

# Beverage Journal

MAY 2019

## ROSÉ ALL THE WAY

WINE'S HOTTEST TREND  
KEEPS EXPANDING



RUM: WHEN  
SPICE IS NICE

CELEBRITY  
BRANDS  
ROCK ON

ALBARIÑO:  
SPAIN'S  
WHITE STAR



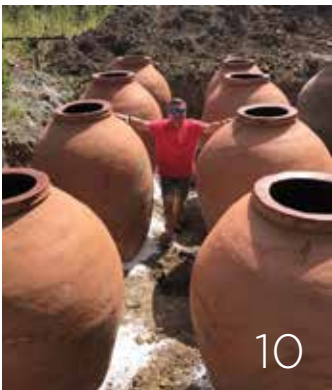
18



26



40



10



30

## FEATURES

**18 PINK PIPELINE**  
Rosé wine's prettiest—and most important—trend. We look at this crowded category ... plus 8 things to know entering into Rosé Season 2019.

**26 WHEN SPICE IS NICE**  
Originally a spin-off, Spice Rum carves out its stake in the rum world.

**30 STARS SHINE ON**  
The breadth and influence of celebrity-branded wines and spirits keep evolving.

## PROFILES

**10 GEORGIA RISING**  
Hands-On importer highlights unique wines from former Soviet Union.

**24 DELIVERING ON OREGON'S PROMISE**  
Trio of wines from Pino Cellars represent quality and value.

**36 DRIVING CARIÑENA'S POTENTIAL**  
Bodegas San Valero is determined to bring Spain's Cariñena region into the spotlight.

**38 RIOJA'S MASTER OF AGE**  
Bodegas Faustino's commitment to the art of aging Gran Reserva.

## DEPARTMENTS

**02 PUB PAGE**  
Phoenix Rising Group Supports Children's Cancer Foundation.

**04 NEW PRODUCTS & PROMOTIONS**

**08 SPIRITSCOPE**

**14 PULLING DOUBLE DUTY**  
As labor costs rise, GM & Beverage Director roles converge... at a price?

**40 BAR TALK**  
Jordan Kutchma of Fiola, Washington, DC



ON THE COVER:  
Photograph Courtesy of  
Cameron Whitman / Stocksy

## WINE & SPIRIT BRANDS "SHARE THE LOVE"



**P**hoenix Rising Group, Inc., a marketing firm representing major brands in the spirits industry, and its partners will donate a portion of their product sales to The Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF), from the month of April. Suppliers and wholesalers will donate up to \$1 for all bottles distributed to wine and spirits retailers, bars and restaurants in Maryland, Delaware and Washington, DC.

Cancer continues to be the number one cause of disease-related death in children. Research for children with cancer, especially for those with sarcomas and brain cancer, lags nearly two decades behind their adult counterparts. Since 1983, the CCF has awarded more than \$37.6 million for area hospitals and researchers to treat and cure childhood cancers including The Johns Hopkins Hospital, The National Cancer Institute, and Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"CCF relies on the generous support of our local community," says Executive Director Tasha Museles. "The 'Share the Love' campaign is a unique opportunity for Phoenix Rising Group to help us bring awareness to the importance of pediatric cancer research."

Bottles will be easily identified with "Share the Love" bottle hangers at wine and spirits retailers. The brands will send funds raised directly to CCF research and programs in the local community to support pediatric cancer researchers, facilities and programs in the Maryland, D.C. and northern Virginia region.

The brands participating in the "Share the Love" promotion are Bacoo Rum, Black Button Distilling, COA Tequila, Montgomery Distillery, MurLarkey Distilled Spirits, and Prichard's Distillery with wholesale partners Atlantic Wine & Spirits, Bacchus Importers, Legends/Blueprint Brands, and Breakthru Beverage Group (Washington, DC).

"Our brand partners and the Phoenix Rising Group are grateful to be able to support CCF and the important work they are doing to advance children's cancer research," said Scott Folkens, CEO of Phoenix Rising Group.

Throughout April, wine and spirits retailers across the three states offered tastings in conjunction with the promotion including Wells Discount Liquors in Baltimore, MD; Canton Crossing Wine & Spirits in Baltimore, MD; Total Wine in Laurel, MD; Wine World in Abingdon, MD; Friendship Wine Spirits in Abingdon, MD; D'Vines in Washington, DC; and Montgomery County Wine & Spirits stores. A complete list of participating retailers can be found at <http://bit.ly/ShareTheLoveApril>.

The "Share the Love" campaign is the second program that the Phoenix Rising Group has initiated. In December 2018, the donation program raised \$4,500 for Toys for Tots.

For more information about the "Share the Love" campaign, visit [www.phoenixrisinggroupinc.com](http://www.phoenixrisinggroupinc.com). ■



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Maryland • Washington, DC

# Beverage Journal

Published Monthly by  
**The Beverage Journal, Inc.**  
(USPS# PE 783300)

Over 80 Years of Continuous Publication

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**THE BEVERAGE JOURNAL, INC.**

P.O. Box 159, Hampstead, MD 21074-0159

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**Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, MD** and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: MD edition; 1 year \$45.00 plus tax, 2 years \$75.00 plus tax, 3 years \$100.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$10.00 plus tax. DC edition; 1 year \$36.00 plus tax, 2 years \$60.00 plus tax, 3 years \$83.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$5.00 plus tax.

The opinions expressed by guest columnists are their own and not necessarily those of The Beverage Journal, Inc. The Beverage Journal, Inc. is an affirmative action/equal opportunity corporation.

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P

new  
products

### 1. GRAND MARNIER 'CUVÉE LOUIS ALEXANDRE'

Grand Marnier is extending their Grand Cuvée Range with Cuvée Louis Alexandre. Created to honor Louis-Alexandre Marnier Lapostolle, the Parisian visionary who first taught all of us to "Live Grand," this new VSOP expression features bold citrus flavors softened by notes of oak and vanilla. Cuvée Louis Alexandre is a blend of 82% Cognac and 18% orange liqueur; 80 proof. Available in select quantities nationally, with the majority available in NY, FL, GA and Washington, DC.

**\$ SRP: \$69.99**

**campariamerica.com**

### 4. YALUMBA 'SAMUEL'S COLLECTION' WINES

A new range imported by Winebow honors Yalumba founder Samuel Smith and celebrates the legacy and estate he established 170 years ago this year. A "gateway" to Yalumba's premium portfolio, the collection includes Eden Valley Viognier 2017, Barossa Shiraz 2017 and Barossa Bush Vine Grenache 2018. These wines showcase the varieties Barossa and Yalumba have become known for, and are produced in a youthful, generous and fresh style by winemaker Louisa Rose.

**\$ SRP: \$21**

**yalumba.com | winebow.com**

### 2. BERINGER BROS. TEQUILA BARREL AGED SAUVIGNON BLANC

Beringer Brothers, the most successful new wine brand by dollar sales in 2018, is adding a unique Sauvignon Blanc expression aged in tequila barrels, complementing current offerings of Chardonnay, Cabernet and Red Blend aged in bourbon barrels. A full suite of selling tools is available, including "Tavern" sampling kits with scented barrel blocks. All labels can be activated with the Living Wines Labels augmented reality app.

**\$ SRP: \$16.99**

**beringerbros.com**

### 5. HANSON OF SONOMA MEYER LEMON VODKA

Hanson of Sonoma is adding a Meyer lemon-infused vodka to their line-up, using fruit sourced from orchards just 25 miles from their Sonoma distillery. The zest from fresh Meyer lemon peels is sweeter and less acidic than traditional lemons; the resulting infused vodka has notes of spicy bergamot, herbs and a kick of spice. Ideal in a fresh take on the classic Lemon Drop or a summery cocktail.

**\$ SRP: \$30**

**hansonofsonoma.com**

### 3. PORTO CRUZ 'FINEST RUBY RESERVE' PORT

On the heels of the brand picking up "Best Ruby" and "Best Tawny" at the 2018 World Port Competition, Prestige Beverage Group is aiming to get Porto Cruz, already a popular brand globally, greater penetration in the U.S. market. Founded 130 years ago, the Gran Cruz house aims to balance tradition and innovation. Porto Cruz Finest Ruby Reserve displays notes of dark chocolate and dark berries, and a velvety semi-sweet finish. ABV 19%.

**\$ SRP: \$19.99**

**prestigebevgroup.com**

### 6. STRANAHAN'S 'DIAMOND PEAK' WHISKEY

Stranahan's is refining its process of making their Diamond Peak, adding the finishing process known as solera, typically used in making Sherry. Following four years in American oak barrels, Master Distiller Rob Dietrich transfers the whiskey into a larger 620-gallon barrel; after several months, a select volume of this whiskey is bottled and newly harvested whiskey is added to the solera to replace the liquid taken.

**\$ SRP: \$69.99**

**stranahans.com**

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P

new  
products

7



8



9



10



11



12

## 7. 1000 STORIES 'PROSPECTORS' PROOF' CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The Spirits-Barrel-Aged wine category is for real. 1000 Stories is adding to the trend they helped create: Prospectors' Proof Cabernet Sauvignon joins the flagship Zinfandel and red blend among bourbon-barrel-aged wines. Guided by veteran Bonterra winemaker Bob Blue, the wine offers classic Cabernet flavors of cherries and currant with the bourbon barrel aging process adding hints of burnt sugar, vanilla, herbs and a touch of smokiness.

**\$ SRP: \$18.99**

**1000storieswines.com**

## 10. CAVIT SWEET RED

The newest addition to the popular Cavit Collection is Cavit Sweet Red, a proprietary blend of indigenous grapes from northeast Italy that offers fresh, fruity aromas and flavors of cherries and berries and a smooth finish. Cavit Sweet Red joins Pinot Noir, Riesling, Oak Zero Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Moscato, Select Red Blend, Rosé, Prosecco and Pinot Grigio in the Cavit Collection.

**\$ SRP: \$9.99/750ml | \$14.99/1.5L**

**cavit.com | palmbay.com**

## 8. BACARDÍ LIME

Zeroing in on warm weather months, Bacardí is rolling out a new flavor: Lime. Just like the brand's other flavors, Bacardí Lime begins with a base of Bacardí Superior white rum and is then infused with natural lime flavors, providing an intense flavor with aromas of lime zest and bright citrus notes. Besides its natural appeal for a variety of lime-accented cocktails, Bacardí Lime, when mixed with soda, is only 74 calories. 64 proof.

**\$ SRP: \$12.99**

**bacardi.com**

## 11. ROE & CO IRISH WHISKEY

Adding momentum to Irish Whiskey's ascent, Diageo has launched Roe & Co—positioning it as a unique foundation for mixologists. Created in partnership between Diageo Master Blender Caroline Martin and five top Dublin bartenders, the project hit European bars in 2017. Its release here post-St. Patrick's Day, and just in time for World Whiskey Day, speaks to the brand's intent to advocate for Irish whiskey's contribution to cocktail culture. 90 proof.

**\$ SRP: \$33.99**

**roeandcowhiskey.com**

## 9. LEGENT BOURBON

Beam Suntory's newest bourbon breaks new ground in whiskey, uniting West and East—expertly distilled by Fred Noe, Master Distiller of Jim Beam, and artfully blended by Shinji Fukuyo, fifth-ever Chief Blender of Suntory. Legent (pronounced "lee-jent") starts as a Kentucky straight bourbon then is aged in wine and Sherry casks before being blended with more Kentucky Straight Bourbon, resulting in a balanced yet complex and layered whiskey. Enjoy neat, on the rocks or in cocktails. 94 proof.

**\$ SRP: \$34.99**

**legentbourbon.com**

## 12. WATERMELON SPARKLETINI BY VERDI

Carriage House Imports, Ltd. has launched Watermelon Sparkletini by Verdi in two sizes. Made with all natural watermelon flavors, this bubbly Spumante has a light, refreshing watermelon taste, perfect for whenever and wherever people want a fun, fruity sparkling beverage. Watermelon joins the Sparkletini line-up of Strawberry, Raspberry, Peach and Green Apple, as well as Verdi Original and Rosa Spumante. ABV 5%.

**\$ SRP: \$5.99/750ml | \$9.99/1.5L**

**verdispumante.com**

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BY DUNCAN H. CAMERON



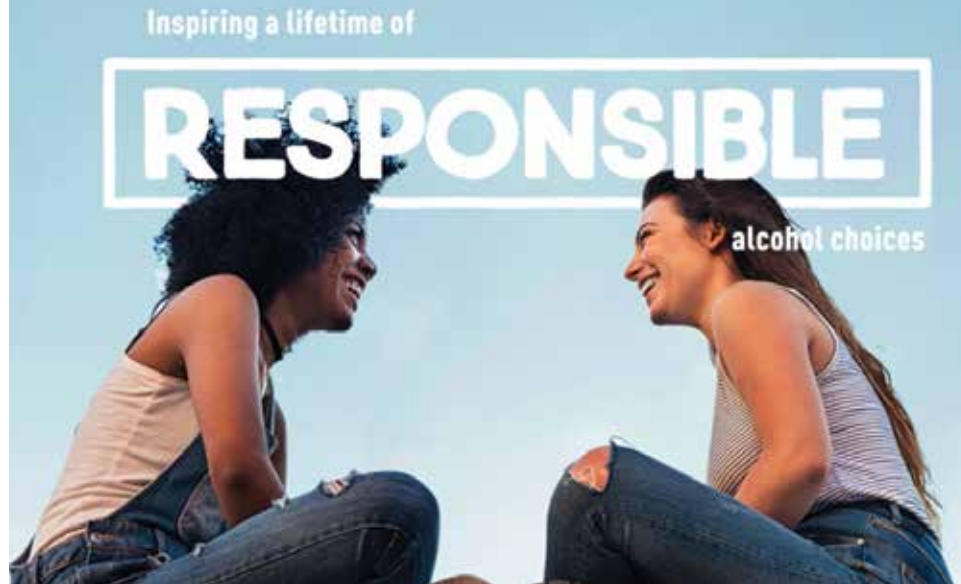
## NEW STUDY HIGHLIGHTS WHOLESALER ECONOMIC IMPACT...

Family-owned wine and spirits wholesalers in the U.S. deliver wine and spirits from every corner of the world to local restaurants, bars and stores- and are a major economic engine, according to a new study.

According to the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) President and CEO Michelle Korsmo. "... the nation's wine and spirits distributors directly employ 88,000 Americans who earn a collective \$7.5 billion in annual wages- a 19 percent increase in jobs and an added billion dollars in wages in just two years' time. Wholesalers are part of an industry that generates \$77.5 billion in tax revenue each year."

This data is part of a new industry economic impact study and coincides with the launch of the newly-designed [WSWA.org](http://WSWA.org) website, which tells the story of wholesalers and the three-tier system while highlighting the value and uniqueness of America's beverage alcohol system.

You will find information on their web site that will be helpful to your local education



efforts. WSWA's industry economic impact analysis and ongoing studies are prepared by John Dunham & Associates based in Brooklyn, N.Y.

## 5 SECOND AGING...

According to Esquire magazine, Pabst Blue Ribbon will soon launch a whiskey. They claim it will be made in a style that founder Jacob Best was experimenting with in the 1800s. The goal was to make an unaged whiskey. After being informed by regulators that they could not call it whiskey unless it was aged, they found out that just about any age would do. So they designed a system to process their whiskey through a barrel, spending just 5 seconds in wood. That's enough to call it whiskey! The clear liquid may prompt some confusion as it carves out a pretty unique niche in the whiskey world. *Perhaps they could call it Fresh Whiskey?*

## THINKING RESPONSIBLY...

Responsibly is the theme of a new digital media campaign launched recently by Responsibility.org (formerly known as the Century Council) in partnership with Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS).

The campaign, geared toward millennials of legal purchase age who choose to drink, aims to increase their intention to drink responsibly through messages that underscore responsible drinking decisions.

As part of the campaign, Think Responsibly ads will encourage online site visitors to take a quiz on responsible drinking. The quiz, along with online messages, will be measured to determine how well the campaign lifts a millennial's intention to drink responsibly.

Think Responsibly was fine-tuned by extensive qualitative and quantitative research



to better understand millennials' attitudes around alcohol consumption. While most respondents feel fine about their drinking, they acknowledge there are times they could be more responsible. The research found that first and foremost, "drink responsibly" means don't drive drunk and don't embarrass yourself.

"This campaign provides an excellent opportunity for all tiers in the alcohol industry to work together on an important new social responsibility program," said [Responsibility.org](#) and Distilled Spirits Council President and CEO Chris Swonger. "We all share the same commitment to responsibility and by partnering with WSWA and directly with our wholesale partners, we will be able to extend our reach and get this important message out to millennials across the country. Everyone should drink responsibly but also think responsibly." Swonger invited additional participation in the campaign from all segments of the industry.



### MADD GOES LOW ...

Michigan has become the fourth state this year to begin considering legislation that would lower the legal blood-alcohol limit for driving by 40% from 0.08 to 0.05 BAC—a change that could have a chilling effect on sales at restaurants and bars.

This also marks the first time Mothers Against Drunk Driving has come out in favor of the proposal—pivoting from their previous consistent support of a 0.08 BAC limit. Is this trend headed elsewhere?

### VOLVO IS WATCHING...

The Swedish carmaker with a reputation for safety innovation is taking it to the next level. Volvo has announced their plan to install technology in cars that can detect if the driver is drunk.

Starting next year all new vehicles will have cameras and sensors to spot if the motorist is showing signs of being over the limit.

Cars will slow down before automatically contacting the Volvo call center - and the vehicle may even park itself if the driver is unresponsive! They are not saying if it can call you an Uber! The new safety features are part of the manufacturer's pledge to eliminate all passenger deaths.

As well as detecting whether the motorist is intoxicated, the cars will also be able to intervene if the driver appears tired or distracted by checking a mobile phone - one of the biggest factors causing road accidents.

The announcement comes after Volvo said recently that it would introduce a 112 mph speed limit on all new vehicles.

### CELEBRATE MAY...

May has been recognized as NATIONAL TAVERN MONTH since 1953.

It is a good time to remind customers and government officials that taverns have been a staple of business, socializing and leisure from the earliest years of the settlement of the United States. According to the 2016 Economic Impact Study of America's Beer, Wine & Spirits Retailers, direct retail alcohol sales for on-premise, licensed establishments account for as many as 1.41 million jobs; \$35.9 billion in wages and benefits; and more than \$76 billion in economic impact annually! ■

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# GEORGIA RISING

## HANDS-ON IMPORTER SPOTLIGHTS UNIQUE WINES FROM FORMER SOVIET UNION

BY TEDDY DURGIN

**T**he wines of Georgia are having a moment in the U.S. market right now. While their market share is growing—double digits off a small base—their impact is felt more profoundly in the way that the wines of this former Soviet Republic have captured the imagination of the American wine trade.

Georgia hits all the right marks: Producing natural and organic wines (long before they mattered in this market), home to a treasure trove of over 500 grape varieties, and unique production methods like the *kvevri*, the egg-shaped clay vessels that Georgian vintners traditionally bury underground which create amber-hued orange wines that sommeliers covet today.

This fascinating wine region has been producing wine for over 8,000 years, but Soviet rule was catastrophic for Georgia's viticulture tradition, as the state mandated that many of the indigenous grapes to be ripped out in favor of a few higher-yielding—and often

less interesting—varieties. Yet family plots of more interesting grapes remained, enabling the industry to rebuild itself after it seceded from the Soviet rule in 1991.

One man who should know is Konstantin Khizder, President of Interbalt Products Corp. His Gaithersburg, MD-based company has been in business since 2002, importing and distributing beer, wine and spirits from all over the globe. Among the firm's most popular products are Georgian wines.

As Khizder explains, Georgia's notoriety as an ancient winemaking culture is actually recent news: "Around three years ago, scientists found archaeological evidence that proved Georgia's long winemaking history. They discovered clay winemaking vessels, known as *kvevri*, all over the countryside and still containing the seeds of ancient grapes!"

Georgia is currently second, in terms of volume, in grape production in the former Soviet Union, trailing only Moldova. The wine there is currently produced by hundreds of small farmers, along with some modern wineries and a number of monasteries. For the most part, traditional techniques of winemaking are used.

### Weather On Their Side

Khizder notes that Georgia's location on the map and its year-round climate conditions are optimal for winemaking, with moist air courtesy of the nearby Black Sea. Weather extremes are highly unusual. The summers are generally sunny, and the winters are more mild



With more than 500 grape varieties and an 8,000-year-old winemaking tradition, Georgia is finally being discovered in the U.S. market.

than you would think and largely frost-free in many areas. In addition, natural springs abound, with various Caucasian Mountain streams draining mineral-rich water into the valleys.

"Many tourists from Europe and the United States are now going to Georgia," Khizder notes. "They are seeing that Georgia is a country not only with great wines, but great hospitality, great culture, and great people."

The soil in many of Georgia's vineyards is intensively cultivated. So much so that the grapevines grow up the trunks of fruit trees and clusters eventually hang down when they ripen—a method of cultivation known as *maglari*.

Yet, still, traditional Georgian grape varieties remain little-known in much of the world. Fortunately, in recent years, the wines of Eastern and Central Europe have come to greater international awareness. As a result, grapes from Georgia are becoming better known also.

### Organic Bonus

Khizder's InterBalt introduced the first organic wines from Georgia to the United States, from two producers: Artevani and Shumi. Both are located in the historic Kakheti region and work with organically grown Saperavi grapes. "We have a certificate from FDA in the United States and from an agency in Europe who monitor plants for up to five years," says



Huge clay vessels called *kvevri* are unique to Georgian viticulture; they are either buried below ground or set into the floors of large cellars.

# Tooters!

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Georgia is now documented as the world's first winemaking culture—8,000 years old; many of the vineyard and winery practices retain ancient ties.

Khizder. “They are very strict about what is organic and what is not. Georgia also has very good dessert wines and ice wines that compare favorably to the popular Canadian and German brands.”

There are five primary regions of viticulture in the country, with the principal indeed being Kakheti. It produces roughly 70% of Georgia's grapes. Georgian wines traditionally carry the name of the source region, village or district, similar to such French regional wines as C tes-du-Rh ne and Bordeaux. As with those French wines, Georgian wines are often a blend of two or more grapes with the semi-sweet varieties among the most popular.

Interbalt located in suburban Maryland, operates in Maryland, Washington and Virginia, serving restaurants, packaged goods stores, clubs and numerous embassies. “For our company, there is a great opportunity to be a pioneer in bringing Georgian wines to the United States,” Khizder remarks. “In [the coming] years, we would like to see every store of ours have a minimum of one wine from Georgia. This is a huge challenge for us.”

Of course, it all comes down to knowing who to sell to. To this end, Khizder concludes: “Sales are growing not only for people between ages 40 and 60, but

also among Millennials. It's something new for them. Today, when we introduce our wines, many of our customers don't know anything about Georgia. We say, ‘Georgia is a state, but it's also a country. It's a former republic from the Soviet Union.’ And as soon as they taste the wines, those who didn't know anything about Georgia are surprised that the wine is so delicious and that there is such a rich story behind it. People love hearing stories, and that's how they are becoming fans.” ■

Interbalt Georgian wines are distributed in MD/DC by Interbalt Products Corp. (301) 793-1818.



Konstantin Khizder, President of Interbalt Products Corp., has been importing Georgian wines for more than a decade; awards and awareness are both on the rise.

### DISCOVERY GRAPES

More than three dozen are officially grown for commercial viticulture in the country; the most important among them:

- **Ojaleshi**, a dark grape cultivated on the slopes overhanging the banks of the Tskhenis-Tskali River
- **Usakhelauri**, cultivated primarily in the Zubi-Okureshi district in Western Georgia
- **Saperavi**, which produces deep red wines that are suitable for extended aging (up to five decades); used extensively for blending with other lesser varieties



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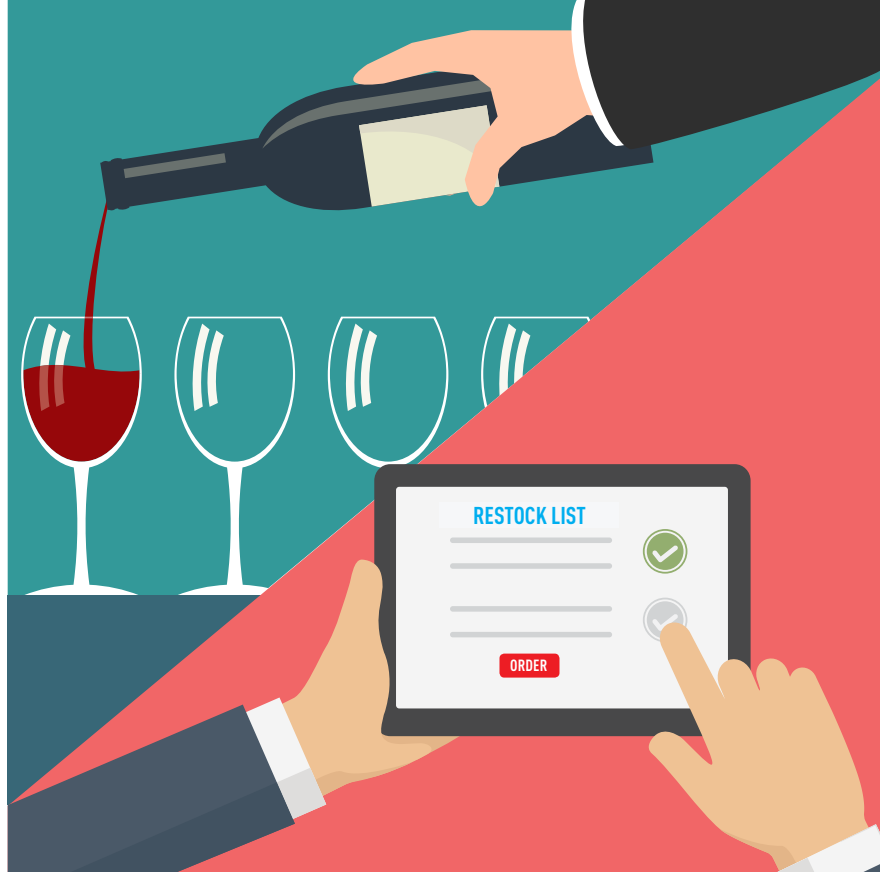
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# PULLING DOUBLE DUTY

AS LABOR COSTS RISE, GM AND BEVERAGE DIRECTOR DUTIES CONVERGE...AT A PRICE?

BY COURTNEY SCHIESSL



**F**rom New York to California, minimum wages are rising for both tipped and non-tipped workers, and restaurants are feeling the squeeze. While opinions abound about the minimum wage discussion, one thing is certain: restaurants are cutting back on labor to make ends meet.

Whether establishments are opting for counter service or consolidating multiple positions into one, service roles in

## Juggling many different tasks can lead to a few of those balls getting dropped.

restaurants are changing. Increasingly, restaurants are folding beverage management in with general management.

“The sommelier and manager roles are merging,” says James O’Brien, owner, general manager and beverage director of Popina in Brooklyn, NY. “Labor and rent are killing restaurants, so cutting back on labor is a must, and unfortunately, sommeliers are the first to go.”

Faced with a position that combines two of the most time-consuming front-of-house restaurant roles, how can the singular general manager-beverage director oversee engaging, profitable wine programs while managing a restaurant’s other operations?

### Planning Time Carefully

Hiring a beverage director that also serves as the general manager decreases labor costs, but it also saves money elsewhere in the restaurant’s operations. “Having a GM do the wine list allows him or her to budget just like they would on labor or materials,” says O’Brien, who jokes that enthusiastic wine professionals can be like kids in a candy shop when it comes to buying. “It’s good to have someone budgeting because restaurant profits are marginal, so staying in line with that budget could keep you in business.”

But juggling many different tasks could lead to a few of those balls getting dropped—a situation that may cost the restaurant more money in the end. At the most basic level, being a successful GM-beverage director is about time management. “You need to organize yourself and your time,” says Thierry Carrier, the beverage director and general manager of Avenue Restaurant in Long Branch, NJ. He suggests creating a daily routine in order to build beverage planning time into off-peak hours.

When a beverage director also takes on the role of general manager, it often makes sense to keep the wine selection

James O’Brien of Popina admits “unfortunately, sommeliers are the first to go.”



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TC Whysall at Red Pump Kitchen suggests working on larger projects during slower parts of the year.



consistent, freeing up time for other tasks. However, doing this can cause the wine list to risk seeming stale. “A great way to stay ahead of that is to work on larger projects during slower parts of the year,” says TC Whysall, the general manager and beverage director for Red Pump Kitchen in Charlottesville, VA. By doing a larger overhaul of the program during the slow season, a GM-beverage director can take advantage of extra time to reinvigorate the list.

Carrier agrees: “The wine program at Avenue has been worked on over the winter months so it’s ready to go by mid-April.” He adds that after the slow months, the list is updated, by-the-glass wines are selected, and storage is planned out. When planning for future



Thierry Carrier of Avenue emphasizes smart time management.

## Investing in team members at the restaurant can also lighten the workload.

ordering, it is also important to be selective when choosing which vendors to work with. “Finding distributors with a good book helps a lot as well,” O’Brien notes. “Don’t waste your time trying to meet minimums.”

Similarly, with wholesalers that have a diverse portfolio, replenishing a list can often be achieved by working with the rep when a wine needs to be substituted. Swapping a South African Sauvignon Blanc for a Chilean one, for instance, or a Mâcon and a Vin de France, can be done hitting similar price and style points.

### Finding Resources in People and Wines

When time is stretched thin, it’s essential to build a strong network of people to support the restaurant, both in-house and at vendor partners. “I know you can’t always pick your reps,” O’Brien says, “but

finding ones that you trust helps a ton.” As the owner, general manager, and beverage director, O’Brien admits that while he loves to curate the wine program, tasting is often least prioritized. “Sometimes I defer to my reps, and I’m usually super happy with the results,” he says. “They know what I look for, and they don’t waste my time.”

Investing in team members at the restaurant can also lighten the workload while simultaneously preparing them for the changing labor structure of restaurants. “Involving your employees in the program is helpful,” Carrier says. Spending a small amount of time educating staff members on the wine list and its operations allows them to manage the day-to-day sales and functions of the beverage program more independently.

This also creates a stronger hospitality workforce in the long run. “The more versatile a person can be, the better, right?” O’Brien says. “In the current restaurant environment, it’s imperative to cross-train employees.”

As the cost of labor rises and restaurant structures change, when it comes to current-day restaurant management, running a successful beverage program may depend as much as on being efficient and business-minded as on knowing your AVAs and AOCs. ■



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# PINK PIPELINE

## TAKING STOCK OF WINE'S INCREASINGLY CROWDED ROSÉ CATEGORY

BY KIT PEPPER

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Although rosé has undeniably become a year-round category, the bona fide rosé season starts with the first warm day of spring. Even in pink strongholds, rosé sales see a big summertime boost. But will it be big enough to consume all the pink wine in the market?

From the trade's perspective, the release of fresh rosé has become a complex science. But tracking the changing forces of supply and demand suggests a market rich with opportunities—especially for buyers.

Indeed, the relative ease of pink wine production and the allure of pink profits have swelled the supply side, giving on- and off-premise buyers who pay attention to availability and pricing an advantage.

### FEBRUARY: THE EARLY BIRDS

Rosé sales in the United States increased in value over 40% in the 52 weeks to April 2018, according to Nielsen. By 2017 rosé was growing faster in the U.S. market than the red and white wine categories, and even sparkling wine and spirits (Euromonitor). Clearly consumers are buying more rosé, but hidden behind these figures is the sheer breadth of rosé available, with hundreds of new products introduced in just the past two years.

The problem, points out Daniel Hubbard, National Portfolio Manager

for M.S. Walker, is “Everybody’s making rosé, but that doesn’t mean that the retailer’s shelf space is increasing to satisfy the amount of available rosé in the market.” Even with dedicated rosé sections now commonplace, SKUs are far outstripping shelf slots.

One result is a jostling for attention early in the season when the big chains plan their commitments. “For your broad market, big box type retail store, they’re not really looking in March and April for rosé on a deal—they want to be the first ones with the freshest, the fastest, and the catchiest type of labels they can also make the longest margins on,” says Hubbard.

Sutter Home, last century’s White Zin king is adding two new sizes of rosé this summer (500ml Tetra and 1.5L). // Provence continues to develop appealing packages and present a pure, crisp, pale pink style. // Delicato Family Wines’ Bota Box, leading the 3L rosé pack, is growing at 102%. // Everything turned up pink on “Rosévelt Island” on April Fools Day, thanks to Three Olives Rosé Vodka. // Kim Crawford became America’s top New Zealand rosé import in its first vintage. // Muddy Boots is part of Bronco Wine Co.’s offering of multiple rosés, from California and beyond.

“They’re shutting off what they’re going to buy sometimes as early as May and saying ‘I’m done for the year.’” The earlier a wine is available, the more likely it will be first in the door with the big players.

### LOOK BACK FOR BARGAINS

Another salient factor in the rosé market this spring: the transition of vintage. As of April 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year, according to the New York Metro database of Beverage Media, the number of 2017 vintage rosés outnumbered the 2018s by 673 to 557. That’s a lot of last year’s juice to be sold—and with deep discounts to clear out stock, there are deals to be found in March through May.

Harry Constantinescu, General Manager at The Juice Box Fine Wine & Spirits, in Atlanta, is one of many retailers who take advantage of pricing on the previous vintage to do a stack or a special offer early in the season. “It’s a money maker,” he says, “We wouldn’t pass on the opportunity.”

On-premise, this yields both a great margin for the house and a good value on a better glass of wine for the customer, according to Charles Schneider, Wine Director of Webster’s Wine Bar in Chicago: “You could run a very successful rosé program just based upon buying close-outs of the past year’s rosés and people would be very, very satisfied.”



The signature elongated Provence bottle shape has gained broad recognition among rosé fans. Above, from left, examples from: Aimé Roquesante, B & G ("Tourmaline"), Âme du Vin and Château Minuty ("M de Minuty").

### JULY SURPLUSES: ACROSS THE QUALITY SPECTRUM

Grabbing those past-season wines makes sense for buyers, says Hubbard. "They're hedging bets that there are still going to be other opportunities out there, which they're entirely correct about." As some bigger outlets realize their spring commitments haven't sold through as expected, surpluses start to appear in June

and July—resulting in favorable pricing on this year's wines.

Of course, branded wines like Meiomi or Whispering Angel follow a different set of rules, as do the classic rosés, like Domaine Tempier, with a dedicated audience. But most of the rosés out there are individual sales, and by August it becomes obvious which of them will be fantastic values the next April and May—if they have the staying power—and the quality.

At the same time, the pink tsunami has resulted in an increasing amount of poor quality rosé hitting the marketplace as producers around the world seek to take advantage of the trend. Poorly made versions—which were never great to begin with—age even less well, so it's critical to taste before you buy, no matter how tempting the close-out deal.

### A MATTER OF BALANCE

With a flood of rosé in the pipeline, balancing timing, price and quality has be-



Other French producers such as Paul Mas in Languedoc, are opting for colorful labels with bolder type and graphics.

come easier, both on-premise and off. And what do customers want? If it's "rosé every day," they may soon have their wish, as the pink wine supply overflows its season.

For the meantime, savvy retailers are approaching the pink season with a blend of optimism and attentiveness. ■

### PINK EXPANSION PULSE CHECK

Is anyone surprised to hear that "Experience Rosé: The 2019 Competition" has opened up categories for cider, spirits and more? The power of pink has spilled well beyond wine. Prepackaged rosé is a reality now; as are rosé ciders (Brosé, anyone?). There are RTD spritzers that contain not a drop of wine. Chains sell Welch's "rosé" juice (usually not far from the rosé lip balm). There is even a rosé energy drink.

Aside from publicity stunts and kitsch, at its core—there are many signs that rosé is still strengthening as a category.

**Upscaling and diversity ramp up.** Whispering Angel has become a call brand, a flag-bearer for Provence—and it is not cheap. This



has contributed to a fairly soft ceiling for rosé's high end. New releases from Provence as well as well-known regions (e.g., Russian River Valley, Santa Barbara, Willamette Valley) are stepping confidently over \$20 SRP. Meanwhile, more and more rosés are now coming from surprising regions—Greece, Portugal, Argentina, Chile, New Zealand... Offbeat grapes are usually never mentioned on labels; Pinot Noir, however, has become a proud point of distinction, even when hailing from an unusual source, as in the case of Clean Slate from Germany.

**Image matters.** Naturally more photogenic than red or white wine, and powered by Instagram and other social media, rosé has become a cultural phenomenon for its photo opportunities alone. Dena Haberbosch, self-dubbed



"Queen of Rosé" at Yankee Spirits' Sturbridge, MA location, notes that their store now has an entire aisle of rosé—and that shoppers snap selfies of themselves among the rows of colorful wines.

**Packaging counts too.** The industry has played its part upholding rosé's image, supplying packages that fill a spectrum from playful and casual to bold and colorful to enticingly elegant. On top of designs, formats are also expanding, particularly large formats and cans.

**Brands show clout.** On the supply end, no one is making less rosé. And while few brands have separated, it is worth noting that well-known brands are showing their strength. One way is by extending a strong varietal line into rosé;



Kim Crawford basically went from zero-to-sixty with their Pinot Noir Rosé; it became the nation's best-selling rosé in its first vintage (2017). And consider Palm Bay's Cavit Rosé; they are adding 187ml four-packs this year, in time for summer. Ruffino, which first released a rosé bubbly in 2016, is another strong brand expanding; they just added sparkling rosé 187mls in three-packs.

**Provence on top.** At Yankee Spirits, Haberbosch believes that rosé loyalists are not as brand-specific as they are style-aware. In this, people have come to understand and elevate the crisp, dry, pale-pink Provence model. She says it is the only rosé region right now that commands a higher price point with relative ease.



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# PREPPING FOR PINK SUCCESS

## 8 THINGS TO KNOW ENTERING ROSÉ SEASON 2019

BY JEFF SIEGEL

**J**ason Hisaw, a sommelier who is the Texas state portfolio manager for distributor RNDC in Houston, has been selling rosé a long time. And he has never seen the pink wine business quite like it is in 2019. “It’s completely piloting through the sky, and there is no slowing it down,” says Hisaw. “These days, you need a rosé if you’re going to be relevant in the wine business. And I know no one would have said that in years before.”



So yes, the rosé boom is still booming—much to the surprise of many of the people selling it. It’s one thing for rosé to be trendy, but trends happen all the time. Remember Moscato? In this, few expected rosé to hang around as long as it has—and, perhaps even more surprisingly, pink wine may well be entering the mainstream.

“Every year, it seems like I have to ramp up our rosé selection,” says Amy Mundwiler, the Wine Director at Maple & Ash, a Chicago steakhouse. “And I have to find more rare rosés. We just can’t have one or two any more.”

Provence has done a remarkable job of maintaining their image as the spiritual homeland of dry rosé. But the truth is that tasty dry rosé is being made all over the world, from practically all red grapes; for instance, Portillo is Argentine Malbec rosé.

Know these eight things about rosé as the new vintages hit store shelves and restaurant wine lists:

**1 Sales show no signs of slowing.** Rosé’s 2018 increase far outpaced any other category, including the still popular red blends category. And as rosé thrives, White Zinfandel—once the U.S. pink wine staple—slides further, down 8% in value and 10% in volume.

**2 Big Wine is into it.** Large suppliers are getting into rosé in the way it once embraced White Zinfandel. Charles Bieler, who makes rosé for three brands—his family’s Bieler Père et Fils in Provence; Charles & Charles in Washington state, and Three Thieves in California—says the proliferation of grocery store pink has been one of the biggest surprises he has seen as part of the rosé boom. Big producers, many of whom were late to rosé, seem to be catching up with two, three, even four different brands spread among their lineups.



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**3 Previous vintages matter.** The rule of thumb for rosé was not to trust older vintages, and certainly nothing older than two years. But no longer, says Patrick Mata of Olé Imports, a leading Spanish wine importer. “We see accounts and consumers buying rosés from prior vintages,” he says. “Now we get phone calls from retailers and restaurants asking if we have 2016 or 2017 rosés that age well.” Several distributors said this was the first year in memory they didn’t need to close-out the previous vintage.

**4 Rosé is no longer an “afterthought.”** In many wine regions, rosé was historically produced by “bleeding” off a portion of red wine juice, a practice which results in red wines with greater concentration. Rosés made this way—the saignée method—are bolder and much darker in

## THE BIG PINK PICTURE

How does the rosé market look from the top? Here is some overarching-category perspective from Dave Lane, President and COO of Terlato Wines, who both produce or import a half-dozen rosés: “Rosé has clearly arrived and is here to stay as a category. Sales continue to rise through penetration into more households largely driven by millennial and affluent consumers. With expanding size and trial it is pushing out to all channels and all demographic groups. Spring and summer seasons are still peak consumption times for rosé. However, with the rise in overall penetration and sales, the volume in less traditional fall and winter windows is rising as well. This is especially true in large coastal markets Florida, Texas and California.”

color with lower acidity. As the demand for rosé has grown—specifically the Provence style of rosé with its pale pink hue and high acidity—producers are setting out to make rosé intentionally, and as a result, the quality is better. “Winemakers are growing grapes specifically for rosé, and not making it from juice left over from something else,” explains Jed Boyar, wine buyer for Dandelion Wine, a small shop in Brooklyn. This gives rosé great freshness and more savory notes, he adds, which is the style most rosé consumers are looking for today.

**5 Premiumization is coming.** The other rule of thumb for rosé in the old days? There was no need to spend more than \$10 for a quality bottle. In 2019, though, expect prices for typical rosés to range from \$12 to \$16, with significant growth in more expensive pink wines, including \$50 and up to \$200. And, notes Boyar, \$20 rosés may be worth the extra cost in a way that \$20 red wines aren’t. “The more expensive rosés are more interesting, as they should be because they are more expensive,” he says. Adds Mundwiler: “Consumers are willing to pay more based on where the wine is from and who is making it”—something else she hasn’t necessarily seen in year’s past, and that moves rosé squarely into the mainstream.

**6 California is ramping up production.** Provence, the spiritual home of rosé, still tops consumer preference, say those who work on- and off-premise. But production of California rosé is increasing rapidly. First, there’s more of it being made, and second, wine drinkers who associate California with quality reds and whites want to stick with California wine as they make the move to rosé. And,

Rosé seems empowered in the Instagram Age, with the concept spilling well beyond wine, to cider and other beverages—reinforcing the popularity of rosé wine in all of its forms and formats. Year-round success of Campo Viejo Cava Brut Rosé is setting the stage for a new still rosé coming in June, from Spain’s Navarra region. Mathilde Chapoutier Rosé, a Côtes de Provence, is a blend of mostly Rhône grapes plus Cabernet Sauvignon.

for those hipsters who can find what little there is of it, Austrian rosé, made with the Zwiegelt grape, looks set to be the trendiest pink in 2019.

**7 Producers seem committed to keeping rosé “rosé.”** That is: fresh, crisp and light, and not heavy, hot and oaky. In other words, the sort of thing that happened to Chardonnay. “No, the wine business hasn’t screwed rosé up yet—although anything is possible,” says Dandelion Wine’s Boyar with a laugh. Other retail and restaurant buyers agree with his assessment, since rosé’s selling point—besides its picturesque color—is its lightness and freshness.

**8 Keep an eye on pink periphery.** Rosé’s spiritual homeland of Provence has done a bang-up job of maintaining market share and image while the rest of the industry churns out more pink wines to catch the wave. This may be the summer we see whether the power of pink truly extends to other beverages.

Big spirits suppliers adding pink to their portfolios include Beefeater and Malfy gins; and Three Olives and Svedka vodkas. The Svedka entry is especially interesting as the liquid contains 5% rosé wine and the 2019 launch has been supported by ads with cheeky taglines like “Vodka with a Wine Fetish.” ■



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# WHEN SPICE IS NICE

ORIGINALLY A SPIN-OFF, SPICED RUM CARVES OUT ITS STAKE IN THE RUM WORLD

BY AMANDA SCHUSTER

**S**piced rum as a commercial category is a modern invention. Yes, spice has been added to rum since its very beginnings, centuries ago, but the purpose of those spices was primarily to mask flaws and poor quality in the spirit, and the rum was for private consumption.

Comb through vintage classic cocktail books and the pantheon of Tiki—Trader Vic's or Don the Beachcomber, etc.—and you'll find rum, but spiced rum is absent as a recipe ingredient. If spice was called for in



## OTHER RUM HOT SPOTS

As a category, rum is not growing like brown spirits—all the more reason for bars and shops to recognize the spirit's iconic drinks and trending sub-categories.

**Need-to-know tipples.** Rum has a short but potent list of classic cocktails. Hot **toddies** are staples in ski lodges; and **Tiki** has resurged in popularity among mixologists; but rum's real calling is arguably tropical refreshers:

**Mojitos, Daiquiris and Piña Coladas.** Two other drinks were so important that they wound up in court: Bacardi defended its inclusion as the official rum of the **Cuba Libre** (Rum and Coke) in court; and Gosling's recently trademarked the **Dark 'N Stormy**, establishing their Black Seal Rum as the base.



**Island vibe.** Flavored rums have proliferated in recent decades, but Pernod Ricard's **Malibu** brand has carved out a solid niche of its own as a lower-alcohol (42 proof) blend of rum and coconut liqueur. Malibu gained a reputation for mixability as well as a following for multiple RTD expressions spun off from the original recipe.

**Cream rises.** The sub-category of Rum Creams is growing. The continued success of **RumChata**, in multiple expressions and formats, has helped that brand become a hit on- and off-premise. And surprisingly, **Blue Chair Bay** found a huge hit in their Key Lime Rum Cream.

**Serious sipping.** Not to be overlooked, **Aged Rums** making their way on to neat spirits lists offer significant value compared to single malts Cognac, and bourbon. Examples include **Santa Teresa 1796** and **Diplomatico Reserva Exclusiva** from Venezuela; **Auténtico Nativo** from Panama; and **Bacardi Ocho**.



Sailor Jerry, Brinley Gold Shipwreck and The Kraken are among many rums that lean on seafaring imagery for their brand identity. Don Q released their Oak Barrel Spiced as an upscale addition to the portfolio; it's a blend of rums aged at least 3 years in American white oak barrels and bottled at 90 proof. Above: Maggie Campbell of Privateer Rum in Massachusetts, one of many craft rum producers in America.

a drink it was added in other ways such as syrups, infusions or bitters. It wasn't until 1984, when Captain Morgan first set sail, that pre-spiced rum became a thing, particularly a thing to add to cola, but not much else. However, a new wave of spiced rums have come to shore—and no soft drinks are necessary to enjoy them.

What sets the new era of spiced rums apart are actual spices, which tend to stay in the sweet bakery flavor spectrum—think cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, clove, citrus peel, vanilla—but just how much spice and how it gets there depends on the rum. A successful spiced rum will use high quality spices and botanicals sourced from exotic locales the world over, and genuine flavorings that are used judiciously in the spirit so they don't taste like a spice rack kitchen catastrophe or add too much sweetness.

The spice mix is commonly added as an infusion to a finished rum, much the way it was done on ships traveling the high seas back in

the day, although thankfully the quality of the rum the spice is added to has come a long way. In fact, the base rum tends to be comprised of a blend of aged rums.

### SEAFARING & SWASHBUCKLING

Given the maritime history of rum, it makes sense that many spiced rums also come with a fair share of beachcombing and yo-ho-ho-ness in their branding. These include Brinley's Shipwreck; Blue Chair Bay; Bones; The Kraken; viking-inspired Roknar from Far North Spirits; Rumbullion! (recently imported from Atom Brands); Admiral Nelson's and Blackheart (both with Heaven Hill Brands); and of course, Sailor Jerry, with its nautical themes honoring tattoo artist and former naval officer Norman Keith Collins, a.k.a. Sailor Jerry.

The rum brand was founded in the 1990s by tattoo artist friends of Collins as a tribute to the man who sailed off to higher seas in 1972 after suffering a heart attack while riding his Harley. Further re-branding and re-formulation of Sailor Jerry Spiced rum in 2010 proved to be a massive hit behind the bar, and is still a favorite go-to spiced cocktail ingredient.

Major Caribbean rum producers like Bacardi with Oakheart; Cruzan;





Chairmen's Reserve; and Don Q with its Oak Barrel Spiced (recently seen at the Last Word in Livermore, CA, in a drink blended with orgeat) have banked on rum's buccaneering past for their spiced entries. However, for a lighter spice touch, consider it a sort of gin rummy, if you will, there's Bumbu from Barbados and Boukman Botanical Rhum from Haiti. Even the darling of rum aficionados, Foursquare from Barbados, took the spice route, though with a sophisticated herbal essence overshadowing the sweet spiciness. (Incidentally, like gin, lighter spiced r(h)ums are delicious on the rocks with a simple splash of tonic and a citrus twist.)

**IN OUR OWN BACKYARD**

Spiced American rum has come almost hand in hand with the resurgence of domestic rum production. Serious, high-end spice variants hail from coast to coast—from Maggie's Farm (Pittsburgh), Cutwater Spirits (San Diego), Bayou (Lacassine, LA), Siesta Key (from Drum Circle Distilling in Sarasota), Twenty Boat (Cape Cod), Corsair (Nashville), Greenbar Distillery (Los Angeles), Sugar Island (Loma, CA) and Koloa (Kuai, HI).



Tropical-inspired concoctions with exotic fruit juices are not the only use for spiced rums. Their warm flavors make for a soothing base for hot toddies or a fun way to spice up a hot chocolate or hot

buttered rum variations. In a stirred drink, a good spiced rum will add an element of intrigue paired with some good amaro and/or vermouth and bitters.

Ask any Tiki aficionado and they'll tell you the best rum drinks require more than one type of rum to balance flavors—light and dark, sweet and herbal. It's worth experimenting with a few spiced rums to taste which ones play well with others, and which ones let their spiciness

Rumbullion!, created by the Great Britain-based firm Ableforth's, is based on Caribbean rum and infused with Madagascan vanilla, orange peel, clove, cassia and a pinch of cardamom.

stand for themselves. And with so many different artisanal cocktail mixers these days, it might be worth reverting to that classic spiced rum and cola combo after all. Or, if you like things extra spicy, a splash of ginger beer. ■

**WHITE RUM SHINES**

Clear spirits are not always so transparent—just look at white rum. Common perception is that light rum is unaged or intended only for mixing. However, plenty of clear rums are sippable in their own right... while also making a mean drink base.

Sippables from the states include BLY Silver from Pennsylvania Pure Distilleries; Colorado's Montanya Platinum; and Silver Reserve from Privateer in Ipswich, MA. "For our silver rum, we wanted something aromatic and vibrant that would shine through cocktails without it needing to be aggressive sipped straight," says Maggie Campbell, head

distiller at Privateer. "We also are fully dedicated to the 'en rama' style, meaning in the raw—our rum is unfiltered, leaving rich texture to add to your cocktail and it has no additives," including sugar. The rum also has a distinctive flavor profile because it's left three months in stainless steel (like soup, rum is best after settling).

Many Caribbean white rums, such as Plantation 3 Star, El Dorado, Denizen, Cruzan, Chairmen's Reserve, Angostura, The Real McCoy and Doorly's, are rum blends aged a couple of years or more, then charcoal-filtered for clarity. Even Owney's clear Distiller's Reserve out



of Brooklyn is blended with an aged Dominican rum. Try these in an opaque glass some time next to a dark rum such as Gosling's for a fun taste test.

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Ryan Reynolds bought Aviation Gin last year



Rita Ora just launched her tequila, Próspero, at the WSWA Convention in April.

# STARS

# SHINE ON

THE BREADTH AND INFLUENCE OF **CELEBRITY-BRANDED** WINES AND SPIRITS KEEP EVOLVING

BY W. R. TISH



Surfing star Luke Davis is one of several celebrity influencers who has partnered with Beatbox RTD party punches.



Kenny Chesney's rums fit his "No Shoes Nation" brand.



Once upon a time, celebrities made the covers of wine magazines just for drinking wine. Then they started making it. Or at least Francis Ford Coppola made it—and made it look easy. And Marilyn Merlot made it fun.

Next thing we knew, as Americans were drinking lots of different kinds of wine and spirits, brands with celebrity connections—from movie stars and musicians to athletes and politicians and porn stars—started to crop up. And never stopped. Enough Reality TV stars had wines (count 'em: 12) that a pop culture website staged a taste-off.

The star-studding of beverage alcohol extended to spirits, too. (Even the Hatfields and McCoys have a whiskey.) Indeed, it was on the liquor side where the financial clout of star power would be felt in the form of P. Diddy's Ciroc Vodka, which launched in 2007. Other star-aligned spirits that have established themselves include Dan Aykroyd's Crystal Head Vodka, Kenny Chesney's Blue

Chair Bay Rum, Sammy Hagar's Cabo Wabo Tequila and Jay Z's D'Ussé Cognac.

But there is no simple formula—otherwise, P. Diddy's tequila, DeLeón, would sell like Ciroc-cakes. And what happened with Effen Vodka and 50 Cent? Does anyone even know that Ludacris had a Cognac (Conjure); or that Martha Stewart had a wine brand; or that PitBull had/has a vodka (Voli)? And how many people know who Steven Soderbergh is (a film director), let alone his Singani 63, a Bolivian distillate of Muscat of Alexandria grapes?



Bob Dylan also provided art for Heaven's Door bottles.

## BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG WHISKEY

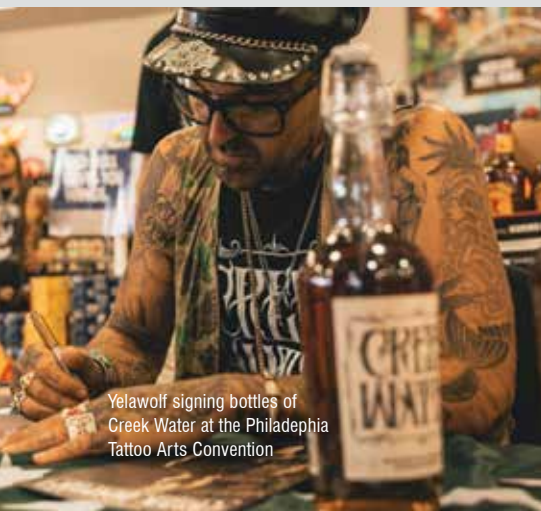
■ Bob Dylan's **Heaven's Door** is the new Kentucky thoroughbred in town. The Nobel Prize-winning musical auteur is clearly adept at whiskey selection as well. Heaven's Door expressions have snagged multiple awards and high critic's scores.

■ **Longbranch**, Wild Turkey's collaboration between Matthew McConaughey, in his role as the whiskey brand's creative director, and Master Distiller Eddie Russell, has caught fire. This small-batch Kentucky bourbon is refined with Texas mesquite and oak charcoals.

■ Conor McGregor's **Proper No. Twelve** sold out within months of being introduced last fall. The professional grappler's fan base is large and passionate, and after ironing out supply issues, Proper No. Twelve looks to have staying power, give or take McGregor's recent mumblings about retiring and brushes with the law.

■ Here's a sleeper celebrity whiskey that is both new and different. In 2018, rapper Yelawolf created and launched **Creek Water**. The whiskey is made in Durham, NC, using a patented system that enhances barrel aging so that maturation can take place in days rather than years.

■ **Blackened**, the new whiskey project from heavy metal rockers Metallica, was created with the late Dave Pickereil—a celebrity in whiskey circles. While aging, the whiskey is enhanced with its own Metallica playlist, selected and arranged by the band members.



Yelawolf signing bottles of Creek Water at the Philadelphia Tattoo Arts Convention

## WHITE SPIRITS GONE WILD

■ Country music superstar Kenny Chesney's "No Shoes Nation" is about lifestyle, not just music, so his brand **Blue Chair** extends seamlessly to his laidback, beach-y line of rums and rum creams.

■ Sovereign Brands is targeting the hip hop culture with their Panamanian **Bumbu Rum**; they created "The Bumbu Room," an online video series of no-holds-barred interviews with well-known rap artist Lil' Wayne.

■ Ryan Reynolds bought into **Aviation Gin**; now a larger-than-life version of the actor can be seen sporting a three-day beard and a gin cocktail on the sides of Southern Glazer's trucks.

■ One to watch out for in 2019: The mansion featured in the British TV drama *Downton Abbey*—**Highclere Castle**—is also the namesake for a gin. The castle and the gin are owned by George Herbert and his wife Fiona, the eighth Earl and Countess of Carnarvon. The gin is likely to get a boost from a film version of the beloved show. It is also worth noting that the couple have already launched a successful cigar line based on Highclere Castle.



Janelle Monáe

■ Crystal Head has company in the vodka arena. **Belvedere** and Janelle Monáe teamed up for "A Beautiful Future," a digital series of new content by three creative women filmmakers. Their films will be posted to Belvedere's YouTube channel starting in April and extending into other content and events for the next two years.

■ **Stillhouse**—a spirits line launched in 2009 in 750ml metal containers that resemble paint thinner—made news recently suing Bacardi. Rapper G-Eazy (part-owner since 2017) claims the rum giant backed out on a partnership deal. Stay tuned?

■ Virginia-based **Belle Premium American Vodka**, has partnered with two-time Grammy nominee saxophonist/vocalist Mindi Abair, of Mindi Abair and the Boneshakers.

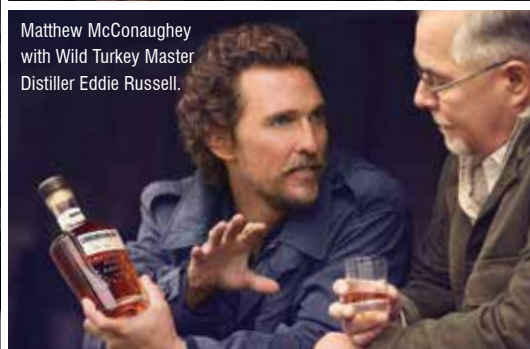
Keeping with its musical theme, each bottle of Blackened is "re-mastered."



Conor McGregor's Proper No. 12 is named after the Dublin neighborhood he grew up in.



Matthew McConaughey with Wild Turkey Master Distiller Eddie Russell.





# STARS SHINE ON

In a way, the proliferation of star-driven wines is a natural byproduct of wine's overarching boom, and a sign of alcohol, despite regulatory hurdles, becoming more in tune with of American consumer culture. But just when it seemed the idea of star-branded wines and spirits might have plateaued, the past few years have seen a spike of huge hits. George Clooney's and Rande Gerber's Casamigos Tequila and Conor McGregor's Proper No. 12 Irish Whiskey practically broke their respective bottle molds. And last summer's sudden must-have rosé was Diving

Into Hampton Water, South of France veteran Gérard Bertrand's collaboration with rocker Jon Bon Jovi and his son Jesse Bongiovi.

Predicting a hit is dicey business. It can't be just the juice in the bottle. Having a television platform never hurts, as evidenced by Avión's boost from HBO's *Entourage*. Bethenny Frankel's *Skinny Girl*—built on an audience of TV-tuned-in, calorie-counting women—effectively flipped the script; the street-savvy *Real Housewife* of New York became more famous *after* launching her brand of alcohol.



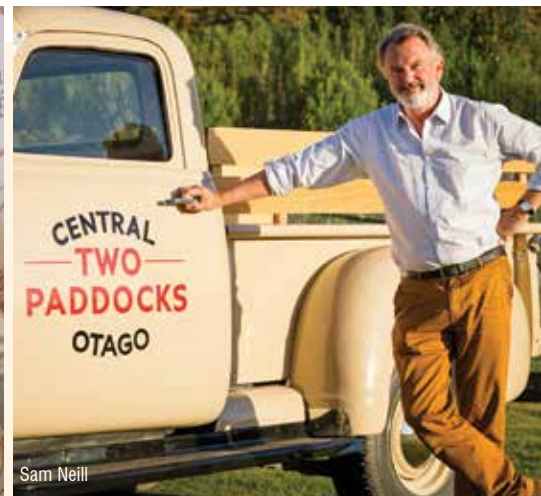
Jesse Bongiovi and Jon Bon Jovi with their smash hit rosé.



Sarah Jessica Parker



Lisa Vanderpump with her daughter, Pandora



Sam Neill

## 99 BOTTLES OF CELEBRITY WINE ON THE WALL...

■ Wine has no shortage of hands-on thespian vintners. Drew Barrymore's eponymous label, for instance, and Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's **Château Miraval**. Sam Neill's **Two Paddocks** Pinot Noirs from New Zealand are serious. Sarah Jessica Parker will be tapping into New Zealand this year, partnering with Invivo. The "**SJPIInvivo**" project brand is so new that they had not finalized the name that will appear on the label as of press time, but the plan is to launch this year.

■ Bubbly wine makes for odd table-fellows sometimes; **Licataa** is a new Lambrusco from Wu-Tang Clan's Raekwon. Drake is behind the luxury **Champagne Mod Selection**. Christie Brinkley has "Zero Sugar" **Bellissima** and **Bella Sprizz** sparklers from Italy. Usain Bolt, the world's fastest man (still?), is the global ambassador for **G.H. Mumm**. It's also worth remembering that **Sofia** sparkling wines were named after Francis Ford Coppola's daughter, Sofia Coppola.

■ Other musically connected vintages include **Ferguson Estates** (by Fergie); **Z. Alexander Brown** (Zac Brown Band); and Train's "**Save Me, San Francisco**" label. Dave Matthews inspired Constellation's

**The Dreaming Tree** line of California wines; he also owns Blenheim Estate in Virginia. Sting's Tuscan estate wines are imported in small quantities by Taub Family Selections, but his **Roxanne** is national.



■ Perhaps the best indicator that celebrity power is alive and well in wine and spirits can be seen in the ongoing success the Fine Wine & Good Spirits stores in Pennsylvania have had with bottle-signings, including **Vanderpump Rosé**. "Some huge crowds at some of our events surprised us," notes Shawn Kelly, for the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. "Having people camp out 34 hours to meet Channing Tatum [for the **Old Forester** special Kingsman edition] was not a surprise, but seeing more than 1,000 people line up at the Ardmore Fine Wine & Good Spirits Premium Collection to meet Lisa Vanderpump was somewhat unexpected. The sheer number of people who arrived at the store that morning was almost overwhelming."

Perhaps most important of all, today's digitally-fueled society has recalibrated the whole notion of celebrity. True stars can be completely unrecognizable to people who don't follow those specific genre of arts or sports. So, part of the trick for wine and spirits merchants is determining just what (and how relevant) a celebrity angle is.

There are also matters of supply and promotion. Many celebrity beverages are made in tiny quantities; so, for example, even if you did know about Pink's wine label Two Wolves, you would not be able to sell it. As for promoting a celebrity connection,

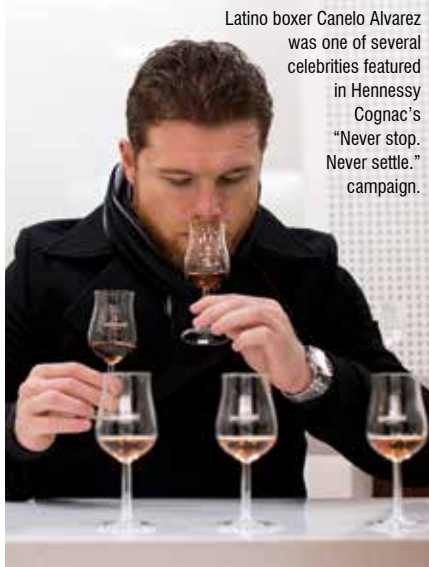
there is every reason to flag it in the store. Distributors are usually happy to provide brand details, but they don't always have point-of-sale materials. In that case, house-made shelf talkers can play silent publicist.

Here is a look at some of the obvious and not-so-obvious celebrity-connected wines and spirits to consider carrying, depending on availability in respective markets. The fans are out there. Even when the star is not in-store signing bottles, making sure that celebrity connection is evident is a common-sense means of helping make sure you don't miss out on sales. ■

Country music star Blake Shelton's Smithworks Vodka is made in Arkansas using corn from Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma (his home state)



Latino boxer Canelo Alvarez was one of several celebrities featured in Hennessy Cognac's "Never stop. Never settle." campaign.



Jenny McCarthy's RTD's debuted at her husband's Wahlburgers restaurants.



## RTD: IT'S PARTY TIME

■ Check out Jenny McCarthy's **Blondies** line. Available as Lemonade and Strawberry Lemonade, Blondies uses coconut water, stevia and vodka; after several months of being offered only in husband Donny Wahlberg's Wahlburgers chain, Blondies distribution has expanded steadily since the 2017 launch.

■ Nikki Minaj's **Myx** RTDs play directly to her female fan base; these sweet, tropical minis are strong in multiple markets.

■ **Beatbox Party Punch**, propelled by a seminal appearance on *Shark Tank* where Mark Cuban invested \$1 million, continues to grow thanks to a network of influencers. These celebrities are specialized, mostly clustered among extreme athletes (such as surfer Luke Davis, with 96,000 Instagram followers) and DJs (GTA and Cut Snake, among others). As these celebrities have a vested interest in the brand, they naturally promote it via social media, custom content and the like.

## MORE CONNECTED STARS AND BRANDS

Jack Falahee — Disaranno Liqueur

Moschino — Oban Scotch

Cheech Marin — Israeli wine

Lenny Kravitz — Papalote Mezcal

Amari Stoudemire — Old Camp Whiskey

Major Marshall — Dom Pérignon

Florida Georgia Line — Blackened Whiskey

Metallica — Hennessy Cognac

## AGAVE STAR TURN

■ **Casamigos** is the alpha dog among star tequilas, but this category is primed for more action. Chris Noth (best known as Big in Sex & the City) recently became majority owner of **Ambhar**; he will be involved in creative direction and was reportedly key in securing national distribution with RNDG.

■ Professional wrestler turned actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is working on a new tequila brand as well, to be called **Mana**.

■ In March of this year, Conecuh Brands announced a partnership with international pop singer Rita Ora to launch **Próspero Tequila** in the U.S. The brand promises even more girl power as Próspero was created by Stella Anguiano, one of Mexico's first female distillers. "With both Stella and Rita behind it, Próspero will appeal to strong vibrant women and tequila aficionados alike," asserts Roy Danis, Conecuh's President and CEO.

Country star Toby Keith has a mezcal, Wild Shot, replete with worm.



# DELIVERING ON OREGON'S PROMISE

## A TRIO OF WINES FROM PINO CELLARS REPRESENT QUALITY AND VALUE

BY JACK ROBERTIELLO



With a name like Pino Cellars, it's no surprise that all three of the Oregon brand's expressions derive from the Pinot family of grapes. There's a Pinot Noir, of course, (nearly 60% of Oregon's grapes are that variety), a Pinot Gris (the state's second most prominent varietal), and a rosé made from a 90/10 blend of the two. Meant to highlight the state's promise rather than particular regions, the wines all are crafted to be fresh, fruit-forward, approachable (the Stelvin seal helps) and food- and consumer-friendly.

These are introductory style wines with an Oregonian character, according to Joshua Maloney, who has overseen more than a dozen Pacific Northwest wines in the Bronco Wine Co. portfolio since 2017. Specifically for Oregon, he supervises Daffodil Winery, Laurelwood Winery and Pacific Pinot in addition to Pino Cellars.

Joshua Maloney



The Pino brand wines are growing at a time when the whole state is on an upswing: store sales rose 12.4% in dollar value in 2018, according to the Oregon Wine Board, far outdistancing overall industry growth of 1.5%. Wine Board data shows that Oregon wines, at an average price of \$16.13 a bottle, currently sell for more than twice the national average.

### Pricing A Positive

Those higher-price expectations put Pino Cellars value-priced wines at a retail advantage. The real challenge in producing good wines at lower price points comes from sourcing grapes, especially after the impact of the recent fires on many southern Oregon vineyards. "The popularity of Pinot Noir especially makes it very hard," says Maloney. "There isn't any surplus in any of the varietals in any year. Yes, there are a lot more grapes going into the ground but most of them are already spoken for when they are ready for harvest. What is an advantage for us is that we were able to go beyond the Willamette Valley, to southern Oregon, Umpqua Valley and Rogue Valley to get more affordable Pinot Noir that is also a bit more consumer-friendly." (SRP for the Pino Cellars Rosé and Pinot Noir is \$19.99; Pinot Gris \$17.99.)

Pino Cellars in some ways is a virtual winery: Bronco contracts with growers and vintners to produce wine to their

specifications, which they send to Maloney who works on crafting the correct blend. As the acreage under vine increases annually, Maloney expects Pino Cellars to be able to continue growing,

although strictly with the three wines currently in production. "Because we have partnered with a number of wineries in the state, there is a synergistic effect: they have fruit at prices we need and they need us like we need them." It helps that Bronco works with some of these wineries on their higher-end Oregon wines as well.

Maloney says making wines in Oregon and Washington can be dramatically different. "Even Oregon's warmer areas are not nearly as warm as Washington," he says, and notes that Oregon's practice of cane pruning, rather than spur pruning, aids in ripening and volume but is harder to mechanize.

As for the difference in soil types, Maloney is a bit agnostic. "The number of different types in Oregon is huge," notes Maloney. "In Washington, soil differences are not that great, but here I rely on the partners on the ground to understand their land."

One trend can cause conflict: the rosé boom. "There is pressure to get more grapes for the rosé, but you make less selling Pinot Noir as rosé compared to as a red wine, and the Pinot Noir red demand is much, much higher than rosé. It's a great problem to have that you don't have enough of what you need to fill all your demand." ■

Pino Cellars wines showcase the state's top varietals.

May is officially Oregon Wine Month, with events, tastings and promotions that celebrate the state's wines across the country.

# PINO<sup>TM</sup>

OREGON

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# DRIVING CARIÑENA'S POTENTIAL

**BODEGAS SAN VALERO IS DETERMINED TO BRING THE CARIÑENA REGION INTO THE SPOTLIGHT**

BY COURTNEY SCHIESSL



**A**rising tide lifts all boats, as the saying goes. That has been the steady philosophy behind Bodegas San Valero, one of the most important cooperative producers in the Cariñena region of northeastern Spain. Over the past 75 years, Bodegas San Valero has worked to transform the quality of Cariñena's wines by bringing education and support to local growers, and innovation and quality control to their winemaking.

Cariñena, the largest D.O.P. in Aragón, was recognized early on as a



Bodegas San Valero has pioneered the introduction of modern equipment in their winemaking facility, as well as quality-enhancing techniques such as hand-sorting grapes.

promising wine region. With a winemaking history that dates back to the third century B.C., it became the second official region designated in Spain in 1932. Its rocky soils, relatively high altitudes and extreme day-night temperature swings are ideal for growing a range of grape varieties in many styles. But the region struggled to compete with the greater world of wines, and the wines failing to gain traction beyond Spain threatened the economic viability of viticulture in the region.

For many small growers—today there are more than 1,500—the simplest approach was to sell their fruit to be bottled in bulk, rather than under the region's D.O. Looking to change this, 66 growers banded together in 1944 to work together as Bodegas San Valero (BSV). Today, the winery has nearly 700 cooperative partners and is one of the most important economic powers in the region.

## Enhancing Tradition With Technology

Bodegas San Valero's winemaking philosophy is founded on three things: innovation, tradition and quality. Through the years, the winery has been a pioneer of technology in the region, using modern winemaking equipment and techniques to enhance the traditions of the region. Bodegas San Valero was the first winery in Aragón to introduce industrial bottling, and in 1983, it implemented innova-

tive quality control practices to monitor grapes during harvest.

These technological upgrades proved key to improving the overall quality of the wines produced in Cariñena, making them cleaner, emphasizing purity of fruit, and allowing the wines to better translate terroir.

## Garnacha Rules

Despite sharing a name with—and being the birthplace of—the Cariñena, (Carignan) grape, the variety most important in the Cariñena D.O.P. is Garnacha. Known as Grenache in France, where it is an anchor of the Rhône Valley, Garnacha thrives in Cariñena's rocky soils and dramatic temperature swings. As Cariñena can rely on this resilient variety to withstand even the harshest of conditions, it is home to one of the highest concentrations of old-vine Garnacha in the world.

In an effort to protect not only these old Garnacha vines, but all of Cariñena's vineyards, Bodegas San Valero has made vineyard management and grower education a cornerstone of their business. "Bodegas San Valero is very committed to the region and its people," says Javier Domeque, Marketing Director. "We always try to give the professional work to the people of Cariñena in order to bring value to the region."



The vineyards of Cariñena explode with color in autumn. Working with 700 cooperative partners, Bodegas San Valero has a quality control department within the winery overseeing a team of viticulturalists who consult with individual growers throughout the growing season.

In addition to the winery's viticulturalists, who lead the work in the vineyards, Bodegas San Valero created an "Atria" department within the winery that works to ensure that grapes grown by partners are in pristine quality. They review all of the cooperative vineyards and work with farmers directly to advise them of best practices in the vineyard. This helps to combat vineyard problems while minimizing pesticide use, raising both the consistency of vineyard care and the quality of the wines.

### Variety + Value

Having overcome the quality hurdle in Cariñena, Bodegas San Valero continues working to bring greater worldwide recognition to the region as a source of value-driven, high-quality wine—particularly Garnacha. With over 45 brands, BSV is in position to supply wines to represent Cariñena. Parts of the portfolio are currently available in more than 30 countries around the world, notes an export department representative. In the U.S., the winery is particularly focusing on Florida, California, New York, Illinois and Texas.

Likely the most well-known wines from Cariñena are found under



Bodegas San Valero's Particular label—a line of red, white, and rosé wines designed to meld tradition with modernity while sourcing fruit from the winery's best vineyards. The region's tradition of old vines, for instance, is celebrated with the Particular Old Vine Garnacha, a structured and spicy red that remains approachable and remarkably affordable at under \$15. Other options in the Particular line include a barrel-fermented Chardonnay, a Garnacha Rosé and a varietal bottling from the Cariñena grape, among others.

While some of their wines are quite limited in production, Bodegas San Valero has plenty of other wines that combine quality and value, expressing clear points of distinction. The Origium 1944 wines, named for the year of the winery's founding, offer a taste of the pure quality that Bodegas San Valero is known for, in white, rosé, and both young and aged red versions. The Sierra de Viento wines celebrate the strong, dry "cierzo" wind that is so important to the grapes in Cariñena's vineyards, showcasing fresh fruit and bright acidity in both stainless steel and oak-aged versions.



As the proverbial tide continues to rise for Cariñena, the D.O.P. is poised to jockey for position as the



BSV's Particular labels were inspired by the traditional way in which winemakers distinguished the different casks with simple graphics.

go-to region for affordable, delicious wines that deserve to be everyday staples for U.S. consumers. But without the efforts of cooperative producers like Bodegas San Valero, the bottles may have never left Spanish shores. After 75 years of believing in the potential of this underappreciated region, Bodegas San Valero is finally seeing the world recognize these wines, too. ■



500 Manos, a robust blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah, is a tribute to the growers who start great wines by hand.



Of course, age alone doesn't make a wine great. Faustino is the largest landowner in Rioja with more than 1,600 acres of vineyards which are farmed naturally and meticulously tended.

# RIOJA'S MASTER OF AGE

## BODEGAS FAUSTINO'S COMMITMENT TO THE ART OF AGING GRAN RESERVA

BY KRISTEN BIELER

**E**ven in Rioja, the land of famously long-aged reds, Faustino is an anomaly. One of the region's oldest family estates, Faustino is—and has always been—fiercely committed to the most ageworthy category of wine made here, Gran Reserva. And the winery's Gran Reservas spend more time aging in the bottle before release than most do, far surpassing the legal minimum of two years in oak followed by three in bottle.

Proof of this devotion is found in Faustino's vast cellar: Of the 10 million bottles currently aging there, 75% are Gran Reservas. As a result, Faustino is responsible for 34% of the Gran Reservas produced in all of Rioja.

A library collection like this doesn't happen overnight. For more than half a century Faustino has been a firm believer that Gran Reserva is the ultimate expression of Rioja and that these wines must only be sold when they are ready to drink—and only produced in the best vintages. Consider the just-released 2006 Gran Reserva: By the time it hit the market, it was already 13 years old.

"Faustino has always had a very clear direction and a very clear idea about how a Rioja should look, smell and taste,"

Faustino's value proposition is unique: older wine priced well below the global competition that is ready to drink upon release.

shares Ángel Hernández Vélez, Export Director for the company. "Gran Reserva is the most important wine for us, and we never faltered with passing trends. We have stayed loyal to our style."

### Making of an Icon

Founded in 1861, Faustino didn't begin bottling its own branded wine until the family's third generation took charge in 1930, led by Don Julio Faustino Martínez. Several decades later, Bodegas Faustino began selling wine abroad and over time grew to become one of the top exporters from Rioja. Today the winery produces more than 1.6 million cases of wine, about half of which are consumed outside of Spain. And the brand is now being imported into the U.S. by Pacific Highway.

### GRAND RESERVA CURRENT VINTAGES

#### 2005 Faustino I Gran Reserva

This is more powerful than most, marked by dark cherry and blackberry flavors. Notes of prune, coconut and fresh herbs add complexity and firm tannins suggest this has tremendous aging potential.

Faustino Gran Reserva bottles feature frosted glass and the traditional wire mesh.

#### 2006 Faustino I Gran Reserva

Dark fruit and cranberry are highlighted by notes of vanilla, cinnamon and smoke in this medium-bodied Gran Reserva. Soft, velvety tannins and a lengthy finish make this perfect for drinking now.



**PACIFIC HIGHWAY**  
wines & spirits



Faustino's Gran Reserva is 80% Tempranillo, filled out with local varieties Graciano and Mazuelo. Only produced in the best vintages, it is aged a minimum of 25 months in French and American oak, then spends many more years in bottle.

The fourth generation is at the helm today and Faustino remains a steadfast adherent to the unique and traditional style of Rioja—extensive barrel aging in French and American oak which imparts characteristic toffee and coconut notes on the nose and palate.

“Faustino’s commitment to longer-than-minimum aging affords consumers the chance to see what bottle aging can impart to a world-class red wine—all those complex tertiary qualities that few people get the chance to encounter in their wine-drinking lives,” describes Andrea Immer-Robinson, Master Sommelier and author. “It offers all of that at an affordable price compared to other great reds that improve with age.”



Faustino’s distinctive label—featuring Rembrandt’s 1641 portrait of successful Dutch trader Nicolaes van Bambeeck—was a nod to the Martínez family’s love of art and has become one of Rioja’s most iconic labels.

**“Faustino’s commitment to longer-than-minimum aging affords consumers the chance to see what bottle aging can impart to a world-class red wine.”**

– Andrea Immer-Robinson, MS

**Wine for the People**

In recent decades, many producers in Rioja have veered towards a more modern style, aiming for wines that emphasize bold fruit flavors and power over classic high-toned floral, red fruit notes and elegance.

In Immer-Robinson’s opinion, this stylistic shift diminishes the uniqueness of what Rioja has to offer: “The more modern-style Riojas compete not just with one another for consumer attention, but with the rest of world-class red wine world like Napa Cabernet, Tuscan reds and Bordeaux. These wines make the same demand on them: Age me yourself, to see where I can be after a decade or more. That works for collectors, but I like the idea of people who aren’t collectors being able to taste for themselves why people who collect wine decide to do so.”

**FAUSTINO LIBRARY COLLECTION**

In addition to the current 2005 and 2006 Gran Reservas, Faustino offers limited quantities of the following older vintages:

- ❖ 1955
- ❖ 1964
- ❖ 1970
- ❖ 1987
- ❖ 1994
- ❖ 2001

Faustino’s consistency is now being rewarded, as a more elegant style of Spanish wine is increasingly appreciated today—particularly by sommeliers looking to food-friendlier wines for their lists.

With by far Rioja’s most vast library collection, going back to the 1955 vintage, Faustino is able to offer an impressive vertical selection. No need for buyers to comb the auction market or estate cellar sales for older expressions, and no need to pay a premium: Faustino’s Gran Reservas are available direct and are remarkably priced to retail for as little as \$39. Even for critically acclaimed vintages—such as 2001—the price holds; down-to-earth prices that make Faustino a people’s wine, democratic wine.

While the Faustino brand is well known, the Gran Reserva has potential as an accessibly-priced discovery wine, believes Immer-Robinson: “With bottle age, something magical happens that makes wine taste completely different from the top reds most people are used to drinking. I tell people, ‘prepare to be amazed!’” ■



# MARTINI HOUR & MORE

**JORDAN KUTCHMA, HEAD BARTENDER,  
FIOLA, WASHINGTON, DC**

BY ALIA AKKAM

**J**ordan Kutchma is head bartender at Fiola, Fabio Trabocchi's fine dining flagship in Washington, DC.

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** Whether guests are sitting down to a tasting menu in the main dining room or poring over the à la carte selections at the Ezio Room, Fiola is a restaurant that gives nostalgic Italian cooking a contemporary sheen. How do you describe the beverage program in terms of style?

**JORDAN KUTCHMA:** We're traditional. There are a lot of classic cocktail calls from guests, but we like to introduce newer interpretations of those classics through our menu, such as a playful take on the Clover Club with Cynar and raspberry-tarragon syrup. Our specialty cocktails represent a more modern feel. The Matchabox Fizz, for example, pairs Pisco with ingredients like matcha and ginger beer.

**BMG:** How do the drinks extend what's happening in the kitchen?

**JK:** We complement what the chefs are doing in the back by the direction of flavor. We make sure Italian ingredients make their way to the menu, like the Amaro Sfumato Rabarbaro in our Beyond Love with Grey Goose, grape-and-sage syrup, blackcurrant, cranberry and lime.

**BMG:** Monday through Friday, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm, Martini Hour with housemade vermouth and bitters unfolds at Fiola. What do you hope that initiative adds to the bar?

**JK:** We're a spirit-forward, cocktail-driven bar, meaning a lot of Martinis and Manhattans, so Martini Hour covers that for our Capitol Hill regulars. It's much different than your typical discounted menu, but I also hope it brings in a younger crowd. It's good to mix it up.

**BMG:** A rare Bacardí Paraíso blend is among the bar's bottles. What influences the collection?

**JK:** Good spirits inspire the backbar, walking a fine line between small-batch



spirits and corporate brands. It's good to have what the general public likes, but also spirits you can introduce to customers and educate them on. That's the fulfilling part. I remember my first taste of amaro—complete mindblower. It's cool to be able to do that for a guest. ■

**How Long He's Been Bartending:**  
10 years

**Favorite Spirit:** Aged rum

**Favorite Cocktail:** Daiquiri

**If He Wasn't a Bartender He Would Be:**  
Graphic designer



## • Almost Famous

### Ingredients:

¾ oz Illegal Reposado Mezcal  
¾ oz Macadamia Orgeat Syrup\*  
¾ oz Yellow Chartreuse  
¾ oz Lemon Juice

**Method:** Add all ingredients into a mixing tin. Shake for 7-8

second seconds. Using a fine strainer, strain into glass. Add a sphere of ice.

\*Macadamia Orgeat Syrup: Pulse 2 cups blanched macadamia nuts in a food processor until finely ground. Combine 1½ cups sugar and 1¼ cups water in a pot over medium heat; stir until sugar dissolves. Boil

for 3 minutes; add the ground nuts; lower heat and simmer for 3 minutes, then increase the temperature to medium-high. Just before it boils, remove it from the heat and cover with a lid. Allow to rest at least 2 hours, then strain it through cheesecloth. Stir in ¼ tsp. orange flower water and 1 oz over-proof grain alcohol.

# It's the law.

**No Cigarettes**



**No Cigars**



**NoTobaccoSalesToMinors.com**

**No Spit Tobacco**



**No Vapes**



Retailers must ask for photo I.D.  
from everyone under 27.

**Under 18? NO TOBACCO.**

# THE 2019 MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE SESSION HAS CONCLUDED

## A FINAL REPORT

### How Will Your Business Be Affected?

By J. Steven Wise  
MSBLA Lobbyist and  
Legal Counsel



**D**espite the profound sadness over the passing of Speaker Busch the day before, work continued on Monday, April 8, until the curtain closed at midnight (sine die). With that came the end of 90 days filled with new faces in both chambers, and new Committee leadership in the Senate. This was the first year of the four-year term, following the 2018 election, which brought nearly 60 new legislators or almost a one-third turnover in the 188 member General Assembly. New legislators constituted over half of the membership of the Senate Education, Health and Environment Committee (EHE), where alcohol bills are considered. That Committee also had a new Chairman in Senator Paul Pinsky (D-Prince George's), who kindly spoke to those who attended Lobby Day on February 21st, as did new House Alcohol Subcommittee Chairman, Delegate Talmadge Branch (D-Balt. City).

The goals of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) for this year were largely achieved, thanks to the efforts of our members and in particular our Legislative Committee, which reviewed, discussed and took positions on each of the 164 bills we identified as impacting the industry, amidst the nearly 2,500 total bills filed. Our Legislative Committee's work was made more difficult than usual, since

nearly half of the bills were introduced just ahead of the deadline during the week of February 4th, almost 30 days into the Session. This was a symptom of the 2018 election, which gave legislators, particularly new ones, less time than usual to prepare their legislation.

Below is a summary of the major issues and their outcomes. A detailed summary of the outcomes of all local legislation is available from the MSLBA.

#### WINE & SPIRIT BRANDS

**Senate Bill 801/House Bill 1010--Brewery Modernization Act of 2019** passed after a compromise was reached between the MSLBA and the Brewers Association of Maryland (BAM). This was the culmination of 2 years of MSLBA's time and attention, following the passage of legislation in 2017 on these same issues. Despite substantial brewery growth in the State in recent years, both in the number of them and the barrelage produced, BAM sought further changes in the law. While BAM also sought changes during the 2018 Session, there was really no communication among the interested parties that year, and no legislation was adopted. Early in the 2019 Session, MSLBA met on numerous occasions with BAM representatives and reached an agreement that the General As-

sembly ultimately agreed with and adopted. The terms of the agreement are as follows:

- No change in operating hours for Class 5 Breweries (grandfather provisions still apply);
- Law remains that Class 5 Brewery "may" receive retail license, not "shall";
- BAM will not introduce, support or instigate local or state legislation on these provisions for the rest of this 4 year term.
- Increased tap room limits of 5,000 barrels for both Class 5 and Class 7 (microbreweries);
- Class 7's can brew up to 45,000 barrels per year (which was already the law in two counties);
- Microbreweries can have two locations with separate tap room limits, but law will clearly state that a person cannot have more than 2 microbreweries anywhere in the State.
- There are other minor provisions.

Also on the brewery front, **SB 704/HB 1080 Alcoholic Beverages - Beer Franchise Agreements - Notice of Nonrenewal or Termination** passed. This bill reduces, from 180 to 45, the number of days that a brewery must wait before

terminating a franchise agreement, if the brewery produces 20,000 or fewer barrels of beer per year. Such a brewery is authorized to terminate or refuse to continue or renew a franchise agreement without good cause and is no longer required to give its franchisee an opportunity to correct a deficiency if that is the reason the agreement is being terminated. The bill requires a termination agreement and arbitration, and takes effect January 1, 2020. For a brewery that produces 20,000 barrels of beer or less each year and that is party to a franchise agreement existing before January 1, 2020, the terms of the agreement relating to compensation and repurchasing of inventory must continue unless otherwise mutually agreed by the parties.

With these two pieces of legislation, the law is settled on breweries for a number of years and the industry can now spend its time promoting all Maryland products through our “Buy Local” efforts.

## WINERIES & DISTILLERIES

We had numerous local bills that proposed to allow manufacturers to sell products other than their own. This is part of a national trend and one that has taken hold in our surrounding states, so we can expect this to be a battleground in the coming years. One of these passed, but most died.

**HB 866/SB 667 Allegany County – Alcoholic Beverages – Licenses** passed, which allows the Board in Allegany to issue a Class L license to any manufacturer, allowing them to sell their own products or products of any other manufacturer.

**HB 354/SB 104—Washington County-Alcoholic Beverages—Wineries—Special Event Permits** failed. The legislation sought to make permanent a bill that passed two years ago, allowing wineries in Washington County to sell beer and liquor at special events. MSLBA opposed this because it sets a precedent of allowing manufacturers to sell alcohol other than what they produce. In the end, we had agreed to extend the legislation for another

year to work on a long-term solution, but for whatever reason, the amendments to accomplish this were not adopted.

**HB 936 Harford County - Alcoholic Beverages - Multiple Licensing Plans, and SB 928/HB 1337 Carroll County—Alcoholic Beverages-Class D Beer, Wine and Liquor License**, would also have allowed manufacturers to sell products other than their own, but were defeated.

**HB 549 Class 1 Distillery License - On-Site Consumption Permit** also passed, which authorizes a local alcoholic beverages licensing board in the State to issue an on-site consumption permit to the holder of a Class 1 distillery license. The permit authorizes the sale of mixed drinks made from liquor produced by the distillery for on-premises consumption. A local licensing board must require the permit holder to abide by all applicable trade practice restric-

tions and comply with existing requirements for alcohol awareness training.

## ALCOHOL AWARENESS / IDENTIFICATION LAWS

**HB 508—Prohibited Acts-Defense to Prosecution for Sales to Underage Individuals** failed. For the second year in a row, this legislation fell victim to the political process and died in the Senate. In 2018, it died in the House. So it has passed both chambers, but unfortunately not in the same year! This bill was an MSLBA initiative that would update the law setting out a good faith defense to serving a minor to include reliance upon an ID scanner for age verification. We will try again in 2020.

**HB 1057—Alcohol Awareness Programs Certification Requirements-Alterations** was withdrawn by the sponsor after it had passed from the

## INCREASE TO MINIMUM WAGE

**HB 166/SB 280—Labor and Employment-Payment of Wages-Minimum Wage** was also passed, vetoed by the Governor and then overridden by the General Assembly during the Session. The bill phases in the increase and does so at a different pace for small businesses (those with 14 or fewer employees):

- o January 1, 2020 = \$11.00/hour; small business - \$11.00/hour
- o January 1, 2021 = \$11.75/hour; small business - \$11.60/hour
- o January 1, 2022 = \$12.50/hour; small business - \$12.20/hour
- o January 1, 2023 = \$13.25/hour; small business - \$12.80/hour
- o January 1, 2024 = \$14.00/hour; small business - \$13.40/hour
- o January 1, 2025 = \$15.00/hour; small business - \$14.00/hour
- o Small business – January 1, 2026 \$14.60/hour
- o Small business – July 1, 2026 \$15.00/hour

Other relevant provisions include:

- o There is no automatic cost of living escalator for minimum wage as included in the bill as introduced.
- o Lowering the maximum age from 20 to 18 that an employer can pay a rate equal to 85 percent of the minimum wage, meaning this sub-minimum rate applies up to the age of 18.
- o Maintaining current law regarding tipped wages but requires the Department of Labor (DLLR) to adopt regulations requiring restaurant employers that include a tip credit to provide tipped employees with a certain written or electronic wage statement showing the effective hourly tip rate.

House to the Senate. This bill would have required anyone serving alcohol to have alcohol awareness training. MSLBA did not object to the bill, but on further analysis agreed that there were issues that needed to be considered in more detail before any bill was passed. These included laws in some jurisdictions that permit some employees to serve but not pour alcohol, and the availability of training programs in certain parts of the State.

**HB 180—Motor Vehicle Administration—Licenses and Identification Cards—Electronic Credentials** passed, which enables the MVA to create an electronic credential that can be issued in addition to, but not in place of, a normal hard-copy identification. MSLBA asked for and got an amendment to the legislation clarifying that this credential MAY be accepted as proof of age, but does not have to be. The credential requires an electronic verification system operated by the State, so if a retailer does not have that system, they do not have to accept the credential and can demand the hard copy of the identification.

## GENERAL BUSINESS LEGISLATION

**HB 109/SB 285—Environment-Expanded Polystyrene Food Service Products—Prohibitions** was passed, which prohibits, beginning July 1, 2020, a person from selling or offering for sale in the State an “expanded polystyrene food service product”. These are defined as a product made of “expanded polystyrene” that is (1) used for selling or providing food or beverages and (2) intended by the manufacturer to be used once for eating or drinking or generally recognized by the public as an item to be discarded after one use. It includes food containers, plates, hot and cold beverage cups, trays, and cartons for eggs or other food, but does not include (1) food or beverages that have been packaged in expanded polystyrene containers before receipt by a food service business; (2) a product made of expanded polystyrene that is used to package raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry, or seafood; or (3) nonfoam polystyrene food service products.

**SB 694/HB 777—Credit Card Processors—Merchant Processing Agreements** passed, which prohibits a credit card processor from assessing or charging a fee, fine, or penalty of more than \$500 if a business entity cancels a “merchant processing agreement” before the expiration of the initial term. Additionally, a credit card processor may not assess a fee, fine, or penalty if a business entity terminates the merchant processing agreement after the expiration of the initial term. The bill does not apply to an agreement that may be terminated without fees, fines, penalties, or liquidated damages, or to a business entity that employs 50 or more employees or estimates that it will generate more than \$2 million annually in credit card or electronic commerce transactions. The agreement must disclose the amount of any early termination fee, fine, penalty, or liquidated damages, the expiration and renewal dates of the agreement, and the customer service contact information of the processor. The information must be provided on the signature page of an agreement and be initialed separately by the business entity. ■

## FIELD ENFORCEMENT LEAVING COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE; WILL BE AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR WITH CONSENT OF SENATE

**HB 1052/SB 703—Alcohol and Tobacco Commission** was also adopted, although MSLBA did not take a position on these bills. This legislation passed, vetoed by Governor Hogan, and then overridden by the General Assembly during the Session. Effective in June of 2020, this legislation will transfer the Field Enforcement Division and its role in enforcing the alcohol and tobacco laws (but not petroleum) from the Comptroller's Office to a five-member independent Commission, whose members will be appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The background of the members include one from law enforcement, one from public health, one from the alcohol industry, and the remaining two must come from a financial background. Its members cannot accept contributions from the industry. For alcohol retailers, this shift does not mark a major change in enforcement, as the vast majority of it will continue to be done through the local liquor boards. On larger issues of policy and so forth, the Commission will certainly play a role. For manufacturers and wholesalers, they will now be regulated through the Commission. Sales and alcohol taxes will still be collected through the Comptroller's Office.

MSLBA was formed to represent the interests of the retail alcohol beverage operator in legislative and executive matters in connection with the sale and distribution of beer, wine and liquor, and to promote friendly relations between members of this association and allied branches of the beer, wine and liquor industries.

Beverage Alcohol Licensees who are not already members are encouraged to join. Membership information is available by contacting the MSLBA office: 410-871-1377, 410-876-3464 or [mslba@msn.com](mailto:mslba@msn.com).

The Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association, Inc., is a non-profit trade association whose members are alcohol beverage licensees throughout the State.

**M**

market shots



**EVAN WILLIAMS APPLE  
AT SOUTHERN GLAZERS WINE AND SPIRITS**

Evan Williams Apple blends crisp green apple flavor with smooth Kentucky Straight Bourbon, for a taste that's always refreshing.

"Whether it's a chilled shot or a mixed drink," explained Liz Townsend of Heaven Hill Brands, "it's ripe for any occasion."

*Proof:* 70 Proof

*Color:* Light copper

*Nose:* Crisp green apple with Bourbon behind

*Taste:* Juicy, sweet apple with hints of caramel and light spice

*Finish:* Green apple with a long, smooth Bourbon finish.

*Here are Donnie Russell, SGWS; and Liz Townsend, Heaven Hill Brands; with Evan Williams Apple.*



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**Kenilworth Liquors**

Steve recently brokered the sale of my business and property. I was exceptionally impressed by the way Steve went above and beyond to make the deal work for both Buyer and Seller. He did a great job, and would recommend anyone who is thinking of selling their business to contact Steve prior to signing with anyone else. He does his research and puts people together.... Barry G.

**Harbor Spirits**

After negotiations with several potential Buyers that eventuality fell apart, I engaged Steve as my Intermediary. The expertise that Steve brought to the sale was appreciated by all parties involved and was the sole reason I was able to complete the sale and retire...Maben K.



**Woodensburg Market**

Steve recently assisted in the sale of my liquor store. While it was a smaller transaction, I felt like I had Steve's undivided attention. Steve brought a wealth of experience, was always professional and most importantly closed the deal...Michael S.

**M**

market shots

**LA CREMA WINEMAKER RETURNS TO MARKET**

Jen Walsh dons the title winemaker at Le Crema Estate at Saralee's Vineyard of California. However, she called Baltimore home before moving west. Jen recently returned to her native market to promote Le Crema fine wines.

Here's Ben Golueke, Mt. Airy Liquors; and Jen Walsh, Le Crema.

**FRANZIA RE-LAUNCH PARTY**

The Wine Group recently held a Franzia Re-launch Party at Main Event Entertainment in Columbia.

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FAVORITE  
ITALIAN  
SPARKLING**

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At right are Rob Budke, Breakthru Beverage; Joe Wagner, owner of Copper Cane, and Tim Murphy, also with Copper Cane.



**COPPER CANE WINE & PROVISIONS VISITS MARKET**

Joe Wagner, owner of Copper Cane Wine & Provisions, recently visited Breakthru Beverage and conducted a tasting of his portfolio of premium wines. Copper Cane is releasing Boen Tri App Chardonnay and Pinot Noir to the market. Other wines in the Copper Cane portfolio include Elouan, Belle Glos, Quilt and Beran.



**DIAGEO AND MOËT HENNESSY HOLD OCEAN CITY TRADE SHOW**

Diageo and Moët Hennessy recently held their annual Trade Show in Ocean City. The prestigious brands from both portfolios showcased their plans for the spring-summer season.

