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CORRECTION

In our November/December 2019 issue, we mistakenly included the wrong bottle image for the Nasiakos 2018 Moschofilero from Mantinia in our Down the Aisle column. We regret the error.



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FROM TRES AGAVES
ORGANIC TEQUILA TO
HANSON OF SONOMA
ORGANIC VODKA,
TRINCHERO FAMILY
ESTATES IS EXPANDING
ITS LINE OF SPIRITS

by Jonathan Cristaldi

The Trinchero family is well known for their wide range of wines, from Joel Gott and Sutter Home to Ménage à Trois and Trinchero Napa Valley. But their spirits business is booming too: With five brands, that division of the company is growing by more than 20% each year.

"About seven years ago, we decided to get into spirits," says Dave Derby, Senior Vice President of Marketing for Trinchero Family Estates. Noting that their forebear Mario Trinchero was a bartender in New York in the 1930s at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, he adds that the family's "lifelong love affair with spirits set the stage for the current generation to launch a spirits portfolio."

Tres Agaves Tequila was the first brand they signed on; Hanson Organic Small Batch California Vodka, made by a family-owned, artisanal distillery in Sonoma, is the most recent, thanks to a joint venture partnership established last October. The focus, says Derby, is on "authentic products. . . . We're looking at family-owned and unique, handcrafted offerings for today's consumer." In short, Trinchero is aiming straight at the heart of on-premise accounts with its line of craft spirits.



Available nationwide, the Original, Cucumber, Meyer Lemon, Mandarin Orange, and Habanero 80-proof vodkas retail at \$30. Tasting Panel editor-at-large Jonathan Cristaldi found the Original subtly sweet and earthy, with a warming midpalate. But the Meyer Lemon was his favorite-silken in texture, it was like biting into the flesh of a just-picked fruit.

HANSON OF SONOMA Grape-Based Organic Vodka

The Hanson of Sonoma Distillery, just off Highway 37 in the Carneros AVA, boasts a beautiful tasting room with reclaimed wood, iron beams, comfortable seating, and a backlit bar that looks a bit like a Hollywood set, with good reason: Owners Scott and Judy Hanson were art dealers and filmmakers before becoming producers of organic vodka made from local grapes. The couple works hand in hand with their four adult children—Brandon, Darren, Chris, and Alanna—all of whom are actively involved in day-today operations.

When the Hansons started out about six years ago, "the market was saturated with image-based luxury vodkas," says Brandon, who spent time working in craft cocktail bars in Los Angeles. "We were the first non-GMO-verified spirit in the U.S., and a desire to create infusions using locally sourced ingredients led us to think about organic." Alanna attributes that mission partially to growing up around farmers markets,



Master distiller Chris Hanson uses a hybrid copper pot and 50-plate column still to produce a pure and flavorful organic vodka using grapes from California.



Brandon Hanson reveals a smallbatch infusion of Habanero Vodka, whose aromas are powerfully fresh and vivid.

UPFIONT

adding that they started the conversation around thoughtful ingredient sourcing "to extend to the places where our vodkas are served. It's important to us as a family."

When they initially took the concept to distributors, they were told, "Don't waste your time," notes Scott. "But we stuck to it, and now every market values organic." Further validation arrived in the form of their first award, a SIP #1 Best Vodka in Show. Darren admits it surprised all of them: "We submitted it unlabeled, tacked on masking tape, and, with a Sharpie, wrote 'Hanson."

In his role as master distiller, Chris works with a hybrid copper pot and 50-plate column still; doing so, he says, "gives us a viscous mouthfeel and helps retain some of the flavor." (The base vodka is 193 proof, but for the infusions, that's lowered to 150 or 160.) Using



The Hansons assembled their customdesigned hybrid copper pot and 50-plate column still by hand.

hand-peeled and -chopped organic fruits and vegetables, the Hansons do small-batch infusions to maintain consistency. "Our Ginger could infuse three months, the Meyer Lemon up to eight weeks, and the Habanero about five to six weeks," explains Brandon.

The results are some of the loveliest, freshest-tasting, purest-flavored vodkas I've sampled. "We want to educate people about vodka—how to sip it and mix it together," says Alanna. At the distillery, she adds, "We host people in tech, in cocktails, and in the beverage trade, and we will tailor-make experiences." The Hansons are so serious about hospitality that they nabbed Krzysztof Pawlik from the Thomas Keller Group to help refine their tastingroom services.



- Organic Original Vodka
- ▶ ½ oz. Trincheri Dry Vermouth
- Splash of smoked olive juice Add the ingredients into a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled Martini glass. Garnish with two Castelyetrano olives.



- Meyer Lemon Vodka
- ▶ 1 oz. fresh organic Meyer lemon juice
- ▶ ½ oz. Tres Agaves Organic Agave Nectar
- ▶ 1 organic egg white Build cocktail in a shaker and shake; add ice and shake again. Strain into a Nick & Nora glass and garnish with a Meyer lemon wheel.



A stop at Hanson of Sonoma Distillery threatens to derail any intended trip to wine country-where else along Highway 37 can you pull off for a Dirty Martini paired with Regiis Ova caviar?



TRES AGAVES Organic Tequila

Two organic Margaritas hit the table just as Barry Augus arrived for our interview at the Sky & Vine bar atop the Archer Hotel in downtown Napa. Without skipping a beat, he picked up a glass and said, "Cheers!" as if we'd been in the middle of a conversation about old times.

Augus is the founder and CEO of Tres Agaves Tequila, every drop of which is sourced from the Tequila Valley in the state of Jalisco. "We just finished completion of our own distillery in [the town of] Amatitán," said Augus, "[which] we believe is the true birthplace of the oldest stills in Mexico."

At 4,000 feet in elevation, the agave Augus sources comes from Amatitán's largest private grower, Fernando Perez. "It's a wonderful place to grow agave," Augus explained, noting that Perez's land abuts a volcano and "there's a great source of natural aquifers."

In the spring of 2019, Tres Agaves hired a new master distiller—Iliana Partida, a fourth-generation tequila craftsperson who brings an "intellectual curiosity and can-do attitude and shares our passion for making high-end tequila," said Augus. Iliana's father, David Partida, sold the land to Augus for the new distillery and is incredibly proud of his daughter as one of only a handful of female master distillers in the Tequila Valley, noted Augus.

This year, Tres Agaves is introducing its organic single-barrel program, "which allows buyers to sample our Reposado and Añejo and choose a barrel that they like," Augus explained. "[Then] we'll bottle it for them." The brand is also debuting a line of 33-proof ready-to-drink offerings sweetened with its proprietary agave nectar and bottled in Mexico; meanwhile, Augus hasn't ruled out the possibility of a canned tequila product.

Organia Margarita

Organic Margarita

Courtesy of Peter Triolo, General Manager, Sky & Vine

- 2 oz. Tres Agaves Organic Blanco Tequila
- ▶ 1 oz. Tres Agaves Organic Agave Nectar
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice Mix ingredients, shake, and pour over ice. Salt the rim or add a fresh lime wedge for garnish.

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YEARBOOK Looking Back at the Class of 2019

Heading Into the New Year with 2020 Vision



Meridith May

Going into our 13th year, The Tasting Panel survives as a print publication in a digital age—possibly because of the platform we offer for the constant outpouring of new brands."

lthough this is technically our January/ February issue, most of you will receive it In early February—giving us the leeway to create a new moniker, Ginuary. The Tasting Panel celebrates the namesake white spirit at the beginning of each year, a tradition that continues to evolve as new brands take shape, new flavor profiles emerge, and irresistible botanicals abound to please our senses.

Creativeness and inventiveness involve the ability to visualize what others may not initially see on their own—and the producers of the wines and spirits that have graced our pages over the past year with scores of 92 or higher show those traits in spades. In our annual Yearbook section, we bring these welldeserving graduates of our review pages to light: It is here that we celebrate the acuity of vision that winemakers and distillers possess to offer outstanding products for on- and off-premise buyers.

Going into our 13th year, The Tasting Panel survives as a print publication in a digital age—possibly because of the platform we offer for the constant outpouring of new brands as well as for the audience of wine and spirits buyers, distributors, and importers who assess trends and can distinguish what is of value to them in the day-to-day business of selling.

So it is with sharp focus that we go into the new year. And while this "2020 vision" does not necessarily equate with perfect clarity, we hope that our awareness of this ever-growing industry will keep us centered on what's important.

I wish you happiness, health, and the power to see things clearly this year. II

Meridith May, Publisher/Editorial Director

TWO DISTINCT STYLES. SAME SKY-HIGH SCORE.

Juniper-forward with a crisp front and balanced finish Citrus-forward with hints of orange, lime, and vanilla GIN

Tasting Panel Magazine, April 2019 for London Dry. Tasting Panel Magazine, May 2017 for The Original. Gin, Alcohol 40% by Volume (80 Proof), ©2019 New Amsterdam Spirits Company, Modesto, CA. All rights reserved



Delicato Family Wines Appoints Mary G. Burnham as Director of PR & Events

elicato Family Wines recently announced the appointment of Mary G. Burnham as its Director of Public Relations & Events. Reporting to Executive Vice President of Marketing Jon Guggino, Burnham will lead public-relations efforts for the company's portfolio of 30-plus brands and joins Delicato with more than 20 years of experience in PR and wine.

Burnham came to the wine industry from the agency side at Weber Shandwick, where she developed national PR programs for clients such as Beam Global and Kraft Foods. She also spent five years at Beam Global's wine division, Beam Wine Estates, where she directed PR for 24 brands. Burnham joins Delicato after a decade of working broadly across the industry as a consultant. "Mary is a strategic thinker and an accomplished spokesperson, with a track record of creating breakthrough PR programs that build brand equity, drive brand awareness, and deliver against brand imperatives," Guggino says.

"Never Before, Never Again" Wines to Appear at the Sonoma County Barrel Auction

he Sonoma County Barrel Auction will offer a I chance to acquire "never before, never again" wines from Sonoma County's top vintners and vineyards on May 1 at MacMurray Estate Vineyards in the Russian River Valley. Participating wineries vary from hidden gems to beloved fan favorites and prestigious showstoppers.

Guests of the auction can raise a glass to salute Sonoma County innovators and icons who have shaped the region's winemaking history. Auction lots are offered at five, ten, and 20 cases, giving trade buyers the opportunity to acquire true originals for resale to their customers and ultra-premium wine collectors. Barrel Auction lots showcase the diversity of Sonoma County and include Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Bordeaux blends, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, and more. For more information, visit socobarrelauction.com or email info@sonomawine.com.



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SOMM CON

SommCon Announces Dates for Its 2020 Conference Series

OmmCon, a leading conference for wine, beer, Oand spirits professionals, has announced its 2020 dates: Its three-day educational symposiums will return to The Westin Georgetown in Washington, D.C., July 12–14 and the InterContinental hotel in San Diego, California, November 11–13. The conference brings together experienced and highly regarded trade members to lead the conversation on the status of the industry, with The Tasting Panel's sister publication, The SOMM Journal, serving as the event's official media sponsor.

Supported by some of the business' most influential palates, SommCon's mission of education is geared toward both professionals and serious enthusiasts who have a passion for wine and spirits as well as an unyielding appetite for knowledge. Like its predecessors, SommCon 2020—which will feature seminars by Masters of Wine. Master Sommeliers. Certified Wine Educators, authors, winemakers, and others—will provide an opportunity to learn and taste alongside these experts through educational discussions, keynote sessions, networking opportunities, and more.

Registration will open for SommCon D.C. in March and for SommCon San Diego in May. For more information, visit sommconusa.com.



Marina Del Rey Hotel Introduces Peter Coenen as Its New Executive Chef

os Angeles' Marina del Rey Hotel recently _announced the appointment of Peter Coenen as its new executive chef. Coenen will spearhead the culinary team at SALT Restaurant & Bar, the hotel's modern American restaurant.

Coenen spent the earlier years of his career honing his skills at luxury properties around the country, namely The Ritz-Carlton in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and The Inn at Palmetto Bluff

in Bluffton, South Carolina. Soon after, Coenen moved to Chicago, where he continued to enhance his culinary expertise at one-Michelin-starred Boka Restaurant. During his nine years in the Windy City, Coenen also served as **Executive Chef** at The Gage; later, at the



Chicago Athletic Association Hotel, he oversaw all operations as Corporate Executive Chef, including fine-dining restaurant Cherry Circle Room and two freestanding establishments. One of them, Lonesome Rose, was named to the Michelin Bib Gourmand list in 2018—within one year of its opening. That same year, he earned a StarChefs "Rising Star Chef" award.

Coenen's desire to break into the L.A. food scene brought him to SALT, where he aims to enhance the restaurant's reputation for delivering seasonally inspired and locally sourced Californian cuisine. The passionate chef fuses his love for seafood with sumptuous flavors, premium ingredients, and minimalist plating; inspired by global flavors and techniques, he intends to redefine coastal cuisine with refined rusticity in the heart of Marina Del Rey. For more information on SALT, visit marinadelrey hotel.com/SALT-restaurant-and-bar.



BRIEF FNCOUNTERS



Founded in Toronto, plant-based restaurant Fresh opened an L.A. location on Sunset Boulevard last fall.

Toronto Favorite Fresh Elevates Los Angeles' Expanding Vegan Dining Scene

hen chef Ruth Tal first opened her vegan eatery Fresh in Toronto two decades ago, exclusively plant-based restaurants weren't just few and far between—they were virtually nonexistent. Needless to say, a lot has changed in two decades: Having expanded to five locations in its home city, Fresh crossed the border last fall, fulfilling a longtime dream of Tal's as it landed on a bustling stretch of Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Fresh might not necessarily be a pioneer in L.A., where vegan restaurants, street fairs, and pop-ups now abound, but it certainly succeeds in covering a lot of ground. The expansive menu complements the airy, 5,000-square-foot space, which is split into two levels of dining areas replete with plush velvet booths, patio seating, and two spacious bars doling out wine, draught beer and kombucha, and an extensive array of craft cocktails made with locally sourced ingredients.

While the food offerings trend toward the comforting and familiar standouts include poutine with mushroom

> gravy, perfectly fried buffalo cauliflower, and burgers so savory they'd satisfy

even the most chronic meat cravings—the drinks might be the real showstoppers here. The Wild Muskoka Mule, made with Nat Kidder Navy Strength Vodka, spiced maple bitters, and cold-pressed organic raw ginger, is so aromatic and invigorating that it hardly feels like a riff on an all-too-common classic—it's a new thing entirely. Equally refreshing are the alcoholfree options, among them fresh juices cold-pressed daily, botanical lattes, and housemade sodas. Vegans, rejoice: Your star is rising on the

Sunset Strip. —Kate Newton



Fresh's expansive menu includes shareables like perfectly fried cauliflower tossed in spicy buffalo sauce.

Clear Ice Breaks the Mold at District in Downtown L.A.

 Δ t District in downtown Los Angeles, mixologist Tony Gonzalez seeks to make an impression by going back to basics. The solution? Clear ice, which has "zero visual impurities such as air bubbles or white clouds," Gonzalez explains. "The way to make [it] is to control the direction of the freeze as well as the rate. For example, you can essentially fill an ice chest with tap water, remove the lid, and put it in a walk-in freezer." As the water freezes from the top down, the cloudy part is pushed to the bottom, and the clear ice can then be broken into workable pieces and carved into various shapes.



The Diamond in the Rough cocktail at District in downtown Los Angeles, CA. features a multifaceted block of clear ice sculpted in house.

While many craft cocktail bars outsource their icemaking, Gonzalez's own proprietary approach, called "Ghost Ice," makes use of specialized molds to ensure he and his colleagues can churn out enough cubes to sustain a high-volume program. The frozen ingredient's impact on a given drink proves that perfecting it is more than worth the effort: "Since the ice is now a solid block, it will melt more slowly, meaning less dilution in your drink," Gonzalez says. "The clear ice [also] . . . exemplifies the art and science behind the cocktail and the bar itself—if you're going to spend good money on a cocktail, it should not only taste good but also look great."

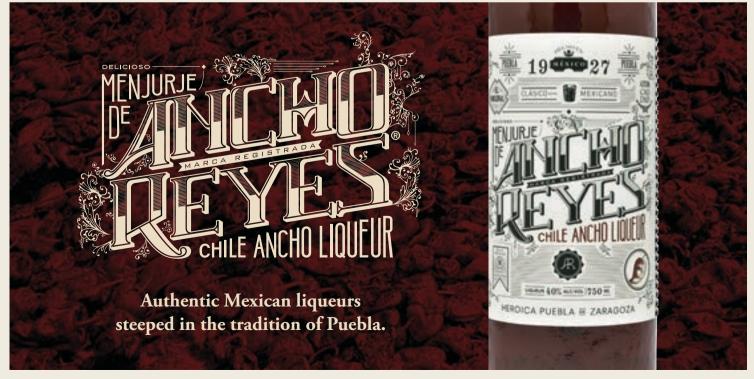
District is hardly lacking in bona fides beyond its impeccable ice: In addition to winning a Gold Key Award for Best Restaurant Design–Casual Dining, District's Opium cocktail, made with Bombay East Gin, grapefruit, rose water, lemon, Campari, Lillet Rose, and Riesling, was named Best Tasting Cocktail at the 2017 M International Mixology Competition. —Kate Newton

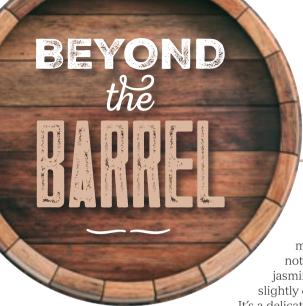


CAMPARI GROUP

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In Beyond the Barrel, we'll taste and review products that may or may not come from a barrel but definitely land outside the box. From brilliant innovations to zany concepts, we'll approach each one judiciously, with the cognizance that everything has a market.

O.Vine White Wine Essence Water (\$5/350-mL glass bottle) This alcohol-free refresher is made with the upcycled skins and seeds of Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, and Chardonnay grapes using a method that retains the fruit's antioxidants. Green-apple notes are at the forefront of the palate, followed by white jasmine and a noticeable saline minerality (likely from the slightly effervescent sparkling water used as the drink's base). It's a delicate option for sober-curious drinkers.

DOC PEPES

OLD EASIBORED



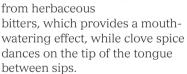


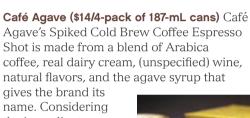
GAZE Coconut Moscato Chardonnay (\$6/375-mL bottle)

Made with California wine, coconut water, carbonated water, and a dash of sugar, this fruit-forward libation opens up with a note of white-pear puree before dovetailing into flash-pickled watermelon rind rounded by the nutty sweetness of coconut. Given its low alcohol content (4.5% ABV), it might serve as a choice seque between, say, an afternoon yoga class and a concert at dusk.

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

Doc Pepe's Lab **Barrel Finished** Old Fashioned (\$45/750-mL bottle) This rum cask-aged Old Fashioned owes its remarkably smooth mouthfeel to its time in barrel. Moderately sweet, it's likely to appeal to enthusiasts of the classic cocktail. A note of candied orange peel nicely balances the bite





the ingredients, you might assume it'd be rich and cloying, but it's not—it's robust and satisfying, and the alcohol cuts through (it's conceivably the source of a faint medicinal element that adds



complexity). There are three other expressions, so if you are looking to satisfy your sweet tooth, Vanilla Cinnamon might be your jam: It's like having a creamy, boozy coffee with a Cinnabon, gobs of icing and all.



Tonic and Tinctures Bitters Company (\$18/4-oz. bottle) Tonic and Tinctures (TNT) Bitters Company's horseradish-ginger and smoked-grapefruit bitters might be its two most attention-grabbing products, but its aromatic-and-citrus flavor is the one that truly awakens the taste buds. Acidity and tartness lead the charge, followed by a numbing sensation that's akin to buzz buttons. If you're after something nuttier that's also faintly chocolaty and baking-spicy, try the espresso bitters—or, if you just can't decide, opt for the TNT Stick (\$20), a cardboard tube resembling a stick of dynamite that's loaded with 1-oz. samples of all four expressions.







orceBrands is the leading specialized recruiting firm for the consumerproducts industry—we build the teams that build the brands. Our industry-specific divisions BevForce, FoodForce, BeautyForce, and HerbForce offer executive-search services, board-of-director assembly, and a digital job board to connect directly with qualified candidates.

Quinn Burns has been named Phoenix Territory Sales Representative at JuneShine. She had been Arizona Sales Manager at Riff Cold Brewed.

Brian Rieth has been named NY Market Manager at Sweet Amber Ventures. He had been Area Manager at Deep Eddy Vodka.

Kyle Ingram has been named VP of Marketing at Flying Embers Hard Kombucha. He had been VP of Marketing at CANarchy Craft Brewery Collective.

CAREER CORNER

BevForce BUZZ:

How Emerging Beverage Brands

Can Get Noticed in 2020

A lot of trends are poised to shake up the alcoholic-beverage industry this year: an expanding online marketplace, the rising popularity of whiskey and saké, the rapidly growing presence of ready-to-drink beverages, and more. We caught up with ForceBrands' Client Strategist, Annette Kim-who collaborates with world-class companies on long-term strategies for reaching their full potential—to discover how emerging beverage brands can get noticed in 2020.

"Talk to your consumers. You might have some great ideas, but if you're trying to really infiltrate them, speak to millennials and Gen Z," Kim said. "Get yourself out there and put yourself where these people are living, playing, and dining. Talk to them and see what they like. There's also nothing wrong with following other emerging brands to see what they're doing. Lean on your neighbors, because they can ignite ideas for you, and it's not always about competition. It's about bringing the best foot forward for whatever's happening right now so everyone can work together."

As for spurring continuous growth, the most essential strategy is to assemble a great team. According to a ForceBrands report on hiring trends in the consumerproducts industry, the alcoholic-beverage sector offers some of the most competitive benefits and compensation packages. This year, companies will likely continue to move away from more traditional employee offerings like paid family leave and instead cater to younger generations of professionals with more flex time off, options for working remotely, and more.

For additional insights, visit forcebrands.com. II

Want to connect with beverage industry leaders? Tap into ForceBrands' specialized beverage division BevForce at forcebrands.com/bevforce or email hello@forcebrands.com for more information.



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

California Cabernets Worthy of a Winter Pour

by David Ransom



Philippe Langner savors a sip of his Hesperian Wines Cabernet at The Dutch in New York, NY.

eing based in New York, I look east toward Europe for my wines more often than not—but that doesn't mean I eschew American wines altogether. When winter sets in (and this year it came rather early), I rather like a good California Cabernet to pair with the season's heartier meals. I recently got acquainted with a few wines that I think fit the bill guite nicely; interestingly, they all come from winemakers who lost their homes in the wildfires that hit the state's wine country in 2017.

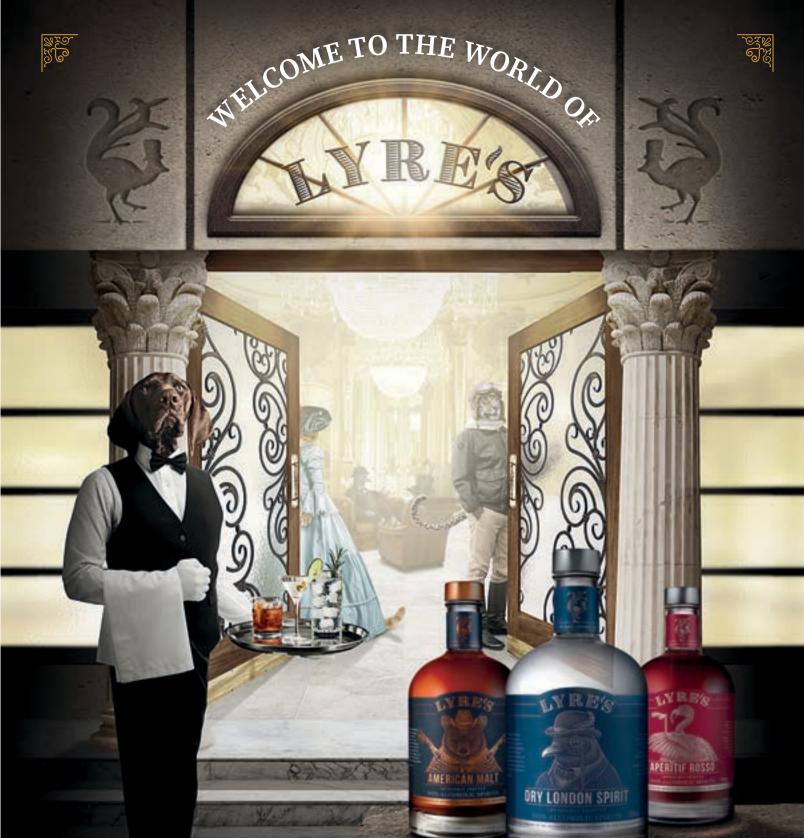
The first, tasted over dinner at Scarpetta, was poured courtesy of Chris Benziger. His Tribute 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon is made with fruit sourced from three certifiedsustainable vineyards in three separate regions south of San Francisco: Paso Robles, San Benito, and San Lucas. Tribute's components spend about 13 months in American oak before they're blended with Merlot (20%).

According to Benziger, whose home was burned in one of several fires that raged through Sonoma County more than two years ago, the label is his "tribute to 40 years of working with [his] four brothers to build [their] life in wine together." At \$20, this Cabernet is a steal that he says is "perfect to enjoy every day"—and an easy choice for serving by the glass.

The other two wines that piqued my palate were tasted during dinner at The Dutch in SoHo with Hesperian Wines



owner Philippe Langner, whose home in Napa County went up in the Atlas Peak fire. Langner, a Frenchman who's been making wine in Napa for the better part of two decades, poured me a pair of his Cabernets: the **Hesperian 2015 Napa** Cabernet Sauvignon (\$100), a 50-50 blend of fruit from the Coombsville and Atlas Peak AVAs, and the Hesperian 2015 Kitoko Vineyard Atlas Peak Cabernet Sauvignon (\$150) from his estate. Both expressions show classic Napa structure and are



EXPLORE OUR RANGE OF 12 IMPOSSIBLY CRAFTED NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS











Advanced Sommelier Ali Schmidt, who serves as Wine **Director and Manager** of Emmer & Rye in Austin, TX, also oversees the wine lists of two concepts that opened back to back late last year: Hestia and a Basque pintxos bar named Kalimotxo.

Savoring the Moment

NEWLY PINNED ADVANCED SOMMELIER ALL SCHMIDT

MAINTAINS HER FOCUS IN AUSTIN story and photo by Lori Moffatt

ast November, 68 hopeful sommeliers sat for the Court of Master Sommeliers' Advanced-level exam in Portland, Oregon. Just 19 passed, including nine women—among them Ali Schmidt, Wine Director and Manager of Austin restaurant Emmer & Rye. I recently sat down with Schmidt to learn about her path to wine, her favorite up-and-coming regions, and how she mastered such a grueling test on her first try.

A native Austinite, Schmidt earned a degree in psychology in Chicago but found restaurant work—and a growing interest in wine—to be so restorative and energizing that she pivoted career tracks. "Eventually the winters got to me, and in 2013, I moved back to Austin, where the food scene was exploding," Schmidt says. She landed gigs at Uchiko and Jeffrey's, two high-profile restaurants with intense wine-education programs, which further solidified her interest. "At first, we just had a little study group where we'd all bring a \$12 bottle of wine and some cheese, and we'd flip through The Wine Bible and pull up some Wine Folly articles online and just talk about them," she says. "It was so fun and big-picture and cultural."

In 2017, after passing her Certified Sommelier exam, Schmidt came to Emmer & Rve, where she expanded the Old World-focused list to include more options from South Africa, Chile, Tasmania, and the United States. "Right now, I'm also excited about Sicily—specifically Mount Etna, where the wines have the complexity and structure of a Barolo meets Burgundy at a doable price point," says Schmidt. "The Languedoc-Roussillon area of

France has a lot of value, and I can't wait to see the southern Oregon regions of Applegate and Rogue start to produce more wine."

As for her stellar showing at the Advanced exam, she credits support from the local wine community, the practice of staying "in the moment," and a time-management technique called the Pomodoro Method, taught to her by her mentor Craig Collins, MS, who's also based in Austin. "You set a timer for 25 minutes and you're not allowed to touch anything unrelated to your focus. Four hours of study sounds so daunting, but seven half-hour bursts with breaks to play with the dog? Sure, I can do that," Schmidt says with a laugh. "The big takeaway for me is that any one person passing this test is a result of the support of mentors, peers, employers, and friends and family."

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FLAT TOP



Interesting Whiskies for Interestina by Ian Buxton

020 seems likely to be a year of great challenge for single malt Scotch as the category contends with the 25% tariff introduced last October on imports to the United States. Supplies that arrived from Scotland prior to the tax hike may have been sufficient to meet holiday demand, but now distillers, importers, and consumers have to face a new reality.

tariffs are a big blow, as the last few years we have seen steady growth in sales," he says. "It is hoped they aren't in place for too long so the impact doesn't do long-term damage."

Kilchoman and ImpEx have pledged to hold prices to the trade through March and clearly hope the benefit will be passed on to retailers, or that the government's trade policy will change

in the near future. Others will be LAPHROAIG

Strangely, blended Scotch has so far been exempted from the new levy, but with single malts accounting for roughly one-third of imports by value, the imposition of the tariff has caused great concern—most notably among small distillers that are more heavily reliant on single malt.

One strategy has been for distillers and importers to absorb the cost by slashing their profit margins, but that's a short-term fix at best. One brand taking this route is Islay's Kilchoman, working with its U.S. importer, ImpEx Beverages. But, as Kilchoman founder and CEO Anthony Wills explains, the arrangement is only temporary. "The

watching their move with interest.

An alternative might be to ship whiskies that consumers see as musthaves. That more or less describes the Laphroaig Ian Hunter Story: Book One (\$1,250), a 30-year-old single malt that debuted late last year. Hunter was the energetic but reclusive distillery owner who built Laphroaig into the powerhouse brand it is today; the whisky itself, a 46.7% ABV cask-strength release, is limited to fewer than 5,000 bottles worldwide.

It's a truly sublime example of longterm maturation in first-fill bourbon barrels, combining delicate sweetness, ripe orchard fruits, and the dis-

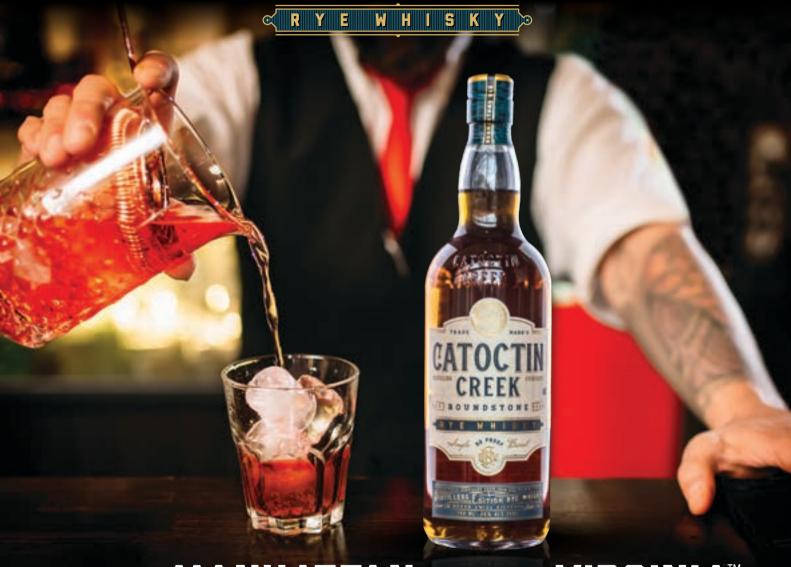
tillery's signature smokiness. My only gripe: The packaging, which comes presented as a book, is so involving that collectors may never actually open the bottle. It would be a minor tragedy if this superb and intriguing dram ended up as a mere "investment," but regardless, Book Two of what will be a 15-chapter partwork will be released late this year.

Also keenly sought after are the expressions in the annual Diageo Special Releases series. There are just eight this time 'round, with supplies to the U.S. concentrating on three unusual single malts: the Mortlach Aged 26 Years (53.3% ABV; \$1,910), the Pittyvaich Aged 29 Years (51.4%; \$420) and the Singleton of Glen Ord Aged 18 Years (55%; \$165). While the comparatively youthful Singleton looks like something of a bargain, this may be one of the last opportunities for malt mavens to sample the Pittyvaich, a long-closed Speyside distillery. Mortlach, relishing its reputation as "the beast of Dufftown," needs no introduction.

While the eventual winners and losers from the tariff changes remain to be seen, it's clear we live in interesting times.



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Helmed by *Top Chef* alum Spike Mendelsohn, Vim & Victor serves "healthy-ish" dishes like cauliflower nachos.



A NOVA FAVORITE GETS A
SPIFFY NEW LOOK WHILE
A CELEB CHEF SERVES
"HEALTHY-ISH" FARE AT A
MASSIVE FITNESS COMPLEX

New Year, New Flavors

by Kelly Magyarics

hen it debuted a decade ago, Trummer's on Main in the charming town of Clifton was a welcome addition to northern Virginia's culinary scene. Last year, the restaurant underwent a month-long overhaul that transformed its menu and space from buttoned-up to casual bistro. Not to say it was ever stuffy—that would have been impossible under the watchful eye of affable husband-andwife team Stefan and Victoria Trummer. But as I learned during a recent visit, Trummer's is now decidedly more laid-back and even more welcoming.

The focal point post-renovation is the French rotisserie oven, which chef John Kropf uses daily to spit-roast prime rib and chicken; other main dishes, including Rohan duck and porchetta, get a featured spin in the oven once a week. Stefan nods to his Austrian roots with speck, apples, and manchego cheese; pork schnitzel with browned butter, lingonberry, and lemon; and Sachertorte for dessert. The wine list follows suit with offerings like Grüner Veltliner and Zweigelt made in Kamptal and a Pinot Noir rosé from Burgenland. Sommelier Nicole Bernard, who recently did an extensive wine-tasting tour in Austria, oversees the restaurant's 4,000-plus-bottle cellar, curating one of the largest collections of Austrian wine on the East Coast.

Stefan also has new cocktails up his sleeve, as he proved when he served us several experiments that will be on the menu soon, including a crèmebrûléed riff on a Daiguiri. But longtime



At the newly renovated Trummer's in Clifton, VA, chef John Kropf uses this French rotisserie oven to spit-roast prime rib, chicken, and a rotating series of featured dishes.

Trummer's fans should be happy to see two beloved libations remain: The Titanic mixes grape vodka with muddled grapes over a Champagne-sorbet iceberg, while the heady Sage tops Plymouth Gin, elderflower liqueur, lime,

and sage with bubbly. Cheers to another decade of some of the DMV's most impressive dining, 45 minutes outside of the District.

Also in Virginia, Vim & Victor is the dining concept at The St. James, a 450.000-square-foot fitness complex in Springfield. Owner and Top Chef alum Spike Mendelsohn cheekily describes it as a "healthy-ish restaurant," with freshpressed juices, bowls, smoothies, and salads joined by low-ABV cocktails. The team recently hosted a media brunch featuring some of Mendelsohn's greatest hits, so my fellow keto-aspiring friend and I threw our aversion to carbs out the window to try the cauliflower nachos: corn tortillas topped with roasted florets, cheese sauce, radishes, pickled chiles, pomegranate, and a drizzle of crema cilantro. Another favorite-mussels steamed with green curry, coconut milk, lemongrass, and makrut lime—was the most aromatic and flavorful bowl of bivalves

I've ever had. Among the drink selections, meanwhile, is a gin, cucumber, and mint libation reminiscent of the infused water sipped by spa patrons. Whatever Mendelsohn means by "healthy-ish," I'm game.





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A BICOASTAL ODE TO THE ENDANGERED FRUITS OF THE SEA

by Merrill Shindler

ccording to numerous reputable studies, we will run out of seafood sometime around the year 2050 due to pollution and the warming of the seas. No more grilled salmon, no more shrimp cocktails, no more baked halibut, and no more deep-fried calamari...fin. kaput, that's all she wrote.

This is obviously not good news for the human race. But it's especially bad news for folks like me—hardcore pescatarians who, given our druthers, would happily live on seafood for the rest of our days. I've loved fish since I was a wee sprout growing up by the Atlantic shore, eating bluefish and flounder; on the West Coast, I dote on red snapper and Chilean sea bass. The notion that these species could be lost forever fills me with the desire to eat them as often as I can—preferably by the shore, in casual spots where the tables are lined with butcher paper or even newspapers.

But special occasions call for seafood destinations. In New York, of course, there's chef Eric Ripert's fabled Le Bernardin, regularly acclaimed as the best fish house in America; the top contender for that title on the West Coast, meanwhile, is Providence in Los Angeles.

Providence chef Michael Cimarusti's passion was evident as he mounted a defense of less-popular species when I spoke with him recently. "Turbot is a very meaty fish—that's what I love about it," he said. "We hear people complaining that a dish tastes 'fishy.' I don't understand that—fish is supposed to taste like fish, not like chicken. People have trouble with bones as well. Skate wing isn't easy; there's a lot of cartilage—but it's delicious." Noting his frustrations with sourcing, he added, "Our fish has to be treated with greater respect." He does just that, showcasing vermilion rockfish with Tahitian squash and chorizo, buri (Japanese amberjack) with tangerine, and Quinault River Coho salmon with sunchoke.

Back East, another favorite spot of mine is Hank's Oyster Bar on the District Wharf in Washington, D.C. One of four branches in the Capitol, it's always packed with locals hungry for a taste of old-school seafood done as freshly as could be, thanks to the market at the heart of the Wharf. Hank's is where I go when I feel the need (as I often do) for a plate of fried Ipswich clams, classic New England clam chowder tweaked with crispy bacon, Hog Island-style barbecue oysters, and topneck clam stuffies. The kitchen does a fine oyster po'boy and a couple of snappy oyster shooters, one with saké, the other with mezcal—don't forget to layer on the Tabasco. The sweet corn hush puppies are perfect on the side, the french fries with Old Bay seasoning madly addictive. Of course there's a full bar—but really, only a cold craft beer will do. For as long as we have fish to eat, we'll have lager to wash it down.





Anibal Calcagno

BEVERAGE MANAGER AT INDIAN ACCENT, NEW YORK, NY

by Michelle Metter



nibal Calcagno joined SommCon's sommelier leadership team last November. In his career to date, he has run beverage programs at all kinds of restaurants managing the boutique list at Brenner's Steakhouse in Houston, a 12,000-bottle cellar at Landry's in New York, and, now, the award-winning program at Indian Accent, also in New York.

What are the challenges in maintaining a small wine program versus a large one? How do you weigh the expectations of restaurateurs against those of your guests?

Writing a small list is very challenging, especially with all the wine styles available today. Every placement must be scrutinized to make sure you have something for everyone, [yet] your cost percentages can run high without the luxury of bulk purchasing. I've used very creative buying strategies to keep the costs down and the owners happy. Large programs must be super-efficient and organized. If not inventories will take days, and you'll be reporting bogus numbers to

What advice do you have for sommeliers looking to grow within the industry as you have done?

I would join an establishment with a strong beverage program. You might have to settle for a server or manager role, as the sommelier market is saturated and very competitive. Volunteer to assist in all aspects of the beverage program—yes, that means being heavily involved with cellar maintenance and inventory. [But] the most important thing is to find a mentor and a weekly study group. Tasting and studying within a group is crucial to becoming a talented sommelier.

What is your approach to pairing wines with the revolving, inventive menu of chef Manish Mehotra at Indian Accent?

I had to look past some of the established pairing rules and just experiment. It took several attempts to find the perfect pairing for our tofu masala dish; I don't know many somms who brag about their tofu pairings! Our talented sommelier Amy Mitchell and I taste wine with the chef's food nightly to ensure the pairings work. Our sweetpickle ribs are tough on dry wines, so we [might go]/with an off-dry sparkling. Our beet-and-peanut butter tikki sings with a Pineau des Charentes rosé.

You have one glass of wine and ten minutes. What are you drinking and who are you with?

I would love to enjoy a glass of 2005 Bernhard Huber Spätburgunder with my old tasting group in Houston, led by Guy Stout.

> Michelle Metter is the co-founder and Director of SommCon USA. The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal are proud supporters of SommCon and its Young Leader Summit. Join world-class educators in 2020 at SommCon D.C. July 12-14 and SommCon San Diego November 11-13.







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A Q&A with Daniel Mandelbaum

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, DAVOS BRANDS

ForceBrands: You've worked with a few brands in the consumer-packaged-goods (CPG) sector. What attracted you to the beverage industry and to this role specifically?

Daniel Mandelbaum: I began my career at Procter & Gamble, which gave me an amazing business foundation that prepared me for senior positions in other industries. Having said that, what attracted me to the alcoholic-beverage industry is the need to connect with consumers on an emotional level. When it comes to creating [that] connection, you have to look for a holistic experience, from making beautifully crafted products to placing a strong story at the center of any brand. Then, with every launch, innovative and creative experiences are crucial to your thinking. What attracted me to Davos Brands was the opportunity to work on an amazing, diverse, and up-andcoming portfolio, all while connecting with consumers emotionally.

FB: In a competitive market, which strategies does Davos Brands implement to connect with consumers?

DM: It starts with best-in-class products, of course; then we communicate with consumers in a way that is unique [and] relevant. [People] expect more from their brands today. It's not enough that the drink is amazing—brands need to have an identity or quality consumers can identify with.

FB: Can you give an example of a marketing strategy or campaign you've introduced at Davos Brands?

DM: We have a fantastic brand called Sombra Mezcal that was just [recognized] as the 2019 Leading Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Mezcal by the Mezcal Institute. Each step of



Sombra's production, from fermentation to distillation, has been reimagined to reduce its environmental impact. I believe any successful marketing campaign must be authentic and arise from the brand's actual DNA. In Sombra's case, we are marketing sustainability simply because that is what the brand is all about.

Under [that] umbrella, we created the Sombra Adobe Brick Project, which upcycles Sombra's distillate byproduct into bricks to build homes for those in need. With these actions, we started a dialogue on ways our business can not only contribute to social change and sustainability but also achieve growth.

FB: What is the most rewarding and exciting part of your job?

DM: It starts like a joke—"A guy walks into a bar"—but I love hearing from a simple conversation with a bartender how our efforts evolve and help shift consumer behavior. I love

taking a relatively unknown brand into the forefront.

FB: How does Davos Brands keep up with trends, particularly as the cannabis industry continues to emerge as a competitor?

DM: We do what I suspect many others do as well, from reading a lot to having our eyes and ears to the ground. There are many types of consumers [and] usage occasions—I don't believe this is an "us vs. them" situation. The real question is whether our brands are dynamic enough to maintain their relevancy in the face of a changing landscape.

FB: How would you describe the company culture?

DM: It's a roll-up-your-sleeves type of culture. Perseverance with an eye on the goal is imperative, and since you are required to wear many hats, we put a strong emphasis on ownership and accountability, all in the spirit of executing with excellence.



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all these ingredients that I had never had as an example of looking for ways to relate to different people and to understand that they have different experiences.

From a service perspective, [Master Sommelier] Bobby Stuckey. I've heard him speak at conventions and events about service in general, and for him, the question's always: Is it better for the guest? If not, then why are we doing it? He says it more eloquently than that, but I find it very refreshing. That's what it's all about, and why most of us got into this industry. I try always to keep his philosophy in mind.



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STEVEN MENDIVIL

Wine Director, Good Fortune, Chicago, IL



When I ponder what resonates with me in terms of hospitality, I really take from a lot of the periphery. A dear friend of mine, Andrew Stiles, is Director of Guest Experience at The Sinclair, which is a high-end residence. He's dealing with tenants' lives on a day-to-day basis, and he creates these intimate, informative, and fun experiences that exceed expectations—he'll do cooking classes or beer tastings and make them really interactive. Even though I see guests for a much shorter period of time, he reminds me that you never turn away from the experience that you're trying to create. You can't only be in the moment: The hospitality business has to be what you eat, drink, and breathe.

Another is a gentleman named Justin Arnett. He's created two wildly fascinating [full-service creative] companies, B | E | Co and Garn:t. If you're looking to do an impactful event or seminar or food-and-beverage-related program, he will structure it, collaborate, and [serve as] the conduit between all the different pieces that bring it to fruition. He'll find a videographer, a brand ambassador, an artist who does the soundtrack. . . . Justin reminds me that you have to pool from other resources, you have to form a network, and he never forgets the connections that he makes. People feel it when you maintain that sincerity and listen to what someone's telling you so you can make their experience even better.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention someone directly in the industry, making strides in the community at large. Charles Schneider is the GM and sommelier at Webster Wine Bar, which has a rich history and a resonance for wine lovers in Chicago. He hones a deep list of natural wines and provides reverent yet wildly candid descriptions for each and every selection on the list, championing the vignerons and winemakers who make the top lowintervention wines from around the world. It reminds me of the importance of becoming intimate with and understanding the provenance of the wines you serve while creating a warm, welcoming environment for wine experts and novices alike. We have to be constantly reaching out to those who are excited to learn but may be unable to articulate it.

DEVON ESPINOSA Independent consultant, Los Angeles, CA

Before I got into the bar scene, I was a chef. I used to watch Julia Child and The Galloping Gourmet while my siblings were watching Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. At 18 or 19, I joined a hospitality panel for students from the Culinary Institute. The roundtable involved Danny Meyer, and he was such an inspiration; I still think he has one of the best hospitality books ever.

But being classically French trained and peeking out from behind the scenes, I always wanted to be part of the party—my personality was too big to be in the back of the house. The front of the house is where you make your money as well. And when it comes to cocktails, I was pretty much self-taught. I was working in New York, and one day [my boss] said, "Can you jump behind the bar?" I was like, "Are you kidding? I'm 18!" And he said, "You can make drinks, you just can't drink them." I thought to myself, "Well, you can still be smart with

your techniques, you can still be seasonal with your ingredients," and that's where I took it. But one source of information for me was Jeffrey Morgenthaler. I loved the way that he spoke about cocktails and their history, and what made sense to him also made sense to me.

[Beyond that,] I'm inspired every day by my peers and friends. Julian Cox and Josh Goldman are two of my favorite guys who made cocktails and who I always looked up to. I opened Ink with Michael Voltaggio, and he taught me techniques that I still use today. Steve Livigni and Pablo Moix taught me lots about the bar scene, especially on the business side, such as how to fine-tune your creativity for a given concept. Pour Vous was very much a Parisian concept, but the French don't really do cocktails, so I learned to stay within the flavor profile [of a given recipe] using French ingredients—not straying too far from the concept but modernizing as well. [By the same token,]



the inspiration for [L.A. bar] Canary is the Canary Islands, but I didn't want to pigeonhole the bar with just Spanish ingredients. It's very tropical but not necessarily tiki-for instance, I'm working with pandan-infused aged rum and passion fruit served in a bird-shaped glass. So it's pretty fun and whimsical. Everyone I've worked with has taught me something; I've just pooled all of it and made it my own thing. II

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In Down the Aisle, the editors at *The Tasting Panel* have set out to rate retail beverages based on a combination of elements that can impact off-premise potential, including design, branding, value, and user-friendliness. For this reason, we are employing a dual-ratings system to evaluate the packaging as well as the product.

In retail environments, "talkies" are the little cards appended to shelves that educate the consumer and sometimes even include ratings. They are an invaluable tool when there isn't a knowledgeable employee available and/or the customer is too shy or intimidated to ask for help. Down the Aisle assesses the relative appeal of wines, spirits, and beers via our "talkie" rating system and employs a traditional pointsbased system regarding flavor. Each beverage will be rated based on its own merit!

I TALKIE 🔬



Clear, legible label; solid branding. Good overall for retail.

2 TALKIES 🚇 🚇



Eye-catching label and memorable branding. Very good for retail.

3 TALKIES 🚇 🚇 🚇





Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. Great for retail.

4TALKIES 🔬 <page-header> 🚇





A near work of art and meaningful branding. Excellent for retail.

5 TALKIES 🤬 😡 😡 🥹







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Decov 2017 Zinfandel,

Sonoma County (\$25) Duckhorn created its Decoy line in 2008 as a means of providing the high-quality wine for which it's known at a more affordable price point. Made with Dry Creek Valley estate grapes, this Sonoma-based Zin offers soft, ripe red fruits (namely strawberry and raspberry) accented with spicy vanilla-cola notes. It's a juicier-style Zinfandel that doesn't beat you over the head with jammy richness and texture (perhaps the 17% Petite Sirah makes it seem a bit drier). Per usual, Duckhorn relies on a label depicting its signature fowl to fly above the competition. 90

DUCKHORN









Dreaming Tree 2017 Pinot Noir, California (\$15) Dreaming Tree is a collaboration between musician Dave Matthews and New Zealand winemaker Sean McKenzie. Pinot Noir sourced from choice vinevards in California offers dense yet bright cherry and strawberry as well as

toasted oak character in a wine whose success is a great example of effective marketing and excellent labeling, giving us "So Much to Say." 87

CONSTELLATION BRANDS



Pomelo Wine Co. 2018 Sauvignon Blanc,

California (\$14) A riperstyle Sauvignon Blanc offering white peach and Meyer lemon; 92% of the fruit comes from Lake County and 8% from Lodi/Clarksburg, Clear, simple branding, 87

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES





Brotte Esprit Barville 2017 Côtes du Rhône

(\$11) This Grenachedominant Côtes du Rhône leads with dark fruits (black cherry, blackberry); follows with dried herbs (rosemary): and ends on earthy black licorice. The Brotte family of Maison Brotte in Châteauneufdu-Pape have been making wine since 1931,

aging it in 100-year-old oak barrels and concrete for up to 12 months. The packaging is traditional. 87







Steele 2017 Writer's **Block Cabernet Franc,**

Lake County (\$18) This Cabernet Franc-dominant blend with Merlot and Zinfandel offers dark raspberry, plum, plum skin, and candied black olive and was aged for 15 months in hybrid barrels. There aren't many pictures of Shakespeare on wine bottles, which makes this one all the more memorable. 88







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THE GOLDEN FOODIES AWARDS GALA CELEBRATES THE

BEST OF ORANGE COUNTY DINING by Leanne Chau



Tim Sample, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits Division Manager, Orange County, presented the award for Best Bar Program to Social Costa Mesa.



Amin Benny, President of the United States Bartenders' Guild Orange County Chapter, with Bartender of the Year Ravin Buzzell and 320 Main owner Jason Schiffer.



eturning for its eighth year, the Golden Foodies Awards Gala was held last September at the Newport Beach Marriott Hotel and Spa. This annual red-carpet event was created by the Orange County Restaurant Association to honor the area's best independent and chef-driven restaurants, which are chosen in a voting process that's open to the public and audited by a third-party accounting firm.

Prior to the ceremony, elegantly attired quests mingled while sipping on premium wines provided by Copper Cane and libations featuring spirits from Sipsmith, Haku, Cruzan, Maker's Mark, and Hornitos. The awards themselves were hosted by TV personality and cookbook author Aarti Sequeira and Neil Saavedra, host of the popular "Fork Report" radio show. The program included a package of humorous video clips in which nominees reenacted restaurant and bar scenes from classic movies.

Local industry luminaries presented awards in 16 categories. Winners took home 14 karat gold-plated Golden Foodie statues and custom-engraved Maker's Mark bottles, hand-dipped in the Awards' signature gold and black wax. Presenting the award for Best Bar Program to Social Costa Mesa was Tim Sample, Division Manager, Orange County, of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, which collaborates on the Golden Foodies Awards with the Orange County Restaurant Association in order to support its partners in the onpremise community.

Proceeds from the gala benefited the Golden Rule Charity, a Southern California-based nonprofit that aims to help hard-working restaurant employees in need.

The 2019 Golden Foodies Award Winners

Bartender of the Year: Ravin Buzzell, CdM Best Bar Program: Social Costa Mesa Best Beer Program: Helmsman Ale House Best Brunch: Bosscat Kitchen & Libations Best Cocktail: Wait for It, The Blind Rabbit

Best Dessert: Popcorn ice cream. THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon Best Entree: Cowboy rib-eye, THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon

Best Lunch Spot: Farmhouse at Roger's Gardens

Best New Restaurant: Fable & Spirit

Best Service: Five Crowns

Best Wine Program: Selanne Steak Tavern

Chef of the Year: John Park, TOAST

Outstanding Community Service: Dave Hanna, restaurateur Pastry Chef of the Year: Jacky Martinez, Henry's Ocean View Dining

Restaurateur of the Year: Russ Bendel

Rising Star Chef of the Year: Shachi Mehra, Adya

Leanne Chau is the Marketing Director for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits.

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The Chef's Chef

AT MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH. EXECUTIVE CHEF DAVID SERUS

FIRES ON ALL BURNERS story and photos by Richard Carleton Hacker

tretching majestically along the bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, ultra-luxurious seaside resort Montage Laguna Beach houses three of the most distinctive restaurants to be found anywhere. From the elegant California-French cuisine of the craftsman-styled Studio (featuring produce from its own vegetable gardens) and the casual but equally inventive Asian-fusion offerings of Loft to the open-air relaxation of Mosaic Bar & Grill, with its artistically plated sandwiches and salads, this multifaceted mecca for gourmands presents a challenge that can be met by only the best chefs.

Overseeing it all, including banquets and weddings, is recently appointed Montage Executive Resort Chef David Serus. In addition to his name and title, his immaculate chef's whites are proudly embroidered with the initials MCF: In 2013, Serus was awarded the prestigious Maître Cuisiniers de France (Master Chef of France) designation by the French culinary community. There are only 86 MCFs in the United States and fewer than 350 in the world—but with more than 25 years of experience cooking for luxury clients, the native of Le Mans, France, has proven himself eminently qualified.

After culinary school, Serus cooked



Within view of the Pacific Ocean, the gardens outside of Studio ensure the herbs and vegetables served at the resort's restaurants are always fresh.



Montage Executive Resort Chef David Serus is responsible for all culinary activities at the five-star resort in Laguna Beach, CA. At The Loft, chef Joosung Lee smokes sea bass (inset) from Baja, CA, over maple wood; he then pan-roasts the fish and serves it with charred fennel and green and yellow beans beneath thin crostini topped with saffron aioli.

for the officers' mess while serving in the French Navy, then worked at Michelin-starred restaurants in London and France before transitioning to a succession of Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton resorts. Just before he started at Montage, he dined as an incognito guest at each of the resort's restaurants to study their different styles; today, he oversees 16 sous chefs and 65 cooks while working closely with Studio chef de cuisine Benjamin Martinek, The Loft chef Joosung Lee, and other food and beverage personnel to coordinate various wine dinners. He believes that the wines should come first; then his culinary team can craft the best dishes to complement them.

"During the week I make notes for everybody," Serus says, "[and] every Friday we have a one-hour meeting.

There is a lot of exchange of ideas and communication. I also do a lot of oneon-one guidance. I like to challenge my chefs, but they are in charge of creating their own menus, which I taste and critique."

Under his guidance, the resort is also working with local farm and garden designers Tenfold Harvest to reimagine the Studio garden, growing seasonal vegetables and herbs literally right outside the kitchen. (The resort's bartenders also benefit from these fresh ingredients.) Yet one of Serus' fondest discoveries since coming to Laguna Beach is the local farmers market, which he visits every other week. "I eat out a lot, because I want to see what other restaurants are doing," he admits. "I don't cook a lot for myself at home. That's the last thing I want to do."

"All of Harlem's best food in one place." The New York Post



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The Continental Shift

IT'S TIME TO DEMYSTIFY SOUTH AFRICAN WINES

by Kyle Billings

s travelers savor both mountain and ocean vistas along the scenic drive east from Cape Town to Elgin, they're likely to pick up on clues that South Africa isn't your average wine country—especially if they notice the baboons that often scatter the countryside.

The region is no stranger to challenging the received wisdom of the wine world, acknowledged Talifhani Booi Mbelengwa, Acting Consul-General for the South African Consulate-General in Los Angeles, when he and Consul Alleta Maseko recently welcomed members of the trade to the loft of local restaurant A.O.C. After their opening remarks, the duo introduced Jim Clarke, Marketing Manager of Wines of South Africa, to present four flights of maritime wines in a master class titled "A Journey from Cape Town to the Southern Tip of Africa."

"I think South Africa can be a confus-

ing country for many people—they don't get to taste the wines that often, unfortunately. There's such a range of offerings," Clarke told attendees. "It's really a matter of the winemakers adapting to the local terroir and finding what grapes are working there."

Despite a vinous history that predates England's constitutional monarchy, South Africa is not quite Old World and not quite New. "For South Africa in general, I think the hot and dry [climate] leaves people to often expect the wines to be very big and heavy," Clarke said. "First, the regions aren't as hot and dry as you might think. That's one of the reasons we did the maritime-influenced tasting. But also, the winemakers have really managed to do a lot in the vineyards . . . to keep freshness in the wines." Winemakers in areas such as the Cape South Coast, for example, are keen to make use of varieties suited to the cool, windswept climate of the

country's southern extremity.

The locales that capture the attention of a global audience do so by offering distinct impressions of recognized grapes. Clark extolled the Hemelen-Aarde Valley as South Africa's Burgundy while a series of other expressions—Chardonnay from the Western Cape, Pinot Noir from Elgin, a Shiraz blend from Bot River in the Walker Bay district—ably represented lesser-known areas.

At the conclusion of the tasting, Mbelengwa was scarcely able to hide his delight as he expressed his gratitude for the presence of the gathered company. He declared that the purpose of the annual tasting is to showcase "something uniquely South African ... wines that we as South Africans are proud of." Given the innovative spirit of their producers, it's all but assured that the country's wines will continue to surprise and inspire.



Paying It Forward in Paso Robles

THE **DREAM BIG DARLING AUCTION** RAISES MORE THAN \$120,000 FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE TRADE PROFESSIONALS

story by Ellen Gates / photos by Jill Hewston

he weather for the second annual Dream Big Dinner, Auction & Concert held late last October could not have been dreamier: It was a sign of blessings to come, as some 175 guests gathered to raise more than \$120,000 in the name of mentoring up-and-coming women in the wine and spirits industry.

"The entire evening was enveloped in a spirit of generosity," says Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, founder of Dream Big Darling and VP of Operations at Ancient Peaks Winery. "People see that we are making a difference, and they want to be a part of it. We could not be more grateful."

Dream Big Darling is a relatively new nonprofit whose mission is to foster the success of women in the wine and spirits industry through mentorship, education, life-enhancement initiatives, and professional retreats. The auction serves as the centerpiece of Dream Big Darling's fundraising efforts, and the proceeds will fund scholarships to Wine Speak 2020, the



As the sun set behind the peaks to the west, guests convened in the Oyster Ridge barn for an epic fourcourse dinner by chef Jeffery Scott that included oak-seared Double R Ranch prime beef loin and darkchocolate brioche pudding.



Dream Big Darling Creative Director Christine Curtis, Brand Ambassador Macey Cox, and Chief Operations Officer Melodee Crank with scholarship recipients Nancy Gonzalez, Kate Edgecomb, and Justin Trabue.

annual Dream Big Darling Leadership Retreat, and other professional-development experiences.

It all began at the Oyster Ridge events venue on the historic Santa Margarita Ranch in Paso Robles, where the surrounding vines of Margarita Vineyard were aglow in autumn color, the sun was brightly perched over the Santa Lucia Mountains, and the temperatures hovered in the high 70s. The setting was nothing short of picture perfect.

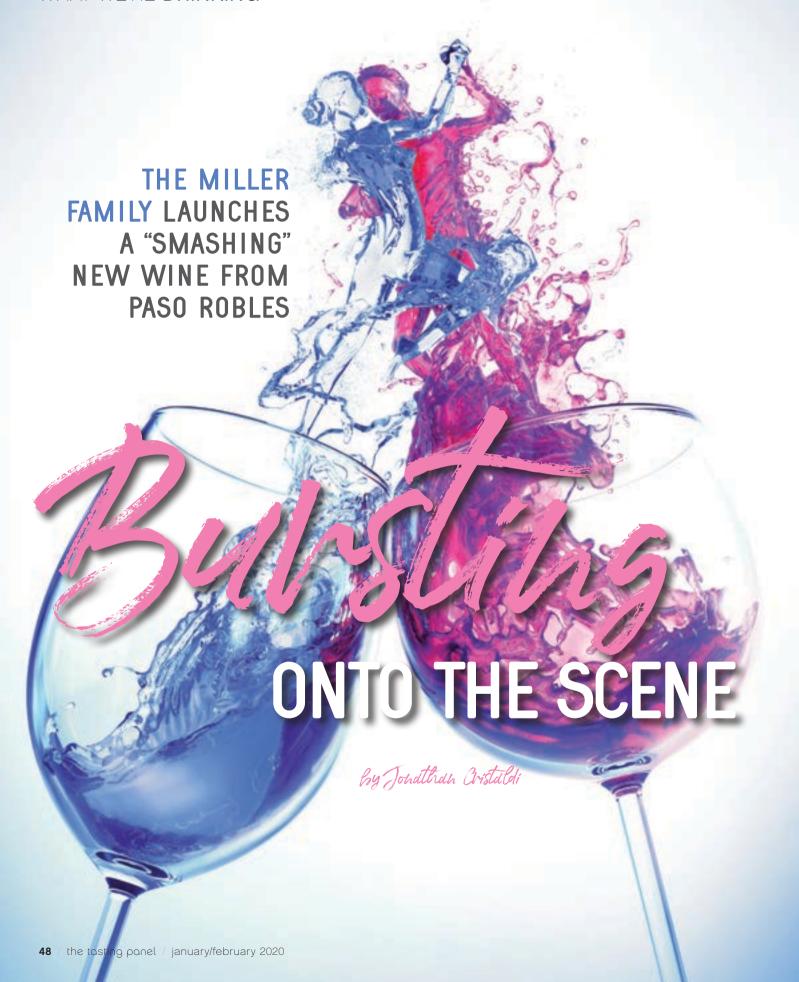
Dinner was punctuated by a lively auction featuring a remarkable roster of items up for bidding, including two Kawasaki Mule Pro-FXT Ranch Edition offroad vehicles; an Alexander Clancy Italian leather handbag and coveted Lady Gaga concert tickets, along with a stay at the Bellagio Resort; and a hosted deer hunt at Santa Margarita Ranch. The generosity was amplified when local vintner Jerry Lohr donated

\$8,000 toward Dream Big Darling scholarships to the aforementioned Wine Speak trade event.

Numerous wine luminaries lent a guiding hand to the proceedings, including Meridith May of *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal;* Jordan Fiorentini of Epoch; Nicole Pope of Stolo Vineyards; Adrienne Ferrara of Clesi; Cynthia Lohr of J. Lohr; and Clarissa Nagy of Riverbench. The event was emceed by Cara Crye, CEO of Farm Supply Co., and Gina Fitzpatrick, CEO of the Paso Robles Chamber of Commerce.

"These are some of the most accomplished women in the industry, and they all have a passion for paying it forward," Wittstrom-Higgins says. "We are so grateful for their support."

For information on leadership and scholarship opportunities with Dream Big Darling, visit dreambigdarling.org.





Nicholas and Marshall Miller walk the French Camp Vineyard in Paso Robles.

he Miller family are celebrated as fifth-generation farmers and owners of the Central Coast's prestigious Bien Nacido Vineyards in the Santa Barbara County AVA of Santa Maria Valley. Now they're shining a light on Paso Robles.

Their newest release, the 2019 Smashberry Rosé, joins Smashberry Red Wine as a value-driven jewel sporting a stunning and evocative label of two grape berries colliding in an explosion of flavor-packed juice. This distinctly fruit-forward wine is accessible to everyone at a suggested retail price of \$14—and makes for a rather luxurious \$10 by-the-glass option for on-premise buyers.

The grapes are entirely sourced from the Paso Robles AVA, with a generous portion of the fruit coming from the Miller family's French Camp Vineyard in the Paso Robles Highlands AVA. Situated at just over 1,400 feet, it's among the highest-elevation sites in the region; Morro Bay is about 30 miles due east, ensuring the vines are treated to cooling Pacific Ocean breezes. The site also experiences some of the largest diurnal temperature swings in California, making it subject to frost damage even during the growing season.

"Names on a wine label that tell a story are the best," says Nicholas Miller, who heads up marketing and sales at the Miller Family Wine Company. "Some brand names leave the consumer to wonder: Is that the vineyard? Some ethereal component? The family? With Smashberry, it's intentionally clear: We are crushing grapes and making a fruit-forward-style wine that boasts a label emblematic of the experience so that, when the consumer twists off the cap, they already have an idea of what the wine will taste like."

Coming from SIP Certified vines, Smashberry is a sustainable product. Miller points out, adding, "It will always be a blend of grapes to keep the fruit-forward style consistent from vintage to vintage." Marshall Miller, who oversees winemaking and operations, explains that "for our Red Wine, we night-harvest and bring the grapes in cool, so the freshness is preserved.

The fruit is checked daily during fermentation and the temperature is closely monitored. After pressing, we let malolactic fermentation run its course naturally and age 25% of the Smashberry in French and American oak for nine months. Blends are scrutinized until a clear favorite from the vintage emerges. After bottling, we know that we made a wine that pushes your senses to the brink. The new Smashberry Rosé is an exciting new interpretation of the concept, primarily consisting of Grenache."

As far as the market is concerned, "We see Smashberry as having tremendous potential with a lot of growth, from the name to the concept to the packaging, and we see the opportunity to add other labels into the Smashberry lineup," says Nicholas. "We also offer a canned version of the Red Wine, and in spring this year we will release the Rosé. . . . It's a serious wine, but also an amusing concept, with a great energy and spirit about it."

Tasting Notes

Given that this is our January/February issue, we highly recommend that retailers sell Smashberry with a box of chocolates. The rich fruitiness of the wine will complement the texture of the chocolate.

Smashberry 2019 Rosé, Paso Robles (\$14)

Ripe, succulent summer melon and just-bit peach perfume this salmon-hued, Grenachebased rosé. Tart flavors of pink grapefruit wash across wet stone, giving the wine serious play on the palate; spiced apple keeps it intriguing on the finish. **90** —*Meridith May*

Smashberry 2017 Red Wine, Paso Robles (\$14) Paso Robles speaks the language of the bold when it comes to red wines, and this Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah blend (with some Cab Franc and Grenache) has the syntax in place for ripeness and structured

tannins. Overdelivering in taste and value, it bears a colorful label that depicts the nature of its crushed blue and red fruit, starting with bold aromas of baker's chocolate, espresso, and black bean. Dried herbs season the ripe fruit, and the chocolate feels dusty on the palate. 90 —М.М.



FESTIVALS

Third Time to

THE PACIFIC WINE & FOOD CLASSIC WELCOMES EPICURES TO NEWPORT BEACH

eld last August at the Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort & Marina, the Pacific Wine & Food Classic drew epicures to the shores of Back Bay in Newport Beach, California, for the third year in a row. The award-winning, fan-favorite event offered attendees summer-inspired cuisine from more than 40 top Southern California restaurants as well as fine wines and delicious handcrafted cocktails.

Welcomed with a Lillet Spritz, the guests strolled down the sand on the scenic waterfront as they explored over 100 highly rated wines showcasing American and Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits; standouts included expressions from Belle Glos, JUSTIN Winery, Gérard Bertrand, and DAOU Vineyards and Winery. On the far end awaited the Bubble Bar, which harbored plentiful pours of G.H. Mumm, Gloria Ferrer, and Scharffenberger Cellars.

Despite its relative youth, this first-class event has gained widespread recognition: It recently placed on *USA Today*'s "10Best" list of U.S. food festivals in 2019; was recognized by the International Food, Wine and Travel Writers Association as one of the top ten food and wine festivals in the world; was named one of the best events in Orange County by the *Los Angeles Times*' TimesOC readers' poll in 2018; and earned an *OC Weekly* People's Choice award for best food event in 2017 and 2018.

When the Pacific Wine & Food Classic returns August 15–16, it will continue to support the Golden Rule Charity. The nonprofit aims to "help the hospitality industry in times of need . . . one individual at a time, one community at a time," according to its website.













rom the growing demand for lowalcohol and ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages to portable packaging, this year is certain to be interesting for our industry as we strive to reach consumers. Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits SVP of National Accounts-On-Premise Bill Edwards and SVP of National Accounts-Off-Premise Scott Moore share some of their forecasts for wine and spirits trends in 2020.

The Rise of Low-Alcohol **Beverages**

With the younger generation's focus on well-being, the market is likely to remain driven by healthier choices. Inventive low- and no-alcohol drinks that also pair with food in a social environment are expected to be on the rise.

"Products that are low in alcohol content but high in flavor continue to grow in popularity among millennials," says Edwards. "This behavior is tied to the health-and-wellness trend that's more important than ever to consumers and isn't expected to slow down in 2020."

The global market for alcoholic beverages is expected to reach a value of \$1.59 billion by 2022, according to the Portland, Oregon-based Allied Market

Research. Appealing to an increasing number of sober-curious shoppers with an evolving range of choices can only help it grow.

The Packaging Revolution

Interest in canned wine and RTD beverages is also expected to rise, allowing an increasingly mobile generation of drinkers to slip a couple of cans in a cooler or a backpack. Additionally, consumers are calling for drinks that have a lower carbon footprint; cans are easier to recycle and reuse than glass bottles, so it's likely they will continue to be embraced as an ideal container for a number of drinks.

"Transitioning shelf space from slowing craft-beer trends to more on-trend canned wines and pre-mix cocktails could be something we see retailers implementing in 2020," says Moore. "Grab-and-go prepared food options available at grocery stores are the perfect companions to these convenient RTD wines and spirits." On premise, canned wine and RTD beverages allow bars to offer a wider choice of drinks that don't require extensive prep time.

Another packaging trend is reflected in the number of brands that have begun to experiment with augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence



Bill Edwards is Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits' SVP of National Accounts, On-Premise.

(AI). Scannable bottles that tell stories and provide background on wineries and spirits producers are likely to rise in popularity as consumers seek to learn more about brands to share with their friends. These applications also tend to be extremely social media-friendly, appealing to millennials and beyond.



THE **WINES OF ISRAEL**CAMPAIGN LANDS IN NEW YORK

story by David Ransom photos by Doug Young s part of a national promotion to raise awareness of Israeli wine while connecting with members of the trade, the Wines of Israel campaign made a stop at the Union Park Events venue in New York last fall to host a grand tasting and a series of seminars. The event featured over two dozen producers representing wines from the country's six major winemaking regions, and for many attendees—including the author of this article—it offered a glimpse at the sheer breadth and diversity found within Israel, as well as the chance to view kosher wines in a new light.

While Israel's winemaking history dates back roughly 5,000 years, what could be described as the country's "modern" wine industry has existed for less than two centuries. It's generally accepted that Israeli wine as it's known today got its start in 1882, when Château Lafite Rothschild's Baron Edmond de Rothschild brought the first vine cuttings to Israel from Bordeaux. He began making wine at what would eventually become the historic Carmel Winery, which is still in operation today.

Fast-forward to another turning point in the 1980s, when Golan Heights Winery hired Victor Schoenfeld to spearhead its winemaking operations. A veteran of the California wine industry, Schoenfeld helped usher in a new era for Israeli production through the use of innovative winemaking techniques.

Today, there are over 250 wineries in Israel, 70 of which are commercial operations; annual production now exceeds 40 million bottles. The bestknown regions are Golan Heights. Judean Hills, and Galilee (divided into upper and lower sections), ioined by the Coastal Plain region. the Central Mountains, and Negev in southern Israel.

While the country is considered by many to be part of the Middle East, its hot Mediterranean climate closely resembles that of Italy, southern France, and neighboring Greece. "One of the big misconceptions about Israel is that it is a desert, but the majority of the country's wine regions are classic Mediterranean climate zones," says Erik Segelbaum, Food & Wine's 2019 Sommelier of the Year and a brand ambassador for Wines of Israel. "The only desert-like winemaking region is the southern region of Negev."



Erik Segelbaum, an ambassador for Wines of Israel, reviews the country's major wine regions.

As expected, much of Israel's production is kosher, "which can be both a blessing and a thorn in Israeli winemaking's side," says importer Haim Hassin, who owns SolStars Wines in New York and features a number of Israeli wines in his portfolio. "For me, Israeli wines are some of the most exciting wines in the market today, as they're well made and well priced. I think the big goal now is to get people to look at these wines first for their quality and think of them as kosher second."



The Wines of Israel panel from left to right: Erik Segelbaum, founder, SOMLYAY; Jim Clarke, writer/educator; Kathy Morgan, MS, Adjunct Wine Faculty for the International Culinary Center; Brian Freedman, writer/educator; and Yannick Benjamin, head sommelier for the University Club of New York and co-founder of Wine on Wheels, Wheeling Forward.

Segelbaum agrees: "In order to understand kosher wines in general, it's important to explain the two schools of kosher winemaking," he adds. "So often, the public perception of Israeli wines is based on kosher wines consumed in their past, but while Israel does produce a majority of wines labeled as kosher, most are not the mevushal-level 'kosher for Passover' wines that are so often associated with Jewish holiday traditions." (See sidebar for more on kosher wine.)

Where the Mediterranean Begins

As part of the Wines of Israel event in New York, Segelbaum hosted two seminars. The first was a panel discussion and overview of key international grape varieties found in the country, some of which are to be expected—including Rhône staples Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre and Bordeaux varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot-and some of which are not, such as Marselan, Tannat, Gewürztraminer, and Riesling; native grapes, meanwhile, include Argaman and Marawi. Among the panelists were sommeliers Yannick Benjamin and Jim Clarke as well as Kathy Morgan, MS, and wine consultant Brian Freedman.

The second seminar explored Israel's garagiste movement (a reference to small-scale winemaking that plays on the word "garage") and featured wines from some of the country's most creative and forward-thinking producers. "Since the majority of winemaking in Israel is done at large wineries, I like to use the

term 'garagiste' to identify those smaller wineries or, in some cases, second 'high-end' winemaking facilities owned by large wineries that are pushing the envelope and raising the bar for Israeli wine," says Segelbaum.

Ultimately, the "Wines of Israel: Where the Mediterranean Begins" program succeeded in its goal to help attendees gain insight into the future of this remarkable region. Perhaps Benjamin said it best: "I believe that Israel is only hitting its stride. [Its winemakers] have a very distinctive style that is rich in complexity, representing their unique Mediterranean climate and ancient but diverse soil types."

DEMYSTIFYING KOSHER

Kosher wines are produced via the same traditional methods as non-kosher wines, but the process unfolds under rabbinical supervision and is handled by Sabbathobservant Jews; they must also contain kosher versions of any additives or fining agents. While most Israeli wines—and practically all made at larger wineries—are indeed kosher, many of Israel's smaller wineries do not follow kosher practices. Further, adherence to kosher winemaking does not have any correlation with the final quality of a wine.

Phe DOM Paso Robles

Evan Goldstein, MS, was the gracious and erudite host of a Paso Robles—focused dinner held at Somerset in The Viceroy Hotel during last fall's Full Circle Beverage Conference.





STORY BY MERIDITH MAY AND RUTH TOBIAS / PHOTOS BY REBECCA PEPLINSKI

"Paso Robles is near and dear to my heart,"

Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein recently declared to a group of wine professionals who attended his sold-out Full Circle Beverage Conference in Chicago last September. "I've been following California's wine industry for decades and the prominence of the state's most noteworthy grape: Cabernet Sauvignon. But it's Paso Robles that has made among the most impressive advancements in style, technique, and character for Cab and red Bordeaux varieties. Thanks to an intricate tapestry of some 40 terroir formations, including its iconic high-pH calcareous soil and great swings of day-to-night temperatures, this unique region—California's largest geographic appellation—continues to build on its world-class quality."



Michelle Brinning of Cellar 55 in Vancouver, WA, with *Tasting Panel* and *SOMM Journal* Publisher and Editorial Director Meridith May.

To showcase this admirable ascent, the **Paso Robles CAB Collective** brought in wines for a dinner hosted by Goldstein at Somerset in The Viceroy Hotel (the event was sponsored by The Tasting Panel's sister publication. The SOMM Journal). "My customers adore these bold reds from Paso Robles," said Nancy Sabatini, owner of Illinois-based retailer Mainstreet Wine & Spirits. "We carry all the wines on this table." Fellow guest Michelle Brinning, President/owner of Cellar 55 in Portland, noted that "J. Lohr was the first wine we carried, and now Paso Cabs have become popular in

Danielle Kuzinich, Wine Director at San Francisco wine bar The Hidden Vine, is another longtime fan of Paso Robles. Of the wines featured at the dinner, which also appear on her list, she said, "Paso Cabs have become the forefront of conversation—they are the rising star of California."



Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon of Plum Market.



Guests Sophie Yoneoka and Nicholas Prevolos of The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, CO.

DAOU VINEYARDS & WINERY



Katherine Daou serves as Brand Ambassador and Social Media Manager for her family's estate.

The revered André Tchelistcheff once called Daou Mountain "a jewel of ecological elements." That's where DAOU Vineyards & Winery is perched—on top of the world as far as Paso Robles locations go. Situated in the Adelaida District—which is defined by its calcareous clay soil as well as a cool microclimate born of its elevation and relative proximity to the coast—it showcases wines with depth, texture, and remarkable color.

The Daou family oversees 115 planted acres, 68% of which are dedicated to Cabernet Sauvignon (red and white Bordeaux grapes comprise the remainder). Winemaker and industry leader Daniel Daou's experience in that iconic region led him to Paso Robles; during the dinner, his daughter Katherine gave some background on the strategies that have driven his success there. "My dad has created a proprietary process that allows him to extract a high level of phenolics that provide elegance, power, and balance," she said. "Paso Robles has given my family such an amazing opportunity."

DAOU 2016 Soul of a Lion With silky tannins and deep black fruit, this wine expresses its chalky terroir. Elegant notes of garrigue, dark chocolate, and sage meld with black plum and exotic spice as the fruit and balanced acidity gracefully glide through the finish. A Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant blend with Cabernet Franc and some Petit Verdot, it was named after a book Katherine Daou's grandfather wrote for the family about the trials and tribulations he overcame in his native Lebanon. "If you think about how a lion is stoic and elegant in its movement, that's how you can interpret this wine," Daou remarked. —Meridith May

DAOU 2013 Soul of a Lion According to our dinner guests, it may be in its prime, but it still has years to evolve. With a nod to Old World characteristics, this red exhibits earth, fennel, violets, and baking spices. The 2013 vintage "was one of the driest years on record," noted DAOU National Sales Manager Josh Lavis. "Small berries and concentration of flavor are the result." -M.M.

J. LOHR VINEYARDS & WINES



J. Lohr red winemaker Brenden Wood (right) with Evan Davis of Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods in Austin, TX, and Nancy Sabatini of Mainstreet Wines & Spirits in Countryside, IL.

"J. Lohr is a comfort label in the best sense of the word," said Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon of this pioneering Paso brand—a compliment that surely comforted red winemaker Brenden Wood as he kept one eye on the pre-harvest conditions back home. "I was just looking at my weather app: It was 100 degrees today, and it'll be 55 tonight," he told the group. "That extreme diurnal fluctuation contributes to the ripeness [as well as] the freshness and acidity in our wines."

Though the 2019 growing season had been a fine one in the region, Wood's watchfulness made sense given the tricky vintages of the two expressions that he and Sales Manager Doug Burch were on hand to present. With respect to the Hilltop Cabernet, Wood admitted, "2017 was a nailbiter"; due to an extreme heat wave in August, "We thought that the fruit wouldn't hold up." As for 2015, he explained, an unusually cool spring meant that "a lot of flowering shattered. But Merlot was not affected as much, and the low yields were a blessing"—especially for J. Lohr's Right Bank-inspired blend Pom.

J. Lohr 2017 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon Exudes a combination of freshness and brilliant acidity, with a blueberry-pie ripeness that shines as earth and espresso form the palate's base. Grown at an elevation of 2,000 feet on calcareous soil, it's a blend of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot with a splash of Malbec. —M.M.

J. Lohr 2015 Cuvée Pom A tribute to the Grand Cru wines of Pomerol on Bordeaux's Right Bank, this Merlotdominant red (90%) includes some Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. Concentrated, savory, and broad, with aromas and flavors of black plum, it features chalky tannins that go from dry to satiny as the wine opens up with an earthy charm. Triffon commented, "I love its gentle ripeness and long, smooth mouthfeel." -M.M.

OPOLO VINEYARDS



Opolo Vineyards Sales Manager Jeff Faber.

Though Opolo Vineyards Sales Manager Jeff Faber admitted that he'd been "so excited to raid the larder for this evening," he wasn't inclined to go into too much technical detail about the limited-production bottles he'd brought to show the group. That's because, in his view, "Paso is the essence of romance"—a place that defies analysis in favor of pure experience, where "you can throw tasting descriptions over your shoulder" and simply enjoy wine in the present moment, whatever it may entail. Indeed, he explained, Opolo winemakers Chris Rougeot and James Schreiner craft several Bordeaux blends as well as varietal Cabernets "not only to reflect the region but also [to offer options] that would be interesting to different people doing different things."

Opolo's estate encompasses nearly 300 acres of vineyard planted in the mid-1990s by proprietors Rick Quinn and Dave Nichols, who were neighbors before they were partners—a fact that neatly illustrated Faber's point about the magic of Paso, in Goldstein's opinion: "There is such a sense of communal activity there," he said. "It's not first generation, but it feels like it, because everyone wants everyone else to do well." With that, Faber led the guests in a toast: "Opolo!" they cheered.

Opolo 2014 Willow Creek District Cabernet Sauvignon

Aromas of ripe, expressive red and blue fruit precede a spicy entry that leads to heather and black-cherry liqueur. Seasoned by oregano, cedar and cinnamon make an entrance midway. Faber pointed out that Opolo wines always strive to be a true expression of the region. "Our wines communicate their 'where' through the glass. Each wine is . . . a celebration." —M.M.

Opolo 2014 Reserve Rhapsody Spiced cherries zing alongside fresh acidity in this blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Malbec sourced from the winery's top vineyard sites. Bright and vibrant floral tones play with toasted oak to create a pleasant, savory quality that tingles the tongue with white pepper. Caramel sweetens the ginger spice on the finish. —M.M. 💵



A Frence, Feminine

TRUE TO ITS CORE. LA ADELITA **BEGINS THE NEW** YEAR BY HONORING TODAY'S WOMEN WARRIORS

story by Jessie Birschbach photos by Gabo Garcia



espite the culture of machismo that surrounds it, tequila has a history of association with femininity, as its origins are literally rooted—according to Aztec legend—in a female deity. The civilization's ideographic writings indicate that the very

first agave plant sprouted from the grave of Mayahuel, the goddess of fertility. In that light, teguila is the distilled soul of a heroine.



Durangan woman who allegedly joined the movement that would spark the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s. During the battles that followed, she served as a symbol for the soldaderas (female soldiers) who themselves became key figures in fighting the revolutionary war.

In modern-day Mexico, the term adelita is used to refer to any woman who stands up for her rights. Last year, proprietor Chris Radomski brought forth a new tequila brand into the world: La Adelita, named in honor of these renegades. Produced at Hacienda la Capilla—a small, family-run distillery in the Los Altos region of Jalisco—the tequila is made with agave sourced from the Highlands DO, which ranges from 5,700 to 7,000 feet above sea level. Because of the low temperatures experienced at this high elevation, agave from the red soils of this area takes longer to mature, developing a sweeter, fruitier, and more floral character along the way.

La Adelita's coveted Los Altos agave is 100% estate grown and carefully hand-harvested by Hacienda la Capilla's adept *iimadors* (farmers), who possess an unparalleled knowledge of the agave plant that's been passed down from generation to generation. Radomski describes their process as "piña by piña," adding that "the reason our tequila tastes so pure is because every single one of those piñas was

ready to be picked." Only when the size, weight, and color of the plant have met the jimadors' standards and its sugar level has achieved a minimum 35% Brix during field tests is the piña deemed suitable for production; this usually takes five to seven years.

La Adelita is produced in small batches—only 1,200 cases made it into the U.S. in 2019. Steamed in an autoclave (large steam oven), the piñas are crushed and double-distilled in 100-year-old copper stills post-fermentation. (Double distillation is employed to concentrate the tequila's flavors, increase aromatics, and create a smoother character.) The spirit is then aged in used American whiskey casks. Once these 200-liter oak barrels cross the border, they undergo a secondary toasting to achieve a medium char.

Radomski, who cofounded Hundred Acre Wine Group, likens the harvesting and distillation processes of La Adelita to the production of fine wine.

"I've really tried to translate as much as possible over to the production of tequila," he explains. "In this day and age, where so much tequila is mass produced, La Adelita is one of the few single-estate tequilas out there. There's zero manipulation, no additives or anything like that, and as a result all the expressions truly represent the purity of the agave that comes from this great terroir."

Just as his tequila brand honors women of great fortitude, Radomski likewise set out to recognize female

fighters this year via a selection process that was just as discerning as that of his jimadors and distiller. Read on to meet the two collaborators whom he has affectionately deemed the "Women of La Adelita."

The Tireless Worker

Leslie Nguyen hardly looks a day over 25, yet she's worked in the service industry for 20 years. From her humble



beginnings at Burger King to her success today as the owner of four restaurants—two in Orange County, California, and two in Houston, Texas— Nguyen has come a long way through dogged determination and hard work.

In fact, we lost count tallying the number of jobs the self-proclaimed workaholic has had over the past two decades, not least because Nguyen somehow maintained bartending and serving gigs at two or three different establishments at a time. It wasn't until she helped to run a sports bar for a young couple in

Laguna Niguel that she realized she too was capable of proprietorship.

"They were absentee owners, but I loved working for them—they actually inspired me to open up my first bar," she explains. "I was pretty much running [their place] on my own and thought, 'If they can do it, I can do it.' Working for a small mom-and-pop shop like that really helped me to see this, because prior to that I had always

> worked for corporate restaurants."

The couple purchased another bar where Nguyen also worked, allowing her to save up some money until their divorce (and subsequent release of employees) propelled her into her own venture. Using her savings while partnering with a fellow bartender who brought on an investor, Nguyen opened The Daily Dose Sports Lounge. Later she would meet a far more simpatico business partner, John Reed, and together they'd open Newport Beach's beloved Bosscat Kitchen + Libations in 2014 (where, of course, they pour La Adelita). Three more restaurants would follow.

Nguyen has recently embarked on a new project, Miss. Mini Donuts, with plans to set up licensing for the brand. "I'd like to help other women like me. who work hard and want their own business but don't want that overhead or maybe can't afford that larger initial investment,"

she says, adding that the challenges she had to overcome went beyond finances. As a female entrepreneur, she was often underestimated; she also faced struggles with depression and alcohol addiction (she's been sober for five years). But these obstacles have only made her stronger.

To Radomski, Nguyen's personal and professional triumphs make her an obvious "Woman of La Adelita." "I love the woman warrior aspect of La Adelita—it feels a bit like me," she acknowledges.





The Driven Nurturer

Perhaps you know the British actress Gabrielle Anwar from her breakout role as Al Pacino's dance partner in Scent of a Woman, or as Princess Margaret Tudor in Showtime's The Tudors, or as Fiona Glenanne on Burn Notice. But you might not know her as a devoted board member of Pikler Lóczy USA, an organization committed to the mental health of children. In fact, her real-life philanthropic efforts are vast—from the Make-a-Wish Foundation to animal welfare—but child advocacy is at the center of her altruism.

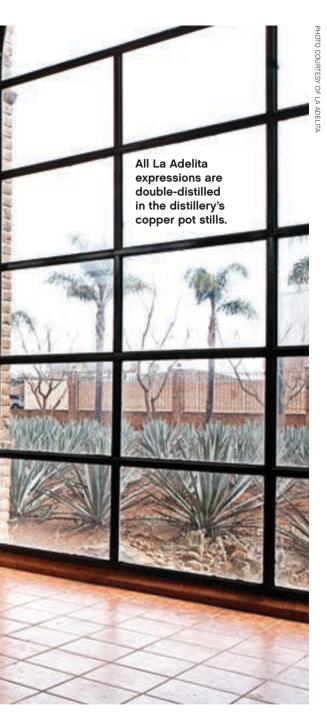
"My goal until I perish," says Anwar,

"is to teach caregivers and parents to raise their children with so much affection, respect, and self-esteem that it may then affect their physical wellness, physiological wellness, and psychological wellness. Which may in turn—and there is some scientific proof of this—prevent cancer and various terminal diseases from taking effect in a child's incredibly vulnerable body."

This lifelong mission is reflected in some of Anwar's writings about the life of Dr. Emmi Pikler (the pediatrician who founded the Pikler Institute). Anwar will be the first to tell you that writing is her greatest passion, and while her

eloquence in conversation hints at her talent, what comes through most clearly in speaking with her is her kindness.

"Self-esteem and respect are up there for me in how to interact with not only my children but everybody—whether it's business or personal or family or the cashier at the supermarket," says Anwar. She attributes her generosity of spirit to her mother, who has served as one of the biggest inspirations in her life—but "every mother [is inspiring]. I believe that we moms are supreme beings sent from the gods to raise better and better children," adds Anwar, only half-jokingly. "It's a huge



responsibility that's easier said than done. I think it's the most difficult vocation on the planet—the least respected and the most important."

Regarding Radomski's recognition of her as not only an incredible mother but also an acclaimed actress, writer, and philanthropist, Anwar says, "I think all women have the spirit of Adelita deep within. I feel like we're warriors and we have been for centuries—it's just, do you get in touch with that inner warrior in your lifetime or not? It's available to each of us, I really believe it. But [it] boils back to our early childhood and whether we're encouraged to be that warrior."



La Adelita produces five expressions of tequila.

Tasting Notes

Late last year, our sister publication *The SOMM Journal* gave La Adelita Añejo the Award of Excellence during the Concours d'Spirits competition at SommCon San Diego. Read on for Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May's reviews.

La Adelita Blanco Pungent aromas of lime-juiced agave—tart, ripe, and sweet—lead to a zing of spiced vanilla bean on the tongue, with a warming effect that melts into a chocolate coating. The spirit finishes with a wet-stone sensation, followed by a settling sweetness. **94**

La Adelita Reposado Perfumed with dill and just-ripened agave, this expression is semi-sweet yet buffered by salinity; toffee, oak, and walnut dot the palate with dryness. The edgy texture grips and almost tightens the tongue before a bold finish of tobacco and mocha. **94**

La Adelita Black Añejo Cristalino This spirit offers up a salty, pulpy nose with additional aromas of cashew, anise, and oak. A sweetness highlights that first sip, sparked by white pepper and nectarine zest; notes of peach nectar ensue, bringing on a velvety finish. **96**

La Adelita Añejo The nose picks up expressive and direct scents of buttercream, lime, and fresh agave. Powerful in its bold flavors, the palate has a vegetal character that emphasizes well-integrated cedar and butterscotch. Well balanced and quite dramatic. **96**

La Adelita Extra Añejo Following succulent waves of honeyed heather, sassafras, marzipan, and apricot nectar, flavors of sweet milk chocolate and white-peppered orange blossom arouse the palate. A continuing fragrance envelops the senses for a memorable, Cognac-like sipping experience. 97

A Peaceful Place to Produce flat top hills wines with the

FOURTH GENERATION OF THE C. MONDAVI FAMILY

story by Liz Thach, MW / photos by Hardy Wilson

. Mondavi & Family released its new brand, Flat Top Hills, in select U.S. markets last year to offer accessible premium wines with a touch of Napa class. Produced at the family's winery in St. Helena and designed to play in the \$13-\$18 price range, the five wines in the series—Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rosé, and a Red Blend—are jointly crafted by Randy Herron and fourth-generation winemaker Angelina Mondavi. I recently met with Herron and Mondavi at Sky & Vine in downtown Napa's Archer Hotel to talk about their project.

"Our goal," said Herron, "is to craft wines that are super-approachable and easy to drink. We started developing Flat Top Hills two years ago, because we have such excellent fruit coming from our vineyards in the Dunnigan Hills AVA. We realized the quality would be perfect for a premium brand positioned between our Charles Krug wines, which are ultra-premium and luxury-priced, and our value-priced line of CK Mondavi and Family wines."

The Terroir Behind the Name

Asked about the brand name, Mondavi set the scene. "My sisters and I used to spend weekends hiking in our family vineyards in the Dunnigan Hills AVA and swimming and fishing in the many ponds on the property," she explained. "[It's] composed of undulating hills with flat tops; we used to love to run up through the vines to reach the summits."

When the marketing team heard her describe the area, they immediately latched on to the phrase "flat-top hills" as a great way to define the brand. It's perfectly illustrated by the clean white label, which Mondavi called "modern-



C. Mondavi's Flat Top Hills wines are crafted by Randy Herron and Angelina Mondavi.

style, with an edgy touch," adding that "it also represents the newest generation of winemakers in the family. My sisters, cousins, and I call ourselves 'G4' for the fourth generation."

Mondavi still visits the Dunnigan Hills vineyards several times a month and even more frequently during harvest. "I enjoy taking my dog Bailey, a Fox Red Labrador, with me to walk through the vines," she said. "It is a peaceful place that brings back fond memories of my childhood."

The Dunnigan Hills vineyard was purchased by her grandfather nearly 30 years ago; today it consists of more than 900 acres of vines. Farmed sustainably, it's still home to abundant wildlife—Mondavi herself has seen

coyotes, rabbits, storks, herons, hawks, and even a mountain lion there. "It is a great region for growing quality grapes," noted Mondavi, "because it doesn't get as hot as other regions of the Central Valley—[it's] usually about 10 degrees cooler, with heavy fog in the summer months. We selected special blocks within the vineyard and have spent more time on canopy management to ensure we achieve the highestquality grapes for this series."

While Flat Top Hills is made primarily with these grapes, supplementary fruit comes from Monterey County, Lodi, and Paso Robles. "We want to have some flexibility in crafting the wines," explained Herron, "and in some vintages we might not have enough



fruit produced in our vineyard, or we may need to add different flavors from other regions."

The Winemaking Process

The grapes are harvested at night and transferred to the Charles Krug winery in St. Helena for processing, fermentation, and aging. As the oldest winery in Napa Valley, Charles Krug has a

grandfathered production permit, so it has the capacity to add new brands. Established in 1861, it was purchased by the Mondavi family in 1943 for \$75,000.

"For the Sauvignon Blanc and Rosé," said Herron, "we like to keep them fresh and fruity with crisp acidity, so we ferment and age in stainless steel—but the Sauvignon Blanc has a small amount of

lees contact to provide more texture." The rosé, meanwhile, is made not by the saignée method of bleeding the juice off red grapes but by the more expensive direct-press method. Composed of an unusual blend of primarily Grenache and Dolcetto, it's relatively dark-hued, showing a brilliant pink.

The Chardonnay and both red wines are aged in oak. In order to determine the best wood for each wine, Herron and Mondavi analyzed over 140 different samples. In the end, they decided to age the Cabernet Sauvignon for 14-16 months in predominantly French barrels with a touch of American oak; the red blend is aged in Hungarian oak for 18-24 months, while the Chardonnay sees a small amount of French oak for around six months.

Ultimately, Flat Top Hills offers excellent quality for the price point. As Mondavi said, "We are upping the ante on this new premium product line. After all, our family has been making wine for over 100 years. It's not like we're starting from scratch."

Tasting Notes

Flat Top Hills 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$14) Fresh, crisp, and aromatic, this lean and lovely white comes alive with scents of tropical fruit. The palate radiates white flowers and sweet citrus. 90 — Meridith May

Flat Top Hills 2018 Chardonnay, California (\$14) This textural beauty allures with aromas of key lime. From there, it holds its richness in check, but its expressive nature is apparent. The mouthfeel is superb, with notes of succulent stone fruit and ripe pineapple. 91 —M.M.

Flat Top Hills 2016 Red Blend, California (\$16) Awash with mouthwateringly tart black cherry and white-peppered mocha, it wakes up the palate with its fine balance of acidity and fruit. Notes of brush and tangy herbs lend more character. 91 — M.M.

Flat Top Hills 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$16) Supple and full-bodied, this expressive red offers heaven-scented violets and jasmine integrated with blueberry and pomegranate. It's redolent with floral notes against a backdrop of orange peel and blue fruit. Savory and saline hints mark the finish, and good acidity makes it a great food partner. **92** —*M.M.*

Flat Top Hills 2018 Rosé, California (\$14) This exuberant rosé glows with a brilliant pink color and delivers a delightful medley of fresh berries, including lit-from-within strawberry and raspberry, plus a note of watermelon. Wrapped in a creamy mouthfeel, it brightens with a refreshing acidity. 90 —Liz Thach



WINEMAKER SPOTLIGHT PASO ROBLES, CA NDURING PORTFOLIO by Jonathan Cristaldi





VINTAGE WINE ESTATES APPOINTS BLAKE KUHN AS REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF WINEMAKING FOR THE CENTRAL COAST AND OPENS A NEW TASTING ROOM IN PASO ROBLES

f the name Blake Kuhn isn't on your radar yet, it's about to be. While earning a degree in biology and environmental sciences at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in the mid-1990s, Kuhn worked in local restaurants and fondly recalls introducing consumers to Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays from Qupé and Laetitia Vineyard & Winery. Today, both brands, which were acquired by Vintage Wine Estates (VWE) in the past two years, are Central Coast icons—and as fate would have it, Kuhn is now Director of Winemaking at Qupé (which is produced at Laetitia), having taken the reins from Bob Lindquist in 2019. "It's an incredible responsibility, and I'm honored to take it on," says Kuhn, who also serves as Regional Director of Winemaking for VWE's Central Coast properties.

Kuhn recalls working the floor at Citronelle, the acclaimed Santa Barbara restaurant helmed by the late Michel Richard: "We did a lot of winemaker dinners with folks like Brian Babcock of Babcock Winery, Jim Clendenen of Au Bon Climat, and, of course, Bob Lindquist of Qupé, which is [how] we first met. Around 1999, I was thinking that winemaking could be a great fit for me personally," says Kuhn. Fastforward a decade, and—after extension courses at UC Davis and a gig at R.H. Phillips' Toasted Head—Kuhn found himself back on the Central Coast. specifically the Paso Robles area, working for Clayhouse Wines.

"It was a small family operation, and I'm a surfer and fisherman. I wanted to be close to the water and raise my family there," Kuhn explains. (He has two daughters-Mylee, 14, and Charly, 11—and his wife, Jenn, is a librarian at the local elementary school.)

At Clayhouse, Kuhn did it all, from winemaking to compliance and ordering. "We grew Clayhouse at a time when red blends were going

showcase all of the brands he's now overseeing. In December 2019, VWE unveiled Wines of the West, a community-focused tasting room offering two different experiences: a more formal bar serving Clayhouse and Purple Cowboy in front and a more casual. eclectic space called the CAN-tina in back, where quests can sample canned wines from If You See Kay and Alloy Wine Works.

Getting into canned wine was a no-brainer for VWE CEO/founding partner Pat Roney and President Terry Wheatley. According to a July 2019 report on Nielsen.com. the canned wine market is now worth \$70 million, with sales up 70%. Still, VWE's canned brands "are small-production runs," notes Kuhn, who adds that he's really excited about fine-tuning their quality. "It's not a novelty anymore," he says, "and I believe the best way to make

as well as Z Block for Syrah; Alta, a Biodynamically farmed section; and of course, our famous Y Block"; what's more, the team is "working on developing a Qupé tasting room . . . in an 1890 ranch house" on the Laetitia property. Finally, he promises (albeit without divulging details), "We also made some new Qupé wines, which will be available in 2021."

And speaking of the Laetitia property, Kuhn notes that the winery has seen "a lot of upgrades and a lot of capital investment—new barrels and tanks and freshening everything up and making sure we are poised for success." With just 300 acres on the 2,000acre Arroyo Grande estate planted to vines, there is also potential for growth under winemaker Eric Hickey. Having long overseen the production of Laetitia's still wines (his first vintage was 2000), Hickey has now taken over



"IT WAS A FAST AND FURIOUS YEAR WITH A TON OF CHANGE. I WENT FROM MAKING JUST CLAYHOUSE TO MAKING QUPÉ AND OVERSEEING THE PRODUCTION OF CLAYHOUSE, PURPLE COWBOY, ALLOY WINE WORKS, AND IF YOU SEE KAY." -BLAKE KUHN

bonkers," he says. "We had Adobe Red and Clayhouse Cabernet, and then VWE acquired Clayhouse Wines in 2016. At the time, we were making 1,000 cases of Cabernet, and I thought we could do more; Clayhouse's owners, the Middleton family, also owned Red Cedar Vineyard and there was a lot of potential there." Noting the vineyard's location on the east side of Paso Robles in the San Juan Creek and Estrella sub-AVAs, he adds, "It all tied in perfectly with VWE's Purple Cowboy wines."

Kuhn's appointment to Qupé has coincided with the opening of a new venue in Paso Robles where he can

a name for yourself is to make damn good wine! There's no reason not to include great fruit. Getting people used to the package change was a challenge, but in the can the wine is fresh and early to market."

Wines of the West will also exclusively feature some new projects from Kuhn, including "small-production lots out of various Paso Robles AVAs that were sourced from elite vineyards or small or newly producing vineyards that I go out and find," he says. "Most of these bottlings will range from about 120 to 200 cases."

As for the production of Qupé and Laetitia, Kuhn points out, "These are heritage brands"—which doesn't mean there isn't room for progress under VWE ownership. For Qupé, he explains, "We resigned X Block, which is an incredible Syrah block,

the role of sparkling winemaker from his father, Dave Hickey. (Dave retired in 2019 after a 35-year career spent helping to shape the identity of coolclimate sparkling wine from the Arroyo Grande AVA.)

Reflecting on all that happened in 2019, Kuhn acknowledges that "it was a fast and furious year with a ton of change. I went from making just Clayhouse to making Qupé and overseeing the production of Clayhouse, Purple Cowboy, Alloy Wine Works, and If You See Kay. I'm focused on maintaining the individual identity for each brand and the house style, which is really important for me. The way to do that is by securing the vineyards that have been traditional sources of fruit for each brand. That's super-important, and Pat Roney and Terry Wheatley are well on board with that."



A LOOK INSIDE WINES OF THE WEST

Sharing space with Heirloom Kitchen, which serves up California farm-fresh food seven days a week, the front section of Wines of the West offers a traditional tasting experience where guests can sample the wines of Clayhouse and Purple Cowboy. The former is a mix of Rhône-driven GSM blends, Malbec, and Cabernet-based wines, while the latter is Bordeaux-centric, composed of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet blends. Side by side, the two brands highlight the classic varieties of Paso Robles' west side and inspire debate among guests: Rhône or Bordeaux—which shines brighter here?

In the back of the house, the aptly named CAN-tina is where guests can enjoy If You See Kay rosé and red wines along with VWE's widely distributed brand Alloy Wine Works—all directly from the can, of course. For more information, visit pasowinesofthewest.com.



Ever-Interesting Times

ast October, Heineken USA executives assembled in downtown Los Angeles for their Western Region Distributor meeting; held at the chic Convene event space in the Bunker Hill neighborhood, the conference detailed future plans for the company's flagship brand as well as its subsidiaries Dos Equis, Amstel Light, Tecate, and Red Stripe.

Heineken USA President/CEO Maggie Timoney highlighted the major developments of 2019, most notably the launch of Heineken 0.0. As beer sales overall saw a decline in 2018, the brand got creative and introduced the non-alcoholic beer in the U.S. last January after a promising 2017 debut in Europe. The results "exceeded all of our expectations," Timoney said, adding that Heineken USA's "vision is to become the most innovative and exciting U.S. beverage company by 2023"—perhaps suggesting that

the brand will branch out to other products beyond beer in the near future.

In a heartening development for the company, beer consumption looked to be on the upswing in 2019, with canned beer seeing an increase in sales. "Cans are growing," said Chief Sales Manager Jim Sloan. "We're up 6% on single-serve [cans], 2% on 12-packs, and 2% on 16-oz. cans." Aptly enough, then, all brands will undergo a redesign, with Heineken, Amstel, Tecate, and Dos Equis packaging all featuring a bolder font that wraps around the can and larger emblems that immediately stand out on the shelf.

Celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, Amstel will match its bottle labels and secondary packaging to the rebranding of its cans; a new marketing campaign with golf legend Phil Mickelson, meanwhile,

will aim to reinvigorate the premium lager's popularity with baby boomers. (Expect to see Amstel commercials during the next PGA tour.) HEINEKEN REVEALS ITS PLANS FOR 2020 AT ITS WESTERN REGION DISTRIBUTOR MEETING.

by Eric Marsh



AAGE COURTESY OF HEINEKEN USA

Last year's U.S. launch of nonalcoholic brew Heineken 0.0 was a major success.

President/CEO Maggie Timoney was among the members of Heineken USA's leadership who presented at the meeting.





As Ali Payne, Heineken USA's Vice President of Marketing–Mexican Beer Portfolio, put it, Dos Equis is "a brand built on advertising and fantastic content . . . that defines 'interesting.'" She also noted, however, that it needs fresher, more relevant content marketed to a younger demographic. The screens behind her then played commercials from Dos Equis' new "Interesting Beer for Interesting Times" campaign; set to launch later

Chief Sales Officer Jim Sloan.



Red Stripe's new campaign encourages consumers to "Feel the Good Vibes."

this year, the commercials explore topics germane to millennials, namely absurdities posed by the digital age. While some are outlandish and based on conspiracies, they all make for funny and thought-provoking (if not paranoia-inducing) attention grabbers for consumers of all ages.

Tecate will also see a complete rebranding that focuses on a younger demographic. Its target audience is Mexican-Americans who, like the brand itself, have "one foot in Mexico and one foot in America." The brand has long sponsored boxing matches, which Senior Brand Director Oscar Martinez implied tend to attract the attention of an older demographic; however, as the brand works to capture a younger audience, he noted that "the conversation has shifted from 45-year-old men talking about boxing to 21- to

35-year-old men and women talking about Tecate."

HITCH SALES OFFICER

To further these efforts, Tecate recently started sponsoring music festivals such as Pal Norte, one of the largest events of its kind in Mexico. Other 2020 launches include a thicker, waterproof carrying case for Tecate's 12-packs and a 24-oz. canned Michelada made with Mexican spices.

Finally, classic Jamaican lager Red Stripe will put the rising prominence of legalized cannabis at the forefront of its new "Feel the Good Vibes" campaign, replacing its "It's always 5:20 somewhere" slogan with, of course, "It's always 4:20 somewhere." The brand will also supply bars with tin cans as its recommended packaging of choice in place of pint glasses. It's a laid-back move indeed, but just remember, these are "interesting times."

Anthony Dias BLUĖ REVIEWS

Presented by (BLUE) LIFESTYLE

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

85-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

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



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

For additional Blue Reviews, go to bluelifestyle.com.

Prices are for 750-mL bottles unless otherwise noted.

IMPORTED

🖊 La Playa 2015 Axel Primero Red Blend, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$30) A charming and smooth blend of six Bordeaux varieties (the usual five plus Carménère), with a dark garnet color. Tangy, rich, balanced, and lush with style and deep notes of plum and berries; long and impressive.

Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Le Sol Syrah, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$105) Deep cherry color with a satiny texture; intense, juicy, and complex with notes of blackberry and toast, a tangy finish, and great length. A convincing demonstration of Hawke's Bay's potential with this variety.

KOBRAND

93 Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Aroha Pinot Noir, Te Muna Road, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$150) Ripe cherry nose with a smooth texture, fresh black-cherry flavors, and tangy acidity; elegant and bright.

KOBRAND

93 Domaine Alain Gras 2017 Saint-Romain Blanc, Côte de Beaune, France (\$46) Silky and ripe with juicy acidity; a fresh and lovely expression of great farming and winemaking.

VINEYARD BRANDS



9 Dr. Loosen 2018 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Spätlese, Mosel, Germany (\$32) Smooth, rich, and creamy with sweet peach and apple; refined and ripe with a lengthy finish. LOOSEN BROS. USA



Mod Sélection O Rosé Vintage 2008, France (\$550) What an exquisite Champagne! Pale in color but intense in flavor, it's bright, fresh, and refined, with hints of raspberry and cherry preceding a remarkable finish that conjures baked apple. It's more than just a wine: It's an

experience.



Mod Sélection Mod Selection Réserve Vintage 2008, France (\$480) A seamless and magical blend of Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir with a silky, graceful texture; fine mousse; and exquisite flavor. Ethereal, memorable, and long, it's a remarkable achievement.



Mod Sélection NV Blanc de Blancs Champagne, France (\$450) This is elegance in a bottle: an exceptional all-Chardonnay expression from an eye-opening house. Silky, tiny bubbles announce a refined, scintillating wine of great power and finesse; it's smooth, luscious, and balanced with a long, lovely finish.



Mod Sélection NV 6 Blanc de Noirs Champagne, France (\$450) Luscious, rich, and delicious with ripe berry notes, deep complexity, layered flavors, and refined mousse. With a long, chiseled finish, it's another stunning wine from this superb producer.

Gradis'ciutta 2015 Riserva ■ White Wine, Collio, Italy (\$43) A lush nose leads to ripe stone fruit; the palate is equal parts rich, deep, and round, with a smooth, juicy, and balanced style.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Heavensake Junmai Daiginjo Dassai, Japan (\$106) Luscious with depth and a soft nose as spice joins creamy notes of vanilla. Tangy, long, complex, and elegant.

HEAVEN DISTRIBUTION

👤 Joto Sake Maboroshi Daiginjo The One with the Clocks, Hiroshima, Japan (\$45) Soft, fresh, and refined, with rich, fruity, and deep flavors. KOBRAND

MAAL Paciencia X-XI-XII Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$199) Dark cherry color with a rich berry nose; intense, graceful, and toasty. Complex and layered, with spice and berry notes giving way to an endless finish.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Poliziano 2015 Asinone, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Italy (\$63) Deep ruby color and a lush berry nose; silky-smooth, clean, juicy, and tangy; elegant, complex, and lovely with good length.

DALLA TERRA

Saiya Brewery Yuki No Bosha Junmai Ginjo Cabin in the Snow, Akita, Japan (\$38) Rich, aromatic nose; intense, luscious, and fruity with depth and a very long finish.

KOBRAND

Tenuta di Fessina 2017 A'Puddara, Etna, Italy (\$66) Lush and complex, this is a stunning sequel to last year's Tre Bicchieri winner. Floral and ripe, silky and elegant—it's a remarkable wine abundant in tropical fruit and citrus. VINEYARD BRANDS



Santi 2014 Santico, Amarone della Valpolicella, Italy (\$45) Deep ruby color with a rich, fruity nose; intense flavors of concentrated berries and toast; integrated and balanced. 65% Corvina, 30% Rondinella, and 5% Molinara.

FREDERICK WILDMAN

BLUE REVIEWS



Alexana 2016 Signature Pinot Noir, Revana Vinevard, Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$75) Deep ruby color and a rich cherry nose; smooth, juicy, and savory with tangy cherry and hints of toast, vanilla, and spice. Elegant, complex, and long. REVANA FAMILY VINEYARDS



Santi 2012 Pro-**†** emio, Amarone della Valpolicella, Italy (\$60) The lush, mature, and earthy nose leads to a complex and concentrated palate with prune and blackberry flavors. Long, balanced, and refined.

FREDERICK WILDMAN

DOMESTIC



92 Archery Summit 2017 Chardonnay, Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon (\$48) Ripe nose of pear and vanilla; fresh, juicy, and balanced with a creamy texture and tangy acid structure.

> CRIMSON WINE GROUP (LEUCADIA NATIONAL CORP.)

Dutton-Goldfield 2017 Mo-🚄 relli Lane Vineyard Zinfandel, Russian River Valley (\$50) Deep crimson color; fresh, lush, and lively with surpris-

ingly elegant flavors of berry and cassis.



1 Gary Farrell 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$45) Opaque ruby color and a soft cherry nose; smooth with bright cherry flavors, crisp acidity, and a long finish. FYI: Farrell is no longer associated with this label.

VINCRAFT GROUP

J. Christopher 2016 Cuveé Special Selection Pinot Noir,

Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$45) Medium ruby color; silky and bright with a tangy, linear style; lively, fresh, and long. Crafted in partnership with local winemaker lay Somers, this label is Ernst Loosen's Oregon experiment.

Long Meadow Ranch 2016 Chardonnay, Anderson Valley (\$42) Racy and crisp, juicy and vivid; refreshing with good length.

Maggy Hawk 2017 Afleet Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$65) Vibrant ruby color with a ripe cherry nose; velvety and rich with dense flavors of cherry and raspberry. Lush yet mellow and balanced.

Quench + Temper 2016 Chapter I, BÃS Vineyard, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$60) Smooth aromas of plum; lush, dense, and spicy with a satiny texture. Chewy and rich with layers of flavor, it's an impressive statement. 50% Grenache, 40% Mourvèdre, and 10% Syrah.

Quench + Temper 2017 Chap-ter II, BÃS Vineyard, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$60) Dark ruby color with a spicy nose and rich layers of ripe plum and berries. Grenache (20%) and Syrah (20%) support a large helping of Graciano (60%), a tangy Spanish Rioja variety; spice and vanilla add to the charm.



Piña Napa Valley 2015 Ames Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$85) Deep cherry hue with a luscious nose; silky and juicy with racy berry notes and hints of spice and herbs; tangy and long.



Rabble Wine Com-**1** pany 2017 Amor Fati Syrah, Murmur Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$60) Dense, rich, and smooth with lovely blackberry and spice; lush, long, ripe, and sweet—but not heavy.



? Robert Hall Winery 2017 Cavern Select Syrah, Paso Robles (\$45) Dark cherry color; juicy with flavorful notes of blackberry and sugarplum. Deep, concentrated, and intense, but with fine structure and balance—it's the complete package.

Rocca Family Vineyards 2015 Chardonnay, UV Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$65) Golden color with a ripe nose; silky, dry, and crisply refreshing. Tangy, lively, and racy with balance and length.

Shafer Vineyards 2017 TD-9, Shafer Vineyarus 2000.
Napa Valley (\$60) Predominantly Merlot, with Malbec and Cabernet adding complexity and style. Dark ruby color with a rich plum nose and a lovely, smooth texture; lush with depth, intensity, and elegance.



5 Sosie Wines 2016 Vivio Vineyard Syrah, Bennett Valley, Sonoma County (\$38) Velvety with complex flavors of ripe blackberry and spice; deep and dense with balance and a long, smooth finish.

Sosie Wines 2016 ✓ Vivio Vinevard Roussanne, Bennett Vallev, Sonoma County (\$38) Golden color with robust vanilla on the nose and palate; silky texture and good acid structure. Clean, creamy, and toasty: rich and balanced with a finish that persists.

9 Tayson Pierce Wines 2017 O Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$65) Smooth with lovely notes of vanilla and toasty oak; juicy, elegant, and long with finesse, style, and bright acidity.

Three Sticks Wines 2017 Wa-Lala Vineyard Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$70) Lush ruby color with notes of ripe cherry on the nose and palate; succulent yet crisp and polished.



Tooth & Nail 2017 The Stand, Paso Robles (\$36) Smooth, luscious, and rich with ripe blackberry and spice; long and dense with a silky texture. 85% Petite Sirah, 14% Syrah, and 1% Viognier.

95 TOR Wines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Vine Hill Ranch, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$225) Dark, intense cherry color; spicy, deep, and juicy with a rich texture and graceful flavors of plum, blackberry, toasty oak, and vanilla. Huge cellaring potential.

TOR Wines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$225) Fragrant and rich with spice and smooth, bright berry notes. Layered, lovely, and graceful, it's a great wine from Napa's most famous vineyard.

TOR Wines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Tierra Roja Vinevard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$155) Deep ruby color; refined, rich, and spicy with lush plum and blackberry; balanced, ripe, and generous, with length and complexity.

TOR Wines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Oakville, Napa Valley (\$95) Silky and intricate with juicy plum, spice, and toast; fresh, balanced, and long with lovely depth.

TOR Wines 2018 Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$55) Luscious with a satiny texture; rich and dense, but not heavy; bright and long, tangy and deep.

VALUE

Adami Garbel Brut Prosecco Superiore, Italy (\$15) Dry, fresh, and crisp; racy and smooth with lovely, clean flavors.

DALLA TERRA WINERY DIRECT

BLUE REVIEWS

Berton Vineyards 2019 Shiraz Rosé, Riverina, Australia (\$14) Racy, dry, and silky yet crisp; charming, tangy, and balanced. Bursting with strawberry, this is a terrific value with a lasting finish. CABERNET CORPORATION

O Bread & Butter 2018 Chardonnay, California (\$15) Bright and fresh with juicy fruit and a hint of toasty oak; balanced, clean, and long. A great value that could easily be mistaken for a much pricier wine.

1 Chandon Brut, California (\$19) Ripe, succulent nose; smooth, lush, and rounded with a dense, fruity style. Rich, elegant, and long with depth and considerable finesse.

Domaine Bousquet 2018 Reserve Chardonnay, Tupungato, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$18) Bright, fresh, and juicy with crisp acidity and a smooth texture; tangy, balanced, and long; quite a good value.

WISD, LLC

Gran Verano 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Chile (3-Liter Bagin-Box: \$23) Smooth with citrus and other bright fruit flavors; a total charmer that shows how good Chile is at crafting Chardonnays.

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS



Kim Crawford 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) Grapefruit nose; juicy and bright citrus with a smooth, ripe hint of sweetness on the back of the palate. Layered and mellow, long and balanced.

CONSTELLATION WINE U.S.

S Jamieson Ranch Vineyards 2017 Light Horse Pinot Noir,

California (\$13) Pale ruby color; silky texture with juicy notes of raspberry; tangy, crisp, and decent with a lasting finish.



Lucky Rock Wine Co. 2018 County Cuvée Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$22) Medium ruby color; smooth and savory with complexity and depth; balanced, tangy, and subtle.

Villa Wolf 2018 Pinot Noir Rosé, Pfalz, Germany (\$12) Pale salmon color; dry and tart with racy acidity and crisp style; edgy, acidic, and long.

LOOSEN BROS, USA

SPIRITS

The GlenDronach Master **U** Vintage 1993 Aged 25 Years, Scotland (\$343) Smooth caramel nose;

creamy and rich with sweet, toasty oak and lush notes of dried fruit and flowers. Layered and complete with lovely depth, it's a classic Highland malt expression.

BROWN-FORMAN

Barr Hill Tom Cat Gin, USA (\$57) Medium amber color; complex with notes of caramel, wood, and toast; spicy, rich, and long with intense botanical flavors.



9 Disaronno • Originale Liqueur, Italy (\$25) A creamy and lush liqueur that will soon celebrate its 500th anniversary. Ruddy golden color with smooth, clean, and sweet flavors of honey and anise with hints of mint and white chocolate.

ILLVA SARONNO

O Partida Tequila Reposado, ✓ Mexico (\$45) Toasty agave nose; spicy, silky, and rich with finesse and fresh flavors of earthy agave. A lovely tequila that showcases the refined and elegant potential of reposado.

PARTIDA TEQUILA

Santo Tequila Blanco, ✓ Mexico (\$40) Soft agave nose; clean, creamy, and mellow with balance, spice, and a nice bite at the finish. Another winner from rocker Sammy Hagar—make your Margaritas with this stuff.

PARK STREET IMPORTS

🖊 Laphroaig Islay Single Malt Scotch Aged 16 Years, Scot-

land (\$90) Pale amber color and an intense nose. It's the full Laphroaig experience: toasty, smoky, and medicinal but smooth and almost sweet; salty and briny, with a shot of pepper on the finish.

LAPHROAIG IMPORT COMPANY



O Del Maguey Single Village Mezcal Las Milpas, Mexico (\$70) Earthy, smoky agave nose; smooth, toasty, and rich; spicy and nicely balanced between rustic and refined.

DEL MAGUEY CO.





LDDV



Yida de Louie Reposado
Tequila, Mexico (\$37)
Pale amber color; soft honey and agave nose; silky texture with hints of smoke and oak; smooth, rich, and aromatic with a lengthy, expressive finish.

I DDV

Oscillario (\$26) Smooth and clean—the result of being distilled ten times. Soft and neutral in flavor, with just a hint of vanilla; silky, lush, and pure with a mellow, long finish.

G'DAY IMPORTS

92 Bombora Vodka, Australia (1 liter; \$22) Refreshingly dry with just a little hint of vanilla. This is a vodka for the purist: Ten times distilled from grapes, it's a no-nonsense addition to any cocktail.

G'DAY IMPORTS

Mnob Creek Quarter Oak Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50) Medium amber color; nose of soft caramel and sweet oak. Smooth and toasty with flavors of honey, dried fruits, and spice; a connoisseur's bourbon, with lovely depth and classic style.



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Düsseldorf

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

Publisher's



Meridith May with her Australian Cattle Dog, Porter.

WINES



Cono Sur 2018 Bicicleta Viognier, Chile (\$12) While many Viogniers from warm climates are high in alcohol, this version—a product of Chile's mild and sunny days, cool nights, and foggy mornings—is only 13.6% ABV. Rounded out by butterscotch-dipped apricot, a burst of lemon verbena and chamomile makes for an intense fragrance. The palate possesses a

citrusy buoyancy that ranges from lemon tart to a zesty note of tangerine peel. 90

FETZER VINEYARDS



Three Pears 2018 Pinot Grigio, California (\$14) From the Lodi/Clarksburg regions, this crisp and angular Pinot Grigio is a superb food wine. Linen and honeysuckle are perfumed partners, paving the way for flavors of tart lemon and white grapefruit. Lively notes of Asian pear and an echo of salinity cleanse the palate further. 90

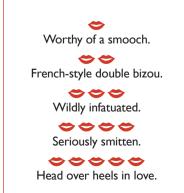






Alta Luna 2018 Pinot Grigio, Dolomite Alps, Italy (\$14) Stony and dry, with chalky minerality and lemon zest. The high point is the bright acidity, which cleanses and purifies the palate with sage and lime. 90 TAUB FAMILY COMPANIES







Ballard Lane 2018 Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$13) Rich and lively, this clean and focused white exudes a perfume of toasted coconut and cashew butter rimmed with lemon chiffon. Cedar meets minerality on the palate as toasted almond, fennel root, and crisp pear soften the tartness that arises from the finish of lemon peel. Fermented in stainless steel

(100% malolactic) and aged six to eight months in 25% new oak. 91

MILLER FAMILY WINES



The Crusher 2017 Red Blend, California (\$15) Bright and vibrant aromas of ripe fruit lend clues of what's to come in the flavor profile of this juicy, concentrated, and easy-drinking blend with good acidity. Cedar melds with tart notes of pomegranate and cherry before giving way to a finish of spiced plum and mocha. 90

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS



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Barón de Lev 2017 Varietales Tempranillo,

Rioja (\$15) Sourced from the winery's vineyards in Finca Los Almendros, this 100% Tempranillo shows the influence of the Mediterranean climate while representing the region's iconic variety. The flavor profile is classic, with sour cherry lending itself to the dry feel of the palate. Sturdy tannins and flavors of walnut and cocoa define the structured mouthfeel. Aged six months in American oak and an additional six in bottle, this is a fine food wine, thanks to bright fruit and Old World acidity. 89





7 Moons 2017 Red Blend,

California (\$13) Seven varieties are responsible for the yum factor of this soulful, inky black-purple wine: Syrah, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Zinfandel. Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Grenache. Its perfume runs deep and transfers to its flavor profile, which is wrapped in a silky mouthfeel. Black cherry, blueberry, white pepper, and luscious dark chocolate make for a multidimensional experience. 90

CONSTELLATION BRANDS





Casa da Passarella 2015 Tinto.

Serra da Estrela, Dão, Portugal (\$15) With a low ABV of 13%, this blend of 40% Touriga Nacional, 20% Tinto Roriz, 20% Alfrocheiro, and 20% Jaen was grown on granitic soils and makes for a fabulous food wine. Aged in French oak for eight months, it overdelivers as one of this month's great value finds. Dark chocolate and coffee accent aromas of ripe red berries as dusty tannins are softened by juicy notes of brandied plum. Soil and espresso bean impart structure. 92

M IMPORTS



ers and wild strawberry on the finish. 91

PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL



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The Great Oregon Wine Company 2017 Pinot

Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$20) Grapes sourced from four vineyards in the South Salem area express the character of lory and sedimentary soils. There's so much depth and nuance to this wine, beginning with its unique aromas of beet root, cranberry, and savory porcini mushroom.

On the palate, earthiness deepens the base notes, but the texture—a vibrant juiciness encourages the flavors of tart cherries, rose petals, spiced jasmine, and sassafras to swirl around in the mouth. Impressive! 92

INTEGRATED BEVERAGE GROUP



9999 Hahn Family Wines 2017

SLH Grenache, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$25) Scents of baking spices and black plums greet the nose of this complex red as spiced rhubarb and black cherry go wide and generous alongside mid-palate notes of cinnamon candy. Accompanied by good grip, balanced acidity, and finegrained tannins, the texture is

SLH

superb, and the lifting finish of lavender is a gift. 95

Publisher's PICKS



Chardonnay, El Centinela Estate, Casablanca Valley, Chile (\$26) Alluring aromas of lemon oil and vanilla custard lead to a palate of crisp white pear and white floral tones. Along with a light toast and an underlying stony salinity, high-toned acidity and a grapefruit-lime character come through with clarity. The result

balanced, and food friendly. 93

FETZER VINEYARDS







999 J. Lohr 2017 Vineyards & Wines Los Osos Merlot, Paso

Robles (\$15) For the price, this Merlot (with a little Malbec) wows: It's ripe and juicy, with aromas and flavors that bring out pretty tones of red and purple flowers. Luscious dark chocolate, vibrant acidity, and a savory finish keep the mouth hydrated. 92



Amador Cellars 2016 **Estate Reserve Grenache**

Noir, Amador County (\$30) From its scents of rhubarb and spice to its buoyant texture, which almost floats on the tongue, this expressive red grabbed our attention. It's ripe, round, and lovely, with notes of plum and cigar leaf dusted with nutmeg and white pepper. 92



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Alara 2018 Viognier, San Benito County (\$31) From California's Central Coast comes a floral beauty full of energy and seasoned with aromas of peach nectar. On the palate, a refreshing echo of wintergreen lends flair to flavors of pineapple upsidedown cake, bananas Foster, and lemon blossom. Aged in stainless steel, it has enough acidity to be food friendly, but it's a great sipper on its own. 92



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R 2017 Tempranillo,

Shake Ridge Ranch, Amador County (\$34) One of the best domestic Tempranillos I've tasted, with notes of bright rhubarb and cranberry tartness on the nose and palate that bring it to life. Orange peel, sour cherry, and chalky raspberry nod to its Spanish ancestry, and it's ripe and earthy on the



finish, with light and supple tannins. Hats off to owner leff Runquist, who saw his eponymous winery named Golden State Winery of the Year at the 2019 California State Fair Commercial Wine Competition. 94



Parducci 2015 Coro

Mendocino, Mendocino County (\$38) Aged 15 months in French and American oak, Coro is a signature blend specifically crafted from 100% Mendocino County grapes in accordance with the Consortium Mendocino bylaws. Wines that meet these qualifications must be Zinfandel-based (in this case, it's 60%) and blended with up to nine varieties (Coro incorporates Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, and Carignan) in a nod to the Italian field blends once characteristic of this region. We found this elegant wine to be one of Parducci's best, showing off juicy brightness and structure. An Old World acidity comes through, as do white-peppered notes of boysenberry, laurel, sage, and soy sauce. 94

Rombauer Vineyards 2017 Zinfandel, California (\$34) To craft this rich and spicy red, fruit was sourced mainly from El Dorado as well as additional vineyards in Sierra Foothills, Lake, and Napa counties (5% Petite Sirah was also blended in). With an ABV of 15.9%, it was aged for 16 months in American and French oak; the body weight

is apparent, with big and jammy blackberry notes joining sweet tobacco and brandied cherry. A dot of white pepper adds an accent toward the finish. 90



Chardonnay, Mitsuko's Vinevard, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$30) Deemed a "classic" Napa Valley vintage, 2018 was one of the longest harvests in Carneros since 2011. This 100% barrelfermented Chardonnay is aged nine months sur lie in 30% new French oak. Toasty cedar and bread dough greet the nose, followed by scents of vanilla and lemon spice. Unctuous on the palate, baked apple goes bright with a twist of lime as chamomile and tarragon keep a savory watch over stone fruit. An underlying flintiness persists. 93

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



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Alta Colina 2016 Old 900 Svrah, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$58) From the rolling hills of Paso Robles, this estate Syrah was aged sur lie in French oak for 22 months and broods with notes of tar and dried lavender. Backed by deep espresso, inky-black plum skin makes for a textural treat: In fact, the wine, named for the World War II aircraft flown by owner Bob Tillman's father, is so rich and luscious that it keeps unfolding by the minute, ultimately finishing with a sensual fudge-cake effect. 95



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Clos Pegase 2018

Père Anselme La Fiole du Pape (Non-Vintage),

Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France (\$40) Complete with a twisted bottle designed to look like it's been aged—dust and all—this shows all the characteristics one expects from an approachable, juicy, and balanced Grenache-and-Syrah-based CNP.The fruit shines through the high acidity, with plum and rhubarb taking

the lead on a great mouthfeel. Garrigue notes develop and dry the palate a bit, showing a maturity and joining an accent of white pepper. 92

MAISON BROTTE





Hahn Family Wines 2016 SLH Orchestral Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$90) This is a limited-production "field blend" of Pinot Noir clones, fermented and aged together to yield an estategrown beauty with depth and concentration of flavor and aromatics. Between broad strokes of rhubarb and brush, red berries and savory

spices are wrapped in cinnamon and

sage on a juicy mouthfeel. 96



Hestan Vinevards 2015 Stephanie Malbec, Napa Valley (\$55) Winemaker Jeff Gaffner co-ferments and implements a lengthy 28-month aging program in both French oak and bottle for this blend of 93% Malbec with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot from the Hestan Estate Vineyard in eastern Napa Valley. In addition to an elegant mouthfeel, it

offers up body weight, a chewy texture, and concentrated and engaging flavors of chocolate and plum, with underlying notes of fennel, dried violets, and cinnamon/ nutmeg. The tannins are slightly chalky, but the wine has a superb grip. 94



Publisher's PICKS



Shafer 2015 Hillside Select.

Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$310) I tasted this as a barrel sample at Premiere Napa Valley just over two years ago, and memory holds: I still recall the dense, almost syrup-like quality of black fruit, earth, and sage. Now released into the marketplace, this heralded 100% Cabernet Sauvignon still has time to develop, but after decanting, it proved more than worthy of praise. The fruit comes from Shafer's best hillside blocks, and given the dry conditions that year, smaller berries resulted in an extracted expression. Opulent aromas of cedar, leather, and coffee bean are almost Cognaclike, and on the palate, peppered licorice and blackberry perpetuate that syrupy density alongside teeth-gripping, chalky tannins. The elegance rises out of the glass once the wine opens up, exhibiting violets, sagebrush, and sweet meat. 97



Cuvaison 2017 Swan Pinot Noir, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$65) Introduced to us by Cuvaison President/CEO Dan Zepponi and longtime winemaker Steve Rogstad, Swan is one of the winery's small-lot and micro-lot projects. This particular expression was made with estate-grown fruit from a block of Swan Clone Pinot Noir and was aged 16 months in (33% new) French oak. Delicate yet distinctive scents of cherry, chili powder, and cedar are clear and precise. Both sweet and tart, cinnamon, red licorice. and pomegranate are tempered with a lovely array of floral notes and passion fruit. Tannins are silky and lithe. 95



Hillside Estate. Santa Maria Valley (\$45) A



superb vintage for an iconic label from a world-famous site, this majestic wine offers heady and lush aromas of chocolate. brandied blueberry, and heather. Floral notes surge on the palate, accompanied by blue fruit and high-toned acidity. Silky tannins lend a gliding effect to flavors of cinnamon and raspberry pie as sage and tarragon add a savory tone. 96

VINTAGE WINE ESTATE



Ackerman Family Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$95) From Napa's 16th sub-AVA—certainly its rising star—comes this rich, concentrated, and poignant red. It's a great representative of the region, with aromas of blueberry pie filling leading to a palate of spiced espresso bean. Texturally plush black and blue fruit is blanketed by velvety tannins—just impossibly supple. 95



Patel 2015 Malbec, Napa Vallev (\$125) This luxurious, silky red surpasses expectations for Malbec. Its mountain home in Stagecoach Vineyard is top real estate, with dark red dirt abundant in clay and iron. Bright, meaty, blood-iron aromas and a perfume of black cherry emanate from the glass before dark chocolate melts into café latte on the palate. A juiciness squeezes through spice and oak, finishing in a wash of black fruit. 96



SPIRITS



Heaven Hill Bottled-in-**Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$40) This seven-yearold 100-proof offering celebrates a heritage that dates back to 1939. Pungent aromas of figs and apricotflavored tobacco are laden

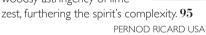
with maple. Redolent of

butterscotch, the creamy, rich mouthfeel reveals hints of peach cobbler and spiced cedar before a warming finish of apple tart. 94





The Glenlivet 14-Year-Old Cognac Cask **Selection Single Malt** Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$55) Alluring aromas of corn husk, peach, and honey precede flavors of brown rice layered atop ripe stone fruit, spearmint, and the creaminess of malted milk. A thread of minerality weaves through a woodsy astringency of lime





Lonerider Sherry Cask Finish Bourbon, USA (\$70) Apricot nectar fills the air alongside secondary aromas of butterscotch, cinnamon, and pecan. Despite its proof of 110.2, this bourbon is no outlaw, instead remaining approachable thanks to an underlying sweetness that seduces the palate. Flavors range from black-peppered

baked apple to saddle leather with hints of tobacco, cedar, and cinnamon. It's complex and satisfying. 94



dipped in milk chocolate. The warmth of the liquid makes the tongue glow, leaving behind flavors of orange peel and nougat. Sensational, 98

DUKE SPIRITS



is exquisite. 94

Papa's Pilar Blonde Rum, USA (\$30) Inspired by Ernest "Papa" Hemingway and his boat, Pilar, this handcrafted 84-proof rum sources its ingredients from throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and Florida; it then undergoes a solerastyle aging process. The nose includes chicory, butterscotch, white cedar, and melon, while the concentrated flavors center on white-peppered lemon zest, poached pear, candied apple, and chamomile. The mouthfeel









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arrels stashed in a church basement. A jug stowed in the hollow of a headstone atop a reverend's grave. A copper still concealed beneath a pigpen. These are just a few of the ways in which residents of the tiny farming town of Templeton, Iowa, hid their goods from the feds during Prohibition. During that time, the community distilled and bootlegged whiskey to supplement their income, working together to send their juice to speakeasies in Omaha, Kansas City, and Chicagowhere Templeton Rye became widely known as "The Good Stuff."

Presumably, their endeavors continued after the 21st Amendment was ratified, if only as a pastime. Certainly some locals continued to hone their craft, as illustrated by the fact that in 2006, Templeton Rye made its official (legal) debut in the U.S. market.

Right out of the gate, the product exceeded the brand founders' expectations; retailers and newfound devotees in this controlled state couldn't get enough of it. By 2008, to keep up with demand, co-founder Keith Kerkhoff recalls, "We told the



Templeton Rye Ambassador Tim Grimes at the distillery.



At a spry 87 years old. Darwin Haskin readies bottles for the production line. where they'll be filled and prepped for shipment.

state we would give them 4,500 cases over the course of three months." There remains some vestige of disbelief in his voice as he tells the story. "We gave them 1,500 cases a month—October, November, December—which is a lot of whiskey." Understandably, he thought that would satisfy Iowans well into the next year, so on January 1, 2009, the brand supplied just 500 cases, mindful of depleting its stock. "They called us four days later asking for more," Kerkhoff says with a hearty laugh. The predicament would prove to be an auspicious one: To ensure fair distribution among chain retailers and mom-and-pop stores, the state soon put Templeton Rye on allocation.

That led to stores establishing waiting lists for customers, sometimes over 300 names long. "It was amazing to witness," Templeton Rye Brand Ambassador Tim Grimes remembers, describing it as near pandemonium. "People would line up for it. They would chase down state trucks, follow them to the stores, and argue to get more than one bottle." Clearly, something big was on the horizon.

As its popularity continued to grow exponentially, the company ramped up production and prepared for its next big push. In 2010, Templeton Rye, with the help of Infinium Spirits, expanded distribution to New York and San Francisco, and by 2014 "The Good Stuff" was available in all 50 states.

Grimes notes that its success made a major impact on the whiskey industry. "If you go back to 2006, there were not many other ryes available," he explains. "[We're] proud to have been on the forefront of the rye whiskey revival [with] one of the first ryes in the market." Adds Kerkhoff, "We were one of the trailblazers that helped make the category what it is today."

Building for the Future

Situated halfway between Des Moines and Omaha, Templeton remains a small pastoral town: The population is 362 and the downtown area is roughly eight by five blocks. Driving down Main Street, you pass the post office, city hall, Templeton Savings Bank,

and the historic Still Bar and Grill. Templeton Rye occupies a 20-acre plot of land on the outskirts of town (which is to say four blocks west of Main Street). It opened in August 2018 as a \$37-million, state-of-the-art facility that includes a tasting room, gift shop, and museum dedicated to the history of distilling during Prohibition in Templeton and surrounding Carroll County. Employing 38 workers, the distillery itself has the capability to produce every style of American whiskey under one roof. Its copper column still can yield up to 500,000 gallons annually; its 54,000-square-foot maturation area is currently aging 22,000 barrels of liquid (between sourced whiskey stock and its own distillate, with enough space to store more than twice that); and the bottling line can send off some 2.8 million bottles a year.

That capacity is needed. "Over the past 18 months, we have grown our international distribution to 30 countries," says Shane Fitzharris, Executive Vice President of Global Sales. "As the American rye whiskey category grows,





Templeton Rye co-founder Keith Kerkhoff.

there is an increased demand from international importers and consumers, and we continue to search for strong distribution partners globally." Templeton's top-selling markets outside the U.S. are Germany, Australia, and Japan, but the brand has also penetrated markets in South Korea, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine. And Fitzharris says they aren't close to stopping: "We are on track to further increase our international footprint to 40 markets by the end of 2020."

The current Templeton Rye whiskey portfolio was inspired by the original enterprising bootleggers and specifically Kerkhoff's grandfather, Alphons, as one of the town's prominent Prohibition-era distillers. Its original expression uses a mash bill consisting of 95% rye and 5% malted barley that ages for at least four years in Char No. 4 barrels; this spirit is used as the base for Templeton's entire lineup. In addition to the Templeton Rye 4 Year, the brand also offers a six-year-old.

As Templeton Rye continues to grow up and out, innovation will be



During Prohibition, barrels of whiskey were hidden from law enforcement in the basement of Sacred Heart Church in Templeton, IA.

at its core. In 2019, it began its Barrel Finish Series with the launch of its Maple Cask Finish. This year will see the release of the second product in the series as well as the 2020 version of the brand's annual Barrel Strength expression. "Each year, we carefully select the best barrels of rve whiskey from our aged stock in our warehouse," Fitzharris explains. "We then marry these together and bottle it at natural cask strength." The 2019 Barrel Strength represents Templeton in its purest form, with a nose of orange peel and butterscotch giving way to dark

chocolate and orange zest on the palate, balancing its considerable strength as a 115-proof whiskey.

Working closely with the distilling team on research and development, Grimes promises several more expressions in the years to come—and though he's staying mum on the specifics, it's a sure sign that Templeton will never face shortages again. Which means that its devotees no longer need worry about finding the mother cache in the church basement or chasing down trucks—not even, it would seem, if they live in Seoul, Baku, or Kiev. 💵

DISTILLERY **SPOTLIGHT**

Pictured front row from left to right: Runaway June band members Hannah Mullholland and Naomi Cooke; Duke **Spirits Director** of Global Sales Cathy Steen; and Jennifer Wayne, also of Runaway June. Back row: Simon Burch, CEO of O.Z. Tyler Distillery; Duke Spirits founder Chris Radomski: and **Duke Spirits master** distiller Jacob Call.



His New Kentucky Home

DUKE SPIRITS ANNOUNCES THE OPENING OF THE JOHN WAYNE EXPERIENCE AND A NEW TASTING ROOM AT THE O.Z. TYLER DISTILLERY IN OWENSBORO, KY photos by Harold Estime



Duke Spirits founder Chris Radomski at the O.Z. Tyler Distillery in Owensboro, KY, with Seth Weinberg, Beverage Director for Bourbon Steak in Nashville, TN.

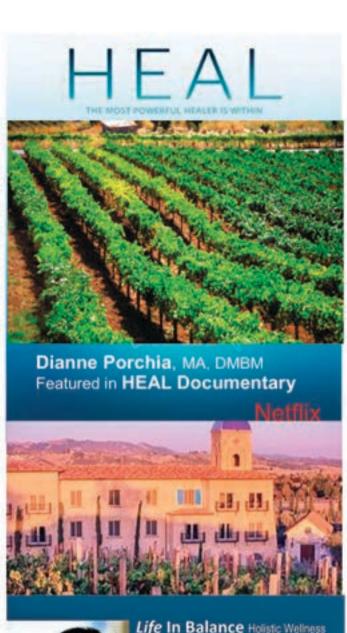
fficially set to open its doors to the public in early 2020, the O.Z. Tyler Distillery in Owensboro, Kentucky—home to Duke Spirits—will soon host a tasting room that showcases Duke's Kentucky bourbons and ryes. These high-quality whiskeys, which pay homage to John Wayne, are crafted according to the late actor's handwritten notes to capture his love for bold, full-bodied spirits.

Last November, Duke Spirits founder Chris Radomski and master distiller Jacob Call announced the future opening of the tasting room during a ceremony at the distillery. The facility will also offer tours on a regular basis, taking guests through the process of creating the meticulously blended Duke Kentucky Bourbon and showing them how the brand crafts its spirits by combining old-school distilling and a winemaker's approach to barrel



aging. Visitors will also have the chance to learn more about the building—a historical landmark that was founded in the 1880s as Kentucky's tenth licensed distillery—and to visit a center dedicated to John Wayne that contains exclusive memorabilia associated with "the Duke."

For the grand opening, meanwhile, Wayne's granddaughter Jennifer Wayne—along with her fellow Runaway June band members Naomi Cooke and Hannah Mulholland—will cut the ceremonial ribbon and perform their hit single "Buy My Own Drinks."





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Wellness & Wine Series Allegretto Vineyard Resort Paso Robles, CA

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Dianne Porchia
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Avoid the 9 Traps of Unconscious Loving that create mental-emotional stress, weaken your immune system and undermine your loving intentions in relationship.

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Dianne Porchia, Master Spiritual Psychology, Diplomat Mind-Body Medicine, featured in HEAL Documentary for her successful work with advance stage cancer client who remains cancer free over five years after diagnosis of stage IV colorectal cancer. © Copyright Porchia's WISH Inc 2019



NEW YORK WORLD WINE & SPIRITS COMPETITION RESULTS



BEST IN SHOW

BEST IN SHOW: WHITE/BEST IN CLASS: CHARDONNAY

Three Sticks Wines Gap's Crown Vineyard 2017 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$55)

BEST IN SHOW: DESSERT WINE/BEST IN CLASS: ICE WINE

Weingut Reiss Würzburger Pfaffenberg 2018 Silvaner Eiswein, Franconia, Germany (\$80)

BEST IN SHOW: RED/BEST IN CLASS: PREMIUM BORDEAUX BLEND (\$25 AND OVER)

J. Lohr Cuvée POM 2015 Premium Bordeaux Blend, Paso Robles (\$50)

BEST IN SHOW: SPARKLING/BEST IN CLASS: SPARKLING ROSÉ

Domaine Carneros by Taittinger 2015 Brut Rosé, Carneros (\$42)

BEST IN CLASS

BEST IN CLASS: BRUT

J Vineyards & Winery NV Cuvée Brut, California (\$25)

BEST IN CLASS: CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Ca'Momi HEARTCRAFT 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$25)

BEST IN CLASS: NON-BORDEAUX RED BLEND (\$25 AND UNDER)

Ca'Momi 2017 Rosso, California (\$15)

BEST IN CLASS: PETITE SIRAH (DURIF)

Cholame La Presa Vineyard 2016 Petite Sirah, Santa Barbara (\$50)

BEST IN CLASS: PINOT NOIR

Rodney Strong Estate 2016 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$25)

BEST IN CLASS: SANGIOVESE

Bella Vista Winery 2016 Sangiovese, Temecula, California (\$44)

BEST IN CLASS: SAUVIGNON BLANC

Mud House 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$17)

BEST IN CLASS: SHIRAZ OR SYRAH

Shottesbrooke Vineyards Tide Chaser 2018 Shiraz, Langhorne Creek, Australia (\$17)

BEST IN CLASS: TEMPRANILLO

Adega Northwest 2015 Tempranillo, Umpqua Valley, Oregon (\$24)

BEST IN CLASS: ROSÉ

Benessere Vineyards 2018 Rosato di Sangiovese, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$25)

BEST IN CLASS: ZINFANDEL

DaVine Cellars Old Gold 2016 Zinfandel, Monterey County, California (\$48)

DOUBLE GOLD

Barefoot Cellars 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$6)

Ca'Momi HEARTCRAFT NV Brut, California (\$15)

Davis Family Campbell Ranch 2017 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$65)

Gecaj Estate 2016 Red Bordeaux Blend, Rahoveci Valley, Kosovo (\$80) US STONE CASTLE IMPORTS

ITER 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$20)

J. Lohr Tower Road 2016 Petite Sirah, Paso Robles (\$35)

Rodney Strong Estate 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$28)

Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$20)

Round Pond Rutherford Estate 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$75)

Talbott Vineyards Kali Hart 2017 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$23)

Three Sticks Wines William James Vineyard 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$70)

GOLD

21 Brix Winery Rasberry Wine, Lake Erie AJA Vineyards Estate Grown 2016 84% Syrah 16% Field Blend, Malibu Coast (\$27)

Apothic 2018 Rosé, California (\$14)

Avalon 2018 Chardonnay, California (\$11)

Babich Wines Family Estates Organic 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) MHW LTD

Babich Wines Black Label 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16) MHW LTD

Barefoot Cellars NV Moscato, California

BASH! NV Sparkling Rosé, California (\$15)

Bench 1775 Bliss 2017 Ice Wine, Canada (\$60) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Darkhorse 2017 Merlot, California (\$10)

DaVine Cellars Shameless 2016 Malbec, Monterey (\$58)

Davis Bynum Winery 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$35)

Davis Family Vineyards Hunt & Ryde 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River (\$55)

Davis Family Vineyards 2018 Pinot Noir, Russian River (\$32)

Domaine Carneros LeReve 2012 Blanc de Blancs, Carneros (\$115)

Edna Valley Vinevard 2017 Merlot, Central Coast (\$16)

Fleur de Mer 2018 Rosé, France (\$20)

Four Vines Winery The Biker 2017 Zinfandel, Paso Robles (\$18)

Gancia 2018 Brut Prosecco, Italy (\$14)

Ghost Pines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$19)

Ghost Pines 2016 Red Blend, Sonoma/Lake/ Santa Barbara Counties (\$23)

J Vineyards & Winery 2016 Pinot Noir, California (\$25)

J. Lohr Arroyo Vista 2017 Chardonnay, Arrovo Seco (\$25)

J. Lohr, October Night 2017 Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco (\$35)

J. Lohr Cuvée PAU 2015 Premium Bordeaux Blend, Paso Robles (\$50)

J. Lohr Cuvée ST.E 2015 Premium Bordeaux Blend, Paso Robles (\$50)

J. Lohr Pure Paso 2017 Premium Red Blend, Paso Robles (\$27)

Louis M. Martini Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$35)

Maggie Malick Wine Caves 2016 Petit Verdot, Loudoun County (\$35)

Montalbera Nuda DOCG 2016 Barbera d'Asti Superiore, Piedmont (\$39) SOILAIR SELECTION

Okapi Dan Rouge NV Proprietor's Blend, Napa Valley (\$75)

Outlot 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$25)

Outlot 2018 Rosé, Alexander Valley (\$23)

Rodney Strong Estate 2016 Chardonnay, Chalk Hill (\$22)

Talbott Vineyards 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)

Tzafona Cellars 2017 Riesling, VQA Niagara Peninsula (\$20)

BEST IN SHOW

BEST IN SHOW: BRANDY/BEST IN CLASS: COGNAC VS/THREE STAR OR EQUIVALENT

Courvoisier Master's Cask Collection Sherry Finish Cognac, France (\$40) BEAM SUNTORY

BEST IN SHOW: LIQUEUR/BEST IN CLASS: FRUIT LIQUEUR Putney Mountain Winery and Spirits Vermont Cassis, Vermont (\$29)

BEST IN SHOW: AGED WHITE SPIRIT/BEST IN CLASS: REPOSADO TEQUILA Batanga Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$25)

BEST IN SHOW: UNAGED WHITE SPIRIT/BEST IN CLASS: MEZCAL Los Vecinos del Campo Mezcal Espadín, Mexico (\$34)

BEST IN CLASS

BEST IN CLASS: COGNAC/BRANDY VSOP OR EQUIVALENT

Beehive Brandy VSOP, France PARK STREET

BEST IN CLASS: DARK/GOLD RUM

Papa's Pilar Marguesas Blend Rum, The Caribbean (\$47)

BEST IN CLASS: SCOTCH

Laphroaig Quarter Cask Single Malt Scotch, Islay (\$60) BEAM SUNTORY

BEST IN CLASS: EXTRA AÑEJO

Cierto Private Collection Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$450) RILO IMPORT & EXPORT

BEST IN CLASS: FLAVORED GIN

Watershed Distillery Bourbon Barrel Gin, Ohio (\$38)

BEST IN CLASS: FLAVORED WHISK(E)Y

Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey, California

BEST IN CLASS: GIN

Sakurao Gin Hamagou, Hiroshima, Japan

BEST IN CLASS: OTHER SINGLE MALT WHISK(E)Y: BEST IN CLASS: SINGLE MALT SanTan Spirits Sacred Stave Cask Strength American Single Malt Whiskey, Arizona (\$70)

BEST IN CLASS: OTHER WHISK(E)Y

Bainbridge Yama Mizunara Cask Single Grain Whiskey, Washington (\$525)

BEST IN CLASS: COCKTAIL MIXER

Taste of Florida Spicy Bloody Mary Mix, Florida (\$6)

BEST IN CLASS: RHUM AGRICOLE

Chalong Bay Pure Series Rum Phyket, Thailand (\$20)

BEST IN CLASS: RYE WHISK(E)Y

Rabbit Hole Boxergrail Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, Kentucky (\$50)

BEST IN CLASS: SILVER/GOLD (UNAGED) TEQUILA

Azuñia Blanco Organic Teguila Amatitán, Jalisco, Mexico (\$35)

BEST IN CLASS: SMALL BATCH BOURBON – UP TO 10 YEARS

1792 Full Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$45)

BEST IN CLASS: STRAIGHT BOURBON

W. L. Weller C.Y.P.B. Bourbon, Kentucky (\$50)

BEST IN CLASS: VODKA

Wheatley Vodka, Kentucky (\$20)

BEST IN CLASS: WHITE RUM

Florida Cane El Encanto Silver Rum, Florida (\$25)

DOUBLE GOLD

Dewar's The Monarch 15 Year Old Scotch. Scotland (\$52)

Dewar's The Signature 25 Year Old Scotch, **Scotland** (\$255)

Distillerie Mitis Gin Mugo, Quebec (\$45) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Loki Dry Gin, Sao Paulo, Brazil (\$30)

SUSTO Handcrafted Mezcal, Oaxaca, **Mexico** (\$50)

Hillrock Estate Distillery Single Malt Whiskey, New York (\$105)

SanTan Spirits Sacred Stave American Single Malt Whiskey, Arizona (\$50)

10th Street Distillery Peated American Single Malt Whisky, California (\$65)

Bainbridge Two Islands Barbados Cask Wheat Whiskey, Washington (\$90)

Intipalka Mosto Verde Torontel Pisco, Ica Valley, Peru

SanTan Spirits Butcher Jones Cask Strength Straight Rye Whiskey, Arizona (\$50)

Balcones Texas Rye Cask Strength, Texas (\$60)

Very Old Barton 90 Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$14)

GOLD

AQARÁ Agave de Los Andes, Caraz, Peru (\$44) MIGUEL E. GIRALDO

Argonaut Fat Thumb Brandy, USA (\$53)

E & J Brandy XO, USA (\$10)

Corazón de Agave Añejo Teguila, Mexico (\$35)

Slainte Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$35) RICHARD **DAVIES**

Dewar's The Vintage 18 Year Old Scotch, Scotland (\$77)

Cachaça Paratiana Prata, Rio de Janeiro, **Brazil** (\$15) PARK STREET

Cachaça Paratiana Labareda, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (\$29) PARK STREET

Caribou Crossing Single Barrel Canadian Whisky, Quebec (\$50)

Courvoisier Cognac VSOP, France (\$38) BEAM **SUNTORY**

Courvoisier Cognac XO, France (\$150) BEAM **SUNTORY**

Bundaberg Master Distillers' Collection Solera Rum, Queensland, Australia (\$125) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Cincoro Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$1600)

Corazón de Agave Extra Añejo Tequila, **Mexico** (\$70)

Flor de Caña 12 Year Old Rum, Nicaragua (\$40) WILLIAM GRANT & SONS, NY

Flor de Caña 25 Year Old Rum, Nicaragua (\$145) WILLIAM GRANT & SONS, NY

Masons Yorkshire Lavender Edition Gin. North Yorkshire, UK (\$46)

Tinkerman's 6.3 Sweet Spice Gin, Virginia (\$30)

Bundaberg Master Distillers' Collection Small Batch Spiced Rum, Queensland, Australia (\$48) PARK STREET IMPORTS

St. Royale Green Tea Vodka, USA (\$22)

BOAR Gin, Black Forest, Germany (\$40)

Flower City Gin, New York (\$24)

Farmer's Botanical Gin. Minnesota (\$30)

Archie Rose Signature Dry Gin, New South Wales, Australia (\$55)

Warner's Lemon Balm Gin, Northants, UK (\$50) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Tinkerman's 7.4 Curiously Bright & Complex Gin, Virginia (\$30)

Watershed Distillery Barrel Finished Nocino, **Ohio** (\$28)

June Gin Liqueur By G'Vine, France PM **SPIRITS**

Gouden Carolus Single Malt Whiskey, Province of Antwerp, Belgium (\$65) IMPEX **BEVERAGES**

Kavalan Distillery Select Single Malt Whisky, Taiwan (\$60)

Bespoken Spirits Whiskey Distilled from **Bourbon Mash, California (\$30)**

Uncle Nearest 1856 Premium Aged Whiskey, Tennessee (\$60)

Next Century Spirits Bear Fight Whiskey, USA (\$25)

Azuñia Reposado Organic Teguila, Amatitán, **Mexico** (\$40)

Corazón de Agave Reposado Tequila, Mexico

Heaven's Door Straight Rye Whiskey, USA

Colonel E.H. Taylor, Jr. Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$60)

Stagg Jr. Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$50)

Balcones Texas Blue Corn Bourbon, Texas (\$60)

Rabbit Hole Cavehill Kentucky Straight **Bourbon, Kentucky** (\$60)

Southern Tier Distilling Company Smoked Bourbon, West New York (\$42)

Isaac Bowman Port Finished Virginia Straight Bourbon, Virginia (\$70)

Oak & Eden Bourbon & Vine Cabernet Steeped Oak Finished Whiskey, Texas (\$60)

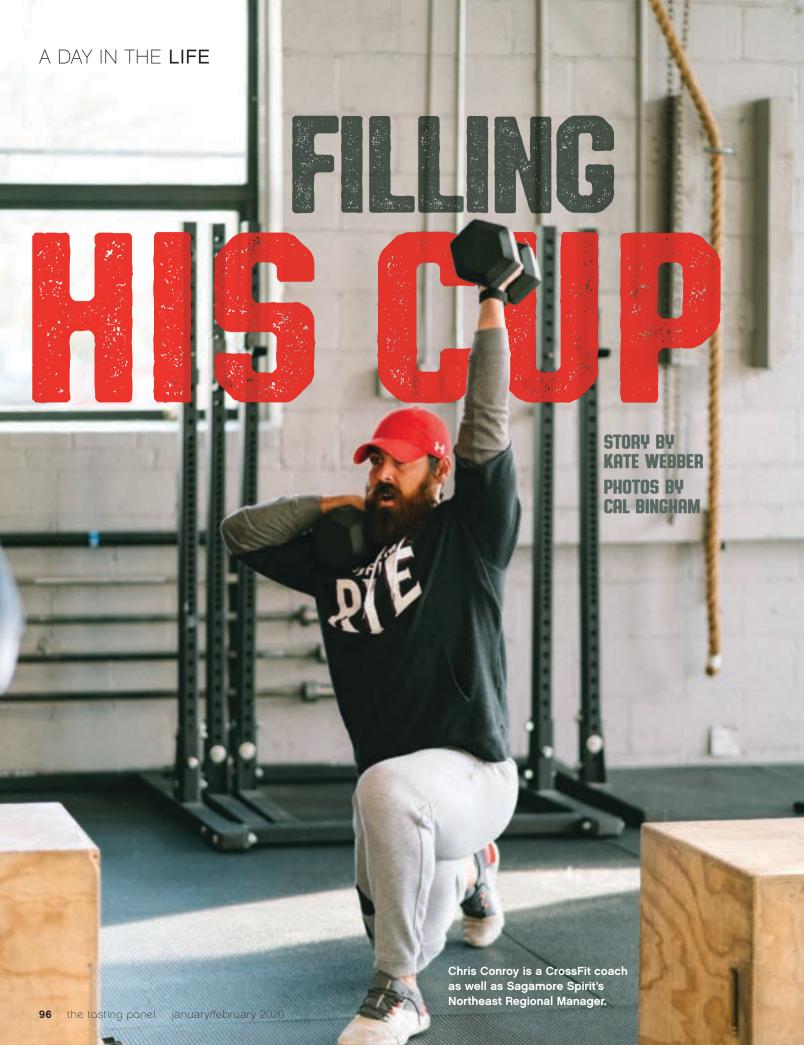
W. L. Weller Special Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$25)

Five Wives Premium Potato Vodka, Utah (\$30)

Russian Standard Vodka, Russia (\$20)

Russian Standard Platinum Vodka, Russia

Archie Rose Original Vodka, New South Wales (\$48)



HOW CHRIS CONROY, **NORTHEAST REGIONAL MANAGER FOR SAGAMORE SPIRIT, BALANCES WORK AND PLAY**





ith growth in sales skyrocketing 1,000% over the past ten years, American rve is on a roll. Sagamore Spirit is no exception: Having received a double gold medal and the

award for World's Best Rve Whiskey at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition last spring, it continues to gain momentum, with availability in 36 states and three foreign markets. In December, I documented a day in the life of Chris Conroy, Sagamore Spirit's Massachusetts-based Northeast Regional Manager, to see what sort of energy a salesperson requires to help maintain that momentum. It was no small task.

Getting a Move On

"I wake up at 3:45 a.m., have a cup of coffee, and coach CrossFit from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.," Conroy tells me. "Then I work out, shower, work from home until the traffic settles, and hit the road around 9:30." It's 10:45 a.m., so Conroy has been up for seven hours; in fact, he's already made a stop at a retail store to set up a holiday display.

After I join him on his way to deliver some display bags to another retailer, we visit a third store before grabbing lunch at an on-premise account and, finally, hitting one more store and a consumer tasting. It seems like a lot, but Conroy takes it in stride without losing sight of what's important. "The quality of life at Sagamore is perfect for my health and wellness," he says. "Eventually you realize you don't have all the time in the world, and you need to make sure you're







At Eastern Standard in Boston, MA, Conroy catches up with Bar Manager Diego Peña.

making yourself the priority. The people at Sagamore believe in human beings first."

From Georgio's Liquors in Waltham to Fifth Ave Liquors in Framingham, Chris builds displays and checks in to make sure the accounts have what they need until he can pop by again. As we walk up and down the aisles, Conroy tells me Sagamore Spirit's origin story, which can be traced back to Sagamore Farm, a thoroughbred horse farm once owned by the Vanderbilts in Northern Baltimore County. "Sagamore Farm sits right on top of a natural limestone aquifer; they used to say the reason the horses were as successful as they were

was because of that very water," he explains. But of course, the company's identity is also rooted in Maryland's expansive distilling history: "Maryland was over 158 years old before Kentucky was founded; veteran distillers made rye by the barrelful for the colony and beyond," Conroy says. "There were over 44 distilleries in Maryland and 22 in downtown Baltimore before Prohibition. At Sagamore, we're proud to pick up that torch." That special water, meanwhile, gets transported 22 miles to Sagamore's own downtown distillery to proof each bottle of whiskey. "It's what gives our rye such a smooth and approachable palate," he adds.

Raising the Bar

We stop for lunch at Eastern Standard, one of the best-known cocktail spots in Boston. The dining room and bar are packed on this chilly Thursday afternoon, which marks the rollout of the winter cocktail list; Bar Manager Diego Peña is featuring Sagamore Spirit Rye in his Monte Carlo, a classic that also contains Bénédictine and bitters.

"Boston is an important whiskey market," Conroy assures me. (I write this down, because it fills me with civic pride as a local.) "I mean, Texas is huge, but Chicago, New York, D.C., Bostonthey're all big whiskey markets." This is why Boston was chosen as the first

test market outside of Maryland for Little Penny—a miniature replica of Penny, the 40-foot copper-finished column still at the Sagamore Spirit distillery, that serves as a vessel for shared cocktails.

"If you look at the growth of small craft distilleries over the last five years, the reality is people aren't buying a handle of mainstream whiskey to bring to a party anymore, they're bringing two or three smaller bottles that have stories to go with them," he

adds. "What we want to do is capitalize on that idea of 'share your spirit'—the spirit of Sagamore—so we came up with shareable batched cocktails."

Equipped with a dispenser at the bottom for tabletop service, Little Penny holds enough for four people at a table to have two cocktails apiece. "We partnered with the Envoy Hotel in Boston to have Little Penny on [its] roof deck over the summer," Conroy tells me. "The Envoy is a pretty hot spot overlooking the



Conroy sets up a holiday display at an off-premise account.



Conroy arrives at Fifth Ave Liquors in Framingham, MA, with author Kate Webber.

Harbor, so it was a perfect fit for us to test it out." (More prototypes have been made, and the program is expanding into different cities.)

As we drive to our tasting at Total Wine and Spirits in Burlington, I circle back to how Conroy maintains his sanity during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. "You have to do whatever centers you—you've got to fill your cup," he says. "For me, the coaching is really important. I enjoy the opportunity to get up in the morning and help impact somebody else's day. ... You get to help someone out, then take care of yourself, then go on with the rest of the day and give your best to anything that comes through."

When we arrive at the store, Conroy pulls out the Sagamore Spirit Signature Rye, Double Oak, Cask Strength, and Cognac Finish; customers gather around the table almost immediately. After the day we've had together, I'm not surprised: His honest enthusiasm for Sagamore Spirit is a beacon, drawing people in as much as the shiny, 2-foot-tall copper still beside him. "Every tasting is an opportunity to educate people," he says. Spoken like a true coach.

Seltzer Goes

THE TASTING PANEL CONDUCTED A SERIES OF BLIND TASTINGS TO FIND THE BESTTASTING HARD SELTZER BRAND

he boozy carbonated water bubble just keeps on expanding. With so many brands taking up space on retailers' shelves, we wanted to find out which one reigns as the category leader for professional palates. So recently, our editorial team invited a group of on- and off-premise beverage professionals to join us in a blind taste test of nine hard seltzer brands, sampling three flavors of each in four rounds. The result was unanimous: We voted High Noon the number-one best-tasting hard seltzer and the highest-rated brand across all flavors.



Ray Brych, Gelson's Category Manager for Beer, Wine and Spirits, with his colleague Jake Cheung, Sr. Manager–Marketing.

Here were the other brands in the lineur:

White Claw
Truly
Bon & Viv
Smirnoff Spiked Sparkling
Seltzer

Crook & Marker Henry's Hard Sparkling Water Natty Light Hard Seltzer Cape Line



High Noon, made with vodka and soda, ranked first among all of our tasters. It contains real juice and no artificial flavors or highfructose corn syrup.



Iris Rowlee, who has worked as a beverage director for A-16, Quince, and other high-profile San Francisco restaurants, said, "There was no competition. High Noon possesses clarity and authenticity of flavor."

Coming in second place was Bon & Viv Spiked Seltzer; third was Cape Line and fourth was Crook & Marker.

Praising High Noon as "hands down the best of the group," Ray Brych, Gelson's Category Manager for Wine, Beer, and Spirits, noted that "the watermelon flavor is really superb." Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor of *The SOMM Journal* and Senior Wine & Beer Editor for *The Tasting Panel*, added that "High Noon Grapefruit delivers a burst of fresh flavor—it's unrivaled."



Simon Shamoun, owner of Tarzana Wine & Spirits, tastes with Senior Wine & Beer Editor Jessie Birschbach. Shamoun declared, "Now I know why High Noon flies out the door at my store."

PHOTO: DOMINIQUE CROWDER



PRESENTED BY FLORIDA WINE ACADEMY

Full Program

Day 1: March 8th, 2020

8:30 - Registrations

9:30-10:45 - "Ancient World, Old World, New World; The History of Wine in Six Glasses"

Presenter: Max Kast, MS, Director of Education for Broadbent Wines

10:45-11:30 — Coffee break, featuring Japanese Sake

11:30-12:45 - "Untangling Brunello vs. Barolo" presented by The Somm Journal

11:30-12:45 – "Napa Valley Rocks - Exploring Cabernet's patchwork diversity", sponsored by

Napa Valley Vintners

Presenter: Nicole Ramos, WSET L3, FWS, SWS, WSET Certified Educator

1:00-2:00 - Sponsored Lunch

2:15-3:30 - "A Practical Approach to Blind Tasting Based on Theory and Deductive Reasoning"

Presenter: Eric Hemer, MS, MW, Senior Vice President, Director of Wine Education, Southern

Glazer's Wine & Spirits of America

4:00-6:00 - Sparkling Wine Networking Hour sponsored, featuring Champagne Charles

Heidsieck

Day 2: March 9th, 2020

9:00 – Registrations

9:30-10:45 - "Donnafugata's Volcanic Sicily"

Presenter: Antonio Rallo, Winemaker, CEO and co-owner of Donnafugata

10:45-11:30 - Coffee break, sponsored by WSET - Wine & Spirit Education Trust

11:30-12:45 - "The Business of Sparkling Wine"

Presenter: Matthew Citriglia, MS, Director of Wine Education for SGWS Florida

11:30-12:45 - "The Pillars of Jerez: A Sherry Education"

Presenter: Claire Henderson, Senior Brand Manager, González Byass USA

1:00-2:00 - Sponsored Lunch

2:15-3:30 – "A journey to the unexpected: Exploring Prosecco through the lends of terroir and the individualistic wines of Franciacorta"

Presenter: Kristina Sazama, DipWSET, MW candidate, Director of Education SMUSA

2:15-3:30 – "A Tale of Two Counties: Leadership in Sonoma and San Luis Obispo, CA"

Presenter: Joseph Spellman, MS, JUSTIN Vineyards & Winery

4:00-6:00 - Grand Tasting featuring more than 80 wines.

MIAMI BILTMORE HOTEL MARCH 8TH & 9TH, 2020

More information at floridawineacademy.com

KEEPING Timeless

JACK DANIEL'S HOSTS BATTLE OF THE BANDS WINNER OFFSHORE IMPACT IN L.A.

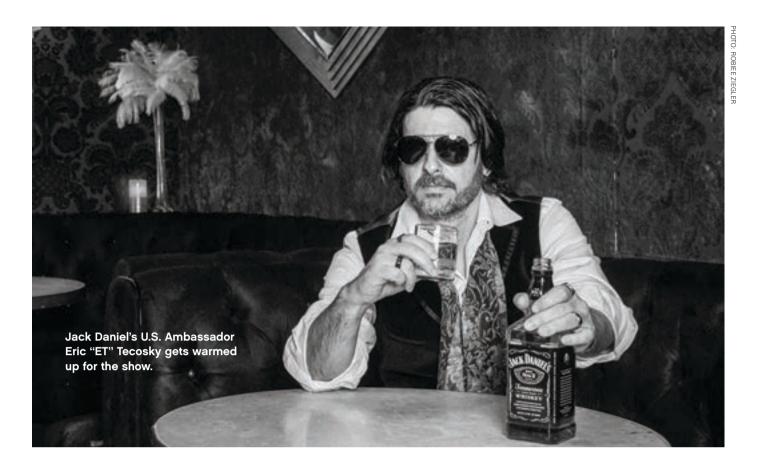
by Kyle Billings

n a city that's no stranger to memorable musical performances, devotees of one of America's most storied brands recently earned a tribute of their own. On the evening of November 7, San Diego band Offshore Impact performed at a dimly lit Los Angeles speakeasy to celebrate their victory in the inaugural Jack Daniel's Battle of the Bands, sponsored by iHeartRadio. Jack was the only spirit on the menu of this invite-only hideaway, and according to bassist Eric Kasaty, that was all there needed to be.

"It's the quintessential American drink," he said. "We don't do vodka. We don't do tequila. If you're going to go with an American drink, it's got to be whiskey. And then if you're going to talk about American whiskey, it's Jack."

Continuing its legacy of supporting musicians and their communities, Jack Daniel's joined iHeartRadio in inviting musicians to submit videos for a virtual Battle of the Bands. (The only





stipulation was that the participants had to be unsigned.) Out of more than 400 entries, a panel of renowned music directors selected ten finalists to compete via online fan voting. The final tally fell in favor of Offshore Impact, four disarmingly affable guys who have been playing together for years.

Lead singer Mike Lobaugh set the stage for their improbable victory. "I was watching football on a Sunday and I heard about it on the radio," he said. He submitted a friend's phone recording from a recent show on a whim, with managed expectations: "I never thought about it until I got contacted. And then I lost my mind."

Unwilling to define their sound, the quartet defies easy categorization. Prior to their set, they volleyed memories of past shows, crowds pleasant and foul, and their origin story. Lobaugh and lead guitarist Willie Heien have performed together since childhood, while drummer Dylan Voelker fondly recalls his adolescent gigs with the group (he had to leave the venue after each set because he was underage). Kasaty, meanwhile, had offered his house for band practice before the departure of a former member afforded him the bassist role. Today they seem of one mind, including with respect to the enduring

appeal of Jack Daniel's Old No. 7. In the words of Heien, "Why mess with something that's good?"

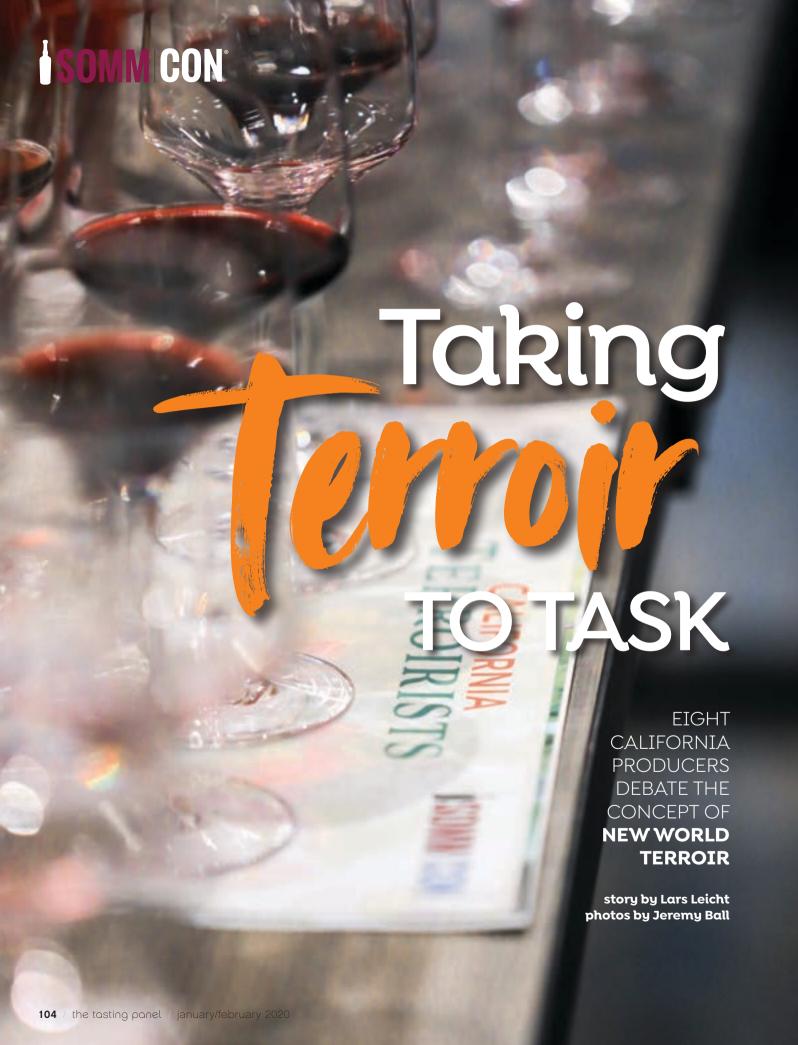
Fans of the brand in the music industry are legion, and music is an indelible part of Jack Daniel's in turn, according to Eric "ET" Tecosky, U.S. Ambassador for Jack Daniel's. "[It has] always had a connection to music, even in Jack's day," he says. "He dug music. And then of course when Sinatra tasted Jack Daniel's, it became part of who he was. And then from Sinatra, you got all the rock bands that are photographed drinking Jack Daniel's, and then it moved into country and hip-hop and R&B."

Tecosky explained their affinity for the brand as a matter of temperament: "Jack kind of did things his way. [It's] Jack's Tennessee Whiskey; it's not bourbon. . . . Yes, it follows it all the laws to make bourbon, but then we charcoal mellow the whiskey, so it's a little bit different. Everyone had a round bottle; Jack chose a square bottle. He had his own identity and swagger and point of view." By the same token, he added, "Musicians are individuals also. And they're trying to get their point of view across. They have something to say to the world and they're always a little bit [rebellious]. Jack was a bit of a rebel."

Many of the stars known for drinking Jack Daniel's have been photographed by the legendary Henry Diltz, who was the official photographer at Woodstock. As part of their winning purse, Offshore Impact joined a roster of subjects including Paul McCartney, Jimi Hendrix, and The Doors to be captured on film by Diltz. In a circular red booth at the speakeasy, the photographer recounted finding a style uniquely his own—not unlike the brand or the band. "My Chinese animal is a tiger. A tiger likes to sit up on top of the cliff and watch the other animals," said Diltz. "I'm a people watcher. I really like people, so I look to do candids. I like to see people."

The band put the finishing touches on the sound check and briefly communed at the edge of the bar as the crowd waited in anticipation. With a rocks glass in one hand, Voelker rhythmically gestured with the other to trumpet his idea of Jack's legacy.

"What makes something classic is that people can always come back to [it] and always appreciate [it] time and time again," he said. "Just like Jack Daniel's: It never gets old. It never gets stale and that's really our goal, to be timeless. I think that should be the goal of every musician, every artist."





The "California Terroirists" panel left to right: Vintage Wine Estates Regional Winemaking Director Robin Akhurst; Will Costello, MS, Estate Ambassador for Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills; LangeTwins Western Regional Manager Jeff Marston; Russ Weis, President of Silverado Vineyards; moderator David Glancy, MS; Craig Winn II, Chief Production Officer at Dancehall Winery; Sextant Wines assistant winemaker Alex Frost; Niner Wine Estate Director of Sales Tucker Spear; and Black Stallion lead winemaker Ralf Holdenried.

o date, the term terroir has largely been reserved for the Old World. Derived from the French language, it refers to a concept that has been central to European wine production since, well, forever—one that's easy enough to understand but nevertheless hasn't been a focal point for New World winemakers until recently. Now, however, a growing contingent of Americans are embracing it and approaching their craft accordingly.

The Tasting Panel's sister publication, The SOMM Journal, gathered just such a group at SommCon San Diego last November for a seminar titled "California Terroirists: Rethinking Assumptions from Paso Robles to Lodi, Napa to Sonoma." David Glancy, MS and founder of the San Francisco Wine School, served as moderator (and self-styled slide advancer) of the panel, which aimed to help us rethink our assumptions about California's top AVAs.

"I define terroir as mineral intensity, slope, aspect, sun, wind, fog, plants and animals, and the human hand," Glancy told the audience. "In other words, everything that contributes to a sense of place. On the other hand, I once heard an Australian winemaker describe terroir as simply a French word for underripe grapes."

Guffaws from the crowd—and especially the eight panelists underlined the lingering contentiousness of the term in a New World context, but each of them went on to eloquently describe the sense of place they saw reflected in their own wines.



David Glancy, MS and founder of the San Francisco Wine School, served as moderator for the panel.

Will Costello, MS, is Estate Ambassador for Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills.

SOLOMON HILLS 2017 ESTATE CHARDONNAY, SANTA MARIA VALLEY

As Estate Ambassador for Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills, Will Costello, MS, offered the first of what he called ten-minute "elevator pitches" from the panel. He cut to the chase, professing his wine's atypical typicity. "If you tasted this wine and didn't think it was Californian," he said, "that makes me happy."

Santa Maria Valley, he explained, is Santa Barbara County's northernmost AVA and the second-coldest winemaking region in the U.S.: According to the Winkler Scale, which classifies regional climate based on heat summation of growing degree days, only the Leelanau Peninsula off Lake Michigan is colder. Noting that "it's too cold to plant" east of the AVA's boundaries, Costello described the soil as beach sand with great drainage—though the annual rainfall of 17 inches qualifies the area as a coastal desert, despite its location just 10 miles inland.

In light of all that, it perhaps came as no surprise that the Solomon Hills Chardonnay he presented has the same pH as Champagne, Austrian Riesling, and Pinot Noir from Central Otago. Costello additionally attributed the wine's character—linden-flower perfume, flavors of guava and passion fruit, minerality, and all—to native yeasts and California sunshine. Full malolactic fermentation balances its texture: "Otherwise it would be like battery acid," he said. "It's not an oak-driven wine; it is a great refresher [that's] wonderful with food such as crudo, guacamole, and carnitas." Glancy complimented its lingering acidity.

LANGETWINS 2016 MILLER VINEYARD CABERNET FRANC, CLARKSBURG

Jeff Marston, Western Regional Manager for LangeTwins, confessed to equally formidable challenges at the Miller Vineyard. Owned and sustainably farmed by the Lange family since 2006, it lies at or below sea level along the Sacramento River, where "the structure of the soil changes throughout the vineyard," he said. "The vines constantly reach for water. There is loam and sand in the fertile topsoil, but each block is different; each row makes a different wine."

The blend includes 5% Merlot and 1% Malbec to soften the bold character of the Cabernet Franc, which is rarely used in this area; the 100% estate fruit is then aged in neutral French oak. "It is essentially a Bordeaux-style wine," said Marston, "but in Clarksburg we are able to make wine with more finesse and show off the terroir. The Lange family connects people through the land to the wine." The 2016 vintage showed floral notes with spice, chocolate, and espresso on the finish; the 500 cases produced have sold out, to be followed by the 2017 in spring 2020.

Glancy, who called the wine textbook Cabernet Franc, noted that it held its 15% alcohol well due to its refreshing acidity.



Jeff Marston is Western Regional Manager for LangeTwins.

CONTROL OF THE CONTRO

Robin Akhurst is Regional Winemaking Director–Napa and Sonoma for Vintage Wine Estates, which oversees Clos Pegase.

CLOS PEGASE 2018 PINOT NOIR MATSUKO'S VINEYARD,

CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY

Robin Akhurst, Vintage Wine Estates' Regional Winemaking Director for Napa and Sonoma, spoke of a relatively new AVA where grapes have nevertheless grown for two centuries: Carneros, established in 1983. Proximity to San Pablo Bay's fog and breezes makes Carneros the driest and coolest area of Napa Valley, with summer temperatures that are often 15 degrees cooler than in Calistoga. This was, in fact, the first appellation in California to be defined by climate—a key element of terroir—rather than municipal boundaries.

Despite the fog, rainfall is scarce here (17–18 inches annually), so the vines struggle, ensuring low yields but intense flavor. (Recycled Napa water provides consistent irrigation.) Meanwhile, those moderate summers and mild winters add disease pressure, explained Akhurst, decreasing vineyard lifespan by a decade compared to elsewhere in Napa. Growers strategically use rootstock and training to get 15-18 years of productivity from their plantings in soils that are mainly marine sediment with fossilized seashells, some volcanic obsidian, and alluvial deposits from the Napa River; gravel at lower levels is replaced by thin clay loam on the hillsides. Practices such as clonal selection, which aids glycerol content and varietal typicity, also help, but "it's not an easy place to grow," Akhurst admitted. "You can't let it slip in Carneros; you have to stay on top of it."

Still, this "challenging region [is] very rewarding to farm," he added. "It is cool, dry, and windswept but makes bloody good wines"—including the Clos Pegase Pinot Noir he presented, which Glancy called "classic Carneros."





Ralf Holdenried is lead winemaker at Black Stallion.

BLACK STALLION GASPARE VINEYARD 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON,

OAK KNOLL DISTRICT, NAPA VALLEY

Founded in 2010, Black Stallion drew its name from the property's legacy as an equestrian center. As lead winemaker for the past six years, Ralf Holdenried was proud to present its lone single-vineyard wine.

Holdenried works with fruit from 16 Napa Valley AVAs to produce most of his wines, but the Gaspare Vineyard Cabernet contains a selection from one of the last vineyards to be developed in Napa, stretching across more than 30 acres at the southern end of the Silverado Trail. He discussed the transition of volcanic soils from the upper reaches of the trail near Atlas Peak down to deeper, fertile soils near the Napa River. "We altered our farming practices to achieve balance, using different rootstocks," he said, adding that the wine saw two to three weeks of skin contact, malolactic fermentation in barrel, frequent racking throughout its 26 months in barrel, and another two years of age in bottle before release.

The result offers slate character and black fruit that "really shines through," Holdenried observed. "Though we have to carefully manage the tannins, the valley floor really brings it out." In fact, he concluded, "This was a fantastic vintage—and this is a great time to drink it."

DANCEHALL 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, MT. VEEDER, NAPA VALLEY

Craig Winn II's "day job" is farm-labor contracting, but his baby is Dancehall Winery, where he serves as Chief Production Officer. Unable to resist prime vineyard land for his own label, he planted 6.5 acres on Mt. Veeder's steep slopes in 2012.

"This is exceptional terroir for Bordeaux varieties," he told the audience. "I planted here based on the soil and the altitude of the site. The San Pablo Bay breezes definitely have an impact up there, especially in the afternoon. Our temperatures are about 10 degrees lower than [those of] Napa, with shorter diurnal swings. The upper one-fourth of the vineyard has shallow volcanic rock, while the lower three-fourths has typical valley soil."

The higher portion is planted to vigorous Cabernet, the lower to Petit Verdot and Malbec, which combined make up 4.5% of the wine Winn presented. He vinifies the three varieties separately and ages them in 70% new and 30% neutral oak for 22 months before blending. "I hoped for more slate character," Winn admitted, "but there are great black-fruit and coffee flavors."

Winn's outside work allows him to produce only in ideal vintages; otherwise he sells off the fruit, as he did in 2019. "Of all my projects," he said, "this is the most rewarding."



Craig Winn II is Chief Production Officer at Dancehall Winery.

Russ Weis is President of Silverado Vineyards.

SILVERADO GEO 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON,

COOMBSVILLE, NAPA VALLEY

Russ Weis, President of Silverado Vineyards, praised the "purity, energy, and acidic narrative" of the wines we'd tasted thus far. He then pointed to Silverado's Disney-Silverado Heritage Clone of Cabernet, propagated in two different vineyards with completely different results, as a poster child for terroir.

"If you make the right pick-point decision, you can express terroir wherever it is. But is it really just dirt?" Weis challenged. "As a fourth-generation grower, I know that terroir is many factors beyond soil and climate. Terroir is equally about tradition and terrain." He offered Mt. George's steep volcanic slopes, first planted to vine in 1868, as an example of the complex influences on the Coombsville appellation. The mountain, he declared, knows way more than man about grape growing. "Mt. George didn't blow, it oozed," he explained. "It shoved volcanic soils around both above and underground. Our soil pits show large chunks of tuff that collect rain. Vines tap into these sponges and it becomes easier to dry farm. The vines balance themselves naturally."

According to Weis, Coombsville terroir expresses broader, chewier tannins and more blue fruit than does that of, say, Stags Leap, where the climate is warmer and harvest reliably begins a week earlier. But Weis also credits the oft-forgotten human aspect of terroir for the quality of the wines, in this case the commitment and experience of Silverado's four generations of family owners. "The Miller family will celebrate Silverado Vineyards' 40th anniversary next year, and our winemaker and vineyard-management team have been here for 30 years," he said. "There is no substitute for continuity in an estate."



Alex Frost is assistant winemaker at Sextant Wines.

SEXTANT 2017 KAMAL CABERNET **SAUVIGNON,** EL POMAR, PASO ROBLES

Alex Frost, assistant winemaker for Sextant Wines, lives by the axiom that wine is made in the vineyard. After all, the winery he works for was started by a family who runs a grapevine nursery, and its lead property is also a California state-registered and -certified nursery block.

As firm believers that the sprawling Paso Robles AVA deserved recognition for its diversity, Sextant founders Craig and Nancy Stoller were key advocates for breaking it down into 11 sub-appellations. Their Kamal Cabernet Sauvignon hails from El Pomar in east-central Paso Robles, where the soils are calcareous and vinevards benefit from wide diurnal shifts in temperature. The wine is made with Cabernet selected from six different lots of the main vineyard; the exact blend is determined by vintage conditions.

Aged in new and used French oak barrels for 18 months, the 2017 vintage showed elegant aromatics and dark-fruit flavors of ripe plum and pluot, supported by a firm backbone of acidity. "Our goal each year in blending is to counterbalance the ripeness of our Cabernet from the warm growing season," said Frost. "A small percentage of other Bordeaux varieties helps complement that opulent fruit character."

NINER 2016 FOG CATCHER CABERNET BLEND, WILLOW CREEK, PASO ROBLES

Tucker Spear, Director of Sales for Niner Wine Estate, told the crowd about the dream of Richard Niner, a self-made businessman from West Virginia, to return to his simple farming roots by finding ideal terroir and making wine. Enamored with Paso Robles, Niner and his wife, Pam, purchased their first vineyard, Bootiack Ranch, in 2001.

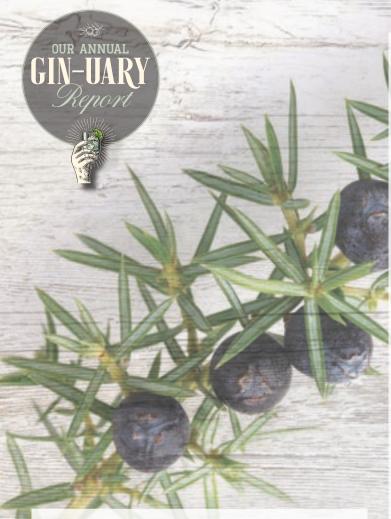
They now grow 19 varieties in vineyards on three sites; each vineyard has a different mix of varieties, clones, and rootstocks to best express its individuality. As stewards of the land, they emphasize sustainability through such measures as solar energy and water conservation and reclamation. They have also come to embrace seasonal temperature variations and fog as everyday companions, while sunshine is a fair-weather friend who works noon to five.

"Fog Catcher," explained Spear, "is the pinnacle of winemaking at Niner Estates. It is usually a blend of all three vineyards, based on vintage conditions, and a selection of the best 20 barrels of our top wines, which are blended and placed back in oak for another year." The 2016 vintage is an intense Cabernet-based wine aged predominantly in new French oak, yet it maintains a sense of place. "We want the vineyards to shine through," Spear said. II



Niner Wine Estate Director of Sales Tucker Spear presents a bottle of Fog Catcher.







NOLET'S SILVER GIN

Of all the trends engendered by the craft distilling movement, the resurgence of gin—or the Ginaissance, as some have called it—seems the most propitious. At

a time when the popularity of holistic, plant-based products has reached a tipping point, it only makes sense that a spirit whose character derives from botanicals would capture our fancy.

Eleven generations of the Nolet family have been making gin in Holland for more than three centuries. One could therefore forgive them for resting on the laurels of tradition. Instead, they anticipated—and even facilitated—the category's revival with the creation of NOLET'S Silver.

Incorporating rose, peach, and raspberry into its otherwise secret slate of botanicals, this modern expression speaks to a new generation of gin drinkers with all the authority and authenticity of the legendary brand behind it.



LYRE'S:

Getting Into the (Alcohol-Free) Spirit

Gin's newfound status as the featured spirit in many a trendsetting beverage program has coincided with a seemingly opposing trend: a growing interest in libations sans ethanol. Hence the intrigue surrounding Lyre's Spirit Co.'s Dry London expression, a product that brings these categories together.

"One of the great things about it is the wide spectrum of cocktails that you can use it in, just like gin," says Tommy Quimby, National Brand Ambassador for Lyre's. "That's the whole point. Someone who just wants to enjoy a Gin & Tonic can still get those flavors that they're looking for. Or if someone wants to have a more complex cocktail, like a Pegu Club or something like a Gin Martini, they're going to be satisfied with the flavors that they're getting from London Dry." Modeled on its namesake's classic profile, it features a robust mélange of floral and citrus notes surrounding an unmistakable juniper backbone.

"When you're looking at where the beverage industry is going, there's been a strong progression toward high-quality low-ABV and non-ABV cocktails," says Quimby. "The Lyre's range allows bartenders to . . . get as creative as they'd like. It's really providing a tool that hasn't been there for them previously."



D. GEORGE BENHAM'S **SONOMA DRY GIN**

Made with a mix of 12 botanicals from across the globe, D. George Benham's Sonoma Dry Gin features both the usual suspects—star anise from China, cardamom from Guatemala, and coriander from Morocco—and more esoteric ingredients, among them sweet-and-spicy grains of paradise from West Africa, galangal from India, and zested Buddha's hand citrus from founder Dereck Benham's home state of California.

As its name suggests, Benham's is distilled in a small Sonoma County town called Graton. Soon after he perfected the gin for its 2016 debut, Benham—a veteran of the wine industry—promoted his assistant distiller Jeff Duckhorn to head distiller.

Duckhorn, who is a baker, brewer, fermenter of kombucha, and avid gardener, can now add orchardist to his list of skills: "All of the Meyer lemons [used to produce Benham's] come from trees in my yard or from our local community," he says. And while the lion's share of the Buddha's hand citrus comes from the nearby Central Valley, Duckhorn has "a little baby Buddha [tree] that currently has about six Buddha's hands on it," he adds, noting that the majority of the fruit the brand uses will soon be grown locally.

Duckhorn and his team individually vapor-distill each botanical before blending—which was especially helpful when they began experimenting with the recipe. For instance, while fresh fennel fell short of expectations, galangal worked exceptionally well. "[It's] almost like horseradish or wasabi coming off the still—super bright and earthy spice," Duckhorn says.

Using a micro-column still enables them to control the length of time each botanical sees in the gin basket as well as the temperature of the vapor that passes through it; peppermint, for example, doesn't need to spend nearly the same amount of time in the basket as cardamom. The subtly sweet Tuscan juniper berries they use, meanwhile, are "swapped out every 12 minutes." These precise methods ultimately yield a delicate spirit that's both worthy of gin enthusiasts' devotion and capable of converting the gin-averse.

Forgo the vermouth altogether and drink D. George Benham's Sonoma Dry Gin chilled on its own: Just stir and strain into a coupe glass and garnish with a twist of Meyer lemon and three pods of cardamom. Or, with spring right around the corner, go the Gin & Tonic route—the fresh floral bouquet of the citrusy-clean libation will pair perfectly with a cool evening breeze. -Eric Marsh

Benham's Gin, USA (\$39) This spirit is handmade, with each botanical individually vapor-distilled in column stills and then blended together; the citrus is locally sourced and hand-zested for a remarkable freshness. Aromas of salted lemon, lavender, and vanilla are delicate and inviting, while vibrant notes of lemon oil, chamomile, and honeysuckle are accented by coriander and rose petals. A wash of wintergreen and an echo of juniper melt into a dry, defined, and most stylish finish of blue flowers. 97 —Meridith May

PURPLE WINE & SPIRITS



On the Waterfront:

NO. 209

The field of exciting new brands and storied stalwarts within the gin category is so crowded these days as to be mystifying. But Distillery No. 209 emerges from the fog—a phenomenon all too commonplace in its home city of San Francisco—thanks to its enviable location and unconventional offerings.

The only gin distillery in the world to be built over water—in this case, the Port of San Francisco— Distillery No. 209 houses a copper pot alembic still that was custom-crafted in Moray, Scotland: It's nicknamed "Rosey" for the color it takes on when the sun is setting on the bay.

After the passing of founder and legendary Napa vintner Leslie Rudd in 2018, Distillery No. 209 was acquired by Vintage Wine Estates. Arne Hillesland, who has served as the brand's master distiller since its inception, directs his team in crafting six core expressions, all of which are five times distilled; first and foremost is No. 209 Gin (\$30), a citrusy, floral-forward spirit tinged with spice that features 11 botanicals sourced across four continents.

The flagship serves as the base of Distillery No. 209's trio of barrel-aged gins: the Sauvignon Blanc Barrel Reserve (\$35), which spends three to four months in casks that once held Rudd Mt. Veeder Estate Sauvignon Blanc; the Chardonnay Barrel Reserve (\$35), which rests four to five months in Edge Hill Bacigalupi Chardonnay barrels; and the Cabernet Sauvignon Barrel Reserve (\$35), which ages in Rudd Oakville Estate Red casks for six to seven months. "These extremely unique and delicious wine barrel-aged gins are a great extension of our flagship Distillery No. 209 gin and fantastic additions to the Vintage Wine Estates Spirits portfolio," says National Craft Spirits Manager Dan Burke. Rounding out the lineup are the sugarcane-based Kosher-for-Passover Vodka and Gin (\$33), both of which are certified by the Orthodox Union.

Entering the Stratusphere of Success:

ANSTHRUAN

E. & J. Gallo wasn't exactly new to the spirits business when it debuted New Amsterdam Stratusphere (then called Original Gin) in 2007; after all, the company had been making brandy since 1975. And it certainly wasn't new to the idea that it could create high-quality yet affordable products to compete with super-premium brands. So it wasn't much of a stretch when, in a period of revitalization for the category, the Gallo team "saw an opportunity to launch a new, contemporary, Western-style gin," in National Beverage Development Manager Chris Chamberlain's words.



But even they may have been surprised by its enormous success as an 80-proof expression designed, according to Chamberlain. to be "more approachable for consumers new to the category" thanks to "front notes of lemon and candied orange that [also] help open the door to bartenders . . . when crafting all sorts of cocktails." Indeed, it was so successful that they decided its converts might be ready to try a more traditional style. Enter Stratusphere

London Dry Gin, a 96-proof spirit with a more classic, juniper-forward profile.

The real kicker, of course, is value: With the flagship priced at about \$15 and the London Dry at \$22, newly minted gin fans don't have to choose between them—they can go for both in order to explore the spirits' different characters and uses. No wonder Gallo's so confident in its ability to compete with more expensive brands.

Lift Off:

AVIATION AMERICAN GIN

Aviation American Gin was already a bartenders' darling by the time actor Ryan Reynolds discovered the spirit in 2017. He was shooting Deadpool 2 in Vancouver, and after wrapping up on set, he would often decompress at his favorite restaurant bar by ordering his go-to cocktail. After many evenings of sipping what he considered the perfect Negroni, Reynolds asked the bartender what it was that elevated the classic drink. The answer: Aviation. With that, Reynolds reached out to Davos Brands, the portfolio company that owns the brand, to inquire about an ownership stake.

In the two years since, Reynolds has used his fame to champion the gin. His social-media platform alone—34.5 million followers on Instagram and 15.3 million on Twitteraccounts for an awareness many spirits producers can only dream of. "Ryan's massive platform and his celebrity have introduced the brand to A) consumers who might not have heard of it and B) people outside of the gin category," says Aviation Senior Brand Manager Adrian Molina. That exposure has helped Aviation net a robust following of its own: 260,000 followers on Instagram and 65,000 on Twitter. "There is no other gin brand with this degree of audience engagement," Molina says.

Aviation has seen explosive growth in the past two years, but its roots reach back to 2006, when master distiller Christian Krogstad and mixologist Ryan Magarian set out to create an American gin that eschewed the piney blast of juniper. They arrived at an expression that draws on cardamom, coriander, French lavender, anise seed, sarsaparilla, and both bitter and sweet orange peels, with juniper playing a more modest role. In essence, Aviation is a more mixable gin than that of a more juniper-forward London Dry. "The tasting notes vary depending on the cocktails," Molina says-including the brand's namesake drink. "In an Aviation or neat, you feel lavender. Mixed in a Negroni, the cardamom comes out. All of the botanicals play in unison and off of each other."

That deft balance of flavor has also played well in the market. According to recent Nielsen data, Aviation is the fastest-growing gin in the U.S. in absolute dollars and cases. "Aviation has nearly double the [case] growth of Tanqueray, Bombay, and Hendrick's combined," says Daniel Mandelbaum, Marketing Vice President for Davos Brands. "It's responsible for 19% of the total gin category's dollar value growth and 34% of the total gin category's case volume growth." And so, while Reynolds' celebrity might lead consumers to Aviation, the proof is in the repeat purchase. "We're proud of our juice," Molina says. "And once people taste it, they come back." — Amanda M. Faison

EVENT RECAP

Our prestigious Southern California speed-tasting panel, pictured from left to right at L.A.'s Bar Toscana:

Josh Renfree of BOA Steakhouse, Sarah Diehm of Southern Glazer's Artisanal Group, Kim Stodel of
Providence, The Tasting Panel's Meridith May, Justin Campbell of The Nice Guy, and Rafael Barba of Mr. O's.



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A COCKTAIL SPEED TASTING AT L.A.'S BAR TOSCANA PUT **SOUTHERN GLAZER'S ARTISANAL GROUP BRANDS** ON THE FAST TRACK

STORY BY KYLE BILLINGS / PHOTOS BY DEVIN BERKO



Del Maguey Brand Ambassador Jennifer Oakley.

ON CLOUD NINE: **DEL** MAGUEY

The small village of Santo Domingo Albarradas is located in a tropical, high-altitude region of Mexico just south of Oaxaca. Here, a majestic mist shrouds the surrounding peaks, valleys, and rivers, protecting the agave throughout the harvest. According to Brand Ambassador Jennifer Oakley, this distinctive terroir has inspired Del Maguey to craft mezcals with the sort of nuance that consumers typically identify with wine; its 100% Espadín Santo Domingo Albarradas, for example, is part of its single-village collection.

At our tasting, Oakley conveyed the mezcal's subtleties via a cocktail she called the Nube Nueve (Spanish for "Cloud Nine") in a nod to the magical mist. Served in a rocks glass with an orange wedge hugging the rim, the libation looked deceivingly familiar at first glance.

"I wanted to do a cocktail that's classically a gin cocktail," Oakley said. "I really wanted [its composition] to highlight what we're looking at in a mezcal and not take it over at all." Rafael Barba, Bar Director at Mr. O's, was appreciative. "This high-elevation mezcal brings out its rock soil's high mineral content," he said. "The smoke is tempered and works well with the concentrated floral-brush undertones."

In short, the Del Maguey Santo Domingo Albarradas defied sweeping generalizations about the category, revealing that for all its wisps of smoke, single-village mezcal clearly mirrors the place it came from.

NUBE NUEVE

- ▶ 1½ oz. Del Maguey Santo Domingo Albarradas
- ¾ oz. Aperol
- ▶ ¾ oz. Lillet Rosé
- 3 dashes Fee Brothers Whiskey Barrel-Aged Bitters Garnish with an orange wedge.



BACK TO THE FUTURE: JUNIPERO GIN

At MacCallans Public House in Brea, California, lead bartender Carlos Levya is mining the classics to yield new favorites. Gin has become a darling of Leyva and like-minded barkeepers thanks to innovative brands such as San Francisco's Junipero, which offers a fresh take on the spirit while maintaining a high quality standard.

Distilled in a small copper still, Junipero Gin utilizes 12 different botanicals—not just the definitive juniper—to produce a spirit with complex, robust character. As Tasting Panel Publisher and Editorial Director Meridith May observed, "This lovely gin is clean, crisp, and dry, with vivid floral notes and a creamy mouthfeel—the peppered vanilla pudding on the finish is wonderful."



Carlos Leyva, lead bartender at Macallans Public House in Brea, CA, mixes it up for Junipero Gin.

It clocks in at 98.6 proof, yet its nuances moderate the perception of heat, making it a great base for cocktails. Not only does its slight fruitiness benefit Martinis, said Levya, "it also works really well in spritzes and things like that. That bright, sunshiny kind of taste it has goes right through the cocktail."

Justin Campbell, Bar Director for the Hollywood Group, was impressed by Leyva's example, the Golden Girl Spritz, noting that "high-toned, bright lemon and floral notes shine from [this] great take on the Harvey Wallbanger." The thrilling rediscovery of gin's versatility continues.

GOLDEN GIRL SPRITZ

- ▶ 1 oz. Junipero Gin
- ▶ ½ oz Tillet Blanc
- № oz. Bénédictine
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ▶ 1 oz. fresh orange juice Top with soda water and garnish with a mint sprig.





Carlos Leyva prepares The Holy Trinity with Denizen Rum Merchant's Reserve.

THREE'S COMPANY: DENIZEN

Denizen Rum was founded with the vision of crafting a spirit with big character and bold flavor that harkens back to the premium rums of vore. With the concoctions of adventurous barkeeps in mind, Denizen sources three different eight-year-old rums from Jamaica and Martinique for the Merchant's Reserve and blends them together.

"What I ended up doing was using . . . a blend of three types of teas: white, green, and black," Leyva said. "It's kind of a take on a Jungle Bird but [without] pineapple; it has bitterness and complexity."

Denizen Rum Merchant's Reserve is distilled from molasses in three different copper pot stills and then aged for eight years in used American oak bourbon barrels, which impart a distinctly honeyed quality. Leyva builds a Highball with it, adding cherry, mint, and an orange peel as tiki-style garnishes. "It's called The Holy Trinity, playing on the rule of thirds: the bitter, the sweet, and the spirit," he said.

Josh Renfree, Bar Manager at BOA Steakhouse, recognized the depth of flavor in the rum. "Neat, it offers oatmeal and peach flavors," he noted, "along with dark honey notes that accent a dry minerality and the walnut and stone-fruit notes that are carried by classic aged rums."

THE HOLYTRINITY

- ▶ 2 oz. Denizen 8 Year Merchant's Reserve
- ▶ ¾ oz. cinnamon—black pepper
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lime juice
- ▶ ½ oz. Cynar Amaro Garnish with three mint leaves.



CALIFORNIA DREAMING: **SURF** CITY

Surf City Still Works pays homage to the California state of mind as a craft distillery governed by a freewheeling philosophy, said founder Josh Kornoff: "We're in control of the process—we do the distilling in house, so we focus on developing spirits that we like and know our customers will love."

Kornoff and his wife, Elena, started Surf City in 2017 to produce a robust lineup of spirits. The Huntington Beach distillery's California Gin, however, holds a singular place in Josh's affections. "The gin is the one that we wanted to get perfect from the onset," he said. "If you're going to make a cocktail, we'd love for you to make it from gin."



Allys Escobar is the Tasting **Room Manager at Surf City** Still Works in Huntington Beach, CA.

Surf City Still Works lead bartender and Tasting Room Manager Allys Escobar

heeded that advice with the debut of her Lavender Fields. Serving it up in a coupe, she complemented the citrus and floral botanicals of the gin with lavender syrup, grapefruit, and lemon.

Campbell approved. "[The gin's] citrus-forward nature and wonderful acidity lends itself to some great cocktails. The Lavender Fields offers a nod to the sweet, rich blue-floral tones it carries."

Each spirit in the Surf City portfolio is beach-themed and features the work of a different local artist on the label in liquid tribute to SoCal's endless summer.

LAVENDER FIELDS

- ▶ 1½ oz. Surf City Still Works California Gin
- ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh grapefruit juice
- ¾ oz. lavender simple syrup
- ▶ ½ oz. aguafaba
- 2 dashes chamomile bitters



SET TO BLEND:

BARDSTOWN BOURBON

Bardstown Bourbon is challenging the perceptions of what a Kentucky bourbon can be. In the words of National Brand Ambassador Sam Montgomery, "Versatility [is] the most important thing. Does it work well in a cocktail? Does it pair well with food? And does it taste great on its own?"



Bardstown Bourbon **National Brand** Ambassador Sam Montgomery.

Though it began as a distillery to accommodate brands without facilities. Bardstown Bourbon now releases its own line of Kentucky's finest, including the Fusion and Discovery Series. The knowledge its team has gained along the way has cemented its ethos of collaboration and invention.

"This is a blend of three different bourbons," Montgomery said of the Fusion Series #1, containing corn, wheat, malted barley, and rye. "On the side of the bottle, because

we are a company that really values transparency, you can see exactly how we blended it—all three bourbons, age statements, where they came from and their mash bills, which the consumer always wants to know. So there are no secrets."

Renfree found that the expression's "coffee, peach, mocha, and banana aromas lead to a malty smoothness with a hint of white pepper and cask-strength heat. Dark coffee notes, rye spice, and a nuttiness are distinct flavors to a lengthy finish."

Inspired by the singer and rapper Lizzo, Montgomery's Boss Up cocktail combined Fusion Series #1 with amaro, dry vermouth, and a crème de banana rinse. True to her word about pairing, she served it with a chocolate-covered espresso confection. The final product certainly commanded attention.

BOSS UP

- ▶ 1½ oz. Bardstown Bourbon Company Fusion Series #1
- ¾ oz. Meletti
- ▶ ½ oz. Dolin Dry Vermouth
- ▶ ¼ oz. Tempus Fugit Crème de Banane to rinse
- Lemon twist (express and discard) Garnish with a slice of banana.





Heritage Distilling Co. Western Region VP of Sales Brian Snyder and Bar Toscana General Manager Robert Carder present BSB - Brown Sugar Bourbon.

WHISKEY LULLABY:

BSB - BROWN SUGAR BOURBON

BSB - Brown Sugar Bourbon has guickly become globally recognized for its sweet, smooth finish of warm brown sugar with hints of spicy cinnamon. Based in Washington, the popular brand comprises two styles: BSB - Brown Sugar Bourbon and the 103-proof BSB 103. When approaching the concept of whiskey production, the makers of BSB. Heritage Distilling Co., aimed to create a product that would transcend generations and challenge existing expectations of a traditional whiskey. The result is an award-winning flavored spirit perfect for drinking straight or mixing into your favorite cocktail.

Barba was unequivocal in his praise of BSB. "Cinnamon, gingerbread, and holiday spices spruce up this unique whiskey," he said. "Brown sugar and peach are brought to a savory finish with pecans and walnuts on the finish. Superb."

Bar Toscana General Manager Robert Carder, meanwhile, described the whiskey as "pretty much an Old Fashioned in a glass," making for an easy recipe. "All I did was add a clear block of ice and a little Angostura bitters, stirred it, and added orange zest. I don't think it needed more. . . . It was really best just simple."

BROWN SUGAR BARY

- ▶ 2 oz. BSB 103
- ▶ 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- ▶ 3 dashes orange bitters
- Orange peel zest





Greg Bryson of The Wallace in Culver City, CA, creates a Nonino cocktail.

ANDIAMO!: NONINO

Founded more than a century ago, Friulian distillery Nonino is globally recognized for its grappas more than its apéritifs. However, the latter have garnered an eager audience in the United States, including the newly released L'Aperitivo Nonino Botanical Drink.

The origin story of the house of Nonino begins before the turn of the 20th century and winds through World War II, when the recently widowed Silvia Milocco developed a lighter, friendlier aperitivo. It remained forgotten for years, until her granddaughters and fifth-generation stewards of the house discovered the treasured recipe among family heirlooms and resurrected it for a new generation.

L'Aperitivo Nonino is a 42-proof, copper-pot-distilled apéritif whose mix of botanicals is still a closely guarded secret. Its complexity was on display in Greg Bryson's Drink With No Name, a Highball that also contained bourbon, white peach puree, lemon verbena, and a kiss of brown sugar.

"This riff on the Julep makes for a fragrant, light, refreshing sipper," said Kim Stodel, head bartender at Providence. But L'Aperitivo also drinks well on its own, according to Bill Anderson, Director of Sales for Terlato Artisan Spirits. "What I like about it is that it can be enjoyed neat, and it's very pleasant on the rocks too. I don't think a lot of apéritifs can say the same thing," he explained. "It's really supposed to be something that everybody can enjoy."

THE DRINK WITH **NO NAME**

- ▶ 2 oz. Breaker Bourbon
- ▶ ½ oz. L'Aperitivo Nonino
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ▶ 1 oz. white peach puree
- ▶ 2 tsp. brown sugar Garnish with a sprig of lemon verbena and a dried white peach slice.



CAPTAIN PLANET: **BATISTE RHUM**

Green is the new color of rhum. Founded by entrepreneur Tristan Mermin, Batiste Rhum was designed to be the first eco-positive, clean, and sustainable U.S.-based craft rhum brand with a single source in the French Caribbean. "All of the ethics and interests of the food movement that have been growing over the last 20 years—sustainability, organic product they are about to start coming into spirits in a more meaningful way," said Mermin. "[Batiste's distillery partner] opened in 2003 with support from the EU and the French government to build the first ecologically

correct distillery."



Batiste Rhum founder Tristan Mermin.

Raw rhum agricole is imported, aged, and finished in Napa, California, to produce the existing Batiste expressions: Silver and Gold. The Silver, said Campbell, "offers a clean, floral flavor profile with vanilla. bread dough. and tapioca."

Presenting his rhum both neat and in a Martini with a touch of vermouth and

a lime twist, Mermin was keen to express that it's designed for cocktails and also proudly noted that it's free from additives, preservatives, and flavoring chemicals—not to mention free from guilt for consumers. "If we get it right, personally I believe the ultimate material to make alcohol from is sugarcane," said Mermin. "It's a perennial product—if you treat it correctly, it just keeps growing and growing. There's a lot of benefit to working with sugarcane. It's the only material that you juice the body of to make alcohol."

RHUMTINI

- 1½ oz. Batiste Rhum Silver
- ▶ ½ oz. Dolin White Vermouth Garnish with a lime twist



FIRESIDE CHATS: **DUKE SPIRITS**

Miguel Rodriguez isn't afraid to exploit childhood memories. Featuring Duke Founder's Reserve Rye and Aztec Chocolate Bitters, his S'mores cocktail proved a potable tribute to the campfires you grew up around, as the scent of a smoked marshmallow speared on a cinnamon-stick garnish permeated the air. "When you have a good whiskey, you don't need to add too much to it," he said of the simple drink.

Meridith May agreed. In her view, the rye—which is distilled in Kentucky, aged for six months in



Miguel Rodriguez of Duke Spirits.

French oak barrels previously containing Napa Valley Cabernet. and bottled at 98 proof—had plenty to offer: "Aromas of stone fruit are unctuous and ripe, along with scents of cedar and coffee bean." she said. "The mouthfeel is exquisite. with blackpeppered peach and apricot, burnt orange peel, chocolate. and tobacco." In addition to

the whiskey, Rodriguez showcased La Adelita Añejo, made at a decades-old, family-operated distillery in the Los Altos region of Jalisco. The triumvirate of unique terroir, tradition, and tireless quality standards make for a compelling tequila: "You can actually taste the labor, the time that we put into it," he said. (For more on La Adelita, see page 58.)

S'MORES

- 2 oz. Duke Founder's Reserve
- ▶ ½ oz. cinnamon-honey syrup
- 3 dashes Aztec Chocolate Bitters

Garnish with a marshmallow on a cinnamon stick and light the marshmallow on fire just before serving.



FREE SPIRITED: LYRE'S

Exuding Kiwi charm in his floral button-up, native New Zealander Jeremy Shipley, Global Brand Ambassador for Lyre's, achieved the seemingly impossible on a recent trip to Los Angeles: Getting a room full of bartenders to agree on something.

As the attendees acquainted themselves with the brand's range of 12 non-alcoholic expressions, including American Malt, London Dry, and White Cane, Shipley provided insights into the production process behind Lyre's, whose "proprietary blend of essences, extracts, and distillates imparts the same



Lvre's Global Brand Ambassador Jeremy Shipley.

aroma and taste of the original spirits that it pays homage to."

Even among these discerning members of the cocktail cognoscenti, neat pours of Lyre's Italian Orange inspired by a classic Italian bitter liqueur earned fervent nods of approval and hushed affirmations all around. Equally well received was the featured "cocktail." the Bianco Spritz,

which contained Lyre's Dry Aperitif, Lyre's Orange Sec, and Fever-Tree Mediterranean Tonic garnished with mint, cucumber, and lemon. "I thought it was well made and offered something so unique in this category," said Renfree.

The Lyre's team concocted the alcohol-free Bianco Spritz from Lyre's Dry Aperitif, Lyre's Orange Sec. and Fever-Tree Mediterranean Tonic.



- ▶ 1 oz. Lyre's Dry Aperitif ▶ 1 oz. Lyre's Orange Sec
- ▶ 3 oz. Fever-Tree
- Mediterranean Tonic





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Yearbook

LOOKING BACK

Class of

Welcome to the Yearbook, which *The Tasting Panel* puts together at the beginning of each year to celebrate the best and brightest wines and spirits we reviewed over the course of the previous 12 months. Unlike the yearbooks of your youth, there are no embarrassing photos or cornball quotations here—just a tribute to the brands that we think warrant a space on your backbar or slot in your cellar, all receiving scores of 92 or higher.





Most Venerable

LOUIS M. MARTINI 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, MONTE ROSSO VINEYARD

Louis M. Martini officially established his winery in St. Helena in 1933; five years later, he purchased the Sonoma property that would become the famed Monte Rosso Vineyard, and in 1943, he helped found the Napa Valley Vintners Association. His



son Louis P. took over in 1954 and was inducted into the Vintners Hall of Fame half a century later. That timeline says it all: The Martini family recognized California's potential as a wine region before just about anyone, and their winery continues that mission today.

Louis M. Martini 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Rosso Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$120) Concentrated wildflower aromas appear alongside an orchard of black cherries. Decades of impeccable grape growing in this world-class vineyard express themselves with elegance through the texture, flavor, and scents of mountain brush. Chewy tannins and a dry palate lure black pepper, slate, and an energetic mélange of tangerine peel, blackberry, and cassis. Filled in with mocha and dark red fruit, the triumphant finish further explores the complexity and depth of this expression. 99 —Meridith May

E. & J. GALLO

Most Bang for the Buck

DARK HORSE 2018 SAUVIGNON BLANC

As the Director of Central Valley Winemaking for E. & J. Gallo Winery, Beth Liston set out to prove that she could make a \$10 bottle taste like \$20. Enter Dark Horse, a label for which she has free rein to experiment with uncommon varieties, different yeast strains, and/or varying oak regimens until she produces the wine she's looking for. Case in point: Her Sauvignon Blanc, which is on a winning streak when it comes to value.

Dark Horse 2018 Sauvignon Blanc,
California (\$10) With crisp pears and
honeysuckle appearing on its perfumed
nose, this energetic wine possesses daring acidity. Its style,
more New Zealand than California, brings out passion fruit and

tropical greens. **92** —*M.M.*



E. & J. GALLO



WINES

- 97 Alejandro Bulgheroni Lithology 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$80)
- 95 Allegretto Vineyards 2014 Ayres Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles
- 92 Alma de Cattleya 2017 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County
- 92 Alma Negra 2016 M Blend, Mendoza, Argentina (\$22) VINEYARD RRANDS
- 93 Alois Lageder 2016 Lagrein, Alto Adige (\$25) DALLA
- 92 Alta Vista 2017 Estate Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina
- 93 Anaba 2016 Chardonnay, Dutton Ranch, Sonoma Coast (\$42)
- 93 Ancient Peaks 2016 Oyster Ridge, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$60)
- 92 Andis Painted Fields 2017 Old Vine Zinfandel, Sierra Foothills, Amador County (\$25)
- 94 Andis 2017 Barbera d'Amador, Sierra Foothills (\$25)
- 93 Antica Terra 2014 Antikythera Pinot Noir, Eola-Amity Hills (\$160)
- 95 ANVIL by Forgeron Cellars 2016 Boushey Vineyard Syrah, Yakima Valley, Washington (\$65)
- 92 Au Contraire 2018 Rosé, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$30) TAUB FAMILY WINES
- 92 Au Contraire 2018 Rosé, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$30) TAUB FAMILY WINES
- 93 Auros 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$48)
- 92 Avissi Prosecco DOC, Italy (\$16) TRINCHERO FAMILY
- 92 Baileyana 2017 Firepeak Chardonnay, Paragon Vineyard, Edna Valley (\$28)
- 92 Ballard Lane 2017 Pinot Noir, Central Coast (\$12)
- 92 Barrel Burner 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles
- 92 Barrel Burner 2016 Chardonnay, Paso Robles (\$15)
- 94 Beckmen Vineyards 2016 Syrah, Purisima Mountain Vineyard, Ballard Canyon (\$32)
- 93 Benessere Vineyards 2016 Aglianico, Holystone Vineyard, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 92 Benziger Family Winery 2015 Merlot, Sonoma County (\$17) BENZIGER FAMILY WINERY
- 94 Benziger Family Winery 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley (\$55) THE WINE GROUP
- 96 Bien Nacido 2016 Estate Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) MILLER FAMILY WINES
- 94 Bien Nacido Estate 2017 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley (\$45) MILLER FAMILY WINES
- 95 Bodega Corazon del Sol 2017 Grenache, Revana Vineyard, Single Block 13, Los Chacayes, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) JEFF LEWIS
- 92 Bogle Non-Vintage Reserve Syrah, Quick Ranch, Clarksburg, USA (\$42)
- 94 Bonterra 2016 The Roost Chardonnay, Biodynamic Blue Heron Vineyard, Mendocino County (\$40) FETZER
- 92 Bonterra 2017 Zinfandel, Mendocino County FETZER
- 94 Bonterra Organic Vineyards 2014 The Butler, Mendocino County (\$55) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93 Borgo Scopeto 2015 Chianti Classico Gran Selezione, Italy (\$65) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 92 Borgo Scopeto 2016 Borgonero, Toscana, Italy (\$24) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 92 Boutari 2017 Oropedio, Mantinia, Greece (\$24) TERLATO
- 92 Buena Vista 2016 Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$25) BOISSET
- 93 Buscado Vivo O Muerto 2015 El Manzano, Los Chacayes, Mendoza, Argentina (\$54)
- 92 Buty 2017 Sémillon, Sauvignon & Muscadelle, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$25)
- 93 C.L. Butaud 2017 Tempranillo, Texas High Plains (\$48)
- 94 Calla Lily Estate & Winery 2014 Audax Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$120)
- 95 Campo Alla Sughera 2013 Arnione Bolgheri DOC Superiore (\$65) VIAS IMPORTS LTD.
- 97 Cardinale 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

Most Visionary

CLOS DE LA TECH

Leave it to a man who saw the future back in 1982—when he founded Cypress Semiconductor—to approach his dream estate with innovation top of mind. TJ Rodgers spent three years drafting the blueprint for his gravity-flow winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains, designing his own tractor to handle steep vineyard slopes, his own wine press for better efficiency, and his own fermentation tanks to boot. No wonder he called the place Clos de la Tech.

But when it comes to the fruit itself, he and his wife-partner Valeta Rodgers are thoroughly committed to the age-old methods of handling it. They farm sustainably. They hand pick. They foot crush. They employ native-yeast fermentation and they don't filter. In short, they believe in the magic of terroir every bit as much as the precision of science—and it all shows in the bottle.





Most Potential from Portugal

SYMINGTON FAMILY 2015 QUINTA DO ATAÍDE VINHA DO ARCO RED

Quinta do Ataíde has a long and illustrious history as a Port house. But under Charles Symington's watch, it also has a future as one of the Douro Valley's most exciting producers of table wine. Some 53 grape varieties—most native to Portugal—are now being grown on the estate's 200 acres of organically farmed vineyard for Symington's viticulturalists to experiment with. Meanwhile, the winemaking team is upending expectations for traditional Port grapes by showcasing them in dry, ageworthy bottlings like this 100% Touriga Nacional.

Symington Family 2015 Quinta do Ataíde Vinha do Arco Red, Douro, Portugal (\$35) Smooth, rich, and dense with finesse, style, and ripe black fruit. A long and balanced expression from a producer that takes advantage of its unique terroir. 92 —A.D.B.

VINEYARD BRANDS



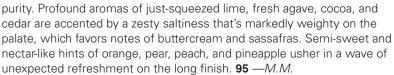
Most Resourceful

FAMILIA CAMARENA AÑEJO TEQUILA

Before the family behind this tequila distillery began growing agave, they co-founded the Jaliscan town of Arandas, in which they now operate. That was in 1761; many generations later, they aim to preserve the natural resources and traditions of this region through sustainable farming, ambitious recycling, and more, even as they incorporate modern techniques into the distillation process.

Familia Camarena Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$30)

From its amber hue to its clean, precise nose, this graceful aged tequila is an elegant expression of



E. & J. GALLO

(AMARENA

- 92 Carmen 2017 Frida Kahlo Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$15)
- 95 Casadei 2016 Filare 18 Cabernet Franc, Toscana, Italy (\$50) CLINE SISTERS LLC
- 94 Castello di Gabbiano 2013 Bellezza Chianti Classico, Gran Selezione DOCG, Italy (\$40) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 96 Cecchi 2013 Coevo Toscana IGT, Italy (\$130) TERLATO WINES
- 92 Cedar + Salmon 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Horse Heaven Hills, Columbia Valley (\$25) 3 BADGE BEVERAG
- 92 Cedar + Salmon 2016 Red Wine Blend, Walla Walla Valley, Washington (\$25) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE
- 92 Cedar + Salmon 2017 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley (\$25) 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 92 Chalk Hill 2016 Chardonnay, Chalk Hill, Russian River Vallev (\$30) FOLEY FAMILY WINES
- 93 Chamisal Vineyards 2016 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$24) CRIMSON WINE GROUP
- 94 Champagne Jean Diot Extra Brut, France (\$55)
- 98 Chappellet 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Pritchard Hill, Napa Valley (\$250)
- 94 Chappellet 2017 Grower Collection Chardonnay, Calesa Vineyard, Petaluma Gap (\$45)
- 93 Chappellet 2017 Grower Collection Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Vineyard, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$45)
- 93 Chappellet 2017 Grower Collection Pinot Noir, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 92 Château des Jacques 2016 Gamay, Morgon, France (\$27)
- 97 Château La Nerthe 2016 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée des Cadettes, France (\$180)
- 95 Château Minuty Cuvée 281 Côtes de Provence Rosé, France (\$79) TREASURY CHÂTEAU & ESTATE
- 92 Chateau Ste. Michelle 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Mountain (\$50) STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES
- 95 Cherry Pie 2015 Pinot Noir, Stanly Ranch, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$50)

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

- 95 Cherry Pie 2016 Huckleberry Snodgrass Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$50) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES
- 94 Cherry Pie 2016 Pinot Noir, Rodgers Creek, Sonoma Coast (\$50) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES
- 92 Cliff Lede Vineyards 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley
- 93 Cliff Lede Vineyards 2016 Soul Fire Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$110)
- 92 Cline 2016 Ancient Vines Mourvèdre Rosé, Contra Costa County
- 92 Cline Cellars 2017 Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi (\$12)
- 98 Clos De La Tech 2014 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Vineyard, San Francisco Bay (\$130)
- 93 Clos De La Tech 2014 Pinot Noir, Domaine Lois Louise Twisty Ridge Block, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$65)
- 93 Cogno 2013 Cascina Nuova Barolo, Italy (\$70) WILSON
- 92 Cogno 2016 Bordini, Barbaresco (\$60) WILSON DANIELS
- 92 Cono Sur 2018 Reserva Especial Chardonnay, Casablanca Valley, Chile (\$17) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 92 Croft 430th Anniversary Reserve Ruby, Douro, Portugal
- 92 Cruset Blanc de Blancs Extra Dry Sparkling Wine, France (\$17) VOTTO VINES
- 93 Cuvaison 2017 Méthode Béton Sauvignon Blanc, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$35)
- 96 DAOU Vineyards 2015 Soul of a Lion, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$125)
- 93 DAOU Vineyards 2017 Chardonnay Reserve, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$46)
- 92 Dark Horse 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$10) E & J
- 93 Davies 2017 Pinot Noir, Nobles Vineyard, Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast (\$70) WILSON DANIELS
- 94 Davies Vineyards 2017 Pinot Noir, Ferrington Vineyard, Anderson Valley (\$70) WILSON DANIELS
- 93 Davies Vineyards 2017 Pinot Noir, Nobles Vineyard, Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast (\$70) WILSON DANIELS
- 97 Delas Frères 2014 Les Bessards, Hermitage, France (\$257) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 96 Delas Frères 2015 Domaine des Tourettes, France (\$96) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 96 Delas Frères 2016 Domaine des Grands Chemins, France (\$42) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 92 Domaine Fournier 2018 Sancerre Les Belles Vignes Rosé,



Loire Valley, France (\$29) DAVID MILLIGAN SELECTIONS

- 94 Domaine Rütz 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Morisoli Vineyard, Rutherford Bench, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 93 Domaine Weinbach 2017 Cuvée Théo Gewürztraminer Vins d'Alsace, France (\$43)
- 93 Domus Aurea 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$70) GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTING
- 93 Double Canyon 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$25) CRIMSON WINE
- 92 Dueling Pistols Cellars 2016 Red Blend, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$55) TERLATO
- 92 Dutton Estate Winery 2017 Manzana Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$65)
- 92 Dutton-Goldfield 2015 Syrah, Cherry Ridge Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$50)
- 93 Dutton-Goldfield 2016 Chardonnay, Rued Vineyard, Green Valley of Russian River Valley (\$55)
- 92 Dutton-Goldfield 2016 Zinfandel, Dutton Ranch-Morelli Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$50)
- 92 Dutton-Goldfield 2017 Chardonnay, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$39)
- 93 Dutton-Goldfield 2017 Pinot Noir, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 93 Eberle 2016 Syrah, Paso Robles (\$34)
- 93 Eberle 2017 Côtes-du-Rôbles, Paso Robles (\$30)
- 94 Eberle 2017 Syrah, Steinbeck Vineyard, Paso Robles (\$30)
- 93 Eberle Winery 2016 Vineyard Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$25)
- 93 Eberle Winery 2016 Vineyard Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$25)
- 93 Eden Rift 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Griva Vineyard, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County
- 95 Emeritus Vineyards 2015 Pinot Noir, Hallberg Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$44)
- 94 Emeritus Vineyards 2016 Pinot Noir, Hallberg Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$44)
- 92 Emporium 2015 Appassimento Rosso Salento, Puglia, Italy
- 93 Eponymous 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$65)
- 95 FEL Wines 2016 Pinot Noir, Savoy Vineyard, Anderson Valley (\$70)
- 94 Feudo Maccari 2016 Syrah, Maharis, Sicilia, Italy (\$70)
- 94 Firriato 2014 Signum Aetnae Riserva, Etna, Italy (\$100)
- 94 Flora Springs 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Holy Smoke Vineyard, Oakville (\$125)
- 93 Flora Springs 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Out of Sight Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$125)
- 97 Flora Springs 2016 Rennie Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, St. Helena Vineyard, Napa (\$150)
- 93 Flora Springs 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 97 Flora Springs 2016 Rutherford Hillside Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 92 Flora Springs 2016 Merlot, Napa Valley (\$35)
- 93 Flora Springs 2016 Trilogy, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93 Flora Springs 2017 All Hallows Eve Estate Cabernet Franc. Napa Valley (\$60)
- 94 Flora Springs 2017 Ghost Winery Malbec, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 92 Foley Sonoma 2016 Brut Sparkling, Russian River Valley (\$42)
- 92 Folie à Deux 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$23) TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- 92 Folie à Deux 2017 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$18) TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- 93 Folly of the Beast 2018 Pinot Noir, Central Coast (\$19) WINC
- 93 Fonseca 2014 Late Bottled Vintage Port Unfiltered, Douro, Portugal (\$24) KOBRAND
- 92 Four Virtues 2016 Bourbon Barrel Aged Zinfandel, Lodi (\$25) **RUTHERFORD WINES**
- 93 Frankland Estate 2015 Olmo's Reward, Western Australia (\$55) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Frankland Estate 2015 Isolation Ridge Shiraz, Frankland River, Australia (\$40) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Frescobaldi 2017 Benefizio Reserva Chardonnay, Pomino Bianco, Italy (\$48)
- 93 Fritz Haag 2017 Riesling Spätlese, Brauneberger Juffer Sonnenuhr Vineyard, Mosel (\$42) LOOSEN BROS. USA
- 96 Gagliole 2015 Pecchia Colli della Toscana Centrale IGT, Italy (\$120) VIAS IMPORTS
- 92 Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2017 Old Vine Estate Zinfandel. Russian River Valley (\$50)

Best Pedigree **WESTWOOD ESTATE**

When you've got it, flaunt it. Not only does Westwood Estate have a prime piece of real estate in the form of the prestigious, cool-climate Annadel Gap Vineyard in Sonoma County, it also has a world-renowned collaborator in winemaker Philippe Melka. Melka and his team help to bring out the best of this Biodynamic site on the eastern edge of the Mayacamas, which is influenced by the Pacific 20 miles to the west.

Westwood Estate 2016 Legend, Sonoma County Aromas of sweet, savory soil are accentuated by rich tones of blueberry preserves in this generous blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon with Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre. A true extrovert, it gives wide berth on the palate to creamy boysenberry and luscious, ripe plum. Red floral notes and graphite harmonize with high-energy acidity as finely grained tanning grip like a professional golfer: confident, seamless, and firm but not tight. It finishes with a snip of cayenne, sparking an alignment with cinnamon and oak as the blue fruit turns darker. 96 -M.M.

Westwood Estate 2016 Syrah, Annadel Gap Vineyard. Sonoma Valley Blackberries paint brushstrokes of violet on the plush nose and palate. Grainy, powdered tannins add more textural layers as chocolate fudge cake meets a core of cherry liqueur. As the wine continues to open, it sends out a juicy wash of salted violets, black pepper, blueberry, and cedar. 95 — M.M.

Westwood Estate 2016 Pinot Noir, Wendling Vineyard, Anderson Valley, Mendocino County Spiced oak and cinnamon cherries form an exquisite perfume that leads into a more savory palate. Nutmeg, clove, and cranberry are filled with a mocha-cedar center. Dried heather adds flavor to the wine's textural weight. 94



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- 92 Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2017 Old Vine Zinfandel, Starr Road Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$50)
- 93 Gehricke 2015 Pinot Noir, Los Carneros (\$32) 3 BADGE
- 93 Gehricke 2016 Petite Sirah, Sonoma Valley (\$30) 3 BADGE
- 93 Gérard Bertrand No. 40 Château La Sauvageonne La Villa Rosé, Languedoc, France (\$85)
- 96 Gorgona 2015 Costa Toscana IGT, Italy (\$140)
- 96 Groth 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$140)
- 92 Groth 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$65)
- 93 Groth 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$24)
- 95 Guarachi Family Wines 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90)
- 93 Gundlach Bundschu 2015 Vintage Reserve Red Blend, Sonoma County (\$125)
- 93 Gundlach Bundschu 2017 Mountain Cuvée, Sonoma County (\$20)
- 92 Gundlach Bundschu 2018 Estate Gewürztraminer, Sonoma Coast (\$25)
- 92 Hahn Estate 2017 Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$18)
- 94 Hahn Estate 2017 SLH Estate Grown Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$22)
- 94 Hard Row to Hoe Vineyards 2016 Burning Desire Cabernet Franc, Glacial Gravels Vineyard, Lake Chelan, Washington (\$55)
- 93 Hawk and Horse Vineyards 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills AVA, Lake County
- 93 Henry's Drive 2017 Magnus Shiraz, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$80) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Henry's Drive 2017 Padthaway Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$60) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Highwayman 2017 Trailblazer Reserve, Sonoma County (\$35)

- 92 Hopes End 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia (\$13)
- 92 Imagery 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, California
- 92 Imagery 2018 Pinot Noir, California
- 95 J. Davies 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Diamond Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$120) WILSON DANIELS
- 96 J. Lohr Cuvée St. E, Paso Robles (\$58)
- 96 J. Lohr 2015 Cuvée POM, Paso Robles (\$50)
- 94 J. Lohr 2017 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$35)
- 92 J. Wilkes 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles Highland District (\$30) MILLER FAMILY WINES
- 93 J. Wilkes 2017 Pinot Blanc, Santa Maria Valley (\$18)
- 93 J. Wilkes 2017 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley (\$18) THE THORNHILL COMPANIES
- 93 J. Wilkes 2017 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley (\$30) MILLER FAMILY WINES
- 96 Joseph Phelps 2013 Estate Insignia, Napa Valley (\$250) 92 Kate Arnold 2017 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$25)
- 92 Kay Brothers 2017 Amery Vineyards Basket Pressed Grenache, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$40)
- 92 Kay Brothers Amery Vineyard 2015 Hillside Shiraz, Amery, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$60) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 93 Kay Brothers Amery Vineyard 2016 Shiraz, Block 6, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$110) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Kenwood Vineyards 2013 Six Ridges Merlot, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$26)
- 93 Kim Crawford 2017 Signature Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$25) CONSTELLATION WINE
- 92 Kim Crawford 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$18) CONSTELLATION WINE LLS
- 92 Kutch Wines 2017 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$39)
- 92 Kutch Wines 2017 Pinot Noir, Falstaff Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$64)
- 92 La Crema 2016 Chardonnay, Kelli Ann Vineyard, Russian

- River Valley (\$55) JACKSON FAMILY WINES
- 93 La Crema 2016 Pinot Noir, Shell Ridge Vineyard,
- 93 Lang & Reed 2016 Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93 LangeTwins 2016 Cabernet Franc, Miller Vineyard, Clarksburg AVA (\$32)
- 92 LangeTwins 2016 Montepulciano, River Ranch Vineyard, Jahant AVA, Lodi (\$28)
- 92 Le Grand Courtâge NV Grande Cuvée Blanc de Blancs, France (\$22) LE GRAND COURTÂGE
- 93 Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2015 Estate Ti Amo, Alexander Valley (\$86)
- 93 Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2016 Old Vine Estate Barbera, Sonoma Valley (\$54)
- 93 Lorenzo Mattoni 2014 Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG, Italy (\$50)
- 95 Louis Jadot 2016 Gevrey-Chambertin Côte de Nuits-Villages, Burgundy, France (\$72) KOBRAND
- 94 Louis Jadot 2016 Pommard Côte-d'Or, Burgundy, France (\$67) KOBRAND
- 99 Louis M. Martini 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Rosso Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$230) E & J GALLO
- 92 Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Cote del Sol Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Ynez Valley (\$36)
- 93 Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Goodchild High 9 Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara County (\$35)
- 94 Luce della Vite 2015 Toscana IGT, Italy (\$100) VINTUS
- 94 LVE 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, USA (\$85)
- 92 Maddalena 2016 Zinfandel, Paso Robles (\$22) RIBOLI FAMILY
- 96 Maison de Grand Esprit 2015 Grand Esprit Saint-Estèphe Médoc, Bordeaux, France (\$100) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 93 Maison de Grand Esprit 2015 La Mystèriale Bordeaux Lussac-Saint-Émilion, France (\$45) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 95 Maison de Grand Esprit 2015 La Mystèriale Rhône Valley Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France (\$50.0) TREASURY WINE ESTATES





Shadow boxes displaying vintage woolen bathing suits adorn the walls of J.J. Pfister Distilling Company's tasting room in Sacramento, California. These strikingly ornate garments are not some random decor choice: They tell the story of the eponymous John Jacob Pfister, who made a name for himself in the early 20th century with knitted sportswear.

Keeping his forebear's entrepreneurial spirit alive, Pfister's great-grandson Kevin Keck founded J.J. Pfister with his wife, Gail, and son Brian in 2016. As the master distiller, Brian has created a spirits portfolio initially focused on the craft distillery's London Dry Capitol Gin. At J.J. Pfister's distillery in California's capital city, nine specially selected botanicals—including cubeb berries, lemongrass, angelica, orris root, and fennel seeds—are distilled using a column gin basket to optimize the flavor profile of this certified organic spirit. And speaking of certification, J.J. Pfister's distillers are a team of graduates of the Viticulture and Enology program at the University of California, Davis, so it's no wonder why the gin drinks with elegance—it's pleasant on the nose and smooth on the palate.

To date, J.J. Pfister has been a featured brand at Sacramento's Farm-to-Fork Festival—a destination event that highlights the best that local chefs, winemakers, brewers, and distillers have to offer—and has won multiple awards for not only its gin but four other well-reviewed spirits, including its Organic Vodka and Navy Strength Rum. You could say, then, that things have gone swimmingly for this talented family.

J.J. Pfister London Dry Capitol Gin, USA (\$30)

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Organic rye from the Sacramento Valley is used as a base for the spirit, which exudes aromas of lavender, tangerine, and spearmint with an echo of juniper. The palate is blissful: soft and silky, with candied violet opening to lemongrass and exotic spices. Fennel root creates a creaminess on the palate. The finish is long and leaves a sweetness on the tongue. **97** —*M*.*M*.

J.J. Pfister Organic Vodka, USA (\$25) Like its sibling in the gin category, this is a step above for vodka. On the nose, tarragon-spiced lemons and vanilla are delicate and vibrant. The creamy entry offers a layer of licorice covered by a wave of mocha, black pepper, and toasted marshmallow. The mouthfeel is fluid and lengthy. **95** —*M.M.*

J.J. Pfister Distilling Navy Strength Rum (\$35)

A luminous hue of amber-gold meets a heady perfume of dried flowers and bittersweet orange peel. The palate is composed, elegant, and silky. At 114 proof, this navy-strength rum doesn't knock you over; rather, it's crisp and defined. Stone fruit weaves through vanilla extract, dark honey, and dried figs, followed by a finish of oak, apricot, and dark chocolate. 95 -M.M.





Most Regal

EL REY TEQUILA

A brand named for royalty had better make an impression as distinguished as its title. The award-winning El Rey Tequila—which translates as "the king" does just that for true agave connoisseurs.

Produced in Jalisco's Valle region, El Rey's six tequilas are made exclusively with 100% Blue Weber agave grown in rich volcanic soil; the Silver



rests for three months in stainless-steel containers, while the Reposado and Añejo spend six and 14 months, respectively, in American oak barrels. The Strawberry, Hibiscus, and Pineapple Coconut expressions, meanwhile, are produced with 100% natural flavoring and are recommended for serving over ice. In a final regal touch, each bottle comes equipped with a crown-shaped glass cap that can be used as a shot glass.

El Rey Silver Tequila (\$34) Potent lime and agave aromas join vibrant flavors of strawberry, grapefruit zest, and salted earth. 95 — M.M.

El Rey Reposado Tequila (\$35) Scents of butterscotch and chamomile lead to delicate notes of agave and garden herbs. Salted citrus and a mineral quality appear on the finish. 93 —M.M.

El Rey Añejo Tequila (\$37) This is an elegant and dizzyingly sensuous expression, with candied pineapple seducing savory notes of cigar leaf and peppered cocoa. 95 —M.M.

El Rey Silver Hibiscus (\$38) Lovely pink and purple flavors are pleasantly aromatic, with no cloying sweetness. Notes of blueberry and vanilla round out the finish. 93 -M.M.



El Rey Silver Pineapple Coconut (\$38) Jasmine and ripe pineapple accent coconut on a buoyant palate that further enhances this mellow tequila. 93 —M.M.

El Rey Silver Strawberry (\$38)

Pleasant aromas of candied strawberry give way to a hint of mint and a dollop of coconut on a sumptuous mouthfeel. 92 -M.M.

- 93 Maison Louis Jadot 2016 Meursault, France (\$75) KOBRAND
- 92 Marichal 2015 Grand Reserve Tannat, Canalones, Uruguay
- 93 Masi 2013 Vaio Amaron, Serigo Alighieri Vineyard, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico (\$100) KOBRAND
- 93 Masi 2015 Costasera, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico (\$65) KORRAND
- 93 Masút 2016 Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir, Mendocino County (\$4n)
- 93 Mayacamas 2015 Merlot, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 92 McManis Family Vineyards 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$12)
- 92 McManis Family Vineyards 2017 Chardonnay, River Junction. California (\$12)
- 92 McManis Family Vineyards 2017 Estate Grown Pinot Noir,
- 92 McManis Family Vineyards 2017 Petite Sirah, California (\$12)
- 92 Medici Ermete 2018 Solo Reggiano, Lambrusco, Italy (\$20)
- 92 Ménage à Trois 2017 Bourbon Barrel Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15) TRICHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- 94 Merry Edwards 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River
- 95 Merry Edwards 2917 Olivet Lane Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$68) MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 92 Metzker Family Estates 2018 Rosé, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$30)
- 97 Michele Chiarlo 2010 Cerequio Barolo Riserva, Italy (\$125)
- 92 Midnight Cellars 2016 Nebula Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$55)
- 98 Mod Sélection Réserve Champagne, France (\$300)
- 98 Moët & Chandon 1992 Brut Champagne Grand Vintage Brut, France MOËT-HENNESSY USA
- 96 Moët & Chandon 2002 Brut Champagne Grand Vintage Brut, France (\$109) MOËT-HENNESSY USA
- 95 Moët & Chandon 2012 Brut Champagne Grand Vintage, France (\$75) MOËT-HENNESSY LISA
- 94 Moët & Chandon 2012 Brut Rosé Champagne Grand Vintage Brut Rosé, France (\$85) MOËT-HENNESSY US
- 92 Moët & Chandon NV Brut Champagne Imperial, France (\$40) MOËT-HENNESSY USA
- 92 Moët & Chandon NV Brut Champagne Impérial, France (\$40) MOËT-HENNESSY USA
- 92 Moët & Chandon NV Brut Rosé Champagne Impérial, France (\$50) MOËT-HENNESSY USA
- 94 Montes 2016 Purple Angel Carmenère, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$80) KOBRAND
- 92 Montes 2016 Alpha Chardonnay, Aconcagua Coast (\$22)
- 95 Morgan 2017 Highland Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands
- 92 Morgan Winery 2017 Metallico Unoaked Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$22)
- 93 Morgan Winery 2017 Double L Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$44)
- 94 Morgan Winery 2017 Double L Syrah, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$44)
- 95 Morgan Winery 2017 Highland Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$28)
- 92 Morgan Winery 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Monterey (\$18) 92 Morgan Winery 2017 G17 Syrah, Santa Lucia Highlights
- 92 Morgan Winery 2017 Tempranillo, Arroyo Seco (\$24)
- 92 Morgan Winery 2017 Twelve Clones Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$35)
- 92 Morgan Winery 2018 Double L Vineyard Dry Riesling, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$24)
- 94 Mount Eden Vineyards 2015 Estate Bottled Chardonnay, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$60)
- 92 Mt. Beautiful 2016 Riesling, North Canterbury, New Zealand (\$22) MT. BEAUTIFUL USA
- 92 Mt. Beautiful 2018 Rosé, North Canterbury (\$17) MT. BEAUTI-
- 92 Mt. Beautiful 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, North Canterbury, New Zealand (\$17) MT. BEAUTIFUL USA
- 92 Niner Wine Estates 2016 Red, Paso Robles (\$20)
- 93 Norton 2016 Privada Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) GUARACHI FAMILY WINES
- 92 Norton 2018 Barrel Select Britto Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$15) GUARACHI WINE PARTNER:



- 94 Oceano Wines 2017 Chardonnay, Spanish Springs Vineyard, San Luis Obispo County (\$38)
- 93 Oceano Wines 2018 Pinot Noir, Spanish Springs Vineyard, San Luis Obispo County (\$45)
- 94 Opaque 2014 Malbec, Paso Robles (\$32) RIBOLI FAMILY
- 94 Palazzo 2016 Left Bank Red Cuvée Master Blend Series, Napa Valley, USA (\$50) WINEBOW
- 92 Pamplin Family Winery 2015 JRG, Columbia Valley AVA
- 93 Paraduxx 2015 Candlestick Red, Napa Valley (\$32) DUCKHORN WINE COMPANY
- 92 Paraduxx 2017 Proprietary White, Napa Valley (\$32) DUCK-HORN WINE COMPANY
- 92 Pascual Toso 2015 Alta Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipú, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) QUINTESSENTIAL WINES
- 92 Pascual Toso 2016 Malbec Reserva, Maipú, Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) QUINTESSENTIAL WINES
- 94 Pascual Toso 2017 Alta Barrancas Vineyards Syrah, Maipú, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) QUINTESSENTIAL WINES
- 91 Pata Negra 2016 Toro Roble, Toro, Spain (\$10) GARCÍA CARRIÓN
- 92 Paul Dolan Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Mendocino County (\$25) PARDLICC
- 92 Paxton 2018 Graciano, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$25)
- 92 Paxton 2019 NOW Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$20)
- 95 Peju 2016 The Experiment Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
- 93 Peju 2016 The Experiment, Napa Valley (\$100)
- 95 Pellet Estate 2016 Henry's Reserve Red Wine, Pellet Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 94 Pellet Estate 2017 Un-Oaked Chardonnay, Sunchase Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$42)
- 92 Peregrine 2016 Charcoal Creek Late Harvest Riesling, Central Otago, New Zealand (\$29) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 92 Peter Lehmann 2014 Portrait Shiraz, Barossa, Australia (\$18)
- 92 Peter Lehmann 2015 The Barossan Shiraz, Barossa, Australia (\$22)
- 92 Pighin 2018 Pinot Grigio, Friuli, Italy (\$20) KOBRAND
- 96 Ponzi Vineyards 2017 Aurora Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$105)
- 92 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Aurora Chardonnay, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$65)
- 92 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Chardonnay, Avellana Vineyard, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$63)
- 96 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Madrona Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$107)
- 92 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Pinot Noir Reserve, Willamette Valley,
- 93 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Abetina 2 Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$110)
- 94 Ponzi Vineyards 2016 Pinot Noir, Madrona Vineyard, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$107)
- 92 Ponzi Vineyards 2017 Avellana Chardonnay, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$63)
- 94 Ponzi Vineyards 2017 Avellana Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$105)
- 94 Prelius 2015 Prile, Maremma, Toscana, Italy (\$55) WILSON **DANIFLS**
- 94 Provenance Vineyards 2016 Deadeye Red Blend, Napa Valley (\$50) TREASURY WINE ESTATES 94 Quinta do Vallado 30 Year Old Tawny Port, Douro, Portugal
- (\$142)
- 93 Qupé 2015 Syrah, Bien Nacido Hillside Estate, Santa Maria Valley (\$45) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES
- 95 Ramey Wine Cellars 2015 Syrah, Rodgers Creek Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$65)
- 92 Ravel & Stitch 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Central Coast (\$25)
- 92 Remy Pannier 2018 Sancerre, Loire Valley, France (\$34)
- 95 Résonance 2016 Découverte Vineyard Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$65)
- 95 Résonance 2017 Chardonnay, Hyland Vineyard, McMinnville, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$56) KOBRAND
- 95 Ricasoli 2015 CeniPrimo Chianti Classico Gran Selezione DOCG (\$85) FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS
- 93 Ricasoli 2015 Colledilal Chianti Classico Gran Selezione DOCG (\$70) FOLIO FINE PARTNERS
- 92 Ridge Vineyards 2014 Lytton Estate Syrah, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$46)
- 93 Ridge Vineyards 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Bello Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$65)
- 93 Ridge Vineyards 2017 Lytton Estate Petite Sirah, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$45)

The Cool Kid

DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY

It takes no small amount of moxie to run a distillery in a state with an outdated yet persistent reputation for being dry; that's no doubt why Dented Brick remains one of only a handful of intrepid spirits producers in Utah. Then again, this Salt Lake City maverick would stand out even on a much more crowded playing field for its cool factor.

Take the fact that it gets its name from the vestiges of a gunfight that once took place on the site where the distillery now stands—a few bulletdamaged bricks now grace its edifice. Or take the artesian well also on the premises, bringing snowmelt from the Wasatch Range straight to the fermentation tanks. The purity of that water reflects the distilling team's wholesome approach to ingredient sourcing: The brand's Great Basin Bristlecone Gin, for instance, is made with Cache Valley red winter wheat and pumpernickel rve from Idaho. while its Antelope Island Rum starts with organic sugarcane and non-GMO molasses. Authenticity with a bit of an edge—that's what locates Dented Brick within the craft-spirits zeitgeist.





Antelope Island Rum, USA (\$22) This white rum offers aromas of Himalayan salt, vanilla, lime, and pineapple. Dotted with salty notes of apricot, Asian pear, and butterscotch toffee, the buoyant palate precedes a luxurious finish. **92** —*M.M.*

Antelope Island Red Rum, USA (\$24) This 90-proof expression, which rests for three years in Cabernet barrels, delves deep with black pepper, black olive, and anise. Sweet notes of cedar and tangerine zest temper the heat. **92** — M.M.

Great Basin Bristlecone Gin, USA (\$22) With aromas of plum and musky vanilla, this satintextured 90-proof spirit features delicate pine notes with a touch of key lime, white pepper, and blue-floral tonality on the back stretch. It's both elegant and unique. 94 —M.M.



Most Personality

RABBIT HOLE DISTILLERY IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, IS A LEGACY IN THE MAKING by Amanda M. Faison

According to an old adage, there can be only one captain of a ship. But that is certainly not the case at the eight-year-old Rabbit Hole Distillery in Louisville, Kentucky, where founder Kaveh Zamanian has bucked all convention by championing teamwork rather than having a master distiller—and the resulting whiskeys are the better for it. "Rabbit Hole is a family business and that applies to all that we do. There is

not one person that's a designated hero when it comes to making Rabbit Hole's spirits," Zamanian says. "Individuals on our innovation team and sensory panel work together alongside me to make sure everything from grain selection to the liquid in the bottle meets our quality standards."

Zamanian's background may have something to do with his novel approach: He didn't grow up along the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, nor did he come up through the industry. Instead, he spent his childhood in Southern California before eventually making his way to Chicago. He got his Ph.D. in clinical psychology, completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern University Medical School, and opened a private practice. It was in Chicago that Zamanian met his wife, Heather, a Louisville native and an admirer of

bourbon. With Heather's guidance and many trips to her hometown, bourbon began to compete with psychology for Zamanian's attention.

He dug into the history of the spirit by reading books and talking with industry veterans. A fire was ignited. "One of my graduate-school mentors once told me, 'Just shoot me if I only have one idea in life.' That statement resonated and has reverberated throughout my adult life," Zamanian says. As he learned more about Kentucky bourbon, Zamanian realized that, over time, consolidation had snuffed individuality from the market. "The variety of bourbon recipes disappeared as the industry went through boom-and-bust cycles and moved from farmer-distillers to mass production," he explains. "I wanted something different." And so, Zamanian took the gamble of his life: He closed his practice and tapped his savings to create personal recipes that had never been tested on the market. "I did it because Rabbit Hole is not just a job or a business, it's my life; it's a reflection of my belief that individuality matters," he says.

Zamanian's dedication to that ideal has since paid off. Rabbit Hole's unique mash bills and custom-made barrels vield a distinct flavor profile that bourbon lovers—and industry insiders—have fallen for. The distillery, which now produces 20,000 barrels annually, has collected medal after medal for its Cavehill Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Boxergrail Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, and Dareringer Straight Bourbon Whiskey (which is finished in Pedro Ximénez casks) at events such as the New York World Wine & Spirits Competition and Los Angeles International Spirits Competition. In late 2019—just a few months after the distillery was officially added to the Kentucky Bourbon Trail—Rabbit Hole released Heigold, a high-rye bourbon made with imported German rye that tastes of butterscotch and citrus.



Rabbit Hole founder Kaveh Zamanian.

Despite his meticulous approach to his craft, Zamanian thinks bourbon shouldn't be so lofty that it can't also find its place in daily life. "I think that whiskey is [as] complex and exciting as wine when it comes to food pairing," he says. Michael Motamedi, Rabbit Hole's Chief Marketing Officer, expands on this idea: "Our goal at Rabbit Hole is to spread the gospel of American whiskey. One of the ways we do this is by encouraging imbibers to explore the complexity of bourbon and rye through pairings with food." Cases in point: Dareringer's essence of vanilla and currants works well with dark chocolate or candied nuts, and Boxergrail's black tea and floral notes complement prosciutto and Grana Padano cheese. Certainly the culinary world has taken notice: Rabbit Hole has been named the official bourbon of the James Beard Foundation's Taste America program.

Eight years in, Zamanian is as committed as ever to standing out by offering a fresh perspective on an age-old spirit.



Rabbit Hole Dareringer Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished in Pedro Ximénez Sherry casks, this 93-proof spirit exudes a plump wave of spice, honeyed apricot, and husky wood. The palate sings to the gods of fruit with pretty ripe peach and brown-sugared pear. Notes of white-peppered cereal add a roasted nuttiness within a texture that spells out sumptuousness. 95 -M.M.

Rabbit Hole Boxergrail Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey The nose of this elegant 95-proof whiskey, which is the color of a copper penny, is heady with notes of heather and jasmine against a background of tropical fruit. In the mouth, a high-toned, peachy sweetness takes precedence, spreading generously across the palate with secondary flavors of mocha and cinnamon as it continues to evolve. 96 -M.M.

Rabbit Hole Heigold Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey

Following scents of cigar leaf, leather, and baked apple, the cinnamon-spiced entry of this 95-proofer is dotted with chile pepper and subdued by pekoe tea. High-toned notes of cola nut and orange blossom lead to a snappy finish. **93** — *M.M.*

Rabbit Hole Cavehill Kentucky **Straight Bourbon** Fragrances of coconut, new oak, mandarin orange, and honeyed golden apples are luscious in a well of depth. Ripe pears, banana, walnuts, molasses, and an accent of black pepper warm the palate. At 95 proof, it's opulent and elegant. 97 —M.M.

Yearbook



BAN FRANCISCO

WORLD

DOUBLE

GOLD

SPIRITS

Hepple Gin's tagline, "Nature and Science, Perfectly Balanced," couldn't be more apt: The story behind the product contains both the romance of the wilderness and the thrill of technical innovation. Here are some

highlights:

It's made on the windswept Hepple Moors of England's Northumberland National Park.

Five of its featured botanicals, including green juniper, are foraged in the wild and harvested by hand.

- To preserve the essence of these ingredients, production is undertaken with the utmost care via the Hepple Triple Technique of copper pot distillation, glass vacuum distillation, and supercritical extraction. The process takes roughly five times longer than an approach involving conventional methods.
- The resulting spirit has won numerous awards and accolades, including a double gold medal at the 2017 San Francisco World Spirits Competition.
- Excellent for sipping, Hepple Gin also shines in the most captivating of all classic cocktails, the Martini.

Hepple Gin (\$45) A gentle breeze of perfumed juniper, lemon oil, and peppercorn is incredibly inviting. Satin sheets of vanilla and pine coat the tongue, followed by salty heather and fennel root. It's a remarkably balanced and agreeable spirit, with half-shadowed notes of blackberry and coffee bean. 96 — M.M.

COMPASS POINT IMPORTS

NATURE AND SCIENCE, PERFECTLY BALANCED



- 95 Ridge Vineyards 2017 Lytton Springs Red Blend, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (\$43)
- 93 RJV (Robert John Vineyards) 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90)
- 96 Robert Mondavi Winery 2015 BDX Red Blend Oakville, Napa Valley (\$67.50) CONSTELLATION
- 99 Robert Mondavi Winery, The Reserve 2016 Caberne Sauvignon, To Kalon Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$175) CONSTELLATION
- 95 Rockbound 2016 Pinot Noir, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$65)
- 93 Roger Roessler Wines 2016 Pinot Noir, Lennox Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$60) R2 WINE COMPANY
- 97 Ruffino 2015 Alauda Toscana, Italy (\$99) RUFFINO IMPORT CO./ CONSTELLATION WINE U.S.
- 92 Ruffino 2016 Tenuta Santedame Chianti Classico DOCG, Italy (\$20)
- 92 Rutherford Ranch 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$30) RUTHERFORD WINE COMPANY 93 Rutherford Wine Company 2016 Two Range, Napa Valley
- (\$215) RUTHERFORD WINE COMPANY 94 San Simeon 2015 Estate Reserve Petite Sirah, Paso Robles
- 92 San Simeon 2018 Grenache Rosé, Stefano Vineyard, Paso Robles (\$24) RIBOLL FAMILY WINES
- 94 Santi 2012 Proemio, Amarone della Valpolicella, Italy (\$60) FREDERICK WILDMAN
- 93 Santi 2014 Santico, Amarone della Valpolicella, Italy (\$45) FREDERICK WILDMAN
- 93 Scattered Peaks 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
- 92 Scheid Vineyards 2012 Reserve Claret, Monterey County
- 93 Schug 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma Coast (\$25)
- 95 Sea Smoke Cellars 2016 Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills (\$82)
- 93 Seguoia Grove 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$50) KOBRAND
- 93 Sequoia Grove Vineyards 2017 Chardonnay, Napa Valley
- 98 Shafer Vineyards 2014 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$295)
- 96 Shafer Vineyards 2015 Relentless Syrah, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 94 Shafer Vineyards 2016 TD-9, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 96 Shafer Vineyards 2014 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa (\$295)
- 94 Shafer Vineyards 2016 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 92 Shafer Vineyards 2017 Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$52)
- 92 Shiloh 2016 Secret Reserve Malbec, Judean Hills, Israel (\$35) ROYAL WINE CORP 92 Silenus Winery 2015 Tyros Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa
- 92 Silver Palm 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$22)
- 94 Silverado Vineyards 2016 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$53)
- 93 Silverado Vineyards 2017 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Los Carneros (\$35)
- 92 Silverado Vineyards 2018 Miller Ranch Sauvignon Blanc, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$25)
- 93 Simi 2015 Landslide Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$41) CONSTELLATION
- 93 Simi Winery 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Landslide Vineyard, Alexander Valley (\$41)
- 92 Sobon Estate 2016 ReZerve Zinfandel, Paul's Vineyard, Amador County (\$24)
- 92 Spoken Barrel 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon #42, Columbia Valley, Washington CONSTELLATION BRAND
- 97 Spottswoode 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 92 St. Francis 2015 Zinfandel Reserve, Dry Creek Valley (\$44) KOBRAND
- 93 St. Francis 2016 Merlot Reserve, Sonoma Valley (\$40)
- 92 St. Huberts 2016 The Stag Cabernet Sauvignon, North Coast (\$25) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 93 St. Supery 2015 Merlot, Rutherford Estate, Napa Valley
- 94 Stags' Leap Winery 2015 The Leap Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District (\$110) TREASURY WINE ESTATES 93 Stags' Leap Winery 2015 Ne Cede Malis Estate Grown
- Petite Sirah, Stags Leap District (\$125) TREASURY WINE ESTATES



With a legacy dating back to 1753 as America's first whiskey company. Michter's was later coined as "the whiskey that warmed the American Revolution" and has maintained its reputation for quality craftsmanship even in the wake of a series of name and ownership changes. Of the entire Michter's lineup, the small-batch, singlebarrel US*1 expressions perhaps best embody the brand's tenacious approach to distilling.

Since current Michter's President Joseph J. Magliocco and his mentor Dick Newman (formerly of Wild Turkey) took the helm in the 1990s, the company's portfolio has attracted attention and accolades from new generations of whiskey drinkers. Confident that Michter's will continue to rise above the competition in the midst of a whiskey renaissance, master distiller Dan McKee takes his time with the US*1 expressions, refusing to release them until both he and Michter's master of maturation Andrea Wilson give their unequivocal approval.

In addition to the Michter's Fort Nelson Distillery, which opened on Louisville's Museum Row last year, the company operates the 78,000-square-foot Shively Distillery, also in Louisville, as well as a 145-acre farm in Springfield.

Michter's US*1 Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$50)

The nose exhibits a surge of caramel, tobacco, and sweet peach before the palate widens, releasing apricot nectar and exotic spice. A taste of char is tempered by vanilla on the pleasant finish. 91.4 proof. **95** — *M.M.*

Michter's US*1 Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Rye, USA (\$50) Dotted with black pepper and oatmeal on the nose, this 84.8-proof rye reveals a mouth-warming palate compounded by flavors of butterscotch, caraway, new leather, and ripe peach. 94 —M.M.

Michter's US*1 Unblended American Whiskey, USA (\$50) A complex array of scents—rancio, cedar, black cherry, and saddle leather—appear on the nose. On the bold palate, cigar leaf and mocha are gently balanced by dried apricot. There's some wet-stone minerality on the finish that works well with a touch of caramel. 83.4 proof. **94** —*M.M.*

Michter's US*1 Original Sour Mash Whiskey, USA (\$50) This 86-proof limited release with an exquisite perfume of brown sugar, cinnamon, and apple pie is awash in flavors of peach, white pepper, and sassafras. With a heavenly texture, the satin glide of liquid stays on the tongue and finishes with a buttery sensation. **96** —*M.M.*

Michter's 20 Year Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$700) Michter's first released a 20-year-old three years ago, and now it's back again. At 114.2 proof, it's a gentle giant that offers up a nose of honeyed wheat bread and charred caramel. On the palate, the developed sweetness shows through marshmallow and orange peel coated with almond and dark chocolate. Cigar leaf adds a more serious tone to this luxe sipper. 100 -M.M.



Can-Do Canadian Spirit

SIGNAL HILL CANADIAN WHISKY

One of Canada's most famous landmarks, Signal Hill served for centuries as a beacon for ships entering the harbor in St. John's, Newfoundland. Now it's a quiding light for its namesake whisky producer, whose bottling facility is within sight of the iconic fort (weather permitting).

Bearing a logo inspired by an ancient Norse symbol a nod to the Vikings' arrival on Newfoundland's shores—this 80-proof Canadian whisky is distilled from corn and barley. It's then aged in a mix of new white-oak casks, first-run bourbon barrels, and Canadian whisky casks before it's blended with pristine Newfoundland water. Non-chill-filtered, Signal Hill offers complex aromas and flavors as well as a rich mouthfeel; each batch is consistent due to the careful analysis of renowned master blender Michael Booth.



Signal Hill Canadian Whisky, Canada (\$35) Maple and oatmeal take charge on the nose alongside a hint of new leather as orange zest glides luxuriously across the palate, developing a deep, rich opulence with maple-kissed apricot on the finish. 94 —M.M.

TOTAL BEVERAGE SOLUTION

Smoothest Operator

WHIP SAW RYE **WHISKEY**

The name may have an edge, but the product most definitely does not: With a mash bill of 76% rye, 21% corn, and 3% malted barley, Whip Saw is as smooth as could be. That should come as no surprise when you consider the talent and experience behind the brand, a joint project of Vintage Wine Estates with winemakers John Wilkinson and Bob Cabral, who craft their rye from a blend of whiskeys aged up to seven years.

Whip Saw Rye Whiskey, USA (\$48) Rich amber color with a polished rye nose. Mellow yet flavorful with a smooth texture, toasty grains, sweet oak, and notes of dried flowers and brioche. 94 —A.D.B.

SPLINTER GROUP SPIRITS



- 92 Stags' Leap Winery 2015 The Investor, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 92 Stags' Leap Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 93 Stags' Leap Winery 2017 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$30)
- 92 Steele Wines 2016 Stymie Syrah, Lake County (\$38) QMS
- 92 Sutro Wine Co. 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Stuhlmuler Vineyard, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$28)
- 93 Sutro Wine Co. Merlot, Warnecke Ranch, Alexander Vallev. Sonoma County (\$35)
- 92 Symington Family 2015 Quinta do Ataíde, Douro, Portugal (\$23) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 92 Symington Family 2015 Quinta do Ataíde Vinho do Arco, Douro, Portugal (\$35) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 93 Tablas Creek Vineyard 2017 Mourvèdre, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$40) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 93 Tablas Creek Vineyard 2017 Patelin de Tablas, Paso Robles (\$25) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 94 Taittinger 2013 Millesime Brut Champagne, France (\$103)
- 95 Talley 2016 Syrah, Rincon Vineyard, Arroyo Grande Valley
- 94 Talley Vineyards 2017 Oliver's Vineyard Chardonnay, Edna Valley (\$48)
- 95 Talley Vineyards 2017 Rosemary's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$75)
- 94 Tamarack Cellars 2013 20th Anniversary Emerald Release Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$100)
- 92 Taylor Fladgate 2014 Douro, Portugal (\$25) KOBRAND
- 93 Tenshen 2017 White, Central Coast, California (\$20)
- 96 Tenuta CastelGiocondo 2013 Brunello di Montalcino, Italy
- 96 Tenuta di Biserno 2015 Biserno, Toscana, Italy (\$200) KOBRAND
- 94 Tenuta di Biserno 2016 II Pino di Biserno, Toscana, Italy (\$80) KOBRAND
- 92 Tenuta di Biserno 2017 Insoglio del Cinghiale, Toscana, Italy (\$45) KOBRAND
- 92 Tenuta di Ghizzano 2017 II Ghizzano Rosso, Costa Toscana, Italy (\$22) MAISONS & DOMAINES HENRIOT
- 94 Tenuta Perano 2015 Chianti Classico, Italy (\$25) VIAS
- 99 Tenuta San Guido 2016 Sassicaia, Italy (\$235) DALLA TERRA
- 97 Tenuta San Guido 2017 Guidalbeto Toscana IGT, Italy (\$60) DALLA TERRA
- 95 Tenute Silvio Nardi 2012 Poggio Doria Brunello di Montalcino Riserva, Italy (\$115)

KOBRAND WINE AND SPIRITS

- 95 Tenute Silvio Nardi 2013 Red Wine, Brunello di Montalcino, Italy (\$70) KOBRAND
- 92 Tenute Silvio Nardi 2017 Red Wine, Rosso di Montalcino, Italy (\$30) KOBRAND
- 94 Testarossa Winery 2017 Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$70) 95 The McNab 2016, McNab Ranch Vineyard, Mendocino
- County FETZER 94 The Vineyard House Winery 2015 Chardonnay, Oakville,
- Napa Valley (\$75) FAR NIENTE 94 Three Sticks 2016 Pinot Noir, Cuvée Eva Marie, Sonoma
- Mountain (\$90) 93 Three Sticks 2016 Pinot Noir, Durell Vineyard, Sonoma
- Coast (\$70) 93 Three Sticks 2017 One Sky Chardonnay, Sonoma Mountain
- 92 Three Sticks 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$65)
- 96 Tierra Roja 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$165)
- 94 Tinto Negro 2016 1955 Vineyard Malbec, La Consulta, Uco Valley, Mendoza (\$99)
- 92 Trapiche 2016 Medalla Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) ACME WINE MOVERS/WINE GROU
- 96 Trestle Glen Vineyards 2017 Creekside Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$55)
- 97 Trestle Glen Vineyards 2017 Hillside Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$75) 94 Trinity Hill 2016 Homage Syrah, Hawke's Bay, New Zea-
- land (\$125) MT. BEAUTIFUL USA 93 Trinity Hill 2018 Syrah, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$40)



- 93 Trivento 2015 Amado Mendoza, Argentina (\$20) EXCEL-
- 96 Upchurch Vineyard 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Mountain, Washington (\$75)
- 92 Vina Quebrada De Macul 2014 Domus Aurea Cabernet Sauvignon, Upper Maipo Valley, Chile (\$50) GLOBAL VINEYARD
- 96 Viñedos y Bodegas García Figuero 2014 Noble Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$162) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Viñedos y Bodegas García Figuero 2015 Old Vines Family Selection Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$68) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Viñedos y Bodegas García Figuero 2015 Tinto Figuero Reserva 15 Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero, Portugal (\$66) OLIINTESSENTIAL
- 94 VinRoc 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak, Napa Valley (\$125)
- 92 Vintage Longbottom 2018 H Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$40) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 92 Vitkin Winery 2016 Old Vines Petite Sirah, Samson, Israel (\$35) ROYAL WINE CORP
- 96 Westwood Estate 2016 LEGEND, Annadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$55)
- 95 Y. Rousseau 2015 Le Roi Soleil Cabernet Sauvignon, Stagecoach Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$100)
- 93 Z. Alexander Brown 2017 Uncaged Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$16)
- 93 Z. Alexander Brown 2018 Uncaged Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$16)
- 93 Zaca Mesa 2016 Clydesdale Estate Syrah, Santa Ynez Valley (\$48)
- 92 Zaca Mesa Winery 2016 Inceptive, Santa Ynez Valley (\$35)
- 96 ZD Wines 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Napa Valley (\$230)
- 93 ZD Wines 2017 Chardonnay, California (\$42)

SPIRITS

- 93 1792 Distillery 12 Year Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)
- 93 21 SEEDS Grapefruit Hibiscus Tequila, Mexico (\$35)
- 94 Ableforth's Bathtub Gin. UK (\$35) PARK STREET IMPORTS
- 93 Ableforth's Rumbullion!, UK (\$35) PARK STREET IMPORTS
- 93 Amaro Lucano Anniversario Edition, Italy (\$33) KOBRAND
- 92 Amaro Lucano, Italy (\$30) KOBRAND
- 95 Amass Los Angeles Dry Gin, USA (\$65)
- 96 Balcones Texas Single Malt Whisky Single Barrel, USA
- 96 Bardstown Bourbon Company Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Discovery Series, USA (\$130)
- 93 Bardstown Bourbon Company Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Fusion Series, USA (\$60)
- 95 Bardstown Bourbon Company Straight Bourbon Whiskey Phifer Pavitt Reserve, USA (\$125)
- 93 Bartholomew Roberts Black Bart Navy Rum Silver Oar, Barbados, Trinidad, and Guvana (\$30)
- 93 Basil Hayden's Dark Rye, USA (\$40) BEAM SUNTORY
- 97 Benham's Gin, USA (\$35) PURPLE WINE & SPIRITS
- 93 Benham's Barrel Finished Gin, USA (\$37) PURPLE WINE & SPIRITS
- 93 Bethel Rd. Brandy, USA (\$65)
- 93 Blade and Bow Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)
- 94 Booker's Teresa's Batch 2019 01 Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$70) BEAM SUNTORY
- 95 Booker's 30th Anniversary Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$200)
- 93 Casa Noble Joven Tequila, Mexico (\$50) CONSTELLATION
- 93 Casa Noble Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$50)
- 92 Cooperstown Cane High Spiced Rum, USA (\$40) COOPER-STOWN DISTILLERY
- 94 Dewars The Monarch Aged 15 Years, Scotland (\$45)
- 94 Distillery No. 209 Barrel Reserve Gin, USA (\$35)
- 94 Distillery No. 209 Cabernet Sauvignon Barrel Reserve Gin, USA (\$35)
- 93 Distillery No. 209 Chardonnay Barrel Reserve Gin, USA

The Absolute Sweetest

MOZART DARK CHOCOLATE LIQUEUR

Salzburg, Austria, is the birthplace of two of the most sensuous pleasures in existence: the compositions of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the chocolate liqueurs that pay tribute to his genius. Made from West African cocoa beans and Madagascar vanilla with a touch of caramel and mellowed briefly in brandy barrels, Mozart Dark Chocolate Liqueur is designed to be drunk on its own as well as incorporated into dessert cocktails—including the ultimate Valentine's Day concoction, a Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Shot. Combine it with Mozart White Chocolate Cream Strawberry in equal parts, and you've got a nightcap to make your



Mozart Dark Chocolate Liqueur, Austria (\$27) Anyone who craves the aromas and flavors of dark chocolate will find love at first taste with this richly textured 34-proof liqueur, which could be easily compared to a melted chocolate bar. Its sweetness is tempered with a hint of roasted coffee bean that gives it serious perfume and a character that would make its namesake proud. **95** — *M.M.*

Most Connected

own music by.

MOSSBURN VINTAGE CASK NO. 22

Mossburn's Distillers & Blenders Vintage Casks Series requires careful decision-making: The brand's master blender starts by selecting single malt barrels in an aging warehouse containing casks from some of Scotland's finest distilleries. Mossburn's Vintage Cask No. 22, for example, is a 2009 single malt from Speyside's Glentauchers Distillery—but it's just one of many: The Vintage Cask Series includes a total of 27 different expressions, ranging in vintages from 2003 to 2009. Their varied provenance is what makes Mossburn our "Most Connected" brand in 2019.

Mossburn Vintage Cask No. 22 2009 Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$70) Pale gold color with a soft spice nose and silky texture. Elegant and rich with balanced and mellow flavors of toast, vanilla, oak, treacle, marzipan, and caramel. 94 —A.D.B.





For more information, visit ourniche.com.



Most Likely to Beat Expectations

NEW AMSTERDAM STRATUSPHERE LONDON DRY GIN

When New Amsterdam's flagship gin debuted in 2007, it took consumers by surprise as a modern American interpretation of the spirit that featured softer, fruitier botanicals and a jaunty label depicting the Empire State Building. Now the brand is upending expectations once again with Stratusphere London Dry Gin, which strikes a more classic profile for only \$22, no less.



New Amsterdam Stratusphere London Dry Gin, USA (\$22) This is a new formulation for the brand, which has a more juniper-forward nature that contrasts with the citrusy personality of the original. Aromas of baby's breath, cocoa, and enticing jasmine generate warmth on the nose, and the sensation on the palate is equally soothing: a soft roundness without bite or burn. The juniper settles down with jasmine on a wave of creamy vanilla as a nostalgic echo of sweet cherry-flavored pipe tobacco arises. The finish is long, leaving behind tangerine zest. 95 — M.M. II

E. & J. GALLO

- 95 Distillery No. 209 Gin 5 Times Distilled, USA (\$35)
- 92 Drake's Organic Premium Vodka, USA (\$20)
- 94 Dry Fly Barrel Reserve Gin, USA (\$50)
- 96 Dry Fly Gin, USA (\$38)
- 92 Drynxmy Bourbon Sour RTD Cocktail, USA (\$7)
- 97 Duke Double Barrel Founder's Reserve Rye Whiskey, USA (\$99)
- 95 Duke Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$42)
- 95 Eight & Sand Blended Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$30)
- 92 El Rey Silver Strawberry Tequila, Mexico (\$38) TEQUILA
- 93 El Rey Silver Pineapple Coconut Tequila, Mexico (\$38)
- 93 El Rev Silver Hibiscus Teguila, Mexico (\$38) TEQUILA
- 95 El Rey Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$37) TEQUILA EL REY
- 93 El Rey Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$35) TEQUILA EL REY
- 95 El Rey Silver Tequila, Mexico (\$34) TEQUILA EL REY
- 95 El Tesoro Tequila Extra Anejo Aged 5 Years, Mexico (\$125) FIELDING & JONES LTD.
- 94 Elijah Craig Barrel Proof Kentucky Bourbon, USA (\$50) HFAVEN HILL
- 95 Familia Camarena Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$30)
- 93 Gin Mare Thyme, Rosemary and Basil Mediterranean Gin Distilled From Olives, Spain (\$39)
- ST. KILLIAN IMPORTING CO
- 92 Gooderham & Worts Four Grain Whisky, Canada (\$38)
- 92 Goslings Papa Seal Single Barrel Bermuda Rum, Bermuda (\$199) CASTLE BRAND
- 97 Grain & Barrel Spirits Chicken Cock Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$250)
- 94 Grand Marnier Cuvée Louis-Alexandre Cognac, France
- 94 Great Basin Bristlecone Gin, USA (\$24) DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY
- 93 Heirloom Brand American Alchermes Liqueur, USA
- 93 Heirloom Brand Genepy Liqueur, USA (\$33)

- 92 Heirloom Brand Pineapple Amaro Liqueur, USA (\$37)
- 96 Hepple Gin, UK (\$45) COMPASS POINT IMPORTS
- 92 Hera The Dog Vodka, USA (\$28)
- 94 High West Distillery Bourye A Blend Of Straight Whiskeys, USA (\$49)
- 97 Highland Park 25-Year-Old Orkney Single Malt Whisky, Scotland (\$650)
- 93 Historia de Nosotros Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$40)
- 92 Isaac Bowman Port Barrel Finished Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$45)
- 93 Islay Mist Blended Scotch Whisky Aged 8 Years, Scotland (\$26) MS WALKER
- 97 J.J. Pfister Distilling Company London Dry Capitol Gin, USA (\$30)
- 95 J.J. Pfister Distilling Company Organic Potato Vodka,
- 96 J.J. Pfister Distilling DRAKAS Honey Spirit, USA (\$30)
- 95 J.J. Pfister Distilling Navy Strength Rum, USA (\$35)
- 92 John Barr Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$25)
- 95 KROBĀR Craft Distillery Rye Whiskey, USA (\$60)
- 98 Laphroaig 28 Year Old Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky 28 Year Old, Scotland (\$799)
- 93 Larressingle Napoleon Armagnac, France (\$70)
- 92 Larressingle VSOP Armagnac, France (\$60) KOBRAND
- 94 Larressingle XO Armagnac, France (\$98) 94 KOBRAND
- 94 L'Heritier-Guyot Creme de Cassis de Dijon, France
- 92 Lucano Anniversario Limoncello, Italy (\$23) KOBRAND
- 93 Lyre's Non-Alcoholic Coffee Liqueur, Australia (\$36) 92 Martini & Rossi Riserva Speciale Bitter Liqueur, Italy
- (\$24) BACARDI
- 95 Mezcales de Leyenda Limited-Edition Cuixe, Mexico
- 95 Michter's 10 Year Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$160) CHATHAM IMPORTS
- 100 Michter's 20 Year Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$700) CHATHAM IMPORTS

- 94 Michter's US*1 Toasted Barrel Finish Sour Mash Whiskey, USA (\$60) CHATHAM IMPORT
- 95 Milagro Silver Tequila, Mexico (\$37) WILLIAM GRANT
- 94 Minor Case Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$43)
- 94 Mossburn Single Malt Scotch Whiskey No. 2 2009, Scotland (\$70) NICHE IMPORT CO
- 95 Mozart Dark Chocolate Liqueur, Austria (\$27) NICHE
- 93 Mr. Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, Australia (\$40)
- 95 New Amsterdam Stratusphere, USA (\$22)
- 94 Old Elk Dry Town Gin, USA (\$39)
- 93 Organika Life Vodka No 73863 Unique Vodka, Russia (\$42) HEALTH & ENERGY FOOD CORP
- 93 Organika Life Vodka, Russia (\$42) HEALTH & ENERGY
- 92 Organika Vodka, Russia (\$32) HEALTH & ENERGY FOOD
- 94 Paquera Mezcal Artesanal Barril Mezcal Let's Be Friends, Mexico (\$75)
- 93 Paquera Mezcal Artesanal Espadin & Barril Mezcal Let's Be Friends, Mexico (\$59)
- 93 Paquera Mezcal Artesanal Espadin Mezcal Let's Be Friends, Mexico (\$41)
- 97 Pasote Tequila Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$190)
- 93 Peg Leg Porker 12-Year-Old Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$86)
- 92 Penelope Bourbon Limited Release Barrel Strength Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)
- 95 Powers John's Lane Release Single Pot Still Aged 12 Years, Ireland (\$62) PERNOD RICARD
- 93 Powers Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey Three Swallow Release, Ireland (\$48) PERNOD RICARI
- 96 Rabbit Hole Boxergrail Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$49)
- 97 Rabbit Hole Cavehill Kentucky Straight Bourbon,
- 95 Rabbit Hole Dareringer Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$79)
- 93 Rabbit Hole Heigold Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$69)
- 97 Redwood Empire Emerald Giant Rye Whiskey, USA (\$45) PURPLE WINE & SPIRITS
- 97 Remus Volstead Reserve Bourbon, USA (\$200)
- 94 Rhum Barbancourt 5 Star Réserve Spéciale, Haiti
- 92 Rolling River Coffee Spirit, USA (\$30)
- 94 Rutte Old Simon Genever, The Netherlands (\$35) ROYAL DUTCH DISTILLERS IMPORTS
- 98 Sagamore Spirit Cognac Finish Rye, USA
- 93 Sator Square American Dry Gin, USA (\$45)
- 94 Signal Hill Canadian Whisky, Canada (\$35)
- 92 Sonoma Distilling Co. Black Truffle Rye, USA (\$86)
- 93 Source One Vodka, USA (\$34)
- 92 Stillhouse Classic Vodka, USA (\$22)
- 93 Sugarlands Distilling Roaming Man Tennesse
- Straight Rye Whiskey 3 Years and 2 Months, USA (\$50)
- 92 Svöl Danish-Style Aquavit, USA (\$35) NEW YORK DISTILL-ING COMPANY
- 93 Svöl Swedish-Style Aquavit, USA (\$38) NEW YORK DISTILLING COMPANY
- 92 Tia Maria Coffee Liqueur, Italy (\$20) KOBRAND
- 92 Till American Wheat Vodka, USA (\$19)
- 93 Tom of Finland Organic Vodka, Finland (\$42) WOLF
- 93 Tom's Town Botanical Gin, USA (\$33)
- 92 Trincheri Rosso/Sweet Vermouth, California (\$24)
- 92 Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, USA (\$65)
- 94 Vida de Louie Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$35)
- 95 Westland Garryana Native Oak Series American Single Malt Whiskey Edition 41, USA (\$150)
- 94 Whip Saw Rye Whiskey, USA (\$48) THE SPLINTER GROUP
- 95 Whistle Pig Piggy Back Rye Whiskey Pot Distilled and Aged 6 Years in American Oak, Canada (\$50)
- 93 Woodford Reserve Master's Collection Kentucky Bourbon, USA (\$130) BROWN-FORMAN
- 95 ZÍAMI Barrel Proof Florida Overproof Rum, USA (\$36) 94 ZÍAMI Platinum Rum, USA (\$30)
- 94 ZÍAMI Ruby Rush Grapefruit Flavored Rum, USA (\$28)



The Man Behind the Brands





AMERICA'S #1 ZINFANDEL

SINFUL INDEED

