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Yes, We Can!



ath Lokue

A few months ago, instead of the typical wine shippers, I started getting smaller, more compact boxes. What's going on? The answer is: cans."

As you can imagine, I receive lots of unsolicited samples for review: wine, spirits, and, recently, even some dog treats (they were delicious). It's easy for me to spot emerging trends just by monitoring what comes in.

This method of taking the temperature of the marketplace is highly unscientific; it's also very accurate. For example, after sleeping in the shadow of Cabernet Sauvignon for years, Pinot Noirs began arriving at my doorstep in abundance some time ago (perhaps thanks to *Sideways*?). These days, I still see more Pinot than Cab.

Over the past three years, there has been an explosion of rosés. I've been shouting about rosé for decades without anyone hearing me—but suddenly, everybody who has a fermentation tank and a garden hose is making it.

But that isn't the latest trend, as evidenced by my UPS and FedEx deliveries. A few months ago, instead of the typical wine shippers, I started getting smaller, more compact boxes. What's going on? The answer is: cans.

It seems that everyone is putting stuff in cans. There are canned wines and wine-based drinks like sangria (I enjoyed a spiffy Mimosa recently that was in a 12-ounce can). And there are lots of 8- to 12-ounce canned cocktails: Gin & Tonics, Palomas, Cosmopolitans, Piña Coladas, Margaritas, Gimlets, and more.

Then there's BuzzBallz—a line of 15% ABV cocktails packaged in 200-milliliter round plastic containers by a Texas-based company. (They're really tasty: I've been drinking them with lunch recently.) And as for the ever-expanding popularity of canned hard seltzers, even Bud Light has gotten into the act.

So what do I think about this latest trend? I'm for it. Everything I've tried so far is quite acceptable, sometimes even delicious, and I like the idea of single-serving containers. Right now, the spirits products are outpacing those on the wine side, but I expect wineries will catch up fast. Does that mean we can count on vintage Mondavi Private Reserve in cans soon? Stay tuned . . . II

UPFICATI Maggie Kruse is head winemaker at Jordan Winery in the Alexander Valley. nenting a MAGGIE KRUSE TAKES THE REINS AS **HEAD WINEMAKER** AT JORDAN WINERY narch 2020 / the tasting panel 5

UP FIONT

by Liz Thach, MW

Nothing delights Maggie

Kruse more than the scent of fermenting fruit: Her favorite part of working as head winemaker at the renowned Jordan Winery in the Alexander Valley is opening the cellar door early in the morning during crush and smelling the wine at various stages of its life. She takes careful handwritten notes on each tank and barrel, noting not only the vineyard block from which they came but the aromas and flavors as they develop. "This way," explains Kruse, "I have both a mental and palate memory of the wines as they move toward the blending phase. It's like I develop a relationship with each wine, and it is exciting because each vintage is a whole new discovery."

Kruse's passion for fermentation may well have been inherited from her father, who was a brewmaster at Miller Brewery Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she grew up. She remembers being fascinated by science from an early age and enjoying the opportunity to work with her hands in the high school lab. It was this intense interest that landed her in California at the tender age of 17, when she enrolled in viticulture and enology classes at Napa Valley College. "My parents encouraged me to study fermentation science in California," she recalls, "and my mother drove me to Napa and actually lived with me for a few months in my rental apartment because I was too young to sign the lease."

After a year at the junior college, Kruse was accepted to the University of California, Davis, where she graduated in 2005 with a degree in fermentation science. This, along with the experience she gained from internships—including a harvest stint at Central Coast estate Clos LaChance—secured her a job as an enologist for J Vineyards & Winery in Sonoma County, where she assisted in making still and sparkling wine. A year later, she was wooed away to Jordan by Rob Davis, who had been making wine at the estate since its first vintage in 1976.

"Rob has been an incredible mentor to me," says Kruse. "He was trained by André Tchelistcheff, whom Tom Jordan hired to work here from 1976 to 1992, and not a day has gone by when Rob didn't tell me a story about André. It's almost like I was mentored by both men." Now, after 15 years at Jordan—first as an enologist and then as assistant winemaker—Kruse has

taken the reins with the level of training necessary to uphold the values and philosophies that have secured Jordan's reputation as one of Sonoma County's most revered "châteaux."

Indeed, Jordan's wines have long been known for their refined, elegant, food-friendly style, with moderate alcohol, crisp acidity, and a remarkable ability to age—as evidenced by the estate's large library collection. "We sell



Winemaker Maggie Kruse tastes through the Jordan lineup with author Liz Thach, MW.

TASTING NOTES

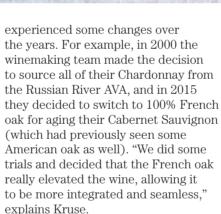
Jordan 2017 Chardonnay, **Russian River Valley** Showing a complex nose of straw, muted apple, and chamomile, it's fuller-bodied on the palate, with a zing of lemon peel, a modest touch of toasty oak, and cleansing acidity on the finish.

Jordan 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley This wine entrances with complex, earthy aromas laced with black fruit, spice, and hints of root beer and oregano; after an hour in the glass, it transforms into a mélange of black cherry. clove, and hints of raspberry puree. Medium-bodied and elegant, with finely structured tannins and fresh acidity, it's truly magical.

Jordan 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley A powerful wine with concentrated ripe plum, raspberry, spice, and anise notes along with massively structured tannins, well-integrated oak, and a very long finish. Complex and evolving in the glass, it tightened up after two hours and should age well.

70% of our wine on-premise in finedining establishments across America," says Kruse. "Consumers know that with a bottle of Jordan . . . they are buying a very high-quality wine with history and pedigree. It is a favorite choice for corporate dinners because the wine has an excellent reputation but is not prohibitively expensive."

For all its consistency, Jordan has



Today, Jordan Cabernet is aged for a minimum of four years before release, including the 12-14 months it spends in approximately 50% new French oak barrels. It usually incorporates Bordeaux's classic blending grapes: For example, the most recent release, the 2015 vintage, is composed of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 2% Malbec, and 0.3% Cabernet Franc sourced from both estate and surrounding vineyards. "I don't think we will ever be 100% estate-grown wine," Kruse says. "We like to have the flexibility of purchasing grapes from local growers and supporting our local community. There are some incredible vineyards in Sonoma and Mendocino where we source our

grapes, and we want to ensure we have the highest-quality fruit."

That said, Jordan is currently replanting 120 acres of vineyard. "Altogether, we have nearly 1,200 acres," says Kruse, "but not all of it is suitable for grapes. That's why we have cattle as well as our organic gardens." Visitors approach the winery via a twisting road that winds through many of those acres, passing hills covered with oak trees. Once they arrive at the large and impressive facility—designed to look like a French château with its golden stucco walls—they dine on fresh vegetables, breads, and appetizers made by Jordan's executive chef, Todd Knoll, as part of a paired tasting.

When asked if she thought Jordan would ever create a second label as most of the great Bordeaux houses do, Kruse shook her head. "John Jordanour owner and the son of our founders. Tom and Sally Jordan—believes there is no second for Jordan. He says we will always make the best wine that we can each year." She pauses to take a sip of her Cabernet before continuing. "You know, I like this philosophy, because it is very rewarding to make a wine that you know is the very best that you can create."

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DON'T BE AFRAID 96 OF THE DARK

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Jack Brennan Appointed to Senior Vice President and Managing Director, Corporate Development, for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

Outhern Glazer's Wine & Spirits has appointed Jack Brennan as Senior Vice President and Managing Director, Corporate Development. In this role, Brennan will provide leadership and guidance for labor and governmental relations in California while also assisting in the expansion and maintenance of SGWS' California-based wineries. He will also support





Jack Brennan.

Steve Harden.

other strategic corporatedevelopment initiatives and will report directly to Chief Executive Officer Wayne E.

Most recently, Brennan held the role of Executive Vice President and General Manager, California. He has been with the company for more than 40 years and is credited with helping to shape its business in California, ultimately lead-

ing the state to become the largest market across SGWS' national footprint. Succeeding Brennan in his prior role as Executive Vice President and General Manager of California is Steve Harden, who most recently served as Executive Vice President of Sales for California. During his 30-year career with SGWS, Harden has progressed through a number of sales and operations roles, including Senior Vice President and General Manager of Northern California.

SGWS' Mel Dick is Knighted Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic

Outhern Glazer's Wine & Spirits has announced that Mel Dick, the company's Senior Vice President and President of its Wine Division, was knighted Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (OMRI). He received the prestigious award in light of his outstanding business achievements and contributions to the growth of the international market for Italian wines, as well as for his understanding of Italy's wine culture.

The OMRI is awarded for achievements in the fields of literature, the arts, economics, and public service, among other areas. Armando Varricchio,

Ambassador of Italy to the United States, bestowed the award on February 20 at SGWS Wynwood, Southern Glazer's new hospitality and education center in Miami, Florida. "Thanks to his hard work, Italian excellence, quality, traditions, and innovative techniques in the wine industry are increasingly appreciated and valued throughout the U.S.," said Varricchio.





Jack Daniel's Tennessee Fire Unveils Package Redesign

n January, the Jack Daniel Distillery launched a premium packaging redesign for Jack Daniel's Tennessee Fire that's intended to fit more cohesively within the company's family of brands while improving visibility in bars and restaurants.

Jack Daniel's Tennessee Fire launched globally in 2016 and has since become the numberfour bestselling flavored whiskey in the world. Crafted with Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 Tennessee Whiskey and infused with a proprietary cinnamon liqueur for a smooth and appealing taste, it gives fans a new way to enjoy Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey.

"Jack Fire is a complex [spirit] that delivers the bold character of Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey with the warm, smooth finish of cinnamon," savs Alicia Johnson, Jack Daniel's Tennessee Fire Brand Manager. "This new package design more accurately communicates to our consumers the flavor and taste expectations for the delicious whiskey it contains."

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Hospice du Rhône Will Return to Paso Robles in April

The Tasting Panel and sister publication The SOMM Journal will serve as sponsors for Hospice du Rhône, an exclusive weekend focused on all things Rhône Valley. Organized by a nonprofit business league of the same name, this palate-pleasing event will be held at the Paso Robles Event Center and aims to embrace the enchantment and history of the region's 22 signature varieties.

Throughout the weekend, attendees can share a glass with international producers, peruse the largest collection of Rhône varietal wines on the planet, and savor the region's exceptional cuisine. Weekend passes are available for \$995 and include a seat at all four seminars as well as entry to the Opening and Closing Tastings, daily breakfast, the Rosé and Live Auction Lunches, and the Farewell Dinner. Tickets for the Rhône-Around Dinner Series on April 24 will be sold separately, with times and locations to be announced.

More than 150 producers will pour different wines at both the Opening and Closing Tastings, with the former serving as an opportunity for participating wineries to highlight vertical tastings, large-format bottles, and wines from the 2014 vintage and earlier; ageworthy white wines will also take the stage. The Closing Tasting, meanwhile, will focus on current releases, futures, and barrel samples.

For more information, including a list of participating producers, individual pricing for seminars, and details on ticket purchasing, visit *hospicedurhone.org*.

Day One: Friday, April 24

8:30-9:15 a.m. Check-In and Garden Breakfast

9:30-10:45 a.m. Seminar One: To Be Announced

11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Seminar Two: *Horsepower Vineyards: Leave No Stone Unturned* with producer Christophe Baron and moderator Jeb Dunnuck

12:30 –2:30 p.m. Rosé Lunch prepared by Sonoma restaurant the girl & the fig

4-7 p.m. Opening Tasting

Day Two: Saturday, April 25

8:30-9:15 a.m. Check-In and Garden Breakfast

9:30–10:45 a.m. Seminar Three: *Ventoux, Red Hot Cause It's Cool* with producers Château Pesquié, Château Juvenal, Chêne Bleu, Domaine de Fondrèche, Saint Jean du Barroux, and moderator Jeb Dunnuck

11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Seminar Four: Syrah to Rock the World: The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater with Todd Alexander, winemaker/partner for Force Majeure and consulting winemaker for The Walls Vineyard; Billo Naravane, MW, of Rasa Vineyards; Steve Robertson of Delmas; Rôtie Cellars; Valdemar Estates; and moderator Elaine Chukan Brown

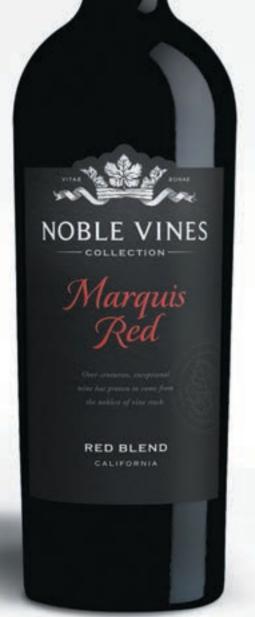
12:30 – 2:30 p.m. Lunch prepared by the girl & the fig and Live Auction led by auctioneer Todd Ventura

4-7 p.m. Closing Tasting

7–10 p.m. Farewell Dinner catered by local food trucks, including fig rig, with live music provided by Mark Adams Band and other artists









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n Denver, Colorado, restaurateur Joshua Pollack has built a miniempire on nostalgia for a bygone era in a whole other city: early- to mid-20th century New York. Starting with the wildly successful Rosenberg's Bagels & Delicatessen—where he engineered the water supply to replicate that of the world's bagel capital—he has gone on to open sandwich counter Lou's Italian Specialties as well as Famous Original J's Pizza, complete with a walk-up window dispensing foldable slices. Now he's launching Sherry's Soda Shoppe—and it's just the right place at just the right moment.

"It's a tumultuous time," he explains, "and when I think of the good that comes out of tumultuous times, it's art and food." Just as the dot-com crash gave rise to the comfort-food craze of the early millennium—when meatloaf and mac-and-cheese returned even to upscale menus coast to coast—so the current state of global uncertainty seems to be drawing a new generation toward a beacon of sweetness and light: the classic soda fountain, from the Brooklyn Farmacy to The Castro Fountain in San Francisco.

The longing for good clean fun in a



Joshua Pollack named Sherry's Soda Shoppe after his grandmother—whose last name graces Rosenberg's Bagels & Delicatessen, his adjacent flagship in Denver, CO's Five Points neighborhood.

period of gloom may also have something to do with the growing sobriety movement across the U.S.—and while both the alcoholic-beverage and bar industries are responding ably with zero-proof products and cocktails (see

our cover story on page 62), soda fountains have historically been alcohol-free zones by default.

Admittedly, Pollack may be acquiring a liquor license down the line (not everyone is sober-curious, after all). But for now, Sherry's, which opens March 10, has more than enough to tempt customers of all ages and inclinations. Of course there are ice cream-based concoctions galore: triple-dip cones, cookie sandwiches, sundaes, "house boats" (to use the terminology of soda jerks past, which Pollack's crew has every intention of reviving—along with their uniforms).

But it's the liquid variants that might especially attract adults seeking a break from booze. In addition to malts, shakes, and egg creams, housemade sodas in grown-up flavors like basil, mint, and lavender can be jazzed up with acid phosphate, Galeffi Effervescente crystals imported from Italy, and CBD oil. By all means add scoops of ice cream to turn them into floats—but an even better accompaniment might be the candy cigarettes Pollack is stocking. It's the perfect alternative to a drink and a smoke circa 2020. —Ruth Tobias

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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.

LÉGAL Molho de Pimenta (\$9/150-mL bottle) This Brazilian hot sauce is made from four ingredients: carrot, vinegar, salt, and malaqueta pepper, a bright-red chile native to Brazil. It's as hot as its color suggests, bringing kick, tang, and saliva-inducing acidity to LÉGAL's Mild, Medium. and Hot expressions. Meanwhile, the carrot adds color and a vegetal element to the mix. So what's a hot sauce doing on this page? Being useful: You can add it to your favorite savory brunch cocktail in place of Tabasco (and then douse your eggs and home fries with it too).



Little Fancy Peachy Rosé Wine Spritzer (\$11/4-pack of 250-mL cans) Rarely do you see packaging that is so convincingly retro you're inclined to double-check the expiration date, vet Little Fancy launched just three years ago. Loads of peach cobbler and watermelon on the nose appear more subtly on the palate, where they're accompanied by rose petal. The acidity is balanced and a thread of minerality tickles the underside of the tonque. At 5.5% ABV and just 90 calories per can, this spritzer is the wine drinker's alternative to virtually any hard seltzer on the market.





could drink them straight

from the can on a luxe

floatie in the pool.



MANCAN Rosé (\$5/375-mL can) The canned-wine bandwagon is getting crowded, but MANCAN—which claims the title of "the first exclusively canned wine company in the United States"—has been on it since 2015. The brand offers four expressions: White, Rosé, Red, and a bubbly white blend called Fizz. The Rosé melds unoaked Chardonnay with Zinfandel to produce a pale-coral guaff. Following aromas of honeydew and watermelon, tannins from the Zin skins scrape the palate clean before a note of glazed strawberry bursts onto the scene and lingers on the finish.

Stolen X Rock & Rye (\$3/100-mL can; \$25/750-mL bottle)

Combining American rye with organic raw honey and fresh orange peel, this flavored whiskey drinks like a pre-mixed Old Fashioned. The flavor brings to mind Good Earth's famous Sweet & Spicy black tea—thanks to not only the orange peel but also notes of cinnamon and clove—and the raw honey sweetens things up just enough for the whiskey-averse to enjoy. The brand advises to "shoot or sip over ice"; I suggest the latter option because, once cold, the honey moves like translucent amber lava in the bottom of the glass, which is fun to watch. II



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Brandon Richards has been named President at AleSmith Brewing Company. He had been CEO at Coronado Brewing.

Ingrid Gentry has been named CFO at **The Bardstown Bourbon Company**. She had been CFO at Tri-Arrows Aluminum. Inc.

CAREER CORNER

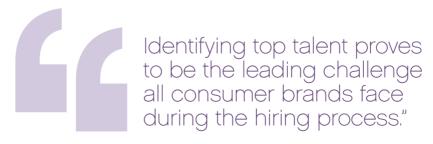
BevForce BUZZ:

Does Employer Branding Matter?

Today's job market is competitive. According to ForceBrands' just-released Talent Market Report on hiring trends, team structures, and employer branding, identifying top talent proves to be the the leading challenge all consumer brands face during the hiring process. The data shows that companies are recognizing the importance of creating a strong employer brand to attract the attention of candidates, with 76% of CPG companies rating employment branding as an extremely or very important factor in attracting talent. In addition, more than half of all respondents (56%) have increased their investment in employer branding.

Employers within each industry take a different approach to improving their brand image. Wine and spirits companies are more likely than those in other sectors to create communication and collateral related to employment branding. They're also more likely to refine the positioning and messaging of their employment branding and to train their employees on how to speak about the company.

For additional insights from this report, visit forcebrands.com. III



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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.

Embracing the Elegance of Wines from Piedmont and Provence



Domaines Ott's Jean-François Ott with author David Ransom in New York.

Punset winemaker Marina Macarino with her organic Barbaresco, which is imported by Regal Wine Imports.

story and photos by David Ransom

s winter's grip on the Northeast fades, New Yorkers are slowing their consumption of heavy reds in favor of wines whose elegance and freshness signify that spring is on the horizon. Two tastings I attended recently showcased regions famous for these exact styles.

At the Top 100 Symposium celebrating the best wines from around the world, I got a chance to taste the newly released Château de Selle 2018 from legendary Provençal producer Domaines Ott (imported by Maison Margues & Domaines). Ott was founded in 1912 by Alsace native Marcel Ott. who dreamed of making world-class wines in a Mediterranean climate; its reputation has long been built on Grenache-based rosés with great character and no small degree of sex appeal (just look at that bottle).

The latest vintage is further proof they're still at it. Hailing from the winery's original Côtes de Provence property in Taradeau and poured



Serena Marrone displays her family's Bussia Barolo (imported by The Sorting Table).

from magnum, it was an inspiring display of winemaker Jean-François Ott's ability to create wines that consistently rise above the dense rosé fray, sporting a lovely pale-salmon color and filled with both fruit and acidity.

In early Feburary, having just returned from Piedmont a few days prior, I was especially excited to attend the first New York edition of the Barolo Barbaresco World Tour (BBWT), a behemoth event featuring more than 200 producers of Nebbiolo from the Langhe. Barolo and Barbaresco are, of course, two of the three Bs of collectible Italian wine (the other being Brunello di Montalcino), and to have so many member-producers of the Consorzio di Tutela Barolo, Barbaresco, Alba, Langhe, e Dogliani under one roof was a treat. Of topmost interest for me were the single-vineyard tables, providing a great opportunity to do a deep dive into the differences between such growing areas as Barolo's Serralunga d'Alba and Bussia and Barbaresco's Ausario and Nervo.

BBWT showed that there's not only superb quality to be found in the Langhe but—Gaja and Voerzio aside—value as well.





Suerte bar chef Blake Gardner and manager Celia Pellegrini.



Full of Surprises

AT AUSTIN'S **SUERTE**, CELIA PELLEGRINI AND BLAKE GARDNER MELD TRADITION WITH INNOVATION story and photo by Lori Moffatt

hen Austin's buzzy Mexican spot Suerte opened in 2018 with a focus on Oaxacan cuisine, some quests didn't know what to think. Where were the bottomless baskets of tortilla chips and frozen Margaritas? Once the shock subsided, however, patrons who were game for adventure were rewarded with such dishes from chef Fermín Nuñez as smoked fish molotes, citrusy ceviches, and duck-breast mole—all served alongside a wine and cocktail menu full of novel choices. Take the Lucky Maria, a refreshing brunch cocktail combining sotol, tomato water, white soy, chile, and citrus; though reminiscent of a Bloody Mary, it's lighter and zingier, with a smack of umami. And that's just one example of the surprises that Suerte—a James Beard Foundation semifinalist for Best New Restaurant in

2019—offers for the palate.

For instance, says front-of-house manager Celia Pellegrini, an Austin native who curates Suerte's list of unusual wines from around the globe. "Right now, pét-nats are in style, and they work so well with our food: They're super-complex, a little funky and savory, and not extremely fizzy—which is good because bubbles exaggerate spice, and our food has lot of chile." But thanks to her background in natural wine, she's as concerned with supporting "winemakers who match our culture of sustainability when it comes to sourcing and production," in her words, as she is with showcasing "what's food-friendly and fun to drink"—be it a French Cab Franc with a suggestion of green pepper, a spicy Chilean Carménère, or a Spanish Albariño with a bit of residual sugar.

Pellegrini's approach mirrors that of

bar chef Blake Gardner, whose enthusiasm for terroir-driven agave spirits not only mezcal and tequila but also lesser-known types like sotol, raicilla, and bacanora—informs the cocktail list. A trained chef, the Dallas native formerly worked as a baker at Austin's Odd Duck; when founding partner Sam Hellman-Mass opened Suerte, he called on Gardner to help out and eventually oversee the bar menu. You could say, then, that Gardner followed his fascination with yeast into the beverage world. "All mezcal is naturally fermented, and you'll taste one and you'll wonder how the mezcaleros achieved that flavor, and maybe your mind will go back to sourdough starter," he says. "In everything we do at Suerte, we focus on roots, on people, on tradition. We love to see producers really celebrating time and place."



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SCOTI AND KEEPS THE WHISKY FLOWING DESPITE TARIFES

by Ian Buxton

hen the going gets tough, the tough get going": With the recent imposition of a 25% tariff on imports of single malt whisky to the United States, the truth of that old saying may yet be demonstrated. Hopes of an early settlement appear to have been dashed, so distillers and importers will have to introduce their accounts and, ultimately, consumers to the harsh new reality of higher pricing.

Not that all brands seem disheartened. Take Highland Park, for example. This storied Orkney malt, long a personal favourite of mine, has recently expanded U.S. distribution of

The Light and The Dark. First released in 2018, these 17-year-old whiskies represent Orkney's changing seasons the lighter expression is meant for spring and summer and its partner for autumn and winter (\$300; 52.9% ABV). Of course, there's no harm in drinking either at any time of the year!

Also from Highland Park is the second release of its 21 Years Old (\$350; 46% ABV), a vatting of nine first-fill. Sherry-seasoned European oak hogsheads, eight bourbon hogsheads, and nine refill hogsheads—all aged entirely at the distillery and bottled at natural





colour. And coming very soon—probably by June—is the Permanent Cask Strength Release No. 1. Without an age statement, the name sums it up: This traditionally styled and non-chill-filtered whisky is matured predominantly in Sherry-seasoned American oak casks at a powerful 65% ABV. Highland Park's Global Brand Director, Jason Craig, tells me the distilling team is "really excited" about this release, the casks for which were hand-selected by master whisky maker Gordon Motion. At a modest

NITAMOT

suggested retail price of \$85, this is one to order early to ensure supply.

But here's one whose price would raise brows regardless of tariffs. Of the 390 bottles of **Tomatin Warehouse**

Six Collection 1977 produced, just 25 are available in U.S. markets for an

SRP of \$4,000. Notably, this 49% ABV Scotch aged in a Sauternes wine cask, a first for this relatively little-known Highland distillery. Premium packaging befits such a rarity.

Finally, from Ireland, Irish Distillers has introduced the third expression in its Dair Ghaelach collection. Midleton

Very Rare Dair Ghaelach Knockrath

Forest (\$350; ABV around 56%, depending on the batch). Most unusu-

> ally, it's matured in barrels made of virgin Irish oak from Knockrath Forest in County Wicklow. As

Midleton Head of

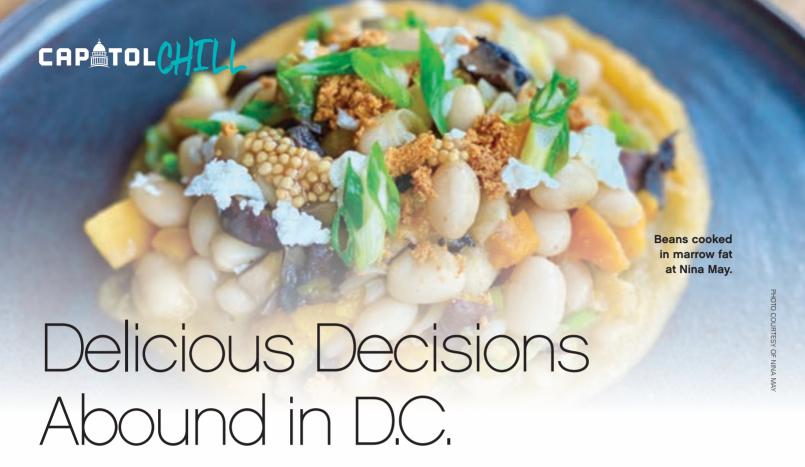
Maturation Kevin O'Gorman explains, "Until we started this project, Irish oak had not been used to mature whiskey

for well over 100 years. Today, thanks to sustainable practices, we can harvest small volumes and trace each bottle right back to the very tree that helped to create it. This has fostered an awareness and appreciation among whiskey lovers that there is even a subtle difference between trees, which contributes to a whiskey's unique flavour."

Fortunately, Irish whiskey is exempt from the 25% tariff charge—which means tree-hugging whiskey lovers have never had it so good!







A PRIX FIXE SURPRISE AND AN INDIAN FEAST FIT FOR ROYALTY by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

he words "the chef would like to cook something special for you" are music to my ears. After all, who knows what the kitchen does best better than the person helming it? So I was beyond pleased to discover a "Chef's Choice" option at the new Nina May in Logan Circle, where partners Colin McClimans and Danilo Simic—who named their concept after their two daughters—source all ingredients from within a 150-mile radius.

Not only is the prix fixe option touted as the best meal McClimans can cook right now with the seasonal ingredients on hand-which is great fun for adventurous diners like myself—it includes as much as you care to eat. (That generally translates to three courses of two dishes each, though ambitious eaters may order a fourth.) Simic ran the beverage program at Balkan hot spots Ambar and Baba; you can find clues to his background in drinks like a barrel-aged rakija cocktail and the Beet, which mixes the purple juice from its namesake ingredient with gin, velvet falernum, lime, and mint.

The earthy root vegetable also gets a star turn as carpaccio with radicchio, shaved ginger, and celery leaves—a refreshing departure from the ubiquitous beet salad with slabs of goat cheese. Buttery homemade fettuccine with littleneck clams and chorizo is also a standout, rivaled only by juicy Pennsylvania chicken roasted with lemon and thyme. At a time when diners can review online menus and decide what to order before even setting foot in a restaurant, Nina May proves that surrendering to a chef's whim can be the most delicious decision of all.

Speaking of deliciousness: Before even sampling a bite of the contemporary twist on royal Indian cuisine served at Punjab Grill—the international restaurant group's first U.S. outpost—I savored the luxe surroundings, from the hand-carved, inlaid walls and backlit marble bar to the opulent private dining room with custom gilded place settings, a pearl tiled table, and a massive crystal chandelier. But the dishes are even more spectacular. Puffy flour crisps arrive topped with spherified passion fruit, avocado, and apple; jumbo lump crab is bathed in a creamy coconut curry called varutharacha; short ribs are dusted with rose powder and served with crispy aloo bhaja (fried, shredded potatoes); a head of cauliflower comes covered in a garam masala-seasoned sauce and studded



Punjab Grill's take on a Gin & Tonic is mixed with turmeric tonic tableside.

with edible flowers and mint chutney. And the cocktails follow suit: Be it a rye libation with five-spice cordial, a tequila tipple with persimmon and tamarind, or the GT&T—served in a porthole infuser filled with lemongrass, ginger, mango, and cardamom alongside a carafe of turmeric tonic poured table-side—they're as exotic and fragrant as the food.

Kelly Magyarics, DWS, is a wine, spirits, lifestyle, and travel writer in the Washington, D.C., area. She can be reached through her website, kellymagyarics.com, or on Twitter and Instagram @kmagyarics.



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Life Lessons from Napa Valley

by Merrill Shindler

e always take a trip for my daughter's birthday, often to Hawaii, but we've also been to Mexico, Japan, Iceland—she's been around. Recently, for her 21st, she asked to visit Napa. That was unexpected, given that her consumption of wine has largely been limited to Whispering Angel Rosé. But if she wanted to enjoy the wonders of Yountville and Rutherford and St. Helena, who was I to refuse? So off we went for a long weekend—beginning, of course, in San Francisco.

Sensibly enough, our trips are always built around food. We began in San Francisco with dim sum at the fabled Yank Sing, where the selection is as encyclopedic as the prices are sobering. (Expensive dim sum? What a concept!) Afterward we stopped by The Buena Vista for my ritual Irish coffee before dinner at Boulevard, which after four decades is still remarkable—the California sturgeon–artichoke risotto is a life-changing dish.

The following morning, it was up to Napa, where we stayed at the modernist Hotel Bardessono in Yountville, across the street from The French Laundry (where we didn't eat) and Bouchon Bakery (where we did, again and again—the croissants are as good as any in Paris). Our lunch stop, burger stand Gott's Roadside, looks old-school—but the options, including kimchi burgers, ahi poke tacos, and a large selection of local wine and craft beer, are anything but. Then it was off to taste wine at a longtime favorite of mine: Frog's Leap, where we discovered the wonders of its blush La Grenouille Rougante before moving into crisp Chardonnay, luxurious Zinfandel, and more.

At Domaine Chandon, we took a class on sparkling-wine cocktails and learned to make Lemongrass Sparklers, strawberry-based Beauty Elixirs, and a lavender-flavored libation called The Sapphire that smelled disturbingly like soap. We stopped at The Prisoner Winery, another old favorite, to pick up a few bottles sold only in the tasting room: With names like Unshackled and Headlock, they're worth having for the labels alone.

Dinner was at the legendary Mustard's Grill, where the menu advertises "Deluxe Truck Stop Classics for 36 Years" and the wine list boasts "Way Too Many Wines"—all local, of course. I can't believe I consumed an entire mountain-sized order of onion rings with tomato-apple ketchup, but I did. (Everything's fair game on vacation.)

Our Napa excursion concluded at Hill Family Estate's cozy Yountville tasting room; founder Doug Hill poured us his exceptional Carly's Cuvee Chardonnay, which was so good that we bought half a case, along with his Sauvignon Blanc. Then it was back to San Francisco and The Old Clam House, which dates back to 1861 and reminds me how perfect a simple kettle of steamed clams can be with a brew. The housemade Milwaukee Steam Beer did very well, and so did we: I was reminded that Napa is Disneyland for grown-ups, and my daughter finally learned that there's more to wine than rosé—a life lesson to remember.



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92 POINTS

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POINTS

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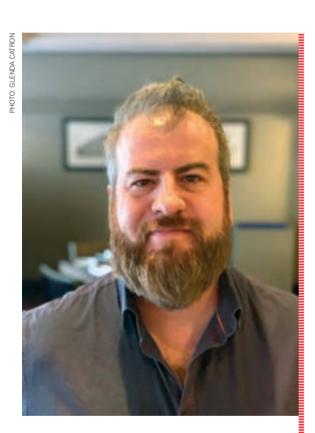




Dan Allen

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER AND WINE DIRECTOR AT PANZANO, DENVER, CO

by Michelle Metter



an Allen first experienced the wonders of wine as a bartender in Lexington, Kentucky, where he fell for big-name Bordeaux and Napa Cabernet. After college, he left bartending and moved to Colorado to work in restaurant management—but it wasn't until he landed his job at the long-standing Panzano in downtown Denver's Kimpton Hotel Monaco that he was given the room to dive deeply into Italian wines.

Tell me a bit about the wine program at Panzano. My approach is to look for diversity and quality. Our list is about 85% Italian, and it can be a little intimidating to the layperson. Having some varietals that are similar to wines that most people are comfortable with helps keep the wine flowing. I also look to make [the list] approachable for quests to ask questions. If they're curious, the descriptions and stories about the wine [we provide] will be intriguing enough [for them] to

How does Colorado's craft beer scene factor into your offerinas?

We are lucky to have such a vast community that celebrates craft beer. Although our program highlights mostly local brews, I specifically look to appeal to a wide range of beer drinkers— [considering] not only taste but also how beer can accompany their meal. I'm a big fan of sours and their versatility with food.

Why do you put an emphasis on guest education? My goal for our Tour d'Italia [tasting series] is to keep people engaged and build a customer base that helps us stay relevant in the market. I think the true value of these classes is the stories about the region. They take you on a journey where you can learn about the grapes, the countryside, and how these wines come to be. I think the secondary value is that attendees start to feel comfortable drinking varietals they may have never had before, and then they go out to buy these wines to show off to their friends. It's really a win-win.

You have five minutes and one glass. What are you drinking and who are you with?

Sagrantino from Umbria, big and robust. And that only pairs well with Jim Morrison.

SOMM CON

Michelle Metter is 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.



Down the AISLE

Antidotes to March Madness

Tell your customers and guests to enjoy these wines while tearing their hair out over a broken bracket. Unlike a beloved team vying for victory in the NCAA men's basketball tournament, at least they can be counted on to deliver.

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 points-based 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 😡 😡 🚇

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

5 TALKIES 🚇 🚇 🚇 🚇

A masterpiece in packaging and a new benchmark in branding. A must-have for retail.

9999

Blue Rock 2017 Baby Blue Bordeaux Blend.

Sonoma County (\$29) The Kansas City Chiefs won the Super Bowl—and this full-bodied blend of 47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 8% Petit Verdot, 7% Syrah, 6% Malbec, and 4% Cabernet Franc won the afternoon at the barbecue where I watched the big game. Ready to drink now, it offers ripe blueberries, blackberries, and raspberry jam plus a creamy swirl of chocolate and vanilla on the mid-palate that leads to a dry. graphite-laden finish. Its richness works perfectly with a cheeseburger,

and the packaging is elegant with a

BLUE ROCK VINEYARDS

4 4 4 4

tinge of mystery. 91

Bonterra 2018 Dry

Muscat, Mendocino County (\$16) Grown in the Biodynamic Blue Heron Vineyard—which is named for a neighboring nesting site—this Muscat Canelli was fermented dry in stainless steel. The result is an ethereal, crisp white that offers lychee, tangelo,

and a sprinkling of honeysuckle before culminating in a bone-dry, river-rock finish. The illustration of a bee approaching a flower represents Bonterra's organic approach quite nicely. Just 220 cases were produced. 91

FETZER

9999

J. Wilkes 2018 Pinot Noir,

Santa Maria Valley (\$30) Aged five months in 30% new French oak, this vintage is a touch riper than its predecessors, to great effect. Overlaying sandalwood and cumin, dark cherry and raspberry form the finish alongside slightly funky earth, like

somebody dropped some kimchi on a stroll through the forest. The delicate black-and-white illustration functions nicely on an otherwise clean label. 92

MILLER FAMILY WINES

9999

Sequoia Grove Winery 2018 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$36) This is a creamy. slightly saline expression sourced from a handful of vineyards within Carneros and the Oak Knoll District. Salted butter and ripe pineapple lead the charge, with lemon vogurt in tow. Predominantly comprising Dijon clones, the fruit underwent primary fermentation in 100% new French oak before aging sur lie for ten months. The branding is simple yet strong: Like its portfolio fellows, the bottle sports the estate's

SEQUOIA GROVE WINERY

9999



Virginia Wineworks 2014 **Upper Shirley Vineyards** Zachariah Red Wine,

beloved sequoia trees. 89

Virginia (\$40) This roughly 50/50 blend of Merlot and Petit Verdot with a dollop of Tannat offers deep, red cherry and rich, minerally potting soil in a mediumplus body; that damp-earth factor is especially interest-

ing considering that Upper Shirley Vineyards is situated on the banks of the James River in Charles City. The label is clean with a modern slant. (Note: The adjacent bottle image does not reflect the reviewed vintage.) 92

VIRGINIA WINEWORKS



Simple Life 2017 Pinot

Noir, California (\$13) Blended with 5% Merlot and aged ten months in French oak, this easy drinker offers bright, tart, and vanilla-spiked raspberry and strawberry with a dash of nutmeg. (All fruit was sourced from Clarksburg, Lodi, and the

California Delta.) The packaging is true to the brand: laid-back and simple. 87

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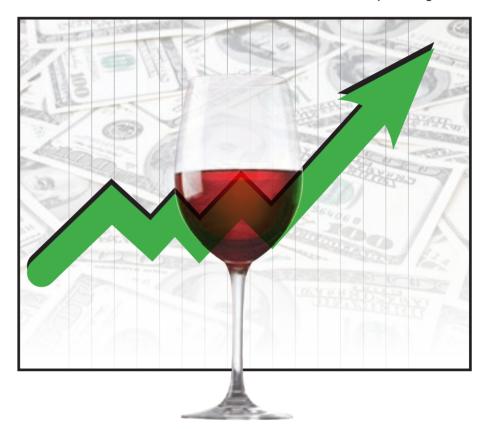
f @skrewballwhiskey

Making a Case for Half-Bottles

by Erik Segelbaum

alf-bottles are among the most valuable revenue-boosting tools at a restaurant's disposal. Here are a few reasons why every establishment should take advantage of them:

- 1. The non-upsell upsell. I don't believe in the term "upsell." However, I do support making suggestions that benefit both your quest and your business. Applying some version of the following approach is guaranteed to boost check averages while simultaneously pleasing your guests: "If you plan on having more than one glass or sharing the same wine, we have a large selection of half-bottles that give you many more options to choose from. And, half or full, you can always take home anything you might not finish" (per the law in most states). The result: A large majority of the time, a by-the-glass order turns into a bottle sale—roughly a third of them involving full 750-milliliter bottles, at least in my experience. Without a strategic half-bottle program, that sale simply couldn't happen.
- 2. Revenue-boosting trade-offs. No program, no matter the size, can pour everything by the glass. Whether it's a matter of space constraints, cost considerations, or potential losses, it's simply not pragmatic. A well-curated half-bottle selection, however, facilitates spending on premium options. For instance, a \$39 half-bottle of Sancerre could be more appealing than a \$10 glass of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. And it might not be feasible to pour a \$30 glass of Cabernet, but it's easy to offer a \$70 half-bottle.
- **3. Guaranteed revenue.** Half-bottles guarantee upfront revenue. We have a scientifically proven resistance to spending money that has little to do with the impact on our wallets. Rather, whenever we commit to a new transaction—say, ordering that second glass of wine—our subconscious tries to prevent us from



doing so. As a result, people drink wines by the glass more slowly. The guaranteed spend on a half-bottle is more valuable to a restaurant than the potential for three glasses that, more often than not, will in reality only be two.

- **4. Freeing up the bar.** Most by-the-glass programs are executed by the bar. Selling more half-bottles gives bartenders additional time to prepare cocktails and interact with their own guests rather than fill table orders, which translates to both better service and more sales potential.
- **5. Increased pairing options.** Not only do half-bottles come in handy for pairing menus, they're also an extremely effective tool for encouraging progressions. Many guests would balk at ordering a second full bottle, but offering half-bottles in different styles for each course ensures extra

revenue and prevents product loss on pairings. This is especially true when their first bottle is special, such as a Grand Cru Burgundy or first-growth Bordeaux. There is likely nothing that can compete by the glass, but a similar wine in a half-bottle keeps them happy while maximizing their tab.

6. Stealth service. Half-bottles give the server reason to visit the table more often. This allows for better meal pacing and provides the feeling of more attentive service.

So don't hide your half-bottles or bury them in the back of the list. They should be as close to the by-the-glass selections as possible—ideally on the same or facing pages—to make it easier to encourage the sale. I guarantee that a well-curated and well-placed half-bottle selection will be a huge driver of revenue and guest satisfaction.

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TAKING INVENTORY FOUR BUSINESS FOUR TOICES

WHAT'S YOUR
APPROACH TO YOUR
OWN CONTINUING
EDUCATION, BE IT
FORMAL OR INFORMAL?

NICOLAS TORRES

Co-owner and Bar Director, True Laurel, San Francisco

Education is more accessible to everyone now that we have the internet; you can learn about hospitality and bar technique online. So we've been thinking a lot more about education *beyond* the bar. I push myself to start reaching into topics I didn't look into in the past: For instance, are we a sustainable bar? Is our bar a safe space to be in?

We try to utilize our produce to the fullest, root to fruit. But in the food world, there's a stronger connection to [ingredients]; within bars there seems to be a disconnect. So that's how I got into researching where our bottles come from. My focus is breaking down the barriers that we have somehow set up in the beverage world by exploring and making connections to the organic materials, the farming practices, the [production] process—to what we support when we drink—and sharing that with others.

Also, when I was coming up, there was this idea that once you have a liquor license, booze sells itself. But bars are about so much more than drinking. They are communal environments where folks come together, and people return to places they feel comfortable in. The best way to create a welcoming environment is to make sure that the people who work there are super-comfortable too. That comprises so many little things, but the bottom line is respect. For example, when we're onboarding staff, we ask for their preferred pronoun so that we can introduce our new co-worker the proper way. Which isn't a little thing, to be honest—it's a big thing.





APRIL 23-25 **2020**

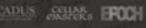
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ELIZABETH SAMMURI

Wine Director, Flagstaff House, Boulder, CO

I'm studying for the Advanced level of the Court [of Master Sommeliers], and it's really easy to get burned out—but it's important to stay motivated and excited about what I'm doing. Maybe it'll be a recent travel experience that sparks me: I went to Japan in January, and now I'm obsessed with learning more about saké. I do a lot of tastings for the restaurant, and that gets me excited too. When somms get really busy, they say, "I don't have time to taste," but it's really the foundation of what we do; we got into this industry because we enjoy it.

Another thing I've learned over the years is that I really have to push myself to go to seminars and trade tastings—to say yes to everything. It's tough because I work late, and I have to drag myself out in the morning. But there are so many educated people in the world of wine; you can get information from all sides.

And I make sure that, when I am studying, I have three different tangents going to keep it fresh. One is always a focus on a region. Another is viticulture or enology—I'm reading about yeast right now and finding that really fascinating. And the third is spirits or beer and cider. Then, when I'm memorizing silly things like the sugar levels of a region, I can remind myself that I love it all.

JUSTIN MOORE. MS

Wine Director, Vetri Cucina, Las Vegas, NV

When you pass [the Master Sommelier exam], it's not like all of a sudden you know everything. As you go through this journey, you realize how much you don't know; one of my mottos, I think it's Plato, is "I know that I know nothing." It's a really humbling experience. So there are a couple of things I plan to do.

First, the best way to truly master something is to teach it, so my plan is to mentor as many people as I think I can be beneficial to. Giving back to the community is the best thing that any of us can do in any endeavor. The second thing is that I really need to take some of my own advice and travel more. Sometimes we're looking at these maps and imagining these picturesque landscapes and we forget that people actually live there and need a convenience store—that's humbling [too].

And the last thing is, we all need to study the classics, but there's a whole world of wine out there. I intend to continue challenging myself by exploring it, not only to enjoy but for the program at Vetri. I'm rarely satisfied with the same thing twice—and I really believe that change and growth are important for both personal and professional development.



HOTO: MEGAN BLAIF



THE PROOF IS IN THE GLASS

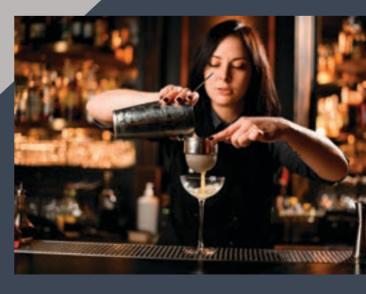
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TORBRECK CHIEF WINEMAKER IAN **HONGELL** SHINES A SPOTLIGHT ON THE ANCIENT TERROIR OF THE BAROSSA VALLEY

by Ruth Tobias



Ian Hongell is chief winemaker at Torbreck Vintners.

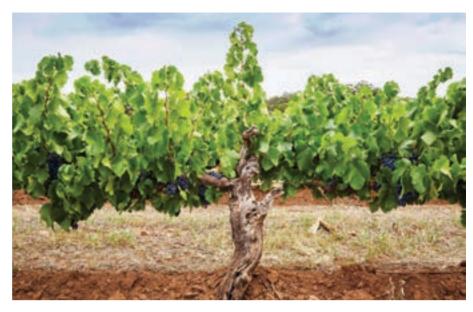
hen a winery hires a superstar like Ian Hongell to oversee its production, the expectation is that he will be putting his inimitable stamp all over the portfolio. But as chief winemaker of Torbreck Vintners in Australia's Barossa Valley, Hongell's far too shrewd to try to fix what ain't broken. Since making his much-buzzedabout move from Peter Lehmann Wines to Torbreck in 2016, he says, "It has simply been a matter of finessing. The foundations are rock-solid, and we've been able to come in and put a final polish on the components that make Torbreck great."

Actually, you could say those components are soil-solid. Boasting far more diverse terroir than it's credited with, the Barossa Valley is home to some of the oldest vineyards in the world; planted in everything from sand, clay, and lime to rock, granite, and schist, they can date back as many as 160 years. Torbreck, meanwhile, has built its name on restoring and preserving these phylloxera-free sanctuaries, working in partnership with the multigenerational growers who farm them. "We put these vineyards above all as our most important asset," asserts Hongell. "They were here before us, they'll be here after us, [and] they need to be celebrated."

Hongell comes by his long view honestly: His own family has been selling grapes to Torbreck for more than 20 years. "It's just lovely to be able to have that connection, to see that fruit come to the wines," he says.

No wonder, then, that his first order of business was not winemaking but vineyard management. As he explains it, "The climate is so well suited to Rhône varieties that we now feel they're Barossa varieties; they thrive in a dry environment, which is very conducive to low-intervention viticulture." So he's spearheaded what he calls "a softer approach" in the vineyards, "basically taking them on an organic iourney. We are growing better plants. and from that we are getting better grapes," Hongell continues.

That, in turn, has been conducive to maintaining the relatively handsoff style of winemaking for which Torbreck was already known. "We still use indigenous yeast. We're still not fining or filtering. Everything's done by gravity, and the wines still have that beautiful opulence and creamy texture as a result," Hongell says, adding that his contribution has been "a bit of simple environmental management," namely "better temperature and humidity control."



The Barossa Valley is home to some of the oldest vineyards in the world; one of Torbreck's sources for Shiraz was planted in 1858.

Lest he seem overly modest, rest assured that Hongell is aware (and no doubt proud) of his reputation for nuance and complexity, especially within the context of a region that is sometimes unfairly pigeonholed as a bastion of big, bold reds and not much else. Still, he says, if under his watch Torbreck's wines "are a little more finessed. I take that back to what we're

doing in the vineyards. We're able to get better expression from our sites to allow that to take place." In fact, he continues, his stylistic restraint should only highlight the natural richness that is this corner of Australia's imprimatur: "Barossa has this powerful terroir, and we don't try to fight that—we try to work with it. Let it give us what it does best."

Tasting Notes by Publisher Meridith May

Torbreck 2016 The Steading, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$40) A rich and ripe blend of 55% Grenache. 28% Shiraz, and 17% Mataro (aka Mourvèdre) sourced from multiple vineyards containing 40- to 150-year-old vines. Aromas of rhubarb. anise, and dried violets are spiced and heady. Supple but dry black-tea tannins and a sprinkling of black pepper coat the palate, with walnut and

plum skin on the far end

with well-integrated oak

of the mouth. Earthy,

and fine acidity. 93



Torbreck 2016 The Struie, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$55) This cuvée of 100% Shiraz combines fruit from the Barossa Vallev's Western Ranges and a single vineyard in the Eden Valley, which gives it its backbone. Aged 20 months in new and seasoned French oak, it imparts a fragrance of ripe, peppered plum and violet that's mirrored on the palate, accompanied by new leather and bittersweet dark chocolate. The effect is savory and juicy, with blackberry concentration. 94



Factor, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$135) A perfume of sweet dark plum and both blue and black berries leads to a palate of plush, creamy plum pudding. Inky, dense, and seamless, this wine is a nosedive into old leather, black olives, and coffee-bean tannins. Many of the vines that bore the fruit are a century old, meaning they were unaffected by the phylloxera outbreak of the late 19th century. Aged 24 months in a combination of new. second-fill, and seasoned oak barriques, it's a beauty for the ages. 96

Torbreck 2016 The



Go Slow, Be Kind, pen Mind

TOP TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SAN ANTONIO COCKTAIL CONFERENCE

story and photos by Lori Moffatt

ith more than 40 educators from around the globe descending on Texas to lead seminars at the ninth annual San Antonio Cocktail Conference in January, we took the opportunity to avail ourselves of their wisdom by asking a few of them how they apply business lessons to their lives outside the industry.



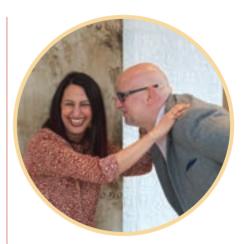
HEATHER GREENE, author of Whiskey Distilled and master blender and CEO of Milam & Greene Whiskey

A longtime New Yorker who recently moved to Blanco. Texas. Greene said that one of the reasons she loves whiskey is that it teaches people to pause and reflect on the moment. "Whiskey is an antidote to a fast-paced life," she explained. "You have to slow down to appreciate the aromatics and flavors . . . to think about the memories they evoke."

TANEKA REAVES and JOHNNY **CALDWELL**. authors of Holv Spirits! Charleston Culture Through Cocktails and founders of Cocktail Bandits

As party planners and the founders of Cocktail Bandits—a company that consults with beverage brands to promote inclusivity—it makes sense that Johnny Caldwell and Taneka Reaves emphasize the importance of genuine personal interaction. Conversation leads to change. Caldwell pointed out: "How many times have you sat at a bar [and had] a meaningful conversation about food or travel or family with someone who doesn't look anything like you? That's what I love about being in a bar." Added Reaves, "What I've learned from hospitality is to be kind. What people do to you is their karma; what you do to them is yours. In this business, you have to love people and love what you do."





SANDRA SPALDING, Director of Marketing, Events, and Education for Twin Liquors, and ROB MCCAUGHEY, WSET Senior Business Developer, Spirits and Sake, Americas

As one of about 60 approved WSET program providers in the United States, Twin Liquors now has more than 200 WSET-accredited employees. Sandra Spalding joined WSET's Rob McCaughey in giving conference attendees a 90-minute overview of the program and its systematic approach to tasting spirits; then the duo shared their own secrets to success. "Through hospitality, I learned how to get out of my own head, to let things go, and to be comfortable with the fact that I don't always have to be right," Spalding said. "It's true," McCaughey agreed. "When you work in this industry, you learn not to sweat the small stuff. The important things in life are the people and the relationships."



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FOR TRUE FOODIES ONLY IS A GAMF-CHANGING PLATFORM FOR THE GLOBAL GASTRONOMIC COMMUNITY

by Ruth Tobias



f you're easily distracted by social media, you might want to wait to install the For True Foodies Only app on your phone until you've got a solid block of time to kill, because your first trip down that rabbit hole could take a while. The dashboard alone is an endless scroll of gorgeous food porn; click on any given post—say, an exquisite close-up of a yuzusaké-basil tart—to navigate to the profile of the chef who created it, in this case Julien Royer of the two-Michelin-starred Odette in Singapore. There, you can read Royer's bio, check out his ten favorite restaurants, and purchase some of his recipes as well as hit the Follow button to start curating your feed.

Continue the curation process by clicking on the toque icon, which brings up a directory of more than 10,000 other featured chefs, pâtissiers, and sommeliers from around the globe. You can also subscribe to a video channel of cooking tutorials; peruse the restaurant guide to daydream your way through once-in-a-lifetime meals at Maaemo in Oslo or Lung King Heen in the Four Seasons Hong Kong; or explore the wine database, where the listings of nearly 2,500 recommended bottles include tasting notes and pairing suggestions. You can even share your own favorite pairings by uploading side-by-side photos of both the dish and the wine you drank it with. Aspirational, informative, entertaining: For True Foodies Only covers all the bases.

For chef Ted Kolodziejczyk, who built the app with his wife, Joanne Carter, a few years ago, it was a matter of necessity begetting invention. Though there's admittedly no shortage of online resources for recipes, restaurant reviews, and so on, the Le Cordon Bleu alumnus explains that he "felt that there was something missing in quality; we saw a big gap in the market for our community"—one that could be filled by bringing some of the world's brightest culinary lights "closer to the users." Indeed, he points out, "That's the key to our app: Only our top chefs and somms can recommend the restaurants and the wines and bring other chefs [on board]. We are very proud of it; it's completely different from the [crowd-sourced] model. This is an education."

Adds Carter, "If you're really a foodie, you wake up in the morning and ask yourself, 'What am I going to cook today? Which restaurant am I going to? What's happening with José Andrés or Massimo Bottura today?' Ted's vision is: We're the go-to place for [true] gastronomes."

That goes for enophiles too, of course. Didier Pierson is chef de cave at Champagne house Frerejean Frères, which recently formed a partnership with Kolodziejczyk and Carter; he sees the app as an invaluable tool for unmediated dialogue with wine lovers. "Crafting Champagnes with true character" from "the superb fruits of the Côte des Blancs," he says, "requires knowledge of the ingredients, experimentation, a lot of patience, and above all passion. True Foodies enables me to speak to the receptive ears of an equally passionate crowd, [which] is why I very much enjoy working with them. This community is eager to learn about the secrets behind great dishes and wines." It all makes for one teeming, lively rabbit hole.

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





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SCOT DAHLSTROM **KNOWS THAT**

7 DEADLY ZINS

IS SYNONYMOUS WITH AMERICAN ZINFANDEL-AND HE INTENDS TO KEEP IT THAT WAY

> STORY BY JONATHAN CRISTALDI PHOTOS BY CLARA RICE

you were asked to name the number-one Zinfandel in America for the past five years, would you even hesitate before answering "7 Deadly Zins"? Not likely. As that bit of Nielsen data shows, the brand has practically become synonymous with the category. It's also a poster child for Lodi's big, bold, and rich yet terroir-driven style: The name references the seven old-vine Zinfandel vineyards from which the wine was originally sourced.

"Northern California is by far our largest market," says Chris Summers, Executive Vice President of Sales for 7 Deadly, which is owned by The Wine Group (TWG). "Being from Lodi, the consumers there seem to have an appreciation for great Zinfandel. Colorado, however, is a big surprise market for us . . . especially the restaurant scene in Denver. It finished as the number-two volume market in the country for onpremise sales. And our Red Blend has really gained momentum, approaching 20% of [7 Deadly's] business during 2019."



According to Nielsen data, 7 Deadly Zins is the numbereight super-premium red in the \$11-\$15 category. For the past five years, it has also enjoyed its status as the number-one Zinfandel in the U.S.

But when a brand grows to such colossal proportions, it's easy to forget that the contents of each and every bottle must navigate a long journey from grape to glass. And, of course, there must be someone making decisions at every stage of that process, including precisely when to harvest each bunch of fruit that will then be crushed, fermented, and aged before finally making its way to the market.

In the case of 7 Deadly Zins, that person is Scot Dahlstrom, who didn't set out to become a winemaker; instead, he planned on studying psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, until someone tipped him off

to the enology program at California State University, Fresno. Dahlstrom had grown up around wine, yet his mother's attempts to teach him about it had largely fallen on deaf ears. His grandfather, though, had always kept Cook's Champagne stocked in the fridge, and that was "pretty tasty on a really hot day in Turlock, California," says Dahlstrom of the town in which he grew up.

With those early experiences in mind, Dahlstrom followed his instincts, and after two years spent earning his enology degree, he landed internships at Justin Vineyards & Winery in Paso Robles and Cold Stream Hills in

Australia's Yarra Valley. He was thinking about his next opportunity when he met a woman who was on her seventh internship: "She didn't feel like she had enough experience," Dahlstrom recalls. "I didn't want to go down that route. I was ready to start making wine."

A friend at Bronco Wine Company helped turn that ambition into a reality. In 2002, just one year after graduating, Dahlstrom was named assistant winemaker—a rapid ascent by industry standards. He was put in charge of white and sparkling wines, working primarily with Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Grigio. Then, in 2007, Blackstone was looking for a wine-



maker for its California-appellation expressions, and on the advice of another friend, Dahlstrom applied and was hired. There, he not only incorporated Gewürztraminer into his white-winemaking experience but also made reds with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah, and Pinot Noir.

A few years later, in 2010, he got a tip that led him to TWG, where he took a job as senior winemaker in its Fresno facility. But he and his wife, Kendra, felt the pull of the ocean and dreamed of living within a short drive of the salty sea air; a former Blackstone colleague suggested he look at Estancia

Vineyards, which he did, and they brought him on board.

After a few years on the coast, though, Dahlstrom began to miss the camaraderie and easygoing atmosphere of TWG. He'd never burned a bridge in his life, so when he dropped by to see if there was still room for him on the team, he was welcomed back into the fold. In fact, he was named head winemaker of 7 Deadly Zins, taking over from former Fresno State classmate Adam Mettler with the goal of continuing and even expanding on its legacy of success. "My plan is to maintain the [brand's] lush style, and to do that I'll continue

sourcing from the same sites, which are located throughout Lodi," he says. "My winemaking style has always been to hone in on and create those big, fruit-forward wines that the 7 Deadly brand is known for."

His first solo vintage of the flagship 7 Deadly is the 2019, which blends in a dash of Petite Sirah. He's also working on a 7 Deadly Cabernet, which is set to debut this spring. What to expect in terms of style? You guessed it: a whole lot of flavor and a whole lot of fun—which, if Dahlstrom had become a psychologist, would be exactly the type of wine he'd need to crack open after a long day at the office.



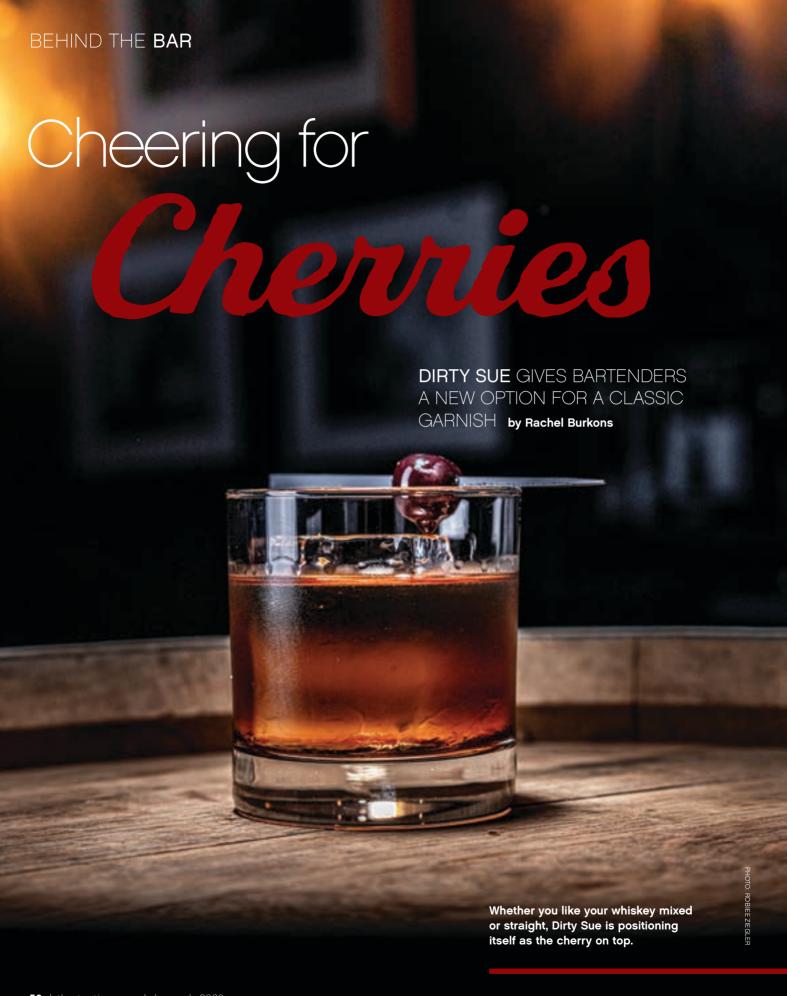
Tasting Notes by Publisher MERIDITH MAY



Seven Deadly 2016 Red Wine, Lodi A mélange of spice and briar fills the juicy, round body of this blend of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot, which exudes aromas of ripe plum, blackberry, and coffee. Fig and clove season the mid-palate while black pepper marks the finish of mocha and oak. 90



The Seven Deadly Zins 2017 Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi Big, round, and full-bodied, with a heady array of deep, savory scents that include ripe plum, bramble, cinnamon, and mocha. Jammy spiced fruit packs a punch on the palate as boysenberry and salted plums lead to coffee bean, leather, and cedar. The flavor lingers on the finish. 91





ocktail cherries are an essential part of any bartender's arsenal: They're the definitive garnish in a variety of classic drinks. High-end versions of the product, however, remain limited, so Dirty Sue founder Eric "ET" Tecosky—well-known as a "bartender's bartender"—decided that the fruit deserved more special treatment.

"When I started Dirty Sue, there was an obvious void in the bar—there was no [premium] bottled olive juice, so I filled that need," he says, recalling how the brand he launched expanded from its flagship product into olives and cocktail onions. "We had garnishes for Martinis and Bloodies, so I thought, well, now that I do garnishes, why not cherries?"

Tecosky began by taking a look at what was already on the market. "The most popular brands of cocktail cherries are tiny and expensive," he says. "And while those bright red maraschino cherries stand out in a cocktail, I'm pretty sure that color does not exist in nature, nor do they taste orchard-grown.... I wanted to make [high-quality] cherries the star and

make bartenders excited about them."

Then he found Sunburst cherries from the Pacific Northwest. which he calls "amazing": "They have a very classic cherry taste, and they're big and plump," he says. "They're exactly what you'd expect from a cherry! What's great about them is that the skin has a little bit of a snap to it; they're not mushy. It's so satisfying when you bite into one, and as you crack the skin, the juice starts flowing. They hold their shape too, which is really great and important for a garnish."

Now that he'd found the right cherry, he

turned his attention toward devising the recipe. "While the newer styles of cocktail cherries are soaked in brandy, they are predominantly used in whiskey cocktails," Tecosky points out. "It just made sense to make whiskey cherries [instead]"—not least given the whiskey category's booming popularity. So it was that Tecosky landed on the final formulation for Dirty Sue: First, Pacific Northwest Sunburst cherries are bathed in cherry and currant juice, then they're rested in a mix of Kentucky and Tennessee whiskevs.

"The response has been unanimously pretty phenomenal," says Tecosky. "It's actually kind of amazing. I first sent out a bunch of samples to my bartender friends and got some great feedback—but my first tasting was when I knew [the product was] a hit," he recalls of the invite-only distributor event where Dirty Sue debuted. "A lot of people were already familiar with the brand, so they were excited to try it, but I was really happy when, over and over, the response was, 'These are so damn good.'"

Tecosky believes that consumers will love Dirty Sue's big, bold garnishes as

much as hospitality professionals do, but he's careful to not limit the ways in which people might use and enjoy them. "Personally, I would never tell anybody how to drink anything," he notes, "but Dirty Sue Whiskey Cherries are great for anything they'd normally put a cherry in, adding to a flavor you already like in your cocktail and making it shine a little brighter with just a crave-worthy whisper of cherry flavor." He personally likes to "just drop it on top" of Jack Daniel's on the rocks—"but the secret is [that] I'll dip the slotted spoon in twice, adding a little bit more juice to my cocktail." He adds coyly, "The juice is so good, maybe I'll even use a regular spoon instead of a slotted spoon."



Jack & Coke Tennessee Tiki

- ▶ 1½ oz. Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ▶ 1½ oz. Coca-Cola
- ▶ 2 oz. fresh pineapple juice
- ▶ 1 oz. banana puree
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lime juice
- ▶ 2-3 dashes Jack Daniel's Cocktail Bitters

Shake all ingredients but Coke with ice. Add Coke and strain into a tiki glass or mug. Garnish with a Dirty Sue Whiskey Cherry and a mint sprig.

THE MANY FACETS OF TRIVENTO MALBEC

story by Amanda M. Faison / photos by John Curley

Trivento's Los Ponchos vineyard in the Tupungato subregion of Mendoza.

Malbec may not be native to Argentina,

but it has certainly flourished there. Indeed, one could argue that the sprawling South American country is the single most perfect place on earth to grow the variety.

Having been largely cast aside in its birth-place of France after a phylloxera outbreak in the mid-19th century, the thin-skinned, sun-worshipping grape has done very well in Argentina. The country has become the world's largest producer of Malbec; plantings comprise more than 50,000 acres—some 70% in Mendoza. Situated on the eastern flank of the Andes in the center of Argentine wine country, this region is home to intense sun, alluvial soils, and some of the highest vineyards in the world. In short, it's Malbec heaven.

It was here that Trivento, a winery owned by Santiago, Chile-based Viña Concha y Toro, first opened in 1996. In the years since, it has become one of the world's leading exporters of Malbec. The name Trivento is an homage to the three famed winds—the Zonda, the Sudestada, and the Polar—that serve as the lifeblood of Mendoza's wine country (much as the Mistral defines the terroir of southern France). At once highly predictable and all-important in determining the growing season and moderating temperatures, they're akin to having a built-in heater, humidifier, and air conditioner.



Winemaker Maximiliano Ortiz oversees Trivento's Reserve line.





Eolo is crafted by winemaker Germán Di Cesare.

According to winemaker Maximiliano Ortiz, who oversees Trivento's Reserve line, the warm Zonda blows from the west down over the Andes. "It's associated with the first hot weather, when the vines start to wake up after the winter," he says. In the summer months, the Sudestada comes from the Atlantic, bringing clouds and rain that help refresh and protect the vineyards against the blazing sun. These storms cool and hydrate the land while providing the grapes the time they need to mature on the vine. Finally, the Polar's cold southern gales signal that it's time for pruning and laying the vineyards to rest.

In other words, these winds, combined with the high altitude—Trivento procures its grapes from vineyards located between 1.800 and 4.000 feet above sea level—create extreme growing conditions that yield wines with distinct ripeness balanced by fresh acidity. The intensity of the sun at these elevations is another advantage, providing an ideal source of power: Trivento recently installed an ambitious solar project that underscores its commitment to sustainability.

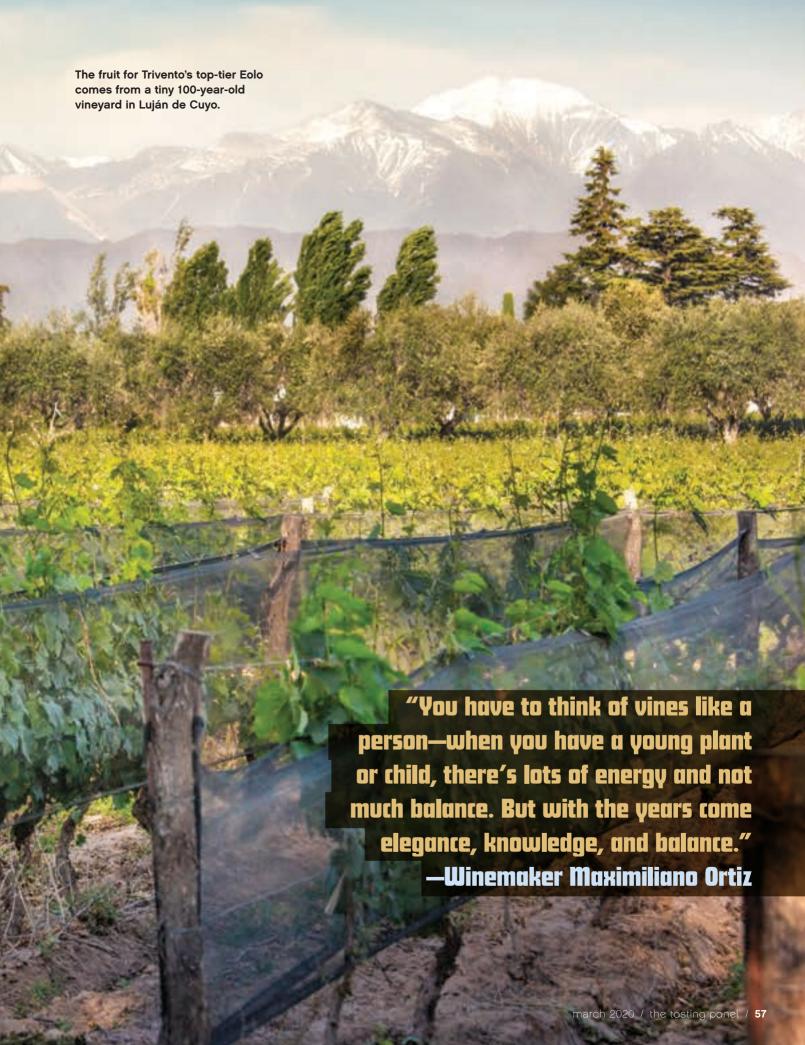
Trivento has multiple properties scattered throughout Mendoza's winegrowing districts, including the highly prized areas of Luján de Cuyo and the Uco Valley. Although it produces many varietal wines, not the least of which are its Cabernet Sauvignon and Torrontés, its focus has always been

on Malbec. The most prized wine in its portfolio is Eolo, which is named for the god of wind and made from grapes grown in a tiny 100-year-old vineyard in Luján de Cuyo. (Trivento has papers showing that the vines were planted in 1912, but it's widely thought that they were actually planted earlier.)

To drink the dark, inky wine, which spends 18 months in French oak, is to experience refinement, according to Ortiz. "When you have old-vine wine you can taste the elegance and complexity," he says. "You have to think of vines like a person—when you have a young plant or child, there's lots of energy and not much balance. But with the years come elegance, knowledge, and balance." Production is so small that each vear, winemaker Germán Di Cesare makes fewer than 500 cases, of which roughly 40% is exported to the United States. Retailing for \$80 in the U.S., Eolo is a true expression of how brilliantly Malbec has taken to Mendoza. "The secret is the vineyard," says Trivento Brand Manager Roberto Catalani.

But to linger on the depth of flavor that Di Cesare coaxes out of Eolo's magnificent old vines is to appreciate just a slice of what Trivento does, as the winery takes the same careful approach with its younger vines. Take the Golden Reserve Malbec, which retails in the U.S. for about \$25. This fresher, more modern expression—made solely from grapes hand-harvested in Luján de Cuyo—spends 12 months in French







Winemaker Magdalena Viani helps craft Trivento's Golden Reserve Malbec.

oak barrels and pairs fine-grained tannins with powerful berry notes and suggestions of grilled meat. "Of course we want to express the varietal," says

winemaker Magdalena Viani, who works alongside Di Cesare in crafting the Golden Reserve wines. "But we [also] want to talk about the region we want to talk about the history and the tradition of the place."

At the core of Trivento's impressive portfolio, meanwhile, is the Reserve Malbec, composed of a blend of fruit from the Uco Valley, Luján de Cuyo,

and Maipú; a quarter of the grapes are aged with oak for six months before being reintroduced into the blend. Selling in the U.S. for about \$13. it smells of blackberries and violets and can stand up to—and even refresh-flavorful dishes like barbecue. "We want the Reserve to be approachable, which is why we have such a restrained approach to oak," says Viani. "Our goal is a wine that expresses the lovely varietal character of Malbec and its fresh acidity, but is still gentle in the mouth." The result,

according to Catalani, is the bestselling Malbec in the United Kingdom. Trivento is working hard to make

a similar splash in the U.S. In such a large and heterogeneous market, the winery has taken an unconventional approach to promotion: In 2017, it partnered with Major League Soccer to become the league's official wine. "We wanted something that made sense and soccer is everything for Argentina. It's a religion," says Catalani. The partnership, which has grown brand awareness and distribution, has proven to be a good one for Trivento. "The MLS fan is verv much in line with our consumer," Catalani says.

Malbec has become Argentina's darling, and Trivento's ability to produce such vastly different yet consistently acclaimed expressions of the grape underscores its mastery and appreciation of the variety. "This is why Trivento is so amazing," says Viani. "Working with Eolo is a special thing and you have to open your mind for something different. And when you work with Golden Reserve [and Reserve], you have to do the same—with the wonderful opportunity to bring these wines to a larger audience."



Old vines in Luján de Cuyo.

Publisher Meridith May's Tasting Notes



Trivento 2015 Eolo Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$80) This Malbec is aged for 18 months in 60% new French oak, then bottleaged for a year. The freshness and focus on the nose, dominated by blueberry, figs, and cocoa, are astonishing. The lush, generous juiciness of the wine washes over the palate with plum, dark chocolate, and lavender as fine acidity and a sense of purity make themselves evident. The stony middle leads to coffee-bean tannins and a seamless finish. 93



Sur Red Blend, Mendoza, Argentina (\$15) After eight months in French oak and six months in stainless steel, this assemblage of 70% Malbec. 20% Bonarda. and 10% Syrah from Luján de Cuyo, Maipú, and Tupungato ages an additional five months in bottle. The resulting wine is generous, vibrant, and savory, with expressive and inviting aromas of game, coffee beans, and blue flowers. Grainy tannins are flavored by café mocha with a kiss of oak. Structure, elegance, and grace are all embedded in the blend, with grilled, meaty notes appearing on the mid-palate and finely balanced acidity ensuring strong pairing potential. 92



Trivento 2018 Reserve Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11) Iron and grilled meat are heady on the nose, compounded by deep, dark cherrywood. With that intense start, this juicy red speaks of wet earth as the fruit morphs into black cherry within a satin-textured frame. Lightweight and agile, it still holds a concentration of inky fruit and iron minerality. 91



Reserve White

Orchid Torrontés, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11) Blended with 15% Pinot Gris, this Torrontés is a light-bodied delight at 12.7% ABV. White grapefruit and lime are melded with ethereal aromas of its namesake white orchid and other exotic flowers. Its edgy mouthfeel keeps the floral notes coming, along with touches of tropical fruit and stonefruit nectar. 91



Cabernet Sauvignon,
Uco Valley, Mendoza,
Argentina (\$11)
Blackberry, black
pepper, and coffee
beans are among the
tremendous aromas
that pop out of the
glass. The coffee continues to coat the lush
palate alongside ripe
boysenberry. A subtle
minerality lingers on
the otherwise round
and seamless finish. 93

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Australian songbird, has a single notable talent: the gift of imitation. It can perfectly replicate most any sound—another bird's call, a car's loud backfire, and a chainsaw chewing through a tree trunk, to name just a few. So when award-winning Australian entrepreneur Mark Livings began conceiving a plan for his Sydney-based nonalcoholic spirits company, he channeled the unique ability of this winged master of mimicry.

After all, the name fit, as Livings didn't want merely to launch a line of alcohol alternatives: He wanted his products to stand in place of the world's most beloved spirits—bourbon, gin, rum, absinthe, et cetera. "Our high-water mark was for bartenders to just reach for a different bottle in a nonalcoholic format," Livings says. "If that could happen, then we knew the product had potential."

The idea came to him in 2016, when Livings—who had spent 15 years on the marketing side of the beverage industry, working with companies like Coca-Cola and AB InBev—began to see dips in traditional alcohol consumption. In the U.S. alone, he says, "It was declining 1% year on year—and the decline was accelerating." Yet no alarm bells had sounded because the boom in craft brewing and distilling was counteracting the slump: "No one was looking at changes, because premiumization of beverage alcohol was offsetting the decline in volumes—revenue was steady," he explains.

No one, that is, except Livings, who has made it his trade to study consumer



Mark Livings is the founder and CEO of Lyre's Spirit Co.



"our high-water mark was for bartenders to just reach for a different bottle in a nonalcoholic format. if that could happen, then we knew the product had potential."

-MARK LIVINGS



Beverage Director Larry Piaskowy of San Francisco's Rich Table recreates classic cocktails with Lyre's.

habits. He believed the downturn wasn't an anomaly but rather an early indicator of changing global behavior. The societal trend toward a more mindful lifestyle—with people reducing their consumption or even halting it through Dry January or February Fast challenges—is now well documented, but at the time, it was barely a blip on the radar. Still, as Livings turned the data over and over in his head, he kept returning to the same question: "People have developed a palate for time-tested flavors; what if we could replicate [them] in a nonalcoholic format?" The answer—three years in the making—is Lyre's Spirit Co.

When the brand officially launched in March 2019, it wasn't with just one or two bottles but a full line of 13 expressions that mimic their alcoholic brethren. From American Malt (bourbon) and Dry London (gin) to Dark Cane (dark rum) and Aperitif Rosso (sweet vermouth), the range is vast and impressive—and Livings thinks that's one of the company's strongest selling points. "We're endlessly compared to Seedlip because it came out first," Livings says. "It's a lovely product, but it's someone's individual expression. We're taking a very different route:

We're a toolkit for bartenders and for people making drinks at home without alcohol." According to Livings, roughly 50 of the world's best-loved classic cocktails can be replicated with Lyre's—along with an infinite number of original recipes.

Two notable spirits remain to be added to the Lyre's portfolio: tequila and vodka. For the moment, Livings has pushed the idea of a vodka alterna-



Lyre's-based cocktails at Rich Table in San Francisco, CA.

tive to the side: "In general, vodka is not drunk for flavor—it's usually a mixer," he says, also admitting that attempts have only yielded "hot, spicy water." Creating a carbon copy of tequila, however, is an ongoing project. "Tequila is incredibly challenging because of the complexity of agave," he says. "We're working with agave farmers and beverage-technology partners to get those extracts to create an alcohol-free version. We won't release anything that isn't right."

Which begs the question: How exactly does Lyre's do it? It isn't a matter of simply removing the ethanol from a spirit; instead, Livings paired up with food scientists, beverage specialists, and even sommeliers to reverse-engineer the flavor profiles of spirits in nonalcoholic formats. Sound tricky? It is. "Instead of, 'Let's find a bourbon and figure out how to take the bourbon out,' we took a science-based approach," says Livings. "What makes bourbon a bourbon is all those lovely molecules sliding around in there. You can get your hands on those with food science. We rebuilt a bourbon molecule by molecule without distillation."

Every product in the Lyre's portfolio underwent its own time-consuming and labor-intensive process. The Aperitif Rosso, for example, contains 36 different ingredients. "Getting our liquids right took about three years," Livings says. "And while [we were] chipping away at it, the category took off."

As a "less is more" philosophy begins to define drinking habits the world over, it's well established that a large percentage of millennials in particular (more than 30% in the United Kingdom, according to the National Health Service) are toying with sobriety. Lyre's is poised to gain their favor. The company—which also has offices in London, Los Angeles, San Diego, and New York—is seeing major distribution growth not only in its home base of Australia but in the U.K., New Zealand, the United States, and Asia. In the U.S., retail liquor chain BevMo! has become

a Lyre's champion as it positions itself at the forefront of the nonalcoholic movement.

The thing about humans is that. sober or not, we're all still social beings, and that's where alcohol-and the pressure to fit in-often come into play. For many, it's second nature to go out and bond with friends over a drink or two; now they can do just that by ordering a Manhattan or a Negroni made with Lyre's, and no one will be the wiser (don't miss the pun on "liar's"). "People don't want to compromise their social hour or the things they love," Livings says. "And they don't have to. I think of our category as similar to the Impossible Burger—people still want a burger, but for whatever their reasons, they want to make a more mindful choice."



Phillip Dunn, Wine Director at Spago in Beverly Hills, CA, with his Lyre's Amaretti-based Nutcracker cocktail.

LYRE'S BEHIND THE BAR



Lorelei Bandrovschi is the founder of the booze-free Listen Bar in New York City.

It used to be that a nonalcoholic drink order came with a lot of sugar and a guaranteed eyeroll. "I've seen [zero-proof drinks] be very secondary, even tertiary, to what's going on in a bar program," says Lyre's National Brand Ambassador Tommy Quimby, a former bartender at Virgin Hotels as well as Trick Dog and Rich Table in San Francisco. "It was always, 'What can we throw together?'" But not anymore: Lyre's ups the ante for bartenders by furnishing them with an arsenal of familiar profiles to work with. "Our products provide bartenders with replicas of flavors they already know and use. It allows them to have an understanding of what works," Quimby explains. "It's a tool that steers the cocktail in whatever direction the customer wants—whether that's low ABV or no ABV. You're not sacrificing those flavors, and everyone across the board can enjoy them."

In other words, plug-and-play spirit alternatives are a revelation in reducedand zero-proof versions of standard cocktails, but they also invite creativity. Phillip Dunn, Wine Director at Spago in Beverly Hills, builds a drink he calls the Nutcracker on the Amaretti, which he says tastes exactly like amaretto; over at Addison, San Diego's only Michelin-starred restaurant, Bar Manager lan Ward also works with the Lyre's take on amaretto as well as the brand's rum, vermouth, and bourbon alternatives to recreate classic cocktails for guests. And at the aforementioned Rich Table, Beverage Director Larry Piaskowy riffs on the classic Boulevardier with a Boulevard No Way, made with Lyre's American Malt, the dry vermouth-like Aperitif Dry, and Giffard Aperitif Sirop (the syrup provides the mouthfeel that nonalcoholic stand-ins can lack). For a play on the Cuba Libre, he uses Lyre's Spiced Cane Spirit—the equivalent of spiced rum—with a coconut wash for texture. "I like that the guest has what looks like a traditional cocktail, and they don't have to explain anything," he says.

Lorelei Bandrovschi, founder of the booze-free Listen Bar in New York City, agrees that Lyre's helps ease any social awkwardness. "It's really great, from the bar menu to the social experience," she says. "Not only do you order a drink and not get a weird look, but the people around you don't get self-conscious either." And she's quick to point out that Listen Bar's alcohol-free cocktails showcase the same skillful touch as any full-proof versions would. Case in point: When famed rapper Snoop Dogg asked her to create a drink for a campfirethemed party, the result was Smoked with Snoop: Lyre's American Malt, CBD, and a simple syrup made with grapefruit, orange, honey, molasses, and clove. The finishing touch was a burnt cinnamon stick. In short, says Bandrovschi, thanks in tremendous part to Lyre's, nonalcoholic beverages are no longer the "lonely stepchildren of the bar menu" but "a centerpiece"—one that appeals as much to the sober-curious as the abstinent.

Anthony Dias BLUE REVIEWS

Presented by (BLUE) LIFESTYLE

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

85-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

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



For additional Blue Reviews, go to bluelifestyle.com.

Prices are for 750-mL bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC

Cardinale 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$325) Deep garnet color and a lush nose of plum and vanilla. Silky with bright plum, soft new oak, and tangy acidity, this wine is another addition to winemaker Chris Carpenter's series of masterpieces for this label. It promises to have a very long life.

93 Flora Springs 2011 ogy Red Wine, Napa Valley **♀** Flora Springs 2017 Tril-(\$85) Subtle vanilla on the nose and palate; smooth with soft plum, toast, new oak, and hints of spice, mocha, and chocolate; elegant and balanced.

Florida Orange Groves Winery 2017 Barrel-Aged Peach Fruit Wine, Florida (\$59) Clean, soft, and lush with crisp acidity and characteristic notes of peach on the nose and palate; fresh, smooth, and generous.

Lancaster Estate 2016 Wine-O maker's Cuvée, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$100) A lush plum nose precedes a rich and dense palate with lovely plum, cherry, and toasty oak. It's clear that the fruit was skillfully vinified, resulting in a very special and classic wine that's succulent, balanced, long, and, above all, delicious. FOLEY FAMILY WINES



Frank Family Vineyards 2017 **Chardonnay**, Carneros (\$38) Soft pear nose; creamy texture with a lovely, balanced style and good length; juicy and bright with lively acidity, vanilla, and oak.



FEL Wines 2017 Savoy ✓ Vinevard Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$70) Lovely cherry nose that echoes with depth on the palate alongside bright acidity and soft spice. Elegant, balanced, and long, it's a lovely Mendocino wine from Cliff Lede.

Frank Family Vineyards 2017 **Zinfandel**, Napa Valley (\$38) Deep garnet color; smooth, dense, and ripe with tangy blackberry; spicy, fresh, and long with style and a graceful approach.



Gary Farrell 2017 Olivet Lane Vineyard Chardonnay,

Russian River Valley (\$45) Rich, toasty nose; bright and juicy with tangy acidity and lively style; fresh, crisp, and long.

VINCRAFT GROUP

Sequoia Grove Winery 2017 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$32) From a producer long known for its quality, this wine is fresh, clean, and juicy with bright pear and smooth, subtle notes of toasty oak.

KOBRAND

Sequoia Grove Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$48) Concentrated aromas of plum and earth; refined and lush with rich flavors of plum, spice, earth, and toast. Tangy, classic, and immediately likable yet carefully built to last.

KOBRAND

St. Supery 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35) This fine winery has made Sauvignon Blanc a specialty. A classic rendition, this stunning wine is elegant, intricate, and delicious with a long finish.

St. Supery 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$100) Rich plum on the nose is echoed on the smooth and toasty palate alongside berry fruit. Ripe, juicy, balanced; refined and generous.

Talley Vineyards 2016 Rincon Vineyard Syrah, Edna Valley (\$42) Dark ruby color; dense and rich with blackberry and spice; lush and intense, long and lovely.

Talley Vineyards 2017 Rosemary's Vineyard Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$50) Smooth and tangy with exquisite fruit and acid structure; soft, subtle oak and a lengthy, crisp finish.

The Calling 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$36) Medium ruby color; rich, ripe, and dense with bright, fresh acidity, lush notes of black cherry, and lovely balance; long and expressive.

DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS

WALT Wines 2017 Bob's Ranch Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$70) Golden hue with a juicy, bright, and silky palate. Fresh and tangy with depth and finesse; complex, flavorful, and quite lovely.

WALT Wines 2017 Bob's **T** Ranch Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$85) Opaque crimson color and aromas of black cherry; dense palate with more cherry and spice; smooth and long.

WALT Wines 2017 Sierra Mar Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$85) Deep ruby color; creamy texture with lush red cherry and hints of vanilla. Juicy, long, and balanced with bright fruit, length, and elegance.

Cliff Lede Vineyards 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$28) Fresh and crisp with citrus and spice; lovely depth, balance, and length.

9 Gamble Family Vineyards

2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60) Dark ruby color; smooth, lush, and rounded with depth. Immediately generous and complex as well as extremely drinkable; long, rich, and balanced, it's another stunning wine from this great property.



Scattered Peaks 2017 Caberonet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40) Smooth, rich, and dense with an elegant style, bright notes of plum and berry fruit, subtle toast, and a long and generous finish.

PURPLE WINE + SPIRITS

BLUE REVIEWS

IMPORTED

Azienda Agricola 2015 Binomio Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC Riserva, Italy (\$52) Intense garnet color and dense blackberry nose; velvety and deep; meaty and juicy with concentration and generous flavors. It's made with an ancient biotype of Montepulciano called the Africa clone due to the shape of its bunches.

O Badia a Coltibuono 2016 Chianti Classico Riserva, Italy

(\$36) Aromas of earth and spice; smooth, rich, and mellow with complexity and finesse; long and elegant.

DALLA TERRA



Silver Ghost 2017 Cab-🚄 ernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$35) Deep berry color plus a luscious and velvety mouthfeel; rich, toasty, and complex with depth and good breeding; stylish and expensive-tasting.

9 Badia a Coltibuono 2013 Sangioveto, Toscana, Italy (\$50) Spicy nose; succulent and deep with toasty oak, soft spice, and notes of violets, earth, and plums; dense and balanced with a lasting finish.

DALLA TERRA

🕇 Badia a Coltibuono 2007 Occhio di Pernice Vin Santo del Chianti Classico, Italy (\$70) Rich amber color and a lush caramel nose; sweet, silky, and maderized. Rancio, creamy, and intense; spicy and long with a touch of volatility.

DALLA TERRA

Domaine du Castel 2017 Estate Bottled Grand Vin,

Judean Hills, Israel (\$78) Richly colored and fragrant, this is a stunning blend of four Bordeaux varieties from one of Israel's finest producers. Lush and deep, with sprightly acidity lifting it; elegant and complex, long and bright. Among the best Israeli wines I've ever tasted.

ROYAL WINE COMPANY

Finca La Capilla 2015 Crianza. Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$33) Rich plum hue and a ripe berry nose; smooth and minerally with rich plum and cherry; balanced and long with good acid structure. 100% Tinta del País aged 12 months in new and second-use French and American oak, followed by a minimum of two years in bottle. VINEYARD BRANDS

Marqués de Cáceres 2015 Rioja Reserva, Spain (\$31) Dark garnet color and a nose of cherry and earth; smooth, bright, and juicy with mature notes of plum and spice. Balanced and complex, long and complete.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Marqués de Cáceres 2016 Generación MC, Rioja, Spain (\$38) Dark cherry color and earthy, dense aromas; lush and tangy with complex and well-developed notes of berries, spice, and toasty oak. Smooth, balanced, and ready to drink. 100% Tempranillo.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Ornellaia 2017 Le Serre Nuove dell'Ornellaia, Bolgheri Rosso, Italy (\$51) Deep, dark garnet color; plum appears on the plush nose before it joins blackberry on the smooth and rich palate. Luscious and fresh, it's an exceptional

value—a chip off the old block.

COLANGELO & PARTNERS

Viñedos y Bodegas García O Figuero 2015 Figuero Noble Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$162) Deep berry color; lush black cherry shows on the nose and palate with rich blackberry. This is a knockout wine with a refined acid structure and notes of licorice, chocolate, and nutmeg; juicy and layered, it just keeps changing as it lasts and lastswhew!

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

VALUE

Bulletin Place 2018 Pinot Origio, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$10) Fresh and tangy with racy acidity and crisp style; lively and long, it's an amazing value.

VINEYARD BRANDS

() Calcu 2019 Reserva Especial Rosé, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$13) Pale pink color; smooth, dry, and bright with refreshing, round berry notes; clean and long, this great value mostly comprises Malbec.

GLOBAL VINEYARD

Funckenhausen 2019 Dry Rosé, Mendoza, Argentina (\$15) A blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc with a light pink color; smooth, dry, and minerally with decent berry flavors. Long and juicy, it comes in a 1-liter bottle at a fine price.

GLOBAL VINEYARD



Chloe 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$17) Crisp, dry, and peachy with a silky texture and clean, fresh style; juicy, tangy, and long with balance, depth, and a lovely finish.

Gradis'ciutta 2017 Merlot, Collio, Italy (\$18) Medium garnet color; soft plum on the nose and palate; silky, clean, and juicy. Fresh and tangy with a lasting finish, it's a good weekday wine.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Gradis'ciutta 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Collio, Italy (\$18) Precise, smooth, and succulent with tangy acidity and balanced flavors; refreshing, long, and stylish. VINIFYARD BRANDS

Gradis'ciutta 2018 Chardonnav, Collio, Italy (\$18) Juicy yet refined, crisp, and clean; balanced and bright, fresh and snappy—and a good value to boot.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Lucchesi Vineyards & Winery 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Sierra Foothills (\$21) Golden color and a soft nose; dense, lush, and smooth; rich and intense with notes of ripe apple.

Matchbook 2018 Estate Bottled Old Head Chardonnay, Dunnigan Hills (\$15) Luscious and creamy with mature fruit and notes of vanilla and oak, this is a surprisingly impressive wine for the price, It's dense and flavorful but tangy and balanced.

The Arsonist 2018 Chardonnay, Dunnigan Hills (\$22) Smooth and velvety with nice depth and balance; rich and complex yet subtle, with notes of vanilla, new oak, and ripe (but not heavy) fruit culminating in a long and generous finish.



Mettler Family Vinevards 2017 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon,

Lodi (\$25) Deep garnet color; fresh, dense, and generous with bright plum and spice. Juicy and long, this is a very nice wine from a longtime grower family.

Mille1 2017 Garda Rosso, Ita-Iv (\$20) A blend of Corvina, Rebo, and Merlot from one of the most beautiful places in all of Italy. Medium crimson color and a soft vanilla nose; bright and juicy with notes of ripe plum and berry, subtle new oak, and a long finish.

DALLATERRA

Morgan Winery 2018 Cotes du Crow's, Monterey County (\$20) An eclectic blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Tempranillo; smooth and lush with rich fruit, including bright notes of blackberry. Lively and clean, tangy and stylish.

9 Vietti 2017 Barbera d'Asti Tre Vigne, Agliano Terme, Barbera d'Asti, Italy (\$18) Deep garnet color and a luscious blackberry nose; creamy, deep, and juicy with dense berry notes. Long, balanced, and lovely, with flair and amazing value.

DALLA TERRA

Vietti 2018 Roero Arneis, Santo Stefano Roero, Italy (\$24) This delightful and complex Piemontese white is smooth, lush, and succulent with notes of ripe, tangy apple. Elegant, polished, and skillfully made, with a lengthy finish.

DALLA TERRA

Foppiano Vinevards 2016 Petite Sirah.

Russian River Valley (\$25) Dark garnet color; smooth, dense, and spicy; clean and lush with balance and style, but essentially simple.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES



BLUE REVIEWS

SPIRITS

93Egan's Centenary Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$100) Very pale golden color and a fresh, bright nose; silky texture with smooth flavors of oak, spice, and vanilla. Elegant, balanced, and concentrated with a lasting finish.

INTREPID SPIRITS



95 Booker's Beaten Biscuits
Batch 2019-04, USA (\$79) Rich
amber color and a soft nose of toast and
vanilla. Silky texture and style with equally
smooth flavors of toasted oak. Rich, layered,
complex, and—with the addition of water—
generous, easy-going, and long.

92 Empress 1908 Gin, Canada (\$40) Vibrant deep-blue color; nice citrus nose. Silky texture with notes of orange and juniper; tangy and bright, charming and long.

AZZURRE SPIRITS

CORPORATION

91 Slo de Vie Carrie Nation Grappa D'Uva, USA (\$27) Light golden color; soft pomace nose. Mellow and lush with toasty notes; smooth, dense, balanced, and quite elegant.

91 Slo de Vie Two Foxes Grappa Batch #019, USA (\$55) Pale amber color and a refined, toasty, and intense palate. Rich, tangy, and long with spice and balanced flavors.







Rogue Spirits Oregon Rye Malt Whiskey, USA (\$60) Warm amber color and a soft rye nose; smooth, sweet, and lush with rich notes of toasty grain and spice. Long and deep, it's an impressive distillate from Oregon.



Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$30) Medium amber color and a dense rye nose; smooth, lightly toasted, and silky with spicy rye and hints of dried fruit and flowers. Despite the high proof, it's softer and mellower than most on the market.

HEAVEN HILL



92 The GlenDronach Cask Strength Batch 8, Scotland (\$77) Pale amber hue;

balanced with a persistent, intense finish. Smooth and toasty, it shows rich caramel and malt after watering. BROWN-FORMAN



Watershed Distillery Four Peel Gin, USA (\$30) Silky and bright with citrus fruit and peel; graceful and elegant. Fresh, tangy, and spicy; peppery, juicy, and balanced with a finish that endures.

() Watershed Distillery Bourbon ✓ Barrel Gin, USA (\$40) Finishing in bourbon barrels gives this gin a toasty note of caramel, which joins vanilla and other balanced flavors; creamy and soft with a mellow, lush style.

93 Watershed Distillery Chamomile Flavored Guild Gin, USA (\$31) Almost translucent amber color; silky and clean with soft spice and lovely chamomile flavor (it's infused with dried chamomile flowers post-distillation). Floral and lush with a long finish.



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 Organically **Grown Cabernet** Sauvignon/Carménère/ Syrah, Chile (\$14) This vivacious red gets off to a pleasant start with aromas of baking spices, baker's chocolate, cherry cola, and dried roses. It's juicy on the palate, with notes of cinnamon, rhubarb, and red tea paving the way for spiced cedar; sweet tobacco; and dry,



mineral-driven tannins toward the finish. 90 FFTZFR VINEYARDS



Wine by Joe Dobbes 2017 Pinot Gris,

Oregon (\$14) There are so many reasons to enjoy this stainless steel-fermented white. With a lower ABV of 13.5%, it shows unique aromas of salted pear, lychee, and fresh linen and flavors that range from white tea and pineapple to basil. Spritzy acidity amps up the edgy texture.



Château Routas Red, Côteaux Varois en Provence, France (\$14) A blend of 52% Syrah, 28% Grenache, and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, this spiced and perfumed red offers up fruit and mineral components in an airy and lean body. Lavender, roses, and Old World acidity meld with tart cranberry as they freshen the palate. 90

USA WINE WEST



Batch No. 198 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, North Coast (\$15) This wine should appeal to not only lovers of lush, deep, and supple Cabs but also craft-spirits enthusiasts, who'd appreciate the character imparted by three months of aging in Kentucky bourbon barrels. Following robust aromas of chocolate-covered black cherries. the palate flows with flavors of

ripe plum and blueberry underscored by dusty cocoa-powder tannins and hints of whiskey, toffee, mocha, and char. Texturally alluring, it's a great value. 91

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES





Barrel Burner 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Paso Robles (\$17) Fifty percent of this wine aged for one year in American bourbon barrels—hence the name. It's ripe and rich on the nose, with aromas of plum, black cherry, cinnamon, and oak. The palate offers layers of character, from cassis and cigar box to chewy, mocha-

tinged tannins. It's as juicy and fruit-driven as it is big and broad. 90

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



9996

Ancient Peaks 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$19) Perfumed with chalky chamomile and lemon verbena, this floral beauty scatters an array of honeyed petals on the nose and palate. Flint joins a bouquet of orange blossom and gardenia, adding texture to the mouthfeel. Notes of summer peach

feel weighty-almost nectar-like-

but it's balanced by a lean acidity. 93



Writer's Block 2017

Syrah, Lake County (\$18) An even-tempered ABV of 13.5% keeps this expansive red in check. Scents of black pepper ignite boysenberry and bramble before spiced cedar and blueberry take over on the juicy palate. A touch of violets accents coffee tannins, 91

STEELE WINES





Thornhill 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Vallev (\$19) The tannins are rustic and the liquid is juicy in this blend of 89% Cabernet Sauvignon with 6% Petite

Sirah and 5% Merlot. Dried figs intertwine with mocha, cedar, and dark cherry as anise and a creamy hint of blueberry pie filling coat the tongue. 90

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY





Château de Pizay 2018 Morgon,

Beaujolais, France (\$20) This Gamay-based red offers up fresh scents of blueberry and mocha. Good acidity is accentuated by dry, chalky tannins and ironrich, mineral-driven plum skin before cherry and walnut emerge midway. Overall, it's well developed. 90

DAVID MILLIGAN SELECTIONS





ZD 2018 50th Anniversary

Chardonnay, California (\$42) Made with certified-organic grapes from Carneros and barrel-aged for ten months in American oak, this white commemorates 50 years of winemaking for this family-owned and -operated winery based in Napa Valley. A nose of apple pie and lemon sorbet opens up to a flavor profile that reaches ripe heights with pineapple, sweet lime, and creamy notes of magnolia. It's an energetic and voluptuous Chardonnay, with a round body that succumbs to bright acidity. 94



RedHeads Coco Rôtie 2018 Syrah, South

Australia (\$20) The grapes for this Syrah (or Shiraz) were sourced from three family-owned vineyards in South Australia's Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale regions, while the Viognier (4%) is grown in the Adelaide Hills at an elevation of 1,250

feet. Aged for ten months in new, seasoned American and French oak, the wine puts an Australian accent on the style of Cote-Rôtie. It's a juicy, bright, and delicious overdeliverer, offering red cherry, cranberry, and apricot enveloped in black pepper and focused acidity. 92

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

Publisher's PICKS



RouteStock 2017 Route 29 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Vallev (\$25) Named for a north-to-south throughway that traverses Napa Valley, this blend of 82% Cabernet Sauvignon and 7% Cab Franc with small portions of Malbec, Petit Verdot, and Merlot exudes aromas of mint, cedar, and ripe blackberry. The nose mimics the palate, which sees the addition of a dusting of chocolate as well as violets and savory Italian herbs. 91



Hanna 2018 Chardonnay,



TERI ATO WINES





Ballentine Vineyards 2018 Betty's Vineyard Chenin Blanc, St. Helena,

Napa Valley (\$30) The Ballentines have been producing this variety from the vineyard surrounding their winery since the 2002 vintage. Floral aromas mingle with kiwi and passion fruit as notes of linen settle on the clean and crunchy palate; its lean energy is powered by bright orange peel and marzipan. 90





Sea Smoke 2017 Southing Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$70) This vintage marks the 20th anniversary of the Biodynamic Sea Smoke estate vineyard, which boasts ten Pinot Noir clones grown on three soil types at a range of elevations. Barrel-aged for 16 months in French oak (28% new), it expresses a deep, dark perfume of cardamom and tilled soil elevated by rose petals. Black raspberry, graphite, anise, and espresso bean shade in the big-boned structure as a finish of Chinese five spice seasons the fine tannins. 95



Gebricke 2017 Petite Sirah, Sonoma Vallev (\$30) Lavender and coffee bean are easy scents to pick up from this deep, concentrated, inky-black red. Silky and sumptuous, it exudes lushness from an inherent freshness of blue and black fruit punctuated by a finish of cedar and dark chocolate. 93



3 BADGE ENOLOGY



Salvestrin Winery 2018 Sauvignon

Blanc, Crystal Springs Vineyard, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$30) Mineral-driven and replete with grapefruit zest, this single-vineyard white blooms with peach and white flowers that scent the air and freshen the palate. Aged 50% in stainless steel and 50% in neutral oak, it has an overarching stony quality, a creamy middle, and a sweet finish of tropical fruit. 92





Gehricke 2016 Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley (\$35) This blend of 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Malbec, and 2% Petit Verdot is lushly textured throughout, combining aromas of blueberry pie with a silky, supple mouthfeel and flavors of dark chocolate, nutmeg, and cinnamon. With balanced acidity and an ABV of 14.2%, it aged 18 months in French oak. 93

THREE BADGE ENOLOGY





Ehlers Estate 2018 Sauvignon Blanc,

St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$32) From winemaker and General Manager Laura Diaz Muñoz, this stainless steel-fermented wine is a lean, mean machine that aged sur lie for six months. On the heels of the delicate, floral aromatics, precise acidity threads through white grapefruit while just-ripe guava and pineapple impart a sweet-tart effect. 92



Anaba 2018 Turbine White, Sonoma Valley (\$32) This energetic. aromatic, and balanced Rhône blend comprises 30% Viognier, 28% Grenache Blanc, 26% Marsanne, and 16% Picpoul sourced from the family-owned Landa and Snow vineyards. Sweet melon and honeyed white petals are full of personality on the

nose, and the creamy palate hits just the right level of acidity (thanks to the influence of the Picpoul, as Viognier and Marsanne are often lacking in that regard). Minerality on the finish also ensures a more linear effect. 93



0000

J. Lohr 2017 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon,

Paso Robles (\$35) Sourced from three estate vineyards in the El Pomar, Adelaida. and Creston districts. the latest vintage of |. Lohr's flagship Cabernet



Sauvignon shows off the new Vineyard Series packaging. This is one of Paso Robles' most luxurious Cabs, and it continues to wave a magic wand of flavor and aromatics over its juicy core of blueberry and cassis. Petit Verdot (4%) and Malbec (1%) add an echo of violets and iron minerality. 93



Cecchi 2015 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Italy

(\$37) A garden of savory herbs looms out of the glass, joining fragrant cherries and sweet tobacco leaves. Aged 24 months in small oak barrels, this Sangiovese-based expression is juicy, peppered, and poignant, with notes of tart pomegranate, cinnamon, and red licorice. 92



TERLATO WINES



Colterenzio-Schreckbichl Prail 2018 Sauvignon

Blanc, Südtirol/Alto Adige, Italy (\$45) The grapes for this wine were sourced from vines grown in calcareous soils. Wet stone paints stone fruit as a bouquet of white flowers buoys the aromatics to an impressive level of honeyed charm. On the bright and edgy palate, rosemary and tarragon season peach. apricot, and lime. 91

IDEAL WINE & SPIRITS



Small Vines 2017 Chardonnay.

Sonoma Coast (\$55) This single-vineyard Chardonnay hails from the Sloan family's organically farmed and densely planted Barlow Homestead estate in Sebastopol. Pears and white flowers greet the nose as Asian pear meets wet stone on the palate. Lean but abundantly floral, the wine fermented in barrel before resting nine months on the lees. The fruit is ripe and clean, and the beeswax texture is pleasantly accented by a cinnamon finish. 94



Blue Rock 2016 Cabernet

Franc, Alexander Vallev (\$65) With 5% Merlot and 2% Cabernet Sauvignon added in, this deep and inky red channels charred violets on the nose and palate: Unctuous and pungent, it's threaded with dried rosemary and tarragon. Sweet, weighty notes of blueberry lean up against drying tannins as black

pepper spikes the fruit and fine acidity keeps things fresh. 94



Migration 2017 Running Creek Vinevard Pinot Noir, Russian River

Valley (\$70) A busy and fragrant nose of earth, cedar, cinnamon, and cherry leads to a quieter, graceful palate of cool red fruit. Cherry pith adds texture to the lithe body as red tea leaves are lightly spiced by chili flakes. 93

DUCKHORN PORTFOLIO





Three Sticks 2017 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay, Sonoma

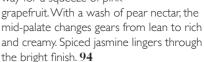
Coast (\$55) The 2017 vintage is a milestone for Price Family Vineyards, which purchased this prestigious site 20 years prior; the fruit comes from the northernmost, oldest, and coldest section. Aged 15 months in French oak (30% new), the resulting wine has a lush texture, creamy body, and stony center, culminating in a wealth of depth and class. Aromas of lemon verbena and pear tart mesmerize as the palate proffers edgy notes of lemon zest positioned with high acid, which tames the rich texture. It finishes with a mouthful of honeyed apple. 95





Acumen PEAK 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Atlas

Peak, Napa Valley (\$75) From the Attelas Vineyard, which sits at an elevation of more than 1,200 feet, this mineral-driven white—aged in stainless steel and French oak—sparks attention on the nose and palate. Its flavors and aromatics continue to develop as it opens up: Salted apricot, pear, and pineapple pave the way for a squeeze of pink





Publisher's PICKS



Paraduxx 2016 Red Wine.

Rector Creek Vinevard. Napa Valley (\$82) This savory, spicy blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon and 35% Zinfandel aged 18 months in 60% new French oak Aromas of brush and desiccated blue flowers meld with black fruit. and on the palate, clove-kissed boysenberry, cedar, cinnamon, black cherry, and graphite

work their magic amid well-developed and structured tannins. 94

DUCKHORN PORTFOLIO





juicy core. On the back end, the balance of desiccated violets and licorice plays with soft tannins, 95



Calera 2016 Pinot Noir, Selleck

Vineyard, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast (\$95) This vibrant, big-boned Pinot Noir hails from vines as old as 40 years; grown on limestone soils, they're found at an elevation of 2,220 feet in the Gavilan Mountains. roughly 25 miles east of Monterey Bay. Aromas of earth, cinnamon, and salted cherry are expressive and inviting. The salinity comes first and the fruit second: Deep, juicy notes of black raspberry are seasoned with mushroom, spiced fig, and clove. Due to its silky tannins, it's wonderfully sip-worthy. 95

DUCKHORN PORTFOLIO



2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Vallev (\$96) From winemakers Aaron Pott and Lindsey Wallingford, this vibrant, blue floral-scented red-a blend of six Cabernet Sauvignon clones grown on Bale Ioam soils in St. Helena—aged 22 months in 70% new French oak. On the elegant and

plush palate, round, firm tannins hold on to concentrated notes of black fruit. The weightiness soon dissipates, making way for a refined lineup of black tea, cherry liqueur, and fine acidity. A mouthful of devil's food cake lingers on the finish. 95







Bozal Sacatoro Single Maguev Mezcal,

Guerrero, Mazatlán, Mexico (\$80) Comprising 100% Agave angustifolia (aka Espadín), this 89.6-proof joven spirit has a smoky, ethereal nose with an echo of jasmine and mandarin orange at its delicate center. Floral notes

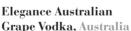
continue to emerge on the palate alongside vanilla bean and white pepper. Desiccated leaves and wet stone dry out the mouthfeel on the finish. 96

3 BADGE BEVERAGE









(\$99) Housed in a bottle resembling a brilliant-cut diamond, this exquisite small-batch, gluten-free liquid is 11 times distilled from Australian Chardonnay grapes. Blended to 80 proof using local spring water, it's charcoal-filtered four

times. Its aromas—ranging from blueberry to candied lavender to vanilla wafer—are unique to its category, and the weightlessness on the palate is not without depth of character. A veil of lace seems to cover the tongue as white pepper and licorice seep through, followed by heather and lemon zest. Although it begins softly, the finish is a savory and spicy awakening. 96





Papa's Pilar Marquesas Blend Dark Rum, USA

(\$47) Finished in No. 4 Char. Kentucky bourbon barrels, this 88-proof limited-edition blend was inspired by Ernest "Papa" Hemingway's adventures on his boat, Pilar, in Florida's uninhabited Marquesas Keys. It was awarded a double gold medal and a Best in Class: Dark/Gold Rum award at the 2019 New York World Wine & Spirits Competition. Aromas of nougat and peach merge with roasted coffee beans before the palate is sweetened by maple, apricot nectar, and a finish of spiced apple. 95

HEMINGWAY RUM COMPANY



tanding in the old parlor room of the house he grew up in, with the same plush red carpet underfoot that he spent countless hours on as a child, Chris Benziger gives a firm twist to the screwcap of his 2018 Tribute Sauvignon Blanc. Incredibly, nearly 40 vears of family winemaking history are bookended by that simple motion, as the wine pays homage to the very first the Benzigers produced some four decades ago.

An early September morning in 1980 seemed just like any other on the Benziger Ranch—that is, until Barry Gold, a junkyard owner, came barreling up the family driveway with two milk trucks in tow. He parked them right outside the partially built winery—the future home of Glen Ellen wines-and after the dust had settled, the sound of something spilling revealed a puddle of milk draining out of a valve at the tail end of one of the tankers.

The late Bruno Benziger called for Chris, then 15, who'd either been chopping wood or cleaning who-knows-what in preparation for the family's first grape harvest. But none of that mattered, as he now had a new task: scrubbing the inside of those giant milk tankers until they were squeaky clean.

It had to be done quickly, as Sauvignon Blanc grapes were set to arrive soon—despite the fact that there was no winery to speak of, save a few hollow walls, a makeshift roof covered by a tarp, and a door with a deadbolt, which was something a bonded winemaking facility had to have in order for county inspectors to sign off on permits. The stainless-steel tanks required for their first fermentation, however, were still lying flat on a truck bed, speeding toward the winery along some interstate in California. Fortunately, Gold had seemingly turned up with a solution.

Now in his early 50s, Benziger has never forgotten that day, which he describes as "electric." After he'd cleansed those tanks of day-old milk, in came the first grapes, which fermented guite well in the unconventional vessels. That first harvest yielded three wines, and the following fall, each was entered



"THESE WINES ARE TRULY ALIVE; THEY SHOW THEIR UNIQUENESS AND THESE CRAZY COMPLEX NOTES WITH DEPTH AND LAYERS."'—CHRIS BENZIGER

into the Sonoma County Harvest Fair. Out of the more than 750 bottlings competing for first place, the Glen Ellen Benziger Family Selection Sauvignon Blanc (aka "Milk Truck Wine") took home the gold medal, laying the groundwork for a decades-spanning Sonoma winemaking dynasty.

By 2015, however, Benziger's parents, Bruno and Mary, had passed away, and his brothers—all older than him by at least 15 years—opted to take a back seat. They found a fitting partner in The Wine Group, which invested in winemaking upgrades while providing a robust distribution network. But

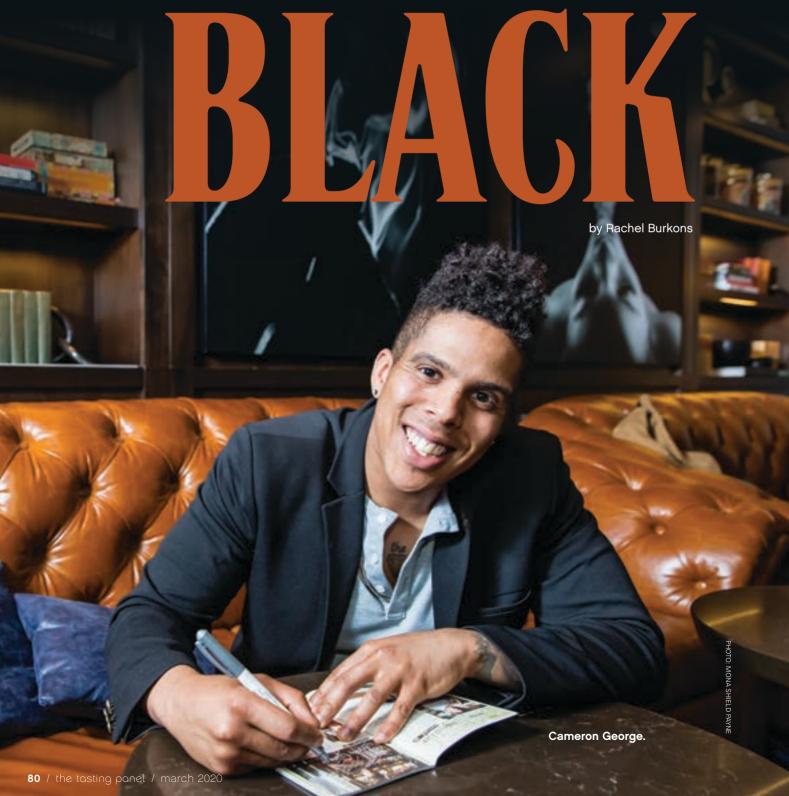
Benziger wasn't ready to stop working the land that he and his family had not only cultivated over the last 50 years but painstakingly revived through Biodynamic farming practices. Instead, he began planning a way to honor the Benziger legacy—and that's how Tribute was born.

In keeping with family tradition, Tribute wines are sourced from sustainably farmed vineyards. The inaugural 2018 Tribute Sauvignon Blanc was harvested from a single site, San Lucas Vineyard, located west of U.S. Highway 101 in Monterey County; the vines here are rooted in rare Lockwood shaly loam soils comprised, much like limestone, of fossilized seashells. The 2017 Tribute Cabernet Sauvignon. meanwhile, is the second vintage release. Both wines are available strictly to on-premise accounts seeking stellar by-the-glass options. "These wines are truly alive," says Benziger. "They show their uniqueness and these crazy complex notes with depth and layers. . . . Once you start farming with an eye toward sustainability, the vines come alive and lay down complex root systems. And that's uniform across all our sites, so there's a continuity to the style. It's all about energy."



THE TASTING PANEL CATCHES UP WITH **JACK'S BLACK BOOK** ALUMNI BEFORE THE RELEASE OF VOLUME V

Backin









While we've been lucky enough to feature cocktail Hall of Famers like Dale DeGroff and Tony Abou-Ganim, it's been a true joy to introduce readers to some of the star bartenders of tomorrow due to the efforts of Jack Daniel's U.S. Brand Ambassador Eric "ET" Tecosky, who has hand-selected all of the beverage pros included in Jack's Black Book. Some he may have bonded with over a drink during a busy market visit; others he's known for years—but the one thing they all have in common is a love of the leading name in American whiskey.

"I've been really impressed by so many of the bartenders we've featured over the years—some of them have gone on to do some really cool things since we put them in the book," says Tecosky. We checked up on three Jack's Black Book alumni to find out what they've been up to since they appeared in its pages.



Tutu Adetomiwa.

The Tasting Panel: How did it feel to be included in Jack's Black Book?

Cameron George, Class of 2016, Seattle, WA: I loved the program. ET is one of the reasons I do this job now learning from him and speaking about Jack's history will forever make me a fan of the brand.

Travis Sanders, Class of 2018, Seattle,

WA: I had only met ET once before and didn't expect to be selected. [But] it was fun to be included with so many talented bartenders. Everyone had such great stories and drinks. I got to meet a few bartenders from the experience and still keep in touch with them. And being published has led to many more opportunities—I am actually heading to the Jack Daniel Distillery for the first time very soon!

Tutu Adetomiwa, Class of 2019, Dallas, TX: It was honestly one of the best moments of my life. It was very unexpected getting recognized by ET. I was discovered by him within my first couple of months of officially bartending!

How has your life changed since publication?

CG: Life has changed greatly: I am now the National Brand Ambassador for Ardbeg.

TS: I am still working for Pennyroval in Seattle, [where] I have been getting a lot more requests from magazines looking for recipes. This last year has been a long run of online publications and the

chance to get really creative. I have also had a chance to meet bartenders from other cities and really grow my network.

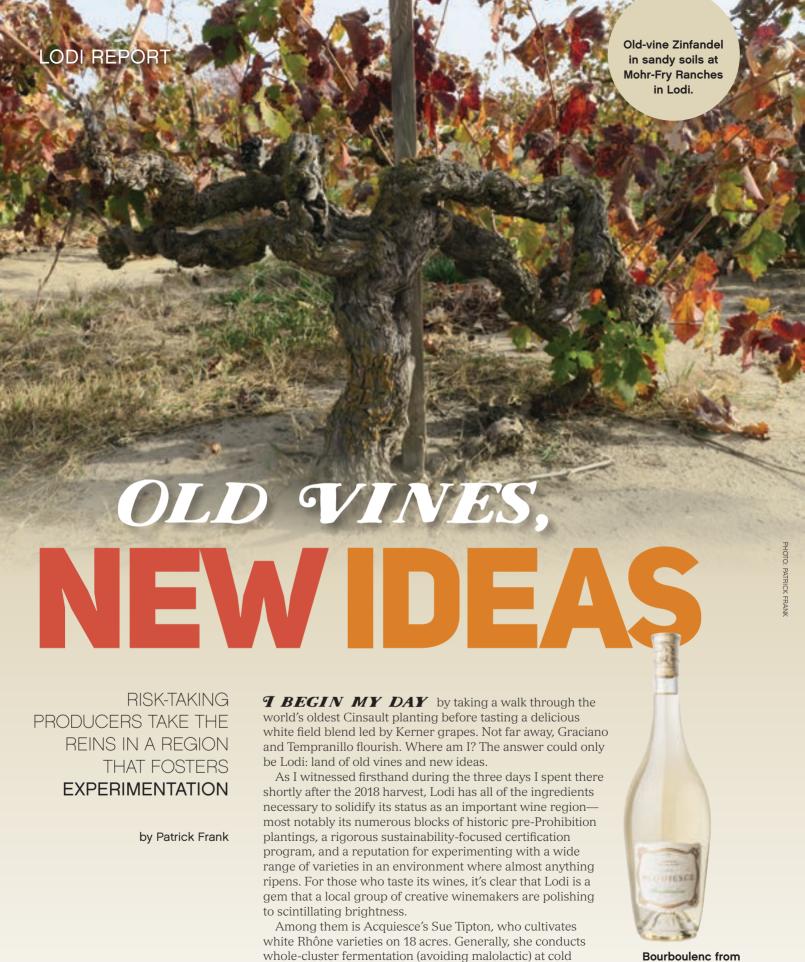
TA: Back then I was a server/ bartender living at home; I am now a manager, and I live in my own place. I'm still working on a degree in political science—but honestly, I have become way more enticed by bartending versus university! I am now pursuing a career in event bartending, and I launched my own business called Drink of the Dé: I host biweekly drink events at my house for friends to try my cocktails. I also plan on opening up my own bar/restaurant concept in the future. I am very ambitious and excited to see where my future leads!

What sort of feedback did you hear from your peers, friends, and family when the book came out?

CG: My friends from around the country enjoyed seeing me in the book. It got many reposts and shout-outs!

TS: My bar manager Ben batched out my cocktail, The Autumn Harvest, and bottled it to sell. He took my photo from the book and made stickers of my face to put on each bottle. I walked into work one day to see my face on bottles all over the bar. It makes for a weird shift to be handing out mini-cocktails with your face on them!

TA: Everyone was so proud of me! People now ask me about my drinks and business all the time. But I think the question I hear the most is, "When are you making my drinks next?"



temperatures after having dropped roughly half of her crop,

and in her new winery, there isn't an oak barrel in sight. Picpoul, Grenache Blanc, and Bourboulenc stand out in Acquiesce's lineup, which Tipton pairs in the tasting room with inventive bites such as homemade thyme-Gouda crackers.

Just east of downtown Lodi in the small community of Victor is Markus Wine Co., run by Swiss native Markus Niggli. He uses the nearby Mokelumne Glen Vineyard as a painter's palette, blending Kerner, Bacchus, and Riesling into two separate cuvées every year; wedded to spontaneous fermentations, he patiently waits out the up-to-50-day intervals the whites need to ferment in their jacketed tanks. Niggli also sources reds from the historic Spenker property, bringing his low-intervention style to those old vines. For now, he has the only winery in Victor, but he will soon be joined by Tegan Passalacqua of Turley Wine Cellars, who is converting an old Ouonset hut around the corner into a hub for his Sandlands label.

Because this is Lodi, there will be Zinfandel—but it's not your parents' version, as Michael McCay deftly exhibits with his eponymous brand. By picking early and using a light touch in the cellar, he counters the traditional narrative of the ripe, fruit-led Lodi colossi that still maintain their following. As he poured seven old-vine expressions for me during my visit, McCay raved, "I feel like a young archaeologist at a new



Markus and Liz Bokisch with Bokisch Vineyards winemaker Elyse Perry.

dig—there's always something to discover." His standout wines come from the east side of Highway 99, where a relatively delicate style comes naturally. On the west side, old-vine offerings tend to be both richer and more common, and producers like third-generation grower Dan Panella of Oak Farm Vineyards do well there.

Last year's edition of the annual Lodi Tour of Tempranillo featured an unbelievable 12 wineries, all of which owe their inspiration to Markus Bokisch—the man who pioneered the use of Spanish varieties in the region nearly 20 years ago. Today, Bokisch Vineyards winemaker Elyse Perry uses Albariño and Graciano from the label's estate vineyards to craft attractive and ageworthy bottles.

Lodi's most sacred ground is the Bechthold Vineyard, planted in 1885 with 10-by-10-foot spacing. Here, Kevin Phillips of Michael David Winery farms 25 acres of head-trained Cinsault vines in accordance with Lodi Rules, the aforementioned sustainability standard that assesses everything from water use to workers' wages. Twelve producers source from this property, making wines that tend to be Gamay- or even Pinot-like, showing wonderfully spiced red fruit.

"Lodi is a national center of experimentation with grape varieties," Stuart Spencer of the Lodi Winegrape Commission told me, and my visit only proved this assertion. Building on a solid core of tradition, it's distinguished itself as a region on the rise.

LODI WINES THAT SHINE

Acquiesce Winery 2018 Estate Bourboulenc Floral notes, pineapple, and apple skin give way to spicy lime peel on the brisk finish of this medium-bodied and lovely Sue Tipton project.

Markus Wine Co. 2018 Nativo This rich field blend of three German white grapes shows apricot, lanolin, and white peach in a medium body that finishes dry.

McCay Cellars 2012 Faith Zinfandel Lot 13

Still light on its feet, this library offering from a historic vineyard expresses cherry, lavender, and dried herb notes in a pretty texture.



Oak Farm Vineyards 2017 Mohr-Frv Zinfandel Block 417

Made with fruit from a westside vineyard planted in 1942, this Zin displays blackberry, black cherry, coffee, and leather notes in a rich body with firm balance.



Bokisch Vineyards 2017 Estate Graciano, Terra Alta Vineyard

Hearty and sleek, this rare Spanish variety shows black cherry, forest floor, and iron shavings in a medium body, finishing with bramble and dusty tannins.

Fields Family Wines 2017 Cinsault, Bechthold Vineyard

This top release from a historic property yields attractive rhubarb, spice, and cherry/berry notes thanks to winemaker Ryan Sherman's restrained style. With an ABV of 12.5%, the body is light and brisk.



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Anspired DISTILLATIONS





Bill Brandel, VP of Sales & Marketing for The Tasting Panel, introduces the presenters.





The lyrebird is one of Australia's greatest cover bands in that it can perfectly mimic the song of any of its feathered peers. It's therefore the ideal namesake for a company that crafts nonalcoholic spirits to imitate the flavor profiles of their proofed counterparts. (For more on Lyre's, see page 62.)

"We use flavor architecture to build a complete replica of the spirit we're trying to imitate," explained Christian Butler, Vice President of North America at Lyre's Spirit Co. Whereas many nonalcoholic products are reverse-engineered, their ethanol removed by reverse osmosis (which some argue also strips them of flavor and texture), the Lyre's team takes a different tack: They instead identify the elements of a given spirit's flavor profile and recreate them through the use of botanicals and spices. For example, they use pepper berries to generate the burn of alcohol, integrate 30-40 other ingredients to construct the volatile compounds found in ethanol, and incorporate extracts to increase viscosity. Their current portfolio contains 13 expressions that act as a 1:1 substitute for alcohol in cocktail recipes.

"The essence of Lyre's is really the freedom to choose to have your drink your way—be it nonalcoholic or low-alcohol," said Butler, noting that one could reduce the proof of any mixed drink by substituting Lyre's for any of the base components. Whether you're abstaining altogether or just trying to avoid a hangover, Lyre's offers a guilt-free alternative.



Lyre's Spirit Co. National Brand Ambassador Tommy Quimby, Senior Vice President Christian Butler, and Vice President-West Joshua Carlos display the brand's Dark Cane Spirit, used to create an alcohol-free Dark & Stormy.



Joel Caruso, Los Angeles Market Manager for Chopin Imports, shows off the Chopin Family Reserve.

CHOPIN FAMILY RESERVE EXTRA RARE YOUNG POTATO VODKA

When Joel Caruso, Los Angeles Market Manager for Chopin Imports, was first asked if he could sell vodka, he thought, "Probably, but I really don't want to." That changed when he met Tad Dorda, the founder of Chopin. Dorda is passionate about terroir—a concept that few would even consider associating with the colorless spirit. Yet the Chopin Family Reserve Extra Rare Young Potato Vodka validates his argument. Due to their low starch content, it takes 25 pounds of young potatoes to produce a single bottle. But what they lack in efficiency, these potatoes—grown on Chopin's 17-acre estate in Poland to reach roughly the size of golf balls—make up for in flavor. Intended for sipping, the resulting vodka delivers with notes of white chocolate and green cardamom plus a rich, silky mouthfeel.

Chopin is a household name today, yet it still qualifies as a boutique distillery, with all production occurring onsite. Under the watchful eye of Dorda's longtime master distiller Waldemar Durakiewicz, the vodka is carefully distilled four times to 96% ABV, blended to 80 proof with local well water, and aged in neutral Polish oak barrels (*kufa*) for two years before bottling to allow the flavors to meld. "There are plenty of times to drink vodka with mixers, [but] this is not one of those times," insisted Caruso. "This is the time to appreciate where this spirit is trying to take you, not where you want to take the spirit."

NO. 209 GIN

In 1882, the United States issued its 209th distillery license to William Scheffler in St. Helena, California. The former distiller for Charles Krug went on to receive many awards for his spirits, including a medal at the Universal Exposition of 1889 in Paris. Then Prohibition was ratified, effectively shuttering the doors of his facility. Nearly a century later, the new founder of the estate, the late Leslie Rudd, removed the ivy on the walls of what was being used as a hay barn to uncover hand-painted lettering that read: Registered Distillery No. 209.

This reveal was the inspiration for No. 209 Gin. Because the original building didn't meet current Napa County code standards, a new distillery was established on Pier 50 in San Francisco—which happens to be one of the contested places of origin for the Gin Martini. The medal that Scheffler received at the Paris Exposition hangs in the new quarters as a reminder of the brand's roots.

Like Scheffler, the distillery uses pot stills for the final extraction after macerating the base spirit overnight with botanicals. Only the heart of the distillation is used for bottling, resulting in a pure, aromatic product with rose-petal aromas, notes of grapefruit peel, and an elegant texture. Since it's designed for use in cocktails, National Craft Spirits Manager Dan Burke recommends adding a drop of water before enjoying No. 209 neat.



Dan Burke, National Craft Spirits Manager, presents No. 209 Gin.



Eric Entrikin, MS, is Brand Ambassador at Germain-Robin.

GERMAIN-ROBIN XO

Master Sommelier Eric Entrikin is often asked why he'd want to leave wine for spirits. The answer? "I don't," he admitted. "But I'm moving to Germain-Robin because it's a special product." As its Brand Ambassador, he went on to describe the significance of brandy production to California. Brandy has been made in the region for over 350 years—and unlike their French counterparts in Cognac and Armagnac, American producers have the flexibility of choosing which grapes to use. This is important because brandy, as a product of wine, is one of the few spirits in which the flavor of the base ingredient is noticeable. For that reason, Entrikin believes, "We have the ability to produce [Cognac and Armagnac's] level of quality—and maybe even better."

Company founder Hubert Germain-Robin comes from a long line of Cognac distillers dating back to the 1700s. After moving to California, he founded his namesake product in the 1980s and continues to consult for the brand today. Entrikin explained that Hubert believes Pinot Noir to be ideal for brandy distillation, as it adds significant weight and texture to the final product. The grape comprises 85–90% of the blend of aged brandies that make up Germain-Robin XO, supplemented by small amounts of Viognier, Sémillon, and Colombard. The result is pure luxury, as the average age of the blend is 20 years old, resulting in rich flavors of butterscotch and nougat that coat the palate as they're framed by spicy clove and cinnamon.

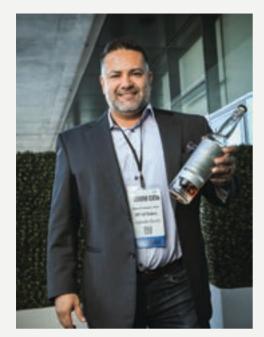
CATOCTIN CREEK ROUNDSTONE RYE DISTILLER'S EDITION 92 PROOF

In 2009, a married couple traded in their day jobs to launch a small distillery in Purcellville, Virginia. Just over a decade later, Catoctin Creek is now the state's most awarded whiskey brand. Co-founder and chief distiller Becky Harris introduced its 92 Proof Roundstone Rye by igniting a conversation around grain sourcing, explaining, "We're really focused on the flavor of rye and how we can explore that." Each time she and her husband, Scott, begin working with a new grower, they make a single batch to determine the flavor profile obtained from that farmer's crop (they currently work with four rye farmers, all Virginia-based). From there, Harris undertakes a careful barrel-selection process to determine which vessel best suits a given label. If a barrel doesn't fit a specific flavor profile in their portfolio, it's bottled for their private reserve program or as a special release.

The Harrises were inspired by the history of rye whiskey in their home state. As one of the 13 original colonies, Virginia was among rye's birthplaces; George Washington himself distilled and sold rye at his Mt. Vernon estate. Catoctin Creek's 92 Proof Roundstone Rye is an ode to that heritage. The nutty spirit is the liquid equivalent of warm sourdough rye bread; to attendee and sommelier Ishmael Hendricks, a sip "felt like a nice Virginia hug."



Becky Harris, chief distiller for Catoctin Creek, co-founded the Virginia distillery in 2009 with her husband, Scott, who serves as General Manager.



Miguel Rodriguez-Vidal, Regional Sales Manager for Legend Spirits, with a bottle of Duke Bourbon.

DUKE GRAND CRU Founder's reserve

Renowned vintner Chris Radomski founded Duke Spirits as an homage to Ethan Wayne and his father, legendary actor John Wayne, a connoisseur of fine tequilas and American whiskey. The Duke's taste for excellence led him to develop his own recipes for spirits that were privately distilled and bottled for him. After he passed, Ethan uncovered these handwritten formulas and unlabeled bottles in a crate from his father's estate. This discovery led him on a duteous quest to replicate the forgotten blends the Duke so fondly enjoyed.

Duke Grand Cru Founder's Reserve is based on John Wayne's 1962 recipe for Kentucky straight bourbon. A nine-year-old selection of that bourbon is finished in onceused French oak wine barrels for six months before bottling. "We're not the first whiskey to finish in wine barrels, but we are possibly the first to use the finest French oak wine barrels," noted Regional Sales Manager Miguel Rodriguez-Vidal, referring to the company's policy of sourcing from cult Cabernet Sauvignon producers in Napa Valley. Ideally served over a large ice cube, the 110-proof whiskey is surprisingly smooth, with concentrated roasted-hazelnut aromas and flavors of toffee and caramel corn.

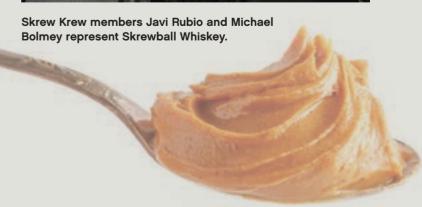
SKREWBALL PEANUT BUTTER WHISKEY

When couple Brittany and Steve Yeng first launched their peanut butter whiskey, they had no idea it would be a success—but it proved to be one overnight. The idea for the brand stemmed from a signature cocktail created by Steve at one of his restaurants in Ocean Beach, California; Brittany used her creative talents and chemistry background to fine-tune the product and develop the packaging, christening their unconventional brainchild Skrewball. Within 12 short months, the response was such that the Yengs appear to have created a new whiskey category: Not only did Skrewball get picked up by a large distributor and become available in all 50 states, but it also spawned some imitators in the market.

Still, the Skrew Krew—as the Yengs affectionately call their self-described team of misfits—continues to set itself apart through the use of premium ingredients. The base consists of a high-quality American whiskey made from corn and barley, which is blended with extracts from American peanuts and sweetened with real cane sugar.

"Skrewball combines that childhood flavor of peanut butter with the adult flavor of whiskey. When you taste it, you can really taste both," said Skrew Krew member Michael Bolmey. It's a truly nostalgic concoction, evoking memories of freshbaked peanut butter cookies and handmade holiday toffee. Yet it shouldn't be sidelined as a mere novelty; audible *mmms* from the audience attested to that. Skrewball also makes an excellent base for twists on traditional cocktails such as Manhattans as well as tiki-style libations with passion fruit and pineapple, both of which pair well with spicy Thai and Indian dishes.

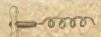








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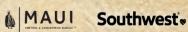


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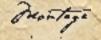












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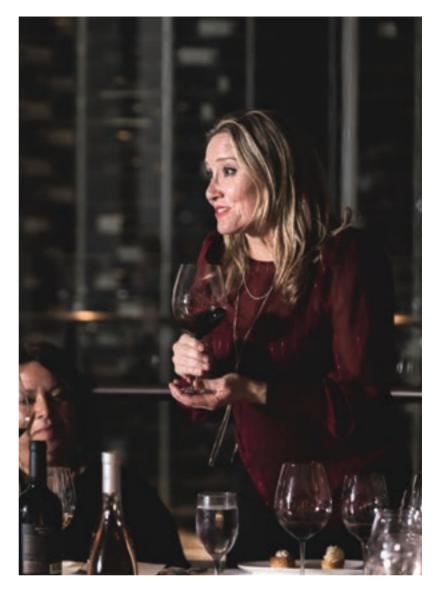
E. & J. GALLO'S WOMEN BEHIND THE **WINE CAMPAIGN** CELEBRATES AND EMPOWERS WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY

story by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

n the past decade, there's been an evident shift in the historically male-dominated wine industry as more women take on leading roles. Yet we still have a long way to go; the push toward gender equality is an ongoing effort, and many female power players are working hard to advocate for one another and to promote the next generation of women in wine.

To further these endeavors, the 12 recipients of the 2019 SommCon Young Leaders Scholarship—presented by *The Tasting Panel* and sister publication The SOMM Journal in coordination with SommCon San Diegojoined female leads from E. & J. Gallo's Wine Dialogues platform last November for an unforgettable evening at Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse. The evening began with introductions and toasts as attendees sipped on flutes of J Vineyards & Winery Cuvée 20 Brut NV, a zesty Russian River Valley sparkler made by winemaker Nicole Hitchcock with refined bubbles and crisp green-apple notes; a roundtable-style setup was intended to promote discussion as each of the guests revealed personal truths that led to their seat at the table.

"All of you as scholarship winners are pioneers, because you're paving the way for someone else," said Brenae Royal, Vineyard Manager for E. & J. Gallo's Monte Rosso Vineyard, who took note that 11 of the 12 recipients were women. As one of the faces behind Wine Dialogues' Women Behind the Wine campaign, Royal said, "I'm so proud to be a part of this campaign, which allows us to give back and to inspire others." Launched last spring, it aims to celebrate female leaders at E. & J. Gallo while supporting aspiring professionals through scholarships; it has

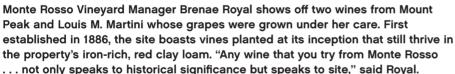


As the recipient of a Fuel Your Dreams grant from Women Behind the Wine in partnership with Women of the Vine & Spirits, Meghan Vergara expressed her thoughts on the evening: "I think the strongest power of all this is our ability to connect and to talk in a real fashion about what we face and how to overcome it together."

"I think it's important as women to support each other and to also support the younger generations coming up."

-Natalie Henderson, Principal, Corporate Public Relations, E. & J. Gallo





partnered with organizations such as Women of the Vine & Spirits to award \$100,000 in grants to women looking to advance their career through certifications and formal training programs.

"Our whole goal is to take away barriers," explained Megan Zeeb, Assistant Commerce Marketing Manager for E. & J. Gallo Winery, who shared that the campaign has inspired her both personally and professionally. Beyond easing the financial burdens of continuing education, the grants it offers can give awardees the confidence they need to go the extra mile. Ultimately, it's about creating a community of support for one another's goals no matter

what they might be.

It's essential that E. & J. Gallo is taking a significant stand on this issue. As the largest family-owned wine company in the world with 86 years in the business, it actively employs women at the top tiers of marketing, production, and operations. "No matter what level you are in the company, you are working alongside the family," said Natalie Henderson, Principal of Corporate Public Relations, who added that in her 13 years with the company, she has had many opportunities to learn and grow. "As needs arise and as things change, we adapt," she explained, acknowledging that careers in this business are



constantly evolving.

One topic that was widely discussed was motherhood, which undoubtedly has an impact on any career. For Michelle Christman, Portfolio Consultant, On-Premise, who has worked at E. & J. Gallo Winery for 18 years, it challenged her to reevaluate her goals. She shared her experience while introducing the 2015 Talbott Vineyards Pinot Noir from Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, which delighted with an amalgam of forest floor, raspberries, and holiday spice. After nearly a decade in management, which required a demanding travel schedule, Christman chose to return to sales and center her career closer to home. Many of her peers thought she'd taken a step down, a view she considers shortsighted. "It does not mean that I am not the best at what I want to do," said Christman. "I can still have both [career and family].... It might not be 100%



working me or 100% mom all the time, but I have a really great balance."

Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor for The SOMM Journal, agreed, explaining that she'd left a fast-paced position as the sommelier at Spago in Beverly Hills to pursue a career that allowed her to spend nights and weekends with her family while exploring her passion for wine journalism. "Don't be afraid of having exactly what you want, because you can have it all. As cliché as it sounds, it's absolutely true," insisted Birschbach.

And if others have a different definition of personal and professional fulfillment, that's fine too. "I think as a human, having it all means trying to find out what the heck we're trying to be. And I think that is so much more challenging," said Kathleen Thomas, Wine Training Manager at Hakkasan Group and a panelist at SommCon San Diego. She encouraged the young lead-

ers by noting that it's OK to be afraid and make mistakes. Most importantly, she stressed the importance of compassion for both others and yourself. "You have to remember to take care of yourself or no one else gets taken care of," said Thomas.

To that point, guests divulged their approach to achieving work-life balance. Tasting Panel Publisher Meridith May, who manages two publications with a dedicated team of mostly women, chimed in, "It's dogs, dogs save me! I love dogs—I don't have kids. So we are a dog-friendly office." In addition, many of the women acknowledged the importance of surrounding themselves with people who encourage them. As Henderson reiterated, "I think it's important as women to support each other and to also support the younger generations coming up."

Later in the evening, Royal shared details on the final wines served from

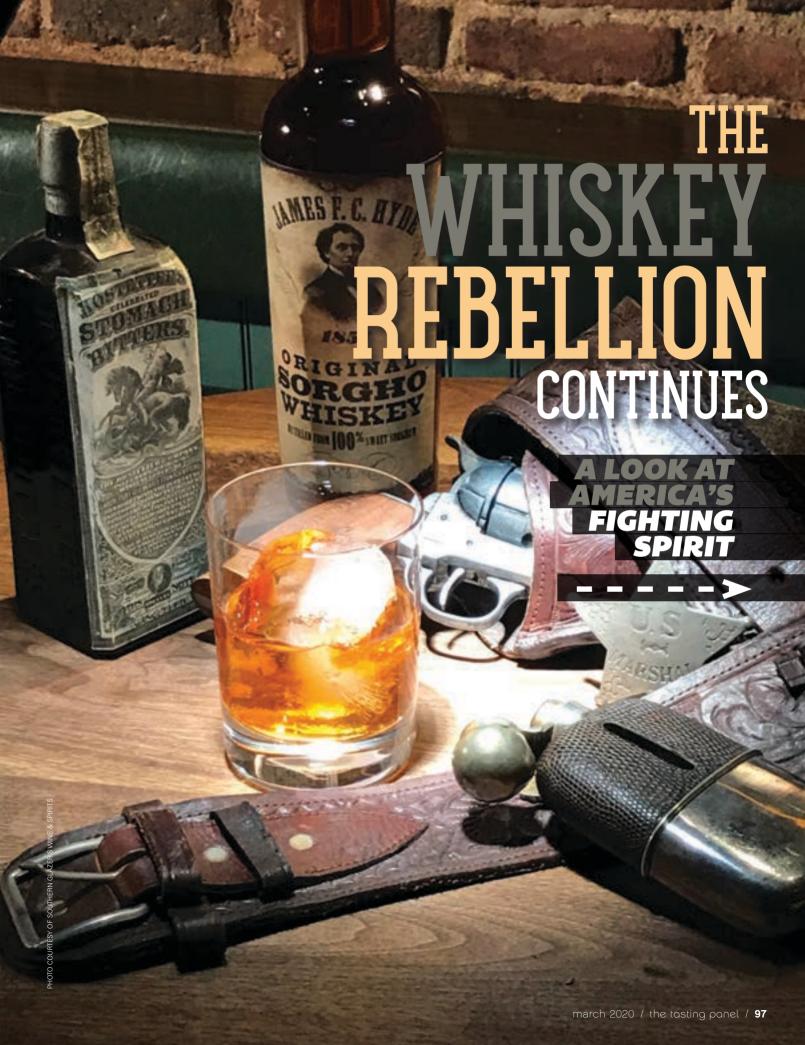
Mount Peak and Louis M. Martiniboth of which are grown under her care at the Monte Rosso Vineyard in Sonoma County—along with some background on her career path. Two weeks prior to her graduation from California State University, Chico. where she studied horticulture and developed a love for bold red wines, Royal approached a Gallo representative during a job fair and boldly summarized her qualifications. A few weeks later, she found herself interning on their viticulture team; within two years, she was named Vineyard Manager at Monte Rosso. As one of only four black female vineyard managers in the country, Royal acknowledged bearing a sense of responsibility. She takes pride in training others knowing that they'll someday replace her as she progresses toward new challenges. "I love pulling others up with me," she said. "There's room for all of us up here."



DONT BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

n January, we devoted our regular Category Report to gin, which your average drinker correlates with warm weather. Now that spring is rolling in, we're dedicating it to whisk(e)y, more commonly associated with fall and winter. What gives? It's simple: While their application in cocktails may be seasonal, spirits themselves line your backbar year-round for a reason. This guide to the wide world of brown booze should help you keep those bourbon buffs, Scotch connoisseurs, and rye revivalists coming.









by Brian Van Flandern. Executive Director of Spirits Education for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of Nevada and author of Whiskey Cocktails, with Max Solano, Whiskey Educator of SGWS Nevada

efore the resurgence of craft distilling around the turn of the millennium, the American whiskey industry hadn't experienced much innovation. In 1964, when the term bourbon was legally declared the exclusive property of the United States of America, producers promoted authenticity over creativity.

Today's producers, by contrast, seek to offer both. To that end, they're rediscovering artisanal grains, growing their own single-estate crops, redefining the malted-barley category, and emphasizing the importance of terroir in their distillates. To truly understand these recent developments, however, we must first consider the heritage of the category.

In 1790, a fledgling America, deeply in debt from the Revolutionary War, was looking to raise taxes on one of the primary forms of currency—rye whiskey. Having discovered the amber waves of grain, President George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and many American revolutionaries were distilling rye in Maryland, Virginia, and especially Pennsylvania. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton's decision to levy a massive tax against them

led to the Whiskey Rebellion of 1791, which lasted four years.

When it was over, many distillers sought to escape the taxation by fleeing to the Ohio Valley, where they discovered corn. Bourbon, made predominantly from this ingredient, was still relatively unknown; Evan Williams hadn't opened the first commercial bourbon distillery until 1783. But by the onset of Prohibition in 1920, corn had become the dominant grain in American whiskey production.

Today's pioneers are reaching back into this fascinating history for inspiration and applying modern technology to their findings to break new ground, exciting and delighting whiskey connoisseurs all around the world as they go. Take Frey Ranch, founded in Nevada in 1854 when the West was truly wild; for the past five years, Colby and Ashley Frey have been building on the family legacy by planting their own non-GMO corn, winter cereal rye, house-malted barley, and sprouted winter wheat to make an authentically ground-to-glass, single-estate American bourbon that also incorporates local well water (which is lower in iron content than that of Bourbon County).

Here's another example: James F.C.

Hyde Sorgho Whiskey. In 1857, James F.C. Hyde published the definitive work on growing, harvesting, and distilling sorghum (then called sorgho), a naturally gluten-free and tremendously flavorful grain originally brought to the United States by Chinese immigrants, who planted it throughout the Midwest as they built the Transcontinental Railroad. Abolitionists and free-state farmers adopted Hyde's work on sorghum to divest themselves of slaveproduced corn and sugarcane. For this reason, sorghum whiskeys briefly surged in popularity just prior to the Civil War. Ironically, it was the Great Emancipator Abraham Lincoln himself who indirectly ended sorghum's rise when he levied a massive tax on all American whiskey to pay for the war; just as before, smaller distillers immediately abandoned sorghum for corn, the less-expensive option.

The producers of James F.C. Hyde whiskey have revived this lesser-known grain and proved that it is just as good as, if not superior to, corn in both price and flavor; their newest release, a straight rye, blends in 15% sorghum instead of corn. They're shifting the American whiskey paradigm one sip at a time.

Wheat Worth Worshipping: DRY FLY DISTILLING

In eastern Washington, it's all about the wheat: wheat whiskey, in the case of Spokane-based Dry Fly Distilling, which arrived on the scene in 2007 as the first craft distillery in the state. Beginning as a vodka and gin producer, Dry Fly also became the first distillery to commercially bottle a 100% wheat whiskey and has since expanded its portfolio to include an array of innovative and award-winning expressions that follow different aging regimens.

Sourcing all of its grain from within a 30-mile radius, Dry Fly epitomizes the grain-to-glass approach to distilling; its founder, Don Poffenroth, has long touted the instrumental role that grower-partners like Mitch Engel of Engel Farms play in maintaining the quality standard of its products. Exhibit A is the 90-proof **Straight Wheat Whiskey**, made with Engel's Washington soft white wheat; aged in new American oak for a minimum of three years, it features aromas of toasty oak, wheat mash, and toffee that lead to a sweet, smooth palate, with notes of biscuit and grain that culminate on a drying, peppery finish.

The whiskey serves as the base for both the **Port Barrel Finish** Straight Wheat Whiskey—also 90 proof, it spends an additional six to 12 months in its namesake casks—and the bold Cask Strength Straight Wheat Whiskey, which drinks softer than its 120 proof would suggest and has garnered the distillery's highest ratings. Also of note is Dry Fly's **Cask & Release Series**—a play on "catch and release"—which brings back barrels lent to breweries for beer aging; transferred into these vessels for roughly a year of additional finishing, the flagship Straight Wheat Whiskey takes on either the slightly smoky edge and full body of the KettleHouse Brewing Cold Smoke Scotch Style Ale or the rich roundness and spice-and-cocoa character of Pelican Brewing's Captain of the Coast ale. Grain to glass, beer to spirit—it's all fair game for Dry Fly.

Dry Fly Straight Wheat Whiskey (\$40) Aromas of honeyed apples, chamomile, and oatmeal lead this youthful whiskey. The palate is sparked with white pepper and just-ripe white peach. Almond brittle adds a sweet tone on the finish. 92 — Meridith May

Dry Fly Cask Strength Straight Wheat Whiskey (\$49.95)

Seductive aromas of apricot and maple are mirrored on the palate. Midway, nectarine rings true, imparting a creamy texture that washes over the tongue. Floral tones also shine despite the high proof. 93 *—М.М.*



Dry Fly Port Barrel Finish Straight Wheat Whiskey

(\$44.95) Port barrels add color and flavor to this striking spirit: Lighthearted but deep amber in hue, it's a mineral-driven whiskey with delicacy and complexity. The perfume of nougat, raisin, walnut, and chocolate goes deep as flavors of candied almond meld with



coffee bean, grain, and cedar before the dry, seamless finish. 94 -- M.M.

Dry Fly Straight Wheat Whiskey Cask & Release Series: Pelican Brewing Co.

(\$54.95) Aromas of malt, barley, and peach preserves are rich and generous. With each sip, the flavors warm the tongue and expand with unique notes of soy sauce, marmalade, charred cherrywood, and leather. The finish is under-



stated yet powerful—it's sleek and clean, with burnt orange peel and a dash of salinity. 95





The Heart of Bourbon Country:

LUX ROW DISTILLERS

Lux Row Distillers is located in Bardstown, Kentucky—known to many as the Bourbon Capital of the World—off a tree-lined road on a property that also happens to be the home of head distiller John Rempe. Rempe has been with Luxco, the distillery's parent company, for more than 20 years and also serves as its Director of Research & Development. "I moved from St. Louis to a small town to take on this role," he notes. "I learned how important bourbon is to the people who live here; it's life." He feels the same way: "Whiskey has been a passion of mine for a long time, and to be able to focus on it and smell and taste it every day is incredible."

Among the brand's premium-tier offerings is Lux Row Distillers Double Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, which combines two barrels of 12-year-old bourbon into a limited-edition bottling only available in Kentucky. David Nicholson 1843, meanwhile, brings to life a recipe for a wheat-based Kentucky straight bourbon created by a St. Louis grocer in the 19th century; the result won a double gold at the 2015 San Francisco World Spirits Competition. (The David Nicholson Reserve puts a twist on that heirloom recipe by using a higher-rye mash bill.) Lux Row's Old Ezra 7 Year Barrel Strength Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey is aged for seven years and bottled at 117 proof for an extrarobust profile. And then there's the **Rebel** Yell 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, aged for a decade in charred oak barrels.

In an effort to introduce more people to the bourbon category, the Lux Row team gives in-depth tours and conducts tastings complete with chocolate pairings. The hope is that their guests feel as at home there as Rempe does: "I love living here on the 90-acre property," he says. "I only have a couple-hundred-yard commute to work, and I get to watch the sun rise over the distillery every day."



Lux Row Distillers Cask Strength Double Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey The sensational perfume of dark chocolate and pecan is topped off by baked apricots and guava. The warmth on the palate melts into a pool of melting caramel, which joins leather and white pepper in a swirling crescendo of flavor. 118.4 proof. 94 —M.M.

Rebel Yell 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky
Straight Bourbon Whiskey The luxurious nose
is ripe and rich with aged stone fruit, dates,
and cinnamon sugar—and the palate is equally
plush, as white pepper accents nutmeg,
almonds, vanilla wafers, and burnt orange. Yet
there's an inherent softness to this whiskey—a

pillow-like weight that integrates the plethora of flavors with no bite, which is especially impressive given the high proof of 100. **95** —*M.M.*



David Nicholson Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Love the smell of peach pie? Maybe with a dollop of banana and toffee cream? The nose of this bourbon recreates it, while the palate has a lean minerality, cushioned by stone fruit, oatmeal, and black tea. 100 proof. 93 —M.M.

Old Ezra 7 Year Barrel Strength

Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey The aromas are akin to a cedar closet packed with old leather jackets and shoes caked in just-tilled soil. This complex and ultra-elegant spirit offers up charred orange peel covered with bittersweet dark chocolate. Floral tones of peach blossom and jasmine come in with baking spices on the second pass. Clocking in at 117 proof, it's memorable and lengthy. 95 —M.M.



In a Category by Itself: BALCONES DISTILLING

Housed in the Balcones distillery in Waco, Texas, are four copper pot stills made by fourth-generation craftsmen in Scotland. "People ask us all the time why we use pot stills," says Balcones Distillery Manager Thomas Mote, explaining that he and his colleagues aim to make whisky* in a manner that honors "Scottish tradition as faithfully as possible," right down to using only malted Golden Promise barley in their Single Malt mash bill. Yet in so doing, Balcones is proving that it's very much an American brand with an audacious spirit. In fact, head distiller Jared Himstedt is among the founders of the American Single Malt Whisky Commission, which seeks to officially establish a category for American single malts.

Himstedt's team uses the same pot stills and local ingredients to cook up their adventurous takes on classic American whiskies, from the **Baby Blue Corn Whisky** they first released in 2009 to the **Texas Rye 100**, whose mash bill predominately comprises Elbon Rye from the northwest corner of the state along with crystal, chocolate, and roasted rye—a mix that comes across as subtly sweet on the palate.

And then there's Balcones' most recent release, **Pot Still Bourbon**. In perfecting it, Himstedt and Mote discovered that making bourbon down south can be a very challenging enterprise; the Texas heat can make a spirit too dark and tannic long before the two years it takes to fully mellow and mature in new American oak. But they were not deterred. As is their proclivity, they began to experiment—in part by employing larger (59-gallon) barrels that had seen extended yard aging—and managed to yield a unique bourbon that's auburn in color and features notes of raw honey, candied pecans, and leather.

Between its core expressions and its limited releases, Balcones offers close to 20 whiskies—while the accolades it has received for them run upwards of 350. But who's counting?

*Note: Balcones omits the "e" in its spelling of "whisky."

Balcones Texas Single Malt Whisky Single Barrel (\$80) Dark amber in hue, with a nose of molasses, walnut, pekoe tea, and raspberry. A flash of heat leaves a satin cloud of flavor on the mouth: Lavish notes of cocoa, peanut butter, and saddle leather soon mellow out to reveal orange peel seasoned with black pepper. Decisively big and bold at 128 proof after at least 24 months in oak, it's well worth the experience.

Balcones Distilling Texas Single Malt Whisky Classic Edition (\$70) Rich and toasty with spice, dried fruits, and caramel; lush, intense, and elegant with amazing finesse. It's high proof, but adding a bit of water opens it up. 94 —Anthony Dias Blue

Balcones Distilling Texas Rye 100 (\$40) A luscious, lovely rye that's fresh and spicy as well as aromatic, silky, and toasty with memorable flavors of spice and caramel. Deep, balanced, and long finish. **94** —*A.D.B.*

Balcones Distilling True Blue Straight Corn Whisky (\$50) Deep amber color. Made from roasted blue corn, this velvety expression shows toasted notes balanced with juicy fruit; it's elegant, rich, and generous. 94—A.D.B.



From Arkansas Grain to Glass:

ROCK TOWN DISTILLERY STRAIGHT BOURBON

When Rock Town opened in Little Rock in 2010, it became the first distillery to operate legally in Arkansas since Prohibition. The grain-to-glass producer sources its cereals from farmers within a 125-mile radius before channeling these ingredients into Rock Town's Bottled in Bond Arkansas Straight Bourbon Whiskey mash bill of 82% corn, 9% soft red winter wheat, and 9% malted barley. The liquid is double-distilled in a Vendome copper pot still, aged four years in seasoned and charred new oak barrels, and then, in accordance with Bottled-in-Bond Act regulations, bottled at an even 100 proof.

Meanwhile, the national and international awards Rock Town has won since its launch have encouraged its ventures into new terrain—most recently with its **Chocolate Malt Straight Bourbon Whiskey**.

Rock Town Bottled in Bond Arkansas Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$55) Aged four years in 53-gallon white oak barrels, this bourbon is beautifully structured, with aromas of caramel, coffee, and peach preserves. Walnut notes dry the palate, while a surge of new leather, charred mango, and black pepper provide depth that lasts into the long finish. 94 —M.M.

Rock Town Chocolate Malt Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$45) This 92-proofer ages for 24 months in new, 25-gallon seasoned and charred white oak. Mocha and sassafras engage the senses on the nose, followed by nectarine and apricot. The chocolate malt comes through immediately on the palate. Used mostly for brown ales, bitters, stouts, and porters, the ingredient adds weight to the mouthfeel and keeps company with notes of tobacco leaf, black pepper, and grilled stone fruit. 93 -M.M.

From the Ground Up:

BOOT HILL DISTILLERY

In the 19th century, outlaws were buried here. In the 20th century, they were being jailed here, even as new laws were being enacted in the adjoining chambers. But today, the former cemetery grounds-turned-municipal headquarters of Dodge City, Kansas, are home to Boot Hill Distillery, which operates according to a whole different set of laws: those of nature. Father-and-son farmer-owners Roger Kelman and Hayes Kelman shepherd their spirits through the production process from soil to sip, growing their own grains to make a number of different whiskeys—including white, red eye, and bourbon.

Boot Hill Distillery Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40) This highwheat Kansas bourbon has a mash bill of 51% corn and 49% hard red winter wheat. Rested in No. 3 charred barrels and bottled at 90 proof. it offers lingering aromas of orange peel, butterscotch, coffee, and peach pie. The palate intensifies and mirrors the perfume, adding a coat of white pepper and oatmeal. The pleasing finish incorporates cedar painted with fleshy stone fruit. 93+ -M.M.





Far Beyond

BOURBON

WHISK(E)Y'S INTERNATIONAL REACH

hile Ireland and Scotland wage an endless dispute over the origins of whisk(e)y—with each laying claim to its invention—the rest of the world has forged ahead in shaping its future. The Canadians got in the game not long after we Americans did, and the Japanese weren't far behind them in making the most substantial contributions to the category outside of the U.K. But today, the spirit is produced across the globe—from Bhutan and Taiwan to Germany and Sweden to Mexico and South Africa. There's no better time, then, to take your palate on a world tour of whiskey: Here are a



Savoir Faire in a Bottle:

BENJAMIN CHAPMAN 7-YEAR WHISKEY

Who was Benjamin Chapman? According to wine and spirits company 3 Badge Beverage Corporation, that's a mystery yet to be solved—but from what little we know, he was a fascinating and debonair gent from the 1960s with a preference for the finer things in life. This whiskey, crafted in small batches with a legendary smoothness, is a tribute to his enduring memory.

For men like Chapman, first impressions are important, and his whiskey follows suit. The diamondfaceted bottle was selected for its resemblance to the intricate crystal tumblers used for classic whiskey cocktails. The initials "BC," prominently etched on the cork bar-top closure, serve as a reminder of the signature that he might have scribbled on a hotel receipt or a note to a lady friend. The black label, meanwhile, shows the subtle herringbone pattern of the era's fashionable tweed suits, while its gold-foil lettering reflects the traditional gold cuff links and other accessories that defined men's style at the time. Toward the side of the bottle, a strand of intricate diamonds lines a vertical band of deep emerald green—a design that might be seen on a fine silk tie straight from Chapman's favorite haberdasher.

So far, so impressive—but what's inside the bottle is as bespoke as the tailored packaging. Benjamin Chapman is fashioned from a blend of 51% ten-year Canadian rye and 49% seven-year Canadian prairie wheat whiskey. The rye is distilled with pure glacial water sourced from the northern Rockies in an oldfashioned pot still for a clean and flavorful profile, then aged for just over ten years in white oak casks with an optimum level of char that adds complex layers of vanilla and spice. The wheat is distilled in triple-column continuous stills and aged for a minimum of seven years in American oak whiskey barrels for a rich, bold character. Blended with panache, the result is an exceptionally distinctive small-batch whiskey worthy of its mysterious yet always elegant namesake.

Benjamin Chapman 7-Year Whiskey (\$39) From its orange-amber hue to its delicate perfume of cinnamon, peach, and caramel, this striking whiskey reveals its reserved and refined character even before the first sip. A luxurious entry feels like liquid velvet, imparting a honeyed nectar of peach, mocha, and spiced banana. The finish is graceful and unique, with a white-peppered vanilla-pudding effect. 95 — M.M.

3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.





The Urquhart family has been synonymous with whisky from the Speyside region of Scotland since 1895—the year John Urquhart took a job at Gordon & MacPhail, a newly established grocery in Elgin. Thanks to his skill at blending and aging the local whiskies the company stocked, he soon assumed a leading role at the company.

Fast-forward a century: Gordon & MacPhail was now internationally renowned as a Scotch bottler and wholesaler. But while the third generation of Urguharts upheld their reputation by working with 100 different distilleries to secure the finest spirits for maturation, they also dreamed of opening their own distillery. As Richard Urguhart, Gordon & MacPhail's fourth-generation Head of Sales (Americas), explains, "By actually making whisky ourselves, we could safeguard the future of our business." That dream came true in 1993, when they purchased the then-defunct Benromach distillery: five years later, they reopened it on its centennial.

Today, Benromach is the repository of the Urquharts' 125-year his-

tory in the whisky business, with a three-part portfolio that reflects their expertise. One is the experimental Contrasts range: "Because we are small and family-owned," says Urguhart, they have the freedom to "do these small batches and try anything." Another is the Heritage range, built on the stocks that remain from the original distillery. That includes the much-buzzedabout 50 Years Old, showcasing "our last ever Benromach cask from the 1960s," according to Urguhart, for a "dark-red, treacly whisky with an oiliness . . . yet elegance; everything is in perfect balance." Clocking in at \$12,000 per, a full 50 of just 125 bottles released were exported to the U.S.—a stat that, he adds, "shows the importance of the market."

Which brings us to the core range: Classic. "That's going to be the real focus for us in terms of brand building in the U.S., which is hopefully going to be our biggest market," Urquhart says. "It is really the DNA of the distillery, handcrafting whisky the way it would have tasted in Speyside 50, 60, 70 years ago—elegant and fruity with a touch of smoke." And its crown

jewel is the multi-award-winning **15 Years Old**: As "one of the few distilleries that always uses first-fill casks to get the right balance of whiskies," Benromach matures the Scotch in Sherry barrels, which "give it a really rich, intense flavor" marked by "cinnamon spice, dried fruit, a subtle smokiness. . . . It's a full-bodied and really well-rounded whisky." Adds Urquhart, "We're very proud of it."



Benromach 15 Years Old Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky Offering up a bouquet of peat and brown rice, peppermint, and candied almonds, this spirit is indisputably supple and seductive, with notes of caramelcovered pears, cigar leaf, charred coconut, and chocolate egg cream. The vivacious aftertaste offers an echo of delicate

peatiness and a bundle of heather. **96**—*M.M.*

Craft and Community:

WEST CORK DISTILLERS

John O'Connell, Denis McCarthy, and Ger McCarthy sure know how to rally the troops around a good cause. The best, in fact: whiskey. As the founders of West Cork Distillers, they've committed themselves to hiring employees only from their corner of southern Ireland. They rely on fresh, local spring water and locally grown grains in their distillations—not solely to showcase the terroir of County Cork but also as a means to boost its economy. (That includes their latest release, a small-batch single malt made exclusively from barley sourced within 60 kilometers of its headquarters; the aforementioned water, meanwhile, comes from within 5 kilometers.) And this spring, they're opening a brand-new distillery to shine the spotlight even more brightly on their hometown of Skibbereen, with a visitor's center and tasting room to follow.

Hand-built copper pot stills and artisan techniques might be a given in the craft spirits business these days, but community is not—so cheers to West Cork for a dedication to its friends and neighbors as strong as its devotion to making fine Irish whiskey.

West Cork 8 Year Old Single Malt Irish Whiskey (\$39) A gently salty sea breeze of honeyed ylang-ylang and jasmine perfume the glass before an echo of peat and chamomile intersects with flavors of apricot, cashew, and Granny Smith apple. This lighthearted whisper of a whiskey is non-chill-filtered and matured in first-fill bourbon barrels—and it's tremendously enjoyable. 94 — M.M.

West Cork Bourbon Cask (\$27) Aromas of brown sugar and figs as well as hazelnut butter and nougat are lovely openers to this spirit, whose gossamer texture is preternatural: It glides and melts. A pinch of Himalayan salt pats the middle of the tongue while apricot and cedar intermingle. 98 —M.M.

MS WALKER



A Beacon for Japanese Whisky:

HATOZAKI

While it may be new to the U.S., Japanese brand Hatozaki is the product of the Yonezawa family's "long-standing interest in fine whiskies," in the words of master distiller Kimio Yonezawa. Brewers since 1856, his ancestors began distilling shochu and neutral alcohol in 1918 before transitioning to whisky production a century later.

Owner Toji Kimio Yonezawa, the fourthgeneration head of the company, has extended his distilling experience by exchanging knowledge and techniques with master distillers in Scotland, including representatives from sister distillery Torabhaig on the Isle of Skye as well as Mossburn Whisky Company.

Today, the Yonezawas' new facility—named The Kaikyo Distillery after the nearby Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge—produces two Hatozaki expressions blended from Kimio's collection of maturing barrel stocks. Hatozaki Finest Japanese Whisky is a premium blend of whiskies aged up to 12 years; light in style and non-chill-filtered, it has a rich backbone of malt character, and its notes of cereal and gentle sweetness make it prime for use in both Highballs and straight pours.

Hatozaki Small Batch Whisky, meanwhile, comprises 100% malt whiskies aged in imported bourbon and Sherry casks as well as Japanese Mizunara oak barrels (batches never exceed 20 barrels in size). Also non-chill-filtered, the spirit expresses a rich profile of sweet cereals and malty dried fruit, with a subtle touch of smoke and honey on the finish.

Both labels feature an illustration of the Hatozaki Lighthouse, which has guided sailors into the Port of Akashi in Japan's Hyogo Prefecture for four centuries. According to Kimio, paying homage to the brand's namesake enables his family to not only express pride in "their company's heritage and provenance" but also showcase Akashi as a cultural beacon with much to offer the world—and, particularly, the global whisky category.



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Contact our SVP Food & Beverage, Sarah Davidson for more information at 440-542-3033 or sdavidson@ecrm.marketgate.com



VIBE, LLC:

"I can't recommend doing a ECRM Programs enough! This has been our 2nd time attending one of these, and we've always been so impressed with how everything is set up and how incredible the appointments go! The staff is so helpful and has each company's success as their #1 focus. The meetings are always so great, and the entire setup of the event is catered to allow buyers and sellers to network and market with one another. We wouldn't have ever had the opportunity to meet and share our products with so many incredible companies if it wasn't for these programs! Thanks again for allowing us to attend - we look forward to next year!"

WALGREENS:

"ECRM continues to be one of the greatest resources that link the Walgreens buying team to diverse number of suppliers available worldwide. As a team we find the ECRM process highly productive, it's a very effective use of our time to meet with all the participating vendors of all scale and size. The Adult Beverage Programs have proven to be a very effective use of our time and as a company our Adult Beverage team will continue to make the ECRM meetings and format an integral part of our review and selection process throughout the year. To date approximately 20% of the planogram items have been discovered during the ECRM events."



BATTLE of the BRANDS

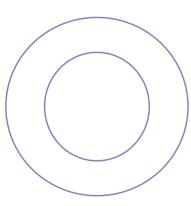
INSIDE THE **HEADLINING EVENT** OF THE WINE & SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF AMERICA 77TH ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION





Boukman Botanical Rhum co-founders Adrian Keough and Josette Buffaret Thomas make their pitch at last year's Brand Battle to judges Chris Underwood of Young's Market Company, Steve Slater of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, Sam Rubenstein of Horizon Beverage Group, TV personality/restaurateur Bill Rancic, Charlie Merinoff of Breakthru Beverage Group, and Marc Sachs of Republic National Distributing (Merinoff and Sachs not pictured).





ften referred to as the Shark Tank of the wine and spirits world, Brand Battle is one of the marquee events of the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) Annual Convention & Exposition. It gives representatives of both burgeoning brands and established companies with expansion plans the chance to pitch new products to a panel of six judges—comprised of five top distributors and one retailer—as well as an audience of some 400 industry professionals.

Just making it onstage is a win in itself. This year, more than 250 entrants will submit sizzle reels to a qualifying committee, which will narrow down the pool to five finalists. As exciting and rewarding as it is to be on the stage, it can also be extremely daunting. So we caught up with last year's winners and runner-up to ask about their experiences at Brand Battle and the advice they might have for future presenters.

One of the 2019 victors was Seaside Grown, a family-owned South Carolina company that bottles its field-to-glass Bloody Mary mix on the same farm where it grows its beefsteak tomatoes. "All of a sudden you have instant credibility," says President Ross Taylor, "and that was a crazy thing to understand and appreciate for a company that was as young as we were" (they bottled their first batch in 2017). "We flew by the seat of our pants," he admits, adding with the same candor that he'd watched



President Ross Taylor of Seaside Grown, which tied for first place at the 2019 Brand Battle.



Boukman Botanical Rhum co-founders Adrian Keough and Josette Buffaret Thomas were the other first-place winners of the 2019 Brand Battle.

previous Brand Battles on YouTube to deduce which presentation elements worked best. But perhaps most beneficial to Taylor was that he knew his brand's story well—after all, his family has owned the aforementioned farm for 115 years—and, just as important, knew how to tell it.

Last year's other first-place winner was Boukman Botanical Rhum, a four-vear-old brand that's distilled in Haiti from fresh cane juice infused with ingredients such as native wood and bark, bitter orange peel, clove, and vanilla. "Brand Battle and our exhibit booth [at WSWA] helped us clinch a couple of distribution deals that were already in discussion," says co-founder Adrian Keough, noting that although presenting at the event "won't land a deal on its own, it does get [companies] in front of decision-makers for a first meeting." Indeed, one of the 2019 judges was so impressed by Boukman

that his company began distributing it.

Brand Battle 2019 runner-up London Essence Company makes cocktail mixers from distilled botanicals. Senior Vice President Steve Smith says that "the connections [made] with a number of the panel [members] have been instrumental in building our distribution"; in fact, it has grown since the competition from seven U.S. states to 15.

And as much as it is a business builder, Brand Battle can also be a learning experience—one that contributes to more productive pitches in the future. For instance, Smith learned from the four-minute time constraint placed on his presentation that concision is paramount, so he advises fellow contestants to "focus on no more than three key attributes. Too many can be too much." (It's the old "less is more" strategy.) He also recommends that they "be clear and confident on [those] key messages and points of difference.



Prepare and anticipate the questions vou may be asked."

In short, with enough preparation and persuasive storytelling, your company just might walk away victorious from Brand Battle 2020, which will be held at WSWA's 77th Convention & Exposition at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 20-23. For more information, visit wswaconvention.org.

"ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU HAVE INSTANT CREDIBILITY, AND THAT WAS A CRAZY THING TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE FOR A COMPANY THAT WAS AS YOUNG AS WE WERE."

-ROSS TAYLOR, PRESIDENT OF SEASIDE GROWN

The 2019 winners display their trophies alongside host Marsh Mokhtari, whose Gray Whale Gin won Brand Battle 2018.

ENTER YOUR BRAND

To enter your brand into the 2020 Brand Battle Competition, visit wswa convention.org and select the Brand Battle tab to complete and return the entry form. All entrants are required to submit a brief video. For more information contact WSWA's Cindy Nachman-Senders at cindy@wswa.org. The deadline for submissions is Friday, March 20.

To check out the WSWA Convention YouTube Channel with past Brand Battle pitches and other convention content, visit wswaconvention.org and click on the Media tab.



A BUZZWORTHY BRAND

Given Skrewball's high profile, it may come as a surprise that 2019 marked the peanut butter whiskey brand's WSWA debut. Though not yet a year old at the time, it created such a buzz at the convention that it took home the Hot New Now Media Award (an accolade that all trade and mainstream media members—and influencers—are welcome to vote on via the WSWA Convention app).

Since then, Skrewball has seen a meteoric rise. Co-founder Steve Yeng says that the networking opportunities the WSWA Convention gave him and his wife-business partner Brittany Merrill Yeng led to partnerships that "quickly and successfully positioned [Skrewball] in all 50 states." If you haven't seen a Skrewball bottle on a backbar or a shelf at, say, Publix or Vons, then you've likely at least heard about it, as the word first generated at the WSWA Convention & Exposition continues to travel from coast to coast.

Skrewball Whiskey co-founders Steve Yeng and Brittany Merrill Yeng took home the Hot New Now Media Award in 2019.



A Q&A with



Steve Luttmann

MANAGING DIRECTOR. TORTOISE & VOLT MARKETING & **VENTURES**

ForceBrands: You've held many roles in the beverage industry over the years. Which ones have you found to be the most rewarding?

Steve Luttmann: I definitely enjoyed working on the brands at the famous Schieffelin & Somerset and LVMH's Möet Hennessy. However, the most rewarding experience for me was creating Leblon Cachaça. Our company had a unique, enthusiastic culture which was very focused on incessantly communicating our brand message. Overall, we accomplished our mission of establishing the cachaca category here in the U.S., and Leblon is the quintessential high-end Brazilian spirit brand worldwide.

FB: Following the success of Leblon, what inspired you to launch Hercules Mulligan?

SL: I'm a history fan, especially of the colonial period, and discovered Hercules Mulligan when reading Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton in 2012. I subsequently found an out-of-print biography of Mulligan published in 1937, and that's how I became motivated to create the brand. The story is very inspiring. An Irish immigrant who ran a tailor shop in Lower Manhattan during the British occupation, Mulligan became a spy for General Washington and his close friend Alexander Hamilton. The charismatic Mulligan served drinks to his patrons at his shop, which became a popular hangout for British officers. After a few drinks, they would get a bit loose and spill their secrets, which he passed on to Washington and Hamilton. These secrets saved Washington's life on two occasions and spared the French Naval Armada from decimation off the coast of Rhode Island. In other words, without Mulligan and, of course, his drinks, the Americans probably would not have won the Revolutionary War.

Hercules Mulligan Rum + Rye, an 86-proof craft cocktail in a 750-milliliter bottle, is inspired by recipes from the Revolutionary Era. It is a 50/50 blend of Caribbean aged rum and homegrown American rye whiskey. Fresh, organic ginger root is macerated in the rum and rye blend, and a splash of bitters is added. It's designed to be enjoyed on the rocks like a ready-made Old Fashioned—and it's a great conduit for revealing secrets among friends.

FB: Which trends do you predict will dominate the industry in the next couple of years, and which do you anticipate will become things of the past?

SL: Without guestion, healthier, better quality, and lower alcohol are meaningful trends, and the hard-seltzer trend with sugar-based fermentation will now unleash a low-ABV RTD/canned-cocktail revolution. Unfortunately, like anything, there will be a herd mentality, which will make it very hard for entrepreneurs to win. However, I still think the biggest trend in beverage alcohol is simply creating new concepts that respond to generational shifts. Even if the category appears to be stagnant and unexciting, if there are large, tired brands sitting there representing the past, it's probably a good opportunity for a new concept brand that speaks to the next generation.

FB: And lastly, just for fun, describe your ideal happy hour. Where are you and what are you drinking?

SL: I love to ski, and after hitting the slopes, there's nothing better than hanging out in the lodge bar and trying out one of its craft beers, Margaritas, or craft whiskeys. Usually there's a band, and everyone is happy—a key aspect to any happy hour. II



The Man Behind the Brands





WHAT DOES GOLF HAVE TO DO WITH MAKING GREAT CHARDONNAY?

Everything. Because at least a couple times a week, Patrick Headley, our Director of Viticulture, takes the narrow road up to Inspiration Point to drive a few golf balls toward our Deer Valley Vineyard. From this vantage point, he gets a clear sense of wind speeds and the temperature of breezes sweeping across our vineyards from Monterey Bay. Next time you visit, look up on the ridge, and you might see Patrick working on his long game.

