MEET THE MASTERS:
The Duke’s son, Ethan Wayne; Chef Rick Moonen, whose RX Boiler Room hosted our final challenge; Chris Radomski, CEO, Duke Spirits; Fred Dame, MS, Vice President, Prestige Accounts, American Wine and Spirits; and Francesco Lafranconi, Executive Director of Mixology and Spirits Education, Southern Wine and Spirits of Nevada.

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- Volume growth: +34%
- Dollar value: +37%

1. Source: Nielsen 52 weeks ending June 2015

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CORRECTIONS:
In our March issue “Rosé Rendezvous” story, the importer for Charles Heidsieck was listed incorrectly. The importer for this label is Folio Fine Wine Partners.

In the March “Blue Reviews” column, the name of the latest Herradura release was listed incorrectly. The product is Tequila Herradura’s Colección de la Casa, Reserva 2015 – Directo de Alambique (Directo).

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Fruit on Fire!

DEEP EDDY VODKA LIVENs UP SUMMER COCKTAILS WITH A NEW PEACH FLAVOR
By Becky Tsadik

At Baby Blues BBQ in West Hollywood, California, Bar Manager Chad Sullivan takes pride in his playfulness behind the bar. Happy hour proves prime-time for interfacing with regulars and asking for their feedback as he experiments with new drink combinations. Recently, he has been reaching for a newcomer from one of his favorite brands: Deep Eddy Peach Vodka.

“Deep Eddy Vodkas are so refreshing,” Sullivan says. “Sweet Tea, Lemon, Peach—all of those taste great by themselves, poured over ice.”

Just Peachy

Distilled from corn in small batches at its Austin, Texas distillery, Deep Eddy Vodka relies on real flavors and natural ingredients to enhance its portfolio, which includes Ruby Red Grapefruit, Sweet Tea, Cranberry and Lemon. In January, the brand rolled out its Peach flavor, the next chapter in Deep Eddy’s storied saga.

When it comes to Peach, Deep Eddy Vodka instilled the same care into the development and launch process as it has with massively successful predecessors like Ruby Red Grapefruit, which spearheaded a major trend in cocktails, and Lemon, rolled out last year and already the number-two citrus vodka in the category, less than one year out of gate. The breakout hit of 2015 is continuing to grow around the country and is showing signs of being the number-one citrus vodka in the nation soon. Similarly, Peach is poised to take the category by storm, promising to be the feel-good hit of the summer and a perfect example of Deep Eddy’s spin on classic flavors using natural ingredients.

“A peach flavor has been on the roadmap for a while, but we worked for well over a year until we had a product that met our standards,” says John Scarborough, President of Deep Eddy Vodka. “We set the bar higher with each flavor extension, and we will not release a product unless our team can stand proudly behind it.”

What’s the secret formula driving Deep Eddy Vodka’s success, making it the fastest growing vodka in the category? Small-batch production vodkas made with real ingredients, all crafted in the brand’s Texas distillery.

Bartender-Tested, Customer-Approved

Bartenders around the country have taken notice and embraced Deep Eddy Vodka for its range of flavors made with real ingredients that are simple to mix into cocktails both classic and complex; the brand often receives feedback about what crowd pleasers their flavors are. The use of pure ingredients means no artificial or strange aftertaste, making it a favorite at places like Baby Blues BBQ in West Hollywood, CA, which has readily incorporated Deep Eddy Peach Vodka into its repertoire, less than one month after bringing it on board.

Chad Sullivan, Bar Manager of Baby Blues BBQ, located in West Hollywood, CA, and his Doctor’s Orders cocktail, featuring Deep Eddy Peach Vodka.
“Deep Eddy Peach is easy to mix with and create a sunshiny drink that’s refreshing,” says Liz Gulash, General Manager, Baby Blues BBQ. “Peaches remind people of home-cooked food and summertime,” Gulash says.

Bartenders aren’t the only ones flocking to Deep Eddy Vodka; at Baby Blues BBQ, customers ask for the vodka by name.

“The initial response to Deep Eddy Peach Vodka has been tremendous in the market,” Scarborough says. “It tastes like you are biting into a peach, and consumers love the variety of this taste profile as a complement to our popular citrus products.”

**Fresh-Squeezed Future**

Deep Eddy Vodka is committed to maintaining the same meticulous approach to making its products that has driven its success thus far, a huge draw for consumers, who have increasingly flocked to brands featuring real, natural ingredients made with a personal touch.

“Even with our tremendous growth over the last few years, we still approach our product one batch at a time,” Scarborough says. “Our production team cares deeply about the product and take a personal interest in making sure it is of the highest quality before it leaves the distillery.”

The forecast looks bright for Deep Eddy Vodka. The company was acquired by Heaven Hill Brands last year, but is continuing to operate as an independent subsidiary from their original Austin home. Now part of a family-owned company, they can focus on making great-tasting vodkas over chasing trends for financial gains in the short-term. Continuing to build brand awareness is top of mind—while also having fun!

“The best is ahead of us as we continue to build on the momentum of the brand the marketplace,” Scarborough says.

In February, John Scarborough was appointed President of Deep Eddy Vodka. “As a native Texan that has been with the brand since early days, I understand the Deep Eddy Vodka DNA that is firmly rooted in the laid-back, fun Austin lifestyle,” Scarborough says, confident that his five-year history with the brand will serve him well.

“One of the key factors in Heaven Hill’s acquisition of Deep Eddy Vodka has been keeping the heart and soul of the brand intact,” he says. One strand of that Deep Eddy DNA certainly is the brand’s commitment to maintaining quality in spite of rapid growth.

“We have experienced high growth from the very beginning and remain the fastest-growing vodka brand in the country. Our amazing team will continue to focus on making the best vodkas with real ingredients that consumers and bartenders love.”

—John Scarborough, President, Deep Eddy Vodka
Ripe for Picking

With summer around the corner, Baby Blues BBQ Bar Manager Chad Sullivan and his team will be experimenting with cocktails inspired by the bounty of fruits of the season. With Deep Eddy Peach Vodka as the base, these fresh and flavorful treats beg for BBQ or a poolside afternoon of (responsible) day-drinking!

“Deep Eddy is a good-quality vodka that we’re lucky enough to put in our wells,” says General Manager Liz Gulash. “Texas is the BBQ state and the home of Deep Eddy. Plus, the pin up–style bottle label speaks to our décor here!” The restaurant’s unpretentious, approachable and fun vibe is embodied in the house-made sauces that are prominently displayed in unadorned squeeze bottles at every table: vinegar-based BBQ, molasses-based Sweet and fiesty XXX, a risqué marriage of habanero, serrano and poblano peppers offset by the sweetness of pineapple, raspberry and mango.

The sauces are intended for slathering onto Baby Blues’ house-smoked pulled pork or baby back ribs—but Sullivan doesn’t stop there. He uses 80-proof straight Deep Eddy Vodka to craft their Bloody Mary—spiked with a kick of XXX sauce and house-made “pig candy”—when the tasty candied bacon even makes it out of the back of house.

“I’ve seen more customers eating our sliced brisket lately,” Sullivan says. “Brisket goes well with bourbon, but as the weather gets nice, I want to pull out something more refreshing—these are great ‘transition’ drinks into the lighter spirit: vodka.”

Doctor’s Orders

by Chad Sullivan, Baby Blues BBQ

- 1½ oz. Deep Eddy Peach Vodka
- ½ oz. Larceny Bourbon
- Splash of cranberry juice
- Splash of sweet and sour mix
- Squeeze of lime

Top with club soda. Garnish with lime wedge.

Tasting Note

Deep Eddy Peach Vodka
(SRP $19.99/750mL)

Summer is only a couple of months away, but the fragrance of peach blossoms is in the air with this 70-proof spirit. Along with the floral tones, there’s a fresh peach-y fruit scent. Real peach juice is mixed with Deep Eddy’s ten-times-distilled vodka, and it’s gluten free. The taste of peach and honey lingers as does the echo of ripe apricot.

Baby Blues BBQ Bar Manager Chad Sullivan and General Manager Liz Gulash pause for a toast with Deep Eddy Peach Vodka.
The cacophonous din on the internet and social media has had a huge impact on how we live our lives. Most of us don’t make a move, a buying decision or plans until we check to see what others are saying online. When it comes to restaurant intelligence, one of the most visited sites is Yelp. This much-traveled source is a quick reference for such facts as phone numbers, addresses, menus and other key information. That would probably be enough, but it is also where to see what others think of a place.

Ever wonder what happens to all those badly lit food photos people are always snapping when they should be eating? Look on Yelp; they are all there in their muddy, out-of-focus glory. Based on thousands of moronic critical comments and boring food pictures, Yelp has developed a rating system, and, using some mysterious algorithm (the actual nature of which is known only to a handful of operatives secreted in a windowless cubicle somewhere), they have developed a list entitled “The Top 100 Places to Eat in the U.S.”

To say this list is quirky would be a serious understatement. The top-rated place in the country can be found in Burbank, California, not normally looked upon as a hotbed of culinary excellence. The place is called Porto’s Bakery and Cafe (the accent mark is omitted so as not to confuse the natives) and, judging by the more than 4,000 pictures it is represented by on the Yelp site, its specialties are potato balls, meat pies and cheese rolls.

I have eaten at #4, Oklahoma Joe’s Bar-B-Que in Kansas City. It’s actually a great place with a long line out front. They serve killer brisket, burnt ends and Diet Coke. Oh, and it’s in a gas station. And just when you thought the white tablecloth went out with the Waldorf salad, there’s Gary Danko’s fine San Francisco restaurant at number six. And in case you were wondering, Napa’s celebrated French Laundry rings in at number 57. How many Michelin stars does Porto’s earn?

It’s reassuring to learn that just about everyone who eats fancies him or herself a food critic. They also don’t seem daunted by the fact that 782 other diners have already submitted blurry pictures of the same lumpy, brown stew.

—Anthony Dias Blue
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122 ARIZONA COCKTAIL WEEK BRINGS OUT THE BIG GUNS
Another Year of Growth and Fun in the Sun at Arizona Cocktail Week (plus our Arizona Cocktail Week Speed Tasting Report)
Launched

Following the successful exit of Angel’s Envy, industry veteran Jay Maltby now launches a new sales and marketing platform for artisanal spirits, The Espiritus Group. Espiritus launches in partnership with a $30 million spirits venture fund. “We’ve assembled a spirits portfolio all of which are in high-growth categories and share common attributes: artisanship, family ownership, financial stability, high quality and authenticity of story,” explains Maltby, Chairman, CEO of Espiritus. “We’ve also put together a team of over 20 industry veterans with complementary skill sets who share our entrepreneurial approach to the business.” The venture fund will invest $3–10 million in high-potential spirits brands.

New Partnership

Southern Wine & Spirits of America, Inc.—the nation’s leading wine and spirits distributor with operations in 35 markets—has entered into an agreement to acquire Sterling Distributing Company in Omaha, Nebraska. Sterling Distributing Company is Nebraska’s premier distilled spirits and fine wine wholesaler.

Commenting on the acquisition, Wayne E. Chaplin, President & CEO of Southern, said, “The Sterling Distributing Company is a great family-owned business with a talented workforce and a long-standing reputation in the state. Southern is honored by the opportunity to work with and learn from the Sterling leadership and employees deeply engrained in the market and to bring our industry best practices and expertise to the Nebraska market.”

Portfolio Additions

E. & J. Gallo Winery (Gallo) announced that it has been awarded the exclusive rights to distribute Italy’s Renato Ratti wines in the United States beginning immediately. Renato Ratti will join Allegrini, Poggio al Tesoro and Pieropan in Gallo’s Luxury Wine Group (LUX Wines). Gallo initiated LUX Wines in 2014 to meet the evolving needs of its customers. LUX’s vision is to represent iconic wine suppliers from the most noteworthy appellations in the world.

Celebrating Historic Roots

Launching in May in select markets, Gin Lane 1751 ($24.99/750 ml.) is a classic London dry gin—“a gin for gin lovers”—which celebrates the Victorian gin-making era, with a style of bold juniper and hints of liquorice. A small batch gin, Gin Lane 1751 comprises three styles: London Dry Gin (40% ABV); Victoria Pink Gin (40% ABV); and Old Tom Gin (40% ABV).

Gin Lane 1751 was created by Charles Maxwell of Thames Distillers, an eighth-generation distiller, and the Bloomsbury Club—a group of gin lovers and drinks industry professionals. Its name signifies an important historical landmark on the gin timeline: the Gin Act of 1751, which was in part brought about by artist William Hogarth’s iconic depiction of Gin Lane.

“We are not really turning the table on craft,” says Geoff Curley, one of the founders of the Bloomsbury Club, “but we think that there is a place for something affordable for the masses, and this gin is just that. We launched in the U.K. in July and have had some really great success in the past eight months . . . and it’s the most gin-heavy, competitive market on the planet!”
**INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT**

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Davos Brands**, an importer and marketer of luxury sakes, wines and spirits is pleased to appoint **Adrian Molina** as Senior Brand Manager of the company. Part of the TY KU Sake and Davos Brands team for the past five years, as of February 2016, Adrian will report directly to Davos Brands Vice Chairman Guillaume Cuvelier, founder and former CEO of SVEDKA Vodka.

As Senior Brand Manager, Molina will be responsible for developing and executing overall strategic marketing plans for the entire Davos portfolio of TY KU Sake, Aviation Gin, Sombra Mezcal and Astral Tequila including brand marketing (media/PR, online and promotional event opportunities), trade marketing (program development, sales support tools, trade events) and online marketing efforts. Previously Molina was appointed Brand Communication Manager when TY KU formed into Davos Brands in July 2014.

**American Mixers**, the parent company of **Dirty Sue Premium Olive Juice**, has brought on **Tim Bekins** as its National Vice President of Sales. Bekins brings more than 45 years of beverage industry experience to his new role, including 36 years with Trader Joe’s. For 13 of those years, he held the title of Senior Buyer for all 161 of the specialty grocer’s West Coast Stores. After TJ’s, Tim spent two and a half years working in the same capacity for Ralph’s Grocery Company, overseeing the beverage sector for 165 stores before moving into the supplier side of things.

**Brockmans Gin** has announced the appointment of **John Soden** to the position of Sales Director. Soden will work closely alongside Brockmans’ senior management and with the brand’s U.S. market managers to continue the successful, international sales growth of this distinctly original gin.

“I have been a longtime spectator in the burgeoning gin category,” says Soden. “I’m thrilled to take an active role with the fantastic team of professionals at Brockmans Gin to accelerate growth of the brand in existing and new markets.”

**The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa** recently appointed **Thomas Riordan** to Executive Chef. Riordan is an expert culinary leader with a prestigious culinary background and more than 20 years of experience in the food and beverage industry. Riordan brings an exceptional understanding of both the luxury market place and locally inspired dining.

In his new role as Executive Chef, Riordan will have the task of overseeing all culinary functions at Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, including oversight of restaurant concepts and menus for Ko’Sin and the resort’s signature and award-winning restaurant, Kai. Additionally, he will oversee meetings and group banquets, event catering, guest room dining for the 500 room resort and all culinary staff recruitment and
Since 1976, Kenwood Vineyards has been the exclusive producer of wines from the historic Jack London Ranch. The dramatic wolf head on the bottle was inspired by Jack’s bookplate logo and today is used to embellish the premium character of these unique wines.

Whether by the bottle or by the glass, the Pernod Ricard USA Wines & Champagnes portfolio delivers quality, heritage and value with every pour.
Brief Encounters

We may not have enough pages in each issue to devote as much attention as we would like to each person whose path we cross, but please note that if it’s in the publication, we deem it noteworthy.

—Meridith May, Publisher & Editorial Director

Somms Taking on Somms

Sommeliers gathering to taste wine and compare notes isn’t so unusual, as many study to attain yet another level of professional certification. But Jon McDaniel, Beverage Director at Chicago’s Lawless Restaurant Group (Acanto, The Dawson, The Gage and Beacon Tavern) invited top Chicagoland sommeliers to gather for a slightly more competitive angle. On February 9, McDaniel hosted his second annual Sommelier Slam, bringing ten somms into Acanto restaurant for a five-course pairing dinner, served to and judged by seventy-five ticket-purchasing consumers. Each dish was prepared by a different Lawless Group chef, and sommeliers were randomly paired to select wines. “It’s a way to get sommeliers around the community in one place to showcase their pairing skills,” McDaniel says.

“Everyone has a different definition of the ‘best,’” so for some, it was the best wine, while for others, it was the best pairing,” McDaniel says. “Either way, people got to put their expert wine judge hat on for this.” McDaniel announced winning wines after each course and allowed the two sommeliers to explain their pairing principles to the crowd.

The wines spanned the wine globe, from a Pet-Nat Malvasia from Oregon’s Applegate Valle to a Chardonnay-Chenin Blanc blend from the Western Cape of South Africa. The evening demonstrated the difficulty and vast creativity of pairing wines to complex dishes that sommeliers hadn’t even tasted. —Laura Levy Shatkin
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Martin Reyes and his team are on a crusade to change the perception of wine clubs. Reyes, Senior Wine Buyer for Global Wine Company (GWC), which curates wines for such prestigious clubs as The New York Times, The Washington Post and Williams-Sonoma and their proprietary Global Wine Cellars club, works with a tasting panel that includes Tim Marson, MW, Jennifer Ingellis, a Food & Wine Sommelier of the Year; Mark Bowery, an eight-time winner of the California Wine Tasting Championship; and Mary G. Burnham, a three-time author of Food & Wine’s annual Wine Guide.

Aside from Reyes’ busy task of seeking direct imports, he emphasizes the point that they are also buying wine from the same distributors that restaurants and retailers are buying from, stressing that the 9,000 wines they taste annually are “quality labels, not fantasy labels,” created by marketing experts. Reyes worries that consumers are quick to assume that wines from a wine club, such as GWC, mostly offer these fantasy brands—but that’s simply not the case. And though not all fantasy labels are bad, admits Reyes, the danger, he emphasizes, is when marketers price these wines at inflated price-points so they can be perceived as offered at a discount. At GWC, the tasting team works hard to ensure that no wines are brought in at a discounted rate and that what consumers are purchasing is a special curated box of wine, like the Entertainers Collection or A Year of Wine—stocked with authentic brands with a story and place behind them. Reyes and team have worked with Della Terra, Henry Wine Group, Winebow, Kermit Lynch and several others. More info at globalwinecellars.com.

—Jonathan Cristaldi

Star Power

Getting married at the 1,200-acre Château Miraval in Correns, France was just the start for the star couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. They purchased the estate in 2012 for $60 million, and as if they didn’t have enough to keep them busy, with their movie roles and brood of kids, they became wine producers in partnership with Marc Perrin of the venerable Rhône Valley winemakers. Their lovely Provençal rosé is produced on 150 acres of the property and was first released on no other than Valentine’s Day (2013).

I recently tasted the 2015 vintage at a Wines of Provence tasting in Chicago. The wine is bursting with fresh lively strawberries, confectioner’s sugar and bright raspberries with a hint of rose petals. The Champagne-style bottle is elegant, but be sure to validate the authenticity via the engraved hallmark on the foot of the glass bottle. Counterfeits are circulating already and the wine sells out within hours of release.

—L. L. S.
Clad in Shining Armor, This Charming Knight Provides
a Sensual Escape from the Mundane

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A Time Too Brief

Susan Korol Pey, the Napa Valley wine and restaurant innovator who created several new wine brands and elevated the fine wine dining scene across the western United States, died suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of March. She was 52.

Although born in Mississippi, Susan was a northern California girl at heart whose career in the wine and hospitality industries began while living and studying in Florence, Italy. Susan passed Master Sommelier tests, but in the 1990s withdrew from formal wine study to focus her attention on raising the three daughters she loves so much. She was a member of the San Francisco Chronicle Tasting Panel and the Bon Appetit Tasting Panel, among others.

Susan pioneered the renaissance of winegrowing in west Marin County in 1999 with her Pey-Marin label. She was the first to plant Riesling in this cool-climate region; today more than 20 wineries produce wine in the area. In 2000, Susan was recruited by restaurateur and visionary Larry Mindel to oversee the beverage program at the 22-unit Il Fornaio restaurant group. In 2004, Susan started producing TEXTBOOK Napa Valley wines with her husband Jonathan Pey. Her wish was to craft superb “small-lot” wines that express the special nuance that Napa Valley so richly offers.

Determined to stop the scourge of breast cancer, she was a tireless advocate for the Breast Cancer Fund and one of its leading individual fundraisers. Susan is survived by her soul mate, husband and best friend of 33 years, Jonathan Pey; daughters (and best friends) Lauren, Alexandra and Cameron, her parents Harold & Iris Korol of Palo Alto, three siblings, several in-laws and nephews. Susan traveled the world extensively with her family to more than 30 countries, and particularly loved off-the-beaten-path locales such as Lombok, Fez, Bequia and Pantelleria. She recently returned from Cuba as part of the Napa Valley Vintners outreach there. Susan Pey lived life every moment richly and fully—and expected us all to do the same.

Tasting Greatness

Nearly two decades after the first Premiere Napa Valley, they continue to come in droves—the heavy hitters and big buyers of the wine industry—to taste as many as they can of some 225 barrel samples, with winemakers pouring and talking up a storm, all from the third floor of the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, in the Vintners Hall of Fame. Wines sold at Premiere are micro-lots from Napa’s best producers, and each lot is comprised of 60 to 240 bottles, specially labeled for Premiere, and highly coveted by on-premise buyers.

The $5 million raised this year by the Napa Valley Vintners (NVV), a non-profit trade association, goes toward sustaining and promoting the Napa Valley as the leading American institution of domestic wine production.

Weaving in and out of friends and acquaintances, some of my favorites that exemplified the beauty of Napa Valley Cabernet—its depth and complexity shining through a mask of powerful tannins—were: William Hill Estate Winery 2014 “Bench Blend”; Signorello Estate 2014 “Cuvee Athena”; Alpha Omega 2014 “Dr. To Kalon”; Hunnicutt 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon from a one-acre block planted to Clone 169; and the Cliff Lede Vineyards 2014 “Cinnamon Devil.”

“We’re thrilled with the results and we had a great day sharing our wines with our partners in the trade,” noted Doug Shafer of Shafer Vineyards, this year’s Premiere Napa Valley Steering Committee chair. Top grossing lots at the auction included: Italics Winegrowers, Memento Mori, Nine Suns, Realm Cellars, Bombauer Vineyards, Shafer Vineyards, TOR Kenward Family, Duckhorn Vineyards, Silver Oak Cellars and ZD Wines. More information at premierenapawines.com. —J. C.
GROWING BRANDS.
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BRANDING | DISTRIBUTION | LEGAL | MARKETING | RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT | SALES

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What’s the difference between a cult wine and a unicorn wine? While they both trade on scarcity, quality and occasionally scores, price isn’t always a deciding factor. To well-heeled wine enthusiasts, cult wines are whatever they can afford, but find nearly impossible to obtain. To sommeliers, unicorn wines are those they hunger to drink and pour but must go to great lengths to procure. On Mondays at San Francisco’s RN74, Wine Director David Castleberry proffers by-the-glass pours of unicorn wine. On one particular Magnum Monday, it was Domaine de Montille 2008 “Le Cailleret” 1er Cru de Puligny-Montrachet hand-carried from France by Raj Parr for that very purpose.

After making a few treks to Ovid Winery, which perches like an aerie on the face of Pritchard Hill and looks west over Napa Valley, to taste with winemaker Austin Peterson, cult wine has begun to take on a deeper meaning. Historically associated with wine styles that have earned 100-point scores, it’s fair to say that cult wines don’t have a reputation for being universally food-friendly while the exact opposite applies to unicorn wines; they enjoy and often times demand the company of food.

Peterson—who shares a well-known surname with wine-maker Dr. Dick Peterson and his daughter Heidi Peterson Barrett but is no relation—is a second-generation winemaker who made and sold his own wine to finance his Davis education. When Ovid founders Mark Nelson and Dana Johnson appointed him winemaker in 2010, he had been assistant to consulting winemaker Andy Erickson there since 2006 and worked for advisor Michel Rolland after he graduated.

When you’re at the solar-powered, gravity flow winery, it’s inevitable that your attention is continually drawn outward in an effort to drink in the panoramic view. But even during a late summer lunch when the table is laid with the estate’s organically-grown fruit, nuts, vegetables and flowers, accompanied by Peterson’s decidedly food-friendly wines, there’s little distraction from what’s happening in the glass.

After tasting the 2012 releases of Experiment V6.2 and Cabernet Sauvignon late last year, this generous vintage reveals that Ovid’s estate vineyard, which was planted in 2000, has now come fully into its own. The Cabernet Franc–dominant Experiment V6.2 is a blend with Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon that Peterson said was developed from an earlier Cabernet Franc/Petit Verdot blend. Medium-bodied, with cool tannins and seemingly endless secondary flavors of tea, tobacco and earthy minerality, its dried sage or coyote brush signals the dominant variety.

Blended with close to 25% Cabernet Franc, Peterson’s Cabernet Sauvignon shows classic cassis and violet markers, dark blackberry and mulberry fruit, but without any berried sweetness and more depth and structure. Described as a “pretty baby,” the tannins are resolved and on the plus side of medium.

The drier vintages that followed 2012 would naturally bring more concentration to Ovid’s mountain fruit, but without tasting the five-case lot of 100% estate 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon labeled S.P.Q.R. that was offered at Premiere Napa Valley, that’s just an assumption based on Peterson’s description of the vintage. That particular lot of Ovid will be available through the Nakagawa Wine Company in Tokyo, effectively making this cult wine a unicorn for American consumers and sommeliers alike.
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If we believed that April showers bring May flowers, then we’d publish our rosé roundup next month. But various rosé rovers arrived this month, and in the spirit there’s no time like the present, we present the “Ready for Rosé” edition.

**Wines of Provence** made a local stop on its U.S. tour, hosting a media lunch at Claudette, the Provençal restaurant in Greenwich Village. Rosés ranging from pale shell-pink to a strawberry-colored style were paired with regional dishes such as roasted vegetable aioli, grilled sardines and pork cheek Provençal. Rosé not only seriously stands up to Provence’s rustic cuisine, it is serious business. Wines of Provence President Alain Baccino said it was the most difficult wine to make because saignée and pressing requires precision to preserve freshness and the hallmark color. “Provence is a traditional land but also an innovative land,” he said, citing the region’s Rosé Wine Experimentation and Research Center, a 20-year-old institution that analyzes more than 1,000 samples annually and provides technical assistance to winemakers.

The story of the **McBride sisters** is both quirky and heartening. The two women shared a biological father and upbringings in wine country. But reared separately, they didn’t know about each other (think 1996: pre-Facebook). Andréa hailed from New Zealand, Robin from California. Fast-forward through manual records searches (think: pre-Google search) and a letter campaign. The sisters met for the first time in 1999 and created **McBride Sisters** wine company. Last year they launched Truvée (French for “found”) sourced from Central Coast grapes for a Chardonnay, a red blend, and now a rosé, made from Rhone varieties sourced from Paso Robles. At $15 SRP, it’s an off-dry pleaser with a pretty party-ready label.

In case you think pink is just for girls, Elia Pellegrini, a professional football (that’s soccer to you Americans) player turned wine geek, was in town to introduce Solidio Rosato, the first rosé in the portfolio of **Aia Vecchia**, the family winery in Tuscany’s coastal region. Reds from the indigenous Morellino di Scansano grape (a local clone of Sangiovese) anchor the up-and-coming Maremma region, but Aia Vecchia instead presents a Sangiovese-based rosato. It’s a variance for the family who, known for their Super Tuscans, started the winery in 1996 with the help of famed Hungarian winemaker Tibor Gal. But Pellegrini says, “We don’t want to compete with the big names; we want to make the wines that are on everyone’s table every day.” Solidio Rosato delivers crisp and tart cranberries with a hint of saline, we imagine extracted from the nearby Tyrrenhenian Sea.
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Welcoming Both Old and New Friends

by Ian Buxton

As I hinted last issue, this is going to be a huge year for Lagavulin as this iconic Islay distillery celebrates its 200th anniversary. Details have been announced of what I expect will be a memorable year of commemoration, beginning with a Special Edition 8 Year Old release.

Any new Lagavulin catches the eye. This expression is inspired by the writing of Victorian scribe Alfred Barnard, who found Lagavulin “exceptionally fine” back in the 1880s, going on to describe the make as “held in high repute.” I think he’d like this 48% dram. At a SRP of $65, it’s not expensive and it’s distinctively Lagavulin, with the signature taste of sweet, warm tarry wood smoke, developing depth and complexity on the finish. More sweet notes emerge with water to tussle with the Lapsang Souchong black tea flavors. Nice!

Over in Ireland I’ve had opportunity to visit Tullamore D.E.W. and the just-opened Waterford Distillery. More on the exciting new 14 and 18 Year Old Tullamore Single Irish Malts elsewhere in this issue but I can report here that the new make from Mark Reynier’s team at Waterford is very impressive. Reynier—former boss at Bruichladdich—is distilling furiously, using fully traceable barley from 46 different farms, but the venture is so securely financed that nothing will be released for at least five years. It’s definitely one to watch out for however, as Irish whiskey really gets into its stride.

Say “welcome back” to an old friend. Fans decried the loss of Johnnie Walker Green Label—and I’m happy to report that owners Diageo have listened and restored supplies. This 15 Year Old Blended Malt balances four key signature styles, represented by Talisker, Linkwood, Cragganmore and Caol Ila. As Johnnie Walker Master Blender, Jim Beveridge explains, “The challenge of Johnnie Walker Green Label is to have a wide flavor spectrum from malts matured for 15 years in American and European oak, ensuring that those flavors really complement each other and work in harmony to create a blend of great complexity . . . true to the Johnnie Walker style of big and bold flavors with a signature smokiness.” The blending process allows Beveridge and his team to shape a whisky with a depth of character that just isn’t possible from one malt whisky alone. So, if you locked away a few bottles (and more than a few people did just that) you can open them now and raise a glass to future drams (43%, $64.95 suggested retail price).

You might not be in such a hurry to crack the seal on the latest release from The Macallan—for this 65 Year Old beauty in its Lalique decanter will retail at a cool $35,000. It’s the oldest Macallan ever released and just 140 bottles will find their way stateside. The sixth and final release in The Macallan’s Lalique Six Pillars series it will be in market “very soon.”

No tasting notes, but I expect it’s a very fine drop of whisky, as well it should be for the price of a BMW 3-series sedan. Or 466 bottles of the new expression from anCnoc blas. Yes, ‘blas’, like that; it means ‘taste’ in Gaelic, though why whiskies insist on putting these Gaelic names on their bottles I have no idea (only around 1% of the Scottish population actually speaks the language, which means some 99% are as baffled as I am!). Anyway, Scottish-born fashion designer Patrick Grant, Creative Director of Savile Row tailors Norton & Sons, designed a print for the bottle label and packaging inspired by the sights and sounds of the distillery. And very fetching it is, too. If you like your whisky full-bodied, yet sweet and fruity with notes of lemon and candied orange peels, followed by bold, honeyed notes, bitter chocolate and vanilla, this dapper $75 offering could fit right into your wardrobe.
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THURSDAY, June 9

A MASTER CLASS INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE WINE TASTING
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Invitation only; food, beverage and hospitality professionals.

LOCAL INDUSTRY WINE TRADE SHOW & GOURMET PRODUCTS SAMPLING
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Invitation only; Industry

WELCOME RECEPTION
Merriman’s Kapalua 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Invitation only & four-day pass holders

FRIDAY, June 10

FESTIVAL GOLF TOURNAMENT
The Bay Course, Kapalua: 7:00 am

CHAMPAGNE AND SCOOGY SNACKS WINE SEMINAR & TASTING
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm
This seminar brings together an impressive array of Champagnes. Hosted by Master Sommelier Rob Bigelow and paired with a sampling plate of Chef Mark Tarbell’s incredible take on Scooby Snacks.

WOMEN IN WINE
A Panel Honoring the Amazing Women Wine Seminar & Tasting
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Our second in a series of panels featuring notable women winemakers. This female-powered panel tasting will be an annual feature that celebrates the women that craft some of the finest wines in the world. Hosted by Meridith May, Publisher/Editorial Director, The Tasting Panel/ The SOMM Journal/The Clever Root.

SUNDAY, June 11

THE GRAND TASTING: KAPAULUA STYLE
Sponsored by Hawaii.com
Montage Kapalua Bay: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Premium wines are showcased with fabulous gastronomic indulgences from Kapalua Resort restaurants and friends. A walk-around tasting and evening under the stars; all on the oceanfront grounds of Montage Kapalua Bay.

FAMILY TREE: SCIONS OF FAMILY WINERIES
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
This seminar brings together second- and third-generation winemakers and their winemaker parents to share their secrets, stories and wines. Hosted by Master Sommelier Michael Jordan.

COOKING DEMONSTRATION WITH CELEBRITY CHEF MICHELE MAZZA
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Noted Italian Chef Michele Mazza, owner and Executive Chef of Il Mulino and Trattoria Il Mulino in New York City will wow attendees with his traditional, authentic Italian dishes crafted from his roots in Naples. Hosted by Master Sommelier Michael Jordan and paired with exquisite Italian wines.

GLOBETROTTING WINEMAKERS
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Featuring renowned globetrotting winemakers that make wines in more than two countries. Hosted by Master Sommelier Michael Jordan.
SUNDAY, June 12

NEW ZEALAND PINOT NOIR
WINE SEMINAR & TASTING
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua – 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Join some of the true pioneers and new stars of New Zealand winemaking. This seminar will showcase both established headliners and newest upcoming wineries. Hosted by Master Sommelier Rob Bigelow.

COOKING DEMONSTRATION WITH
CELEBRITY CHEF HUGH ACHESON
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
The award-winning chef, restaurateur, TV personality and author showcases his Southern flavors reinvented for your kitchen Southern cooking. Co-hosted by the always engaging Master Sommelier Rob Bigelow and paired with the Spanish wines.

TEN YEAR MAGIC RETROSPECTIVE:
CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE SEMINAR & TASTING
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
This seminar highlights what ten years of aging can do. A comparison of a young vintage and a ten year aged wine. Hosted by Master Sommelier Michael Jordan.

SEAFOOD FESTIVAL
Sponsored by Alaska Airlines Visa Signature Card®
The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua: Beach House Lawn: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
14 of Maui’s Top Restaurants showcase a seafood specialty and culinary creation in competition for Maui No Ka Oi magazine’s “Best of the Fest” award. Hawaiian entertainment provided by Nuff Sedd.

Schedule and panelists subject to change.

To date, confirmed winemaker panelists include:
Merry Edwards, Merry Edwards Winery; Elizabeth Grant-Douglas, La Crema Winery; Heidi Peterson Barrett, La Sirena Wines; Laely Heron, Heron Wines; Carlo & Tim Mondavi, Continuum Estate; Robert & Brandon De Luze, ZD Wines; Christopher & Larry Hyde, Hyde Vineyards; Fred Scherrer, Scherrer Vineyards; David Long, David Arthur Vineyards; Marcus Notaro, Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars; Ted Edwards, Freemark Abbey Winery; and Bo Barrett, Chateau Montelena Winery.

www.kapaluawineandfood.com
Famous actors and actresses, stunning designer gowns and food created by Chef Wolfgang Puck himself: The Academy Awards is the most glamorous and elegant event all year. With such prestigious company, it’s fitting that Piper-Heidsieck would be the exclusive Champagne of the Oscars, serving three of their Prestige Cuvée vintages at the Oscar’s post-celebration, the Governors Ball, as well as a limited-edition Cuvée Brut. Created in 1785, Piper-Heidsieck is one of France’s oldest Champagne houses and is currently overseen by venerable winemaker Régis Camus.

A couple of weeks before the Academy Awards ceremony, The Tasting Panel sat down for a lunch with Benoit Collard, Piper-Heidsieck’s Global Executive Director, at Wolfgang Puck’s flagship restaurant and Beverly Hills landmark Spago for a sampling of three Champagnes—the "Red Carpet Ready" Cuvée Brut, the 1998 Prestige Cuvée Rare and the 2002 Prestige Cuvée Rare—that would be poured at the Governors Ball (the fourth Champagne at the Oscars would be the 1988 Prestige Cuvée Rare). Our first course was a burrata and prosciutto salad, served with the Red Carpet Ready Cuvée Brut, a 1,000-bottle limited-edition Pinot Noir–focused blend that would be poured exclusively at the Oscars. The toasty, citrus-finished champagne was an excellent contrast to the creamy cheese and salty cured meat.

Our second course was a rye-crusted loup de mer, served with Maine lobster and sauce Américaine, paired with the Cuvée Rare 2002. A personal favorite, the 2002, featuring 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir from the Montagne de Reims region, was structured and full-bodied, exuding a nose of delicate, exotic tropical fruits and notes of toasted brioche.

The third course was a delicate and architectural raspberry panna cotta, with white chocolate and lychee Champagne gelée, served with the 1998. An apt pairing for dessert, the 1998, produced exclusively in magnums, was fruity and smooth, with creamy notes of hazelnut and gingerbread.

The gorgeously etched gold Piper-Heidsieck bottles evoked images of the iconic Oscar statuette, and it was clear that no matter which actor, actress or film came out on top at the Academy Awards, Piper-Heidsieck would be a clear winner.
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ABOUT DAVOS BRANDS

Our mission is to build and develop the highest quality, best in class wine and spirits brands that create a valuable and meaningful connection with consumers. We do this through teamwork, passion, innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and relentless perseverance.

Davos brands offers a full service sales, distribution, marketing and logistical platform in the wine and spirits industry. The members of its sales team have a proven, successful track record and are considered amongst the best performers in the industry, having built major wine and spirit brands throughout their careers.

The Company has been formed under the direction of Founder and former CEO of SVEDKA Vodka, Guillaume Cuvelier, who now serves as Vice Chairman of Davos Brands.

DavosBrands.com

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The International Chardonnay Symposium brings top Chardonnay producers to the Californian beach towns of Pismo Beach and Avila Beach and the Edna Valley wine country. The 2016 event line-up will feature a grand wine tasting, educational seminars, panel sessions and winemaker dinners—see the full calendar below. For more information and to buy tickets, go to www.thechardonnaysymposium.com.

**MAY 12–14, 2016**

**Vintners Wine Tech Symposium**  
*Thursday, May 12, 9:00am–4:00pm*  
Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort

**Sommelier Chardonnay Challenge**  
*Thursday, May 12, 10:00am–3:00pm*  
Avila Lighthouse Suites

**French Forum: Exploring The Wonders of French Chardonnay (lunch included)**  
*Friday, May 13, 11:00am–1:30pm*  
Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort

**Wente Clone Comparative Tasting**  
*Friday, May 13, 2:00pm–3:30pm*  
Avila Lighthouse Suites

**Pét-Nat, Sparkling Wine & Oysters Gala**  
*Friday, May 13, 4:00pm–6:00pm*  
Avila Beach Golf Resort

**La Paulée Dinner and Vintners Awards Ceremony**  
*Friday, May 13, 7:00pm–10:00pm*  
Greengate Ranch & Vineyard

**Taste the Difference: Exploring California’s Distinct Chardonnay Regions**  
*Saturday, May 14, 10:00am–11:30pm*  
Edna Valley Vineyard

**What’s Oak Got to Do with It?**  
*Saturday, May 14, 11:00am–12:30pm*  
The Cliffs Resort

**Hone Your Chardonnay Blind-Tasting Skills**  
*Saturday, May 14, 10:30am-12:30pm*  
The Cliffs Resort

**Pairing Chardonnay & Artisanal Cheese**  
*Saturday, May 14, 11:30am–1:00pm*  
Greengate Ranch & Vineyard

**Saturday Grand Tasting**  
*Saturday, May 14, 1:00pm–5:00pm*  
Greengate Ranch & Vineyard

**Winemaker Dinners**  
*Saturday, May 14, Evening*  
Various Times and Locations
THE PROOF IS IN THE GLASS.
By the time you read this, the winners of the 2016 San Francisco World Spirits Competition will have been announced. Double Gold, Gold and Silver medal winners will be listed in a special section of the May issue of The Tasting Panel.

If your product(s) has received Double Gold, Gold and Silver and you would like to show off your new medal(s) to our 90,000+ influential readers with an ad to appear within this special awards section, we will have some ad space available for you at special rates.

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Hotel F&B Directors
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Proud winners from last year’s San Francisco World Spirits Competition on tour with their Gold and Double Gold medal brands.
A Quiet Night, A Celebration Night. Any Night.
Let’s Go Camping!

WE’VE GOT EVENTS, AND WE WANT YOU THERE!

by Becky Tsadik

From cocktail competitions to voyaging through vineyards, we are already on a roll with a full agenda of events for the year! We are always on the lookout for new friends to invite to wine tastings, spirited brunches, SOMM Camps and more.

Contact me, Becky Tsadik, to join The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal on some of our exciting excursions—from British Columbia to Brentwood, California, from the Alexander Valley to Amador County—whether you’re a sommelier, restaurant or retail beverage buyer, mixologist or bartender. All events receive coverage in our national magazines and provide exclusive opportunities to connect with other movers and shakers in the industry.

Check out some of the exciting places we have been, then reach out to find out how you can join us! I can’t wait to hear from you.

For more information on upcoming events or to be placed on an interest list for a future camp or tasting, email becky@tastingpanelmag.com.
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* Source: Nielsen, Past 52 Week $ Value Performance vs. YAG TOTAL US - 8/15/15
** Source: Nielsen TTL US ZAOC & Liquor Plus; Volume Performance vs. YAG; 52 weeks ending 12/5/15
*** Source: Nielsen Perishable Group Report - 2014

SKYY Infusions®, Vodka infused with Natural Flavors. 35% alc./vol. (70 proof). ©2016 Campari America, San Francisco, CA. Please enjoy responsibly.
The Incredible Tale of the Mexican Martini

FIND IT AT THE CEDAR DOOR AND JUST ABOUT EVERYPLACE ELSE IN AUSTIN

by Anthony Head / photos by Kirk Weddle

Legend has it that in the late 1970s an Austin bartender was drinking somewhere South of the Border and was served a Margarita in a Martini glass. She thought it was a neat idea, so when she returned to work at the Cedar Door she convinced the owner to do the same.

Let’s recap: A Margarita served in a Martini glass. “Yes. She was served a Margarita in a Martini glass,” confirms Ash Blaize, General Manager of the Cedar Door.

So, big deal, right? Right, except, it really did become a big deal after they dropped in an olive and called it a “Mexican Martini.” More than three decades later Cedar Door can move 1,000 Mexican Martinis a week, and that’s not the end of the story. “It’s really an Austin institution,” Blaize says. “More bars and restaurants than not serve some form of a Mexican Martini.”

To be clear, that means that Austin bars and restaurants serve Margaritas in Margarita glasses and Martinis in Martini glasses under a different name and everyone is totally okay with it. Of course, the Mexican Martini’s appeal is probably also linked to its amped-up alcohol, not to mention the traditional shaker on the side as part of the presentation. Plus, there’s that strict “limit of two” per customer, so, it checks all the right boxes: exotic, quirky, slightly dangerous.

The Cedar Door, which also sells its own proprietary Mexican Martini & Margarita Mix, features the original cocktail (see recipe), as well as the “Austin Ultimate,” made with Z Blanco Tequila and Paula’s Texas Orange, and a spicy version with Tanteo Jalapeño Tequila—a lineup that Blaize says is enough to regularly exhaust his supply of individual shakers.

And that’s the story of the Mexican Martini, which Blaize tells a lot, even though there are plenty of cocktail choices, like his homage to his grandfather and the Gin and Tonic served in a wine glass. “It’s called the ‘White Hawk,’” he says. “My grandfather’s CB handle was ‘White Hawk,’ my grandmother’s was ‘Lady Hawk.’ When he was on his way home, I remember his voice coming over the CB, ‘White Hawk returning to the nest.’ He was a gin man.”

It’s a good story, too. 

---

The Mexican Martini

The house specialty at Austin’s Cedar Door

- 2–2 ½ oz. Cedar Door Original Mexican Martini Mix
- 2 oz. tequila
- 2 oz. triple sec
- 1–2 oz. lime juice

Adjust the lime juice and Mexican Martini Mix to taste. Shake over ice and strain into a Martini glass. Garnish with olives.

The White Hawk

- 1½ oz. Bombay Sapphire Gin
- ¾ oz. St-Germain
- 2 good splashes of tonic
- Orange slice

Build drink in shaker tin. Squeeze orange into tin, including pulp. Put peel in wine glass half filled with ice. Shake tin vigorously and strain into glass.
GET A TASTE OF ITALY IN THE FRENCH QUARTER.

Everyone from monks to mixologists has discovered the power of amaro. Join Montenegro Herbalist Matteo Bonoli, who blends and distills each batch, along with bitters expert Sother Teague and brand ambassador Marco Montefiori for an immersive workshop at Tales of the Cocktail.

The Riverview Room at Hotel Monteleone
New Orleans, Louisiana
July 20, 3-5pm

The Amaro Workshop
hosted by

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The 2016 World of Pinot Noir in Santa Barbara’s Bacara Resort this past March was an incredible opportunity to glean the state of American Pinot Noir, particularly California Pinot Noirs from the 2013 vintage, which, by all accounts, was a remarkable one.

But do remarkable vintages equal remarkable wines? After tasting more than 100 Pinot Noirs during this two-day festival, I had my doubts. For example, typifying most of the 2013s was a single-vineyard bottling by one of Sonoma Coast’s most prestigious Pinot Noir specialists that could only be described as over-the-top: big, at 14.4% alcohol—not in itself troublesome, since 14% to 15% alcohol is pretty much par for even the best California Pinot Noirs these days—densely layered with adolescent tannin and glycerol, and at the same, ultra-ripe to an annoying degree with sweet cherry/Kool-Aid fruitiness, despite the wine’s evident dryness.

So what gives? Are California Pinot Noir producers that tone deaf about recent calls for wines of less overt fruitiness, and some semblance of “balance”? To get answers, I called Greg La Follette of La Follette Wines, whose experience with American grown Pinot Noir is legend.

According to La Follette, “2013 was a great year for California Pinot Noir. But in great years, when grapes are looking really good, winemakers tend to get bolder about things like wild fermentations, or following the latest trends like using less SO2. As a result, you can just as well end up with sluggish or stuck fermentations and rampant secondary microbiological super-bugs. We saw a lot of stuck fermentations, more residual sugar, and lots of VA [volatile acidity] in 2013, which were only exacerbated by use of less SO2.

“Furthermore, you have to remember that wild yeasts are also wimpier yeasts that preferentially consume more glucose, leaving fructose sugars behind. In years like 2013, you might end up with one-and-a-half to two grams residual sugar, which is still below the threshold. The tricky part is that fructose tastes twice as sweet as glucose, so your one-and-a-half grams of residual sugar tastes more like three grams. We also got beautiful stem ripeness in 2013, and so we saw more whole cluster fermentations, which build fruity aromas called esters. Hence, your phenomenon of a ‘sweeter’ tasting vintage.”

The 2013 California Pinot Noirs may be fruity, but that doesn’t mean some producers weren’t able to produce perfectly proportioned wines that are also keenly focused on vineyard delineations. To name just a few that I found: Patz & Hall, Côtière, Rusack Vineyards, Freeman Winery, Siduri Wines, Talley Vineyards, Hilliard Bruce and Stephen Ross Wine Cellars were among the producers showing 2013s with all the grace and terroir-related distinctions we love in the grape, notwithstanding the vintage’s unabashed fruitiness.
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- Pinot Noir
- Tempranillo
- Syrah
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Wine Flies (off the Shelf) When You’re Having Fun

BLUE RIDGE SPIRITS MARKETING AND 1026 BEVERAGE COMPANY ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNERSHIP

by Izzy Watson

Maybe a friend has posted a card reading, “I drink a glass of wine every day in the hopes of living longer to drink more wine” to your social media, or perhaps you’ve sent one reading, “I love how your family drinks to enjoy each other’s company rather than tolerate it”—whatever the case, unless you have taken up residence under a rock, you’ve undoubtedly come across the wonderfully dry humor of Someecards, one of the most widely shared brands on the Web and in social media.

Instead of only enjoying these on the internet, your consumers can now bring the laughs home with the brand SomeWine, co-owned by 1026 Beverage Company and Someecards. To increase SomeWine’s distribution footprint to over 25 states nationwide, 1026 Beverage Company has partnered with Blue Ridge Spirits Marketing—an Atlanta-based sales and marketing company that focuses primarily on premium wine and spirit brands. “We are very excited to partner with 1026 Beverages on our first wine venture,” says Carlos Carreras, CEO of Blue Ridge Spirits Marketing. “They have a vision and aggressive growth strategy that is very compatible with ours.”

1026 Beverage Co. launched SomeWine in January 2016. John Ormiston, partner in 1026 Beverage Company says, “SomeWine is based on one of the most recognized and loved brands among Millennials, an audience that is becoming increasingly important in the wine and spirits industry. Our partnership with Blue Ridge accelerates our ability to make SomeWine available to the tens of millions of Someecards fans. They have a strong and growing organization and we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship.”

Adds Rene Armas, VP of Sales for Blue Ridge, “We are thrilled and honored to be partnering with Somewine. Someecards ranks as one of the top social media engagement performing brands in the entire world—outperforming many of the world’s most recognizable brands. In the battle for pull-through, it is a tremendous competitive advantage to be able to launch a brand that already has that level of brand awareness built into it.”

Go ahead and let the wine (and packaging) do the talking for you!
Join wine industry experts and fellow up-and-coming beverage professionals for this exciting learning and networking event. Deepen your knowledge, create connections, and make 2016 the year you take your career to the next level.

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THE SOMM JOURNAL is a proud media sponsor of the CIA Sommelier Summit.
Holy Trinity

Roger Trinchero, Vice Chairman and CEO, Trinchero Family Estates; Bob Torres, Senior Vice President of Operations, Trinchero Family Estates; and John Leary, Executive Director of Trees for the Future, planted the 10 millionth tree on the family’s St. Helena property in 2013. This Earth Day will mark the planting of the 15 millionth tree as part of the Trinity One Oaks’ “One Bottle, One Tree” mission.

Every year on April 22, millions of people celebrate Earth Day with a gesture such as planting a tree or attending an event that highlights environmental issues. The annual day has roots in 1970, when it was established to demonstrate support for environmental protection; almost a half century later, the cause is recognized in more than 192 countries and has expanded to Earth Month, which also encompasses Arbor Day, celebrated annually on the last Friday of April.

Trinchero Family Estates celebrates “Earth Month” year-round by re-populating entire forests. The earth-friendly wine company partnered with non-profit Trees for the Future in 2008 and committed to planting one tree for every bottle of its Trinity Oaks wine sold. “Our partnership with Trees for the Future has been successful since the beginning; we work well together to achieve a greater goal for our environment,” says John Garaventa, Senior Brand Manager at Trinchero Family Estates.

Trees for the Future has been planting trees since 1989, including 80 million trees over its history. Trinchero is the non-profit’s biggest sponsor, with sales of Trinity Oaks wines responsible for the planting of 15 million trees as of this year’s Earth Day!

Considering that Earth is losing trees annually, tree donations make a huge impact, not only environmentally, but also through their role in generating profit and helping families in farming communities afford basic necessities. Trinity Oaks’ partner organization does not stop short of simply planting trees: Trees for the Future also has a structured training system to empower the communities in which they work to manage their land, employ staff and utilize local resources.

For its part, Trinity Oaks is fully dedicated to environmental mindfulness: Beyond its “One Bottle, One Tree” slogan, the wine bottles’ Nomacorc corks are recyclable and leave a smaller carbon footprint than traditional corks; the plant-based capsules are compostable and made from EarthFirst PLA Film, produced using renewable technology; the aluminum top disk on the bottle is recyclable and the labels are printed on consumer waste paper, all nicely packaged in kraft shippers sent to distributors.

“We serve Trinchero Family Estates’ Trinity Oaks wines because the label is a consistent award winner in both national and international wine-tasting competitions and because it aligns with our own sustainability practices,” says Mark Southern, Food & Beverage Director, Hilton Garden Inn, Memphis. “Trinity Oaks’ eco-friendly ‘One Bottle, One Tree’ campaign in which it vows to plant one tree for every bottle that it sells is a win for our brand and for our guests, as we partner to make our world a better place.”

Trinity Oaks wine lineup includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Pinot Grigio and Chardonnay varietals (all SRP $8.99). The classic Trinity Oaks 2014 California Chardonnay is a blend of 60 percent Lodi fruit and 40 percent Coastal Region Chardonnay grapes. The wine undergoes partial malolactic fermentation and is aged in both French and American oak to yield a medium bodied and well-balanced Chardonnay expressing citrus and pineapple flavors and a top note of sweet oak.

From ground to glass, Trinity Oaks raises the profile of environmental issues year-round through an industry-lending partnership while providing a wine consumers can feel great about supporting.

TTREES PLEASE

15 million trees planted globally. Trees restore oxygen to the atmosphere, enrich soil to enable sustainably-grown food and create a fence to shield animals from grazing in gardens and destroying valuable crops.

500 tree farming communities supported. Farmers are empowered to plant diversified crops that generate income year-round.

900,000+ people supported. With reliable income, families can afford food, clothing and education.
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Display the RumChata Freedom Bottle on your floors!

A PORTION OF ALL RUMCHATA FREEDOM BOTTLE PROCEEDS GO TO

LONE SURVIVOR FOUNDATION

SINCE 2014, WE HAVE DONATED

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RumChata® Caribbean Rum with Real Dairy Cream, Natural and Artificial Flavors, 13.75% alc./vol. Produced and Bottled by Agave Loco Brands, Pewaukee, WI 53072. Please Enjoy Responsibly. RUMCHATA and CHATA are Registered Trademarks of Agave Loco, LLC.
Spanish Succession

WITH 100 YEARS OF WINEGROWING EXPERIENCE, GIL FAMILY ESTATES CHAMPIONS INDIGENOUS VARIETIES AND OLD VINES

by David Gadd

Established in 1916 by Juan Gil Jiménez in the now up-and-coming Jumilla appellation of Spain, passed down for four generations and celebrating its 100th birthday this year, Gil Family Estates is one of Spain’s most dynamic wine producers. Under the leadership of brothers Angel and Miguel Gil, this producer specializes in old-vine indigenous grape growing matched with state-of-the-art winemaking. Now boasting nine bodegas located across eight appellations, Gil Family Estates produces terroir-driven wines that present a triple threat: originality, consistency and value.

The portfolio includes the flagship Juan Gil wines and the luxury El Nido and Clio labels from Jumilla; Ateca from D.O. Calatayud; Atalaya from the little-known D.O. Almansa; BlueGray from Priorat and Can Blau from Montsant, both in Catalonia; Lagar da Condesa from D.O. Rias Baixas; Shaya from D.O. Rueda; and Tridente from Castilla y León. In addition, brands Honoro Vera and Shania (which comes in a 3L bag-in-box) offer superb value.

In particular, the Gil family is passionate about Jumilla’s historic Monastrell vines (aka Mourvèdre) for their suitability to the dry climate, yielding what Manuel Gil calls “grapes of extraordinary concentration.” He continues, “The wines are very expressive, with a huge, fruited character, a lot of color, aromas of red and blue fruits, very powerful with a floral hint both in the nose and mouth which gives our Monastrell wines a marked personality very different from the ones obtained with the same variety in France or from any other wine region of the world.”

Recently, The Tasting Panel’s Wine Editor, Jessie Birschbach, and I conducted a tasting of Gil Family Estates wines at The Bazaar, the Los Angeles restaurant of Chef José Andrés, located in the SLS Hotel Beverly Hills, with Lead Sommelier Rachel Macalisang and Sommelier Albert Letizia. The wines, many of which are made by Australian winemakers recruited by the Gil family for their experience in extracting full flavors, showed impressive color, lovely aromas, lush mouthfeel and intense fruit. Here a just a few highlights—we’ll leave you to discover the others! ☛

Bodegas Shaya 2014 Rueda (SRP $16)
Verdejo
“Dried peach/stonefruit character; pithy minerality; finished perfectly dry.” —J.B.

Bodegas Juan Gil 2013 Silver Label, Jumilla (SRP $17) Monastrell
“Bright; briar, red raspberry, clove; nice vibrancy, buoyancy.” —A.L.

Bodegas Atalaya 2013 Alaya Tierra Old Vines, Almansa (SRP $45)
Garnacha Tintorera (Alicante Bouschet) and Monastrell
“Incisive character; rich and mouthfilling.” —D.G.

Bodegas Atteca 2011 Garnacha, Armas Old Vines, Calatayud (SRP $45) Garnacha Tintorera (Alicante Bouschet) and Monastrell
“Violets, just-ripe raspberries; just barely medium-bodied.” —J.B.

Cellers Can Blau 2011 Mas de Can Blau, Montsant (SRP $45) Carinena-Mazuelo, Syrah and Garnacha
“Garnet color; spicy, exotic spices; cassis, black currant. Great wine!” —R.M.

BlueGray 2013 Priorat (SRP $20)
45% Garnacha, 30% Carinena, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon
“Black fruit with herbal and mint/menthol notes. A beautiful expression of the minerality of Priorat.” —R.M.

Bodegas El Nido 2013 Clio, Jumilla (SRP $45) 70% Monastrell, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon
“Garnet color; spicy, exotic spices; cassis, black currant. Great wine!” —R.M.

Bodegas El Nido 2013 El Nido, Jumilla
(SRP $135) 70% Monastrell, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon
“Opaque and raisinated. A big style with profound depth—very velvety and plush.” —R.M.

Old-vine Monastrell at Bodegas Juan Gil in Jumilla.
INTRODUCING STRONGBOW CHERRY BLOSSOM HARD APPLE CIDER

Hard cider is one of the hottest categories in beverage alcohol and flavors are at the forefront with refreshing taste profiles that appeal to consumers. Strongbow’s Cherry Blossom Hard Apple Cider delivers the ultimate cut through taste with a cherry blossom aroma, subtle sweetness and a ripe apple finish.

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73% OF ALL CIDER VOLUME SOLD IS FLAVORED (ALL CHANNELS)*

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Enjoy Our Products Responsibly.
* SOURCE: Nielsen Scan Food Q1/FDMC 1/15 w/e 12.5.15
At the Ready

While we love handcrafted cocktails, they don’t always make sense. On-premise managers might have a crowded bar with a line that shows no signs of slowing. Retailers might have consumers who want the same standard of quality at home that they have grown accustomed to while out at a tavern, but without the time-consuming hassle. Time is money, as they say, so instead of wasting it, let these brands do the work for you and your patrons.

by Emily Coleman

Liberating Lybation

Perfect for the summer months to come, Lybations Signature Cocktails come in three flavors to please any palate: Pepino Diablo Margarita, made with serrano, reposado tequila, lime, cane sugar and cucumber; Flower Power Sour, created using elderflower, vodka, lime and lemon; and Lime in the Coconut, featuring vodka, ripened coconut, cane sugar and lime. The easy-to-reseal container will allow your guest to take them anywhere their warm weather adventures may lead.

WWW.LYBATIONSCOCKTAILS.COM

The One Cocktail to Mule Them All

There’s no denying the popularity of the Moscow Mule at bars around the country. Now your customers can bring this favorite home with Crafthouse Cocktail Moscow Mule. Featuring ginger beer made with organic ginger juice, small batch vodka, California lime juice and real cane sugar, these concoctions—available in both large-format bottles and in cans—all-natural ingredients shine with bright flavors and simple elegance. Copper mug sold separately.

WWW.CRAFTHOUSECOCKTAILS.COM

It’s Cocktail Time!

From the multi–Emmy award winner, Sandra Lee Cocktail Time Margaritas give your patrons a tasty way to enjoy everyone’s favorite time of day. The Key Lime and Strawberry expressions are infused with real limes and strawberries, respectively. Both mix pure sugarcane, blue agave silver tequila, triple sec and other natural flavors. With fewer than 150 calories per four-ounce serving—and with a name like Sandra Lee attached to it—you just might have to expand cocktail time!

WWW.COCKTAILTIME.COM

Swimming in Flavor

Nothing says refreshing like crisp flavors swimming in light bubbles. Meet SpikedSeltzer, which comes in four flavors: Cape Cod Cranberry, Valencia Orange, West Indies Lime and Indian River Grapefruit. To produce these 6% ABV treats, Master Brewer Nick Shields takes purified water and cold-pressed citrus essence through a brewing process he invented. The end result can be served right from the bottle, poured over ice or added to a cocktail for a fresh kick.

WWWSPIKEDSLETZER.COM
Stealing the Spotlight

Co-owned by pop star Nicki Minaj, Myx Fusions Sangria offers an easy way to enjoy sangria in a small-format bottle. The three flavors include Classico, which combines Spanish red wine with lemon, orange, cassis and peach natural flavors; Tropical, which mixes Spanish white wine with passion fruit, mango coconut, peach and cinnamon; and Redberries, which blends Spanish red wine with strawberries, raspberries, cranberries and blueberries. These little wonders are certainly climbing our taste buds’ charts.

WWW.MYXFUSIONS.COM

Mix and Match

Now more than ever, guests are after healthy alternatives in the products they consume. To answer this call, Be Mixed developed an all-natural, zero-calorie mixer. Each offering—Cucumber Mint, Ginger Lime and Margarita—pairs with a variety of spirits and other mixers, so your bartenders or customers can amp up their creativity, while still reaping all of the healthy rewards!

WWW.BE-MIXED.COM

The Proof Is in the Glass

No good mixologist, whether behind the bar or at home, wants to sacrifice quality, but when efficiency doesn’t take away from the end product, who can resist? Proof Old Fashioned Cocktail Syrups promise just that. The feel-good, mouth-watering expressions—Traditional, Pecan and Maple Bacon—elevate this classic cocktail and add a twist that patrons will love. With each bottle lasting for 32 drinks, what other proof do you need?

WWW.PROOFSYRUP.COM
April Spring Sparkle

Our Wine Editor, Jessie Birschbach, CS—or JABS, as we call her in the office—uses her experience as a sommelier and her background in marketing to rate retail wines on both the inside and outside of the bottle. Let’s face it, in off-premise environments, and for most of us, it’s usually the packaging that hooks us, then it’s up to the wine to lure us into the boat. For that reason, she’ll employ both the classic 100-point number scale on taste, and the “JABS” rating system to assess packaging and brand identity.

1 JAB Clear, legible label, solid branding. Pow, right in the kisser.

2 JABS Eye-catching label and memorable branding. This one’s got a one two punch.

3 JABS Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. I’m seeing stars and parakeets.

4 JABS A near work of art and meaningful branding. Might not last another round.

5 JABS A masterpiece in packaging and new benchmark in branding. An instant knock-out!

This is a special version of Down the Aisle as these tasting notes are extracted from the April/May 2016 SOMM Journal Sparkling Category Report.

Anna de Cordiníu Reserva Cava, Spain ($15)

This is a Cava of major historical importance and yet is just as relevant today. Fresh white peach, grapefruit and lime peel deliver softly onto the palate. You can’t miss the stand-out packaging. 90

Ferrari 2008 Perlé Trento DOC, Italy ($39.99)

Made with 100% Chardonnay in the traditional metodo classico, this vintage sparkler spends 48 to 53 months on lees. Creamy and tangy, yet light in texture—like whipped cream and tangy pineapple. The softer sparkle is likely due to age. Almonds, red apple and a touch of honeycomb precede the lemon-yogurt-chiffon finish that still remains dry and transparent. Incredible complexity, especially considering the price. 93

Dr. Loosen line of non-estate Rieslings, this Sekt (German sparkling wine), made using 100% Riesling and the Charmat method, offers exceptional value. Honeycrisp apple, honey and peach finishes mostly dry with just a whisper of sweetness. The acid here makes sure of it. 91

Miguel Torres 2012 Santa Digna Estelado Rosé, Maule Valley, Chile ($28)

Made from 100% País—a nearly forgotten grape that has been in Chile since the 16th century—in the traditional method. This is a unique and special sparkling! Cantaloupe, watermelon, rhubarb, orange blossoms and blood orange. Then mid-palate, an earthy mushroom takes over and finishes with a pithy blood orange. I paired this with a chimichurri chicken; the spicy, garlic-laden green sauce was a perfect match to the citrusy cool and slightly sweet flavors. Informative, kinda cool old-school packaging. 91

Le Grand Courtâge Grand Cuvée Brut Rosé, France ($17.99)

One foot in the New World and one foot in the Old, Le Grand Courtâge Rosé is a blend of Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc and Gamay. Fresh raspberries and strawberries swim alongside a bouquet of pink roses. This is an outstanding example of clear, savvy packaging and branding, which is appealing to the aspirational drinker. 98

ALE VENIU BRANDS

Le Grand Courtâge

ALBINEA CANAIL “FB” Lambrusco, Emilia-Romagna, Italy ($19.99)

Dry strawberry, basil sorbet and tart homemade lemonade with an incredible, plush texture that thankfully doesn’t turn into Skittles, but mellows into a doughy focaccia. The snappy red berry fruits and juicy Meyer lemon, dressed in a gentler semi-sparkle or frizzante style, are the result of the metodo ancestrale. Just watch out for the deposit of natural yeast in the bottom of the bottle. Hands down, one of my favorite versions of Lambrusco; this is 100% Lambrusco di Sorbara. 92

Palm Bay International

STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES

April Spring Sparkle

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Palm Bay International

STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES
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.

JEFF JOSENHANS
Head Mixologist at Grant Grill at THE US GRANT, San Diego, CA

What is your process when designing your culinary-inspired cocktail programs?
From day one, when I arrived to the Grant Grill almost eight years ago, I set out to establish a sense of identity for the beverage program. By focusing on technique, we were the first to barrel-age cocktails here in San Diego (and the first to custom-bottle barrel-aged cocktails aged in a distillery), the first to use the Champagne method to carbonate cocktails and the first bar to integrate beer and cocktails through custom brews using barrels that were used for cocktail aging.

You’re one of the nation’s only certified Cicerones, an awarded mixologist and a Level 2 Sommelier—how do you balance these three areas of expertise?
To be honest, having in-depth knowledge in all of these areas really opens your eyes to not only how much there really is out there to learn. On the other hand, I tend to visualize and know what I want way before any supplier can make suggestions because I pretty much understand the depth of all of the offerings in all beverage areas. Producing quality cocktails in high volume and high pace is an entirely different art.

ANTHONY MUELLER
Wine Educator at Inglenook Winery, Rutherford, CA

In your opinion what are some of the most underappreciated wine regions?
If you systematically build a graph of quality versus price, you will find, in general, Spanish wines are really underappreciated for how long they have been around. Other Old World underappreciated wine regions include Greece, Georgia, Slovenia, Portugal and Croatia. It takes a very mindful sommelier to reach beyond the norm to place any one of these regions on the wine list to pair with the cuisine of their restaurant.

You’re also a certified saké advisor; do you feel a saké culture is finally blossoming here in the U.S.?
Yes! I feel that saké has finally broken through the mainstream in America and has found a spot at the dinner table. Saké is a truly versatile beverage to be enjoyed and consumed with a wide variety of dishes. Master Saké Sommelier Toshio Ueno taught us firsthand about saké. With the success of the Saké School of America and the WSET Saké Course, it really shows that saké culture is finally blossoming here in the U.S.

ERICK CASTRO
Owner/Bartender at Polite Provisions, San Diego, CA

Polite Provisions just received its first James Beard Award nomination. Are there certain signature drinks you feel the bar has become known for?
I would say that it definitely has to be the Kentucky Buck, the Oceanside and our house Old-Fashioned. The Kentucky Buck is a drink that I came up with while I was at Bourbon & Branch in my San Francisco days, but it seems to have followed me all over the country. The Oceanside is our homage to our style of cocktails, twists and innovations on classic formulas and recipes. For our house Old-Fashioned we take the whiskey and mix it with a little gomme syrup and bitters, then serve it over a large hand-cut, crystal clear ice cube for guests to enjoy.

What is your favorite spirit base to work with?
My favorite spirit to work with definitely changes throughout the year as the seasons change, but currently I am on a heavy bourbon kick. This time last year, I was all about tequila, then I moved into rum, almost exclusively for a period, but after bouncing to Cognac, I’m back to American whiskey.

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 jesse@tastingpanelmag.com.
“A core of cherry and berry fruit shines through this light, firm red, framed by tea, tobacco and spicy notes. Harmonious and graceful, with juicy acidity and firm tannins. Drink now through 2020.”
T.M. - January 2016
OPENINGS

What Dreams May Come

THE NEW JCB TASTING SALON AND ATELIER BY JCB IN YOUNTVILLE PROMISES "NO LIMIT" TO YOUR ENJOYMENT

by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Alexander Rubin

Jean-Charles Boisset with a glass of The Surrealist in hand at his JCB Tasting Salon in Yountville, CA.

The opening of a new tasting room in the heart of Napa Valley is often an event unto itself with a kind of pomp and circumstance that you can almost predict—the fresh-faced staff, the storied interior design, full pours, on and on. But when an opening involves the creativity and stamp of Jean-Charles Boisset—a wine-world visionary with infectious energy and a charismatic charm that seems to touch everything within his immediate presence—you can hardly predict what to expect, as is the case with the recent opening of his new haute-living JCB Tasting Salon and Atelier by JCB, in Yountville, California.

Situated just off Washington Street, JCB has transformed what was a lackluster tasting room into an experiment in wine world joy. Everything is fashioned in the Louis XIV style—gold-leaf gilded furniture, an exquisite central mahogany table, and looking up, you’ll find yourself transfixed by a dazzling Baccarat crystal chandelier, or instead by your own reflection, glimpsed in a series of mirrors framed by elegantly carved gilt wood—JCB is unabashedly aware that they also offer a voyeuristic view of other people—an arousing and sexy kind of thread that runs through all of his creations.

Add to all this, the “Surrealist Boutique” where high retail fashion is on dazzling display—and for purchase. Baccarat and Lalique decanters and vases and Riedel “specialties” line the wall, next to wine accoutrements and artistically fascinating jewelry, flexed by Swarovski crystals and personally designed by JCB. There are Goyard handbags, Champagne buckets and so much more. “We wanted to bring all these products into the tasting salon to instill a bit of joy,” said JCB, beaming, impeccably dressed in a red velvet blazer, wearing his heart (as a pin) on his lapel—which he designed.

Samples and wine flights are available for purchase in the Tasting Salon, and guest are encouraged to sit at the interactive tasting table—it will astound. Some of the wines we sampled were only available on-premise: JCB “Infinity” sparkling ($75), an exclusive 3,000-bottle offering, fully organic and biodynamic with zero dosage—bright mineral notes, tingly mousse, fresh green apple skin and baked apple and pear spice; the JCB 2012 No. 76 Chardonnay, Marin County ($35), with bright fruit, a decadent mouthfeel, round and with burnt toast and caramel notes; The Surrealist 2013 Napa Valley ($350), a Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot blend, sold in clear glass that can be used as a decanter afterwards. It’s a robust, black cherry and plum skin wine with powerful tannins and a mineral vein that is as pronounced as JCB’s personality.

James Ayers and Rebecca Karr, who can boast 25 years of experience working with fine epicurean goods, run the Atelier, accessible through an open-framed doorway. From frozen lobsters, smoked salmon, foie gras, pata negra and escargot to vinegars, olive oils, chocolates, caviar, Poilâne bread flown in from France every Thursday, and more, the options will keep you up at night—and that’s okay with JCB. “I’ll sleep when I’m dead,” he says. “There is nothing like a dream to create our future, and we need our dreams to take us there.”
A Celebration of International Wines & Maui’s Best Cuisine!

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

INTERACTIVE WINE TASTING SEMINARS • CELEBRITY COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS • EVENING GALAS WITH LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

JUNE 9-12, 2016 • KAPALUA RESORT • MAUI

kapaluawineandfood.com
n mid-February, Raymond Vineyards held its highly-anticipated fifth annual Napa Gras, a burlesque-themed celebration to inspire and delight the wine trade, journalists and VIPs in town to bid on the extraordinary wines for Napa Valley Vintners’ 20th annual Premiere Napa Valley.

“It is exhilarating to bring excitement, passion and a certain je ne sais quoi and flair to everyone during Napa Premiere week,” said enthusiastic host and Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset. “To bring the world of trade, a journalism and VIP guest together to celebrate style, embrace joie de vivre and transcend terroir, is energizing and brings magnetism to all the wine world.”

Jean-Charles greeted attendees with his JCB No. 21 Crémant de Bourgogne while seated in a larger-than-life Champagne coupe. Suiting up to this year’s burlesque theme, attendees came donning unique masks and wearing custom-made attire. Raymond Vineyards’ wines were served throughout the night and entertainment was the highlight of the evening. Special performances by Brook Lynn’s Burlesque, aerialists and gold body-painted models from Aurora Circus Arts-Aerial Entertainment entertained party-goers throughout the evening by performing on the main stage in Raymond’s Crystal Cellar tasting room. DJ Jeff from Wine Country Entertainment was on hand playing music throughout the winery, while live music from Honey Mahogany serenaded guests in the famous Red Room.

At the Premiere Napa Valley barrel tasting and auction, which took place on Saturday, February 20, Raymond Vineyards’ lot brought in $27,000 for five cases (or $450 per bottle) of Masquerade, a 2014 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. The work of esteemed Raymond Winemaker Stephanie Putnam, world-renowned Consulting Winemaker Philippe Melka and Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset, Masquerade combines the best lots of fruit from Raymond’s cherished Napa Valley vineyards into a stunning expression of pure velvet opulence in a glass. The Raymond lot contributed to the staggering results achieved at the barrel auction, with a total of $5 million being raised for Napa Valley Vintners.

Raymond proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset greeted guests of Napa Gras seated in a larger-than-life Champagne coupe.
We’ve touched over 25,000 products from 65 different countries,” says MHW, Ltd. CEO John Beaudette. As if to underscore the point, Executive Vice President Scott Saul pulls a squat, clear bottle from a locked glass cabinet, and dives into the spirit’s backstory. “The founders of this Swedish vodka, Karlsson’s, added a potato harvest date to echo the concept of vintage.” Next to it, Saul sets Singani 63, a Bolivian grape-based liquor from director Steven Soderbergh, on the conference table. “People say we’ve handled everything,” he remarks. He continues, chuckling while describing a beer bottle with a scratch-off label (akin to a lotto ticket) revealing a female in the buff. “I had to convince the client, based on longtime expertise, that this label design was certain to be rejected by the TTB.” Indeed, the 20-year-old company has seen it all, or most of...
it, which explains why, along with their unique service model, alcohol beverage suppliers routinely employ its importation and distribution capabilities.

MHW has come a long way since its initial founding as Monsieur Henri Wines in 1934. At the time, the business functioned as a traditional French wine importer and brand marketer until PepsiCo acquired it in the 1970s. During the Cold War, Pepsi used MHW to play a pivotal role in introducing the first imported vodka to the U.S. by accepting Stolichnaya as payment for Pepsi concentrate sent to the Soviet Union. During that period, Beaudette toggled between positions at Monsieur Henri Wines and PespiCo, until lastly, he served as CFO of Monsieur Henri Wines. When Pepsi sold the distribution rights to Stoli in 1994, Beaudette seized the opportunity to set a new course for the company.

Together with two other ex-Pepsi executives, they implemented a novel business strategy. “We don’t own brands; rather, we service them,” Beaudette explains. In an era of importer and wholesaler consolidation, Beaudette wanted to assist the proliferation of new suppliers in finding a successful route to market. Renamed MHW, an acronym to honor its past, the firm opened with one employee. Twenty years later, MHW has assembled a multilingual workforce of over 100, many loyal for well over a decade—for some, almost two.

In simple terms, the primary goal of MHW’s service model is to manage the complexities of U.S. alcohol importation and distribution, including logistics, licensing and compliance. As Beaudette puts it, “People can plug their brand into MHW, leave the back-office operations to the experts, and go focus on marketing and sales.”

MHW holds permits to import distilled spirits, wine, malt beverages and cider into any port in the U.S. and to ship and commercially sell products, both foreign and domestically produced, into any U.S. state, allowing clients to sell nationally and, as a boon, create one label. The firm also holds wholesale licenses in New York, New Jersey and California, permitting direct sales to retail; has wholesaler privileges in markets like D.C. and Ohio; and is working on a wholesale operation in Florida.

While beverage logistics is the cornerstone of the business, MHW
also consults on marketing and new business development, recently adding brand creation and design—working with a cadre of external creative experts—to its repertoire. Ten years ago, the firm founded Genesis, an incubator distributorship in New York, which has a sales force of ten part-time sales representatives. The sales team has successfully introduced new brands to market. The buzz generated by the team was the stepping stone many brands needed in order to catch the attention of traditional distributors in a crowded marketplace.

This extensive suite of services was the primary reason Steven Luttman, founder and CEO of Leblon Cachaça (recently acquired by Bacardi), chose MHW. “We needed a logistics solution, from importing and compliance to warehousing, shipping and invoicing/collections from our distributors. We were a start-up and could never afford to do all this ourselves, not to mention that we had to focus on sales, marketing and producing our product. We were introduced to MHW, and it was a godsend. We didn’t know this capability was available, and they were really the only ones to provide these services at the time we created our business in 2005.”

MHW proved the service model a triumph as much for their clients as for themselves. “Our greatest asset is our roster of brands—such as Avión Tequila, 1800 Tequila, Hypnotiq, Skinny Girl Margarita and many others—that have seen great success,” says Beaudette.

Inevitably, others have tried to recreate MHW’s strategy. While imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, newer competitors, many opened in the last five years, lack MHW’s relationships, resources and enduring experience.

Shane McCarthy, the Boston and New York market manager for Crean’s Lager of Dingle Brewing Company in Ireland, confirms. “What sets MHW apart is their communication, attention to detail and industry knowledge.” He uses MHW for all U.S. logistics: from order processing and customer invoicing, delivery coordination, to U.S. Customs clearance. “On the federal and state level, we rely on their expertise for all regulatory compliance matters,” McCarthy says. He points to a recent event, the 78th NBWA (National Beer Wholesalers Association) Annual Convention recently held in Las Vegas, as an example of their excellent customer service. “The MHW team worked very closely with us to have a successful show—from the design of the exhibit with our creative agency in Ireland to the management of the door to door logistics.”

To support their clients, MHW boasts multiple proprietary technology platforms. “We spent a lot of money and time building them,” says Beaudette. This ranged from the integrated compliance system, capable of high-level custom specification, to the client reporting dashboard which provides transparent access to all sales and financial information. “It’s state-of-the-art and very user-friendly,” says McCarthy. By the end of summer, MHW will launch its latest innovation: a cloud-based ERP system which will provide continuous proprietary software updates meeting the ever-changing landscape of client needs, industry rules/regulations, and the information delivery platforms—here today and coming tomorrow. It also provides critical safeguards with respect to data access, protection and redundancy.

The company has one more asset that literally can’t be copied: the depth of experience and commitment of its leadership team. John Beaudette, for example, serves as Chairman Emeritus of the National Association of Beverage Importers Inc. (NABI). This role keeps his finger on the pulse of industry change; consequently, he’s regularly engaged to speak at conferences and events all over the world. EVP Scott Saul and COO MaryAnn Pisani both boast nearly two decades at MHW as does their Director of Systems, Ritch Robinson. CFO Hilary Grossman is closing in on her 15th year with the company. Additions to the management team over the last three to ten years include folks like Melanie Gbowu, Manager of Business Development and Marketing, and Mike Horowitz, Director of Strategic Planning and Information Technology. This stability, coupled with forward thinking, is a testament to MHW’s success and deep knowledge of the alcohol beverage industry.

“Ultimately,” says Beaudette, “there’s no one simple formula to replicating what we do. It’s not just understanding the complexity of the industry. You can’t replicate the people side of our business as well as the trust so many industry members place in us.”

A Genesis—an incubator distributorship in New York—supplier meeting for ARTA tequila at Toloache Thompson NYC with Steve Shaw (far right) of SDS Enterprises.
A TREASURE ON HIGHWAY 29

SEQUOIA GROVE HAS EARNED A LOYAL FOLLOWING

BY BRYCE WIATRAK

Sequoia Grove’s Winemaker Molly Hill calls the vineyard “a hidden gem amongst the giants.”
Winemaker Molly Hill calls her place of work, Sequoia Grove. The expression rings true in more than one respect. For one, the tasting room physically rests beneath a small group of towering redwood trees. But in a less literal sense, Sequoia Grove's friendly and cozy home stands out, or better yet doesn't, from its palatial neighbors that line Napa Valley's Highway 29. Production remains relatively small for the region—only 35,000 cases for each vintage across the portfolio that includes their nationally distributed Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as their limited-edition red wine blend, Cambium. For those who have discovered this Rutherford estate, Sequoia Grove has amassed a loyal following that highly regards the winery for its unyielding dedication to balance and craftsmanship.

Sequoia Grove's Chardonnay has attracted much attention from the restaurant community. Lauren Helm, Lead Sommelier at St. Helena's Harvest Table, the dining component of Harvest Inn by Charlie Palmer, has kept Sequoia Grove's Chardonnay on her by-the-glass list since the restaurant's inception. Why Sequoia Grove out of the countless Chardonnays coming from Napa? Helm responds, “It's one that stood against its peers in terms of balance. It's not over-oaked or buttery and is really food-friendly.” Peter Steiner of the Mediterranean restaurant Sens in San Francisco also finds himself a fan of the Chardonnay. Peter says he carries Sequoia Grove Chardonnay on his by-the-glass list for a variety of reasons: “First is its Napa Valley appellation, since our clientele is tourist- and banquet-driven.” Nevertheless, he goes on to say, “It's not highly typical for Napa. It represents the new style of more restrained Chardonnay.”
Beyond the conservative use of only 30 percent new French oak, Sequoia Grove's Chardonnay also undergoes no secondary malolactic fermentation. Moll Hill also finds that as a winemaker, the Chardonnay is one of the more difficult wines to craft. "White wine is challenging," she explains. "Like all varietals, the work has to be done in the vineyard, especially the non-malolactic Chardonnay. You need to have impeccable fruit coming into the winery. We craft our wines in an elegant style that highlights the fruit and doesn't cover it up in oak."

The same commitment to food-friendly and elegant winemaking can be found in Sequoia Grove's Cabernet Sauvignon. Hill says, "A cool thing about our two estate properties is that they show the two sides of Rutherford. Sequoia Grove's original estate is in western Rutherford. The soil is similar to the Rutherford Bench, alluvial soil that washed off the Mayacamas Mountains. Our newer estate property, Tonella, is on the eastern side, and that soil is quite different and more influenced by the Vaca Mountains." Much of the nationally-distributed Cabernet Sauvignon is composed of fruit from these two vineyards—the rest of the blend coming from such pedigreed sites as Stagecoach Vineyard, Morisoli, Beckstoffer George III and others.

Victor Dedushaj, General Manager at New York's Benjamin Steakhouse and The Sea Fire Grill, offers the Sequoia Grove Cabernet Sauvignon by the bottle, his thoughts echoing Lauren's and Peter's. He says, "The Cabernet is a beautiful, classic Cab from Napa . . . We do really well with Sequoia Grove because I think the quality for the price is incredible."

He finds that the traditional pairing of Napa Cab and a hearty steak works well for the wine. "I had it with rib eye last night and it's a fantastic match," he says. But he believes there's room for less conventional couplings as well. For example, he's fond of enjoying the Cabernet alongside the blackened Montauk swordfish served at The Sea Fire Grill, as the wine is elegant and balanced enough to not overwhelm the fish.

Beyond their first-level Cabernet, Sequoia Grove also produces their flagship wine Cambium in national distribution, as well as a selection of vineyard designates sold direct-to-consumer. President and Director of Winemaking Mike Trujillo says, "A
great wine doesn’t have to be big and chewy to be fabulous and long-aging. Balance can get you further than big tannin. We’re not bound by the 75% Cabernet minimum,” referring to the minimum blend of Cabernet Sauvignon required to label a wine as a Napa Cabernet. He continues, “we’re going to nurture Cambium slowly to become our icon wine. We look forward to growing that label.” This flexibility allows winemaker Molly Hill to fully utilize her creative prowess when blending each vintage of Cambium, crafting a wine that highlights what is inside the bottle instead of just what is printed on its exterior.

Both Hill and Trujillo have spent most of their careers with the winery, not uncommon for Sequoia Grove. Hill explains, “Sequoia Grove has been around since 1980. We keep our employees happy and we’ve had the same employees for 20 to 25 years, including our Cellar Master and some folks in our tasting room staff. I’ve been here almost 15 years. All these people live and breathe for Sequoia Grove.” “This commitment to those who work there help keep Sequoia Grove “old school.”

As a final note, Trujillo adds, “I think Sequoia Grove still embodies what Napa Valley used to be back then: small and focused on the region.”

### Sequoia Grove 2013 Chardonnay, Napa Valley ($27.99)

The 2013 Chardonnay has a beautiful acidic drive to it. A streak of lemon blossom needles through a core of fresh Golden Delicious apples, coupled with a wet stone minerality. The wine also emits a savory, lees-y quality, thanks to twice monthly bâtonnage.

### Sequoia Grove 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley ($41.99)

The 2013 leans more hedonistic than the prior vintage. The wine seduces with dark, earthy flavors such as black currants, coffee grounds, graphite and tar. It’s also very gratifying texturally, a wash of plush tannins coating the palate.

### Sequoia Grove 2011 Cambium, Napa Valley ($109.99)

Cambium is stunning in 2011, the cooler vintage only accentuating the elegance of this wine. It exudes an enticing herbaceousness—aromas of violet, cassis, spearmint and crème de menthe escape from the glass. On the palate, the wine sits broad with a lush black plum core of fruit and ample, but soft tannin structure. The wine shows an inviting trajectory, fattening on the mid-palate and waning to a long, rewarding finish.

### Sequoia Grove 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley ($41.99)

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon rests in tranquil harmony. There’s a pleasant, cooling blue fruit quality to this wine—a mélange of blueberry and blackberry compote—alongside a red plum juiciness and softened by a violet pastille character. Never overripe or heavy, the 2012 sings stunningly today.
Back in 1998, the gin category was in a sad state of affairs. It was seen as old and tired and the quality of the spirits on the shelf left something to be desired. While at a bar in Notting Hill in 1998, three friends, Martin Miller, David Bromige and Andreas Versteegh, decided to make an ultra-premium gin—one that would encourage a new generation to dive into the spirit. The trio launched Martin Miller's Gin in 1999 and, by doing so, began a revolution in the world of gin.

Starting with the company in 2002, Jacob Ehrenkrona, CEO of Martin Miller's, reminisces about the days before he found the brand: “At the time, I was very cynical about gin. All of the products on the market relied heavily on marketing, but then I tasted Martin Miller's and realized it could also be about the liquid. It was like working with someone who invented color TV; I finally understood that the category did not have to be black, white and boring.”

The gin that turned Ehrenkrona, as well as countless bartenders and consumers, onto the category uses steeping instead of “berry trays” or carterheads to introduce the botanicals into the spirit. These ingredients include juniper from Tuscany and India, cassia bark from China, Florentine iris from Florence, along with angelica, orange, coriander and liquorice root. Dried lemon and lime peel also are added, but separately from the earthy botanicals in order to maintain the bright citrus notes that make this offering iconic.

When creating the recipe for the brand, Miller, Bromige and Versteegh decided that each ingredient should elevate the spirit and no expense should be spared, which led them to Borganes, a tiny village in Iceland. Here, a spring provides soft, pure water from the base of the Basalt Mountains to blend with the gin. It takes ten days for the spirit to make the journey to this remote island, but since water makes up over half of the final product, the journey is well worth the extra time.

The quality of the product has led to a close relationship to many of the world's top bartenders. “Mixologists have kept Martin Miller’s alive and relevant,” Ehrenkrona explains. “We incorporate their feedback into our brand as much as possible. When they expressed a need for a higher-proofed gin for cocktail creation, we developed 90 Proof Westbourne Strength. We also are developing an aged expression geared towards the mixology community.” Named Nine Moons, this expression will rest for nine months in single-use bourbon oak barrels, aging slowly in Iceland's cold, dry climate; this offering will be released in May 2016.

Through these bartenders and tastings, Martin Miller’s has been able to share the potential of gin with consumers around the globe. “We know if can get someone to try Martin Miller’s,” he continues, “they will like it, even if they claim to only like vodka.”

Martin Miller’s Gin has received more top awards than any other gin, including a 97-point “Superlative” award for the Westbourne Strength from the prestigious Beverage Testing Institute, the highest in the category. This expression is a favorite among mixologists and seasoned gin drinkers.

With Martin Miller’s on the backbar or shelf, the world of gin is finally in Technicolor.
There was friendly competition in the air at Bar Toscana, the cozy bar in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles, where 14 Southern California bartenders gathered to compete in the Martin Miller’s Gin shakeoff. Using either Martin Miller’s 80 Proof London Dry Gin or Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin, which is bottled at 45.2% ABV, the bartenders whipped up some delicious and aesthetically-pleasing drinks for the judges: The Tasting Panel’s Associate Publisher Rachel Burkons; Martin Miller’s Regional Manager Mitch McDonald; Bar Toscana’s Beverage Director William Perbellini and Lesley Solmonson, author of Gin: A Global History. —Jesse Hom-Dawson

At Bar Toscana, in Brentwood, CA, Lesley Solmonson, author of Gin: A Global History; The Tasting Panel’s Associate Publisher Rachel Burkons; and Bar Toscana’s Beverage Director William Perbellini.
Marsha Meyer
Founder, The Natural Mixologist, Los Angeles

California Kapil
➤ 1 ½ oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin
➤ ¾ oz. Grand Poppy Liqueur
➤ ½ oz. Opuntia Ventura Spirits
➤ ¼ oz. housemade citrus cordial
➤ 3 drops instafoam

Shake all ingredients through a double strain into a coupe. Garnished with bittered ice sphere, orange twist and citrus peel.

Blaine Adams
Beverage Director, Barrel and Ashes, Studio City

D-Rose
➤ 1 ½ oz. Martin Miller’s Gin
➤ 2½ oz. homemade desert pear and grapefruit green tea soda
➤ 1 oz. fresh lime juice
➤ ½ oz. fresh naval orange juice
➤ ½ oz. Amaro Montenegro

Build ingredients in mixing tin except soda and give a long and hard shake. Pour soda into a single Old Fashioned glass. Double strain tin mixture into glass and garnish with candied grapefruit rose.

Christopher Barragan
Lead Bartender/Sommelier, Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse, Woodland Hills

Thai Me Up
➤ 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Gin
➤ 1 oz. lime juice
➤ 1 oz. ginger, lime and lemongrass syrup
➤ 10–12 Thai basil leaves
➤ 10–12 fresh mint leaves
➤ 8 coin-sized slices Persian cucumber
➤ A splash of soda

Muddle basil and mint. Add all wet ingredients and shake. Strain and top with soda and give a bartender’s roll. Garnish with fresh mint and basil.

Sergio Salazar
Bartender, Areal Restaurant + Bar, Santa Monica

Green Eye
➤ 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength
➤ ¾ oz. St-Germain
➤ ¾ oz. Solerno Blood Orange Liqueur
➤ ¼ oz. lime juice
➤ 2 basil leaves

Shake all ingredients and double-strain into glass. Sweetness can be adjusted with elderflower liqueur.

Vincent Anter
Bartender, FIG, Santa Monica

Shake Your Blue Tea
➤ 2 oz. cardamom-infused Martin Miller’s Gin
➤ ½ oz. almond oil cream
➤ ½ oz. lemon juice
➤ ¼ oz. orange blossom honey
➤ 10 blueberries

Muddle, then shake ingredients. Double-strain into Collins glass over crushed ice, garnish with torched meringue and blueberry leather.

Clare Ward
Bar Manager/Mixologist, Sambar, Culver City

1,000 Nautical Miles
➤ 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin
➤ ½ oz. Maurin Quina
➤ ½ oz. Fino Sherry
➤ 1 oz. carrot pickling liquid
➤ Pinch of salt
➤ A splash of Champagne

Stir all ingredients. Strain into coupe glass, top with Champagne and garnish with fennel, grapefruit and carrot medallion.
**RYAN HOOKS**  
Senior Bartender, St. Felix, Hollywood

**LAIDBACK**  
- 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin  
- ½ oz. egg white  
- ¾ oz. lemon juice  
- 4 raspberries  
- 3 sprigs thyme  
- ¾ oz. simple syrup

Muddle thyme with simple syrup. Combine ingredients and shake with one ice cube to whip until melted, then shake with four ice cubes to chill. Strain up. Garnish with thyme, orange bitters, orange peel and raspberry.

**ADAM GEORGE FOURNIER**  
Bar Manager, Areal Restaurant + Bar, Santa Monica

**BI-COASTAL QUANDARY**  
- 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin  
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice  
- ½ oz. simple syrup  
- 2 heaping barspoons kumquat and sage boba

Whip ingredients and top with soda. Garnish with kumquat speared with sage.

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**BRETTNEY OLSEN**  
Bar Lead, E.P. & L.P., Los Angeles

**HEIR OF THE DOG**  
- 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Gin  
- ½ oz. heirloom tomato shrub  
- ½ oz. blood orange juice  
- ½ oz. celery seed syrup  
- ¼ tsp. miso paste

Add all ingredients to shaker and shake to combine. Fine strain over fresh ice, garnish with blood orange wheel, heirloom tomato slice, celery leaf and black pepper.

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**GIA ST. GEORGE**  
Beverage Director, Estrella, West Hollywood

**TEARS OF DEU**  
- 2 oz. Martin Miller’s Gin  
- ¾ oz. tarragon and white pepper syrup  
- ¾ oz. lime juice  
- Absinthe mist

Stir ingredients, pour over compressed melon cubes. Garnish with baby daisies.

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**CANDACE-ELYSE BOOKER**  
Manager, Vinavanti, San Diego

**PRINCELY STATE**  
- 1½ oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin  
- 1 oz. fava wash of garbanzo bean water  
- ¼ oz. Raj Simple*  
- ¼ oz. Chai Lillet Rouge  
- 3 dashes forbidden bitters

Whip and then shake ingredients. Garnish with star anise dust, pod and hibiscus flowers.

*Raj Simple:
- 1 tbs. fennel seeds  
- 2 tbs. Chinese 5 Spice  
- ¼ cup dried coconut flakes

Toast above ingredients on medium heat in a pot with no oil for about two minutes. Add two cups of Demerara sugar, two cups water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer for 10 minutes. Strain contents through a cheese cloth and bottle.

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**MICHAEL ALVAREZ**  
Head Mixologist, Alvarez & Co. Bartending, Los Angeles

**BREAKFAST OVER MALIBU**  
- 1½ oz. Martin Miller’s Westbourne Strength Gin  
- ½ oz. Lillet Blanc  
- ½ oz. St-Germain  
- 1 egg white  
- Peychaud’s Bitters  
- Blood orange liqueur

Filler shake with ice. Add first four ingredients and shake very well, then strain into a Martini glass. Add two dashes of Peychaud’s Bitters and a spritz of blood orange liqueur. Garnish with orange peel.
May 12-14, 2016  |  CENTRAL COAST, CA
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<th>Thursday, May 12</th>
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| Vintners Wine Tech Symposium  
 Led by Winemaker Larry Brooks to share the best practices using the Steamboat Format. | French Forum: Exploring The Wonders of French Chardonnay (lunch included)  
 Open to the public. In this fun and informative seminar, Master Sommelier Bob Bath will take you on a guided tasting tour of the top Chardonnay producing regions in France from Chablis to Champagne. | What’s Oak Got To Do With It?  
 Pairing Chardonnay & Artisanal Cheese |
| Sommelier Chardonnay Challenge  
 Top Sommeliers will compete based on their accuracy in evaluating the wine. | Taste the Difference: Exploring California’s Distinct Chardonnay Regions  
 Hone Your Chardonnay Blind Tasting Skills  
 Grand Tasting |
MEET THE CONTESTANTS: Mack Cavanagh, Bartender, The Hawthorne, Boston; Jeremy Hawn, Principal Bartender, Seamstress, NYC; Greg Richie, Executive Chef/partner, Thornton Park Restaurant Group; Will Benedetto, Beverage Director, William Collier's, Nashville, TN; Kurtis Williams, Bar Lead, The Gladly, Phoenix; Dane Nakamura, Beverage Director, Bryan Voltaggio Restaurants, Mid-Atlantic Region.
Sure, today’s bartenders can craft a mean Manhattan, but they’re also primed to offer pairing suggestions for the perfect Pinot to accompany the chef’s signature dish. So as food and wine, cocktails and spirits become an ever-interconnected vortex of pairing possibilities, the modern mixologist can play somm, the wine director can suggest a spirit and the chef can mix-up a creative cocktail.

With this connectivity in mind, we paired up with Duke Bourbon, Layer Cake and Cherry Pie Wines last year for a search to find the most daring pairers out there, and we brought together five bartenders—and one chef!—for the finale in Las Vegas this January. “These guys are masters of flavor,” said Chris Radomski, founder of Duke Bourbon. “They’re proving that if you can cook, you can make a great drink; if you can make a great drink, you can understand the flavors in wine and how to use them. These things all go hand in hand. It’s not often explored, but I believe this is a great talent.”

So with a two-day, multi-part competition facing our contestants, we knew we’d need some heavy-hitting judges. Representing Duke Bourbon, we tapped Ethan Wayne and Radomski, who is also a partner in Hundred Acre Wine Group; from The Tasting Panel, Publisher Meridith May brought her primed palate; Las Vegas–based celebrity Chef Rick Moonen whipped up impeccable dishes for a pairing challenge; Master Sommelier Fred Dame weighed in on the contestants’ wine know-how; and the Director of Mixology for Southern Wine & Spirits of Nevada, Francesco Lafranconi, challenged craft cocktail creation.

Leading up to the Duke Bourbon Mixology Challenge portion, the contestants were tasked with using Southwestern, Asian and Peruvian ingredients—after watching a series of some of John Wayne’s most famous scenes. “This bourbon was inspired by John Wayne's personal preferences,” explained Wayne’s son Ethan Wayne, co-founder, Duke Spirits.

First, we brought our contestants to the state-of-the-art mixology lab at Southern Wine & Spirits, Las Vegas, where Lafranconi pitted our contestants against each other in a series of three cocktail challenges inspired by John Wayne and crafted using Duke Bourbon. Inspired by classic films such as True Grit, our contestants created Southwestern-inspired cocktails, with use of ingredients ranging from cornbread and beef jerky to BBQ sauce; then, in the vein of WWII-era film Flying Tigers, our challengers were faced with ingredients like ginseng, kaffir limes and lemongrass; and finally, in honor of Ethan’s mother, actress Pilar Pallete, the contestants were given a Peruvian challenge, tasked with using ingredients like Inca Cola and tamarind.

With such a diverse array of flavors at their fingertips, the contestants relied on Duke Bourbon’s strong, blendable backbone to achieve balance: “Duke is one of those bourbons that sits right in the middle; this is a spirit you can actually use in so many different ways, but it is still strong enough to be present in cocktails without losing any of that flavor. It’s a great mixing bourbon,” explained Dane Nakamura, Beverage Director for Bryan Voltaggio Restaurants. Jeremy Hawn, Principal Bartender at Seamstress in New York, agreed: “It’s really great in simple cocktails because it’s a great bourbon, but it’s also really nice in more complex drinks because it really stands up in a cocktail.”
Challenge #2: SERIOUS SLINGERS

The second challenge saw the contestants channel their inner cowboys with a trip to the gun range, where after a series of safety instructions, each bartender got his chance to play gunslinger. While there were no real winners or losers in this round, Radomski joked, “We’re looking to see who’s John Wayne material—and we’ll celebrate with a shot of Duke bourbon after we shoot guns.”

Let’s just say straight-shooting runs in the family: Ethan Wayne takes aim during the Outdoor Challenge.

Jeremy Hawn, Principal Bartender, Seamstress in NYC; Chef Rick Moonen peeking over his shoulder; Kurtis Williams, Bar Lead, The Gladly, Phoenix; Mack Cavanagh, bartender, The Hawthorne, Boston; Greg Richie, Executive Chef/partner, Thornton Park Restaurant Group, Orlando, FL; Fred Dame, MS; Dane Nakamura, Beverage Director, Bryan Voltaggio Restaurants; Will Benedetto, Beverage Director, William Collier’s, Nashville, TN.

Challenge #3: WINE COCKTAILS AND FOOD PAIRINGS

For the third and final round of the competition, we headed to Chef Rick Moonen’s Rx Boiler Room, where each contestant was tasked with creating cocktails that fit three criteria:

- Contains Duke Bourbon
- Contains a white or red Layer Cake wine
- Pairs with a dish specially created by Chef Moonen

First up, Chef Moonen rolled out light Kona kanpachi fish tacos in taro root shells, meant to be paired with Layer Cake Sauvignon Blanc– or Chardonnay-based Duke Bourbon cocktails. Next, Moonen brought out a beef tongue shepherd’s pie and our contestants were challenged with creating Layer Cake Malbec– or Cabernet Sauvignon–based Duke cocktails.

As each dish was brought out, the contestants gathered around, tasting it with sips of the wines, and with only ten minutes to idealize their cocktails, time was of the essence as our judges tasted along. “Craft spirits are making the world of hospitality so much more exciting than in the past,” mused Fred Dame, MS. Agreed Rick Moonen, “My bartenders are coming back to the kitchen more and more, and I say have at it! We can have 850 bottles of wine on our list, but we have all the colors in the crayon box when we’re talking about mixing with spirits.”

So with a rainbow of flavors to explore, our

Celebrity Chef Rick Moonen created two dishes for our contestants to pair with: a braised beef tongue shepherd’s pie, and kanpachi fish tacos in taro root shells.
Meet the Contestants

GREG RICHIE, EXECUTIVE CHEF/PARTNER, THORNTON PARK RESTAURANT GROUP, ORLANDO, FL

Favorite John Wayne Movie: The Shootist—the ending was epic!

What cocktail or dish would you make for The Duke? Bourbon molasses-glazed hanger steak.

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? Balance. Everything has to play well together. A sip and a bite must continue on seamlessly.

“Craft spirits are making the world of hospitality so much more exciting than in the past,” mused Fred Dame, MS.

contestants set off, going head-to-head with the pairing challenge, and while it was a difficult and competitive challenge, the winner was finally announced: Chef Greg Richie, Executive Chef and partner of Orlando’s Thornton Park Restaurant Group, which operates Socó Restaurant and Baoery Asian Gastropub, the lone chef among our stable of bartenders, took home the title.

“Being the only chef selected to participate in this competition initially had me a bit unnerved,” admitted Richie. “These were some of the most talented bartenders and mixologists from around the country! Had this been in a purely mixology-based format, I would’ve been in a pretty tough spot, but since the competition was about pairing drinks with food, I had a leg to stand on; I do that every day!”

For more action-packed photos and recipes, visit our Facebook page!

APPALOOSA

• ½ oz. Duke Bourbon
• 4 oz. Layer Cake Sauvignon Blanc
• ½ oz. simple syrup
• ½ oz. lime juice
• 2–3 slices ripe jalapeño
• Cilantro

Gently muddle cilantro, jalapeño and simple syrup, then stir with ice and remaining ingredients. Strain into wine glass and garnish with three slices of jalapeño and a fresh sprig of cilantro.

Paired with Chef Moonen’s braised beef tongue shepherd’s pie, Greg Richie’s Red River cocktail.

RED RIVER

• ¾ oz. Duke Bourbon
• 4 oz. Layer Cake Cabernet Sauvignon
• ½ oz. sweet vermouth
• ½ oz. dry vermouth
• ¼ oz. fresh carrot juice
• 3–4 dashes celery bitters

Stir all ingredients with ice cubes until lightly chilled. Strain into a coupe and serve with skewered pearl onion.

In the white wine pairing challenge, Greg Richie paired Chef Moonen’s kanpachi fish tacos with his Appaloosa cocktail.

Paired with Chef Moonen’s braised beef tongue shepherd’s pie, Greg Richie’s Red River cocktail.
COVER STORY

WILL BENEDETTO,
BEVERAGE DIRECTOR, WILLIAM COLLIER’S, NASHVILLE, TN

During the Southwestern Challenge, Will Benedetto served up his The Last Puff cocktail, saying, “In every John Wayne movie, there’s always a final smoke: Sometimes from a cigarette, sometimes from a gun—and not always John Wayne’s gun!”

Favorite John Wayne Movie: True Grit. I love the relationship between Annie and Rooster.

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? I think a great bourbon, like Duke, can be paired with virtually any type of dish or cuisine. The flavors of the dish should be accentuated or complemented by the drink, and if the bourbon neat fails to accomplish this, there are a multitude of ways it can be mixed into a cocktail to suit the job.

How do you plan to continue developing the concept of cocktail and spirit pairings with food? Certain wine varietals and styles are well established as being ideal pairings with certain foods. I think this broad concept can be applied to cocktails as well. Just as Cabernet Sauvignon is great with red meat, a robust and boozy cocktail like a Manhattan or Sazerac should complement steak as well. Whereas bourbon might overpower delicate flavors of seafood dishes, sour style cocktails would be great with oysters or mahi mahi, just like a Sauvignon Blanc would.

KURTIS WILLIAMS,
BAR LEAD, THE GLADLY, PHOENIX, AZ

Favorite John Wayne Movie: True Grit, because it was a film that personified John Wayne—and it was his Academy Award-winning movie that finally recognized all of his accomplishments on film.

What cocktail or dish would you make for The Duke? I would have to stick to a classic since the man was such a classic. It would be a Duke Bourbon Manhattan, which I can picture him appreciating after a long day of shooting.

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? I think cocktails should complement the dish, but also have enough backbone and contrasting flavors to bring out the levels of flavor in both the cocktail and the food. Neither the food nor the cocktail should dominate the experience, but both should play an integral role in an amazing dining experience for guests.

THE LAST PUFF
- 2 oz. Duke Bourbon
- ½ oz. Italian sweet vermouth
- ½ oz. Campari
- Muddled jalapeño
- 1 dash Regan’s Orange Bitters

Remove the seeds from the jalapeño and muddle, then stir and strain into a sidecar. Place the sidecar on a plate and smoke the around the glass with cherry wood and then quickly place a glass over the sidecar to capture the smoke. Serve the sidecar and plate with a chilled coupe glass.

In the Southwestern challenge portion of the mixology competition, Kurtis Williams utilized two of the most unique ingredients available: cornbread and BBQ sauce.

LEARN FROM YESTERDAY
- 2 oz. Duke Bourbon
- ½ oz. Casa Martielletti Vermouth
- ¾ oz. BBQ sauce
- ¾ oz. Cinzano
- 2 dashes Bitter Truth Old Time Aromatic Bitters

Stir and strain into a Martini glass. Garnish with cornbread crumbles.
Dane Nakamura, Beverage Director, Bryan Voltaggio Restaurants, Mid-Atlantic Region

Favorite John Wayne Movie: The Green Berets because there’s nothing wrong with being relentlessly and unapologetically pro-military and pro-America.

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? Make it work! The only truth we know is we can keep learning and trying.

What cocktail or dish would you make for The Duke? A bottle of bourbon and two glasses.

Mack Cavanaugh, Bartender, The Hawthorne, Boston, MA

Favorite John Wayne Movie: True Grit. I love the tagline: “The strangest trio to ever track down a killer.”

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? Match bold flavors and accentuate delicate flavors. Taste, taste, taste everything—food and cocktails!

What cocktail or dish would you make for The Duke? An Apple Bourbon Smash, with fresh flavors muddled together. The Smash is a great cowboy cocktail!

The Cowboy Cobbler

- ¾ oz. Duke Bourbon
- ¾ oz. honey
- 3 pieces grapefruit
- ½ oz. Cointreau
- 2 oz. Layer Cake Sauvignon Blanc

Muddle grapefruit with honey, then add Duke Bourbon and Cointreau and dry shake. Strain over crushed ice into double Old Fashioned glass and top with Sauvignon Blanc and garnish with mint.

In the White Wine Challenge, Mack Cavanaugh created The Cowboy Cobbler to accompany Kona kanpachi fish tacos.

Jeremy Hawn, Principal Bartender, Seamstress, NYC

Favorite John Wayne Movie: True Grit because the character is so multi-dimensional.

What is your philosophy on pairing bourbon with food? Pair bourbon with food. Do it. Especially with BBQ or any meat-heavy meal because the mild sweetness complements the sweet juices of fatty meats.

How do you plan to continue developing the concept of cocktail and spirit pairings with food? Wine pairings are something people are used to. I have always tried to steer people in the direction of pairing food with spirits with both savory and dessert dishes.

Alpaca Lotta Flavor in It

- 2 oz. Duke Bourbon
- ¾ oz. tamarind syrup
- 1 oz. pineapple juice
- Muddled cardamom
- ¾ oz. lime juice
- 2 dashes Amargo Chuncho Peruvian Cocktail Bitters

Shake and strain into a cocktail glass. Garnish with pineapple leaves.

During the Peruvian Flavor Challenge, Jeremy Hawn mixed the flavors of Duke Bourbon with tamarind and cardamom.

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Anthony Dias
BLUE REVIEWS

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.tastingpanelmag.com.

Prices are for 750 ml bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC


93 Grieve Family Winery 2014 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley ($30) Ripe and lush with deep peach fruit and lovely texture; tangy and intense wine from the undiscovered Lovall Valley of Napa; an exceptional effort.

92 Dierberg Vineyard 2013 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley ($32) A consistent performer from Santa Barbara County. Elegant and balanced with firm structure and fresh pear and citrus fruit; long and graceful.

91 Colter’s Creek Winery 2012 Koos Koos Kìa, Snake River Valley, Idaho ($22) This blend of all five Bordeaux varieties proves that Idaho has the right stuff; smooth, complex and balanced with depth and concentration; seamless and long. Look for more Idaho wine reviews in my online reviews at tastingpanelmag.com.

91 Ancient Peaks 2013 Renegade, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles ($24) Three winegrowing and ranching families collaborate on this constantly improving Paso label. Deep plum, blackberry and cassis; rich and earthy with balance and spice. 93% Syrah, 4% Malbec, 3% Petit Verdot.

91 Oso Libre Winery 2012 Osenzo Zinfandel, Paso Robles ($38) Central Coast vintners and cattle ranchers make this rich and spicy Zin loaded with blackberry and cassis; juicy, dense and peppery with sweet fruit and a long, mellow finish. They also sell beef futures!

93 Star Lane 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara ($50) Star Lane is Dierberg’s sister label, focused on Bordeaux-style wines. Dense with ripe plum, blackberry and cassis; supple and subtle; deep, generous and long. 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Merlot.

90 Résonance 2014 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley ($50) A Louis Jadot project in Oregon—their first outside France—with wines made by the renowned Jacques Lardière. This ripe and balanced Pinot shows deep cherry and spice, rich and long on the finish.

91 Young Inglewood 2012 Right Bank Blend, St. Helena–Napa Valley ($75) Bordeaux-inspired wines from a passionate Napa Valley boutique producer: Velvety with ripe plum, cassis and spice; rich and balanced with firm structure and a long, dense finish. 60% Cabernet Franc, 37% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot.
IMPORTS

92 Robert Weil 2014 Tradition Riesling, Rheingau, Germany ($19) Silky and off-dry with juicy citrus and lush, balanced flavors; elegant and refined; racy, crisp and smooth. A stunning value.

91 Domaine J. A. Ferret 2014 Pouilly-Fuisse, France ($35) Definitive Fuisse from this Jadot-owned property. Rich depth backed by tangy acidity; juicy, fresh and balanced with nice minerality.

94 Witteman 2014 GG Trocken Riesling Westhofen Morstein, Rheinhessen, Germany ($40) Pure, crisp, dry and precise flavors of citrus with minerals and tangy acidity; a stunning expression of the noble Riesling grape from a family that has been making wine since the 1600s and has now converted to biodynamic winemaking.

92 Croft Reserve Tawny Porto, Portugal ($20) A venerable Port house (est. 1588) with a modern bent. Dark, rust amber; smooth, soft and nutty with bright, sweet fruit and mild rancio; silky, balanced and long.

91 Ritual 2014 Monster Pinot Noir, Casablanca Valley, Chile ($40) Paul Hobbs consulted on this ambitious project from Agustin Huneeus and the wines are made by Benziger alum Rodrigo Soto. Lush, ripe and savory with cherry, spice and tangy style; deep, intense and elegant.

91 Bodegas Baigorri 2007 Tempranillo Reserva, Rioja, Spain ($40) From a state-of-the-art gravity-fed winery in Rioja Alavesa. Mellow plum, lovely spice and mature fruit; dense, rich and complex with bottle age.

VALUE AND BY-THE-GLASS RECOMMENDATIONS

90 Giesen 2015 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand ($14) Aggressive, grapefruit nose; juicy and tangy with silky texture and bright, long and fresh.

91 Villa Wolf 2014 Pinot Blanc, Pfalz, Germany ($11) Racy, crisp and long; tangy, fresh and showing citrus and rounded flavors; pure, bright and balanced.

89 Alamar 2015 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Casablanca Valley, Chile ($12) Lush peach nose; juicy and tangy with citrus and lively acidity; fresh, balanced and long.

88 Vento di Mare 2014 Organic Grillo, Valle del Belice, Sicilia, Italy ($12) Silky and soft with juicy style and bright aromatics; mellow and smooth with balance and fresh fruit; lush and long. One of a new line of Sicilian imports.

88 Fetzer 2014 Eagle Peak Merlot, Mendocino County ($10) Clean, smooth and lush with juicy plum and berry fruit; dense, balanced and long.

88 Cycles Gladiator 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Central Coast ($11) This controversial “naked lady on a bike” label is now back in the hands of its original winemaker, Adam LaZarre. Ripe, spicy style showing blueberry and plum with sweet oak.
La Côte d’Oregon

Domaine Serene Rivals Grand Cru Burgundy

BURGUNDY-LOVING Minnesotans Grace and Ken Evenstad arrived in Oregon’s Willamette Valley in 1989, investing in a 42-acre hilltop estate in the Dundee Hills. Their winery, named Domaine Serene after their daughter, effectively launched Oregon’s luxury wine industry.

Today, Domaine Serene produces Pinot Noir from six vineyard estates spanning three Willamette Valley AVAs, as well as Chardonnay solely from high elevations in the Dundee Hills. In 2001, a state-of-the-art, five-level, gravity flow winery was constructed, specifically designed to produce world-class Pinot Noir.

Bringing their vision of Pinot Noir full circle, last year the Evenstads purchased Château de la Crée, a Burgundy estate in the Côte d’Or. I look forward to seeing what they make of the new property as the first vintage launched under their ownership (2013) reaches distribution channels. In the meantime, domestic Pinot Noir hardly gets any better than the ones the Evenstads are making at Domaine Serene.

90
Domaine Serene 2013 Evenstad Reserve Chardonnay, Dundee Hills ($70)
Lush nose; smooth and rich with tangy citrus and racy acidity; elegant and fresh with depth and finesse.

92
Castello Banfi Grappa, Italy ($46)
Composty nose; smooth, clean and showing a touch of sweetness; earthy, balanced and rich with lovely texture and a long, elegant finish.

93
Domaine Serene 2013 Chardonnay, Côte Sud Vineyard, Dundee Hills ($75)
Smooth vanilla nose; silky and lush with ripe pear and tangy acidity; rich and showing vanilla oak and graceful structure; long and deep.
Domaine Serene 2013 Chardonnay, Clos du Soleil Vineyard, Dundee Hills ($75) Smooth vanilla oak nose; juicy and elegant with tangy acidity and soft texture; layered, deep and beautifully realized; long and faceted.

Domaine Serene 2013 Chardonnay, Etoile Vineyard, Dundee Hills ($75) Lush vanilla nose; rich, dense and ripe with depth and finesse; creamy and intense with a core of firm, bright acidity; complete and long.

Domaine Serene 2012 Chardonnay, Récolte Grand Cru, Dundee Hills ($125) Smooth vanilla nose; creamy and luscious with mellow, elegant and intense style; lovely notes of toasted oak, spice, tangy acidity and ripe fruit; certainly one of America’s finest Chardonnays; a ringer for Corton-Charlemagne.

Domaine Serene 2012 Evenstad Reserve Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley ($70) Soft cherry nose; lush texture and ripe cherry fruit; smooth and juicy, balanced and long.

Domaine Serene 2012 Pinot Noir, Jerusalem Hill Vineyard, Willamette Valley ($90) Lush cherry nose; smooth, luscious and dense with black cherry, soft vanilla oak; rich, juicy and intense; long and ripe, deep and generous.

Domaine Serene 2012 Pinot Noir, Mark Bradford Vineyard, Dundee Hills ($125) Ripe cherry nose; deep, lush and homogeneous with sweet oak and spice; graceful and complete; juicy and long.

Domaine Serene 2012 Pinot Noir, Grace Vineyard, Dundee Hills ($185) Smooth black cherry nose; lush texture and balance, elegant, classically structured and rich; juicy and fine-grained with finesse and breeding; long and lovely.
Publisher’s PICKS

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.

WINES

Two Arrowheads 2013, Paso Robles ($18) Nectar-like scents and flavors of white peach, banana, mango and melon, all with toned chalky minerality. Pretty buttered peach pie plumps up the mid-palate and ends with a lemon-curd softness. This blend of 71% Viognier and 29% Roussanne demonstrates the natural setting for Rhône varieties in Paso Robles. 92

Hey Mambo 2013 “Sultry Red,” California ($12) The latest vintage shows all the right moves for this sun-drenched, earthy red. Light on its feet, it takes graceful steps towards lush ripeness and balances its partner of fine acidity while dipping into chocolate-coffee-fig undertones. 90

Pennywise 2013 Pinot Noir, California ($12) The earthy, raspberry nose is brisk and bass-toned. The grip of acidity and tea tannins are brusque but momentarily sweetened by raspberry until Italian herbs move in. This is a Pinot Noir in motion: a constantly changing flavor profile that’s proof of complexity and great value. 90

True Myth 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles ($24) With an abundance of blue and black fruit to sweeten, the chalky tannins and earth “soil” play up the savory and mineral tones of this rustic red from the Niven Family of California’s Central Coast. This wine over-delivers with serious big oak-caramel and black cherry coming in from mid-palate to finish. 90

Opaque 2010 Malbec, Paso Robles ($30) A blood purple-hued beauty that rounds out the Malbec grape to a generous, flowing provider of lush red and blue fruit. Its tannins are pliant and work well with its toffee-kissed oak. Dotted with bright cherry and cranberry, the acidity is pert and the underlying minerality cleans the palate after each sip. More Cahors than Argentina, the floral vitality brought out by winemakers Anthony Riboli and Arnaud Debons is exquisite. 93

Viña Siegel 2012 Unique Selection Los Lingues Red, Alto Colchagua Valley, Chile ($33) The blend of 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Carmenère and 20% Syrah is an expressive array of deep, black fruit and spice. A vein of chocolate sweetens violet petals and the texture and density of the wine is impressive to the finish. Aged in French oak for 14–16 months. A true-blue match with red meat. 92

PICKS

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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.

Worthy of a smooch.
French-style double bizou.
Wildly infatuated.
Seriously smitten.
Head over heels in love.
Buena Vista 2013 Syrah, Hillside Vineyard (S$25) The 2013 vintage of this wine is mature and ripe, with a dark purple color. The nose is fragrant with blackberry and boysenberry, and the palate is rich with flavors of black cherry, dark plum, and black currant. The wine has a smooth texture and a long, velvety finish. 95

Tasted side by side, these two stellar reds got our attention with huge, engaging texture and flavor. Blends dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon, each has a small percentage of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

* Aperture Cellars 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (S$55) Tobacco and violets make a daring pair in this tremendously deep, jammy red. Malbec (9%) is blended in, a beloved variety of winemaker Jesse Katz, who has spent time in Argentina and more recently in Bordeaux, where he worked the Pétrus harvest after he left Lancaster Estate. The sleek, silky wine is aged 22 months in 100% French oak (50% new). 93

* J. Bookwalter 2012 “Protagonist,” Columbia Valley (S$60) 9% Cabernet Sauvignon. From its fragrant sandalwood-chocolate nose to its developed palate of plum and violet, this is an outgoing, vivacious and savory red. Perfectly balanced, it’s a nod to the great 2012 growing season. 94

* J. Bookwalter 2013 “Protagonist,” Columbia Valley (S$60) 95% Cabernet Sauvignon. This pitch purple-black opaque wine offers up a nose of tar graphite and toasted oak, which is mirrored on the palate as its character expands into tobacco and rustic tannins that coat the tongue. An aromatic lift is in the blackberry core. In 2013, Washington State experienced its highest recorded tannin and color potential. 90

* Davis Estates 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (S$60) Pure luxury. A fragrant orange-lavender, a touch of spearmint and Oreo cookie and threaded by blueberry, blackberry. Chocolate fudge streams through the mid-palate. Chewy, deliciously broad strokes of fudge and cherry on the finish. 93

* Levendi 2013 “Sweetwater” Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (S$60) The grapey currant syrupy effect is attributable to the sunshine-filled 2013 vintage and this Cab shows it beautifully. The grapes are grown on rocky red-soiled slopes and the wine’s texture—strikingly rich—has a backdrop of slate and dried lavender. Chocolate pudding surfaces heroically on mid-palate. The creamy French oak drives texture further, enveloping the palate in what seems like forever. This is one to watch. 95

* Rumson’s Rum, Trinidad (S$32) Orange, pekoe tea and cigar leaf on the nose. Brown sugared chocolate-covered orange on first sip is layered and delicious. Soewy and lengthy, a lemon drop opens up on third pass—a hint of spiced cinnamon stick leaves you wanting more. 80 proof. 91

* Mezcal Marca Negra Espadín, Mexico (S$65) Ripe agave and pineapple, baked in the sun, are aromatic with a dry, smoky nose. Spiced pecans on the palate pique the tongue and are followed by a lemon-lime-pepper barbecue rub flavor. Texturally creamy. 102.2 proof. 92

SPIRITS

* Venge Vineyards 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Bone Ash Vineyard, Calistoga, Napa Valley (S$105) Black-purple-hued, the scent of black licorice and burnt tobacco on the nose is seductive and on the palate—it coats the tongue. This red is spiced by chili pepper and black pepper, regulated by an abundance of blackberry pie filling. Cigar leaf shows through this powerful anvil, its grapes grown in volcanic soil. But the anvil doesn’t hammer down; instead, it paints the palate, stroke by stroke. 96

* Upchurch Vineyard 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Mountain, Washington State (S$68) From a single plot on a small plateau (Red Mountain is not a mountain), located on the eastern end of the Yakima Valley, Red Mountain is Washington State’s smallest appellation and one of its warmest growing areas. White pepper and soy on the nose, with blackberry so ripe and fragrant. A plethora of flavors—basil, marjoram, cedar, pencil shaving, violet, lavender and olive—keep adding dimension. 96

BACCHUS WINERIES

* House Family Vineyards 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Cruz Mountains (S$54) Toasted oak and caramel-cherry chocolate were prominent features of the 2010. Broad, generous black currant and blackberry inspire a bright acidity. This wine is texturally delightful—round yet “massive” in style with an amise-salinity on the finish. 93

* House Family Vineyards 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Cruz Mountains (S$52) The 2011 impressed with tobacco and dark, sunshine-packed dark fruit. Savory notes of olive, damp earth and figs were pleasant with the good acidity. 92

* House Family Vineyards 2013 Syrah, Masada Bloc, Umpqua Valley, Oregon (S$40) Winemaker and proprietor Stephen Reustle’s 2012 vintage of this wine won the International First Place Award from 6 Nations Wine Challenge. This nod to the growing potential from this Southern Oregon appellation has us taking note. Estate grown and produced, the nose imparts a field of heather and a powdered sense of cocoa. Mouth-filling with violet-dotted chocolate, cranberry and rhubarb play the acidity hand for sublime balance. The silky palate and sleek tannins make for a textural dream, with a cross between salinity and white pepper on the finish. 93
Sipping the Rainbow

TASTING THE VIBRANT FLAVORS OF NEW AMSTERDAM VODKA

by Jesse Hom-Dawson / photos by Dustin Downing

Although the weather forecast in Los Angeles was for rain, the flavors at the New Amsterdam vodka tasting were clean, bright and reminiscent of summers at the beach. Seven spirit experts gathered at The Bellwether, a bar and restaurant in Studio City, CA to taste through the portfolio of New Amsterdam vodkas, as well as some delicious cocktails made using some of the flavors, created by Bellwether’s Beverage Director Ann-Marie Verdi. On hand was Verdi, as well as The Bellwether’s Bar Manager Jonathan Daniels; Sean Hamilton, Bartender at Sassafras in Hollywood, CA; Blaine Adams, Beverage Director at Barrel & Ashes in Studio City, CA; Chris Barragan, Lead Bartender/ Sommelier at Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse in Woodland Hills, CA; Quintin Ellis, Head Clerk at Bevmo! in Encino and Jesse Hom-Dawson, Editorial Assistant at Tasting Panel.

Blaine Adams enthused, “While the classic vodka has a body and mouth presence that is useful behind the bar, I quite enjoy the coconut flavor. As a mixologist of sorts, I prefer to use fresh produce whenever possible. However, using fresh coconut can make for a very thick and semi-oily mouthfeel. This coconut vodka tastes of fresh coconut without any of that hassle. When playing in the tiki cocktail flavor world, the New Amsterdam Coconut Vodka has a strong case as a staple.”

The cocktails played nicely with the flavors, as we tried a traditional Moscow Mule, made with the original New Amsterdam, and then Verdi’s take on a Moscow Mule, fittingly titled Not Your Mama’s Mule, made with a kaffir lime and ginger-infused version of New Amsterdam, which reflects the beverage program at The Bellwether, where infused drinks are the star. We capped things off with A Kick in the Head, made with spicy Thai chilies and New Amsterdam’s Red Berry Vodka, Verdi’s favorite flavor: “The berry could be used in a variety of cocktails, making it a versatile spirit,” she said.

New Amsterdam 80 proof vodka.

MERIDITH MAY’S TASTING NOTES

New Amsterdam Vodka
Cherry-skin, marshmallow and licorice gather on the nose. The clean, clear, crisp palate slowly builds up to a heat that pleasantly warms, with no burn. Hints of charred marshmallow and white pepper are wrapped in its pillow-like texture. **93**

New Amsterdam Citron
A lemon-lime-mandarin appeal is as fragrant as it is creamy. The slightest touch of orange rind gives it a just-peeled effect. Undertones of sweetness pull through but it actually dissipates into an authentic white grapefruit that creates a zingy finish. **93**

New Amsterdam Orange
Flowers perfume the air: orange blossoms are kissed by lanolin and vanilla. The rich, pretty flavors are accented with exotic Asian spice. **93**

New Amsterdam Mango
The nose is voluptuous and sultry, with heady tropical tones to soften the ripeness of the fruit character. A bittersweet, slightly peppered mango comes to the mid-palate. On second pass, green leaves, apricot nectar, taro root and dried herbs make this beauty even more complex. **92**
New Amsterdam Original
“Witch hazel, dried lemon peel, mineral on the nose. Mineral and dried grains on the palate with a clean, zesty finish.” —Chris Barragan
“Hot and sharp on the nose, sharpness confirmed on the palate with heat and a clean finish. Dissipates quickly, pure clean example of a heavily distilled vodka.” —Jonathan Daniels

New Amsterdam Citron
“Light, exotic tropical fruit and fresh lemon. Lingering taste, refreshing water with lemon on the next level.” —Quintin Ellis
“Zesty lemon and sugar with grapefruit notes. Spicy and smooth with dry finish.” —Jesse Hom-Dawson

New Amsterdam Orange
“Nose of tangerine and orange Tic Tacs. Hits sweet area of palate right off the bat with a rush of bright orange notes from tangerine and blood orange to classic navel. Sweetness masks ABV level for an easy sipper.” —Blaine Adams
“Nose of orange fruit leather. More meat and peel of orange, slight sweetness up front and finishes with an almost candy-like sweet orange.” —Sean Hamilton

New Amsterdam Mango
“Nose of ripe mangos. Rushes back with bright, sweet mango notes, hits mid-palate with a touch of citric notes, clean finish, like a mango juice stopped by a bar for a minute.” —Blaine Adams
“Jam-packed flavor, rich mango on the nose and taste. A lush bouquet of mango would mix well with a Cosmopolitan; works well with or without mixer.” —Quintin Ellis

New Amsterdam Peach
“Intense and perfume-like on the nose. On the palate, strong flavors of peach, nectarine and mango. Reminds me of a sweet sherbet.” —Jonathan Daniels
“Fragrant, floral blossom nose. Apricot and baked peach cobbler, cinnamon finish.” —Jesse Hom-Dawson

New Amsterdam Pineapple
“Fresh pineapple, clean finish. This would be great in a play on a Mojito cocktail.” —Ann-Marie Verdi
“Fresh-pressed pineapple juice. Slight sweet with a drop-off in finish.” —Sean Hamilton

New Amsterdam Berry
“Fresh-picked raspberry and loganberry notes with taffy-like aromas. Blueberry and vanilla flavors on the palate with a white pepper finish.” —Chris Barragan
“Berry nice! Strawberries and raspberries shine on this one; we added a little heat to contrast the sweetness for our ‘Kick in the Head’ cocktail.” —Ann-Marie Verdi

New Amsterdam Coconut
“Dry-toasted coconut on the nose, takes you to the beach. Bouquet more than pleasant on the palate, lingers with lavish tropical coconut on the tongue.” —Quintin Ellis
“Dry-toasted coconut on the nose, viscous body with a perfume-like blend of coconut and vanilla.” —Jonathan Daniels

New Amsterdam Original
Nose: witch hazel, dried lemon peel, mineral on the nose. Mineral and dried grains on the palate with a clean, zesty finish.

New Amsterdam Citron
Nose: light, exotic tropical fruit and fresh lemon. Lingering taste, refreshing water with lemon on the next level.

New Amsterdam Orange
Nose: tangerine and orange Tic Tacs. Hits sweet area of palate right off the bat with a rush of bright orange notes from tangerine and blood orange to classic navel. Sweetness masks ABV level for an easy sipper.

New Amsterdam Mango
Nose: ripe mangos. Rushes back with bright, sweet mango notes, hits mid-palate with a touch of citric notes, clean finish, like a mango juice stopped by a bar for a minute.

New Amsterdam Peach
Nose: intense and perfume-like on the nose. On the palate, strong flavors of peach, nectarine and mango. Reminds me of a sweet sherbet.

New Amsterdam Pineapple
Nose: fresh pineapple, clean finish. This would be great in a play on a Mojito cocktail.

New Amsterdam Berry
Nose: fresh-picked raspberry and loganberry notes with taffy-like aromas. Blueberry and vanilla flavors on the palate with a white pepper finish.

New Amsterdam Coconut
Nose: dry-toasted coconut on the nose, takes you to the beach. Bouquet more than pleasant on the palate, lingers with lavish tropical coconut on the tongue.

Putting New Amsterdam Flavors to Work

Not Your Mama’s Mule
1½ oz. house infused kaffir lime- and ginger-infused New Amsterdam Vodka
¼ oz. simple syrup
½ oz. POM Pomegranate Juice
20 ml. lime juice
2 oz. Bundaberg Ginger Beer

Build over ice and garnish with a lime twist.

Kick in the Head
1½ oz. New Amsterdam Red Berry Vodka
3 oz. house-made sweet and sour
¼ oz. fresh orange juice
¼ teaspoon finely chopped Thai chilies

Shake, pour over ice and garnish with a lime twist or Thai chili.
A Conversation with
Jonathan Tennenbaum
WINE DIRECTOR, HARRIS’ RESTAURANT, SAN FRANCISCO

Fred Dame, MS, VP/Prestige Accounts for American Wine & Spirits (a division of SWS of CA), and Jonathan Tennenbaum, Wine Director of Harris’ Restaurant in San Francisco.

Fred Dame: Jonathan, when did you start working at Harris’?
Jonathan Tennenbaum: I started here in 1999 as a server. I had an obvious passion for wine, so within six months, a full time position that would allow me to focus primarily on that aspect of our service was created. I did take a few years off to work in the wine industry but in the end, I just couldn’t stay away from restaurant life. Harris’ is such a great place and it’s really one big family. Plus, I missed the energy of working on the floor.

You run the wine list here at the premier steakhouse in San Francisco. What would be the percentage of big Cabernet Sauvignon that is sold here? I’m guessing more than 50 percent.
It’s surprisingly more like 70 percent!

I don’t miss by that much too often. That’s an amazing fact. Let me try to redeem myself by saying that more than 50 percent of the wine you sell is from California. (Laughing) Sorry Fred. Actually about 75% of the bottles we open are from California. It makes sense. We’re so close to wine country. We have a pretty global list though. I’d say that France, Italy and Argentina make up a big chunk of the rest.
You must be a popular man in the Napa Valley.
Yeah. Wineries tend to treat me pretty well when I visit.

Do you sell much white wine? Not nearly as much as I’d like. A good amount of the white is sold by the glass before dinner. While we are a steakhouse, seafood makes up a large percentage of our appetizers. We’ve got fresh oysters, steamed clams, smoked salmon and more, so I always try to get a little white on the table whenever possible. High acid whites work well with many of these dishes and can serve as a refreshing aperitif. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are generally the most popular but Riesling is by far my favorite white grape.

You’re making me thirsty. Your Executive Chef, Mike Buhagiar, has been here for quite a while as well. Chef Mike has been here since 1984, the same year we opened our doors. Nobody knows more about steaks than this man. He’s been sourcing our corn-fed beef from the top ranches in the Midwest for over 30 years. He also dry-ages our porterhouse and bone-in New York steaks on-site for 21 days to allow the meat to tenderize naturally. And though we do have a full time butcher on staff, Chef Mike is a master at that as well, helping to shape the finest cuts for our guests. He’s really the heart and soul of Harris’.

So what is your most popular high-end Cab?
(Laughing) Well, high-end is a relative term, isn’t it? We try to cover all price points. If you want a great wine that’s around 50 dollars, we have it. If you want one for over a thousand dollars, we have that as well. Having said that, we have success with the iconic producers of California: Joseph Phelps, Duckhorn, Silver Oak, Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars, and Jordan to name a few. But I think one of the strengths of our wine program is in working with some of those smaller wineries, whose stories aren’t as well known. For instance, I’ve been a fan of Arns Winery for over a decade now. They make about 500 cases of Cabernet Sauvignon near the base of Howell Mountain. Some of his vines are over 100 years old! Wines like Arns, Neal Family, Clark-Claudon, Brown Estate . . . they deserve some love as well. I enjoy introducing our guests to wines like these.

After Cabernet, what’s next?
I’d guess Merlot.
Pinot Noir. It didn’t used to be that way, but it is now. We cover it all, from California to Oregon, France to New Zealand. I am always on the lookout for wines outside of California that complement what we do here.

I am sure that the staff here, like the prime rib, is well seasoned. Do you do a lot of staff training?
We do. Once each month or two we go up to Napa or Sonoma with the team to taste and break bread with the winemakers. Sometimes we have the opportunity to get our shoes dirty in the vineyard. We do blind tastings here at Harris’ about once a week and we change our wines by the glass often. We also like to have guest speakers from the wineries and distributors. Those meetings add a lot of knowledge to our staff’s arsenal. It’s important for everyone to be on the same page as much as possible.

OK, I’ve missed on all the numbers. What else don’t I know?
Loire Valley reds. We do really well with Chinon. We also do well with some of the heartier Italian wines. Who doesn’t love a nice bottle of Brunello di Montalcino or Barolo with a juicy steak?

I love Syrah. It just doesn’t get the love from the general public. How about you?
I’m a fan as well, they are a natural pairing with red meat, but it is an uphill battle. We have a whole page of Syrah and are always looking for the guests to try one. The sales reps who call on me always comment surprisingly on how much Syrah we have, and we’ll keep building on it.

We’re tasting a classic today. Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon from the wonderful 2013 vintage. What a lovely wine. I just saw that his brother Peter just passed away. We’re running out of legends.
I love this wine; we pour it by the glass. This is textbook Napa Valley Cabernet. It’s full-bodied, but like all of Mr. Mondavi’s wines not over-extracted. I can count on Mondavi wines always being varietally correct. It’s very enjoyable in its youth, which is great for our guests.

What else do people like to drink at Harris’?
Zinfandel is a popular choice. As legend has it, it’s the only California native grape, so I love serving it to our out of state guests. And yes, I’m aware that this “native” claim is debatable.

What would you say is Jonathan’s guilty pleasure wine?
Bordeaux. There’s just something about them. I love their earthiness and complexity. My favorite flavors are savory, like tobacco, leather and green olives. I am fascinated by the Left Bank—especially St. Julien. Château Gruaud-Larose has always been close to my heart—1986, please, if you’re buying.

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So what would you wish be to change the world of wine?
I think we’re doing remarkably well. The industry has evolved so much in my career. Consumers are more educated and adventurous. Sommeliers are everywhere, and because of that, wine drinkers are more willing to take a risk and try that bottle they’ve never heard of. And though there’s still a little stigma that wine is fancy and only for those in the know, that’s shifting rapidly. My goal is to make wine more approachable to everyone, and I believe that we’re on our way.

Executive Chef Mike Buhagiar and Wine Director Jonathan Tennenbaum of Harris’ Restaurant in San Francisco.
With great winemaking comes great responsibility. Of course, a charitable approach to business can also be applied to other industries, but the thing is, altruism has actually been proven to make wine perceptively taste better. Even when considering the business-like term ‘longevity’ for a winery, environmental responsibility and sustainability are key contributing factors to a company’s long-term goals. It just makes good business sense, especially in the world of wine, to be a do-gooder. We at The Tasting Panel feel it’s paramount, so we’ve dedicated an entire column by highlighting a winery or two committed to these noble efforts.

PURPLE HEART, THE HERO WINE

A BOLD NEW WINE SUPPORTS A COURAGEOUS CAUSE

by Jessie Birschbach
The recent loss of the incredible Peter Mondavi Sr. calls for a weighted list of his great accomplishments: One of the first Californian winemakers to use French oak barrels; an early pioneer of vineyard development in the Carneros region; founder in part of the Napa Valley Technical Group (an organization that shares technological and research advances in Napa, bringing the community together); and, of course, being the CEO of Charles Krug Winery. But what a lot of us don’t think to include on this list is how he served our country in WWII.

The Purple Heart 2013 Red Wine out of Napa Valley reminds us of this sacrifice, as the new ultra-premium wine that pays tribute to the brave men and women in the military. The annual donation made to the Purple Heart Foundation—an organization that supports numerous programs and services dedicated to helping all veterans and their families—is a meaningful contribution from the Peter Mondavi Sr. family, now more than ever, honoring our heroes.

Quite appropriately, Ray Coursen, a veteran of the Vietnam War, leads the Purple Heart winemaking team. Coursen was chosen not only because of his close family ties, but because of his long-term experience and his wines’ accolades—more than 50 wines with scores over 90 points. Says Coursen, “Living in the Napa Valley is a blessing. It’s something for which I am constantly thankful. It’s a privilege made possible, in large part, by the bravery and sacrifices made by people who risked everything to provide the United States with the freedom we all enjoy. Purple Heart wines is a small tribute that we will make to say thank you to military veterans. As a winemaker and Vietnam vet, it just seemed like the right thing to do.”

What does this right thing to do taste like? Plush. Very plush. Coursen elaborates, “I work with the folks at C. Mondavi & Family to make a blend that will be soft, fruit-forward and approachable, yet have the structure needed to evolve in bottle for four to five years or more. We start with a core of Merlot from the family’s Yountville and St. Helena vineyards and seek out complementary lots of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot from across the Napa Valley. We also experiment with various oak trials to impart just the right amount of fruit-oak balance. It’s a lot of trial and error to ensure the wine achieves the style we are looking for.”

The 2013 is the inaugural vintage for Purple Heart. “I’d be hard-pressed (no pun intended) to think of a harvest better than 2013 to launch Purple Heart,” continues Coursen. “The spring was warm and the continued drought conditions kept the vineyards dry, resulting in steady, even ripening. Yields were above normal and of exceptional quality. It enabled us to produce a complex Bordeaux blend with ripe fruit, balanced tannins and complexity.”

Although this collaboration between C. Mondavi & Family and the Purple Heart Foundation has only just commenced, I suspect the wine is going to do very well; and not one drop will be left behind.

**TASTING NOTES**

**Purple Heart 2013 Red Wine, Napa Valley ($19.99)** Ripe blackberry, Blackamber plum and black cherry folded into an extensively plush texture that finishes with hazelnut. The wine is called Purple Heart to honor the men and women serving in the military, and in fact, this producer makes an annual donation to the Purple Heart Foundation. Grab a bottle to support the veterans, and you’ll find yourself returning for more because it’s so darn drinkable. 92

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY
Smoky Mountain High

WHERE THERE’S OLE SMOKY MOONSHINE, THERE’S FLAVOR

by Matt Jackson

A couple of cocktails from Logan’s Roadhouse featuring Ole Smoky White Lightnin’ Moonshine:

Moonshine Margarita and Roadhouse Teas.
Craig Howell—National Manager of Beverage Operations for Logan’s Roadhouse based in Nashville, TN—oversees the beverage program of their over 230 locations.
The Wines They Are a-Changin’

WINE AUSTRALIA USA SHOWS OFF THE DIVERSE WINES THAT DOWN UNDER HAS TO OFFER

by Fred Swan / photos by Stephanie Secrest

Tom Donegan (left) and Henry Hudson, from Hudson Wine Brokers—a boutique Australian wine importer, focusing on premium Australian wines from diverse regions across Australia—share wines with the guests of the Wine Australia USA event.

Chuck Hayward, one of America’s foremost experts on Australian wine, co-led the excellent pre-tasting seminar along with Wine Australia Global Education Manager Mark Davidson.
On February 10 in San Francisco, trade and media savored Australian wines at an event presented by Wine Australia USA. The day opened with a tasting seminar featuring 12 absolutely stunning wines. From Riesling to Chardonnay, Shiraz to Cabernet Sauvignon, they showed the breadth of styles, complexity and sophistication that Australia presents.

“Our wines offer authenticity and history,” says Jonathan Hesketh of Parker Coonawarra. “It’s nice that the real Australia is starting to be recognized here.” And well they should be. These are exactly the characteristics sommeliers, sellers and consumers are looking for today.

Many Australian wineries have succeeded in the U.S.—Penfolds, Yalumba, d’Arenberg and Leeuwin among them. Nonetheless, Aussie shelf space here is often dominated by wines not representative of Australia’s best. Now, conditions are favorable for change. Improved exchange rates, trade and consumer sentiment and the wealth of current and new offerings in the U.S. provide good opportunity for trade to get on board, and benefit, with Australia.

“There are a lot of family-owned wineries and a big focus on sense of place,” adds Ben von Doussa, North America Market Entry Program Manager for Wine Australia. “They are quality-driven.”

“We are sharing premium wines that showcase Australia’s diverse regions and styles,” adds Angela Slade, Head of Market for North America. “There is a renewed excitement about Australian wine from trade and consumers alike, a sentiment reflected by our latest export figures.” Australian exports increased 14% in 2015. Sales value increased at every price level.

Roughly the same physical size as the U.S., Australia offers a huge variety of climates, soils and topographies. Its wines are almost unavoidably diverse and unique. Vitis vinifera grape varieties took root in Australia the year before George Washington became our first president. Within a century, Australian wines were winning international awards. Australia is still home to the world’s oldest producing grapevines for several important varieties, due to relative isolation from phylloxera.

Iconic Australian wines, such as Penfolds Grange and Henschke Hill of Grace, are globally prized and highly allocated. Despite that, and the U.S. being Australia’s top export market, the full depth and diversity from Down Under has been largely overlooked here. It’s been a hard market to tap for many premium Australian producers. That’s changing.

“Timing is right and the exchange rate is favorable,” says Limestone Coast Wines principal Justin Moran. His company has significant sales in Europe, but he’s just moved to Manhattan to focus on the U.S. introduction. “We’ve built a business that will allow us to grow without discounting.” Discounting has hurt Australia’s brand in the past, eroding perceived quality.

Even without discounting, Australian wines offer excellent value. Limestone Coast Wines’ 2014 The Hidden Sea Sauvignon Blanc ($20) is vibrantly aromatic with passion fruit and flowers, but offers rich minerality on the palate. The sophisticated Parker Coonawarra Estate 2013 Coonawarra Series Cabernet Sauvignon ($20) is well-balanced and offers a full-spectrum of flavors, both fruity and savory, with plenty of minerality.
A FAMILY JOURNEY

BY RACHEL BURKONS
PHOTOS BY JOHN CURLEY

Christine Wente, Fifth Generation Winegrower and President of the Wente Foundation; Eric Wente, Fourth Generation Winegrower and Chairman of the Board; Carolyn Wente, Fourth Generation Winegrower and CEO; Phil Wente, Fourth Generation Winegrower and Co-Founder, Murrieta’s Well; Karl Wente, Fifth Generation Winemaker and Senior Vice President of Winemaking; Jordan Wente, Fifth Generation Winegrower.
THE EIGHTH ANNUAL WENTE LEGACY AWARDS CELEBRATE BIG SALES WITH FAMILY BY BLOOD AND FAMILY BY BUSINESS

If you’ve never dined with the Wente family in the Livermore Valley at their Estate and Winery, you’re missing out. Between the great wines, warm welcome and hearty laughter over a shared meal, the Wente family has an innate ability to bring people into the fold, and feel, if only for a moment, like they’re a part of this venerable vintner family.

The mood was no different at this year’s eighth annual Wente Family Estates Legacy Awards, which gathered Wente Family Estates’ distributor partners for a dinner that felt more like a family reunion than a business meeting. With awards categorized based on market size, Wente Family Estates’ international and U.S.-based distributors were awarded for year-over-year success, with the largest market segment recognition for the Platinum tier distributors at 50,000 cases or more in 2015.

“We have friends here tonight from Bermuda, Canada, Mexico, Arkansas, New York, Mississippi, Florida, Texas and lots of places in between,” rattled off Carolyn Wente, Fourth Generation Winegrower and CEO. “Tonight’s theme is ‘For the love of the journey,’” she continued. “It has been said, ‘What you think, you become; what you feel, you attract; what you imagine, you create. My great-grandfather must’ve thought, felt and imagined great things, because here we are today. But all along, it was for the love of the journey. Each generation of our family wanted to do this, and that’s what makes our journey such a great story to share.”

“But,” she continued, “our success has been based on you understanding our story and sharing it with your customers, so you have become part of our journey, and for that, we thank you tonight!”

PLATINUM TIER

Southern Wine & Spirits of California

With the theme of the evening at heart, Carolyn Wente was pleased to liken Southern Wine & Spirits (SWS) of California’s incredible sales accomplishments to a joint family journey:

“We’ve grown up together, worked together, laughed together, and they have been unwavering in their commitment to helping our family.” Here, Steve Harden, SWS; Larry DiPietro, Wente Family Estates; Carolyn Wente; Karl Wente; James Bradney, SWS; Steve Slater, SWS; Jim Andrus, SWS; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Jason Schweriner, SWS.

Southern Wine & Spirits of Florida

“One shining example of steady growth, year on year,” commented Carolyn Wente of Southern Wine & Spirits of Florida, which saw another stellar year in sales, particularly as the off-premise chain leader for the entwine label, with over 19,000 cases sold in Florida alone. Bob Baraknski, Brittany Sales; Carolyn Wente; Steve Slater, SWS; Jason Schweriner, SWS; Karl Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Chris Morris, SWS.

Glazer’s of Texas

“Although Glazer’s of Texas is a four-time Legacy winner,” began Carolyn, “this is the first year they find themselves in the Platinum category. And because everything is bigger in Texas, they’ve increased case sales of Estate Grown wines by 7,700 cases this past year.” Phil Wente; Heather Alper, Glazer’s; James Campbell, Glazer’s; Karl Wente; Carolyn Wente; Larry DiPietro, Wente Family Estates; Matt Metz, Glazer’s; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Jody Turnbow, Glazer’s.
GOLD TIER

Tryon Distributing, North Carolina

“Ed has won four Legacy awards in four consecutive years,” commented Carolyn Wente. “What he and Tryon Distributing are doing is an amazing example of execution across our entire portfolio.” Phil Wente, Carolyn Wente; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Ed Johnston, Tryon; Karl Wente; Eric Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

Southern Wine & Spirits of New York

“If I were to do the math, Southern Wine & Spirits of New York will have achieved this milestone three times in the 11 years of their starting business in the state. That’s 27% better than the New York Yankees,” ribbed Carolyn Wente. Gentle jokes aside, Carolyn was quick to point out high visibility and key placements, such as the Wente Family Estates Riva Ranch Chardonnay at the Ralph Lauren Polo Bar, as big wins. Eric Niccols, SWS; Matt Munn, SWS; Carolyn Wente; Karl Wente; Chris Giudice, Wente Family Estates; Steve Slater, SWS; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Jason Schweriner, SWS; Larry O’Rourke, SWS.

Heidelberg Distributing, Ohio

Third-time Legacy Award winners Heidelberg Distributing in Ohio are a perfect match with the Wente’s family-driven business model: Heidelberg Distributing in Ohio was started by Vail Miller’s grandfather-in-law, and the company is family-owned and -operated to this day. Phil Wente; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Karl Wente; Carolyn Wente; Vail Miller, Heidelberg Distributing; Bridget Epp, Wente Family Estates; Eric Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

An International FAMILY AFFAIR

With international distributor partners flying in to be recognized for their achievements, Carolyn Wente had plenty to cheer for: At the Bronze level, Gosling Brothers Limited, based out of Bermuda, is another family business with a rich history and legacy, beyond even their famous Gosling’s Black Seal Rum and Gosling’s Dark Ginger Beer. “Goslings has been representing our wines, sharing them with islanders, tourists, cruise ships, growing the awareness of our brands through taste trials in Bermuda, touching many wine consumers internationally,” said Carolyn.

Silver Legacy Export winner Ferrer y Asociados has been representing Wente Family Estates wines in Mexico for a decade, and was a first-time Legacy award winner, having grown the portfolio 93% in 2015 over prior year. “A bit of trivia about Ferrer,” chimed Carolyn: “All of the key people at Ferrer are French! French people living in Mexico, selling American wine! Say what?”

Carolyn turned to Ralph Waldo Emerson for inspiration when speaking about Gold Legacy Award winners International Cellars, in Western Canada. “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail,” quoted Carolyn. “Since 2008, International Cellars has left the path and excelled in making their own trail!”
Southern Wine & Spirits of Hawaii

“Hawaii sold so much wine in 2015 that they moved from Bronze to Silver market size tier,” cheered Carolyn. “They came in with a whopping 54% increase.” Larry DiPietro, Wente Family Estates; Carolyn Wente; Karl Wente; Keith Chinien/SWS; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

Capital Hustings, Wisconsin

This four-time Legacy Award winner was on hand to celebrate yet another year of Wente Family Estates excellence.
Phil Wente; Carolyn Wente; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Joel Sanfilippo, Capital Hustings; Karl Wente; Bridget Epp, Wente Family Estates; Eric Wente; Kyle Luebke; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

Paustis Wine Co., Minnesota

“Paustis is a family-owned distributor that only represents family-owned wines,” recalled Carolyn, who told the story of a Wente Family Estates wine dinner she hosted with Cody Olson, Brand Manager for Paustis. “There are quite a few Wentas in Minnesota,” she said; “I looked around the room and they were the ones that were 6'9” tall. The Wente clan are wine lovers!” Phil Wente; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Carolyn Wente; Cody Olson, Paustis Wine Co.; Karl Wente; Bridget Epp, Wente Family Estates; Eric Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

Young's Market, Utah

Carolyn Wente described the winery's relationship with Young’s Market Company in Utah with a famous quote from John Steinbeck: “A journey is like a marriage,” she says, calling theirs a “good one.” With depletions up 51%, we’re inclined to agree. Larry DiPietro, Wente Family Estates; Carolyn Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Karl Wente; Dan Ewer, Young’s Market Co.; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates.

Southern Wine & Spirits of Oregon

“It’s a real challenge to sell California wines in Oregon,” admitted Carolyn, “but it’s apparent to me that Southern Wine & Spirits took things to a new level in Oregon,” where depletions were up 55% over plan for the first-time Legacy winner. Carolyn Wente; Karl Balzer, SWS; Karl Wente; Larry DiPietro, Wente Family Estates; Tyson Overton, Wente Family Estates; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates.

Glazer’s Mississippi

“Since it’s your first time, I can roast you,” joked Carolyn Wente, who was all seriousness when she noted that Glazer’s of Mississippi had improved sales 35% over previous year. Carolyn Wente; Kevin Laxon, Glazer’s; Karl Wente; Amy Hoopes, Wente Family Estates; Heather Alper, Glazer’s.
Key leaders in the InsightAction team: David Garrard, Vice President, Software; Dave Dennis, President and CEO; Stephanie Kubacki, North American Director of Strategic Partnerships; Joe Lacroix, Director of Creative and Front-End Design; Matt Bannister, VP, User Experience and Project Management; Stephen MacLeod, Chief Data Scientist.
It’s all over competitive athletics and presidential politics. It’s in city planning and those self-driving cars, and it’s essential to the business models for all manner of industry, including beverage alcohol. It’s Big Data, and it doesn’t run our lives—it is our lives. In fact, Big Data is what once was called “life,” but now (because, let’s face it, the technocrats won) enormous amounts of life’s activity, in public and otherwise, is being collected, converted into 0s and 1s, and analyzed. Big Data is either what every company wants or what every company doesn’t know it wants yet, which is why Dave Dennis and InsightAction have stepped into the picture.

“The low-hanging fruit for the clients we initially engage is making use of the data they already have in a way that everyone in the organization can use to improve their collective performance,” explains Dennis, President and CEO of the global business intelligence software company. “When you think about what that does, it aligns an organization so that everyone is working from one version of the truth. So now you can have business critical information at the tips of your fingers that you can act upon and have intelligent conversations across functions to maximize organizational opportunities.”

Not that long ago, industries were very keen on collecting as much Big Data as possible, even if individual companies were unsure of what it all meant and how to utilize it. Today, it’s simply not good enough to capture as many data points as possible; it’s how the data is collected and aggregated that truly matters. Stephen MacLeod, Chief Data Scientist at InsightAction, knows big data all too well: “Without fail, every company we have ever met with has more data than they know what to do with. We help them leverage that data and provide insight that everyone can use to improve performance.” So InsightAction begins by “analyzing information and loading into one of their applications in such a way that often when it’s presented back to a client, they hardly recognize it as being their own, which leads them to find insights that they didn’t know existed. It’s a game-changer,” says Dennis.

Big Data is the single greatest data opportunity firms could be pursuing: “The dawn of large-scale affordable data processing systems has opened up tremendous potential,” says David Garrard, Vice President, Software, for InsightAction.

It’s a “game-changer” for a number of reasons, including the fact that real-time information is business critical to capitalizing on emerging opportunities, and InsightAction emphasizes real-time collection of data from field intelligence. As fast as the data is available is as fast as it can be accessed. But—just as critical—that information is presented back to end-users within a custom-designed software package that applies game theory and gaming mechanics to produce easy-to-navigate programs. Why is this important? Because InsightAction understands how people navigate information.

Joe Lacroix, Director of Creative and Front-End Design, has worked on development of some of the most successful video games in the world: “Working in game design has given me a unique perspective on how to turn complex interactions into a simple user experience to provide an engaging user experience that will keep the user coming back,” he explains.

“When people pick up an iPad or download an app, they know how to use it immediately. They know how to navigate and to access what they need. That’s
“WITHOUT FAIL, EVERY COMPANY WE HAVE EVER MET WITH HAS MORE DATA THAN THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH. WE HELP THEM LEVERAGE THAT DATA AND PROVIDE INSIGHT THAT EVERYONE CAN USE TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE.”

the thinking we brought to our company,” says Dennis, adding that this approach has proven successful across a broad spectrum of industry, including the beverage alcohol industry through InsightAction’s dedicated beverage division.

Matt Bannister, VP of User Experience and Project Management, possesses a unique insight on how people tend to think when navigating big data. “My experiences have helped shape my approach to work. I’ve lived and worked on four different continents as an artist, educator and technologist. Through these experiences, I have developed a deep understanding for people’s needs, desires and expectations and work to apply this to a User Centric Design approach.”

In fact, Dennis says working with Louisville-based wines and spirits corporation Brown-Forman is a perfect example of how InsightAction can revolutionize a company’s approach to sales, marketing and other logistics without disrupting day-to-day operations. Despite myriad and separate sources of data (suppliers’ shipments to distributors, distributors’ shipments to individual accounts, control states, national accounts, etc.), and despite disparate hardware and software programs already in use, InsightAction can seamlessly align its software development capabilities to maximize an organizations existing information technology.

“Our solution can sit on top of existing platforms or even replace underperforming platforms—but the success is targeting it to the end-user’s needs,” says Dennis. “Our focus [with Brown-Forman] was developing the platform that every person—sales, marketing, finance, senior management—can use at their fingertips, and we also knew this would have relevance to the beverage alcohol industry as a whole.” Stephanie Kubacki, InsightAction’s North American Director of Strategic Partnerships, adds, “After working for beverage alcohol supplier companies for over 15 years, I know all too well the challenges with big data and the complexity in beverage alcohol. It does not have to be so difficult. One of the outstanding benefits is that this technology unites all functions and departments because everyone is looking at the same information.”

In March, Campbell Brown, who managed Brown-Forman’s brands in Canada and the Midwest and who was named President of Old Forester Bourbon last year, told The Tasting Panel, “With the program from InsightAction, we can identify the nature of our sales store by store, street by street, city by city. We can see, in real time, where our brands are shelved, where they are selling and which rival brands are selling next to them.”

Such results prove especially gratifying to Dennis, who previously spent 20 years in consumer packaged goods, including tenures in sales and marketing with companies like Coca-Cola and Bacardi. One of his great frustrations was looking through endless reports for the insights needed to guide his decision-making. “In the end, we had a static selling presentation to take to our clients. The problem at the time and today is that the market dynamics are ever-changing. I’ve always carried that with me,” he says.

With solutions from InsightAction, Dennis says the dynamic between frontline sales with on- and off-premise accounts changes dramatically, becoming much more interactive with Big Data than passive or reactionary: “That sales rep now becomes an advisor; the information is real-time. They’re no longer selling to accounts; they’re collaborating with accounts. If objections are raised, the information is there for discussion. If a new idea is proposed, the information can be accessed right there, as the conversation is happening. It’s a real time conversation with real time information that provides real answers.”

Dennis goes on to say, “One of the best parts about this sophisticated engagement is that our products are so intuitive that the users are fully leveraging their potential the moment it’s in their hands.”
JACK DANIEL LEARNED WHISKEY-MAKING FROM A PREACHER.
HALLELUJAH.

LIVE FREELY. DRINK RESPONSIBLY.
With its warm breezes, sunny afternoons and scent of fresh flowers wafting through the air, spring practically begs us to wile away the afternoon with a tall, refreshing cocktail. But for mixologists, the combination of tantalizing weather and cold, hard soil presents a special challenge. “Spring is one of the hardest seasons to make drinks for,” says Kevin Denton, who holds the title of National Mixologist for Pernod Ricard. “Because you want what’s fresh and green, but most things still haven’t managed to grow.”

With 36 brands under the company’s belt, Denton’s job involves a lot of mental gymnastics as he develops recipes for important restaurant accounts like Outback Steakhouse and Applebee’s, creates recipes for the back label of bottles and oversees the brand’s long-term drink strategy. All of this requires Denton to be on top of trends in the cocktail world across a very broad demographic, while staying true to the “fresher and better” motto at Pernod Ricard. This mission, for Denton, translates to focusing on “drinks with fresh, high-quality ingredients and drinking responsibly, so you can enjoy the product more.” His own personal philosophy is linked to his family roots. Growing up in Kansas, Denton recalls with a grin, when his mother made the request, “I want a cocktail I can make.” Therefore, his drinks for Pernod Ricard are refreshingly simple.

But Denton, who worked for one of the restaurant industry’s most creative chefs, Wylie Dufresne, is also aware of what’s edgy and contemporary. As the mixologist for Dufresne’s restaurants WD-50 and Alder, the former of which stunned New Yorkers with molecular gastronomy, Denton was tasked with providing drinks that were just as innovative as the food. “We took a carrot and tried to make...”
it more of a carrot, and did it with a wink and a nod,” is how he summarizes that experience. One drink, for example, involved creating an olive-flavored Dirty Martini by blending olives and gin, then centrifuging them clear, finishing the drink with a circle of pimento oil. It was a cocktail that excelled in sophistication compared to its briny partner. Other career highlights include being on the opening staff of agave cocktail pioneer Mayahuel and working as Head Bartender for Danny Meyer’s Tabla. In other words, Denton is most definitely up to the challenge of making drinks that match our springtime desire for freshness.

Denton, who is an avid gardener, recommends working with root vegetables like beets and carrots, which grow through the winter and can be made into juice, and favors herbs, which find their “time to shine” in spring. But the simplest solution to the advent of warm weather, says Denton is “the spritz—it’s where it’s at.” Low in alcohol and high in refreshment, spritz variations are a simple and fun drink choice. That’s probably why they’re so popular as pre-dinner aperitif drinks in France and Italy, where they take the form of Kir Royale or Aperol Spritz, and of course as the brunch drink du jour across the U.S.

A fondness for tequila is evident in Denton’s spring mixology approach. Recently, he visited the Avión distillery, and was “delightfully surprised to see how hands-on it is,” given that many tequila brands are more industrial. “I think the word ‘craft’ is thrown around all the time, but they’ve been really doing it since they started,” about four years ago, says Denton, emphasizing factors such as the estate-grown agave, and the fact that the distillery hand-bottles.

Below, two of Denton’s recipes for spritzy spring drinks using Avión tequila, to be enjoyed on a patio with a bowl of fresh chips and guacamole.

Avión Fizzy Aviation

A riff on the classic Aviation cocktail, which consists of gin, lemon juice and Maraschino liqueur.

- 2 oz. Avión Reposado Tequila
- ¾ oz. lemon juice
- ½ oz. Maraschino liqueur
- Splash seltzer

In a mixing glass, combine all ingredients except seltzer with ice cubes. Shake and strain into chilled cocktail glass, top with seltzer or sparkling water.

Avión Sunrise

This one is about “updating lowbrow classics,” says Denton. In that vein, it’s a take on a Tequila Sunrise, made more sophisticated by the addition of Lillet Rouge.

- 2 oz. Avión Silver Tequila
- 2 oz. orange juice
- 1 oz. Lillet Rouge
- Lime cut into halves

In a highball glass, add ice cubes and Lillet Rouge. Squeeze the lime into the glass and add other ingredients. Use the squeezed lime as garnish.
Sometimes, a brand becomes so ubiquitous that we forget it has a history—one that may be quite alive even today. In 1864, Gerard Adriaan Heineken wrote to his mother, asking for money from the wealth his parents had amassed as cheese merchants to buy a brewery. That was the start of HEINEKEN, a company that today remains family-owned—Gerard’s great-granddaughter Charlene de Carvalho-Heineken owns 25% of the Dutch company—and has a presence in 192 countries, even including North Korea, and many of which have their own breweries (more about that detail soon).

One hundred fifty-two years later, the company is secure in its global reach, but they want to make sure that their origin story isn’t lost, and that people know them as first and foremost, a family-owned brewery focused on making great beer. “People across the world are becoming increasingly interested in knowing more about ingredients and processes,” says Global Branding Director Mark van Iterson. “We are famous for our cool TV commercials and parties, but underneath [Heineken] is a real brewery. It’s all natural ingredients; just like wine and whiskey; it tastes different not only place to place but year to year, and our brewers have been able to keep it more consistent.”

At the time of Heineken’s founding, Amsterdam was in the midst of a cultural renaissance, and the city was rife with breweries, but their products were inconsistent. In contrast, Adriaan wanted to make a clear, bright, consistent quality beer. When his product turned out well, he decided to export it—and to make it stand out to consumers, Adriaan thought of using the green glass bottle that is now its signature packaging. The Heineken bottle has become an icon, and its
uniqueness was recognized early on, including winning the Grand Prix for design at the 1889 World’s Exhibition in Paris.

On our recent visit to Heineken’s brewery, constructed in 1973 and located about 27 miles outside Amsterdam, Head Brewmaster Wilhelm van Waesberghe led a tour of the enormous facility, which produces nine million barrels annually and is almost completely automated—only two men monitor it on weekends, and even they can opt to work from home. Van Waesberghe, who is both passionate and serious about his job, started at Heineken in 1995, and became Brew Master in 2013 in order to concentrate on consistency across the company’s 66 breweries around the world. All Heineken in North America comes from the Dutch brewery.

“We have a basic recipe for Heineken and that’s how it should taste, but every year brewers have to alter the recipe to get the taste we want to have,” Van Waesberghe explained. “Brewers like to talk about the original recipe, but for us, if you want to get the same taste, you need to change the recipe. And that’s the craftsmanship of brewing.”

On a regular basis, 50 trained tasters, including Van Waesberghe, blind taste samples from Heineken’s breweries around the world, testing with their educated palates to see whether they match what the Dutch brewery is putting out. If not, Heineken’s Brew Masters activate a “consistency and continuity protocol,” examining every possible variable to determine the root cause of the inconsistency, and correct it.

A few things constitute the signature taste of Heineken’s clear, bright lager; one is a pronounced banana note, resulting from its unique “A-yeast,” and the other is horizontal fermentation. Neither is proprietary or secret; for a while, Heineken hid the fact that it fermented in horizontal vats, but then gave up, realizing that anyone wishing to copy them would ultimately fail, since it’s the entire set-up that delivers a great product. The “A-yeast” was developed in 1886 by a scientist who had studied with Louis Pasteur. “At that time, we sold our yeasts, so about 75 percent of all lagering yeasts in the world are Heineken yeasts,” says Van Waesberghe matter-of-factly. “But we think we have mastered dealing with this yeast better than anywhere else in the world.” The horizontal vats are a large part of that—the A-yeast prefers not to have too much liquid below it.

Heineken is proud of its history, and behind the scene of the “Heineken Experience” in Amsterdam, where visitors proceed through an extensive interactive tour that shows all aspects of the brand, there is an archive holding many keys to the company’s roots. Maarten Rijkens, Chairman of the Heineken Foundation, has been with the company since 1972 and oversees the archive’s mission to preserve the legacy of Heineken in three senses: the family, the brand and the company. It’s a story of building a global brand while staying true to its original mission: to provide a consistent product, a clear and bright lager that satisfies thirst worldwide.

In 1864, Heineken began with Gerard Adriaan Heineken writing to his mother, asking for money to buy a brewery.

Head Brewmaster Wilhelm van Waesberghe at Heineken’s brewery, which was constructed in 1973.

Maarten Rijkens, Chairman of the Heineken Foundation, with a photo from the 1889 World’s Exhibition in Paris, where Heineken’s iconic green bottle won the Grand Prix for design.
Our Bordeaux Blends

Blind Tasting

LOS ANGELES SOMMS GET BUSY WITH A VARIED GROUP OF REDS

by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Cal Bingham

Left to right: Michael Ploetz, Director of Food & Beverage at The Peninsula in Beverly Hills; Rebekah Turpin, Sommelier at Culina; Jessie Birschbach, Wine Editor of The Tasting Panel; Scott Reesman, Sommelier at The Lobster in Santa Monica; Mariana Caldwell, Sommelier at Baltaire in Brentwood; Jesus Evangelista III, Wine Director at Scarpetta at the Montage in Beverly Hills; and Naureen Zaim, Wine Director at Eveleigh in West Hollywood.
Eleven bottles cloaked in maroon-colored velvet satchels sat perched on a shelf near the entrance of the swank, private dining room of Culina, a restaurant within the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles that serves Italian cuisine as modern and stylish as its decor. I watched our panel of Angeleno somms trickle into the room, inevitably catching their eyes darting over to the bags. “So what are we tasting again, Bordeaux?” asked Naureen Zaim, half-joking. Naureen, always sharply dressed with an even sharper palate, is Wine Director at Eveleigh in West Hollywood. “Yes, these will all be Bordeaux blends. But we don’t know from where or when or anything else for that matter,” I explained, returning the smile.

In Bordeaux—France’s largest wine appellation, consisting of 306,000 acres—red wines are usually blends, made from two or more of six varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Carménère. In the United States, a Bordeaux-style blend is sometimes called a Meritage, but in order to use that term on the label, the winery must be a member of the Meritage Association and the wine a blend of—but no more than 90%—Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Carménère and the more obscure Gros Verdot and Saint-Macaire. Domestic Bordeaux blends often have proprietary names, as some of these do.

Our panel took copious notes on these red blends but did not rate them in order of preference. They are presented here in the order in which they were blind-tasted and then revealed.

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Winemaker Jay Turnipseed revealed the Franciscan Estate 2012 “Magnificat,” Napa Valley, and what better domestic Bordeaux blend to lead with—this is one of the original Meritage blends of California, in production since 1985. Says Turnipseed, “At Franciscan, we come out of harvest with over 200 different red wines. What that means is that each vineyard block that we farm, we keep separate from each other up until the final blend, which gives us a really good look at the individual components to see how they’ll fit together into a harmonious whole.” It’s this process that has inspired the name Magnificat, after J. S. Bach’s masterpiece. The blend, overseen by winemaker Janet Meyers, consists of 73% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot, 3% Malbec and 2% Cabernet Franc, which spends 20 months in 70% oak barrels.

TASTING NOTES: Michael Ploetz, Director of Food & Beverage at the Peninsula in Beverly Hills: Deep and brooding nose. There is power here. Very complete and integrated. Blackberry, black olive and currant framed by a touch of eucalyptus and study structure.

Rebekah Turpin, Sommelier at Culina: Beautiful dark fruits of black cherry, black currant and plums. Floral notes of violets and light baking spices. A layered wine with a balance of fruit, oak and well-integrated ripe tannins.

Meridith May, Publisher and Editorial Director of The Tasting Panel: Caramel oak, black cherry plum nose. On the palate spiced, brandied plum. Tight tannins and a dusty, dry finish. There’s a big boy meatiness with floral components, iron and graphite.
SPEED TASTING REPORT

Mountain Mystique

Jay Turpinseed presented the next wine from a much higher elevation. This was the Mount Veeder Winery 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon out of the Napa Valley. Yes, it’s labeled as a Cab with 81% of the variety, but it is a blend that also includes 10% Merlot, 4% Malbec, 3% Petit Verdot, 1% Cabernet Franc and 1% Syrah all aged 20 months in 70% new French oak. Probably a more important distinction to remember is that this is Napa Valley–appellated wine. Not be confused with the Reserve, which is 100% Mount Veeder fruit - the Mount Veeder Napa Valley Cab relies on a solid backbone of mountain fruit plus additional select Napa Valley lots blended to the mountain style: the resulting wine displays classic dark fruit flavors plus great palate richness and density. Jay points out: “Of the 140 acres that Mount Veeder Winery owns, only about 40 acres of it are under grapevine. The rest of it is native forest, and very steep, between 1,000 and 1,500 feet above sea level. All of our vineyards face the morning sun. That’s what really is so special about the Mount Veeder, it’s the Southernmost of the mountain AVAs in Napa, which also makes this the coolest of all them. With mountains/hillsides, the soil is very shallow, which affects berry size. The smaller the berry, the more density and concentrated it becomes. Also, if you ever get the chance to visit our vineyards you’ll see tons of California bay trees. On warm days you can even smell the bay leaves floating in from the forest.” But did any our panel pick up on these bay leaves?

TASTING NOTES:

Scott Reesman, Sommelier at The Lobster in Santa Monica: Boysenberry syrup over chocolate chip pancakes. Dusty tannins, dried green herbs and black olive finish.

Jessie Birschbach, Wine Editor For The Tasting Panel: The solid structure is the first thing that stands out here. Black plum, blackberry and then a big dollop of vanilla, yet all of this is very well integrated.

Jesus Evangelista III, Wine Director at Scarpetta at the Montage in Beverly Hills: Smooth, silky, bold plump and full. Rich, dark fruit you can chew on all day. Blueberries and plum too.

Signature Silk

The third wine of the day revealed was actually the first wine tasted in the line-up. Director of Sales Nick Holmes was there to uncloak the Jordan 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley. Winemaker Rob Davis put together a blend of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot and 2% Malbec, aged in about 70% French oak and 30% American oak for 12 months. Rob uses a “barrel blend,” which means that the vineyard lots go through fermentation and malolactic fermentation separately—there are 60 blocks sourced from the estate and 16 family growers—then he evaluates each vineyard and blends. “Rob’s signature style is to have this silky tannin profile. Rob has never made a wine over 13.8 ever, so it’s a bit Old World in style that way,” says Nick. This signature silk was very apparent to many of us.

TASTING NOTES:

Naureen Zaim, Wine Director at Eveleigh: Boysenberry, plum, opaque, young, medium tannins, really round and velvety. Like a smooth, chocolatey Merlot.

Mariana Caldwell, Sommelier at Baltaire: Rich, velvet plum, blackberry jam, with a lingering tasting of baking spice, nutmeg and clove with a well-integrated cedar note.

Napa Renaissance

Clos du Val’s Director of Sales Sean Gallagher was pleased at the surprise from the room when he unveiled the Clos du Val 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley. The panel was already acquainted with Clos du Val given its history—the 1972 Clos du Val Cabernet was one of the six Cabs selected for the famed 1976 Judgement of Paris—but it’s also seen as a value-driven, high-production wine. That said, tasting it blind, a few of us on the panel called it a French Bordeaux! Says Sean, “We’ve been around since 1972, located on 150 acres of the Stags Leap District. We’re going through a renaissance right now and 2013 is just the beginning of it. With a new, respected team of leaders at the helm—President Steve Tamburelli, Director of Operations Jon-Mark Chappellet and Winemaker Ted Henry—we’re heading towards sustainability and cutting our production of Cabernet by half. We’re building a winery within a winery. Stainless steel tanks and 16-ton fermenters so we can isolate lots and ferment them separately. New micro-crush pad and new barrel program. In short, we’re making a huge investment towards quality. The wine that I brought today is the beginning of this journey for us, moving towards the terroir-driven, vibrant style—a more elegant, heavier mid-palate solid wine. In terms of where we’ve been in the past, we were value-driven and now the owners wanted to catch up with what’s going on with our neighbors.” The 2013 Clos du Val Cab is 92% Cabernet, 7% Merlot and 1% Petite Sirah and aged 18 months in 25% new oak.

TASTING NOTES:

Rebekah Turpin: Black raspberry, cassis and violets. A pretty and enticing nose. The fruit is elegant in nature and plays well with the bright tannin in this wine. Not too overbearing or in your face. Nicely balanced. Quite charming and one of my favorites of this tasting.

Scott Reesman: Soft, supple, red fruits, red cherry, dark chocolate, toasted herbs, black olive and burnt earth. My guess would be a Right Bank Pomerol.

Meridith May: Tobacco and new leather seat with a tight tannin structure. When the fruit shows through, it comes in light, dainty shadows of rhubarb and cranberry. High-acid, Old World style. Elegant and medium in power on the palate.

Lodi Leader

Keeping with the pioneering families theme, the LangeTwins 2011 Midnight Reserve, Lodi was presented next. But this family goes way back; in fact, the Langes have been in Lodi since the 1870s. Susanne Allen, LCF Western Division Sales Manager, says, “They began farming wine grapes in 1916, and have vineyards that they still manage and harvest that their grandfather planted.” This particular blend of Lodi grapes consists of 52% Petit Verdot, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon and 7% Malbec and is aged 24 months predominantly in new French oak. I know I’m not the first somm to say this, but it’s high time we give Lodi a little credit. As an AVA it’s cooler than the rest of the Central Valley—the bulk wine area of California—because of a gap that pulls cool air in from the San Francisco Bay.

TASTING NOTES:

“I should note we tasted both 2011 and 2012. For me, they were quite similar but certainly the 2011 reflected a cooler vintage.

Meridith May: Nose reveals a blackstrap molasses, date and milk chocolate. The palate is a masculine composition of cigar leaf, Worcestershire with a tart blackberry and cedar.

Marianna Caldwell: A very floral, feminine nose. Roses and violets. Ripe plum and mulberry with a dark chocolate note. This is a tar and rose mix.

Rebekah Turpin: Noses of cedar spice, plum and a savory quality. More fruit on the palate—black raspberry, plum and a lingering, mocha finish. Strong sense of vanilla and spice on the finish.

Sean Gallagher, Clos du Val Director of Sales, with Clos du Val 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley.

Susanne Allen, LCF Western Division Sales Manager.
Passion from Paso

Another wine undressed yet draped in history was the J. Lohr 2013 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles. It’s safe to say that Paso Robles would not be where it is without the Lohr family. Southern California Area Manager Erin Williams tells us, “We are one of the oldest wine families on the Central Coast. We planted our first Monterey County estate vineyards in 1972, and we started growing grapes in Paso in 1988. To highlight the finest of our estate vineyards, we debuted our J. Lohr Vineyard Series in 1998. Hilltop is its flagship wine. It is hand-harvested, hand-sorted and made in limited quantities—so it gets a lot of love! Most of the grapes come from the new Estrella and Creston sub-AVAs, which are ideal for Bordeaux varieties.”

The blend consists of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Petit Verdot and 1% Malbec, aged 18 months in 225-liter French oak barrels, 60% of which is new. Says Michael Ploetz, “Powerful yet balanced with vibrant acidity. Complex and complete, and would be great by the glass or on its own. After learning that it was produced by a family in limited production, I became more excited as I am always looking for smaller projects made by passionate people. After thinking of all of the wines from Paso that I have tasted, the Parrish spoke to me of that terroir.”

TASTING NOTES: Marianna Caldwell:
On the nose, bell pepper and roses—a well-balanced nose of both vegetables and fruits as though one was in the midst of a lush garden in spring just beginning to bloom. Palate: juicy pomegranate, cherry and plum.

Jessie Birschbach: Certainly one of the richer styles and one of my two favorites of the day. Brambly fruits, baked blackberry, black cherry and chocolate finish with crushed rock.

Essay in Terroir

One of the big hits of the blind tasting was revealed as the Parrish Family Vineyard 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles by Assistant Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Ethan Ray. Although this 100% estate Cab isn’t a blend of varieties, it was a blend of two Cabernet clones grown at a 1,200-foot elevation in the Creston AVA of Paso, aged in 100% French oak, 60% of which is new. Says Michael Ploetz, “Powerful yet balanced with vibrant acidity. Complex and complete, and would be great by the glass or on its own. After learning that it was produced by a family in limited production, I became more excited as I am always looking for smaller projects made by passionate people. After thinking of all of the wines from Paso that I have tasted, the Parrish spoke to me of that terroir.”

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Dusting Up

The final Napa-based wine turned out to be the Sequoia Grove 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, brought to us by Kobrand District Manager Spencer Cruse. This was a blend made up 77% Cab and 12% Cab Franc, mostly fruit from Rutherford and in fact they have 48 acres just south of Beckstoffer To Kalon. This family-owned winery was established in 1979 and really did show off a bit of that “Rutherford dust,” which we somms get all excited about. (Read more about Sequoia Grove on page 60.)

TASTING NOTES: Rebekah Turpin:
Bursting with coffee grounds and mocha notes. Dark fruit, plums, blackberries; ripe in nature. Slight creamy vanilla finish that lingers.


Jessie Birschbach: Peppery blackberry and black cherry follow the coffee and clove on the nose. A dusty, dark chocolate finish.

Ethan Ray, Vineyard Assistant Winemaker and Vineyard Manager for Parrish Family—a member of the Paso Robles CAB Collective—with Parrish Family Vineyard 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles, CA.
Northwest Knockout

The charming Nick Pomponio, Business Development Manager for Southern California for Chateau Ste. Michelle, presented the Northstar 2012 Red Blend, Walla Walla, WA. You won’t find this style of blend on the Right or Left Bank of Bordeaux, as it uses Syrah—10% of it—in addition to 83% Merlot and 4% Cab Franc grown in one of their best sites, Anna Marie Vineyard, where the vines are 15 to 17 years old. The wine spends 20 months on 100% French oak, 53% new barrel. I had the pleasure of meeting the flashy yet good-natured winemaker, David “Merf” Merfeld, at a recent Wines of Washington seminar. The Merf not only makes great wine, but he also somehow makes Oakley-looking sunglasses cool again.

TASTING NOTES: Meridith May:
Outgoing, exuberant nose of plums and cassis. Tighter tannins on the palate with great acidity. A mouth-filling, lush, earthy core with surrounding blackberry.

Michael Plebcz: Very spicy aromatics—nutmeg, Black pepper. Soft and supple, lovely finish of leather combined with dried cherry. Very pretty. This could be a New World wine from a cool climate.

Marianne Caldwell: A nose of herbal and vegetal notes, primarily of fresh, green pepper. On the palate, the fruit is rich and jammy with plum and blueberry and the vegetal notes subside, though, linger underneath the fruit with a hint of black pepper. This tastes like a Merlot/Cab Franc blend.

Brooding Presence

Portfolio Manager Ashlie Leslie presented The Sextant 2012 “Kamal” Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles, a blend of 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Cabernet Franc, 6% Merlot, 3% Malbec and 2% Charbono aged 19 months in new French oak. If the lot of these wines speak to history, the Sextant “Kamal” speaks to the future with its extensive clonal blend grown in the El Pomar District sub-AVA of Paso Robles, California, in partnership with the only commercial vine nursery in Paso, Sunridge Nurseries. Jesus Evangelista says, “I remember being surprised most by the Sextant ‘Kamal’ Cabernet. I recall it being quintessentially Paso on the nose, fragrant and airy with subtle notes of sandalwood and rose petals. But on the palate, the flavors were much deeper than I expected. The wine is dense and plump, with an almost brooding presence of dark cherries and ripe plums framed around a delightfully surprising amount of earthiness and terroir expression.”

TASTING NOTES: Jessie Birschbach: Twizzlers! Red plum and my favorite berry preserve: boysenberry. New World in style, this one has perfectly sized love handles that you like to hold onto because the face is so elegant and beautiful.

Naureen Zaim: Red currants, cassis, cinnamon and rose petals. Young, bright berry forward. This tastes like a Merlot/Cab blend from Paso.

Right Bank Ringer

But wait! There’s one more, and it was the only ringer of the day. This was the Le Carré 2012 Saint-Émilion Grand Cru, a super-cuvée from Château Teyssier. With its Old World pedigree, some of the panelists recognized it immediately as a Right Bank Bordeaux.

TASTING NOTES: Meridith May:
Beautiful fruit—bright, red and blue. Feminine. Coffee sweetened by mocha and plum liquor perfumed and floral tones of lilac and jasmine.

Rebekah Turpin: Dark fruit, black cherry, leathery and earthy cigar box notes burst with ripe and gripping tannins concentrated with black licorice and black cherry. Strong, bold and powerful.

The 11 velvet-covered bottles that once judged us from above sat naked and exposed on the long table in front of us. Looking at the lot in its entirety made the range of wine regions more obvious: Napa, Paso Robles, Lodi, Walla Walla, Alexander Valley, and Saint-Émilion. It was an experience as entertaining as it was educational.
The first sniff, sip and swallow will quickly reveal why 100% agave tequilas are so tremendously popular. Ounce for ounce, these ultra-premium tequilas are comparable in quality and allure to vintage malts and well-aged Cognacs. Their extraordinary characters are so remarkably rich and vibrant that you’re left with the unmistakable conclusion that this is how tequila is meant to taste.

Crafting great tequila is a labor- and time-intensive process. Agaves mature at their own pace, irrespective of demand. It takes the plant between eight to 12 years to reach maturity and optimally is harvested when the plant’s natural sugar content has peaked at about 21–25 Brix. The agave thrives in rich volcanic soil, and a warm and dry climate.

The differences between brands of 100% agave tequilas are years in the making, and taking shortcuts during the production process consigns a brand to mediocrity. From harvesting agaves to the un-barreling of an añejo, the production cycle can exceed 15 years.

Like Champagne and Cognac, tequila has its own appellation, or Denominación de Origen, which delineates growing regions and specifies ingredient content. Since 1993, the production of tequila has been strictly regulated by the CRT (Consejo Regulador del Tequila), whose symbol appears on every compliant label of tequila.
As their labels clearly state, 100% agave tequilas are single-ingredients products. This begs the frequently asked question, if these tequilas are crafted from nothing but agave, how can there be such diversity between the various brands? As is true with wine, the appellation, or growing region, where the agaves are cultivated is a point of distinction. The so-called Highlands and Lowlands of Jalisco differ substantively in their ambient temperature, humidity and soil composition and the amount of rainfall they receive. These differences combine to be what winemakers call terroir.

Another variable is the quality of the water used in production and the type of yeast used to precipitate fermentation. Then there’s the fact that not all tequilas are fermented in the same manner. In some cases, the distiller will play classical music over loudspeakers while the fermenting wash—referred to as the mosto—is being slowly fermented. It’s thought the soothing music has a positive effect on the quality of the fermenting wash. Injecting the mosto with oxygen enhances the lushness of the body.

Then again, not all tequilas are made the same. Some are double-distilled, while are others triple-distilled. Tequilas that undergo an additional pass through the traditional copper pot still are typically lighter in body. Likewise, not all tequilas are bottled at the same alcohol content. Simply put, the higher the alcohol content, the less water is used to render the tequila to proof. Less dilution equates to more inherent flavors shining through.

Barrel-aging is the final variable—how long the tequila is aged and in what type of wood. The large majority is matured in charred, American white oak barrels used previously to age bourbon. However, French Limousin oak, Sherry butts and Port pipes are also popular with tequila makers.

The following award-winning tequila brands exemplify the finest in production methods and finishing techniques. Collectively, they represent the best and brightest of the tequila family. ¡Salud!

High Above

OMECA ALTOS TEQUILA 100% PURO DE AGAVE

Everything about Olmeca Altos Tequila 100% Puro de Agave screams authenticity.

The powerhouse brand hails from the Highlands of Jalisco. After its estate-grown agaves are harvested, they are brought to Destilería Colonial de Jalisco (NOM 1111) and slowly roasted in brick ovens. To extract the plants’ sugar-rich juice, the distillery employs the centuries-old practice of crushing agaves with a volcanic-stone tahona wheel—or millstone—weighing around two tons. The juice is then collected and transferred to vats where Maestro Tequilero Jesús Hernández uses a secret strain of yeast to precipitate fermentation. The tequila is twice distilled in a copper pot still.

“People are becoming more and more interested in the quality and craftsmanship with which spirits are made, and that’s a good thing, especially for our brand, Olmeca Altos,” contends Dominic Alcocer, Director of Tequila for Pernod Ricard USA. “We are especially proud of Olmeca Altos Reposado, which recently earned a Double Gold medal at the prestigious San Francisco World Spirits Competition.”

The Olmeca Altos Reposado is indeed a Tequila celeb. It is aged in charred, American oak barrels for six to eight months, during which time it develops a fetching copper/golden appearance and a bevy of spicy, herbaceous aromas. Its expansive palate and dry, fruit and herbal finish are bona fide works of art.

Fans of sipping blanco tequilas will no doubt appreciate the unbridled enthusiasm of the Olmeca Altos Plata, a lushly textured silver tequila with a surprisingly expansive, peppery bouquet. The flavor of the roasted agave takes center stage, followed by layers of fruit, herbs and anise flavors. Its fade is silky smooth.

PERNOD RICARD USA
An Unmistakable Legacy

AZUÑIA BLACK SPECIAL EDITION Añejo

The Zuñiga family—makers of Azuñia Tequila—is one of the oldest agave growers in Jalisco. Their legacy can be traced back for generations, during which they accrued a reputation for distillation mastery. The Azuñia range offers enthusiasts skillfully crafted tequilas and a multitude of authentic flavors at a remarkably fair price. Their most impressive release to date is Azuñia Black Special Edition Añejo, a stately, ultra-sophisticated spirit that answers the often-asked question of which tequila to take to a deserted island.

Azuñia Black is crafted in the Lowlands of Jalisco at Agavero Unidos de Amatitán (NOM 1426). The family-owned and -operated distillery is the artistic outlet of Master Distiller Salvador Rivera Cardona.

The process begins with hand-trimmed, mature agaves. The sugar-rich plants are taken to the distillery where they’re roasted for 36 hours in traditional clay ovens, called hornos. The fibrous plants are then shredded to express their juice, transferred to vats and slowly fermented using natural, airborne yeast over the course of five to seven days. Afterwards, the fermented wash is double-distilled in a copper pot still and filtered for purity.

“At that point, the tequila is either bottled as the fresh and vibrant Azuñia Blanco, or put into charred, American oak barrels for maturation,” explains importer Jim Riley of Intersect Beverage. “There it will sit for a minimum of two years. Azuñia Tequila celebrates the flavor of the terroir in the finished product. Each expression in the range preserves the base flavor profile. Other brands often lose the essence of the agave during the aging process.”

The two-year-old special edition añejo has a full, curvaceous body and a generous bouquet laced with the bakery-fresh aromas of mocha, caramel, vanilla and cocoa. It is an excellent tequila to allow for additional time breathing to fully open up. The tequila generates scant heat as it passes the palate and glides effortlessly to a long, sultry finish, a lingering fade marked by notes of toffee, dark chocolate and subtle smoky notes.

In case you’re wondering, each expression of Azuñia tequila is better than the one preceding it, and it doesn’t matter in which order you try them. The Azuñia Blanco has a satiny textured body and an alluring floral bouquet with lively herbal and citrus notes. Frankly, its high aromatics are well worth the price of admission. Azuñia Reposado is barrel-aged in American oak for three months, while the Azuñia Añejo is matured for a minimum of a year. Both are graced with an herbaceous and black pepper nose. They fill the mouth with the flavors of lemons, oranges, vanilla, toffee and toasted oak. Their finishes are long and laced with the added flavor of dark chocolate, semisweet herbs and fresh citrus.
If you’re searching for a character-laden tequila brimming with kinetic energy, you need look no further than flavored newcomer Soltado Spicy Añejo Tequila. Its eye-opening heat and fresh pepper flavors make Soltado a backbar necessity.

Crafted at Destiladora Juanacatlán (NOM 1551), Soltado is an añejo tequila barrel-aged for a minimum of 28 months. After the añejo tequila comes off the wood, it is infused with local organic Serrano peppers and Mexican canela, a spicy warm cinnamon. The first and only tequila to be produced using a base of high quality añejo tequila macerated with all natural ingredients, Soltado is an ultra-premium craft spirit created for the adventurous in heart and palate.

“The distillery we work with is also truly unique,” asserts brand owner David Weissman. “It is a co-op owned by 80 agave farmers in the Juanacatlán region of Guadalajara. Our distillery sources its agave from those same farms, choosing only the best that each harvest has to offer. The extreme weather in Juanacatlán increases the Brix levels in the agave, creating a naturally sweet flavor, while meeting consumer demand for high quality, no sugar added products. What’s stated on the bottle is exactly what you’ll get in Soltado, and we intend to keep it that way.”

Guaranteed you won’t soon forget your first sip of this surgically balanced spirit. However, be apprised, Soltado is muy caliente. The nearly combustible combination of barrel-aged tequila, Serrano peppers and cinnamon is evident in every aspect of this fiery gem. On the palate, the heat of the roasted Serranos is front and center, followed closely by a blast of spicy cinnamon. The herbaceous flavor of the tequila is easy to recognize on the long, lingering finish.

By the way, there’s perhaps no better rite of passage than downing a shot of Soltado. Likewise, it has so much personality that even sipping it over a few cubes of ice is a satisfying way to spend an evening.

Appealing as a spicy twist on a Margarita or tall drink, such as the Bloody Maria or the Michelada, Soltado’s incandescent qualities also make it an ideal brand to showcase in contemporary mixology. Its uniquely spicy flavor profile and barrel-aging make it the perfect complement to whiskey, Scotch or bourbon in craft cocktails, as well as a solid performer in tropical and dessert-focused drinks.

Says Weissman, “Soltado is quite literally the hottest tequila on the market. We use the entire chile in production—from the fleshy exterior to the seeds and veins, macerating the tequila for up to a week. It’s a truly unique and marvelous product.”
More than Tequila

KARMA 100% AGAVE TEQUILA

Karma 100% Agave Tequila is an overnight sensation nine years in the making. Achieving excellence takes time. It took the brand owners the first three years alone to select the most capable distillery, choose the finest agaves and purest water and develop a new blending technique along the way. A few minutes alone with any of the three expressions of Karma Tequila will reveal their time and effort were well invested.

The distillery they chose is family-owned and operated Tequila El Viejito (NOM 1107). Certainly one of the preeminent distillers, El Viejito employs traditional production techniques abandoned by many as too slow and labor-intensive.

The singular character of the finished tequila can be attributed the composition of its blend. Karma is an innovative marriage of double-distilled and triple-distilled tequilas, both of which are made in copper and steel pot stills. The triple-distilled portion of the blend lightens and refines the tequila, whereas most of its flavor is derived from the double-distilled spirits.

According to brand co-founder Gary Eisenberger, its unsurpassed quality is another distinguishing factor. “Karma Tequila is pure and unadulterated. It’s free of any additives, artificial flavors, coloring, glycerin or chemical accelerators. We’re proud of the fact that the tequila is certified kosher; another indicator of the tequila’s purity. Basically, there’s no makeup on this model . . . it’s naturally beautiful.”

Naturally beautiful they are. Karma Silver Tequila is a Highland gem possessing crystalline clarity, a satiny, lightweight body and a peppery, spicy, herbaceous bouquet. Free from the obscuring effects of barrel-aging, Karma Silver is the surest way to fully appreciate the enhanced character of its double- and triple-distilled blend.

Karma Reposado is matured in charred American oak for just shy of a year. The aging imbues the tequila with a shimmery amber/golden hue, a textured body and a wafting bouquet of vanilla, fresh fruit and toffee with light oaky notes. It fills the mouth with fruity, spicy flavor before tapering off to a long, dry finish.

The Karma Añejo is an elegant tequila matured in charred American oak for 35 months. The extended aging imbues the tequila with the aromas and flavors of dark chocolate, vanilla, mangoes and caramel with light smoky notes.

Eisenberger and business partner Devin Semler have dedicated their company to supporting organizations that contribute to the educational and wellness of children.

“Devin and I have been board members on a few of these types of organizations, some for over 20 years, and it’s a marvelous way to give back,” says Eisenberger. “Together we started the Karma Cares Foundation. All of the monies it raises go directly to the cause. That’s not just an investment of money or product, but of our time as well. It’s a moral commitment.”
Elevating Tequila

AVIÓN TEQUILA

Here’s a quick way to turn someone into a long-term customer. Pour them a shot of Avión Silver Tequila, made from estate grown agave, neat. Encourage them to take their time and enjoy the experience of sipping a world-class tequila. Pour the person shots of both the Avión Silver and the Reposado, and you’ll make a friend for life. Yup, it’s that good.

Avión is crafted in the picturesque, remote town of Jesús María, situated at 7,000 feet above sea level, the highest point in Jalisco. The handpicked agaves used in production are estate grown and of high quality. At the distillery, the agaves are slowly roasted at low temperatures and crushed to extract the juice. The fermented juice is then double distilled in pot stills. Only an extremely narrow cut of the distillate run is used, which means that it takes up to 30% more agave to make a bottle of Avión. Prior to bottling at 40% alcohol (80 proof) the tequila is subjected to rigorous filtration.

Avión Silver is a thing of beauty. It has a clear, shimmery appearance and a generous bouquet of herbaceous roasted agave, cinnamon, black pepper and fresh citrus aromas. The fresh fruit carries through to the palate where the citrus flavors linger well into its extended fade.

“Avión Silver has three significant awards at the prestigious San Francisco World Spirits Competition,” observes Dominic Alcocer, Director of Tequila for Pernod Ricard USA. It earned a Double Gold medal, meaning that all of the judges agreed on the gold medal unanimously. Plus it was named by the judges as the “Best Tasting Tequila” and “Best Unaged White Spirit.”

The esteemed portfolio also includes Avión Reposado, which is aged for six months; the two-year, extended aged Avión Añejo; a limited-run, Extra-Añejo aged 44 months called Avión Reserva 44; and delicious specialty liqueur, Avión Espresso.

PERNOD RICARD USA

Bringing the Sweet and Spicy Flavor with

AGAVE LOCO
PEPPER CURED TEQUILA

Tequila and chilies are a match made in heaven, evident by the popularity of spicy Margaritas and other tequila-based drinks popping up on menus in the past few years. And Agave Loco brings a nicely-balanced heat to the tequila before it even hits the glass. The 100% agave reposado tequila, distilled in Tequila, Jalisco, is aged for six to eight month in bourbon barrels. The tequila is then infused with the oils of six different varieties of peppers— including jalapeños, serranos and habaneros—using a trademarked process called pepper curing that takes the rough edges off the taste of the tequila and leaves the spirit with a rich pepper flavor and aroma.

The pepper-cured tequila makes an excellent addition to any cocktail, elevating its character and bring a unique sweet heat to the drink. From a Bloody Maria to a Jalapeño Margarita, the possibilities are endless. It’s also an excellent ingredient in the kitchen, added to meat marinades or a splash in zesty salsa or guacamole for an adults-only condiment. No matter how you choose to use it, Agave Loco brings a great flavor that spices up any dish or cocktail. —Jesse Hom-Dawson
Fred Dame: I am sitting with the proprietors of one of the most exciting new brands to hit the world of tequila—Campeón! What’s really interesting is that I have known Lou Palatella for 40 years, John for 25 years and Marci, well let’s just say a while! But I never expected tequila!

Lou Palatella: It all started when I was talking to Marci about my retirement from Southern Wine & Spirits. I had to have something to do besides play golf every day. And I love the spirits business! Marci had this great name trademarked, Campeón. She had created it right before one of the agave shortages had stopped the original project. One thing led to another and here we are today with this exciting new brand.

How did you find a partner?

Lou: It was a wild search! Years ago, I made several trips to Mexico looking for someone with a strong history that could make the best quality tequila. I found this little guy in the highlands region, in Atotonilco, in the state of Jalisco. His name is Juan Nunez. He’s a third-generation distiller, and we hit it off from the very beginning. We are committed to working together to make Campeón exceptional.

Marci Palatella: Sitting on our counter, we had over 50 samples from various small producers. There was a distinct taste profile we had in mind and we worked through tasting and blending to nail that softer, and more elegant taste that we enjoy. The partner who could work with us on that—Juan is a long-time family friend, a very small producer and shares our standards. We work with him exclusively.

John Palatella: I should point out that our factory number—our NOM—is 1107. This is one of the oldest in all of Mexico, having been established in 1937. “NOM pedigree” is becoming a more important topic for retailers and consumers. We are fortunate to be part of one of the original factories in the tequila industry.

That is interesting indeed. I would venture that your price point is a little different, as is your production schedule.

Lou: We loved Juan’s Reposado and Añejo from the start. The Silver was a bit of a project that took a number of tries and trips to Jalisco until we found the perfect flavor profile. He makes fewer than 100,000 cases a year—a lot of which is sold down in Mexico. They are a true boutique, craft distiller and a great partner.

So your volume here in the U.S. currently is about what?

John: About 5,000 cases so far. We just launched nationally a few months ago and are currently distributed in about 24 states. All the major markets are covered, and the reception to the brand and packaging has been more than we could have have asked for.

And what is the mix of the three in sales so far?

John: It’s been very interesting. Our Silver is 50 percent of the mix with our Añejo and Reposado, accounting for the balance and fairly evenly split. This is a testament to the strength of each of the marques individually. What’s even more interesting is that our channel split is divided evenly between on-and off-premise. I attribute this to the strength and uniqueness of our packaging in addition to the quality of our liquid.
The package is stunning and quite unique indeed. Marci: Our original packaging was developed for the tequila market at the time. The demographic has subsequently changed and is moving upscale. We knew that our tequila was excellent and belonged in the luxury category, so moving to a new package was a natural transition—once John came on board and hit us over the head a few times!

How would you describe the flavor profile?
John: I would say that Campeón is a very “classic” style; it’s extraordinarily soft and smooth, highlighting the exceptional quality of our East Highlands agave. Marci: It’s a soft and buttery style. We really wanted something with elegance and great quality. Consumers today recognize those components.
John: For example, when we sample Campeón in the trade, we don’t use mixers and don’t chill it. We have total confidence in our liquid.

What about the sourcing for the agave? Does Juan own his own fields?
John: No, he doesn’t, and that is the norm in the tequila industry, for the most part. There is only a small amount of what could be qualified as “estate-bottled” tequila. Juan has many long-term relationships with his growers, most of which have gone on for decades.

It sounds like the wine business!
John: I agree, in that respect it is very much like the sourcing of grapes.

Are there plans for additional products? Wow, I hate that word when describing great quality!
John and Marci: Well, we have few secrets. We can tell you that we do have an ultra-luxury tequila—an Extra Añejo—that will be released later this year. We are incredibly excited about the project.

Okay, okay, don’t leave me hanging here. Can I break the story with the name?
Marci: It will be called “Immaculata,” derived from the traditional definition of the Immaculate Conception.

That sounds fantastic! By the way, I knew what “Immaculata” meant—what kind of heathen do you think I am? Plus, my wife teaches religion in the Catholic school system. I think there is room at the super-luxury section for something that wasn’t dreamed up in the marketing department. What is the price of the three that are out now?
John: Retail for the Silver is around $75, the Reposado $85 and the Añejo is $95. Remember, I said retail—and of course, it depends what part of the country you are in.

Campeón, the name means “champion” if I am correct. Was there any other reason for using it?
Marci: Yes, if you go to any Latin American sporting event, that is the cheer that you will hear. It means much more than Champion, it means in essence, “we’re the best!” That’s a lot to live up to, but we’re gunning for that slot.

Are there any other projects on the horizon? I am looking in the corner over there and see a number of whiskey brands that I believe that Marci has worked with before. I know of your family’s long association with rare and old bourbons.

Lou, John, Marci: (laughing) Bottles? What bottles? Well, let’s just say that Campeón is our priority right now, but you can never stop looking over the horizon. We have a long history in the bourbon industry and with the distillers as well.

Congratulations to The Legacy Group—a true family enterprise that will be bringing more great brands to the spirits industry!
EVEN AFTER 450 YEARS, ANNA DE CODORNÍU STAYS HIP (and Gets Sweeter)

WHERE TO BEGIN... SERIOUSLY, WHERE DO YOU BEGIN WHEN THE PRODUCER YOU’RE WRITING ABOUT HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE THE 16TH CENTURY? ESPECIALLY WHEN THIS WINEMAKER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFINING THE VERY CATEGORY OF WINE IT SELLS. I GUESS WITH JUST THE NAME, RIGHT? CODORNÍU (PRONOUNCED co-door-NEW). IF YOUhaven’t HEARD OF CODORNÍU, CHANCES ARE YOUhaven’t HEARD OF CAVA—SPAIN’S VERSION OF TRADITIONAL méthode champenoise SPARKLING WINE, IN WHICH SECONDARY FERMENTATION IS ACHIEVED IN THE BOTTLE.

ALTHOUGH CODORNÍU WAS FOUNDED IN 1551, IT WASN’T UNTIL 1872 THAT JOSEP RAVENTÓS—DESCENDANT OF HEIRESS ANNA CODORNÍU AND ENOLOGIST MIGUEL RAVENTÓS—INTRODUCED A SPARKLING MADE IN THE méTODO TRADICIONAL. HE LIKELY GOT THE IDEA WHILE TRAVELING THROUGH EUROPE SELLING HIS STILL WINES, INCLUDING, OF COURSE, A VISIT TO CHAMPAGNE. INITIALLY THEY EVEN CALLED IT CHAMPAÑA, BUT EVENTUALLY ENDED UP GOING WITH CAVA, WHICH MEANS “CELLAR” OR “CAVE” IN CATALAN. A WELL-DESERVED, UNIQUE NAME, AS THERE ARE A FEW MAJOR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO, OTHER THAN NOT BEING FROM CHAMPAGNE.

BORN IN THE TOWN OF SANT SADURNÍ D’ANOIA IN THE ALT-PENEDÈS (ONE OF EUROPE’S HIGHEST-ALTITUDE WINEGROWING REGIONS) IN CATALONIA, CAVA IS TRADITIONALLY MADE FROM THREE WHITE GRAPES, PRINCIPALLY PARELLADA, BUT ALSO MACABEU AND XAREL-LO. CAVA DO REQUIRES LESS TIME ON LEES THAN CHAMPAGNE: NINE MONTHS FOR THE USUAL STUFF, 15 MONTHS FOR RESERVA AND 30 MONTHS FOR GRAN RESERVA. THEN, JUST OVER 30 YEARS AGO, IN 1981, CODORNÍU LOBBIED TO INCLUDE CHARDONNAY, AND TODAY IT IS ALLOWED IN THE MIX AS A RESULT. IN FACT, THESE FOUR WHITE GRAPES MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THE PENEDÈS VINEYARDS, ALTHOUGH CAVA DO BY LAW CAN ALSO CONTAIN GARNACHA, PINOT NOIR, TINTA, MONASTRELL, TREPAT AND MALVASIA. THE ADDITION OF THE FRESH, SOPHISTICATED CHARDONNAY SPAWNED ANNA DE CODORNÍU—and it’s these

DULCE ANNA RELEASED AS PART OF SUCCESSFUL ANNA DE CODORNÍU LINE

by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Dustin Downing

Burgundian-esque versions of Cava, some of them including Pinot Noir, that fare well with extended aging on lees. (The traditional blends of Spanish grapes tend to be earthier.) Although at least 95% of Cava is produced within Penedès, it’s important to note Cava technically covers a style, rather than a region. What is also important is that while Cava may have been inspired by France’s Champagne, Cava eventually ended up influencing France! Namely via employment of the gyropalette—a piece of equipment that automates and expedites the riddling process in the production of sparkling wine—as well as through refined dosage levels.

Today, Codorníu is the world’s oldest bottle-fermented sparkling producer and the oldest family-owned business in Spain. Its crown jewel, Anna de Codorníu, is sourced from two different regions within the Cava DO and made up of a blend of 70% Chardonnay, 15% Parellada, 7.5% Xarel-lo and 7.5% Macabeo. The Chardonnay comes from the continental climate of Lleida, while the native grapes come from the warmer Mediterranean climate of the Penedès. The wine spends 15 months on lees and the result is a citrusy, clean, elegant sparkler. The Anna de Codorníu Brut Rosé sources its Pinot Noir from Conca de Barberà.

Commissary’s classic eggs Benedict paired with the Anna de Codorníu at the Line Hotel in Koreatown, Los Angeles.
Mary Thompson—Director of Operations and Beverage Director for 10 Grand Hospitality, which owns the Line Hotel in L.A.’s Koreatown—watches the light from the glass ceiling of Commissary shine through in the effervescence of the Anna de Codorníu Reserve.

On the Town with Anna de Codorníu

Mary Thompson—Director of Operations and Beverage Director for 10 Grand Hospitality, which owns the supercool Line Hotel in Los Angeles’s Koreatown district—serves up the Anna de Codorníu Reserve to her guests at the Line Hotel’s restaurants Commissary, Café and Pot. “I love how this winery is rooted in tradition and Cava history, yet still is completely in tempo with the times and the current market needs. It is situated at a great price and has the high quality to match that price,” says Mary. “Anna de Codorníu is perfect for brunch at Commissary. The color is vibrant; it drinks light and fresh. It makes me crave our eggs Benedict. Its brightness cuts through the silkiness of that ever-so-decadent hollandaise.”

Recently appointed Executive Chef Fernando Darin also likes to break out the Codorníu during the day at restaurant Ray’s and Stark Bar to partner it with a few of his artfully made lunch

Tuna tartare with avocado, oroblanco and taro chips with the Anna de Codorníu Rosé.
items. Ray’s and Stark Bar, part of the Patina Restaurant Group, is an awesome spot for basking in the Angeleno sun and soaking up the culture of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Chef Fernando pairs his tuna tartare and his bianca pizza with the Anna de Codorníu Rosé. Says Chef Fernando, “From a wine stand point, the tuna tartare is a light appetizer that pairs well with the Anna sparkling wine. The Anna sparkling wine is dry with fruity notes of red berries, whereas the tuna tartar is light with a hint of saltines. The result is a beautiful contrast on your palate. The pizza, on the other hand, brings a little sweetness because of the saba—caramelized, reduced ‘grape must’ from Italy. The sparkling wine is dry and has a beautiful acidity which breaks through the richness of the pizza, making your palate ready for the next bite.”

General Manager & Executive Sommelier Stefan Jüling says, “The Anna de Codorníu Sparkling Wine Rosé is very well made. With two-thirds Pinot Noir and one-third Chardonnay, it brings a beautiful balance on the palate. It is a perfect companion for every restaurant visit. And from a business standpoint, the price is very good as well.”

Now, on the heels of Annas’ success, and given the fact that sweet wines are trending worldwide among Millennials, comes Dulce Anna, which is essentially the Reserve—the same blend with a sweeter dosage, resulting in 50 grams per liter of residual sugar. Even with a higher RS, the Dulce still remains fresh, but rounder and smoother in texture. The Dulce perhaps offers even more versatility than its fellow Annas, as there exists a great potential of using it in cocktails or even on the rocks. By itself, however, Jüling of Ray’s and Stark Bar says, “In this market and with this price point, there is definitely a demand. The Dulce is something you don’t see often and we can certainly imagine it as a wonderful dessert pairing.” And Mary Thompson of the Line Hotel tells us, “At Commissary, the Dulce would be a beautiful way to end the meal.”

Anna de Codorníu is imported by the Avenía.

Introducing the Dulce Anna!

Pizza Bianca with sottocenere cheese, robiolina cheese, saba syrup and sage with the Anna de Codorníu Rosé.
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Over the past five years, Arizona Cocktail Week has become a force in this industry, with some of the best brands and bartenders from around the world gathering in Scottsdale, AZ in mid-February to celebrate the craft and the culture of the American cocktail.

This year, it was impossible to walk more than five feet without running into a long-lost industry friend or having an impromptu meeting with a spirits supplier at the Hotel Valley Ho’s bar, and with the industry’s support firmly rallying behind it, Arizona Cocktail Week 2016 was another one for the record books.

Making this year’s festivities even more special, AZCW founder Kim Haasarud launched an Arizona Cocktail Week National Buyer’s Program, wherein spirits buyers who oversee a variety of big-name programs received a sponsorship to attend and experience Arizona Cocktail Week.

“It was a natural progression,” explains Haasarud. “There are so many cocktail events, trade shows, etcetera, but not many are really geared toward National Account buyers. We thought Arizona Cocktail Week would be a great way for many of these buyers to get to see and meet many key players in our industry as well we see what’s on the forefront. We created some specific programming for them, as it related to their field, and gave them and their spouse VIP passes so they could really enjoy the many festivities happening… Plus, who doesn’t want to enjoy a little Arizona sunshine in the dead of winter?”

The response from the buyers was enthusiastically positive: “The National Buyer Program was well organized and intimate,” said David Morgan, Vice President of Food and Beverage for Omni Hotels. “There were several key takeaways for me, ranging from developing our own vermouth to finding what might be a more efficient and cost effective way to take the beverage industry.”

“We’ve gotten phenomenal feedback from the buyers,” continues Haasarud, “and from the brands. Many of the brands have never had the opportunity to meet some of the buyers, so it would good to see some of those introductions and relationships blossom. So many ideas and wheels turning. Next year, we’ll expand the invitational to include more opportunities to meet suppliers one-on-one. It was a great environment to inspire new ideas that fit into their national account framework.” —Rachel Burkons

Janel Holmen, Director, Beverage Growth and Innovation, BJ’s Brewhouse; Mat Snapp, Director of Beverage, Fox restaurant Concepts; Mary Melton, Beverage Director, PF Chang’s; Kim Haasarud, Founder, Arizona Cocktail Week; Stacey Smith, Beverage Director, The Pappas Group; Mike Ryan, Director of Bars, Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants; Jessica Lambert; Celia Waddington, Ignite Creative Services.

Mixologist Adam Seger; Nate Wright, Beverage R&D Manager, The Cheesecake Factory; Steph Steil Hoppe, Chief Marketing Officer, LYFE Kitchen; Kim Haasarud, Founder, AZCW; Jon Baer, Beverage Operations, The Cheesecake Factory.
MIXOLOGISTS SHARE THEIR CRAFT COCKTAILS AT THE FIFTH ANNUAL ARIZONA COCKTAIL WEEK

by Emily Coleman / photos by Grace Stufkosky

Arizona experts (back row): Richie Moe, Beverage Director, Square One Concepts, Scottsdale; Meridith May, Publisher, The Tasting Panel; Bill Degroot, Beverage Director, GO Group, Phoenix; Wednesday Nowak, Beverage Director, Talking Stick Resort, Scottsdale; Ross Simon, owner, Bitter & Twisted, Phoenix; Luke Detraz (the Speed Tasting’s emcee), Director of Mixology, Southern Wine & Spirits of AZ; Tiffany Eldridge, Beverage Director, Vero Amore, Tucson.
In the midst of the bustling Artisanal Spirit & Cocktail Market at fifth annual Arizona Cocktail Week taking place at Scottsdale’s Hotel Valley Ho during mid-February, seven expert Speed Tasting panelists tasted through 11 artisanal brands and their corresponding cocktails made by area mixologists. From a twist on a Negroni to a Collins featuring dill, the concoctions brought the heat with creativity and complexity, which left the judges wondering if they had found an oasis in the desert. It’s a hard job, but someone has to do it.

Peter Kasperski, owner of Cowboy Ciao in Scottsdale, takes notes during our Arizona Cocktail Week Speed Tasting.

### The Woodsman: KIKORI WHISKEY

Rice from a rice paddy along the Iwase River in Kumamoto—a city on the Japanese island of Kyushu—starts its transformation into Kikori Whiskey when it enters giant steel steamers, where it is cooked. After distillation, the whiskey rests from three to ten years in a mix of American oak, French oak and Sherry casks. The name—meaning “the woodsman”—stems from a Japanese cautionary tale about Visu the Woodman, who lives a life without balance. You won’t find any imbalance in this bottle!

**TASTING NOTES:**
- “The cocktail had terrific aromatics—a great summer drink! The whiskey is like a gin/rye cross and is bright and high-toned. Really fantastic stuff!”—Peter Kasperski
- “The foam tied the light and citrusy cocktail together. It was nice and light neat; with apples and pear, the rice base really comes through and works well.”—Ross Simon

**Baransu No**

*The name means “in balance.”*

- 2 oz. Kikori
- ¾ oz. Sichuan pepper honey syrup
- ½ oz. pichuberry-infused lychee juice
- ½ oz. yuzu
- Dash orange bitters
- Dash orange water

**Foam:**
- ½ oz. Sichuan pepper honey syrup
- ½ oz. lychee juice
- ½ oz. Tuaca
- 2 dashes orange bitters
- ½ oz. lemon juice
- 2 egg whites
- Orange water

Katarina Balalas, Vice President of Sales for Kikori Whiskey, and Daniella “Ella” Perez, bartender at The Gladly in Phoenix.
Returning to Tradition: ROCA PATRÓN SILVER

Made using the traditional tahona wheel—a two-ton volcanic stone wheel, used to break down the agave—the Roca Patrón portfolio features hand-crafted tequilas that exhibit intricate taste profiles. The Silver expression begins with 100% Weber blue agaves, which are roasted in small brick ovens for 79 hours. After the agave is crushed, the juice spends 72 hours in wooden vats for fermentation and is then distilled in small copper pot stills. At 45% ABV, this spirit provides bartenders with a higher proof tequila than Patrón’s flagship Silver offering—talk about backbone!

TASTING NOTES:
“The balance in the cocktail is impeccable. I love the bittersweet quality. This is Patrón like you’ve never seen it: buttery, earthy and very smooth. Higher proof is always a bonus!” —Tiffany Eldredge

“Earthy, savory cocktail with a nod to the culture of a well-made tequila like Roca. The spirit had an earthy minerality and layered flavors of baked agave.” —Meridith May

Dynamic Duo: TY KU CUCUMBER SAKE AND AVIATION AMERICAN GIN

East meets West in this unlikely match up of spirits. Both from Davos Brands, the expressions bring quality and innovation to the table. Refreshing and perfect for the time of year, TY KU Cucumber Sake marries the specialty Akebono rice from Japan with the all-natural flavor of fresh cucumber. Creating a spirit that reflects the Pacific Northwest and one that strays away from juniper overkill, Aviation Gin brings together juniper, elligaria cardamom, lavender, sarsaparilla, coriander, anise seeds and dried sweet orange peel—it was named after the classic Aviation cocktail, invented by Hugo Ensslin a century ago. While they come from drastically different parts of the globe, the Speed Tasting demonstrated that opposites attract.

TASTING NOTES:
“Well, that is a refreshing cocktail! Beautiful balance and subtle complexity. TY KU Cucumber Sake should be used in springtime cocktails everywhere and Aviation gives American gin a good name—it’s a flat-out great gin.” —Peter Kasperski

“Ultra-refreshing and really nice effervescence! This is the perfect summer cocktail. Love the Aviation Gin—the juniper, clover lavender come alive—and TY KU has an authentic, delicate taste.” —Bill Degroot
A Spirited Waltz:  CHOPIN POTATO VODKA

Named after the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin and launched in 1992, the family behind Chopin Vodka sought to disprove the myth that vodka was a flavorless, neutral spirit without any distinctive attributes. Their answer to this misconception, Chopin Potato Vodka, uses potatoes grown in the south of Poland and is four-times distilled in small batches at the distillery located in Krzesz, Poland, which Chopin acquired and restored in 2003. It’s music to the palate!

TASTING NOTES:
“A dry cocktail, perfect for vodka drinkers looking for something different than the usual sugary drinks. The vodka is easy on the palate, very smooth and mellow.” —Tiffany Eldredge
“Love the bitter notes in the cocktail; they played well with the potato vodka. The vodka has notes of vanilla bean and black pepper that end in a creamy finish.” —Bill Degroot

Vitamin C Minor
- 2 oz. Chopin Vodka
- ¼ oz. Cynar
- ½ oz. orange juice
- ½ oz. honey syrup
- 2 dashes orange bitters

CHOPIN IMPORTS

A True Texan:  TITO’S HANDMADE VODKA

What started as a hobby turned into a thriving spirit company when Tito Beveridge decided to create a flavored vodka that was so good, you could drink it straight. The distillery in Austin claims the title of Texas’s oldest legal distillery. The vodka is made from yellow corn—it’s certified gluten-free—and is distilled six times in old-fashioned pot stills. Since its inception, it’s taken the Lone Star State and the rest of the country by storm!

TASTING NOTES:
“Very pretty cocktail and presentation overall. The complexity between the sweet and spicy notes made this an exquisite delight. It brought out the delicate flavors of the vodka.” —Wednesday Novak
“The cocktail showcases the spirit while playing in the Texas theme. A grassy, licorice nose leads into a creamy palate with spiced and pepper hints when tasted neat.” —Meridith May

Feelin’ Spicy & Prickly in Texas
- 2 oz. Tito’s Handmade Vodka
- ½ oz. Marie Brizard Parfait Amour
- ½ oz. ginger syrup
- 3-4 dashes chili orange bitters
- ¼ oz. fresh lemon juice
- Barspoon prickly pear syrup
- Orange peel for garnish

FIFTH GENERATION, INC.
Back to Bourbon’s Roots: ELIJAH CRAIG SMALL BATCH BOURBON

As legend has it, Reverend Elijah Craig decided to improve upon the local un-aged corn liquor by aging it in charred oak casks; in doing so, he invented Kentucky bourbon as we know it today. In honor of the Reverend and his vision, Elijah Craig Small Batch Bourbon uses fresh limestone spring water and a yeast recipe that has been in the family for generations. This bourbon comes from a barrel dump of only 200, eight- to 12-year-old barrels—making it truly small batch!

TASTING NOTES:
“Evolving notes make this whiskey complex with a great bourbon backbone and hints of ginger, orange and tea. The really creative cocktail adds sweetness to the big bourbon.”
—Bill Degroot

“Great adult version on the classic Thai tea and a fun use of boba. The spirit neat was full-bodied with layers of spicy, pepper, coco and toffee.”
—Ross Simon

The Noble Path: CASA NOBLE REPOSADO TEQUILA

Unlike many tequilas which are only distilled twice, Casa Noble Tequila goes through the distillation process three times—producing an extraordinarily pure spirit. Aged in French white oak barrels for 364 days—the maximum time allowed for a Reposado by the official Consejo Regulador del Tequila—the tequila is estate bottled and distributed in small batches. The brand became one of the first certified organic tequilas and continues to take care of its land through initiatives including the making of their own compost. It’s no wonder how the brand received its name!

TASTING NOTES:
“A well-balanced, super fragrant drink—it balances out the bitterness of Campari. The tequila itself is robust, earthy and light in color, with an almost ‘rustic’ quality to it.”
—Richie Moe

“Brilliantly combined ingredients—show off the agave with a zingy/bitter finish. On the palate neat, white pepper and lime zest shine through the agave base.”
—Meridith May
**Rye-d and True: **REDEMPTION RYE

After Prohibition ended, rye whiskey lost its spot as the number-one seller in the whiskery category. To redeem this title, Redemption Rye utilizes a mash bill of 95% rye and 5% barley malt. It ages for a minimum of two-and-a-half years in new charred oak barrels. Coming in at 92 proof, it has the strength and flavor profile to pay homage to the classic American rye cocktails.

**TASTING NOTES:**

“The cocktail seems to be an expanded palate of the notes within the rye itself—citrus, spices, light, floral and refreshing.” —Wednesday Novak

“Adult apple cider—the cocktail carries the rye whiskey spice very well. The spirit is spicy and tangy while still being light on the tongue.” —Richie Moe

**Nose over Tail**

- 1½ oz. brown butter-infused Redemption Rye
- ½ oz. lemon
- ½ oz. cinnamon simple syrup
- ½ oz. apple cider
- ¾ oz. Earl Grey reduction

**Among Friends:** CASAMIGOS AÑEJO TEQUILA

“I prefer to drink this straight,” notes Breton Hodges, bartender at Ten Handcrafted American Fare & Spirits in Phoenix. Made in small batches from 100% blue Weber agaves, grown in the Highlands of Jalisco, Mexico, Casamigos Tequila follows traditional methods by roasting the piñas in brick ovens for 72 hours and slowing down the fermentation process to 70 hours. The Añejo matures for 14 months in American white oak barrels. And while the spirit speaks for itself, it doesn’t hurt to have names like George Clooney and Rande Gerber attached to it.

**TASTING NOTES:**

“Cocktail was a Manhattan-style with a lot of chocolate notes. The tequila was an airy mouthfeel, with oak vanilla, honey and agave notes.” —Ross Simon

“The tequila is the perfect bridge between the chocolate bitters and vermouth. This Añejo is grassy with a touch of oak and very agave nectar forward. I really like this product—and not just because George Clooney has anything to do with it.”—Tiffany Eldredge

**Dynamite**

- 2½ oz. Casamigos Añejo Tequila
- 1½ oz. sweet vermouth
- 6 dashes chocolate bitters

**DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS**

**GERBER SPIRITS**
**An Fear Ciuin:  THE QUIET MAN IRISH WHISKEY**

While many people try to avoid following in the footsteps of their parents, Ciaran Mulgrew embraced the path of his father, who worked as a bartender for over 50 years around Belfast, Ireland. To celebrate him, Ciaran developed The Quiet Man Traditional Irish Whiskey, which is distilled in traditional Irish whiskey pot stills at one of the newest distilleries in Northern Ireland and ages in oak bourbon barrels, before being recasked in first-fill bourbon casks. While the Irish might call this whiskey “An Fear Ciuin,” the liquid speaks volumes upon sipping.

**TASTING NOTES:**
"Delicious cocktail. Creamy mouthfeel—the passion fruit complements the smoothness of the whiskey, while highlighting its light wood notes.”—Wednesday Novak

"The citrus notes are wonderful and balance the pretty, feminine whiskey. The citrus, honey nose on the spirit builds into subtle butterscotch, white flowers, cinnamon tea and French toast on the palate.” —Meridith May

**Cool, Calm, Quiet**
- 2 oz. Quiet Man Irish Whiskey
- 1 oz. pineapple juice
- ½ oz. lime
- ½ oz. Bigallet Viriana China Amer
- ¼ oz. passion fruit syrup
- ¼ oz. macadamia nut orgeat

**Beauty Inside and Out:  CLASE AZUL REPOSADO TEQUILA**

The striking packaging of Clase Azul Tequila will surely leave an impression: The hand-sculpted and -painted vessels take two weeks to craft and stand-out on backbars and retail shelves alike. While many brands might rely on marketing, Clase Azul goes above and beyond with a remarkable tequila to match. They let the organic Weber blue agaves mature for nine years before hand-selecting and cooking piñas for 72 hours in stone ovens. Once distilled, the spirit goes through a triple micron-filtration to ensure quality—the Reposado then rests in second-use oak barrels for eight months.

**TASTING NOTES:**
"The tequila is so delicate and the agave really shines, with just the perfect amount of earthy notes and barrel oakiness. I love that you can taste the spirit up front in the drink—Clase Azul is the star for sure.” —Tiffany Eldredge

"With a lemon-lime custard nose and palate, this cocktail is a fun treat with durian fruit. The sweet tequila has a smoothness to it that pairs well with the earthy, dusty notes.” —Richie Moe

**Sabor a Mí**
- 1½ oz. Clase Azul Reposado Tequila
- ¼ oz. Tio Pape Sherry
- ¼ oz. durian-yumberry-coconut syrup
- Lime for garnish

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