

THE
tastingpanel
MAGAZINE

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Bartender Christina Smith
pours a glass of Rosa Regale
at THE RANCH Restaurant &
Saloon in Anaheim, CA.

EVERYTHING'S
COMING UP

Rosa

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AND CHEFS ALIKE



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Winemaker Andrea Card

SAUVIGNON BLANC
OF SONOMA COUNTY

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Hope for the Future of Hospitality?

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Tokien".

“It’s a very positive new program for the entire industry at a time when it’s most needed.”

—Laura Shunk, president of the Colorado Restaurant Foundation (CRF)



Two years into the pandemic, restaurants are struggling more than ever: With new variants not only impacting staff and traffic on a daily basis but exacerbating supply-chain disruptions and rising costs, it’s no wonder that people are leaving the industry in droves.

Perhaps, then, you’ll be as heartened as I was to learn of a program underway here in my home state of Colorado that could potentially alleviate the labor-shortage crisis in not only the short term but the long: the Restaurant Youth Registered Apprenticeship (RYRA), which is aiming to place 270 17- to 24-year-olds in one- or two-year paid positions in both the back and front of participating restaurants by the end of this year. As Laura Shunk, president of the Colorado Restaurant Foundation (CRF)—one of only four organizations in the country to be implementing RYRA at present (the others being in Maryland, Delaware, and Louisiana)—puts it, “Our paid, registered apprenticeship program gives young people a pathway to a successful career in the restaurant and food-service industry while providing a pool of talent to help employers recruit and retain strong teams. It’s a very positive new program for the entire industry at a time when it’s most needed.”

“This is different than someone just walking in off the street and wanting a job,” explains CRF communication manager Mark Antonation. “The restaurant needs to agree: ‘We’re going to hire them at the going rate, we’re going to teach these specific skills, and we’ll give them at least one raise.’ The other component is they get training and certifications in specific things like ServSafe.” Meanwhile, thanks to additional funding from the Colorado Workforce Development Council (primary funding comes from the U.S. Department of Labor through the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation), “We [can] actually pay restaurants . . . \$3,000 per apprentice” for their efforts, says Antonation. Talk about a win-win.

He offers as an example the youth working at Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center, “where there are two full-service restaurants and four or five fast-casual [venues], so they’re getting exposure to a lot of different kinds of cooking—steakhouse, breakfast, Asian-inspired,” Antonation notes. “They’re working in these brand-new, high-tech kitchens and they’re required to learn all stations, so they’re not just cooking fries or chopping veggies. It’s almost like getting paid to go to culinary school.” Other apprentices “are getting exposure to small, locally owned restaurants with focused ideas, the kind that [they] might want to open.” And finally, “they’re [learning] ‘How much money can I make in this industry? How do I make myself a valuable employee?’ This is what gets people to stick around longer.”

In fact, according to the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation, there’s an 80% retention rate among apprentices in formal programs like RYRA—which suggests that the mutual investment made by operators and trainees alike is more meaningful than it is merely transactional. Whether it could have a large-scale impact on the hospitality industry remains to be seen, but no matter the outcome, you can count on *The Tasting Panel* to continue to delve into the topic of restaurant recovery as the state of affairs evolves. **LT**

upfront

by Natasha Swords

Bar manager Tara Shadzi makes a cocktail called *The Clean* with Drake's Organic Ultra-Premium Vodka at BOA Steakhouse in West Hollywood, CA.

The "BETTER FOR YOU" Bellwether

DRAKE'S ORGANIC SPIRITS DEFINES AN EMERGING MARKETPLACE TREND

PHOTOS: AZUSA TAKANO

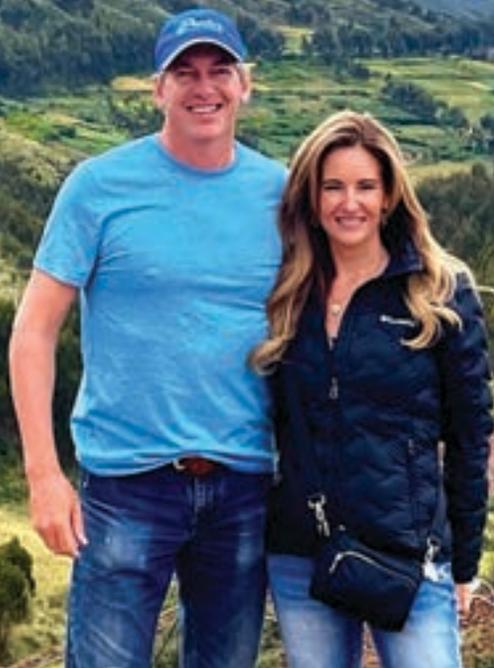


Drake's Organic Spirits' Spiced Rum, Ultra-Premium Vodka, and White Rum.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A BELLWETHER BRAND IN THE ALCOHOL SPACE? Foresight? Boldness? An inside track on short- and long-term trends? A serial entrepreneur at the helm? The answer is all of the above.

In 2017, Mark Anderson founded Drake's Organic Spirits and, in so doing, effectively created a new health-and-wellness category in the marketplace. As the first and only line of ultra-premium spirits to be certified in all five sustainability and organic classifications—USDA Organic, Non-GMO Project Verified, gluten-free, vegan, and kosher—the brand has grown to achieve an annual capacity of 12 million cases as well as distribution in 46 U.S. states and five countries. But how did Anderson know that consumers would react so enthusiastically to his “better-for-you, better-for-the-planet” philosophy?

It started in 2008, when he launched Captain Drake, a leading supplier of non-GMO, organic ingredients for the food and beverage industry. From there, “I sort of stumbled onto organic, non-GMO alcohol out of necessity,” says Anderson. “A handful of flavor-house customers began asking for organic, non-GMO alcohol as an ingredient to produce organic extracts, and that is how we began our organic alcohol production—by distilling the organic cane sugar we were importing from South America, which isn't grown commercially in the United States.” Anderson realized



Drake's Organic Spirits founder and CEO Mark Anderson with his wife, Kristen, in Colombia's Cauca Valley, the source for the brand's cane sugar.

that organic sugarcane alcohol is more sustainable and carbon-negative compared to genetically modified grain. Sugarcane is a fast-growing grass that can be harvested twice per year over the course of four years before replanting is required; by contrast, genetically modified corn requires the use of pesticides and herbicides as well as annual planting and tilling, creating a larger carbon footprint and more soil erosion. Anderson believed that consumers were looking for better options: They wanted all-natural, sustainable, organic products, and they wanted proof that they were getting what the packaging advertised.

Enter Drake's Organic Spirits, whose portfolio encompasses Drake's Organic Ultra-Premium Vodka (\$19), Organic White Rum (\$16), and Organic Spiced Rum (\$16) as well as Drake's Organic BOXTAILS (\$19): "During the COVID pandemic, we observed the rising consumer demand for RTDs," says Anderson, "and so we entered that category" with five expressions, including Black Cherry Limeade, Mango Punch, Minted Mojito, Perfect Margarita, and Watermelon Tini. At 12% ABV—which is twice that of most traditional seltzers—BOXTAILS are shelf-stable, a detail made more significant by

the fact that their packaging is made from eco-friendly recycled paper that can itself be composted or recycled. One 1.75-liter BOXTAIL contains 14 premixed cocktails: That's equivalent to five seltzer cans that would eventually end up in landfills, making it the more sustainable choice.

Drake's has also introduced three new flavors of freeze-and-eat, 12% ABV adult popsicles called Spiked Ice: Mango Vodka Punch, Black Cherry Limeade, and Watermelon Tini. There are nine packets in a box, which retails for \$15. "The freeze-and-eat adult

beverage category is estimated to be a \$1 billion category this year," notes Anderson. "Consumers enjoy [these] beverages on hot summer days . . . [and] we've responded with new and improved Drake's Organic Spiked Ice. Each packet is only 100 calories and carries all five certifications consistent with the better-for-you and better-for-the-planet practices we hold so dearly."

Like its namesake, Sir Francis Drake (see sidebar on page 7), the brand is charting new territory with the confidence and resourcefulness reflective of its founder and CEO. Anderson is something of a serial entrepreneur who grew up on a horse ranch in North Dakota that produced grain and raised livestock. In 1996 he moved to Minneapolis and learned to trade on the Minneapolis Grain Exchange; it wasn't long before he went from buying and selling physical commodities to trading futures. Eventually, Anderson became one of the most influential figures in the dairy market. This synopsis of his impressive early career encapsulates his vision as well as the self-assurance he exudes as a pioneer. "We welcome new competition into this space," Anderson effuses. "We want to supply other spirit brands with high-quality, sustainable, organic cane alcohol while we continue to innovate and build out the Drake's Organic [portfolio]: The goal is to make better, [more] sustainable products while reducing our collective carbon footprint, and the more companies [that are] doing this, the better for all." **LE**



PHOTO: AZUSA TAKANO



THE CLEAN

- ▶ 3 oz. Drake's Organic Ultra-Premium Vodka
- ▶ ¼ oz. agave syrup
- ▶ 2 slices cucumber
- ▶ 4–6 mint sprigs
- ▶ 3 lemon wedges

Muddle the fresh cucumber, mint, and lemon in a mixing glass. Add the agave syrup and vodka, chill, and double-strain into a coupe. Garnish with a cucumber ribbon and mint sprig.

On Premise With Drake's Organic Spirits

Tara Shadzi has worked in multiple venues over her nearly 20-year career as a bartender, but the West Hollywood steakhouse where she serves as bar manager, BOA, sets itself apart: To her, it represents family, and her allegiance to the upscale restaurant extends to a strong sense of responsibility for ensuring its success. "I always say BOA raised me," she says. "It's such an amazing restaurant to work for, and that's reflected in the loyalty of the staff. When you visit BOA, it's as if you're visiting our home, and I only want the best for our guests."

So when Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits sales representative Jason Boswell suggested BOA consider Drake's Organic Spirits, Shadzi listened. Ultimately, she explains, "I was impressed with the quality, flavor, [and] price point [as well as] the clean, organic aspect, which is very important to Angelenos in general." She quickly added Drake's Organic Ultra-Premium Vodka to the bar, appointing it to the desirable station of "house vodka" and using it in cocktails like The Clean, which she describes as "a spa-like Martini. . . . I suggest it to any guest who wants a fresh, organic, light option in a cocktail. I call it our 'healthy' drink!"

What's in a Name?

An inspiring story that encapsulates the ingenuity of Sir Francis Drake led to Mark Anderson's decision to name Drake's Organic Spirits after the explorer. Legend has it that, in 1586, Drake landed in Cuba and went ashore to gather ingredients in an effort to cure his sick crew. He blended mint to calm the stomach with lime to treat scurvy and bark from the chuchuhuasi tree for stamina, then mixed them with cane spirit. The combination, which not only healed the crew but also tasted wonderfully refreshing in the South American heat, represented what some consider to be the world's first cocktail and the birth of what would later evolve into the Mojito.

Another name that's important to Drake's is the Cauca Valley, which is located in southwestern Colombia and serves as the source for the brand's organic sugarcane. It's only natural, then, that Drake's would name its popular take on the Mojito after the lush setting.

DRAKE'S CAUCA VALLEY MOJITO

- ▶ 2 oz. Drake's Organic White Rum
- ▶ 1½ tsp. turbinado sugar or organic cane sugar
- ▶ 2 oz. fresh mint
- ▶ ¾ oz. fresh lime juice
- ▶ Club soda

Muddle the mint and sugar in a sturdy glass five to ten times, until fragrant. Add the rum and lime juice, then stir with a barspoon until the sugar is dissolved. Top with club soda and stir again. Garnish with a lime wedge and mint leaves.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DRAKE'S ORGANIC SPIRITS



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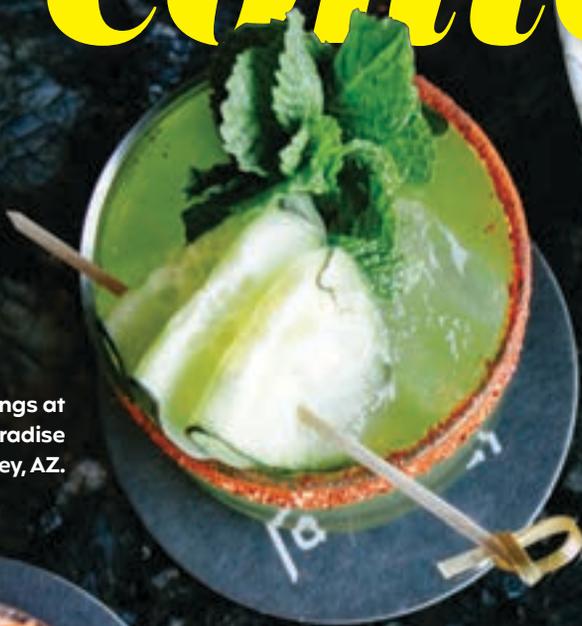


PHOTO: GRACE STUKOSKY

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A BOOM IN BROWN

Whisk(e)y Makes a Statement and an Impact From the U.S. to the U.K. and Beyond



PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVER LYAN

the Women Behind

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MEET THE WOMEN LEADERS
SHAPING OUR WINES
FROM GRAPE TO GLASS



PICTURED: ELIZABETH KESTER, DIRECTOR OF WINEMAKING. ALY WENTE, VP MARKETING & CONSUMER EXPERIENCE. NIKI WENTE, SENIOR VINEYARD/VITICULTURE MANAGER.

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A Glass With Gloss

JOSEPHINENHÜTTE COMBINES DELICATE FORM WITH SENSORY FUNCTION

We recently received a set of new Josephinenhütte glasses by Austrian designer Kurt Josef Zalto, each of which has a unique shape that allows the aromas and flavors of wine to unfold—almost as if it's interpreting the profile for the drinker.

Each handmade, mouth-blown glass is thin-walled and ultra-light to the point of being almost flexible. The narrowly sculpted Josephine No. 1 White glass allows not only fruit character but mineral components to shine, while Josephine No. 2 Universal can be used for all wine styles as well as beer. Josephine No. 3 Red brings out the savoriness and earthiness of Burgundian or



Bordeaux reds, and Josephine No. 4 Champagne features a deep peak at the bottom of the bowl and a wide middle that narrows toward the rim to concentrate the bubbles and reveal the wine's character with finesse.

These glasses would be a showpiece at any fine-dining restaurant, their delicacy and efficacy working together to deliver a luxurious experience. A set of two sells for \$136. For more information, visit us.josephinen.com.



PHOTO: AMY RICHMOND/COURTESY OF SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Ole Smoky Distillery Launches Partnership With Grammy-Nominated Bluegrass Band

Ole Smoky Distillery, one of the nation's fastest-growing spirits companies and the most visited distillery in the world, recently announced a national partnership with The Po' Ramblin' Boys, a Grammy-nominated bluegrass band. "Music has always been a part of the Ole Smoky experience. By featuring quality entertainment at our locations, we have created family-friendly destinations that salute the hospitality of East Tennessee and the Great Smoky Mountains," says Ole Smoky Distillery CEO Robert Hall.

CJ Lewandowski founded The Po' Ramblin' Boys while working at Ole Smoky Distillery in Gatlinburg in 2014. "We are so grateful to Ole Smoky Distillery for not only helping us get our start in bluegrass music but now supporting our music, our tour, and our brand," says Lewandowski. The band's forthcoming album, *Never Slow Down*, will be released March 25 via Smithsonian Folkways. For more information, visit theporamblinboys.com.

[yellow tail] Marked Key Milestones in 2021

Family-owned Australian wine

brand [yellow tail] celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2021 and recorded 13.5 million cases in global volume. John Casella, founder of brand owner Casella Family Brands, created [yellow tail] in 2001 to address what he considered to be a large yet untapped consumer base of potential wine drinkers who either mostly consumed beer or were intimidated by traditional wine offerings. He launched the brand in the U.S. that same year in partnership with Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits, which continues to handle domestic



sales, marketing, and distribution.

[yellow tail] has since expanded from two founding products—Shiraz and Chardonnay—to 23 varietals distributed in over 60 countries worldwide. Casella Family Brands today employs over 900 people in locations across Australia and works with 155 distributor partners around

the globe. Casella notes that the brand became a source of comfort for loyal consumers during the pandemic: "The last 18 months have proven the appeal of [yellow tail]. As consumers turned to a familiar, known, and trusted wine brand, [yellow tail] experienced its highest-ever volume of global sales recorded."

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Creamy Creation Diversifies the Nonalcoholic Category



Creamy Creation, the world's leading B2B developer and manufacturer of cream liqueurs, is diversifying the nonalcoholic category with three distinct and fully customizable concepts meant to target different consumer needs: Silk Cream Liqueur with Maca; Elderflower Citrus Hops Mixer, an herbal cream meant for mixing into cocktails;

and Vegan Piña Colada, a tropical RTD with real pineapple and coconut cream.

Global innovation manager Jeroen Huiskes explains, "Due to the recent growth of the [nonalcoholic] category, consumers looking to abstain or moderate their alcohol intake can now enjoy a complex drink that provides the same experience as an alcoholic drink in a social setting. The category [has] evolved from gin-like beverages to brown and white 'spirits' as well as RTDs . . . [and] we wanted to draw the parallel and [provide] a [nonalcoholic] cream product to our customers and their consumers that offers the same [benefits]."

Demeine Estates Launches Dream It, Live It Campaign



Napa-based fine wine importer Demeine Estates recently launched its Dream It, Live It campaign, a professional partnership opportunity for wine entrepreneurs that aims to use the importer's established network to provide opportunities for minority-owned businesses and social-responsibility organizations. Demeine Estates' 2022 partners include Tish Around Town, a small business founded by Tish Wiggins of Texas that leads immersive trips to historic wine regions, and the Glancy Wine Education Foundation, which provides underserved individuals with scholarships to the San Francisco Wine School to further their education. Demeine Estates will be working with the foundation to establish a namesake scholarship.

"We are relentlessly committed to building the most diverse and talented team in the wine industry," says Demeine Estates president Philana Bouvier. "Already we are a pioneering workplace for people of all identities, and with Dream It, Live It, we are opening doors and creating spaces to pay our philosophies forward and build a stronger wine world."



Jordan Vineyard & Winery Appoints International Export Director

Jordan Vineyard & Winery has promoted Ashley Cesario to an expanded role as Eastern U.S. and export sales director. Cesario will direct international sales initiatives for existing and prospective accounts and continue to oversee Jordan's current Northeastern U.S. territories. "We are incredibly excited for Ashley to step into her new role," says Brad

Butcher, Jordan's national sales director. "We are thrilled to formalize this new position and bring a new level of service to our international customers, especially as Jordan approaches such an important anniversary milestone" of 50 years in business.

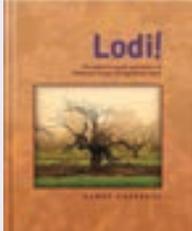
To support account management in the Northeastern U.S., the Jordan sales team will add a New York City-based market manager who will report to Cesario. A member of the sales team since 2014, Cesario brings 14 years of experience in distributor and supplier sales management to her new role. Prior to joining the Jordan team, the Chicago native honed her skills in wine sales and brand management at Southern Wine & Spirits of Illinois and Bacardi USA.

Tasting Panel Contributing Editor Randy Caparoso Pens First Book on Lodi Winegrowing

Tasting Panel contributing editor and *SOMM Journal* editor-at-large Randy Caparoso has authored *Lodi! The Definitive*

Guide and History of America's Largest Winegrowing Region, the first book to explore the story behind the historic appellation. Now available for sale through kitchencincoress.com, it paints a vivid picture of the area with over 400 photographs by the author as well as original watercolors by artist Lisa Nowlain depicting local flora and fauna.

Featuring a foreword by writer and critic Mike Dunne, longtime wine columnist for *The Sacramento Bee*, *Lodi!* is a book for wine scholars and enthusiasts alike seeking to learn more about, in Dunne's words, "the country's most underappreciated wine regions as gauged by such standards as price, tourism, and restaurant wine lists." Nearly one-fifth of California's wine grapes are harvested in Lodi each year, including more than a third of its Zinfandel and almost a third of its Cabernet Sauvignon.

Caparoso has lived in the region for a decade, spending his first five years there in a cottage in the middle of a vineyard. "There is no region in California more in need of a deeply researched book than Lodi and no better person to produce such a work than Randy Caparoso," says Alder Yarrow, publisher of popular wine blog Vinography. "It's a history lesson, love letter, encyclopedia, and guidebook all rolled into one beautifully composed package." 

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The Ransom Note is a column by Tasting Panel editor-at-large David Ransom. Each issue, David connects readers with some of the people, products, and events making news along the Eastern Seaboard.

Springing Forward

WINES TO POUR AS THE WEATHER WARMS

One of the best parts about living on the road, I'm learning, is that I can skip winter altogether if I choose, moving to warm-climate locales whenever the whim strikes me. I did just that this year, spending most of my time in Florida's balmy weather. This affected my wine consumption somewhat, as I gravitated away from red wine and more toward whites and rosés. Here are a few examples I encountered that are perfect for serving in spring and beyond.

In the sparkling category, I got to know the delightful Prosecco DOC wines from Alessandro Furlan, a veteran winemaker who spent years working for his family's Franco Furlan label in Friuli prior to starting his own line in 2009. **Ca' Furlan** is produced in the Montello e Colli Asolani region of the Veneto and currently offers

two expressions in the U.S. through importer Regal Wine (regalwine.com). The first, Cuvée Beatrice Prosecco DOC Extra Dry, is a bright, rich, delicious Prosecco by any standard. Made from 100% Glera, it shows beautiful notes of pear, white peach, and citrus accented by a wisp of white flowers and a lovely, fine bead. Meanwhile, Ca' Furlan's Rosé Prosecco DOC, Cuvée Mariana, equally impressed. Made from Glera and Pinot Noir, this pale salmon-colored sparkler is a perfect aperitivo or lunch wine and would make a good by-the-glass pour. Both wines are available in 750-milliliter bottles for \$12; Cuvée Beatrice is also available in 187-milliliter three-packs for the same price.

Another label that caught my eye was **Brendel Wines** (brendelwines.com). A Napa Valley venture spearheaded by Heitz Cellars CEO and Master Sommelier Carlton McCoy Jr., Brendel produces organic, terroir-driven wines defined by their purity of fruit. Both the Noble One Chardonnay and Everbloom Sauvignon Blanc are unoaked and respectively evoke their Burgundy and Loire counterparts thanks to good acid-



ity, in-check alcohol levels, and a sense of austerity. Another white, the Chorus Cuvée Blanc, features 70% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Chardonnay, 10% Malvasia Bianca, and 10% Fernão Pires; filled with aromatics and complexity, it's a perfect warm-weather pour. And Chorus Cuvée Rouge, composed of 32% Tempranillo, 26% Touriga Nacional, 22% Tinta Cão, 12% Tinta Madeira, and 8% Trousseau, honors Napa's heritage of field blends. Retail prices range from \$28 to \$40. **VZ**

"One of the best parts about living on the road, I'm learning, is that I can skip winter altogether if I choose, moving to warm-climate locales whenever the whim strikes me."



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Bistro du Jour's raspberry macarons with foie gras mousse and fig jam.



PHOTO: REY LOPEZ

Keeping Cozy With Cocktails and Coq au Vin

DRINKS FROM ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST BARTENDERS AND FRENCH BISTRO FARE WARMED D.C. AS WINTER WOUND DOWN

One of my last outings before the world shut down in 2020 was to Silver Lyan, where owner Ryan Chetiyawardana and I chatted about his first outpost outside of Europe. On the heels of rebranding the London-based Dandelyan and launching White Lion in Amsterdam, Chetiyawardana, better known as Mr. Lyan, was bringing his whimsical brand of mixology to Washington, D.C.; unfortunately, the bar was open for barely a month before it had to shutter as COVID-19 gripped the world.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVER LYAN



Made with The Macallan, Plymouth Sloe Gin, and ginger, Silver Lyan's Ceres Joker comes with a helium balloon that's lit tableside to releases the fragrance of lemon zest and burnt nitrates.

half-shell oyster, olives, house-pickled onions, and lemon peel. Elevated Jell-O shots are paired with shots of Gosset Champagne. But the Ceres Joker is the showstopper. A coupe of The Macallan, Plymouth Sloe Gin, and ginger is served with a helium balloon that, when lit tableside, releases the fragrance of lemon zest and burnt nitrates to simulate the aromas of gunpowder, rubber, and lit match found in extra-aged spirits. After one couple ordered it, half the bar followed suit. We did

not, and instead sat with our FOMO. Next visit, I guess—which will be sooner than two years from now.

What we *didn't* miss out on was French bistro comfort food that same chilly evening at Bistro du Jour at The Wharf, the latest concept from restaurant group KNEAD Hospitality + Design. The drinks program, overseen by beverage director Darlin Kulla (featured in Taking Inventory in our November/December 2021 issue), abounds in fun twists: There's lemon verbena in the French 75, aged rum in the Air Mail, and a whole menu of French apéritifs, from pastis to Pineau des Charentes. The wine list includes five traditional-method sparklers by the glass and less-expected bottles like Melon de Bourgogne and Ploussard from Jura.

A play on one of my favorite French snacks, radishes come with a ramekin of nutty melted brown butter. A shareable crock of French onion soup is the best version I've slurped recently, and playful raspberry macarons are slathered with foie gras mousse and fig jam. While the coq au vin was decent, we were hard-pressed to locate many pearl onions, mushrooms, or pieces of bacon. Much better were the plump, tender mussels, traditionally steamed in a garlicky white wine-and-herb bath and served with hot, crisp, perfectly salted frites. Desserts come from the New York-based Mah-Ze-Dahr bakery, but a better strategy is to hit the bakery counter for flaky chocolate croissants, brioche cinnamon rolls, and cream scones that make for a sweet start the next morning. **L**

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20 ANIVERSARIO

Pagos del Rey – Ribera del Duero celebrates its 20th Anniversary. This winery represents the first step towards the expansion of Felix Solis Avantis into northern wine regions. This arrival in Ribera del Duero was followed by new openings in the most recognizable Spanish D.O. (Denominación de Origen) such as Rioja, Rueda and Toro. After these 20 years, “Pagos del Rey - Ribera del Duero” achieved an outstanding performance, bringing the main two brands: “Condado de Oriza” and “Altos de Tamarón” to the top of national and international distribution. Additionally, the wines have been internationally recognized with prestigious awards, worthy to mention Best Spanish wine 2021 by the ‘Frankfurt International Trophy’.
 More info: www.pagosdelrey.com



Setting Sights on Sanctuary

CHRISTIAAN RÖLLICH BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN THE BAR AND THE KITCHEN WITH HIS FARM-TO-TABLE COCKTAILS

The Arizona cocktail scene has seen its share of notable transplants, and Christiaan Röllich is no exception. After heading the bar program for Suzanne Goin’s restaurant group in Los Angeles—including Lucques, Tavern, and AOC—Röllich joined the food and beverage team at Paradise Valley’s Sanctuary Camelback Mountain, A Gurney’s Resort & Spa, in 2021.

Network star and Sanctuary executive chef Beau MacMillan, who hired Röllich as “bar chef” at Jade Bar along with Samantha Sanz, a two-time James Beard Award nominee, as the chef de cuisine for the resort’s restaurant, elements. “Beau pushed for me to be here because he saw that’s what the resort needed,” explains Röllich. “Any restaurant today needs to have a cocktail menu that is as good as the food that is served. It is a package deal.”

Regular customers might not be immediately aware of major adjustments when they walk in, but the changes soon become perceptible, among them Röllich’s preference for ‘90s hip-hop and, of course, innovative drinks. The list he has rolled out stays true to his affinity for seasonal produce, featuring fresh juices as well as house-made syrups, bitters, liqueurs, and even vermouth: “There is different produce here than in LA—I have prickly pears here,” he says with a charming grin.

While cocktails like the Mekong—combining gin, lemongrass, coconut, carrot, makrut lime, ginger, and yuzu—help build the “bridge” to Sanz’s Asian-inspired menu at elements, complementing dishes such as the ahi tuna poke, Röllich also saw opportunities to fill certain gaps

in the program. “When I started here, there were only two well mezcals in the backbar. I was told nobody orders mezcal, and I couldn’t believe it,” he says. “So I came up with a cocktail, the Little Leaf, and it’s the number-one drink on the menu.” Made with El Silencio mezcal, cucumber, cilantro, cumin, and jalapeño, it evokes a delicious summer salsa.

Röllich will even design cocktails off menu, like the one he made for a regular who loves Red Bull and vodka using a syrup he made from the energy drink along with fresh lime and pineapple juices. In his quest to provide a memorable experience, he notes, “If someone comes for dinner, I want them to finish the meal and remember how good the cocktail was that they had in the beginning.”

Despite the accolades from peers and customers, Röllich humbly states, “When I started here, I knew that people were coming here for Beau. And the same when I worked in LA—people came for Suzanne.”

That may be, but these days, you can bet people are coming to the Sanctuary just to see what Christiaan Röllich is up to. **LD**

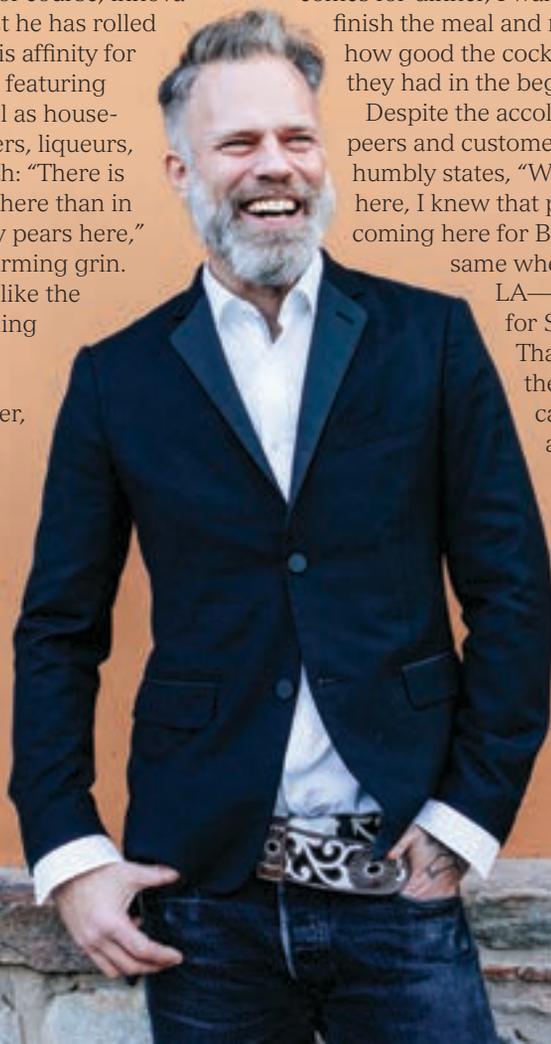
Christiaan Röllich is known as the Bar Chef.



Jade Bar’s Little Leaf and Mekong cocktails paired with tuna poke.

A native of Amsterdam, Röllich undertook several careers—working at his father’s psychiatric hospital in Amsterdam, traveling the Netherlands as a “carnie,” and landing an acting gig as Brad Pitt’s body double in *Ocean’s Eleven*—before he began mixing drinks. As he acquired a reputation at Lucques for approaching cocktails from a culinary standpoint, Röllich became known as the Bar Chef—a nickname that in turn became the title of a recipe collection he published in 2019. Using high-quality seasonal ingredients, he subscribes to Goin’s philosophy of “building a bridge between the kitchen and the bar,” in his words.

Upon moving to Phoenix in 2020 after Lucques closed, Röllich met Food



PHOTOS: GRACE STUFKOSKY



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95 pts - Meredith May, The Tasting Panel

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The Spirit of the Times

VINTAGE LIQUOR AND WINE ADVERTISEMENTS PAINT AN INTRIGUING HISTORY

Like a lot of people during the height of the pandemic, I developed some new hobbies. Mine included sewing with cast-iron machines from the 1940s and 1950s, whose industrial rumble and distinct motor-oil smell were somehow soothing. And as I searched through vintage magazines for style inspiration, I found myself equally fascinated by the way articles and ads for both liquor and wine captured the zeitgeist; compared with ads today, which often focus on sustainability, responsibility, or the product's story, they show that times were different, to say the least.

“Let’s celebrate, this first postwar spring,” wrote editor Mary Frost Mabon in her 1946 *Harper’s Bazaar* column “The Right Drink.” “Let’s say goodbye to the lukewarm cocktail, the haphazard highball, the ‘bad little wine’ that made do in the era of pinches and priorities. . . . It’s time to go back to pre-war standards.” Reading that, I began wondering: What can this midcentury content tell us about the history of the industry, and what parallels can we draw to our current moment as we attempt to emerge from the collective trauma of the pandemic?

Imagine a New York wedding party in the 1940s; what kind of sparkling wine might the hosts serve their guests? Since Champagne wasn’t readily available during the war, American bubbles such as Great Western American “Champagne” from the Finger Lakes would have filled the void. I love the brand’s ad in a *Holiday* magazine from 1949, featuring a saucy illustration of a woman getting “blasted” into space on a cork. Due to the halting of imports more generally, American products dominated magazine pages: In a January 1943 issue of *Life*, ads for Hiram Walker cordials and I.W. Harper Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey feature overtly patriotic themes. “Drink it . . . with Pleasure!” reads the manly, ski-themed page for



the latter, but “if in doubt about what to buy for your money, buy War Bonds.”

Reflecting the contrast between wartime and postwar advertising, a 1946 Schenley ad published in *Life* seems to encourage morning consumption with its illustration of a rooster in a waiter’s jacket, carrying a whisky-laden tray as the sun rises. “In serving this I take delight,” he says. “It’s mellow as the morning bright.” (Ouch, my head.) Meanwhile, imports of European whiskies and wines began to rebound. “Notice to all Scotch drinkers,” states an ad for Scottish Cream in the December 1949 issue of *Holiday*. “Because of the war, aged Scotch is rare in today’s market. . . . We are pleased to announce, therefore, that our supply of fine 8-year-old Scottish Cream whisky has recently been augmented from the distillery’s reserves in Scotland.”

And as postwar travel increased, people’s horizons—and palates—expanded, reflecting a new spirit of adventure. Fast-forward to 1961, when *Holiday* magazines indicated a link

between readers’ interest in exotic libations and the dizzying array of destinations that had become available. Here are ads for cruise ships, railways, hotels, car rentals, and airlines interspersed with ads for Puerto Rican rum, Galliano liqueur, Sherry, vermouth, Cognac, and Champagne. An ad for Moët in the April issue from that year suggests, “Planning a trip to France? Be sure to visit the famous, 15-mile Champagne cellars in Épernay,” and opposite a page suggesting that readers “Unwind in Tahiti Tomorrow” is an amber-washed Hennessy ad featuring a couple listening to records on their groovy console stereo. (I feel relaxed and sophisticated just gazing upon it.)

What Mary Frost Mabon so eloquently wrote in 1946 holds true today: “Good liquor, good wine, and good food are more than mellowing influences. They are subtle, civilized pleasures in themselves.” And so here’s my toast to 2022: Whatever we may be drinking, may it too reflect a new spirit of adventure! 



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BY PARIS VASSER



Drinking to the Beat

SOMMELIER ASHTIN BERRY'S SUBSCRIPTION BOX, **PARTY LINE**, OFFERS A HARMONIOUS BLEND OF MUSICOLOGY AND WINE

The way we experience wine is fluid. It can be altered by atmosphere: The bottle we drink at a party with friends might taste different when opened alone on a Tuesday night. It can also be influenced by the language we use to contextualize what we are drinking and how it makes us feel, though the latter has often been excluded from traditional Eurocentric wine terminology. To help expand that vocabulary, sommelier, mixologist, and educator Ashtin Berry aims to center music as a medium that can strengthen people's connection to their bottle of choice and the "vibe" they get from drinking it.

atmosphere impacts the way we interact with wine and food is nothing new to service workers, Berry explains; for example, a restaurant might choose dim lighting to stimulate guests' appetites or play fast- or slow-tempo music to increase or decrease the pace of eating. But she believes music can engage with wine in more profound ways than that.

Enter Party Line, a bimonthly subscription box that curates an average of six wines with themed genres of music and visuals meant to appeal to a diverse community. Party Line is focused on exploring consum-

Berry conceptualized Party Line in 2020 based on her own experiences with pairing wine and music, taking interest in musical structure and theory as well as how elements like melodies, tones, rhythm, and even lyrics can pair and contrast with various characteristics of the wines, including their structure, their flavor profile, and the duration of their finish. She offers the example that if someone is listening to the complex compositions of jazz musician Miles Davis, it would suggest that they are in a "pensive mood" requiring "a sitting wine or bodacious red that requires time and aeration."

The box also includes text-based materials and access to visual media that aim to guide subscribers through alternative methods of conversing with others about wine; those methods are rooted in terms traditionally used to describe music, such as texture, tonality, and harmony, though Berry emphasizes that there is no need to have a prior understanding of musical theory to get the most out of Party Line. She notes that her overarching goal isn't to challenge the standards of European tradition; rather, she's simply intent on bucking the notion shared by many that "in order to understand wine or enjoy wine, they have to be indoctrinated into the wine world's language."

Thematically centered on American music genres like jazz and R&B, the first box soft-launched earlier this year; the March box, meanwhile, is focused on women winemakers and accompanied by a playlist of female-identifying pop stars from the '90s onward. Going forward, Berry aims to explore a diverse array of themes, including boxes spotlighting specific artists and collaborations with wine experts—all with the end goal of building a community for wine drinkers who want to become more in tune with their palates. [V](#)



PHOTO: JONATHAN COOPER

Sommelier, mixologist, and educator Ashtin Berry conceived her music-themed wine subscription box, Party Line, as a way to expand the language people use to describe how they experience wine.

Berry, who has over 15 years of experience in the hospitality and beverage industry, is also the founder and community architect of Radical XChange, an agency that promotes intersectionality in hospitality through virtual events and education. How

ers' unique tastes; as Berry explains, "Wine drinking and eating [are] a somatic experience, though we haven't been trained to think of it that way in American culture. Party Line is about getting people back into the feeling of drinking."

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BEYOND the BARREL

In *Beyond the Barrel*, deputy editor Eric Marsh tastes everything from craft spirits and fine wines to brilliant innovations and zany concepts that land outside the box. He then reviews the products with a judicious approach and the cognizance that all goods have a market.



Scapegrace Black Gin

(\$60/750-mL) Ingredients such as butterfly-pea flower, sweet potato, saffron, and aronia berry play a part in the gunmetal color of this Australian gin. Dark notes on the mouthwatering, herbaceous, and slightly spicy palate include licorice, violet, lavender, and black pepper; mint and pineapple are also present. And if you like magic tricks, take note: The liquid turns light purple when mixed with citrus or tonic.

FUJI Single Grain Japanese Whiskey

(\$95/700-mL) Produced at the Mt. Fuji Distillery, this refined Japanese spirit is made with snowmelt from the eponymous mountain. Best sipped neat, it shows notes of almond brittle, toasted marshmallow, orange oil, freshly scraped vanilla bean seed, and substantial spice.



X by Glenmorangie

(\$34/750-mL) This single malt Scotch is intended for mixing into cocktails. Honey leads the charge on the palate along with slightly floral and citrus flavors; toasted coconut lingers on the finish. Try it in a Blood and Sand or a Penicillin.



Lee Spirits Co.

Fuego Lemonade

(\$13/4-pack 355-mL cans) Made with Lee Spirits Ginfuego—a gin infused with fresh peppers and cinnamon—this noncarbonated RTD cocktail has notes of fresh jalapeño, woody

spice, and tart lemon. At 9% ABV, it's a sweet and spicy kind of funky.

Three Spirit Nightcap

(\$39/500-mL) Made with Hüll Melon hops and botanical extracts that include ashwagandha root and white willow bark, this alcohol-free spirit is unique yet familiar, with aromas of ginger, cola, and sarsaparilla. Bitterness from the hops and roots opens things up on the palate, followed by significant, tongue-numbing spice that's fiery at the back of the throat. Soothing lemon balm—another botanical extract—is apparent, but just slightly, while the maple syrup that sweetens the liquid also provides a silky mouthfeel. Savor it like an Old Fashioned, on the rocks with an expressed orange twist. **LE**



Belvedere Organic Infusions Lemon & Basil (\$36/750-mL) Bright, herbaceous, and floral owing to a touch of elderflower, this lemon- and basil-infused premium vodka would be dynamic in a Vodka Gimlet, Moscow Mule, or just about any refresher you like to experiment with in the warmer months.





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PHOTO: JANET FLETCHER/PLANET CHEESE

Savoring Sustainability

THESE PRODUCERS GIVE "GREEN CHEESE" A NEW MEANING

The push toward sustainable practices in the wine industry has its parallel in the cheese world, with domestic cheesemakers striving to show they're responsible producers. Especially as plant-based cheeses make inroads into the market, American creameries that practice humane animal husbandry and environmental awareness want consumers to know it. The Good Food Awards seeks to spotlight those producers that marry great quality with sustainable practices. Start your research now with some of the 2022 winners in the cheese category, and you'll have your sustainable cheese course—paired with sustainably made wine or beer, of course—ready for Earth Day on April 22. These five are all relatively easy to find:

Bijou from Vermont Creamery is a petite goat cheese modeled on France's Crottin de Chavignol. At 2 ounces, it's ideal for a two-person cheese board with other selections or warmed in an oiled ramekin and served on a salad. The bloomy rind (from *Geotrichum candidum*) begins to droop as the cheese matures,

a good sign of ripeness; wait for that droop if you like your goat cheese soft and creamy. The interior will be silky, with aromas of mushroom and lemon. A Sancerre or steely Sauvignon Blanc is Bijou's soulmate.

Griffin from Georgia's Sweet Grass Dairy (pictured above) is a raw cow's milk wheel patterned loosely on French farmhouse *tommies* and matured for at least four months. Cheesemaker Jeremy Little washes the curds with a local Baltic porter to impart a faintly malty aroma. The interior is firm, dryish, and crumbly, with pronounced acidity. Porter is the obvious pairing, but the malt presence is subtle enough that Chardonnay could step in too.

Highlander from Vermont's Jasper Hill Farm is a blend of the creamery's raw cow's milk and raw goat's milk from neighboring Bridgman Hill Farm. A new cheese from this acclaimed producer, Highlander is inspired by French and Swiss raclette, so you know it's a good melter. Serve it oozy

from the broiler with boiled potatoes and cornichons alongside an Alsatian Riesling or Swiss Chasselas.

O'Banon from Indiana's Capriole Goat Cheese is a 6-ounce goat disk wrapped in bourbon-soaked chestnut leaves. The aroma is woody, sweet, and fruity, the flavor lactic and tangy. With so much going on, O'Banon isn't the easiest cheese to match with wine. The creamery recommends Prosecco or Champagne; dry cider seems like another good option for this fragrant beauty.

Pleasant Ridge Reserve from Uplands Cheese Company in Wisconsin bills itself as "the most awarded cheese in American history," and now it has another win. Modeled on Beaufort, this handsome raw cow's milk wheel is made only when the farm's cows are on pasture; then it's aged for a year. The aromas are nutty and beefy, the flavor mellow, deep, and layered. Pair with a Pinot Gris or a Chardonnay with minimal oak. [L](#)

COMPLEMENTS TO THE CHEF



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Levi Seed

ASSISTANT MANAGER AND LEAD SOMMELIER,
JOEL PALMER HOUSE, DAYTON, OR



by Michelle M. Metter



Levi Seed is the assistant manager and lead sommelier at Joel Palmer House, located in the heart of the Willamette Valley in Dayton, Oregon. We sat down with him to learn more about the expansive wine program he runs alongside exec chef/owner Chris Czarnecki and his prospects for the year ahead.

Q Tell us about your job: What does your day-to-day routine look like?

I assist in curating the largest Oregon Pinot [Noir] list in the country; [I] also . . . lead our restaurant and service staff with a commitment to . . . never-ending improvement to hospitality excellence and ensuring that our guests have memorable experiences. Whether it's doing bread and water service, hosting, bartending, taking a food order, running food, bussing tables, or [conducting] wine service, I am always . . . anticipating our guests' needs.

Q The approach at Joel Palmer is authentically Oregonian. Do you find that helps make wine selection easier or more challenging? How do you help narrow options for your guests?

With so many unique wineries in Oregon, [we are] proud that we offer so many selections . . . that you cannot find out of state. A lot of our guests have heard about our wine program and are eager to experience everything the Willamette Valley has to offer; I would estimate 90% of [them] are interested in Oregon Pinot. Narrowing down the perfect bottle for each guest is really a testament to how versatile [it] can be. I take my time talking to each individual about their personal likes and what profile they are looking for, whether they are drawn to a specific AVA, to cooler or warmer vintages, to something more terroir-driven or fruit-centric, to older or more current vintage wines, or [to a specific] price range. I can then narrow down to AVA, producer, vintage, and price based on the profile they are looking for.

Q What's new in Oregon that people should know about?

Oregon, being one of the youngest winegrowing regions in the world, is still gaining world recognition. Lots of European investors are starting to express more interest in what Oregon has to offer, and many of the wineries are now partnering with [producers] . . . in Burgundy. Oregon is still being explored, with new AVAs being petitioned, and put to the test to stretch its capabilities as we start seeing warmer vintages. It seems like there is a new winery every day.

Q Any predictions for the year ahead?

I think it's going to be a good year. [With] the last few years behind us, we are starting to see more restaurants bouncing back and adapting to the new standards and service. It seems there is an uptick in guests wanting to dine out . . . and have memorable experiences.

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

Adelsheim 2011 Quarter Mile Lane Pinot Noir. It's my favorite Oregon Pinot from one of the very first established vineyards, planted in the early '70s. Oregon wine history resides within [Adelsheim's] roots. Quarter Mile is perfectly balanced; it is elegant and delicate enough to not draw too much attention but powerful and structured enough to stand up to food. As for who I am drinking with, there are so many people I would like to share this with, but honestly, I like to drink wine with whoever recognizes what goes into it. Every vine and every single grape has a journey. Part of the reason I love being a sommelier is because I can hold a glass of wine and see that journey. Wine is art, and I will happily share a glass with those who appreciate it. *TM*



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How many hats do you wear in your current position, and what are the most surprising skills you've developed as a result?

Editor's note: While this column typically features two or more beverage professionals, we were so taken with Marshall's point of view that we've opted to devote the space to printing her answer in full.

Nya Marshall

Owner, IVY Kitchen + Cocktails, Detroit, MI

I wear a lot of hats as owner. Being an operator, I'm in the back of the house expediting, cooking, prepping, bartending, cleaning; I'm hosting, serving—you name any job in there, I'm doing it, I've done it. It depends on what happens when I walk in for the shift. I go in a couple of hours before anyone else; that's when I say, "Who's coming to work? Who's not coming to work? Who's in quarantine?" and then fill the holes based out of that. So on any given day I could be doing any and all of these things.

This is my first restaurant; I have an automotive background with an MBA in finance and an engineering degree. So it's a very different world. I did work in restaurants in the past, and this has been a passion of mine: Where my restaurant is in the city of Detroit, it was a food desert. There was nothing fresh; it was all basically Coney Island [hot dogs] everywhere. So this is a business for me in terms

Continued on page 34

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of needing to stay financially viable, but it's also a community giveback and a labor of love. Now, we've spawned a new era; three other businesses have opened in my corridor since I opened mine. So we're spiraling entrepreneurship, creating jobs for people of color who look like myself in the neighborhood. That's very rewarding.

[As for new skills], I would say interviewing skills, actually. The other skills that are required in the hospitality industry, I was very familiar with most of them. There's artistry in our food, in our craft cocktails, [and] most of our menus derive from me. Hosting is about personality and organization; so is service. These are things I had in my previous life already. But what I did not have were public relations skills. I didn't realize the impact that my restaurant would have when I began this journey and that's something that I'm very proud of, [so] I've learned the importance of PR—making sure that people know who you are. In terms of being interviewed, that's something I've always shied away from. So it's forced me to come out of my shell and develop a skill set that I was really very reluctant to do and had to dig very deep for. It's not my personality; I'm more of an organizational person, more of a process/procedure person, and it took me a while to accept that part. It's not like before. Before when you promoted your restaurant, it was really about the food: "Is the food good? Is the service good? Let's go." And now there are so many intangibles, [like] storytelling, that make a brand successful.

We opened right before the pandemic. I'll never forget when we got the notice to shut down on March 15—I



The dining room at IVY Kitchen + Cocktails in Detroit, MI.

IVY Kitchen + Cocktails' mezcal wings will soon be sold at retail.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NYA MARSHALL

thought it was only going to be for one week. I had my staff come in and we deep-cleaned the restaurant so we could be better off when we opened in a week or so. And when I realized it was going to be six months, almost, it was devastating. You go into survival mode to figure out how you're going to proceed, how you're going to redirect, how this model is going to change so that you're able to sustain. I was very fortunate—I had a partnership with the World Central Kitchen with José Andrés; I had several partnerships. We provided meals to the homeless, to the frontline, to alternative living for girls—just people in need who probably would have suffered if we had not been there. But that was out of survival mode—OK, the world has shut down; people still have to eat, though. And that was kind of my approach to it: How do we get food into the hands of people who need it? And so through the research on that came the partnerships. . . . I was just happy to be part of the solution. . . . You're talking about our frontliners, who were out there working 16-, 18-hour days. You just wanted to show appreciation of that and let them know that this is a small token, but it's a token that I'm able to provide. It was a very rewarding experience.

And there are going to be new hats. The business model of a traditional restaurant is constantly evolving and the pandemic has forced it to evolve

even more. And so there's something that I guess could be considered adaptation, which is what I'm doing right now. We're coming out with several products, and we have our first service market pending as well so that we can provide fresh produce, fresh food, fresh butchery to the local area as well as sell our own brand and our own products, which will hopefully increase revenue [and] help me maintain the employment of my staff. So the model isn't as singular as it once was; you have to have several revenue streams. That's one of the main takeaways that I've learned, and I am implementing it now. We're working on the concept of . . . different flavors of spritzers as an accompaniment to cocktails; we have a sauce; we have one of our signature [appetizers], the mezcal wing, that we're planning to package up right now. I'm actually a participant in the Amazon Accelerator program to move that product forward. So those are some of the things that we're coming up with and we're hoping to brand to get into local stores. **VI**

Taking Inventory is a survey of owners, sommeliers, retailers, managers, and other on- and off-premise buyers from around the country, covering all aspects of the beverage business. If you would like to be featured in a future issue, reach out to managing editor Ruth Tobias at rtobias@tastingpanelmag.com.

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The Courage of Conviction

AT LARKS HOME KITCHEN CUISINE IN ASHLAND, OR, **MOLLY SHAUGHNESSY**
DOES THE RIGHT THING

When it comes to the farm-to-table movement, the hospitality industry is not always what it seems. For instance, it's often the case that chefs who hang their toque on organic ingredients work with sommeliers who pour conventional wines that are the antithesis of their ethos.

In November 2021, I visited Molly Shaughnessy, CMS, in Ashland, Oregon. Shaughnessy aims to set things aright. As restaurant manager of Larks Home Kitchen Cuisine, she remains faithful to the restaurant's farm-to-table code, which celebrates strictly local, seasonal, responsibly raised foodstuffs sourced from Southern Oregon farmers, ranchers, artisans, and foragers. By the same token, Larks' wine program focuses solely on local producers that follow sustainable practices.

"Farming and sustainability go hand-in-hand—we cannot take from the earth without paying our dues," she told me, noting that there's "moral comfort" in applying this philosophy to hospitality. "If you care how a chicken is being treated, you should care about how grapes are grown. . . . This can be done without sacrificing highest quality."

Neither is Shaughnessy concerned about achieving a well-rounded selection. "There might be no region as diverse in terms of terroir as Southern Oregon," she said. "For our lighter dishes, especially in spring and summer, I can source from Irvine & Roberts," which grows delicate yet soaring Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays on a windswept, east-facing Ashland-area hillside at an elevation of 2,100 feet. The winery is third-party certified by both Salmon-Safe and LIVE, Oregon's sustainable winegrowing organization.

PHOTO: RANDY CAPAROSO



For heavier dishes, added Shaughnessy, "Rogue Valley producers such as Kriselle Cellars produce fuller-bodied wines, and sustainable farming is a big part of what they do." We tasted Kriselle's rich, spice-inundated 2018 Malbec along with its equally intense and peppery blends of Grenache, Tempranillo, and Bordeaux grapes, all showing a real sense of place. "There is something to fulfill every palate right here in this little valley," said Shaughnessy.

The Demeter Biodynamic and Regenerative Organic Certified Troon Vineyard in nearby Applegate Valley naturally has Shaughnessy's attention; Troon's mineral- and acid-suffused Vermentino and grippy yet perfumed Syrah have been fixtures on Larks' wine list. "I would like to eventually add the Troon 2020 Amphora

Amber Vermentino," said Shaughnessy, "but it will require staff training." For her, orange wines like this skin-fermented offering, with its sexy, musky spice notes and meaty citrus-peel textures, "have so much to offer in the way of food pairing and experimentation with our cuisine."

Applegate Valley's Quady North, which is a farming company as much a winery, really floats Shaughnessy's boat. "I am always blown away by Quady's Flagship Syrah," she gushed, and the 2018 we tasted together may be more like the Northern Rhône in terms of incense-like spice than any wine grown on the West Coast. The Quady North 2019 Mae's Vineyard Cabernet Franc, meanwhile, is as savory and distinct with cedar and

green herbs as any Chinon, but in a way that is utterly "Mae's," while the Quady North 2016 Merlot from Layne Vineyard plantings dating to 1972 is beautifully svelte and velvety. "Not only are Quady wines LIVE certified," noted Shaughnessy, "but the certification is printed on their labels, which helps me and my staff communicate our commitment to these kinds of wines to our guests."

There are other Southern Oregon wineries that Shaughnessy truly believes are producing world-class wines, such as those of Weisinger Family Winery and Awen Winecraft, but "unfortunately, [they] have yet to put up sustainability statements"—so for now, she is taking a pass on them. Commitment takes courage, and she's the rare professional who embodies both. **LD**

Rob & Bonnie Lloyd

Rob Lloyd was the winemaker behind some of California's most successful Chardonnay producers. In 2008 he stepped out from behind the curtain, when he and his wife Bonnie launched Lloyd Cellars to produce wines that are of unequalled quality.



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SCAN ME



Pinot and Pepper

AT **HANCHIC** IN LOS ANGELES, BULGOGI RISOTTO CROSSES CONTINENTAL BOUNDARIES

by **Michelle M. Metter**

At Hanchic in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Koreatown, chef Kyungbin “Justin” Min blends classic European techniques and recipes with bold Korean ingredients and influences. His bulgogi risotto, for instance, incorporates the latter into an Italian dish perhaps better known to some of his guests; his hope is that such creations serve as an entry point for an increased appreciation and understanding of Korean cuisine—or as he puts it, “I wanted a menu where, whether you are Korean or not, you could relate and connect to it in some way.” In this case,



PHOTO: PATRICK IN L.A.

Above: Korean and Italian influences mingle in bulgogi risotto at Hanchic in Los Angeles, CA. Left: Chef Kyungbin “Justin” Min.

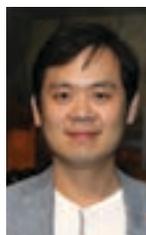


PHOTO COURTESY OF HANCHIC

Arborio rice is infused with the grilled, marinated pieces of beef known as bulgogi (or “fire meat,” which can also be made with pork) to develop sweet and peppery flavors; it’s then topped with mozzarella and slightly torched. “When I was a child, I loved mixing the cooked bulgogi juice into my rice and eating it together,” says Min, “so this dish takes me back to being a kid again.”

Min pairs it with a Pinot Noir Blanc from Oregon’s first Korean-American winemakers, CHO Wines proprietors David and Lois Cho, who aim to showcase the beauty of Willamette Valley fruit. The Pinot Noir Blanc is made with 100% Pinot Noir from Laurel Vineyard to impart aromas of savory spices and dried strawberries along with tart red-fruit flavors, zestiness, minerality, and a lively finish. Its crispness refreshes the palate after every sip, balancing the heaviness of the meat and cheese. Read on for two more pairing recommendations tailored to this distinctive dish. [V](#)

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINES OF ARGENTINA



Kyungmoon Kim, MS, founder, KMS Imports LLC

I believe bulgogi risotto is best paired with [a] Korean rice wine [called] Yangchon Chungju. Established in 1920, Yangchon Brewery is one of the oldest commercial breweries still in operation [in Korea]. With three generations of brewers’ guidance, they continue their legacy of making traditional makgeolli and chungju.

Yangchon Chungju is brewed with organically grown rice, [which] is cultivated [with the help of] snails that eliminate unwanted weeds in the rice field. [It] has a golden-amber color [and] abundant savory notes such as fermented soy, cheese rinds, and mushroom. [This] earthy element . . . amplifies the savoriness of this dish. It [also] has a touch of natural sweetness [from the] rice that provides round texture and complements creamy risotto with soy-based bulgogi marinade.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOTUS OF SIAM



Aaron Kelley, wine director/sommelier, Lotus of Siam, Las Vegas, NV

I consider myself lucky as a sommelier to work with a cuisine [in

which] the recurring theme is spice. This is the type of pairing I live for. Bulgogi, with its pepper-dominant flavor profile, always has a touch of sweetness, and with dry white wine as an ingredient in risotto, you find a perfect spot to flip the concept of red wine with red meat. You’re going to need a wine that cuts the richness while complementing the spice, and for me it’s dry Riesling. When I think of this style of wine, my mind instantly goes to the Pfalz region of Germany and specifically Von Winning. The Von Winning Ungeheuer Grosses Gewächs . . . would be the perfect complement to this dish. Ungeheuer translates to “monster” and was so named due to the fact that [Prussian politician] Otto von Bismarck declared the 1837 vintage “monstrously good.” Expect a mineral-driven wine with notes of dried apricot and orange peel that’s intensely pure.

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Not Far From the Tree



WITH THE RELEASE OF **NELSON BROTHERS**, CHARLIE AND ANDY NELSON KEEP THEIR FAMILY'S NAME ALIVE

Distilling has been in the Nelson family since 1860, but a 100-year lull in production rendered that history a distant memory: Growing up, Charlie and Andy Nelson heard some vague tales of their great-great-great-grandparents Charles and Louisa Nelson and their whiskey-making endeavor, but it wasn't until a 2006 trip to a Tennessee butcher, when the brothers were in their early 20s, that they began to grasp the enormity of it. After they came upon a historic sign stating that they were just a mile away from the site where Charles opened the Nelson's Green Brier Distillery in 1860, they learned that their ancestors' enterprise had been the largest and most prosperous distillery in the state prior to Prohibition and instantly felt compelled to learn more—about not only Charles and Louisa but whiskey production in general. As they did, they knew it was their calling to pick up where the distillery had left off when it closed in 1909.

In 2009, after three long years of fully immersing themselves in the business and working with some of the most renowned bourbon-production consultants in the world, the brothers reincorporated Nelson's Green Brier Distillery in Nashville, Tennessee. Since 2012, they've built up an impressive portfolio to much acclaim, and their latest label, Nelson Brothers, will serve as their premium brand alongside their flagship Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey. Its two expressions, Classic Bourbon and Reserve Bourbon, are derived from a mash rich with rye: At 93.3 proof, the former is versatile, drinking as well on the rocks as it does as an ingredient in cocktails like the Boulevardier (see recipe), whereas the premium Reserve, which showcases a blend of some of the best barrels in Nelson's Green Brier Distillery's inventory, is a balanced expression best savored neat or with a splash of water—seeing that it weighs in at 107.8 proof.

Both bourbons are available in 750-milliliter bottles with labels that nod to the past through their use of the original distillery's distinctive green-and-gold color scheme and iconic vine design, while modern typography recognizes Charlie and Andy's revitalization of the business and the trajectory that Nelson's Green Brier Distillery is on. And since the brothers were some of the first whiskey producers to release Oloroso cask- and honey cask-finished bourbons under their other labels, you'll likely see similar examples added to the Nelson Brothers lineup in the near future. [V](#)

Nelson Brothers Reserve Bourbon, USA (\$60) This is a high-rye bourbon whose high proof of 107.8 manages to not overshadow its inner beauty. It's warm and polite on the nose, with scents of root beer, sandalwood, and baked apple. The flavors are delectable, from nutty oak and peach blossom to ginger, black cherry, and spiced tea. Notes of saddle leather come in on the mid-palate, leading up to a finish of burnt orange, vanilla, and maple. **95** —*Meridith May*

Nelson Brothers Classic Bourbon, USA (\$37) Aromas of shortcake, nougat, and spiced orange unwrap with each nosing before a well-mannered entry of toffee and peach pie glides in on a silky body. A hint of key lime and chocolate-covered cherry keeps the palate busy with hedonistic deliciousness. Mid-palate notes of egg cream and maple pecan lead to prickly pepper on the finish, which is softened by disarming flavors of oak and pekoe tea. 93.3 proof. **94** —*M.M.*

NELSON'S GREEN BRIER DISTILLERY/
CONSTELLATION BRANDS

BROTHERS BOULEVARDIER

- 1½ oz. Nelson Brothers Classic Bourbon
- ¾ oz. bitter orange Italian liqueur
- ¾ oz. sweet vermouth
- 1 dash orange bitters

Combine in a mixing glass, add ice, and stir until chilled. Strain over a large ice cube or sphere. Express the oils from an orange peel over the top of the drink and insert it into the glass.



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Drink Well, Do Good

NOBLE VINES AIMS TO DONATE 1.5 MILLION MEALS TO THOSE IN NEED IN 2022

by **Natasha Swords**

“Our purpose with Noble Vines is not only to make great wine that offers incredible quality for its price but, in a bigger sense, to pour good into the world,” says Ashley Larson, brand manager for Noble Vines, which was founded by fourth-generation family-owned company Delicato Family Wines 15 years ago. “We began focusing on hunger relief in 2020 by partnering on charitable efforts with 26 regional food banks across 19 states; in 2021, we expanded this program to food banks in 30 states, focusing on the end-of-year holiday season. And this spring, we’re thrilled to expand beyond the holiday season and to offer a direct donation to No Kid Hungry for every bottle sold” through their latest marketing initiative. “It’s a way of empowering wine lovers to do good just by enjoying a wine they love.”

As Larson explains, No Kid Hungry is a national campaign run by Share Our Strength, a nonprofit working to solve issues surrounding hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world. It has provided more than 1 billion meals to kids since its inception in 1984 through school grants, educational programs, and its Free Meals Finder’s digital directory and helpline.

Here’s how Noble Vines’ own campaign works: The brand will donate \$1 to No Kid Hungry for every bottle of Noble Vines 337 Cabernet Sauvignon purchased across the U.S. from March 1 through April 30, 2022. The objective is to reach a \$150,000 donation point, which will provide up to 1.5 million meals for children in need.

“Consider this,” continues Larson. “One dollar provides up to ten healthy meals needed to nourish our most vulnerable: kids.” She contends that, pre-pandemic, one in six American children faced chronic hunger; now, more than two years into the pandemic, it’s one in four. “Around 13 million children in this country live in food-insecure homes; we believe every kid deserves the safety of knowing where their next meal is coming from,” she asserts.

Marketing support in the form of an LED ticker that clocks each bottle sold across the country and displays it in real time is available to retailers, along with themed case sleeves, neckers, shelf talkers, and glorifiers. “We’re supporting small- and large-footprint stores to help educate consumers at point of sale,” says Larson, adding, “Of course, the wine itself represents the biggest draw.”

The Noble Vines 337 Cabernet Sauvignon hails from the red cobblestone soils of Lodi, which create the deep colors, aromas, and flavors in the brand’s hearty but balanced wines. “The rich tannins in our wines are leveled by the generous acidity provided by the region’s cool climate. The vineyards were purchased by the



Retail marketing support for Noble Vines’ Pour Good campaign includes a floor display with an LED ticker that clocks bottles sold across the country in real time, each representing \$1 donated to No Kid Hungry.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DELICATO FAMILY WINES



Ashley Larson is brand manager for Noble Vines.

first and second generations of the Indelicato family over the last century,” explains Larson. “This is why we can produce such high-quality wines and sell them at affordable prices.”

The vine stock for the Noble Vines 337 Cabernet Sauvignon in particular originated in Bordeaux, France. Today the grapes are harvested in the cool of the night and delivered to the winery, where a balance of proper extraction with a healthy fermentation takes place. Aging in a combination of French oak, American oak, and stainless steel allows for a bold, dark, dense, and flavorful Cabernet Sauvignon with

smooth tannins and balanced acidity.

“The Cabernet Sauvignon is our flagship varietal and one that consumers know best, so it made sense to build our No Kid Hungry campaign around this wine,” explains Larson. “The Noble Vines team is dedicated to giving back in the form of sustainability, over-delivering to the consumer on price point, and contributing to communities through charity programs such as this. We’re grateful for the success of this brand, and we’re excited to use its popularity to help fight childhood hunger in collaboration with No Kid Hungry and our retail partners.”



The Tipping Point

HAS THE PANDEMIC ACTUALLY BROUGHT OUT THE BEST IN CONSUMERS—OR AT LEAST THEIR WALLETS? **by Nell Jerome**

Tipping has been an increasingly heated industry topic over the past couple of years, with debates breaking out on social media platforms over whether tipping on takeout is tacky or obligatory and whether it's appropriate for operators to suggest tips as high as 25%. There's no secret to the timing of the discussion: The pandemic and associated shelter-in-place orders wreaked havoc on the on-premise industry, shuttering restaurants and furloughing workers. As establishments have reopened and people regained confidence in entering the public sphere, dining out is coming back in a big way—and, we're happy to say, so are tips. According to a Bank of America survey conducted in December 2020, 56% of restaurant customers began tipping more that year, specifically because of the pandemic's impact on the industry.

Jamie Jamison, general manager and wine director at Brix Restaurant & Gardens in Yountville, California,

has noticed an increase in tips since coronavirus-related restrictions began. "We pool all of our tips and we have definitely been paying out more," he says. "People want to do the right thing for the employees, and they have been very generous." Ted Greene, manager of Il Poggio in Snowmass Village, Colorado, agrees: "People here feel like family, and the staff has been consistent, so they consider them family too. Our guests have been very generous and empathetic since we reopened."

So how much are customers tipping? A recent article in *The Atlantic* noted that, according to the credit card-processing company Block (formerly known as Square), the average pre-pandemic tip ranged from 19.9 to 20.1%. As restaurants faced restrictions, the numbers began to increase, peaking at 21%, and as of June 2021 were averaging approximately 20.7%.

There are various explanations as to why diners are digging deeper into their wallets beyond benevolence.

Some states mandated cashless, contactless payment during the pandemic, triggering many restaurants, bars, and wineries to implement digital-payment systems that automatically prompt customers to tip. The amounts are at the discretion of the venue, and many are suggesting up to 25%, even for takeout or self-service.

A January 2022 CNBC article titled "Is 25% the new 20%? How much to tip in a post-pandemic world" suggests that the pandemic has created a new awareness of the compensation structure for the hourly workforce, possibly motivating some people to leave a larger gratuity. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour but varies by state, with the highest being \$14 per hour in California.

On-premise servers thus rely on gratuities to make a livable income. And as many of us got a taste of a world with no restaurants, they have proven why they earned the title of "essential workers"—not to mention a generous tip. **VZ**

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The Scions of Sprezzatura

WITH NEW PACKAGING, **ZONIN** CAPTURES THE ZEITGEIST

by Ruth Tobias

The Italians have a word for “effortless style”: *sprezzatura*. They also have a Prosecco brand for it: Zonin.

The Zonin family can trace their roots in the Veneto back 600 years; in 2021, they marked two centuries of wine-making there with the launch of new packaging—packaging that speaks, yes, effortlessly both to that history and to the current zeitgeist, in which consumers are finally recognizing that bubbles aren’t just for observing special occasions but for elevating everyday moments. As company vice president Francesco Zonin explains, “We used [our 200-year anniversary] as an opportunity to draw inspiration from our archives and early designs. The retro look celebrates our heritage authentically while delivering a design aesthetic that appeals to a modern Prosecco consumer.”

Indeed, from the mix of fonts to the splashes of salmon pink and aqua to the polka dots on the foil, the new bottle could easily appear in the sort of vintage Italian liquor advertisements that inspire design mavens to this day, while the pearlescent finish on its textured label conveys easy luxury. So, for that

matter, does the price: At \$15, Zonin Prosecco DOC ensures that everyone can, to use its new tagline, “make it pop!” The 11% ABV, meanwhile, guarantees that it can not only pop but flow liberally at brunch or a backyard barbecue, on a picnic or a porch, with *insalata caprese* or crab cakes.

The same goes for Zonin Prosecco Rosé DOC, which is hitting shelves across the U.S. this spring. True to the newly designated category, the blend of 85% Glera and 15% Pinot Noir offers up notes of apple, wild strawberry, wisteria, and almond for a profile that makes it an ideal accompaniment to the likes of sushi, risotto, and fruit-based desserts—or, one can imagine, 100 other dishes to represent the 100 countries that Zonin is now available in. For more information (not to mention a visual representation of *sprezzatura*), follow [@zoninproseccous](#) on Instagram. **V**



Zonin Prosecco DOC, Italy (\$15) Surprisingly crisp and balanced given its abundance of fruit, this Prosecco is as classic as they come, delivering aromas of ripe pear and peach plus a touch of honeysuckle before a palate that loops in yellow apple and lime sherbet, finishing with a bit of citrus pith. It’s just the thing for brunch guests who take their bubbles straight, no OJ. **91**



Zonin's new labels were inspired by those from the company's past.



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The Confection Connection

CATCHING UP WITH A PAIR OF CALIFORNIA'S CHAMPION CHOCOLATIERS **by Richard Carleton Hacker**

What do an elephant and a bottle of Syrah have in common? They've served as a source of inspiration for third-generation French chocolatier Sheila Kearns, whose boutique and factory Sheila Kearns Chocolate & Confections (sheilakearnschocolate.com), located in San Luis Obispo's historic downtown district, is well known among a discerning national clientele for creating some of the finest handcrafted chocolates this side of Paris.

Her custom chocolate making and decorating skills came to my attention when I received a bottle of Austin Hope 2015 Syrah, notable for its unusual label, which the Paso Robles winemaker had



John Kelson and Kelly Green are the entrepreneurs behind John Kelly Chocolates in Los Angeles, CA.

reproduced from a painting created by an elephant's brush-welding trunk during his honeymoon in Thailand. Kearns had perfectly reproduced the multicolored design by hand on a crème-filled, chocolate-covered bonbon that was included with the wine; the confectionary's flavor was subtly rich and elegant, reflecting the all-natural, organic, and locally sourced ingredients she uses while eschewing artificial additives.

Kearns learned what she calls her "sophisticated" style as a chocolatier from her great-aunts Rosé and Thérèse, a pâtissier and chocolatier, respectively, who honed their crafts in Alsace-Lorraine and Paris before immigrating to the United States. "I've been making chocolate creations ever since I can remember," she adds. "My aunts did things very Old World-style. They didn't even measure, [and] I don't measure anything in my kitchen. Other people in the industry are shocked by this, [but] I feel these are some of the things that help me to look at my profession a little differently than others."

To create the molds for the custom chocolates she makes in addition to her regular selections, which include everything from peanut butter-bourbon chocolates to chocolate-covered cherries, Kearns notes that "we use colored cocoa butter—no artificial colors—[with] various brushes to achieve a desired look. Chocolate is then poured into the molds to create a shell, which we fill and cap. It's more art than mass production. Hand painting like we do it is unusual in the U.S. We hope over time to educate Americans about chocolate and share what chocolate lovers in Europe have known for decades."

Meanwhile, to the south in Los Angeles, John Kelly Chocolates (johnkellychocolates.com) caters to the Hollywood elite at its boutiques in Hollywood, Santa Monica, and Beverly Hills as well as in various Whole Foods, Central Market, and Bristol Farms locations. Proprietors John Kelson, a longtime executive in the luxury fashion industry, and Kelly Green, an advertising industry veteran, began their chocolate-making journey



Using a variety of European molds and decorating techniques, Sheila Kearns Chocolate & Confections in San Luis Obispo, CA, offers handmade chocolates in a variety of shapes, fillings, and styles.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHEILA KEARNS CHOCOLATE & CONFECTIONS

Third-generation chocolatier Sheila Kearns learned the craft from her two French great-aunts. Many of her chocolates are hand-painted with all-natural coloring.

with a unique recipe from Kelly's mother for chocolate fudge. "It was more refined in texture—smoother and silkier—but she only had access to traditional baking ingredients," says Kelson. "So the first thing we did was source high-quality chocolate. We then decided to create individual . . . pieces and give them a chocolate coating that resulted in [what we call] 'truffle fudge,'" their signature offering.

The largely self-taught entrepreneurs have gone on to create a lineup of richly flavorful (and kosher) confections that include dark chocolate bars with habanero and jalapeño, semi-sweet chocolates with Thai coconut curry, and walnut caramel clusters with Mediterranean sea salt. No wonder *Los Angeles Magazine* featured John Kelly as the city's "Best Handcrafted Chocolates" in its 2021 "Best of L.A." edition. **LT**

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Purchase for a Purpose

LINE 39'S "PLATE IT FORWARD" CAMPAIGN PROVES A CASE STUDY IN CAUSE MARKETING **by Kyle Billings**

In early December, Northern California-based producer Line 39 hosted an event to showcase both its range of wines and its new philanthropic initiative, Plate It Forward. The venue was Auld Fella, a winsome Irish pub located in Culver City, and the setting festive, with holiday trimmings and twinkling lights dotting the perimeter of the comfortably snug dining room.

At center stage, four bottles stood as sentries on a long, elegantly appointed wooden table. Throughout the afternoon, guests were fêted with the most recent releases of Line 39 Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Sauvignon, each boasting lively tension and zip.

The primary aim of the day, however, was to discuss the brand's charitable plans. Brand manager Jurga Krastinaityte explained that an ethos of sustainability and community informs multiple aspects of Line 39's business approach. "Sustainability is very important to the people of O'Neill Vintners & Distillers [owners of Line 39; it's] at the core of its operations and winemaking practices across all its brands," said Krastinaityte, adding that this commitment undergirded the launch of the Plate It Forward campaign.

"We wanted to do something meaningful during the holidays to support our communities," she explained. "When we asked our team what social causes they were most passionate about, food security rose to the top. We reached out to local food banks and invited them to be a part of our program to ensure it would be more close and personal to our consumers."

Participating food banks were located in California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois, among other states. At the lunch, discussion of the initiative bred cautious optimism among attendees, though some expressed concerns about brands eager to profit under the guise of charity. Krastinaityte agreed that consumers



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINE 39

Attendees at the Line 39 event from left to right: Desiree Harrison-Brown, @winonoire; Jurga Krastinaityte, brand manager at Line 39; Katina Bush, account director at Calhoun & Company; Elle Rodriguez, @themodernpour; Lexi Stephens, @lexiswinelist; and Allison Levine, owner of Please the Palate.

are increasingly conscious about what they purchase and deftly conveyed that Plate It Forward was designed accordingly. "I think that cause marketing is a powerful way to be a force for good while aligning your business goals," she said. "Since most brands already invest in their marketing strategy, I am pleased that our strategy makes sure to benefit communities and support causes as well."

Indeed, the results of the campaign speak for themselves: Line 39 handily surpassed its goal of providing 200,000 meals in 2021 and plans to bring more food banks on board for its next program. **W**

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Lessons From the Lab

PHOENIX, AZ, IS HOME TO A TRENDSETTING BEVERAGE WORKSPACE

The Cocktail Collaborative is a non-profit cocktail club housed in a 1914 bungalow at 822 N. 6th Avenue in the South Roosevelt district of downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Opened in November 2021, it's one part neighborhood craft-cocktail bar—open three nights a week and Sunday brunch to the public as Garden Bar PHX—and one part educational workspace that can be booked for private drink-development sessions, presentations, special events, and even cocktail-competition practice in four-hour, day-long, or multiday blocks. The interior is cozy, with an eclectic mix of leather couches, velvet chairs, and farmhouse furnishings as well as a state-of-the-art bar that features two Tobin Ellis cocktail stations, a CO₂ glass chiller, plenty of freezer space, multiple types of ice, and many other bells and whistles to make drink development innovative and exciting; our staff can also make specialty ingredients, shop for necessary materials, and provide setup and

The bar at The Cocktail Collaborative in downtown Phoenix, AZ.



The Botanical Room is one of The Cocktail Collaborative's many distinctive nooks.



Kim Haasarud of Liquid Architecture is at the helm of The Cocktail Collaborative.

breakdown services as needed.

During the pandemic, I served as a board member for the United States Bartenders' Guild (USBG) National Charity Foundation's COVID-19 Relief Campaign. Going through thousands of grant applications and hearing the stories of hundreds of bartenders and other front-of-house workers, I was struck by how much change is needed in the hospitality industry, and I wanted to be a part of that. As a result, my LAB initiative will not only host traditional educational series but explore issues like the need for new labor models and more inclusive hiring practices as well as opportunities to broaden community reach and multiculturalism in programming, which make for a more warm and welcoming space both for our guests and employees.

Between working with clients who book the LAB and planning out our full calendar of events, we

are already having a busy season. For instance, we recently hosted an educational session titled "Science Behind Taste & Flavor," and we have our first Bartender Yard Sale & Gin Fizz Brunch coming up. Other events on the horizon will cover topics like mezcal and mole; Scotch, cheese, and honey pairing; foraging; Mint Juleps; best sustainability practices behind the bar; and more! For more information, visit cocktailcollaborative.com; if you're interested in getting involved with our programming or booking the space, contact me at kim@liquid-architecture.com. **LA**

Kim Haasarud is the founder of Liquid Architecture, The Cocktail Collaborative, and Garden Bar PHX as well as the current USBG national president. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona, with her husband, Kevin; their two kids, Maddy and Holden; and their dog, Lucy.

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Ushering in a Banner Year for Whisky



This year marks the retirement of one of Scotland's best-known and most highly regarded master blenders, Jim Beveridge, OBE, of Diageo. His career has spanned nearly 40 years and is culminating with two noteworthy releases from one of the company's storied brands, Johnnie Walker.



While there are fewer than 100 bottles of Johnnie Walker Masters of Flavour (41.8% ABV; \$25,000) available in the U.S., ardent fans of the brand may still be able to snap up the more accessible Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ghost and Rare (43.8% ABV; \$385), a distinctive blend of exceptional and very rare whiskies from the company's own Speyside "ghost" distillery, Pittyvaich, which closed in 1993 after a mere 18 years in operation. Both products are a fitting conclusion to a legendary career.

In a mark of the Scotch whisky world's increasing diversity, Beveridge's place is being filled by the coincidentally named Dr Emma Walker. As the new face of Johnnie Walker, she must meet the industry's latest challenges, not the least of which is sustainability.

Such concerns are being addressed on a wide scale: Bruichladdich, Fettercairn, and Glenmorangie have all recently announced significant projects to address environmental concerns and implement sustainable-production initiatives as the industry strives to achieve carbon neutrality. The stillhouse of the former, for instance, will soon be powered by an innovative "green hydrogen" boiler, now being installed at a cost of more than \$3.5 million.

We may also expect whiskies themselves to reflect consumer interest in a greener future. Take the two biodynamic whiskies launched by Bruichladdich and Ireland's Waterford, respectively.

First to market was the latter with its Luna 1.1 Irish Single Malt Whisky (58.1% ABV; \$100). Following principles first adopted by the wine industry,

biodynamic farming follows lunar cycles and relies on natural preparations as a means of charging soils with vitality and crops with unusual vibrancy. It may sound unorthodox, but, as Waterford Distillery CEO Mark Reynier says, "Biodynamics is, after all, merely a self-contained farming system—but one that consists of the culmination of 16,000 years of agricultural optimisation; it's no surprise to see the ever-increasing adoption of biodynamics in the search for intensity and purity of flavour. If for the grape, why not the grain?"



Following close on its heels is Bruichladdich's biodynamic whisky—Scotland's first. Introducing it, global brand manager Christy McFarlane comments, "Having been harvested from Yatesbury House Farm in 2010 and distilled at Bruichladdich in 2011, this has been ten years in the making. We are particularly enthusiastic about the farming methods applied here, not just because of the potential flavour properties but because Yatesbury House Farm sequesters ten times more carbon than it emits."

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Getting to Know

SHOCHU



In Chicago, IL, Japanese-inspired cocktail bar Kumiko serves a Chū-hi highball featuring citrus-shichimi cordial, club soda, and iichiko Silhouette.



iichiko Saiten stars in Kumiko's Last Rose cocktail along with elderflower, hibiscus, lemon, shichimi togarashi (Japanese seven spice), and chili-sesame oil.

IICHIKO WANTS TO INTRODUCE THE WORLD TO JAPAN'S MOST POPULAR SPIRIT

story by **Allyson Reedy** / photos by **Rebecca Peplinski**

It's rather comforting that, in our information-overloaded world, there are still discoveries to be made—especially when those discoveries can be sipped and savored. Shochu, the 500-year-old Japanese spirit made from a variety of grains and vegetables, is far from a secret in its native land, where it outsells both saké and whisky. And now the U.S. is finally catching on.

The shochu evangelist intent on getting bottles into domestic consumers' hands is Tetsuro Miyazaki, general manager of iichiko USA. While iichiko may not be a household name yet, if Miyazaki accomplishes his mission, Americans will soon have it perched on bar carts and shelves right alongside their favorite vodkas and whiskeys.

"Our goal is to make shochu like vodka, tequila, [and] mezcal, so that everybody knows shochu," Miyazaki says. Considering iichiko's sales numbers—it distributes a staggering 7 million cases a year worldwide—it seems as though U.S. drinkers are the only ones who *don't* know shochu.

So here's a crash course. Most shochu is distilled from barley or potatoes, although it can also be made from rice and other starchy ingredients. The clear spirit has a uniquely savory, umami-heavy flavor that comes from koji, Japan's national fungus. Yes, that's really a thing, and it's glorious: A vital ingredient in familiar products like soy sauce and miso, koji is the driving force behind iichiko shochu, coaxing the conversion from starch to sugars and releasing citric acid to maintain the barley flavors.

It's not that shochu is completely new to the American market, but it wasn't until 2019, when the then-40-year-old iichiko brand partnered with beverage-alcohol company Davos Brands to expand its reach, that the American market for the spirit really began to open up. "I think one of the reasons why the shochu culture did not spread was because sales were limited to [traditional] Japanese restaurants," Miyazaki says. "Now, top bartenders are beginning to realize the existence and uniqueness of shochu. Consumers are attracted to products that have more of a craft feel to them, and I think this is the same for bartenders. They want to deepen their knowledge and use creative ingredients, and shochu fits their needs."

One such bartender is Julia Momosé, partner and creative director at Kumiko, a Japanese-inspired cocktail den in Chicago, Illinois, and author of *The Way of the Cocktail: Japanese Traditions, Techniques, and Recipes*. Momosé, who got a major head start on her shochu knowledge while growing up in Japan, features shochu recipes in her book and uses it in multiple drinks at Kumiko. She's a huge fan of the spirit and, like Miyazaki, does her part to inspire American shochu fans while recruiting others to join their ranks.

"I would say the quick pitch for shochu is it's a stunning representation of terroir in Japan," Momosé says. "There are so many [styles] and ingredients used to make shochu [that] I feel like there's a shochu for everyone."

Traditionally, shochu was either served on the rocks or with water (hot or cold), but a growing contingent of bartenders are, like Momosé, using the spirit in cocktails. In fact, iichiko collaborated with American bartenders to make a shochu specifically for mixology. While traditional shochu clocks in at just 25% ABV, the brand's Saiten shochu is a more robust 43% ABV, with big umami flavors and a substantial body that helps it stand out in mixed drinks.

"This is a really unique shochu made with a lot of input from bartenders in the U.S.," Momosé says of Saiten, which she features in her Last Rose cocktail along with elderflower, hibiscus, lemon, shichimi togarashi (Japanese seven spice), and chili-sesame oil. "It's got a fun balance of savory and fruity." She notes that ingredients



Julia Momosé is partner and creative director at Kumiko.

like ripe passion fruit and papaya help balance the intense savoriness imparted by the koji, but she's careful in her descriptions: "I use a couple roundabout ways to describe [shochu] because I don't want to pigeonhole it in anyone's mind. It's too nuanced. I don't want to steer people away and say it's very funky; it may scare people."

More mild is iichiko's refreshing Silhouette expression, which Momosé calls a "really stunning, delicate shochu." She uses it in her Chū-hi cocktail, a highball made with citrus-shichimi cordial and club soda. Because it's lighter than Saiten, however, it's also great sipped on its own; Momosé says that a bit of water really opens up its sweet flavors.

Considering shochu's diversity of styles and intense popularity in Japan on the one hand and Americans' increasing interest in the global beverage market on the other, it's surprising that more consumers haven't yet been acquainted with the spirit. But that just means we get the pleasure of discovering it now, and let's be real—now is an especially good time to be discovering new pleasures.

And if Miyazaki has his way, we'll be drinking a whole lot more iichiko in years to come. "We started the shochu boom in Japan over 40 years ago, and now we are challenging [ourselves] to get into the global bar scene," he says. "We want to be an innovator in the shochu industry." **LT**

EVERYTHING'S
COMING UP

Rosa

ROSA REGALE'S

SPARKLING
WINES ARE
INSPIRING
BARTENDERS
AND CHEFS
ALIKE

Rosa Regale Sparkling Red
paired with a trio of ceviches
at THE RANCH Restaurant &
Saloon in Anaheim, CA.

PHOTO: @SWIMSOCIAL



Banfi's Piedmont estate in Strevi, Italy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFI

by Amanda M. Faison

When Banfi recently streamlined its portfolio to focus on house-owned brands, the intention was mainly to shine a spotlight on its flagship Brunello di Montalcino. Yet between its renewed emphasis on brand building, the explosive trend toward all things sparkling, and the challenges of a global pandemic, the company recognized another opportunity bubbling to the surface: Rosa Regale.

It was Banfi that first took Brachetto from the pages of history books—as legend has it, Cleopatra favored the varietal—and introduced it to consumers worldwide as a luscious sparkling red. The world fell in love with the effervescent, ruby-hued wine, fragrant with rose petal and flavors of fresh strawberry and raspberry, and it stood on its own for 25 years primarily as a dessert pairing that complemented chocolate especially well. “Rosa Regale [red] has always been a special wine for Banfi. It is incredibly unique—we like to say it is ‘love at first sip’ for anyone who tries it,” says Banfi’s third-generation family proprietor and CEO, Cristina Mariani-May. “As we sharpen our focus on our own brands, it makes all the sense in the world to evolve the Rosa Regale brand.” In celebration of its 20th-anniversary vintage, then, Rosa Regale introduced its Sparkling White as the first line extension since the brand’s launch.

Made from 100% Moscato Bianco sourced from the Asti DOCG in Piedmont, it’s fermented in stainless-steel tanks and produced in the Charmat method to deliver notes of white peach dipped in honeycomb. And like its red counterpart, it is already finding a following. “Rosa Regale symbolizes affordable, everyday luxury for Banfi, and we’re thrilled to be able to bring this brand to more wine lovers through



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BARTONVILLE STORE

A dessert of Rosa Regale Sparkling Red—poached pear at The Bartonville Store in Bartonville, TX.



Above, grilled artichoke with garlic butter accompanied by Rosa Regale Sparkling Red at THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon; right, Brachetto grapes on the vine.

PHOTO: @SWIMSOCAL



the introduction of our Rosa Regale Sparkling White,” says Mariani-May. “[It] offers balanced sweetness and a gorgeous floral character that makes it a must-reach-for bottle for anyone who loves delicate sparkling wines.”

Although seemingly destined to serve as a dessert wine, the Sparkling White is joining its sibling on restaurant and bar menus across the country—and not always in a Champagne flute. The versatility of the wines’ profiles—sweet yet light, crisp, and balanced by fresh acidity—combined with the affordable price point (\$20 at retail) and low ABV of 7% means that they are well suited to mixing into cocktails. “With the sweeter profile, I almost think of [them] as a liqueur,” says Sly Cosmopoulos, director of beverage marketing at Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC), who has been playing with both expressions in cocktails; as she explains, “You get the best of both worlds” in pairing a wine with a spirit.

This duality of purpose is especially relevant in today’s strained marketplace. Staffing issues and supply-chain shortages have forced bar programmers to cut back inventory and look for ways to simplify and cross-utilize ingredients. “That’s where wine cocktails came in,” Cosmopoulos continues, noting that between 2020 and 2021, RNDC saw a 32% growth in wine as a cocktail ingredient. Additional data indicates

that 27% of on-premise consumers are interested in ordering wine-based cocktails, in keeping with the trend toward lower alcohol consumption.

In a play on an Old Fashioned, for instance, Cosmopoulos replaced the sugar with the Rosa Regale red and found that it had enough oomph to stand up to the whiskey. And in addition to creating a Peach Aperitivo Spritz, she combined the white with lychee puree and coconut rum for a cocktail called the Ivory Tower. But she had the most fun working with the 187-milliliter bottles—another trend that took hold during the pandemic, according to Cosmopoulos, and sees no end. “Taking advantage of the size and popularity of the 187s, we did a New York Sour Flip,” she says. “It’s typically a Whiskey Sour with a red wine float, but we flip the bottle into the drink. It’s eye candy—people see it [from] across the room and they point and they order it.”

White sangria, meanwhile, was a jumping-off point for general manager and beverage director Gabriel Atkinson at THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon in Anaheim, California. He refabbed the crowd-pleasing cocktail by adding a float of the sparkling red for color, contrast, and effervescence. Atkinson says that Rosa Regale fills a niche on THE RANCH’S wine list because “there just aren’t many sparkling reds. We’ve got Cava, Prosecco, Champagne . . .

but this is a unique wine.” He finds it pairs particularly well with two of the restaurant’s appetizers: the grilled artichoke with garlic butter and the ceviche trio. “The smoky grilled flavor [of the former] is the converse of the sparkling’s sweetness, and that [combination] just sings,” he says, adding that the wine’s off-dry profile also offsets the slight spiciness of the tomato sauce in the calamari and shrimp ceviches.

In Galveston, Texas, bartender April McEuen (named the *Dallas Observer’s* Best Bartender in 2020) collaborated with Banfi rep Heather Queen to create a riff on the Bee’s Knees for client Pam Fleetwood, owner of bed-and-breakfast Virginia Point Inn, who aimed to serve it at an open house where guests would wander the property. McEuen skipped the traditional fresh lemon juice and replaced it with Rosa Regale Sparkling White, thus creating a cocktail that recalled a bygone era but also felt of the moment. “We wanted to add something with a note of fresh, vibrant acidity, but it had to be something we could get to 100 people quickly,” says Queen. “It was just gin, honey syrup, Rosa Regale, and a strawberry. People loved it.” Fleetwood has also started pouring the white by the flute during high tea, and it’s been an immediate hit.

To the northwest in Bartonville, Texas, chef-owner Michael Scott of The



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFI



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFI



PHOTO: @SWIMISOCIAL

Sparkling Bee's Knees

Created by bartender April McEuen for The Virginia Point Inn in Galveston, TX

- 1 oz. Boodles Gin
- ½ oz. honey syrup
- Rosa Regale Sparkling White

In a shaker tin, shake the gin and honey syrup with ice. Strain into a coupe. Top with Rosa Regale Sparkling White and garnish with a strawberry.

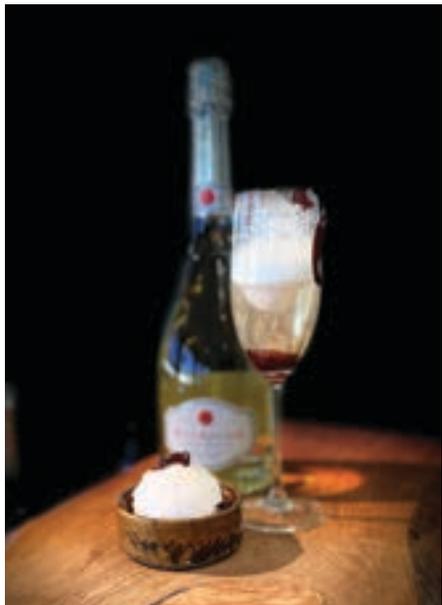
White Sangria

Created by Gabriel Atkinson, general manager and beverage director of THE RANCH Restaurant & Saloon in Anaheim, CA

- 1 oz. Ketel One Citroen
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 1 oz. simple syrup
- Rosa Regale Sparkling Red

Pack a wine glass with ice and add the vodka, lemon, and syrup. Using the back of a spoon, float the Rosa Regale to the desired level, about 2 ounces. Garnish with a Cara Cara orange slice and a lemon twist.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BARTONVILLE STORE



At The Bartonville Store, chef-owner Michael Scott makes gelato with Rosa Regale Sparkling White and raspberries; it goes into the Razzoregale, a take on a Coke float.

Bartonville Store has taken to playing with Rosa Regale not only in cocktails but also as a menu ingredient. For example, he crafts a gelato with the Sparkling White and infuses it with raspberries. “The acidity that’s in the [wine] is complemented by the milk fats

and the sugars,” he explains. “There’s some trial and error, but you keep adjusting until you start smiling.” No doubt Scott’s guests also smile when they order the Razzoregale, his elevated take on a Coke float. Served with a long spoon, the dessert combines a scoop of the gelato and candy made out of Rosa Regale Sparkling Red—which is reduced down to a syrup and allowed to crystallize—with a pour of Rosa Regale Sparkling White over the top. Finally, Scott makes a plated dessert featuring pear poached in the Brachetto with cinnamon and nutmeg overnight. When ready to serve, he slices the fruit, fans it across a plate, and garnishes it with vanilla sabayon and more of the sparkling red candy.

Of course, Rosa Regale’s wines also make their mark on their own. This is something that Ji Hun Hong, chef-owner of Dragonfly Wine & Sushi Bistro in El Paso, Texas, recognized

when he became the first restaurateur in the area to serve the sparkling white. Hong, who added it to his list specifically for its delicate sweetness and food friendliness, is especially excited about pairing it with yellowtail carpaccio on the one hand and yuzu cheesecake on the other. In the former case, he explains, “The freshness of the yellowtail and orange oil will complement the white-peach profile of the wine, while the sweetness will simmer down the spicy notes of the roasted jalapeño and yuzu-jalapeño oil.” In the latter, the Moscato tempers the cheesecake’s richness while highlighting the citrusy notes of the yuzu.

The many ways in which Rosa Regale can be enjoyed is in itself worth a *cin-cin*. From a joyful flute to a thoughtful pairing, as a cocktail mixer or a menu ingredient, these versatile wines inspire creativity while carrying the spirit of celebration in a bottle. **LV**

ICING ON THE CAKE

**HOSHIZAKI ICE MACHINES
CAN HEAT UP ANY BEVERAGE
PROGRAM**

story by Amy Antonation / photos by Mimi Leake

What are you willing to sacrifice for perfect, sparkling ice? The hard-hearted subject of Foreigner's golden oldie "Cold as Ice" may be willing to kick her love to the curb, but if she were to run a restaurant, she'd discover that you don't have to sacrifice anything for high-quality cubes. You just have to head to Hoshizaki for ice machines that last for decades, save money in the long run, and yield products that make beverage pros swoon.

Hoshizaki's ice makers—over 150 models in all—collectively turn out eight different types of ice. There are workhorse products like crescent cubes and cubelets (which come in three sizes and two textures); flaked ice perfect for bar displays; and ice spheres and large-format cubes (both 1- and 2-inch), ideal for making eye-catching cocktails. That's more than any other brand manufactures, says Sally Ray, marketing director at Hoshizaki America, who adds that it's not unusual for clients to own more than one machine.

Matthew Berger—a bar consultant for Curious Kitchen and Bar in Senoia, GA, and a brewer/cellarmaster in nearby Peachtree City—is a devotee of Hoshizaki ice machines.



Curious Kitchen and Bar's Pretty in Pink cocktail is made with Cathead Honeysuckle Vodka, cranberry-mint syrup, and lemon; shaken with Hoshizaki's crescent cubes; and served over a 2-inch cube.

As a bar consultant for Curious Kitchen and Bar in Senoia, Georgia, and a brewer/cellarmaster in nearby Peachtree City as well as a local influencer, Matthew Berger agrees. “Give me the cubelet ice, the 1-inch cubes, and the big [2-inch] cubes, and I’d be the happiest camper ever,” he declares, ultimately settling on the latter as his favorite. “It immediately increases the sexy factor of the cocktail,” he says, noting that he has always had at least two drinks on his cocktail lists that utilized it. The results are perennial crowd-pleasers that garner consistent oohs and ahhs from guests. “The cube fits perfectly in an Old Fashioned class. Any cocktail poured over the top of the cube . . . fills pretty much to the top of the glass, [and] the garnish sits right on top beautifully,” he explains.

For Berger’s money, however, the most versatile ice for a hospitality setting would be the cubelet (he dubs it the “ice nerd’s ice”), since it has numerous applications beyond simply shining on social media feeds: Whether you’re pouring a soda to serve with a slice of pizza or dressing up a tiki glass with a wee paper umbrella and an edible orchid, the product is indispensable. Ray agrees, noting that certain beverages, like Mint Juleps and fountain drinks, practically cry out for that chewable style.

Berger has a lot to say about the other shapes too: For instance, putting 1-inch cubes in a highball glass “[is] visually . . . so attractive.” And while he admits his preference for the smaller specialty cubes, he acknowledges that the crescent cube—Hoshizaki’s most popular shape—is an ideal choice for many situations. “The machine makes it faster [than the 1-inch cubes]. It’s easy to use. It’s a universal ice cube,” he says, adding that it reminds him of hitting up the soda fountain at the gas station as a kid.

That’s echoed by Ray, who points out that the shape of the crescent cubes (flat on one side, curved on the other) allow them to snuggle up nicely next to each other in a drink. More ice in a glass means less liquid is required to fill it—and that means lower costs, whether you’re paying for Fanta or Fernet. In fact, Hoshizaki has conducted experiments to show that its crescent cubes displace 3 ounces more soda in a 32-ounce cup than does a competitor’s product.

In cocktail bars where every beverage has to be a work of art, investing in one



The 1825 cocktail at Curious Kitchen and Bar features select-barrel Elijah Craig in a glass smoked with white American oak; it’s chilled with Hoshizaki’s crescent cubes and served over the company’s 2-inch cube.

of the brand’s undercounter specialty machines can yield even more dramatic savings. Rather than buying large-format cubes or spheres from a third party (which can cost over \$1.50 per piece, according to Berger), operators can save money over the long term by purchasing a compact machine that also eliminates the need for fussy molds—which invariably result in cloudy ice—and freezers in which to store them.

On that note, the clarity of Hoshizaki’s ice—whatever its shape—is the result of a unique product design, says Ray. Instead of a single-sided, grid-style evaporator—which traps impurities as well as pockets of oxygen that cause cloudiness during the freezing process—Hoshizaki machines have gridless, double-sided evaporators, ensuring the ice is denser, slower to melt, and crystal clear. “I’ve heard people say they think ice should be white,” she asserts, “but white[ness] comes from the impurities in the ice that make it melt faster” as well as impart off-flavors. By way of comparison, Berger notes, “You can have fresh-squeezed juices [in a cocktail] or something you bought from a distributor that’s from concentrate. You notice the quality [difference].”

Another benefit of Hoshizaki’s design is durability. Thanks to those double-sided evaporators, Hoshizaki machines turn out a large batch of ice every 30 minutes; most other ice makers, according to Ray, produce a batch half the size every 15 minutes. Because they run through two cycles rather than one to make the same amount of ice in the same amount of time, they are subject to greater wear and tear and therefore a shorter lifespan. Berger enthusiastically attests to Hoshizaki’s endurance as he recalls taking over the lease at his last cocktail bar: It was a turnkey operation, and when he and his team walked into the space, they found a Hoshizaki machine. “It had probably been off for six months; it was from the 1990s, maybe 1995,” he says. “Replacement parts weren’t even being made anymore, but it just needed to be serviced and it started making ice. That thing looked prehistoric, but it still freaking worked.”

“With ice machines, you 100% get what you pay for,” Berger continues. “Hoshizaki can’t be matched by any others.” Which is good news for operators who don’t want to sacrifice anything—quality, variety, or dependability—when it comes to their drinks. **LT**

In each issue, Tasting Panel publisher/editor-in-chief 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

PICKS



Tasting Panel publisher/
editor-in-chief Meridith May.

WINES



Cline Family Cellars 2019 Fog Swept Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$30) A silky, savory wine with notes of tomato leaf, beetroot, and orange peel. Cinnamon, rose, and wild strawberry claim their spot midway, accompanied by earth and sage. It all brightens up beautifully for an arresting finish with balanced acidity and minerality. **92**



Concha y Toro 2020 Casillero del Diablo Reserva Pinot Noir, Chile (\$12) After making an earthy start with chocolate, coffee bean, and ripe black cherry, this outgoing and expressive red finishes with aplomb: It's juicy and full of verve. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Gemma di Luna 2020 Pinot Grigio delle Venezie, Italy (\$15) Mineral-rich notes accompany flavors of lemongrass, pear, chamomile, and oregano. Hints of lanolin appear on the streamlined finish. **91**

ENOVATION BRANDS



Concha y Toro 2021 Gran Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, DO Litueche, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$15) Following captivatingly vivid aromas of fresh hay, basil, and lemon blossom, stark acidity woos the senses, with a slice of lime lending extra edge. Crushed stone and a hint of peanut brittle rock the palate. **93**

FETZER VINEYARDS



French Blue 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, France (\$15) This not-so-simple white shows succulent aromas of wildflowers, grapefruit, peach, and tapioca. Lively and straightforward, the palate offers flavors of key lime, orange marmalade, pea tendrils, and banana. Honeysuckle reaches a crescendo of sweetness on the finish. **91**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



Tous Les Jours 2020 Pinot Noir, California (\$17) Spiced cinnamon, pomegranate, and persimmon perform in a round yet light-as-air body. Bright acidity meshes with savory undertones of tomato leaf and beet. **90**

PAIRS WITH LIFE CELLARS

Worthy of a smooch.

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Wildly infatuated.

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Head over heels in love.



Quinta Vale D. Maria NV Lote N°18 Reserva Porto, Douro, Portugal (\$18)

Reined-in richness is the mark of this beautifully structured and elegant wine. Well-defined notes of black cherry, soy sauce, black olive, and molasses are joined by floral tones that last through the hearty finish. Made the traditional way,

with the grapes crushed by foot in granite lagares. **92**

AVELEDA



Muirwood 2019 Vaquero Block Cabernet Sauvignon, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$22)

Dark fruit and woody scents are captured on the nose. Red fruit brings a high tone to the fore, where wild strawberry, black cherry, and plum weave in vanilla, cedar, and coffee bean. Layered, expressive, and

so well balanced, the wine aged in French and American oak. **92**

ASV WINES, INC.



Ammunition 2020 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$25)

Sourced from Carneros and the Russian River Valley and aged eight months in (30% new) French oak, this red possesses a revved-up personality. Notes of cinnamon raisin, dark cherry, sandalwood, and cocoa light up deeper savory tones. A silky mouthfeel, a juicy texture,

and an equally praiseworthy finish of soy sauce and sweet tobacco trigger pleasure on the palate. **92**

DAYLIGHT WINE & SPIRITS



St Huberts 2019 The Stag Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$20)

With a fraction of Malbec and Shiraz, this stand-up red bucks the system when it comes to value. Notes of milk chocolate in a sumptuous and ripe yet balanced body meet a chalky plum-skin middle. Savory flavors of balsamic and earth add to the

wine's mouthwatering elegance. Perfect for by-the-glass programs. **92**

TREASURY WINE ESTATES



Twin Suns 2019 Reserve Zinfandel, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$30)

Aged for 15 months in French oak, this kosher wine offers a satin-lined entry, with blackberry and molasses leading the way. The slightly jammy palate brings in white pepper and a blueberry middle along with plush

tannins and an acid structure that imparts elegance. **91**

THE RIVER WINE



San Polo 2019 Rubio Toscana IGT, Italy (\$25)

From a Montalcino winery owned by Marilisa Allegrini and her daughters, Carlotta and Caterina, this certified organic Super Tuscan is a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. Showing taut acidity through a swath of red cherry and plucky pomegranate,

it's juicy, lighthearted, and easy drinking, with a touch of sandalwood and minerality on the finish. **92**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Raeburn Winery 2020 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$20)

One of the best-priced Chardonnays out there, this super sipper aged sur lie in French and Hungarian oak for six months. It boasts crystal-clear purity of flavor, and, like the 2019 that we tasted last year, a light from within. White

flowers, passion fruit, and dainty minerality show through on the palate, while lemon blossom and powdered sugar are palpable on the finish. **93**

PURPLE BRANDS



Finca Sobreño 2018 Crianza Tempranillo, Toro, Spain (\$22)

Notes of balsamic, sweet tobacco, juicy plum, and baking spices make for a compelling Tinta de Toro (Tempranillo) aged in American oak for just over eight months. The wine's elegance shows through a burst of pomegranate and white pepper; with

chalky tannins backing up the finish. **92**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Trinchero 2020 Mary's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35)

A perfume of lime sorbet and summer peach lights up the glass with a stroke of minerality. The richness of the palate is reined in by just-ripe pears and tart apple. A true gem from a single vineyard in the Calistoga AVA. **94**



Cline Cellars 2019 Seven Ranchlands Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$23)

Bright, perky, and alive with intense flavors of cherry, pomegranate, mushroom, and sweet tobacco. Herbal notes accentuate the fruit, while lit-from-within acidity refines the mouthfeel. Perfect for by-the-glass programs. **91**



Forgeron Cellars 2018 Barbera, Sagemoor Vineyard, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$35)

Aged nine months in neutral French oak, this deeply concentrated, inky red shows dried violets and sweet plum. Good acidity meets a spice rack of flavors: vanilla, espresso, soy sauce, balsamic, cherry, and white pepper. **92**

Publisher's PICKS



Aquilini 10,000 Hours 2019 Syrah, Red Mountain, Washington (\$35)

This gorgeous labor of love from Red Mountain's sand, silt, and nutrient-rich gravel soils equates to 10,000 "hours of practice: There are no short-cuts." Aged 20 months in (20% new) French oak to come in at 15% ABV, it's powerful but

not overreaching in its muscular frame. Mint chocolate, anise, and cured meat make for a sumptuous start. Tannins appear within the silky texture before black pepper chimes in on the plush finish with generous dark fruit.

94



Lloyd Cellars 2020 Chardonnay, Carneros (\$40)

Creamy notes of toasted vanilla meet a surge of cookie dough, ripe melon, kiwi, and peanut brittle. This wine caresses with a sumptuous touch. 94



Dutton Estate Winery 2019 Kyndall's Reserve Chardonnay, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$44)

Vineyards as old as 54 years contribute to this white, which aged separately in stainless steel, oak, and concrete. With an arousing nose of pineapple upside-down cake, it just

sings on the palate. Succulent notes of ripe melon, vanilla wafer, and honeysuckle line the mouthfeel, whose velvet suppleness is luxury defined. Sweet lemon and brown sugar intensify the wine's complexity. 94



pureCru 2018 Pinot Noir, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$38)

More like pure earth: This ray of sunshine swoops in with savory ripeness. Accompanying bright notes of strawberry and pomegranate are mushroom, fallen leaves, soy sauce, and garden herbs. Plum and a hint of powdered cocoa appear on the finish. 93



Lake Sonoma Winery 2019 Malbec, Lazy Dog Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$45)

Elegant, bright, and well structured, with teeth-coating tannins and vibrant blackberry plus a hint of Worcestershire. Deep, tarry, and rich, this wine resonates with grace and meaty power. Aged 20 months in (50% new) French oak. 93



Mathew Bruno 2019 Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$38)

Fruit sourced from two pedigreed sites—the Baldacci family's Honey B Vineyard and Beckstoffer's Carneros Lake Vineyard—proves worthy in this regal white, aged nine months sur lie in French and American oak. Aromas of nougat and

lemon meringue are breathtaking, and the velvety mouthfeel is defined by buttered pear, caramel apple, and mouthwatering notes of chamomile and nectarine. 94



Forgeron Cellars 2019 Grenache, Boushey Vineyard, Yakima Valley, Washington (\$45)

We are thrilled by the second vintage of this small-production beauty. A nose of sweet cherry, jasmine, and scented orange peel is beguiling. With bracing acidity and notes of tart cherry, kirsch, and red tea, the palate gets off

to a sensational start; florals add aromatics throughout, while dried heather adds texture. Ideal for serving with most dishes. 93



Ride 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40)

Straight out of the gate, this wine overperforms for the price, from its inky black-carmine hue to its aromas of grilled meat, chocolate-dipped orange peel, and black plum. Juicy, vibrant, and teeth-coating yet focused, with notes of dusty cocoa, heather, and black olive. The deluxe mouthfeel is a smooth ride to the finish. 95

ROYAL PRINCE WINES



Keanu Wines 2018 Philippe's Cuvée Red Blend, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$45)

This sustainably estate-grown blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah shows beefy notes of smoked meat and blackberry. Black pepper comes into play, and good structure, highlighted by plush tannins, defines the broad and

generous palate with dark fruit and savory notes. Aged 21 months in barrel sur lie. 92

BROADWAY VINEYARDS

PHOTO: BOB MCCLENAHAN



Bonterra 2019 The Butler, Butler Ranch Vineyard, Mendocino County (\$50)

A blend of 63% Petite Sirah, 33% Syrah, 3% Grenache, and 1% Viognier; this single-vineyard, biodynamic estate cuvée is sourced from ridgetop knolls exceeding 2,000 feet in elevation. Well built and dynamic at 15.3% ABV, it shows power

driven by chewy tannins as dried violets and espresso roll through a field of spiced blueberries layered with chocolate cake and graphite. Aged for 18 months in 100% (35% new) French oak. **95**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Eden Estate 2019 Woz Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$50)

Eden Estate Wines owner John Couch goes way back with Apple legend Steve Wozniak and dedicated this wine to him. The nose is bright with lemon oil, pea tendrils, and vanilla custard, the palate

opulent and mouth-filling with flavors of key lime, tangerine, basil, and almond. Reined-in richness and good acid structure define a wine with fine food-pairing abilities. **94**



Lake Sonoma Winery 2019 Barbera, Glen Ellen, Sonoma County (\$60)

This domestic Barbera (with 1% Sangiovese) is proof that the variety, when carefully tended, can emulate its Old World counterpart. Aged 19 months in 70% neutral and 30% new French oak, it boasts a keen acid structure and a

deep and savory flavor profile: Spiced clove, dried heather, and tart cherry merge with undertones of slate. Silky and sumptuous, with hints of beetroot, lavender, and sweet tobacco. **94**



VIK Winery 2018 Milla Cala, Cachapoal Valley, Millahue, Chile (\$50)

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cab Franc, and Carménère combine in this meaty red. Intriguing, savory notes of balsamic, molasses, and Worcestershire are seasoned by oregano, chervil, dried lavender, and cigar leaf. Deep blue- and red-berry

notes intertwine throughout. **94**

GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS



MacRostie 2018 Thale's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$58)

Named for Steve MacRostie's wife, Thale's (pronounced *Thay-lee's*) Vineyard is a 13-acre site in Middle Reach—the northernmost part of the Russian River Valley—that encompasses three soil types and four clones of

Pinot Noir. French oak—aged for ten months, this small-production red possesses an airy, whisper-like demeanor beneath a crown of jeweled fruit. White pepper, raspberry, and tart cranberry tea show an earthy quality. The finish is vivid despite dusky base notes of oregano and dried rose. **93**



Quinta Vale D. Maria 2017, Douro, Portugal (\$65)

This strikingly beautiful single-vineyard red is made from a lineup of indigenous grapes, including Tinta Amarela, Rufete, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, and Touriga Francesa, among others, grown on 60-year-old vines. That maturity comes through thanks to vivacious aromas of roasted coffee bean, dark chocolate, and boysenberry. The wine's rich, concentrated power—illustrated by teeth-gripping plum-skin tannins—is built up by notes of anise and dried violets. But its muscle is balanced by grace, with a silky flow of tobacco, tar, and cedar on the finish. **97**

AVELEDA



Solomon Hills 2019 Estate Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$45)

One of the Central Coast's coolest sites, this vineyard sits on sandy soil 10 miles from the Pacific. Aromas of butterscotch and bread dough meld with key lime before pineapple and bright pear kickstart the palate

to reveal a layer of vanilla angel food cake. As the wine evolves and reins in its leesy, round character, it leads to salty notes of wet stone on the finish. Exquisite! **94**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Cuvaison 2019 ATS Chardonnay, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$60)

Wine-maker Steve Rogstad selected the estate's four finest barrels to produce this Meursault-like gem. Butterscotch melts on the tongue with a dollop of lemon curd and ripe pineapple. Rich and unctuous yet buoyed by great acidity, the

palate has a salty middle that attracts notes of vanilla wafer and a pinch of chervil. Amid floral tones that keep the aromatics on a roll, it finishes with a kiss of brioche. **96**



Goosecross 2017 Branta, Napa Valley (\$65)

What an opulent wine: Named for a term for "black goose," it's brushy and brambly, with strokes of elegance. And no wonder—the inky purple blend of 50% Zinfandel, 41% Petite Sirah, and 9% Cabernet Sauvignon is a grand demonstration of how these sympatico varieties work in tandem. On the heels of a perfume of tilled earth, nougat, and cedar, the silky palate shines bright as slightly chalky tannins and red plum connect with heather and dark chocolate. The varietals aged separately for 25 months in mostly used French barrels. **95**

Publisher's PICKS



St. Supéry 2018 Merlot, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$70) Ripe plum, cinnamon bark, crushed stone, and a dollop of white pepper just start to describe this intensely deep and ripe single-vineyard Merlot from St. Supéry's Rutherford Vineyard. Luscious dark cherry usurps the palate with pleasure, storming forward with a

plush yet mighty mouthfeel. **94**



Frisson 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$78) Grown on 40-year-old vines and aged for 18 months in (60% new) French oak, this distinctive small-production Cab includes 10% Merlot. High-toned notes of mint chocolate have chalky undertones, while cigar leaf, blackberry preserves, and graphite

lend panache. **94**

ATC WINES



J. Lohr 2018 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$100) From the steeply sloped, high-elevation Beck Vineyard in Paso Robles' Creston District, this small-production style-setter—released on January 1 in honor of Jerry Lohr's 85th birthday—is on top of its game. To quote CEO Steve Lohr, "The

2018 J. Lohr Signature Cabernet Sauvignon is the culmination of everything we have learned about winegrowing. . . . It sets a new bar for Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon." Aged 20 months in 100% new French oak, it contains 7% Saint-Macaire (along with 1% Malbec, which explains some of its brightness); the rare Bordeaux variety is known for its savory side as well as its color and density. Bold notes of cherry liqueur kick off a broad, generous wash of red fruit with an inner light; the palate is concentrated with notes of roasted coffee, sweet tobacco, and balsamic. **98**



Eden Estate 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$100) Old World acidity combined with a rustic bite of mulberry and red tea paint a unique picture for this variety as grown in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Tannins are supple and mild-mannered, yet a spark of fire courtesy of Red Hots laced with red plum alights on the finish. **93**



Bien Nacido Estate 2019 Old Vines Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$100)

Sourced from the oldest Pommard-clone vines on the estate, planted in 1973 and ungrafted, this Pinot Noir aged 16 months in (60% new) French oak. It possesses mouthwatering juiciness: Salted

cherry and chocolate-covered raisin are swathed in baking spices and rose petal, while tomato leaf and earth keep the high-toned notes in check. A rare beauty. **97**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



St. Supéry 2017 Dollarhide Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$110) This

100% estate-grown single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon hails from the winery's Dollarhide Ranch. The property is known for its steep rolling hills—reaching upwards of

1,100 feet—as well as some flatlands and seven lakes rife with wildlife. Aged for 20 months in 100% French oak (54% new), the wine offers a broad and generous mouthfeel with chewy tannins. The fruit is ripe and almost gobby, becoming more streamlined as it opens up. Dark berries are lush and sweet with hints of brown sugar. Acidity and chalky lift are well defined and have the mouth imploring for that next sip. Refined, elegant, polished, and poised. **96**



Mathew Bruno 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$120) Two high-profile winemakers, Stephens Moody and Dr. Nichola Hall, capture the inherent character of each of the sites from which this producer's small-lot offerings are sourced. The fruit for this wine hails from the Rutherford site that André

PHOTO: BOB MCCLLENAHAN

Tchelistscheff relied on for Georges de La-tour in the 1960s and 1970s. Scents of black olive, blackberry, slate, and dark chocolate are heady, and the palate is muscular, chewy, and savory, with flavors of fennel, ripe purple plum, pencil lead, and grilled meat. Soy sauce brings in salty minerality, augmenting the bittersweet finish of dark chocolate and toasted orange peel. **96**



Scattered Peaks 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sage Ridge Vineyard, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$125) A silky journey

from start to finish, yet energetic and somewhat flashy due to its intense, magnificent hue and depth of flavor. Espresso and dark chocolate uphold the stage presence of deeply concentrated black fruit and elegant yet broad tannins. **94**

PURPLE BRANDS



Erikson & Caradin 2018 Ivy & Thistle Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

(\$140) From a single row of Cabernet Sauvignon grown on one of the steepest parts of Atlas Peak, this wine fermented in concrete and aged in second-use barrels. Chalky tannins keep it both wound up and structured. Energetic and alert rather than overpowering, it delivers plush blackberry, plum skin, espresso, and black olive on its broad-shouldered frame, well built for aging. **95**

ATC WINES



Editor's note: We just could not help ourselves. It's always difficult to award a 100-point score—we are often hesitant—and the night we tasted this wine, it was in the company of some very high-end Cabs. But there was really nothing to judge against its prowess.



Spottswoode 2018 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$235) Believing that the 2018 vintage was ideal, winemaker Aron Weinkauff claims that “our hand was never forced” when it came to picking, “so we were able to achieve pinpoint accuracy in terms of ripeness and flavor development.” Ideal it is. Aromas of ripe plum, red tea, and tomato leaf are exuberant. Dry, powdery tannins seamlessly meld with the plush fruit, urging black cherry and black raspberry out to perform with self-assurance. Stoniness augments orange peel and Earl Grey within the wine’s luxurious flow. **100**



Erikson & Caradin 2018 Craftsmen & Wolves Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$140) Teeth-grabbing, chalky tannins speak of burnished plum and coffee bean. Violets and black pepper appear in between to heighten the experience of structure, tension, and keen

acidity. Tarry and denser as it opens up, the wine finishes with a wash of blackberry and soy sauce. **94**

ATC WINES



Don Melchor 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, DO Puento Alto, Alto Maipo Valley, Chile (\$150) The Don Melchor Vineyard lies at the foot of the Andes on the northern bank of the Maipo River; over 2,000 feet above sea level; this wine reflects that dramatic terrain. The velvet-

lined curtains open with streamlined notes of black coffee before plum and chocolate take center stage with spice and cedar. A magnificent performance featuring kirsch on the finish and cameos by Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Petit Verdot. **98**

FETZER VINEYARDS

SPIRITS



Elvis Rye, USA (\$50) Partnering with Elvis Presley Enterprises, Grain & Barrel Spirits channeled “the King” in producing this 90-proof straight Indiana rye. Aromas of cinnamon, brown sugar, and dried apricot are subtle and clean. Spiked by white pepper, walnut and peach preserves wash over the palate. Cigar leaf comes in midway, while tart-sweet green apple surges on the finish. **92**



Duke Founder's Reserve Grand Cru Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$65) This agave spirit from the Jalisco Highlands is aged between three and six months in used whiskey barrels of American oak and finished in third-use French Grand Cru wine barrels. The nose of salted

caramel, fresh hay, and clean agave is sensual and luxurious, and the glossy, textured liquid is vibrant: Notes of lemon cookie, jasmine, ginger root, and French vanilla captivate. The pure, silky finish offers up chamomile and pine nut. **97**



Duke Founder's Reserve Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$150) Aged for three years in used whiskey barrels of American oak and finished in third-use French Grand Cru wine barrels, this tequila emits heady aromas of spiced sandalwood, cocoa, and orange peel along with a mature note of agave. White-peppered butterscotch enriches the palate, while dark cherry, chocolate, tangerine, and banana-walnut cake go broad and deep. Exquisite from start to robust finish. **99** *TL*



Showcasing \$20-and-Under Bordeaux Reds With 90-Plus Scores

Our editors, including myself, are always pleasantly surprised when we happen upon big reds that wow us for suggested retail prices at the \$20-or-under mark. We expect a lot out of the bottlings we taste—as do all the beverage professionals out there who sell and/or distribute wine. We decided to create a special section for this issue devoted to those red wines made with Bordeaux varieties that deserve some extra ink. —*Meridith May, publisher/ editor-in-chief*

Trivento 2020 Maximum Reserve Red Blend, Uco Valley/Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11) Coming in at 14% ABV, this exuberant blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Malbec aged eight months in French oak and an additional six months in bottle. Meaty, chewy, and generous in stature, it offers a mega-mouthfeel of dark cherry, wild strawberry, and grilled beef plus a hint of iron, with spiced beet and sweet tobacco adding a layer of depth. Boasting great acid structure and a lengthy finish, it overdelivers in droves. **91**



FETZER VINEYARDS

Concha y Toro 2020 Casillero del Diablo Reserva Carménère, Chile (\$12) This blend of 85% Carménère and 15% other reds features delectable notes of spiced plum and a hint of jalapeño. Juicy from start to finish, with espresso giving depth to an evolved balance of oak, earth, and acidity. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Hook or Crook Cellars 2018 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi (\$13) Aromas of cinnamon, clove, and sweet tobacco mingle with wild strawberry and dark plum. The exuberant profile ranges from mocha and cedar to black cherry, all exemplifying liveliness, focus, and ripeness. Delicious and easygoing, with enough spice to keep the fruit alive and the savory qualities intriguing. **91**



THOMAS ALLEN VINEYARDS & WINERY

Flat Top Hills 2018 Red Blend, California (\$14) The price belies this wine's high quality, which shouldn't be unexpected from the team at C. Mondavi & Family. Generous black fruit washes the palate, filtering through melted chocolate and exposing black-tea tannins. Upright and impressive. **91**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



French Blue 2019 Bordeaux Rouge, France (\$15) Hallmark scents of berries and earth also appear on the first sip; roasted coffee and toasty cedar follow. This easy drinker goes deep with mellow tannins, good acidity, and richness of flavor. **90**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



Two Horns A Mean Red Blend, California (\$15) A blend of all five Bordeaux varieties, this bold statement lathers the palate with melted chocolate, spiced plum, and blackberry preserves. A hint of mesquite and sweet tobacco makes for a savory finish. **89**



Paso Highlands Cellars 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles Highlands District (\$17)

Scents of mountain sage and black plum engage the nose and don't let go. The entry is brushy and brambly, showing spiced coffee, mocha, cedar, and mulberry. Lengthy notes of jammy fruit maintain freshness as well as ripeness on the palate, which also shows balanced acidity and firm structure. **91**

MILLER FAMILY WINE CO.



Tous Les Jours 2020 North Coast Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$17)

A nose of back olive, graphite, and black plum speaks to a serious Cab whose structure and elegance is maintained by deep black-purple fruit. Chalky tannins make way for an onslaught of juicy plum, black pepper, and slate. For a wine whose name translates as "everyday," it definitely overdelivers on complexity. **91**

PAIRS WITH LIFE CELLARS



MyStory 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$17)

Wonderfully balanced, with well-defined notes of white pepper, strawberry, mocha, and toasty oak. Tannins integrate with a rich and opulent flavor profile. **91**

MYSTORY WINE COMPANY



Highway 12 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$17)

An impressively inky black-purple hue and scents of blueberry, graphite, and violets reveal a concentrated red that tastes as though it costs three times the price. Dark chocolate-covered violets and blueberry are ravishing, and the sense of plush, round richness is certainly palpable without being over the top: At under 14% ABV, the wine's power is reined in, but its structure is firmly in place. **93**



Carmen 2020 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo, Chile (\$18)

This stunning single-vineyard wine earns high marks for its aromas of violets and boysenberry and mirrored flavors that take a firm grip with plum-skin tannins. Structure and beauty go hand in hand as herbal notes alight on ripe plum. Aged 14 months in oak and stainless steel. **92** *TL*

SANTA RITA



PHOTO: MATT MORRIS



Julien Fayard is the veteran winemaker behind the Gelson's private-label wines from Napa Valley.

Taking Stock in the Market

SUPERSTAR WINEMAKERS JULIEN FAYARD AND DOUG MARGERUM KEEP **GELSON'S PRIVATE-LABEL WINES** TOP SHELF

Gelson's private-label wines have been on *The Tasting Panel's* radar for several years now: Each vintage is as exciting as the last, thanks to Napa Valley's Julien Fayard and Central Coast legend Doug Margerum.

These two impressive wine-making veterans lend their talents to the specialty grocer, which operates 27 full-service locations in Southern California and offers only the most high-quality foods and hand-selected produce—so it's no surprise that the brass in the wine department would join forces with them for another round of exquisite selections.



Central Coast winemaker Doug Margerum is behind the Gelson's private-label Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Sta. Rita Hills in Santa Barbara County.



Gelson's 2019 Epicure Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$100)

This single-vineyard, single-varietal Cab aged 20 months in new French oak. The texture is liquid satin: Dark chocolate melts in the mouth, joined by chewy and silky tannins. Notes of cigar leaf, gingerbread, and espresso add to the big, luxurious finish. **96**

Gelson's 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley (\$50)

While muscular and robust, this wine possesses inherent acidity that shows through concentrated black fruit. Aromas of black plum and fennel lead to a full-bodied mouthfeel. Spiced with notes of white pepper and clove, the glossy texture affirms elegance and grace. **95**



Gelson's 2019 Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$30)

The pedigreed sites sourced for this deluxe red, crafted by famed Central Coast winemaker Doug Margerum, include the Sanford & Benedict, Donnachadh, La Encantada, and Radian vineyards. Savory and spiced scents of mulberry, sandalwood, and cinnamon give way to deep and juicy flavors of sweet tobacco, red plum, and cherry. A swatch of sage and a dash of black pepper coat dark chocolate, enhancing an earthy finish. **94**

Gelson's 2019 Chardonnay, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$22)

This white aged sur lie for ten months in (60% new) French oak, resulting in a Chablis-like texture: crisp and clean yet curvaceously sensual. Scents of lemon drop and candied pineapple are alluring. Minerality underscores the palate as succulent notes of banana and vanilla wafer create a creamier mouthfeel. The long finish is a testament to the complexity of this stunning wine. **94**

Keeping Up With Guarachi Family Wines

The portfolio at Guarachi Family Wines continues to grow—so to catch up, we tasted through the following releases with owner Alex Guarachi. Here are our notes.



Parker Station 2019 Pinot Noir, Monterey/San Luis Obispo Counties (\$17)

Bramble, earth, and tobacco leaf spell out savoriness on the nose. On entry, a high-pitched note of bright cherry is heightened even further by equally bright acidity. Dark cherry leaves behind a dry, pithy texture before mocha and cedar appear on the

compelling finish. 76% of the fruit came from Monterey County and 24% from San Luis Obispo County. **90**



Tenshen 2019 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$20)

Aged in 50% stainless steel and 50% French oak, the fruit comes off as world class. Candied pineapple is bright and *intenshenionally* lean. Chamomile and chalky mineral notes help round out an exquisite mouthfeel, and the acidity is pitch-perfect. **93**



Tenshen 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Central Coast (\$25)

Showing a gorgeous dark purple-magenta hue, this earthy, expressive red is super-ripe, with notes of spiced plum, black pepper, cedar, and walnut. Some herbal notes on the back end are layered with dark chocolate. Overdelivers for the price. **92**



Tenshen 2020 White, Santa Barbara County (\$20)

This blend of Viognier, Grenache Blanc, and Chardonnay aged two months in (20% new) French oak and rested in stainless-steel tanks. Following powdery and sweet floral scents, notes of salted pear, tangerine peel, and jasmine create the wine's namesake tension and lean edginess. **92**



Tenshen 2020 Red, Santa Barbara County (\$25)

Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Petite Sirah offer up a perfume of toasted cedar, grilled meat, and black plum. On the palate, charcuterie melds with a chorus of more black plum as well as roasted coffee and dried violets. **93**



Bacon 2020, Central Coast (\$25)

We say "Bravo!" to this sizzling blend of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre, which aged 12 months in French and American oak. It's more complex than its name suggests, with a charming nose of heather, lavender, and blueberry. Toasty, meaty flavors latch on to dark chocolate and espresso

within the big, robust mouthfeel alongside broad and supple tannins. **93**



Tasting an Award-Winning Coterie of High-End, Elegant Expressions From Campo Cabal Tequila

After Campo Cabal claimed two gold medals and a silver at the 2021 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, we knew we had to taste its lineup for ourselves. What we discovered was an abundance of flavor, character, and stunning texture.

Cabal comes from the Spanish word *caballero*, which translates as “cowboy” or “gentleman”; the brand’s bottles, designed to resemble horse heads, have earned innovation awards for design (though standard bar bottles are also available). Crafted in the Los Valles region of Amatitán, which is considered to be the birthplace of tequila, Campo Cabal’s four expressions are the result of baking freshly picked agave piñas in a century-old, 32-ton brick oven for 42 hours. Here are our notes on these delectable double-distilled spirits. **LD**

Tequila Cabal Blanco, Mexico (\$50 for bar bottle/\$65 for horse bottle) Following aromas of musky vanilla, clay, fresh agave, and lime, cocoa and marshmallow take hold on the palate with bright agave notes, white pepper, and lively white-grapefruit zest. Creamy with a sense of pureness, the liquid leaves the palate clean yet well seasoned. **95**

Tequila Cabal Reposado, Mexico (\$65 for bar bottle/\$80 for horse bottle) Stored in bourbon barrels of charred American white oak for eight months, this elegant and spicy spirit exudes peaty aromas along with green herbs, spearmint, and mocha. A dynamic entry of white-peppered tangerine is sweetened by maple and bolstered by walnut and grainy notes before cigar leaf and stone fruit mingle on the finish. **95**

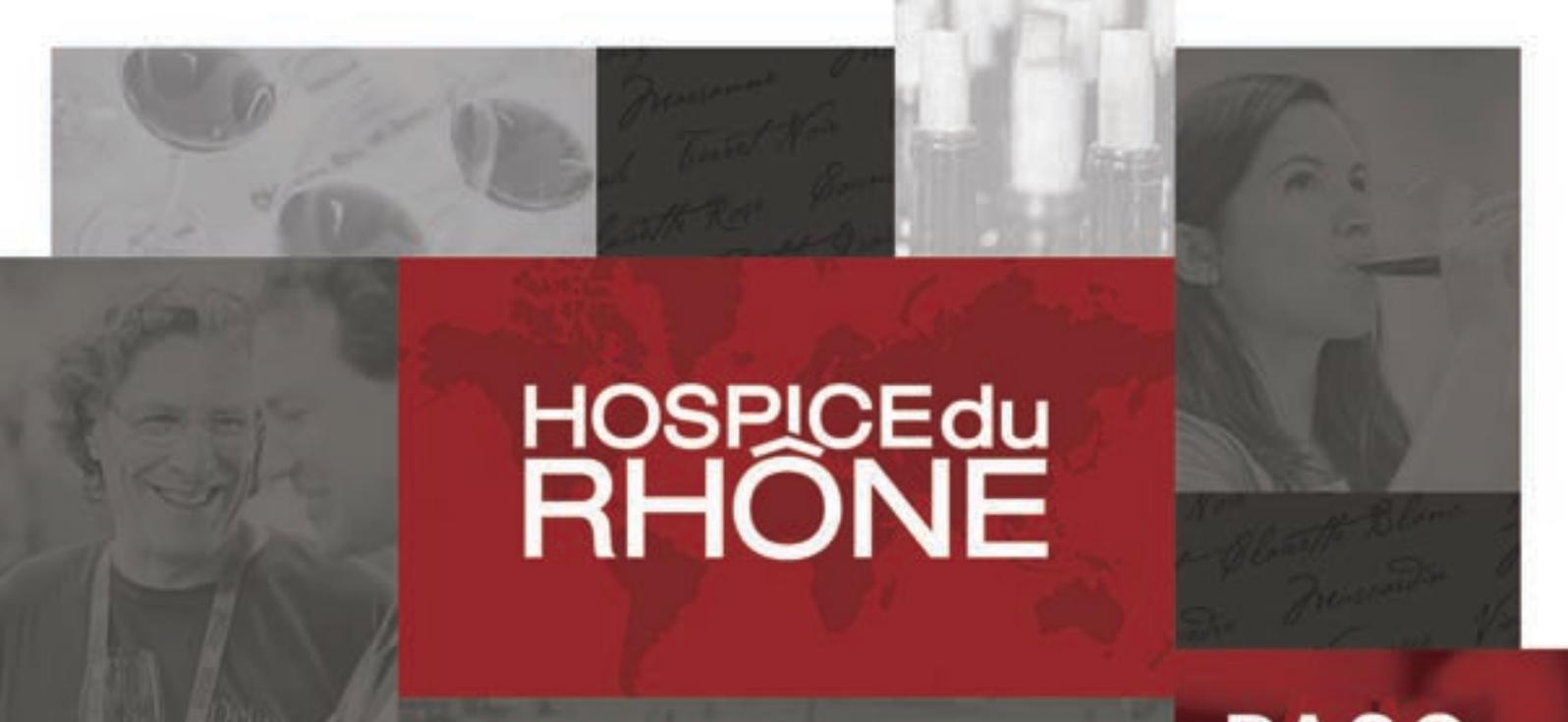


Tequila Cabal Añejo, Mexico (\$87 for bar bottle/\$109 for horse bottle) The nose of gingersnap and brown-sugared peach with a hint of spearmint is captivating and the palate is lush and round, with a mouthwatering effect of peach nectar, vanilla tart, lemongrass, and jasmine. The fresh notes of agave are unmasked and shine through. One of the more succulent mouthfeels for an añejo, imparting a wave of liquid pleasure. Aged 18 months. **96**

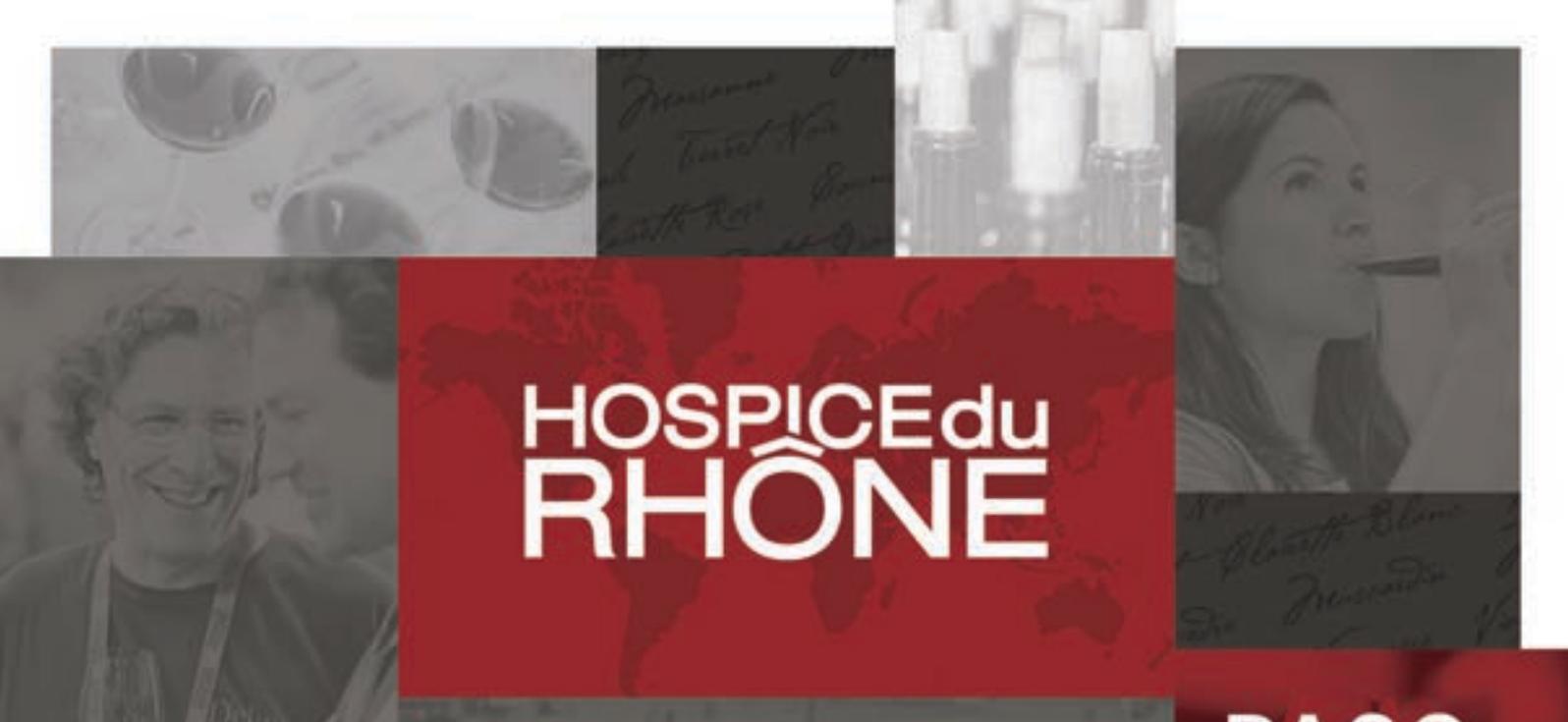
Tequila Cabal Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$270 horse bottle only) This expression aged for 36 months, yet the oak is subtle and so well integrated that the resulting flavor profile brings out only the most exquisite notes.

Scents of patchouli, ginger, ripe pineapple, and graham cracker are the start of something *extra* special. Unctuous flavors of chamomile, cereal, butterscotch, and mango are enveloped in a subtle coat of cedar, allowing the agave to come forward with brilliant clarity. **98**

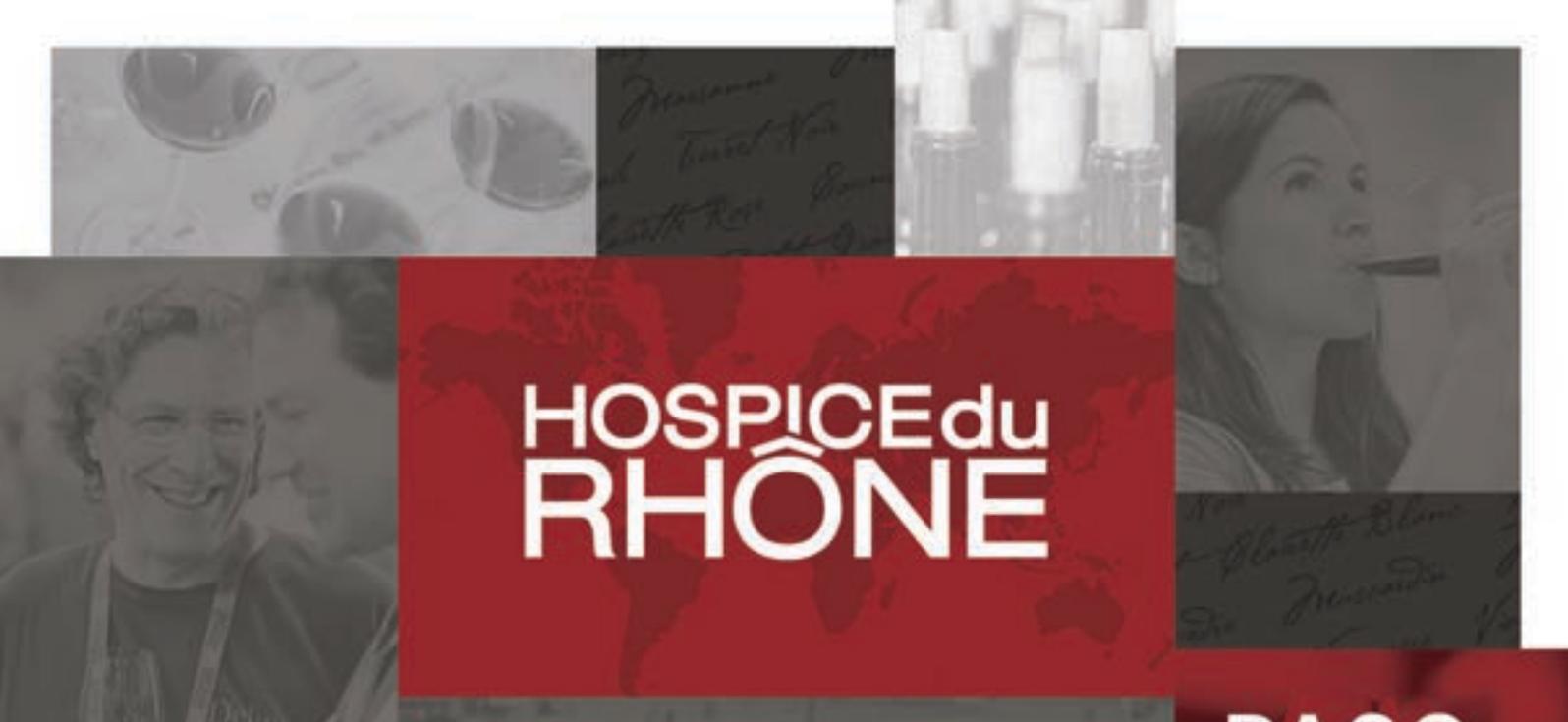




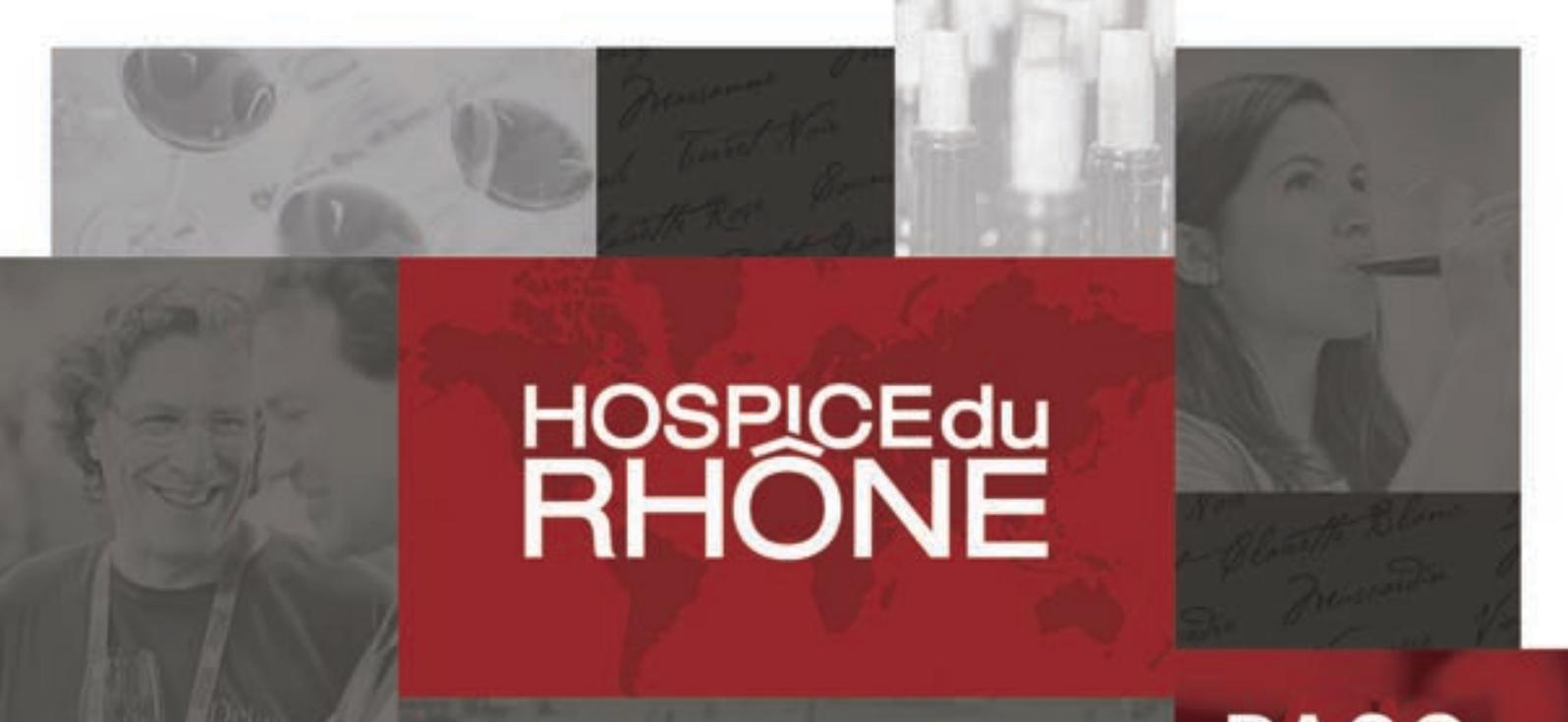
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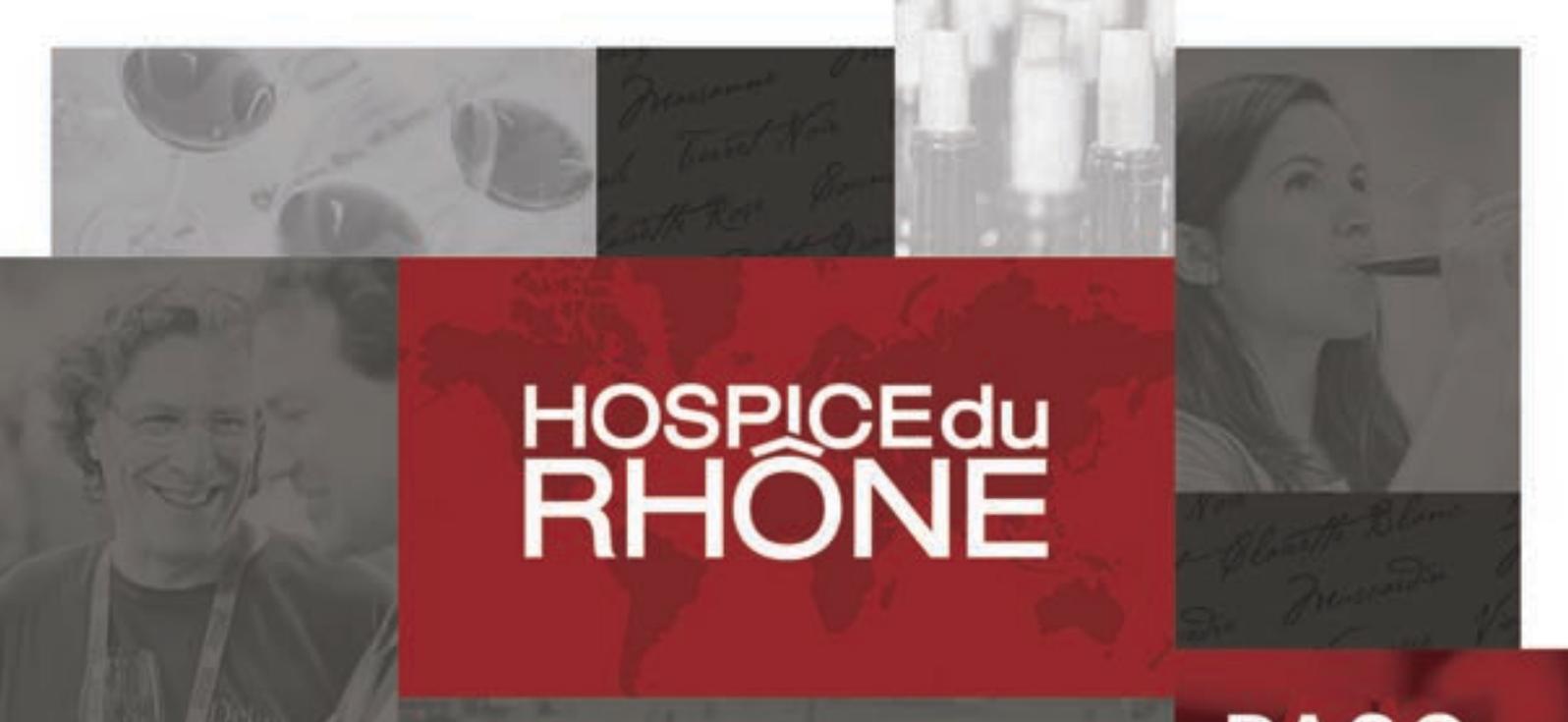
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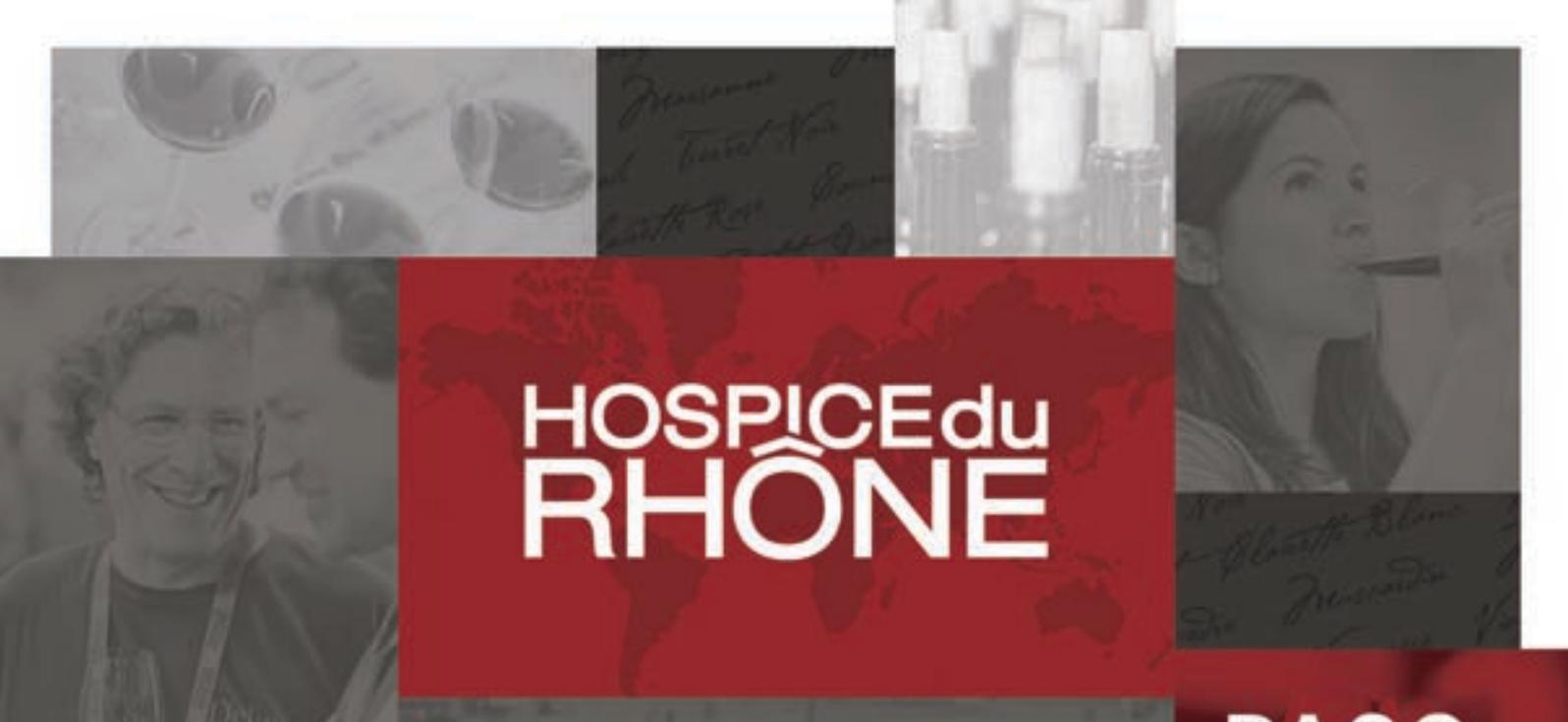
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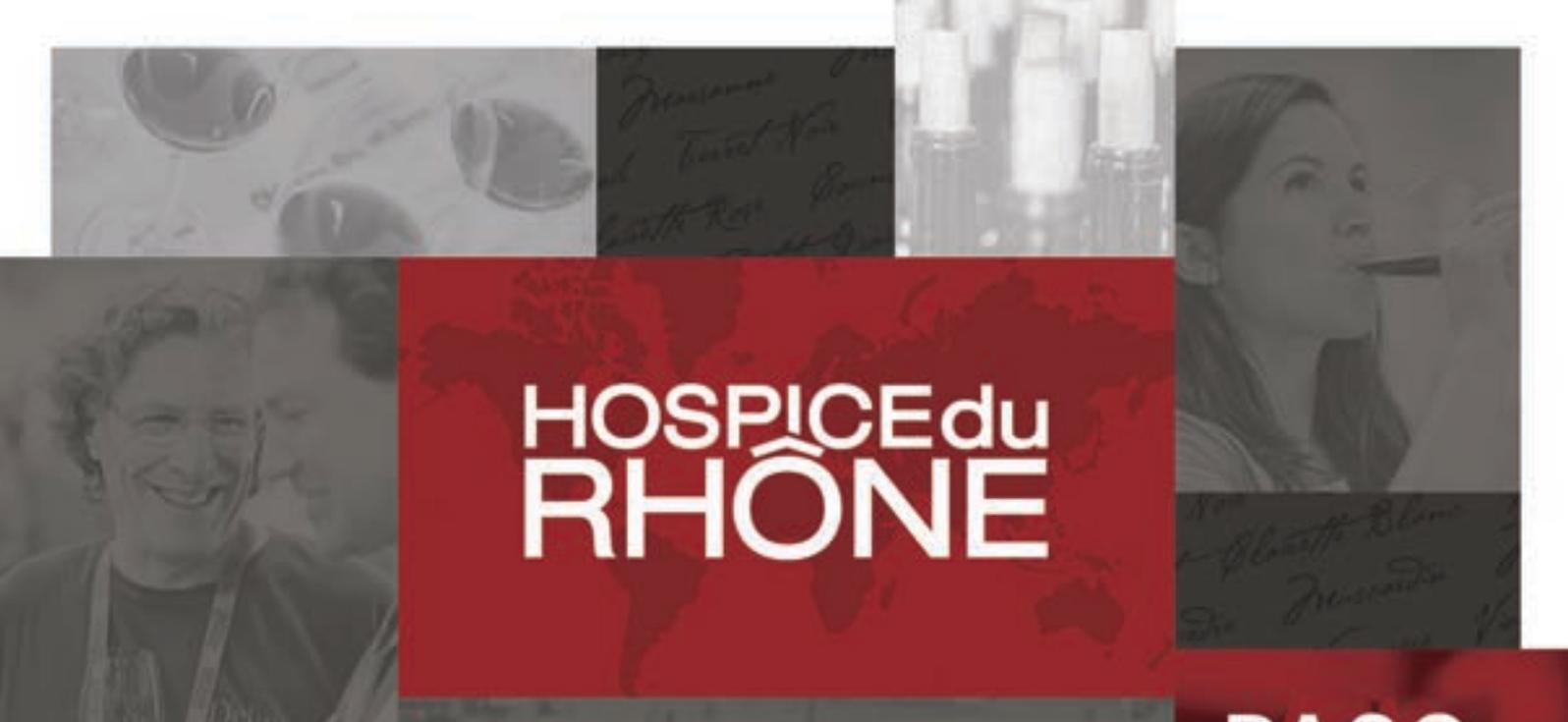
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SURVEYING THE OFF-PREMISE CHART-TOPPERS

Great brands, like great bands, forge a personal connection with their fans; a successful label, no less than a hit song, becomes a touchstone by which consumers count their joys, drown their sorrows, make new memories, and relive old ones. In this category report, we look at a few beverage companies that are resonating in the retail space as profoundly as their musical counterparts dominate the airwaves. There's something here for everyone, from the loyalists who keep their standbys on heavy rotation to the ficklest of drinkers constantly in search of the next big thing: If producers like Ménéage à Trois and Félix Solís Avantis represent the golden oldies (albeit with plenty of new tricks up their sleeves), brands like Dashfire and Flybird exemplify the industry's cutting edge. Consider us a captive audience.



It Takes Three to
Start a Trend:

MÉNAGE À TROIS

Just as Chuck Berry is credited with creating rock 'n' roll, so the wine industry considers Trinchero's Ménéage à Trois to be the pioneer of the \$10 California red blend category. Launched out of Napa Valley in 1996 by Folie à Deux Winery, the wine was named in honor of the three red grapes it features (currently Zinfandel, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon). Following the original release of the flagship alongside its White Blend, the brand's portfolio has exponentially grown to encompass a whopping 26 offerings today, including the number-one new wine items for five consecutive years per Nielsen data: Midnight, a dark red blend (2014); Silk, a soft red blend (2015); a Chardonnay called Gold (2016); Decadence, a Cabernet Sauvignon (2017); and Luscious, a Pinot Noir (2018). Along the way, it's been recognized with Beverage Dynamics' Fast Track Award four times; the Impact Hot Brand award six times as well as the Impact Blue Chip award in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019; and MarketWatch's 2009 Wine Brand of the Year award.

In conjunction with its provocative name, Ménéage à Trois' bold marketing—take, for instance, its call to wine drinkers visiting its website to “experiment threely”—has helped not only to create a whole category but to remain one of its leaders. This is why *The Tasting Panel* considers Ménéage à Trois among the most fearless rock stars of retail.



Broadside director of winemaking Adam LaZarre and marketing director Anna Frizzell.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINE HOOLIGANS



For the People, the Planet, and Prosperity: BROADSIDE

“What goes into the land goes into the grapes and so into the wine. From there it goes into our bodies,” says Anna Frizzell, marketing director for sustainably farmed producer Broadside. “[Our brand was] born out of the Santa Margarita Ranch, which is the southernmost appellation in Paso Robles. It’s a huge open space that’s managed in collaboration with nature. Farming works around the wildlife there, and the health of the land is always top of mind.”

Since 2006, Broadside has been crafting Paso Robles wines that express purity of fruit, balance, and elegance from SIP-certified vineyards in the San Juan Creek and Willow Creek districts as well as Santa Margarita Ranch. Currently Broadside is itself completing certification and plans to don the esteemed SIP logo on its label in Q3 of this year—no small achievement, as SIP is a rigorous sustainability program with strict standards based on expert scientific

input, independent verification, and transparency. Addressing the “3 Ps of Sustainability”—people, planet, and prosperity—these standards involve a measurable, holistic set of practices that cover habitat, water, energy, soil, recycling, air quality, packaging, pest management, social equity, and business management. Implementation of these requirements is verified through on-site inspections before participants receive final approval.

“To us [sustainability] means ‘perpetuity.’ How do we maintain these practices for a long, long time?” says Frizzell. “For example, our grower-partners really think about their water use—conserving when they can while slowing the flow to spread further through catchment systems. Where the water ends up and how we reuse it is of paramount importance. These and many other social responsibilities are addressed when acquiring the SIP certification.” The latter include providing fair wages, excellent healthcare and

disability benefits, a 401k program, and educational allowances.

Adam LaZarre, who joined the Broadside team as director of wine-making in 2013, fits in perfectly with the company’s culture. A Navy veteran who developed a love for wine while stationed overseas, LaZarre enrolled in the winemaking and viticulture program at California State University, Fresno, after finishing his military service and has now lived in Paso Robles for over 20 years. He’s a firm believer in the democratization of great wine and endorses a price point that’s inclusive of all consumers; most of Broadside’s wines are under \$20 at retail.

LaZarre’s commitment to the consumer experience is unparalleled right down to the enclosures he uses. “There are two main reasons I like to use Nomacorc,” he explains. “[One,] there is never an issue with cork taint, and [two,] . . . all corks allow a microscopic amount of oxygen into the bottle over time, which, arguably, may help develop the wine. You can order these corks in various porosities, which allows you to match the wine to the amount of oxygen you think [it] needs to develop. Big, heavy reds: more oxygen. Lighter, delicate wines: much less.”

Responsibly produced from sustainably grown sugarcane in Brazil, these enclosures are optimized through Broadside’s latest sustainable initiative: a recycling program it implemented with its cork supplier, Vinventions. Trade and consumers are invited to join the program by mailing their Broadside corks to Broadside Cork Recycling, 980 Airway Court, Suite A, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. —*Natasha Swords*

Broadside 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$18)

Sourced from sustainably farmed, SIP-certified vineyards, this concentrated, sensual blend of 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, and 6% Malbec spent 18 months in French and American oak and offers spiced mulberry, tomato leaf, cigar box, blackberry, and graphite. Chalky tannins adhere to big shoulders within a graceful frame. **92**—*Meridith May*





A Prophecy of Spring:

OLD SOUL WINES

Old Soul 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi (\$15) Sweet blackberries wrap around the palate, accompanied by forest leaves and dark chocolate. A dose of spiced oak lends an intriguingly savory side to this 85% Cabernet Sauvignon with Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, and Merlot. Round bodied and balanced at 13.7% ABV, it aged eight months in 60% French and 40% American oak. **90**—*M.M.*

In the Lodi vineyards where Old Soul grapes grow, towering oak trees abound, some dating back hundreds of years. Printed directly onto the glass of the brand's bottles is an illustration of an oak tree bereft of leaves. While the skeletal image can at first appear haunting, it actually depicts one phase of a long life cycle. And like that tree, so too will grapevines again bud and bear fruit after losing their leaves (so long as Ganoderma root rot or phylloxera is not at play—yikes!). In that light, the label might even invoke some self-reflection, and its simple Gothic aesthetic certainly stands out—as is evidenced by the fact that Old Soul is producer Oak Ridge Winery's second-bestselling SKU.

Old Soul launched in 2012 with a lineup comprising Old Vine Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Pinot Noir, and a blend called Pure Red—all made from vines that range from 30 to 50 years old. According to chief winemaker Laura Chadwell, their age ensures that they're better able to withstand drought, while the grapes they bear "ripen more evenly and have more intense, concentrated flavors." Primarily grown in the sub-AVA of Mokelumne River, they yield structured wines that are "truly expressive of the unique Lodi AVA."

Patriarch Angelo Maggio, who arrived in Lodi from Italy in 1906, planted his first vineyard there in 1928.

Five generations later, the Maggios still work the land; in 2002, they acquired the East Side Winery—built in 1934, it's now the oldest operating facility of its kind in the region—and renamed it Oak Ridge Winery. The family farms all of their vineyards in accordance with LODI Rules, and each Old Soul bottle is adorned with a Certified Green seal in addition to one of those leafless old oak trees—which to be sure are just at rest, growing at a slower speed as trees tend to do when temperatures cool. The vines surrounding them are healthy and resilient too, blooming anew each spring with bud break on the horizon. And with the Maggios at the helm, they will yield many more vintages to come.



Jumpstart to SUCCESS

DASHFIRE SCORES HIGH FOR CREATIVITY AS WELL AS TASTE

Founded in 2013 by Lee and Dawn Egbert, Dashfire has grown from its beloved original product, Vintage Orange Bitter—Minnesota’s first and only barrel-aged bitters—to a line of not only 21 different bitter varieties but also six RTD cocktails and three hard coffees. Along the way, the small family-owned company has made significant headway in expanding its distribution: It’s currently available in 21 states as well as Washington, D.C.

For its cocktails, Dashfire takes advantage of its extensive library of bitters and extracts by combining them with super-premium and natural ingredients. Packaged in both 100-milliliter cans and 750-milliliter bottles, they stand out in the RTD crowd by packing a punch, with all but the Chai White Russian (17% ABV) clocking in at 38% ABV.

To elaborate, the Bourbon Old Fashioned blends bourbon whiskey with cherry juice, a mix of five Dashfire bitters, and cane sugar, while the Fig and Cascara Manhattan melds rye whiskey with Cream Sherry and a proprietary botanical blend of Black Mission fig, cherry, vanilla, rhubarb root, and cascara, or dried coffee-cherry skin. The Chai White Russian and the Lemon and Lavender Martini use vodka as their base, adding Wisconsin cream, Dashfire Chai Bitters, and cane sugar to the former and Sherry, Dashfire Lemon Bitters, and Dashfire Lavender Bitters to the latter. Finally, the Elderflower Martinez is a blend of Dashfire’s proprietary gin, Cream Sherry, elderflower liqueur, and Dashfire Grapefruit Bitters, and the Pomegranate El Presidente features white rum, dry vermouth, Curaçao, and housemade grenadine.

As for the hard coffees, they’re created in partnership with Five Watt Coffee in Minneapolis. Sold in 200-milliliter cans, they also beat the competition through the use of quality, locally sourced ingredients as well as relatively high levels of alcohol and caffeine at 14% ABV and 11–83 milligrams per serving, respectively.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DASHFIRE

Editor’s note: The following scores reflect the category, not a comparison to wines and spirits.

Dashfire Chai White Russian Cocktail, USA

This is a well-made, authentic, vodka-based expression with a fine, creamy character, offering a persona defined by mocha, ginger, and espresso. The chai bitters make it unique. **92** —*M.M.*

Dashfire Pomegranate El Presidente Cocktail, USA Using rum as its base, this bold drink partners pomegranate with a peppered middle. Notes of tropical fruit and burnt orange peel add more oomph. **90** —*M.M.*

Dashfire Bourbon Old Fashioned Cocktail, USA Cheery and bright notes of cherry are spiced up by a blend of Dashfire bitters. The whiskey shines through as tangerine and vanilla bring life to this super sipper. **93** —*M.M.*

Dashfire Lemon and Lavender Martini Cocktail, USA Vodka and Sherry combine with lemon and lavender bitters for a tremendous and highly original flavor profile. Lemon zest gives the savory and perky palate a spiced-floral bath. **92** —*M.M.*

Dashfire Elderflower Martinez Cocktail, USA This riff on a classic gin cocktail sees the addition of Cream Sherry, grapefruit bitters, and elderflower, which add incredible dimension. We’ll take another, please! **93** —*M.M.*

Dashfire Fig and Cascara Manhattan Cocktail, USA Dried fruit, chocolate, and walnut are backdrops to this cheeky rye whiskey cocktail. Honeyed fig and cherry linger on the finish. **91** —*M.M.*

Café Dashfire Rum Golden Latte, USA A botanical garden of flavors merges with rum and espresso from Minneapolis’ Five Watt Coffee in this delicious, milky concoction with nutmeg and ginger. **92** —*M.M.*

Café Dashfire Rum Café Mocha, USA Chocolate lovers unite! Cacao, chicory, and Wisconsin cream melt in the mouth as notes of dried fruit make a memorable appearance on the finish. **93** —*M.M.*

Café Dashfire Bourbon Cold Brew Coffee, USA The deepest and boldest of coffee flavors sees a hint of bourbon and is sweetened to perfection. Notes of walnut, cedar, and vanilla add even more complexity. **92** —*M.M.*



Elouan owner and winemaker Joe Wagner.



Elouan 2019 Chardonnay, Oregon (\$20) Notes of star fruit, lanolin, vanilla pudding, and lemon drop combine with a clean, slightly creamy mouthfeel for a wine that's brightly lit from within. The acidity is well balanced by a kiwi-chamomile finish. **93** —*M.M.*

Elouan 2019 Pinot Noir, Oregon (\$22) A buoyant, lightweight palate shows round, plump plum and cherry notes against a backdrop of tobacco and clove. Juicy, with deep, earthy undertones and an uplifting splash of rhubarb, this is a vivid and graceful red. A hint of smoked charcuterie leaves a touch of spice on the finish. **92** —*M.M.*

Going Toward the Light: ELOUAN

Elouan Wines takes its name from a word of Celtic origin for “good light,” referring to the abundance of sunshine in Oregon. But it has another meaning too: The brand has emerged as a guiding light of social responsibility in the wine space.

In 2021, Elouan partnered with Trees for the Future (TREES), an international nonprofit organization focused on replenishing the diminishing global tree population, for its “Enjoy a Bottle, Plant a Tree” initiative. TREES planted a tree for every bottle and glass of Elouan sold in 2020 and 2021 for a total of over 1.1 million trees. This year, the winery is partnering with the National Forest Foundation, a nonprofit that restores forests and grasslands across the United States. Through its “Enjoy a Bottle, Help Plant Trees” campaign, Elouan is committed to donating

\$100,000 to the organization as part of a pledge to plant 100,000 trees in 2022 and 2023. These important partnerships allow it to replenish the natural environment in which its grapes grow.

Certainly, consumers care about environmental awareness, and making a connection with brands that work toward sustainability is a distinguishing factor at point of sale. But Elouan has more to offer than doing good. Drawn to the vision of a vibrant, full-bodied Pinot Noir, fifth-generation California winemaker Joe Wagner went to the foothills of the Oregon Coast Range, where he believed he could achieve this distinctive style. Here in one of the world's renowned Pinot Noir regions, Wagner found the cool climate coupled with ample exposure ideal for shaping the character of his wines.

Today he sources fruit from north-

western and southwestern Oregon as well as the west-central Oregon Hills. This wide range of distinct terroirs offers tremendous diversity, which in turn affords him the opportunity to provide versatility in style. The result is a portfolio of intensely structured wines that also maintain vibrant acidity.

In addition to an entry-level Pinot Noir, Elouan makes a Chardonnay and a Rosé at a \$20 SRP as well as Klamath's Kettle Reserve Pinot Noir and Missoulan Wash Reserve Pinot Noir, which retail for \$45. —*Natasha Swords*



A dish of king salmon with the Pulpo 2019 Albariño from Rías Baixas. Pulpo means "octopus" in Spanish.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS OFFERS STATESIDE CONSUMERS A GATEWAY TO SPANISH WINES

story by Chris Sawyer / photos by Alexander Rubin

"We're talking one grape, six names, one country," says Pedro García, U.S. managing director of Spain's number-one still-wine exporter, Félix Solís Avantis, in reference to the national "passion" for Tempranillo. Consider the company's flagship red wine, Viña Albali Gran Reserva Selección Privada: It's crafted with handpicked estate fruit in the Valdepeñas region of southern Spain, where the grape is commonly called Cencibel. While it may also be known as Tinta del País, Tinto del Toro, and Tinto Fino, among other synonyms, depending on the area in which it's grown, this early-budding, thick-skinned variety has a special historical link to Valdepeñas, which gave its own name to the grape in 1888 when budwood from the region was propagated at the famous Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center near Jackson, California, in Amador County.

As a Gran Reserva, the wine is cellar-aged 36 months in oak and 24 months in bottle, a regimen most commonly associated with Rioja to the north. But it has its own regional identity and charming character, driven by its brilliant combination of deep, ripe, and rich fruit flavors; spicy nuances; smooth texture; and underlying notes of wild herbs and minerals, such as graphite, that are reflective of both the sunbaked growing conditions

and the special mixture of rocky red volcanic and concentrated clay-based soils that have become the trademarks of Valdepeñas (which translates as “Valley of Rocks”). The result is a stylish, modern benchmark for the region that overdelivers at \$16.

“In my opinion, a lot of Spain is still hunkered down in traditions,” says Garcia. Valdepeñas, by comparison, “[has] got to be constantly in motion, changing, improving, and using [its] advancements to create wines that favor quality over price.”

Located at the midway point between Madrid and the southernmost region of Andalusia, Valdepeñas and its 22,000 hectares of vineyard are nestled on the southern edge of the larger and more arid growing region of Castilla-La Mancha. Even before it became Spain’s second official Denomination of Origin in 1932, Valdepeñas was achieving international success in the trade, shipping wine to South America and the Philippines by sea as soon as the railroad to the coast was completed in 1861. Its domestic reputation for producing world-class red wines with rich, powerful, and opulent flavors likewise increased when the “Wine Train” (*Tren del Vino*) began to carry wine to Madrid in 1895.

Prior to launching Viña Albali in 1962, Félix Solís Fernández and his wife, Leonor Yañez, spent ten years

honing their skills in the vineyards and the cellar to create quality wines that would appeal to a broad spectrum of consumers. In conjunction with the inaugural release, they purchased a bottling company and storage facility in Madrid, which allowed them to hand-deliver wines to restaurants, bars, and retail outlets. Six years later, they broke ground at the site a few miles north of downtown Valdepeñas that is now Félix Solís Avantis’ home base and one of the world’s largest and most high-tech winemaking facilities.

Today, Viña Albali is the top-selling brand by value and volume in Spain and among the top ten Spanish brands worldwide, while Félix Solís Avantis is the seventh-largest producer of still wines on the globe. The third-generation family owners’ steady focus on making the best wines for the price has made Félix Solís a household name not only in Spain but across the 120 countries to which it exports. Yet here in the U.S., Spanish wine represents only 1.6% of the market, with most of that share claimed by lower-end sangria and sparkling-wine brands. When Garcia joined the team six years ago, he saw a golden opportunity for Félix Solís to champion Spanish wines stateside by marketing them in ways that would allow them to outshine foreign and domestic competitors in both the \$11-and-under bracket and the popular premium category of \$12–\$18.

“Let’s face it, while Viña Albali is a genuine brand from an incredible DO that is very popular in many different countries, we’re not even scratching the surface in the U.S.,” says Garcia. “That’s why we developed a comprehensive strategy that is focused on promoting consumer awareness and cultivating the U.S. market for long-term growth.”

For starters, after developing their Pagos del Rey brand—which includes Pulpo Albariño from Rías Baixas, Sentero Tinta de Toro from Toro, Condado de Oriza Reserva from Ribera del Duero, Arnegui Crianza from Rioja, and two wines from La Mancha, Prospero Secco Gran Selezione and Viña San Juan Sauvignon Blanc—the Solís family started their own winery-direct import company and distribution chain in Napa in 2012. Over time, this one-stop-shop model has allowed the company to eliminate the middleman and pass the savings on to wine



The Arnegui 2016 Rioja Crianza became part of Félix Solís Avantis’ Pagos del Rey program in 2006.

buyers, thus giving them more access to more Spanish wines.

Félix Solís has also recently launched a series of blends that cross regional boundaries while showcasing the strengths of both Spain’s native grapes and its approach to growing international varieties. The first is FYI, a lively blend combining 30% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon from Valdepeñas with 30% Tinta de Toro and 20% Garnacha from Toro. With a catchy name that invites consumers to interpret it in multiple ways (“For Your Information,” “Free Your Inhibitions”), this rising-star label is powered by dense dark-fruit flavors and complementary hints of licorice, cocoa, vanilla, and spice. It’s a great value at around \$11.

Then there’s Mucho Más (“Much More” in Spanish). Sleekly packaged and priced at \$11 to attract the attention of curious consumers, the red blend is composed of Tempranillo and Garnacha from Toro and other regions in northern Spain along with a smaller portion of Syrah from Castilla-La Mancha; Mucho Más White, meanwhile, blends 70% Verdejo with 20% Chardonnay and 10% Sauvignon Blanc also sourced from multiple regions. Garcia explains, “If we are ever going to get more U.S. consumers to identify and enjoy Spanish wines, then we need to be disruptive in nature and step outside restrictions.” If any company can do it, Félix Solís Avantis can.



From Valdepeñas, Viña Albali Gran Reserva Selección Privada was first released by Félix Solís Avantis in 1962 and is now Spain’s number-one value wine.



Butternut winemaker Roxie Ward.

A Breakout Brand Branches Out: BUTTERNUT

With the acquisition of BNA Wine Group's brand portfolio in October 2020, Miller Family Wine Company (MFWC) was counting primarily on a single product, Butternut Chardonnay, "to give MFWC a stronger presence in the retail chain/grocery environment," in vice president of sales and marketing Nicholas Miller's words. "We had typically been focused on regional chains or on premise, and this was our way to get our foot in that national retail-chain door."

So far, so successful: Butternut can currently be found at Publix, Kroger, and Albertsons Companies stores, among numerous others, in 44 states. And sure enough, the Chard is the key driver of performance as "by far the biggest product in the portfolio; it has been a solid base of volume," says director of marketing Tommy Gaeta,

helping to bring the brand up 11.6% in 2021 according to the IRI stats for total U.S. multi-outlets. But better still, it has a little friendly competition. "What has been really exciting in the past year or so is that we have seen the red SKUs, both Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon, grow" to the tune of 33.8% and a whopping 169.6% respectively, he notes. "The emergence of our reds has propelled Butternut's steady rise, putting it on track to eclipse the 100,000-case threshold this year. . . . That is showing that Butternut is not a product; it's a brand. It transcends Chardonnay as a category and is able to grow on multiple fronts." Which brings us to Butternut Sauvignon Blanc.

Gaeta points to three factors in the decision to launch the new California-appellated varietal wine, which will hit shelves in April and May. First, the

popularity of the brand as a whole "is a good market indicator that, hey, we've got something here; growing broader as opposed to just deeper . . . was an opportunity for us," he says. Second was the discovery that, as compared to a few years ago when super-premium New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc dominated the market, "the domestic category is now just as hot as the import category." And third, adds Gaeta, "This was a gap in our retail portfolio . . . and the Butternut consumer, we know, drinks a lot of Chardonnay but also a lot of Sauvignon Blanc. For her, it's a nice change of pace in a style that she'll appreciate."

According to winemaker Roxie Ward, the inaugural 2021 vintage of Butternut Sauvignon Blanc strikes a balance between acidity and silky richness that is consistent with the portfolio as a whole. Aromas of lemongrass and orange blossom carry over to the palate with an initial burst of citrus, including grapefruit, followed by notes of passion fruit, melon, and lemon curd. Retailing for \$15, it's sure to further the momentum of a brand that is quickly becoming a household name nationwide. —Ruth Tobias

PHOTO COURTESY OF MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Donny Sebastiani represents the fourth generation at Don Sebastiani & Sons.

Soaring Above the Competition: FLYBIRD

If you're reading this, you likely know who the Sebastiani family is—or at the very least you've happened upon some of the brands in Don Sebastiani & Sons' portfolio: Consider Smoking Loon, Leese-Fitch, B Side, and Simple Life, to name just a few. What you may not know is that this fourth-generation wine company also produces an RTD agave-cocktail line called Flybird. But that's right in line with its reputation as a disruptor and an innovator. Just as Smoking Loon shook up the wine world with an offbeat name and label that challenged the industry's serious image, so Flybird reflects Don Sebastiani & Sons' intention to not just "do it but do it better than everyone else," per the mantra of proprietor Donny Sebastiani.

"Flybird took a little over a year from inception to bring to market, and one of our main goals with it was to overdeliver on the premium Margarita experience with expressive, fun flavors that would be as authentic as [if] enjoyed on the beach in Mexico," says Cynthia Gomez, vice president of marketing at Don Sebastiani & Sons. "Think 'great mixology program' and create a premium cocktail that requires only the addition of ice—this was our approach." Launching in 2019, the



Cynthia Gomez is vice president of marketing at Don Sebastiani & Sons.

brand "received immediate attention from our best partners and our customers," she says, and even "garnered the Impact Hot Prospect Brand award in its first year in the market"; it has since seen 71% growth year-over-year.

Packaged in 750-milliliter bottles (\$10–\$12) with what Gomez calls a vibrant, expressive "party vibe," the Flybird portfolio includes Margaritas in six flavors—Baja Lime, Strawberry, Watermelon Cucumber, Passion Fruit, Blood Orange, and Prickly Pear—as well as a Grapefruit Paloma. All are made in Mexico from 100% agave wine at 15% ABV. "If Donny can't be

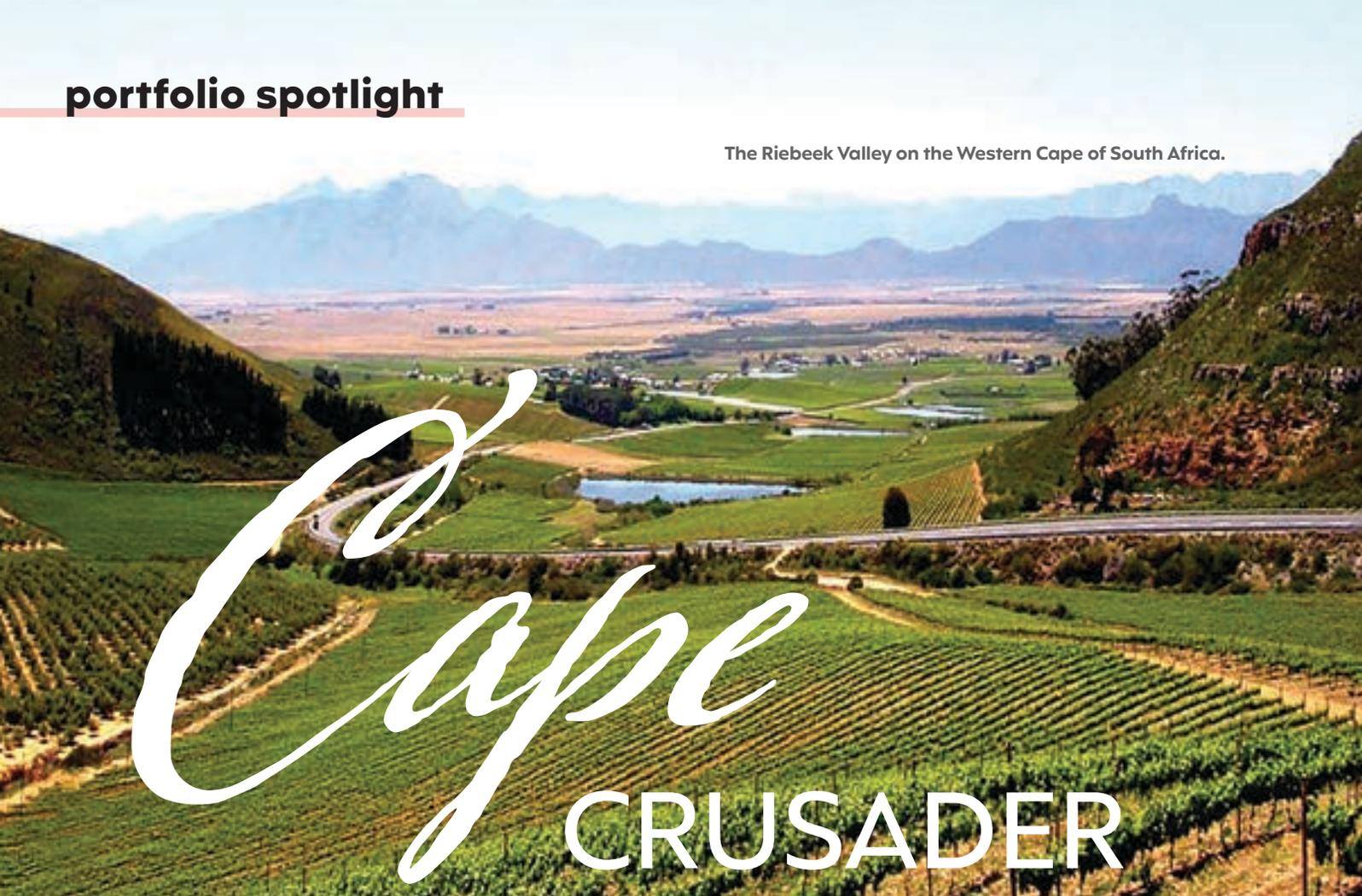
the best at making an RTD, he won't make an RTD," notes Gomez. "I'd say when comparing Flybird to other RTD cocktails, just taste them and then taste ours. That's the simplest way to prove our point. Flybird tastes like it came from a bartender."

No wonder it has been a marketer's dream for Gomez. "Committing to a premium product that tastes authentic and not artificial has been a differentiating path for the brand," she says. Observing that its primary target is Gen X and millennial women, she adds that "upcoming campaigns, PR, and social media outreach using high-profile influencers will serve to educate consumers on our major differentiating propositions, including Flybird's bartender-quality premium taste and its pledge to source natural ingredients only from Mexico."

In March, the brand will launch three new SKUs to "give consumers more of what they crave," Gomez says: Piña Colada, Mojito, and Mangonada. And true to form for Don Sebastiani & Sons, she adds, "It won't stop there—we've got our eyes on continued new experiences for our multiple consumer bases, [which] span legal Gen Z drinkers through 45-plus." In fact, yet another RTD project is already in launch mode: Half & Half, a blend of equal parts lemonade, tea, and Chardonnay that's effectively a premium Arnold Palmer (6% ABV; \$13/250-mL 4-pack). —*Natasha Swords* [TW](#)



The Riebeeek Valley on the Western Cape of South Africa.



Cape CRUSADER

MASTER SOMMELIER AND IMPORTER **FRAN KYSELA**
CHAMPIONS WINES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

by David Ransom

Ash Fran Kysela, owner of the Winchester, Virginia–based import company Kysela Pere et Fils, what he likes about South African wines, and he'll happily start by putting on his Master Sommelier hat. Kysela, who received his MS pin from the Court of Master Sommeliers in 1989, explains that "South Africa makes modern, fresh wines that also have a touch of old-school European style to them. They are clean, focused wines with good acidity and a brightness that charms." What's more, he adds, "[They] tend to be lighter and present more freshness than California wines of the same type—yet at the same time, South Africa has plenty of sunshine and [the] length of season to bring fruit to full ripeness and get the most out of the grapes."

Next, Kysela will offer his perspective as an importer who has spent much time in the region—completing 17 trips to date—and knows each of South Africa's demarcated wine regions, districts, and wards by heart. "These wines have a unique sense of



Lismore Estate was founded in 2003 by Samantha O'Keefe.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KYSELA PERE ET FILS

place in the wine world,” he asserts. “After 350 years of winemaking, [the country is] still being discovered as an up-and-coming [region] to know. . . . They’re the underdog, and I like underdogs.”

South Africa today is home to approximately 600 wineries that harvest fruit from over 100,000 hectares (about 250,000 acres) spread across the Western Cape, which runs 500 miles from east to west. Kysela Pere et Fils imports a variety of wines from about a dozen South African producers, including those listed below, which are prime examples of the way in which South Africa easily straddles the line between value-driven wines and world-class offerings. (View the full portfolio at kysela.com.) 



A Chenin Blanc bush vine.

**Riebeek Cellars
Chenin Blanc,
Swartland, Western
Cape, South Africa
(\$13)**

Riebeek Cellars was founded in 1941 as a collective of nine growers; now, 22 partner farmers supply fruit exclusively to Riebeek. They cultivate approximately 1,000 acres of Chenin Blanc; for context, that’s equivalent to about one-fifth of the plantings in Vouvray. In other words, Chenin Blanc is their thing. Cold fermented in stainless steel, this 100% Chenin Blanc is packed with tropical-fruit flavors and shows good acidity on the palate. A perfect apéritif, it’s the classic South African wine for “sundowners,” or cocktail hours, and would also be a highly profitable pour for by-the-glass programs.



**Babylon’s Peak
Chenin Blanc,
Swartland, Western
Cape, South
Africa (\$17)**

The family-owned Babylon’s Peak winery sits high on the slopes of Paardeberg Mountain in the Western Cape, where this 100% Chenin Blanc is made with handpicked grapes grown on old, dry-farmed bush vines in granite soils, which help give it good complexity and minerality. The free-run juice is cold fermented and then aged on the lees until bottling in stainless steel, allowing the wine to present loads of fruit. It’s a next-level effort, great for food pairing and pouring by the glass.



**Lismore Estate
Vineyards
Chardonnay,
Greyton,
Western Cape,
South Africa
(\$44)**

Lismore Estate Vineyards was founded in 2003 by American Samantha O’Keefe. The property lies at the foot of the Sonderend Mountains in Greyton on the eastern edge of the Western Cape; part of the Overberg region, the Greyton subappellation—or “ward” in South African parlance—exists due to O’Keefe’s vision and persistence. High elevations make for a cool climate, and this 100% Chardonnay from one of South Africa’s most acclaimed vintners presents like a Chablis: austere and filled with citrus notes and good acidity. Barrel fermented, it gets its luxurious texture from full malolactic fermentation and 11 months of aging in new French oak.



**Keermont
Vineyards Cabernet
Sauvignon,
Stellenbosch,
Western Cape,
South Africa
(\$58)**

Founded in 2007 by Mark and Monica Wraith, the Keermont estate sits in a Stellenbosch valley in the shadow of the Suurberg mountain range. Of its 72 planted acres, about two-thirds are devoted to red varietals, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. This blend of (separately vinified) 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Malbec spends 27 months in French oak and is bottled unfiltered. A dark ruby color, it’s full bodied, with gentle tannins that lead to red-berry notes and hints of cassis as well as spices such as cloves. Similar to a Howell Mountain Cab, it would be a serious contender on any bottle list.



In Down the Aisle, the editors at *The Tasting Panel* rate retail beverages based on a combination of elements that can affect off-premise potential, including packaging, branding/credibility, value, and user friendliness.

“Talkies” are the little cards appended to retail shelves that educate the consumer through tasting notes and, sometimes, ratings. They are an invaluable tool when there isn’t a knowledgeable employee available and/or the customer is too intimidated to ask for help. For this reason, we are supplementing the traditional rating system with our “Talkie” rating system to assess retail wines/spirits/beers based on the aforementioned factors—and, of course, taste!

1 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.

4 TALKIES

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.



Santa Ema 2021 Select Terroir Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$10) Crisp herbs and lime zest create the backdrop for candied pineapple and tart green apple. Minerality ensues on the finish. **90**

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINE & SPIRITS



Cono Sur Organico 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon/Carménère/Syrah, Chile (\$11) This juicy blend of 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Carménère, and 28% Syrah is made with organic grapes. Plum and tart black cherry are seasoned by oregano and sweet basil. White pepper surges midway, while fine acidity primes the palate for the next sip. The finish offers notes of cured meat, sage, and tobacco leaf, all surrounded by that generous array of dark fruit. **89**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Simple Life 2019 Pinot Noir, California (\$13) Black-peppered cherry forges a path to an earthy middle. Lively acidity ushers in a fresh and vibrant finish of graham cracker and spiced cranberry. **89**

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS



Gemma di Luna Moscato, Italy (\$15) This vino spumante is a delectable example of Moscato’s sweet charm, with peach and apricot nectar bursting through the effervescence. **90**

ENOVATION BRANDS



Green & Social Organic Verdejo, Rueda, Spain (\$14) Sustainability is the mantra behind this label, which packages in recycled glass with plastic-free aluminum capsules and sugarcane caps made with zero carbon footprint. Lemon blossom melts on the tongue, leaving behind a powdery mouthfeel. Prickly-pear notes and stark minerality finish with a tangerine gleam. **91**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



French Blue 2020 Bordeaux Rosé, France (\$15) Clean, clear notes of watermelon, raspberry, and wet stone meet florals that contribute lightness of character, remaining on the palate through the finish. A delicious sipper. **90**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY





12 Knights 2019 Opulent Red Wine, Lisbon, Portugal (\$15) This red blend provides a silky entry lined with bright cherry and black tea. A hint of graphite threads through roasted coffee and dark plum. Food-worthy, with a fine acid structure and a salty mineral finish. **90**

AVELEDA



Hugl Weine 2020 Zweigelt, Austria (\$16) This 100% Zweigelt (a cross between St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch) offers mouth-filling notes of cranberry and cocoa: Silky and round with abundant acidity, it delivers heavenly floral notes, but its distinctive taste of soil is evident on the finish. **91**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Gemma di Luna Prosecco DOC, Italy (\$15) Light and lean, this wine is vivacious from start to finish. Notes of jasmine rice, white flower petals, prickly pear, and tangerine are subtle yet pure. **90**

ENOVATION BRANDS



Tous Les Jours 2020 Chardonnay, California (\$17) Joined by bright acidity and a leesy mouthfeel akin to buttercream, notes of lemon oil, grapefruit zest, and apricot ring true to the varietal. The toasty finish yields a banana-coconut surprise. **90**

PAIRS WITH LIFE CELLARS



Butternut 2020 Pinot Noir, California (\$15) Notes of chocolate and roasted coffee are surrounded by plush tannins along with red cherry, sweet tobacco, and vanilla. Silky and delicious. **91**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Pasqua 2020 11 Minutes Rosé Trevenezie IGT, Veneto, Italy (\$19) The name signifies the time this wine takes on the skins to develop its pale, onionskin-pink hue. A blend of 50% Corvina, 25% Trebbiano di Lugana, 15% Syrah, and 10% Carménère with an ABV of 12.5%, it's a regal rosé. Steely notes of tart apple and white cherry, dried rose petal, and fresh watermelon shine through the glassy texture, while mouthwateringly intense acidity has a winning effect on the palate. The unique bottle and glass top are also impressive. **93**



Pasqua 2019 Romeo & Juliet Passione e Sentimento Bianco Veneto IGT, Italy (\$16) Vinified in stainless steel and partially aged in French oak, this 100% Garganega unfolds like a romance on the palate—but not a star-crossed one, as it sharpens the senses with notes of crisp Asian pear and powdered white-flower petals. The glorious mouthfeel is lengthened by sweet lime, apricot, and marzipan. **93**



St Huberts 2018 The Stag Red Wine, Paso Robles (\$20) The staggering list of varieties in this bottling reads like a wine encyclopedia index: Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, Shiraz, Merlot, Petit Verdot, and Cab Franc. Notes of boysenberry liqueur, cocoa, and fennel are broad yet structured. Juicy, ripe plum aligns with brushy notes of dried flowers that linger on the finish. **91**

TREASURY WINE ESTATES



Prescription Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Clarksburg (\$20) Enhanced by notes of chervil, oregano, and chamomile, luscious lemon meringue defines the mid-palate. Crushed stone, white pepper, vibrant minerality, and a spark of acidity amount to just the right Rx for great food pairing. **92**



Slam Dunk 2020 Red Wine, California (\$15) This blend of 58% Petite Sirah and 42% Zinfandel offers scents of lavender and blueberry. Luscious notes of boysenberry on the entry make a startlingly fresh impression before cinnamon, cedar, and elegant black-tea tannins liven up the palate. The structure allows for a lengthy finish. **92**

SLAM DUNK WINES





Trivento 2019 Golden Reserve Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza (\$21)

The fruit here could not be brighter, while the acidity, set against chalky tannins, reaches tightwire levels, ensuring this energetic, juicy wine can cut through fatty meats while also complementing grilled chicken and fish. Blackberry, strawberry, white pepper, and black tea are highlights. Aged 12 months in 90% French oak barrels and 10% French oak foudres. **90**



FETZER VINEYARDS



MyStory 2018 Reserve Malbec, Paso Robles (\$22)

Sassafras, herbs, and baking spices make the first impression in this broad-bodied red. Brown-sugared blackberry is rich and concentrated. **90**



Badgerhound 2018 Red Blend, Sonoma County (\$25)

Ripe blue fruit and spiced cedar unite with a fine acid structure in this broad-shouldered red, which also shows notes of cured meat, chervil, oregano, and heather plus a dollop of blackberry preserves on the finish. We like the producer's description of the blend: 80% Zinfandel, 10% late-harvest Zinfandel, and 10% "Not Gonna Tell Ya." Also on the tech sheet: "The distinctive label pays homage to both the Italian roots of the Zinfandel grape as well as our love of mobster movies, having been inspired by a scene in *The Godfather* in which Michael Corleone is [lying] low in Italy." **91**



DAYLIGHT WINE & SPIRITS



Ashlyn 2019 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$25)

From the Eola-Amity Hills AVA, this Pinot Noir is light on its feet. Easy drinking, with notes of red cherry and sweet tobacco as well as a hint of white pepper that seasons dried flowers and adds spice to the earthy finish. **90**



Lake Sonoma Winery 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma Valley (\$28)

Aromas and flavors of honeysuckle and pineapple dart between wet stone and basil in this multilayered, edgy, stainless steel-aged white that delivers lemon-wedge vibrancy thanks to superb acidity but also a soft mouthfeel courtesy of powdered vanilla. **91**



Keanu 2019 Chardonnay, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$30)

Aged ten months in barrel sur lie, this rich, creamy white offers a floral bouquet that leads to a luxurious mouthfeel. Along with salty minerality, fresh notes of apricot and tropical fruit come forward. **92**



BROADWAY VINEYARDS



Pieces of Jewel 2020 Pinot Noir, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$50)

Cocoa and strawberry sweeten the nose and palate. With basil and a dollop of white-peppered cherry, there's a delicious factor that's heightened by fine acidity and pleasant, underlying earthiness. **92** 

EDEN ESTATE WINES LLC



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCHEID VINEYARDS

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers: A Bright Spot for Zero-Sugar Wine

From the folks at Scheid Vineyards, Sunny with a Chance of Flowers is designed to fit into a healthy lifestyle. Winemaker Casey di Cesare allows the grapes to reach full maturity and flavor development, but after they're crushed and fermented, a proprietary process ensures a lower proof (9% ABV), 30% fewer calories, and no sugar.

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2020 Positively Sauvignon Blanc, Monterey (\$17)

Lively florals and white grapefruit dazzle. Easy drinking, with alluring grassy notes as well as tarragon and dill. The clean finish shows a spark of white pepper. **90**

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2020 Positively Chardonnay, Monterey (\$17)

Aromas of vanilla wafer and lemongrass give way to a gentle palate of sugar cookie, pineapple-soaked flowers, and well-defined acidity. **89**

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2020 Positively Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$17)

Aromas of earth, Red Hots, and black cherry lead to flavors of pomegranate, bramble, and red plum. The toasty finish is pleasant and the texture satiny. **90**



Anthony Dias

BLUE *REVIEWS*



by THE TASTING ALLIANCE

In each issue, senior editor 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:

88-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

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

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

For additional Blue Reviews, go to bluelifestyle.com.

Prices are for 750-mL bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC

93 Gary Farrell 2018 Pinot Noir, Hallberg Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$55) Smooth, ripe, and juicy, with notes of earth and cherry; fresh, balanced, and long.

VINTUS



93 Gary Farrell 2019 Chardonnay, Olivet Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$50) Toasty, with pure and crisp acidity; a classic wine that's equal parts balanced, intense, and silky.

VINTUS



91 Cumulus Cellars 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$50) Pale ruby color and an authentic berry nose. Toasty, elegant, balanced, and long.

CAPEWINEVENTURES

93 J. Bucher 2019 Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$45) Round and ripe, with a bright ruby color and sweet notes of cherry; stylish and long.



94 J. Bucher 2019 Three Sixty Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$65) A lush, classic Pinot with a smoky nose and a rich, deep palate of earth, spice, and dried cherry.

92 King Estate Winery 2019 Backbone Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$28) Smooth, ripe, and tremendously juicy, with a nose of bright fruit, this is an exceptional version of its variety.



BLUE REVIEWS



95 pureCru 2015 M. Coz, Napa Valley (\$125) Mitch Cosentino has been making wine in Napa Valley for many years—and this is one of his best efforts. Fresh, smooth, and pure, with fine balance and a persistent, unhurried finish.

91 Frank Family Vineyards 2015 Blanc de Blancs, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$55) A fresh expression of Chardonnay with lush fruit and energetic bubbles; minerally and tangy, with good length.

97 Knights Bridge 2018 Linville Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley, Sonoma County (\$150) Deep berry notes and a velvety texture show that this wine is a keeper: It has amazing structure and depth as well as considerable finesse. It's lovely right now, but it will probably last another decade or two.

93 Knights Bridge 2020 Knights Valley Chardonnay, Knights Valley, Sonoma (\$40) Silky, rich, and complex, with toasty oak, bright acidity, and good length; deep and balanced.

93 Landmark Vineyards 2019 Overlook Chardonnay, Sonoma County (\$27) A

knockout wine with a lovely, elegant nose; silky texture; refined structure; and rich balance between racy pear and toasted oak.



95 Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2020 Bellissimo Red Wine, Sonoma Valley (\$94) A lush, spicy, seamless, and brilliant blend that fires on all cylinders.

94 Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2018 Howell Mountain Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$120) Dark garnet color; silky, smooth, and complex, with notes of plum, toasted berries, and sweet oak culminating in a long finish.

94 Middle Jane 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$36) Deeply colored, velvety, and lush, with ripe plum and black raspberry.

SCOUT & CELLAR

91 Middle Jane 2020 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$37) Smooth and juicy, with spice and pear; balanced and long.

SCOUT & CELLAR

96 Obsidian Wine Co. 2019 Half Mile Cabernet Sauvignon, Obsidian Ridge Vineyard, Red Hills Lake County (\$75) Elegant and velvety; deep, rich, and balanced, with notes of toasty oak, ripe plum, and black raspberry as well as great finesse and length.

PACIFIC VINE INTERNATIONAL

92 pureCru 2017 Purety White Meritage, Napa Valley (\$26) Smooth and fresh, dense and stylish, balanced and long.



94 Ram's Gate 2018 Cellar Note Cabernet Sauvignon, Moon Mountain District, Sonoma County (\$68) Richly colored, with a silky texture; deep, juicy style; and long, intense finish.

92 Sequoia Grove 2020 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$26) Ripe pear

nose; rich and toasty yet clean and balanced with fruit-forward style at a good price.



KOBRAND

96 Sullivan Rutherford Estate 2018 J.O. Sullivan Founder's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford (\$250) Deep color and aromas of spice and plum; rich and dense with chocolate, mocha, and toasty oak; lush, balanced, and long.

94 Testarossa 2019 Pinot Noir, Graham Family Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$80) Bright, smooth, and juicy with fresh cherry and raspberry as well as notes of oak, cola, and spice.

95 Testarossa 2019 Tondre Grapefield Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$80) Vibrant ruby color and lovely cherry nose; bright and crisp, with sweet notes of new oak. Fresh, long, and absolutely stunning.

92 Upchurch Vineyard 2019 Counterpart, Red Mountain, Washington (\$50) Tangy plum; racy acidity; and lovely balance define this blend of 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon.

IMPORTED

94 Barkan 2018 Platinum Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel (\$35) A pure expression of Cabernet: crisp, tangy, and generous, with black cherry and plum leading to a long, classic finish.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

94 Bodegas Bianchi 2019 Particular Cabernet Franc, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) A demonstration of how good ripe Cab Franc can be. Clean yet intense and juicy, with mature berry flavors and impressive balance.

94 Clos Mesorah 2017 Montsant, Spain (\$90) Dark color; ripe and layered with smooth, rich berry notes. Wonderful now, but with huge aging potential.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

94 Daniele Conterno 2020 Langhe Nascetta DOC, Italy (\$30) This ancient Piedmontese variety almost went extinct but has been revived by several producers. The resuscitation was well worth the effort: This wine is pure, tangy, and balanced as well as bright and energetic, with charming spice and racy acidity. If you're looking for a substitute for Chardonnay on your table, this is it!

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

93 Georges Duboeuf 2020 Domaine Emile Beranger Chardonnay, Pouilly-Fuisse, France (\$50) Lush, round, and elegant, with depth and finesse—no domineering oak here. Creamy and balanced, with style and good length.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

94 J. de Villebois 2019 Les Monts Damnés, Sancerre, France (\$30) Smooth and bursting with juicy fruit and bright acidity; tangy, fresh, and long.

VINEYARD BRANDS



95 Shiloh Winery 2017 Mosaic Exclusive Edition, Judean Hills, Israel (\$110) A richly colored, impressive, and remarkably stylish blend of 38% Syrah, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 10% Petit Verdot, and 8% Malbec.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

92 Shiloh Winery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Judean Hills, Israel (\$30) Bright and juicy, with the crisp citrus one would expect from a good Sauv Blanc but even more depth and finesse.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

94 Vintage Longbottom 2019 Henry's Drive Magnus Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$80) Deep color and a rich, expressive nose; smooth, juicy, deep, and concentrated with spice, toast, blackberry, and plum. A stunning effort.



QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

93 Vintage Longbottom 2020 Henry's Drive Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$50) A fresh, balanced, medium-bodied wine that speaks of plum and black raspberry. Lively and juicy, charming and long.



QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

94 Warre's 2005 Quinta da Cavadinha Vintage Port, Portugal (\$57) A sweet, bright, and balanced single-quinta Port with a deep, dark color and a rich, jammy nose.

VINEYARD BRANDS

93 Warre's NV Otima 20 Twenty Year Old Tawny Porto, Portugal (\$56) Rich amber color; toasted and silky, with roasted nuts and a good proportion of rancio.

VINEYARD BRANDS



93 Kurtatsch 2019 AMOS, Südtirol/Alto Adige DOC, Italy (\$44) A seamless and elegant blend of six varieties. Smooth, creamy, and rich as well as floral and spicy, with a crisp acid structure and long finish.

VINEYARD BRANDS

VALUE

91 Amarose 2021 Rosé, Lodi (\$25) A pale pink blend of Rhône varieties. Clean, fresh, and dry, with lively style; smooth, deep, and tangy.

92 Chasing Venus 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$19) Fresh peach nose; crisp and juicy, with a hint of more peach on the finish; balanced and long.

MATCHBOOK WINE COMPANY

BLUE REVIEWS

93 **Gradis'ciutta 2020 Collio Sauvignon, Italy** (\$22) Fresh, crisp, and smooth, with lively acidity: a pure, elegant, and fine example of northeastern Italy.

VINEYARD BRANDS

92 **Hall Ranch 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles** (\$19) Deeply colored and rich, with notes of plum, berry, spice, and toasty oak.

91 **Les Jamelles 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Sud de France** (\$14) Bright citrus nose; smooth and juicy, with crisp acidity. Dry, racy, and clean, it's a charming wine at a great price.

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

93 **Lubanzi 2020 Coastal Region Red Blend, South Africa** (\$18) Lush and deep, with rich blackberry and plum; spicy and seamless; balanced, long, and lovely. 75% Shiraz, 18% Grenache, and 7% Mourvèdre.

CAPEVENTURE WINE CO.

92 **Marchesi di Grésy 2019 Monte Aribaldo Dolcetto d'Alba, Barbaresco, Italy** (\$19) Bright, fresh, and juicy, with crisp and racy acidity as well as lovely notes of plum and cherry. Drink it with pasta.

DALLA TERRA

92 **Mohua 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand** (\$19) Floral and as bright as a summer day; clean, fresh, and bursting with citrus.

VINEYARD BRANDS

92 **Morgan Winery 2019 Cotes du Crow's, Monterey** (\$22) Spicy, bright, and long, with a mouthful of ripe, tangy fruit. 62% Grenache, 29% Syrah, 5% Tempranillo, and 4% Cinsault.

92 **Nine Stones 2019 Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia** (\$16) Deep color; smooth and dry, with intense, rich flavors and concentrated minerality.

VINEYARD BRANDS

SPIRITS

94 **Horse Soldier Small Batch Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$70) Bright amber color and a soft, perfumed nose. Smooth, spiced, and creamy, with sweet, toasty oak and complete flavors. Named for a special operations team of brave men who rode into battle in Afghanistan on horseback.



93 **Distillery 291 Bad Guy Colorado Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$108) Floral, rich, and ripe, with balanced flavors of caramel and sweet oak; complex and long.

94 **Partida Tequila Blanco, Mexico** (\$35) Both floral and spiced, this is a glorious blanco with an elegant agave nose, velvety texture, and good length. Make your Margaritas with this.



93 **O.H. Ingram River Aged Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$74) Refined and spicy nose, velvety texture, and mellow notes of wood and spice smoothed and aged by the gentle rocking of the Mississippi River.



94 **Partida Tequila Reposado, Mexico** (\$44) Soft agave nose; smooth and rich, with considerable finesse and a balance between elegance and earthiness.

97 **Knob Creek Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA** (\$100) A luxurious and dazzling expression with a soft, toasted nose; rich and lush, with ripe fruit as well as notes of wood, honey, caramel, and Christmas spice.

BEAM SUNTORY

95 **Larceny Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$50) Who would guess that such a high-proof whiskey would yield such soft, gentle, and floral flavors in addition to its notes of vanilla?

HEAVEN HILL

94 Broken Barrel Whiskey Co. Plank Walker Straight American Whiskey, USA (\$90) Toasted corn nose; smooth and deep, sweet and balanced. 85% corn and 15% rye; finished in Barbadian rum staves.

92 Ron Barceló Imperial Rum, Dominican Republic (\$35) Deep amber color; rich and stylish, with depth and spice; pleasant and balanced despite its candied sweetness.

96 Elijah Craig Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$60) A 120-proof barrel-strength spirit from an always reliable brand, with notes of toasted oak. Creamy and sweet, but not excessively so; complex and long.

HEAVEN HILL



94 Frey Ranch Farmers + Distillers Single Grain Series 100% Wheat Whiskey, USA (\$60) Lush and spicy, with depth and finesse. Rich and toasty, layered and balanced, with lovely, sweet flavors and exceptional style.



93 Frey Ranch Farmers + Distillers Single Grain Series 100% Oat Whiskey, USA (\$50) A clean whiskey made with 100% oats. Fresh, spiced flavors and balanced style; tangy, charming, and long. Try it on your oatmeal. **VZ**

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"if you like it, drink it!"

THE CANDY SHOPPE BY BRIAN CANDELARIO

Introducing The Candy Shoppe: Our New Review Page From Brian Candelarario

PHOTO: MORGAN JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHY



My story is probably similar to that of many folks in the wine business. My family didn't drink wine and I didn't either, despite having worked in restaurants since I was 18—until, that is, I had the opportunity to dive in headfirst as a server at a small wine bar and bistro in Walnut Creek, California, called Va de Vi. I discovered that wine isn't just an item on a menu: There was an endless amount to learn about the subject. Nor was it something only certain people could enjoy—in fact, it brought people together.

Fast-forward to a few years later when the wine director position became available at Va de Vi. I thought, "Let's do it—what could go wrong?" I started tasting and tasting and tasting. Pretty quickly I realized a few things: First, there's no such thing as a perfect wine, just the correct wine for the occasion. Second, you don't have to have wine knowledge to decide whether a wine is "good." If you like it, drink it: That's the Candy Shoppe motto! **W**



Jules Taylor Wines 2021 Pinot Gris, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)

Sure, the words “New Zealand” automatically bring Sauvignon Blanc to mind, but not so fast, my friends! Though Jules Taylor, a native of Marlborough, does crush the country’s signature grape, her other offerings are very sharp as well—including her Pinot Gris, which is the perfect patio pounder. It’s easy drinking and zippy, with all the minerality you need. Pineapple, guava, and lime dominate the palate, and the finish is just long enough to set you up for another mouth-watering sip. **91**



Jules Taylor 2019 On The Quiet Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$35)

Taylor’s On The Quiet line features limited-release, single-vineyard wines made in small quantities. This one is very Burgundy-esque and needs a bit of time to open up, but once it does, you’ll find darker fruits like plum and blackberry along with typical Pinot Noir notes of orange peel and ripe cherry. The acid throughout ties the wine together with a nice bow. A very solid offering—well done, Jules! **92**



Sean Minor 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, North Coast (\$22)

Sean Minor and his wife, Nicole, had a problem with what they perceived as a lack of terroir-driven California wines that didn’t cost an arm and a leg. They set out to resolve that, and the Four Bears brand—inspired by their four children—was born, evolving into Sean Minor once the kids were all grown up. Their 2019 North Coast Cab shows lifted flavors of dark cherry, with a dusty, earthy character throughout and a short finish with an equal amount of tannin and acid. **88**

Sean Minor 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$16)

You could put this wine on the table and find that another bottle will need to be opened in 30 minutes. It’s an easy-drinking Sauv Blanc that checks all the boxes: tropical fruit, good acid, and enough body to smooth out the finish. **88**

Zerbina 2019 Pinot Grigio, DOC Delle Venezie, Italy (\$15)

Bryan Rivi-Howell started Zerbina Imports as an ode to his grandfather Pietro, who moved to the U.S. from Italy in 1905 in an effort to provide a better life for his wife and six kids. This Pinot Grigio offers notes of stone fruit and apple that meld well with white flowers and zippy acidity, making it a perfect food accompaniment. **88**



Zerbina 2018 Chianti DOCG, Tuscany, Italy (\$15)

This 100% Sangiovese reminds me of the wine my Italian grandmother would have on the table for every Sunday meal: The prototypical table wine, it could pair with literally every dish. The fruit blends well with the hints of oak and mild tannins. Pop this, plate your pasta, and tell a story your family has heard 100 times! **88**



Anakena 2020 Nuna Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva, Chile (\$13)

Anakena was founded in the late 1990s by Felipe Ibáñez and Jorge Gutiérrez with the goal of making New World wines from Chile with good depth and fruit character. *Nuna* is an Incan term that means “all beings have an unalterable spirit”; Cabernet tends to do well in Chile, and Anakena lives up to that spirit with this offering, which punches a good deal above its weight. Luscious ripe cherry and blackberry on the nose lead to a great, balanced blend of oak, spices, and dark chocolate. **90**



Anakena 2020 Nuna Carménère Reserva, Chile (\$13)

Carménère is such an underrated variety, but Anakena shows why the grape is iconic in Chile. It has a fresh, lively nose and a flavor profile of big blue and black fruit, integrated tannins, and a chalky finish. Think red meat and mashed potatoes! **89**



ACCOLADE WINES

689 Wine 2020 White Wine, Napa Valley (\$24)

Curtis McBride and Kent Rasmussen go back years and years as both business partners and friends. Over the course of many trips to the Far East, they realized they could use elements of Chinese numerology to express their ideals for a perfect winery. In Chinese culture, the numbers six, eight, and nine are considered to be lucky or auspicious, inspiring their label, 689. This blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay really showcases the tropical notes and linear acidity of the former and the weight and structure of the latter while exhibiting the fun combo of oak and stainless-steel aging. Green apple, lime, stone fruit, and textured creaminess make for complex but straight-up goodness. **91**



Petaluma White Label 2021 Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$30)

This Chardonnay is meant to drink now: I mean today, because it needs to be in your glass. Fresh, bright, and absolutely a delight, it offers notes of grapefruit, peach, and that hint of Sweet Tart that makes a young wine so drinkable; its touch of sweetness is soon overtaken by lively acidity. This is a wine built for pairing with sun, an umbrella, and a lounge chair—thank me later. **90** **W**



ACCOLADE WINES

ACCOLADE WINES

From France With Love: **HEAVENLY SPIRITS**

Heavenly Spirits is a leading importer of artisanal French spirits, including Armagnac, Calvados, Cognac, whisky, gin, apéritifs, and liqueurs. Its portfolio is available in 38 U.S. states and represents an impressive list of iconic brands. Since 2009, it has been the number-one importer of Armagnac into the U.S. as well as the first name in **organic French spirits**.



COGNAC

*From the Heart of Cognac's
Grande Champagne Region:*

JEAN FILLIOUX

This iconic Cognac house has been producing Cognac for five generations and is one of the last family-owned farm-to-bottle producers in Grande Champagne, where its 25-hectare vineyard is located in the Golden Triangle of the region's Terroir.



The #1 Best-selling Organic Cognac:



DISTILLERIE DU PEYRAT

Located on the riverbank of a small village 10 kilometers east of Cognac, Distillerie Du Peyrat produces, distills, and ages its eaux-de-vie with respect for the environment and the intense expression of terroir.

ABSINTHE/PASTIS

*Made by Artisans,
Beloved by Artists:*

LA MUSE VERTE

Artisanally made without additives or sugar, this brand brings us back to the times of the Green Fairy, which inspired artists such as Beaudelaire, Verlaine, Hemingway, and Van Gogh.



CALVADOS

*A Wonderfully Unique
Calvados:*

CHAUFFE-COEUR

In the heart of the Pays d'Auge, the Martayrol family traditionally harvests, presses, and ferments their apples into varietal ciders that are aged 10 months or more before they're distilled into this delicious Calvados.



ARMAGNAC

The #1 Best-selling Armagnac House in the U.S.:



DELORD

Prosper Delord started his company as an itinerant distiller in 1893. Carting his portable pot still around farms in the Bas Armagnac region, he gained a reputation for his dedication and expertise. When his son, Gaston, took over in 1925, he officially established the company's name and permanent location in Lannepax.

Today, Prosper's great-grandsons, Jerome and Sylvain, carry on the family tradition, maintaining their renown for unsurpassed quality. Owners of 50 hectares of vineyards in the heart of the Bas Armagnac—widely known as the Premier Cru—they distill, age, and blend their eaux-de-vie in the exact same way that their great-grandfather did. Their aging cellars contain Armagnacs dating back to 1904.

WHISKY

Hand-crafted French Whisky:

BASTILLE

For four generations, the Daucourt family has shared their passion for making great spirits. Acclaimed for creating Jean-Marc XO Vodka & X-Rated Fusion Liqueur, they have always been at the forefront of new industry trends. Inspired by their Irish mother, they distilled this compelling whisky in gooseneck pot stills, which are typical of the Charente region.



VERMOUTH



French Vermouth That Redefines the Category:



VERMOUTH GUERIN

This exceptional line of French vermouth builds on Guerin's history of producing outstanding Pineau des Charentes. Blended with botanicals including angelica root, cinnamon, cardamon, coriander, nutmeg, and bitter orange peel, then matured in seasoned Cognac casks, the result is a deliciously balanced apéritif that can also be used in a wide range of cocktails.



ISRAEL

Ascendant

TASTING THROUGH THE CREAM OF THE KOSHER CROP

by Anthony Dias Blue

Last year, I wrote a column extolling the impressive kosher wines I had recently been tasting, most of which came from Israel. This year, the wines are looking even better: They're rich, deep, and modern, with style and complexity.

The Israeli winemaking renaissance is being led by a passionate band of young professionals who have trained in France, California, and Australia. They're making so many good wines that it would be impossible to list them all: What follows is the best of a very strong crop. (There's one ringer among them, so read carefully.) Especially outstanding were the bottlings from the Judean Hills' Shiloh Winery; I've included seven of its expressions to demonstrate the consistent excellence that is possible in this reawakened wine region.



1848 Winery 2020 2nd Generation Chardonnay, Galilee, Israel (\$24) Bright and racy, tangy and lively, with crisp acidity, fresh pear, soft minerals, and good balance. **90**



Carmel Winery 2017 Merlot, Galilee, Israel (\$20) Dark, with a meaty nose; smooth and tangy amid lush plum. A modern and charming wine with a camel on the label. **92**

Barkan 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Kerem Ben Zimra, Israel (\$25) Medium ruby color and aromas of cherry and earth followed by flavors of spice and more ripe cherry. Tangy, rich, smooth, and long. **92**



Carmel Winery 2018 Gewürztraminer, Galilee, Israel (\$20) Rose-petal nose. Creamy yet bright with tangy acidity and floral notes; clean and long. **94**



Barkan 2018 Platinum Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel (\$35) A pure expression of Cabernet: crisp, tangy, and generous, with black cherry and plum leading to a long, classic finish. **94**



Clos Mesorah 2017 Montsant, Spain (\$90) Dark color; ripe and layered with smooth, rich berry notes. Wonderful now, but with huge aging potential. This wine may not be from Israel, but I didn't want to leave it out. **94**



Ephod Winery 2018 Keter, Galilee, Israel (\$30) Deeply colored; clean and balanced yet smooth and lush. Spicy and toasty, with notes of vanilla; long and complex. **93**



Ephod Winery 2018 Regesh Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel (\$35) Rich garnet color and an earthy nose. Fresh, juicy, and charming; clean, smooth, and balanced, with a lasting finish. **92**



Odem Mountain Winery 2017 Har Odem Reserve Merlot, Odem Mountain, Israel (\$50) Deep garnet color and a spiced nose. Silky texture and notes of spice, herbs, chocolate, plum, and toasty oak; complex, balanced, and long. **92**



Psâgot NV The Land Red Blend, Jerusalem, Israel (\$28) Rich garnet color and a toasty nose; smooth texture and notes of bright plum and spice. Lifted and long. **93**



Segal 2018 Petit Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel (\$50) This fresh, bright, and tangy Cabernet from Galilee is luscious and generous yet balanced, showing style and finesse. **93**

Tabor Winery 2020 Chardonnay, Mt. Tabor, Galilee, Israel (\$15) Clean, crisp, and fresh, with tangy citrus and pear; ripe yet balanced, with a long finish. An excellent value. **91**



Tabor Winery 2017 Adama Shiraz, Galilee, Israel (\$15) Deep color and a ripe berry nose. Clean, fresh, and juicy, with depth, balance, and spice notes culminating in a long, tangy finish. **92**



Maia by Tulip 2018 Apollonia Saint-Tropez, Samson, Israel (\$22) Peachy aromas meet smooth texture in this dry white with a fresh and juicy palate of clean yet lush flavors. The finish is long and appealing. **91**

ROYAL WINE CORP.

Spotlight on Shiloh Winery

Shiloh Winery 2018 Mosaic Exclusive Edition, Judean Hills, Israel (\$75) A lush Bordeaux blend from talented winemaker Amichai Lourie, the flagship wine of this remarkable winery is rich and generous, showing depth and exceptional finesse. **95**

Shiloh Winery 2017 Secret Reserve Petit Verdot, Judean Hills, Israel (\$50) Deep garnet color. Spicy, with bright varietal flavors and smooth, dense texture; stylish and long. **92**

Shiloh Winery 2018 Secret Reserve Shiraz, Judean Hills, Israel (\$50) Velvety, dense, and lush with ripe blackberry, spice, and hints of vanilla. Delightful and long. **93**



Shiloh Winery 2018 Secret Reserve Cabernet Franc, Judean Hills, Israel (\$50) Nuanced, deep, and layered, with lovely spice and rich texture. **93**



Shiloh Winery 2019 Shor Cabernet Sauvignon, Judean Hills, Israel (\$35) Smooth yet fresh, with racy plum and berry notes and elegant spice; meaty and toasty. A complete wine. **92**

Shiloh Winery 2019 Shor Merlot, Judean Hills, Israel (\$35) Deep garnet color. Lush and ripe, with deep, pure flavors and a velvety texture; toasted and layered, long and showing considerable finesse. **93**

Shiloh Winery 2020 Chardonnay, Judean Hills, Israel (\$30) Showing smooth, ripe pear, this is lush and tangy yet clean and balanced, with good length and depth. **92** 

ROYAL WINE CORP.

A Pioneer's Passion

The recipe for this focaccia crostini topped with smoky peppadew cheese spread, prosciutto, olive tapenade, and Marcona almonds appears in award-winning chef and restaurateur Lisa Dahl's second cookbook, *A Romance With Food: Latin Fusion Cooking*.



CHEF, RESTAURATEUR, AND AUTHOR **LISA DAHL** ON HER LIFELONG ROMANCE WITH FOOD

story by Marci Symington / photos by Grace Stufkosky

Lisa Dahl is not only a successful chef and restaurateur but also a skilled storyteller. Dahl was critical in establishing the dining scene in Sedona—a town of 10,000 in the stunning Red Rock Country of northern Arizona—as executive chef and CEO of Dahl Restaurant Group, which includes five concepts: Dahl & Di Luca Ristorante Italiano, Cucina Rustica, Pisa Lisa, Butterfly Burger, and Mariposa Latin Inspired Grill. Voted “Top Chef of Arizona” and “Food Pioneer” in 2018 and 2019 by the Arizona Restaurant Association’s Foodist Awards, Dahl has appeared on both the Travel Channel and the Food Network and has cooked twice at the James Beard House in New York City.

This level of success is no small feat, but to understand the path by which she got here is to gain an even greater appreciation of her achievements. Through each of her concepts as well as her two cookbooks, she relates her story as a girl growing up in the Midwest with a love of cooking, a grieving mother working through the loss of her only child, and a self-taught chef-turned-restaurant pioneer with a deep respect for the land equal to her belief in its stewardship.

Dahl was raised in Indiana before moving to the Bay Area, where she spent 20 years working in the fashion business. Following the untimely death of her son, Justin, she relocated to Sedona in 1995, a renowned spiritual center. As she and Justin had loved to cook



Dahl is CEO of Dahl Restaurant Group, overseeing five concepts in Sedona, AZ.

together, cooking became a medium by which she connected with her “angel.” This motivated her to fulfill the lifelong dream of opening a restaurant, Dahl & Di Luca, naming it for herself and her then-partner Andrea Di Luca. “The opening of my first restaurant will always be my greatest glory as a chef,” explains Dahl, “as a way of finding inspiration and peace.”

The success of her flagship opened doors to more business opportunities, including the launch of a Mediterranean concept, Cucina Rustica, in 2003 and the publication of her first cookbook, *The Elixir of Life: Finding Love and Joy in the Passionate Pursuit of Food*, in 2010. While the book contains recipes based on her popular restaurant dishes, Dahl explains that it “reads like a memoir, detailing my independence as a chef and my journey in finding salvation.”

Dahl then opened Pisa Lisa, a wood-fired pizzeria, in 2012 and Butterfly Burger in 2019, whose menu stars burgers that have claimed awards at the Scottsdale Burger Battle. And in between came Mariposa Latin Inspired Grill, a 6,500-square-foot restaurant with unparalleled views of the Sedona landscape and a menu that focuses on wood-fired meat, seafood, and vegetables. As Dahl explains, Mariposa, which opened in 2015, added “another wonderful layer [to my portfolio] for guests to enjoy. But most of all, I felt that Sedona needed a unique kind of steakhouse.”

While childhood memories of barbecues in the backyard and a passion for what she calls “the exotic, earthy, sensual spices of the Southwest” partly inspired Mariposa, Dahl and her husband, photographer Scott Yates, also spent three months in 2014 traveling around Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay for research. There, the idea for her



Dahl's signature grilled octopus alongside a Mariposa cocktail made with blanco tequila, chile liqueur, mango puree, and fresh lime juice.

second cookbook, *A Romance With Food: Latin Fusion Cooking*, took root.

Released on February 1, *A Romance With Food* reveals Dahl’s playful personality through chapters such as “Sumptuous Salads,” “Sultry Soups,” “Tantalizing Tapas,” “Platos Principales,” and “Sweets to Savor.” The “Spirit Realm” chapter features some of her outstanding cocktails, including the Rosé Grapefruit Strawberry Sangria, the Pisco Sour Primitivo, and Lisa’s Luscious Skinny Margarita with Azuñia Reposado, whose distributor told Dahl that her version is the top-selling Margarita in Arizona.

In the appetizer chapter, readers will find ceviche; Dahl’s signature grilled octopus; and empanadas, a staple of both Chile and Argentina, to which she adds her own twist: “I interpret classic items like beef empanadas a bit differently,” Dahl explains. “I use olives and currants and potatoes instead of the traditional hard-boiled egg. I play around and make it my own.” That’s also true of soups like veggie pozole and her personal favorite, sopa de Justino; named for her son, it’s made

with roasted chicken, vegetables, quinoa, and homemade chicken stock.

Many of the main dishes are grilled, including the lamb *costeletas* and the *flores del mar*, a seafood dish inspired by a camping trip. The recipe calls for prawns, scallops, and lobster (though Dahl encourages readers to use their own favorite seafood) wrapped in tinfoil with vegetables, herbs, and a saffron broth. Rounding out the book are several Latin-fusion desserts like prickly pear cheesecake, an ode to her desert surroundings.

As with her first book, Dahl explains that *A Romance With Food* is “more than just a cookbook. The stories are what set it apart.” Perhaps it is also a continuation of her spiritual transformation in recognizing cooking as a path to healing, highlighting the bridge it has created between her and her son. “I do feel [he] has guided this experience,” she acknowledges, noting that “he plucked the [word] ‘butterfly’ in Spanish into my thoughts” when she was deciding on a name for Mariposa. “And this is what I have done with it.” **LT**



Dahl's Smokey Pear cocktail.

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Proving the point that quality can override price and perception, **Dark Horse** took the lead in the majority of categories in our recent \$10 and Under Wine Challenge.

BEST CHARDONNAY

Dark Horse 2019 Chardonnay, California

Rich toasted oak and streamlined citrus notes.

E. & J. GALLO

RUNNER-UP

Cono Sur 2021 Bicicleta Chardonnay, Central Valley, Chile

This unoaked Chardonnay is crisp and fragrant, with herbs and flowers leading the way. Salted pear, grapefruit zest, oregano, and white petals cleanse the palate.

FETZER VINEYARDS





BEST SAUVIGNON BLANC

Dark Horse 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, California Aromatic and vibrant, with searing acidity that makes for a racy, sleek Sauv Blanc.

E. & J. GALLO

RUNNER-UP

[yellow tail] Sauvignon Blanc, Australia Grassy, clean, and crisp, with tropical fruit and green apple.

DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS



BEST CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Dark Horse 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, California Notes of espresso, structured tannins, and a meaty profile.

E. & J. GALLO

RUNNER-UP

Upper Left 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington Flavors of dark chocolate and coffee as well as balanced, dark fruit.

PRECEPT WINE



BEST RED BLEND

Frey Vineyards Organic Red, California This USDA Certified Organic blend of Merlot, Carignane, and Zinfandel is floral and ripe, with notes of raspberry, cherry, and baking spices.

RUNNER-UP

Dark Horse Double Down Red Blend, California Cigar leaf melds with warm spices, black plum, and roasted coffee in this deep, plush blend of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Tannat, and Teroldego.

E. & J. GALLO

BEST OTHER WHITE WINE

Fetzer 2020 Pinot Grigio, California With 17% French Colombard blended in, this dashing white is seasoned with lime, basil, and sweet stone fruit. The crisp finish keeps you coming back for more.

FETZER VINEYARDS

RUNNER-UP

Bella Sera 2019 Pinot Grigio, Veneto, Italy Crisp and mineral-driven, with lovely notes of stone fruit.

E. & J. GALLO



BEST PINOT NOIR

Dark Horse Pinot Noir, California Cinnamon, black cherry, and rose persist right through the finish line.

E. & J. GALLO

RUNNER-UP

Republic of Wine 2020 Pinot Noir, Itata Valley, Chile Earthy, vibrant, and fruit-driven.

PRECEPT WINE



BEST ROSÉ

Casal Garcia Vinho Rosé, Portugal Watermelon and raspberry appear under an umbrella of energetic acidity. Refreshing and clean.

AVELEDA

RUNNER-UP

Stella Rosa Ruby Rosé Grapefruit, Piedmont, Italy A crisp and citrus-toned blend of Moscato and Malvasia with a slight frizzante and hints of rose petal.

MADDALENA IMPORTS/
RIBOLI FAMILY WINES

Matchmaking

AT **CALDO VERDE** IN LOS ANGELES, PORTUGUESE CUISINE AND WINES ARE NATURAL PARTNERS

by **Sandra Gomes Rocha**

Once a European powerhouse, Portugal is experiencing a renaissance. For years, avid adventurers have kept this top travel destination a secret, but tourists have recently started flocking to her shores in record numbers. Meanwhile, world-class chefs and somms are ringing the bell on the country's remarkable cuisine and wines.

Leaders of this movement include Caroline Styne and Suzanne Goin of A.O.C. in Los Angeles as well as myself as the founder of Portuguese

wine importer Diniz Cellars. Recently, I teamed up with the celebrated restaurateur and chef at their newly opened downtown Portuguese-inspired restaurant, Caldo Verde, to host their first Portuguese wine-pairing dinner.

Featuring wines from the Vinho Verde, Dão, and Alentejo regions, the event highlighted a new generation of small family producers

that are proving Portugal is a world-class production zone. Goin's expertly prepared menu offered the perfect backdrop for these delectable pours.

The first course paired **Vale dos Ares 2020 Alvarinho** from Vinho Verde with prawns in a garlic and arbol chile sauce. The wine's tropical and citric flavor profile not only highlighted the dish's acidity and salinity but served to represent a region famous for its refreshing and easy-to-drink wines.



The Kelman 2017 Tinto Dão red blend, with its red-fruit notes and slight pepperness, mellowed out the richness of traditional Portuguese caldo verde with local rock crab, grilled linguica, kale, mussels, and potato.

However, this Alvarinho was also emblematic of the evolution happening in Vinho Verde, where wines are increasingly being built with elegance and ageability that are redefining its potential.

Next, the spotlight shone on the Dão, where high elevations and granitic soils yield Burgundian-style wines. From Kelman Family Vineyards came the **Kelman 2017 Encruzado** white wine and **Kelman 2017 Tinto** red blend. Encruzado, with its light aromatics and lush mouthfeel, is an ideal match with



Paired with chef Suzanne Goin's Portuguese-inspired menu, the featured wines came from the Vinho Verde, Dão, and Alentejo regions, highlighting a new generation of small family producers.

PHOTOS: TOM BERTOLOTTI



Importer Sandra Gomes Rocha of Diniz Cellars led an educational wine-pairing dinner for trade professionals at the newly opened Caldo Verde in the Proper Hotel in downtown Los Angeles.

seafood and richer dishes. One of the guests noted that its "bright and lively nature was a particularly fun standout, especially against the richness of the anchovy cream in the . . . endive salad." The Tinto, consisting of a variety of native Portuguese grapes, played a pivotal role in highlighting the restaurant's namesake, caldo verde, a classic potato-based soup: With red-fruit notes and a slight pepperness, it mellowed out the richness of the linguica and lent an earthiness to the rock crab that Goin added for a delicious twist on tradition.

The evening ended with the bolder and more robust **Herdade das Albernoas 2018 Reserva** from Alentejo. This traditional red blend of Aragonez, Trincadeira, Alicante Bouschet, and Touriga Nacional feels like Portugal in a glass, what with its rustic, ripe red fruit and girthy body. Its earthiness and medium acidity, meanwhile, stood up to rich beef cheeks in cream sauce and green salad with chile-based dressing.

Given wines like these, it's no wonder Portugal is on the trade's radar. And with its gastronomy now reaching our shores, Americans' appreciation for it will surely only deepen. **LZ**



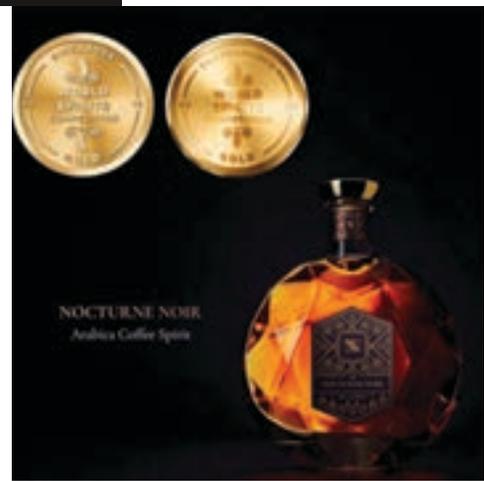
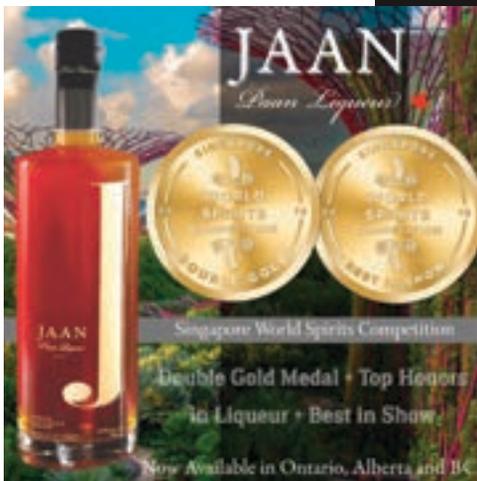
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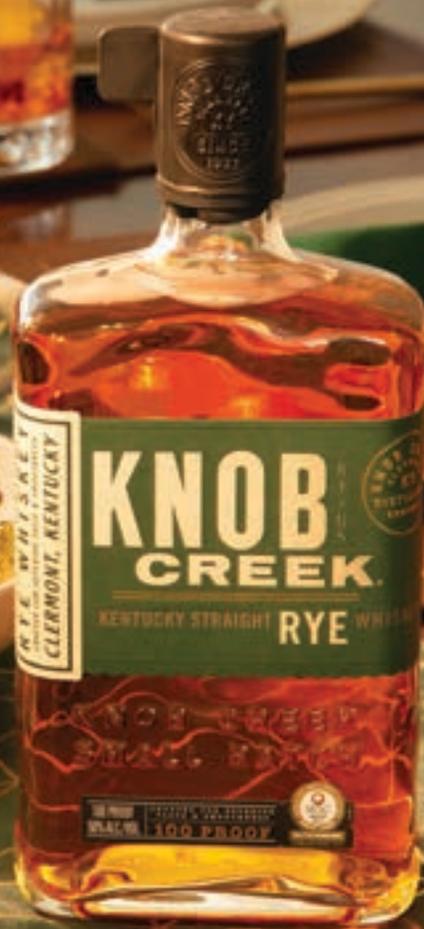
Whisk(e)y

A BOOM IN BROWN

**WHISK(E)Y MAKES
A STATEMENT AND
AN IMPACT FROM
THE U.S. TO THE
U.K. AND BEYOND**



by Bridget Albert



Choosing the right whisk(e)y is arguably the most important step in the execution of a great cocktail. Bourbon will give your drink a sweeter profile—think Maker's Mark, with its delightful oaky and vanilla notes—versus, say, Knob Creek Rye, which lends bold, spicy baking flavors like cinnamon and nutmeg. Within the confines of an expansive portfolio like that of James B. Beam Distilling Co., “I can find the perfect match for every cocktail ideation I take on, from Legent with its unique finishing characteristics to Jim Beam White Label [with] its approachability and affordability,” says Beth Burrows, American whiskey ambassador for Beam Suntory. “JBBD Co. has you covered!”

Depending on what part of Scotland your single malt is from, your cocktail can be peaty with a hint of honey, as with Bowmore 12 Year from Islay, or sing of toasted almond and toffee thanks to a Lowland single malt like Auchentoshan 12. Exploring single malts by region and age statement can be a quick and delightful way to discover your favorites.

American whiskeys have been experiencing a global boom for several years now, with bourbon steering the ship and other legacy styles like rye as well as relatively new styles like American single malt coasting along right behind it. This has led to both massive growth in the number of U.S. distilleries and geographic diversity in terms of whiskey production. Kentucky and Tennessee have been joined by most, if not all, of the other states. For instance, globally recognized whiskey professional Kyle McHugh notes that



the company for which he serves as director of advocacy, Samson & Surrey, “is fortunate to have two of the most exciting players in the craft whiskey world: New York’s Widow Jane, [with] its much lauded 10-Year-Old Bourbon, and renowned innovation driver FEW Spirits in Illinois—both growing like rocket ships right along with the insatiable global demand for bourbon and rye.”

And at Heaven Hill Brands, says Lynn House, the company’s award-winning national spirit specialist, “We have five signature mash bills that allow for a wide range of flavors: high-rye bourbon, wheated bourbon, corn, rye, and wheat. The ryes and high-rye bourbon have a beautiful spiciness that lends them to classics like the Old Fashioned or Manhattan. Our portfolio is also very diverse when it comes to age and proof. The older whiskeys are bolder, wonderful to enjoy neat or on the rocks; the younger whiskeys are softer and more fruit forward, perfect



for making any cocktail you desire. What is wonderful about our portfolio is there is a flavor and style for every whiskey connoisseur.”

Meanwhile, the category of Japanese whisky is growing in popularity among both the trade and consumers each year. A refreshing alternative in a classic cocktail or on the rocks, it’s most frequently paired with spicy food and small bites like sushi. “Yamazaki and Hakushu are world-renowned single malt whiskies, and the exquisite blends from Hibiki are sure to please any whisky drinker; Suntory Whisky Toki is led by its signature Toki Highball cocktail,” says Bobby “G” Gleason, celebrated master mixologist for Beam Suntory.

Finally, the long-standing category of Irish whiskey is a favorite among new whiskey drinkers. This may be due to the fact that many are introduced to it in the form of shots with Guinness chasers during Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations—or it may be thanks to the triple-distillation process by which some Irish whiskeys are made, which yields a smooth and approachable liquid. Founded in 1757, Kilbeggan is the oldest licensed distillery in Ireland. Blended and twice-distilled for a dynamic yet elegant flavor profile, Kilbeggan Traditional Irish Whiskey is a personal favorite of mine—and the distillery is magical to visit.

Wherever in the world you select your whiskey from, trust it to bring the flavor of its homeland to your glass.

Bridget Albert is the senior national director of education—Beam Suntory at Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits and the author of Market Fresh Mixology and Life, Love, Happiness & Cocktails.



THE WORLD OF



Whisk(e)y

GRAINS of TRUTH

OUR **BACK TO {SPIRITS} SCHOOL** WEBINAR EXPLORED WHISK(E)Y'S APPEAL ACROSS THE GLOBE

by **Stefanie Schwalb**

With winter nearly behind us, what better way to toast to spring than with a dram or two of whisk(e)y? For the November 2021 installment of our Back to {Spirits} School webinar series, "Warming Up to Whiskey, Global Style," an expert panel moderated by *SOMM Journal* VP of education Lars Leicht; Brian Connors, director of Florida International University's (FIU) Bacardi Center of Excellence; and professor Nathan Dodge of FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management distilled the traditions and evolutions of whisk(e)y around the world. During the session, which was presented in partnership with the Bacardi Center of Excellence and co-sponsored by Lyre's Non-Alcoholic, attendees learned from five brand representatives about a diverse range of expressions hailing from Ireland, Scotland, Australia, and the U.S.

TORABHAIG

"We are only the second distillery on the Isle of Skye and the first new one in 190 years," said Mossburn Distillers global brand manager Bruce Perry of Torabhaig—the construction of which, he readily admitted, was initially challenging at best. "I have to give it to people with vision because I don't think it would cross my mind to make a distillery out of it," he conceded. "It was an old castle steading and it was a very old building—roughly 200 years old—which was falling over. If you put your fist through the walls, you'd go right through them. The stones just fell out, but because it was so old, it was a protected building, so we couldn't just knock it down. We had to restore it." The process took Mossburn's stonemason four years to complete.

"The other thing about it being a protected building is that the rules meant that we couldn't go any higher than the apex of the roof—the width, height, and length of the building were established," Perry explained. "While we did a lot of work on the design front, ultimately the stills had to fit in that building."

Meanwhile, the Torabhaig team looked to their location to determine the style of whisky they were going to make. "The Isle of Skye is beautiful, but in a rugged sort of way," noted Perry, "so we thought, 'How are we going to get 'elegantly rugged' into a bottle?'" The first thing they did was get heavy peat-reek into their barley, "so then we wanted to tame it. What we didn't want to do was make the searing, medicinal style of whisky—there were many people who excel at that already," he continued. "We wanted to see if we could tame that ruggedness and create some elegance and finesse. We ran long fermentations, 100 hours or so, but we also ran very slow with distillations. We ran a 15-minute foreshot, and we cut at 64%."

The team has been following a ten-year plan for the launch of their ten-year-old whisky through their Legacy series, which is designed to capture different stages of its maturation. "We'll put some Sherry cask into our next [release], Cnoc Na Moine—that means 'the hill of peat'—and we'll put some Madeira casks into the Allt Breacach," concluded Perry. "Hopefully by then we'll be at 2028–2029 and have a ten-year-old."



PHOTO: @GASTRONOMCOCKTAILS

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARUSSIA BEVERAGES USA

Torabhaig's distillery is the second on Scotland's Isle of Skye.





LYRE'S

Non-Alcoholic

As an aficionado of cocktails—including Old Fashioneds, Sazeracs, and Whiskey Sours—Kyle Billings, former director of marketing, North America, for Lyre's, introduced himself by saying that while he and his team certainly appreciate spirits in all their glory, including Scotch, bourbon, and everything in between, "I'm excited that Lyre's can do a lot of the things your whiskey counterparts can do—just in lower[alcohol] and nonalcoholic formats that everybody can enjoy." Billings then introduced Texas-based brand ambassador Robert Albright to cover the brand's bourbon variant, American Malt, through a series of cocktails. ("There may or may not be a Scotch variant in the future as well," Billings added coyly, "so be sure to watch this space.")

Albright started his demonstration with a nonalcoholic version of a Sazerac. "Lyre's is unique because we not only have American Malt, which is a bourbon replica, but we've just relaunched our Absinthe," he explained, "so we can actually use [that] in a Sazerac and keep it nonalcoholic all the way through." First, he mixed 2 ounces of the American Malt and a quarter-ounce of turbinado sugar



**Lyre's brand ambassador
Robert Albright.**

in a beaker. Next, he grabbed an ice cube, gave the drink a stir, and poured a splash of the Absinthe into a separate glass. "I'll always play with the Absinthe and give that a little wash of the glass," Albright noted. "Since it's nonalcoholic, we don't dump it—we leave it in there so you get more of that flavor." He proceeded to pour the mixture from the cocktail beaker into the glass, express a lemon, and deposit its peel inside as garnish.

"Another cocktail that we're going to do—since we're in the South—is a Southern Gentleman," continued the mixologist. "It takes fresh blackberries, a bit of mint, 2 ounces of our American



Malt, and a hint of lemon juice." Instead of a rocks glass, he serves this drink in a goblet for added flair. Finally, Albright concocted a nonalcoholic Boulevardier by combining the American Malt with Lyre's Aperitif Rosso (winner of a San Francisco World Spirits Competition gold medal in 2020) and Lyre's Italian Orange (the brand's homage to Campari), then garnished it with a dehydrated blood orange. "I like to play with the classics," he concluded. "You get to have a lot of fun mimicking these flavors and showing people that they can have a sophisticated cocktail that's nonalcoholic too."

THE WORLD OF



Whisk(e)y

DEWAR'S *AND* ABERFELDY

“Whisky is a distilled spirit made from fermented grain. It can be made anywhere in the world using any distillation technology and aged in any type of wood, depending on where you’re coming from and what legal terms you’re bound by or work within,” Gareth Howells, North American single malts ambassador for Bacardi USA, reminded the audience. “But I’m going to be talking about Scotch. . . . What makes Scotch? It has to be malted, mashed, distilled, and bottled in Scotland, aged for a minimum of three years in oak, and bottled at a minimum of 40% ABV.”

From there, things get more complicated, Howells admitted, because there are two main distillates made within Scotland: grain whisky and malt whisky. From those come five predominant styles of Scotch: single malt, blended malt, single grain, blended grain, and blended. “We’re going to be talking about two specifically, blended and [single] malt,” he noted.

Dewar’s was founded in 1846 by John Dewar as a fine whisky and goods emporium. Dewar was a businessman, not a distiller, but he learned his trade by blending tea, coffee, and chocolate. “Blending is about construc-

tion, consistency, and the creation of flavor profiles—a house style, so to speak—and that was really the birthplace for the world of blended Scotch whisky,” explained Howells. “Effectively, one of the most important things in business is consistency. It’s the ability to create something your customers will recognize and know time and time again.” He described the Dewar’s house style as tasting of barrel-aged orchard fruits drizzled in honey.

Emphasizing the importance of a master blender, Howells also noted that Dewar’s has had only seven master blenders in its 175-year history. “It started with AJ Cameron, who was responsible in 1899 for the blending and release of Dewar’s White Label,” he said. “Today, it’s Stephanie Macleod. Effectively, she’s the gatekeeper—the protector of the Dewar’s blends’ flavor profile and master of the malts for each of the five distilleries of the house of Dewar’s, including Aberfeldy.”

Malt whisky in Scotland is made from three things: malted barley, water, and yeast. “Some people may get confused when you talk about single malts,” Howells said. “They think it comes from a single grain, but it actu-

ally refers to the fact that it’s whisky distilled from a singular distillery.”

After John Dewar passed away in 1880, the company went to two of his sons, who were responsible for founding Aberfeldy in 1898. Built in its namesake village alongside the river Tay in the Perthshire region—known as “the gateway to the Highlands”—it became the first and only distillery the family ever owned and operated themselves. It still sports the signature design element of its architect, Charles Doig, who introduced the pagoda-shaped chimney throughout the Highlands and Speyside.

Aberfeldy draws its water from the Pitilie Burn, renowned for its exceptional water quality and rich deposits of gold. Equally rich is the whisky’s honeyed, floral, and fruity profile, which can be attributed to the distillery’s longer-than-average fermentation process of 72 hours minimum and the use of stills that allow for a high level of copper contact during distillation. Truly indicative of the historic style of Highland single malt, the whiskies are matured in a combination of American and European oak casks and aged for a minimum of 12 years.



The Aberfeldy distillery in the Perthshire region of Scotland.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BACARDI

TEELING *Whiskey* COMPANY

Production at Ireland's Teeling Whiskey Company, founded in 2012 by brothers Jack and Stephen Teeling, is overseen by master distiller and blender Alex Chasko. Although his background is in craft brewing, Chasko also went to school for distillation; it's his belief that innovation represents the future of whiskey. "Essentially, when the Teeling brothers started the company, they wanted to make sure that they were keeping to the roots of Irish whiskey yet always looking toward the future," explained brand ambassador Matthew Conner.

Teeling's portfolio includes five whiskeys: Small Batch, Single Grain, Single Malt, Single Pot Still, and Blackpitts Peated Single Malt. "Our flagship whiskey, which is our Small Batch, is a blended Irish whiskey that's aged in ex-bourbon barrels and finished in rum casks for about one year," said Conner. "It features rum raisin on the nose, wonderful vanilla notes from the bourbon cask, and a sweetness on the finish from the rum cask."

The Single Grain, meanwhile, is aged exclusively in Cabernet Sauvignon barrels and boasts a beautiful red hue. The complex Single Malt is aged in Oloroso Sherry casks and finished in Madeira, Port, Cabernet Sauvignon, and White Burgundy barrels, while the Single Pot Still is a classic Irish whiskey style that can only be made in Ireland. "Single pot still was basically bred out of the necessity to cut back on paying so much tax to England," explained Conner. "During the 18th century, England was taxing Ireland for essentially everything, including malted barley, so the Irish decided to throw unmalted barley into their mash bill, creating this new style of whiskey."



Teeling Whiskey Company brand ambassador Matthew Conner mixes a cocktail.

Teeling's Single Pot Still is 50% malted and 50% unmalted barley, which is a unique mash bill for single pot still, added Conner. It's aged in a combination of ex-bourbon barrels, virgin American oak, and Oloroso Sherry casks. Finally, Blackpitts Peated Single Malt, which was released stateside in 2021, is a peated single malt aged in both ex-bourbon barrels and Sauternes casks.

Teeling's distillery was built in 2015, four years after the company's launch, in Ireland's capital. "We wanted to bring whiskey making back to Dublin, so we put our distillery right in Newmarket Square in the heart of

The Liberties," said Conner. "Dublin used to be the epicenter for . . . whiskey [globally], and everybody was looking to Dublin whiskey for a long time as the best whiskey you could get." But when Prohibition got underway in the U.S., almost all of Dublin's distilleries closed, and due to the rise in blended Scotch, they remained so for decades. "[That] decimated the entire Irish whiskey industry," concluded Conner, "but nowadays, we have a lot more distilleries. [We're] slated to have 30 open total by 2025, [and] then there are even more being built now that are supposed to open just after that. It's an exciting time for Irish whiskey."



Starward Whisky founder David Vitale.



“In 2007, when I started thinking about making whisky in Australia, there were plenty of local Australian distilleries that were making amazing products,” said David Vitale, Starward Whisky founder and director of sales and marketing, “but it was the world of whisky that captivated me. Starting Starward wasn’t this idea of, ‘I want to prove to the world that Australia can make great whisky.’ It was about saying, ‘What is it that we can bring to the world that doesn’t already exist?’”

All great whisky is indicative of the place it’s made, but Vitale said Starward’s formula has a secret ingre-



redient: the climate it hails from, in this case that of Melbourne. “We’re famed for having four seasons in a day, which can be quite dramatic,” he explained. “It’s not uncommon that one minute we’re over 100–105 degrees Fahrenheit, and then 25 minutes later, it’s 55. Then in the evening, it’ll climb back up again.” Vitale described Melbourne in relation to the Outback to its north and Antarctica to its south. “Since Melbourne is located in the southeast corner of Australia,” he expanded, “the weather coming from the northwest is hot, dry winds, and when it’s coming from the southwest, it’s freezing with low humidity. That [plays] a huge part in maturation and aging.”

But that’s not the only element of terroir that makes great whisky, Vitale said: “In terms of the grain, the malted barley and wheat in our two products, they come from within a day’s drive of the distillery. And although Melbourne has great water, we add calcium to it for fermentation because it’s often soft.” Meanwhile, Starward’s

aging barrels are sourced from local Australian wineries, which means that “[residual] wine goes out and whisky goes in for that full aging period,” he noted. “That’s an exciting thing for a couple of reasons: It is bloody delicious; it lands the point that we’ve seen from everybody on the panel today that a whisky [speaks to] the place where it’s made; and most importantly, we have an accessible whisky for the sharing cabinet at home or in amazing bars looking for great whiskies from around the world.”

Vitale also revealed that because food is at the center of his family life, he wanted to craft a whisky—or rather two, Two Fold and Nova—that would pair well with a range of dishes and cuisines. “We know that wine is the most food-friendly of drinks in the world, so I’d argue that Starward being fully aged in wine barrels is the most food-friendly whisky of all,” he said. While he enjoys Starward neat with water, he professed that it also makes a great cocktail.

THREE *Chord* BOURBON

Three Chord Bourbon was founded in 2016 by Neil Giraldo, a Grammy Award-winning guitar player, music producer, playwright, songwriter, and composer who joined forces with distiller/blender Ari Sussman to launch the company. “When I asked Neil about his creative process as a music producer, he said that when he’s feeling good about what he’s doing, he’s bringing in musicians from different backgrounds, genres, and age groups, putting them in a room together, and trying to create a vision where all these parts are working together in harmony,” Sussman explained. “What he was talking about in terms of music was like a blending house, because in whiskey blending, we also try to take individual components and put them together so that there’s harmony [and] to make a sum that’s greater than its parts.”

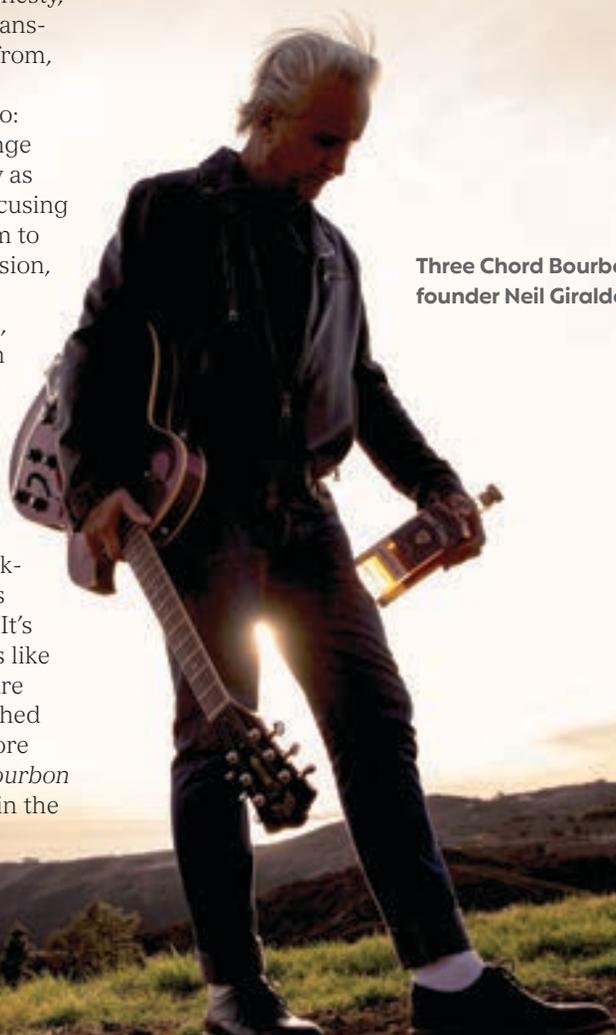
They decided to call the company Three Chord in reference to the blues, “an American form of music that went on to change the entire world and became the basis of rock ‘n’ roll,” Sussman said. “We wanted a name for a company that was elemental. There’s a great quote, ‘All you need to write a song are three chords and the truth,’ so we constantly remind ourselves that all you need to make a good whiskey are good components, honesty, integrity, and authenticity.” Those values are part and parcel with transparency: communicating where the whiskey they purchase comes from, how old it is, what blends they’re making, and in what proportions.

There are seven different expressions in the Three Chord portfolio: Blended Bourbon Whiskey, Twelve Bar Reserve, Amplify Rye, Strange Collaboration, Whiskey Drummer, and Tennessee Straight Whiskey as well as the recently released Bourbon Cream. “What we’ve been focusing on doing is purchasing whiskey of different ages and blending them to create new expressions,” noted Sussman. “Our introductory expression, Blended Bourbon Whiskey, is a blended bourbon at 81 proof with components coming from three different states: Tennessee, Indiana, and Kentucky. It’s smooth and approachable—that’s on one end. On the other, we have a 15-year-old straight Kentucky bourbon [called] Whiskey Drummer; that’s something you’re going to want to keep for special occasions.”

Strange Collaboration, meanwhile, is a blend of two-year-old and five-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon that’s finished in Pinot Noir casks for three to six months. “The blending of spirits of different ages is . . . a technique that we borrowed from winemakers who understand that wine at different stages in its maturity has different aromatics, mouthfeel, and flavors,” concluded Sussman. “It’s interesting as a distiller and blender to learn about sister industries like winemaking, perfumery, coffee, and tea blending, because the future of innovation in whiskey is going to come from those long-established principles, which we can study and apply to spirit making.” For more information, visit threechordbourbon.com or follow @threechordbourbon on Instagram—and look for reviews of the brand’s latest bottlings in the May/June issue. **17**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THREE CHORD BOURBON



Three Chord Bourbon founder Neil Giraldo.



Nuts and (Lightning) Bolts:

OLE SMOKY DISTILLERY

Ole Smoky has been in the spirits game for over ten years, and in that time it's become one of the fastest-growing distilleries in the country. While it was first known for moonshines like White Lightnin', in 2017 it added handcrafted flavored whiskeys to its portfolio. It now has over 17 inventive flavors, and it's not stopping there: Ole Smoky distillers are continuously experimenting with new expressions, which they often try out on visitors at the brand's four distilleries across Tennessee.

"We have the best test markets in the industry at our distilleries," says VP of marketing Will Ensign. "As the most visited distillery in the world, with more than 5.7 million consumers visiting in 2021, we have an amazing opportunity to test and refine our products to optimize for the consumer."



That's precisely how Ole Smoky Peanut Butter Whiskey was launched in 2019; one year later, it was available on the national wholesale market and quickly became one of the brand's top sellers. "We knew that pairing peanut butter with whiskey would be delicious—the combo of sweet and savory is always a big hit with consumers," says Ensign. Made with natural peanut extracts, the tantalizing liquid really encapsulates its namesake flavor, which is augmented by subtler notes of vanilla, oak, and star anise.

It's tailor-made to serve not only as an after-dinner drink but as an ingredient in classics like a Manhattan or an Old Fashioned (see recipe below), contributing an almost umami component. Of course there's no shortage of room for more playful creations, such as a PB&J shot that combines equal parts Peanut Butter Whiskey and Ole Smoky Blackberry Moonshine.

Beyond its ever-expanding lineup of fun flavors, the brand has also ventured into the world of fine spirits: In 2021, after spending a decade perfecting the recipe, Ole Smoky founder Joe Baker released James Ownby Reserve Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey. The distillate undergoes charcoal filtration before aging for over four years in charred virgin American oak barrels, which, in CEO Robert Hall's words, "mountain-mellows" the bourbon and "removes harsh flavorings, resulting in a rich, warm, easy-sipping spirit with a distinctly Southern soul."

Suffice it to say, then, that Ole Smoky has an expression for every palate.



Ole Smoky Tennessee Peanut Butter Whiskey, USA (\$20)

Authentic to this 60-proof spirit's name, the nose also shows a note of buttercream cookie. On the palate, the unctuous nature of the liquid is enhanced by a glossy texture, and side notes of toffee with a hint of mocha come through. Balanced and delicious. **94**
—Meridith May



Ole Smoky Peanut Butter Old Fashioned

- 1½ oz. Ole Smoky Tennessee Peanut Butter Whiskey
- ½ oz. Ole Smoky Blended Whiskey
- 4 dashes bitters

Stir in a mixing glass and strain over ice into an Old Fashioned glass. Garnish with an orange twist.

The Ultimate Triple-Double:

AMADOR WHISKEY CO.

There aren't many well-known whiskey brands headquartered in the heart of Napa Valley, but the location makes the perfect base for Amador Whiskey Co., as its three expressions are finished in wine barrels.

Although Amador is owned and operated by California wine-industry leader Trinchero Family Estates, its Napa roots represent only half of its upbringing. The company sources its whiskey from craft distilleries in Kentucky, where the spirit spends the first three years of its life maturing in charred new American oak barrels at an accelerated rate thanks to the state's hot summers, cold winters, and daily temperature swings.

Amador's Double Barrel lineup includes a trio of expressions, all of which spend an additional nine months or more in a former Trinchero Family Estates wine barrel: a three-year-old straight wheated bourbon with a Chardonnay finish (\$40), a three-year-old straight bourbon with a Cabernet Sauvignon finish (\$50), and a three-year-old straight rye whiskey with a Port finish (\$60).

According to Nielsen data, the year ending in June 2021 found the luxury American whiskey category (SRP \$30-plus) up 28% in retail sales. With its expanded lineup of Double Barrel whiskeys, which launched last fall, Amador is poised

to benefit from this continuing growth—all the more thanks to such promotional programs as partnerships with subscription services Flaviar and Shaker & Spoon and a recent holiday allocation on the members-only Touch of Modern website. Amador's retail sales grew by 38% from the launch through the holidays, thriving in top accounts such as ABC Fine Wine & Spirits; Spec's Wine, Spirits & Finer Foods; Meijer; and Total Wine & More.

In other words, Amador, whose name means "lover" in Latin, is certainly wooing consumers with not only its small-batch, wine barrel-finished production process but also its astute retail presence.



THE WORLD OF



Whisk(e)y

CHARACTER

Comes at a Cost

MICHTER'S SPARES NO EXPENSE WHEN PRODUCING ITS ACCLAIMED WHISKEYS

Considering that the Michter's legacy dates back to 1753, when it emerged in Pennsylvania as America's first whiskey producer with Swiss Mennonite farmers John and Michael Shenk at the helm, it's no surprise that the now-Kentucky-based brand prides itself on playing the long game. That particularly applies to its production process, which traverses through a series of meticulously executed steps overseen by master distiller Dan McKee and master of maturation Andrea Wilson to yield a lineup of both core and limited releases—reinforcing the Michter's mantra “Cost be damned!”

Paramount to the profile of a spirit is the type of vessel it's aged in, and the barrels Michter's uses are no exception. The distillery team works exclusively with wood that has been thoroughly dried outdoors for as long as 18–60 months, enhancing natural properties that will eventually impart higher levels of flavor and lower levels of tannins in the finished whiskey. Once the barrels have been made to the brand's specifications, they're toasted before they're charred, which aids in making the wood's sugars—now caramelized and concentrated due to the heat in what's known as the “red line”—more accessible to the liquid as it seeps into the barrel staves through the char, enhancing its color and character.

That practice directly ties into the producer's choice to barrel its rye and bourbon at 103 proof rather than the industry-standard entry proof of 125. The

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHTER'S



The towering column still at the Michter's distillery.



The history of Michter's dates back to the founding of a small distillery in Pennsylvania in 1753, but in the 1990s the brand was revived, and it now has a distillery in the Shively section of Louisville, KY.



Barrels piled high in the Michter's rickhouse. The distillery uses heat cycling to impart complexity in its maturing whiskeys.



Michter's works exclusively with wood that has been thoroughly dried outdoors for as long as 18–60 months; once the barrels have been made to the brand's specifications, they're toasted before they're charred to help make the wood's sugars more accessible to the spirit stored within.

distillery team believes this allows for those concentrated wood sugars to more readily dissolve into the whiskey during the aging process, and while setting this standard has resulted the production of fewer bottles per barrel, Michter's has found it to be worth the tradeoff in achieving its signature style, which president Joseph J. Magliocco has described as rich and full bodied.

Next comes what's known as heat cycling, another rare practice in which the temperatures in the rickhouses are raised to increase how frequently the whiskey expands and contracts;

as it moves in and out of the wood, it extracts more flavor from that aforementioned red line. Heat cycling is costly as it significantly increases the angel's share, but (remember that mantra!) the resulting complexity means that more is gained than lost when it comes to the quality of the matured whiskey.

It's worth noting that, in the case of Michter's, all of those whiskeys are both single barrel and small batch. According to U.S. regulations, the latter term is not formally defined, leaving the door open for producers to label hundreds or thousands of barrels as small batch. By contrast, Michter's caps its batches at 20 full barrels, which is the maximum capacity its equipment allows at its distillery in the Shively section of Louisville, Kentucky, as well as its second facility in Fort Nelson.

Finally, the distilling team's discerning eye lands on filtration: Instead of using carbon filtration, which can strip flavors and aromas from the whiskey, Michter's employs chill filtration. Of course, the one-size-fits-all approach used by many producers won't do here; instead, the techniques best suited to each offering are identified, despite coming at—you guessed it—an added cost in terms of both time and expense. Clearly there are few lengths Michter's won't go to when it comes to furthering its legacy as America's groundbreaking distiller. **LE**



Michter's 10-Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$170) The 10-Year is in high demand with limited stock, but this impressive whiskey has a bright future once the brand expands its Springfield Farm to produce more estate-grown grain for distillation, according to Michter's president Joseph J. Magliocco. With a nose of sassafras, ginger, and maple syrup-kissed apricot, the complex palate delivers sunflowers drenched in dripping honey and peach nectar. Resin resonates midway as notes of sandalwood pave a path through melted saffron butter. 92.8 proof. **99**—*M.M.*

Living the Dream

TRAVELING WINEMAKERS TAKE THE GREAT HARVEST HOP

What started in 2007 as a Facebook group named Travelling Winemakers has since connected over 43,000 members around the world. It's one of many outlets that help get wine professionals abroad, from California intern boards to other Facebook pages like WineVoyage.org; Wine Jobs and Resources for Travelling Winemakers that allow users to rate their harvest experience.

Follow along with me as I introduce you to friends I have made along my harvest journey!

In 2019, I found myself in New Zealand after locating a harvest opportunity at a winery called Pask through the Travelling Winemakers Facebook page. After landing in Wellington, I had only 48 hours to find a car and drive to Hawke's Bay before starting my first day of work (naturally, I somehow made time for a brief detour to the location that doubled as the Elvin kingdom of Rivendell in the *Lord of the Rings* films).

It was here I met my friends Stefanie Galicia Hernandez and Roman Balandran Felix, both born in Mexico. Stefanie grew up in Mexico City, then moved to Aguascalientes, where she eventually met Roman. I asked them what type of presence wine had in their Mexican families; both mentioned sparkling toasts on special occasions such as *quinceañeras* and weddings, but neither was well acquainted with the winemaking process until they pursued their own studies. In 2013, while a master's candidate in viticulture and enology, Stefanie completed her first of six harvests at a small winery in Burgundy called Domaine Carrette. It wasn't until her third that Roman, now her husband, experienced harvest for the first time when both of them worked in Napa. Stefanie said that they have never had trouble applying for harvests together, typically working at different wineries in the same region. They're now settled in Okanagan Valley, Canada, where Stefanie works as a lab assistant and assists producers with winery upkeep, logistics, and more.

I asked my co-worker and friend Hope Pinelli what she wished someone had told her before her first harvest. She laughed and suggested the importance of bringing a lot of extra socks, stretchy pants, sunscreen, and a hat, as well as of eating as much as possible to curb exhaustion during long and grueling shifts. Raised in Portland, Oregon, Hope is a Chinese-American winemaker who has completed nine harvests in the U.S., New Zealand, and Australia. Having the opportunity to do multiple tasks throughout the day and see all steps of the process is important to her. There are well-established safety protocols, pay structures, advanced technology, and greater opportunity for extended employment at larger facilities, but smaller facilities—which she prefers—allow for one-on-one guidance.

Speaking of effective safety protocols, my friend Marreya Bailey, a Black winemaker raised in Minnesota, transitioned into the world of wine in 2015 when she moved from hospitality to production. She has completed vintages in Vermont at a woman-owned wine and cider facility as well as in California at both a co-op winemaking facility in Sebastopol and a custom-crush facility in Santa Rosa; she also hopes to do a vintage in Japan soon. Marreya, as well as everyone else, agreed that day shifts are more forgiving physically, as night shifts require the adjustment of sleep schedules and tend to result in more injuries and fatigue-related incidents. We also agreed that safety training regarding confined spaces, chemical use, and proper communication can truly save a life.



From dig outs to punchdowns, pruning, and picking, there is much fun to be had as a traveling winemaker. From top to bottom: Hope Pinelli (she/her), Imane Hanine (she/her), and Roman Balandran Felix (he/him).

People often wonder what kind of perks come with working a harvest. There can't be a harvest without banging beats, or at least that's what my friend Imane Hanine thinks. This first-generation New Yorker of Moroccan and Dominican descent says you can always find her singing and dancing somewhere: She is the designated DJ. In addition to great tunes, the food provided by producers on long, physically taxing days—from snacks from a fully stocked fridge to a breakfast burrito—can make a huge difference in terms of both performance and morale. Sharing wines from various producers during lunch is also a great way to bond while training your palate. Marreya mentioned that she loved seeing her co-workers at the end-of-season party: "It was fun to see each other dressed up and not covered in grapes."

In Imane's words, "The greatest challenge yet to be solved is securing a decent salary." Applying for harvest abroad for the first time, she must ensure her pay covers not only her transportation costs but also food and bills back home—not to mention housing if it isn't being provided by the winery. Imane and Stefanie also agreed that acquiring visas when working in regions that require them can be difficult, as the application process can stretch on for weeks or even months.

I asked everyone if they had ever been treated unfairly in a winery based on their identity. Responses varied from "Show up like a boss anyway" and "Earn your respect" to confessions about the difficulty in finding welcoming environments among colleagues, even of the same gender and race, due to competition for job opportunities. The answer I received the most involved a hierarchy based on harvest experience, which as Imane explains "fosters a culture of posturing, bravado, and competition."

The Travelling Winemakers page puts it best: Harvest is for those "who are willing to think out of the box and head overseas to make some good wine and sample the fruits of the foreign soils." There are amazing programs around the world connecting BIPOC traveling winemakers with funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities. If you are looking for ways to travel for wine, check out [@naturalactionwc](#), [@battonage_forum](#), [@hispanicsinwine](#), [@theveraisonproject](#), [@rootsfund](#), [@asianwineprofessionals](#), [@blackwineprofessionals](#), and, of course, [@dreambigdarling_org](#) on Instagram. 🍷



From left to right, top to bottom: Traveling winemakers Marreya Bailey (she/her), Stefanie Galicia Hernandez (she/her), Bailey, Pinelli, Hanine, and Balandran Felix.

Fresh Voices is a collaborative effort between The Tasting Panel, The SOMM Journal, and 501(c)(3) organization Dream Big Darling. The concept centers around providing opportunities to and amplifying the voices of the next generation of women in the wine and spirits industry. To learn more about Dream Big Darling, visit [dreambigdarling.org](#).

*
Dear*
Emma

* by Emma Roberts

Joke's on Us

THE TOP TEN THINGS RESTAURANT WORKERS HEAR MOST OFTEN
(WHILE SOMEHOW KEEPING A SMILE ON OUR FACES)

Having worked in the hospitality business since I was a teenager, I have heard guests say some crazy things over the years. Even when I was a 16-year-old ice cream scooper at Walmart, customers would tend to overshare or tell jokes, whether they were welcome or not.

Service workers know we are not here to perform brain surgery or save lives: We are here to provide a memorable guest experience. But what happens when those guests interfere by taking things too far? I got together with Drew Talbert, a hospitality veteran of 23 years who last worked as a server in March 2020, to talk about some of the interesting (and unusual) things people have shared with us during our tenure in this business. Here are our top ten, listed in order from bad to most detestable:

10 "I guess you do know what you're doing!" This one usually comes up when guests order an extra-challenging drink. My retort: "What a surprise!"

9 "I'm sweet enough," in response to being offered sweetener for their tea or coffee. Drew says he'd usually look at their companion and remark, "Is that true?"

8 "Why do we have to pay if we bring in an outside dessert?" is a good one. Well, kind lady, it's because I'm losing money to another business every time you bring something else in.

7 "We know the owner." But do you? Because when I texted him to let him know you said hello, he said, "Who?"

6 "Take off your mask so I can see that smile!" Several men have said this to my female servers during the

PHOTO: ANDREW DELMAN



Drew Talbert is a hospitality veteran of 23 years and a content creator.

pandemic. I recommend answering, "I'm toothless, so it's better with it on!"

5 "We'll never come back!" This is what a gentleman told me when I asked how his meal was, causing immediate anxiety followed by relief when he added, "I'm a comedian." (Aren't you all, sir.)

4 "You'll have to wheel me out of here!" when a guest is offered dessert. Drew would laugh and respond, "I'll grab the gurney from the back."

3 When presented with the check, the person paying says, "We didn't order that." Drew would always retort, "No, I know—the chef insisted you try it."

2 "A million dollars" is an oldie but goodie in response to the question "What can I get you?" Drew would give

Service workers know we are not here to perform brain surgery or save lives: We are here to provide a memorable guest experience. But what happens when those guests interfere by taking things too far?

a hearty fake laugh and say, "If I had that, do you think I'd be working here?"

1 "It was terrible!" Ah, the classic answer from a person with an empty plate when they're asked how the food was. Drew's suggestion is to say, "What did you do, dump it on the floor?" and pretend to look around for it.

I'm not saying our responses are hilarious, but you need to have *some* reply ready to continue the flow of service and ensure things don't turn awkward at the last moment. Use ours or reach out to me with your own!

As for Drew, he's now employed as a content creator. His long tenure in the restaurant business gave him an abundance of subjects to cover, and he has made a series of comedic videos for social media that I find myself cackling at, especially when it comes to his (accurate) descriptions of guests. Follow him on TikTok @drew_talbert and on Instagram @drewtalbert, or visit his YouTube channel, youtube.com/c/drewtalbert. [📺](#)

Comments or general life questions?

Send Roberts an email at 100proofemma@gmail.com or reach out to her through her YouTube channel, [100 Proof Emma](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC100ProofEmma), or Instagram @100proofemma.



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