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Mordy and David Herzog of Herzog Wine Cellars.

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letter from the publisher

Holding Out Hope



We could have devoted the entire magazine—perhaps volumes—to speak to more of these impactful professionals.



AS THE WORLD WATCHES THE UPHEAVAL IN EUROPE, WE MUST CONTINUE TO KEEP THE FAITH IN OUR COUNTRY, IN OURSELVES, AND IN MANKIND

Our cover features Mordy and David Herzog, whose legacy begins in Eastern Europe and carries through to a successful family business over 100 years later. Hard work and dedication have ensured that the Herzog name is known not only as a leader among global wine importers but also as owner-operators of a remarkable California-based winery.

This issue is further dedicated to the talented women—winemakers, educators, entrepreneurs, and more—who have impacted our industry through their creativity, innovation, and forthright decision-making. We call this section "Women Who Raise the Bar," and truly, we could have devoted the entire magazine—perhaps volumes—to speak to more of these impactful professionals. Of course, we have only so many pages available, but this is not the last time that we will address this honorable segment of our trade.

Demonstrating our love of agave spirits, the May/June issue also contains an annual category report that spotlights both established brands and the new arrivals on our radar. Along with a recap of our recent webinar on the topic, featurettes on some of these charismatic liquids start on page 96. We remain astonished at the wide variety of flavor profiles, textures, and, yes, eye-popping packaging.

In addition, our pages are bubbling over with content on sparkling wine: a feature on food pairing with Prosecco as well as the effervescent reviews of managing editor Ruth Tobias, who has moved her Sparkle Motion column from *The SOMM Journal* to *The Tasting Panel*.

So now that spring has sprung, let's jump right in as we travel from the Charleston Wine + Food festival to Tennessee's Old Smoky Distillery to California wine country with Oak Ridge in Lodi and Landmark in Sonoma County.

Along the way, I trust that we will keep the fires of faith burning through strength of prayer and the belief that good will reign. \blacksquare

With warm regards,

Meridith May

Meridith May Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

upfront

by Randy Caparoso

Oak Ridge Winery general manager Raquel Maggio-Casity with her sisters and partners, hospitality manager Lisa Kammerer and brand ambassador Shelly Maggio Woltkamp.

Giving Voice to the

OAK RIDGE WINERY MAKES A PLAY FOR THE PREMIUM-TIER MARKET

any of the farming families in California's Lodi appellation have been there for over 100 years. The Maggio family is no exception, having emigrated from Genoa, Italy, in 1906. Like many Lodi growers, the Maggios profited immensely during Prohibition, when home winemakers across the country created a sudden demand for wine grapes; today, they own and farm over 2,500 acres, all but 250 of them located within the AVA (the balance falls in the California Delta region just west of the appellation). Intent on preserving their properties for future generations, they are certified by LODI RULES for Sustainable Winegrowing, which sets a high bar with respect to environmental responsibility.



Twenty years ago, Rudy Maggio, the family's third-generation patriarch, led the Maggios into the winemaking business by establishing Oak Ridge Winery. The original idea was to capitalize on their wealth of land and surplus of grapes by producing value-priced labels such as OZV, Old Soul, Maggio, Three Girls, and Blazon that would sell in retail stores from coast to coast for as low as \$11.

Rudy, however, has recently eased into retirement, making way for a fourth generation: Oak Ridge general manager Raquel Maggio-Casity and her sisters and partners, hospitality manager Lisa Kammerer and brand ambassador Shelly Maggio Woltkamp. Says Maggio-Casity, "We are proud to be womenowned. It's no coincidence that we have a new woman winemaker, our assistant winemakers are women, and our marketing and sales teams are majority women." And together, they have made no bones about what they plan to do: raise the quality of their wines to sell in the \$22-\$35 range.

The siblings feel strongly that their grapes have always possessed the requisite qualities for premium production, so "the major focus has been in the winery," Maggio-Casity explains. "We made huge improvements just over the past three years, investing in more and better barrels and adding new tanks and equipment, including a Pellenc optical sorter. . . . We are still working out



The label on the inaugural vintage of Maggio Estates Cabernet Sauvignon tells the family's story.





Marcall

MADGED

1906 Vintners 2021 Fumé Blanc, Lodi (\$22) Fermented in steel and aged in French and American oak (70%), this DTC-only Sauvignon Blanc offers fragrances of citrus (lime peel) and tropical fruit (mango) with a sliver of vanillin oak enhancing the fruit-focused profile. Tart, tight, delicate qualities show on the palate. In chief winemaker Laura Chadwell's words, "Sauvignon Blanc grows beautifully in Lodi, which you can sense in this wine.... The fruit is very bright and citrusy but not overripe.... It is filled with orange blossom–like floral notes, a grapefruit-like citrus character, and a hint of nectarine rather than being only about tropical fruit."

Maggio Estates 2020 Chardonnay, Lodi (\$30) Light straw-gold in the glass; fresh, bright apple and pear aromas with an intriguing trace of leafy herbiness; fine, silky, creamy entry leading to a pinpoint balance between crisp fruit, a touch of toasty oak, and citrusy acidity. Explains Chadwell, "The fruit is sourced from the Maggios' Mokelumne River and Jahant AVA vineyards [in] the cooler parts of Lodi, so the natural acids show very well. This is not a 'copycat' Chardonnay. It is a selection of our best barrels, the ones we felt were truest to the terroir. Stylistically, we went for [a] more delicate [wine] with crisper acidity, avoiding a fat or buttery oak feel—the predominant profile remains that bright citrus/green apple Chardonnay character, which allows for a little floral/jasmine character to come through."

Maggio Estates 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi (\$30) Purplish-ruby hue. Intensely fruit-forward nose—plums, mixed berries—underlined by low-key hints of cedar/pencil wood as well as leafy/herbal green notes. On the palate, notable acidity and medium tannins bolster the fruit tones, framed by a touch of toasty oak. Chadwell elaborates: "This is an almost 100% Cabernet Sauvignon with 2% Merlot blended in, aged in French (73%) and American oak. In future vintages we plan to move to 100% French oak. Similar to our Chardonnay program, we selected our best barrels, which came from our best vineyards on the cooler western side of the Lodi appellation. The climate in this area is moderate enough that we get the concentrated blackberry varietal character [with neither] a super-green pyrazine herbaceousness nor any overripe, raisiny, or

jammy characteristics. The wine ends up very much a Lodi style of Cabernet Sauvignon. It has structure and weight but is also very fruit forward; when Lodi fruit is allowed to express itself without interference, you get a very supple style of the varietal, with enough intensity to define itself as a luxury-tier Cabernet."

the bugs, since this is an old facility, originally built in 1934 [as an old growers' cooperative, but] . . . we are very serious about being competitive in the premium market."

That goal has also entailed bringing in bright new talent, which perfectly describes chief winemaker Laura Chadwell. Chadwell is a University of California, Davis, graduate in viticulture and enology who actually grew up in the Lodi area but has honed her skills over the past ten years in Paso Robles, Monterey County, and Napa Valley.

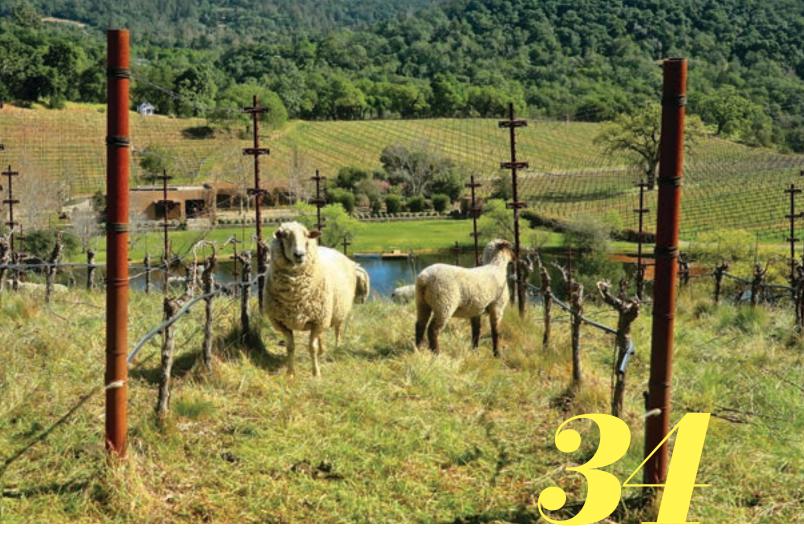
Chadwell's outlook is typical of many winemakers today in that she is planning, with the blessing of the Maggios, to steer the winery away from strictly commercial varietal bottlings toward wines that highlight terroir, specifically that of Lodi. "When I had the chance to return to the old Zinfandel vines that stole my heart nearly ten years ago, I jumped," says Chadwell. "I love to make wines that speak for themselves—wines that decide what they will be, where I'm just lending a helping hand."

The current releases in Oak Ridge Winery's premium portfolio do indeed speak for themselves, though we have something to say about them too—see above for tasting notes. \blacksquare

Oak Ridge assistant winemaker Lorena Hernandez Barron, chief winemaker Laura Chadwell, and assistant winemaker Sasha Hazel.

MAY/JUNE 2022 • tastingpanelmag.com







cover story

KEEPING THE FAITH

By Implementing Vertical Integration and Creating Lasting Relationships, the Herzog Family Sustains a Legacy That Dates Back to the 19th Century

5

up front

GIVING **VOICE TO THE** GRAPES

Oak Ridge Winery Makes a Play for the Premium-Tier Market

70

category report GLASS **CEILING BE**

GONE In Praise of the Women Who

Make Our Industry Great

96 category

report THE ART OF

AGAVE Exploring the Authentic Artistry of Tequila, Mezcal, and More

90

feature

SIMPLICITY AT **ITS FINEST**

With Complicated, Winemaker Amanda Ingram Is on a Mission to Make Wine More Approachable

136

feature

MORE THAN THE SUM OF **ITS PARTS**

Landmark Vinevards Is a House of Many Dimensions



AWARDED GOLD

Denver International Spirits Competition, 2022 & TAG Global Spirits Awards, 2022



"Warm and polite on the nose, with scents of root beer, sandalwood, and baked apples. Flavors are delectable: from nutty oak to peach blossom, ginger, black cherry, and spiced tea. Notes of saddle leather come in mid-palate, with a burnt orange-vanilla and maple finish. A high rye with a high proof that manages to not overshadow its inner beauty."

95 pts – Meridith May, The Tasting Panel

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content

departments

- 4 Letter From the Publisher 12 Industry Spotlight **16** The Ransom Note *18* Capitol Chill 20 Dining and Drinking From A to Z 22 Lone Star Libations 24 A Voice Uncorked 26 Fresh Voices 28 Cheese Wiz 30 Five Minutes With ... Robin Wright
- 32 The Cocktail Collaborative

34	The Wandering Sommelier
36	Beyond the Barrel
38	Taking Inventory
42	Pairing Up
<i>44</i>	Q&A: Nico Cantacuzène
48	Sparkle Motion
52	The Candy Shoppe
56	In Memoriam: Sally Schmitt
58	Brand Spotlight: Antigal Winery & Estates
60	Entrepreneurs: Magda Gilpin

66	New Releases: Nelson Brothers Bourbon
68	Brand Spotlight: 1000 Stories
88	Events: Ole Smoky Shine Fest
94	Behind the Label: Borreo
114	Bubbles: Zonin
<i>118</i>	Publisher's Picks
125	Publisher's Picks EXTRA
132	Down the Aisle
140	Blue Reviews
144	Events: Charleston Wine + Food
146	Dear Emma

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ROBERT HALL WINERY Featuring Winemaker Amanda Gorter

The AVAs of Paso Robles Adelaida district | creston district | el pomar district | paso robles estrella district | paso robles geneseo district | paso robles highlands district | paso robles willow creek district | san juan creek | san miguel district | santa margarita ranch | templeton gap district

industry spotlight



Meant to celebrate the contributions of Sonoma County's farmers, growers, winemakers, and chefs, the inaugural Healdsburg Wine & Food Experience will unfold May 20–22 at various locations in the Healdsburg area. The schedule of events includes a trade tasting and VIP Welcome Evening Celebration on the Grand Lawn of the Montage Healdsburg on Friday, May 20; wine panels/seminars and culinary demonstrations by celebrity chefs on Saturday, May 21; and four separate VIP lunches on Sunday, May 22. For more information, including ticket pricing and a full schedule, visit *healdsburgwineandfood.com*.

The Montage Healdsburg will serve as one of the host venues for the inaugural Healdsburg Wine & Food Experience.

Alexander Bratslavsky Is the Driving Force Behind Ukraine's Pristine Vodka

As the old adage goes, "If you want something done right, do it yourself." Alexander Bratslavsky is certainly taking those words to heart as both founder and importer of Pristine, working passionately to deliver premium vodka from his homeland of Ukraine to American consumers.

As a young adult, Bratslavsky served in the army and dreamed of one day emigrating to the United States in pursuit of starting and running his own successful business. In 1989, he took the first step toward that goal, leaving Ukraine with his family in tow. But the American dream proved elusive when they arrived in New York: Daunted by culture shock and a significant language barrier, Bratslavsky put in years of hard work before he could even conceive of what would eventually become Pristine Vodka. He instead began working as a limousine driver, and he was able to realize his dream of making a living and raising a family in the U.S. But he was disappointed in the overpriced and lackluster premium vodkas available on the domestic

market compared to the smooth, high-quality vodkas of his homeland, with their distinct minerality.

Through extensive research, Bratslavsky learned that many other consumers were also looking for something new: a vodka of exceptional taste and value. As soon



as he was able, he set out to fill that niche and began importing vodka himself; after learning everything he could about crafting it, he eventually combined his experience in the industry with his firsthand knowledge of the fertile lands and pure waters of Ukraine. After organizing a team of agriculturalists and

master distillers to create a peerless Eastern European vodka, Bratslavsky continues to oversee all facets of the brand, which aims to embody the simplicity and elegance of the name Pristine. For more information, visit *pristinevodka.com* and see our review on page 124.

YOU ASK. JOE ANSWERS.

Ask 5th generation winemaker Joe Wagner anything you want to know about BÖEN wines.









industry spotlight

NV Group USA Appoints Scott Franklin as Executive Vice President of Sales

NV Group USA, responsible for the launch and development of NV Group India's premium spirits brands in the U.S., has announced the appointment of industry veteran Scott Franklin to executive vice president of sales. In his new role, Franklin will report to NV Group USA president Mike Ginley and oversee an



aggressive growth plan for Smoke Lab Vodka as well as the launch of additional premium spirits brands produced by NV Group India. Before joining NV Group USA in September 2021, Franklin served as regional sales director for Angel's Envy Bourbon in Louisville, Kentucky, and Pisco Porton in Houston, Texas.

According to Ginley, Franklin "is the definition of a leader and team builder. Scott brings tremendous enthusiasm and a wealth of skills and experience to the table that will be instrumental in helping us achieve our aggressive distribution and sales goals over the next five years and beyond."

"Make Peace Not War" Campaign Brings Breweries Together to Support Ukraine

As part of a collaborative effort between EGC Group's Craft Beverage Division, First Sip Brew Box, and Hoot Design Studio, creative teams from across the craft brewing industry have come together to launch a campaign aiming to spread a universal message of hope through, of all things, beer labels. "Make Peace Not War" is a customizable label design that craft breweries can adopt for use with their own beverages—all while raising much-needed funds for relief effor



much-needed funds for relief efforts in Ukraine.

The label template was conceived and produced by Jen Borror, an award-winning illustrator and graphic designer who owns Hoot Design Studio in York, Pennsylvania. Brewers are invited to add the name of the beer, their logo, and the beer style to the label and then distribute their product as a limited-edition selection. "I felt so helpless sitting on my couch the day after Russia invaded Ukraine," explains Borror. "I knew I had to do something, so I posted a design to my Instagram account and the response was tremendous and encouraging. From there it just took off."

Temporary use of the copyrighted label is entirely free, provided that the breweries that use the design donate at least 10% of their sales proceeds from Make Peace Not War beer to a charity that's providing relief to those affected by the crisis in Ukraine. Interested breweries are invited to register with the campaign and download the label art by visiting *makepeacenotwarbeer.com*.



DAOU Vineyards Launches Its 2019 Soul of a Lion Cabernet Sauvignon

DAOU Vineyards hosted a launch party for the 2019 vintage of its crown jewel, Soul of a Lion Cabernet Sauvignon, in early March on the West End Rooftop of The London hotel in West Hollywood, California. Guests gathered at four long tables seating roughly 20 each, where the 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019 vintages of Soul of a Lion were lined up on tasting placemats.

Winemaker and proprietor Daniel Daou noted that despite their different ages, the wines had all retained the same rich, deep purple color due to their phenolic content. "We created a special process to extract the right phenolics, rendering the wine approachable upon release yet having the structure to age for 40 or 50 years," he added. And while each vintage had its own remarkable profile, cassis and blueberry were present throughout, including in the 2019, which also showed notes of dark cherry, sweet tobacco, and licorice with chalky tannins.

Daou explained that the name Soul of a Lion was taken from a book of stories that his father had compiled to share with Daniel and his brother when they were growing up. The elder Daou wanted his children to know that if they "ever despair or lack hope, inside of them there is the roaring soul of a lion." The same goes for the wine, regardless of vintage.



Outlaw by Nature

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

Rethinking My Relationship With Sauvignon Blanc

My wife, Melanie, will tell anyone who asks that I am not a big fan of Sauvignon Blanc, a varietal that, particularly in entry-level incarnations, often misses the mark on quality and flavor—at least in my opinion. But recently—just in time for summer—I found a reason to rethink my position, thanks to some excellent wines from both sides of the pond.

During a Zoom presentation featuring wines from Tuscan producers, I tasted the marvelous Enos I from Tenuta Montauto *(montauto.org)*. One of Tuscany's southernmost producers, Montauto is located just north of Lazio in the Maremma, where vintner Riccardo Lepri farms organic vineyards planted by his grandfather Enos 40 years ago. The estate's proximity to the coast, only a few kilometers from the Tyrrhenian Sea, is what makes it especially suitable to cool-climate grapes

not normally associated with this sunbaked region, including Pinot Noir and, of course, Sauvignon Blanc.

The Enos I (\$26)—named, as one would guess, after Lepri's pioneering grandfather—is made with 100% Sauvignon Blanc from the original vineyard on the property, an isolated piece of land surrounded by forest as far as the eye can see. Quartz-rich clay is the dominant soil here and gives lovely mineral notes to

16 THE TA



the finished wine. Stainless steel–fermented at 60 degrees Fahrenheit and



aged on the lees prior to bottling, Enos I also presents tropical fruit and a touch of flintiness on a harmonious palate marked by bright and lively acidity. A fine food companion worthy of any wine list, it's available in the U.S. through such regional importers

> as Kindred Vines Import Co. (kindredvines. com) and Martin & Company Wines (martincowines.com).

Moving virtually from Italy to California, I was lucky enough to get acquainted with another standout example of the varietal in the form of Medlock Ames Bell Mountain Estate Sauvignon Blanc (\$32) from the Alexander Valley in Sonoma County. Co-owners Chris Medlock James and winemaker Ames Morison farm about 55 organic acres of vines atop the namesake mountain; the property houses a solar-powered and gravityfed winery. (The duo also runs a tasting room in Healdsburg.)

The wine is 92% stainless steel-fermented, with the balance fermented in oak. It delivers layers of minerality, freshness, lively citrus flavors, and palate-cleansing acidity that would pair beautifully with fish and other al fresco meals that celebrate the season.

ESY OF LENUIA MONIAUIO

Tenuta Montauto's vineyards in Maremma.





A Study in Contrasts

GOING FROM SKI COUNTRY TO THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORE WITHOUT LEAVING D.C.

When it comes to spring-break ski getaways, I'm more of a sit-by-thefireplace-with-a-warm-drink-in-hand gal than a double-black-diamond devotée. So I was excited to hear that Bourbon Steak at the Four Seasons Hotel, Washington D.C., in Georgetown had installed four ingenious "chalet suites" on its patio for the season, each boasting decor modeled after a different Four Seasons ski resort: Aspen, Jackson Hole, Whistler in Canada, and Megève sweet or heavy. Ditto the Tea Time: With hazelnut-infused vodka, walnut, chai, and lemon, it sounded like a dessert drink but went down as a nutty, dry, spicy tipple we kept going back to.

Of course, head sommelier Winn Roberton was on hand to uncork fun and surprising finds for what we referred to as our "rib eye–off": ordering and comparing a grass-fed cut from Cape Grim, Australia, with wagyu from 7X Cattle Company in Colorado. We pretended it was aperitivo hour on the Mediterranean coast with the Santé Spritz, which mixed local Catoctin Creek Gin with Campari and grapefruit soda, and the South of France Sparkler, combining Cîroc Vodka, lemon, mint, lavender, and a Prosecco float. *Buonissimo!*

On to the meal: A grilled Virginia oyster bathed in tangy harissa butter found its foil in luscious Sauternes, while the gorgeous earthiness of beet



A "chalet suite" at the Four Seasons Hotel, Washington D.C.

in France. The cozy, custom-built wooden structures turned out to be my après-ski dream come true. Depending on your evening plans, they could be set with a round dining table for two to six guests or with sofas, low tables, and lots of blankets for curling up over cocktails. Niceties included space heaters and Bluetooth speaker hookups, while outdoor firepits with communal seating were only steps away.

On our visit in February, my friend and I took a virtual trip to Wyoming, sliding the door closed to ward off the chill and settling in with a round of fabulous libations. Featuring gin, dry vermouth, lemon, and plump figs, the vanilla-scented Action Figure gave a nod to the season without being too Bourbon Steak's gin-based Action Figure cocktail is flavored with figs and vanilla.

loved both, but preferred the flavorful Down Under steak to the decadence of the latter.

Across the bridge in northern Virginia, another luxury hotel—The Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City—revamped its dining venue last fall, opening the 64-seat Santé as a spot for Mediterranean small plates and global wines. Executive chef Phil Skerman and chef de cuisine Kevin Marshall-Broderick—with the help of director of food and beverage Shaun Henesy created a special six-course menu with wine pairings for my companion and me that hit a lot of high notes. But first, in keeping with the concept, we

Santé's lamb osso buco.

and burrata salad with shaved fennel, pistachios, and lavash was balanced by the restraint of Bordeaux Blanc. Tender grilled octopus was given a decidedly Spanish treatment with chorizo, olives, romesco, and a fruity crianza Tempranillo; one of my all-time favorite whites-mineral-driven, citrusy Sancerre-made an appearance alongside pan-seared black bass in brown butter beurre blanc; and lamb osso buco with okra and rosemary couscous was perfect with a chewy Priorat Garnacha blend. Sure, we didn't need dessert. But given whimsical, Champagne-paired options like a baklava-inspired sundae and warm olive-oil cake with brûléed figs and lemon chantilly, we thought, why not? 🗖



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PINK WHITNEY

NEW AMSTERDAM

DINK WHITNEY

PINK LEMONADE

FLAVORED VODKA

NEW AMSTERDAM VODKA

Pink Lemonade Flavored Vodka, Alcohol 30% by Volume (60 Proof), ©2021 New Amsterdam Spirits Company, Modesto, CA. All rights reserv.



Cactus, Cotton, and Creosote

BAR 1912 IS A HEARTFELT ODE TO THE VALENTINE STATE

"Arizona is having a moment," declares Chad Price, co-owner of Valentine, an acclaimed Southwestern concept located in Phoenix's Melrose District. Opening in November 2020 to serve baked goods, breakfast sandwiches, and coffee, Valentine has been constantly evolving since, expanding its services to include brunch and dinner and creating menus that are helping to define the cuisine of the "Valentine State"—so called for the date of its statehood on February 14, 1912. In March 2022, Price and his business partner, Blaise Faber, also increased hours of operation for echoes the architecture of Spanish missions like Tucson's San Xavier del Bac, with arches adorning the walls, while jars containing native plants such as tomatillo husks, cactus paddles, manzanilla berries, *chiltepines* (wild chiles), and Navajo tea, many of which have been foraged, line the bar.

Foraged botanicals also find their way into cocktails that reflect the six ecosystems of the state: Desert, Chaparral, Forest, Tundra, Woodland, and Grassland. For instance, the Desert cocktail contains locally produced wild botanical gin, housemade cactus



Valentine and Bar 1912 owners Chad Price and Blaise Faber with executive chef Donny Hawk.

their backroom cocktail lounge, Bar 1912, while introducing a revamped food and beverage program driven by Arizona terroir and lore.

Faber and Price—born-and-bred locals who worked together at Chris Bianco's Tratto—aim to highlight the historical foodways of their home state through the use of ingredients such as mesquite flour, wolfberries, and durum wheat berries. That's evident from a glance around the cozy interior, which vermouth, and citron; it's served in a Martini glass and spritzed with creosote spray to evoke the scent of the desert after rain. As Price puts it, "We theoretically conceptualized and translated the ecosystems into flavor profiles."

In addition to providing a lesson on local flora, a visit to Bar 1912 harkens back to social studies class, with Price and Faber interpreting what are known as "the Five Cs" of Arizona's early economy—cattle, cotton, climate, citrus,



The Tundra (right) contains Scotch-soaked stones that represent the cocktail's namesake biome. It's pictured with the Desert cocktail (left) as well as olives stuffed with guinea hen liver, marinated quail eggs, and mesquitesmoked mixed nuts.

and copper—through their drinks. For instance, representing one of the state's largest cash crops, the Cotton reinvents a Ramos Gin Fizz with pistachio milk, Oloroso Sherry, lemon juice, and a garnish of pistachio cotton candy over an egg-white float.

A 2022 James Beard Award semifinalist in the emerging chef category, Valentine's executive chef, Donald "Donny" Hawk, adds a different dimension to Valentine's menu by weaving his Korean heritage into such popular dishes as hiramasa crudo in brown butter, raisin, and tomatillo vinaigrette and shrimp toast with tepary-miso yogurt. Explains Price, "While Mark Miller [of Santa Fe's Coyote Cafe] inserted French techniques into Southwest cuisine, we are carrying forward the torch with Pan-Asian flavors."

For Bar 1912, meanwhile, Hawk has carefully curated a selection of snacks: Dates (another important local cash crop) are filled with honey-nut miso and glazed with pomegranate molasses. Castelvetrano olives are stuffed with local guinea hen liver and covered with date sugar. Spiced red and green corn chips are served with Anasazi bean dip, while tamari-marinated quail eggs and mesquite-smoked nuts round out the menu along with white Sonoran wheat pretzels made by pastry chef Antonia Kane, a Tartine alum, who accompanies them with whipped guinea hen fat.

Price concludes, "This is a powerful time for Phoenix. The James Beard acknowledgments of [2022]—15 total—speak to that. People are working tirelessly, in light of how broken the world is right now, to keep pushing boundaries, and I think it is coming through in the food and the drinks." 'I

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In His Blood

BILL NORRIS HONORS HIS FAMILY'S CONNECTION TO THE BAR BUSINESS WITH HIS NEW CONSULTING COMPANY, 3RD GENERATION HOSPITALITY

On a sunny day in March, I met with bartender Bill Norris on the patio of a newish Austin hangout called Easy Tiger, which draws crowds with its bakery, smokehouse, beer hall, and well-balanced drinks. Long ago at a food and wine event, Norris—an early leader in the local craft-cocktail scenehad opened my eyes to the culinary aspect of cocktails, and I wanted to chat with him about the current state of the business. his career trajectory, and the new consulting business he's started, 3rd Generation Hospitality.

A New Jersey native with a degree in creative writing, Norris oversaw the beverage program at the Texas-based Alamo Drafthouse theater chain as it expanded from 12 locations to more than 40 across the country before the company restructured during the pandemic. "Bartending is in my blood," Norris tells me. "My grandfather Ed Zipf ran a Prohibition-era speakeasy in Newark called Beb's Pretzel Shop. When Prohibition ended, Beb's went legit. Later, [my] uncle Bus ran a bar and grill in Wall Township called the Family Tree Tavern. It wasn't open on holidays, so we'd have our family celebrations there when I was a kid. I remember being fascinated by the equipment, the swinging doors, the scale of it."

Those early memories helped shape his experiences as an adult, first as a novelist and now as a bartender with a business sense as well honed as his creativity. Depending on the client, Norris assists with menu ideation and development, staff training, and streamlining operations; on new constructions, he'll do design evaluations of both space and equipment. "The best bars are those



that understand what they are—or want to be—and execute that flawlessly," he explains. "Not everyone has to have a vast menu of amari or 48 craft beers." More important is genuine hospitality: "When I train bartenders, I tell them that they're the host of a dinner party with 100 strangers every night," he says.

Norris concedes that the most common complaint he hears from bar customers is that cocktails take too long to make. "That's a design failure most of the time," Norris says. "In many cases, restaurant and bar owners are still looking at their bars as super-profitable revenue centers where all the bartenders do is put ice and spirit in glasses. So the questions I ask are things like: Where are the dump sinks? Where is the glassware? After a bartender makes a Margarita, where does she rinse her tins? Are the shelves high enough on the backbar to hold a bottle of Grey Goose with a pour spout on it? Or are they so high you need to be 6-foot-3 to reach a bottle?"

Grandpa Zipf, making drinks during Prohibition, likely didn't think about ergonomics or where to keep the lime wedges. But of course, until December 1933, he had other things to worry about. CHILEAN SAUVIGNON BLANC

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On Dry Land

AT **SANS BAR** IN AUSTIN, TX, CHRIS MARSHALL INCLUDES ALL WHILE EXCLUDING ALCOHOL

Austin, Texas, is known as a city where people want to have a good time, driven by an eclectic bar culture that's become a way of (night)life. As the founder and owner of Sans Bar, Chris Marshall delivers, following a "let loose" mantra that captivates his guests nightly-but what he's got stirring behind the bar contains no alcohol. Created four years ago-when alcohol-free bars were still all but nonexistent—Sans Bar was designed to be an inclusive haven for sober imbibers. It continues to serve as a beacon for the dry movement: Whether you're abstinent, sober-curious, or just sober-sometimes, everyone's welcome.

Marshall, who has been abstaining from alcohol for over 15 years, comes to the beverage space from a background as a licensed counselor, which is where he first noticed that "people who don't drink are kind of an afterthought" in society, as he explains. Personal experience and firsthand accounts from others in the sober community showed him how common it is to feel excluded at social gatherings where non-drinkers are relegated to tea, soda, and water. Marshall felt a responsibility to create a space where people could have fun over a great drink—sans alcohol.

Just as plant-based food has entered the mainstream, Marshall believes zero-proof beverages will take flight over the next ten years: "We are on the precipice of a new age of alcohol-free socialization that is centered around deep connection," he says. Going beyond Dry January, those who practice intermittent sobriety make up about 70% of Sans Bar patrons, according to Marshall, who is ready to see the movement push forward, with alcohol-free cocktails becoming readily available on menus in not just bars but restaurants and other social hot spots. To help facilitate this, he is working on an app, Mock Spots, that will be a directory for people to find mocktails any time, any place, nationwide.

What does a visit to Sans Bar feel like? Marshall reiterates that the vibe is one of connection. Though some people don't even know they've entered an alcohol-free space at first, they soon find an engaging environment where they are able, as Marshall puts it, to "talk *to* each other rather than *at* each other." When fully present in their surroundings, everyone from the bartenders and guests to the musicians and comedians who perform at Sans find themselves interacting in an intentional and meaningful way.

Marshall also wants his patrons to engage meaningfully with their mocktails, whether it's a reimagined classic like the Gold Fashion made with "whiskey," bitters, and orange or an imaginative creation featuring frankincense and myrrh, oolong tea, and saffron. Not a prohibitionist by any means, Marshall simply asks imbibers to decipher what it is they want to experience with their drink: Is it really just a buzz or, perhaps, is it a matter of excitement on the palate? He finds that most are looking for adventure, which he says can be better experienced without the booze: "What vou're really tasting [with alcohol] is that negative space on the palate. But when you remove alcohol, you are able to taste everything else."



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A New Lees on Life

GOING SKIN DEEP IN THE WINEMAKING PROCESS

by Ellie Loustalot

"Go ahead, dip your hand in." I was working as a harvest intern at Bargetto Winery in Santa Cruz, and the assistant winemaker was urging me to stick my hands into a recently emptied wine tank, where a thick substance had pooled at the base like a fruit smoothie. I did as directed, and the substance squished between my fingers like purple mud. But it wasn't mud—it was lees, a byproduct of the fermentation process that settles out of solution over time. Without a towel handy, I wiped the lees on my arm and carried on with my day. It wasn't until later that evening that they finally got my full attention: The skin where the lees had dried was far brighter and softer than that surrounding it.

The results prompted me to eagerly begin experimenting with lees in my personal skin care routine, applying them to my face and limbs, letting them dry, and washing them off. Come January 2021, I realized my discovery deserved to be looked at through a legitimate scientific lens. So I turned to my biochemist fiance, Matthew De Silva, with a challenge: Could this natural byproduct be turned into a viable skin care product?

After many months of research and testing, the data was clear. Wine lees have incredible health properties. From their high concentration of antioxidants to their rich diversity of amino and organic acid groups, lees are essentially a multivitamin for your skin. Again and again, our findings pointed to one clear fact: We had uncovered an amazing product.

Matthew and I began building The Lees Cellar in March 2021 before bringing in two additional partners, Ian Loustalot and Jeanne Baldzikowski. Finally, after an exciting but grueling year of product research, lab testing, legal establishment, infrastructure layout, and the development of proprietary processes, The Lees Cellar From their high concentration of antioxidants to their rich diversity of amino and organic acid groups, lees are essentially a multivitamin for your skin.





The Lees Cellar face mask.

Ellie Loustalot discovered that lees contact is good for the skin, prompting her to launch The Lees Cellar.

officially launched in March 2022.

We are beyond excited to be offering our premier product: an all-natural face mask made from 100% wine lees. It's plastic-free and water-conscious, since harvesting lees prevents water from being wasted during the winemaking process. Our mission is to offer a unique skin care line built entirely on all-natural, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products derived from wine lees. Your skin and the environment are at the forefront of our platform! Find us at *theleescellar.com* and on Instagram @*theleescellar.*



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Dare to Pair

FIVE CHEESES BUILT TO SERVE WITH CHARDONNAY

A few years ago, I asked Trefethen Family Vineyards to host my annual series of cheese-appreciation classes in Napa Valley. They agreed but had one request: Would I devote one of the five tastings to cheeses that complement Chardonnay? The idea made me a little nervous because I didn't typically turn to California Chardonnay as a pairing for cheese, and I wasn't convinced the tasting would have broad appeal.

In fact, the event sold out quickly and made a convert out of me. As long as the Chardonnay is well balanced—as the Trefethen wines are—and not overly oaky or high in alcohol, many cheeses can work with it. Those most likely to succeed will have aromas of roasted nuts, mushrooms, or warm butter and/or a lush, buttery texture; truffled cheeses are also typically a good bet.

Consider these five cheeses when you expect to have Chardonnay in your glass:

Cascadia Creamery Sleeping Beauty (Washington): Cheesemaker John Shuman buys raw cow's milk from a neighbor, adds a mix of cultures, and then relies on the microbes in his cellar to produce the dimpled, mold-dusted natural rind on this 6- to 7-pound tomme. Aged for about three months, it has a firm, brittle interior and aromas of clotted cream and damp cave. The finish is tart and tangy.

Marin French Triple Crème Brie

(California): A repeat award winner at the American Cheese Society conference, this 8-ounce disk has a faint mushroom scent and a luscious, supple interior. The addition of cream to the cow's milk makes it richer and higher in butterfat than the traditional French brie.

Petit Agour (France): Made by one of the Basque region's most respected producers, Petit Agour is a smallformat version of the traditional aged Basque sheep cheese. Semi-firm and silky on the tongue, it delivers aromas of roasted nuts and caramel, followed by a concentrated yet mellow flavor. The finish is perfectly balanced between sweetness and salt, making you crave just one more taste.

Point Reyes Farmstead Toma

(California): This semi-firm cow's milk cheese smells like melted butter. The texture is open, smooth, and creamy, like a young Gouda, while the flavor is mellow and buttery, with a tangy finish that suggests sour cream or cheesecake.

L'Etivaz (Switzerland): This raw cow's milk cheese from the Vaud Alps (pictured) is like Gruyère with the volume turned up. Created in the 1930s by producers who thought the Gruyère PDO standards weren't tough enough, L'Etivaz is, by definition, an alpage cheese, made at high-elevation chalets between May and October when the cows are on pasture. PDO regulations require the use of raw milk, animal rennet, and the previous day's whey as the only culture; the curds must be warmed in a copper kettle over a wood fire and the wheels matured on spruce shelves for at least five months. The finished product is rightly prized, with a creamy texture and a fragrance that suggests roasted onions, aged beef, wood smoke, and hazelnuts.



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Robin Wright

BEVERAGE DIRECTOR, CI SIAMO, NEW YORK, NY



by Michelle M. Metter



Robin Wright is the newly appointed beverage director of Ci Siamo, the latest restaurant from the New York– based Union Square Hospitality Group. We sat down with Wright to discuss the opening and her approach to curating a wine program in keeping with chef Hillary Sterling's contemporary Italian cuisine.

Tell us about Ci Siamo's wine program. Were there any particular challenges in creating it?

Ci Siamo's wine program is fun and uniquely Italian. Our list breaks down to about 75% Italian producers, [with] the other 25% focused mostly on France, the U.S., and other countries that encircle Italy, especially those regions that share fun ties to Italy like Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, and Corsica. The focus is heavily [on] Piedmont and Tuscany, as you might expect, but we also go deep on regions like Liguria, Abruzzo, Campania, and Sicily. I'm a sucker for anything highelevation and volcanic, so Italy gives me a ton to work with. We also have a distinct focus on native varieties, since Italy has so many! The list really forces people to come out of their element and try all sorts of different wines they might otherwise overlook. We have been lucky to acquire "culty" wines from [Giacomo] Conterno, Accamasso, Roagna, Cappellano, Mascarello, Poggio di Sotto, Pian dell'Orino, Valentini, Benanti, and Salvo Foti, to name a few. My sommeliers are extremely knowledgeable and sell these wines with ease, especially to any guest who is curious about them.

There are young and old wines on the list, and value is absolutely a theme. . . . Half the list itself is actually under \$100 . . . so there is something for everyone and nobody has to feel excluded!

My biggest challenge was just the sheer volume of bottles that arrived back when we opened. Our full wine team hadn't yet started, so I had to put it away largely on my own. It's crazy to think how empty that cellar was and how overflowing it is now!

${f Q}\,$ How did your work at heavy hitters like NoMad New York and Daniel help prepare you for your current role?

I'm so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work at these two great restaurants. [Wine director] Thomas Pastuszak at NoMad taught me to care for the small-production, family-focused, organic farmers . . . [while] working at Daniel taught me all about big prices and big vintages. My vintage game definitely evolved there. . . . Both restaurants taught me how to sell wine and how to sell wine fast, a critical skill at a restaurant that's as busy as Ci Siamo. For my first beverage director role, the list we've put together really feels like a dream. Italian wine is so overperforming and affordable, whereas French usually demands a much higher price. My by-the-glass program and by-thebottle program from the Italian side (the Barberas and Chiantis especially) really drive the sales to allow my culty and [typically] pricey French wine to be super-affordable, which is a real win-win situation.

What advice do you have for developers of regionally specific wine lists? Don't be afraid to go into regions that people are less aware of like Liguria, Valle d'Aosta, or Abruzzo. People are looking for a conversation and want to discover something new and fresh. Be a champion for these smaller regions and family-run wineries—help bring more light to the little guys!

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

I want to be in Sicily drinking Carricante with Salvo Foti, asking him how he does it! \blacksquare

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Let's Talk About Batching

WHY "FAST CRAFT" BEVERAGE PROGRAMS COULD BE THE FUTURE OF THE BAR

While people love having a great craft cocktail, they often don't like the wait that comes with ordering one or the inconsistency that can occur from drink to drink. Add to that continued labor shortages, and it's no wonder beverage professionals are beginning to rethink how they're streamlining their work behind the bar without taking shortcuts. Fast-craft batching might be the way.

Batching—or pre-measuring all of the ingredients in a drink—has become popular in high-volume restaurants and bars as well as at special events. It provides a more consistent product. as the drink will be perfectly balanced every time regardless of who prepared it; it's faster to execute, reducing the customer's wait time from minutes to seconds; and it minimizes waste by leaving less room for bartender mistakes and, when batching with alcohol, lengthening the shelf life of the product. Some argue it takes away from the "show" behind the bar and requires more prep labor, but for many businesses, the benefits outweigh the costs. And like it or not, batching may be the methodology that allows some cocktail bars to survive.

Batching techniques vary, but there is no right or wrong approach, as everything depends on what's most appropriate for the bar. Beyond the aforementioned pros, faster service can also result in a more significant ROI by making customers more likely to order a second or third round. Meanwhile, labor costs could be dramatically reduced: Instead of having as many as three bartenders, one or two could handle a busy night. And as the industry continues to enhance its pandemic-related safety measures, batching can play a role by allowing for fewer touch points during execution.

Finally, businesses in need of experienced bartenders that have felt



the sting of the labor shortage might find some relief, as batching enables a more inexperienced person to execute drinks—which in turn allows for a broader, more diverse, and hospitalityforward focus in a talent search.

As for the cons, beyond taking away some of the flair involved in preparing a drink from scratch, less labor at the bar is exchanged for more labor on the back end. Depending on how complex the drinks are, prep time can increase by as much as one to two hours—but with big enough batches and streamlined prep, it could be well worth it. Batching containers themselves are also an investment, but not a very big one: A set of glass bottles or other beverage dispensers could cost \$100–\$200. Served at her establishment Garden Bar PHX in Phoenix, AZ, author Kim Haasarud's Hot Pink Creme Soda is a batched cocktail made with gin, hibiscus, orgeat, vanilla extract, lemon, rose tincture, and egg white.

Refrigeration space may be the most significant negative, as the batches should be kept cold. If some spaces can be carved out in a walk-in cooler to keep them, great, but if your venue is small,

it might be worth obtaining an extra refrigerator if you can find the space.

So, what's right for your hotel, restaurant, or bar? If you're looking for cost efficiencies, quality control, diversity in your talent pool, more sustainable methods, and a focus on systems that positively impact the bottom line, batching programs could be a great solution.

Kim Haasarud is a James Beard–nominated mixologist, author of the bestselling "101..." cocktail book series, and the current national president of the United States Bartenders' Guild. She recently launched The Cocktail Collaborative, a 501(c)(7) nonprofit cocktail club and beverage hospitality workspace in downtown Phoenix, Arizona.



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Digging In

HOW **QUINTESSA ESTATE** RETAINS ITS IDENTITY DESPITE EXTREME CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Sommeliers who know Quintessa

Estate undoubtedly value it as something of an outlier in Napa Valley for producing a Cabernet Sauvignon-based red that epitomizes balance through a layered profile of dark berries, flower-petal nuances, and woodsy aromas. But not even this idyllic haven-covering 280 acres (160 planted) of hills rolling down from the Vaca Mountains to the Napa River on the eastern edge of the Rutherford AVA—can escape the effects of climate change: The past few vintages have been marked by drought, heat spells, and incessant wildfires. In March, I visited Quintessa with Amy Currens, wine director at Birdsong in San Francisco, to learn how it's responding to those challenges as an estate that, since its founding in 1990, has been farmed 100% organically or biodynamically.

Upon our arrival, winemaker Rebekah Wineburg and estate director Rodrigo Soto marched us up a steep hill to the blocks called Mt. Calisse, where vineyard manager Martin Galvan had dug a 6-foot-deep trench between vines-some on cane-pruned trellises but most transitioning toward bilateral spur pruning. "These are original plantings dating back to 1990," explained Wineburg. "Most Napa Valley vineyards are pulled out by year 20. We have not only kept ours after 30 years, we are converting them back to spur pruning precisely because this style of trellis carries more wood; thicker wood means more vascular flow. Recently we have found that it's the older vines, with larger trunks and arms, that perform best in extreme heat or drought."

Soto pointed out the sandy soil, describing it as "pure volcanic white ash." The vines grown in it "form the aromatic profile of Quintessa. [They're] what gives the wine its floral lift and the supple tannin associated with the estate.



But what happens in a year like 2017, which had over 25 days of 100-degree temperatures? When these vines fail, we lose a basic part of our identity."

To learn more about the repercussions of climate change, Quintessa recently hired Pedro Parra, an internationally respected soil scientist, and geologist Brenna Quigley. "Dr. Parra has always said there is usually a disconnect between what vineyard owners think they know about their soils and what their soils actually are," said Soto. "Over a two-year period we examined some 80 soil pits dug throughout the estate."

Forming what Soto called "the backbone and structure of Quintessa," the Corona blocks represent an even higher site near the center of the estate, where another 6-foot pit revealed reddish, iron-rich gravelly clay mixed with cobbly river rock. "This type of soil produces wines with higher phenolics," said Soto, "but we never look just for phenolics. Quintessa is all about balance, layering, restraint. Too much phenolics and you get astringency and dryness, which is accentuated in hot or dry years."

Amy Currens in

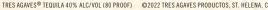
the Corona pit at Quintessa Estate with winemaker Rebekah Wineburg, vineyard

manager Martin Galvan, and estate

director Rodrigo Soto.

Upon tasting, we found the 2019 Quintessa to be tightly wound yet fragrant, with minty dried herbs and a velvety if dense texture. "The important thing," commented Wineburg, "is that it has the Quintessa profile, which I always associate with the scent [of] bay laurel.... This is what we want to capture each year." The 2018 showed a similarly woodsy (bay laurel!) character along with a hallmark feminine feel despite its young, coiled muscularity. The 2017, by contrast, reflected the vintage's heat waves with its concentrated, blackberry-like nose; noticeably riper fruit; and coffee ground-like tannin, yet it retained the estate's signature polish and sense of balance.

"I found it inspiring," commented Currens, "to find an established producer willing to dig in, pun intended, and do the research with the help of outside experts. This is the ultimate example of a producer that works patiently with nature in order to continue to define itself."



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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.



New Fashioned Old Fashioned Dry Cocktail (\$25/7-pack 2.8-g packets)

A dry Old Fashioned mix derived from real fruit and spices makes on-the-go cocktails far less cumbersome. Add a 50-milliliter bottle (or a heavy 1¹/₂-ounce pour) of a spirit of your choosing and a packet of the dry cocktail mixture to a container and stir until the powder dissolves; mix in some ice and you have yourself a spicy, peachy, slightly bitter Old Fashioned. Perfect for camping trips or long weekends at a cabin.

Licence IV Rosé (\$24/4-pack 250-mL cans) This canned French rosé from Var

French rosé from Var, Provence, is a blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Merlot. The pale-pink liquid is



well balanced, with aromas of gravel and garrigue and flavors of wet stone, muddled strawberry, and thyme—and it's packaged perfectly for a sunset picnic or hike.



KÖE Organic Kombucha (\$30/12-pack 355mL cans) This Los Angeles–based brand crafts a lineup of sparking kombuchas sweetened with organic sugar

to appease those who prefer their probiotics without the vinegary tang. The most dynamic of the bunch, Blueberry Ginger, offers a lush mouthfeel from the blueberry juice and spice from the ginger root that, despite the beverage's slightly sweet profile, remains zesty.



Ole Smoky Moonshine Pineapples With Piña Colada (\$22/1-qt jar) If you know Ole Smoky, you know the brand has no limits on which flavors of moonshine and whiskey it's open to creating. Case in point is this tropical treat in a jar: pineapple cubes steeped in Ole Smoky's 40-proof Piña Colada Moonshine. They're destined to work well as a garnish for any fruit-forward cocktail; straight out of the jar with a shot of the sweet, coconutty liquid; or as an

out of the jar with a shot of the sweet, coconutty liquid; or as an ingredient in a fruit salad at a boozy barbecue.



Enroot Sparkling Cold Brew Tea (\$30/6-pack 355-mL bottles)

This wellness tea brand was founded by Brad Pitt, Christina Patwa, and John Fogelman and developed by a team of James Beard Foundation chefs using raw, organic ingredients. The Strawberry Lavender Rosemary Tulsi expression is equal parts fruity, floral, and herbaceous thanks to its blend of fresh strawberry juice and lavender, rosemary, and tulsi (holy basil) teas, which are cold brewed for 20 hours. The robust but bright and refreshing liquid is caffeine-free and weighs in at only 25 calories. Pair it with sweet, savory, or spicy foods.

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YOUR BUSINES

How do you build your by-the-glass (BTG) program?

Jodi Bronchtein Wine director, Audrey, Nashville, TN

It's based on a few things. One, the wines have to match our food, [so] if someone wants to get two glasses to match the whole meal, they can, and they will be outstanding. Our food has a lot of brightness and complexity, so we're usually looking for things that are higher in acid and lower in tannin—Cabernet being the exception because it's popular, so we have two of them.

The second is value: We want to make sure that the prices are affordable. We try to keep it between \$14 and \$17 for whites and \$14 to \$23 on the reds—we have one Cab that's \$33 a glass, but it's organic Napa, only six restaurants have it, and it's doing great, strangely enough. But I've found that anything that's \$14 will sell—anything.

And the third is to find things that will appeal to a very broad audience but have something a little different about them; we primarily try to do organic, biodynamic, smaller producers.... For instance, let's talk about Chardonnay by the glass. We have two, both from Napa, and one literally says "the buttery one" and [the other] is Matthiasson. I know Chardonnay's going to be popular; I know people will see "Napa" and want it, but I also know that [the Matthiasson is] organic, it's a single vinevard—if there's a white Burgundy in California, maybe that's it. It's going to make people who just want a Napa Chardonnay feel comfortable, but I'm also getting a point of view in there. . . . [As for Pinot,] there's just one Pinot Noir.... The rule is that the staff gets to vote on [it]. We do a blind tasting. . . . [It's about] agency. If they're at a table talking about pairings, they have literally voted on this; it gives them something to talk about. Anything you get to pick, vou're involved in. The fact that it's the second-highest-priced red doesn't hurt either.

Another primary concern is that when we want to change the BTG list, the [new] wine has to be something that can fit into our pairings list easily. I love BTG; I'd love to have an even larger list. We started with 27, but we do a lot of pairings, 32–70 a night. . . . I thought BTG would be the money maker, but it's pairings and bottles, [so] today we have 16 BTG. I like to have a million choices, but BTG does better when it's more edited, which is surprising. I want to give the people everything, but they don't want biodynamic pét nat from Alsace. But I do, so that's why it's still on there. *[Laughs.]* I'm not giving it up; I don't care if one person gets it a night, I want them to have the thing that they want. I don't necessarily want people to look at the BTG [list] and know everything on it, but I want them to be able to trust what we have. I want it to be fun, I want it to be interesting, and I want it to serve both of us.

[Continued on page 40]

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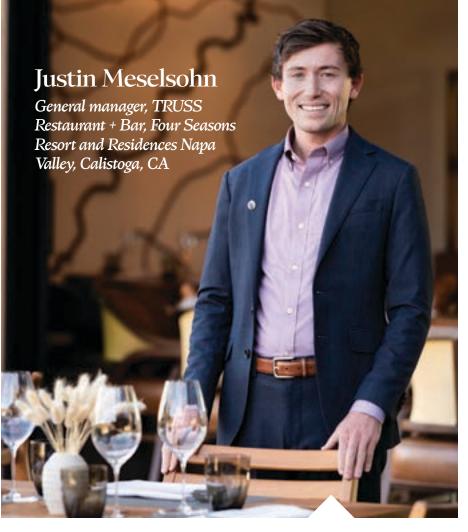
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TAKING INVENTORY



We have about 18 different wines by the glass. [For our core list,] availability is huge. Over the past couple of years, it's definitely had its ups and downs in terms of things we could get on a stable, regular basis. That's definitely something I ask a lot of questions about to our suppliers as well as producers. And then we also look to have a variety. What's nice is we have two different concepts within TRUSS: We have the Living Room and then we have the soon-to-open restaurant. The [former] is more of our bar and lounge concept, so a little bit more casual, burgers, pizzas, things along those lines . . . [while] the restaurant side will be a bit more elevated, the menu will rotate more frequently, and we will get to play with a little more seasonality. So we try to carry a diverse range to accommodate both menus [as well as to] showcase what we have available

here in Napa from some smaller, more niche producers.

For example, we have two different Chardonnays that we're featuring right now by the glass—one completely unfined and unfiltered, so a little bit cloudy in structure and a little brighter in acidity, and one that's a little more full. . . . We have three different Cabernet Sauvignons by the glass, one of them being one that's actually produced on property here at The Four Seasons, our Elusa brand; [the] 2014 vintage [shows] a lot of delicious reductive fruit coming from the valley floor. And then we also have a hillside Cabernet that we feature through Mayacamas, [reflecting] a completely different soil composition and a completely different climate.... We have three sparkling wines, [including] Schramsberg, which are our neighbors right down the street; we carry many

of their different wines as well, so if someone falls in love with their Blanc de Blancs that we pour BTG, we have some other options at different tiers for them to try. And then they can just go down the street and taste it, which is a really nice experience for people joining us.

[As for seasonal offerings.] one really great example was during the month of January, when Napa Valley does a lot of activations with truffles across different platforms. So we were featuring white Alba truffles for the month, [doing] different specials for food, and then on the beverage side we got to have a lot of fun with it, rotating through some Nebbiolos-Barolos and Barbarescosthat just paired so wonderfully with it [along with] some more unique wines from here in the Valley like Ash & Diamond's Cabernet Franc. Right now I'm on the hunt to find some really interesting and diverse rosés . . . [that] really highlight what people are doing here in Napa Valley in terms of producing wine that's really meant to become rosé and not having it be an afterthought. And when you think about the vegetables we're getting in and starting to harvest, it's such a wonderful pairing. So that's really our drive right now. . . . We just added a 100% Aglianico rosé coming from Clarksburg; they're doing some richer styles out there.

I'm actually shocked to see how much of our BTG selection we sell by the bottle; to me and to our wine team, I think it demonstrates that the BTG list that we put together is really thoughtful and it appeals to a lot of people, because we have a list of 350 different selections, and they're choosing one of the 18 that we're featuring by the glass. We have a really diverse pricing structure: Our lowest BTG pour is \$13 and the highest right now is \$45. The goal is that we have something pretty much in every category at every price—so in our sparkling category, we have a low, medium, and a high; in our whites, a low, medium, and a high; and in our reds, a low, medium, and a high. But it's also really nice because we're fortunate to be in a larger property where we have the ability to buy in bulk and then pass those savings along to the consumer; a lot of the wines that we feature by the glass would retail elsewhere for a [much] higher price.



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A Counterpart for Classic Creole Cuisine

FINDING NEW DISCOVERIES TO MATCH WITH THE SIGNATURE ESCARGOT AT NEW ORLEANS INSTITUTION **ARNAUD'S** by Michelle M. Metter

I had a conversation with my 5-year-old daughter not too long ago as she sat watching a snail make its way along the tiles leading to our front door. It went something like, "Mommy, do people eat snails?" I replied, "If they are lucky," to which she said, "Can we cook this one?"

My daughter may not exactly be the target that chef Tommy DiGiovanni had in mind when creating his escargots en casserole at the New Orleans-based institution Arnaud's, but the dish is among its most popular. Located in the heart of the French Quarter, Arnaud's offers everything locals and visitors alike want out of a classic Creole dining experience, thanks to a rich history dating back to 1918. In DiGiovanni's signature dish, Burgundy snails are baked individually in ceramic pots with garlic, parsley, white pepper, salt, Pernod, and butter, then capped with a flaky pastry. (When I read the description to my daughter, she answered, "Yum, but can we add ketchup?" Give her time.)

Adjoining the restaurant is the Arnaud's French 75 Bar, led by head bartender Christoph Dornemann; he recommends pairing the dish with the La Provence Martini made with



Arnaud's French 75 Bar head bartender Christoph Dornemann.



Arnaud's chef Tommy DiGiovanni.

herbes de Provence-infused Dorothy Parker gin, dry vermouth, Lillet, Amontillado Sherry, and Bénédictine. "The dryness and astringency of the gin and Amontillado Sherry cut through the rich herb butter in the escargot, clearing as well as stimulating the palate between each bite," he explains. "La Quintinye extra-dry vermouth is ideal because of its robust herbal notes, including a strong finish of rosemary that complements the dish. The Pernod in the compound butter accentuates the complex botanicals in the Bénédictine, while the [latter] adds sweetness and herbal nuance to bring balance to the anise finish in the [former]." In short, "the [drink's ingredients] elevate and complement the herbal and savory flavors in the [dish] to create a perfect pairing." Read on for two more pairing recommendations.



Rebecca Rose Phillips

Co-managing partner/ wine director, Vintage Wine + Eats and Buvette, Los Angeles, CA

The 2019 Seven Springs Chardonnay from Evening Land Vinevards is my suggested pairing. Farmed biodynamically in Eola–Amity Hills, this Willamette Valley Chardonnay has a rich nose of Fuji apple, spice, caramel, and burnt popcorn, which elevates the aromas of garlic, butter, and pastry. The wine sees only 30% new oak, so it hits the palate with a surprising amount of citrus acidity. The notes of tart green apple and Meyer lemon immediately create balance between the richness of this dish, the earthiness of the snails, and the hints of green herbs. This dynamic pairing will please the palate of even an ABC ("Anything But Chardonnay") drinker!



HOTO COURTESY OF MAYA OREN

Allie Balin

Food and beverage director, Deep Dive Hospitality, Incline Village, NV

Some of the best pairing wines are sparkling, but sparkling wine is often sadly underutilized for anything but celebratory toasts. The Hild NV Elbling Sekt Brut from winemaker Matthias Hild is a versatile pairing wine that comes from the Upper Mosel of Germany. Unlike the rest of the Mosel, which has slateheavy soil, the Upper Mosel has lots of limestone that gives this wine a really great chalky acidity. This acidity, along with the bubbles in the wine, will cut through the fat in the butter and flaky pastry, while the lively tropical fruit and floral flavors will complement the earthiness of the snails and the anise flavor of the Pernod.

Escargots en casserole is one of the most popular dishes at Arnaud's in New Orleans, LA.

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Talking Shop With Thomas George Estates Winemaker Nico Cantacuzène

story by Liz Thach, MW / photo by Alexander Rubin

I was fortunate enough to spend a recent afternoon with Thomas George Estates winemaker Nico Cantacuzène. touring the cellar and tasting from barrel, and was very impressed by his work with a variety of fermentation vessels to accommodate individual blocks from different vineyards, including concrete tanks and eggs, stainlesssteel tanks, and barrels. He expressed great enthusiasm for the experimental leeway he's given in producing not only high-quality Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays but also small lots of varietals such as Albariño, Grenache Blanc, and old-vine Zinfandel as well as sparkling wines.

Q How did you become interested in making wine?

I was born and raised in Paris and decided to study chemistry in college. Upon graduation, I did a student exchange in chemistry at Sonoma State University and discovered I could apply my chemistry degree to wine. Therefore, I did a harvest internship at Benziger [Family] Winery and then a wine-lab internship with Cline Cellars, and I knew I wanted a career in wine. So I decided to get a master's degree in enology and fermentation science at California State University, Fresno, and graduated in 2002.

Q Did you have any winemaking mentors?

Yes, when I graduated from CSU Fresno I was lucky enough to get a job at David Bruce Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It was there that I met my mentor, Don Blackburn, and he helped me develop my passion for Burgundian varietals. After two harvests, I followed Don to Emeritus [Vineyards] in Sebastopol, where we made singlevineyard Pinot Noir for the next ten years. After that I moved to Thomas George Estates as head winemaker.



What is your winemaking philosophy?

I believe the vineyard is the soul of the wine. Most of the impact is achieved there, before the grapes enter the winery. I spend about 70% of my time in the vineyard.

Q Tell us how you make your singlevineyard Chardonnays.

Working with my assistant winemaker, Nick Sansone, and the rest of our team, [I] start tasting the grapes in the vineyard at least one month before harvest so we pick at the optimal time. Usually I am seeking a Brix of 22.5, but it depends on the site. We sort in the vineyard and then again on two sorting tables. The grapes are pressed and go into a combination of stainless steel, concrete, and French oak puncheons for fermentation with natural yeast. Some lots go through malolactic with battonage, whereas others we prefer to stop malolactic to retain freshness and good acidity. We keep all vineyards separate. After fermentation, we age in (25% new) French oak for around 12 months. Then the wine is racked off the gross lees and goes into bottle, where it ages for three to five years before release. We usually do not fine or filter Chardonnay, unless necessary.

And your singlevineyard Pinot Noirs?

With Pinot Noir, I am generally seeking a Brix level of 23.5, but it all depends on the vineyard and vintage. We use the same handsorting process: I don't believe in optical sorters, because they create boring wine that is too uniform.

The grapes are gently destemmed and crushed before undergoing a three- to five-day cold soak. Sometimes I add whole clusters, but it just depends on the vintage and stem ripeness. Again, we allow native yeasts to ferment the wine for up to two weeks in a combination of stainless-steel and concrete vessels; we do two to three punchdowns per day. When fermentation ends, we gently press off the skins, and only the free-run juice is placed in French oak barrels (25-30% new) for 14 months of aging. The wines are not fined or filtered when bottled, and they age for three to five years in bottle before release.

What are your favorite food pairings?

I guess [it's] because I'm French that I prefer the classic pairings—lamb with Pinot Noir and salmon with Chardonnay.

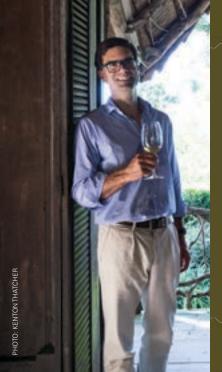




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~ PROMOTION ~

Aveleda Reflects the Guedes Family's Devotion to Vinho Verde



Fifth-generation producers Martim Guedes and António Guedes are the co-CEOs of Aveleda.

A veleda is a family-owned brand that has been creating high-quality wines from the Vinho Verde region since its establishment in 1870. One of the oldest producers in the area, it has been at the forefront of Vinho Verde's evolution, leaving nothing to chance by nurturing everything from the very root. From steep, high-altitude sites to the biggest continuous vineyard in the region, from rare schist to granite soils, from Loureiro to Arinto to Alvarinho, Aveleda uses all the tools at its disposal to make wines reflecting both the wisdom of old traditions and the bold vision of younger generations.

Limitless Potential

Demarcated in 1908, Vinho Verde is the largest wine-producing area in Portugal and one of the largest in all of Europe, with a wide variety of soils, climates, and terroirs within its borders. We at Aveleda believe that it's among the greatest viticultural regions in the world, particularly when it comes to white wines. Our purpose is to explore its full potential and promote it around the world.

Mastery in Viticulture and Winemaking

At Aveleda, innovation is a Guedes family tradition. Here, we mix the empirical winegrowing knowledge five generations have acquired with the latest technology





Aveleda's current portfolio is a pure reflection of Vinho Verde.



The vineyards of Quinta de Aveleda.





and techniques available, including the use of drones to assess the timing of vineyard treatments and harvesting. Each harvest is the successful product of the careful dedication we put into uncovering the secrets of our generous terroir, which yields an equally bountiful array of wines with differing profiles and characters.

Aveleda has a team of highly skilled specialists and professionals working on its projects, which rely on its own high-density viticultural model: fewer clusters per plant but more plants per hectare, ensuring higher root penetration and higher competition in very fertile soils. The results? One, sustainable vineyards that will be healthy for years to come, and two, more concentrated grapes—and thus more concentrated and dense wines.

A Pure Reflection of Terroir

Aveleda's current portfolio pays tribute to its region of origin. The Fonte label is its most authentic expression of Vinho Verde, perfect for easy drinking on any occasion for its delightful freshness and flavors of lime and green apple. In the Castas range, meanwhile, the indigenous grape varieties Alvarinho and Loureiro shine both in varietal bottlings and a blend. The lineup's evolution continues with the Solos (Soils) range, where the geological richness of the region speaks for itself. Finally, the Parcelas (Single Parcels) range focuses on specific areas of exceptional terroir. As a whole, the portfolio truly reflects the rich heritage of Vinho Verde.

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"Sometimes I doubt your commitment to Sparkle Motion," moans one frenzied pageant mom to another in a scene from cult classic Donnie Darko. Well, don't doubt ours. In this column, we at *The Tasting Panel* rate the most notable sparkling wines that cross our desks and lips each issue. Given the wide range of production methods, styles, and price points the category covers, we've devised the following system to score each on its own merits.

1 BUBBLE 🥘 Simple but satisfying.

2 BUBBLES 🕘 🎱 Satisfying and a little more complex.

3 BUBBLES 🙆 🍘 🍘 A strong example of its kind.

4 BUBBLES 🕘 🥘 🎱 A superb example of its kind.

5 BUBBLES 🕘 🗟 🗟 🎱 Stellar by any standard.

For details on submitting wines for review, contact managing editor Ruth Tobias at rtobias@tastingpanelmag.com.

. . . . Valdo Marca Oro Brut

Prosecco DOC, Italy (\$15) Particularly lithe as DOC Proseccos go, this easy pleaser starts with scents of white blossoms and minerally glints that lead to a crisp, dry palate of lemon, melon, and tart Rome apple. 91

TAUB FAMILY SELECTIONS

3333 Valdo Marca Oro Rosé Brut Prosecco DOC. Italy (\$15) This 90% Glera with 10% Pinot Noir boasts a pretty, pale orange-sherbet hue. Rhubarb and strawberry come to the fore on the nose,

where they're met by a hint of red currant and, on the palate, a splash of pomelo. Forthright and refreshing. 90

J Vineyards Brut Rosé,

nay, and 6% Pinot Meunier,

30 months en tirage, with a

panoply of fruits popping up

one after another in addition

to toasty baguette: strawberry,

peach, and cantaloupe to start,

followed by yellow cherry and

blood orange on the sunkissed palate (or should we say

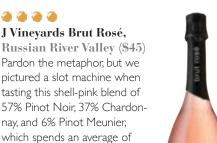
jackpot?). 92.5

3333

TAUB FAMILY SELECTIONS



NOSECC



E. & J. GALLO

Della Vite Prosecco

Treviso DOC, Italy (\$25) Though light as a feather, this Prosecco rests on the more tropical side of the category's spectrum, from the initial whiff of banana to the hint of kiwi that awaits on the palate along with ripe pear and apple. The tech sheet notes that it's "perfect for mixing in cocktails due to its delicate flavor profile," so let your inner



a a a a i

J Vinevards 2014 Vintage Brut, **Russian River Valley (\$60)** A sense of purity is the appealing throughline in this blend of 52% Chardonnay, 35% Pinot Noir, and 13% Pinot Meunier, from its minerally nose and bright acidity to its crystalclear, mouth-filling notes of lemon, green apple, strawberry, and Rainier cherry to its touches of hazelnut and sugar cookie. About dignity, it has something to say. 93

E. & J. GALLO

a a a i

bartender be your guide. 89

Continued on page 50



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Sparkle Motion

Argyle 2018 Blanc de Noirs, Willamette

Valley, Oregon (\$30) At once elegant and charming, this estate blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier from Eola–Amity Hills delivers notes of bread, strawberry, cherry, orange, and honey-nut that echo on the round palate joined by pluot and, midway, a dash of pink grapefruit that makes for a cleansing finish. 92.5





Argyle 2017 Vintage Brut, Wil-

Iamette Valley, Oregon (\$30) This graceful blend of 55% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, and 15% Pinot Meunier sourced from the Dundee Hills and Eola–Amity Hills wafts from the glass with the clean snap of linen: Scents of toast, pear, apple, and a hint of green almond presage a stream of racy acidity that carries flavors of lime and stone, tapering to a gentle yet persistent finish. **92.5**



Bortolomiol 2021 Prior Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut Millesimato, Italy

BORTOLOMICL

8

(\$17) The slightest green tint in the glass, pinpricked by perlage, serves as a swatch for the aromas of this finely drawn Prosecco: green apple drizzled in honey, honeydew, and a touch of herb. In the mouth, an initial zing of bright acid softens to form delicate brushstrokes of citrus—lemon zest, tangelo, yuzu—while the mineral tang on the finish will have you craving some particularly meaty oysters with a cucumber savor. **92**



Bortolomiol 2021 Bandarossa Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Extra Dry Millesimato, Italy (\$21) What a neat treat: Bold aromas of honeydew, young apricot, and even a touch of lychee are ringed with florals, including lime blossom, which resonates on the relatively rich palate in the form of lime curd joined by a note of round pear that rolls across the finish. 93

Schramsberg 2012 J. Schram, North Coast (\$130) Spending eight years en tirage and representing less than 3% of its legendary Calistoga house's annual production, this blend of 86% Chardonnay and 14% Pinot Noir is pure luxury from its intense notes of spiced honey cake, hazelnut toffee, and ripe yellow apple onward. The texture is positively goldspun; the acidity lilting; and the flavors, including apple pie, roasted pineapple, and tangerine zest, at once complex and richly knit through the mellifluous finish. Remarkable. 95

Schramsberg 2018 Brut Rosé, North Coast (\$47) If this petal-pink blend of 62% Pinot Noir and 38% Chardonnay were a scoop of ice cream, it would be called Mineral-Raspberry Swirl, with sprinkles of rose, baking spice, and vanilla on the nose. Flavors of peach and honeyed Fuji apple converge with a gliding texture on the medium-bodied palate, lingering there softly. 92.5

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"if you like it, drink it!" THE CANDY SH OF PPE





Scotto Family Cellars 2021 Dry Sangiovese Rosé, Mohr-Fry Ranch, Lodi (\$13) The Scotto family traces their winemaking roots to 19th-century Italy.With lively acid, crisp fruit, and a touch of mint, this rosé is a bottle you'll want to pop on the patio with some snacks while Bob Marley croons on the speakers. 89

Scotto Family Cellars 2021

Torrontés, Silvaspoons Vineyard, Lodi (\$13) Well known in Argentina, Torrontés has not yet achieved fame in the U.S. but it'll have its day soon enough. Scotto has done a really nice job with this wine, which shows white flowers and citrus on the nose. The palate is a horn of plenty filled with passion fruit, guava, stone fruit, and lime; minerality rounds it out. **90**

J. Ryland NV Cabernet Sauvignon,

Lodi (\$18) Bryan Rivi-Howell and his husband, J. Ryland, created this label as a symbol of their love; portions of its profits go to charities that "embody the ideals of acceptance, inclusion, affirmation, and love," according to its website. This Cab is exactly what you'd expect from Lodi: fruit, fruit, and more ripe red and blue fruit. It strikes a fine balance with baking spices that meld with a ribbon of tannins and acid. It's truly love in a bottle, my friends. **91**

ZERBINA IMPORTS



Qupé 2019 Syrah, Central Coast (\$20) With purple flowers on the nose, this wine is hearty but not overpowering. Tons of juicy black and blue fruit combine with a good amount of acid and that smoke and pepper you expect from Syrah. 90







Montoya 2020 Chardonnay,

Monterey County (\$20) If we had a "Best Value" award, this would win! The word "mosaic" comes to mind, as there's a little of everything here: plenty of acid but also a nice, midweight mouthfeel, along with Bosc pear, ripe apple, and a toasty bit of oak, which pop from the glass to result in a thinking person's Chard. **91**

ASV WINES



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THE CANDY SH PPE

Cult 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi

(\$20) Aged 15 months in (25% new) French oak, this is bright, zippy, and begging to be let out of the bottle. The expressive aromatics are slightly reminiscent of Fruit Roll-Ups. Brambly fruit leads to good structure, and alert, integrated tannins peek around the edges of the palate. Pop a bottle with customers and join the Cult! 90

Montova 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Monterey County (\$20) Nestled in the hills of Monterey County, Montoya has a team, including winemaker Chelsea Laboon, with a single goal: Make approachable wines to drink now. Mission achieved. High-toned, bright, and focused, this isn't the brooding type of California Cab. Understated blueberry, blackberry, and raspberry come together for the perfect backyard-barbecue wine. 89 ASV WINES

Jules Taylor 2020 Pinot Noir, Marlborough. New Zealand (\$25) This Pinot Noir is half fruit and half earth: a nice balance. Initial aromas of coffee bean and dried cherry morph into a sweeter cherrycordial nose. On the palate, there's more forest floor and spice box than you'd expect. Good acid on the back end completes a solid effort. 89

Fogscape Vinevards 2019 Pinot Noir,

Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$25) Site proximity to the Pacific Ocean is evident in the subtle, acid-driven flavors of this Pinot from winemaker lose Ramirez. Bright red fruit and potpourri on the nose give way to acidity and slate on the palate, which finishes with a silkiness you want to keep revisiting. 89

ASV WINES

Fogscape Vineyards 2020 Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco,

Monterey County (\$25) An incredibly balanced, nuanced Chard with not-too-sweet vanilla and honey notes opening into tropical fruits like pineapple and guava, plus just enough creaminess to keep it honest. A good wine for a bad day: Your customer will forget about their troubles by the time they are halfway through their second glass. 90



Chauvet Frères 2020 Morgon Côte du

Py, Beaujolais, France (\$25) Chauvet started his domaine in the 1970s, which makes it a relative baby in Burgundy. He has since passed, but his beliefs are still practiced in the vineyards today. This wine is made with fruit from select parcels on Mont du Py, a hill that reigns supreme over the entire appellation of Morgon. It's darker than most Beaujolais, with a nose that blossoms into a bright pop of strawberry. A good mix of acid and tannin provides a burnished finish. 90 SERA WINE IMPORTS

Chauvet Frères 2019 Beaujolais

Blanc, France (\$28) When you hear "Beaujolais," you think "red," naturally. However, the region also grows Chardonnay that's quite different from white Burgundygenerally crisper and more mineral-driven. Aged in stainless steel, this one is a zippy summer sipper. Jasmine, apricot, and peach dominate the palate as a spine of acidity runs throughout. 90

SERA WINE IMPORTS

pureCru Cuvée XXI Brut

Rosé, California (\$36) Mitch Cosentino shows his 42 years of winemaking experience by skillfully preserving the freshness and vibrancy of the fruit in this zero-dosage, 100% Sangiovese sparkling rosé. On the first sip, a blast of strawberry and pomegranate is framed by generous bubbles. 91

Laetitia 2019 Reserve du **Domaine Pinot Noir, Ar-**

royo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$44) Powerful on the nose, with complexity you don't often see from the Arroyo Grande Valley—and so. Much. Flavor. The mix of freshly tilled earth with ripe red and blue fruit is really something, while deeper, darker fruits show themselves on the

back end. As for the finish, it lasts a while. Candy Shoppe approved! 93









Mayacamas 2019 Merlot, Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley (\$65) How good a winery are you that most locals think of you before the 52-milelong mountain range you're named for? Pretty darn good. Lovely purple flowers and dark fruit are framed by underlying power. Savory and sweet flavors of saddle, earth, chocolate, and blackberry make for a fabulous wine by an iconic producer. 94

Mayacamas 2020 Chardonnay, Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley (\$50) The climate in Napa Valley is just about perfect for beefy Chardonnay. The team at Mayacamas has figured out a way to circumvent that climate and make a very well-rounded wine—not an easy feat. This vintage is basically Goldilocks: Not too big and not too thin, it's just right. It begins with an



understated roundness, and there is a tartness to the fruit that is juxtaposed by the lightly toasted oak. Think of a "Choose Your Own Adventure'' book but in a wine bottle: Everyone will take away their own experience from this wine (and have a blast doing it). 93 💋

ASV WINES

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The Saga of Six Kitchens

A POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATION SPEAKS TO CHEF AND AUTHOR SALLY SCHMITT'S LEGACY by Nell Jerome

Sally Schmitt was once quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle as saying, "I resist the trendy stuff." But those who know her story might label her the ultimate trendsetter as a pioneer of the farm-to-table movement long before it was a household concept—even in California.

man and mayor—the Schmitts relocated to Mendocino in 1996 and continued their culinary adventures. Don died in 2017, and Sally joined him on March 5 of this year—just six weeks before the publication of her muchanticipated cookbook and memoir, *Six California Kitchens: A Collection of* the story progresses through Sally's life and career, it's interspersed with recipes à la Nora Ephron's *Heartburn* that span broadly from Lazy Housewife Pickles to Zanzibar Duck with Rice & Papaya—all based on fresh, locally grown ingredients. It's also peppered with family photos, cooking tips, and



Sally was proud to be a California girl, growing up near Sacramento before graduating from the University of California. Davis, with a degree in home economics. In 1974, she and her husband, Don, purchased a building that had formerly housed a French steam laundry business in the Napa Valley town of Yountville for \$39,000. Inspired by French country cuisine featuring simple, seasonal, and local ingredients, they opened The French Laundry in February 1978. With one seating per table per night and an extensive wine list. the restaurant became a sensation; Thomas Keller took it over in 1994, and the rest is history.

After nearly 30 years in Yountville where Don served terms as councilRecipes, Stories, and Cooking Lessons from a Pioneer of California Cuisine (sixcaliforniakitchens.com).

With its warm-hued photographs and handwritten recipe pages, the book is equal parts gastronomy and nostalgia. It begins with a chapter about her mother's kitchen, where Sally was given the responsibility to cook her first dinner using ingredients from her family's own vegetable garden, igniting a passion that would last a lifetime; subsequent chapters cover her work at all three of the couple's Yountville restaurants-The Vintage Café and The Chutney Kitchen as well as The French Laundry-followed by The Apple Farm, a biodynamic operation in Philo, and finally The Elk Cottage in Elk. As



From the archives: Sally Schmitt at The Chutney Kitchen (left).

recommendations for, say, her favorite spice and olive oil brands.

During their prolific careers, Sally and Don found the time to raise five children; two generations have since followed in their footsteps. Daughter Karen Bates and her husband joined the couple in establishing The Apple Farm, and grandson Perry is the chef at the Michelin-rated Boonville Hotel and Restaurant, which was founded by son Johnny Schmitt.

With forewords by Keller and Cindy Pawlcyn of Fog City Diner and Mustards Grill fame, *Six California Kitchens* is not only a memoir and a cookbook but, like Sally herself, an inspiration to women, chefs, entrepreneurs, foodies, and families.

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BRAND **spotlight**

WHO'S YOUR

The Italian cuisine at Bistro Don Giovanni in Napa, CA, rivets tourists and locals alike.



Bistro Don Giovanni wine and spirits director Aaron Diaz.

ANTIGAL WINERY & ESTATES POSES THE QUESTION TO TWO ICONIC NAPA VALLEY RESTAURANTS story by Patricia Schneider / photos by Alexander Rubin

Argentine producer Antigal Winery & Estates (antigal.com) is internationally recognized for wines that express the essence of Mendoza's terroir, including its signature UNO line of wines, which celebrates inspiration and the idea of being "the one" who shares that inspiration with others. This story presents the first in a series of interviews with top restaurateurs and wine buyers to whom we pose the question: "Who's your número uno?"

training, and inspiring him to continue in the business.

Despite the long hours and hard work, Diaz loves restaurant operations. "I left for a period of time to start my own restaurant—Gio has inspired many staff to pursue their dreams and that's where I met my future wife, Rosa, before rejoining Don Giovanni in 2017 . . . to help with the wine program, which really exemplifies the promise of wine country," he says. "We search



Cole's Chop House proprietor Eric Keffer and director of wine programs Greg Vieau.

Bistro Don Giovanni and Cole's Chop House are two enduring Napa restaurants that remain wildly popular with locals and tourists alike. Why? In the case of the former, wine and spirits director Aaron Diaz credits consistently fresh interpretations of traditional Italian dishes using locally sourced, sustainably farmed fruits, vegetables, and organic meats as well as a bar that pours hundreds of Napa Valley and Italian wines—along with, of course, offerings from Antigal Winery & Estates. His "número uno" in life is family, including a mother who bravely moved her kids from Mexico to California for a better life, and his "adopted" kin, Bistro Don Giovanni owners Giovanni "Gio" and Donna Scala, who met and hired Diaz as a high school student, educating,

far and wide to find the most food-friendly wines to enhance the dining experience. I am not a sommelier—I am a consumer who loves wine. And this makes it easy for me to relate to our guests, whether new or experienced wine lovers. I've learned from Gio the importance of relationships; some wines have been on our list since 1993 when the restaurant opened, and that speaks volumes. We treat everyone like family. We welcome guests to our home, and someone is always at the door to say goodbye."

Located inside a stone building in Napa's historic district dating to 1886, Cole's Chop House is a classic American steakhouse with an epic wine list. Proprietor Eric Keffer was en route to a law career when life intervened; finding himself with a passion for the restaurant and hospitality business, he joined Cole's as a limited partner in 2004 and, with his wife, Heather, purchased the business outright on March 30, 2016.

"My número uno is relationshipsguests, staff, and suppliers," he says. "We are a second home to regulars and tourists, as Napa is a worldwide destination city. We didn't close during the pandemic, and what inspires me was everyone pulling together and going the extra mile. Octavio Barragan, our lead server, drove long distances [and] showed up daily to creatively problem solve, finding nonexistent supplies. Manny Yajeya, [the] right-hand man in our wine program, and Bryce Gagne, now a server, went above and beyond. Their work ethic makes them our heroes. The continued backing of local patrons and suppliers over tough times [also] inspires me. [And] supporting programs for youth, the disabled, veterans, Ukraine, et cetera, [that] help grow Napa as a vibrant community . . . that inspires me [too]."

Greg Vieau, director of wine programs at Cole's, has compiled a list that's designed to pair perfectly with the menu of prime, dry-aged cuts of

meat. While the focus is naturally on Napa Valley wines, Vieau is always on the lookout for small-production bottlings from around the world; he also offers 50 wines by the glass, including ultra-premium selections using Coravin. "Every wine on the

list is of quality regardless of cost, and we offer something for new and experienced wine lovers," he says. "People like to try new taste experiences; visitors come from around the world looking for variety—[and] we're growing and listening. It's all about creating the best dining experience."

Antigal Winery & Estates invites consumers to connect over UNO Malbec.

entrepreneurs

Putting Down Roots

HISTORIC SURROUNDINGS AND UNIQUE OFFERINGS DELIGHT LOCALS AT **GRAFTED WINE BAR & LOUNGE** IN BELLEVILLE, IL

by Sarah Graybill

When Magda Gilpin started her career as a Polish diplomat and interpreter, she likely never envisioned she was embarking on a path that-eight years later-would lead to launching a carefully curated wine bar in a location rich with history. Wanting to leave the office grind, she pursued and passed her exams through the Court of Master Sommeliers. She then served as a floor sommelier at Fiola in Washington, D.C., followed by a stint at Masseria by Nicholas Stefanelli, where she ran the wine program. Eventually, Gilpin acquired her Advanced Sommelier title and set out for Illinois. She settled in Belleville and, in June 2021, opened Grafted Wine Bar & Lounge-a name intended to both drive discussion of phylloxera and reflect her journey to the U.S. from Europe.

"Coming to Belleville after those few years of fine-dining excitement and drama was kind of like coming back to Earth after a long time at a space station—you have to learn how to walk again," she says. "Add opening your own business to that mix, and you surely land on your rear end pretty often before you can steadily stand on your feet."

Nevertheless, Gilpin found her footing. She was intent on creating a place where locals could discover good wine without being distracted by the TVs and loud music typical of other bars; to capitalize on the character of the 170-year-old building, she developed an interest in Victorian architecture and spent hours sanding, painting, sewing, and upholstering to furnish the venue.

The sommelier then set her discerning eye on Grafted's wine list, which includes classics she respects, lesserknown bottlings she discovered while traveling, and entirely new wines she'd never tried before considering them for purchase. A leading criterion? Superb quality-to-price ratio. "I



Owner and sommelier Magda Gilpin of Grafted Wine Bar & Lounge in Belleville, IL.

couldn't be sure how people would react to a wine list full of unfamiliar names, so I expanded my by-the-glass offerings to include wines that people want next to the wines that people don't yet know they want," she says. "I couldn't be happier with the result, since our bestselling white by the glass during summer was not a Pinot Grigio but a Hungarian dry Furmint made by Evolúció. One of our most popular reds turned out to be Raul Perez's Mencía Joven."

In addition, she offers charcuterie and a selection of small bites that pair with the wine list. "Sometimes, when I miss home, I'll prepare a Polish cuisine staple like *bigos* [stew] or *golabki* [cabbage rolls]. Since Belleville is a 'German' town, these foods are appreciated here," she says, adding, "Our guests appreciate being pampered with an elegant setup; homemade food served in eclectic, colorful dishes; and, of course, wines that probably wouldn't [otherwise] be their first choice when shopping in the wine store. I'm trying to offer our guests opportunities to taste something beyond the obvious."

Gilpin credits "encouragement from the local community" for affirming her choice in opening a business



Gilpin refurbished much of Grafted Wine Bar & Lounge's decor herself.

that melds local history with her own homeland's culture. "Although I'm not from Belleville or not even from anywhere close to it, I've never felt like an outsider here," she says. "That continuous community support has been very helpful."

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DUKE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON DUKE GRAND CRU RESERVE BOURBON



DUKE RESERVE RYE WHISKEY

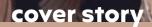
CHARACTER



Grand Cru Reserve Bourbon awarded the Award of Excellence at Somm Journal's Concours d'Spirits!

KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY





KEEPING THE

BY IMPLEMENTING VERTICAL INTEGRATION AND CREATING LASTING RELATIONSHIPS,

THE HERZOG FAMILY

SUSTAINS A LEGACY THAT DATES BACK TO THE 19TH CENTURY

BY ERIC MARSH

Herzog Wine Cellars director of winemaking and operations David Galzignato and vice president Joseph Herzog at the brand's winery in Oxnard, CA.







Herzog Wine Cellars owns vineyards in Lake County, Clarksburg, and Napa Valley and has planting contracts in Sonoma County.

At the dawn of the 20th century, Philip Herzog

was made a baron by Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef, ensuring that the Herzogs would become one of Europe's premier winemaking families as they supplied wine to royalty for most of the next four decades—until it was all taken away from them. In the 1940s, Philip's grandson Eugene, then the head of the family, would find himself, his wife, and their children hunted by the Nazis and his parents condemned to death in Auschwitz while Austria's Communist regime robbed them of their vineyards and property. Yet even in the face of such overwhelming adversity, Eugene was determined to carry the torch his forebear Menachem Herzog ignited in 1848 in Slovakia by moving his family to America and starting from scratch.

After they settled in New York, they began working at Royal Wine (now Royal Wine Corp.); shortly after purchasing the company in 1958, Eugene, with the help of his sons Herman, Ernest, and Philip, established Kedem Winery, and by the late 1970s the three brothers had guided the business to prosperity. Talks of expansion began, but they knew a broader perspective of the marketplace was needed. This led them to their brother David, who had followed a different path to a successful career on Wall Street.

David, realizing that now was the time for him to return to the family fold, told them that the best way to fill a niche in the booming kosher wine market would be to create a California kosher wine. In 1985, under David's guidance, the Herzogs established a winemaking venture in Napa Valley and the Baron Herzog brand was born. As they didn't own a vineyard in the state, they had to be resourceful, procuring grapes and forming relationships with growers in Sonoma, Lodi, and Clarksburg—all of which continue to this day—in order to produce a Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Zinfandel, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

They also didn't own a winery; initially they worked (ironically enough) out of the Christian Brothers winery in Napa instead, but as the brand continued to grow over the next two decades, it migrated to larger facilities not only in Napa but in locales such as Santa Maria and San Martin. While this transient period solidified the Herzogs' ability to adapt, they eventually decided they needed a permanent place to hang their hats. Working with the winemaking team, David designed and built Herzog Wine Cellars, breaking ground in 2004 on a state-of-the-art facility in Oxnard, California.

Meanwhile, Joseph—Eugene's grandson—had arrived in the Golden State to help his uncle David oversee the Baron Herzog label. Joseph convinced his family that in order to not only better control costs given the rising price of grapes but produce higher-quality products, the brand had to pivot to vertical integration by owning and farming their own vineyards in addition to sourcing. In 2009, they purchased their first vineyard in Clarksburg, and over the next ten years they continued their pursuit, acquiring properties in Lake County and Napa Valley as well as planting in Sonoma. Today, Herzog Wine Cellars—where Joseph represents the eighth generation of family leadership as partner and vice president—comprises eight brands that range in price from \$10 to \$275: Baron Herzog, Jeunesse, Herzog Lineage, Herzog Variations, Herzog Special Reserve, Herzog Single Vineyard, Herzog Special Edition, and Weinstock. Between these labels, the company offers expressions of 25 different varietals from six regions throughout California, all produced at the winery in Oxnard.

Why Oxnard, an area not exactly synonymous with wine? "In order to produce kosher wines, you need to have a Sabbath-observant crew to handle the wine," explains Joseph, and Oxnard is near Los Angeles, where there are large Jewish communities. While the facility sits a bit south of the areas where Herzog grapes are grown, director of winemaking and operations David Galzignato says that the team has "developed a system where we are able to deliver fruit to the winery within a 24-hour period of picking" by transporting the grapes in Herzog-owned trucks kept at a cool 45–50 degrees—adding yet another layer to the company's focus on vertical integration.

Also chief to the brand's success is maintaining relationships while continually forming new ones. Much of Herzog's consistent quality is owed to multigenerational team members whose tenures have spanned decades. Galzignato came aboard relatively recently, in July 2021, but he's a 25-year veteran winemaker and grower who has experience in biodynamic and conventional farming practices and has worked in wineries of all sizes throughout California wine country. After cutting his teeth in Italy and later studying in France, he spent 15 years in Napa, where he trained under consulting winemakers from Bordeaux and Châteauneuf-du-Pape; worked at Charles Krug in St. Helena and Rutherford's Provenance Vineyards; and achieved a master's degree in wine business at Sonoma State University. In short, he brings a decidedly global perspective to the Herzog team.

What impressed Galzignato upon starting at Herzog Wine Cellars was the quality across the board. "The same attention to detail that's applied to a \$225 bottle of Herzog Single Vineyard is applied to a \$10 bottle of Baron



The Herzogs' success can be attributed to the relationships they've forged over the years, including those with distributors like Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (SGWS): Mark Chaplin, SVP supplier marketing and development, SGWS; Nathan Herzog, president, Royal Wine Corp.; Mel Dick, president, wine division, SGWS; and Gene Sullivan, chief sales and marketing officer, SGWS.

Herzog Cabernet," he says, noting that because Herzog controls the farming of its grapes, it can better maintain consistency from year to year. Joseph, meanwhile, notes that Herzog wines are among the purest expressions of the fruit they're made from: "Grapes, by nature, are kosher, and it's our job to keep them kosher."

To that end, the quality of the fruit is vital, which makes Galzignato a perfect fit for Herzog: As a conscientious winemaker, he places the lion's share of emphasis on farming. From budbreak to harvest, he is constantly in the vineyard, fine-tuning irrigation, implementing techniques to balance the vine in terms of shoot length and cluster separation, and, once the grapes begin to ripen, measuring phenolic levels. From there, he explains, "Our entry-level wines are machine-picked, stainless steel-fermented, and bottled early to preserve freshness. Our Single Vineyard wines are handpicked, have a unique fermentation sequence, and go directly to the custom French oak after primary fermentation." He notes

that this year, the family has committed to purchasing a state-of-the-art optical sorter that photographs each berry, isolating only the best fruit for Herzog's flagship wines. They are also designing a reserve winery to be completed in two years, modeled after both Napa and French first-growth estates. He concludes, "Every wine is made to be the best version of itself, highlighting the vintage, terroir, and quality, creating a wine for every table, palate, and budget."

As impressive as Herzog Wine Cellars' growth is, Royal Wine Corp. hasn't slowed its momentum either. Over the years the company began importing and now brings in kosher wine from essentially every winegrowing country in the world; in fact, it's the largest importer of Israeli wine. It also produces wine in many of those countries, namely France, Italy, Spain, Argentina, and Australia. As Mordy Herzog, CEO of Royal Wine Corp., says of his family, "Wherever there's great wine produced, we'll go there and produce great kosher wine." **IZ**



Stephanie Wilson is general manager of The Milky Way in Los Angeles, CA.

A STAR IN THE MILKY WAY

Located in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood of Los Angeles, The Milky Way has been a staple restaurant for local diners both kosher and non-kosher since Leah Adler—Steven Spielberg's mother—opened it in 1977.

General manager Stephanie Wilson says the restaurant has had Herzog wines on its list for decades and currently serves expressions from the Baron Herzog, Herzog Lineage, and Herzog Special Reserve labels. "Herzog Special Reserve Chardonnay from Russian River Valley is my favorite and one of our most popular wines," says Wilson. While there's no shortage of seafood on The Milky Way's menu to accompany

the wine, she says the Chardonnay's "pear, citrus, hazelnut, and mineral flavors" make for an especially good pairing with chef Phil Kastel's panseared Chilean sea bass with sweet basil–and–spinach pesto risotto, tomato confit, and parmesan.

Over the years, the stories Joseph Herzog has told at wine dinners that The Milky Way has co-hosted with Herzog Wine Cellars have manifested in Wilson an appreciation for the Herzogs' hard work and perseverance as well as their enduring legacy in the California wine industry. "The Milky Way and Herzog Wine Cellars are nostalgic to generations of Angelenos that have been enjoying both together for decades," she says.

For more information on The Milky Way, visit *milkywayla.com*.



Perfect company: Milky Way chef Phil Kastel's pan-seared Chilean sea bass and Herzog Special Reserve Chardonnay.



new releases



ELSOA BROS.

CLASSIC



TEN YEARS AFTER LAUNCHING THEIR FIRST LABEL, BROTHERS CHARLIE AND ANDY NELSON SHOWCASE THEIR BLENDING EXPERTISE WITH **NELSON BROTHERS BOURBON**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NELSON BR

by Eric Marsh

Charlie and Andy Nelson.

It was while filling their tank at a gas station on a family road trip to Greenbrier, Tennessee, in 2006 that the seed of whiskey production was planted for Charlie and Andy Nelson. The tree from which the seed fell was their own family's, according to a historic sign across the street from the station stating that, just a mile away, "Charles Nelson opened the Nelson's Greenbrier Distillery in 1870." Growing up, the brothers had heard only vague details about their great-great-great-grandfather Charles and his distillery, so they hadn't fully grasped how large and significant the operation truly was before reading the sign, which also states that it was the largest sourmash whiskey distillery in Robertson County until it closed in 1909.

The discovery served as a eureka moment. "We then visited the nearby historical society and saw two original bottles with our name on them," says Charlie. "And we knew: This is what we are here to do in life." As they visited distilleries across Tennessee and Kentucky to study whiskey production, they understood they had a journey ahead of them: "We realized that we didn't even know what we didn't know," admits Charlie.

Of course, knowing that you don't know is the first step in learning—so, with the optimism of youth, the two then-20-somethings continued their quest in earnest, gradually building rapports with distillery owners, vendors, and equipment suppliers. After gaining an understanding of the essentials, they onboarded the renowned "founding father" of craft distilling, Dave Pickerell, as a consultant—and once they had learned all they could about making, blending, and selling whiskey (not to mention the importance of fundraising), they officially reincorporated Nelson's Green Brier Distillery in Nashville in 2009 and released their first whiskey, Belle Meade Bourbon, in 2012.

In the past ten years they've added several other expressions to their portfolio to much acclaim. Nelson Brothers is the latest example, newly released to serve as their premium brand alongside Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey. Its two labels, 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—try it in a Paper Plane or a Manhattan—whereas the latter, a blend of some of the best barrels in the distillery's inventory, is a balanced expression best served neat (or with a splash of water, seeing as how 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 points to Charlie and Andy's revitalization of the business and the path that Nelson's Green Brier Distillery is on.

A New Direction

In this day and age, there's no shortage of craft distillers who source spirits. The Nelson brothers don't hide the fact that they are among them. While the housemade Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey label "is more about the tradition, heritage, and history of whiskey and showcases our expertise as distillers," Charlie explains, "the Nelson Brothers brand is a celebration of the present and the future of the whiskey industry and [of] our expertise as blenders and finishers [as we try] to push the envelope."

With Belle Meade Bourbon, he continues, "We were kind of on the front edge of cask finishing and the experimentation that's been happening across the American whiskey industry—and we intend to bring that into the Nelson Brothers fold." So expect to see limited releases of, say, Cognac- and Oloroso-finished expressions on the market in the future (as well as even rarer examples available exclusively at Nelson's Green Brier Distillery in Nashville).

Tasting Notes

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. Hints of key lime and chocolate-covered cherry keep the mouth 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

BRAND spotlight

Winemakers Bob Blue and Sebastian Donoso collaborate on Fetzer Vineyards' 1000 Stories label.

A Tale of Two Winemakers

1000 STORIES DEBUTS A NEW CHAPTER

by Christina Barrueta

In 2014, Fetzer Vineyards fortified its reputation for innovation with the release of 1000 Stories Zinfandel as the first widely available bourbon barrel–aged (BBA) wine on the market. Winemaker Bob Blue, a 30-year industry veteran, had been intrigued by the notion of enhancing this lush and jammy varietal with the char and spice notes imparted by whiskey casks; the resounding success of his experiment paved the way for him to expand his stable of small-batch BBA wines to include a red blend, a Cabernet Sauvignon, and a Chardonnay. "While [using] bourbon barrels may seem like a radical departure in fine winemaking, our goal is always subtle integration, making it not terrifically unlike choosing Hungarian, American, or French oak," says Blue, who enjoys the "variable impact" of wood to produce wines "that show classic balance, restraint, and sophistication."





Now 1000 Stories has achieved another milestone with the debut of two wines that are designed to continue its celebration of American heritage: a Chardonnay and a Pinot Noir aged in American oak in lieu of the French oak used in more traditional contexts. Working alongside Blue to maintain the brand's tradition of focusing on wood as a flavor enhancement. Sebastian Donoso brings a wealth of experience to the project along with the meticulous craftsmanship he shows as the winemaker behind Fetzer Vineyards' high-end Alea Fina line (the name is inspired by the Chilean expression hilar fino, which refers to an obsession with the finer details).

Sourced from eastern Minnesota and seasoned outdoors for a minimum of 24 months, the oak is "toasted with a gradual increase in temperature, yielding a profile that accentuates [its] lactones and sweet-

ness," says Donoso. "It has very low levels of harsh and bitter tannins and can be a good match for lighter-style wines that don't age too long before bottling, as is the case with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir." Because he is working with new oak, he adds, "I am able to be selective on the type of grain and toast level that I feel is appropriate to each wine." Choosing a medium toast "provides vanilla, marshmallow, volume, and creaminess in the mouth," which complements, say, the raspberry, cherry, and violet notes of Pinot Noir while exemplifying the vital role wood can play in every facet of a wine's character.

As Donoso shares his expertise in luxury and precision winemaking with 1000 Stories, he also embraces the opportunity to collaborate with Blue on a label known for its forward thinking. "Working with Bob has been a great experience because I am able to tap into his deep knowledge and amazing storytelling," says Donoso, who adds that "our style of winemaking is very similar—we have similar palates and align very well when it comes to the amount of acidity that a particular wine needs to have. I do tend to be a bit more conservative than Bob, thinking 'less is more,' but Bob continues to challenge me from that perspective and pushes me to be more experimental and bold. ... All of that helps me when crafting these wines, as I seek to meld and celebrate our combined points of view."

The partnership between these two prestigious winemakers informs the next chapter of 1000 Stories as it highlights what wood contributes—bouquet, tannin structure, and subtle nuances—to two distinct, multidimensional styles of wine. Open a bottle of Blue's BBA wine and you'll appreciate the charred richness that underlines the blackberry and vanilla notes of the Zinfandel, the cherry and spice of the Cabernet, and the currant and leather nuances that weave through the red blend. Similarly, Donoso's Pinot Noir, with its layers of wild cherry, black raspberry, and vanilla, is enhanced by the earth and allspice derived from aging in seasoned American oak, while the Chardonnay's rich notes of peach, pear, and vanilla are laced with the warmth of spice and caramel.

Together, the two masters of their craft are continuing to propel the brand's vision forward. ${I\!\!\!\!/}$



Sebastian Donoso and Bob Blue.

Meeting of the Minds

We asked Bob Blue and Sebastian Donoso, two esteemed winemakers at Fetzer Vineyards, to share their perspectives on what defines 1000 Stories.

What are three words that describe your winemaking style?

Bob Blue: Well-integrated, balanced, true-to-varietal.

Sebastian Donoso: Detailed, balanced, and focused.

How has your background influenced the brand?

Blue: My training is Old World styling with California appellations, making wines that are well balanced and consistent from the nose to the finish on the palate.

Donoso: I think the brand has influenced me more than I have influenced the brand. 1000 Stories has taken me out of my comfort zone and has challenged me to dive deep into areas of winemaking that I had never experienced before.

What do you enjoy most about 1000 Stories?

Blue: I enjoy the creativity. There is an art around the judicious use of bourbon barrels and other, less-expected wood types in winemaking, as each decision impacts the characteristics of the final wine.

Donose: Simply working with a pioneer brand is enjoyable and exciting. 1000 Stories, as the first brand to produce a widely available bourbon barrel–aged wine, serves as motivation to preserve the reputation it has earned while continuing to push the limits.

women ueho naise the

Glass Ceiling BE GONTE

IN PRAISE OF THE **WOMEN** WHO MAKE OUR INDUSTRY GREAT

I istorically, the wine industry—like every other—was a man's world. But today, to quote the old Eurythmics song, sisters are doin' it for themselves in every sector of the business, from production to hospitality to sales and marketing to education and beyond.

Just a quick flip through this issue yields substantial proof: There on page 5 are Raquel Maggio-Casity, Lisa Kammerer, and Shelly Maggio-Woltkamp, the current operators of Oak Ridge Winery in Lodi, while Quintessa Estate winemaker Rebekah Wineburg and Amy Currens, wine director at Birdsong in San Francisco, grace page 34. On page 56 you'll meet the late Sally Schmitt, a pioneer of California cuisine; on page 60, Magda Gilpin, owner/sommelier of Grafted Wine Bar & Lounge in Belleville, Illinois; and on page 90, Amanda Ingram, the winemaker behind Trinchero Family Estates brand Complicated. While such coverage is par for the course for this magazine (itself run by a majority-female staff), the section that follows explicitly celebrates women who are making their names by changing the game one giant step at a time.

ARTIST Impression

WINEMAKER ROXIE WARD BRINGS HER BACKGROUND TO BEAR ON BUTTERNUT

by Natasha Swords

"TO CRAFT WINE THAT I LOVE IS AN

amazing experience, but to craft wine that everyone loves is an absolute dream come true." So says Roxie Ward, a former student of classical art and the winemaker at Butternut, part of the Santa Maria–based Miller Family Wine Company portfolio. As she points out, "Much like art, wine is up for interpretation, and I wanted to create a wine that is accessible to all yet flexible enough for people to make [it] their own. . . . Overdelivering at the very affordable price point of \$14.99, it's easy to buy, drink, pair, or share. It's for you. Make of it what you want."



wine production. Next came Charles Sturt University, Australia, where she received a B.A. in wine science while working full time in the cellars of multiple wineries over the course of her three-year stay on the continent, including Hope Estate, Elgo Estate, and the Charles Sturt University Winery. Upon returning to California in 2011, Ward took the role of winemaker at Terravant Wine Company in Santa Barbara County. There, she rose through the ranks, winding up her time as senior director of winemaking and enology.

Which brings us to 2019, when Ward arrived at the Miller Family Wine Company to oversee Butternut. While the label is "best known for Butternut Chardonnay, which conveys a balanced oak integration and a creamy character," it also offers a Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Rosé, and, as of this year, a Sauvignon Blanc, which she calls "a fun, approachable citrusdriven wine with passion fruit, melon, grapefruit, lemon curd, balanced acidity, and a silky richness that's refreshing on the palate."

Noting that "the Miller family was one of the first to plant grapes in California, and to be part of that rich history is a privilege," Ward adds, "What I love most about my work with Butternut is picturing people enjoying it.... I think we've made something people want, and what could be more rewarding than that?"

Ward grew up in Salinas. California. and attended the Art Institute of Southern California. After struggling to find work as an artist, she wound up at Hahn Estate, the producer of Smith & Hook, in Soledad in 1998. There, she worked as a tasting room attendant as well as an in-house graphic designer. Inspired to learn more about viticulture, she soon found herself working on the estate's 1,000



acres of vineyard, doing cluster counts and grape sampling. Here, as she developed a love for winemaking, a new career path surfaced.

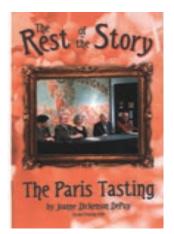
In 2000, Ward joined Paraiso Vineyards and Cloninger Cellars in the Santa Lucia Highlands as a winery assistant but moved to Sonoma in 2001 after being recruited by Martini & Prati Winery as a laboratory technician. After several promotions, she landed at Mumm Napa, where she honed her lab skills and learned the art of sparkling-



The History of STORY

JOANNE DEPUY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF NAPA VALLEY LEGEND

by Paul Kalemkiarian



The cover of Joanne DePuy's memoir, The Rest of the Story.

JOANNE DEPUY IS AN UNSUNG HERO IN THE WINE TRADE. Those of you who have never heard of her have surely heard of the Judgment of Paris: Without her, the tasting may have never happened.

A newly married DePuy landed in Napa Valley in 1949 with her then-husband, who would eventually become a well-known business attorney, while her dream was to start a family. Anyone can ascertain that Napa was a different place then; she'll tell you that you didn't go out of your way to visit Yountville at the time, as it didn't have many attractions beyond its bars. (It's now home to the famed French Laundry.)

In the early 1970s, when the contemporary women's liberation movement was still in its early stages, DePuy found herself divorced with three kids and no vocation. Left alone to her wits, she asked herself what she enjoyed most. The answer: wine and tennis. She set out with the tall order of combining them with travel, knowing that what she had going for her was her drive and her smarts—as well as a tenuous entrée to such famed wine personalities as André Tchelistcheff and Lee Stewart. As she recalled during a recent appearance on my podcast, "Wine Talks with Paul K." (winetalkspodcast.com), she went on to organize over 140 tennis and wine trips and dozens of wine-only trips to England, France, South Africa, Australia, South America, China, and more—all without recourse to the internet, email, text messaging, or even a fax machine.





DePuy has led wine tours throughout the world, accompanied by some of the biggest legends in the industry.



Grgich Hills Estate's Mike Grgich and DePuy.

Quickly garnering a solid reputation as a wine tour operator, DePuy was the first woman to ever address the Napa Valley Vintners association (then a good ol' boys club if there ever was one) with a speech on wine tourism. Afterward, Brother Timothy (yes, of the famed Christian Brothers Winery) approached and told her that she needed to bring "a quality tour" to the Valley.

So it was no fluke that in May 1976, when Steven Spurrier came to Napa Valley to source the wines that would eventually make history, DePuy was tasked with escorting Spurrier and his wife, Bella, to the region's lesserknown but respected wineries. She took the group to Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, Chateau Montelena, and Freemark Abbey.

But her contribution to the story does not end there. Once the wines were chosen, DePuy volunteered to oversee a group of 60 Napa Valley dignitaries on a tour of France and bring three cases of Napa Valley wines along with her. The only logistical headache was the single bottle of Freemark Abbey that broke on the airport luggage conveyor, leaking everywhere; in better news, perhaps the most astonishing aspect of this famed trip was that Tchelistcheff himself served as the lead tour guide. Imagine: the godfather of the Napa Valley wine scene chaperoning the likes of Jim Barrett, Louis P. Martini, and Andy Beckstoffer!

On May 24, 1976, the group arrived at Château Lascombes, the renowned second-growth Margaux house then owned by the celebrated Alexis Lichine, for a luncheon, where DePuy found herself sitting between him and Tchelistcheff—arguably two of the greatest minds in the world of wine at the time. Meanwhile, the competition pitting Bordeaux and Burgundy against their California counterparts was occurring at the Intercontinental Hotel in Paris.

As DePuy tells it, Lichine was toasting his guests with a paean to the virtues of Bordeaux while commenting on the progress U.S. winemakers were making, noting that "there was still some work to do," when the phone rang. An assistant at the winery asked where Barrett was sitting; there was a call for him. Barrett's immediate reaction was to hope his kids were all right before making his way to a tiny phone closet. And then it happened: He was told by the only journalist to attend the Judgment of Paris, George Taber of *Time* magazine, that he had won the white-wine category. Here he was, the guest of a famed producer who at that very moment was alluding to the American industry's inferiority—while he was being told his wine had just beaten the Burgundian competition! Trying to hide his giddiness, he walked back into the luncheon and whispered to Tchelistcheff and DePuy, "We just won!" Tchelistcheff whispered back, "Don't say a word—we are guests here."

On the ride home, DePuy recalled, "It was like taking the bus home from a high school football game. The cheering and noise: No one could stay in their seat."

In the words of legendary radio host Paul Harvey, now you know the rest of the story.

Paul Kalemkiarian is the secondgeneration owner of the Original Wine of the Month Club and host of "Wine Talks with Paul K." His current passion is to fully understand the dynamics of the Burgundy region of France.





Wente Vineyards director of winemaking Elizabeth Kester, vice president of marketing and customer experience Aly Wente, and senior vineyard and viticulture manager Niki Wente.

HOW THE FAMILY BEHIND THE 139-YEAR-OLD BRAND HAS HELPED IT WITHSTAND THE TEST OF TIME

by Nell Jerome

Vomen of

NEIGHIN

FOUNDED BY CARL H. WENTE IN 1883, Wente Vineyards holds the distinction of being the longest continuously operated family-owned winery in the U.S. And while the business wouldn't be what it is today without Wente's remarkable men both past and present, it's now its women who are inspiring the industry.

Currently at the helm is fourth-generation board chairman Carolyn Wente, who in 2020 was honored with Les Dames d'Escoffier International's Grande Dame Award; in past years, it's recognized such icons in food, wine, and related disciplines as Dolores Cakebread, Alice Waters, and Julia Child. Because of Carolyn's accomplishments and the barriers she's broken, the fifth generation of her family is now taking on the responsibility of upholding the Wente legacy through their key roles at the company.

As vice president of marketing and customer experience, Aly Wente oversees the winery's marketing strategy and approach to hospitality, from the tasting room and grill to the wine club and e-commerce sales. Aly admits that more opportunities have likely come her way as a member of a successful family company but notes that all Wente Vineyards employees have to qualify for the job on their own merits. "We have a policy where family members are encouraged to find industry experience to earn your stripes elsewhere," adds Aly, who previously worked in the marketing department at Constellation Brands. "Once you find a job, you need to climb a rank or two in that position to show you are a hard worker. Then you still don't just get a job at Wente because you are family. . . . You have to be the most qualified and there has to be an open role—but at Wente, women have the same opportunities as men."

When asked if there is still inequality when it comes to access in the wine business, Aly says, "I think the industry is doing a lot to empower women, but we have work to do. I am shocked when I go to a wine seminar and it is still all men. At Wente, we focus on women in leadership and it is ingrained in our family philosophy. Women [can] also now . . . be part of an increasing number of women[-focused] networks-especially with social media and on Zoom. These networks offer mentorships, education, and resources. Having the opportunity to talk to any woman in an industry is critical to empowering women in the wine business and beyond. I see so many women lift each other up [by] reaching out and helping each other."

Aly also acknowledges that work-life balance—the definition of which, she adds, varies from person to person can be more difficult for women to achieve. "For me, it means finding my personal life to be as fulfilling as my professional life. I want to spend more time living than resting, and that keeps me motivated," she explains, noting that she encourages her team to put themselves first, as she believes that "happier people are better employees."

Director of winemaking Elizabeth Kester is proof that Wente Vineyards is willing to step outside of the family lines to find the right people for the right roles. Kester originally thought her professional path would lead her to a position as an editor for a wine magazine, but as one of the first students admitted to the major of wine and viticulture at California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, she fell in love with the science of wine. After graduation, Kester worked at BevMo! as a wine specialist on tasting flights and grand openings under the mentorship of former cellar master Wilfred Wong. She was then drawn to Wente Vineyards not only for its highly successful portfolio and historic vineyards but because of its reputation for elevating women to management roles.

Now, under Kester's leadership, the majority of the company's winemaking department is occupied by women. "Carolyn Wente set a precedent and was such an influential force in responsibility. My direct supervisor was female; so was the GM, the director of vineyard operations, and the winemakers for [Huneeus labels] Quintessa and Flowers," she says. "There were so many great role models." Niki advises others to build a personal board of advisors: "You don't have to do it alone. It may take asking someone formally if you can reach out—professionally or personally-[and] run questions by them. Asking for somebody's time is hard, but there are a lot of women in leadership who are willing to give their time to women who want to advance. Having a support system in place will help women-and men-succeed."

In addition to advocating for women to ascend to its highest ranks, Wente Vineyards was an early adapter of



Fourth-generation board chairman Carolyn Wente.

women's leadership. She paved the way not just at Wente but throughout the wine industry. When someone like Carolyn is successful, it normalizes the idea that women can and should step up. She made it easier for everyone," Kester says. "In this business, you have to find mentors and find a way into decision-making rooms. You need to get your hands as purple as possible. You can't be afraid to make mistakes, as they turn into valuable experiences."

Fifth-generation winegrower Niki Wente, who leads Wente Vineyards' farming operations as senior vineyard and viticulture manager, also emphasizes the importance of finding a mentor while reflecting on her experience buying and selling grapes at Huneeus Vintners. "They kept giving me more sustainable practices in both the winery and across its 3,000 acres of estate vineyards in the Livermore Valley and Monterey County, becoming one of the first wineries to receive certification from the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance. Niki is committed to carrying on her family's stewardship of the land: "It is an exciting time to work at Wente Vineyards, especially if you are a woman leader. For my generation of the family, the winery is becoming a forerunner in sustainability practices, an employer of choice, and a leader in wholesale success, and we have the responsibility to live up to the expectations set by generations before us," she says. "We feel like a startup because there is so much we can doand we are just scratching the surface."

WDMEN who raise

CRACKING THE CONSUMER CODE

HOW SCHEID FAMILY WINES' HEIDI SCHEID SOLVED A WEEKNIGHT WINE DILEMMA by Natasha Swords

AS EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AT

Scheid Family Wines, Heidi Scheid embodies the expert who never stops learning. The daughter of founder Al Scheid joined the family business in 1992 as director of planning and CFO from 1997 to 2001. Since 2001, her executive role has encompassed many facets of the business, including sales and marketing; above all, she has guided the company's evolution from strictly a grape-growing operation to a winery whose annual sales have grown from 2,500 cases to more than 700,000 over the past ten years thanks to a wide-ranging portfolio of wines that is sold throughout the U.S. and exported to 23 countries. She's also served as director of the Wine Market Council since 1996, including a two-year term as chair, and board member of the California Association of Winegrape Growers for nine years, serving as chair for two years.

In mid-2020, Scheid made an observation that led to her next big adventure: "There's a healthy version of almost every food and drink out there, except for wine," she notes. "Adults are torn between enjoying a glass of wine



on a Tuesday night and being able to fit in a run before work the next day, because the alcohol makes us sluggish, right?" As an avid runner and hiker who celebrated her 50th birthday by summiting Mount Kilimanjaro, she could identify with their dilemma. "You want to be healthy but you also don't want to sacrifice taste profile. . . . Yes, we want to have our cake and eat it too," Scheid adds. "So I asked myself, 'What's the solution to this?', and Sunny with a Chance of Flowers was born."

Launching with a Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Sauvignon Blanc, Sunny has since emerged as an innovative brand in the trending "better for you" wine category. With no sugar, 9% ABV, and 85 calories per serving, it's retailing for \$13 in over 10,000 store locations throughout the U.S.

The brand has been received with open arms by consumers—including Scheid's own family. "My 85-year-old mother, who likes a glass of wine in the evenings, enjoys the Pinot, while my 29-year-old daughter, Siena, loves

to share the Sauvignon Blanc with friends," she says. "We've noticed that Sunny is a big hit with brunch and bachelorette parties too." As a result, a Cabernet Sauvignon and Rosé have been added to the portfolio. "Most people don't want to spend \$25 on a Wednesday wine," Scheid adds. "We've made something that's better for you and your wallet. Furthermore, we use estate-grown fruit, which means we have full control from grapes to glass. We can produce a delicious, upscale wine and offer it to consumers at an affordable price point. I love this brand so much, and it's wonderful to see consumers appreciating it."

BREAKING THE INBURGUNDY

LE GRAND COURTÂGE AND TRÈS CHIC ROSÉ PROPRIETOR **TAWNYA FALKNER** FORGES HER OWN PATH IN FRANCE by Kate Newton



Le Grand Courtâge and Très Chic Rosé proprietor Tawnya Falkner.

SOURCING AN ARRAY OF GRAPES

from various terroirs to produce a single wine is not standard practice in France—but then again, Tawnya Falkner, the proprietor behind Le Grand Courtâge and Très Chic Rosé, is not your standard French producer. The former real estate developer left behind a successful career in San Francisco to move to Burgundy, utilizing a small, women-led team to build Le Grand Courtâge to the 50,000-case mark and distribution in nearly all 50 states—all the while tailoring what she calls "the three Ps" (price, palate, and packaging) to deliver "French elegance and cachet with an American appeal and price" to consumers.

"There was an intentionality in my approach whereby I reverse-engineered what I felt was needed in the marketplace given that some 70% of brands are bought [based] on packaging alone and Americans have a lighter and sweeter palate," Falkner explains. "The vast majority of bubbly and rosé consumers are female, and women control more than 80% of the spends in the U.S. for all goods. I set out to reimagine a rather antiquated category and create brands that are timeless yet modern."

Le Grand Courtâge's name, which translates as "the great courtship," is meant to symbolize not only Falkner's mission to entice those consumers through her affordable, cuisine- and cocktail-friendly expressions but the connection she's forged between Old and New World winemaking traditions in both brands, including the aforementioned blending of grapes from various regions-in this case Burgundy, the Languedoc, the Loire Valley, and Beaujolais. The Le Grand Courtâge Blanc de Blancs Brut (\$20/750-mL) features Chardonnay. Chenin Blanc. Colombard, and Ugni Blanc, while the Brut Rosé (\$20) blends Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc, and Gamay; both Vin Mousseux expressions are crafted in Nuits-Saint-Georges and aim to strike a balance between soft yet vibrant fruit character and the dryness and acidity expected of French sparkling. Très Chic Rosé (\$17), meanwhile, made its debut in 2019, featuring Grenache and Cinsault from the Pays d'Oc and following in the footsteps of its sister brand with its contemporary packaging and versatility in terms of food pairing.

Falkner's investment in the industry extends beyond her own brands to supporting female entrepreneurs through various philanthropic endeavors, including her ELEVATE program. Now in its second year, it's partnering with Ladies Who Launch, a nonprofit that aims to provide access to educational resources and capital programs for women-led businesses. Selected applicants will each be awarded a \$10,000 grant as part of the program, which will also provide mentorship and advisory support to the awardees over a six-month period. As Falkner knows firsthand, empowering women to forge their own paths is paramount, even—or perhaps especially—if those paths lead in unexpected directions.

Le Grand Courtâge NV Blanc de Blancs Brut, France (\$20) Sourced from vineyards in Burgundy, the Languedoc, and the Loire Valley, this blend of 45% Chardonnay, 10% Chenin Blanc, 15% Colombard, and 30% Ugni Blanc offers up the most delicate bubbles. Aromas of Bosc pear and croissant lead to notes of candied pineapple, lemon meringue, and white flowers followed by a long, mineral-driven finish. The feel of the baby bubbles on the palate and the great price point put this French sparkler in an elevated category of charm and elegance. **93** —*Meridith May*

Le Grand Courtâge NV Brut Rosé, France (\$20) This sparkling rosé—a blend of 45% Chardonnay, 40% Ugni Blanc, and 15% Gamay opens up with perfumed lilac and red berries. Bubbles burst with raspberry and wild strawberry before the palate gets into gear with racy acidity and an inherent freshness. 93—M.M.

Très Chic Rosé 2021, Sud de France, Pays d'Oc IGP (\$17) This blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Cinsault delivers fresh and steely notes of pink grapefruit, fresh linen, and white cherry. Pomegranate and red licorice add even more vibrant expressiveness. **92**—*M.M.*







Julie Theobald

Title: Executive director, Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

Location: Cincinnati, Ohio

Julie Theobald officially joined the first all-female leadership team of the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas, in September 2021. A transformational and energizing visionary with an extensive background in nonprofit and corporate leadership, Theobald previously served as the first female executive director and CEO of the widely respected Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), helping to move the 90-year-old nonprofit arts organization into the digital age by doubling its operating budget and forging new partnerships.

Sarah Eustis

Title: CEO, Main Street Hospitality Group Location: Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Sarah Eustis founded Main Street Hospitality Group in 2014 with a vision that leverages three generations of family leadership in the industry; her career began at 14 in the housekeeping department at the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, which has been in her family for over 50 years. Now at the forefront of the independent hospitality landscape, Main Street owns and operates an expanding collection of properties-five in The Berkshires, two in Rhode Island, and a growing pipeline of projects in destinations throughout the Northeast—ranging from new builds to landmark establishments that offer meaningful and memorable guest experiences unique to each locale. A passionate leader, Eustis maintains an approach to hospitality that aims to connect members of the communities that Main Street serves in meaningful ways.



Title: Chair, board of directors, Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

Location: Oakland, California

A Master Sommelier since 2008, Emily Wines has participated in all levels of examination and education for the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas. She was a founding member of the organization's diversity committee and previously served on the board of directors from 2013 to 2015. She currently works as vice president of wine and beverage experiences at Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurants.

Sydney Edwards

Title: National brand manager, The Pale by Sacha Lichine; marketing director, Shaw-Ross International Importers

Location: Miami–Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Sydney Edwards is the national brand manager for The Pale by Sacha Lichine as well as the marketing director for Shaw-Ross International Importers, a leading wine and spirits importer in the United States. For eight years, Edwards worked as a brand strategist and marketing coordinator for Whispering Angel, establishing it in the U.S. as a luxury lifestyle brand through influential social media campaigns and highprofile food and wine events. She also played an essential role in the launch of The Palm by Whispering Angel in April 2021, and over the course of a year, the chic and irreverent rosé label has grown to national distribution.





Elizabeth Bourcier

Title: Resident vigneronne, Bionic Wines

Location: Walla Walla, Washington

A Seattle native with French roots, Elizabeth Bourcier began her winemaking career at 18, studying at both Walla Walla Community College's Institute for Enology and Viticulture and California Polytechnic State University before working harvests in the United States and Argentina. The resident vigneronne for Bionic Wines, Bourcier is responsible for creating the lineup for its No Girls brand, which aims to champion women in wine; Bionic's portfolio also includes the Cayuse, Horsepower, and Hors Catégorie labels.



No Girls 2018 Tempranillo, Walla Walla Valley. Oregon (\$76) This brand was named for the 20th-century closing of bordellos across the American West, including in the Walla Walla Valley; converted businesses were known to put up signs that read "No Girls." Now, the phrase cheekily serves as Elizabeth Bourcier's celebration of women in the wine industry. Her domestic interpretation of Tempranillo certainly has a Spanish accent: Sourced from a biodynamic vineyard on an ancient riverbed on the Oregon side of the Walla Walla Valley, this is a savory, earthy, toasty red, with a powerful train of black plum, molassescovered grilled meat, and licorice that traverses the palate. Deep notes of balsamic, black olive, and boysenberry syrup keep the sleek tannins united within a cloak of satin. 94 - M.M. **BIONIC WINES**

who raise the



Lulu Handley

Title: Proprietor, Handley Cellars Location: Philo, California

Lulu Handley grew up on her family's Anderson Valley estate, Handley Cellars; after college, her travels took her to Peru, where she learned from traditional subsistence farmers in the Andean Altiplano, and then to Galicia, Spain, where she apprenticed in the cellar at Do Ferreiro and studied old-vine Albariño. She then moved to Maine, where she immersed herself in Old World–style farming and homesteading skills by apprenticing on small-scale diversified farms and contributing to a variety of tasks, including logging, sheep herding, and moving animals for rotational grazing.

After returning to the Anderson Valley, Handley took over the family winery

and vineyards at Handley Cellars following the retirement of her mother, Milla.

Handley Cellars 2018 Pinot Noir, RSM Vineyard, Anderson Valley

(\$55) While luscious in its floral tones, this wine possesses a savory soul and a brilliance that shines through both its sleek body and its conscious richness. Notes of sarsaparilla, rhubarb, and porcini mushroom meld with sweeter notes of cherry. Aged ten months in 33% new French oak. 95 — *M.M.*

Maya Dalla Valle

Title: Estate winemaker, Dalla Valle Vineyards

Location: Oakville, California

Maya Dalla Valle is a second-generation winemaker and the daughter of Naoko and Gustav Dalla Valle, who made their first vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon from their Napa Valley estate in 1986. The 5-acre Maya's Vineyard is today renowned for its Cabernet. Maya holds a master's degree in viticulture and enology from Cornell University along with a master of business and science degree in vineyard and winery management from France's Bordeaux Science



Maya and Naoko Dalla Valle work side by side as a daughter-mother team.

Agro. In January 2021, she was named estate winemaker.

"Dalla Valle is my home. It is also my family's legacy," says Maya. "I am so excited to be working alongside my mom. Dalla Valle is her life's work, and what she has created is remarkable. I also know that the greatest wineries are judged in terms of decades and generations, and that our story is still being written. I am honored to be carrying our family's legacy into a second generation."

Dalla Valle 2018 Maya Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$500) This special cuvée of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc is named after winemaker Maya Dalla Valle, as is the famed estate vineyard it hails from on the eastern hillsides of Oakville. Lifted notes of graphite soil, boysenberry, and maple go so deep as to create a brooding effect. As the wine opens up, it's succulent yet also mouth-drying, with chalky tannins that allow the fruit and savory notes to burst forward. **99** —*M.M.*

Megan Hughes



Title: Second-generation winemaker, Barnard Griffin Winery

Location: Richland, Washington

Second-generation winemaker Megan Hughes oversees white-wine production at her family's winery, Barnard Griffin, in the rain shadow of the Cascade Range in the Columbia Valley. She has a bachelor of science in viticul-

ture and enology from Washington State University and has come a long way since working for her parents at an early age, when she was paid in M&M's: She introduced

Barnard Griffin's canned wine program and worked with her father, Rob Griffin, to craft its rosé. Hughes volunteers for the Boys & Girls Club and Junior Achievement, mentoring young women who want to know more about the wine industry and science.

Barnard Griffin 2021 Rosé of Sangiovese, Columbia Valley,

Washington In this release from winemaker Megan Hughes, we find crackling acidity as well as strawberries and cranberries doused in herbs. On the mid-palate, a fruity lollipop sweetness is trailed by a line of minerality. **92** —*M.M.*



HANDLEY

BOLD LIVINC

MEET CIGAR BOX WINEMAKER BELÉN TUDELA

by Wanda Mann

BE "PERSEVERANT [AND] PATIENT":

These are Cigar Box winemaker Belén Tudela's words of wisdom for women pursuing a career in the industry. Born and raised in Argentina, Tudela herself does not hail from a winemaking family and says that "it was out of pure curiosity that I discovered the world of enology." She started her professional journey in the laboratory of an Argentine company that sold winemaking supplies, an experience that sparked her desire to earn a bachelor's degree in enology. Her determination and inquisitive nature have served her well: "In 2021, I found myself with this beautiful challenge of being able to make and represent Cigar Box," she says.

Before taking the helm at Cigar Box, Tudela spent more than a decade honing her skills at one of Argentina's largest volume wineries. Today she applies that expertise to creating a portfolio of, to use the brand's tagline, "bold wine for bold living." Crafted from hand-harvested grapes, the Cigar Box lineup includes Malbec from Argentina as well as Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile. For Tudela, "Cigar Box is the perfect combination of a bold personality and the craftsmanship and dedication to making the best wines we can," she says. "This results in a product that not only appeals for its quality but also for its message and attitude." And her winemaking style is mirrored by her approach to the rest of her work: "I like being a winemaker who can easily communicate to the consumer what

Cigar Box is all about, in a relaxed way, without prejudice. I also like to behave like this in my workplace, close to the people who collaborate in the production process," she adds.

WNMEN

Tudela finds bliss not only in that process but in seeing how her wines impact those who drink it. As she explains, "Knowing that enophiles enjoy this wine that I make with such joy makes me proud"—which only further fuels her goal "to get more people to come and enjoy the world of wine and its experiences."

Given Tudela's success in forging a path through the wine world, it's clear that she practices what she preaches. She does not deny the existence of the obstacles that women often encounter in the industry, but she adamantly believes that they are not insurmountable. "My suggestion is to be bold and persevering," she insists. "We women can bring all our virtues to this world of wine. You just have to dare to be part of it."



Theresa Heredia

Title: Director of winemaking, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery Location: Healdsburg, California

A love of science led Theresa Heredia from the lab to the vineyard. As a Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at the University of California, Davis, she became captivated by the research projects of the enology students she met. "I realized that my chemistry research and their wine research used similar analytical methods, but the wine sounded like much more fun!" she recalls. "I had already fallen in love with wine before this and had even traveled to Burgundy, Bordeaux, and the Rhône Valley, so it all made perfect sense for me to pursue a career in wine." Heeding a call too strong to

ignore, Heredia left academia behind to get hands-on experience.

Respected for her extensive work with cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the Russian River Valley and the Sonoma Coast, Heredia joined Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery in 2012. "My approach to winemaking is very much about taking advantage of specific vineyard and fruit qualities," she says.

She is quick to pay homage to the women who charted a path ahead of her: "There were women winemakers when I started my career in wine—but not many. I always felt so inspired by



the women who paved the way for the rest of us." No wonder Heredia plans to leverage her position at the upper echelons of the industry to help break down barriers for others. "I really hope to become more involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives," she says. "I would very much like to work with other people in the industry who are also interested in bringing positive change." —Wanda Mann

Theodora Lee



Title: Founder, Theopolis Vineyards Location: Yorkville, California

As a senior partner and trial attorney for a prestigious law firm, Theodora Lee never imagined that jurisprudence would also be the catalyst for her vocation as a vintner. When she began practicing law in the pre-internet 1980s, she often drove to a partner's weekend home in California wine country to get documents reviewed. "While the partner reviewed the brief, I would be invited to stay for dinner, and we would drink fine wine," she recalls.

Lee's Texas upbringing also proved useful during those wine-country meetings; she had learned to drive a tractor at the tender age of 8 on her father's cattle farm and showcased her skill in the vineyard. "At that point," she says, "I envisioned owning my own vineyard one day . . . [which] would allow me to combine my love for farming and the great outdoors."

As she earned the money needed to purchase California property, Lee took viticulture classes at the University of California, Davis. In 2001, she secured 20 acres of sheep pasture in the Yorkville Highlands area of the Anderson Valley. She planted her vineyard in 2003, and Theopolis Vineyards became a reality: From that point forward, she would be known as "Theo-patra, Queen of the Vineyard," initially focused on selling her Petite Sirah grapes but entering into production with the 2012 vintage.

But making wine is only half the battle. Lee has found that selling it can be challenging: "The biggest obstacle I have encountered has been finding distributors and brokers to place my wines in high-end restaurants and wine bars," she notes. Not one to be dissuaded, she has tapped into her legal network for leads, pointing out that "I believe in hard work and grit, and I never give up." Equally committed to making the wine industry accessible to those who have historically been underrepresented, she established the Theopolis Vineyards Diversity Fund at UC Davis in 2020. —Wanda Mann

May Matta-Aliah

Title: Wine educator and consultant Location: New York, New York

Everyone gets the same 24 hours in a day, but May Matta-Aliah leaves many in the dust when it comes to maximizing that precious time. A longtime instructor at the International Wine Center in New York City, Matta-Aliah has trained countless sommeliers and industry pros in the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) curriculum. She's the founder of consultancy In the Grape (inthegrape.com) and an ambassador for the regions of Alto Adige, Armagnac, and Franciacorta; as such, she plays a strategic role in their efforts to reach industry gatekeepers and consumers. And her many credentials include a WSET Diploma as well as Advanced Sommelier (ASA), Certified Wine Educator (SWE), French Wine Scholar, Italian Wine Ambassador, and Spanish Wine Educator certifications-there really isn't room here to list them all!

Born in Lebanon, one of the world's oldest wineproducing countries, Matta-Aliah says that "one of my most vivid childhood memories was stepping into wineries that were buzzing with the energy of the harvest at the end of summer. It felt like I had stepped into a magical place of cool underground caves and barrels bubbling with fermenting wine. I was fascinated by it all, and that fascination never left me" (not even during her ten-year career in graphic design). For other women pursuing careers in wine, Matta-Aliah shared some of her core tenets: "Be humble and open to learning; none of us know everything. Do your research and walk into a room prepared. Respect other people's time and don't waste it. Know your worth—and don't be afraid to ask for it." —Wanda Mann





Shae Frichette

Title: Co-owner and assistant winemaker, Frichette Winery; head winemaker, Sashay Wines

Location: Benton City, Washington

Shae Frichette is co-owner of and assistant winemaker at Frichette Winery and head winemaker at Sashay Wines in Washington's Red Mountain AVA. The appellation lies along a steep slope within the Yakima Valley AVA, where plush canopies yield what Frichette calls "wines to live for," with bold fruit flavors and assertive tannins. Founded in 2013, Frichette Winery now produces almost 3,000 cases of Bordeaux-varietal wines per year with an increasing focus on vineyard designates; having expanded their crush pad, Frichette and her husband/ partner, Greg, recently acquired land for planting their own grapes.

Initially, Frichette says, she was inclined to work behind the scenes due to discomfort with the fact that "I didn't see winemakers who looked like me" in a white male–dominated industry. But she found her voice after attending a conference for Black women in wine, which inspired her to create Sashay—a playful yet empowering label within Frichette's portfolio that includes a rosé of Merlot and a Syrah that embodies the Red Mountain trait of ageability.

Frichette wakes up every day and pursues a passion that gives her goosebumps, and she encourages other women to do the same while trusting that they are an asset to the industry. As she puts it, "To women starting out in the wine industry, I'd say, 'Come on.' There is plenty of room." —*Paris Vasser*



DREAMING BIGG

AMANDA WITTSTROM-HIGGINS AIMS TO EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN IN THE BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

by Natasha Swords

Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, president and founder of Dream Big Darling, holds a picture of her beloved grandmother.

ENGAGING, INSPIRING, AND HELPING

to guide the next generation of leaders in the wine and spirits industry is no small feat. Nonetheless, this is the mission of Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, president and founder of Dream Big Darling, an organization focused on fostering women's success through mentorship and education.

The idea to launch the nonprofit came to her in 2018 as she identified a need among young female professionals in the alcohol space. Reflecting her love for the women who influenced her as a child and young woman, the namesake phrase speaks to the core of the foundation: As Wittstrom-Higgins

explains, her grandmother often told her to "dream big, darling" while she was growing up, and "to me, 'darling' is a word that signifies both endearment and empowerment. It exemplifies kindness, caring, understanding, and unconditional love. . . . I believe that 'dreaming big' is something we could use more of in this world. In my own career, I have been blessed by caring mentors who have helped me do just that." (She also has dynamic colleagues in founding Dream Big Darling board members Stacie Jacob and Dr. Meredith Dillon, who serve as treasurer and secretary, respectively.)

Wittstrom-Higgins, a Paso Robles

native, is the founder and principal of Full Cup Solutions, a full-service consulting firm for forward-thinking agricultural and beverage-industry businesses. Previously, she served as executive vice president at her family's Ancient Peaks Winery in the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA. "For decades, I've looked around this industry that I love, and I've noticed that there are not many people who look like me in leadership roles," she points out. "It drove me to ask myself, 'How will I make the world better for my very young daughter, now 6 years old?' After all, the alcohol industry lies in the hands of the next generation."



The Dream Big Darling team: Creative director Christine Wilson, founding board member Stacie Jacob, founding board member Dr. Meredith Dillon, president and founder Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, chief strategic officer Rachel Collier, and COO Melodee Crank.

The solution was to pay it forward. To that end, the organization has taken a multifaceted approach to creating opportunities within the industry. For example, it collaborates with The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal to produce a column, Fresh Voices, that features a different guest contributor in each issue of both publications, giving them the chance to become a published writer. It has also created a six-month professional coaching program with The Millinger Group, a boutique career-development agency, that's designed to foster dynamic career growth. And it hosts educational programs on the topic of wine marketing, including a recent virtual tasting and discussion with legendary Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon. Each of these initiatives has been carefully crafted to generate impactful learning and build a trusted community.

"Our organization is ultimately about heart. It's about investing in the next generation today so that we can inspire incredible leaders for tomorrow," says Wittstrom-Higgins. "Everyone involved in Dream Big Darling has been personally impacted by caring mentors, and we now want to pay it forward. This is just the beginning—I believe that our reach will grow exponentially. If you share our passion, we would love for you to join us."

Visit *dreambigdarling.com* to become a sponsor or mentor or to apply for a scholarship.

who raise the



Ntsiki Biyela

Title: Founder, Aslina Wines

Location: Western Cape, South Africa

Hailing from Mahlabathini, a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa–based winemaker Ntsiki Biyela of Aslina Wines was pursuing a career in chemical engineering when she was recruited to study winemaking at Stellenbosch University on a scholarship offered by South Africa Airways in 1999. At that point, Biyela knew nothing about wine—she hadn't even tasted it—but by the time she graduated in 2003 with a B.S. in agriculture (specifically viticulture and enology), she had fallen in love with it, and she joined boutique Stellenbosch winery Stellekaya as its winemaker a year later.

In 2014, she founded Aslina Wines after a collaboration with California winemaker Helen Keplinger forged through Wine for the World, an initiative established by U.S. wine importer Mika Bulmash with the goal of supporting emerging winemakers across the globe through partnerships with prominent U.S. producers. Aslina, named after Biyela's grandmother and muse, has since taken flight, growing from 1,800 to 100,000 cases via a portfolio of award-winning premium wines that represent the diversity and typicity of South Africa. To other women starting out in the industry, Biyela advises, "Know your 'why,' block the noises, and focus on the end goal." —Paris Vasser



Stout Family Wines' Guy and Kimberly Stout.

Stout Earns

KIMBERLY AND GUY STOUT ARE BUILDING THEIR BOUTIQUE LABEL FROM THE GROUND UP

by Jonathan Cristaldi

STOUT FAMILY WINES IS A TRUE

family affair: Kimberly Stout brings to the venture the organizational expertise of a marketing pro; her husband, Guy, the acute eye of a veteran wine professional and Master Sommelier; and their son, Ian, the presence and energy of a rising industry star.

Out of a Napa-based custom-crush winery, the Stouts produce around 1,000 cases per year of each of their core products-Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc-for sale primarily in on-premise channels. Working closely with consulting winemaker Tom Rinaldi, Guy and Ian focus on making top-quality Cabernet Sauvignon, while Kimberly's passion is centered around producing the exceptional Granny Rae's Sauvignon Blanc (affectionately named after her mom in honor of her 90th birthday). Additionally, small lots of Cabernet Franc. Petit Verdot. and Chardonnay are produced for Stout Family's wine club.

This represents Guy's "second act" in the wine business. During the first, he worked at Glazer's Distributing in Texas over the span of three decades, serving as its corporate wine-education director, regional finewine director, and national-account on-premise team member. He's most proud of co-creating Glazer's Beverage Academy with the late Bill Saul and asserts that "education and good working knowledge of what you are selling are invaluable" to a credible teamevidenced today by the company's (now Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits) robust 20.000-member sales force and presence across 44 U.S. markets.

Guy and Kimberly met in the early 1980s but didn't reconnect until the late 1990s. After marrying, they devised a retirement plan: "In 1998, we purchased land in [Texas] Hill Country to plant a vineyard [and] make wine," Kimberly says, laughing at the memory of their naiveté. Although they enjoyed growing grapes for the Texas wine industry for two decades, she explains, "We were city kids—[and] between [the] raccoons and varmints and deer and drought and floods in the Hill Kimberly's best advice for women getting into the industry is "Network!"—a directive to which she adds, "Don't be afraid to get involved in any aspect of the business."



Stout Family 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75)

This is no bashful wine: Opulence reigns. Amid brooding notes of roasted coffee and tilled soil, the dark fruit is palpable, the spiced cedar sassy, and the power and grit evident throughout. Blackberry syrup envelops the palate, intertwining with lush, developed tannins. **95** —*M.M.*

Country, it was not an ideal appellation to grow grapes."

Meanwhile. Ian. who had moved to Napa and interned at Rombauer, was on the hunt for fruit to produce his own wine. He found what he was looking for when Michael Stewart of Stewart Cellars in Yountville sold him some juice in 2011. With winemaker Paul Hobbs' help, he bottled the first Stout Family Wines release; excited as he was by the project, however, he decided he wanted to take more time working in the field before returning to it. Guy was still with Glazer's and couldn't be involved in winery operations, so the task of building a family brand fell on Kimberly's shoulders. "I had to learn everything about producing a label from the ground up within a year," she recalls. When Stout Family Wines relaunched with a 2013 Cabernet, it came with the rarified stamp of Rinaldi, a longtime friend of Guy's now deftly guiding Ian's hand in the cellar.

In 2018, Guy and Kimberly sold their vinevard and farm to focus on their growing Napa project, though they still reside in Texas; Ian, meanwhile, remains their "boots on the ground" out west, working alongside Rinaldi to turn out Bordeaux varieties that express California terroir. As president of Stout Family Wines, Kimberly has her hands full with marketing and sales while staving connected to the local wine community by supporting Women of Wine in Houston (WOW), a networking and charity organization that benefits the Houston Area Women's Center, which assists survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Unsurprisingly, her best advice for women getting into the industry is "Network!"—a directive to which she adds, "Don't be afraid to get involved in any aspect of the business."

Echoing Kimberly, Guy says that doing what you're passionate about is most important. "You can't teach passion," he says, but you can foster it by "surrounding yourself with others who have common interests." It would seem that Guy and Kimberly have taken their own advice to heart—and it shows in the wines.



Ole Smoky offers over 25 moonshine expressions.



HISTORY

in a

ole smoky

BRINGS NATIONAL MOONSHINE DAY TO LIFE WITH ITS FIRST ANNUAL SHINE FEST

by Eric Marsh

Moonshine is perhaps the most storied spirit in the United States. Production of the notoriously incendiary spirit dates back to the late 1700s, when Irish and Scottish immigrants settled in the Southern Appalachia area, bringing with them their home distilling practices and their recipes for what's typically a white whiskey derived from corn, yeast, sugar, and water. Yet up until recently, it was totally illegal.

"Hoop," "shiney," "skullpop," "hooch," and "white lightning" are a few other monikers for it, but it's most widely known as "moonshine"—a word that denotes an undertaking done at night, which in fact was the wont of moonshiners as a way to evade law enforcement. Not that they didn't sometimes confront authority directly, as was the case in the 1790s, when, during the Whiskey Rebellion, moonshiners joined other distillers and farmers to stand up to the nascent U.S. government as it tried to impose new taxes on alcohol.

Lawlessness surrounding the spirit continued through the 20th century. Closely tied to moonshiners were bootleggers, whose name came from the verb "bootlegging," which meant to conceal something in an actual boot—in this case, flasks of moonshine stacked high in a tall riding boot as they were moved on horseback. Once bootleggers began ferrying their goods by car, they took to modifying their vehicles, installing heavy shocks to support maximum hauls; souped-up engines made it easier for them to get to market more quickly across longer distances (even on steep, winding mountain roads) while outrunning the authorities—all of which was crucial during Prohibition, when moonshining thrived. On their days off, many of these drivers took their tricked-out cars to local racetracks to show their prowess, thereby playing a hand in the establishment of NASCAR.

Though moonshiners continued to whet the whistles of hooch seekers in dry counties after Prohibition, distilling and consuming it became more of a leisurely pastime, especially in Southern Appalachia. Ole Smoky Moonshine exemplifies as much. Founder Joe Baker, using a century-old family recipe that he fine-tuned, launched the brand in 2010, shortly after Tennessee made distilling moonshine legal in 2009. The brand has grown exponentially in the past 12 years: It now employs more than 800 people, makes a wide range of moonshines and whiskeys in three of its four distillery locations across the state, and hosts over 5.7 million visitors each year. "We've grown to a pretty substantial size for a locally owned ma-



Blackberry Moonshiner

- ▶ 2 oz. Ole Smoky Blackberry Moonshine
- ▶ 3 oz. lemonade
- Mint

Muddle mint in a Mason jar. Add ice, moonshine, and lemonade. Stir well and garnish with a lemon slice and blackberries.

and-pop shop," Baker says. "It's turned into something that's meaningful for our community, and it's something we're super-proud to have been able to kick off and get started."

Ole Smoky is the bestselling moonshine brand in the U.S., and as such has much to celebrate on June 2, National Moonshine Day. Its team "will be out in full force to bring National Moonshine Day to life at bars and restaurants, our distillery locations, and retail accounts throughout the country," says VP of marketing Will Ensign. "We want everyone to celebrate this special day that's a nod to our history." The most notable of the day's events will be the Ole Smoky Shine Fest, which is being held at the brand's 6th & Peabody distillery in Nashville.

Ole Smoky has been featuring live music at its distilleries since it opened the doors to its flagship location in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in 2010. Ensign says that the brand is excited to continue that tradition in kicking off Shine Fest; attendees can expect "a full afternoon of entertainment that will feature artists we've built close relationships with over the years as well as some newer performers within the bluegrass and country genres." Musicians such as Levi Hummon and the Grammy-nominated Po' Ramblin' Boys will perform on 6th & Peabody's outdoor stage for concertgoers who will no doubt be consuming their fair share of skullpop—perhaps in the form of the Blackberry Moonshiner, the official cocktail of the event (see recipe).

Leading up to the holiday, the Ole Smoky team will be promoting the festival on its social media channels and setting up point-of-sale displays with QR codes that drive consumers to a microsite where they can enter a sweepstakes, the grand prize of which is an all-expenses-paid three-day trip to Nashville for a moonshine-and-music adventure. In addition, the brand will be giving away three first prizes—which include a Porch Party Package that the winners can use to celebrate at home as well as hundreds of custom National Moonshine Day T-shirts.

How will you observe the holiday? With more than 25 expressions of moonshine, Ole Smoky provides a myriad of options: Opt for the White Lightnin' to experience the spirit in its purest form, or try the Apple Pie for something that goes down a little easier. Garnish your favorite drink with Ole Smoky Moonshine Cherries, or take the easy route and crack open a can of the brand's moonshine-based cocktails: Mountain 'Rita, Mountain Mule, Apple Pie Ginger, or Blackberry Lemonade.

As Ensign says, "Moonshine is a spirit with rich American history, and [National Moonshine Day] is a way for Ole Smoky to celebrate that legacy and share it with the world. It's time we brought this holiday to life so others can enjoy it as well!"



SIMPLICITY Atits finest

WITH COMPLICATED, WINEMAKER AMANDA INGRAM IS ON A MISSION TO MAKE WINE MORE APPROACHABLE

STORY BY MICHELLE BALL / PHOTOS BY JEREMY BALL

If you've been in the industry for some time, it's all too easy to forget that wine can be complicated. A modest list can easily have over a dozen different varieties, and if you're just starting to get familiar with wine, you might assume that all Chardonnays taste like vanilla and buttered popcorn. Enter Amanda Ingram, a vibrant young winemaker with seemingly boundless enthusiasm for the craft who is striving to make the industry more accessible: With the Trinchero Family Estates brand facetiously named Complicated, she's using popular varieties to make wines that she personally enjoys drinking for a broader audience.



Winemaker Amanda Ingram sources the grapes for Complicated Wines exclusively from Monterey County.

HPLICATED

"The name is meant to be a little tongue in cheek," Ingram explains, painting the picture of the average consumer walking into a grocery store or wine shop, where they're faced with hundreds of labels staring back at them. "How do you know what to pick? Of course, you can do your research and read labels, but that just makes it really complicated. We're looking to uncomplicate it." That doesn't mean, however, that her wines are standardized examples of a Chardonnay or Pinot Noir made to taste the same year after year. "You're still getting a unique wine, but it's not pretentious. It's approachable," adds Ingram.

An Early Pivot

Ingram's path to winemaking began at California State University, Fresno, where she doubted her decision to major in finance as graduation approached. She gave it a chance, but after a year in the business of numbers and cubicles, she knew it wasn't a good fit. At the same time, she was part of a casual wine-tasting group that focused on boutique producers and food pairing, and when she lamented her career choice during one meetup, a friend suggested she look into the wine industry. She ended up on winejobs. *com,* submitting her resume "to every single posting," whether it was for a bottling-line mechanic or a job requiring ten years of experience. "I told them I'm a really fast learner," she recalls with a laugh. Though she didn't get many offers, she did manage to land a harvest internship at Summerwood Winerv in Paso Robles.

After her first harvest season in 2007. she was hooked: "This is it. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life," she remembers thinking at the time. Even though the work was not exactly glamorous—washing hoses, cleaning barrels, doing early-morning picksthe physical labor and the chance to create something with her hands enamored her. "Every day was new. Being able to see the grapes all the way through to the bottling process, I just loved it. I thought, 'I've got to do this forever," Ingram says. Before the year was out, she was back at Fresno State, this time majoring in viticulture and enology. She spent a harvest in New Zealand after graduation, where she thought she might stay until she received an offer in 2011 to serve as



Complicated Wines produces a Monterey County Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Red Blend.

assistant winemaker on a new project, Broken Earth, in Paso Robles. After subsequent stints in South Australia and Texas wine country, she now calls the Central Coast home once more.

A Cool Place to Grow

Ingram has always been fascinated by the interplay of wine and food: how a racy Chardonnay can add a snappy lift to the richness of a creamy carbonara or how an earthy Pinot Noir can accentuate the flavors of a mushroom risotto. When she was hired as winemaker for Complicated in early 2020, she found herself in a prime position to explore how the key to most successful food pairings stems from a wine's acidity, as the cool climate of Monterey County—where Complicated Wines are grown—ensures that the grapes offer ample freshness. "The fruit is so pristine. It comes from such a great area that I really don't have to do a whole lot," explains Ingram. "I can just let Mother Nature deliver whatever it's going to deliver that year, and I like to

see what happens naturally."

Although Monterey isn't as well known as Napa Valley or Sonoma, it's arguably one of California's best winegrowing regions precisely due to its mild summers and proximity to the brisk Pacific Ocean. Ingram describes the region's climatic conditions as a "thermal rainbow": To the north, dense fog and crisp winds from the coast funnel south, creating ideal growing conditions for cool-climate grapes like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to thrive in the Santa Lucia Highlands and Arrovo Seco AVAs. Yet as you move further south, the summer heat further inland moderates those temperatures and allows for a broader range of varieties, including Grenache and Syrah, to ripen. "You can grow a huge variety of grapes in this little area, and they all have their own individual sweet spots," explains Ingram. And because it's less populated than its northern counterparts, it's less expensive to grow grapes, enabling producers to offer high-quality wines at a tremendous value.

Nurturing a Brand

Although Ingram is still a relatively recent hire at Complicated, she feels a strong sense of responsibility to nurture the brand. "Giving me this role right off the bat and saying, 'Here, this is your baby; we trust you to run with it'—that's a big statement for the Trinchero family to give to someone they just met," says Ingram.

Yet it's clear why they opted to do so, as her dedication to her craft is evident. Ingram works closely with Paso Robles native Patrick Silveira, Trinchero Family Estates' senior grower relations representative for over two decades, to collaborate with growers so that Ingram's vision for the wines—such as more vibrant color for the Grenache—are met. "Being able to meet the growers out in the vineyard, talk one-on-one, and show them the results of their changes in the bottle that excites them, too," says Ingram.

In the winery, Ingram employs gentle winemaking techniques while relying on neutral oak and stainless steel to allow the fruit's character to shine through. "I don't want to mask it with too much oak because it's such great quality, and I think that really lends itself to being food friendly," she says. That said, she adjusts her approach based on the profile of the fruit from vintage to vintage. For example, the 2019 Chardonnay underwent 100% malolactic fermentation to soften the acidity, while the 2020 was reduced to 75% for a racier style with brighter green-apple notes. In 2021, she cut it back even further to only 50%. "I like that crisper, brighter, fresh fruit, and that's what this is leaning toward," she explains, referring to the not-yet-released 2020 Chardonnay. "Monterey being so cold, you get a lot of that nice minerality and that crispness naturally. So a little malolactic helps soften it and add more weight in the mouth."

During the lockdown phase of the pandemic, Ingram held numerous virtual tastings to introduce Complicated to a broader audience and also tested various recipes at home to pair with them before sharing her suggestions. Describing her hopes for the future, Ingram shares, "I want to make sure that every year I'm putting the best wine I can in the bottle and showcasing how special the Monterey region is. A big part of that is just letting the natural fruit shine through."

Tasting Notes

Complicated 2019 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$22)



Aged in both neutral oak (50%) and stainless steel (50%), this wine is sourced from the Amaral and Sweetwater Ranch vineyards, located on opposite sides of the Salinas River. On the west side, the soils of the former are composed of ancient river rock, allowing for excellent drainage and offering crisp minerality and freshness. On the east side, the latter sustains strong, gusty winds that force the roots to go deep and promotes a stronger concentration of fruit flavors. The resulting wine is medium-bodied, with flavors of crunchy yellow peach laced with hints of

butterscotch and a finish of juicy Meyer lemon. Winemaker Amanda Ingram suggests pairing it with cacio e pepe or baked chicken marinated in Greek yogurt and lemon. *—Michelle Ball*

Lemon drops perfume the glass and a sinuous, sensuous mouthfeel surfaces. Vanilla and buttered toffee drape over a clean, focused middle of tangerine and pine nut. We can go on, but you get it—it's complicated. **92** *—Meridith May*



Complicated 2020 Pinot Noir, Monterey County (\$24) Sourced from three diverse blocks in Herbert

Ranch Vineyard and aged in 100% neutral oak, this Pinot Noir is more "Old World style," Ingram says, adding, "You're not going to get that jammy raspberry-fruit nose. You'll find more of that earthy mushroomrosemary-herbal character. Personally, that's the kind of Pinot I like to drink." Aromas of dried fig, mushroom, and chaparral lead to flavors of red cherry, hibiscus, and cranberry tea. To complement it, Ingram suggests charcuterie or a pizza topped with fresh burrata. —*M.B.*

A scintillating nose of rhubarb, dried fruits, and clove guides you to exotic flavors of ripe summer berries steeped in milk chocolate. Blue-floral notes set an ongoing aromatic tone along with a slight toastiness. Bright Old World acidity keeps it fresh and balanced. **91** —M.M.



Complicated 2019 Red Wine, Monterey County (\$24)

Though it doesn't say so on the label, the Red Blend is always composed of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah. The Grenache, sourced from Sweetwater Ranch Vineyard, is aged in neutral oak, while the Syrah hails from a hillside block in San Lucas West Vineyard further south in Monterey County; it sees just a kiss of new oak. "The Grenache brings a nice finesse and elegance to the wine, making it pair so nicely with the rich and spicy Syrah," Ingram says. The blend is layered with fresh blackberry pie and bright, aromatic notes of

orange peel, sage, and raspberry. Though it's light enough to enjoy casually, it has enough weight and structure to satisfy the palates of fans of heavy red wines. Ingram suggests pairing it with barbecue brisket or a fig–and–goat cheese pizza with balsamic. —*M.B.*

Aromas of cherry bark lead to deep, delicious boysenberry pie with hints of cocoa and briar. The mid-palate brings in violets and cigar leaf, offering a generous mouthfeel to this Rhône-varietal blend. Woodsy notes, red rose, and pomegranate lend a layered array of flavors on the finish. **92** —*M.M.*

The Attitude of .

AN INSIDE LOOK AT SILVERADO VINEYARDS' BORREO ROSA by Nell Jerome



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Though rosé became a symbol of glamour and leisure in southern France as far back as the 19th century, it wasn't until about ten years ago that it really caught on in the U.S. The strides the category has made ever since are striking. According to a recent report by bw166, a global alcohol market research firm, sales volume for rosé increased stateside by a mind-blowing 1,433% from 2010 to 2020. Today, you will find almost 3,800 options on Drizly, including approximately 1,000 domestic labels, representing a myriad of red varieties such as Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Pinot Noir, Gamay, Cabernet Franc, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sangiovese.

Though the latter is Italy's most widely planted red grape, it's considered one of the most undervalued and underappreciated varietals for what Italians call *rosato* or *rosa*, producing wines that are typically darker than the light-salmon French rosés—ranging from bright peach to intense crimsonpink—while their profile varies from light and fruity to bold and full bodied. In 1996, the Napa-based Silverado Vineyards produced its first Sangiovese from select blocks of the Soda Canvon Vineyard, which it purchased in 1992; originally planted among lemon and olive trees and pomegranate bushes

by Napa pioneer Felix Borreo, the vineyard (which was renamed Borreo Ranch in 2020) lends a rich and spicy character to the grape. The winery debuted the single-vineyard rosé of Sangiovese that would eventually become known as Borreo Rosa in 1997—well ahead of its time.

As its veteran winemaker, Jon Emmerich, explains, Silverado typically harvests most of its Sangiovese in early September. In 2020, it lost most of its red crop due to wildfire smoke; the Sangiovese survived, however, and the rosé was one of the few wines produced. Emmerich elaborates on the process he and associate winemaker Elena Franceschi undertake: "After destemming, the grapes are held for a few hours in their press to soak before [they're] press[ed] off the skins. This enhances the flavor, color, and light tannin transfer from the skins to the juice. The juice is then inoculated with yeast and fermented in temperaturecontrolled (52-56 degrees Fahrenheit) stainless-steel tanks for four to five weeks. Additionally, we saignée a small percentage of juice destined for our Sangiovese red wine.... The grapes are left on the skins overnight, resulting in longer skin contact. The juice is then bled off and fermented separately. The result is a rosé with

more body, bolder flavors, and richer color. Then we blend the two lots, filter, and bottle [the wine], typically in January following harvest, and release it in the spring."

Available nationwide, Borreo Rosa is a refreshing departure from the popular Provençal pink wine—and the packaging is distinctive, too. The clear hock bottle boasts an iridescent-pink foil closure, while the pale-blue label sports cheery cranberry-hued illustrations designed by Walt Disney's greatgranddaughter, fourth-generation winery owner and artist Annabelle Rey Miller. As Miley Cyrus puts it, "Pink isn't just a color—it's an attitude." **IZ**



Borreo 2021 Sangiovese Rosa, Napa Valley (\$28)

This ripe and bright tank-fermented rosé is made with 100% single-vineyard

Sangiovese. Mineral-driven, with tart cranberry and a dollop of candied cherry and cherry pith. Notes of fresh basil come through in its earthy undertones. 92 — Meridith May



ROOTED IN THE GROUND

OUR LATEST **BACK TO {SPIRITS} SCHOOL WEBINAR** EXPLORED THE AUTHENTIC ARTISTRY OF TEQUILA, MEZCAL, AND MORE

by Stefanie Schwalb

As spring slides into summer, there's no better time to talk about agave-based spirits: "Tis the season for cocktails like the Margarita and the Paloma, after all. For "The Art of Agave"—the latest installment of our Back to (Spirits) School webinar series, which took place in late January—an expert panel moderated by *SOMM Journal* and *Tasting Panel* senior wine and beer editor Jessie Birschbach kept the facts flowing as they delved into all aspects of tequila and mezcal, including the vast spectrum of styles the categories represent that allow them to fit into any beverage program. PHOTO COURTESY OF MA

Maguey Spirits' Burrito Fiestero mezcal is fermented in these open-air wooden vats.

LYRE'S NON-ALCOHOLIC





"There is a great consumer opportunity for all of us in the tequila market, and it's rising year on year," said David Murphy, flavour architect for Lyre's Non-Alcoholic, our webinar co-sponsor. "We are seeing IWSR forecasting the tequila sector as a whole growing about 30% in the U.S. and 7% in Mexico by 2023." With that, he introduced two new products: the plata-style Agave Blanco and Agave Reserva, which takes inspiration from reposado.

Agave Blanco features a distinct, complex bouquet of lemon, agave, chamomile, and subtle saline and pine notes as well as an earthy palate with Sichuan pepper-like spice, while Agave Reserva is round and generous with notes of lemon, roasted agave, vanilla, and peppery spice. "We add a bit of oak to our agave; we also use some hop characters to create that fusel note that's a quintessential part of the agave spirit," said Murphy, explaining that "when we are looking at these spirits, it's from a sensory evaluation. We look at tequilas in the market and [find] a way in which Lyre's can replicate and enhance those flavors in a nonalcoholic style."

The charm of the Lyre's brand is reflected in its product labels, which depict various animals. "We like to have fun with our spirits because they should be enjoyed on good occasions and with friends," said Murphy. For the Blanco, it's a chameleon dressed up as a mariachi player; for the Reserva, it's the mythical chupacabra. After Murphy's introduction, Maria Denton—the company's brand ambassador for Washington, D.C.—showed the labels in action with two cocktails: the Paloma and Tommy's Margarita. "Back in the day, tequila used to be thought of something as fairly cheaply made that you would get drunk on. It's been great to see the premiumization," said Denton. "[Due to] the fact that it has terroir, I find it to be one of the most exciting categories in all of the spirits, and I'm really happy that Lyre's has two products to pay homage to that."

For the Paloma. Denton combined 2 ounces of the Blanco with 3 ounces of premium grapefruit soda, a half-ounce of fresh-squeezed lime juice, and a quarter-ounce of agave syrup sans ice. "A couple of notes when you're making cocktails with nonalcoholic spirits as opposed to alcoholic ones: Since they are essentially water-based instead of alcohol-based, we have to be careful of dilution," she explained. "When you're making a cocktail with alcohol, you're shaking or stirring it vigorously with ice to soften the burn. We don't need to do that with our NA spirits. We want to make sure that we're giving you all the flavor, so we ... add the ice at the last minute when we're making them." After doing so, she rimmed the glass with Hawaiian volcanic black salt and topped it with a grapefruit slice.

For the Tommy's Margarita, Denton combined 2 ounces of the Lyre's

Lyre's Non-Alcoholic flavour architect David Murphy.



Lyre's brand ambassador, Washington D.C., Maria Denton.

Reserva, a half-ounce of agave, and a full ounce of fresh lime juice. Again, she shook the ingredients without ice before adding two or three cubes to chill the drink down, straining it over one big cube, and topping it off with a slice of lime and a pinch of salt. Praising the availability of alcohol-free tequilas, Denton noted that there are plenty of reasons why people choose not to drink. "It's about inclusion to have these as an option," she concluded. "It's not just people who are looking after their own sobriety. You can do half [of a full-proof spirit] and half [Lyre's] to make a low-alcohol cocktail too—it's just about letting people have their drink their way."



TEQUILA CABAL

Everardo Gonzalez Jr. founded Tequila Cabal as an offshoot of alcoholbeverage supplier Las Americas. "We wanted to share something that was more than just tequila—more of the culture and who we are as a people from Los Altos and Jalisco," he said. To that end, he sets out to create a taste profile that connoisseurs will recognize as authentic, starting with the Blanco. "I judge a brand by [its] blanco," he continued, "so to me it was important to establish a strong, clean, and pure base."

Located in Amatitán, considered the birthplace of tequila, Tequila Cabal is exclusively and organically estate grown. "We wait the full six-year maturation for the agave," managing partner/co-founder Dustin Schweitzer said, "and we go through the plant rows weekly and daily to remove any impurities that can sap the plant's nutrients." An integral part of the development process involves crop rotation. "Agave is an ancient plant that's been growing in these areas for many years. It's been draining the land of valuable nutrients," explained Schweitzer. "We let the earth rest for at least a year, then we plant corn and alfalfa—which are high-sugar crops—to reset the soil." Gonzalez added that this approach has its roots in the concept of *cabal*, "which is essentially when someone is upright and forthright," he noted. "To me, it was important to [pay] homage to the history . . . of what makes our people the way we are."

The harvested piñas are cooked in an oven built in 1911 for 42 hours and fermented for 72. "The fermentation process is semi-open to allow some natural yeast," said Gonzalez. "For distillation, we use local volcanic rock–filtered well water." All products are aged in single-use barrels of premium American white oak. The Reposado is aged for eight months, the Añejo for a year and a half, and the Extra Añejo for three and a half years. "One final saying that we like to share with everybody," concluded Schweitzer, is that "the spirit in your glass should only be matched by the spirit of your company."





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** —*Meridith May*

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**—*M.M.*

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 mouth-watering effect of peach nectar, vanilla tart, lemon-grass, 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** —*M.M.*

Tequila Cabal Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$270)

This expression aged for 36 months, yet its oak notes are 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** —*M.M.*

HOTO COURTESY OF TEQUILA KOMOS



OMOS

The Tequila Komos portfolio is produced at the brand's distillery partner, Orendain, in the heart of the Tequila region.

KOMOS

TEQUILA KOMOS

"It's important that we talk about how we get to our Blanco," said Ria Soler, national director of education and advocacy for Tequila Komos. "If your blanco isn't good, you've got nothing in your glass." To ensure top quality, the brand—founded by master distiller and winemaker Richard Betts and tech entrepreneur Joe Marchesestarts with ripe agave from both the highlands and lowlands of Tequila. "Ideally, we are looking for plants at about seven years, so we know the sugar content is right," explained Soler. "Everything is hand harvested by *jimadores* [agave farmers], then stone oven–roasted over several days. After [that], it's gently milled and mixed with spring water from [our] distillery partner, Orendain, located in the heart of Tequila." After fermentation, Komos moves on to distillation in copper pots with a capacity of 400-800 liters.

A major point of differentiation for Komos, Soler continued, is that the majority of its spirits age not in American oak barrels that previously held bourbon but in French oak wine barrels. "For our Añejo Cristalino, we are aging in . . . white-wine barrels," she said. "Most are coming from Napa Valley after being used once or twice by producers like Lewis Cellars and Hirsch Vineyards." Highly regulated by the Mexican government, the Cristalino category requires aging for a minimum of one year. "We refine gently through a long charcoal column, removing a lot of the congeners and tannin but leaving in rich barrel notes," she explained. Also key to the brand is the use of amphorae, which "we're using . . . as splash tanks," she added. "We are introducing oxygen into the spirit after it's been distilled to round out the edges and give a creamier, richer mouthfeel on the end."

Komos Reposado Rosa gets its color from spending 65 days in primarily Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon barrels along with some that contained Sonoma Syrah and Pinot Noir; it's then finished in amphorae. "It has to be two months. We found [that if we aged] it any longer than 65 days, the wood started to talk back—[it] was reactive with the tequila and too woody," Soler noted. "Right now it's this perfect balance of chocolate and fruit that comes from the Cabernet [along] with bright agave." Finally, as the brand's most traditional expression, the Extra Añejo spends three years in American whiskey barrels mostly sourced from Heaven Hill before finishing in French oak white-wine barrels and amphorae.

In pursuit of sustainability, Komos repurposes both its agave fiber and water waste to make bricks that it gives back to the community. In addition, Soler noted, "Our bottles are made in Mexico—[they're] meant to be upcycled and live on long after you enjoy the tequila that's lived within them."



The Maguey Spirits vinata (distillery) in Durango, Mexico.

MAGUEY SPIRITS

Maguey Spirits is located in the state of Durango, an area that represents approximately 2% of mezcal production. "We are very fortunate and lucky to be part of an [up-and-coming] mezcal region," said CEO Alejandro Rossbach as he introduced the company he cofounded with his brother, Christian, adding that they believe in maintaining tradition while pursuing sustainability and innovation.

In addition to its new Señor Sotol label. Rossbach focused on the Burrito Fiestero brand, introducing its Artisanal and Ancestral ranges. The former includes Cenizo and Ensamble, which are made from wild agaves native to Durango that take ten to 14 years to mature. Once removed from their spikes by hand with an axe, they are transported down the hill by donkey to the vinatas, or distilleries, where production is overseen by the maestro mezcalero. The piñas are cooked underground for 72 hours in Maguey's volcanic-rock pit oven,

shredded, and fermented with mountain spring water and natural airborne yeast in 600-liter open-air wooden vats for three to five days. After it's double-distilled in copper pot stills, the mezcal is filtered to remove all impurities, then bottled and labeled by hand.

"The Cenizo, our leading SKU, is the quality of a 12- to 14-year-old agave at an affordable price," explained Rossbach. "It's supersmooth, fruity, gentle, and light on the smoke." The Ensamble, one of the brand's newest releases, features two wild agaves: Cenizo durangensis and Verde salmiana crassispina. "We have more character and power to the flavors in this bottle," he noted, "because it's for mezcal drinkers looking to get more of mezcal's intensity, spiciness, and punch." For the Ancestral range, Rossbach highlighted Masparillo and Castilla. "These mezcals are limited-edition [expressions] . . . that will be arriving in very minimal guantities one or two times a year," he said.

Nored BURRITO Interest Interes

"They're all [in] hand-painted bottles [featuring] unique agaves from the state of Durango... distilled in the ancestral method of clay pots and Filipino wooden stills."

The eco-friendly company employs recycled packaging, runs its electric shredders on solar energy, and has made roughly 50,000 agave bricks to rebuild its distilleries. "We're also planting one agave plant for every bottle we sell," noted Rossbach, "so essentially, we're planting five times more than we use."

CHOPIN SPIRITS

BOZAL MEZCAL AND QUECHOL SOTOL





The Spanish term *bozal* translates as "wild" or "untamed." "We chose this name for our mezcal in reference to the wild species of Mexican agave grown in the hard-to-reach, uncultivated lands of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Durango as well as for the untamed traditions used by our family-operated distilleries to distill small batches in those same locations," said Eric Timmerman, national sales manager for 3 Badge Beverage Corporation's Mixology portfolio. "When you think about mezcal, you have to look at the nuances of its growing regions. Each of the ten states where it's made has a different microclimate and soil profile and is home to different agave species. We look at mezcal as the closest spirit to wine," Timmerman continued, mentioning factors such as terroir; the range of agave varietals and production styles; and the palengues, or distilleries, that all have their own methodologies.

Bozal currently works with 14 different maestros mezcaleros and palenques in four different states. For his presentation, Timmerman focused on two labels, Bozal's Borrego Sacrificio Mezcal and Castilla

Reserva Mezcal. In the former case. he presented a slideshow to discuss what makes its production so unique. "When you look at these images, you can see on the left all the fruits, vegetables, [and] spices as well as that beautiful leg of lamb that go into the production process for the Borregomuch like a gin basket," he said. "It sits above the liquid in the still, and vapors come up during the distillation process, releasing the contents into that liquid so you're picking up all these beautiful flavors." Every batch of Borrego Sacrificio is different depending on what ingredients are available in the season it's made.

As for Castilla, it's one of several ancestral mezcals—which are distilled from pit-cooked, hand- or stone-milled agave in wood-fired clay pots—that Bozal has on the market, though "we produce Castilla in San Juan Bautista Jayacatlán, where the climate is different [from other mezcal-producing regions] in terms of elevation and rainfall," Timmerman explained. In addition, "most ancestrals are [fermented] in open-air oak tanks. We use open-air clay-pot fermentation." The maceration, which is done by hand with an axe, takes about seven hours, and the final results go into handmade bottles that are "all individually painted," he added.

Timmerman closed out his session by introducing the brand's newest product, Quechōl, a sotol made from a stem succulent called *dasylirion*, which is a cousin of agave and yucca. It hails from three major growing regions—Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango—and is certified by the Conseio Mexicano de Sotol. "[Sotol is] not that big of a [category] right now, but we certainly see the opportunity," he said. Quechol, which translates as "precious feather" in the Aztec language of Nahuatl, currently consists of two expressions made respectively from Texanum and Wheeleri, two different varieties of the dasylirion plant that "both hail from Durango," he noted. "Unlike mezcal, where basically one plant can equal four to six bottles depending on the size of the piña, with sotol, one plant equals one bottle. It's different in terms of production, style, and size, but we'll be sharing some beautiful liquid when we roll out Quechol nationally." **3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORPORATION**



More than any other category, agave spirits are agricultural products, asserted Don Fulano founder Sergio Mendoza. "I am a lover of all spirits. They are all rooted in the ground-[and] we all know how the character ... of products [is impacted] by earth, process, and maturation," he continued, "[so] for us, centering on the agave fields is where we focus all of our production."

Mendoza's family is from the Jalisco Highlands and has been farming agave in Los Altos for five generations. They practice crop rotation with beans, sugarcane, corn, and castilla squash to restore the balance of the soil. "These practices have been in Mexico for thousands of years, but with tequila having a moment as one of the fastestgrowing spirits categories, we tend to forget the importance of the agricultural side," he said. "There's a lot of pressure being put into it now." Using only Maduro and Pinto agaves for their complex sugars and structure, the family also hand selects the plants, which means harvesting a single field can take anywhere from

two to three years. "We believe that all tequila should be made with only three ingredients: estate-grown. hand-selected, mature agave; proprietary yeast; and natural spring water-that's what tequila should be," noted Mendoza. "Our distilleries are located in the heart of Tequila. We use . . . the richness of the terroir."

Verified additive-free, the Don Fulano range includes two Blancos; a Reposado aged eight to 11 months in French Limousin oak; an Añejo aged up to almost three years in French Limousin; and the Imperial, an Extra Añejo aged for a minimum of five years in French Limousin and finished in Oloroso Sherry casks. "We're never distilling thinking of a brand [style]. We're distilling to get the most out of each batch," Mendoza explained, adding that their blending regimen also separates them from the majority of the pack. "For years we've been collecting batches, and we have the good fortune of having one of the greatest collections of aged teguilas [of] all kinds. We pay a lot of attention in the blending process to give the final profiles to our product."

Tequila Don Fulano Blanco,

Mexico The agave for this tequila is estate grown and the liquid distilled with well water in copper pot stills. Salted-lime aromas bring in the freshness of the agave. Pineapple and vanilla coat the palate, which has a clean vet earthy finish. 93 -M.M.



Tequila Don Fulano Extra Añejo, Mexico Big, broad strokes of leather, black pepper, and cigar leaf make for an earthy powerhouse aged in French Limousin oak. As graceful as a Cognac but with a zesty undertone, it shows sophistication in its inherent austerity. 95 — M.M.

E. & J. GALLO





MIJENTA TEQUILA

Mijenta Tequila hails from Mexico's Arandas region, a place co-founder Juan Coronado described as magical. "In my humble opinion, here the altitude . . . and content of the iron [in the soil] makes the land so red and rich," he said. "It produces amazing and delicious agaves. Their maturity and growth is slow, but [the result is] authentic and rich." From these plants, Coronado and maestra tequilera Ana María Romero Mena aim to develop a spirit that embodies the terroir of Los Altos. "We set out to create a tequila that's traditional [in terms of] body and texture along with the creation of a unique profile," he explained. "Mijenta is the birth of that." The team's motto, he added, is Por la tierra, por la gente, por la vida, or "For the land, for the people, for life": "[Mijenta] is an opportunity to raise a glass and celebrate the land that gives us this majestic agave [along with] the people who work with our team and who bring it to life."

In terms of sourcing, Coronado said, the company works with two families who farm at high altitudes: "We're looking for agaves from six up to seven years old. I exclusively need to see some Coyote [agave] percentages in plots that we harvest, and it's

all done with the same group of jimadores that we've been doing this with since day one." Once harvested, the piñas are transported to a nearby distillery, "where we cook them in both autoclaves and stone bricks on very low heat," he noted. The three-yearold company

currently offers a Blanco; a Reposado aged up to six months in a blend of American white oak, French oak, and French acacia casks: and a soon-tobe-released Añejo.

Mijenta puts a premium on sustainability through its sourcing and procurement practices, land-preservation efforts, and eco-certified packaging: Its locally produced labels and paper products are made from agave waste, and its bottles are also locally manufactured from stock glass.

> Mijenta's agave is grown in the Arandas region, whose terroir lends richness to the finished teauila.



GOING FOR THE GOLD

THE ORIGIN STORY OF CINCORO TEQUILA

by Natasha Swords

When a group of archrival NBA owners got together for dinner in 2016, something amazing happened: They bonded over a love of tequila. After "two really fun evenings out in Manhattan," says Emilia Fazzalari, the quintet—namely herself and Wyc Grousbeck of the Boston Celtics, Jeanie Buss of the Los Angeles Lakers, Wes Edens of the Milwaukee Bucks, and NBA icon Michael Jordan of the Charlotte Hornets—"decided that we would craft our own tequilas exactly to our own personal taste, no matter how long it took." The idea of Cincoro Tequila was born.

Selecting Fazzalari as their CEO to oversee day-to-day operations, the new friends "partnered with a highly respected and honored distillery in Mexico, where the family has been in place for three generations," she says, and "after three years of work, we had our four expressions, all totally unique and delicious, like nothing else we had found." With that, they launched the brand, whose name translates from Spanish as "Five Gold" in homage to the five founding partners and their pursuit of creating the gold standard in the category.

Prior to forming the venture. Fazzalari, who holds a B.A. in economics from the University of Michigan, spent 30 years in the financial industry—first at Moody's Investors Service and then at Bloomberg L.P., where she held several senior positions in the energy sector, including head of commodities product development, product strategy, trading systems, and marketing for Bloomberg TV. There, "I had 20-plus years of intense work experience," she explains, "including starting and running several new lines of business, which prepared me for my role as CEO at Cincoro. I was so excited by the prospect of developing this teguila brand—in fact, I was passionate about it. We're all competitive, driven people, and we play off

each other extremely well." To this day, Fazzalari and Jordan personally taste test every batch they produce to ensure it's up to their standards before it's bottled.

Cincoro Tequila offers a Blanco, Reposado, Añejo, and Extra Añejo; to date, the portfolio has received 22 awards in some of the industry's most prestigious competitions, including double gold medals and a nod for best bottle and packaging design. "The 100% Blue Weber agave we use is hand selected from both the highlands and lowlands of Jalisco, Mexico," Fazzalari explains. "It's then slowcooked and distilled in separate small batches, which gives us two distinct distillates [that] are then artfully blended."

Asserting that "a tequila like Cincoro is meant to be sipped and savored and of course shared with friends," she adds that "I enjoy our aged expressions." The Reposado, aged eight to ten months in ex–whiskey barrels, features what she calls "amazing notes of vanilla, baking spices, and toasted oak. On the palate, you taste sweet cooked agave, caramel, and white chocolate." The Añejo, meanwhile, is Cincoro's signature expression; aged 24–28 months, considerably longer than the one-year minimum for the category, "it has a remarkably long, elegant finish with lingering notes of dark chocolate," according to Fazzalari. As for the "very rare" Extra Añejo, which retails for \$1,600, she says, "It's consistent with our Cincoro taste profile [in that] it's aged for 40-44 months-far longer than required for Extra Añejo tequilas. [It has] subtle notes of wood, spices, and cooked agave on the nose followed by intense oak, caramel, and light vanilla on the palate."

To date, Cincoro has "secured distribution in all leading retail [accounts], bars, and nightclubs across the U.S.," says Fazzalari. Including her husband, Grousbeck, she adds that "my four partners have been extremely generous with their time and energy; this has really been a team effort. It's very gratifying to share Cincoro with friends and see their faces as they taste it for the first time. It's also rewarding to think of the gold medals we have won and of all the people enjoying it across the USA and, soon, overseas."

Cincoro Tequila Blanco, Mexico

(\$90) Vivid scents of pineapple, salted pear, vanilla, and fresh agave. Creamy on the palate, with succulent yet clean notes of agave, white chocolate, and key lime plus a whisper of earth and white pepper. Elegance defined. **98** —*M.M.*

Cincoro Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$110) Caramel and

banana melt across the tongue, joined by hints of sandalwood, jasmine, and ginger. Pekoe tea perks up the mid-palate, softly enhanced by cocoa powder and garnished with a dash of white pepper. Splendor in the glass. **98** —*M.M.*

Cincoro Tequila Añejo, Mexico

(\$140) Aromas of cinnamon and cedar lead to a coating of melted toffee butter—a brilliant start, followed by a layer of toasted coconut and baked pineapple that leaves a trace of flavor and perfume behind. Despite the oak aging, the agave is unmasked, remaining fresh, clean, and zesty. The result is dazzling for all its restraint, graced with more purity than power. **98**—*M.M.*





In Tune With TERROIR



La Luna founder and CEO Salvador Picazo Chavez.

THE UNCOMMON ORIGIN STORY OF **LA LUNA MEZCAL** by Jessie Birschbach

Mezcal enthusiasts know that the majority of the beloved, smoky agave spirit comes from Oaxaca, but that's the first thing that makes La Luna Mezcal special: It hails from the Mexican state of Michoacán. The family of La Luna's founder and producer, Salvador Picazo Chavez, is also from Michoacán—specifically the town of Cotija (yes, it's the birthplace of the mild, salty cheese).

Chavez tells *The Tasting Panel* that the influence of the coastal state somehow wiggles its way into every one of La Luna's mezcal expressions, leaving a signature saline note behind. Also apparent in the mezcal is Chavez's approach to production, which is indicative of the fact that he himself grew up in Sonoma. "So this idea of terroir was always around me—I'm an avid wine drinker," says Chavez. "We produce so many expressions that reflect their site, the time of year, and the different varieties." He adds that one of his favorite things to do is sit down with his mezcal and "geek out with somms."

Chavez also consults with a few Sonoma-based winemaker friends and parlays this knowledge into his work as a mezcal producer; with his family ties to Michoacán and his ability to speak Spanish, he remains hands on throughout the production process. "Our brand, being a produced brand versus a sourced brand, [is] very different," he says. "Our interaction—my personal interaction with our fermentation, with our distillation, with the raw material—allows me to speak through the mezcal in a way that a lot [of others] can't."



Salvador Picazo Chavez and O'Donovan's Restaurant & Pub owner Daniel Betancourt look on as barman Garrick Gurney makes a La Luna-based cocktail.

As if to validate this thoughtful distillation process, distilleries in Michoacán are not referred to as palenques, as they are in Oaxaca and elsewhere. They are called *vinatas*, a reference to the historical local term vino de mezcal. or "wine of agave." "Mezcal should be as pleasant as a fine wine would be in the sense that [in both cases we're] looking for aromatics, depth, complexity, and viscosity," Chavez says. "We should not assume what we've been trained by the market to assume, which is [that] agave products [exist] to just get [you] drunk. Mezcal, and especially La Luna, is a different agave spirit that is very in tune with terroir and the earth, and it's meant to be enjoyed in that same vein."

La Luna sources six different varieties of agave from the mountains of Cotija and Indaparapeo in Michoacán, some wild and some semi-cultivated: Bruto, Chino Silvestre, Espandincillo, Verde, Tequilana, and Manso Sahuayo, all growing at elevations of over 2,000 meters. The mature piñas of these varieties are cooked in a conical earth oven before they're shredded and added with water to an open container (called a tina or pila depending on its shape). Each batch goes through 100% open-air fermentation with ambient yeast and is then twice-distilled, first in a copper *cazo* and then in a pinewood or clay pot still. In a procedure similar to a winemaking technique, the runoff from the crushed agave is collected and fermented separately; the concentrated liquid is added into the *tina* (or *pila*) on about day three of fermentation.

His intimate involvement with the production process has also allowed Chavez to launch a series of custom batches for high-profile clients both off- and on-premise. Working closely with the accounts, the founder refers to his customization program as a "collab," the first of which is for BevMo!: La Luna Mezcal Mango y Chile Seco Tequilana, which has been distilled with mango and dried chile, was released in April. There is also the Chino Destilado con Hierba Medicinal, Cereza, y Almendra, which was made with coca leaf, cherry, and almonds for Gracias Madre, a popular vegan Mexican restaurant in West Hollywood, California: It sold out "practically overnight," according to Chavez.

Another account that plans on collaborating with La Luna and already carries a handful of its expressions is O'Donovan's Restaurant & Pub in Pomona, California. Coincidentally, the family of its owner, Daniel Betancourt, is also from Cotija, Michoacán. "My mother was the daughter of a baker and my father the son of a farmer; both used the very same soil and land that La Luna distills their mezcal in. You can say a little piece of my family is in every bottle that Sal and his family produce," says Betancourt.

O'Donovan's was established in 2013, but by 2017, the business was failing; Betancourt, who had worked his way up to lead bartender while getting his degree in mechanical engineering from Cal State Fullerton, decided to take it over. "We flipped a family restaurant over and tore out the booths and built a craft bar in a city that had never seen ... \$12–\$16 cocktails," he says. "[It was] a massive risk on our part that took months to pay off."

Today, O'Donovan's is thriving, thanks to not only Betancourt's savvy gamble but also passionate bartenders like Garrick Gurney, who says he finds great joy in "creating flavor pairings utilizing fresh and unique ingredients to make something greater than the sum of its parts." Gurney discovered La Luna through an agave education program and instantly fell in love. "The commitment to varietal expression really intrigued me—you can really taste a difference in each offering," he explains.

O'Donovan's offers a mezcal flight, and Gurney believes it's allowing guests to see the spirit on another level. "Hopefully we can help to shed light on brands like La Luna that are doing things right," he says. Both he and Betancourt are particular fans of La Luna Chino; as the latter explains, "When I drink that juice, I can just see myself sharing a glass with my dad. It's just such a friendly and welcoming mezcal!" Chavez, however, has a warning for his friends at O'Donovan's: "The journey with La Luna is never over, even if you've tried every expression," he points out with a sparkle in his eye. "The next batch will be a little different because of the dynamic terroir."



La Luna's collaboration with BevMo!, La Luna Mezcal Mango y Chile Seco Tequilana, was released in April.



A Match Made in Mexico: EL LUCHADOR TEQUILA COLLECTION

When tequilero David Ravandi first introduced El Luchador Overproof Organic Blanco Tequila in 2013, the industry responded with a show of enthusiasm akin to being ringside at a *lucha libre* match. Given the overwhelming success of the brand, which merges two of Mexico's most revered cultural icons—100% blue agave tequila and the colorful sport of *lucha libre* wrestling—Ravandi is following it up with the debut of his El Luchador Tequila Collection.

Three of the collection's four expressions—El Luchador Blanco Tequila, El Luchador Reposado Tequila, and El Luchador Distill-Proof Blanco Tequila—were released in March; El Luchador Añejo Tequila will launch later this year. All four aim to rival the best in their class, according to Ravandi: "Mexico's history is as intertwined with the traditions of *lucha libre* as it is with the production of tequila," he adds. "I hope to inspire agave-spirit enthusiasts by offering several different El Luchador expressions."

They start with estate-grown agave sourced from Los Altos de Jalisco, where it grows in a combination of limestone and iron-rich volcanic soils at an extremely high altitude of 6,500 feet. "Agave grown at this altitude is stressed and constantly seeking water," Ravandi explains. "The more fibrous it becomes, the more concentrated the flavors in our tequila will be."

With notes of fresh agave and bright citrus culminating in a saline finish, El Luchador Blanco (40% ABV; \$40)



is the anchor of the collection. The go-to for classic cocktails, it serves as the base of the other expressions, each of which can be enjoyed in their purest form as a sipping tequila. Take El Luchador Reposado and Añejo: One of the first tequileros to adopt and perfect the process of aging in French oak, Ravandi rests both in barrels that once held Puligny-Montrachet white wine. "I am always challenged to do something different, and this was the perfect opportunity to evolve El Luchador's agave-forward flavor profile," Ravandi says.

After aging for four to six months, El Luchador Reposado (40% ABV; \$45) is imbued with complexity and finesse. showing notes of roasted agave, bright citrus, and vanilla; a bold mid-palate; and white pepper through the finish. The El Luchador Añejo (40% ABV), meanwhile, will make its debut in late 2022 after aging 14–16 months rather than the prerequisite 12 months. "That additional time in oak adds increasing layers of complexity, with notes of deeply roasted agave, caramelized citrus, and dark vanilla," Ravandi says, adding that he plans to release an El Luchador Extra Añejo within the next three years.

Finally, El Luchador Distill-Proof Tequila (55% ABV; \$50) has high viscosity and a stealth attack. With robust notes of fresh agave, juicy citrus, and a slightly smoky and saline finish, it's ideally suited to serve as a foundation for cocktails or as a digestif.

According to Ravandi, the El Luchador Collection is arriving at a time when the market demand for aged agave spirits is at an all-time high; although blanco tequila remains the spirit of choice for use in a Margarita, consumers have been eagerly trading up to enjoy aged tequila expressions neat or over ice. "When it comes to exceptional flavor and authenticity, El Luchador delivers on both fronts," he says. —Deborah Parker Wong

The estate-grown agave for El Luchador comes from Los Altos de Jalisco, where it grows at a high altitude of 6,500 feet in a combination of limestone and dark, iron-rich volcanic soils.



Integrity and Energy: TEQUILA AMAN

When Gerardo Madrigal, CEO/owner of AMAN Tequila, was 9 years old, his parents took him and his siblings on a trip to their homeland. the Mexican state of Nayarit, where he was immediately fascinated by the blue agave plants that dotted the landscape. Now, decades later, the Los Angeles native is on a quest to build Navarit's first distillery as a permanent home for his brand, which was directly inspired by another passion of his: math, the subject he taught as a professor at East Los Angeles College.

Aman is a name of Muslim origin that means "honest" and "trustworthy"—some of the words Madrigal's students would use to describe him on their professor evaluations, as his "no fail" policy enabled them to feel safe



Gerardo Madrigal, CEO/owner of AMAN Tequila.

and understood in the classroom even when they made mistakes. But eventually he had to leave teaching to dedicate himself full time to launching his brand with the help of master distiller Hector Dávalos and farming agave on several parcels, including one rented to him by his grandfather. "Every agave and every stone is imbued with sacred energy," says Madrigal, adding that through AMAN, "we aim to share with the world the majestic beauty of modern Mexico."

Traces of Madrigal's previous career linger in his new venture, among them the mathematical Lambda symbol in its logo and the name of his Añejo, El Profesor, whose tall, sculptural bottle is further accentuated by its rose-gold metallic gradient—the first of its kind on the market. The bottles for AMAN's Blanco, Reposado, and Rosa Blanco expressions are similarly statuesque, with a geometric-patterned surface and pointed front crest meant to allude to the harvested agaves that yielded the complex spirits housed within.

AMAN is distributed by Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits in California, with plans for expansion into additional states as well as international distribution; for more information, visit *tequilaaman.com* or follow @*tequila_aman* on Instagram. —*Kate Newton*



AMAN Tequila Blanco,

Mexico (\$56) Showing inspired and exotic aromas of jasmine and ginger, this spicy, earthy spirit starts with a clean agave character and a seductive, satiny mouthfeel. Black pep-

per, cumin, and red chile join with clay and wet leaves. **93** —*M.M.*



AMAN Tequila Rosa Blanco, Mexico (\$56)

Made with natural hibiscus, this spirit is pretty in pink with its light-cherry hue. Scents of flowers permeate the glass and are guite disarm-

ing. The streamlined hibiscus notes invite additional flavors of raspberry, vanilla, and peach before white pepper unleashes a gravitas that lingers on the finish. **94** —*M*.*M*.



AMAN Tequila Reposado, Mexico

(\$66) More subdued and less spicy than the Blanco expressions, this woodsy spirit aged six months in American and French oak. Chamomile and

nougat scents lead to a silky mouthfeel, and the palate offers a dot of white pepper but allows the mature agave to show through. Ripe pineapple, biscuit, and fresh garden herbs complete its robust style. **94**—*M.M.*



AMAN Tequila El Profesor Añejo, Mexico

(\$180) Aged a minimum of 12 months in French and American oak, this is an elegant añejo. The statuesque rose-gold bottle is awe-inspiring. Aromas

of stone fruit and cocoa fill the senses, making for a sweet start that gives way to butterscotch and tangerine. Sweet oak spreads warmth on the extended finish. **94** —*M.M.*



Hitting the HEIGHTS

DULCE VIDA EXPANDS ITS OFFERINGS WITH A NEW 100-PROOF LINEUP

by Allyson Reedy

How big can tequila get? If you ask Eric Dopkins, CEO and founder of tequila brand Dulce Vida's parent company, Milestone Brands, the answer is "pretty dang big"—in terms of both the category's explosive growth and the rise in higher-proof offerings, demand for which is resulting in tequilas with increasingly powerful profiles. Venturing beyond Dulce Vida's flagship lineup of organic, 80-proof Blanco, Reposado, and Añejo expressions, Dopkins is aiming to further intrigue tequila fans with 100proof aged expressions.



As tequila has experienced colossal market gains, much of which have been driven by high-end brands, it's outgrown its party-drink reputation, compelling consumers instead to sip it neat and on the rocks. "We believe tequila's growth began with the premiumization of the category," Dopkins says. "New, innovative brands offered more complex taste profiles with softer styles. The quality of the more modern, 100% agave tequilas has improved versus the harsh taste profiles of tequila brands from the past." As a result, "the future looks as if tequila will challenge vodka as the [bestselling] category in spirits in the coming years," he adds. "Consumers have continued to develop their palates with so many different styles of tequila [in a way that's] very similar to the whiskey space. We believe that tequila creates an even more uniquely [characterful] spirit, and consumers are learning the same."

The data backs him up. In 2021, tequila's global market was estimated at \$13 billion, according to market research company IMARC; by 2027, it's expected to surpass \$27 billion. How will that manifest? Through the work of producers that continue to push the spirit forward to reach its full potential. For Dulce Vida, this means creating more aged expressions and using different barrel types to develop one-of-a-kind flavors.

The brand has already done this with its 100-proof Lone Star tequila, a nod to its home base in Austin, Texas. Lone Star is aged in barrels previously containing fellow Texas brand Garrison Brothers' Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey for a minimum of 18 months, giving it a honey hue and caramel aroma. Set to release this summer, Lone Star Extra Añejo will take things a step further by maturing in Garrison Brothers barrels for a full three years.

Dulce Vida also offers a 100-proof Extra Añejo aged five years in Napa Valley Cabernet and Merlot barrels. Besides giving the liquid an eye-catching amber color, the barrels impart spiced notes of oak and a sweet finish. Calling it "one of the most amazing tequilas you have ever tasted," Dopkins notes that he decided to raise the aging time to eight years for the limitededition Ocho Años Extra Añejo, also set



to debut this summer. Only 12 barrels will be released, and each bottle's \$400 price tag will reflect its exclusivity.

"When jumping to higher-proof expressions of tequila, you are getting into more complex taste profiles [with] more agave-forward [character]. There's less dilution than at 80 proof. You're truly showcasing the . . . agave taste as well as the natural flavors added by the barrel aging," Dopkins says. "The [result] is so superior, but many have yet to experience this, which tells us about the potential for growth in the higher-proof tequila segment. As consumers experience the difference, they may never go back to their traditional 80-proof Margarita." In fact, he's so confident in the future of 100-proof tequilas that he trademarked the name "Hundo Margarita" (see recipe).

Even amid this portfolio expansion, Dulce Vida's 70-proof Lime, Grapefruit, and Pineapple Jalapeño flavored tequilas and 25-proof canned sparkling cocktails are still doing their part to bolster their category's popularity; the fact that they're organic and use all-natural flavors as well as 100% Blue Weber agave also appeals to those looking for less-processed options.

So yes, the category still has plenty of room to grow as aged tequilas with higher proofs continue to take off, but the lower-proof and flavored spirits remain fun discoveries. too. "Consumers seem to be on a sort of treasure hunt in their alcohol-beverage journey," Dopkins says. "They're open to new brands and styles more than ever before. We believe consumers' tastes are developing, and their palates are seeking new experiences." It's that demand—and the response of brands like Dulce Vida to it-that just might give us a definitive answer as to how big tequila can get.



Resonance in ROSE

CALIROSA AIMS TO REDEFINE THE TEQUILA CATEGORY

Tequila brand Calirosa was co-founded in 2021 by Maroon 5 frontman Adam Levine, his model wife Behati Prinsloo, and Roberto Real, whose family has been growing agave and running the Tequila Selecto de Amatitán distillery in Jalisco, Mexico, for 80 years. According to Real, they have a saying: Somos familia de campo, arraigados a la tierra como el agave mismo, which translates as "We are a family of farmers rooted to the land, the same way our agaves are." His father. Dionisio Real, built the distillery in 1942 "after working the agave fields for many years," says Real; ever since, his family has been "involved in the business, from growing agave to participating in the production."

Calirosa got underway when Levine and Prinsloo visited Mexico and tried red wine barrel-aged tequila for the first time. Fascinated by the experience, they decided to start a label of their own; after sampling several examples from



The juice from the caramelized agaves is then fermented for more than two days and double-distilled. The heads and tails of the distillate are removed to leave only the heart, which Real says maintains the true aromas and flavors of the agave.

Calirosa Blanco Rosa undergoes a relatively brief maturation process of 30 days in California red-wine barrels to produce a liquid that manifests vegetal and herbaceous components along with



distillers in Jalisco, they singled out the juice from Tequila Selecto as the clear winner. Prinsloo says that the couple "kept going back to Selecto as their story, product quality, and what they stood for really resonated with us."

The tequila is derived from Blue Weber agave that the Reals farm in calcium- and phosphorus-rich luvisolic soils at over 4,100 feet above sea level. It's relatively warm and arid in the town of Amatitán, though drastic diurnal swings stress the plants, resulting in greater character that in turn creates a tequila with a nuanced taste profile. The agaves are harvested when fully matured—after seven to nine years-and the piñas are cooked in oldfashioned brick ovens for 30-40 hours.

subtle notes of red berries and roses from the wine, the devil's share of which naturally tinges the spirit a translucent pink. Calirosa Añejo takes on a darker amber hue after being aged for 18 months: woodier notes abound on the palate along with caramel, vanilla bean, orange zest, and cocoa. As for the Extra Añejo, aged for 36 months, it showcases aromas of butterscotch, leather, and honeycomb, with notes of toffee and spiced nuts on the palate.

The Calirosa team has their sights set on redefining the tequila category. And between Real's time-tested production guality and Levine and Prinsloo's celebrity, they're likely to succeed—so expect to see it on retail shelves and backbars soon and long into the future.



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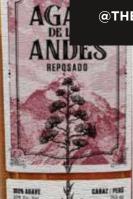


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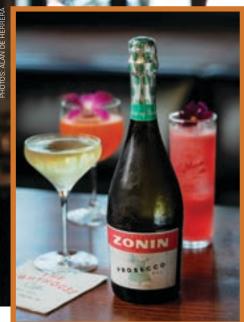


IBAS ALCOHOLICAS EN EXC

bubbles

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Cocktails made with Zonin Prosecco at The Lighthouse Cafe in Hermosa Beach, CA.



Jill Molidor is lead bartender at The Lighthouse Cafe.

A Perfect Fit

FROM PANCAKES TO PARFAIT, **ZONIN** PROSECCO PROVES A VERSATILE PAIRING PARTNER

by Marci Symington

Some 2,500 miles apart on opposite shores, at two different beachfront restaurants, Zonin is proving that its Prosecco is indeed, in the words of Zonin1821 vice president Francesco Zonin, "perfect for all occasions." Whether you are pairing a glass with sashimi on the Atlantic coast or sipping at leisure while watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean at an iconic California venue, this versatile, foodfriendly sparkling wine exemplifies *la dolce vita*.

SIPS, SIGHTS, AND SOUNDS AT THE LIGHTHOUSE CAFE

A Hermosa Beach fixture since the 1940s (it was even featured in the 2016 movie musical *La La Land*), The Lighthouse Cafe reopened in March 2021 under new ownership. Committed to hosting live jazz performances every day of the week from open to close, The Lighthouse Cafe is also dedicated to a new food and drink program that lives up to its status as a local institution.

Though the American menu is concise, with a selection of just a few entrees at both brunch and dinner, lead bartender Jill Molidor assures that "there is something for everyone at the Lighthouse; everyone will find something that they love and come back again and again for"—along with cocktails that feature housemade syrups and fresh-squeezed juices. "We just try to keep it authentic and unique to our setting and culture," says Molidor.

Zonin plays a leading role in this context as a handy pairing at all hours. Molidor describes the brunch menu as "no frills, with all the hard hitters" from pancakes and breakfast burritos to fried eggs and avocado toast; she especially recommends the Prosecco with the buttermilk pancakes, explaining, "I like the idea of sparkling with carbs in the morning, and the fruitiness in Zonin pairs well with the raspberry maple syrup and fruit on the pancakes."

But she also gladly serves it with avocado toast. "It is so clean, crisp, and balanced that it can go with something sweet or savory," she explains. In this case, "it works because the flavor profiles of Zonin go well... with the acidity in avocado toast."





Zonin Prosecco can pair with something as light as sashimi or as hearty as lamb chops.

And the bubbles aren't limited to brunch. Noting that The Lighthouse's bestselling item is the buttermilk-fried chicken sandwich, Molidor says she often suggests pairing it with a glass of Zonin to balance the richness of the batter and the spice in the Tabasco mayonnaise. In fact, the bar goes through two to three cases a week of Zonin while also showcasing it in two house cocktails: the Funny Valentine with vodka, raspberries, and lemon and the Cool Cat with Aperol; Green Chartreuse; and grapefruit, lemon, and orange juices. "They taste great, and they look great," she asserts. "If I send one Funny Valentine out to a table . . . then I am making 20 for the entire restaurant."

THE EDIBLE EXTRAVAGANCE **OF ETARU**

Twenty minutes north of Miami and steps from the white sands of Hallandale Beach, Zonin is also a favorite at ETARU, a contemporary Japanese spot co-founded by German-born chef Rainer Becker, known for London restaurants Zuma and Roka.

ETARU's menu reflects its lively vibe, as diners are encouraged to share a variety of dishes from sushi and sashimi to grilled items from the robata that is the centerpiece of the restaurant. "What I like about the Zonin Prosecco is that it pairs well with everything from the start of lunch and/or dinner all the way to the end," explains general manager Nigel Marumahoko.

For example. Marumahoko serves Zonin with both the signature kampachi sashimi appetizer and a lamb chop entree. The sashimi is a



beautiful presentation of thinly sliced yellowtail imported from Japan in a yuzu-truffle dressing, accompanied by a mizuna salad, pickled sweet potato, and carrots. "The yuzu aspect of the sashimi pairs well with the green-apple [notes] that you get from the Prosecco," says Marumahoko. "The lightness of the fish, coupled with the hint of spice from the mizuna, the citrus in the vuzu, the green apple in the Zonin, and the truffle-which makes the whole experience feel luxurious—all help to open your palate." In line with Italian tradition, Marumahoko adds that a glass of Prosecco is a festive aperitivo. "When a quest comes for dinner. I love to start them off with a glass of bubbles," he says. "Then starting the meal with this appetizer-style dish is a nod to Italy

with the raw, or crudo, aspect that goes very well with Zonin."

As for the lamb, four cutlets imported from New Zealand are marinated 24-48 hours in Korean gochujang paste, then grilled and served with a side of cucumbers in a sesame paste. "What I find when I add the Prosecco with the lamb together is that it makes the flavors of the lamb and the gochujang paste stand out," Marumahoko says. "I love . . . the sweetness of the lamb, and the overall flavor profile of the Prosecco accentuates [that]." To round out the meal, he suggests pairing Zonin with ETARU's smoked coconut-and-passion fruit parfait.

From west to east and brunch to dessert, Zonin Prosecco makes a compelling match for any meal, anywhere.

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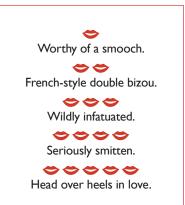
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Publisher's



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



WINES



Cycles Gladiator 2019 Pinot Noir, California (\$13) Aromas of rhubarb, earth, and cocoa glimmer on the nose before a down-quilt

texture envelops fresh strawberry and Queen Anne cherry on the palate. Red tea is spiced with cinnamon and dried heather. **89**

WINE HOOLIGANS



Leese-Fitch 2019 Pinot Noir,

California (\$15) A creative blend of 10% Barbera, 5% Petite Sirah, 3% Merlot, and 2% Tempranillo was added to this Pinot Noir, with most of the fruit sourced from the Lodi and Clarksburg AVAs; it aged for ten months in (30% new) French, Hungarian, and American oak. Cinnamonspiced cherry comes through on

the nose and palate. An earthy core reveals notes of bright cranberry and a hint of sage as toasted oak, toffee, and pomegranate lend an edge. The perky, peppered finish rides on smooth tannins. **90**

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS



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Intipalka 2021
Tannat, Valle

del Sol, Peru (\$13) Concentrated flavors of boysenberry preserves dusted with nutmeg and cinnamon are joined by round and silky tannins. Blue and purple fruit washes across the mouth with cream and raisin cookie. Delicious. 92 VIÑAS QUEIROLO





00000

Murrieta's Well 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Livermore Valley (\$18) The slick mouthfeel with an edge of slate offers crispness, but as steely as this wine is, there's a creamy character here that's undeniable. This complex texture stirs the senses as citrus blossom, nut meat, kiwi sorbet. and a hint of salinity keep the

palate fresh and full of character. 95 WENTE FAMILY ESTATE

000

Cline Cellars 2020 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$16) Dried wildflowers surround a strawberry patch with restrained notes of tilled soil and sandalwood in this bright and sparky Pinot Noir, made with grapes from the cool, foggy Petaluma Gap near the Pacific. White-peppered black cherry on the finish leaves a spicy, lasting trace. 91



000 Pulpo Albariño, Rías

Baixas, Galicia, Spain (\$17) This stainless steel-fermented white offers notes of linen and white pear along with a floral array of lemon blossom and honeysuckle. Clean and crisp, with a salty mineral finish. 91

FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS



Viña Albali 2014 Gran

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Reserva, Valdepeñas, Spain (\$17) Leather and earth. tobacco and oak. herbal tones and a touch of black olive: This Tempranillo, which aged in barrel for at least 18 months followed by three to six years in bottle, leans into its savoriness with tannic grip while presenting black plum

and dark berries amid a sprinkling of pepper and cranberry. 92

FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS



000 Wente Vineyards 2020 **Riverbank Riesling**,

Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$18) White flowers bloom on an unctuous platform alongside succulent, juicy notes of pear and apricot. Bright and crisp, with high acidity and a lush finish of apple pie. 92

WENTE FAMILY ESTATE

00



Tejo, Portugal (\$18) In this blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Aragonez, we found tart, bright red fruit with dry, chalky tannins. Mulberry and allspice light up the glass along with headier notes of coffee bean and graphite. As it opens up, the fruit gets darker and a prickly sensation of white pep-

per startles the palate. 90 CONCURRENT IMPORTS

000

Old Merelo 2020 Single Vineyard

Merlot, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$18) Aromas of briar and mulberry lead to ripe cherry and mocha-dipped strawberry. Sweet tobacco and tea tannins lift the veil from the juicy palate before red licorice comes in midway and powdered cocoa and violets appear on the extended finish. 92SANTA RITA

000 Garzón 2020 Cabernet Franc Reserva, Uruguay (\$20) The vineyard sources for this wine are surrounded by rocky soils and granite boulders a mere 11 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Following a floral entrance of lavender and jasmine, lean notes of slate and espresso take center stage. Plum skin and dark choco-

late-covered raisins take hold with chewy tannins. 92

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINE & SPIRITS



Three Finger Jack 2019 East Side Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi (\$20) Ripe, sweet, and illuminated with juicy black cherry and a deep core of espresso and cedar. Black pepper revives the generous fruit before dark plum is concentrated on the long finish. 91

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DELICATO FAMILY WINES



Highway 12 2019 SRB Sonoma Red Blend, Sonoma County (\$20) Roasted coffee, toffee, and dark chocolate all point to the toasty oak influence on this wine's flavors and aromatics.Texturally graceful yet robust and shadowed, with notes of ripe blackberry that are Port-like in their density and sweetness. An earthy finish

completes the complex cycle. 91



OBERON

000 Ricudda 2019 Chianti

Classico DOCG, Tuscany, Italy (\$24) This certified organic Sangiovese aged in cement tanks and small Tuscan oak barrels for 12 months before resting in bottle for three months. Salted cherry and bright acidity ready the palate for savory balsamic and tobacco. Cinnamon and white

pepper season cedar and red plum on the finish. 91

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD

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Oberon 2019 Merlot,

Napa Valley (\$25) Intense notes of pomegranate, cherry, and pipe tobacco are compelling on the nose and palate

of this easy-drinking wine with smooth tannins.Tart strawberry and red plum add to its character, followed by heather and white pepper. 92

FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS





Publisher's PICKS

000

Raeburn 2020 Pinot Noir, Russian **River Valley, Sonoma County (\$25)** Despite the wildfires in Northern California that impacted this vintage, the Raeburn winemaking team was able to deliver a fresh and fruity red. Aged 11 months in (25% new) French oak, it begins with aromas of raspberry and rose petal. Delicate flavors of salted strawberry usher in a silky mouthfeel as well as an accent of herbes de Provence. Feather-light on the palate, with intricate, lacy notes of dried flowers and white pepper preceding a finish of oak and hazelnut. 92



0000 Gehricke 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma

County (\$29) The density of this Pinot Noir nurtures dark cherry, tomato leaf, and red tea. Its round, juicy character sends spiced sandalwood and cinnamon into a pool of boysenberry compote. The abundance of fruit and

underlying earthiness add more layers to this stunner 93

3 BADGE ENOLOGY

PURPLE BRANDS 0000

Cabernario 2019 Special Selection

Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$30) Meaty notes of espresso, cigar leaf, and dark plum resonate with black pepper and anise. Spiced cedar paves a path for lush tannins and a refined mouthfeel. Deep, brooding, and delicious. 93

0000

SANTA RITA



ENEGAD

0000 Boën 2020 Pinot Noir,

California (\$25) Dark and dense, with a perfume of clove and black cherry, this impressive wine offers innate depth. Winemaker loe Wagner's idea of sourcing from three appellations—Russian River Valley (45%), Santa Lucia Highlands (26%), and Santa Maria Valley (29%)—proved

to be a successful endeavor, yielding a wine of complex flavor, aromatics, and texture. Brown-sugared beet, dark chocolate, black plum, and heather are well integrated within the down-pillow mouthfeel and determined structure. It's an exciting, heady red that holds its power in check. 93

COPPER CANE WINES & PROVISIONS



Ancient Peaks 2019 Ren-

egade, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$26) A spectacular vintage for this blend of 57% Syrah, 33% Petit Verdot, and 10% Malbec: While bold and concentrated, it has a satiny mouthfeel, filled with jammy notes of blackberry and pomegranate. Savory flavors of sweet tobacco and Luxardo

cherry join floral tones in lifting the profile into a crescendo of plush pleasure. 93



Chalk Hill 2020 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$33) There's a glistening, jewel-like quality to this crisp, bright, and stunning white blended with Sauvignon Gris

and Sauvignon Musqué. Fresh notes of juicy peach and melon are joined by mandarin orange, which brings a sweetness to

the remarkable profile. Aged 41% in stainless steel and 59% in (13% new) French oak for seven months, with biweekly bâttonage for three months 93



0000 Quilt 2020 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$45) Spiced apple pie and white-peppered lemon tart spread over the palate of this clean and lean wine, joined by dynamic acidity and sensational floral tones. 93

COPPER CANE WINES & PROVISIONS





0000 eStCru 2019 Staring at the Sun Carignan, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$28) Mouth-coating, chalky tannins are blessed with ripe cherry, vanilla, and broad strokes of beetroot and rhubarb. Gamey and earthy aromas and flavors persist on a subtle scale; venison marinated in soy sauce lingers in the air. White pepper, clove, sweet tobacco, and high acidity activate the amazing food-pairing abilities of this wine, which aged 12 months in French oak. Serve slightly chilled. 94



Smith-Madrone 2018 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$45) Dry-farmed fruit from estate vineyards atop Spring Mountain aged nine months in (55% new) French oak. Vanilla nougat and lemon cream are discernible, as are apricot notes on the middle of the palate. Leesy

and sensual, with vibrant star fruit imparting crispness. A gorgeous, glossy, and elegant vintage. **94**



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Sanctuary 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$40) This wine was fermented in stainless steel with two pumpovers per day and then saw extended maceration on the skins post primary fermentation; aged in (80% new) French oak for 22 months, it displays a united front of powdery tannins, coffee bean, plum skin, and soil. These notes find a haven in the broad texture, unmasking its denseness with a flow of blackberry and black cherry on the finish. 95

FETZER VINEYARDS



Aridus 2019 Graciano, Cochise County, Arizona (\$46) From Alba Vineyards on the high-elevation Willcox Bench in Southern Arizona, this stunning Graciano offers succulent red and blue berries in dark chocolate syrup along with wildflowers and tempered, savory notes of Worcestershire, cinnamon,

and black olive. Plush tannins interact with spiced cedar to end things on a deliciously high note. 93

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Craggy Range 2018 Pinot Noir, Te Muna Road Vineyard, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$47) Fermented with indigenous yeast, this French oak–aged red exudes aromas of wet leaves, pomegranate, and allspice. While strawberry and mulberry are tart and ripe, the taste of soil is evident.

The acidity shows verve, contributing to an overall juicy character that makes for a desirable sipper: ${\bf 93}$

KOBRAND

Cellars by Robert Lloyd 2019 Pinot Noir,

Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$50) The carmine hue is deep and inviting, as are the sensual scents of heather and woodsy forest. The full and generous palate is lathered with huckleberry and dark chocolate–covered coffee bean; layers of tilled soil

and dried flowers keep it exciting and complex. Brown sugar and cinnamon go deep on the finish. $\mathbf{94}$

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Intipalka 2019 Gran Reserva, Valle del Sol, Peru (\$49) Grilled meat, spiced cedar, and mountain brush are just some of the mysterious, deep, and dense flavors present in this dynamic blend of 45% Malbec, 25% Tannat, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Petit Verdot. Coffee

bean meets dark plum and blackberry washed in soy sauce on a satiny path. **94**

VIÑAS QUEIROLO

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Viña Meín 2019 O Gran Meín, Ri-

beiro, Spain (\$50) Indigenous grapes like Treixadura, Torrontés, Albariño, Loureira, and Godello make this white blend extra-special. A nutty quality is well framed by the saltiness of wet stone, and lively notes of lemon cookie and buttercup shine. Beautifully crafted, with keen acidity and an unctuous mouthfeel. **93**

ALMA CARRAOVEJAS

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St. Francis 2019 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$50) High-elevation vineyards on the slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains produced the fruit for this full-bodied red, which aged 20 months in French oak. Creamy and sumptuous, with notes of dark cherry and melted brown sugar. Spiced sandalwood, blackberry, and cassis intertwine with dark chocolate to create a luxurious mouthfeel. 94

KOBRAND

Publisher's **PICKS**



Image: Constraint of the second sec

Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$55) Winemaker Joseph Wagner's expert touch brings layered notes of leather, dark chocolate, espresso, and blackberry to this expressive, concentrated red. As the liquid washes across the palate, a patchwork of earth, dark fruit, and slate melds with the well-

constructed body. 94

COPPER CANE WINES & PROVISIONS



Lake Sonoma Winery 2018 Boar's Blood Red Blend, Sonoma County (\$60) This proprietary blend of 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Petit Sirah, 11% Barbera, 5% Sangiovese, and 2% Malbec aged 33 months in French and neutral oak; it's dense and chewy, with notes of boysenberry-soaked fudge

surrounded by silky tannins. Powdered plum skin dries the palate, only to be drenched in cherry liqueur. Black pepper and earth are cohorts on the lengthy finish. **94**

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LangeTwins 2017 Centennial Zinfandel, Lodi (\$65) This American oak-aged Zin, of which only ten barrels were made, hits a striking pose: Expressive and bright, it offers charismatic notes of black coffee, dark chocolate, cigar leaf, and dried heather. Although robust at 15% ABV, the wine remains juicy and vibrant, with a hint of candied plum that lends a sweeter tone, while a touch of sage on the generous black fruit lends a savory quality to the finish. 94

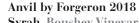


Paraduxx 2018 Candlestick Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$62) Cool-climate Syrah (71%) from Hudson Vineyard was blended with singlevineyard Grenache (29%) from Stout Vineyard. Black-peppered dark cherry is surrounded by brush as grainy tannins expand to create a robust personality. Violets and clove come in mid-

way, sweetened by pomegranate and plum, before the wine finishes with blackberry liqueur and mocha latte. **93**

THE DUCKHORN PORTFOLIO

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Syrah, Boushey Vineyard, Yakima Valley, Washington (\$65) Broad and generous, with tannins that go slick on the palate alongside licorice and violets. A burst of plum and a litany of sage and cured meats define the precision of this Rhône-style red. 93



DAVIES.

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Calla Lily 2017 Ultimate Cabernet Sauvignon,

Napa Valley (\$65) This dynamic red was crafted by winemaker Cary Gott with grapes from an estate on the eastern side of Howell Mountain at an elevation of over 800 feet. Jasmine, rose, and lilac sprout in a garden of joy enveloped by dark chocolate.

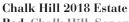
Gobby red cherry and plum garnish the palate as white pepper seasons cedar. The supple tannins are graceful and the wine, as deep as it goes, remains bright. 95

Davies Vineyards 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Napa Valley (\$70) Grapes were sourced from seven sites—from valley floors to the Mayacamas and Vaca mountains—to produce the eighth vintage of this wine; blended with 15% Malbec, 3% Petit Verdot, and 1% Cabernet Franc, it aged 21 months in

(65% new) French oak, and one can pick up the sweetness these barrels imparted in the aromas and flavors. Mouth-filling, succulent notes of strawberry, vanilla, and maple meld with a dense, creamy texture and round tannins. Blueberry preserves and licorice coat the tongue, which is further lathered with rich milk chocolate. **94**

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Red, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$70) Aged 21 months in (61% new) French oak, this dynamic, refined, and texturally thrilling blend of 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Malbec, 10% Petit Verdot, and 2% Carménère opens with scents of red cherry, boysenberry, and coffee. Melting

dark chocolate defines the grainy mouthfeel as powdered plum-skin tannins take hold. Winemaker Courtney Foley's talented handiwork results in a well-built engine that purrs to the finish. **95**





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Craggy Range 2019 Sophia, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$76) Famed Australian wine writer James Halliday refers to this cool growing region, which offers just enough warmth for the vines to ripen, as a sacred site for the gravelly soils that lend it its name, among other fac-

tors. This elegant blend of 60% Merlot, 26% Cabernet Franc, and 14% Cabernet Sauvignon is Bordeaux-like in style, with notes of coffee-kissed violets that lend a deep, satiny mouthfeel. Cinnamon and caramel aromas translate to the palate, and a chalky lick of wet stone conveys earthy elegance. **95**

KOBRAND



Silverado Vineyards 2018 GEO Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$78) The fruit for this wine, which aged 18 months in French, American, and Hungarian oak (43% new), is from the winery's Mt. George Vineyard in southeastern Napa Valley, where the cooler climate and gravelly volcanic soils add

depth to its eloquent character: The name GEO is derived from not only this home vineyard but the root word for earth. The sweet, mineral-based aromas of the terroir are unmasked along with alluring scents of dark chocolate and black cherry. Intense flavors of black olive and roasted coffee are gentled by a creamy roundness. Luscious from start to finish. **95**



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Trinité Estate 2016 Acaibo, Sonoma County (\$80) Trinité Estate in Sonoma County's Chalk Hill appellation is run by Claire and Gonzague Lurton, owners of three Grand Crus Classés in Margaux and Pauillac. Made with fruit grown on clay and volcanic soils, the blend of 72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot, and

10% Cabernet Franc aged 16 months in French oak barrels. Joined by chalky tannins, dried violets, licorice, and orange peel make for extravagant aromas and flavors. Dark chocolate-covered cherry rises from the earth, creating a sweet and voluptuous effect on the palate. **95**



Paraduxx 2018 Rector Creek Vineyard Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$85) A charming duo of 60% Rector Creek Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% estate Zinfandel aged 18 months in (60% new) French oak. Ripe, juicy blackberry gets a punch of black pepper and a coating of heather: Sweet cherry and cocoa dip into a

streamlined array of vanilla and clove. **94** THE DUCKHORN PORTFOLIO

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Bien Nacido Estate 2019 The XO Syrah, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$100) This generous, elegant Californiameets-Côte-Rotie showpiece is named for Miller family patriarch Robert Miller, who served a 30-year naval career as an XO (executive officer) from Pearl Harbor to Vietnam.

Showing balanced acidity, a satiny mouthfeel, and tremendously expressive fruit, the wine is made with grapes from California's first cool-climate Syrah block within one of the most prestigious vineyard sites in the world. Grilled meat, leather, plum, violets, and roasted coffee combine to create a pleasurable flavor profile as walnut tannins seasoned with tobacco and olive lick the palate. **96** MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



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Acumen 2019 Peak Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak, Napa Valley (\$115) Atlas Peak is cooler than Napa Valley's other mountain AVAs, with a wide diurnal swing; grapes sourced from the winery's Edcora and Attelas sites enjoy longer hang times for ripening. Elegance ensues even as tannins hold tight, but once they loosen up, an overture of blackberry, sage, and coffee bean plays softly and surely. On those building blocks, juicy, meaty fruit ascends. 96

Publisher's PICKS



⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ Duckhorn Vineyards 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Patzimaro Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$105) Cabernet Sauvignon (84%), Merlot (14%), and Cab Franc (2%) were sourced from the winery's St. Helena estate vineyard at the base of Spring Mountain. Aged 18 months in (85% new)

French oak, this is a woodsy wine, with black olive and herbal accents of sage and dried lavender. Dense and concentrated, elevated and elegant, with a skyscraper-like structure. **94**



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Shafer 2019 One Point Five, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$110) Just released in February, this youthful blend of 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 3% Malbec, and 2% Petit Verdot aged 20 months in new French oak. At 15.3% ABV, it's well developed, with a satiny mouthfeel and a

silky, elegant entry that speaks of chocolate and tilled soil. As it continues to romance the palate, hints of roasted coffee bean, blackberry, and slate emerge on tiptoe. 95

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Castiel Estate 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$175) Made by the talented hands of winemaker Celia Welch with fruit from one of Napa Valley's most arresting mountain AVAs, this showpiece—aged 20 months in (70% new) French oak—is still in its youth but already offers great balance and structure. Aromas of mocha, cedar, and nutmeg permeate the glass. Opulent and statuesque, it offers blue and purple berries seasoned with garden herbs. Chalky tannins become creamier as the wine opens up, while licorice, cigar leaf, balsamic, and black olive round out the focused finish. 95

SPIRITS



Elvis Tennessee Straight

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Whiskey, USA (\$50) Named for the king of rock 'n' roll, this 90-proof Tennessee straight whiskey warmed our souls with notes of brownsugared walnut, cigar leaf, banana, and peach nectar as well as an engaging flow of moderately sweet cereal grain and caramel. 92

GRAIN & BARREL SPIRITS

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Inspiro Tequila Luna Blanco, Mexico (\$53) From a women-owned and -operated brand established by Mara Smith, this zero-sugar, zero-carb, and gluten-free spirit shows flavors of powdered marshmallow and fresh agave. Floral notes of jasmine and spearmint impart brightness within a pleasant mouthfeel. Ripe pineapple and a dash of white pepper linger on the finish. Inviting, lively, and clean. **95**



10th Street STR Single Malt American Whisky,

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USA (\$65) From the producer named California Whiskey Distillery of the Year at the 2021 New York International Spirits Competition, this 92-proof small-production spirit from San Jose also won a double gold medal at the 2020 San Francisco World

Spirits Competition. Made with domestic two-row malted barley and double-distilled in copper pot stills, it represents a marriage in style between Scotch and American whiskey. Aromas of nutmeg and peach lead to a zap of black-peppered cedar on the palate, where stone fruit and honeyed cherry are set against a backdrop of jasmine and ginger with caramel topping. Extended flavors of mandarin orange fold into a fruit-salad finish. **96**



Courage & Conviction Cuvée Cask American Single Malt Whisky, USA (\$120) Distilled and bottled at cask strength in the Blue Ridge Mountains, this spirit aged in used European redwine casks; after the wine was removed.

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the casks were broken down and their interiors shaved, re-toasted, and re-charred to energize the wood sugars before they were reassembled. Aromas of cinnamon and walnut go deep before a warmth spreads on the palate, where the high proof is well controlled, leaving a trace of orange peel and honeyed peach. The finish strikes a balance between power and fruity elegance with a hint of black pepper and vanilla wafer. **96**

VIRGINIA DISTILLERY CO.

A Salute to Ukraine

ControlControlPristine Vodka.

Ukraine (\$29) This balanced and creamy 80-proof spirit is distinctively rich, with sweet melon and a dash of black pepper. Lingering spice on the tongue is gentled by notes of powdered cocoa. Beautifully balanced and dynamic. 95 /2 TOVTRY IMPORTING



Publisher's PICKS Extra

A Testament to Arizona Wine Country

Family-owned Merkin Vineyards and

Caduceus Cellars produce spectacular high-elevation wines in an underground "bunker" in Arizona wine country, with a focus on French, Italian, and Spanish varieties.

While Merkin's wines are primarily made from grapes grown at an elevation of 4,300 feet in the southern part of the state, Caduceus' fruit is sourced from 110 estate vineyards across both Northern and Southern Arizona. The wines are distributed in 24 states. We recently visited the brands' wonderful tasting room and restaurant in Scottsdale; read on for our reviews.



Merkin Vineyards 2020 Chupacabra, Willcox, Arizona (\$29) This blend of 35% Grenache, 35% Syrah, and 30% Mourvèdre swept us off our feet—and at this price, we can afford a lot of sweeping. Bright and fragrant with garrigue and salty strawberry, the youthful beauty takes its name from that of a mythical Latin American creature, which translates as "goat sucker." Aged 11 months in oak to exude notes of cigar leaf and beetroot plus lively acidity in a Crozes-Hermitage profile, it's deserving of a more flattering name. **94**

Caduceus 2018 Airavata, Jerome, Arizona (\$56) Garnacha from a vineyard in Cornville in Northern Arizona was picked early and fermented whole cluster with wild yeast to create this red, which aged in large concrete eggs. Offering savory aromas of coffee and fig, it shows a backbone of dark plum and dried wildflowers. Rich and spicy, with a texturally appealing caress of dark chocolate–mint and rhubarb. 93

Caduceus 2018 Primer Paso, Jerome, Arizona (\$56) This Southwestern version of a Côte-Rôtie with 85% Syrah, 10% Durif, and 5% Malvasia Bianco (replacing Viognier) aged 18 months in French casks and puncheons. It's deep and brooding, with a plush texture and flavors of grilled meat, tobacco, spiced plum, and black pepper. Garrigue emerges toward the finish. **95**

Situated at an elevation of 4,900 feet in Jerome, AZ, the Judith Block comprises a combination of limestone, volcanic, and sedimentary rock.



The Best of Western Europe

For the past month or two, we put aside our Napa Cabs and Oregon Pinots to dedicate some time to Old World wines. Here are some of the outstanding selections we tasted.

Aveleda 2019 Loureiro &

Alvarinho, Vinho Verde, Portugal (\$14) This stony, edgy, and focused white made with 70% Loureiro and 30% Alvarinho shows notes of pine nut, honeyed Bosc pear, lemon sorbet, and oregano. Minerality chimes in to energize the palate, which is brisk from the start and finishes with the keen saltiness of slate. 92

Hugl 2021 Zweigelt Rosé,

Austria (\$15) Zweigelt is the most widely planted variety in Austria, and this 100% stainless steel-fermented version is delicate, with crackling acidity. Oregano-kissed strawberry and oyster-shell minerality make for a dry and scrubby mouthfeel. The crisp, refreshing finish offers an array of ideas for food pairing, **91**



Louis Jadot 2020 Bour-

gogne Blanc, France (\$19) This white Burgundy offers classic aromas of buttered popcorn and crème brûlée. While toasty oak plays a major role in leading a parade of nougat, vanilla cookie, baked apple, and lemon blossom, it's clean and pure, with enough acidity to keep it in top gear. 91

KOBRAND

Conde Vimioso 2019 Sommelier Edition Vinho Tinto, Tejo, Portugal (\$22) A sensual and silky blend of Aragonês, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Syrah aged 12 months in new and used French oak. Sandalwood aromas and vibrant flavors of wildflowers, dark plum, and chocolate are surrounded by whispers of balsamic and rhubarb. 92

CONCURRENT WINES

Medici Ermete NV Quercioli Reggiano Dry Lambrusco DOC, Italy (\$13) A blend of Lambrusco Salamino and Lambrusco Marani with aromas of sugared violets, fine acidity, and flavors of beet and pomegranate surrounding an earthy core. When the soft bubbles subside, they leave behind a dry and chalky mouthfeel. 90 KOBRAND



Calmel & Joseph 2021 Villa Blanche Chardonnay, Pays d'Oc IGP, France (\$25) From France's southern coast, this scintillating Chardonnay is grown on volcanic limestone soils that show in its core of edgy, salty minerality. Aromas of lemon sorbet and pineapple lead to a creamy, unctuous mouthfeel and flavors of lemon meringue with lime zest, honeyed peach, and pine nut. 91

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Leindl 2020 Grüner Veltliner, Langenlois, Kamptal, Austria (\$26) The hilly area of Langenlois is one of the historical and cultural centers of the Kamptal region. Aromas of lemon tart reflect on the palate, intersecting with bright, crackling acidity; a stony mouthfeel; and a hint of meringue, green apple, and Bartlett pear. 92

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.

Guinigi 2018 Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG, Tus-

cany, Italy (\$28) Ten percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot combine with Sangiovese in this fragrant and juicy riserva. Balsamic-covered black cherry and black olive leave a lasting impression before white pepper and mulberry spice up the finish with a hint of blacktea astringency. 93



3 BADGE ENOLOGY

Fefinanes 2020 Albariño, Rías Baixas, Galicia, Spain (\$29) This stainless steelfermented white is youthful yet shows great grace through its texturally provocative mouthfeel. A whirlpool of apricot, peach, melon, and honeyed pineapple glides across the palate, mixing with salty slate. 93KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.

Condado de Oriza 2014 Gran Reserva. Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$40) Chalky tannins and notes of dark chocolate-covered raisin coat the mouth. The fruit is ripe and quite dark, showing almost Port-like concentration along with Old World acidity. Briar and beetroot meld with a dynamic finish of spiced cedar. 94 FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS



ALMA CARRAOVEJAS

Pago de Carraovejas 2019,

Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$55) A thrilling blend of 93% Tempranillo, 4% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 3% Merlot aged 12 months in French and American oak and an additional 12 months in bottle. Fragrant from start to finish, it delivers notes of violets, purple plum, and sandalwood and a magnificent mouthfeel defined by the tension between

slate-driven tannins and juicy, succulent fruit. Dark chocolate and earth strike a pose and linger for an extended time. 96

ALMA CARRAOVEJAS

Leindl 2020 Ried Heiligen-

stein Riesling, Kamptal, Austria (\$66) Aged on the lees for 12 months in stainless steel, this wine saw no oak. Its original name, Hellenstein ("hell stone") was fitting, as the vineyards are on a mountain where the "sun burns like hell," according to the winery. It was later renamed Heiligenstein ("holy rock"), which refers to

a geological formation of desert sandstone with volcanic matter. In addition to an earthy slate character, it offers scents and flavors of honeyed apricot, salty pear, and stone-fruit pith. 94

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.

Calmel & Joseph 2018 La

Madone, AOP Corbières. Languedoc, France (\$90) From the entry of chalky, chewy tannins to a flavor profile of garrigue, espresso, and grilled meat, there lies a profound depth in this intense and eloquent blend of 65% Grenache and 35% Syrah. As it opens up and expands minute by minute, an array of bold, dynamic purple fruit and

black tea leaves a trace on the palate. Sweet herbal notes of basil and oregano combine with great acid structure to temper the sturdy, slate-like mouthfeel, 95

Champagne Georges Cartier NV Brut Tradition Champagne, France (\$56)

ragon. 94

Ossian Vides v Vinos 2019 Verdejo,

Castilla y León, Spain (\$50) Fruit from

100-year-old vines spent nine months on the

lees to create a creamy, nutty profile. Flavors

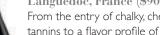
and aromas of pear and peach sharpen their

tune with jicama and a salty mineral thread.

Bright and well seasoned with basil and tar-

Lemon drop and buttercup combine with lime sorbet in this blend of Pinot Noir. Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay. Bubbles burst with ease as the mineral tone keeps the palate cleansed. 93

KYSELA PERE ET FILS. LTD



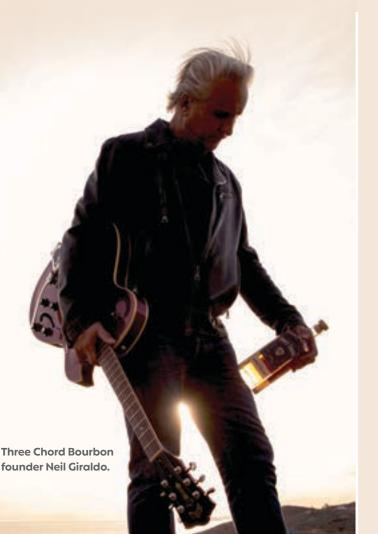


Up Beat

THREE CHORD BOURBON HAS A RHYTHM ALL ITS OWN

Founded by Grammy Award–winning guitar player, producer, playwright, and composer Neil Giraldo, Three Chord was named in homage to the blues, which distiller Ari Sussman notes was the basis for the evolution of rock 'n' roll. He and Giraldo have orchestrated seven different expressions for their portfolio, including the melodious liquid quartet we've reviewed here.





Three Chord Blended Bourbon Whiskey, USA

Clocking in at 81 proof, the brand's introductory expression is a blend of components from Tennessee, Indiana, and Kentucky. Scents of cinnamon-raisin toast, pecan, and baked apple are appetizing. As sultry as it is energetic, the liquid glides across the palate as spiced sandalwood, biscuit, dark cherry, and dried herbs reveal a bonanza of flavor. Woodsy notes accelerate on the peppery finish. **93**

Three Chord Strange Collaboration Kentucky

Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA This blend of two-year-old and five-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon is finished in Pinot Noir barrels from Sta. Rita Hills. Aromas of maple syrup and peach lead to arresting notes of peppered cedar atop a well-tuned undercurrent of coconut, butterscotch, and apricot. Pepper diminishes on the texturally inviting palate as oak-laden stone fruit unmasks to reveal power and grace. 99 proof. **94**

Three Chord Tennessee Straight Whiskey, USA

Complex and layered, this 85-proof spirit has a well-mannered yet robust personality. Its perfume of allspice, nutmeg, and pekoe tea is akin to the scents of the winter holidays. A similarly spicy entry ensues with notes of tobacco, petrol, and honeyed banana-nut bread before a stream of mouth-drying walnut tannins keeps pace with cherry-bark richness. **94**

Three Chord Rye Whiskey, USA Gorgeous aromas of jasmine, pekoe tea, fig, and raisin are soft-spoken yet well composed. The exquisite entry is wrapped in a sheath of cream soda, caramel apple, oatmeal, and pine nut. At 95 proof, the liquid doesn't overload the palate; its black-pepper notes don't enter until midway, whereupon it expands into a bath of peach and cherry on the opulent finish. **97**

Brecon Estate proprietor/ winemaker Damian Grindley.

Paso Present and Future

BRECON ESTATE IS

A STAR FROM THE ADELAIDA DISTRICT OF PASO ROBLES

Winemaker Damian Grindley is

creating beauty in the form of oldvine Cabernet Sauvignon from the outcropped limestone hillsides of Paso Robles' Adelaida District. Of Australian-Welsh heritage, Grindley also grows Cab Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec from Cahors, and Tannat on his estate, which is mostly dry farmed. But the winery's identity is not limited to that: "For us, we don't want to figure out, 'Are we a Bordeaux house, [a producer of] Rhône blends, or [an] Old World winery?' We want to be known as a Paso winery and, in 30-40 years, [known] for what Paso Robles will come to be known [for], whether it's Syrah or Cab or even Albariño," he says.

We discovered Brecon Estate several years ago and want to keep the momentum going with these reviews, as this rising star surely will continue to add to the region's greatness in its future.

Brecon Estate 2019 Malbec, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$67) Malbec

is staking a claim for high praise in Paso; this was one of the first-and the best—examples that caught our attention a year ago. The 2019 is its second vintage and a stellar demonstration of how this grape excels in Adelaida's calcareous



soils. Clones from both Cahors and Mendoza serve as alchemist's tools for winemaker Damian Grindley, who notes, "[The grape] comes with tiny berries and great promise." His addition of 3% Tannat offers more of that French accent to this fragrant red, whose aromas of cigar leaf and

spiced with cinnamon stick. 97 Brecon Estate 2019 **Reserve Cabernet** Sauvignon, Adelaida District, Paso Robles

plum lead to a mouthfeel so dense that

it caresses, envelops, and seduces.

Sumptuous notes of blueberry are

blessed with a bright, ripe character,

joined by melted dark chocolate and

(\$84) Brecon was the third or possibly the fourth Cabernet vineyard planted in the Paso Robles region. With 4% Petit Verdot added in, this is a purple-powered punch of a wine: It's bright, with focused, slick tannins; good acid

structure; and a juicy mouthfeel. Plum, violets, and boysenberry engage in a dance of merriment with savory notes of cured meat that impart intriguing elegance. 96



Brecon Estate Reserve 2019 Haggis Basher, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$82) This classic Northern Rhône blend of 98% Syrah and 2% Viognier rings our bell. It's big enough to pair

with its namesake, but since Scotland's national dish is banned in the U.S., you'll just have to leave that to your imagination.



The wine opens up with flavors of grilled meats rubbed with peppercorns and coffee and marinated in molasses and balsamic. On the satiny palate, spices open up a ripe horizon of black plum and black cherry. Progressively deeper and juicier from mid-palate to finish, this is the mark of a true liquid athlete. 96



Publisher's PICKS Extra

The Aloha-Down on Kaena Winery

HAWAIIAN-BORN **MIKAEL SIGOUIN** IS KNOWN AS THE GRENACHE KING OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

story by Meridith May / photos by Jeremy Ball



Mikael and Sally Sigouin.

"It's the most difficult wine

to make," Mikael Sigouin claims of his Grenache Rosé, which features fruit grown on limestone and clay soils in Ballard Canyon, located in the Santa Ynez Valley on California's Central Coast. That a domestic Rhône rosé can taste so accomplished is a nod to not only the land but Sigouin's talent: The winemaker harbors a love of wines from Tavel and Bandol, but he doesn't try to copy those styles—he nails his own.

The former winemaker for Beckmen Vineyards, one of Santa Barbara County's most revered Cali-Rhône producers, Sigouin gained insight that soon led him toward

his own label. "[The] Hospice du Rhône [event] in Paso Robles was my biggest influence," he tells *The Tasting Panel*. "I met the kings of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Viognier, et cetera, from Michel Chapoutier to Alban to the team from Beaucastel. It was akin to being at Woodstock in the '60s."

He started Kaena in 2001 because of that passion for Grenache, teaming up with his longtime love, Sally, whom he met in 1992 and searched for until he fatefully bumped into her again in 1997. The Sigouins have a tasting room in Los Olivos in the Santa Ynez Valley and recently opened another, the expansive Kaena at the Ranch, between Solvang and Buellton.

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Sigouin was given the nickname Kaena—"potential for greatness"—by his great-grandmother or "tutu," Lucille Hollinger, who raised him in the model of his great-grandfather Johnny Hollinger, a legend in Waikiki who passed away before Mikael was born. Perhaps he has not even reached his full potential, but Kaena's expressive wines, sourced from single vineyards primarily in Ballard Canyon, are stunning examples that we wanted to share with our readers. Here are my notes after tasting with the Sigouins on a warm winter day. Kaena 2019 Grenache Blanc, Tierra Alta Vineyard, Ballard Canyon (\$35) Floral and slightly unctuous, this tank-fermented white offers lemon zest on the back end plus a bevy of white flowers and sapidity on the finish. 92



Kaena 2018 Hapa Blanc, Santa Ynez Valley (\$30) An homage to the white wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape (albeit with a Spanish twist), this blend of Roussanne, Viognier, Grenache Blanc, and Albariño exhibits a gorgeous body along with notes of honey-

suckle, chamomile, and fresh ginger root. Floral aromatics persist throughout. **93**

Kaena 2019 Grenache, Tierra Alta Vineyard,

Ballard Canyon (\$40) Aromas of ripe cherry, pomegranate, and cocoa lead to strawberry and sweet tobacco. White pepper buoys the pillowy weight of this balanced beauty, which finishes with notes of burnished orange peel. **94**



Kaena 2019 Reserve Grenache, Tierra Alta Vineyard, Ballard Canyon (\$50) Sourced from 19-year-

old vines and aged in four-year-old puncheons for 22 months, this wine shows concentration through black pepper, espresso, and black

cherry. The mid-palate reveals bittersweet dark chocolate and a violet-driven perfume. Winemaker Mikael Sigouin plays the music of Rihanna and Prince for the fermenting grapes: "It's a powerful, sexy wine—and that's how I feel about Grenache." **95**



Kaena 2017 Malbec, Stag Canyon, Los Olivos (\$55)

Meaty, with notes of slate and Luxardo cherry, this sturdy, balanced red has characteristics of animale. White pepper, basil, oregano, and roasted coffee give way to slightly chalky tannins. **94**

Kaena 2017 Buona Terra Bordeaux Blend, Stag Canyon Vineyard, Los Olivos (\$75) Grown on rocky alluvial soil, this satin-lined blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot is round and plush. Huckleberry and dark plum are bright and vivacious. Chocolate, oolong tea, and jasmine give it an exotic flair. **95**



Second Sight

WE LOOK AT OPTIK'S 2020 WINES WITH 20/20 CLARITY

The 2020 vintage of optik, a Miller Family Wine Company project that launched last year, reflects the Millers' vision of exploring their famous proprietary vineyards—Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills—with fresh eyes. To do so, the family collaborated with Joey Tensley, a winemaker who intimately understands the soils and microclimates of Santa Barbara County and has created many wines of high acclaim from this region as well as overseas.

The brand's striking label depicts a symbol of a hand with an all-seeing eye that's known as the hamsa, which "represents protection, good fortune, power, and strength," says Miller Family Wine Company director of marketing Tommy Gaeta. "Here, it speaks to the winemaker's hand to convey what his eyes see."

We had the good fortune to taste through these wines—here are our notes.

optik 2020 Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$40) Coastal winds blow from the Pacific Ocean to help illuminate the character of this Clone 17 Chardonnay, which aged 11 months in French oak. It's round and full bodied, with flavors of coconut, pineapple, and lemon cake on a bed of salted slate. Butterscotch augments the mouthfeel as the lively acid structure enables notes of fresh linen and florals to peek through the toasty finish. 94

optik 2020 Pinot Noir, Solomon Hills, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara

County (\$50) Strongly influenced by the proximity of the Pacific, this serious, expressive Pinot Noir offers a spice rack of exotic flavors and aromas that alters the senses. Paprika, Chinese fivespice powder, cinnamon, and rooibos tea contribute to its density. Energetic and prickly with black pepper and lavender, the palate forms an earthy bed lined by silky tannins. 15% ABV. **93**

optik 2020 Pinot Noir, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$50) Aged 11 months in (35% new) French oak, this wine is a floral delicacy. Roses reside with tobacco leaf while brushing up against raspberry, red apple, and clove. Spicy cinnamon candy lingers on the palate, subdued by cherry bark, licorice, and rhubarb. Its inherent elegance and alignment of toast, acid, and earth certainly speak to its site. **94**

optik 2020 Syrah, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$50) Scents of bittersweet chocolate and candied meats stir up sweetness in the air. On the palate, salty charcuterie, roasted coffee bean, and shadowed black fruit align with plush tannins, demonstrating the opulence of this tamed beast: a balanced brute with a well-mannered nature. Caramelcovered dark cherry coats the tongue on the long finish. 95 1/2



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 factorsand, of course, taste!

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

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

3 TALKIES Q Q Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. Great for retail.

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

WINES

Q Q Q

Cono Sur 2021 Organico Sauvignon Blanc, Chile (\$11) Perky and crisp, this stainless steel–aged white offers flavors of just-squeezed lime and a sprinkling of oregano. Tropical tones play out with uplifted notes of pineapple and kiwi.

FETZER VINEYARDS

Q Q (

Cline Cellars 2020 Old

Vine Zinfandel, Lodi (\$11) Grown in sandy soil mostly in Lodi's Mokelumne River AVA, head-pruned vines as old as 50 years yield the fruit for this extroverted yet balanced wine. Given its price, we were surprised by its clarity and freshness. Flavors of cinnamonspiced strawberry, cured



meats, and garden herbs are mouth-filling and generous. $90\,$

Q Q

John's Bay 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Central Valley, Chile (\$12) Notes of linen and tarragon lead to white grapefruit and hightoned acidity. Honeysuckle and pineapple sneak in on the mid-palate: sweet, salty, and pretty. 90

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.

Singerstone 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, South Pacific Coast, Chile (\$15) Intense notes of tarragon, chervil, and oregano on the nose and palate meld with ripe apricot nectar and tangerine zest. The richness of the flavor and mouthfeel is tempered by a fine acid structure. 90 VIÑA SUR ANDINO



Q (

Burgo Viejo 2021 Rosado, Rioja, Spain (\$15) This 100% Garnacha fermented in stainless steel shows clean, bright notes of red cherry, strawberry, and dried orange peel. As it opens up, sweet tobacco and minerality come to the front of the palate. 90 KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Cycles Gladiator 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$13) We found a gem in this expressive white blended with 4% Sémillon: It's crisp and clean, with salty minerality and lemony verve. Tropical notes of guava meld with dried tangerine peel and a grassy middle. Aromatic, refreshing, and charming—what a great value. 91 WINE HOOLIGANS



Indigenous grape varieties from notable regions in Spain yield these delicious, food-friendly, value- and quality-driven wines imported by Félix Solís Avantis.



Q Q

Mucho Más White, Spain (\$12) Blending Verdejo, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay brings out floral notes that are tempered and sweetened by vanilla and pine nut. Toffee cream glides on an unctuous palate with a lime-chiffon undertone. 91



Q Q Q Mucho Más Rosé, Spain (\$12) Made from Garnacha, Bobal, and Tempranillo, this wine speaks of rose and raspberry on the nose and palate. Candied red licorice and a garden of ripe strawberry precede a clean finish of salted pear that had our

mouths watering. 90



Q Q (

Mucho Más Red, Spain (\$12) Syrah and Tempranillo perfume the glass with dried violets. The aromatics and flavors go deeper with black olive and balsamic before the violets come back to life, joined by plump and juicy notes of boysenberry and plum. 91

Q Q Q

Beyer Ranch 2019 Cabarmat Sauvignan Contra

ernet Sauvignon, Central Coast (\$13) Luscious boysenberry and mocha appear in a whirlwind of satin tannins. A spiced cedar middle is followed by a dash of white pepper. The juiciness merges with a persistently rich and creamy mouthfeel. **90** WENTE FAMILY ESTATE



RouteStock 2020 Pinot

Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$23) Cigar leaf and blueberry preserves are enveloped by coffee bean and dark chocolate in this brooding, earthy, and precise red. 91 WILSON DANIELS



Intipalka 2021 Malbee, Valle del Sol, Peru (\$13) Luscious and earthy, this wine is packed with notes of oregano, basil, and cigar box. Pomegranate, mulberry, and a bevy of wildflowers keep it ripe, juicy, and bright. 90 VIÑAS QUEIROLO



Flat Top Hills 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$14) Lemon blossom, jasmine, and a stony mineral tonality keep the texture crisp and tart. Tangerine, lime zest, and just-ripe pineapple play a major role in this lively wine, created by the fourth generation of the Mondavi winemaking family. 90

Leese-Fitch 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15) Uncommon grapes such as Barbera, Tannat, Teroldego, and Tempranillo are added to this 78% Cabernet Sauvignon. The perfume of blackberry, fig, and mocha makes for a striking start, leading to deep and complex flavors of bramble, tilled soil, and sandalwood.



Easy drinking, with vivid acidity and a floral, fruity finish. $91\,$

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

The Infamous Goose 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlhorough, Nav

Marlborough, New Zealand (\$15) Showing its distinct Marlborough accent through grapefruit and lime, this stunning white has a zingy profile that keeps the mouth clean and refreshed. A garden of fresh herbs and star fruit lends another layer to the palate. 91



KOBRAND





Cline Cellars 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, North

Coast (\$17) Thanks to a longer hang time and lower yields in the maritime climate of Mendocino County, concentration and ripeness are evident here. Scents of mulberry, mocha, slate, and spiced cedar are ultra-expressive. Ripe blackberry and



The Crusher 2020 Unoaked Chardonnay,

California (\$17) With the addition of 5% Viognier, this becomes a floral-natured beauty. Aromas of Golden Delicious apple and lemon sorbet lead to white petals before flavors of justsqueezed lime and near-ripe pineapple unfold in a flash.

Lively, with vibrant acidity and a finish of vanilla pudding. $92\,$

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

MyStory 2018 Red Blend

No. 2, Paso Robles (\$17) This ripe and spunky blend of 43% Petite Sirah, 32% Syrah, 21% Merlot, and 4% Viognier shows blackpeppered blueberry and lavender. An even tone of mocha and plum centers the palate alongside supple tannins before the satisfying finish of cedar, coffee, and blackberry. 90

Robert Oatley 2020 G-20

Grenache, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$18) A stroke of boysenberry and white pepper shows up in this fresh and vivid red before lavender ups the ante in flavor, aromatics, brightness, and texture. Great acidity keeps the sparks flying in a juicy whirlwind of raspberry and rose petal. 92



GARAGE

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINE & SPIRITS

Garzón 2021 Reserve

Pinot Noir Rosé, Uruguay (\$20) Steely notes are tempered by raspberry and rose petal. Fresh cantaloupe and peach ring true on the palate. 90

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINE & SPIRITS

Q Q

Summer Water 2021

Rosé, Central Coast (\$20) A light and breezy sipper with stony mineral tones that play against fresh melon, strawberry, and green garden herbs. Crisp and palate cleansing. **89**

WINC

Submission 2019 Red Wine, California (\$20) Balanced yet extroverted, with coffee bean and dark chocolate–covered plum at the forefront. Juicy and easy drinking, with a creamy, woodsy finish. 89

689 CELLARS



Three Finger Jack 2020 Gold Mine Hills Chardonnay, Lodi (\$20) Aromas of lemon peel are fresh and clean. French vanilla and toasted coconut get a kick from keen acidity, resulting in a luscious, energetic mouthfeel. Juicy Anjou pear fills out the middle with white flowers and fig before the wine finishes with a bright squeeze of tangerine. The signature short bottle makes this brand easy to recognize. 91

DELICATO FAMILY WINES

BÖEN 2019 Chardon-

nay, California (\$25) Sourced from three different regions—Monterey County (62%), Sonoma County (28%), and Santa Barbara County (10%)-this beautifully balanced white speaks of toasted coconut and lemon cake. Clean notes of baked pear and caramel-



kissed papaya leave a long, memorable finish behind. 91

COPPER CANE WINES & PROVISIONS

Bavel & Stitch 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Central Coast (\$25) Treasured flavors of violets, slate, dark plum, and new leather keep the rich, spicy, and plush palate occupied. Savory notes of black olive and sweet herbs last through the extended finish. 91



WENTE FAMILY ESTATE

Ossian Vides y Vinos Quintaluna 2019 Verdejo, Castilla y León, Spain (\$25) Wet stone and Asian pear collide within an off-dry mouthfeel. The wine beams with intensity: White flowers and pine nut hold a steady course that's enlivened by crisp acidity and a clean finish of lemon and vanilla, 92

ALMA CARRAOVEJAS

OBERON

Oberon 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$25) This dynamic, bighearted red shows

ripe, spiced blackberry framed by espresso

and cigar leaf. Woodsy and plush. 91 FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS



GEA by Root:1 2020 Andean **Red Wine**. **Central Valley.** Chile (\$25) This bag-in-box blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and País, Chile's ancestral



grape, unleashes plush tannins and notes of boysenberry, cigar box, espresso, and tilled soil. Deep, dark, and juicy, it's a dynamic and pleasurable experience. 90

Prescription Vineyards 2019 Cabernet Sauvi-

gnon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$30) Grainy tannins fulfill their mission to coat the teeth with blueberry compote. This dynamo of a wine overflows with plump plum, powdered cocoa, and blooming lavender—it's really an

over-the-counter cure for disbelievers of the Alexander Valley's potential for textural lushness. Winemaker Rob Lloyd overdelivers on some amazing medicine for the soul. 93

eStCru 2020 Blockchain Cabernet Sauvignon.

Lodi (\$38) Earthy, juicy, and opulent, this vibrant Cab offers up plum, licorice, and slate; aged 12 months in French oak, it's layered and dynamic, with easy tannins and a lingering espresso finish. The producer puts it best: "It unlocks a hybrid

cloud of flavors worth their weight in binary data."We may be running it in print, but it's staying on our digital record as one to watch! 92

SPIRITS

Ole Smoky White Chocolate Strawberry Cream Moonshine, USA (\$22) Fresh, vibrant, and authentic aromas of strawberry mesmerize before the 35-proof liquid coats the tongue with a blanket of perfectly crafted creaminess that's certainly not too rich.



Secondary notes of meringue enhance the flavor profile. 91



Ole Smoky Banana Pudding Cream Moonshine, USA (\$22) For those like me who dream about this dessert, you've got a liquid alternative here that'll put you on cloud nine. Smooth and silky, with back notes of peanut brittle and marshmallow that give it all-around personality-plus. 35 proof. 92 🗖



winery spotlight

On the grounds of Landmark Vineyards in Kenwood, CA.

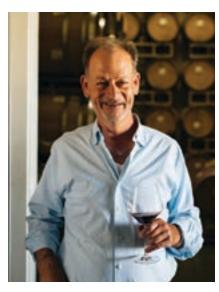
MORE THAN THE

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LANDMARK VINEYARDS IS A HOUSE OF MANY DIMENSIONS

by Ruth Tobias





Landmark Vineyards head winemaker Greg Stach.



ou might call Landmark Vineyards "the house that Overlook Chardonnay built." Representing the Sonoma County estate's largest annual production by far at around 20,000 cases, the flagship white is "the most important wine we make," says head winemaker Greg Stach. "It's what introduces the vast majority of people to [us]." As well it should, in his view: "It has

the classic contours of white Burgundy: apple and pear fruit, oak framing, lees elements. [Tasting] groups will use it as a classic example of California Chardonnay, and that really makes me feel good."

But the thing about houses is, they're more than a structure atop a foundation. As critical and compelling as those elements may be, it's the variety of rooms they support, the nooks and crannies, that were made to be explored. So it is with Landmark, whose portfolio is far more diverse than fans of its leading label may realize.

The Background

Many a success story is prefaced by a false start or two, and Landmark is no different. In 1974, Damaris Deere Ford (the great-great-granddaughter of John Deere) and her co-founders launched the brand and began making wine in the Sonoma County town of Windsor—but didn't quite achieve the results they'd hoped for, says Stach with a laugh: "I think it was 1988 that they got a 67 in the *Spectator* for the Chardonnay." That indignity lit a fire under Ford, who bought her partners out the following year and moved the winery southeast to the Kenwood facility it currently occupies—a lovely hacienda-style structure with a courtyard garden, fountain, and pond—where she set out to prove the naysayers wrong; shortly thereafter, Helen Turley came on board as a consultant and helped whip things into shape. According to Stach, his predecessor, Eric Stern, "said the main thing he learned from her was, 'You need to buy better fruit'" in order to produce "a Chardonnay of reserve quality at a reasonable price through blending." Overlook Chardonnay made its debut in 1990; that it would go on to crack *Wine Spectator*'s Top 100 list eight times indicates the determination with which Stern took her advice to heart.

Today, "it's all about the sourcing," says Stach. Fruit from 24 different vineyard blocks goes into the Sonoma County–appellated wine, about a third of it grown by the renowned Sangiacomo family in Carneros, which "gives the wine a nice tropical note and a fleshiness," in Stach's words; other key components include Rodgers Creek Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap—"I like the minerality it brings"—and Parr Vineyard in the Mayacamas near Calistoga, a driver of acidity.

The Whites

Which brings us to Landmark's single-vineyard Chardonnay program. "It's about pulling out and highlighting the beautiful components that go into the Overlook," Stach says, noting that while he aims to work "very much in the Burgundian model," his ultimate goal is to "really take what the grapes give you-California is never going to be Burgundy. If Burgundy is about expressing the land, then why should it be? Express those grapes, express where they're grown." After all, he adds, "My mom always said that California wine reminded her of California sunshine."

No doubt that applies to Landmark's four vineyard-designate whites, all of which are whole cluster–pressed and fermented in (30–45% new) French oak, where they spend 14–15 months, undergoing bâttonage every two weeks. "[They go] through full malo, so we want really high acidity to start with. We want them to be refreshing and not flabby," says Stach; they're also unfiltered "to retain the mouthfeel."

Perhaps most representative is the Landmark Sangiacomo Chardonnay, if only because the Sangiacomo family, from whom the team has been purchasing grapes for more than 20 years, "is our biggest Chardonnay grower," according to Stach. Made from the Wente clone grown in Kiser Ranch at the center of their Carneros vineyards, the 2020 vintage vibrates with peach and pineapple, but there's also a savory element that Stach confirms is found "with all of our wines." From Rodgers Creek comes a Chardonnav that "has always got that orange-y, tropical note that's unexpected," while the Lorenzo Chardonnay is "always really shy



Landmark purchased its Russian River Valley estate, Hop Kiln, in 2016.

starting out," in Stach's words. "It's so slow-evolving and continues to develop and gain depth and character; it's the Montrachet of what we make—it's really mineral." Finally, the Hilliard-Bruce is a departure from the rest in that it hails from the Sta. Rita Hills, where "there's always a tropicality, with some green banana/plantain that's really different from our Sonoma wines."

The Reds

But the influence of Overlook Chardonnay on the Landmark portfolio doesn't end with whites: Its success also prompted the creation of Overlook Pinot Noir in 2012, designed like its counterpart to offer what Stach calls "a high-quality introduction" to the grape as a tri-county blend of fruit from Sonoma's Russian River Valley, Monterey's Santa Lucia Highlands, and Santa Barbara's Sta. Rita Hills.

Not surprisingly, these "premium, premium growing areas" are also the sources for Landmark's six singlevineyard Pinots. Though all are made much the same way, spending ten months on the lees in (25–50% new) François Frères and Remond barrels, "I love the variety," Stach says. "It's really important to me that the wines are all different and that they all have their own personalities," whether it's the Escolle Road from the Santa Lucia Highlands, which he calls "velvety and plush yet light on its feet"; the Ravhill from the Russian River Valley. described as "a little more mysterious and subtle, with more red fruit"; or the La Encantada from the Sta. Rita Hills,

showing in Stach's words as "cranberry, brambly—not as fruited but very complex." By contrast is the Dierberg Vineyard Pinot Noir also from Sta. Rita Hills, abundant in black cherry, plum, and blackberry along with notes of leather, tobacco, and baking spice.

And then there are the Landmark Hop Kiln Estate and Estate Reserve Pinot Noirs, which naturally hold particular pride of place in the collection as estate-grown wines. A historic property dating to 1905, Hop Kiln is located in the Middle Reaches of the Russian River Valley right next door to Rochioli, whose wines "are really what got me interested in making Pinot Noir," says Stach, "[so] I'm just thrilled to have property out there," where foggy mornings and large diurnal swings in the summertime help to keep acid levels sufficient for picking at about 24 Brix.

Granted, given that its 93 planted acres amount to "three or four vineyards in one . . . with multiple exposures and aspects," he admits that "it was a challenge to try to wrap our brains around" producing wine immediately upon Hop Kiln's 2016 purchase by JUSTIN Vineyards & Winery, which had acquired Landmark from the Ford family five years prior (having itself just been acquired by FIJI Water). That said, he adds, "It's incredible to have the resources" of a company that would trust him to pull it off. Indeed, it's a sign of confidence in his vision from a producer that could have rested on its flagship wine's laurels long ago but instead has branched out in many directions—all of them fruitful.

Tasting Notes

"I love the lushness that it brings," says head winemaker Greg Stach of Hop Kiln, Landmark's estate vineyard in the Middle Reaches of the Russian River Valley. So do we. Grown on "a sweet spot in the middle stretch of the vineyard," the Hop Kiln Estate Reserve Pinot Noir indeed sits on the more robust side of the Pinot spectrum without losing a drop of typicity.

The stunning view from Landmark's courtyard.



Landmark 2016 Hop Kiln Estate Reserve **Pinot Noir, Russian** River Valley (\$119) From nose to palate, all the shades of cherry-from sour to black to candy to cola-grace this wine, which is dusted with tobacco and mocha on the leather-tinged nose and dotted with vanilla, sassafras, and nutmeg in the mouth, where smooth tannins melt into a long finish with a hint of roasted mushroom.

Landmark 2017 Hop Kiln Estate Reserve Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$110) The most savory vintage of the vertical we tasted delivers notes of sunbaked earth_cinnamon and

earth, cinnamon and white pepper, and a little smoked meat in addition to cranberry and strawberry both wild and roasted. Though there's no lack of structure, the texture glides along as surprising flavors keep popping up—yellow as well as red stone fruit here, coffee there.

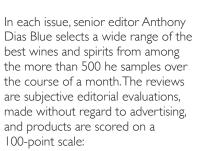


Landmark 2018 Hop Kiln Estate Reserve Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$102) On the nose, wisps of fresh violet, oak, and smoke intertwine with raspberry and blackberry, which echo on the velvety palate amid touches of fig, anise, and subtle forest-floor elements that resonate with chewy tannins.



Landmark 2019 Hop **Kiln Estate Reserve Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$85)** Darker but no less pretty than the others, the most recent vintage offers scents of black cherry, black plum, and black raspberry sprinkled with earth and vanilla cola; a bit more red fruit—cranberry, raspberry-chimes in on the plush palate, where juicy acidity meets earthy tannins with just a kiss of oak as well as a little pepper and ginger on the finish.

Anthony Dias BLUE *REVIEWS*



88-89: VERY GOOD90-94: OUTSTANDING95-100: 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

92 J. Bucher 2019 Pommard Clone Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$55) Spicy berry nose, silky texture, and smooth flavors of cherry and raspberry. Clean, tangy, and long, with excellent balance.

96 JUSTIN Winery 2017 Isosceles Reserve, Paso Robles (\$100) A beautiful and deeply spiced blend of the five Bordeaux varietals that leans toward Cabernet Sauvignon; velvety and seamless, with good balance and notes of plum, cherry, and boysenberry.

94 JUSTIN Winery 2017 Platinum Reserve, Paso Robles (\$110) A 100% Cabernet Sauvignon with intense color and a toasty nose; silky, elegant, rich, and long, with depth and finesse.

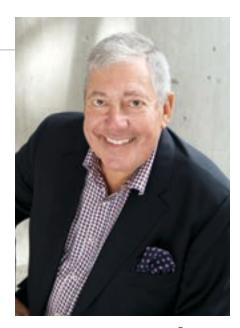
90 King Estate Winery 2018 Domaine Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$70) Smooth, rich, and earthy, with bright cherry and a fresh finish.



93 Ledson Winery & Vineyards 2018 Ti Amo, Alexander Valley (\$98) Deep, dark, and bursting with ripe black fruit; spicy and long.



by THE TASTING ALLIANCE



93 Lorenzi Estate NV El Tesoro Cabernet Sauvignon, Temecula Valley (\$95) Deep color and an earthy nose; lush and layered, with depth and style.

92 Morgan Winery 2019 Highland Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$46) A polished and lush organic wine with a rich texture and complex flavors of toasted oak; clean, juicy, and long. 91 McKahn Family Cellars 2019 Morning Glass Red Wine, Sonoma County (\$30) Smooth and juicy, with soft flavors; balanced, clean, and long. 75% Syrah, 13% Petite Sirah, and 12% Grenache.



92 Ram's Gate 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$35) Ripe cherry nose, juicy and fresh berry flavors, firm acid structure, and a lasting finish.

93 pureCru 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon,

Napa Valley (\$50) Crafted by the talented Mitch Cosentino, this is an elegant wine from a great year; smooth and balanced, with luscious notes of plum.



95 Ridge Vineyards 2020 Geyserville, Alexander Valley (\$50) An opulent, charming blend of 69% Zinfandel, 20% Carignane, 8% Petite Sirah, 2% Alicante Bouschet, and 1% Mataro. Ultra-smooth and seamless, with rich flavors of plum and blackberry. Stunning and long, it's a triumph of winemaking skill.

94 Ridge Vineyards 2020 East Bench Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley (\$30) A nicely structured, layered, lovely, and long wine from one of the world's greatest Zinfandel regions. Smooth and deep, with tangy berry flavors joining notes of cinnamon and vanilla.

94 Sullivan Rutherford Estate 2019 Coeur de Vigne Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$110) Dark and pure, with lovely plum and raspberry notes showing amid layers of flavor. Fresh and velvety; complex, stylish, and long.

94 Testarossa 2020 Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills (\$57) Vibrant ruby color and a floral nose; tangy and juicy, bright and loaded with flavor.

933 Santa Rita Hills (\$45) Lush and elegant, with a pillowy texture, complex palate, and long finish.

92 Yamhill Valley Vineyards 2018 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$28) Lovely, toasty nose; clean, silky, and spiced, with fresh and toasted notes of cherry. Racy, balanced, and long.

IMPORTED

91 Château Miraval 2021 Côtes de Provence Rosé, France (\$27) Super-pale, juicy, and dry, with good acid structure. VINEYARD BRANDS



93 Estancia Uspallata 2018 Pinot Noir, Mendoza, Argentina

(\$70) Bright aromas of red cherry and a silky texture; juicy, crisp, and charming. I'd like to see more Pinot from Argentina.

VINEYARD BRANDS

Q Famille Perrin 2019

Characteristic Characteristics (\$45) Rich berry nose, smooth texture, and spicy notes of plum and black raspberry; elegant, balanced, and long. VINEYARD BRANDS



92 Peregrine Wines 2021 Pinot Gris, Central Otago, New Zealand (\$32) Luscious yet crisp and lively, with floral notes joining fresh, tangy fruit before the long finish.

VINEYARD BRANDS

93 Finca La Capilla 2017 Vendimia Seleccionada Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$53) Dark, ripe, and mature; concentrated, luscious, and velvety, with flavors of blackberry and spice. VINEYARD BRANDS



90 Reyneke 2018 Syrah, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$29) A natural wine with a funky nose; earthy and tangy, spicy and lively, with blackberry and bright acidity.

VINEYARD BRANDS

92 Shiloh Winery 2019 Shor Cabernet Sauvignon, Judean Hills, Israel (\$34) Deeply colored and firmly structured, with notes of toasty oak and hints of vanilla. A well-made wine that will only get better with age.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

92 Tenuta di Fessina 2019 A' Pud-Jara Etna Bianco DOC, Sicily, Italy (\$65) Crisp notes of green apple; racy, pure, and intense, with good length. VINEYARD BRANDS

92 Vantorosso 2018 Valpolicella Ripasso Classico Superiore, Valpolicella DOC, Italy (\$35) Lush and ripe, with spice, earth, and wild black raspberry leading to a fresh, juicy finish.

VALUE

92 André Brunel 2017 Cuvée Sabrine, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France (\$20) A lush GSM with dense color, a spiced fruit nose, velvety texture, and smooth black fruit; deep, balanced, and long.

91 (\$11) A spicy, racy, and fresh blend of Port grapes; juicy and intense. VINEYARD BRANDS

92 Antigal Winery & Estates 2018 Aduentus Petit Blend, Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) Deep color meets a rich nose and smooth texture. Powerful notes of ripe blackberry and plum are joined by hints of chocolate; lush, charming, and long.

CORK ALLIANCE, INC.

93 Craggy Range Vineyards 2021 Te Muna Sauvignon Blanc, Te Muna Road Vineyard, Martinbor-

Te Muna Koad Vineyard, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$23) Fresh, clean, and juicy, with racy acidity and layers of flavor; charming and long.

KOBRAND

MAY/JUNE 2022 ~ THE TASTING PANEL 141

BLUE REVIEWS

91 Daniele Conterno 2020 Barbera d'Alba Superiore, Italy (\$25) Smooth and balanced, with clean, toasted fruit; earthy and long. GRAPEJUICE GROUP

92 Kurtatsch 2020 Sauvignon, Alto Adige DOC, Italy (\$22) Peach appears on the nose and palate; fresh and bright, with a silky texture, firm acid structure, and good balance and length. VINEYARD BRANDS

89 Les Jamelles 2020 Roussanne, Pays d'Oc, France (\$15) Soft and smooth, with minerality and mellow acidity; balanced and long.

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

91 Miguel Torres 2019 Cordillera de Los Andes Reserva Especial Carménère, Valle del Cachapoal, Chile (\$21) Herbal nose and more soft herbs on the palate; spicy and juicy, with tangy fruit and a lasting finish.

VINEYARD BRANDS

91 Morgan Winery 2020 Albariño, Mission Ranch, Arroyo Seco (\$24) Aromatic, fresh, and clean, with bright, lifted flavors and a racy finish.

93 Orfila 2018 Reserva Malbec, Uco Valley, Argentina (\$20) Dark, dense, and pure; smooth and lush, lively and intense.

91 Orfila 2018 Reserva Red Blend, Concentrated and luscious, with deep color, classic structure, nice balance, and ripe notes of blackberry and plum. 50% Malbec/50% Cabernet Sauvignon.

91 Poderi Parpinello 2020 Ala Blanca Vermentino di Sardegna, Italy (\$16) Smooth and spicy, with fresh pear, a bright acid structure, and rich minerality. 91 Royal Tokaji Wine Company 2019 Dry Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary (\$13) A crisp and lively expression from eastern Hungary, with minerals and racy acidity.

WILSON DANIELS

92 Serego Alighieri 2019 Possessioni Rosso del Veronese IGT, Veneto, Italy

(\$20) Silky and fresh, juicy and bright, with spice, bright acidity, and lovely balance; clean, fruit forward, and charming. VINEYARD BRANDS

92 The Seeker 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$14) Clean, bright, and tangy, with flavors of fresh fruit and herbs leading to brisk acidity on the finish.

SPIRITS

91 Bosscal Mezcal Damiana, Mexico (\$50) Fresh citrus nose; smooth, spicy, and toasty, with depth and balance.

WOLF SPIRIT LLC

91 Bosscal Mezcal Joven, Mexico (\$45) Intense herbaceous nose; floral and earthy, rustic and long. WOLF SPIRIT LLC

91 Broken Barrel Whiskey Co. California Oak Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$30) Showing the influence of 70% corn in its mash bill, this whiskey is fruity, bright, and sweet. Balanced and spicy, toasty and fresh.

94 Broken Barrel Whiskey Co. Cask Strength Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$47) Rich and intense yet clean, with notes of toasted oak and a lush, creamy texture. Deep and floral, balanced and stylish. 94 Darnley's Small Batch London Dry Gin, Scotland (\$32) A complex, layered, and carefully made gin from Scotland. Elegant, rich, and stylish; spicy and floral, without any sweetness.



92 Dancing Goat Distillery Limousin Rye, USA (\$39) Spicy yet soft, mellow, and charming, with smooth notes of caramel and a long, expressive finish. A first-rate domestic whiskey.

93 Distillery 291 M Colorado Rye Whiskey, USA (\$108) Dark amber color; soft and sweet yet rich and intense, with deep, persistent flavors of honey and toasty oak. Peppery yet balanced.

91 Firestone & Robertson Distilling Co. TX Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished in Cognac Casks, USA (\$64) Deep amber color and a spicy nose; clean, smooth, and toasted, with balance and style.

95 Horse Soldier Barrel Strength Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$85) Rich, toasty nose; ripe, spicy, and super-intense; sweet and stylish, with lovely depth.



92 Horse Soldier Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$45) Pale

amber color and a toasty nose; soft, balanced, and long, with rich, sweet spice.



80 Otaca Tequila

Plata, Mexico (\$65) Clean and sweet, with gentle spice notes. It's charming—but where's the agave?

91 Siempre Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$70) Amber color and a sweet agave nose; toasty, smooth, and spiced; elegant and long.

THE **SOMM** JOURNAL & tastingpanel







Armed with a high level of learning, insight into the industry, and an audience of qualified beverage professionals, *The SOMM Journal* and *The Tasting Panel* are the country's largest circulated B2B beverage print publications. We serve as platforms to educate and entertain the wine and spirits trade.

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ROOM TO

Chef Chris Williams, owner of Roy's Grille in Lexington, SC, on the opening night of Charleston Wine + Food 2022.

RECAPPING THE 2022 CHARLESTON WINE + FOOD FESTIVAL by Wanda Mann

Food and wine lovers have been hungry for opportunities to gather in person after the long spell of social distancing: After all, the pleasures of wining and dining are maximized by connecting and sharing with others. And that convivial spirit was on full display at the 2022 Charleston Wine + Food festival in March.

For five days, Charleston, South Carolina, was abuzz with an array of culinary events that attracted 30,000 attendees; returning from a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, festival organizers recognized that public health was paramount. "We wanted to set the tone for the festival industry on how to produce an event that is fun, celebratory, and responsible," said marketing and communications director Alyssa Maute Smith. "This affected almost every vertical in the festival landscape—from an increase [in] outdoor venues that allowed more space to spread out to [a boost in]

food stipends for our chef community across the board as a direct response to increased food costs."

Extra care was also taken to ensure that the events and talent reflected the diversity of Charleston and the culinary community at large. Chris Williams, an official South Carolina chef ambassador and the owner of Roy's Grille in Lexington, participated in several events. He reflected on the festival from a historical and personal perspective: "At one point, Charleston was the largest slave port in the Americas," he said. "If you pay close attention, you can still see traces of the slave trade scattered throughout the city. Not only am I a South Carolinian but I'm also a descendant of those enslaved Africans who were marched and sold along the same streets and beaches [on which] we enjoyed wine and hors d'oeuvres. Being in the position that I'm in now is a direct result of the determination and courage of the ones who walked



Cha McCoy served as beverage director of Charleston Wine + Food 2022.

this land before me. My participation in these festivals and my continued success is how I continue to repay them and keep their names alive."

Sommelier Cha McCoy, who joined the festival team as beverage director, said she was "extremely excited to be given the opportunity to showcase not only different beverage products and styles but also beverage professionals that deserved more visibility." In the former case, she shared her passion for and comprehensive knowledge of Madeira at an event titled "Communion: Reclamation Through Madeira," held at The Bar at HUSK. Navigating attendees through Charleston's multifaceted history as the Madeira-consuming capital of America during the 18th and 19th centuries, she paired various vintages of the fortified wine with a menu prepared by chef Katy Powers, including Henriques & Henriques 2007 Verdelho Single Harvest QG with Carolina gold rice, mushroom XO sauce, and benne and Henriques & Henriques 1997 Boal with a duo of quail and beef.

Such creativity was on display throughout the festival. Hip-hop and wine came together at Graft Wine Shop during the "Vino Versus Battle," when shop co-owners Femi Oyediran and Miles White were joined by Jermaine Stone, creator and host of "The Original Wine & Hip Hop" podcast, which was recorded live at the event. Each presented a wine paired with a song. Meanwhile, wine educator Julee Resendez traveled from Amsterdam to co-host "The Truth About Vermouth" at Stems & Skins. a natural wine bar in North Charleston, with its co-owner and beverage director, Matt Tunstall; the tasting featured various styles of sipping vermouth from Napa, Piedmont, and Sardinia.

Festival organizers reported that "20,000 commemorative glasses filled with countless sips" were served; importer Vineyard Brands was one of





"Vino Versus Battle" co-hosts Miles White, Jermaine Stone, and Femi Oyediran.

many beverage partners that kept those glasses full with several of the brands it represents, including Château Miraval, Marqués de Cacerés, Umani Ronchi, and Miguel Torres Chile. President and CEO Greg Doody was excited by Vineyard Brands' first-time partnership with the festival: "We've always admired what Charleston Wine + Food has set out to accomplish and the way it goes about doing it-the diversity of talent they've been able to attract and the variety of ways in which they showcase and celebrate that talent," he said. "So after years of admiring from afar, we thought it was time to jump in. We couldn't be happier with our decision. This year's festival was one of the best wine and food festivals I've had the pleasure to attend."

That sentiment was echoed by George Walker, brand ambassador for Wade Cellars, which was co-founded by NBA legend Dwyane Wade: "We embody togetherness and collaboration at Wade Cellars, so having the opportunity to connect with so many talented chefs and sommeliers for the first time in a couple of years and share our wines with the Charleston community was really special. From the dinners to the seminars to the incredible lounges, each experience showcased the best of what this industry is all about."

Take, for example, the Hangover Dim Sum Brunch, held in North Charleston at Jackrabbit Filly, a self-styled "heritage-driven New Chinese-American restaurant" owned by husband-andwife team Shuai and Corrie Wang. Upon arrival, I was met by their co-hosts, the rambunctious quartet of wine professionals known as the Wine Migos: Oscar García Moncada, Kelvin Uffré, Marquis Williams, and Mozel Watson, who had transported the friendly, high energy that suffuses the wine dinners they host in New York down south. I sat down with a couple of strangers, and the thumping music and popping bottles soon had us sharing the tasty food with ease and laughter.

Events like these helped challenge preconceived notions about the Holy City's culinary scene. As Shuai Wang put it, "You can come and eat amazing Gullah and Geechee cuisine and other Charleston classics, like shrimp and grits and oyster roasts, that you won't find nearly as good anywhere else in the country. [But what's more,] the food scene here is no longer represented only by downtown Charleston. There's a ton of expats and immigrants now calling the outskirts home.... Thanks to them, we have Jamaican food, Trinidadian food, [and] a ton of great, scrappy Mexican spots, plus all these smaller owner-operated joints like us that celebrate local farmers and Southern ingredients but through a different cultural lens. That part of the Charleston dining scene is still relatively young, and there's so much room to grow."

For more information, visit *charlestonwineandfood.com* and save the dates of March 1–5, 2023, for next year's extravaganza.



A Night to Remember

THANKS TO A GUEST WHO NEVER WILL

Here's a story that perfectly encapsulates the absurdity that anyone who's ever worked at a restaurant or bar faces from time to time. Bartender Matthew Laroux, who works at a members-only club in Los Angeles that shall remain nameless, had a recent run-in with an unruly guest that involved multiple staff members, including management, and a missing key.

One evening, after the usual mayhem of service, a security guard came to the bar, stating, "There's someone sleeping in the bathroom, and it's locked." Laroux and two bartenders took it upon themselves to go down the stairs, where a few servers had already gathered. They started banging on the bathroom door, trying to wake the sleeping guest.

After several minutes of yelling and threats of calling the police, the silence on the other side of the door continued. Laroux's assistant general manager and two floor managers arrived, unable to find the key that would solve the problem. Cue one of the floor managers, who braced himself and slammed into the door. It started cracking, and he issued another few rounds of "Hey! Wake up!" Still no response.

After a second brace and a harder impact, the frame shattered. And there he was—Sleeping Beauty himself, passed out on the tile floor with one hand in the toilet! Approximately 6 feet tall, he had the appearance of a well-manicured lumberjack (or at least someone who never says no to an extra pancake at the breakfast buffet). Suddenly he was so startled by the commotion that he started swinging fists, looking for all the world like a hungry bear roused from his hibernation a month too soon. The security guard sat on the sidelines, giving



Another night of slinging drinks and fighting nonsense was over in the city of Los Angeles. He went to sleep with a smirk on his face, knowing he'd do it all again the next day.

Laroux and his colleagues words of encouragement as they quickly escorted their guest off the premises.

Once outside, Laroux handed the man his phone, noticing he had 87 missed calls. He asked, "Can we call you an Uber? Do you have a friend? Perhaps one of the missed calls can pick you up?" Sleeping Beauty stood there silently, looking at him. He appeared unhappy to be having any form of conversation. "I just want to go to bed. Why are y'all staring at me?" he answered. Laroux wished him a good night and good luck getting home. Another night of slinging drinks and fighting nonsense was over in the city of Los Angeles. He went to sleep with a smirk on his face, knowing he'd do it all again the next day.

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, or Instagram @100proofemma.



The Man Behind the Brand





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