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THE tastingpanel MAGAZINE

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BARTENDERS THROUGH ITS
INDUSTRY-LEADING INITIATIVE**

Pernod Ricard USA operates several initiatives focused on educating bartenders at all levels of the hospitality industry. Key members of the brand advocacy team leading these efforts are pictured from left to right: Jamie Gordon, Senior Manager of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Advocacy; Shawn Kelley, Director of Trade Advocacy; Kevin Denton, National Mixologist; and Josh Pearson, Manager of Brand Advocacy.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A meal without wine is a like a day without sunshine."
—Robert Mondavi

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To Reclaim Your Space, Cut Down On Overly-Comfy “Campers”



A reliable source of annoyance for restaurateurs comes from observing people who linger far too long at their table. I’m sure you can picture them now: They’re chatting and slowly sipping their coffee, oblivious to those waiting patiently at the bar long past their reservation time. These inconsiderate hangers-on are known as “campers,” and they create serious headaches for management. One such party can totally disrupt the carefully-planned flow of a restaurant’s evening.

There is, however, a clean and effective solution for this problem I discovered, oddly enough, during my recent trip to London: “time limits,” in which restaurant staff tell patrons before they sit down that there’s a prescribed length of time they can have the table. In London, diners are told—very politely, I might add—that they’re allotted two hours of uninterrupted culinary bliss before they have to get up and make way for the next customers.

To some, this system is perhaps a bit arbitrary and harsh, like the sword of Damocles is hanging over their heads as they tuck into their meal. In actuality, though, the time limit is flexible. It could be 90 minutes or two and a half hours—whatever helps make the restaurant’s operation flow smoothly.

You’ll quickly realize time limits are not an onerous request if you time yourself in a restaurant as you dine out and see how rarely your experience exceeds two hours. Of course, it’s the restaurant’s responsibility to see that your meal proceeds at a reasonable pace, as long delays between courses are unacceptable when people have been given a time limit: “Here’s your dessert but, gosh, your time is up.”

And if you prefer not to formally follow this system at your own establishment, asking campers to bring their coffee or after-dinner drinks to the bar or a less-busy part of the restaurant is totally acceptable as long as you do so in a courteous manner. In general, expecting patrons to observe a time constraint should not offend—especially if their actions leave you high and dry with a line out the door. ■■

Anthony Dias Blue

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Anthony Dias Blue".

UPFRONT

WITH WHISKEY IN MIND

THE SPIRIT TAKES
CENTER STAGE AT
TOMMY TARDIE'S
NEW YORK
RESTAURANTS

Restaurateur Tommy Tardie at Fine & Rare, his spirits-forward restaurant in New York City with more than 1,000 whiskey offerings on its menu.



Fine & Rare offers three variants from the Wemyss Malts line of artisanal blended whiskies.

story by David Ransom

Comforting and homey yet also sophisticated, The Flatiron Room and Fine & Rare—the brainchildren of restaurateur Tommy Tardie—are two of New York City’s most inviting bars. Tardie, a Maine native, spent time in advertising before following his own creative dream to open a venue marrying four of his passions—whiskey, food, music, and woodworking—into one well-presented package.

While spirits and cocktails certainly play significant roles at each venue, Tardie quickly pointed out to *The Tasting Panel* that his establishments “are not really bars, per se, but spirits-forward restaurants.” Each establishment also has a full stage (musicians perform live every evening), a menu filled with fine cuisine options, and a comprehensive wine list. And as an accomplished woodworker, Tardie can often be found down in his basement shop at Fine & Rare, where he’s crafted much of the accent work seen in the restaurants.

Although The Flatiron Room and Fine & Rare—which opened in 2012 and 2017, respectively—have obvious similarities, Tardie likes to stress to potential patrons that they’re not merely carbon copies of each other. “The Flatiron Room was created with whiskey in mind, and with Fine & Rare, we wanted to build on that theme but also venture outside the whiskey arena to embrace all spirits,” he explains.

Both restaurants are major players in that so-called area, with lists boasting more than 1,000 whiskey offerings. But because several other

“I’m excited by the trend toward craft-made blended malt whiskies such as the Wemyss Malts Scotch whisky line,” says Tardie, who carries three Wemyss offerings on his list.



Whiskey-forward cocktails like the Manhattan Boulevardier are the stars of the show at both of Tardie's restaurants.

bars in town also promote themselves as whiskey-oriented, Tardie finds it imperative to his establishments' success that his customer base has access to whiskeys—and other spirits—they can't typically find anywhere else. To that end, Tardie constantly searches for what he calls “unbuyable” bottles at auction houses, distillery libraries, and private collection sales to add to his inventory and offer by the glass.

So, is it all about the “rare” for Tardie? Not necessarily. While having his finger on the pulse of the industry at his level of purchasing power enables him to buy pretty much any spirit he wants (and, naturally, he does), he wants his spirits offerings to exude a certain sense of accessibility, as well.

With that thought always in the back of his mind, Tardie is a big supporter of the current climate embracing artisanal blended whiskeys. “I'm excited by the trend toward craft-made blended malt whiskeys, such as the Wemyss Malts Scotch whisky line, Monkey Shoulder Scotch Whisky, and Copper Dog,” says Tardie. “They are well-made, offer unique profiles that are wonderful in cocktails, and further demonstrate the range and artistry of Scotch whisky.” ■



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PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING



PHOTO: TODD WESTPHAL

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Amstel Xlight Marketing Campaign Targets Consumers with Active Lifestyles

Amstel Xlight is redefining how light beer fits into an active lifestyle. The new “Fit for Real Life” marketing campaign began in February in Arizona, Texas, and Massachusetts and invites consumers to choose a light and refreshing beer they can feel good about. A social engagement platform featuring a series of digital videos aims to position Amstel Xlight as the obvious choice for health-conscious consumers; the spots all end with the tag, “The 2-carb, 90-calorie beer that’s fit for real life.”

At 4.2% ABV and with 4 IBUs, Amstel Xlight is the official beer of the 2018 Spartan Race in Arizona, Texas, and Massachusetts in keeping with its “Fit for Real Life” message. The Spartan Race, the world’s largest obstacle race and endurance brand, organizes roughly 200 events annually in more than 30 countries.



Scheid Family Wines Hires Three New Sales Managers

Scheid Family Wines in January announced the hiring of Keith Knack as Multi-State Manager for Indiana and Michigan. Knack will work with the company’s existing distributors, overseeing and managing education, inventory control, pricing, promotions, incentive programming, and market visits. He will also expand existing business and develop opportunities in both on- and off-premise accounts, including independents and local and multi-state chains.

Knack has been in the wine and spirits business for 21 years, with management positions at Moët Hennessey, Imperial Beverage, and J. Lewis Cooper (now Great Lakes Wine & Spirits). “In addition to his extensive wine knowledge and industry experience, Keith has deep relationships with key accounts and industry leaders across the Midwest,” says Heidi Scheid, Executive Vice President of Scheid Family Wines. “Keith will be integral in our efforts to expand our presence in this important market.”

The company also announced the hiring of two new sales managers to handle distributor support in California. Brian Escobar and Jennifer Harvey will work with Young’s Market Company to grow representation and sales in restaurants and independent fine wine shops across the state. Escobar will handle Northern California from his base in San Francisco, while Harvey will oversee Southern California.



Keith Knack is Scheid Family Wines’ new Multi-State Manager for Indiana and Michigan.



Jennifer Harvey will serve as Sales Manager for Scheid Family Wines in Southern California.



Brian Escobar, the new Northern California Sales Manager.

NEW


Ménage à Trois


DECADENCE

2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

93

POINTS

THE *tastingpanel*
MAGAZINE

November 2017


Ménage à Trois


DECADENCE

2016
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

California

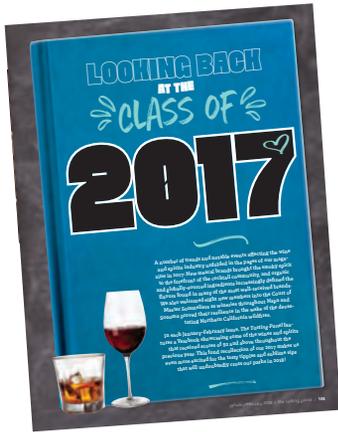
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We omitted the following spotlight from our 2017 Yearbook in our January-February issue. We apologize for the error.

MOST LIKELY TO MIND THE GAP

Westwood 2015 Pinot Noir, Annadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma County (\$44)

Westwood Estate Wines 2015 Legend, Annadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma County (\$44)

From 1998 until four years ago, Westwood Estate was dedicated to the Annadel Gap Vineyard, where variegated soils produced high-quality grapes that were then sold to other wineries. But all of that changed when founder Carl Stanton joined forces with legendary winemaking consultant David Ramey and winemaker Ben Cane: Today, Westwood oversees the 37-acre Annadel Gap Vineyard from root to glass.

In its pursuit of “logical farming” heavily influenced by Biodynamic practices, Westwood has placed an emphasis on Burgundy and Rhône varieties. The winery offers a portfolio of lighter to fuller wines, including Legend, its flagship blend made from an ever-evolving composition of red grapes.

Westwood 2015 Estate Pinot Noir Cherries and wild mushrooms perfume the glass. Rhubarb chimes in with a broadening of pencil shavings, which give way to deep earth with spiced basil and sweet sage. Raspberries are ashy and tobacco-drenched, and acidity leads the finish toward coffee bean and cinnamon. **94** —*Meridith May*

Westwood Estate Wines 2015 Legend A floral perfume with accents of red plum and black pepper. The palate is a silk road of gritty chocolate tannins that leads to red plum, dark chocolate cherries, jasmine, and grilled meat with soy sauce. The finish is pleasurable with a creamy cedar note. **95** —*M.M.*



The Cooper Spirits Co. Appoints Rick Scully as President, Aligns with Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits in 21 New Markets



Rick Scully, the new President of The Cooper Spirits Company.

The Cooper Spirits Company announced the appointment of Rick Scully to President in February. With more than 25 years of experience in the beverage industry, Scully previously worked as President of Peligroso Spirits Company. Prior to his appointment as President of The Cooper Spirits Company, he held the position of Senior Vice President of Sales.

The independent spirits producer also announced an expanded alignment with Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits (SGWS); the distribution rights for the Cooper Spirits portfolio will now expand to 20 new states and the District of Columbia. Southern Glazer’s is now the Cooper Spirits distributor for 41 U.S. markets and Canada.

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APRIL 2017 ISSUE

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New “Blade” Countertop Draught Beer System from Heineken USA Targets Small Operators

Heineken USA has announced the introduction of Blade, an innovative new draught beer system that aims to deliver a premium experience to on-premise accounts that may have considered their beer volume too low to warrant the investment. The system, available for \$437, guarantees brewery-fresh draught for 30 days and produces less waste. Blade fits on a countertop in a 12-by-19-inch area, requires no cleaning, maintenance, or installation, and weighs only 38 pounds.

Blade operates with Heineken USA’s proprietary BrewLock® system, which pushes air between multiple layers within an 8-liter disposable PET keg. By squeezing the inner wall and driving the beer out, the system ensures the beer remains untouched by outside influences and is served only with the natural carbonation already present. Blade also requires no keg deposit, costly line cleaning, or CO₂, and “guarantees fresh draught even when you only serve a couple of glasses a day or week,” says Blade Project Lead Cormac McCarthy.

To order the Blade BrewLock Countertop Draught System, contact your distributor representative. The initial Blade launch will be in select markets with Heineken and Birra Moretti kegs.

Bacardi's Acquisition of Patrón Tequila Expected to Close in First Half of 2018

Bacardi Limited, the world’s largest privately-held spirits company, announced in January that it is expanding its portfolio of premium spirits by acquiring 100-percent ownership of Patrón Spirits International AG and its Patrón brand, the top-selling ultra-premium tequila. The transaction, expected to close in the first half of 2018, follows Bacardi’s initial acquisition of a significant minority stake in Patrón in 2008 and reflects an enterprise value of \$5.1 billion.

According to the most recent IWSR data, this transaction will make Bacardi the number-one

spirits player in the super-premium segment in the U.S. and the second-largest spirits company in market share by value in the U.S. market. Tequila is one of the fastest-growing and most attractive categories in the spirits industry, with Patrón being the clear market leader in the super-premium segment.

“Patrón and Bacardi were both founded on the principles of quality, integrity, and innovation, and are driven by a sense of fearlessness—it’s in our DNA,” said Facundo L. Bacardi, Chairman of Bacardi Limited. “It has been a privilege being a partner for a number of

years with a remarkable entrepreneur like [Patrón Co-Founder] John Paul DeJoria.”

The Patrón leadership team, including Chief Executive Officer Edward Brown, Chief Operating Officer David R. Wilson, and Chief Marketing Officer Lee Applbaum, will continue in their roles.

Following the closing of the deal, DeJoria will serve as an ambassador for Patrón in the role of Chairman Emeritus and intends to work with Bacardi in further advancing a shared dedication to philanthropic projects and environmental consciousness.

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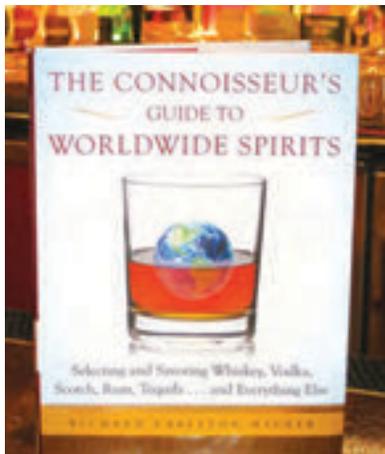
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Tasting Panel Contributing Editor Richard Carleton Hacker Pens Guide to Worldwide Spirits

Richard Carleton Hacker, an internationally-known spirits writer and a Contributing Editor for *The Tasting Panel*, has set out to instruct novices and aficionados alike on how to properly enjoy every type of spirit with his new book.

Published in January, *The Connoisseur's Guide to Worldwide Spirits: Selecting and Savoring Whiskey, Vodka, Scotch, Rum, Tequila . . . and Everything Else* explores the subtle distinctions between popular and obscure libations; the histories behind some of the most popular cocktails; how different spirits are crafted, distilled, and aged; methods for tasting spirits like an expert; how to set up a home bar; and much more. The 224-page manual also features more than 400 color photographs.

Hacker is an international writer and photographer, as well as a lifetime member of the Scotch whisky industry's exclusive Keeper of the Quaich honorary society. He resides in Sherman Oaks, California. For more information or to purchase the book, visit skyhorsepublishing.com.

Bill Newlands Named Constellation Brands President and COO; Rob Sands Remains CEO

Constellation Brands, Inc. announced in February that Bill Newlands has been promoted to President and Chief Operating Officer. Rob Sands, who previously held the title of President and Chief Executive Officer, will continue to serve as the company's CEO.

"Bill is a dynamic leader who has demonstrated an ability to advance our strategic priorities and strengthen our innovation capabilities in ways that further bolster our position as a leading total beverage alcohol company," Sands says. "I look forward to working with Bill to ensure our company continues to deliver long-term, sustainable growth that outpaces the market and competition."

In his expanded role, Newlands will have oversight and accountability for all operating aspects of the company and advancing Constellation Brands' position as an industry leader.



**Bill Newlands,
Constellation Brands'
new President
and COO.**



CORRECTION

In our 2017 Yearbook in the January/February 2018 issue, we neglected to include the score of **95 points** for the "Most Zin it to Win it" **Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel**. The review from Anthony Dias Blue was as follows: "This Zinfandel specialist has the chops. This wine—one of three distinct bottlings—is intense and rich with a strong concentration of berry fruit and a lovely style." ■■

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Scheid Family Wines is going straight to the source in its partnership with Young's Market Company in Southern California. From left to right: Bryan Paul, Senior Vice President/General Manager, Young's Market; Heidi Scheid, Executive Vice President, Scheid Family Wines; Matt Fraser, Vice President of Channel Sales, Young's Market; Al Scheid, Chairman, Scheid Family Wines; Scott Scheid, President and CEO, Scheid Family Wines; and Louis Balducci, Jr., CSW, Channel/Off-Premise Vice President, Young's Market.

May the Source Be With You

SCHEID FAMILY WINES CELEBRATES A CALIFORNIA COUP:
YOUNG'S MARKET COMPANY IS ITS NEW DISTRIBUTOR

A standing ovation from more than 100 distributor representatives greeted Al, Scott, and Heidi Scheid at a Southern California sales meeting as Scheid Family Wines launched its partnership with its new distributor Young's Market of California just days into the new year.

Serving as Chairman, President/CEO, and Executive Vice President, respectively, Al, Scott, and Heidi help lead the family-owned company. One of the largest growers of wine grapes in the Central Coast, its 4,000 acres of vines are planted throughout 11 estate vineyards in Monterey County's four climatic zones. The family grows 39 grape varieties, including 20 clones of Pinot Noir.

The partnership with Young's Market of California became official on January 1 with a well-received sales meeting in Northern California, and *The Tasting Panel* stopped by the second celebration held in SoCal. There, we witnessed a creative and endearing presentation from the Scheids that doubled as an introduction to their integral California sales team and marketing staff. Said

Andrew Powell, Western Regional Manager for Scheid Family Wines, "We are integrity leaders, weaving a clear path from distributor to wine buyer to consumer."

During the meeting, the Scheids, their sales directors, and Scheid Family Wines Marketing Director Laura Kirk Lee wowed the audience with the romance of Monterey County's vinous bounty through the presentation of several engaging visuals. A wall of impressive photos prominently showcased the Scheid's state-of-the-art winery and the people—from winemakers to viticulturists—working behind the scenes. Two short films were also screened, including a *Star Wars* parody dubbed "The Source Awakens" that featured a heavy-breathing—or rather heavy-sniffing—Darth Vader as he sought descriptors for Scheid's VDR (Very Dark Red), a Petite Sirah-Petit Verdot blend grown in Monterey County's



PHOTO: JEREMY BALL

The Scheid family graced the December 2017 cover of *The Tasting Panel*.

Hames Valley. Bryan Paul, Senior Vice President/General Manager for Young's Market Southern California, noted that the company was proud to have partnered with the Scheid family. "Both of our family-owned companies, Young's and Scheid Family Wines, possess a strong passion for the wine business," Paul said. "This is an important portfolio for us," Louis Balducci, Jr., CSW, Channel/Off-Premise Vice President for Young's

Market, added. "Not only do the Scheids produce all estate wines, but their sustainability practices and their broad offerings of everything from Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay to Bordeaux varieties give our on- and off-premise sales teams tremendous opportunities to grow the brand."

Scheid Family Wines has also partnered with Young's Market Company in Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, Hawaii, and Alaska. ■■

—Meridith May



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DEPUIS 1909

RIVAROSE

BRUT

The Mediterranean
Sparkling Rosé



IGP MÉDITERRANÉE SPARKLING ROSÉ

Shana Reade

CORPORATE TRAINER, EMPIRE MERCHANTS

As a Corporate Trainer at Empire Merchants, one of the nation's leading spirit and fine wine distributors, Shana Reade's role is extensive. While her primary focus is to educate the company's sales representatives, she also helps onboard new talent while introducing them to Empire's portfolio. Read on to learn more about her career and the trends she anticipates will define the future of the industry.

ForceBrands: From working as a sommelier with Jean-Georges to serving as the resident wine expert for an innovative wine app, your career in wine is expansive. Describe your current role at Empire Merchants.

Shana Reade: My main responsibility is teaching WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) classes. All of our sales reps are required to pass the Level 2 Wines and Spirits, and spirits-dominated divisions are required to complete Level 2 Spirits. Something I find inspiring is the Level 3 Wines class—the most intensive class we offer—is completely voluntary, but it usually ends up being booked to capacity with a waiting list. One of my favorite responsibilities is running a “Lunch and Learn” for our back-of-the-house employees to teach them about some of our products.

FB: Given that two of Empire Merchants' mottos are “training is a process” and “our associates are our greatest asset,” what value does internal training provide that you otherwise might not be able to gain simply by hiring top talent?

SR: Well, I think no matter how skilled someone is, everyone has an ability to improve. I think the resources Empire



devotes to this effort ultimately lead to greater job satisfaction and a feeling of personal accomplishment. Some of the classes we offer would cost quite a bit if our employees were to take them independently, and this allows our people to be consultants more than order-takers. So, in a way, Empire investing in its employees affects our customers positively as well.

FB: There's a lot happening in the wine and spirits sphere right now. Which current trends do you think will have the most far-reaching effects on the industry?

SR: One trend I personally find exciting is the desire for wine education by the industry and the consumer. A huge shift I've noticed is that rather than stumbling into this industry as a serendipitous accident later in their careers, more and more of our new hires studied wine in college or focused on the beverage industry in other ways. The success of craft spirits and beer, sparkling and rosé, and indigenous grapes from around the world is a product of a more educated and savvy consumer base, which results in a much greater diversity of quality offerings. ■■



AMAZING MONTEREY



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DAVE NAGENGAST, Director of Winemaking

“While each of our 11 estate vineyards is special to me, my favorite is our Riverview Vineyard. There’s nothing I enjoy more than pulling up in my truck as the morning sun peaks above the Pinnacles, shielding my face from the cold northern wind as it knifes through the rows of grapes, or catching my breath at the end of day as the sun retreats behind the Santa Lucia Range.”



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Signs of a Shake-Up

POTENTIAL REGULATION CHANGES AND BOLD NEW RELEASES MARK AN EXCITING SPRING FOR SCOTCH

by Ian Buxton

Whisky's 800-pound gorilla has been stirring as of late. According to recent media reports from *The Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere, industry giant Diageo has formed a confidential project team that's exploring ways to alter industry rules surrounding Scotch production.

One idea that's been broached is the establishment of a new category called "Scotch whisky infusion." This would encompass flavoured or low-alcohol blends sold under existing Scotch brands, though how that would impact existing labels such as Diageo's own J&B Urban Honey spirit drink isn't entirely clear.

Another proposal involves employing former tequila barrels to age new-make Scotch; currently, that would run afoul of regulations requiring "traditional" casks to be used. The reaction within the industry has been lukewarm at best, but with pressure from investors and all those old Casamigos barrels lying around, the incentive for Diageo to stretch the boundaries governing Scotch is considerable.

One new whisky making use of various casks—though quite within regulation—is the new **BenRiach Aged 21 Years**, a Speyside single malt matured in a combination of bourbon barrels and virgin oak,

Pedro Ximenez, and red wine casks. While all four have traditionally been used to age Scotch, combining them is an unconventional choice—one that's enabled Master Blender Rachel Barrie to build on BenRiach's signature sweet barley and fruit-laden style (46% ABV; SRP \$265).



Meanwhile, the U.S. release of **Tamdhu Batch Strength** marks the third time this cask-strength, Sherry-soaked Speysider has been seen in this style. At a hefty 58.3% ABV, this uncomplicated and uncompromising whisky (SRP \$90, ImpEx Beverages Inc.) gives enthusiasts the opportunity to customise their dram with the precise amount of dilution they desire.

Since its revival by the independent and family-owned Ian Macleod Distillers,

Tamdhu and its old warehouses have unveiled one treat after another for whisky lovers.

Also available through Impex Beverages at cask strength are two new releases in the **Chapter 7 Collection** from Swiss entrepreneur Selim Evin, who has made it a personal mission to find and bottle remarkable single cask whiskies. Launching this month are two Speyside whiskies (something of a theme this issue) both nine years old and from relatively obscure distilleries: **Allt-A-Bhainne** (\$65, 60.7% ABV)

and **Aultmore** (\$70, 62.2% ABV). These are hard to find in official releases, so they probably appeal most to enthusiasts.

In the Irish whiskey realm, **Jameson** has released its seventh annual limited-edition bottle design (40% ABV, SRP \$27) produced in collaboration with a group of artists. Just one of a number of recent releases for the U.S. from parent company Irish Distillers, it's said to represent "the bravery, unity, and opportunities that are possible when friends come together." With an introduction like that, the whiskey seems well deserving of a place setting at your St. Patrick's Day festivities this year. ■



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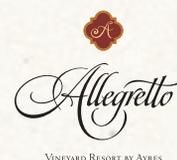


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A SELECTION OF BENCHMARK ITALIAN WINES TO WHET THE SPRINGTIME PALATE

story and photos by David Ransom



Winemaker Alessia Antinori with the Alberico Bianco at the Domaine Select Wines & Spirits portfolio tasting in New York City.

It's finally March and the grip of winter is slowly fading away. If your annual tasting calendar follows a course similar to mine, this means it's time to begin weaning yourself off your red wine regimen to focus a bit more attention toward whites in your daily repertoire. I recently had the chance to try some stellar Italian white wines made from classic European varieties that will keep me entertained through springtime and beyond.

First, at a tasting of the wines of Alto Adige—a wine region known to produce some of Italy's most sophisticated and elegant white wines—I found two that struck me as exceptional. Both were Chardonnay blends: **Beyond The Clouds Grande Cuvée** (SRP \$66) from Elena Walch (importer: USA Wine West), one of the region's most notable independent producers, and **Stoan** (SRP \$35) from the cooperative producer Cantina Tramin (importer: The Winebow Group). The former is "predominantly" Chardonnay while the latter is an exotic blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco, Sauvignon Blanc, and Gewürztraminer, but both wines showed the classic Alto Adige traits of voluptuous texture and fruit coupled with well-balanced acidity.

I was also fortunate enough to taste the limited-release **2015 Ornellaia Bianco** (SRP \$240) at an intimate luncheon hosted by the iconic Bolgheri producer Ornellaia (importer: Vintus Wines). A 100% Sauvignon Blanc wine made with grapes from three select vineyard sites on the estate, it features a flavor profile of ripe citrus wrapped in vanilla and subtle toasted notes. The Bianco is simply gorgeous on the palate, reflecting the same high standards Ornellaia is known for in the production of its acclaimed Super Tuscan Ornellaia Rosso red wine.

Lastly, at the Domaine Select Wines & Spirits portfolio tasting in New York City, I tried the **2014 Alberico Bianco**—a 100% Semillon wine that hails from the Antinori family's Alberico property in Lazio near Rome. The Bianco (SRP \$50) is a passion project for winemaker Alessia Antinori, who reclaimed an old-vine Semillon vineyard originally planted by her grandfather, Prince Alberico Boncompagni Ludovisi, to grow the grapes. Fermented in casks and aged six months in oak prior to bottling (then 24 months in bottle before release), the Bianco is textbook Semillon with complex aromas of tropical fruit, citrus, and hints of oak. Cheers to spring! ■■

The 2015 Ornellaia Bianco.



Stoan from cooperative producer Cantina Tramin.



The Elena Walch Beyond the Clouds Grande Cuvée from Alto Adige.





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Dream a Little Dream

ANDREW POLLARD DEPARTS BREAKTHRU BEVERAGE NEVADA TO BECOME ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BEVERAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR WYNN RESORTS

by Xania V. Woodman

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW POLLARD



Andrew Pollard is the new Assistant Director of Beverage Development for Wynn Resorts in Las Vegas.



PHOTO: JEFF GREEN

Even if you've never met Andrew Pollard in person, chances are you've sipped on some of his work in Las Vegas and throughout the Valley at some point. The Phoenix, Arizona, native recently transitioned to his new position as Assistant Director of Beverage Development for Wynn Resorts after spending six years creating 80–100 cocktail menus annually as a Beverage Development Specialist for Breakthru Beverage Nevada.

With Wynn and Encore's 27 bars now within his purview, it goes without saying that Pollard's responsibilities are extensive. First on his hit list was a much-needed update to the long-standing Signature Sips menu, which allows guests to order nine house cocktails at any bar throughout both properties.

Two of the earliest menu changes came with the addition of the Le Rêve cocktail (with Lillet Rosé, Giffard Crème Pamplemousse Rose liqueur, Aperol Aperitivo, and Champagne) and the house Gin and Tonic in January and February, respectively. "As rudimentary as it may seem, a number of variables come into play when making a great Gin and Tonic: the establishment's gin selection, the quality of the tonic or lack thereof, and the freshness of the citrus and the glassware, just to name a few," Pollard says.

On the tonic front, Pollard collaborated with The House of Bombay and Bittercube to fashion a proprietary syrup recipe exuding notes of grapefruit, calamansi, ginger, birch, and peppermint. For the cocktail, the syrup is combined with Bombay Sapphire East Gin, fresh lime juice, and Mixwell Mojave Grapefruit Soda. "We feel our interpretation will expand the parameters of what our guests may think of a Gin and Tonic and, more importantly, appreciate it overall as a great gin cocktail," he adds. ■■

Xania V. Woodman has been writing and editing at the intersection of dining, beverage, and nightlife for 13 years. Find her at the bar (and sometimes even behind it), on the slopes, or on the go to her next travel destination. Follow her on Instagram at @SinCitizenX.

Le Rêve

Created by Andrew Pollard, Wynn Resorts

- ▶ 1½ oz. Lillet Rosé
- ▶ 1 oz. Giffard Crème Pamplemousse Rose liqueur
- ▶ ½ oz. Aperol Aperitivo liqueur
- ▶ ¼ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice

Fill: Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut Champagne

Combine all ingredients (sans Champagne) in a mixing tin with ice, then cover, shake, and strain into a wine glass with fresh ice. Top with Champagne; garnish with a rose petal and strawberry caviar; and atomize with elderflower perfume.



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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.

James T. Ghanem has been named Director–Customer and Field Marketing at **Mast-Jägermeister US, Inc.** He had been Commercial Marketing Customer Marketing Manager–On Premise at Heineken USA.

Jayesh Needham has been named Brand Manager–Angel's Envy at **Louisville Distilling Company, LLC.** He had been Brand Manager–North American Whiskey at Diageo.

Meagan Sacher has been named Trade Marketing at **Campari Group.** She had been Brand Manager at Stoli Group.

Erik Navone has been named National Chain Director at **Shaw-Ross International Importers.** He had been Vice President of Sales–West at Foley Family Wines.

Alejandro Mercado has been named Trade Marketing Manager–U.S. Market at **Walsh Whiskey Distillery.** He had been District Manager–Gateway Perrone Division at Fedway Associates.

CAREER CORNER

Four-Step Interview Cheat Sheet

Resumes often make the first impression in the hiring process, but interviews can speak much more loudly than words on a page. Below, ForceBrands' recruiters offer up four rules that are fundamental for every successful interview.

Be Mentally Prepared Set aside time before your interview to get in the right headspace. It goes without saying that thoroughly researching the company beforehand is critical if you want to genuinely express your interest in a role, and being mentally and physically present during the interview shows you're actively engaged. Play the part by being as immersed in the company and its mission as you would be if you worked there.

Dress Accordingly Every workplace culture is different when it comes to dress code, but one rule remains consistent across the board when it comes to interviewing: Keep it professional. Dressing more formally than you normally would not only conveys effort on your part, but respect for the person or people you're meeting with. Keep it clean and simple and also avoid distracting accessories; you can showcase your personality through your conversation instead.

Be on Time You obviously never want to arrive late to an interview, but being prompt doesn't mean you should show up 20 minutes early, either. Aim to arrive five minutes before your meeting so the hiring manager is made aware of your arrival but knows you won't be kept waiting for long.

Follow Up There's long been a debate about the advantages of sending handwritten thank you notes over typed emails, but one thing is certain: Follow-up notes are a necessity. Thank the people you interviewed with for their time and use the notes as an additional opportunity to showcase your excitement about the company and the role. Aim to send your notes out within 24 hours of your meeting. ■■

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The coddies (salt cod mixed with Yukon gold potatoes) and stuffies (baked mahogany clams with smoked linguica) are just a few of the seafood dishes offered at the newly-opened Salt Line on the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C.



PHOTO: GREG POWERS

The Transcendence of Fish

A ROUNDUP OF
NOTEWORTHY
RESTAURANTS DRIVING
AMERICA'S STEADFAST
SEAFOOD CRAZE

by Merrill Shindler

Wise culinary travelers know to seek out the dishes that speak expressly to where they are. This is not easy in these days of express shipping—when a Maine lobster could be lounging in the Atlantic in the morning and on a table by the Pacific in the evening—but it seems like no restaurants rise to the challenge more adeptly than the many regional seafood eateries of America.

When in New York, I visit the aptly-named Grand Central Oyster Bar, which is to a pescatarian what the Vatican or the Wailing Wall is to the observant. Walking into the restaurant's remarkable tiled room—with its coved ceilings and long marble counter—offers a thrill akin to being face to face with the Mona Lisa: a sense that *this is it*. The full list of oysters runs into the hundreds with descriptions of the flavor and size of each option, and although many of the oysters arrive from a distance, many more are local.

Heading north, is there a better destination for a taste of the Chesapeake than the newly-opened Salt Line? Situated in the Navy Yard across from Nationals Park on the Anacostia River—which meanders into the nearby Potomac—Salt Line serves coddies (salt cod mixed with Yukon gold potatoes), stuffies (baked mahogany clams with smoked linguica), and johnnycakes with smoked trout salad and marinated salmon roe. The local oysters include White Stone, War Shore, Harris Creek, and an oyster from Maine called Cthulhu Deep: an homage to writer H.P. Lovecraft.

If you want to enjoy your seafood while bathing in history, head for the Old Union Oyster House, which has been in business since 1826 when, according to its website, “the American people were enveloped in an oyster craze.” The toothpick was first introduced to America at the Old Union and President John F. Kennedy often dined there in the private upstairs room. The steamers are sublime, and no one makes better clams casino.

And on the Left Coast, where sushi is the seafood of the moment, a personal culinary obsession of mine resides in Seattle not far from the iconic Pike Place Market: Ivar's Acres of Clams, which sits on Pier 54 on Puget Sound. The menu is long and heavy with fish, but I go there for the chowders, which I consider a near-religious experience—especially the clam chowder, which I would crawl across an acre of fish bones to reach. If Ivar's were open early, it would be my first choice for a straight-from-the-sea breakfast any day of the week. ■■



The Oysters Rockefeller at Grand Central Oyster Bar in New York's Grand Central Station.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAND CENTRAL OYSTER BAR



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THE FERRARI-CARANO
25TH ANNIVERSARY
SIENA EMBOTTLES

"La Dolce Vita"

BY DIANE DENHAM



◀ Inspired by the Super Tuscan wines the Caranos enjoyed in Italy, Siena is crafted with the same refined yet approachable spirit embraced at the Ferrari-Carano estate winery.

◀ Ferrari-Carano's future has rested securely in Rhonda Carano's experienced hands since the passing of her husband, Don Carano, last fall.

Perhaps nowhere else in California wine country is the Italian spirit more wholly embodied than it is at Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery in Dry Creek Valley. When Rhonda and Don Carano sought to establish the winery in 1981, the influence of their shared Italian heritage led them to a location with vistas reminiscent of the country's landscapes. They built a gracefully-imposing Palatinate estate evoking the grandeur of a noble Italian villa, but a *la dolce vita* sensibility prevails in the warm hospitality they offer there.

In 1990, the Caranos decided to add a red blend known as Siena to their portfolio: Inspired by the Super Tuscans, "the name derives from Dry Creek Valley's rich, deep sienna-colored mountains," Rhonda explains, adding that "the label itself, with its ragged die-cut edge, was specifically designed to reflect the soil and our heritage." Although the blend's composition has varied between that first vintage and the recently-released 2015 vintage marking Siena's 25th anniversary, the style and intent of the refined yet approachable wine has never changed.

Ferrari-Carano Executive Winemaker Sarah Quider reveals that Siena's early blends were more Cab-focused, but over the years the wine has taken a more decidedly-Italian bent. Sangiovese gradually assumed a dominant role and is the major component of the anniversary wine, making up 67 percent of the blend. Ferrari-Carano has also notably developed into one of Sonoma County's largest Sangiovese grape growers.



Ferrari-Carano Executive Winemaker Sarah Quider uses mountain-ranch and valley-floor Sangiovese to provide the backbone of the Siena red blend. The 2015 vintage marks the wine's 25th anniversary.



Italian Palatinate in style, Ferrari-Carano's estate winery in Dry Creek Valley, CA, is at once gracefully imposing and inviting.

The Current Climate

Since Don's passing in October 2017, Ferrari-Carano's future rests securely in Rhonda's capable hands. "The fact that Ferrari-Carano owns 24 vineyards in six appellations is a great part of our success," she notes. "Knowing the vineyards allows us to produce quality wines that are appreciated by consumers for their consistency and value. They know when they purchase a bottle of our wine that they won't be disappointed. Success is having repeat customers time after time."

One of the Caranos' most ambitious goals was to earn California Sustainable Winegrowing certification at all of their vineyards: an objective Rhonda deemed especially important considering global climate concerns. This was no small feat considering some of the vineyards exceed 1,100 feet in elevation, but after years of arduous work and dedication, 100 percent of Ferrari-Carano's vineyards have earned the credential. "This initiative has taken years to come to its full potential," Rhonda says. "When you're talking about farming more than 1,500 acres in six different appellations, it takes commitment."

Those lofty vineyards may be tricky to farm, but Rhonda is quick to enthuse about the role they play in the winery's greater identity and legacy. "Ferrari-Carano has always been recognized as producers of white wine, particularly Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, but equal attention should be noted for our

mountain Cabernet Sauvignons," she says. She's particularly excited about the winery's newest mountain vineyard, Mayacamas Ranch, where she says Ferrari-Carano aims to "produce superior Cabernet Sauvignon."

Crafting the Blend

In addition to the Cabernet in the 25th Anniversary Siena blend, 36 percent of the Sangiovese providing the backbone of the wine is also sourced from the mountain ranches. "The higher-elevation mountainside vineyards with shallow, rocky, low-vigor volcanic soil add structure and pomegranate flavors, while the Sangiovese from the valley gives juicy berry fruit and strawberry jam characters," Quider explains.

To round out the blend, Quider also mixed in some Malbec for the "lush, sweet plums" and Cabernet and Petite Sirah "for the touch of darker fruit and leather." After aging 14 months in about a quarter new French oak, the result is an easy-sipping, "medium-bodied, fruit-forward" wine bottled with a screwcap. And although Siena is ready to drink upon release, Quider is confident "it will continue to hold up nicely for several years, thanks to the good amount of mountain-sourced fruit, the Cab, and the Petite Sirah."

Asked for her thoughts on the 25th Anniversary Siena, Rhonda—who also loves to cook—responds with gusto: "Best of all, it goes great with osso bucco!" ■■■



Associate Editor Mara Marski is *The Tasting Panel's* resident bartender.

PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING



WELCOME TO *Mara's Bar*

"Hi! Welcome!"

I used to say these words hundreds of times a day as people entered my bar, and it's been too long since I've used them to greet new guests and friends. My name is Mara Marski and I'm an Associate Editor here at *The Tasting Panel* who's worked in the food and beverage industry for 15 years; in fact, I was working as a waitress in my hometown before I was old enough to drive.

When I moved to Los Angeles six years ago, my first job was as a food runner at John Sedlar's Rivera, where I was immediately captivated by the bar program Julian Cox had established there. Despite being a sheltered kid from the Colorado Rockies, I was suddenly working in a cocktail mecca of freshly-sourced ingredients and hand-cut ice. Since then, I've spent my time learning about—and imbibing—everything I possibly can.

Working at *The Tasting Panel* has let me combine two of the great loves of my life: drinking and writing. With my new nine-to-five schedule, I don't get to spend as much time as I'd like behind the bar, so this column gives me a venue to stay active in the community I love. So, if you're reading this, I'd like to extend you a "cordial" invitation to my bar once a month.

A Cordial Affair: Liqueurs Make a Comeback

A personal favorite trend of mine has been the recent resurgence of liqueurs on cocktail menus. As a young goody two-shoes, I never dared to sip from my parents' liquor collection, but I would often sneak a sniff of DeKuyper Peachtree Schnapps and yearn wistfully for a future in which I was old enough to taste this forbidden fruit. It's been a great joy to watch liqueurs evolve from saccharine taboos to quality ingredients making their way into the spotlight.



The Back Bar: Grandeza Premium Orange Liqueur

Grandeza Premium Orange Liqueur, which I was introduced to last month, is bursting with the sweet brightness and understated bitterness of a Seville orange. With notes of cinnamon and nutmeg on the back end, it's like drinking an alcoholic marmalade. Grandeza is sweetened with organic agave, and the sidecar packaging stays reliably attached to the rim of a glass as

it disperses its precious cargo into any drink you would normally sweeten with orange liqueur.

If you're looking for a way to incorporate liqueurs into your own cocktails this spring, try the Lillet It on Me courtesy of San Francisco cocktail creator Hannah Chamberlain (you can follow her on Instagram @SpiritedLA). "I envision this low-ABV cocktail as a perfect choice for evenings outside when you want a drink that's cool, floral, fresh, and herbal," she says.

Lillet It on Me

- ▶ 3 oz. Lillet Blanc
- ▶ ¾ oz. Giffard Crème de Pamplemousse Rose liqueur
- ▶ ½ oz. lime juice
- ▶ 1 tsp. Green Chartreuse

Add all ingredients to a shaker three-quarters full of ice and shake for 15–20 seconds. Pour into a glass full of crushed ice, garnish, and serve. ■■



PHOTO COURTESY OF HANNAH CHAMBERLAIN

C'MON



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Speed is a Strategy at Colangelo & Partners

by Michael Cervin

When Gino Colangelo founded public relations agency Colangelo & Partners in 2006, he had just left marketing behemoth Dentsu Communications after a decade-long career there. While the move represented a major professional shift, the guiding principles that first led Colangelo to the PR industry haven't wavered over the years. "I got into this business because of my love for the stories behind the wines and spirits: the families, winemakers, distillers, and their communities," he tells *The Tasting Panel*.

With 52 employees and offices in New York and San Francisco, Colangelo & Partners focuses entirely on food-, wine-, and spirits-related clients, including Napa Valley Vintners, Diplomático Rum, Frescobaldi, Vinality, Vintage Wine Estates, Wines of Spain, and many others. The agency offers four basic services, according to Colangelo: press relations, or "keeping clients in the news across all media"; events coordination for both "trade and consumer"; digital communications, including social media creation and development, direct marketing, and sponsored content curation; and relationship building and outreach with "somm and bartenders who carry a brand's story to consumers."

Colangelo says he's "always looking for ways to create value for our clients" ("I never ever take anybody's business for granted," he adds), but how is that "value" actually measured by his agency? In 2018, it should come as no surprise that online analytics play a dominant role. "With digital, we can measure web traffic generation, and if the client has e-commerce measurement, that can then be related directly



Gino Colangelo, Founder of Colangelo & Partners.

to sales," he explains. "It's the same with social media and online direct marketing: We can quantify fan/follower acquisition and engagement."

In such a tenuous media environment, however, things can change quickly. "There is a huge convergence in media right now," Colangelo says. "The lines between paid and unpaid media are breaking down more and more, and digital media presents new opportunities. Our number-one task is to create great written content and videos and disseminate that across diverse platforms, whether they're owned (e.g. LinkedIn, a company blog, or Instagram), earned ('traditional' press), or paid (advertising/editorial content)."

Despite the constantly-evolving nature of the business, Colangelo says his firm consistently applies the same

philosophy to their relations with all clients: that "speed is a strategy." "We believe in moving fast and creating value with integrated services," he explains, adding that rather than paying for overly-thorough planning and forecasting, clients want to pay for *results*: press hits, social media growth, and successful trade events where they can engage directly with buyers. "Regardless of the media platform, clients want validation of their brand by colleagues, critics, and fans," Colangelo continues. "Influence within marketing is becoming a much bigger deal, because now you have micro-targeted influencers" as consumers gain more access to information.

In Colangelo's mind, that trend can only continue to spur industry growth: "We're very optimistic about the future," he says. ■■

PHOTO: RAEMANN SERRA

What You See is What You Taste



Randy Tarlow is the Founder of cocktail syrup brand Liquid Alchemist.

At a suggested average pour of only three quarters of an ounce, the bold flavors of Liquid Alchemist's cocktail syrups shine in both modern and classic cocktail recipes. Made with natural ingredients in small batches, all seven flavors contain no alcohol and maintain their quality for long periods of time, making these products an asset to both beverage programs and retail stores. In fact, Liquid Alchemist syrups have an unopened shelf life of more than a year and an outstanding life of several months after opening. This attribute alone can help reduce production costs while elevating the quality, efficiency, and consistency of any beverage director's cocktails.

Founded in Los Angeles by veteran bartender Randy Tarlow, Liquid Alchemist is the result of more than a decade of hard work and dedication to the craft of making premium cocktail syrups.

"Liquid Alchemist was created out of necessity and by demand," Tarlow says. "Industry standard cocktail syrups tasted artificial, often containing ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup and extracts. I observed bartenders having to make their own as a result, spending valuable time and financial resources on production. With Liquid Alchemist, the flavor you see on the label is exactly what you will taste. We make delicious natural syrups so bartenders no longer have to, helping them to focus on service and excellence."

Liquid Alchemist syrups are currently distributed by Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits in various states throughout the U.S., and the brand team at Liquid Alchemist prides itself on being a resource to customers and industry peers. Visit the company's website at liquid-chemist.com for recipes and cocktail inspiration. ■■





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A spirit of collaboration and creativity shines at the San Antonio Cocktail Conference, which takes place annually in January throughout the Alamo City's historic downtown core. This year, more than 100 brands presented 160 cocktails at events throughout the weekend.

Spirited Proof

THE SAN ANTONIO COCKTAIL CONFERENCE
 DRAWS DROVES OF COCKTAIL ENTHUSIASTS TO
 THE ALAMO CITY

by Lori Moffatt



For anyone seeking evidence that today's libations industry is a playground of creativity and collaboration, January's San Antonio Cocktail Conference (SACC) provided spirited proof. Held since 2012 in the historic core of the Alamo City, the annual event now attracts thousands of industry professionals and cocktail enthusiasts to one of the country's most vibrant cities.

For attendees who know their revelry supports philanthropic causes, the added benefit is like a Luxardo cherry in the perfect Manhattan. Cathy Siegel, the conference's Executive Director, oversees SACC under the wing of Houston Street Charities; helmed by local restaurateur Mark Bohanan, the philanthropic organization has given more than \$700,000 to children's charities via the conference since its inception.

The chef's eponymous steakhouse served as the birthplace of SACC: When Bohanan revamped his bar menu around 2009, he called upon the late New York City bartender Sasha Petraske to lend a hand, and Petraske nurtured

the seeds of the first conference while furthering its charitable mission.

Even the detail-oriented Petraske might marvel at the sheer level of coordination required to pull off more recent versions of the conference, which in 2018 saw 9,000 tickets sold and 160 different cocktails served across various events. The three gala parties, meanwhile, gave brands an opportunity to pull out all the stops at the recently-restored St. Anthony Hotel; the whimsical children's museum; and the city's 300-year-old La Villita arts district, now listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In between in-depth seminars on topics like the history of Sherry, the regionality of agave expression in Oaxaca, and Texas' foray into the trendy vermouth market, this year's attendees could venture beyond the conference's official itinerary through activities like a tasting of rare rums from Maison Ferrand's Plantation Rum portfolio or a boat tour on the San Antonio River with Kimo Sabe Mezcal. "We want the conference to be good for the industry,

good for bars, good for restaurants," Siegel says. "For me, the success of one is the success of many." ■■

For more information on future conferences, visit sanantoniococktailconference.com.

Tio Mio

Signature Cocktail of the 2018
 San Antonio Cocktail Conference

- ▶ 2 oz. Herradura Tequila Añejo
- ▶ 1¼ oz. agave nectar
- ▶ 2 small dashes Angostura Aromatic Bitters
- ▶ 2 small dashes chocolate bitters

In a rocks glass, combine agave nectar, Angostura Aromatic Bitters, and chocolate bitters. Stir until nectar is dissolved. Add tequila and ice to glass and stir gently, quickly, and briefly. Zest a grapefruit peel over the cocktail and use as a garnish.

THE NEW TASTE OF THE WORLD

DID YOU KNOW?

TOKAJ was established as a closed wine region in 1737 by a Royal Decree.

YES NO

FURMINT has been produced in Tokaj since before Columbus reached the Americas.

YES NO

TOKAJ'S VINEYARDS contain a considerable amount of gold.

YES NO

TOKAJI wines produced between the 17th and 19th century were among the most expensive in the world.

YES NO

TOKAJI WINE'S positive physiological effects were already demonstrated in 1524 by Paracelsus, the renowned alchemist and doctor.

YES NO

2017 will be the "**YEAR OF FURMINT**" in North America.

YES NO

FURMINT is an indigenous variety from the world's first classified wine region, Tokaj.

YES NO

TOKAJI could only be obtained by prescription in the 1900's.

YES NO

THE SZEPSY FAMILY has been producing wines in the Tokaj Wine Region for 18 generations.

YES NO

Pope Benedict XIV famously said: "Blessed be the soil that hath grown thee, and blessed I am who drink thee".

YES NO



For more information and facts about Mad Furmint please visit: winesofexcellence.com



Peering—and Pouring— Beyond the Horizon

SOUTHERN GLAZER'S WINE AND SPIRITS FORECASTS THE COCKTAIL TRENDS SURE TO MAKE WAVES IN 2018

by Izzy Watson

Trends can be hard to predict—after all, who would have believed ten years ago that vinyl records would still be popular in 2018? But if any member of the trade can uncover what bartenders have been mixing up behind the stick, it would be Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits. North America's largest wine and spirits distributor recently sent members of its sales and mixology staff to visit 55 accounts in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago, where they drank nearly 250 cocktails to find out which flavors, techniques, and innovations might land on cocktail lists in a major way this year.

According to Southern Glazer's Director—National Accounts Brian Masilionis, who compiled the flavor trend research, a strong beverage program can deliver a lot more than high profit margins. "Unique, trend-relevant beverages tailored to a given brand can also help concepts differentiate themselves from competitors to drive guest loyalty," he adds.

Here are some of the emerging cocktail trends Southern Glazer's encountered in its jet-setting quest, with recipes from Southern Glazer's Mixologist Debbie Peek.

Bitter-Facing Cocktails

Although it's highly likely that sweet drinks won't make a mass menu exodus anytime soon, the popularity of IPA beers and coffee as a cocktail ingredient has shown that customers are seeking out bitter flavors across all segments of the beverage sphere. Amari and other apéritifs are being introduced as cocktail accents, while tea and coffee are perfect for infusions or for imparting complex flavors. Housemade bitters can also prevent a cocktail from venturing too far into cloying territory.

Garden to Glass

Although farm-to-table cuisine has been a popular concept in the restaurant scene in recent years, the concept has been making its way onto cocktail menus recently as well. Fruit has always been a popular cocktail ingredient, but whether it's in the form of cold-pressed carrot juice or yellow peppers adding some color, vegetables have also been finding their way into drinks more and more often. Herbs typically used in food preparation can also be utilized creatively behind the bar.

Adding Aromatics

As mezcal and Scotch cocktails become more ubiquitous, smoky flavors have been a valuable tool for many a bartender. Smokiness, however, is a slippery slope: While it can provide that coveted layer of complexity, it can quickly overtake the drink if it's not handled carefully. Ingredients that offer the mixologist control while also adding aromatic elements to cocktails are ideal, from smoked lapsang souchong tea to burning wood or herbs. ■■

Cafe & Tonic

- ▶ 1½ oz. spiced rum
- ▶ ½ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ 2 oz. cold brew coffee

Add all ingredients to an ice-filled tall glass, top with tonic, and garnish with an orange peel.



Strawberry Thyme

- ▶ 1½ oz. vodka
- ▶ 2 oz. lemon sour
- ▶ 2 strawberries (quartered)
- ▶ 2 thyme sprigs

Muddle strawberries, lemon sour, and thyme, then add vodka and ice. Shake and pour into an empty Old Fashioned glass. Garnish with a lemon wheel and thyme sprig.



Smoked Orange and Rosemary Old Fashioned

- ▶ 2 oz. bourbon
- ▶ ½ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ Orange peel
- ▶ Cherries
- ▶ Rosemary sprigs
- ▶ 3 dashes Angostura Aromatic Bitters

Smoke rosemary sprigs and an orange peel on a wooden plank with a torch. Muddle syrup, orange peel, cherry, rosemary, and bitters. Add bourbon and ice, then stir and strain into an orange- and rosemary-smoked and ice-filled Old Fashioned glass. Garnish with a cherry and a rosemary sprig.



Viticultural Vantage Points

HUNGARY'S UNESCO SITES SHOWCASE THE COUNTRY'S WINEMAKING HISTORY

by Izzy Watson



Pécs, the fifth-largest city in Hungary, is home to the Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral.



The Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma housed winemaking monks in Roman times and still holds wine-themed events.

Many tourists make visits to UNESCO attractions a focal point of their trips abroad, and in Hungary's case, the Tokaj wine region serves as a matchless representation of the country's rich winemaking heritage.

A member of the UNESCO World Heritage list since 2002, the region is just one of several major attractions in Hungary to earn the prestigious recognition. Read on for a brief overview of tourism destinations highly deserving of a spot on your travel itinerary:

Touring Hungary's Winemaking Heritage

With its thousand-year history, the **Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma** has a strong legacy in wine production and housed winemaking Benedictine monks in Roman times. The area around the abbey encompasses a vineyard and winery, and several wine-themed events are held there throughout the year.

Viticultural tradition also dating back to Roman times unfolded in the southwestern city then known as Sopianae, where tourists can now visit the **Early Christian Necropolis of Pécs** (the ancient network of tombs was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000). Just 35 kilometers to the south, the town of Villány is often referred to as the best place to discover complex and full-bodied Hungarian red wines.

To the north, the **Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape** is a geographically-diverse lake and wetlands area that ranks among the country's must-see natural attractions. The nearby town of Sopron, meanwhile, is known for its fruity and vibrant Blaufränkisch wines.

The Cultural Landscape of the Tokaj Wine Region

Situated in the northeastern part of Hungary and surrounded by hundreds of volcanic mountains, the Tokaj wine region finds its center in the small and peaceful town of the same name. Visitors to the region can seek out not only the appealing aszú dessert wine, but the elegant, vibrant volcanic whites of dry Furmint and Hárslevelű.

An even brighter star in the region is the village of Mád, which is known to surpass expectations when it comes to culinary and wine-related programs. The area also hosts a myriad of festivals, which condense the essence and atmosphere of Tokaj into tangible and unforgettable experiences. ■■



The wine country of Tokaj is known worldwide for its aszú dessert wine, dry Furmint, and Hárslevelű.

With A European Twist

AN INTERVIEW WITH LAS VEGAS RISING STAR **EMILY YETT** OF PRIMROSE

story by Richard Carleton Hacker

The real and surreal often intermingle in Las Vegas, but rarely with such grace as at Primrose in the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino/Park MGM. Juxtaposed on each side of the French-inspired bistro's foyer, the upbeat music of The Bar and the tranquility of the Garden Room find common ground in Beverage Program Director and Assistant Restaurant Manager Emily Yett's Provence-inspired cocktails.

An award-winning mixologist, Yett also created the onboard cocktail menu for Royal Caribbean's Harmony of the Seas on its maiden voyage from Paris. *The Tasting Panel* recently sat down with the woman bringing the south of France to Sin City.

Richard Carleton Hacker: How did you adapt your eclectic cocktails to the French Provence theme of Primrose?

Emily Yett: We have separate cocktail menus for breakfast, lunch, brunch, and dinner. I intertwined Mediterranean flavors with some popular Las Vegas cocktails, such as the Dirty Martini and the Marguerite, and merged them into one. The Di Coco is sort of an Aperol spritz versus a Piña Colada: You have Aperol and pineapple juice shaken together and topped with layers of fresh coconut water and Plantation Pineapple rum. It's easy-drinking, light, and refreshing.

What are three of your most unique cocktails?

Our Smoked Bijou with Bombay Sapphire East, Dolin Rouge, Chartreuse, and orange bitters is smoked in orange wood and presented in a clear smoking box. Our Aristocrat, made with Hennessy V.S, Calvados Daron, Lillet Blanc, Bénédictine, and Angostura bitters, comes garnished with an apple slice and a plume-like flower. One of our most popular cocktails is the Moulin Rouge, a deconstructed Old Fashioned made with 10 Year Old Bulleit Bourbon, Lillet Blanc and Rouge, and Angostura bitters.

What else do you do that's different?

A lot of my cocktails are not served with straws, because you need to experience what they taste like from the top to the bottom. I want you to go through all of those layers. ■■



Emily Yett is the Beverage Program Director and Assistant Restaurant Manager at Primrose in Las Vegas.

For more on Primrose, visit montecarlo.com.

As American as Bourbon and Rye

TITLE NO. 21 WHISKEY EXPANDS ITS PORTFOLIO WITH TWO NEW EXPRESSIONS

by Emily Coleman

At its roots, the American ideal has a rebellious nature: It's never satisfied with the status quo and constantly pursues a better way of doing things. Named after the amendment that ended Prohibition, Title No. 21 emanates this ideal by crafting whiskies that mix tradition with a heightened demand for both quality and uniqueness.

To that end, Title No. 21 recently released two new expressions, Bourbon and Rye Whiskey, which are currently being launched in more than 24 states by various distributing partners (including the brand's newest partner, Republic National Distributing Company, in Texas).

Title No. 21 Bourbon features a mash bill of 79% corn, 17% rye, and 4% malted barley, adding light notes of sweetness and spice. Aged and blended in Dallas, Texas, the finished product melds spirits of varied ages for a balanced, refined bourbon.

Inspired by the rye whiskey of the Prohibition era, the team at Title No. 21 decided to create a bold rye with a mash bill of 89% rye, 5% malted barley, and 6% corn. This whiskey rests in charred, new oak barrels for 12 months to nine years before it's blended into this distinctive style. "The vision was to create great whiskey that can stand on its own or be mixed in a traditional cocktail without losing its character," notes Kirsty Barefoot, Director of Trade Marketing for Southwest Spirits & Wine. "It was important for us to stay true to tradition by not adding any color, flavor, or neutral grain spirits."

No matter the expression, Title No. 21 continues to bring a taste of America's past into the present and beyond. ■■



Tasting Notes

Title No. 21 American Whiskey (\$25) The 21st Amendment was the repeal of Prohibition, so this aptly-named spirit is an inspirational message from our past and into the future for the production of small-batch whiskeys. A lightly-perfumed nose of orange marmalade and oak is pleasant and welcoming. The mouthfeel is satiny, with a chili-pepper-on-oatmeal twist that tops sweet, honeyed pineapple. At 80 proof, it's wonderfully approachable, and the pekoe orange tea finish is perfect. **95** —*Meridith May*

Title No. 21 Rye Whiskey (\$27) This spirit exudes an exquisite nose of buttered peaches, lemon verbena, and soft caraway. The palate for this 90-proof rye is particularly velvety; a dollop of oatmeal cookie notes drift alongside creamy butterscotch. Melon and herbal tea notes linger midway, ramping up a long finish that leaves flecks of black pepper. **94** —*M.M.*

Title No. 21 Bourbon (\$29) This 84-proof bourbon has a fruit liqueur-like nose with sweet peach, apricot nectar, and a hint of sassafras. Honeyed melon is ripe and dotted with white pepper and melted brown sugar. Almonds, apples, and cocoa flow through the orange zest core. The spiced cedar finish is clean and mellow. **93** —*M.M.*



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- How Garnacha/Grenache can be best positioned in today's marketplace
- A sensory exploration of the myriad styles this grape is capable of expressing via a walkaround tasting of food and wine pairings from California, France, and Spain, as well as an opportunity to taste an unusual (and literal) vertical of Garnacha
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Events Preview

The Summit Program

The full-day Global Garnacha Summit features seminars with limited seats, so please make sure to register early for your chosen selection.

Garnacha Unveiled

10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

A panel of leading producers from Spain, France, and California will explore the classic varietal characteristics of the variety; how it performs in different regions/terroir; and how it's interpreted by renowned producers from around the world. Master Sommelier Robert Bath, Professor of Wine and Beverage Studies at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia, will moderate the seminar.

Garnacha: The Perfect Partner

12:15 to 1:45 p.m.

This walkaround wine and food pairing featuring the Chefs of Copia will meld the signature flavors of Spain, France, and California with both 100% Garnacha and blends from around the world.

Garnacha Rising

2 to 4 p.m.

A panel of leading sommeliers, buyers, and distributors will discuss historical strategies for promoting Garnacha wines in addition to current consumption trends. The panelists will also exchange ideas for promoting Garnacha in today's marketplace with a focus on making it a wine of choice for young consumers.

Blind Tasting of Garnacha/Grenache

4 to 4:30 p.m.

Led by The SommFoundation with cash prizes of \$1,000 for first place and \$500 for second place.

Visit globalgarnachasummit.com for
Summit updates and registration.

The Bunny Slopes cocktail at Hazel blends coconut eggnog with sherry and C&R Despacchino in a coconut flake-rimmed glass.

New Season, New Tastes

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF TOAST-WORTHY DRINKS AND HOT NEW SPOTS IN THE D.C. AREA

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS



PHOTO: GREG POWERS

Isabella Eatery, a new 41,000-square-foot dining complex inside the Tysons Galleria in northern Virginia, houses eight food concepts and a cocktail bar.



The Tunnel of Love menu at Iron Gate featured the Galentine's Day tray for two with flutes of bubbly, rye Manhattans, and amaro truffles.

Unless your palate skews toward overly-sweet cinnamon rolls, the mall food court isn't exactly considered a bastion of creative cuisine. But when the offerings hail from celebrity chef Mike Isabella and his bar star Taha Ismail, that's reason enough to hop in the car and head for the 'burbs. Last December, I joined hundreds of well-dressed guests at a preview party for Isabella's ambitious 41,000-square-foot dining complex Isabella Eatery in northern Virginia's Tysons Galleria.

Amid the sounds of a live band and DJ, I tasted a greatest-hits sampling of bites and beverages from eight fast-casual and full-service concepts: pintxos and rosé sangria at the Moroccan-Spanish fusion eatery Arroz, chipotle chicken tacos and a black salt-rimmed Margarita at Pepita, and chilled oysters and Champagne at Requin.

Whether you adore or abhor Valentine's Day, Iron Gate Spirits Director Nick Farrell and Executive Chef Anthony Chittum had everyone covered in February. The fine dining establishment conceptualized an Edgar Allen Poe-inspired Tunnel of Love menu that categorized dishes and drinks into Full Hearts or Heartbreaks: The Galentine's Day tray for two paired flutes of bubbly with Rodham Rye Manhattans and amaro truffles, while a deconstructed Negroni with locally-produced Green Hat Gin and Capitoline Vermouth was served with a jello heart made with Don Ciccio & Figli Luna Amaro.

Even a pesky bomb cyclone couldn't keep hardy Washingtonians from sipping al fresco this winter. After sampling Chef Rob Rubba's dishes at Hazel in Shaw, I retired to the winter bar on the back patio to stay cozy by the fire under a fuzzy faux fur blanket. The On a Cleanse cocktail topped Civic Vodka, cucumber, ginger, and lemon essence with sparkling unfiltered saké, while Bunny Slopes blended coconut eggnog with Sherry and C&R Despacchino in a coconut flake-rimmed glass. I had to end the evening with a flute of the delicate Gérard Bertrand Crémant de Limoux Rosé from Hazel's new Champagne Chalet menu: After all, it's *never* too cold for bubbles. ■■

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.

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PRESENTATION IS EVERYTHING

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

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUECOAT GIN



CANYON SHAYER

Head Bartender at Philadelphia Distilling in Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia Distilling's portfolio features labels such as Bluecoat American Dry Gin, Vieux Carré Absinthe Supérieure, The Bay Seasoned Vodka, and Penn 1681 Vodka. What's your strategy for developing cocktails that are creative yet also straightforward in how they showcase the spirit's notes?

Because of our team's structure, we are able to have a comprehensive understanding of how each spirit is made and, ultimately, why each spirit tastes the way it does. As a bartender trying to develop cocktails, there really isn't any better inspiration than walking into the botanical room with one of our distillers and having a full sensory overload. With that base, our strategy is simple—we respect the spirit- and cocktail-making process by using the freshest ingredients possible, and we create simple and seasonally-inspired drinks highlighting the foundational characteristics of each spirit.

What has been your biggest takeaway working as the Head Bartender alongside a distillery?

I was born and raised in center-city Philadelphia, and I started bartending when I was 21 years old. "Growing up" in the hospitality industry using the first legally-distilled spirit in our state made the learning process much more personal, and maintaining this position has afforded me the opportunity to engage with such a large and talented community of people. My biggest takeaway has been learning and experiencing the full process from botanical to spirit to cocktail.

KYLE BRANCHE

Mixologist and Creator of the Bitters Hub blog in Los Angeles, CA

What's the first thing you look for in a bitter?

The flavor profile, meaning if there's one main flavor, I need to know how it comes across by scent and taste. If it's a combination of flavors, I check for what balance the owner has created with it and why. Think in terms of earthy, herbal, medicinal, woody, fruity, floral, nutty, and spicy—let these terms be your guide in purchasing a varied selection that covers all the bases. I think about these flavor categories in terms of linking them to the main spirits, so the goal is to have a range of bitters to go with anything.

There's a variety of bitters brands out there from all over the world. Would you say geographic location and culture have anything to do with the flavors and notes of bitters?

Oh, yes, many bitters brand owners have a history that's led them to do what they do today. That includes using herbs and spices based in the cuisine and culture they grew up in or have experience in as far as location. That's where research comes in on our part and the reason why I do the brand owner interviews: to delve into the history and get to know them better. ■■



PHOTO: PAUL DE LEON

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.

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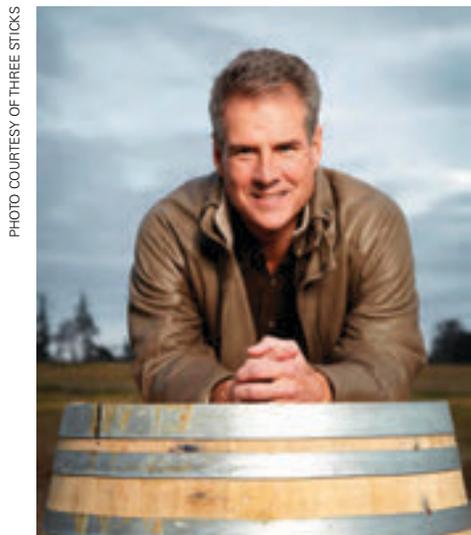


PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE STICKS

Bill Price III oversees a veritable wine empire, with Three Sticks serving as the most personal of his many projects.

Bill Price III grew up in Hawaii, where he spent his spare time in high school surfing. After attending Stanford, Price co-founded TPG Capital, a private equity firm formally known as Texas Pacific Group that later acquired Beringer Vineyards and Chateau St. Jean. Price's interest in wine, fomented by his French-born father, galvanized him to purchase some of the most high-profile vineyards in California, including Durell and Gap's Crown.

Price has since extended his wine empire by acquiring ownership roles in Kistler Vineyards, Buccella, and Lutum, but the most personal of his projects is Three Sticks. The winery, which draws its title from the "III" in Price's name, focuses on Sonoma Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. To bolster the label's prowess, Price hired superstar Bob Cabral, formerly of Williams Selyem, as Director of Winemaking.

Price lives in Marin County north of San Francisco, where he still finds time to surf. **Read on for Anthony Dias Blue's tasting notes on current Three Sticks releases:**

BILL PRICE III'S WINE EMPIRE GROWS WITH **THREE STICKS'** LATEST CHARDONNAY AND PINOT NOIR RELEASES

92 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **One Sky Sonoma Mountain Chardonnay** (\$50) Lush and pure with succulent fruit and a silky texture; elegant and tangy.



92 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Durell Vineyard Origin Chardonnay** (\$50) Bright, juicy nose; opulent with a creamy texture; tangy, polished, and precise with length and finesse.

93 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Durell Vineyard Chardonnay** (\$55) Smooth and refined with ripe fruit and fine balance; lively, crisp, and stylish; long and graceful.

93 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Gap's Crown Vineyard Chardonnay** (\$55) Sumptuous with vibrant acidity from a vineyard in the Petaluma Gap area of Sonoma County; precise and intense with a lengthy finish.



92 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** (\$65) Earthy nose with notes of wild cherry; tangy and crisp with juicy fruit and savory notes; racy, balanced, and long.

93 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Sta. Rita Hills The James Pinot Noir** (\$65) An elegant wine from Santa Barbara County; toasty, lush, and refreshing with depth and robust style.

93 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **PFV Estate Pinot Noir** (\$65)

A rich blend of fruit from the Gap's Crown, Walala, and Durell vineyards with notes of ripe cherry and sweet vanilla oak; complex with a tangy style and lasting finish.



94 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Durell Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$70)

Bright ruby color; smooth, long, and balanced with lovely structure and depth. A great wine from a great vineyard.



94 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$70) A dark and extravagant wine made up of four clones; generous with finesse and a balanced sophistication.

94 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Walala Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$70) A complete package with a spicy, savory nose and deep, intense style; full-bodied and mature with a lengthy finish. ☺



95 Three Sticks Wines 2015 **Cuvée Eva Marie Pinot Noir** (\$90) Silky-smooth and refined with abundant floral and vanilla notes; a stunning and exquisite rendition in the Cuvée series. ■■

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Sky's the Limit

BRENDAN COYLE STAYS ON AS MASTER DISTILLER OF HIGH WEST DISTILLERY WHILE PURSUING A NEW ROLE WITH CONSTELLATION BRANDS GLOBAL

by Catie Joyce Bulay



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HIGH WEST DISTILLERY



Brendan Coyle is the new Master Distiller for Constellation Brands' full spirits portfolio.



Over the past ten years, High West has established itself as an industry leader in the production of truly innovative blended whiskies across several categories. After serving as the Master Distiller at High West Distillery since its formation in 2007, Brendan Coyle will take on an expanded role within the company to help lead the growth of its global spirits portfolio.

In his new role as Master Distiller for Constellation Brands' full spirits portfolio, Coyle's responsibilities will involve both new product development and brand acquisitions. "A big focus of Constellation over the next five-plus years is to really build out the size and the quality of the spirits portfolio," Coyle says.

Stationed in Park City, Utah, Coyle will continue to be closely involved with the production and blending of all High West products. *The Tasting Panel* recently checked in with Coyle for his thoughts on his new position and the spirits industry at large.

Q Which qualities will you be seeking out in brands as part of your new role?

We'll be looking at them in a few different ways. One way is line extensions of a few different brands, and of course looking for different acquisition opportunities across all categories of the spirits industry. We're also considering building new brands as well—really nothing is off the table. First and foremost, we're looking to leverage our existing assets within our global portfolio. We also have a ventures arm where we do smaller investments in smaller brands. It's really a multi-faceted strategy, but it's focused on high-quality price points, for sure.

Q Are there any new products you're especially excited about?

On the High West side of things, the next thing we're probably anticipating is an American malt whiskey launch toward the end of 2019 or beginning of 2020.

Q What inspired you to pursue your new position with Constellation Brands?

I've always really been driven by and focused on building things from the ground up. I was in the brewing industry before the spirits industry with a small and very fast-growing brewing company, then I've been involved with High West Distilling Company since it started in 2007. The Constellation spirits portfolio is really a smaller portfolio that could benefit from not just growth in quality, but growth in size. ■■

Anthony Laborin is the Bar Manager at the Farmhouse at Roger's Gardens in Newport Beach, CA.

FARMHOUSE AT ROGER'S GARDENS WHIPS UP INVENTIVE COCKTAILS IN A BOTANICAL ENVIRONMENT

Farm to Bar

by Rich Manning

It's 3 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon, and Anthony Laborin, Bar Manager at Farmhouse at Roger's Gardens in Newport Beach, California, has just arrived for his shift behind the stick. In reality, though, Laborin's workday started hours ago: Like all Wednesdays, he spent his morning accompanying Farmhouse Executive Chef Rich Mead to the Santa Monica Farmers' Market, some 55 miles away from his bar, to seek out uncommon ingredients for his cocktail program.

Laborin has created a killer bar program in an off-kilter space. The "Roger's Gardens" in Farmhouse's full name refers to a seven-acre nursery that's spent decades selling plants and patio swag to well-heeled locals—not exactly the type of place you'd expect to stumble upon a stellar cocktail menu.

But since Farmhouse opened in its parent venue's back-left corner in September 2016, Laborin has steadily grown its bar from a novel curiosity to a serious drinking destination. "Our bar is ripe for experimentation, particularly because our setting is so inspired," Laborin says. "No idea is too crazy or outside the box. Sometimes, a weird, funky ingredient is what's needed to create something unique."

As an example, consider Laborin's unorthodox creation Not Mushroom in This Bar: a rye whiskey-based beverage infused with housemade mushroom and vodka-soaked Granny Smith tinctures. The ingredients coalesce into a smooth, robust beverage with a nuanced earthiness that melds with the property's verdant surroundings.

Creative riffing also dominates Laborin's conversations with Mead, a pioneering Orange County chef whose advocacy for fresh and sustainable cuisine was solidified well before the term "farm to table" was coined. According to Laborin, Mead's inventiveness in the kitchen strongly informs his bar program. "Rich always tells me that if an ingredient I'm playing around with isn't working, he'll just figure out a way to use it in his food," he says. "This provides me with a tremendous amount of freedom."

This chef-sanctioned artistic license isn't wasted, as the mushroom-kissed cocktail demonstrates, and if you ask Laborin, it's also far from exhausted. "If there is a ceiling to what we can do with Farmhouse's bar program, we haven't seen it yet," he says. "Personally, I don't think there is one." ■■



Not Mushroom in This Bar

- ▶ 1½ oz. High West Double Rye Whiskey
- ▶ 1 oz. Vya sweet vermouth
- ▶ ¼ oz. absinthe
- ▶ ¼ oz. old-fashioned simple syrup
- ▶ 1 dash Angostura Aromatic Bitters
- ▶ 2 dashes shiitake mushroom tincture
- ▶ 5 dashes Granny Smith apple tincture

Build ingredients into a mixing glass. Add ice and stir until diluted. Strain into a martini glass. Express oil from a lemon twist over the glass.

MEZCAL

MASTER SOMMELIER AND WINEMAKER RICHARD BETTS IS THE FOUNDER OF SOMBRA, A 90-PROOF SUPER-PREMIUM MEZCAL BRAND THAT ADHERES TO ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY AND TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION PRACTICES.

ROOTED IN HISTORY,

Anchored in
Community

WITH ITS DISTINCT OAXACAN CHARACTER, **SOMBRA MEZCAL** CENTERS ITSELF AROUND SUSTAINABILITY AND TRADITION

by Izzy Watson



PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMBRA

***THE AGAVE USED IN SOMBRA'S
MEZCAL IS HARVESTED BY HAND
IN OAXACA, MEXICO.***

When Master Sommelier and winemaker Richard Betts ventured south of the border with a goal of immersing himself in the world of tequila, it didn't take long for his plans to shift course. A native of Tucson, Arizona, who grew up drinking agave-derived *bacanora* liquor in Sonora, Mexico, Betts instead found himself enamored by mezcal and the terroir of Oaxaca.

Above all, Betts was drawn to the spirit's robust ties to the people, geography, history, and cuisine of the region. Twenty-six of Mexico's 32 states have a history of mezcal production, but Oaxaca, with its varied terrain and diversity of agave varieties, has become the epicenter of the mezcal movement.

In launching his own super-premium mezcal brand, Sombra, Betts has tapped into Oaxaca's vast potential for producing spirits with a regional character so distinct it practically leaps from the glass. Betts is adamant about following traditional methods when it comes to production of the label, which won a Double Gold medal at the 2016 San Francisco World Spirits Competition. "Sombra is produced in the same way mezcal has been made in Mexico for several hundred years," Betts says. "It's about organically-farmed, mountain-grown agave that is hand-harvested, stone tahona-ground, wild yeast-fermented, and copper pot still-distilled. It's a painstaking process that requires time, effort, and age-old expertise."

Sombra's relationship with its home region is just as important as the contents of the bottle to Betts, and he's constantly looking for ways to improve the brand's production methods to adhere to environmentally-friendly practices. In addition to collecting rainwater and utilizing solar power, the distillery sources its firewood from certified sustainable forests, composts its fermented agave and effluent for area farmers, and upcycles agave byproduct into compressed adobe bricks for local housing.

The company is also a member of global organization 1% For the Planet, donating 1 percent of sales to environmental charities and educational initiatives in Oaxaca. "When we decided at Sombra to build our own distillery, we were forced to confront the question of how to make mezcal clean and modern without sacrificing the artisanal craft—how to respect tradition but also transcend it," Betts says. ■■



***AFTER THE AGAVE IS HARVESTED, IT'S
THEN ROASTED OVER AN OPEN FIRE
WITH FIREWOOD SOURCED FROM
CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE FORESTS.***

NASHVILLE

Breaking the Nashville Norm

by Jesse Hom-Dawson



The Simple Ration cocktail with gin and tonic reflects Jon Howard's commitment to utilizing local produce: It features a seasonal shrub that changes depending on what's available.

CRAFT
COCKTAILS
AND MODERN
AMERICAN
CUISINE
FROM
HENLEY
ARRIVE IN
MUSIC CITY



PHOTO COURTESY OF HENLEY NASHVILLE

Jon Howard is the Lead Bartender at Henley in Nashville, TN.

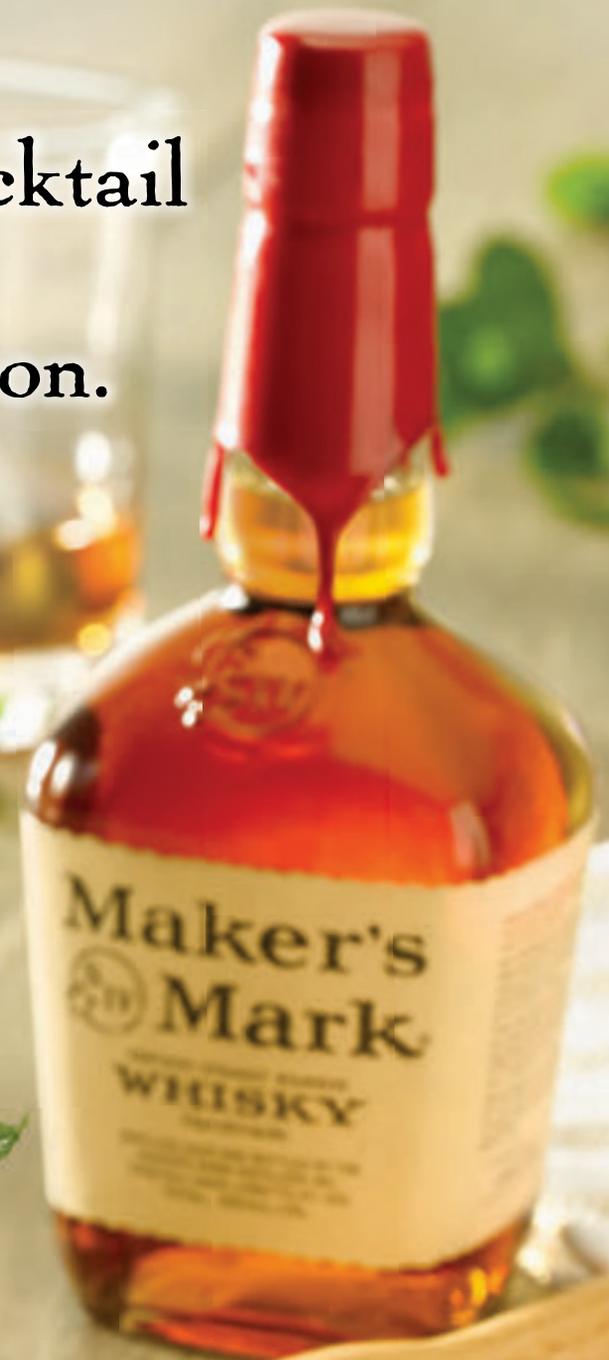
While Nashville is known worldwide for its burgeoning music scene and hot chicken, well-crafted cocktails have never exactly topped the city's list of accolades. However, a number of local spots now boast dynamic bar programs that defy these managed expectations, and Henley—a modern American brasserie located on the quiet end of the famous Broadway strip—has established itself as a go-to for locals and visitors alike since it opened eight months ago.

The man in charge behind Henley's bar since the outset is Jon Howard, an industry veteran whose stints at Saxon + Parole, the BLT Restaurant Group, and Old Glory in New York City have established him as a cocktail connoisseur. With nearly 20 original cocktails, Henley's bar menu embodies Howard's skill at crafting a lineup specifically tailored to food-friendliness: The drinks pair seamlessly with menu items like smoked duck egg gemelli or heirloom grits with chicken-fried sweet tooth mushrooms. "I try to avoid polarizing flavors like amaro and bitters. Instead, we focus on ingredients like vinegars, salt, and shrubs—flavors that are lighter and brighter," Howard explains. "Even our whiskey drinks are on the lighter side."

In an effort to prioritize sustainability, Howard also works with Henley's kitchen staff to utilize regional fruits and vegetables wherever possible. "We're trying to create less waste here, so we don't use twists as garnishes, and everything's dried or in oil form," he says. The bar menu often changes depending on what's in season and on hand at the restaurant. Two drinks, the Simple Ration and the Immediate Impact with Bulleit Bourbon, both list rotating "local produce" among their ingredients: The former uses a rotating seasonal shrub mixed with gin and produce, and the latter recently featured the rarely-seen flavor combination of grapes and shiso leaf. "Our kitchen works backwards—they ask the farmer what's available and work on their menu from there, so our bar is the same way," Howard explains. "The kitchen recently gave us two cases of sprouted coconuts, so I ended up coming up with a coconut fat-washed cocktail."

Despite Nashvillians' collective love of heavy barbeque and beer-and-a-shot combos, patrons have carved out a place in their hearts and stomachs for Henley's more delicate fare. "We know it's different that what people expect when they come to Nashville, but we've been received really well by everyone, and I think they appreciate giving their palate a break!" Howard says. With a full beer and wine list in addition to its plentiful beverage options, which include eight Manhattans, non-alcoholic libations, and dessert drinks, Howard has made good on his quest to create an expansive and creative list that's welcoming to everyone—not unlike Music City itself. ■■

This handmade cocktail
calls for a
handmade bourbon.



Maker's
 **Mark**®

Q&A

Juan Sevilla,
Mixologist for Southern Glazer's—Southern California,

Interviews

Chris Amirault,

Bar Program Director at Downtown L.A.'s Otium

photos by Seth Hancock



Raised in Lynn, Massachusetts, just ten miles north of downtown Boston, Chris Amirault had dreams of playing professional basketball overseas. After a losing bet with his high school guidance counselor required him to audition for the school play, Amirault ended up going to college to study theater and eventually settled in Los Angeles at 23. He landed his first bar industry job as a barback at Fraiche in Culver City, but it wasn't until Amirault attended an intensive seven-week bartending course led by Julian Cox that he really started to immerse himself in the cocktail world.

Amirault has since worked in many fine establishments in the L.A. area, including The Eveleigh and The Fiscal Agent, and in 2016, he became the Bar Program Director at New American restaurant Otium in Downtown Los Angeles. Juan Sevilla of Southern Glazer's recently sat down with the Bacardi Legacy Global Cocktail Competition National Finalist to discuss the importance of mentorship and work-life balance, as well as L.A.'s ascent within the global culinary scene.

Q Juan Sevilla: What's been your favorite thing about working at Otium?

Chris Amirault: My favorite part of this job is the collaboration with the chefs. When I got here, I already had what I thought was a pretty good lexicon of manipulating ingredients and understanding how they work, but I learned there was so much room for improvement. Being able to bounce ideas off of (Executive Chef) Tim Hollingsworth, along with the sous chefs, the executive sous, the pastry chef, and even some of the line cooks, is amazing.

Q These days, you see so many great bartenders going into brand ambassador positions or consulting gigs early in their careers. What has kept you behind the bar and actively involved in the daily operation?

When I was in Julian Cox's class, it was hands-on mentorship, and I don't think that really exists as much right now because you have a lot of these really talented people working for brands or traveling as consultants. Yes, they can still offer advice, but they're not there to nurture from day one all the way until that newcomer is able to run their

own program. I want to be able to help pass on any information I have to the next generation.

Q How do you balance your life so as not get burnt out while working in a busy restaurant like Otium?

I think that when you have a job like this, your creativity never stops. You can't go out to dinner without looking at the bar setup or thinking, "Wow, that's amazing," when a dish comes out a certain way. One of my mentors from theater school told me no matter what you're doing, you need to reserve an hour a day to yourself where you do something that has nothing to do with your job so that when you do go back, you can feel a little bit fresher.

Q Otium deservedly has a large and passionate following. How does the ambiance and environment inspire or affect you when you're putting together a cocktail menu?

We have a really good balance of taster-makers, chefs, and bartenders from around the world and people who seek out food and beverage experiences. We're also next to The Broad museum, so we get a lot of tourists. When it comes to picking the spirits, we try to hit everything so there's something for everyone to drink here, but I try not to let everyone else dictate what I do—I like to try to make a strong statement and hopefully people will respond to it. That's why we call ourselves a quintessential L.A. restaurant, because we don't put fences around what we can do creatively.

Q It's safe to say that L.A. is in a great place in regards to its restaurant and bar scene. Is there any other city you would like to work in?

I think L.A. is finally getting recognition that's been deserved for a long time. I'm very happy here and I can't imagine myself being in another city right now, but there are two places I'd consider in the future. One is Boston—I'd love to go back and leave a little piece of what I do in L.A. for my family there. The other place is Paris—the energy of that city, the culture, the fashion, the food, the beverages. They don't do anything halfway. Walking through the streets of Paris with a cigar and no agenda was one of my favorite moments of my entire life. ■■



Chris Amirault is part of the imaginative team behind New American restaurant Otium. "That's why we call ourselves a quintessential L.A. restaurant, because we don't put fences around what we can do creatively," he says.

Armonía

- ▶ 1¼ oz. Bacardi Gold
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lime
- ▶ ¾ oz. yuzu honey
- ▶ 1 barspoon Kalani Coconut Liqueur
- ▶ 8 Japanese dashes of Angostura Aromatic Bitters

Combine and shake ingredients, then strain over a big rock. Garnish with an espresso tuile.



Anthony Dias

BLUE *REVIEWS*

Presented by  **BLUE LIFESTYLE**

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

85-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

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

 The “twisty” icon indicates wines sealed with a screwcap closure.

For additional Blue Reviews, go to www.bluelifestyle.com.

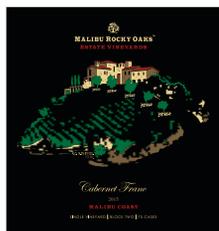
Prices are for 750 ml. bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC

92 **Foley Johnson 2013 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford** (\$75) Deep ruby color; smooth, dense, and tangy with edgy, rich style; tannic and lush with potential, given some cellar age.



92 **Ilaria 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley** (\$65) Smooth plum nose; ripe, zesty, and concentrated with balance and finesse; long and nicely-structured from winemaker Anna Monticelli.



91 **Malibu Rocky Oaks 2015 Cabernet Franc, Malibu Coast AVA** (\$28) Earthy and herbal nose; clean, balanced, and stylish from an estate vineyard overlooking the Pacific with 700 vines of Cabernet Franc.



93 **Miner Family Winery 2013 The Oracle Red Wine, Napa Valley** (\$100) A polished blend of all five Bordeaux varieties with a rich cardinal hue; nose of plum with some vegetal notes; tangy and well-balanced with a long finish.



94 Morgan Winery 2015 G17 Syrah, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$22) Glossy and lush with deep blackberry fruit; bright, juicy, and spicy; crisp and stylish. 87% Syrah, 9% Grenache, and 4% Tempranillo.



93 Pellet Estate 2015 Henry's Reserve Red Blend, St. Helena (\$125) Lush and ripe with spice and berry fruit; toasty and elegant with depth and complexity; a beautiful blend made from a rare selection of estate fruit.



93 Sergio 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Arcano Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$125) Dark ruby hue with an expressive, dense nose; spicy and succulent with ripe plum; concentrated and intense with a long finish.

91 Sanctuary 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford AVA (\$50) Vibrant and luscious with a creamy texture; tangy plum with hints of vanilla and toasty oak; a premium and well-balanced wine from the Fetzer people.

95 Shafer Vineyards 2013 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$285) Fragrant with plum and rich flavors of toasty oak; lush texture and complexity; elegant and concentrated, long and balanced; a Napa Valley superstar aged 32 months in 100% new 60-gallon French oak barrels.

93 Siduri 2015 Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$55) Medium crimson color from a label named for the Babylonian goddess of wine; velvety with ripe cherry and floral notes; herbal and generous with a crisp, tangy finish.

91 Valerie's Vineyard 2016 One-Acre Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$40) Silky with bright raspberry fruit; juicy and fresh with tangy notes; crisp and exuberant; lively and long from a terroir-driven one-acre vineyard.

IMPORTS



93 Maximin Grünhäuser 2016 Riesling Spätlese, Abtsberg Vineyard, Mosel (\$46) Apricot nose; lush and sweet with tangy acidity and notes of honey and stone fruit; racy, exuberant, and fresh from one of my favorite Mosel producers.

LOOSEN BROS. USA

91 Craggy Range 2017 Te Muna Road Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$22) Grassy nose; smooth and sumptuous with bright acidity and depth; balanced and deep from an American-owned winery that's one of New Zealand's best. ☺

KOBRAND CORP.

92 Teperberg 2013 Legacy Petite Sirah, Samson, Israel (\$70) Balanced, spicy, and earthy; juicy and impressive. Aged in new French oak wooden barrels for 18 months, then in bottle for an additional ten. Kosher.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

92 Vitkin Winery 2016 Red Israeli Journey, Sharon, Israel (\$24) Smooth, bright, and lively; juicy with spice and ripe blackberry; a Rhône blend that is balanced and charming. Kosher.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

VALUE

88 Cycles Gladiator 2016 Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$12) Bright yellow color; silky with clean, crisp fruit; juicy, fresh, and long; a remarkable value from winemaker Adam LaZarre, a three-time winner of the Los Angeles International Wine Competition. ☺

WINE HOOLIGANS

88 Villa Wolf 2016 Pinot Noir Rosé, Pfalz, Germany (\$12) Light pink color with a raspberry nose; tangy and luscious with dry, lively style; made by the master, Ernst Loosen. ☺

LOOSEN BROS. USA

88 San Lorenzo Vini 2016 Casabianca Trebbiano, Trebbiano d'Abruzzo DOC, Italy (\$13) Dry, mineral, and well-balanced with graceful, refreshing style; long and juicy. 90% Trebbiano d'Abruzzo and 10% Malvasia.

R.S. LIPMAN COMPANY



BLUE REVIEWS

88 **Madison Ridge 2017 Banker's Lane Chardonnay, Riverina, Australia (\$13)** Fresh fruit nose; silky and fresh with smooth, balanced flavors; tangy and bright; long and clean.

WINE TREES USA

88 **Cambridge Cellars 2016 Cambridge & Sunset Merlot, California (\$14)** Polished, ripe, and plummy; rich and balanced; dense with a lengthy finish.

WINE TREES USA

88 **Infamous Goose 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$14)** Smooth, tangy, and citrusy from low-fertility soil in the Wairau River Valley; concentrated and lively with minerals and bright acidity. ☺

90 **The Seeker 2016 Pinot Noir, France (\$14)** Produced by a tenth-generation family winery with grapes from the Puy de Dôme and Méditerranée regions. Bright and fresh with notes of cherry and savory spice; clean and vigorous. ☺

KOBRAND CORP.

88 **River Road Family Vineyards & Winery 2016 Chardonnay, Sonoma (\$15)** Glossy and ripe with fresh fruit and vanilla notes; precise, balanced, and long. ☺



88 **Scotto Cellars 2016 Anthony & Dominic Chardonnay, North Coast (\$15)** Silken, juicy texture with notes of citrus from winemaker Paul Anthony Scotto; bright with balance and length.

BEAM SUNTORY

89 **Bodega Aniello 2017 006 Riverside Estate Pinot Noir, Rio Negro, Patagonia, Argentina (\$17)** Tangy and lively with crisp acidity and racy cherry fruit; bright and refreshing.

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

91 **Niro 2015 Montepulciano, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC (\$18)** Deep ruby color with a spicy, berry-tinged nose; creamy and lush with earth, spice, and rich blackberry fruit; lean and charming.

PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL

90 **Wittmann 2016 100 Hills Pinot Blanc Dry, Rheinhessen, Germany (\$18)** Smooth, mineral, and dry with racy acidity; crisp and fresh. Produced on a Biodynamic estate by a family with a winemaking history dating back to the 17th century. ☺

LOOSEN BROS. USA

90 **Silkbush Mountain Vineyards 2016 Viognier, Breedekloof, South Africa (\$20)** Sumptuous with ripe tropical fruit and clean style; silky and juicy with balance and good length. ☺

HERITAGE LINK BRANDS

SPIRITS



96 **Bowmore Vintner's Trilogy 26 Year Old Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky French Oak Barrique, Scotland (\$540)** Deep amber color with a smoky, spicy nose; toasty with sweet vanilla notes and a silky texture; complex, long, and rich. An exceptional spirit aged 13 years in bourbon barrels followed by 13 years in wine barriques.



93 **El Tesoro 80th Anniversary Edition 8 Year Old Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$200)** Rich, earthy agave nose and medium golden color; smooth and full-bodied. Its smoky complexity requires it be sipped on the rocks, not in a cocktail.

93 **Low Gap Rye Whiskey, USA (\$75)** Fluid, toasty nose; lush flavors of rye, vanilla, and oak with sweet hints of caramel; deep, balanced, and lovely with a lengthy finish. Cellared in both new and used American oak barrels, used French Limousin oak barrels, and used port barrels.

CRAFT DISTILLERS

94 **Pikesville 6 Year Old Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$50)** Medium amber hue; sleek, and toasted with lush rye flavors and vanilla, caramel, and floral notes; elegant and rich with mellow style. 110 proof.

96 **The Last Drop 1971 Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$3,999)** Notes of dried fruits, soft herbs, and smoke with rich, generous flavors; intense, layered, and matured to perfection; rare and allocated.

SAZERAC COMPANY

93 **The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$28)** Smoky nose; rich, smooth, and toasted with sweet oak and alluring spices; opulent, deep, and long. Distilled in copper pots, this is one of the best Irish whiskies I've tasted. ■■

PROXIMO SPIRITS

NEVER BEFORE, NEVER AGAIN WINES.



APRIL 20, 2018 - SONOMA COUNTY, CA

The Sonoma County Barrel Auction is a rare chance to taste, and possibly own, a true Sonoma County original. It's an exclusive, invitation-only event for licensed members of the wine trade, featuring a selection of never before, never again wines from Sonoma County's leading vintners and growers. This year's auction will be held at the beautiful MacMurray Estate Vineyards™.

FOR DETAILS AND TO GET CONNECTED, VISIT SonomaWine.com/BarrelAuction



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

Publisher's PICKS

PHOTO: DAVID GADD



WINES



Metz Road 2015 Riverview Vineyard Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$35) This esteemed 215-acre site—the Scheid family's northernmost estate vineyard—is located adjacent to the Pinnacles on a bench overlooking the Salinas River. With its moderate microclimate and cold afternoons, the Riverview Vineyard is fortunate to have a long growing season. The savoriness of this small-production Pinot Noir, produced from Pommard clones and grown in well-drained, decomposed granite, is interwoven with juicy fruit and an undercurrent of tobacco, earth, and wet stone. Distinct tones of Cara Cara orange kissed with butterscotch weave through the wine's silky frame. **94**

SCHEID FAMILY WINES



Hanna Reserve 2015 Saint Macaire, Red Ranch, Alexander Valley (\$68) Known as the "Lost Bordeaux Variety," the forgotten Saint Macaire cultivar has reappeared in this 125-case release in the U.S. thanks to Hanna Winery, which grows a half-acre. This blend of 77% Saint Macaire, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Malbec, and 2% Merlot ages 19 months in French Treuil oak. The result astounds in color, texture, flavor, and balance. Aromas of blackberry, espresso, and exotic tea merge into an earth and tar flavor profile as a velvet lead takes you through plush tannins, adding bittersweet dark chocolate, tobacco, and a continuous brightening of the dark black fruit. Refined and complex, its expressive nature is one of a kind. **95**



Pine Ridge 2016 Chenin Blanc + Viognier, California (\$16) Pine Ridge began crafting wine showcasing the grape duo—one of the original unique California white blends—in the early 1990s. The Chenin Blanc (80%) comes from the winery's vineyards in the maritime-influenced Clarksburg area near the Sacramento River; the Viognier, meanwhile, is sourced from Lodi with its Mediterranean climate. Aromas of freshly-juiced pears and honeyed lanolin lead to a palate of orange blossom and kiwi-lime honey. Wonderful with spiced cuisines. **90**



The Prisoner Wine Company Cuttings 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$55) Bold cherry cedar, coffee, and earthen aromas are matched by the spice of anise and black pepper intertwining on the palate. Black cherry emerges from the earthy core and frames a statuesque posture. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon; 20% blend of Petite Sirah, Syrah, and Zinfandel. **92**

CONSTELLATION WINES

Worthy of a smooch.

 French-style double bizou.

 Wildly infatuated.

 Seriously smitten.

 Head over heels in love.



Contour 2016 Pinot Noir, Mendocino, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo Counties (\$16) Divided fairly evenly through these three cool climate California AVAs, this ambrosial red offers up ripe strawberries, root vegetable, and forest floor. Blackberry comes in mid-palate with dark-skinned cherry and tomato leaf, and spices include nutmeg, cinnamon, and a hint of black pepper. **92**



M.S. WALKER



J. Lohr Estates 2016 Falcon's Perch Pinot Noir, Monterey County (\$17) Grapes from cool-climate vineyards in Arroyo Seco and Santa Lucia Highlands perform fantastically for this high-flying Pinot. With its nose of red tea and oregano, the fruit develops on the palate, showcasing ripe red cherries, sage, powdered "talc" tannins, and a lean acidity. **91**



Fort Ross Vineyard Sea Slopes 2015 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$35) From the edge of the rugged ridges of the Sonoma Coast comes this full-bodied, fruit-driven Pinot. Aromas of black cherry make way for a plethora of flavors and scents: Salty rhubarb startles as dried herbs usher in savoriness. Graphite enters at mid-palate, with notes of juicy strawberries, Cara Cara oranges, cranberries, and black tea. Winemaker Jeff Pisoni ages this small-production red in 30% new French oak for nine months, creating satin-like tannins and a creamy finish. **92**



Perfusion Vineyard 2014 Pinot Noir, Richmond County, San Francisco Bay AVA (\$40) Produced from grapes sourced from an estate vineyard in Wildcat Canyon on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay AVA, Perfusion is a micro-batch label. Tom Leaf, the original Head Winemaker at Crushpad (the San Francisco winery that pioneered the concept of custom-crush winemaking) crafted this boutique and well-balanced Pinot Noir. The brand's owner is John Bry, a vascular surgeon whose grapevine label design mirrors the human circulatory system. Dense notes of blackberry cream and violets are aromatic as well as flavorful, and the bright berry fruit is lit from within. The mid-palate shows off ripe cherry and toasty oak. **93**



Smith-Madrone 2015 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$34) Grown at an 1,800-foot elevation on Spring Mountain, these grapes are dry-farmed on red Aiken soil (a result of volcanic materials and sedimentary rock) on the estate property surrounding the winery. Barrel fermented for ten months in 80% new French oak, this Chard is a charmer with multiple personalities and an alcohol level of 14.9%. The nose goes from savory to sweet in 60 seconds, alluding to basil, capers, and vanilla pudding. The palate follows suit, with herb-y chamomile morphing from pineapple and mustard seed to orange-lemon drops. The finish pursues both crispness and creaminess, ensuring this wine offers options. **93**



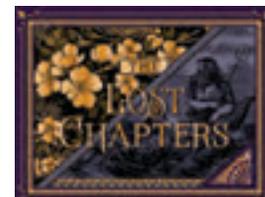
Maddalena 2016 Pinot Grigio, Monterey (\$18) Perfumed with lime and basil, this white is one of the most aromatic PGs out there. It takes a turn with crispness on the palate and green apple leading the acidity march. The wine is spiced with white pepper, or perhaps a salinity that's mineral-based from sandy soils. White flowers bloom from core to finish. **92**



Robert Mondavi Winery 2014 Merlot, Napa Valley (\$25) Italian herbs and soy sauce may sound like the beginning of a favorite recipe, but Winemaker Joe Harden ensured this velvet-lined red was made to pair with a variety of foods. Thanks to its lean acid structure, rich texture, and ripe fruit, this wine scored high with us. While the majority of the fruit hails from the Stags Leap District (42%), a small amount also comes from selected Napa Valley AVAs like Oak Knoll, Yountville, and Rutherford. The palate offers chocolate plum and is dense with spice and gritty new cedar tannins. Blackberry-coffee notes even out the finish. **93**



The Lost Chapters 2014 Petite Sirah, Napa Valley (\$30) From winemakers Mitch Cosentino and Paul Scotto comes this colorful, small-production red. The nose is delicately scented with vetiver and plum, and black fruit is seasoned by black pepper, bergamot, and beetroot on the palate. The grapes are sourced from the prestigious Oak Knoll District and the wine is aged for 30 months in neutral French oak barrels. Balanced at 14.5% ABV. **90**



Value Picks of the Month



Fetzer 2016 Sundial Chardonnay,

California (\$10) As Fetzer celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, we pay tribute to this great-value white. Crisp and unoaked, this tropical-tasting Chardonnay employs cool-climate Riesling from Monterey County and aromatic Muscat to keep it fresh and fruity. Baked apple and citrus floral tones are pleasant throughout. **88**



Montevina 2016 Glass Falls Pinot Grigio, California

(\$10) Grapes sourced throughout the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta and Santa Barbara County share a common thread of cooling maritime breezes, resulting in this wine's ripeness, concentration of flavor, and fine acidity. Stainless steel fermentation at very low temperatures also encourages freshness, as does the prevention of ML. The nose inspires sublime thoughts of pineapple, lychee flowers, and salty sea air; on the palate, honeysuckle romances juicy Anjou pears and is spiced with a dash of nutmeg. Exotic and charming . . . and a superb value. **91**



TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Tamarí 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$15)

From the high-altitude Uco Valley, slowly-maturing Cabernet Sauvignon grapes are destined to evolve into a concentrated wine with dark fruit. The inky color and richness of blackberry and subtle oak, combined with a bright acidity, make for a smooth and structured red. **89**

TERLATO WINE GROUP



Kendall-Jackson 2015 Vintner's Reserve Syrah, Santa Barbara County (\$17)

99% Syrah with 1% Grenache aged 12 months in 87% French and 13% American oak. On the heels of coffee-plum and chocolate aromas, earthy tones continue the journey with brighter notes of pomegranate and blackberry following. The finish mellows out with silky dark chocolate. **90**



Cuvaision 2015 Adda Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$50)

Cuvaision was an early pioneer of cool-climate, Carneros-based Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and has a farming history dating back almost 40 years. The winery has a block-by-block approach to its all-estate fruit on 44 blocks; with ten clones of Chardonnay on seven different rootstocks, Adda represents a barrel selection of the vineyard's oldest and lowest-yielding Wente clone vines. The wine displays edge and earth with richness on the palate and fine acidity intricately woven throughout. It's floral on the nose with flavors of orange peel, apricot, and butterscotch entwined. Aged 18 months in 50% new French oak. 100% ML. **95**



High Dive 2014 Bordeaux Blend, Napa Valley (\$95)

Celebrated winemakers Peter Heitz (Turnbull Wine Cellars) and Scott Palazzo (Palazzo Wines) make this limited-production blend of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Merlot, and 14% Cabernet Franc. The fruit hails from vineyards in Oakville (volcanic red clay) and Carneros (shallow clay). Slate, graphite, and tobacco influence the juicy black plum and plum-skin tannins. The wonderful acidity opens the floor for food-pairing opportunities across the board. Pedigreed and elegant. **95**

SHARE A SPLASH WINE CO.





Winter's Hill 2016 Watershed Pinot Gris, Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$16) An environmental steward located on two forested parcels in the Dundee Hills, Winter's Hill Estate shares a boundary with springs and wells containing the drinking water for the small towns of Dayton and Lafayette. Whole clusters of handpicked fruit are placed into the press within hours of harvesting and are fermented in stainless steel. Wafting aromas of pineapple and Asian pear are fresh and enticing, and the texture is crisp, clear, and sharply focused with a brilliant acidity. Celery and slate form around minerality on the finish. **90**



Elijah Craig 18-Year-Old Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$120) A Double Gold Winner at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, this spirit made us fall in love immediately when we caught the scent of walnut cream and mandarin orange. At 90 proof, flavors of peppered peaches greet the palate with high-toned hints of orange blossoms and hazelnut. Butter and maple syrup melt on the finish. **94**



HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY



V.E.S. Gin, Australia (\$45) This focused gin is copper-pot distilled six times and made from organic raw sugar. At 90 proof, the heat doesn't seem to overpower or mask the aromatics or flavors. A minerality occurs on the nose with slate and steely notes alongside lavender and subdued juniper. The sweetness on the palate reveals itself ahead of the grape and blue floral tones that follow suit. The finish is creamy with blueberry and candied plum. **90**



SPIRITS



Amaro dell'Etna, Italy (\$40) Made using an original recipe from 1901 that features more than 26 herbs and aromatic plants with roots on the Sicilian side of Mt. Etna, this distillate is influenced by the volcanic soil and emits a mineral undertone throughout. On the nose, orange peel and cinnamon bark combine for a sweet and savory scent as white pepper, jasmine, anise root, and rhubarb play midfield. The finish is sumptuous with coffee and cocoa notes. **92**



M.S. WALKER



Bicycle Tree Gin, USA (\$30) From Snohomish, Washington, this 86-proof gin has a nose of sweet violets and spearmint. While its main botanicals include raspberry leaf, mint, rosehips, and lemongrass, the spirit's many layers and textures continue to reveal themselves. A silky entry leads to creamy marshmallow, cut grass, and a finish of lemon zest. Quite pleasant! **91**

SKIP ROCK DISTILLERS



Partners Sweet Vermouth, USA (\$25) What a find! Petite Sirah, Merlot, and fresh cherries are just a few of the outstanding ingredients in this exotically-spiced domestic vermouth. Sourced from gardens and vineyards in Northern California wine country, iconic winemaker Steve Matthiasson, a fan of vermouth, lent his efforts to this project. With a perfumed nose of Italian herbs like oregano and basil intertwined with black-skinned cherries, the flavor profile offers up notes of jasmine and fennel. We made a glorious Boulevardier cocktail and also loved this on the rocks. **94** ■



VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



Remus Repeal Reserve Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA Commemorating the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, this 2017 release is a 94-proof whiskey made in Indiana. Aromas of orange peel, oatmeal, and butterscotch lead you to a flow of baked apple, toffee, fig, and sassy spices: cumin, sage, and peppered cedar. The finish is biscuity with the velvet-hammer touch of the higher proof. This whiskey is built well: a composed balance of strength and finesse. **93**



Los Sundays Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$38) Here's a 70-proof, 100% agave tequila with natural coconut flavor and a nose both subtle and clean. The agave earthiness and crisp lime come through in the perfume. The palate is classy: not a "flavored" liqueur, but a wonderful, refreshingly elegant spirit with flavor. The coconut stays through to the finish, with minerality and bright grapefruit peel notes woven in. A winner. **92**



LOS SUNDAYS FAMILIA LLC



Master Sommelier Joe Spellman.

In the wine industry, rich personalities whose passion for all aspects of winemaking, production, consumption, and ritual drive the way people eat and drink across the globe. We were fortunate to have five minutes with Master Sommelier Joe Spellman, well-known for his educational style, dry humor, and mentorship to countless young pros.

NAME: Joe Spellman, Master Sommelier

PROUDEST TITLE EARNED: Meilleur Sommelier du Monde en Vins et Spiritueux Français

COMPANY: Justin Vineyards and Winery + Landmark Vineyards

Master Sommelier Joe Spellman

If you were not in the wine business, what would you do for a day job?

I'd teach English and American literature.

Have you had a mentor in the industry? If so, who?

I haven't had a specific mentor, but I'm influenced by Masters Fred Dame, Evan Goldstein, Madeline Triffon, and Larry Stone, as well as great restaurateurs George Badonsky and Richard Melman and maître d' types like Alain Lacouture and Pierre Lasserre. Chefs like Jean Joho, Michael Foley, and Charlie Trotter have also inspired me.

We all know the path to the Master Sommelier title is a long one, and you don't get there alone. What role do you think mentorship plays in the road to becoming a MS?

Leadership and example are paramount. I felt more mentored in the service components than in theory or tasting.

If you could share one glass of wine with someone, who would you choose and what would you drink?

I would love to have met [food writer] Richard Olney and discussed many food and wine ideas.

Any advice for young professionals just getting started in the biz?

Work hard, listen, and care for your guests. Memorization and technical expertise on wine production are private pursuits!

Spellman travels the country as an educator on a variety of industry-related topics. As a member of the Board of Advisors for SommCon, a three-day educational conference for wine professionals, Spellman will appear at both the July and November events in Washington, D.C. and San Diego, respectively.

The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal are proud to serve as the media sponsors of SommCon DC (July 22-24) and SommCon San Diego (November 14-16). ■■



HEAD

of the

CLASS

Josh Pearson, Manager of Brand Advocacy at Pernod Ricard USA, leads the company's BarSmarts program.

As the Director of Trade Advocacy at Pernod Ricard USA, Shawn Kelley oversees many of the company's education initiatives.

PERNOD RICARD CELEBRATES ITS TEN-YEAR LEGACY OF EDUCATING BARTENDERS THROUGH ITS INDUSTRY-LEADING INITIATIVE

by Mara Marski

In addition to overseeing the Bartender Advocacy Convention, Pernod Ricard USA National Mixologist Kevin Denton also creates drinks for the company's chain partners while working on new product development and brand strategy.

Jamie Gordon, Senior Manager of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Advocacy at Pernod Ricard USA.

**Jameson Irish Whiskey
Brand Ambassadors
Gary Feeney and Brett
McCoy D'Arcy outside
a January training for
Pernod Ricard USA
brands in Dallas, TX.**



PHOTO: JASON KINDIG

If you want to fully immerse yourself

in an industry that's in a constant state of evolution, education isn't optional, but essential. This philosophy certainly applies to the bartending community, but for many members of the trade, gaining access to educational opportunities that tangibly further their careers can seem like a luxury rather than a realistic possibility.

If the initiatives set forth by the world's second-largest wine and spirits seller are any indication, however, the tide just might be turning in favor of those doggedly seeking ways to further hone their craft. Since launching its education initiative roughly a decade ago, Pernod Ricard USA has dedicated considerable resources to ensure its relationships with bartenders, bar owners, and bar managers are mutually beneficial. "To do that, we're learning the needs of these industry professionals," says Shawn Kelley, Pernod Ricard USA's Director of Trade Advocacy. "Everyone is looking to learn, so we've tailored a program for every level of the lifespan of a hospitality person."

The company's most prominent program is BarSmarts, an in-depth online course for current or aspiring bartenders, but its education initiative also includes BarStarts, an entry-level class originally developed for restaurant chains that focuses on training and hospitality; BarSmarts Advanced, an in-person course that emphasizes tasting and technique; and the newest addition, the Bartender Advocacy Convention (BACon), which explores leadership, entrepreneurship, training techniques, and more through seminars and presentations led by industry experts.



PHOTO: JASON KINDIG

**Daniel Warrilow, Brand Ambassador for
Altos Tequila, also attended the Dallas
brand training.**

When Kelley joined Pernod Ricard nearly ten years ago, the education initiative was in its infancy. In the decade since BarSmarts launched in 2008, Kelley says the company has added more than 50,000 participants to its database, with more than 20,000 people earning their official certification. “We now have four BarSmarts Advanced events per year with an average attendance of 120–140 bartenders,” she adds. “The numbers alone show you the success.”

Bridging the Divide

Because brand ambassadors act as liaisons between their respective companies and the industry at-large, they were the first group to recognize the potential that could be unlocked with increased access to education, according to Jamie Gordon, Pernod Ricard USA’s Senior Manager of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Advocacy. “The role of the ambassadors has always been spreading the gospel of the brand and sharing technical knowledge,” says Gordon. “They feed education out there and come back with requests for more.”

The feedback from these outreach efforts directly informed the early evolution of BarSmarts, with location playing a major role in determining what topics should be incorporated into each course. “All of the success is knowing where to present, what to teach, and when,” Gordon continues. “You can’t bring old material to New York, but that material might be fresh and necessary in a secondary market.”

For Manager of Brand Advocacy Josh Pearson, this emphasis on education enables Pernod Ricard to not only directly support the people engaging with its portfolio behind the bar, but to “shape the industry the way we want.” “Most people at Pernod Ricard came from the on-premise industry,” says Pearson, who graduated from one of the first BarSmarts classes in 2009. “We were bartenders, we love bartenders, and we love going to bars. Advocacy and industry go hand in hand.”



F. Paul Pacult leads a seminar during BarSmarts Live, the in-person version of Pernod Ricard USA’s online course. Pacult and Dave Wondrich, Dave Frost, Dale DeGross, Steven Olson, and Andy Seymour (pictured in the background) are partners in Beverage Alcohol Resource, a bar education organization that oversees the BarSmarts curriculum.



Dave Wondrich, Co-Founder of Beverage Alcohol Resource, watches a student create a cocktail during the testing portion of a BarSmarts Live event.

“As teachers we’re doing our best to disperse this information, but the new generation is taking it places we never foresaw. Our mission is to make people want to be better bartenders.”

Elevating the BAR with BarSmarts

While Pernod Ricard USA has invested considerable resources toward establishing its educational initiative, it actually takes a backseat when it comes to the hands-on instruction. The company partnered with the bar education organization Beverage Alcohol Resource (BAR) to create the BarSmarts curriculum, and BAR partners Dale DeGroff, Doug Frost, Steven Olson, F. Paul Pacult, Andy Seymour, and David Wondrich—all industry-renowned spirits experts—collaborate with Pernod Ricard USA's staff to regularly update the course programming. As Olson says, "Pernod Ricard understood the need of educating bartenders . . . and then they hired the right people."

According to Olson, the flagship BarSmarts course covers "basic information that needs to be known by all bartenders," including spirits basics and production methods, professional tasting methods, classic cocktail recipes from the 1800s to the present, and service management techniques. Ideally, participants in the online class are either spirits enthusiasts or bartenders with at least some previous training. "It gives them a benchmark of knowledge while simultaneously showing employers that graduates have the skills necessary to be good bartenders," he adds.

The curriculum for BarSmarts Advanced, meanwhile, changes often to reflect current trends and also includes



Don Lee, Educator and Designer for Cocktail Kingdom and Beverage Director Emeritus at PDT in New York, leads "The Science & Technique of Making Scotch Cocktails" seminar and practical class at one of last year's Bartender Advocacy Conventions.



Gary Feeny, Brand Ambassador for Jameson Irish Whiskey, leads a segment of the January brand training in Dallas, TX.

Bar Education On-Location: *Olive Garden*

In an effort similar to Pernod Ricard USA's BarStarts program, which works mostly with chain partners, the company continues to bring hands-on educational opportunities to underserved segments of the hospitality industry.

Most recently, Pernod Ricard USA fulfilled this goal by conducting an analysis of Olive Garden's bar program. Pernod Ricard USA's National Mixologist Kevin Denton began by creating a survey and taking bartender testimony to find commonalities with the highest and lowest performing restaurants. He then conducted an immersive training with the two bartenders who had the highest alcoholic beverage sales in each of the chain's ten regions.

"We took the key learnings from Pernod Ricard's feedback and applied it to all 840 Olive Garden restaurants," says Robyn Albert, Director of Beverage Strategy for Olive Garden. "Since then, we've seen improvements in beverage execution, consistency, and efficiency across the company. We knew the experience we provided would broaden their skillsets, but we didn't realize how much they would teach each other."

To express its appreciation for the education initiative, Olive Garden recognized Pernod Ricard USA as its "Partner of the Year" in 2017.

BACon Joins the Lineup

Now entering its second year, the Bartender Advocacy Convention is the most recent addition to Pernod Ricard USA's education initiative. The event, known as BACon, offers highly-specialized courses for advanced bartenders and brings in industry experts to lead talks and demonstrations on leadership strategies, training practices, cutting-edge mixology techniques, and more. Pernod Ricard USA's four-person advocacy team oversees the convention, which will visit three markets this year starting April 9 in Los Angeles.

While BarSmarts provides foundational education, BACon could be likened to a graduate program for bartenders who are moving up in the industry or opening their own bars. Kevin Denton, Pernod Ricard USA's National Mixologist, says BACon was heavily inspired by the fine dining-focused MAD Symposium Conference in Copenhagen and the hospitality-themed Welcome Conference in New York. "This is a program that lets us stretch our legs with bar owners and managers," Denton says. "BACon is interested in things that relate not only to drinks, but a bar's community and how they deal with their staff."

As more forums for delving deep into industry trends emerge—joining marquee events like Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans—the Pernod Ricard USA team sees BACon as their vehicle for contributing to the larger conversation. "There's a lot of coding of topics to find what's interesting and relevant, taking input from the field, finding the right experts, and matching them with the right market," says Jamie Gordon, Senior Manager of Brand Ambassadors and Brand Advocacy. "It's a huge back-of-house effort."

a blind tasting, written exam, seminars with the BAR partners, discussions on craft history, and explorations of rare bartending books and tools. Participants must first complete BarSmarts to attend the full-day, in-person course.

For the BAR partners, it was imperative that BarSmarts be more generic and categoric in practice rather than being centered directly around Pernod Ricard USA's portfolio. As a result, the company chose to instead focus on creating and promoting educational standards that elevate the industry for all players involved, rather than further its brands themselves. "We're here to empower bartenders and help them learn to make decisions with confidence," Olson says. "But if you have the palate, you will choose Pernod Ricard USA products anyway, and (the company) sees the halo effect of that."

Regardless of the course level, hospitality and service act as the common thread drawing far-ranging topics into a collective focus. "We keep bringing it back to what the role of a bartender is, and that's taking care of people," Olson adds.

The BarSmarts Legacy

As Pernod Ricard USA continues to get "a huge number of requests" for its courses, it's clear to see the big-picture perspective of how the education programs are impacting the industry. But for Pearson, the most memorable markers of the initiative's success often come in the form of personal encoun-

ters with past attendees. "I'm constantly amazed to be bumping into people who have taken the class," he says.

And while the program has a presence in secondary markets like Omaha, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee, Pearson says it's not unusual for people to travel hundreds of miles to attend an in-person course. "I've had people drive 12 hours to attend BarSmarts Advanced, and that's not to mention the attendees flying down from Canada," he adds. To Olson, the most significant indicator of the program's progress can be seen in the hiring process. "Some bar managers and owners now require their team to take BarSmarts, and some bars require it on the application," he says. "This could have never happened ten years ago, but it happens today. That's not because of us; it's because Pernod Ricard made this its mission."

But as Kelley summarizes what she finds to be the most gratifying aspect of the program's legacy, it seems to relay exactly what motivated Pernod Ricard USA to establish the initiative in the first place: seeing a BarSmarts graduate excel at their chosen establishment, go on to open their own bar, and then pass on their knowledge so their staff may eventually do the same. "To have someone say, 'BarSmarts changed my career; I was a bartender and now I have my own place'—that's being a part of someone's journey throughout their career," Kelley says.

"The Secret to the Renaissance"

When asked about any shortcomings of the education programming, the

unanimous answer among the Pernod Ricard USA team was that they just wanted to be doing *more* to truly keep up with demand, including potentially launching a lengthier program inspired by BAR's prestigious five-day class in New York (the highest scorers at the next four BarSmarts Advanced classes will be awarded a scholarship to the class).

Despite the growing pains, Pernod Ricard's education initiatives are ever-expanding. "We're constantly updating the program," Pearson says. "Later this year we'll be launching BarSmarts in Spanish, which will open the doors of education for a lot of people."

Olson, meanwhile, has every reason to believe that setting sights on the international arena isn't a tall order for Pernod Ricard USA. "Even without promotion, bartenders are finding this education and demanding it abroad. I've had graduates offer to translate the curriculum into French, Italian, Greek and Spanish, and the sharing is the most gratifying thing to all of us," he says. "As teachers we're doing our best to disperse this information, but the new generation is taking it places we never foresaw. Our mission is to make people want to be better bartenders, and so much comes out of the willingness to share, to embrace the person next to you, to stay open-minded. This is the secret to the renaissance—and it's become Pernod's calling card." ■■

For information on Pernod Ricard USA's education initiative, including registration instructions and bartender testimonials, visit barsmarts.com.



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

Fred Dame (center), MS, VP/Prestige Accounts for American Wine & Spirits (a division of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of CA), with Ryan Stetins (left) and Matt Stamp, MS (right). Stetins and Stamp are Co-Owners of Compline Wine Bar and Restaurant in Napa, CA.



A Conversation With Ryan Stetins and Master Sommelier Matt Stamp

CO-OWNERS,
COMPLINE WINE BAR
AND RESTAURANT,
NAPA, CA

photos by Alexander Rubin



Q Fred Dame: Compline Wine Bar and Restaurant—I like it, but what does it mean?

Matt Stamp: It comes from the Latin word *completorium*, used to indicate the completion of the work day.

Q Great, Latin. You do realize it's a dead language? Have you been hanging out with Larry Stone and his Lingua Franca label? I did also find out that the word means the completion of prayers and services. Maybe you got it right after all!

Stamp: Well, it also rhymes with Compton, sort of.

Q Oh, straight out of Compline. I noticed that your location is in the center of Napa but a bit off the beaten path—but what a great courtyard with outdoor seating.

Stamp: We love the location. It's a bit hidden and kind of a locals-only spot right now. But the season is upon us and the construction around us will soon be finished.

Q Red, white, sparkling—which is the current flavor of choice?

Ryan Stetins: We sell a lot of sparkling. When you look at the list, it's about a 50-50 mix of red and white. We get interesting runs, though: Sonoma Pinot Noir, Burgundy, Italian reds, Greek whites. It's table by table.

Q Do you get a lot of winemakers?

Stetins: Oh, yes, and tons of assistant winemakers!

Q So, what is the big seller? Must be Napa Cabernet Sauvignon.

Stamp: You would think so. When we opened, we kept a secret tally on the number of days that would pass when we didn't sell a bottle of Napa Cab. We have 30 Napa Cabs on the list, but they [the winemakers] make Cab all day and want to try something new in the evening.

Stetins: The first bottle of Napa Cab we sold was to a couple from out of town. We went 17 days before that without selling a bottle, believe it or not!

Q This place is so cool. I can see it becoming the ultimate spot in town for a "final final" and for hospitality workers when they're finished with their shifts.

Stetins: We hope so. We keep the kitchen open until 11 p.m. every night. We also have a family meal nightly where it's \$20 for the meal and a glass of wine. Best deal in town.

Q Revenue so far?

Stamp: About 50 percent wine sales in the restaurant, then 35 percent food, and 10 percent retail wines to go. The rest is in education.

Q How did you two get together? I know you both from the Master Sommelier program.

Stetins: We got together with this idea at the GuildSomm Rudd Roundtable. It was a few years after we met and we hatched the idea—in the cellar, no less. And here we are four years later . . .

Q I noticed some familiar faces here in the front of the house.

Stamp: Correct. Everyone here is involved in the sommelier program at one level or another. In terms of education for them and customer satisfaction, it's the perfect fit.

Q What is the average price of a bottle sold here?

Stetins: About \$80. We try to be fair with pricing so our guests can find something interesting by the bottle. Our retail is between \$10–\$35.

Q I brought something to taste today. This is the Delas 2013 Crozes-Hermitage Blanc Les Launes—absolutely delicious.

Stamp: Northern Rhône white wines are



According to Fred Dame, MS, Ryan Stetins and Matt Stamp, MS, have achieved "wine nirvana" at Compline.

increasingly a category I find myself going back to. I love the weight and the texture.

Stetins: It has wonderful acidity for a Rhône white. Great body and structure.

Q How do you select the wines for the list?

Stamp: Ryan and I sit down together and taste. If we both like it, great. If one of us doesn't, the person loving the wine has to make the good argument to keep it. For the retail shop, our Retail Manager Kassie McPherson becomes part of the selection process.

Q I love it—you actually know what's in those bottles. What an original idea!

Stamp: Yes, that's why we keep it to 100 SKUs!

Q How about staff training?

Stetins: Are you kidding me, Fred? Every day here is staff training for all of us, including chef and kitchen staff. We also feature wine seminars for both the trade and aficionados. On some Monday nights we do "World Tour" classes and feature the wines of different regions, while on Fridays and Saturdays we have "Jumpstart" classes for people just getting into wine.

Q I've been saving this—what's your corkage fee? It has to be a killer here.

Stetins: It's \$15. We don't want to gouge people.

Q Fifteen dollars?! Well, you'll come to your senses one day.

Stamp: The one important thing is that our retail section is totally separate from our restaurant list. So, you have the option to buy a bottle here, drink it here, and just pay a retail markup and small corkage fee.

Stetins: Where else in Napa Valley could you sit down and drink a bottle of wine for under \$30?

It sounds like you sat around with a bunch of sommeliers and listed every complaint they have about the industry, then made sure your business model avoided every one of them. Congratulations—I think you are the first people to achieve wine nirvana! ■■

Ready Drinker One

WITH OLEA, **GABE WHORLEY** ADDS ANOTHER SPACE TO HIS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RESTAURANT AND BAR EMPIRE

by Rich Manning

Some bartenders read books for inspiration, while others flesh out new ideas by treating their kitchen like a makeshift laboratory. Gabe Whorley, Partner/Bar Manager of Olea in Newport Beach, California, takes a different approach: firing up an old-school Nintendo with Partner/Executive Chef Jared Cook. “It works wonders, so we’ll get together and play every so often,” Whorley says. “Inevitably, we’ll start bouncing food and drink ideas off each other.”

Whorley’s method of conjuring his muse may be a bit unorthodox, but you can’t dispute its success. Olea marks the third bar program he’s launched with Cook and fellow restaurant partner Russ Bendel since 2013; the other two concepts, Vine and Ironwood, stand as two of Orange County’s most acclaimed and

adored restaurants.

The crowds swarming Olea every night since its opening last November seem to have already assured a third triumph, but Whorley makes a conscious effort to avoid replication at the new venue. The massive rectangular bar in the middle of the sleek space, for example, is a deliberate departure from Whorley’s previous designs. “We decided to put it in the center to represent the restaurant’s heartbeat, and I also wanted to create a space that would help show off my style and creativity,” he explains.

So far, Whorley’s style at Olea manifests in the form of whimsically-named cocktails that meld old flair with new flavors, like the Bad Decision

with rhubarb bitters, rye, and amaro. His craftsmanship also takes a few cues from Cook, who has injected several Euro-inspired twists into his much-ballyhooed menu of farm-to-table cuisine. “I’ve added a few more European liqueurs and grappas so I can build some more international flavor profiles,” Whorley says. “My goal is to reproduce the best cocktail you’ve ever had in Spain or Italy.”

Whorley’s sense of global ambition ties in well with his overarching strategy at Olea. “Every drink is made to provide a connection to a sense of place,” he says. “This connection could be to a beach in Mexico. It could be a garden in Napa. Wherever it is, we want to take you there.” Whether that place includes a Nintendo is entirely up to the imbiber’s discretion. ■■

Gabe Whorley is the Partner/Bar Manager of Olea in Newport Beach, CA.



Bad Decision

- ▶ 2 oz. rye whiskey
- ▶ ½ oz. Crème de Mûre
- ▶ ½ oz. Cynar
- ▶ ½ oz. sweet vermouth
- ▶ ½ oz. amaro
- ▶ 2 dashes rhubarb bitters

Combine ingredients in tin with ice. Stir and serve straight up in a Martini glass. Garnish with two brandied cherries.

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FRENCH Connection

THE FRENCH ROOM BAR AT DALLAS' ADOLPHUS HOTEL TEMPTS GUESTS WITH REFINED TECHNIQUES AND LUXE INGREDIENTS

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS / photos by Sarah Webb



A cozy corner of the French Room Bar at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, TX.

By whisking away the stress of travel, a hotel bar can transform from a mere convenience into a veritable oasis. That's exactly the restorative effect you get from a few rounds of drinks at The French Room Bar and Salon, a 45-seat spot that opened last October in The Adolphus Hotel in Dallas.

A stark juxtaposition in style from the adjacent restaurant The French Room, "the bar is meant to be dark and masculine as a fun contrast from the other spaces," says Beverage Manager Anna Pereda. "It's completely visible from the lobby but still feels a touch hidden, as though you could disappear in the middle of downtown Dallas."

With its low lighting, dark wood and leather furniture, and attentive service, the bar exudes the type of atmosphere that can make you feel like the only patron in the room. That feeling applies whether you choose to tuck yourself into a corner or watch the bartending team from a front-and-center seat near the large island stocked with gorgeous glassware and tools—the focal point of the back bar.



The Why Not A Sazerac? cocktail is served on a tray with a glass smoked with tobacco.

The most well-received cocktail presentation seems to be the Why Not a Sazerac?, a play on the classic New Orleans drink. Made with bourbon cask-finished Martell Blue Swift Cognac, it's served on a tray with a glass smoked with tobacco to invoke the feel of a cigar lounge. The shelves on the back bar also show off rare and high-end bottles like La Poire du Roulot, an eau-de-vie that's usually sipped after dinner (in the Of Purity and Pear cocktail, it's stirred with jasmine tea-infused vodka and lemon). "When our bar team is behind the bar, they are on a stage," Pereda says. "We want guests to see them making a drink or pulling a bottle and ask questions and start conversations." ■■

Sommeliers tasted five wines from international wineries at SommCon in San Diego.



A Palate Primer

FOR THE MAIN EVENT

THE TASTING
PANEL HOSTED
TEN ELITE
SOMMS TO
KICK OFF
SOMMCON 2017

by Michelle Ball
photos by Jeremy Ball

The illumination from the harbor glimmered off the bay as we gathered on the balcony of the Marina Kitchen Restaurant & Bar on a warm November evening. It was the first day of SommCon at the Marriott Marquis in San Diego, and *The Tasting Panel* hosted an intimate dinner for ten elite sommeliers to commence the three-day experience.

Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May greeted the sommeliers and a few esteemed guests from international wineries, among them Lars Leicht of Banfi Wines and Péter Molnár, Ph.D., of Patricius Winery. Vinum Tokaj International President/CEO Attila Balla and Wines of Excellence Project Director Enikő Magyar, both representing MAD Wine Winery, were also in attendance.

Molnár first introduced the 2015 MÁD Furmint from Tokaj, an alluring, fresh wine with characteristics of kumquat, slate, and petrol. The low-alcohol, high-acid wine has broad palate appeal, especially for those who enjoy racy white wines with dense minerality like Chablis and Riesling. The effort to push forth innovations like dry Furmint is transforming the country's winemaking traditions and increasing Tokaj's presence in the market as Hungary continues to modernize its wine industry in the post-communist era. During the meal, the Furmint was paired with bites of poke in ponzu and a light rice crisp, amplifying the wine's notes of juicy pear and cherimoya. "It's really delicious and makes for a very versatile pairing," Advanced Sommelier Tami Wong noted.



At left, pictured from left to right: Bill Brandel, VP/Sales & Marketing, *The SOMM Journal*; Paul Coker, Sommelier; Lindsay Pomeroy, MW Candidate, Wine Smarties; Meridith May, Publisher/Editorial Director, *The SOMM Journal*; Jay James, Master Sommelier; and Lisa Redwine, Advanced Sommelier, MS Candidate. At right, pictured from left to right: Michelle Morin, Buyer, Montage; Brian Donegan, Advanced Sommelier, MS Candidate; Joshua Orr, Advanced Sommelier, MS Candidate; Lars Leicht, Banfi Wines; and Megan Yelenosky, Director of Catering, Hilton San Diego Bayfront. Not pictured: Woody van Horn, Advanced Sommelier; Tami Wong, Advanced Sommelier; Kenny Daniels, Buyer, San Diego Wine & Culinary Center; and Péter Molnár, General Manager, Patricius Winery.

A beautiful fall market salad was then served with the Sartori di Verona Ferdi 2015 Bianco Veronese, an IGT from the hillsides of Soave. "It takes all the natural characteristics that Garganega has and wraps it in a great big hug," Leicht quipped. The winery dries the grapes for 40 days to concentrate the flavors before pressing and maturing them on the lees for six to seven months. This approach adds complexity and mouthfeel to the wine, inspiring Leicht to give it the name "SOAVARONE."

The next course was a bit of a gamble in regards to both the pairing *and* the bottling. Leicht introduced the La Lus 2015 Albarossa, a "rediscovered" grape variety first produced commercially in 2006 (the hybrid grape, a cross between Barbera and Nebbiolo, was introduced in 1938 but forgotten after World War II). Captivated by the varietal, Banfi and a handful of other producers replanted it in some parts of Piemonte. At our dinner, the soft, plummy tannins with notes of fig and hoisin accented the caramelized flavors in the pan-roasted sea bass; the lack of acid in the savory leek and sunchoke broth, meanwhile, allowed the bright red fruit in the wine to flourish.

We transitioned to the next pairing as Leicht poured the Poggio all'Oro 2010 Brunello di Montalcino DOCG Riserva from the Banfi Castello collection: "In spite of everything I've said before, there are some wines that scream for meat," he said. Produced only in optimal vintages, the wine's muscle and grippy tannins gave way to a bold, feminine mid-palate layered with a dusty profile that's decidedly Old World. We quickly inhaled the wine with buttery wagyu beef and savory, fermented soybean glaze.

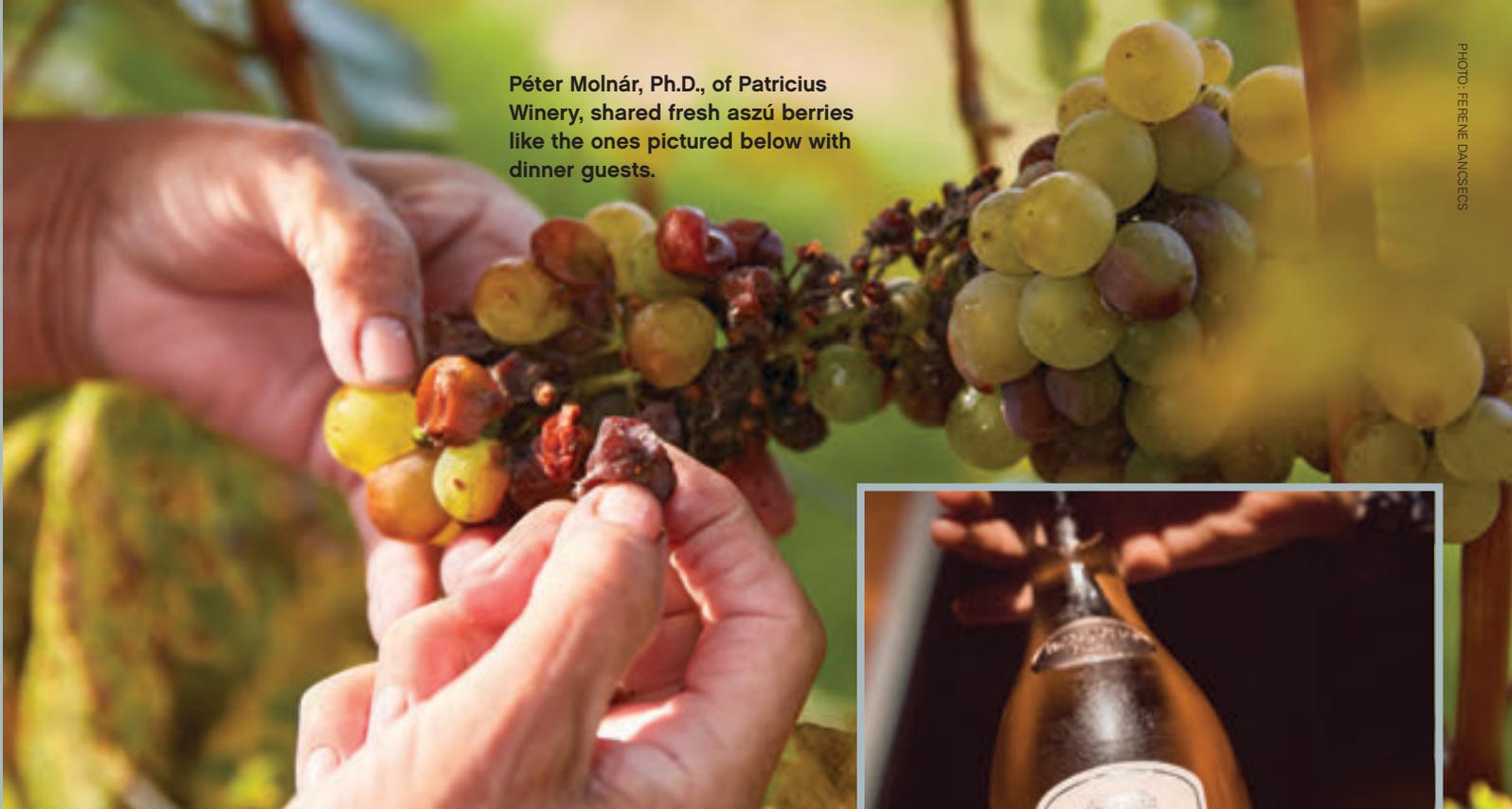
Molnár topped off the evening by sharing fresh aszú berries and the Patricius Aszú 2006 6 Puttonyos with the guests. The luxurious wine's aromas of ripe yellow peach, buttery pie crust, and avocado honey contrasted with the bright and silky tangerine flavors on the palate.

A 6 puttonyos wine is now defined as having at least 150 grams of residual sugar, and although the Patricius Aszú 2006 was on the richer end of the spectrum, 6 puttonyos wines have the most variation in style. Puttonys, the plural form of puttony, are the traditional containers used to pick the aszú grapes (mainly Furmint and Hárslevelű), and the final sweetness level of the wine is attributed to the number of puttonys added to a Hungarian oak cask. Today, 6 puttonyos wines include the aszú Eszencia style, too, and producers can also use the 5 puttonyos designation as long as the wine has a minimum of 120 grams residual sugar and a minimum 19% potential ABV.

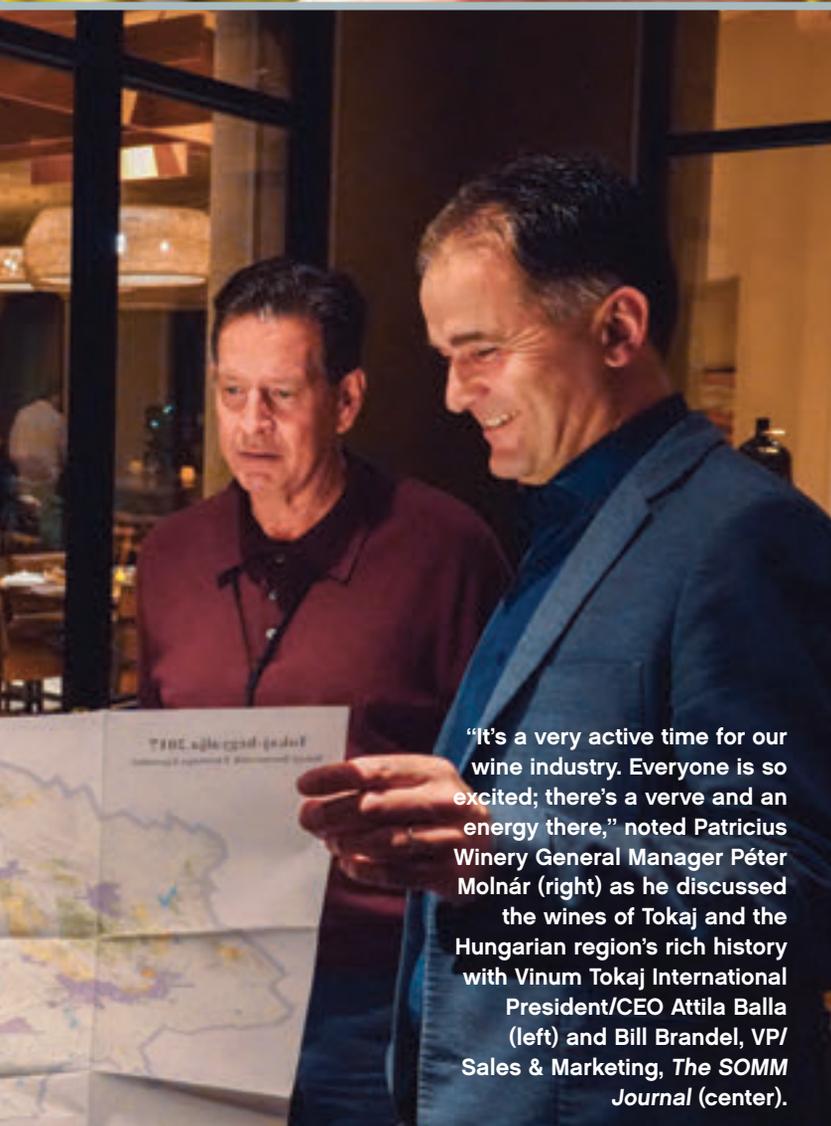
Throughout the evening, the somms and winery ambassadors shared their personal stories and experiences: whetting their palates in preparation for the two days of learning to follow.



Péter Molnár, Ph.D., of Patricius Winery, shared fresh aszú berries like the ones pictured below with dinner guests.



The Patricius Aszú 2006 6 Puttonyos.



“It’s a very active time for our wine industry. Everyone is so excited; there’s a verve and an energy there,” noted Patricius Winery General Manager Péter Molnár (right) as he discussed the wines of Tokaj and the Hungarian region’s rich history with Vinum Tokaj International President/CEO Attila Balla (left) and Bill Brandel, VP/ Sales & Marketing, *The SOMM Journal* (center).



Advanced Sommelier Tami Wong and Kenny Daniels, Buyer for San Diego Wine & Culinary Center, were among the SommCon welcome dinner attendees. ■■

Challenge Accepted

BARTENDERS CRAM FOR THE TÍO PEPE GLOBAL COCKTAIL COMPETITION DURING THE BRAND'S FIRST U.S. MASTERCLASS TOUR

by Kate Newton / photos by Todd Westphal



Tío Pepe Brand Ambassador Álvaro Plata demonstrates pouring Sherry with the *venencia* during the Tío Pepe Masterclass at Rosaliné in West Hollywood, CA. Participants in the Tío Pepe Challenge will also have to use the tool as part of the competition.

By the time the Tío Pepe Masterclass landed in Los Angeles in early February, Brand Ambassador Álvaro Plata had traversed the U.S. as part of the brand's first-ever stateside tour after its inception five years ago. "If you want to do something in the States, you need to do it properly, because it's one of the two or three markets leading the world in mixology," Plata said.

During the seventh and final class at modern Peruvian bistro Rosaliné in West Hollywood, Plata and Claire Henderson, Senior Brand Ambassador for Tío Pepe's family-owned parent company, González Byass, set out to help members of the trade taste through the Sherry producer's portfolio and delve deeply into the various styles' nuances. "Hopefully you'll finish here as Sherry experts," Henderson told the group as they situated themselves at place settings packed with pours of Tío Pepe and González Byass wines.



Plata prepared a series of Sherry-based cocktails after the Masterclass, including the ever-popular Sherry Cobbler.



Masterclass participants applaud for Álvaro Plata as he deftly pours Sherry with the *venencia*.

The participants owed their attendance to a mutual competitive streak: The Masterclass tour serves as the educational precursor to a global bartender battle known as the Tío Pepe Challenge, and American competitors with the best Sherry-based cocktails will first face off in a national final in New York in March. There, they'll vie for a sole spot in the championship in Jerez, Spain, which will be held in May. "We are not just looking for great cocktails: We want to be a tool for people to understand this complex style that's one of the richest wines in the world," Plata, a Jerez native, said.

Those who missed the Masterclass can read on for a crash course of the portfolio selections, listed in the order they were tasted:

Tío Pepe Fino: The Palomino Fino grape is planted to roughly 90 percent of vineyards in Jerez and makes up 100% of González Byass' bestselling flagship wine Tío Pepe, with "the majority of the yeasty character" derived from aging under *flor* for four to five years. The versatile and elegant white pairs with anything from light seafood fare to spicy dishes.

Viña AB Amontillado: Also 100% Palomino, the Amontillado is, to simplify, "a longer-aging Fino" with increased minerality and a long after-taste, Plata told the class. The Sherry ages for 12 years in a combination of biological and oxidative aging: Three to four years of oxidation accounts for its color, but it's still "delicate and pungent

with a little more toasted nose and caramel and vanilla," Plata continued.

Alfonso Oloroso: Eight years of oxidative aging without yeast gives this Sherry its golden amber color and aromas of dried fruits, nuts, and vanilla. "When you smell the wine, it's showing a lot of character from the American oak and the aroma of the cellar," Plata explained: This corresponds directly to the name "Oloroso," which means "scented" in Spanish.

Leonor Palo Cortado: At 20% ABV, this Palo Cortado undergoes 12 years of oxidative aging and is almost identical to Oloroso in color, though it does exude more of an orange peel aroma and is slightly more delicate. Its notes of toasted nuts and mature wood pair especially well with stews and red meat.

Solera 1847 Cream: A blend of 75% Palomino and 25% Pedro Ximénez, the Cream shines as either a dessert wine

or an apéritif. At 18% ABV, its velvety texture on the palate paves a smooth pathway for sweet notes of fig, raisin, and caramel.

La Copa Sweet Vermouth: With a recipe dating back to 1896, this vermouth's spicy nose of cinnamon and clove gives way to an elegant palate that makes it translate especially well as an apéritif. This cream-based vermouth sees eight years of oxidative aging and has 141 grams per liter of sugar.

Néctar Pedro Ximénez: Before wrapping up class behind the bar with a quick tutorial on Sherry cocktails, Plata brought the tasting portion to a close with the "sweet touch" of Pedro Ximénez. "Tío Pepe is the light and this is the night," he quipped, clarifying that the wines basically sit on opposite ends of the spectrum. With 380 g/l of sugar, this dessert wine finds its sweet counterparts in chocolate and ice cream pairings. ■■

Sherryside

- ▶ 1 oz. The London N°1
- ▶ 1 oz. Tío Pepe
- ▶ 1 oz. lemon juice
- ▶ ¾ oz. honey
- ▶ 5 mint leaves
- ▶ 1 piece of ginger

Combine ingredients, shake, stir, and pour into a coupe glass. Garnish with a dry lemon wheel topped with a mint leaf.

MONARCH BEACH RESORT
SGWS Women in Wine & Spirits
Thursday, December 7, 2017

The Stars of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

As we've watched the wine and spirits sphere evolve and develop—often in highly-unexpected ways—over the past decade, women working at all levels of the industry have proven time and time again that they're a similarly unstoppable and dynamic force. At Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits annual "Women in Wine & Spirits" holiday dinner in December, these talented, dedicated, and inspiring women were honored by 140 of their colleagues and peers at the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point, California.

The growing attendance—up from just 40 women at the first dinner five years ago—reinforces how well-received the event has been within the Southern California wine and spirits community. "Women in Wine & Spirits was created to connect, inspire, and mentor women from all lines of business within our division and organization," explains James Bradney, Vice President/General Manager of SGWS' Southern California division. "Our goal is to promote and

IN ITS FIFTH YEAR, THE ANNUAL WOMEN IN WINE & SPIRITS HOLIDAY DINNER SHINES BRIGHTLY AS ITS NUMBERS GROW

story and photos by Karen Moneymaker

The growing attendance at Women in Wine and Spirits reinforces how well-received the event has been within the Southern California wine and spirits community.



What the Stars Say

"Women in Wine & Spirits is a forum for like-minded professional women at SGWS to come together to connect, network, mentor, and collaborate on all things that relate to our wine and spirits world. We also work together to benefit the community through donation drives and charity events sponsored by SGWS and Women in Wine & Spirits. Personally, it is the support system the event naturally fosters that is the most important aspect for me. This group is empowering and allows us to strengthen our ties and expand our knowledge base, which helps grow our diverse leadership team at SGWS." —*Corey Cline, Smart&Final Account Manager*

"Being a part of Women in Wine & Spirits is an amazing opportunity to share my passion and experience with up-and-coming women in the industry. My motto is 'be kind, be humble, be great!'" —*Sharon Brawner, Broad Market Sales Manager*

"Being a part of Women in Wine & Spirits has not only opened my eyes to what our company has to offer, but has given me mentors. This group is empowering, charitable, and knows how to have a good time while expanding our wine and spirit knowledge. My first event was the Christmas dinner in 2016. Hearing the speeches of how passionate and career-driven these women are was incredible. I hope to inspire whomever I cross paths with as these women have done for me!" —*Brissa Lowery, Southern Division District Manager*

"I am honored to say I work for a company that invests in their people and supports initiatives such as Women in Wine & Spirits in Southern California. The annual holiday dinner is the one time a year we are all able to get together, and it is so impactful and inspiring to watch the group grow so significantly year after year, from 40 to 140 women involved in the past five years! It continues to give me hope for the industry's future and evolution in the years to come." —*Nikki Mason, American Wine & Spirits Account Executive*

"Right after college, I moved to California from Texas to work for Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits. When I moved to L.A. I did not know anyone, and I can say that I have built my family around Women in Wine & Spirits. I have been introduced to so many incredible women and mentors who have helped and guided me throughout the past year and a half. Being surrounded by an amazing group of women inspires and motivates me daily to be successful and grow my career here at SGWS." —*Adriana Garza, Chain Sales-Coastal Division & Beverly Hills*



Steve Harden, Vice President—General Manager of CA, SGWS; Annette Alvarez-Peters, Assistant Vice President/GMM, Beverage Alcohol, Costco Wholesale; Frank Santangelo, Vice President—Director of Chains, SGWS of Southern California.



A vision board at the event provided inspiration, empowerment, and encouragement.

encourage the advancement of women at Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits through various networking, recognition, and educational opportunities."

In furthering this mission, SGWS has built an extensive network of driven, passionate women focused on delivering critical company initiatives and exceeding supplier and customer expectations (the group has also made philanthropy a priority by collaborating with area charities). As the night unfolded—with laughter, goodwill, and, of course, many toasts—it was obvious to see that as their numbers grow, this impressive contingent will need a larger venue in the years to come. ■■



AMERICAN DISTILLERIES

MASH

Masters

MOUNT VERNON AND THE DISTILLED SPIRITS COUNCIL CELEBRATE TEN YEARS OF PRODUCTION SINCE THE REOPENING OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ESTATE

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

Clear, unaged whiskey comes off the still at George Washington's Distillery. Next, it will age six years in barrel.

PHOTO: KELLY MAGYARICS



George Washington Straight Rye Whiskey is among the spirits produced at George Washington's Distillery at Mount Vernon. The historic facility reopened in 2007 after extensive restoration.

PHOTO: KELLY MAGYARICS



Fred Noe of Jim Beam was one of the master distillers invited to the distillery to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its reopening.



Steven Bashore, Director of Historic Trades at George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, with a sampling of George Washington Straight Rye Whiskey.

George Washington's Distillery at Mount Vernon—the gateway to the American Whiskey Trail—marked the tenth anniversary of its reopening in a major way last October. At its Distill with the Masters event, 13 of the biggest names in the whiskey world gathered at the spot where Washington founded the distillery in 1797 to supplement his onsite milling business. Though it wasn't established until he was 65, the venture now stands among the Founding Father's most lasting achievements.

The master distillers—among them Dave Pickerell of WhistlePig and Hillrock Estate Distillery, Wes Henderson of Angel's Envy, Fred Noe of Jim Beam, and Becky Harris of Catocin Creek—descended on Mount Vernon to create an anniversary spirit that'll be laid down in barrel and eventually released. In order to adhere to the whiskey-making traditions of the 18th century, these top distillers, typically accustomed to state-of-the-art equipment and technology, instead had to rely on far more primitive methods.

True Grit in the Gristmill

Before plunging straight into production, the group acquainted themselves with the facility by visiting the gristmill; built in 1770, it's still used to grind the grains used in the distilled spirits. Ever the meticulous business owner, Washington had ordered that freshwater be shipped all the way from France's Marne river. He upgraded the mill in 1791, installing elevators linking every machine in the facility for increased efficiency, and by 1799, Washington was producing almost 11,000 gallons of rye whiskey annually—vaulting the distillery into the ranks of the country's largest at the time.

After a brief tour, the true work began. Inside a dark building thick with steam and dust, the volunteers carried wooden gallon buckets of water from the boiler to the unwieldy mash tubs. After manually adding hefty bags of corn and rye, the crew agitated the grains to incorporate them before using wooden rakes to break up the “mash balls” that result from starch clumping together.

The mash was then poured into fermentation tanks heated by wood—for the record, it takes 110 trips to fill the fermenter—before the wort was transported by buckets to the stills, where crystal-clear moonshine whiskey that will age six years in barrel eventually started to flow. (By comparison, Washington's two offerings were an unaged whiskey and another aged just two years.)

Steven Bashore, who serves as Director of Historic Trades at George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, said that immersing the producers in a distilling process true to Washington's time period helps ensure they all “have a hands-on experience.” “It's very gritty in here with all the bucketing and rowing,” he added. “There are lots of atmospherics of 18th-century distilling.”

A Toast to Entrepreneurship

In fact, Mount Vernon is one of the only spots in the country where distillation is still done this way—by staff dressed in period attire, no less—and the operation has seen enough growth to warrant a bigger warehouse for aging.

The impetus for restoring the distillery arose nearly two decades ago, after archivists discovered documentation showing exactly how the facility was built and initially operated. It was reconstructed through a joint venture by Mount Vernon and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) and reopened its doors in March 2007.

When the tenth anniversary celebration rolled around, Bashore said it made sense to bring in not only prestigious master distillers, but those already acquainted with the facility, as well. “My dad [Lincoln Henderson] was here in 2003 with the original distillers, and bringing my son Kyle now is really cool,” said Henderson, Co-Founder of Angel's Envy.

After the batches of whiskey were put into barrels, Rob Shenk, Mount Vernon's Senior Vice President of Visitor Engagement, explained during a press conference that while most Americans immediately recognize Washington as a victorious general and the first U.S. president, they don't typically associate him with the spirits industry and are unaware he went on to become a successful businessman after leaving office. “That's a story we're still introducing to many of our guests,” Shenk said, joking that instead of playing golf or frequenting the speaking circuit, Washington invested everything he could to make Mount Vernon a profitable enterprise. “He didn't need to be doing this—he wanted to.”

After signing a barrel filled with the anniversary expression, the producers rose their glasses with a boisterous exclamation of “huzzah”: a common toast in the Colonial era. On that particular day, it served as an homage to Washington, to his unfettered entrepreneurship, and to the classic American spirit that continues to thrive today. ■■



Star Search

**OLE SMOKY
TRANSFORMS ITS
MASTERS OF
MOONSHINE
COMPETITION INTO
A QUEST FOR BRAND
AMBASSADORS**

by **Jesse Hom-Dawson**

The five brand ambassadors selected from this year's Masters of Moonshine program will visit the Ole Smoky Distillery in Gatlinburg, TN, for a moonshine boot camp.

As Ole Smoky's fourth annual Masters of Moonshine nears, the Tennessee-based distillery has announced a slight twist to the upcoming event. Past iterations of the program have seen entrants create cocktails for a panel of judges in select markets, with the finalists competing for audience favorite at Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans. Last year, Makenzie Oliver of Tennessee and Karen Puttmann of Ohio, both emerged as victors after tying for first place.

This year, Ole Smoky is doing something a little different. "We've never had a Brand Ambassador for Ole Smoky Moonshine before, and we figured now is the time!" Vice President of Marketing Meg Bruno explains.

According to Bruno, a "natural evolution" of the Masters of Moonshine program inspired the distillery to do away with the old format of the competition in a quest to find five mixologists who will represent Ole Smoky in their respective territories for a six-month contract. "We're looking for an opportunity to expand to more markets this year, so we want to reach out to the people who weren't in one of the cities that hosted the semifinals and keep them engaged with us all year long," Bruno adds. "Each region is so different when it comes to their cocktail cultures, and Ole Smoky wants to make sure they're all represented!"

PHOTO: VAN GALLIK





PHOTO: CHRIS GRANGER

Last year's Masters of Moonshine finalists in New Orleans: Vance McCarty, Bar Manager at Maple Hall in Knoxville, TN; Makenzie Oliver, Bar Manager at Parthenon Grille in Murfreesboro, TN; Ian Brooks, Bar Manager at Brick and Bones in Dallas, TX; Karen Puttmann, Bartender at Smoke Justis in Cincinnati, OH; Laura Howard, Bartender at Flight 747 Lounge in Jacksonville, FL; and Jamie Passmore, Bartender at Varnish on King in Perth, Australia.

**INTERESTED IN ENTERING THIS
YEAR'S MASTERS OF MOONSHINE PROGRAM?
VISIT OLESMOKY.COM FOR MORE
DETAILS ON HOW TO APPLY.**

Starting in mid-March, entrants will be able to submit an application for the brand ambassador position. The United States Bartenders' Guild—perhaps the group most qualified to narrow down the applicants—will then pick two semi-finalists each from five regions: the West Coast, the Northeast, the South, the Midwest and the “motherland” of Ole Smoky Moonshine, Tennessee.

According to Sheila Rosario, Director of Sponsorship Sales for the USBG, the judges will adhere to impartiality throughout the process. “As a nonprofit, the USBG follows strict nondiscrimination rules while selecting participants for programs in an effort to avoid or mitigate conflict of interest. To make opportunities fair to all members, we implement an anonymous selection process,” Rosario says. “We will be looking for characteristics that best match Ole Smoky’s values and mission. Family values, tradition, and perseverance are key components that have helped to shape Ole Smoky into the brand it is today. The best candidates for the Master of Moonshine program will be able to show they also embody these characteristics and would be an asset to the Ole Smoky team.”

After Ole Smoky narrows the field down to five, the new brand ambassadors will embark on a trip to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, which serves as the entrance to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the home of the Ole Smoky Distillery, the most visited facility of its kind in America. “Call it moonshine boot camp meets [Kentucky bartender camp] Camp Runamok—we’re throwing them into the trenches,” Bruno says with a laugh. “They’ll get to make moonshine, hang out with the locals, and learn about the history of Ole Smoky. We’re also going to have fun extracurricular activities like fishing, hiking, and four-wheeling.”

Although the boot camp sounds like a lively introduction to a moonshine enthusiast’s dream job, Ole Smoky expects the ambassadors to take their roles seriously. “As brand ambassadors, the five finalists have carte blanche with the help of Ole Smoky to create a program that fits their region, whether it’s going to parties to represent the brand, training staff, or working with us for development of digital content,” Bruno explains.

Ole Smoky will continue with this format for future Masters of Moonshine programs, and Bruno hints there might even be an opportunity in the future to expand the search internationally. “Ole Smoky is distributed in 45 countries, and last year we had an Australian semi-finalist participate, so we’d love to work with people around the world,” she says. ■■

A Grand DRAM

THE GLOBAL WHISKIES THAT WILL TAKE
YOUR PALATE ON THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

by *Emily Coleman*

Within the vast lineup of spirits on the market today, whisk(e)y seems most adept at tempting consumers to ponder the liquid inside their glass. With this power over the imbibers' imagination, it has the magical ability to instantly transport the senses to a realm of refinement and complexity.

With a dram in one hand, a guest's night can be elevated simply by discovering a new whisk(e)y. That drink could hail from a faraway land or follow a unique aging process; regardless, it will open one's taste buds and consciousness to this spirit's seemingly limitless potential.

A Knockout:

JOHN L. SULLIVAN IRISH WHISKEY

In Boston back in the late 1800s, a boxer by the name of John L. Sullivan was named the last bareknuckle boxing champion—after an unimaginable 76 rounds—as well as the first heavyweight champion of gloved boxing. M.S. Walker, having operated in Boston for 88 years, is paying homage to the city's hometown hero with a whiskey as tenacious as “The Boston Strong Boy” himself.

A small-batch spirit made from Irish grains, John L. Sullivan Irish Whiskey goes through triple distillation in copper pot stills before aging in bourbon barrels. The smooth and balanced expression exudes light notes of spice and vanilla.

There's a strong likelihood your customers will fight over this coveted spirit: To keep things civil, we suggest you always keep a spare behind the bar.

John L. Sullivan Irish Whiskey

(\$26) Triple distilled in copper pot stills, this small-batch whiskey is aged in bourbon casks, bringing out pleasant, savory spices. It possesses a keen clarity on nose and palate; scents of honeysuckle and peach are soft-spoken. After warming the mouth with orange-peel tea and brightening the palate with hazelnut, corn husk, and candied pineapple, the whiskey exhibits a clean finish with red apples and sweet, toasty malt.

93 —*Meridith May*

M.S. WALKER

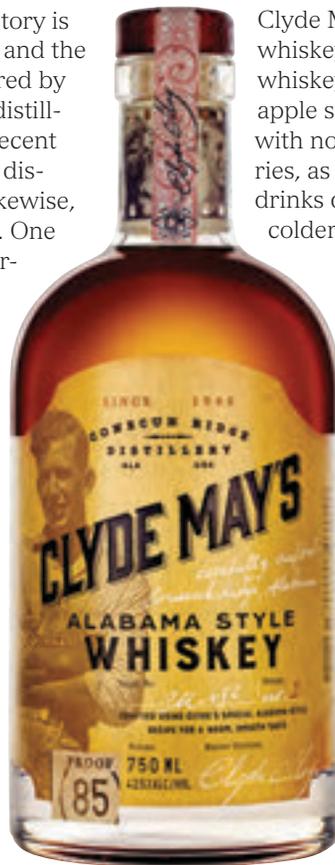


Neat Home Alabama:

CLYDE MAY'S WHISKEY

Much of whiskey's history is more lore than fact, and the truth is often obscured by the secrecy of past distillers. Yet the spirit's recent renaissance has led many to discover new producers and, likewise, their methods of production. One such find occurred in a lesser-known area for whiskey-making: the Conecuh Ridge in southern Alabama, once considered by the federal government to have the heaviest concentration of stills in the U.S. Here moonshiner Clyde May supplemented his income by making small batches of an amber whiskey with a hint of apple; known as Mr. Clyde's "Christmas Whiskey," it became the inspiration for the modern Clyde May's Alabama Style Whiskey (SRP \$32-\$40) made by Conecuh Ridge Distillery.

When asked about the typical reaction to this flagship expression, Kirk Gaither, Clyde May's Regional Director for the West, noted: "It is an 'aha' moment when people taste it and discover that while we are adding a hint of flavor to stay true to Clyde's legacy,



Clyde May's Alabama Style is a whiskey with flavor, not a flavored whiskey." The distinctive touch of apple stands strongly on its own with notes of citrus and dark berries, as well as in premium warm drinks during the winter months in colder markets.

In 2016, the five-year-old, non-chill filtered Clyde May's Straight Bourbon Whiskey (SRP \$32-\$40) won a Gold Medal in the New York World Wine & Spirits Competition. With impressive results like these, the distillery decided to heavily invest in its home state in the form of a new \$13.6-million facility in Troy, Alabama, which will open in early 2019.

"After a successful last few years proving that Clyde May's has the staying power to connect with consumers beyond its base in the south-

eastern states, we see lots of opportunity to compete with national players, in cocktails and on shelves," says Jay Liddell, VP of Sales & Marketing at Clyde May's.

CONECUH SPIRITS

Texas Terroir:

BALCONES DISTILLING

The humble beginnings of new distilleries often make them resemble bold science projects when they first take shape. Such is the case with Balcones Distilling's origin story, which began in a welding shop under a bridge in Waco, Texas. After a team built up the distillery, installed copper pot stills, and officially began operating in 2009, Balcones released its Baby Blue as the first Texas whisky* on the market since Prohibition.

"We started with very little," says Jared Himstedt, Head Distiller for Balcones. "Building and installing a lot of our distillery and equipment gave us a certain intimacy with the whisky. The high level of interaction we have with the spirit is connected to the quality of the product."

The portfolio's success has paved the way for impressive growth and the construction of a new distillery in downtown Waco inside the former Texas Fireproof Storage Co. structure. With ten times the capacity of its old location, the new distillery opened in 2016 with the trio of Himstedt, Distillery Manager Zack Pilgrim, and Production Manager Thomas Mote at the helm.

Increased production in the new facility has enabled Balcones to expand its presence on retail shelves, which has made it easier for consumers to find its whiskies at off- and on-premise accounts. Balcones currently distributes to 13 states, but has plans to add more in the next few years with its sights set on the international market as well. The new distillery also provides both residents



BALCONES BUCK

- ▶ 1½ oz. Balcones Baby Blue
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- ▶ 3–4 oz. ginger ale

Add all ingredients into an ice-filled highball glass and garnish with a lemon wedge.

THE PEACEFUL PEOPLE

Created by Maria Vieira,
The East London Liquor Company

- ▶ 1½ oz. Balcones Baby Blue
- ▶ 1 barspoon mezcal
- ▶ ¾ oz. toasted butter pecan syrup
- ▶ ½ oz. lemon juice
- ▶ 3 dashes coffee bitters

Combine all ingredients and shake with ice until chilled. Strain and serve up in traditional clay cups. Pair with a side of blue corn bread.



“WHISKY TAKES
CUES FROM ITS
SURROUNDINGS,
WE WANT TO MAKE
WHISKY THAT
SPEAKS TO TEXAS.”

and visitors a convenient spot to sample and learn more about the exceptional whisky during tastings four days a week or facility tours on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

“Whisky takes cues from its surroundings,” Himstedt says. “We want to make whisky that speaks to Texas, both by exploring a very ingredient-focused approach and showcasing our unique maturation climate in the finished product.” One example that speaks to the uniqueness of the terroir stems from the rapid temperature shifts of the Texas climate, which allow the casks to breathe at an accelerated rate; this also alters Balcones’ aging process as compared to more traditional global whisky regions. Baby Blue—a Double Gold winner at the 2016 San Francisco World Spirits Competition—utilizes roasted blue corn from New Mexico and is the perfect option for bartenders developing a new drink for their respective program.

While still in the original location, the Balcones team had a vision to make a malt whisky that would serve as the consummate choice for whisky consumers. Balcones “1” Texas Single Malt realized that dream by blending Old and New World traditions into a super-premium sipping whisky. Made from Scotland’s Golden Promise barley, it’s a spirit worth its weight in gold—as in Double Gold medals from the 2016 and 2017 New York World Wine & Spirits Competition and the 2017 San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

While Balcones still calls Waco its home, it’s come a long way from that spot under the bridge and will only continue to create expressions worthy of any Texan’s pride.

TASTING NOTES

Balcones Baby Blue Corn Whisky Roasted heirloom blue corn is the pride of this Texas whiskey. The maize is unctuous, and it adds weight to the mouthfeel, which broadens and disperses across the mouth. Flavors and aromas of walnut—along with a slight nut tannin quality—tangle with peach and Anjou pear notes. At 92 proof, there’s still a soft touch to the palate and nose, perhaps a touch of black pepper to ramp up the sweeter tones of toffee oak and brown sugar. —*Meridith May*

Balcones “1” Texas Single Malt Whisky, Classic Edition Deep-seated perfumed notes of sandalwood, mandarin orange, chocolate, and cedar are balmy and musky. On the palate, a hint of Sherry with an underpinning of molasses and dark chocolate is composed and elegant. The 106-proof spirit exudes the exotic sweetness of dates and figs with the savoriness of tobacco. Layers of honeyed pecans, baked apple, and caramel are beautifully enmeshed. —*M.M.*

BALCONES DISTILLING

**Balcones spells whisky without the “e.”*

whiskey REPORT

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

*Jack Daniel's U.S.
Brand Ambassador
Eric "E.T." Tecosky
Challenges Bartenders
to Collaborate with
Cocktail Creation*

by Mara Marski

While a bartender's job is inherently social, the act of creating a new cocktail or bar menu can feel solitary by comparison. In an effort to combat that sense of seclusion, Jack Daniel's U.S. Brand Ambassador Eric "E.T." Tecosky challenged co-workers at three establishments to collaboratively craft a cocktail without any requirements or constraints. "Typically, you present finished or almost finished cocktails to co-workers or trusted regulars for feedback, and I wondered if instant feedback from a collaborative effort could help or hurt the process. But if it doesn't help or wasn't fun . . . then this whole thing was not my idea!" Tecosky adds with a laugh.

Read on for the stories and recipes behind the participating bartenders' creations.

PHOTO: JOANN ARRUDA



Dave Flatman (left) and Chris Jones (right) watch as Bryan Krieger (center) measures out a walnut liqueur for their collaborative cocktail, the Do Right Woman, at Screwdriver Bar in Seattle, WA.

SCREWDRIVER BAR, SEATTLE, WA

Housed in the basement of a historical building in the cosmopolitan Belltown neighborhood, Screwdriver Bar is a local favorite with a rock 'n' roll vibe. Partners Dave Flatman, Bryan Krieger, and Chris Jones opened the bar in late 2016, and the trio of longtime Seattle bartenders approached the Jack Daniel's cocktail challenge the same way they've gone about accomplishing nearly everything else at the bar: as a team. "We talked about how different ingredients could help accentuate the music history here, and Jack ties nicely into that," Flatman explains. "We wanted something nice and balanced, a little esoteric, and delicious."

Flatman says conceptualizing their Jack Daniel's Rye-based cocktail, dubbed the Do Right Woman, required some "reverse engineering," as one person typically comes up with a cocktail before opening up the floor for finetuning. "It was interesting to go about cocktail development from a different approach than you would normally take," he adds. "It was a very fluid process and a really fun experience."

DO RIGHT WOMAN

Created by Bryan Krieger, Chris Jones, and Dave Flatman at Screwdriver Bar

- ▀ ¾ oz. Jack Daniel's Rye
- ▀ ¾ oz. VS Cognac
- ▀ ½ oz. Nocino liqueur
- ▀ ½ oz. lemon juice
- ▀ ½ oz. honey syrup
- ▀ 2 dashes Regan's Orange Bitters

Shake all ingredients and strain into a coupe. Garnish with a lemon twist and brandied cherry.



PHOTO: JOANN ARRUDA



PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING

Cari Hah, Eugene Lee, and Selene Martinez of Big Bar in Los Angeles, CA, keep things light as they put the finishing touches on their Monkey Fizzness cocktail.

BIG BAR, LOS ANGELES, CA

For Los Angeles bar guru Cari Hah, Manager at Big Bar in Los Feliz, the Jack Daniel's project fell right in line with her collaborative approach to research and design. "I love collaboration, and in a lot of ways it's what we do on all of our menus," she adds.

Hah and her collaborators Selene Martinez and Eugene Lee first zeroed in on their base spirit—Jack Daniel's Rye—and its lingering banana notes. Despite encountering some minor hurdles with their original concept, they suddenly thought "to use chocolate and banana in a fizz," Hah says. After some tweaking for balance, the Monkey Fizzness—a traditional fizz made with egg white and soda—was born.

MONKEY FIZZNESS

Created by Cari Hah, Selene Martinez, and Eugene Lee at Big Bar

- ▶ 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Rye Whiskey
- ▶ ½ oz. Tempus Fugit Crème de Cacao
- ▶ ½ oz. Giffard Crème de Banane
- ▶ 1 oz. heavy cream
- ▶ ¼ oz. dark chocolate syrup
- ▶ Egg white
- ▶ 3 drops Miracle Mile Redeye Bitters

Add all ingredients to a tin with ice and shake vigorously until chilled. Strain the contents back into the tin and discard the used ice, then reseal and shake again. Pour 1 oz. of soda water in the bottom of a chilled fizz glass, add the shaken cocktail on top of the soda water, and give it a few taps on the bottom of the glass to help it settle. Add some soda water into the used tin, pouring down the side to "wash" it out with soda. Add that soda slowly to the glass until the fizz head peeks above the glass. Garnish with a brûléed banana fan and chocolate syrup.



PHOTO: DUSTIN DOWNING



PHOTO: TIM MURRAY

At Pouring Ribbons in New York's East Village, Brooke Toscano and Joaquín Simó worked in tandem to create their Motörhead Royale cocktail.

POURING RIBBONS, NEW YORK, NY

When Joaquín Simó, Partner at the East Village cocktail bar Pouring Ribbons, was tasked with Tecosky's collaborative cocktail challenge, he singled out Lead Bartender Brooke Toscano as his partner. The duo drew their cocktail inspiration from legendary Motörhead bassist/singer Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister, who was rarely seen without a Jack and Coke in hand.

To add complexity, Simó and Toscano sought to incorporate their favorite iterations of Coke—vanilla and cherry. "We started with Carpano Antica Formula sweet vermouth, which gives big beautiful spicy notes of vanilla and chocolate, then we went a little more esoteric with Byrrh Grand Quinquina to give subtle hints of cherry," Simó explains.

MOTÖRHEAD ROYALE

Created by Joaquín Simó and Brooke Toscano at Pouring Ribbons

- ▶ 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye
- ▶ ½ oz. Carpano Antica Formula sweet vermouth
- ▶ ½ oz. Byrrh Grand Quinquina
- ▶ ¼ oz. Luxardo Amaro Abano liqueur
- ▶ 1½ oz. Mexican Coca-Cola
- ▶ 1 dash Peychaud's Bitters

Combine ingredients (sans the Mexican Coke) in a mixing glass, add plenty of ice, and stir briskly until cold. Add the Coke to a chilled champagne flute, then strain the cocktail over it. Garnish with an orange pigtail twist.



PHOTO: TIM MURRAY

A Fresh Taste of Ireland:

WEST CORK DISTILLERS

Instead of framing its products' embodiment of terroir solely around ingredients, the team at West Cork Distillers decided to turn up the heat—literally—on its whiskeys' regional character.

Using a proprietary device that a local fifth-generation blacksmith helped develop, the distillery chars some of its barrels with natural fuel from the Glengarriff Forest in Southern Ireland. After the single malt whiskey ages in Sherry casks for four years, Glengarriff Collection Peat Charred Cask (SRP \$45) and Bog Oak Charred Cask (SRP \$45) finish in these barrels and emerge as distinctive and enduring expressions.

These limited releases join the already impressive portfolio of West Cork, including the 10 Year Single Malt, which ages for ten years in flame-charred bourbon barrels, and the Blended Bourbon Cask, which mixes grain and malt to produce an approachable whiskey.



West Cork 10 Year Single Malt (\$40) The nose exhibits both baked and crisp Gala apples with a hint of cinnamon. Musky sandalwood opens up further along with honeyed pancake batter. On the palate, the liquid slithers in a sensuous flow, with the honey becoming brighter and the stream of stone fruit “juice” growing more unctuous toward the white-pepper finish. **96** —*Meridith May*

West Cork Blended Bourbon Cask (\$27) Aromas of brown sugar and figs, as well as hazelnut butter and nougat, are lovely openers. The gossamer texture is preternatural; it glides and melts, glides and melts. A pinch of Himalayan salt seems to just pat the middle of the tongue as apricot and cedar intermingle. **98** —*M.M.*

M.S. WALKER

Best of the Midwest:

KOVAL SINGLE BARREL BOURBON WHISKEY

Robert and Sonat Birnecker sought to produce organic craft spirits when they opened Chicago's first distillery since the mid-1800s. To ensure the quality of each of their releases at KOVAL—which drew its name from the Yiddish word for “black sheep,” or someone who forges ahead—they contracted with local Midwestern farmers for the grain, which they then mill, mash, distill, and bottle onsite. KOVAL uses only the “heart cut” of the distillate for its whiskey, which results in the brand's signature clean, grain-forward style.

Made of 51% corn, KOVAL Single Barrel Bourbon Whiskey forgoes the usual rye or wheat and instead rounds out its mash bill with millet. The water used to create this bourbon comes from Lake Michigan through a natural charcoal purification process. The bourbon ages for two to four years in American oak barrels made by The Barrel Mill, located in Minnesota.

KOVAL Bourbon is Certified Organic by the Midwestern Organic Services Association and Certified Kosher through the Orthodox Union, giving your customers peace of mind in their whiskey choice.



IAN MACLEOD DISTILLERS

Refreshes Some of Its Favorite Scotches

Both Pig's Nose and Sheep Dip from Ian Macleod have entered the new year with new labels, but there's no need to fear the bottles' contents will undergo similar changes. In the case of Pig's Nose, the Scotch is still made with high malt-content, first-filled bourbon barrels. Ian Macleod has also launched its liter-sized bottles at an accessible price for any on-premise program.

Sheep Dip, a blended Scotch crafted from eight Highland single malts, remains a wonderful alternative tippie for the discerning single malt drinker—just in an updated package. The relabeling is actually an integral part of the brand's legacy: In the old



days of Scotch production, the British began to tax distillers in the Highlands. In turn, the distillers often evaded the new tariffs by labeling their Scotch barrels "Sheep Dip," a commonly-used insecticide that protected livestock from pests and parasites. The phrase became a colloquial name for well-blended whisky, and it persists today as a wink to the past.

For those preferring the complex peat and brininess of the Hebrides, the brand's newest expression, Sheep Dip Islay, features a blend of three Islay Single Malts and has already earned high scores on the competition circuit.

FREDERICK WILDMAN AND SONS, LTD.



Treading a Different Path:

REDWOOD EMPIRE

As a former cost accountant, Jeff Duckhorn took what might be considered an atypical route toward becoming the Head Distiller of Redwood Empire—a craft distillery in Sonoma County—but his passion for the art of spirit-making enabled him to successfully trade out spreadsheets for the still.

Much like the path of its Head Distiller, the distillery's flagship American Whiskey also takes an unconventional approach. It blends 40% bourbon aged 11, five, and four years with 60% rye aged two to three years. By resting in a mix of high-char American oak casks and heirloom port and wine barrels, this whiskey develops a nuanced yet subtle palate. "Redwood Empire is best enjoyed neat or with a couple of ice cubes," notes Duckhorn. "Cocktail inclusion into a Manhattan is delicious."

For those seeking new and intriguing whiskeys, Redwood Empire's spirits stand as tall as the trees that inspired this distillery.

Redwood Empire American Whiskey (\$45) Select lots of 11-, five- and four-year-old bourbon blended with three- and two-year-old rye, this 90-proof Sonoma County-based whiskey opens up with enchanting scents of orange blossom, jasmine, black tea, and pecans. Even with the heat of the overproof alcohol content, the velvety spiced oak and honey cream are sensual and envelop the taste buds with passionfruit, vanilla, and sweet apricot. This is cellar-aged in new American oak with a portion resting in wine and port barrels. **93** —*Meridith May*



PURPLE WINE + SPIRITS

whiskey REPORT

A recent tasting in Los Angeles welcomed guests with a traditional Old Fashioned featuring Little Book Blended Straight Whiskey.

**FREDDIE NOE SHOWCASES
LITTLE BOOK, BEAM'S FIRST
BLENDED STRAIGHT WHISKEY**

A New Page in the **BOOK OF BEAM**

by Jesse Hom-Dawson / photos by Dustin Downing

Five years ago, Frederick “Freddie” Booker Noe IV—son of Beam Master Distiller Fred Noe and great-great-grandson of Jim Beam—was toiling away at Beam’s research-and-development facility when inspiration struck. The idea it spawned would later become his first release for his family’s legendary company: Little Book Blended Straight Whiskey.

“I was finishing up at the Global Innovation Center with what I call my ‘tour of duty,’ where I spent three months in every department at the distillery learning the ropes,” Freddie recalls. “Part of my assignment was to come up with two prototype experiments to present, one of which had to be flavored.”





Freddie Booker Noe IV, the creator of Little Book Whiskey, is the son of Beam Master Distiller Fred Noe and the great-great-grandson of Jim Beam.

That flavored spirit, a fruit punch rum, “will never see the light of day,” Freddie adds with a laugh. But the other—a blend he created from a four-year Jim Beam Bourbon, a four-year corn whiskey, a four-year malt whiskey, and a four-year rye whiskey, all from Beam’s library of whiskeys—seemed to hold more promise.

While Freddie’s prototype never evolved into an actual release, he circled back to the concept of creating his own blended whiskey a year and a half ago and quickly set about finding the perfect blend. The final result, named Little Book after Freddie’s lifelong family nickname, features 13-year-old corn whiskey, six-year-old high rye, and a six-year-old 100% distiller’s malt whiskey blended with four-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon. “I made 27 different blends before deciding the second one was always my favorite,” Freddie admits. “Each component was added for a reason: the corn whiskey adds sweetness, the rye brings spiciness, and you get a great mouthfeel from the malt whiskey.”

To introduce Little Book (SRP \$80) to the West Coast F&B industry, Freddie flew over from Kentucky and led a tasting with Los Angeles bartenders focused on the components of Little Book—and, of course, the final product. With the corn whiskey clocking in at 133 proof and the rye and malt whiskey at 126, Freddie cautioned the bartenders to “sip slow.” Little Book is bottled at 128, or barrel proof, and Freddie explained the “whiskey is meant to be the way it is, straight out of the barrel, so you can enjoy it any damn way you please.” “I like it on the rocks, because as the ice melts, the flavor of the whiskey changes,” he added.

Little Book will be released annually with a new blend each year; it’s a first not only for Freddie, but for the distillery, too, as its inaugural blended straight whiskey. “I wanted to create something new and unique,” Freddie recalls. “I’m excited to keep exploring all the possibilities with blending and to share them with whiskey fans in the coming years.” And since its October 2017 release, the whiskey has received favorable reviews from those both behind and in front of the bar: This news bodes well for Freddie as it helps cement his own burgeoning legacy within the Beam family. ■■

FREDDIE NOE LED A TASTING OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE BLEND FOR LITTLE BOOK WHISKEY, WHICH INCLUDES CORN, MALT, RYE, AND BOURBON WHISKIES.



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drink  smart®



San Francisco area bartenders gathered to celebrate the limited-release Jim Beam Distiller's Cut, a seasonal, 100-proof Kentucky straight bourbon.

ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES

*San Francisco
Bartenders Get
Exclusive Access
to the Jim Beam
Limited-Release
Distiller's Cut*

by Mara Marski / photos by John Curley

Among the slew of parties held during the holidays, those with bartenders as their main audience seem to be cut from a slightly different, more festive cloth. Last November in San Francisco, a group of Bay Area spirits slingers celebrated the season—and some rare downtime during one of the busiest parts of the year—by sampling the newest expression from Jim Beam.

Intended as a perfect gift for the discerning bourbon lover, the seasonal, limited-release Jim Beam Distiller's Cut is an unfiltered, 100-proof Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey aged five to six years and hand-selected by seventh-generation Beam Family Master Distiller Fred Noe. Eager to sample the exclusive spirit, the bartenders assembled at Amblard Leather Atelier in San Francisco's Presidio neighborhood, where French transplant and leather artisan Bea Amblard led the group in handcrafting their own personalized luggage tags.

With several cocktails well within their grasp, the bartenders worked their way through the process of dying, gluing, sanding, stitching, and pressing their initials into the leather under Amblard's gentle tutelage. While the project left the bartenders with mementos they can carry with them on their future travels, it also gave them a chance to take pride in crafting these items by hand: a fitting metaphor for Distiller's Cut itself.

In a separate area of the shop, the group swarmed around Beam Suntory's West Coast American Whiskey Ambassador Megan Breier—a frequent occurrence for someone with magnetic charm and a known reputation as a keeper of delicious whiskeys. Glencairn glasses brimming with neat pours of dark amber liquid seemed to materialize out of thin air as Breier explained that the assembled guests were the first group of bartenders—or anyone, for that matter—outside of Kentucky to try Jim Beam Distiller's Cut.

Breier told the group that the expression distinguishes itself within Beam's portfolio through its lack of "chill filtration," which involves moving the liquid through a filter to remove fatty acids formed during the distillation process. In skipping this step, Distiller's Cut instead undergoes a rough filtration process that only removes barrel sediment. "Since we get the bourbon from barrel to bottle a little differently, the result is pretty unique to most of Jim Beam's other bourbons," Breier said. "It has a fuller taste and palate feel."

The bartenders closely examined the amber-hued nectar, with many of them swirling their glasses and tracing the bourbon's trajectory in the light before inhaling the rich notes of oak and dried fruit. As Breier led a brief toast, the chorus of voices combined with the bourbon's warm, lingering finish to echo the day's merriment and the camaraderie of a shared source of passion: in this case, a passion that elevated an unforgettable encounter with a premium handcrafted spirit. ■■



Beam Suntory West Coast American Whiskey Ambassador Megan Breier (at left) shows off her handmade luggage tag alongside leather artisan Bea Amblard.



Spirits industry professionals Engracio Clemena, Tammy Hagans, and Tanya Clark share a Distiller's Cut toast during the day's festivities.



Bartender Simone Mims shows off her hand-stitching skills.



Whiskey researcher DG Blackburn (at right) studies proper needle technique from a member of the Amblard team.



REINDEERS' MULE

- ▶ 1½ oz. Jim Beam Distiller's Cut
- ▶ 1 oz. cranberry juice cocktail
- ▶ 3 oz. Gosling's Ginger Beer
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lime juice

Pour the Jim Beam Distiller's Cut into a Mule mug and fill halfway with crushed ice. Add lime and cranberry juice, then stir. Fill mug to rim with crushed ice and top with ginger beer. Garnish with expressed lime peel.



BEAMSICLE

- ▶ 1 oz. Jim Beam Distiller's Cut
- ▶ ¾ oz. Jim Beam Vanilla
- ▶ 2½ oz. freshly-squeezed orange juice
- ▶ ½ oz. cream

▶ 2 dashes Regan's Orange Bitters
Combine Jim Beam Distiller's Cut, Jim Beam Vanilla, orange juice, cream, and orange bitters in shaker tin with ice. Shake and strain into coupe glass. Garnish with expressed orange peel.



CLERMONT CRISP

- ▶ 1½ oz. Jim Beam Distiller's Cut
- ▶ 3 oz. apple cider
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lemon juice

Combine Jim Beam Distiller's Cut, apple cider, and lemon juice in a shaker tin with ice. Shake and strain into cocktail glass over ice. Garnish with a turn of cracked black pepper and whole star anise.

The Pride of Maryland SAGAMORE SPIRIT

BRINGS THE TRADITION OF LOCAL RYE WHISKEY BACK TO CHARM CITY

by Kelly Magyarics, DSW

You can't make good whiskey without good water: After all, the very root of the brown spirit's name is derived from the Gaelic word for water, "uisce." Sagamore Spirit, a new Baltimore-based rye whiskey producer, even goes so far as to truck in water from a limestone aquifer 22 miles north for proofing. (Its signature spirit, an American straight rye whiskey, is bottled at 83 proof—a nod to the journey the water makes on Interstate 83 from the aquifer on Sagamore Farm to the distillery in Port Covington.)

PHOTO: RONNIE NETTLES



Maryland-based Sagamore Spirit produces its whiskey in its five-acre, three-building facility that opened in April 2017. Its aging barn, pictured above, is located on Sagamore Farm roughly 20 miles north of the distillery.



After introducing the rye whiskey to the market in May 2016, Sagamore Spirit followed up its debut with a Cask Strength Rye Whiskey bottled between 111–113 proof. The company’s five-acre, three-building facility, which opened in April 2017, houses the world’s only 40-foot mirrored finished copper continuous column still; crafted at Vendome Copper in Louisville, Kentucky, it’s joined by a 250-gallon copper pot still used for R&D, limited releases, and new spirits.

According to Sagamore Brand Director Rachel Fontana, the staff is still testing the waters when it comes to figuring out yields and output, but maintaining a philosophy of distilling to quality—never quantity—has been a firm objective from the outset. “Maryland rye was known the world over for quality and smoothness, and we honor that tradition every day at Sagamore Spirit,” Fontana says. “We take pride in our fast-paced and dynamic team culture and work incredibly hard to produce a nuanced product that pre-Prohibition Maryland distillers would call their own.”

Sagamore currently produces a high rye and a low rye, which are barrel-aged separately for four years and blended for the two core expressions. It also recently released two spirits as part of its Sagamore Reserve Series, which the brand plans to expand: The Double Oak Rye Whiskey is aged for four years before finishing in a second oak barrel, while the Moscatel Barrel Finished Whiskey rests in Spanish casks that previously held floral-tinged Moscatel wine.

The distillery, meanwhile, welcomes roughly 1,000 visitors each week for tours that end with a tasting of either three whiskeys or a trio of rye cocktails. “It’s great for people who might be just transitioning to whiskey drinking,” Fontana says. “There’s no wrong way to do it!”

Sagamore Spirit products are becoming ubiquitous at Baltimore-area bars and restaurants, and Fontana couldn’t be happier. “It’s a thrill to see Sagamore Spirit Rye Whiskey on back bars of our local haunts,” she says. “The reception has been fantastic, and Baltimore is filled with creative bartenders who use Sagamore Spirit to craft cocktails for all palates.” Read on for three spots currently placing Sagamore on the front lines of their bar programs.

whiskey REPORT

RYE STREET TAVERN

Located adjacent to the Sagamore Spirit distillery, this 200-seat spot focused on mid-Atlantic cuisine is the newest restaurant operated by NoHo Hospitality Group. Guests who pop over before or after a distillery tour will be pleased to find four Sagamore expressions lined up behind the stove-flanked back bar, which overlooks a balcony resembling a barrel's curves.

According to Beverage Manager Scott Kollig, Rye Street's staff sells an average of 2,000 pours of Sagamore a month. That doesn't include rye-based cocktails, the most popular of which is the Rattlesnake with Sagamore Spirit 83 Proof Rye, St. George Spirits Absinthe Verte, lemon juice, simple syrup, egg white, and Angostura Aromatic Bitters. The Sagamore Swizzle, meanwhile, mixes the 83 Proof Rye with Lyon Distilling Co. Dark Rum (a fellow made-in-Maryland spirit), lime, mint, and chocolate bitters.

☆☆☆☆

SAGAMORE PENDRY HOTEL/REC PIER CHOP HOUSE

This 128-room hotel in the city's vibrant Fell's Point neighborhood is all about whiskey: A "Sagamore Experience" package combines a harbor-view accommodation with transportation to and from the distillery, as well as a tour and tasting. At check-in, guests also receive a Baltimore-inspired password that can be traded at the bar in exchange for a shot of Sagamore Rye. Jon Chocklett, the hotel's Director of Sales and Marketing, estimates 10–15 percent of hotel guests visit Sagamore Spirit during their stay.

Rec Pier Chop House carries the full Sagamore Spirit portfolio except for the white rye and stocks 12 rye brands altogether. "The category is well-received and has found traction in the rebirth of classic cocktails and the recognition of Baltimore's rich history of distillation," says Joshua Nadel, Beverage Director for NoHo Hospitality Group. Bartenders pour the Sagamore Spirit 83 Proof Rye in the House Manhattan, House Old Fashioned, and the Biscotti Old Fashioned, where it's stirred with Faretto Biscotti Liqueur and aromatic and chocolate bitters.



PHOTO: TASHA DOOLEY

Scott Kollig is the Beverage Manager at Rye Street Tavern, located next to the Sagamore Spirit distillery.

The Rattlesnake with Sagamore Spirit 83 Proof Rye, St. George Spirits Absinthe Verte, lemon juice, simple syrup, egg white, and Angostura Aromatic Bitters.



PHOTO: TASHA DOOLEY

THE CHARLES

Housed in a former bank built in 1900, this restaurant and bar in Baltimore's historic Federal Hill neighborhood boasts 5,100 square feet of space, two poured concrete bars with 18-foot custom racks, and a mezzanine topped by a herringbone ceiling. Original cocktails on the menu include the Sagamore Staycation with Sagamore Rye Whiskey, raspberry-lemon simple syrup, lemon juice, orange bitters, and lemon-lime soda. The Charles' Chef Cory Pastor crafts a full roster of creative plates, including a tempura-battered hot avocado topped with Nashville hot sauce and bread-and-butter zucchini pickles, as well as cast iron-seared scallops served with jalapeno gremolata and smoked Gouda grits. ■■

The Charles' Sagamore Staycation cocktail >
features Sagamore Rye Whiskey, raspberry
lemon simple syrup, lemon juice, orange
bitters, and lemon-lime soda.



PHOTO: TASHA DOOLEY

PHOTO: TASHA DOOLEY

**< Nick Maka is
Bar Manager at
The Charles in
Baltimore, MD.**





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BARTENDER, **DANTE**,
NEW YORK CITY

by Mara Marski

Despite his reputation as an outspoken enthusiast of Polynesian cocktail culture, Marlo Gamora wants you to know he's "more of a tiki *guy* than a tiki *bartender*." This playful reluctance likely lies in his aversion to being professionally pigeonholed: Before taking a bartending position at Italian heavyweight Dante, Gamora has worked at several influential New York institutions, including Filipino gastropub Jeepney and post-modern tiki restaurant Mother of Pearl. "Everywhere I've worked has had a different style and philosophy, and I think that has made me a balanced bartender," he says.

A Filipino himself, Gamora's interest in tiki was originally born out of a love of classic Elvis films and a passion for cultures he encountered while traveling throughout Southeast Asia. He first indulged his curiosity by throwing house parties where his friends critiqued his cocktails, but Jeff "Beachbum" Berry's 2007 book *Sippin' Safari* left Gamora with a newfound admiration for Filipino bartenders famously trained in the tiki arts.

After conceptualizing a full tiki menu at Jeepney, Gamora landed at Dante; with a menu bursting with apéritifs, Negronis, and classic cocktails, the restaurant falls far outside of tiki territory, but part of the joy for Gamora lies in pushing boundaries and making the menu approachable at the same time. "I get to incorporate ingredients that aren't normally used, like amaris and liqueurs," he says. "We try to have a drink for everyone and I love changing up ingredients. That's what draws me in." ■■

THE "5" LIST

MARLO GAMORA'S TOP FIVE FAVES:

The opportunity to meet new people from different walks of life every day.

Teaching people about ingredients old and new, including lesser-known amaro and rum brands.

Having a job that feels like hosting a party.

Geeking out about spirits, where they're made, and the terroir that shapes their flavors.

Checking out new spots and exploring new cultures through their cuisines. (Not such a fan of the weight gain, though!)

MARLO GAMORA'S TOP FIVE PET PEEVES:

Close-minded customers who won't try something new or even read the cocktail menu. I wish guests were more trusting.

Rudeness: guests who snap their fingers at bartenders or rowdy patrons who slap the bar loudly and disrupt the environment.

Irresponsible drinkers who go overboard. Try a low-ABV apéritif and enjoy a conversation with friends instead.

Handsy guests who touch straws and garnishes on the bar. You have to throw them out, which is extremely wasteful.

Lack of respect for culture and tradition: Putting a cocktail in a tiki mug doesn't make it a tiki drink. Without that respect, it becomes an appropriation of sorts.



The Man Behind the Brands



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