 2014 Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara (\$30)** Rich cherry nose; lush and elegant; graceful, juicy, and balanced; long and generous from this Santa Maria Valley vineyard overlooking the Sisquoc River.

IMPORTED

90 **Robert Weil 2015 Brut Riesling, Rheingau, Germany (\$46)** Dry and crisp with good texture and balance; toasty, fresh, and refined; tangy, long, and charming with notes of apricot.

LOOSEN BROS. USA



96 **Yangarra 2014 High Sands Grenache, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$140)** Plush and juicy with a floral nose; pure and rich; balanced and mellow with depth and concentrated fruit; a spectacular rendition of an underappreciated variety.

JACKSON FAMILY WINES

95 **Château La Nerthe 2015 Clos de Beauvenir, AOP Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$140)** Golden color with a spicy nose; creamy with rich, nutty flavors; succulent and dense with tangy, intense, ageworthy fruit; complex and loaded with finesse and style. 70% Roussanne, 20% Grenache Blanc, and 10% Clairette.

KOBRAND CORP.

90 **Karmei Yosef Winery 2012 Bravdo Landmark 2B, Samson, Israel (\$50)** Smooth and rich with plum and spice; a toasty, balanced, medium-weight blend of Cabernet and Merlot; fresh with a lengthy finish. Kosher.

RIVER WINES

90 **Psâgot 2013 M Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Jerusalem (\$70)** A nose reminiscent of earth and petrol; rich, dense, polished, and satisfying with flavorful notes of plum; balanced and lush. Kosher.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

93 **Bodega Chacra 2017 Lunita Pinot Noir, Patagonia (\$45)** Smooth and zesty with notes of ripe cherry; silky and bright with length and finesse; made in Argentina by the scion of the Sassacaia family.

KOBRAND CORP.



94 **Pamplin Family Winery 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley (\$50)** Yet another luscious and lovely effort from this tiny family-run winery; deep and juicy without losing focus; made from fruit grown in some of the best vineyards in the state.

92 **Domaine J.A. Ferret 2016 Pouilly-Fuissé, France (\$51)** Crisp yet luscious with racy acidity and a rich mineral component; fresh, balanced, long, and lively in classic Chardonnay style.

KOBRAND CORP.

92 **Agricola Punica 2016 Montessu, Isola dei Nuraghi IGT, Italy (\$35)** This property, owned by Sassicaia, is located in Sardinia. This blend is mostly Carignan with bits of Syrah and Cabernet; lush and juicy with deep berry fruit, it has a velvety texture and a long, rich style.

KOBRAND CORP.

BLUE REVIEWS

91 **Fasoli Gino 2014 Valpo,**
Valpolicella Ripasso
Superiore DOC, Italy (\$36) Full-bodied, powerful, and ripe; smooth texture with balance and a long, clean finish; a typical regional blend of Corvina, Corvinone, and Rondinella.

M.M. IMPORTS

89 **Tangent 2016 Paragon**
Vineyard Pinot Gris, Edna
Valley (\$17) Smooth, crisp, and mellow from a Sustainability in Practice (SIP) Certified estate vineyard; lush and juicy with robust style and hints of minerals. ☺

89 **Masi 2017 Rosa dei Masi**
Rosé, Rosato delle Venezie
IGT (\$15) Pale pink color with racy acidity and crisp style; dry, fresh, and lively; balanced with a lengthy finish. 100% Refosco. ☺

KOBRAND CORP.

VALUE

90 **Two Angels 2017**
Sauvignon Blanc, High
Valley (\$17) Smooth, fresh, and juicy with bright acidity and lively varietal style; silky and crisp. Interestingly, the artwork appearing on the label was created by Belgian painter Jacob de Backer in the late 1500s. ☺

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

89 **Laberinto 2016 Malbec,**
Mendoza, Argentina (\$13) Polished, bright, and juicy; fresh and tangy with lush and dense dark fruits; rich, long, and balanced.

WINE TREES USA

88 **Pedroncelli Winery 2017**
Signature Selection Dry
Rosé of Zinfandel, Dry Creek
Valley (\$17) Deep raspberry pink; dense, spicy, and tangy; lush, deep, and long; a recurring classic from this historic Sonoma winery. ☺

89 **Château Chantal Naughty**
Red, Michigan (\$14) From the land of Tigers and Lions; bright, charming, and flavorful with clean, tangy berry fruit; a dry, crisp, and lively blend of five varieties.

90 **Albamar 2017 Sauvignon**
Blanc, Casablanca Valley,
Chile (\$12) Reminiscent of a green apple crisp with classic structure and balance; racy, graceful, and luscious; long and fresh; an amazing value. ☺

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS



90 **Don Sebastiani**
and Sons 2015 Big
Smooth Cabernet
Sauvignon, Lodi
(\$22) Refined, lush, and spicy with bright plum and berry flavors; opulent, clean, and balanced. 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot, 4% Petite Sirah, and 3% Malbec.



91 **Morgan 2016 G17**
Syrah, Santa Lucia
Highlands (\$24) Earthy, spicy, and lively with blackberry and silky texture; fresh and generous; 88% Syrah, 8% Grenache, and 4% Tempranillo.



91 **Alcanse 2015**
Gran Reserva
Chardonnay, Maule
Valley, Chile (\$20) Juicy, refreshing, and tangy with minerality and zesty acidity; bright and modern; long and balanced; a small-production wine from Kendall-Jackson's Chilean property.

MAJESTIC IMPORTS



90 **Castoro**
Cellars 2016
Estate Late Harvest
Muscat Canelli,
Paso Robles (\$22) Inspired by Co-Founder Niels Udsen's tenure at Estrella River Winery in the 1980s; creamy and sweet with rich texture and spicy Muscat fruit; ripe and dense.

90 **Radius 2016 Reserve**
Cabernet Sauvignon,
Columbia Valley (\$17) Bright herbal nose; smooth and fresh with plum and mocha flavors; bright, elegant, and fresh with balance and depth; a remarkable value.

PRECEPT WINE

SPIRITS



93 Sombra Mezcal, Mexico (\$39) Silky yet smoky with roasted piñon, lots of spice, and some rich sweetness; earthy and showing wildflower and earthy, peppery notes. This is the real thing.

DAVOS BRANDS

96 Kavalan Soloist Manzanilla Sherry Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky, Taiwan (\$599) Deep caramel color; rich and intense with deep flavors of toasted oak, spice, and dried fruits; dry, smooth, and concentrated; another stunner from this powerhouse distiller.

HOTALING & CO.

94 Sagatiba Envelhecida Cachaça, Brazil (\$30) Aromatic nose with highly satisfying flavors; polished, spicy, and mellow with sweet oak and soft notes drawn from bourbon barrels; lush, elegant, and balanced with a long finish.

CAMPARI AMERICA

91 Marble Distilling Co. Gingercello, USA (\$39) Smooth with fruity lushness; creamy texture with notes of sweet citrus and lemon; a well-balanced product from Colorado, made as a "tribute to springtime" in the mountains.

91 Cedar Ridge Malted Rye Whiskey, USA (\$42) Light amber color; soft, spicy nose; silky texture and floral notes; light toastiness and mellow flavors; balanced, graceful, and long from the first distillery licensed in Iowa after Prohibition.



91 Elijah Craig Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$25) Pleasant and rich with sweet oak and tangy, lush flavors; clean and bright with a long finish. 94 proof.

HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY

90 Havana Club Añejo Blanco Rum, Puerto Rico (\$20) Vanilla nose; refined and clean with spice and forward alcohol; luscious, aromatic, and balanced; the Puerto Rican version of this Cuban classic. ■■

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WHISKEY



The Walsh Whiskey portfolio includes The Irishman Single Malt, Writers' Tears Copper Pot, and The Irishman Founder's Reserve.

IRISH Royalty



WALSH WHISKEY
BALANCES
TRADITION AND
INNOVATION WITH
ITS TWO BRANDS,
WRITERS' TEARS
AND THE IRISHMAN

Walsh Whiskey Co-Founder Bernard Walsh with a special expression of The Irishman Founder's Reserve, which saw the original blend finished for an additional 12 months in Marsala wine casks from the Florio winery in Sicily.



Bernard Walsh stands amidst dozens of barrels at Walsh Whiskey's Royal Oak estate. The company can produce up to 650,000 cases of Irish whiskey annually.

BY MATT JACKSON

It's

hard to imagine a world without whiskey. Although the spirit was most likely first distilled around 100 A.D., the word "whiskey" did not appear formally in the dictionary until 1775. Samuel Johnson commented under its entry in his tome *A Dictionary of the English Language* that "the Irish sort is particularly distinguished for its pleasant and mild flavor."

Fast-forward 100 years later, when Irish whiskey seized the crown as the world's most popular version of the spirit. The following century would usher in a tumultuous time for the category, but thanks to renewed commitment to the craft and tradition of pot-still distillation, it currently enjoys a renaissance of popularity with connoisseurs and casual drinkers alike.

At the head of innovation within the world of Irish whiskey are Bernard and Rosemary Walsh, the founders of Walsh Whiskey. Launched in 1999, the distiller already has a dedicated following and exceptional reputation throughout the 45 countries its bottlings see distribution. "Being a family-run business, we take a hands-on, personal approach to everything we do," Bernard Walsh says. "We are a small and growing team that has great pride in our journey to be one of Ireland's most important whiskey companies by creating exceptional and innovative whiskeys."

While whiskey as an overall category risks oversaturation as new brands join the burgeoning market, Irish whiskey still enjoys annual double-digit growth that began nearly 30 years ago. "It has taken the guts of 100 years to get back on track, but Irish whiskey was always excellent," says Walsh. "Its smooth and flexible taste profile is being rediscovered as new generations of consumers enjoy Irish whiskey in a wide variety of formats."



**"If you visit
our distillery
at Royal
Oak you are
guaranteed
to experience
nothing less
than the royal
treatment."**

**—Walsh Whiskey
Co-Founder Bernard Walsh**

WHISKEY



Bernard and Rosemary Walsh, pictured at their Royal Oak distillery, launched Walsh Whiskey in 1999.



The distillery team at Walsh Whiskey, from right to left: Barry Cahill, Ger Kavanagh, Johnny Graham, Robert Rice, David McEvoy, Eugene O'Rourke, Kevin Hayden, Brendan Massey, Roger McGrath, Fergal Carroll, and Aidan Knox. Not pictured is Distillery Manager Lisa Ryan.

"The Champagne of Irish Whiskey"

Located just one hour south of Dublin, Walsh Whiskey Distillery calls the 18th-century farmland estate known as Royal Oak its home. Located over a freshwater reservoir with close proximity to barley farms, Royal Oak is currently undergoing careful restoration. "We are located in a world-class setting for making premium whiskey," Walsh says. "Our manually operated distillery produces all three styles of Irish whiskey—pot-still, malt, and

grain. This gives us great flexibility and scale in our production capabilities."

Walsh Whiskey releases a number of bottlings under its two brands, Writers' Tears and The Irishman, with The Irishman Founder's Reserve and Writers' Tears Copper Pot ranking as its most popular offerings. "These are recreations of rare styles of whiskey that were very popular during the 'golden age' of Irish whiskey in the 19th century, when they were known as the Champagne of Irish whiskey," Walsh says.

The Irishman Founder's Reserve

approaches the nose with hints of spicy black pepper and cinnamon before finishing with the lasting essence of oak and butterscotch. Writers' Tears Copper Pot, meanwhile, exudes honey and apple aromas that give way to ginger and toasted oak on the palate, finishing with a seemingly endless burst of almond and milk chocolate.

Despite the company's painstaking adherence to historically accurate techniques, Walsh Whiskey also pushes the envelope in creating new styles, finishes, and approaches to the centuries-old production of Irish whiskey. "We have invested in creating a range of innovative and exclusive whiskeys under both our brands. We were the first to finish Irish whiskey in Marsala wine casks, doing so under The Irishman label. This year we distilled the world's first-ever organic pot-still whiskey, which we have laid down for maturing under the Writers' Tears label," Walsh says proudly.

The fruits of the Walsh family's labor are reflected in their bottlings' streamlined, classic packaging, which stands out amongst competitors on any bar shelf. "Writers' Tears rests in one of the tallest bottles of any spirit in any market and the name enjoys great customer recall," Walsh adds. He also believes that in order to continue distinguishing itself as a relatively small company in a massive market, Walsh Whiskey must show a great dedication to quality that rivals or exceeds that of the biggest brands. "Our continued success and very future depends on nothing less than consistency, high standards, and innovation. Many of our staff have worked in major multinational companies and we have been able to adopt and adapt learnings and systems they have experienced during their careers," Walsh explains.

With the capability to produce 650,000 cases of whiskey per year, the company's next five to ten years should result in an impressive 8 million bottles of annual output, according to Walsh. "We will also invest in promoting our distillery, which is a unique new destination for whiskey lovers and visitors to Ireland," he says. "If you visit our distillery at Royal Oak, you are guaranteed to experience nothing less than the royal treatment." With an offer like that, who can resist the call of the dram? ■■



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The JACK Pack

JACK DANIEL'S U.S.
AMBASSADOR ET TECOSKY
EXPLORES HOW BEVERAGE
PROFESSIONALS DRINK THE
WHISKEY "THEIR WAY"



Jack Daniel's U.S. Ambassador Eric "ET" Tecosky has traveled the country to explore how bartenders and mixologists regard the Tennessee whiskey brand as a true classic in the spirits world. These discoveries are detailed in his *Jack's Black Book* series, with Volume III set for release this month.

Whether it's a Chanel dress or a Chevy truck, a classic is a classic. In the world of time-honored spirits, Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey helms a league of its own after gracing glasses in both long-established cocktails and original creations for more than 150 years. But it's not just this "time served" that's earned Jack Daniel's its icon status—it's also about consistency from bottle to bottle and ubiquity on bar shelves throughout the world.

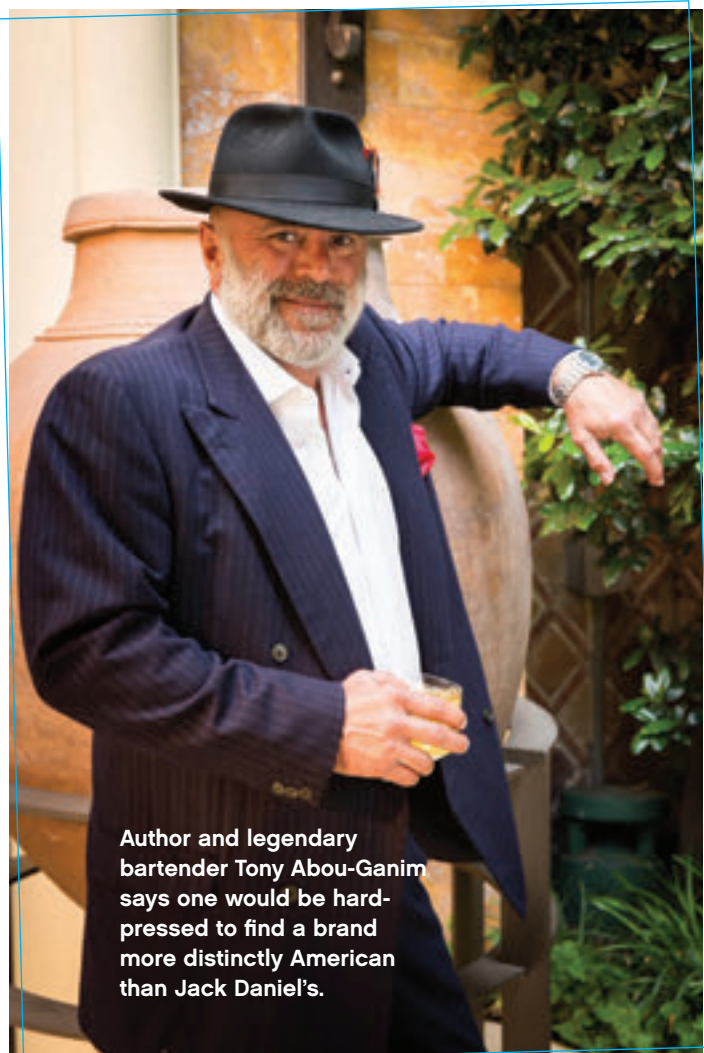
Jack Daniel's U.S. Ambassador Eric "ET" Tecosky has seen it all where his favorite whiskey brand is concerned—and he's captured much of it in his

Jack's Black Book series of cocktail recipe compilations (*Volume III* drops this month). "American whiskey is having its day in the sun and that shines a light on what makes Jack Daniel's so special," Tecosky says. "Its distinctive process creates unique flavors you won't find in other whiskeys, and that uniqueness can be enjoyed both on its own or in a cocktail."

Vanilla, lemon, sours, smashes, Old Fashioneds, and Manhattans: Jack loves it all, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for experimentation. While he prefers his Old No. 7 served simply ("Jack rocks, soda water back, no ice"), Tecosky knows all too well from his travels that bartenders and mixologists love getting creative with the entire

Jack Daniel's portfolio. He also knows that since the brand's legacy spans more than a century and a half and sees distribution in more than 170 countries, there likely isn't a bartender alive today who hasn't held that instantly recognizable black-labeled bottle at some point in their careers.

Tecosky recently hosted a Rat Pack-themed gathering of beverage professionals at the Wynn Resort in Las Vegas that he aptly called the Sinatra Supper Club (the event will pop up next at New Orleans' Tales of the Cocktail in July). He opined that if unofficial Jack Daniel's ambassador Frank Sinatra could have met Jack Daniel himself, they probably would have gotten along famously as they were both "true gentlemen."



Author and legendary bartender Tony Abou-Ganim says one would be hard-pressed to find a brand more distinctly American than Jack Daniel's.

TONY ABOU-GANIM

Aka "The Modern Mixologist"; author of two books; and Partner in Libertine Social at Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, NV

Jack's Black Book Appearance: Featured in Vol. I with his "Tennessee Highball" made with Jack Daniel's Single Barrel

On What Makes Jack Daniel's a Classic: "I don't think there's a more iconic American brand—and I'm not just talking spirits, I mean *brand*—than Jack Daniel's Old No. 7. It was on every back bar since I started bartending in 1980, and it continues to be on every back bar in America today. It is a brand that has heritage, has a story. Tennessee whiskey is a separate animal from bourbon or rye whiskey—it hasn't really changed. It has survived the test of time over and over again and always comes out on top... It's as American as apple pie and baseball."

What He's Drinking: "I love that the expressions have expanded, because I never reached for Jack Daniel's [Old No. 7] for a cocktail application. I like it just on its own, maybe with ice, maybe with water. Then Gentleman Jack came along—a little bit softer with the double-charcoal filtration rounding it out, but also a little more complex so it lends itself to cocktails like the Manhattan."

Jack Daniel's is Like . . . "It's a roar—but in a very loving way. I'm a big Harley Davidson guy. When I ride my bike, yes, it's powerful, it's rumbling, but it's still very seductive. That's what I find Gentleman Jack to be: seductive. The rough edges have been softened, whereas Old No. 7 is a little rowdier."

“American whiskey is having its day in the sun and that shines a light on what makes Jack Daniel’s so special.”



“Jack Daniel was a unique guy. He, too, did things ‘his way’—from his personal style to the square shape of his whiskey bottle,” Tecosky explains. “Jack was known to be very charitable to his family, friends, and neighbors; he threw extraordinary parties, sponsored a local band, and is famous for saying about his beloved whiskey, ‘Every day we make it, we’ll make it the best we can.’”

“Life was similar in the world of Sinatra,” Tecosky continues. “He also took care of many, many people, whether they knew it or not. He donated tons of time and money in his lifetime without taking any credit for it. He always threw a party and made wherever he was *the* place to

be, but never before he put on his fedora—as he would say, ‘Cock your hat: Angles are attitude.’ Sinatra was a skinny, scrappy kid from Hoboken, New Jersey, and built an American dream—much like Jack Daniel down in Lynchburg, Tennessee. If the two of them were hanging out at the old Chasen’s in Beverly Hills, sharing a drink of Jack Daniel’s, I think they’d have a lot in common and truly appreciate each other.”

We stole some facetime with five of Tecosky’s esteemed Sinatra Supper Club guests to get their impressions of Jack Daniel’s as a superlative and a classic—and to find out which expression they reach for first during their own time behind the bar.



OM Spirits Partner Natalie Bovis, who appeared in *Jack’s Black Book Vol. II*, says Jack Daniel’s Gentleman Jack is an “incredible” addition to her drink of choice: the Manhattan.

NATALIE BOVIS

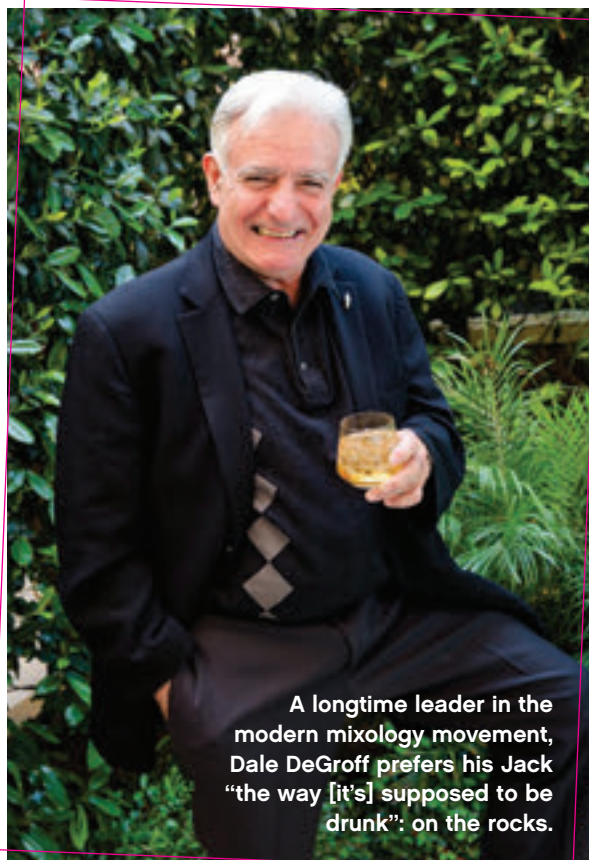
Aka “The Liquid Muse”; Partner in OM Spirits; and creator of the New Mexico Cocktails & Culture festival

Jack’s Black Book Appearance: Featured in Vol. II with her “Chile and Chocolate” cocktail made with Gentleman Jack

On What Makes Jack Daniel’s a Classic: “There are few products and few brands that really stand out as uniquely American. Jack Daniel’s ties into American pop culture by way of Frank Sinatra, as one example, but it also ties into feelings of nostalgia and a sense of place. The fact that the whiskey is branded as a ‘Tennessee whiskey’ really ties it to a region. That automatically brings up images of farmland and this sort of rural America that our country was really founded upon. That in itself just stirs up emotion—not only for Americans but, I think, for anyone who is an ‘Americanophile’ throughout the world.”

What She’s Drinking: “I’m a Manhattan drinker. Gentleman Jack is an incredible choice because it has richness and it also has mellowness. It plays beautifully with vermouth. My drink in Vol. II of *Jack’s Black Book* is essentially a Gentleman Jack Manhattan where I use a little bit of OM Dark Chocolate & Sea Salt Liqueur, Port, and locally made Santa Fe mole bitters. I like to take an elegant whiskey like Gentleman Jack and sort of deepen and embolden its flavors.”

Jack Daniel’s is Like . . . “the drumbeat in a rock song, because it’s not subtle but it also blends itself into the whole. Without it, the song would not carry.”



A longtime leader in the modern mixology movement, Dale DeGroff prefers his Jack “the way [it’s] supposed to be drunk”: on the rocks.

DALE DEGROFF

Aka “King Cocktail”; author of *Craft of the Cocktail* (second edition lands November 2019)

Jack’s Black Book Appearance: Featured in Vol. II with his “Almost Perfect ‘Perfect’ Manhattan” made with Gentleman Jack

On What Makes Jack Daniel’s a Classic: “Well, Frank Sinatra went a long way toward making it a classic, and the Brown-Forman family, which did not invent the brand, very wisely purchased it at exactly the right moment. It seems to be the brand that captured attention before any other American whiskey. Now, of course, American whiskey is having its hay day abroad, but there was a time when Jack was the only American whiskey anyone outside the U.S. knew. And that has to say something about it: that it captured the imagination of the rest of the world, that this is what American whiskey was supposed to taste like.”

What He’s Drinking: “Tony [Abou-Ganim] and I just noticed while sitting at the bar: Everybody drinks Jack and Coke, Jack and ginger . . . And we’re sitting there with just a big glass of ice and Jack Daniel’s, saying to ourselves, ‘Wow. This is really, actually the way Jack Daniel’s is supposed to be drunk.’ It’s just so good on the rocks. I don’t think I want to mix it with anything right now—although I do also like it in a Manhattan.”

Jack Daniel’s is Like . . . “It’ll always be the star of any drink it’s in, because anything else you add to it is a mixer.”

ANDREW POLLARD

Assistant Director of Beverage Development for Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas, NV

Jack’s Black Book Appearance: Featured in Vol. I with his “M Manhattan” made with Jack Daniel’s Sinatra Select

On What Makes Jack Daniel’s a Classic: “A lot of folks are very much in the school of ‘craft’ and ‘small batch,’ but to be able to produce something that’s high quality at such a high volume with consistency globally—it’s quite impressive.”

What He’s Drinking: “My favorite is the Sinatra Select. It pays homage to someone who was so iconic to the brand—really one of the first ‘brand ambassadors’ as we know today. It really has that iconic feel, touch, and taste to it. I also love making a Jack Daniel’s Single Barrel Rye Fashioned. It’s got a great balance of spice and sweetness, and it also highlights the spirit. I find too often that people are using spirits just to use them. It’s about the canvas, and an Old Fashioned truly highlights that.”

Jack Daniel’s is Like . . . “a Ferrari. It’s fast, it’s strong, but it also has a good feel to it.”

Andrew Pollard, Assistant Director of Beverage Development for Las Vegas’ Wynn Resorts, commends Jack Daniel’s for its consistently high quality.





Cari Hah, Bar Manager at Big Bar in Los Angeles' Los Feliz neighborhood, attributes the "classic" status of Jack Daniel's to its ubiquity in bars and cocktails around the world.

CARI HAH

Bar Manager at Big Bar at the Alcove Café, Los Angeles, CA

Jack's Black Book Appearance: Featured in Vol. I with her "Adulting Jack & Coke" made with Jack Daniel's Old No. 7

On What Makes Jack Daniel's a Classic: "Jack Daniel's is one of the very first whiskies that most people will ever drink. For me, a classic is something that is enduring and has reached an echelon of prestige and notoriety. You can walk in anywhere and find it: a neighborhood bar, a dive bar, a high-class cocktail bar. It basically spans any age gap, race gap, or socioeconomic situation—everybody knows and drinks Jack Daniel's. In that way, it has a very enduring presence in our industry and in the world at large. That, to me, makes it an ultimate classic."

What She's Drinking: "Jack Daniel's Tennessee Rye has that very iconic banana note, that tropical aroma. It's a little spicier than the Old No. 7. I tend toward more spicy things than sweet, anyway, which is why I like the rye for 'me time.' It's also really fun to mix with because you can go tiki, you can do classic stirred cocktails . . . You can do any sort of cocktail that you want with it."

Jack Daniel's is Like . . . "the cellist in an orchestra. You need the cello to provide rich, deep notes for all the high notes that come from the violin section. It also plays a beautiful melody all on its own." ■■

Sinatra's Legacy Lives on with New Compilation Album

As bartenders honored Frank Sinatra with Jack Daniel's in Las Vegas, the cultural icon also sees his legacy live on through a new compilation album that was, fittingly enough, partially recorded just down the street from the Sinatra Supper Club event at The Wynn.

If delving deeper into the world of Frank Sinatra appeals to you—and it should—you're in luck, as *Standing Room Only* is a great place to start. The three-CD set, which is also available for download or on streaming services, includes a show from The Sands Hotel and Casino in 1966 along with previously unreleased recordings from two concerts in the '70s and '80s.

"Sinatra's music has always been a part of my father's life, and he made sure that magic was not lost on me," Jack Daniel's U.S. Ambassador ET Tecosky says. "That connection has made many great memories from my childhood to present day. It's natural to not want to dig what your parents did, but when it comes to Frank Sinatra, they were right."

For more information, visit sinatra.com.



U.S. DEBUT

The **BLACK HORSE** *Rides Stateside*

TAIWANESE WUNDERKIND OMAR WHISKY IS
POISED TO DOMINATE THE AMERICAN MARKET

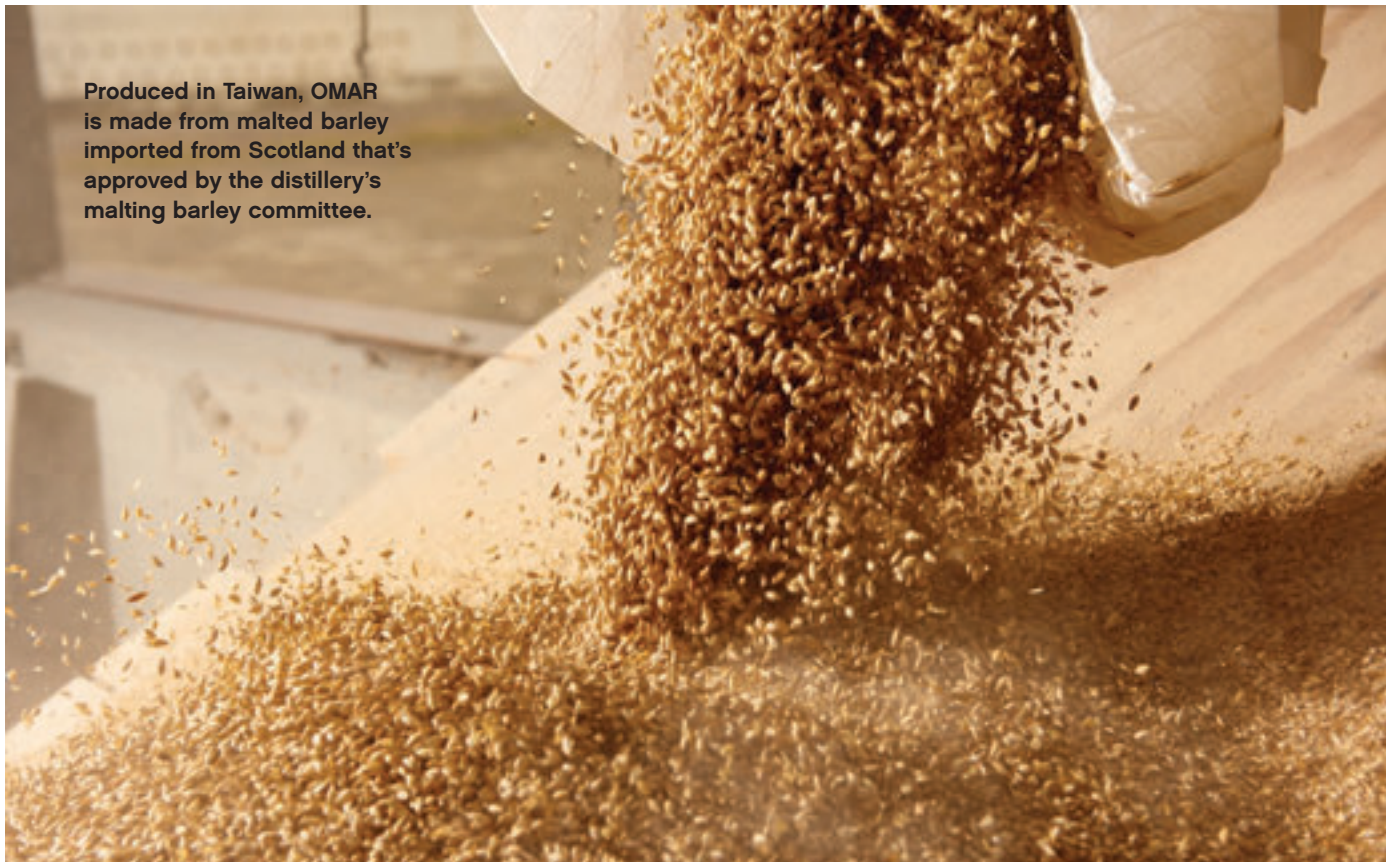
BY MARA MARSKI

OMAR, which draws its name from the Gaelic word for amber, gets its color from aging in ex-American bourbon casks. Though OMAR phonetically sounds like “black horse” in Taiwan, it translates more closely to “black sheep” in English.



OMAR is produced at the Nantou Distillery in Taiwan's mountainous Nantou County.

Produced in Taiwan, OMAR is made from malted barley imported from Scotland that's approved by the distillery's malting barley committee.



Hung Shao-wei, the former team leader in charge of the production line, checks the status of the wort in one of the distillery's washbacks. Taiwan's tropical heat demands the Nantou team follow rigorous management processes to avoid contamination.



roduced by Taiwan's Nantou Distillery, OMAR whisky is stepping into the international spotlight as it prepares for its release in the American market. Joining Kavalan in bolstering Taiwan's newly recognized status as an epicenter of high-end whisky, OMAR has a unique and intriguing taste that's inexorably rooted in the island's history, culture, and terroir.

OMAR gets its name from the Gaelic word for amber—the color that characterizes its appearance. In Taiwan, however, the name sounds like “black horse,” a symbol of “potential, power, and the unexpected,” according to Chung Pei Yuan, a Senior Technician at OMAR's Nantou Distillery.

The rise of whisky in Taiwan may also seem unexpected to outsiders, but the phenomenon is far from a recent development.

Over the past two decades, the Taiwanese have become whisky connoisseurs and rare whisky hunters, and in urban bars and restaurants, menus boast varieties representing a wide range of regions, styles, and distilleries. “Whisky is competitive and diverse,” says Chung. “The Taiwanese are very selective in their whiskies because they look for such variation and are constantly gaining more experience with the spirit.”

In fact, while Taiwan has a population of 23 million people (compared to the United States' 323 million), the small island is one of the world's leading consumers of whisky. Because Taiwan tends to import mainly high-end whiskies, a perfect opening has been created for Taiwanese distillers to introduce their own premium spirits to the market.

NANTOU EMBRACES WHISKY

The government-owned Nantou Distillery has operated as a winery producing fruit wines and brandies since 1978. In the 1980s, the Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation, the state agency that oversees the distillery, voiced its interest in seeing Taiwan join the whisky market and sent Lin Jin-Dan, who later became

U.S. DEBUT



Nantou's copper pot stills were produced by Forsyths of Rothes, the famed producers from Speyside, Scotland.



OMAR's new-make spirit, pictured coming off of the condenser, closely resembles Scotch before it's barreled with a Taiwanese finishing technique.

Nantou's Head of Distillation (he has since retired), to Scotland to learn traditional Scotch whisky distilling techniques.

Lin finally returned to Taiwan the year after what Chung refers to as "The Whisky Golden Age," a transition that caused whisky prices to drop dramatically. This made it cheaper for the Taiwanese to continue to import the spirit rather than produce it domestically, until a series of events prompted Nantou to open its own whisky distillery.

In 1999, Nantou was gravely damaged by an earthquake that destroyed five of the distillery's warehouses, resulting in a significant loss of product. Just three years later, Taiwan officially opened its alcohol market and effectively ended the domestic monopoly that had existed under various levels of enforcement since 1947.

This open international market, coupled with the public shift in taste away from brandy and the devastation from the earthquake, demanded that Nantou make adjustments to survive. However, just as the market in Taiwan embraced whisky, the category once again gained international prominence and skyrocketed in price—prompting Nantou to call upon Lin to use the knowledge he'd garnered 20 years earlier to build a whisky distillery at its facility.

Nantou's inaugural year for whisky production arrived in 2008, with the distillery initially operating mainly with secondhand equipment in a repurposed space that had once housed a restaurant. The area was so constrained that the mashing was performed at a sister distillery and the wash was sent back to Nantou. The following year,

once the team had developed more confidence in their production techniques, new equipment was purchased and OMAR's first single malt whisky was produced.

ADAPTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

OMAR continues to adhere to the traditional whisky-making techniques Lin brought back from Scotland and sources a major ingredient from the U.K., as well: Because Taiwan's staple grain is rice, the Nantou team imports malted barley directly from Scotland. Most OMAR releases are finished in ex-American bourbon casks or Spanish Oloroso Sherry butts, but because Nantou is also a winery, some special editions of the whisky are finished in barrels that have held lychee liqueur, plum liqueur, and local wine. These impart the famed fruit notes of Taiwan's terroir.

KANPAI: TOASTING THE TAIWANESE WAY

The past century of Taiwanese history explains why the island has earned a reputation as an up-and-coming whisky super-region. Taiwan was colonized by Japan from 1895 until 1945, and this left an enduring mark on the island's drinking culture. According to Nantou Distillery Senior Technician Chung Pei Yuan, these customs are deeply rooted in the idea of "kanpai": a traditional Japanese toast meaning "dry glass."

Kanpai also serves as a way to show guests hospitality . . . by knocking back shots. "Taiwan also inherited Japan's business drinking culture where sales and contracts go to those who can drink the most, which is why here a spirit has the advantage if it is strong but smooth and easy-drinking," Chung says.

Taiwan experienced vast economic growth in the 1980s, leading to an exploration of foreign cultures and spirits. Brandy was the champion of the era, but in the 2000s, a marked shift toward Scotch, particularly Sherry cask-age single malts, occurred. In addition to pairing well with local dishes, the category fits those aforementioned Taiwanese needs: sweet, strong, and easy-drinking.

TASTING NOTES

OMAR Single Malt Bourbon-Type Whisky sends you to a garden with perfumed aromas of jasmine and ginger-caramel. On the palate, flavors of peach, melon, and honeyed orange peel are alluring. The lean, satiny, and sinewy 92-proof spirit goes grassy toward the finish with a green-pepper spice and a wave of salinity. **94** —*Meridith May*

OMAR Single Malt Sherry-Type Whisky takes to the forest with scents of cinnamon, date nut bread, and nutmeg. Sandalwood and caramel apple interplay with savory, woodsy notes of porcini mushroom, orris root, sandalwood, and bergamot. The long finish is dotted with a salinity reminiscent of Himalayan sea salt and a sweeter note of spearmint. **97** —*M.M.*



Chen Ching-shen, the craftsman who oversees barrel repairs, refurbishes a barrel in the Nantou warehouse.

And while OMAR derives a portion of its character directly from Scotland, its Taiwanese heritage is directly reflected in the impeccable management of its production. “The Taiwanese excel in factory management, and this excellence concerning production management and quality control is essential for making whisky in a hot and humid environment,” Chung says.

This heat and humidity affects every aspect of OMAR’s distillation process. Because the climate makes raw materials much more susceptible to mold contamination, they must be monitored thoroughly. Likewise, the wet climate increases the risk of biological contamination during the fermentation process, which means the distillery team must take additional care in timing the yeast pitching while strictly adhering to its standard hygienic and cleaning processes.

According to Chung, “The hot envi-

ronment also reduces the reflux ratio during distillation, which means [Nantou has] to distill very slowly to make sure [its] new-make spirit is pure.” In fact, the outside air is so hot that the condenser must be artificially cooled at all times during distillation; temperatures inside the distillery, meanwhile, get so high during the summer that production ceases altogether.

While most Scotches are matured at 63.5% ABV, the new-make OMAR is diluted to a lower ABV before it’s barreled. “We want to take more of the sugars and water-soluble extracts from wooden barrels to soften our whisky and to satisfy the Taiwanese sweet tooth. However, the strength we dilute to is confidential,” Chung adds slyly.

WHY TAIWAN?

It’s not just Taiwanese selectiveness that has made the island the perfect spot for premium whisky production—it’s the country’s natural environment itself. “Many of our benefits are given from nature—not just for OMAR, but for other Taiwanese distillers,” says Chung.

While the island’s tropical climate has required Nantou make the aforementioned adjustments to its production process, it also enables

the distillery to “achieve matured whiskies in much shorter periods compared to traditional temperate whisky regions like Scotland,” Chung explains. OMAR is aged only three to four years before it takes on its characteristic amber color and many of the flavor properties consistent with most 12-year-old Scotch.

This benefit is not without cost. Due to the heat, Taiwanese whisky loses approximately 6% ABV per year: This is twice the rate of Japanese distillers’ product and three times the rate of Taiwan’s Scottish counterparts. Chung, however, says “the fast maturation speed is an advantage, as [Nantou] can quickly react to the changing requirements of the market and save on storage times and capital.”

PREPPING FOR AN AMERICAN DEBUT

With OMAR set to hit the American market in July, Chung is confident Americans will embrace its unique East-meets-West bottlings of whisky that stay true to Scotch tradition while incorporating both the Taiwanese attention to detail and rare tropical maturation. “OMAR whiskies not only show traditional notes of honey and wood, but aromas of incense and tropical fruits,” says Chung of the Eastern-influenced flavor notes that set OMAR apart from other world whiskies.

Chung also mentions OMAR’s enticing price point—an asset in both whisky-obsessed Taiwan and the U.S. “OMAR is a premium whisky at a reasonable price, and that should be very attractive,” he says. ■■



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Schedule at a Glance

WASHINGTON D.C. JULY 22-24, 2018

Sunday, July 22

WSET Level 2 Certification On-Line Course & Exam*

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

French Wine Scholar Challenge*

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Certified Cicerone Exam *

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Discovering Italian Wine Certificate*

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Digging into the Unique Terroirs of La Bella Italy presented by The SOMM Journal and The Tasting Panel

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

SommCon Opening Night Reception + Tasting

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Monday, July 23

Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Networking Coffee & Pastries

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Seminars:

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

History of Wine: Pangea to Pasteur

Wes Hagen, WSET2; Winemaker & Brand Ambassador; J Wilkes Wines

Drinking Stars – The History and Details of Prestige Cuvee Champagne

David Cohn, Dom Perignon USA

Expressions of Grenache presented by Rhone Valley Vineyards

Lisa M. Airey, Wine Scholar Guild

Vibrant Vinho Verde

Sheri Morano, Nomacorc Vinventions | MW, CWE

Tasting Break presented by Wines of Virginia

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Seminars:

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Finding the Right Wine Credential for You and Your Career

Geralyn Brostrom, Co-Founder and Educational Director of Italian Wine Central, CWE

Geoff Labitzke, Master of Wine / Director of Sales & Marketing for Kistler Vineyards

Kathy Morgan, Master Sommelier, Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits

A Retrospective on the 40th Anniversary of Castello Banfi, Builders of Brunello

Christina Mariani-May, President & CEO, Banfi Vitners

Wines of Medoc: A Travel Around the 8 Appellations, 8 Variations on Excellence

Mary Dardenne, Bordeaux Wine Educator

Iconic Wines of Virginia

Jay Youmans, Master of Wine, CWE, Educational Director at Capital Wine School

Break

12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Seminars:

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Old & Rare Wines: Sourcing, Selling & Serving

Christopher Hoel, Founder, Harper's Club

Andy Myers, Master Sommelier, Beverage Director, ThinkFoodGroup

Michael Scaffidi, Advanced Sommelier, Wine Consultant, Beverage Director

Game of Wines presented by The SOMM Journal

Meridith May, Publisher

Bill Brandel, VP Marketing The Tasting Panel & SOMM Journal

40th Parallels of New World Pinot Noir

Bree Boskov, Master of Wine

Everything You Never Dared to Ask About Bourgogne's Climate

Jay Youman, Advanced Sommelier, MW, CWE

Tasting Break presented by Gloria Ferrer

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Seminars:

4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Madeira: The Time Traveling Machine

Michael Scaffidi, Wine Director, DaDong NYC

Managing a Successful Restaurant Beverage Program

Gretchen Thomas, Wine & Spirits Director, Barteca Restaurant Group

Erik Segelbaum, Advanced Sommelier, Corporate Wine Director, Starr Restaurants

Andy Myers, Master Sommelier, Beverage Director, ThinkFoodGroup

Delve into the Different Styles of Sake

Toshio Ueno, MSS, CSW, FWS | Vice President & Executive Instructor, Saké School of America

The Path to Spirits Certification Through SWE

Ira Norof, CSE, CWE, Director of Education & Events Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits,

Past President Society of Wine Educators

Tuesday, July 24

Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Networking Coffee & Pastries

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Seminars:

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Build Your Own Personal Brand

Frans van der Lee, Co-Founder and President/COO, Somm's List

Cab Franc

Jay Youmans, MW Capital Wine School

Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler

Defining Local in the Mid Atlantic

Dave McIntyre, Wine Columnist, Washington Post

Tasting Break presented by Banfi and Bravium

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Seminars:

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

The Nueva South America

Gretchen Thomas, Wine & Spirits Director, Barteca Restaurant Group

The Rosé(y) Side of Languedoc

Jay Youmans, MW Capital Wine School

The Impact of Public Policy on the American Wine Industry

Michael Kaiser, VP of Wine America

Garnacha Unveiled: From Cariñena to the World

Bob Bath, MS, Professor of Wine and Beverage Studies at the Culinary Institute of America

Break

12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Seminars:

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Blind Taste with the Masters (MW)

Moderator: Joe Spellman, MS

Panelists: Geoff Labitzke, MW; Mary Gorman McAdams, MW; Caroline Hermann, MW;

Jay Youmans, MW

Tasting Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Seminars:

4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Getting High: Appellation Elevation

Joe Spellman, MS, Justin Winery

The Secret to Creative Italian Wine Lists That Sell

Geralyn Brostrom, Co-Founder and Educational Director of Italian Wine Central

Kathy Morgan, Master Sommelier, Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits

How Sand Helps Create The World's Best Wines

Will Costello, MS

France: Then & Now

Lisa M. Airey, Wine Scholar Guild

Sponsors:

THE SOMM JOURNAL

tastingpanel

Castello Banfi

WSET



Rhone Valley Vineyards

BOURGOGNE

M



BRIVIUM



GLORIA FERRER

Kistler Vineyards

SOMM'S LIST

CHEF'S ROLL



Mexico's

"New Distillate"

EXPLORING
AVILA,
A NEW CATEGORY
PIONEERED BY
REVEL SPIRITS

*by Mary Thompson
photos by Cal Bingham*

Mary Thompson, General Manager at beachside Mexican eatery Tallula's in Santa Monica, CA, highlights the unique flavor profile of Revel Avila Blanco in her riff on a blood-orange Paloma.

Back in 2011, Micah McFarlane and Jacqui Thompson set out to produce great tequila. Fate soon intervened, however, when they were introduced to the Mexican state of Morelos through Minneapolis chef and restaurateur Héctor Ruiz, who grew up there. After Ruiz sang the praises of Morelos' distilled agave, McFarlane and Thompson decided they had to visit to experience the region firsthand and quickly fell in love with the spirit, the land, and the people.

Before they joined the spirits business, McFarlane and Thompson's relationship was rooted in another mutual passion: music (in their lengthy experience in artist development and tour managing, they've worked with industry legends like Prince). With that shared background, the pair decided to bring their successful music-testing methods to the agave world with help



Revel Spirits Co-Founders Micah McFarlane and Jacqui Thompson enjoy colorful Revel-based cocktails at Tallula's.



Revel Spirits produces the world's first Avila, a new agave-based spirits category which combines the piña-roasting methods of traditional mezcal production with the modernized steaming techniques of tequila.

Revel Reposado is an easy-sipper reminiscent of a lightly smoked mezcal with the structured aging of a whiskey, but the spirit can easily play a role in a boozy or even savory cocktail.



The smoky
Revel Reposado
enhances the
flavor profile
and texture of a
Tallula's original
cocktail with fresh
lime, mint, and
cinnamon syrup.

from partner Susan Clausen.

After their visit to Morelos, they brought samples of its characteristic agave distillate back to Minneapolis and shared it widely as they sought feedback.

The triple-distilled finished product, Revel, has a higher alcohol content and less smoky qualities than those original samples. Under the Revel name, McFarlane and Thompson currently have two products on the market: Blanco and Reposado, with an Añejo expression set for release this fall. Made from blue weber agave, Revel contains no additives or added sugars and is the first official release of “Avila”: a new agave-based spirits category which combines the modernized steaming process of tequila with the roasting process of mezcal.

The Revel Spirits team is currently collaborating with a group of 17 farmers in the area to create these three expressions, the first two of which have already landed at establishments like the beachside Mexican eatery Tallula's in Santa Monica, California. The 80-proof, unaged Revel Blanco exhibits hints of citrus and juniper with a clean agave finish, providing a complex sipping spirit or the multi-faceted base of an innovative cocktail.

Revel Reposado, also 80 proof, ages in American oak whiskey barrels for 12 months and features hints of smoky oak and vanilla with a rich texture. It's an easy-sipper reminiscent of a lightly

smoked mezcal with the structured aging of a whiskey, but the spirit can easily play a role in a boozy or even savory cocktail.

By founding Revel, McFarlane and Thompson sought to highlight the native spirits being made in Morelos and spearheaded an effort to establish Avila as its own distinct category—a spirit that derives its character from the area's mineral-rich, volcanic soils.

With this in mind, the pair are working closely with their farmer partners, as well as distillers and the regional government, to promote Morelos' distillates to the broader market. In the future, McFarlane says Avila will reach beyond the use of blue weber agave and the methods currently employed by Revel to instead be more broad and inclusive with one common thread: the land that captivated them on that very first visit. ■■



Mary Thompson curates the bar menu at Tallula's, which focuses on local produce and high-end agave-based spirits.

MORELOS: A BRIEF HISTORY

Evidence shows that nomadic tribes lived in what's now the Mexican state of Morelos, located northwest of Oaxaca near Mexico City, as early as 6,000 B.C. Due to Morelos' persistently warm climate, the farming of maize and cotton has occurred there since roughly 1,500 B.C.

Established in 1868, the state was named after priest and Mexican independence leader José María Teclo Morelos Pérez y Pavón. At one point in the mid-1800s, the state's capital, Cuernavaca, briefly served as the capital of Mexico. Morelos is the second-smallest Mexican state and is home to active volcano Popocatepetl, traditionally dressed Chinelo dancers, several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and Lagunas de Zempoala, one of Mexico's largest national parks.

THE RUM RENAISSANCE

**EXPRESSIONS FROM
AROUND THE WORLD
ELEVATE THE CATEGORY
TO NEW HEIGHTS**

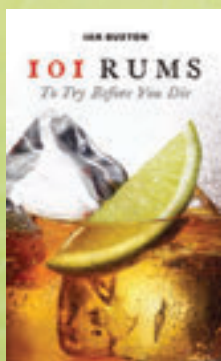
BY EMILY COLEMAN AND IAN BUXTON

Something is stirring in the world of drinks. While gin has gone crazy and whisk(e)y is looking to its laurels, I sense a thunder in the dunder: Rum is definitely having a moment in the sun. No longer a neglected member of the spirits world after years in the doldrums, rum's stunning recovery now ranks it amongst the most fashionable of categories in bars around the world today. Rum is once again, quite decidedly, a *thing*.

But with so many styles, what sort of thing? Do you, for example, prefer your rum in the Spanish, French, or even the British style? Aged, spiced, or both? Do you refer to it by color? White (or silver, as some would have it), gold, or dark might be your guide. And where should one stand on the vexed question of added sugar: Is it a sweet benediction or the work of the devil? Does rum even have to come from the Caribbean?

As I discovered while researching my new book, *101 Rums to Try Before You Die*, the answer to that is a resounding "no." Internationally, and especially in the U.S., a new generation of craft distillers is experimenting freely with this classic spirit as established distillers continue to release exciting new expressions, aged spirits, and tasty flavored rums. Old clichés about parties and pirates, meanwhile, are being left behind—savvy connoisseurs are picking out great rums for the sake of their taste and value; skilled mixologists are exploring rum's depth of character; and shrewd investors are tucking away rare bottles in anticipation of future profit.

It's a new horizon for an old favorite. Enjoy! —Ian Buxton



A RUM FOR EVERYONE: MEZAN RUMS

Mezan's line of vintage expressions come from collections of discovered rums; each hails from a single distillery, some of which are no longer in operation. Without adding any color or flavoring, the Cellar Master takes these rums and ages them in casks until they reach the ideal maturation level. "Consumers are looking for more transparency, especially in the rum category where there is very little regulation," says Justine Charlemagne, Spirits Brand Manager for Mezan Rum. "We provide unchill-filtered rums without any addition of sugar or coloring syrups to preserve the authentic flavors."

The dry taste profile of Mezan's **Jamaica XO (\$30)** makes a beautiful base for high-end cocktails. **Panama 2006 (\$46)** ages twice in American white oak ex-bourbon barrels, while the **Guyana 2005** features more complexity from its distillation in the double-wooden pot still originally housed in the Port Maurant Estate, founded in 1732. "That's why our collection of rare vintages is a real advantage," Charlemagne adds. "The consumer can easily find one Mezan that fits their taste!"

TASTING NOTES

Mezan 2005 Guyana (\$54), with its pale straw hue, offers a delectable and gorgeous bouquet that travels from the sublime to the savory. Honey wheat bread, mango, lemongrass, green olive, and wet stone layer the scent-o-meter. The palate is dotted with white pepper and the green olive returns for an encore with key lime. With hints of sweet notes delivered by ripe pineapple and candied ginger, this rum has an alluring presence. **95** —Meridith May

Mezan 2006 Panama (\$46) is amber/bronze in color and indulges the senses with a delicately smoky nose that brings up dried apricots, dates, and butterscotch. The palate is packed with flavor: layer upon layer from pecans to leather. Lush, semi-dry notes of burnt almonds stay to the lengthy finish. **95** —M.M. NICHE IMPORTS

A SECRET WORTH SHARING:

BOUNTY RUM

Over the years, many Caribbean islands have enjoyed international attention for the rums they produce. Saint Lucia has been a quiet player on the map, but it's consistently earned high acclaim from rum enthusiasts—more for the characteristic style of rum blends that come out of the only distillery on the island than for a particular brand.

That trend is shifting: Saint Lucia is poised to elevate its status among the rum-producing Caribbean islands and has begun to export more brands true rum aficionados know and enjoy. While rums like Chairman's Reserve recently made waves in the international rum scene, St. Lucia Distillers Managing Director Margaret Monplaisir proclaims, "It's Bounty time!"

St. Lucia Distillers came into being when the last two distilleries remaining on Saint Lucia merged in 1972. To formalize this union, the two families behind these distilleries launched Bounty Rum as their first collaborative release. For nearly 46 years, Bounty Rum has been the distillery's flagship rum brand and is at the heart of the lifestyle and culture of the local Saint Lucian population.

Since the island stopped producing sugar, St. Lucia Distillers sources high-grade Guyanese molasses that's double distilled before it ages a minimum of two years in ex-bourbon casks. **The Bounty Premium Gold**, the core of the

Bounty range, is released after a minimum of two years of aging. The **Bounty Premium White** is created from simply filtering the color from the Bounty Gold along with the **Bounty Spiced**; the latter is based on the Bounty Gold but macerated with natural vanilla, cinnamon, clove, and the infamous local Bois Bandé, a natural aphrodisiac. Finally, **Bounty Premium Dark** blends together column-distilled rum aged three years with seven-year-old pot-still rum also matured in ex-bourbon casks.

As "The Spirit of Saint Lucia," Bounty's quality and value has made it incredibly popular on the island for the local community and tourists alike; the distillery, however, has held back from exporting its flagship brand. Bounty is joining its ultra-premium peer, Chairman's Reserve, in the U.S. as rum enthusiasts wait with great anticipation for the stateside re-release of Admiral Rodney by the end of the year. Now that the secret of Bounty Rum is out as it joins these other great varieties of rum, it's high time for Saint Lucia's day in the sun.



TASTING NOTES

Bounty Premium White Rum (\$18) is proud to call itself "The Spirit of Saint Lucia." The clean scents of orange blossom, pineapple, and vanilla are refreshing. A soft, pillowy texture keeps the flavors mellow. Lilac, white-peppered papaya, and a finish of lime make this a lovely tropical spirit. **93** —M.M.

Bounty Premium Gold Rum (\$18) is aged in bourbon casks. A delicate perfume of butterscotch and orange peel exudes from the glass as spiced cedar flavors the palate, which alternates between apricot and peach tones with a lilting note of vanilla on the finish. **92** —M.M.

Bounty Spiced Rum (\$20) is a unique spirit. The aromas and flavors come from an infusion of vanilla and cinnamon with macerated bark of *Richeria grandis*—a tree species found in the Caribbean. It's reputed for its health benefits, but here it offers a deeply aromatic and earthy tobacco character that's exotic and sensuous. **93** —M.M.

Bounty Premium Dark Rum (\$20), aged in bourbon casks, is an 86-proof spirit with attention-grabbing aromas of sassafras, clove, mandarin orange, and cedar. The mélange of flavors parade in from start to mid-palate to finish in a well-structured flow. Cinnamon, passionfruit, and spiced pear lead to black tea and toasted oak. **94** —M.M.

SPIRIBAM NORTH AMERICA

SUN'S OUT, RUM'S OUT: **DON Q PIÑA**

Flavored spirits can polarize consumers, but when a distillery gets one just right, it can open a whole new world of possibilities to mixologists and customers. It takes a very special distillery to capture the essence of a natural flavor, but there are certain producers you can trust to hit the right notes every time. Destilería Serrallés is one of these trusted brands.

Founded in 1865 in Ponce, Puerto Rico, by Juan Eugenio Serrallés Colón, the family still owns and runs the distillery and has maintained the original vision of making excellent rums for more than 150 years. While the distillery created many different brands of rum, it began selling its most popular brand, Don Q—originally known as Ron Don Q—in 1932. This beloved Puerto Rican brand uses high-quality molasses, water from the Río Inabón, and a proprietary yeast strain it has kept alive for the past 75 years to create its remarkable line of rums.

In its efforts to master the art of producing flavored rum over the past 20 years, the distillery added **Don Q Piña** to its portfolio last summer alongside its Limón, Coco, Mojito, and Pasión expressions. To make the Piña, Destilería Serrallés begins by aging its signature rum in American white oak barrels for one to one and a half years before introducing natural pineapple juice to the spirit and infusing it with natural pineapple flavors. The blend of flavor profiles from the Don Q rum and the natural pineapple produces the perfect base for summer cocktails.

TASTING NOTES

Don Q Piña (\$14) is a Puerto Rican rum with natural pineapple flavor. Crafted by the Serrallés family, this 60-proof spirit has a delicate scent of just-ripe pineapple with a hint of vanilla. At first sip, the pineapple flavors emerge, springing forward with sweetness and a creamy mouthfeel. **91**
—M.M.

SERRALLÉS USA



HECHO EN MEXICO:
DEADHEAD
RUM

While many look to Mexico for its agave spirits, Ronés de México, the family-owned distillery behind Deadhead Rum, has been producing rum in Finca Venecia, Chiapas, Mexico, for three generations since 1948. Deadhead Rum aims to respect the heritage of this region and captures its spirit from the bottle to the glass.

Creating spirits worthy of praise takes incredible ingredients, and one of the most important is the person steering the flavor profile of a liquid creation: in this case, the master blender. Jorge Pérez Rafael, Master Blender for Ronés de México, brings passion and decades of experience to the rum-making process.

After growing up in Cuba and receiving a master's degree in fermented, distilled, and aged alcoholic beverages, as well as a Ph.D. in science and technology, he became the Technical and Production Deputy Director at Havana Club previous to his tenure as the Director of Research & Development of the Cuban Rum Industry. According to Rafael, "a great rum is an amalgamation of great raw materials, a great and delicate process of art, and

the presence of a great master blender who had the ability of designing and blending something that satisfies us—something that accompanies us through great moments in life."

When creating Deadhead Cask Aged Rum, Rafael carefully blends rum crafted from molasses and pure sugarcane juice from estate-grown sugarcane—which happens to be Mexico's third largest export—with about 824,000 hectares devoted to its planting. The rum is then aged six years in Chiapas and toasted American oak barrels to produce a subtle yet intricate flavor profile full of rich notes that stand out whether you enjoy the spirit neat or in a cocktail.

Housed in bottles resembling tsantsas, or shrunk heads—which many believed were kept as trophies for honor and spiritual renewal—it looks as unique on the shelf as it tastes in the glass. Rafael clearly has all the components necessary for success: Deadhead Rum has won 13 tasting awards and is distributed in 22 countries, with sales increasing 100 percent in the past year. Its flavor makes it a spirit that can be enjoyed on



Jorge Pérez is the Master Blender for Ronés de México, producers of Deadhead Rum.

the rocks or in a number of tiki drinks and classic cocktails.

"[Rum] is more than an industry," Rafael says. "It is art and science; it represents history and culture and great moments with family or friends. I want to position Mexican rums among the best in the world and continue to satisfy the demands of traditional rum lovers and new consumers, getting them to fall in love with this extraordinary spirit." True to his word, Rafael makes it easy to fall in love with Deadhead Cask Aged Rum.



TASTING NOTES

Deadhead Cask Aged Rum, aged six years in oak casks, sports a deep amber hue and awakens the senses with scents of cinnamon, burnt orange peel, and almond brittle. The smooth texture allows flavors to slide along the tongue with flavors of sandalwood, black tea, peach, new leather, and peanut toffee. Killer character! **93**
—M.M.

ICONIC BRANDS INC.

FOLLOWING THE FLOW:

DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY

Similarly to fruit, water makes up a large percentage of a spirit's body. Marc Christensen decided to build a distillery in the Great Salt Lake Basin, where the Wasatch mountain range and other distinctive geological features create a pristine source for mineral-rich and pure water. Dented Brick Distillery produces two lines of rum with this exquisite raw material: **Antelope Island Rum** and **Jan Stephenson's Tropical Fruit Flavored Rums**.

Antelope Island Rum blends regionally sourced green sugarcane and high-quality molasses to create an unaged, smooth, and delicate spirit. Antelope Island draws inspiration for its packaging and name from the largest island in the Great Salt Lake, which becomes a refuge for animals—including mule deer, big horn sheep, and California seagulls—when the lake is low and a natural land bridge is formed.

Released last month at the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America 75th Annual Convention & Exposition in Las Vegas, the Passion Fruit, Pineapple, and Mango expressions of Jan Stephenson's Tropical Fruit Flavored Rums meld the distillery's technical expertise with the former professional golfer's experience running a successful wine brand, resulting in a remarkable line of rums.

The full portfolio took home honors from the competition: Mango and Pineapple won Silver medals, while Mango also won second place in WSWA's Call for Cocktails mixology competition. Dented Brick Distillery Head Distiller Mike McSorley's creation for this annual contest, Jan's Mango Comber, paired the rum with lime juice, ginger syrup, cardamom bitters, and a splash of Champagne—resulting in the consummate warm-weather drink.



TASTING NOTES

Jan Stephenson Mango-Flavored Rum (\$35) goes deep on the nose. Molasses kisses overripe pineapple as a hint of dates and figs comes into play. The palate feel is spiced with white pepper and brown-sugared tropical fruit. **91** —M.M.

Jan Stephenson Passionfruit-Flavored Rum (\$35) is a bit more light-hearted than its Mango sibling. The nose offers sweet—and authentic—guava and papaya notes warmed by a sunshiny tangerine addition. The palate reins in blackstrap molasses and gardenia with a finish that trends tropical. **91** —M.M.

Jan Stephenson Pineapple-Flavored Rum (\$35) melds pineapple and herbs on the nose: A touch of basil makes for a savory and tropical scent. Delivering more underlying savoriness are flavors of cinnamon, brown sugar, and sandalwood. The fruit is very ripe and sun-kissed. **91** —M.M.

Antelope Island Rum (\$27) is an American white rum that offers aromas of Himalayan salt, vanilla, lime, and pineapple. The round, buoyant palate is dotted with salty notes of apricot, Asian pear, and butterscotch toffee, while the finish is long and luxurious. **92** —M.M.

Red Rum (\$35) has scents of black tea, dates, and orange peel with a hint of blackstrap molasses. The palate delves deep with black pepper, black olive, and anise. At 90 proof, the heat is tempered with sweeter notes of cedar and tangerine zest. **92** —M.M.



DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY

A WORLDLY BLEND:

DOS MADERAS



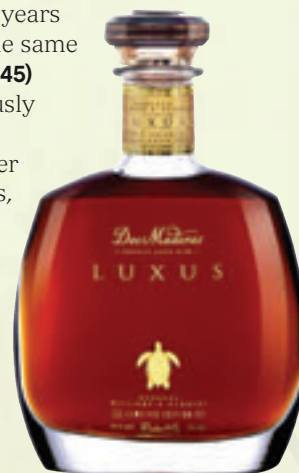
Established in Jerez, Spain, in 1877 by brothers-in-law Alexander Williams and Arthur Humbert, Bodegas Williams & Humbert produces world-class Sherries, brandies, and rums. While the latter might seem like the odd one out, the company puts a twist on its rum that seamlessly ties it in with the rest of the portfolio.

In a riff on the old saying “two heads are better than one,” Dos Maderas brings several global locales together—the Caribbean, internationally distinguished for its rums; South America; and Jerez de la Frontera, a city in southern Spain famous for its Sherry bodegas—to develop unique rums with complex notes from various regions. The rum’s sugarcane comes from Guyana and Barbados, where the rum ages in the barrel for five years in its respective country before being shipped and aged further in Sherry casks at Williams & Humbert’s home base in Jerez. Experienced rum drinkers will welcome the twist this double cask aging technique adds to the category, while those just now starting out with the spirit will love the smooth style of Dos Maderas.

After aging in casks in the Caribbean for five years, **Dos Maderas Rum 5+3** ages for three more years in casks previously used to age the international award-winning Dos Cortados Sherry, which carries a guaranteed age of 20 years

as certified by the Denomination of Origin Jerez-Xérès-Sherry. After following the same initial process as the Dos Maderas Rum 5+3 expression, **Dos Maderas Rum 5+5 (\$45)** undergoes a third stage of aging for an additional two years in casks that previously housed Don Guido, a 20-year-old Pedro Ximénez Sherry.

As for additional expressions, **Dos Maderas Selección Rum (\$71)** blends together Dos Maderas 5+5 and the company’s finest 10-year-old Bajan and Guyanese rums, which have matured in old bourbon casks. Finally, **Dos Maderas Luxus Double Aged Rum (\$180)** ages for ten years in Barbados and Guyana with another five years of aging in American oak casks that previously contained the internationally renowned Don Guido 20-Year-Old Pedro Ximénez Sherry. Dos Maderas rums acquire tastes and nuances from two ancient cultures while putting an innovative twist on the concept of a “sense of place” within a spirit—which explains their popularity among the most refined palates.



TASTING NOTES

Dos Maderas 5+3 (\$34) offers a strikingly rich and approachable nose. The bouquet of caramel cedar, sassafras cream, tangerine, and orange pekoe tea is exquisite. The liquid reflects the creamy nature of this tamed beast with a warmth and presence of utmost elegance. **98**—M.M.

HIGH-WATER MARK:

THE REAL MCCOY RUMS

When husband-and-wife team Bailey and Jennifer Pryor began making the documentary *The Real McCoy* about rum runner Bill McCoy—a film that eventually earned five Emmy Awards—they embarked on a journey that brought the story of the Prohibition pioneer to life. Before America's dry spell, Captain McCoy sailed to the Caribbean to bring back rum right outside of New York City—three miles offshore, to be exact. By staying at that distance, he legally provided alcohol in what was then international waters.

Not only was McCoy one of the first people to think of this scheme, he had a moral compass he wouldn't waiver from: He became one of the only alcohol runners to never get involved with the mafia and to never dilute his product with other substances like turpentine or prune juice, which is how we know the term "The Real McCoy." Inspired

by his legacy, the Pryors decided to make a rum McCoy himself would have carried aboard his schooner.

The Real McCoy suite features single-blended rum crafted farm-to-glass at Foursquare Distillery in Barbados from a blend of copper pot and Coffey stills. All core expressions are aged in American oak bourbon barrels for three, five, or twelve years with no sugar or flavors added—much like the rums of the unadulterated era before multicolumn stills came into common use.

The Real McCoy 3-Year (\$20) is filtered through charcoal to remove most of the color, while the flagship **5-Year** and **12-Year Super Premium Rum** offer insight into how aging affects the character of the same spirit. It's the type of rum McCoy would have proudly carried from the Caribbean to the partygoers just offshore of New York City in 1920.

TASTING NOTES

The Real McCoy Single Blended Rum Aged 3 Years (\$20)

is a single-cask spirit aged in heavy-char American oak barrels. From the delicately scented nose—candied pineapple and orange blossoms—you don't pick up any oak, yet on the palate, toasted coconut and honeydew melon surge forward with a spiced backdrop that speaks of cedar and caramel. The spirit retains a graceful quality throughout. **92** —M.M.



The Real McCoy Single Blended Rum Aged 5 Years (\$29)

offers a similarly eloquent nose that speaks in feminine, perfumed notes of honeyed orange peel. Caramel and banana bread show right away on the palate with mineral-braced tannins and a hint of coffee. Vanilla plays through to the finish: spiced and sensuous. **92** —M.M.



The Real McCoy Single Blended Rum Aged 12 Years (\$50)

shows depth of character from its heady scents of cedar, brandied apricots, and oatmeal. The level of maturity shows itself with a warmth that traverses the palate, adding depth of character with flavors of spiced sandalwood and nutmeg. **92** —M.M.



THE REAL MCCOY

GEORGIA ON MY MIND:

RICHLAND RUM

While many distilleries ship in sugarcane from faraway lands, Richland Rum grows its own crop on its sugarcane plantation in Richland, Georgia. The only continuously producing single-estate rum distillery in the United States, Richland Estate sits on sandy soil that receives both intense sun and rain during the summer: the perfect conditions for sugarcane. Resting in toasted and charred American virgin white oak barrels for four-plus years, the **Single Estate Old South Georgia Rum**, or the “Classic,” tells a story distinct to this region and its terroir.

Having perfected the art of making rum since 1999, Richland Estate Proprietor Erik Vonk—who gained a passion for rum agricoles from his grandfather—decided to add three more expressions to the Richland Rum portfolio: **Single Estate Virgin Coastal Georgia Rum (\$49)**, **Chateau Elan Port Cask Exchange Rum**, and the **Terrapin Double IPA Cask Exchange Rum**.

Resting for just 60 days in the new American white oak barrels, the Virgin Coastal Rum offers the floral and vegetal notes of Georgian sugarcane. Richland Estate’s “cask exchanges” lend out Richland Rum barrels that held rum for three years to fellow artisan Georgia-based producers Terrapin Brewing Company and Chateau Elan Winery. As those establishments age their Double IPA and Port, respectively, in the barrels, their products take on warm rum and oak characteristics.

A year later, after the beer and Port have been bottled, the barrels are returned to the distillery to be refilled with the rum they originally held, allowing the spirit to mature for one additional year. The flavor and aroma exchanges add leather and tobacco notes from the Port and malty, hoppy layers from the Double IPA. Although Georgia may not be the first place a guest names when they think of rum, they’ll surely add the Peach State to their lists after experiencing the smoothness and depth of Richland Rums.



TASTING NOTES

Richland Single Estate Coastal Georgia Rum (\$59) has an herbal nose with lemon-lime zing, sweet maize-y notes, and unique flavors of vanilla musk, Bosc pears, and cashew. It’s a spicy experience with a wonderful mouthfeel. **93 —M.M.**

Richland Single Estate Old South Georgia Rum Chateau Elan Port Cask Exchange (\$79) has a bouquet of sandalwood that’s deep and resin-y. There’s a hint of green pepper and spearmint on the upper palate while apricot and mango play into the middle. Seductive! **94 —M.M.**

Richland Single Estate Old South Georgia Rum, Terrapin Double I.P.A. Cask Exchange (\$79) is a single-barrel, 86-proof rum that proffers a well of depth, starting with a nose of jasmine, maple-infused oatmeal, and burnt mandarin orange peel. Lean minerality surges on the palate sparked by black pepper and cedar. A backdrop of ripe peaches and banana stays through the finish. **94 —M.M. ■■**

RICHLAND DISTILLING CO.

At this year's Great Tokaji Wine Auction, a 1963 5 Puttonyos Tokaji Aszú sold for the highest price per bottle in the history of the event. Simultaneous live bidding also unfolded in London for the first time.

A Bridge to Hungary

CONFRÉRIE DE
TOKAJ CELEBRATES
THE GREAT TOKAJI
WINE AUCTION
WHILE MARKING THE
YEAR OF ASZÚ

by Randy Caparoso

*t*his past February, *The Tasting Panel* and Vinum Tokaj International joined representatives from the Hungarian wine industry to announce a 2018 “Year of Aszú” campaign, which aims to draw international attention—particularly in the North American market—to this iconic, complex, and utterly unique style of sweet wine. “This proclamation is important because it puts a global spotlight on this historic area,” says Miklós Katona, Director of Wine Education for Confrérie de Tokaj USA, an organization representing the Tokaj wine region.

Wine buyers in the U.S. are also starting to become aware of the full range of wines emerging from modern-day Tokaj, including dry to sweet Szamorodni and dry whites made from indigenous grapes like Furmint—the primary grape for Aszú production—and Hárslevelű. These wines, which by nature are exceptionally high in acid, are of particular interest to today’s sommeliers, who put great value on what Katona describes as “racy acidity . . . the ingredient for the most food-friendly wines.” Aszú in particular boasts a history spanning more than five centuries.

The campaign also serves to highlight changes recently implemented in Tokaj. “Since 2013, for instance, the production of 3 and 4 Puttonyos Aszú [puttonyos being a unit of measurement indicating sweetness level] has been discontinued and the wine region restarted producing only the traditional categories of 5 and 6 puttonyos,” Katona explains. “However, there is a minimum residual sugar requirement of 120 grams per liter to qualify as Aszú, which used to be the minimum for the 5 puttonyos. While the grapes for the Aszú wines are collected berry by berry, the bunch-selected botrytised berries are used for the production of late

Advanced Sommelier Miklós Katona (far right), who was born and raised in Hungary, and Master Sommelier Brandon Tebbe (second from left) were the two U.S.-based sommeliers officially recognized this year in a Confrérie de Tokaj ceremony. Katona serves as the Director of Wine Education for Confrérie de Tokaj USA. “For sommeliers, the Great Tokaji Wine Auction is also a great opportunity to visit vineyards, touch the soil, meet producers, and experience Tokaj firsthand,” he says. They’re pictured with Attila Balla, President of Vinum Tokaj International; Enikő Magyar, Wines of Excellence Project Director; and Dr. Péter Molnár, President of the Tokaj Wine Communities.



harvest wines, another blooming category from the region, where most of the winemakers can have fun without worrying about the minimum residual sugar.”

As the new “Year of Aszú” began to take root, the Confrérie de Tokaj held its sixth annual Great Tokaji Wine Auction on April 21. Katona says the auction helps the organization “reposition Tokaj as the international treasure it is.” “This year there was a record number of 31 wines made by 24 producers going under the hammer,” he adds. “Each year members of the trade as well as private collectors, importers, and sommeliers come from all of Tokaj’s major markets—Hungary, Poland, Germany, France, China, the U.K., and the U.S.—to bid on wines available only at the auction. On the same day, before it began, everybody had the opportunity to blind-taste each and every wine slated for bidding.”

At this year’s event, a 1963 5 Puttonyos Tokaji Aszú sold for the highest price per bottle in the history of the auction as simultaneous live bidding unfolded in London for the first time. “Next year we plan to organize live bidding from a city in the U.S.,” Katona says. “We have already done Tokaji wine dinners in New York and D.C. that were very well received, so we know there is growing interest in those markets.”

When asked to share insights into what makes Tokaj unlike any other region in the world, Katona explains that “Tokaj is located in proximity to two rivers, which create humid conditions that encourage noble rot [also known as botrytis].” “There are six grapes permitted in the region, but the one with the highest acid and skin most susceptible to botrytis is Furmint. It’s not only the best variety for Aszú, but also for dry wines because of its acidity and dense phenolic feel,” he continues. “Because of that, we can serve Aszú or late harvest styles of Furmint with dishes like foie gras, spicy Asian dishes, and everything from duck confit to creamy stone fruit desserts and classic American cheesecake.”

According to Katona, Hungarian wineries are producing two styles of dry Furmint or Hárslevelű: “zesty fruit-focused wines and richer, creamier, oak-influenced wines.” “We love the pure fruit styles with white fish and especially crustaceans or langoustines—savory, salty dishes seem to have a connection with the mineral taste unique to the grapes as well as the terroir of Tokaj—while we serve bigger, richer styles with chicken, pork, and turkey.” ■■

Unique Wines Not Available Elsewhere

The wine auction presents an array of unusual and exceptional wines representing the very best of Tokaj. Lots offered feature both wines still in the barrel and some already bottled; they cover a range of Tokaji wines including Furmint, Hárslevelű, late harvest, sweet and dry Szamorodni, and, naturally, the noble sweet 5 and 6 puttonyos Tokaji Aszú for which the region is most famous. This year saw new wineries participating as well as the largest number of producers to date, each of which brought a wine only available at the Confrérie’s annual auction. These special wines are part of the Confrérie’s mission to “open the treasure chest that is Tokaj,” said Dr. Péter Molnár, the newly elected President of the Tokaj Wine Communities organization.

History and Heritage

RECANATI WINERY SPOTLIGHTS ANCIENT VARIETIES WITH ITS BITTUNI AND MARAWI WINES

by Albert Letizia



Chief Winemaker Gil Shatsberg and Owner Lenny Recanati showcase Recanati wines at Spago in Beverly Hills, CA.

Some members of the industry might debate that a stigma of quality surrounds kosher wine. The moment they're introduced to a new Israeli winemaker, they think, "OK, they're kosher. Their wine is probably fine, but it's mostly there to serve a purpose."

While it's myopic as a whole, this presumption couldn't be more ill-advised when it comes to Recanati. Not only is the Hefer Valley-based winery reviving ancient varieties from biblical times and shifting to Biodynamic farming, it's also sourcing fruit from Palestinian growers as it positions itself as a fine Mediterranean producer championing native Mediterranean grapes.

Lenny Recanati and Chief Winemaker Gil Shatsberg brought the winery's inspired lineup to Spago Beverly Hills in April, showcasing classic Mediterranean varieties like Marsanne, Roussanne, and Carignan. They also introduced members of the trade to the ancient grapes they've been working with: Bittuni, a red grape likened to Pinot Noir, and Marawi, a crisp white grape.

"It's important to bring back indigenous varieties for two reasons. First, they are unique to the region and stand out. Secondly, wine was made here at least 2,000 years ago," Lenny explained. "The vision is to produce local Israeli wine that will express the region's special terroir, like a fingerprint." And while all of Recanati's wines are kosher, a lack of flash pasteurization during the production process ensures this requirement has no impact on quality.

With its warm climate, most of Israel's grape-growing areas are classified as Region III's to even the lower levels of Region V's on the University of California, Davis Heat Summation Scale—minimizing issues associated with ripening. Lenny and Gil, however, choose to seek an elegant, restrained style by avoiding heavy wines with high ABVs.

One of the first releases that really caught on for Recanati is made from old, head-trained Carignan vines found in its vineyards, which, as previously mentioned, the winery is working to transition toward Biodynamic farming. "We made the decision out of a pure belief that this is the right thing to do for the environment, for the quality of the grapes, and for the wellbeing of the people working in the vineyards," Gil tells me. "It's not going to happen all at once, but it is the direction we are taking."

The Bittuni will be available in the U.S. market for the first time later this year, while the Marawi had its first U.S. release in 2016. ■■

Recanati Winery released its Marawi, a crisp white Mediterranean variety, in the U.S. in 2016.



The Man Behind the Brands



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Lake Bartezek is delicate and crisp, made from Dankowskie Diamond rye cultivated near the glacial lakes of Northern Poland.



BELVEDERE SINGLE ESTATE RYE

Taste the influence of terroir.



SMOGÓRY FOREST

Smogory Forest is bold and savory, made from Dankowskie Diamond rye cultivated in the vast forests of Western Poland.

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