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OCTOBER 2024

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WHISKEY NEAT

THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE WHISKY

THE IMPACT OF ABV AT BARREL ENTRY



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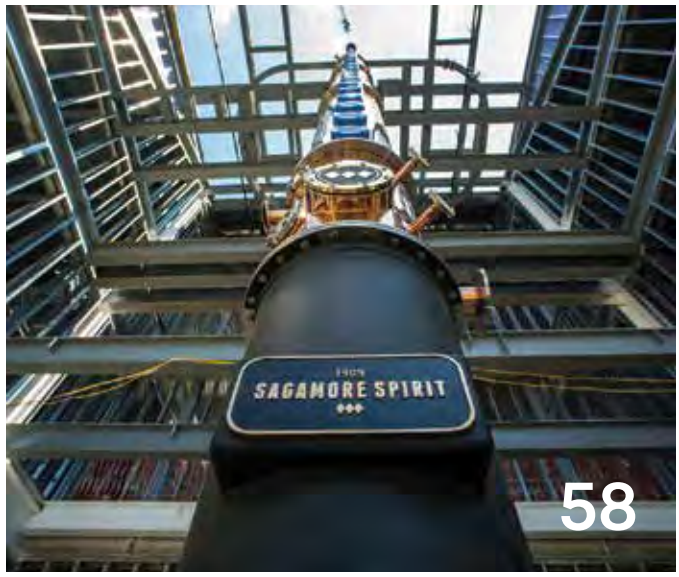
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The largest compilation of beverage alcohol price and brand information.

HOW BEER, WINE AND SPIRITS GET TO THE MARKETPLACE

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Issue Highlights

I don't know about you, but October is among my favorite months: The fall colors are a welcome sight and the cooler-temperature air offers a return to boot weather. Tastes and flavors turn, too, toward warmer profiles, so it's no wonder that whiskey is a focus this issue.

The cover story gives an update on Japanese whisky as a category; in particular, the guidelines that were set by the Japan Spirits & Liqueurs Makers Association in 2021, when members adopted voluntary standards to be labeled as such. The pages that follow will bring you up to speed. We also look into barrel entry proof, a process that whiskey professionals eye so that the whiskey proof does not fall below the legal minimum. It's art and science—and also philosophy—as the global whiskey industry undergoes continued innovation.

Locally, we hear from the Connecticut Package Stores Association about why your vote matters, in case you don't think it does. Stay inspired. The Connecticut Restaurant Association also wants to make sure you know your voice is heard through being a member business or an individual. Trade association memberships give you a chance to align your local and national representation.

October also kicks off a very busy sprint to the end of the sales year, aka OND. Trade tastings are in full swing by now, and you will see those recapped through the end of the year in these pages, as well as the many continued brand and supplier-led events, each linked to wholesaler and market offerings. Make sure we know your news.

Cheers,
Dana



Dana Slone
Managing Director & Editor



ON THE COVER

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KOBRAND CORPORATION NAMES AGUERO PRESIDENT

Kobrand Corporation announced Marcelo Aguero as President and CEO of the company, which became effective Sept. 9. He succeeds Bob DeRoose, who will retire after 41 years with Kobrand Corporation, including the last 15 as President and CEO. Aguero has spent more than 30 years in the fine wine industry, holding various senior-level positions within both the wholesaler and supplier networks. He began his career on the wholesale side working in multiple capacities including sales, management, national accounts and supplier relations. He served Jackson Family Wines for 20 years across multiple disciplines, most recently as Executive Vice President of Marketing and Direct-to-Consumer. For the past four years, he has also been the Executive Sponsor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, helping lead many core company initiatives.

STUDY OUTLINES MOST POPULAR COCKTAILS IN THE U.S.



A study on the most popular cocktails in the U.S., released by Coffeeness, outlined the top five that emerged as the nation's favorites. The Aperol Spritz led the pack as the most popular summer cocktail across 22 states, including in Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Margarita followed in popularity across 17 states; the Old Fashioned is favored in nine states; the Moscow Mule is preferred in seven states; and The Mimosa holds the top spot in three states. Other cocktails that made the list of most popular choices in the U.S. include the Mojito, Bellini, Daiquiri and Sidecar. In the Northeast, the Aperol Spritz takes the top spot, though New Hampshire and Maine showed a preference for Margaritas. The Coffeeness team used and analyzed the Google search volume data for each cocktail by state, revealing which ones are the most popular.

BRENNER RECEIVES DRINKS INNOVATOR AWARD



Deborah Brenner, Founder and CEO of Women of the Vine & Spirits and 86 Harassment Council Member, has been awarded the *SevenFifty Daily* 2024 Drinks Innovator Award for galvanizing the beverage alcohol and hospitality industries to address sexual harassment through the groundbreaking Women of the Vine & Spirits key initiative 86 Harassment. Launched in March of this year, 86 Harassment offers education, customized training and confidential survivor support through a confidential 24/7 crisis hotline in English and Spanish. Rooted in the belief that everyone deserves a safe and respectful workplace free of harm, 86 Harassment is an accessible resource to support employers, employees and patrons alike at no cost.

O'NEILL VINTNERS & DISTILLERS NAMES THREE TO TEAM

California's O'Neill Vintners & Distillers, a Certified B Corporation, announced three additions to its leadership team. First, Ron Mertz joined as Senior Vice President of Commercial Strategy. He joins O'Neill with more than three decades of industry experience, including most recently at Washington's House of Smith. Prior to his tenure at House of Smith, Mertz spent 12 years spearheading exponential sales growth at A to Z Wineworks. The company named Christina Rivera-Glenn as Vice President of Luxury Operations. She comes to O'Neill from DAOU Family Estates and will lead O'Neill's luxury direct-to-consumer sales and consumer experience programs, among focuses. Finally, Jenna Kujundzich joins as Vice President of Luxury Brand Strategy, also from DAOU. She will be responsible for driving overall luxury brand and public relations strategy in her new role, including creative content, social media and partnerships.

EASTER ISLAND AMONG NEW CHILEAN DOS



Easter Island and Patagonia's Chiloé Archipelago received Denominación de Origen (DO) designations as part of a major reform of Chilean wine. Introduced in 1994, Decree 464 had been the subject of three rounds of amends to add new wine regions and grape varieties to the labels of Chilean wine, with the most recent reforms being introduced in July 2024. Among the new DOs is Rapa Nui, more commonly known as Easter Island. Sitting more than 3,500 kilometers west of Chile's Pacific coast, Easter Island has been Chilean territory since 1888. Viticulture has been practiced there since the 19th century, with recent genetic research uncovering that six grape varieties, including País and Moscatel de Alejandría, are grown on the island. Chiloé Archipelago—reachable from Santiago by a 14-hour drive plus a ferry crossing southward—consists of the large island of Chiloé and a series of smaller islands. Montes, which has a 2-hectare vineyard planted on the remote island of Añihué at a latitude of 42° south, is among producers growing in the defined region.

In loving memory of

GEOFFREY S. MANSFIELD

July 17, 1956 - August 18, 2024

Geoffrey Sayer Mansfield, 68, died peacefully on August 18, 2024, surrounded by loving family and friends. Indeed, family and friends were most important to Geoffrey, and he was adored by all who had the good fortune to know him during his vibrant, rich, and joyous life.

From an early age, Geoffrey was a fun seeking, joy making, rebel prankster with a kindhearted mischievous streak, one might even say impish. His early years embraced a life of sports, friends, and music. Geoffrey grew up in the greatest age of rock and roll and without a doubt he immersed himself in all of it and became something of a connoisseur, enjoying a wide variety of artists and attending as many concerts as he could. As an athlete, Geoffrey loved competition be it on the tennis court, Wiffle Ball field or racing Boston Whalers around Hospital Cove. He also had a passion for fishing and was often known to slip out at dawn to fly fish for the perfect striped bass off Bassetts Island.

He attended Noble and Greenough School in Dedham MA excelling both academically and athletically. From Nobles, Geoffrey attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, following his father's footsteps. Post graduation Geoffrey began his career in sales, a perfect match given his natural capacity to



Loving husband, father, brother & uncle.

connect with people. After years of honing his craft in the wine industry, Geoffrey was promoted to President of Worldwide Wines, a leading wine distribution company in Connecticut. Worldwide saw rapid growth under Geoffrey's leadership and continues to this day. He loved traveling, particularly to Italy, and did so extensively for work and play garnering an army of global compatriots and fellow merrymakers along the way. His reputation as an expert oenophile and impact in the industry is legendary and will be sorely missed.

Geoffrey's career in the wine industry perfectly complemented his deep passions. He was a connoisseur of everything from food to art to travel, he was enthusiastic about the finest things in life – especially cooking. He was an avid and skilled chef who was constantly growing, exploring new techniques, and marveling all those who were lucky enough to sit at his table.

Geoffrey loved bigger than anyone. None more than his family. Choosing to spend every summer for 68 years together, he ensured in the off season he checked in daily and weekly, genuinely wanting to know how they were. He was the keeper of traditions, and the family storyteller focused mostly on the preservation of our closeness and history. He believed family was not just an important thing, but everything.

Geoffrey was an inspiration to all who knew him. The loss of such a big hearted, charming, and warm presence has been a huge blow to his family and friends, but his unwavering devotion, great sense of humor and unfailing love and support will linger on in all of us. In his own words, he was "MINT"!

Geoffrey is survived by his loving wife Grazia Pelosi, his adoring daughter Alexandra and her husband Brett Morris, his brothers Peter and Timothy, his adoring sister Pamela, his former wife Paula Mansfield and seven loving nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a donation to:
Connecticut Humane Society
www.cthumane.org/ways-to-give

ANHEUSER-BUSCH ANNOUNCES $6.5 MILLION INVESTMENT

Anheuser-Busch continues its 165-year commitment to supporting local communities by announcing a $6.5 million investment in its Williamsburg brewery. Over the past five years, Anheuser-Busch has invested nearly $2 billion in its facilities across the country to help create and sustain jobs. To date, Anheuser-Busch's work in Virginia has created more than $1.1 billion in capital investments, making the brewer a key contributor to the state's economy. Anheuser-Busch operates over 120 facilities across the country and, with its distributors, employs 65,000. The new investment in the Williamsburg brewery will go toward capital infrastructure projects, including overhaul equipment, and additional improvements that drive efficiencies across the facility. Investments will also be made to enhance the capacity and capabilities of the brewery's warehouse. Anheuser-Busch has called Virginia home since 1972 and remains one of James City County's key employers and contributors to the regional economy.

TOP FIVE CELEBRITY ALCOHOL BRANDS RANKED



QR Code Generator shared news on which celebrity alcohol brands are the most popular according to Instagram and Google search data. The study looked at the average number of monthly searches for more than 150 celebrity alcohol brands, combined with the alcohol brand's number of Instagram followers, and an equal weight was applied to both criteria to create a total index score out of 100. On top was Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila with an index score of 95.4 out of 100. 818 Tequila has over 1.2 million Instagram followers and generates a monthly average of 76,150 Google searches in the U.S. In second place was Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's Teremana Tequila, with an index score of 94.8 out of 100. Teremana Tequila has an audience of 780,000 followers on Instagram and produces an average of 107,092 monthly searches worldwide. Ranking third is Paul Wesley and Ian Somerhalder's Brother's Bond Bourbon, which received an index score of 92.9 out of 100. The brand recorded the highest Instagram popularity with 1.9 million followers and a nationwide average of 25,328 Google searches per month. George Clooney's Casamigos Tequila followed in fourth with an index score of 90.5 out of 100, followed in fifth place by Ryan Reynold's Aviation Gin, receiving an index score of 84.8 out of 100.

HENNESSY OFFICIAL SPIRIT OF THE AMERICA'S CUP



Maison Hennessy is the official spirit of the Louis Vuitton 37th America's Cup. As the official spirit for the event, Hennessy, owned by LVMH Corp., will present two cocktail creations featured in its new Made for More communication platform to showcase "the mixability of the cognac, and introducing a new, lighter, brighter, fresher vision of the brands" in a Hennessy Margarita and a Hennessy Ginger. The regatta takes place off the coast of Barcelona, Spain, which began in late August. Emirates Team New Zealand, the current holder, will defend the Cup against five challengers: INEOS Britannia, Alinghi Red Bull Racing, Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli, NYYC American Magic and Orient Express Racing Team. The competition concludes with the Louis Vuitton America's Cup Match that starts on Oct. 7 and is a first-to-seven series for the historic America's Cup, between the Defender, Emirates Team New Zealand and the winner of the Challenger series, the Louis Vuitton Cup.

SIPSOURCE RELEASES Q2 2024 REPORT



Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America's (WSWA's) SipSource, fueled by WSWA wholesaler member company depletion data, released its Q2 2024 Report. The report tracks data over a 12-month period (July 2023-June 2024) and highlights key trends and statistics for both wine and spirits categories. Currently, the only product classes seeing growth are Premixed Cocktails and Tequila/Agave spirits. Tequila Reposado continues to dominate the spirits segment with impressive growth. Tequila Reposado is up +10.7%, showcasing resilience in premiumization, with products over $50 increasing by +25% and representing 32.8% of volume. Geographically, regions east of the Rocky Mountains are driving growth, all showing increases of over +19%. In contrast, the Tequila-Other segment—any agave-based product that is not silver, reposado or añejo—shows growth driven by lower-priced products. Premixed Cocktails now account for 14.9% of total spirits volume compared to 3.9% in June 2020. In wine, Prosecco remains the top performer: Growth is moderate but still up +2.6% in the latest June ending data.

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HANSON OF SONOMA ORIGINAL ORGANIC VODKA SHOWCASED

The Madison Beach Hotel, part of the Curio Collection by Hilton, hosted a cocktail seminar featuring Hanson of Sonoma Original Organic Vodka at its Crow's Nest bar on Aug. 7. The recurring Crow's Nest Cocktail Club showcases brands for hotel guests and local cocktail aficionados. Participants also enjoyed tastings of the lineup including Cucumber, Espresso, Meyer Lemon, Mandarin, Habanero and its flagship Original. The Crow's Nest Lead Bartender Mike Mills, in collaboration with Trinchero Family Estates' Paul Mazurek, educated guests on the brand and then featured a craft cocktail-making session for a signature offering, Heat of the Moment, featuring Hanson of Sonoma Habanero Organic Vodka. Hanson, an award-winning, gluten-free vodka crafted in the heart of Sonoma wine country, is family-owned and managed by its namesake. Made using organic grapes and non-GMO, it is part of the Trinchero Family Estates Spirits Division.

1. Hanson of Sonoma Original Organic Vodka on display at the Madison Beach Hotel. Shown is Cucumber, Espresso, Meyer Lemon, Mandarin, Habanero and Original.
2. Anthony DeSerio, Dr. Booze CT, LLC; Mike Mills, Lead Bartender, The Crow's Nest; and Paul Mazurek, District Manager, Trinchero Family Estates.
3. The Heat of the Moment cocktail featuring Hanson of Sonoma Habanero Organic Vodka.
4. Mike Mills, Lead Bartender, The Crow's Nest led the seminar on Aug. 7.
5. Paul Mazurek, District Manager, Trinchero Family Estates educated guests.
6. The Heat of the Moment cocktail was made with Hanson of Sonoma Habanero Organic Vodka, pineapple juice, RIPE Margarita Mix and house-made pineapple foam and garnished with habanero threads.
7. Hanson of Sonoma Organic Vodka in Habanero and Original.





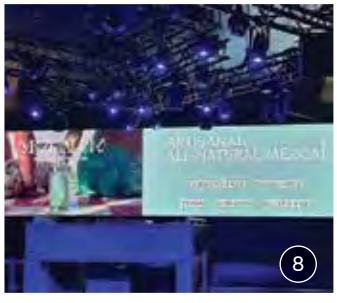












Photos courtesy of Monsieur Touton Selection, Ltd.

MONSIEUR TOUTON HIGHLIGHTS MEZCAL AT MOHEGAN SUN

Monsieur Touton Selection, Ltd., showcased Mezcalum Artisanal Mezcal at a Toast with the Host event at Mohegan Sun's novelle venue on Aug. 9. Founders Erin and Abe Lichy, of "The Real Housewives of New York City," were in attendance. Co-founder and COO Chris Roth got behind the bar to promote the brand, engaging with guests while creating cocktails featuring Mezcalum. Mezcalum is an all-natural, artisanal spirit made from a hand-harvested, wild blend of agave and is double-distilled for a flavor that is light on smoke with complex undertones. The mezcal is made from non-GMO agave and has zero carbs, zero sugar and zero additives.

1. Monsieur Touton Selection, Ltd., showcased Mezcalum Artisanal Mezcal at a Toast with the Host event at Mohegan Sun's novelle venue on Aug. 9.
2. Abe Lichy, Co-founder and CEO, Mezcalum; Erin Lichy, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer, Mezcalum; Marcia Passavant, Spirits Manager CT/RI, Monsieur Touton Selection, Ltd.; Lindsey Cannarozzo, District Manager, Mezcalum; and Chris Roth, Co-founder and COO, Mezcalum.
3. Erin Lichy, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer, Mezcalum behind the bar.
4. Abe Lichy, Co-founder and CEO, Mezcalum.
5. Mezcalum Co-founders Erin and Abe Lichy toasting with guests.
6. Brand ambassadors showcasing Mezcalum Artisanal Mezcal.
7. Marcia Passavant, Spirits Manager CT/RI, Monsieur Touton Selection, Ltd., pouring a taste of Mezcalum.
8. Mezcalum is an all-natural, artisanal spirit made from a hand-harvested, wild blend of agave and is double-distilled for a flavor that is light on smoke with complex undertones. The mezcal is made from non-GMO agave and has zero carbs, zero sugar and zero additives.

IAPSACT Cricket Tournament Celebrates Summer

The Indian American Package Store Association of Connecticut (IAPSACT) hosted its third annual cricket tournament and summer social event for its members and trade guests at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Club in East Hartford on Aug. 11. IAPSACT was created by a group of Connecticut package store retailers with the goal of providing "a united voice," networking, social engagement, advocacy and resource sharing for package store owners of Indian descent, who make up an estimated 60% of the 1,200 permittees in the state. The networking and fundraising event was also a showcase of beer, spirits and ready-to-drink beverages from a variety of supporting suppliers and distributors. The friendly tournament and summer carnival was enjoyed among 12 teams on a knockout basis, with Team Sun Cruiser led by Divyesh Patel from Ocean Discount Wine & Spirits, New London, named the day's winner. Numerous wholesalers, suppliers and brands supported the event, including Pitch sponsors High Noon; Diageo; Allan S. Goodman; Brescome Barton; Slocum & Sons and Eder Bros., Inc.; Brown-Forman; Martignetti Companies; Mancini Beverage; Campari Group; and Star Distributors, Inc., along with dozens of showcased supplier brands and food providers.



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Photos by Michael Leung.

1. The Indian American Package Store Association of Connecticut (IAPSACT) hosted its third annual cricket tournament and social event at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Club in East Hartford on Aug. 11.
2. The IAPSACT Board at the organization's third annual cricket tournament on Aug. 11.
3. The friendly tournament was enjoyed among 12 teams on a knockout basis.
4. Girish Patel, Bottle Stop Wine & Spirit Superstore and Director, Executive Committee, IAPSACT addresses guests.
5. At the mic, Abhin Sheth, Spokesperson, Advisory Committee, IAPSACT.
6. Brand Ambassadors Judy Torre and Tania Arroyo highlighting Happy Thursday Spiked Refreshers.
7. Brand Ambassador Nayda Flores showcasing Rupee Mango Wheat Ale and Basmati Rice Lager.
8. Brand Ambassadors Lindsey Duggan and Jen Arnobaldi showcasing High Noon Vodka Seltzer and High Noon Vodka Iced Tea.
9. Mike Pinto, SoNo 1420; Sam Shah, Sammy's Buy Rite Liquors; and Bhaumik Shah.
10. Murphy Distributors' Paul Flynn highlighting Cazcabel Coffee Liqueur and Tim Clarke showcasing Cazcabel Tequila Blanco and Lenny's Lemonade.
11. Noah Bonner, Brand Ambassador; Steve Turpak, Stormalong Cider; Tussar Shah; and Ankur Parikh.
12. Matt Kaczynski; Jessica Strickland, Brand Ambassador; and Lisa Panteleakos, Regional Sales Manager, The Finnish Long Drink.
13. Arun Lillaney, Liquor World; Karishma Lillaney, Liquor World; and Vincent Melita, MD&S Distributors showcasing Root Out Whisky.
14. Brand Ambassador Zach Heart showcasing Monaco Cocktails in Knockout Punch and Lime Crush.
15. Martha Outlaw, Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer, Barrelsmith.
16. Brand Ambassador Ryan Riggs highlighting Smoke Lab Vodka.
17. Brand Ambassadors Heather Kolodiej and Jonathan Davies showcasing Tuck Gin.
18. Brand Ambassadors Ashley Thompson and Arian Patel showcasing Junglee Craft Cocktails.
19. Brand Ambassadors Janet Feliciano and Maddy Delgado showcasing Patrón Silver Tequila.
20. Brand Ambassador Lisa Parks showcasing Loyal 9 Lemonade.
21. Kevin Frey, Two Roads Brewing Company highlighting Two Roads Road 2 Ruin Zero and Flavortown Spiked Tiki Town Tropical Punch.
22. Jesse Springer, New England Brewing Co. highlighting New England Tropical Trash Berliner Weiss.
23. Will Desousa, Samuel Adams highlighting Sun Cruiser Iced Tea Vodka.
24. Brand Ambassador Janet Meyers showcasing Código 1530 Reposado Tequila and RIPE Bar Juice in Classic Paloma.

Connecticut Pizza & Brew Fest Welcomes Guests

The second Connecticut Pizza & Brew Fest celebrated all things pizza and beer at the Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater in Bridgeport on Aug. 11. Presented by Brown Roofing, guests sampled beer from more than 20 local craft breweries in the event's beer garden paired with pizza from the top 20 Connecticut pizza trucks. Guests enjoyed more beer and beverage tastes at the venue's Two Roads Brewery Bar and event bars, along with live music, dough-throwing contests and shopping from local vendors.



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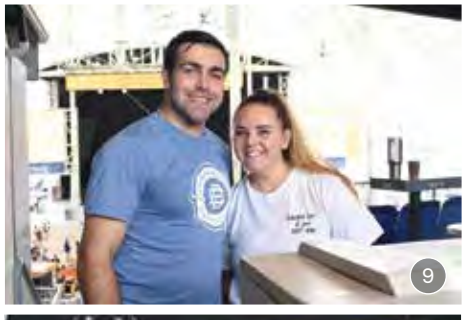

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1. The second Connecticut Pizza & Brew Fest celebrated all things pizza and beer at the Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater in Bridgeport on Aug. 11.
2. Presented by Brown Roofing, guests sampled beer from more than 20 local craft breweries in the event's beer garden paired with pizza from the top 20 Connecticut pizza trucks.
3. Beverage selections in the venue's Dugout Bar.
4. Brand Ambassador Kathyria Burgos showcasing Heineken Silver.
5. Tori Kunst, Counter Weight Brewing Co.
6. Krista Pascale, Daniel Pascale and Orlando Cordova, Fishers Island Lemonade.
7. Mike Mancini and Jimmy Tziokes, Foolproof Brewing Company.
8. Dylan Salvatore, Dockside Brewery.
9. Jason Jacestarret and Lexa Samer, Elicit Brewing Company.
10. Mark Dasilva, Bad Sons Beer Co.
11. Wayne Crow, Connecticut Valley Brewing Company.
12. Hooper Healey, Devil's Purse Brewing Co.
13. Pepper Lavoie, Admission Coordinator, Sacred Heart University for the Sacred Heart Brewing Science and Distillation programs.
14. Cutwater Brand Ambassador Dana Weed.
15. Gregory Weed pouring New Belgium Brewing Voodoo Ranger Hardcharged Tea in Lemon.
16. Douglas Gottlieb, Downeast Cider House.
17. John Badalati, Sales Director and Bob Nuzzello, New England Market Manager, RIPE Bar Juice.
18. Danielle Balado, Hedlum.
19. All from Athletic Brewing Co.: Thomas Rackiewicz, Carla Lia and Larissa Wilbur.
20. Cassie Smith, Aramark Food and Beverage, Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater in the venue's Two Roads Brewery Bar.
21. Guests enjoyed pizza from a variety of local venues.
22. All from The Parlor: A Pizza Joint: Maxwell Lilya, Tyler Lilya, Ida Carey and Megan Grabowski.











INDUSTRY NIGHT SHOWCASES OLD FORESTER BOURBON

Allan S. Goodman, in collaboration with Hartford's New Park Brewing, hosted an industry night featuring Old Forester Bourbon on Aug. 12. Guests enjoyed cocktails featuring Old Forester Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey and Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey mixed by Rebecca Ryder, Taproom Manager, New Park Brewing. Old Forester Bourbon Whiskey is crafted in Louisville, Kentucky, and is the only bourbon that was continuously made and marketed since 1870, including throughout Prohibition.

1. Anthony DeSerio, Dr. Booze CT, LLC, and Beverage Consultant; Jeff Conelius, Craft Spirits Specialist, Allan S. Goodman; Rebecca Ryder, Taproom Manager, New Park Brewing; Christine Bighinatti, Private Events Director, New Park Brewing; and Julian Garcia, Restaurant Consultant.
2. The evening's featured spirits were Old Forester Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey and Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey.
3. Rebecca Ryder, Taproom Manager, New Park Brewing.
4. Guest Bartender Anthony DeSerio, Dr. Booze CT, LLC, and Beverage Consultant.
5. An event cocktail featuring Old Forester Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey.



SLOCUM & SONS WELCOMES ZORAH WINES

Slocum & Sons added wines from Zorah in Armenia, which bills its offerings as "6,000 years of history in every bottle." The country hosts the world's oldest winemaking facility, the Areni 1 cave, dating back to 4,000 B.C. The vineyards of Zorah are situated at 4,500 feet above sea level at the foothills of Mount Ararat. Working uniquely with native varieties, the vines are planted on their own roots directly into the rocky soils. Owner Zorik Gharibian had a successful career in Italian fashion and dreamed of owning vineyards in Tuscany until he visited his ancestral homeland. Wines include Voski White, made with ancient native grape varieties, Voskèak and Garandmak; Heritage White, made with the Chilar grape variety; Karasi Red, made from one of the oldest grape varieties in the world, Areni; and Heritage Red Sireni and Ararati White, made with Sireni, a mid-ripening red grape variety, and Ararati, an indigenous white grape variety. Both varieties are fermented separately in traditional Armenian clay amphorae, buried, then blended together and aged for about two years in a mix of clay amphora and concrete, then another year in the bottle.

A selection of Zorah wines from Armenia, new to Connecticut from Slocum & Sons.



Photos courtesy of Brescome Barton.

BRESCOME BARTON HOSTS PRIVATE BARREL TASTING

Brescome Barton, in collaboration with Tilted Bottles Wine, Beer & More in West Hartford, hosted a private barrel tasting of the Woodinville Whiskey Co. line on Aug. 15. Spearheaded by Phuong Thy Villaysane, Moët Hennessy Portfolio Manager, Brescome Barton, with Eric Jacoby, General Manager, Tilted Bottles Wine, Beer & More, the event featured special guest Josh Prete, Northeast Sales Manager, Woodinville Whiskey Co. He led guests through an educational tasting of the Washington-based distillery's whiskeys, including its exclusive Private Select Straight Bourbon Whiskey and its newest addition, Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Toasted Applewood Staves. Crafted in Washington by best friends Orlin Sorensen and Brett Carlile, Woodinville Whiskey Co. uses locally grown grains, pot-distilled by hand in single batches and aged in charred oak barrels, to make its award-winning line of whiskeys, developed under the tutelage of the late Dave Pickerell, an industry icon known for his role in the craft distilling movement.

1. Brescome Barton, in collaboration with Tilted Bottles Wine, Beer & More in West Hartford, hosted a private barrel tasting of the Woodinville Whiskey Co. line on Aug. 15.
2. Woodinville Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Private Select Straight Bourbon Whiskey and Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Toasted Applewood Staves.
3. Eric Jacoby, General Manager, Tilted Bottles Wine, Beer & More; Matthew Parent, Sales Representative, Brescome Barton; Phuong Thy Villaysane, Moët Hennessy Portfolio Manager, Brescome Barton; and Josh Prete, Northeast Sales Manager, Woodinville Whiskey Co.
4. Josh Prete, Northeast Sales Manager, Woodinville Whiskey Co. leading guests through an education of the Woodinville Whiskey Co. line.
5. Josh Prete, Northeast Sales Manager, Woodinville Whiskey Co. with guests at the private barrel tasting of Woodinville Whiskey at Tilted Bottles Wine, Beer & More in West Hartford on Aug. 15.



ACE DISTRIBUTING BRINGS IN NEW GERMAN SPICED WINE

Plainville, Connecticut-based Ace Distributing recently brought in Rapunzel Glühwein Spiced Wine in time for the holiday season. Popular in Europe, Rapunzel Glühwein is a mulled wine. Called "glühwein" in Germany, the traditional recipe is made of red wine, cinnamon, cloves and anise spices, as well as fruits like oranges, lemons and blueberries. Often served hot and best enjoyed on a cold winter night, it is also very popular at ski resorts where it is savored after a long day out on the trails. The wine joins other imported offerings in Ace's wine portfolio.

Rapunzel Glühwein Spiced Wine joins Ace Distributing's portfolio in time for the holidays.

A Taste of Simsbury Spotlights Local Venues

The 14th annual A Taste of Simsbury, presented by Liberty Bank, was hosted at The Riverview on Aug. 22. Co-organized by Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director, Simsbury Main Street Partnership, the showcase hosted 22 area restaurants and 17 beverage suppliers for an evening of tastes. Guests enjoyed a variety of cuisine options from each venue paired with beverage tastes from Back East Brewing Co., Drink Mechanics, Counter Weight Brewing Co. New England Cider Co., RIPE Bar Juice, Stormalong Cider, Thomas Hooker Brewery and Waypoint Spirits, among others. Wholesaler sponsors included Brescome Barton, Mancini Beverage, Martignetti Companies and all wine and spirits were supplied by The Wine House and Owner Bill Daum. Proceeds from the sold-out event benefited the Simsbury Main Street Partnership, a nonprofit dedicated to economic development and the support of recreation and tourism in Simsbury.



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1. The 14th annual A Taste of Simsbury, presented by Liberty Bank, was hosted at The Riverview on Aug. 22.
2. Chandon Brut Rosé, Masi Fresco di Masi and Banfi Rosa Regale.
3. Carolann Alos, Sales Representative, Brescome Barton and Bill Daum, Owner, The Wine House.
4. Darren Carbone, Martignetti Companies highlighting Opus One Red Blend.
5. Peter Reilly, Counter Weight Brewing Co.
6. All of Millwright's Restaurant: Andrew Valesquez; Tyler Anderson, Chef; and Lindsay Frye.
7. All from Abigail's Grille & Wine Bar: Dogukan Kocamangil, Mike Penna, Ashley Scalabrino, Kristin Enaco and Leanna Carlson.
8. Robert Lawrence, Brewer and Alyssa Tezack, Taproom Manager, Dudleytown Brewing Co.
9. Glenn Hellthaler, Thomas Hooker Brewing Co. highlighting Thomas Hooker #smol IPA.
10. Brand Ambassador Noah Bonner and Steve Turpak, Stormalong Cider.
11. Lianna Urso, Fitzgerald's Foods with her purple velvet cake.
12. Thomas Gex, Plan b Burger Bar.
13. Bob Nuzzello, New England Market Manager, RIPE Bar Juice.
14. Debbie Licho, Co-owner, Waypoint Spirits.
15. All of Little Red Barn Brewers: Kevin Webb, Tracy Webb and Jon Barbagallo.
16. John Kodis and Tomas Nenortas, Co-founder, Quiver Spiced Honey Spirit.
17. Nate Neville, Northeast Beverage and Lauren Kaszuba.
18. Jon Ladd, Back East Brewing Co.
19. Alicia Valliere, Beverage Director, Z Catering with the Perfect Pear cocktail.
20. Aaron Stepka, Founder/CEO, Drink Mechanics.
21. All from The Coffee Spot: Amy Sheehan, Owner; Siobhan Murphy, Head Baker; and Sara West, Bakery Assistant.
22. A Blueberry Margarita from Abigail's Grille & Wine Bar.
23. A dessert from Blossom Café.
24. Salmon tartare with cucumber and cream sauce over a wheat cracker from Zen Restaurant Group.











Photos courtesy of Connecticut Distributors, Inc.

CDI'S CONSIDINE DIVISION VISITS FABRIZIA SPIRITS

Team from the Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), Considine division sales management recently embarked on a summer visit to Salem, New Hampshire's Fabrizia Spirits on Aug. 27. Hosted by Fabrizia Spirits Co-owners Phil and Nick Mastroianni, the team enjoyed an in-depth look at the family's Italian heritage and passion for crafting premium citrus-based spirits. Using a unique artisanal process, the company makes their small-batch limoncellos and ready-to-drink cocktails. Renowned for using Sicilian lemons and oranges, Fabrizia Spirits has become a market leader in New England and beyond thanks to its dedication to producing high-quality, all-natural products. Fabrizia's offerings include Fabrizia Crema di Pistacchio, Limoncello, Blood Orange Liqueur, Crema di Limoncello and canned Vodka Sodas in Sicilian Lemon, Blood Orange and Raspberry, among them.

1. All from Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), except where indicated: Nick Mastroianni, Co-owner, Fabrizia Spirits; Chris Rundstrom, Considine Field Sales Manager; Joe Verrilli, Considine Field Sales Manager; Elaine Paulk, Considine Field Sales Manager; Phil Mastroianni, Co-owner, Fabrizia Spirits; and Steve Slota, Considine Division Sales Director.
2. Fabrizia Spirits Co-owner Nick Mastroianni demonstrated the esoteric peeling machine.
3. CDI's Elaine Paulk, Considine Field Sales Manager and Joe Verrilli, Considine Field Sales Manager with the freshly peeled Sicilian lemons used to make Fabrizia Limoncello.
4. A Fabrizia employee bottling Fabrizia Limoncello on the bottling line.
5. The team in Boston. All from CDI except where indicated: Chris Rundstrom, Considine Field Sales Manager; Steve Slota, Considine Division Sales Director; Elaine Paulk, Considine Field Sales Manager; Phil Mastroianni, Co-owner, Fabrizia Spirits; Joe Verrilli, Considine Field Sales Manager; and Jimmy Gumina, State Sales Representative, Fabrizia Spirits.



NEW WINES FROM 90+ CELLARS RELEASED

Latitude Beverage Co.'s wine line, 90+ Cellars, released two new limited-release reserve wines for OND. The first is Lot 227 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir, a rich, silky and vibrant Pinot Noir from the coastal California region of Santa Lucia Highlands. The second is Lot 228 Crémant d'Alsace, a traditionally made sparkling wine using predominantly biodynamic Pinot Blanc grapes grown in the heart of Alsace. The wine comes from a family who has been producing wines since the late 18th century. Created to "make great wine more accessible to everyone," by partnering with highly rated wineries, 90+ Cellars avoids the expenses of owning vineyards and curates a global collection of top-notch wines.

90+ Cellars Lot 227 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir is new among the wine line's offerings.



TWO ROADS EXPANDS NONALCOHOLIC OFFERINGS

Two Roads Brewing Company launched the latest addition to its line of award-winning nonalcoholic beers for Sober October: Road 2 Ruin Zero. The new NA version of Two Roads' flagship beer is crafted with the same bold, hoppy flavor of its namesake brew, rich with floral and piney aromas and a crisp, clean, big-hop bite. "We've been focusing sharply on our core beer brands, and Road 2 Ruin is at the top of that list. Our brewmaster, Phil Markowski, and his team took the time they needed to develop a nonalcoholic take that fans of our flagship would instantly recognize and could easily embrace," said Brad Hittle, Co-founder and CEO of Two Roads. "This fabulous brew brilliantly pays off our strategy of investing in a more focused portfolio that gives our fans more ways to enjoy what they already love." Like all of Two Roads' nonalcoholic beers, Road 2 Ruin Zero is made using an arrested fermentation process, where the yeast strain selected is carefully managed to achieve an ABV of below 0.5%. The result is a bold, full-flavored liquid that tastes remarkably like the alcoholic version. Road 2 Ruin Zero follows the brand's first two nonalcoholic offerings, an American IPA and a Juicy IPA.



BRESCOME BARTON SUPPORTS BACK-TO-SCHOOL EFFORTS

Brescome Barton team participated in its annual Back to School Backpack Drive in support of the United Way of Greater New Haven (UWGNH) held in the month of August. Employees helped provide and pack school supplies for children in need within the community. "Brescome Barton is committed to giving back to local communities by collecting 30-plus backpacks with supplies for students in need. These children are the future, they need our support and our staff is here to support them. We appreciate our employees' amazing generosity and support to the future of these children," said Mia Ginter, HRIS/Human Resources/ Payroll Associate, Brescome Barton. Founded in 1920 under the name Community Chest of Greater New Haven, the organization changed its name to the United Fund of Greater New Haven in 1951 and, in 1971, adopted the name United Way of Greater New Haven after a merger of the United Fund and Community Council. The UWGNH mission is to create solutions to the most pressing challenges in the Greater New Haven community, with a focus on education, health and financial stability, grounded in racial and social justice.

Jacqueline Godbout, Human Resources Director and Bethany Lavoie, Human Resources Assistant, Brescome Barton.



SONO1420 AMERICA'S MARITIME DISTILLERY NAMES NEW CEO

SoNo 1420 America's Maritime Distillery named Scott Tuck as Co-CEO. Tuck has 38 years of experience in sales, marketing and corporate leadership as a Founder, CEO, President and Managing Director across five institutional asset management companies. He began his career with Fortune 200 coverage in New York City with IBM. He has collaborated with SoNo 1420 Founder Ted Dumbauld on multiple occasions over the last 12 years. His background includes earning a B.S. from West Point and combat arms leadership over 16 years of military service. He joins Dumbauld to helm the destination craft distillery located in historic South Norwalk, where the team produces ultra-premium, alternative grain-distilled spirits.

SoNo 1420's new Co-CEO Scott Tuck.



OPICI ADDS NEW OCTOBER ITEMS FOR CONNECTICUT MARKET

Opici Family Distributing of Connecticut added new items: California-made Wolves 5 Year Old Single Malt Whiskey, Ghia apéritifs, Mijenta Maestra Selection 1 Blanco Tequila and Harridan Paranormal Reserve Vodka. Wolves is American whiskey distilled in Sonoma County by 13th-generation Master Distiller Marko Karakasevic using an old, slow brandy still that was imported from Cognac in 1983. Ghia is a nonalcoholic apéritif made with the purest ingredients to offer a vibrant, fresh and satisfyingly bitter taste, like summer on the rocks. It's vegan with no artificial flavors, no added sugars and no caffeine. Mijenta Maestra Selection 1 Blanco Tequila is made from a single estate in Presa de Otomites, Jesús Maria, Jalisco, Mexico, produced exclusively from Semilla agaves. This is a batch unique in that every plant harvested to produce it were agaves de semilla, agaves grown from seed, which is an industry first. Lastly, in time for October spooky season, is Harridan Vodka Paranormal Reserve. This year, 700 bottles were made, split between two famously haunted locations: the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia and the Pennhurst Asylum in Pennsylvania. Each bottle of Paranormal Reserve contains Harridan's award-winning 88-proof vodka and comes packaged in a hand-numbered engraved wood case and includes the location where it was rested.

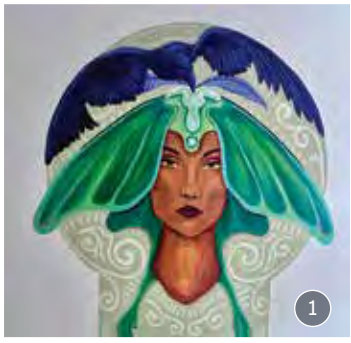
1. Wolves 5 Year Old Single Malt Whiskey, 48% ABV, is rich and very balanced in flavor, with a smooth and long finish.
2. Ghia apéritifs in Signature and Berry flavors are versatile nonalcoholic offerings, just add bubbles.
3. Mijenta's first Maestra Selection is a small-batch, limited-edition artisanal tequila from the highlands of Jalisco that celebrates the traditions of Mexican culture.
4. The 2024 release of Harridan Vodka Paranormal Reserve was aged between two haunted locations. Its bespoke wooden case includes handling gloves, an authenticity card and a "prescription pad."

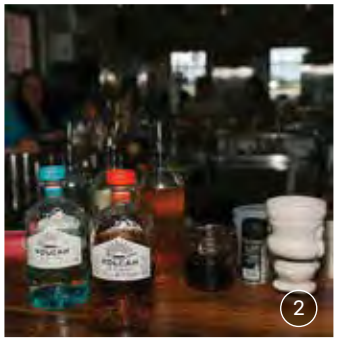


SLOCUM & SONS ADDS GREEK WINE SELECTIONS

Slocum & Sons added wines from Greek suppliers via importer Eklektikon. The group partners with artisanal growers who cultivate their own grapes using organic and biodynamic methods, and vinify naturally, with a portfolio of 20 growers that represents more than 10% of the 300-plus recorded indigenous Greek grapes. Eklektikon was born in 2011 with a passion for Greek wine and Greek pride, creating a "bridge" between Greek tradition and the U.S. market in the form of imported handcrafted natural Greek wines. New-to-Connecticut wines from Slocum & Sons include Amos, Kontozisis Organic Wines and Papras Bio Wines, both in the region of Thessaly, and the wines of Anna Halkia, a small organic grower and winemaker in Nemea, the largest winemaking region in Greece and home to the Agiorgitiko grape.

Slocum & Sons added wines from Greek suppliers via importer Eklektikon.













Photos by Michael Leung.

BRESCOME BARTON HAPPY HOUR SHOWCASES NEW TEQUILA LINE

Brescome Barton, in collaboration with Middletown's Conspiracy, hosted a happy hour featuring Volcan de Mi Tierra Tequila on Aug. 22. Guests enjoyed craft cocktails featuring the new additive-free tequila line, including Volcan de Mi Tierra Reposado Tequila, X.A Tequila and Blanco Tequila. Brescome Barton's Phuong Thy Villaysane, Moët Hennessy Portfolio Manager; Dave Marino, Sales Representative; and Jillian Carey, Account Development Manager, were on-site to educate guests on Volcan's tequilas. Produced by Moët Hennessy, Volcan de Mi Tierra Tequila is available in three expressions: Blanco, Reposado and X.A. Made in the Jalisco region, its name translates to the "land of the volcano" in celebration of its provenance and the company offers a range of additive-free tequilas.

1. Brescome Barton, in collaboration with Middletown's Conspiracy, hosted a happy hour featuring Volcan de Mi Tierra Tequila on Aug. 22.
2. Volcan de Mi Tierra Blanco and Reposado tequilas.
3. Brescome Barton's Phuong Thy Villaysane, Moët Hennessy Portfolio Manager; Dave Marino, Sales Representative; and Jillian Carey, Account Development Manager.
4. The Eldridge cocktail featuring Volcan de Mi Tierra Reposado Tequila, Cynar, vermouth and pear bitters.
5. Volcan de Mi Tierra X.A Tequila.
6. Volcan de Mi Tierra Reposado, X.A and Blanco tequilas.













Photos courtesy of Connecticut Distributors, Inc.

CDI TEAM PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY

Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), hosted a Community Service Day to clean up two neighborhood parks over the summer. Led by CDI's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) team, 45 associates teamed up for the beautification of Sigourney Square Park in Hartford and Edgewood Park in New Haven on July 19 while fostering community engagement and camaraderie. "This day was a testament to what we can achieve when we come together with a shared purpose," said Mike Forbes, CDI DE&I Team Lead. "CDI's commitment to making a positive impact on our community and pushing forward our DE&I initiatives is something I'm incredibly proud of. This initiative reflects CDI's ongoing dedication to giving back to the community, creating a special afternoon of service and connection for all involved." The efforts are part of CDI's ongoing community engagement programs.

1. Associates from Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), at Edgewood Park in New Haven.
2. The CDI team cleaning up New Haven's Edgewood Park.
3. CDI Diamond Division Field Sales Managers Mike Copeland and Nadine Gengras at Sigourney Square Park in Hartford.
4. The CDI team at Sigourney Square Park in Hartford.
5. CDI's Chris Rundstrom, Considine Division Field Sales Manager and Mike Forbes, Vanguard Division Sales Representative during the community cleanup efforts.
6. CDI's Diamond Division Sales Representatives Chris Garcia and Samantha Tinyszin.



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Photos by Michael Leung.

RELEASE OF INDUSTRY VETERAN'S MEMOIR FÊTED IN HARTFORD

Fire by Forge in Hartford hosted a launch party for the book "Serving Life: Behind Bars, Kitchens, and Hospitality" by local hospitality industry veteran Justin Morales on Aug. 26, where he is the venue's General Manager. The Fire by Forge culinary team of Karrigan Pothier, Pastry Chef; Ben Dubow, Chef; Morales; David Gilmore, Sales Consultant, Sysco; and Miguel Alvarez Jr., Executive Chef and Culinary Instructor, teamed up to bring to life the six-course menu created by Morales, who served as chef for the event, while the venue's bar team, led by Suzie Johnson, Bar Manager, mixed up signature cocktails. Morales has created and managed beverage and restaurant programs, as well as award-winning cocktail programs, for dozens of venues across the state and region over the course of three decades. He is also founder of Connecticut-based Sugar Skull Spirits, LLC, and Up n' Down Rock and Bourbon. He said of the launch, "Being in the hospitality industry for 30 years has left me with many stories to share; good, bad and totally crazy. The people I've met along the way and each establishment I've worked at have all brought me to exactly this point today … sharing the story of a left-handed, feral, dyslexic restaurant industry guy just trying to get by." Morales is also a contributor to the *Connecticut Beverage Journal*.

1. Fire by Forge in Hartford hosted a launch party for General Manager Justin Morales' book "Serving Life: Behind Bars, Kitchens, and Hospitality" on Aug. 26.
2. Justin Morales signing a copy of his new book, "Serving Life: Behind Bars, Kitchens, and Hospitality."
3. All of Fire by Forge except where indicated: Karrigan Pothier, Pastry Chef; Ben Dubow, Chef; Justin Morales, Author and General Manager; David Gilmore, Sales Consultant, Sysco; and Miguel Alvarez Jr., Executive Chef and Culinary Instructor.
4. Suzie Johnson, Bar Manager, Fire by Forge crafting event cocktails.
5. The Filthy Rich: Hanson of Sonoma Habanero Vodka, Trincheri Dry Vermouth, black garlic olive oil and sriracha blue cheese bacon stuffed olives.
6. The Kiss From a Rose: Highclere Castle Gin, Wild Moon Rose Liqueur, grapefruit, lemon juice, fee foam and rose petal powder.
7. The Omotenashitni: Hanson Mandarin Vodka, Asian pear sake, Fruitful Triple Sec, lime juice, cranberry juice and Fernet Branca.
8. The Beso Rojo: Tres Agaves Blanco Tequila, lime juice, triple sec, agave nectar and sangria foam.
9. The Yuzu Cowboy: mezcal, Fruitful Yuzu Liqueur, agave nectar, lime juice and orange juice.
10. Fire by Forge team: Kastel Kima, Bartender; Ryan Maleryn, Barback; and Suzie Johnson, Bar Manager.
11. Guests Jim Welch, Saybrook Fish House; Jason McClellan, Sales Representative, Connecticut Distributors, Inc.; and Paul Mazurek, District Manager, Trinchero Family Estates.
12. Morales visiting with guests during the book launch.

See more cocktails and cuisine at:
thebeveragejournal.com/serving-life-launch-morales

ShakesBeer Festival 2024 Raises Community Funds

The annual ShakesBeer Festival was hosted on the grounds of the historic American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford on Aug. 24. Guests enjoyed tastes from more than 50 local craft breweries, with food truck eats from Cinnabomb Mini-Donut, EP Local, The Melting Truck, Rita's Pitas, Star Light Treats, SWAT Southern Wings & Things and Vittles. Night Visitors and Jon Hollywood performed live during the afternoon event, while guests enjoyed the many offerings, shopped local craft vendors and played yard games on the venue's lawn, which overlooks Long Island Sound. The ShakesBeer Festival is organized by local beverage professionals Steven Bilodeau and Pete Rodrigues, who created the annual event to raise money for charitable causes. A portion of the event proceeds benefited athletic scholarships for Stratford students via the Stratford Oldtimers Athletic Association.



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1. The annual ShakesBeer Festival was hosted at Shakespeare Park in Stratford on Aug. 24.
2. Lori LaPia and Joe Bonitatebus, ShakesBeer Festival.
3. All of Bad Sons Beer Co.: Andrew Melvin, Frank Santos, Donnie Paez and Anthony Cox.
4. Bill Donovan, Narragansett Beer showcasing Narragansett Lager.
5. Tori Kunst, Counter Weight Brewing highlighting Counter Weight Headway IPA and Fest Bier.
6. Bryan Ayers and Adam Calderone, Elicit Brewing Company.
7. Jay Williams, Nod Hill Brewery.
8. Zach Washbond, East Rock Brewing Company highlighting East Rock Pilsner.
9. Kathy Ciuci, Two Roads Brewing Company.
10. Brand Ambassadors Mary Helen Smith showcasing Guinness 0 Non-Alcoholic Draught and Julissa Rivera highlighting Captain Morgan Sliced in Mango Mai Tai.
11. Dave Kimball and P. Scott Vallely, Owner, Charter Oak Brewing Company.
12. A.J. Marsiglia and Ben Curry, Boston Beer Co.
13. A pour of Samuel Adams Octoberfest.
14. Mary Rotunda, Martignetti Companies showcasing Surfside Raspberry Tea + Vodka and Strawberry Lemonade + Vodka.
15. Zander Bochm, Marissa Bentivoglio and A.J. Martinik, Lawson's Finest Liquids.
16. Larisa Wilber, Athletic Brewing Co. highlighting Athletic Tropical Sour.
17. Jon Ladd, Back East Brewing Company showcasing Back East Octoberfest and Ice Cream Man.
18. Jamie Lewis, Brewport.
19. Julie Melnyk, Whalers Brewing Company.
20. Scott Maybaum, Good Fucking Brands showcasing Good Fucking Vodka.
21. Vincent Melita, MD&S Distributors highlighting Root Out Root Beer Flavored Whisky.
22. Sasha Bajjo and Wayne Crow, Connecticut Valley Brewing Company.
23. Will Thresher and John Martino, Tribus Beer Co.
24. Dylan Salvatore, Dockside Brewery.







HIGHCLERE CASTLE GIN HOSTS NEWPORT POLO TEA PARTY

Highclere Castle Gin partnered with The Cocktail Guru team led by Jonathan Pogash for a Newport Polo sponsorship, with the gin a featured spirit for the season. On Aug. 31, Highclere Castle Spirits hosted an English Tea Party in the pavilion for the USA vs. UK match to welcome new British Consul General to New England David Clay MBE and to celebrate with trade partners in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Highclere Castle Gin launched in 2019, crafted from botanicals and oats sourced from the estate of the iconic castle that shares its name, known to millions as the "real 'Downton Abbey.'" The Eighth Earl and Countess of Carnarvon, owners and current residents of the castle, are Co-founders of the brand together with Connecticut spirits entrepreneur Adam von Gootkin. Since its launch, Highclere Castle Gin is now the most awarded premium gin in the world. The brand is distributed in Connecticut via Connecticut Distributors, Inc.

1. David Clay MBE, British Consul General to New England and Adam von Gootkin, Founder and CEO, Highclere Castle Spirits.
2. Ruvin Bogati, Connecticut Distributors, Inc.; Allison Wright Bogati, Fork & Fire; Adam and Regina von Gootkin, Highclere Castle Spirits; and Bryce and Kerri Hardy, The Charles.
3. Team England with Adam von Gootkin (center), Founder and CEO and Renee Lemieux, Chief of Staff, Highclere Castle Spirits.



MURPHY DISTRIBUTORS ADDS TIP TOP COCKTAILS

Branford-based Murphy Distributors added Tip Top Proper Cocktails to its statewide portfolio. By offering a crafted cocktail that mirrors the experience of a bartender-made drink, Tip Top is created from a commitment to using traditional recipes with a focus on balance, not-too-sweet flavors and a dedication to authenticity. "We felt there is a gap missing for those who want the convenience of a can but still want a traditional cocktail," said Matthew Murphy, President of Murphy Distributors. "We are thrilled to partner with Tip Top Cocktails to fill that void for our customers." The RTD market has been on a significant upward trajectory, with industry reports predicting continued growth as consumers increasingly seek convenient yet high-quality beverage options. In 2023, the RTD market saw 42% growth in the U.S. Murphy said the partnership with Tip Top is a deliberate move to offer consumers a product that stands out for its craftsmanship and commitment to traditional cocktail-making. "We believe Tip Top Cocktails brings a much-needed authenticity to the RTD market," said Murphy. "As we continue to expand our portfolio, it is always exciting to offer something different that can exceed our customers' expectations."

Tip Top Proper Cocktails are available in Old Fashioned, Espresso Martini, Negroni and Margarita, sold in 100-ml cans by flavor and variety pack.

WHEEL HORSE

Award-winning, 101 proof Bourbon and Rye whiskeys from Owensboro, Kentucky.

94 POINTS

TOP **20** WHISKIES OF THE YEAR 2021

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STOMPING HORSE WINES RUN THE RANGE

Stomping Horse wines expanded its sales footprint by adding on- and off-premise locations via distributor Votto Vines. Stomping Horse was founded by Dawn Page, Steven Shewbrooks and Byron Brewer. Horse lovers, wine lovers and philanthropists, Stomping Horse brings together their passions in a fully realized Connecticut-based wine company whose offerings are bottled directly at the vineyard in Washington State's Columbia Valley. Its two core offerings are Stomping Horse Chardonneigh Washington Columbia Valley 2021, 100% Chardonnay, and Thoroughblend 2020, 65% Mourvèdre, 27% Syrah, 5% Grenache, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Viognier, from Washington's Yakima and Columbia valleys. The wines feature rescue horse wine label model Trouper, an off-the-track thoroughbred and his barn mate, Mavis, also a rescue who lives on Page's farm. A percentage of wine sales are donated to horse rescue and horse/human therapy groups, giving them a second chance just like Trouper and Mavis.

1. Thoroughblend, a Stomping Horse red blend, at Sachem Wine & Spirits in Guilford.
2. Stomping Horse branded wine glasses for sale at Coastal Gifts on Main in Niantic.
3. Stomping Horse Chardonneigh Washington Columbia Valley 2021 at Donahue's Madison Beach Grille in Madison.
4. Stomping Horse delivered to one of its latest locations, Bob's Centerbrook Package Store in Essex.
5. Stomping Horse Thoroughblend 2020 set to enjoy with themed glasses.
6. Enjoying Stomping Horse Chardonneigh at Recovery Room in New London.
7. Stomping Horse is sponsoring an upcoming Oct. 26-27 New England Concours d'Elegance, Hemmings' 70th anniversary celebration benefiting The Hometown Foundation, at Farmington Polo Club.

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WATERFRONT COCKTAIL COMPETITION FEATURES TITO'S VODKA

Tito's Handmade Vodka was showcased at Bridgeport's Boca Oyster Bar on Aug. 26, in collaboration with its state distributor, the Martignetti Companies. Held outdoors on the venue's patio overlooking the scenic Steelpointe Harbor, the event brought together the skills of 11 local bartenders who created cocktails using Tito's Handmade Vodka as their base spirit for guests and a panel of judges, who evaluated each entry on creativity, presentation, taste and balance. After three rounds, finalists were narrowed down and three winners were named: third place: Tom Stokes, Nautilus; second place: Sebrina Hanley, Molto; and first place: Shane McGowan, Wildcat. Each bartender chose a charity to support and all proceeds from ticket sales were donated to fundraising efforts, with Tito's Handmade Vodka pledging its own monetary donations to local charities.

1. Martignetti Companies hosted a cocktail competition featuring Tito's Handmade Vodka at Bridgeport's Boca Oyster Bar on Aug. 26
2. All with Martignetti Companies: Jeff Cryder, Sales Representative; Michael Doran, Sales Representative; Michael Blanchard, VP Sales and Marketing; Jason Kelley, District Manager; Stephen Delmonico, Sales Representative; and Justin Epstein, Sales Representative.
3. All with Martignetti Companies except where indicated: Craig Randi, Key Account Manager; Mike Testani, Guest Bartender; Jake Bishop, Portfolio Manager; Olivia Panetti, Business Development Manager; Jason Kelley, District Manager; Matt Malloy, Area Manager, Tito's Handmade Vodka; Rachel Landau, Sales Coordinator, Tito's Handmade Vodka; Jason Chamberlain, Bar Manager, Boca Oyster Bar; and Giovanna Gok, Director of Operations and Events, Boca Oyster Bar.
4. First-place winner Shane McGowan, Wildcat.
5. McGowan's cocktail, Alpine Arrows: Tito's Handmade Vodka, Alpine liqueur, jalapeño, lime, cucumber and egg whites.
6. Second-place winner Sebrina Hanley, Molto.
7. Sebrina's cocktail, The Sounds of Sirens: Tito's Handmade Vodka, jasmine and thyme simple syrup, muddled cucumber and raspberries, lemon juice and aquafaba.
8. Third-place winner Tom Stokes, Nautilus.
9. Stokes' cocktail, This One's for You Delu: Tito's Handmade Vodka, pineapple simple syrup, lemon juice, velvet falernum and Polynesian bitters.

See all competitors at:
thebeveragejournal.com.com/titos-cocktail-comp-boca



Photos courtesy of Paramount Promotions.

ANNUAL FOXWOODS COCKTAIL CARNIVAL SPOTLIGHTS SPIRITS

A variety of spirits were showcased at Foxwoods Resort Casino's fourth annual Cocktail Carnival on Aug. 31, featuring fair-themed signature cocktails, food and entertainment. Guests enjoyed beverage tastings and cocktails in the Premier Ballroom and on the casino's Fox Tower lawn and terrace poured by representatives from many of the state's beverage suppliers and distributors, along with carnival-themed festival eats, including deep-fried Oreos, cotton candy and corn dogs. Other amusements included lawn games, fortune tellers and caricature artists, along with stilt walkers and jugglers, who contributed to the day's carnival theme.

1. Brand Ambassadors showcasing White Claw Flavored Vodka in Pineapple and Black Cherry.
2. A brand ambassador with a cocktail featuring WhistlePig Rye Whiskey.
3. Douglas Meaney, New England Marketing Manager, Via Carota Craft Cocktails and Ali Welcome, Brand Ambassador.
4. Brand ambassadors showcasing Don Fulano Blanco Tequila and Condesa Gin.
5. Brand ambassadors showcasing Right Coast Italian Ice Lemon Vodka Freeze and Cherry Vodka Chill.
6. Brand ambassadors highlighting Fishers Island Lemonade in Peach and Original flavors.
7. Brand ambassadors showcasing Ghost Blanco and Reposado tequilas.

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Let us help you showcase what's new in the local market each month, in print and online. New brands, great works and team efforts. Email us to find out how to get your news featured.

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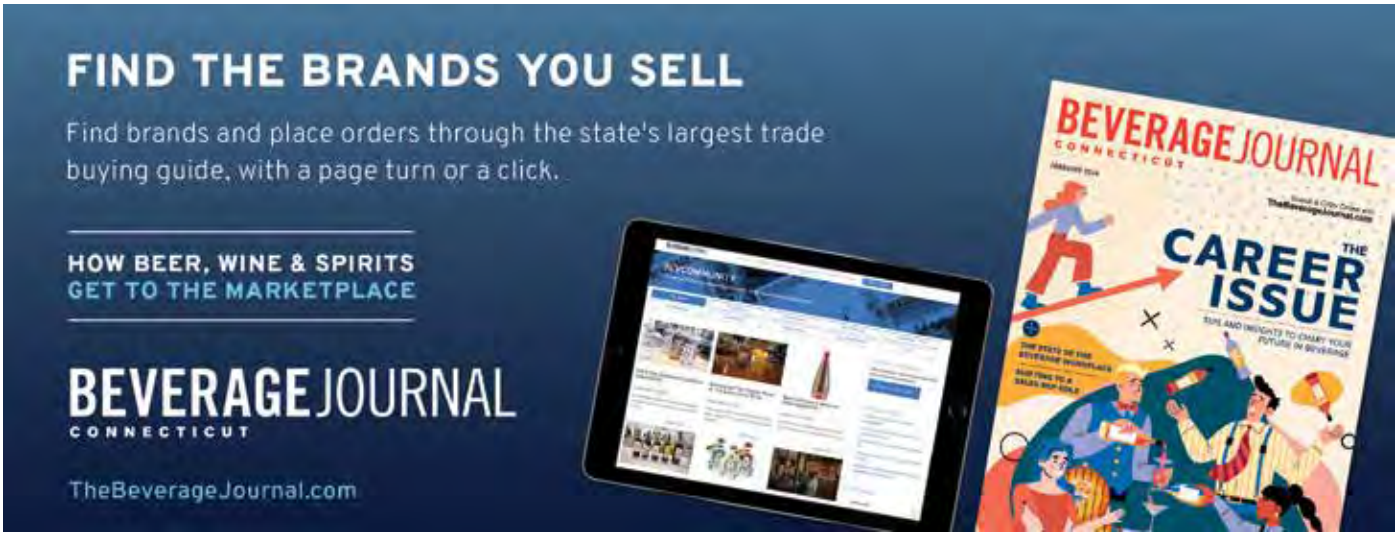


Photos courtesy of Connecticut Distributors, Inc.

CDI HOSTS VISIT WITH DE NADA TEQUILA FOUNDERS

Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), welcomed De Nada Tequila's Danny Neeson, Co-founder and President, and Adam Millman, Co-founder and CEO, to its sales meeting on Sept. 3. During a general sales meeting at the distributor's Stratford headquarters, the CDI sales team enjoyed lunch paired with cocktails featuring De Nada Tequila while learning the story from the brand's beginnings told by its founders. Millman and Neeson set out to create a tequila brand that is made sustainably while giving consumers a spirit with exceptional quality. De Nada Tequila is crafted at the esteemed Vivanco Distillery in Arandas, Mexico, by Master Distillers Sergio Cruz and Cesar Vivanco, whose dedication to tradition and excellence aligns perfectly with De Nada's mission, resulting in a product that is as authentic as it is innovative. The distillery hand-picks only the finest blue Weber agave, ensuring that every batch meets the highest standards. The tequila is made using a meticulous process that includes roller mill extraction to reduce bitterness, with all excess being composted. The brand also boasts certifications that include being additive-free, certified carbon neutral and certified kosher. De Nada is the first in the tequila category to offer a recyclable and sustainable aluminum bottle, emphasizing its dedication to preserving the environment. It's available in two distinct expressions: Blanco, known for its smooth, agave-forward profile with hints of vanilla and lime, and Reposado, aged in ex-bourbon American oak barrels, offering alluring notes of vanilla, caramel and oak with a smoky finish.

1. Danny Neeson, Co-founder and President, De Nada Tequila; Emily Sullivan, Business Manager, Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI); and Adam Millman, Co-founder and CEO, De Nada Tequila.
2. The CDI team enjoyed cocktails including the Tommy's Margarita featuring De Nada Reposado Tequila and the De Nada Paloma featuring De Nada Blanco Tequila.



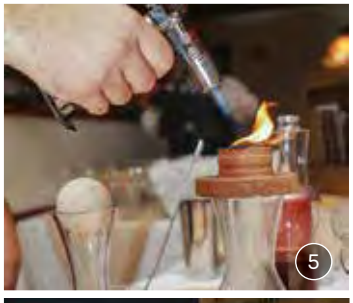


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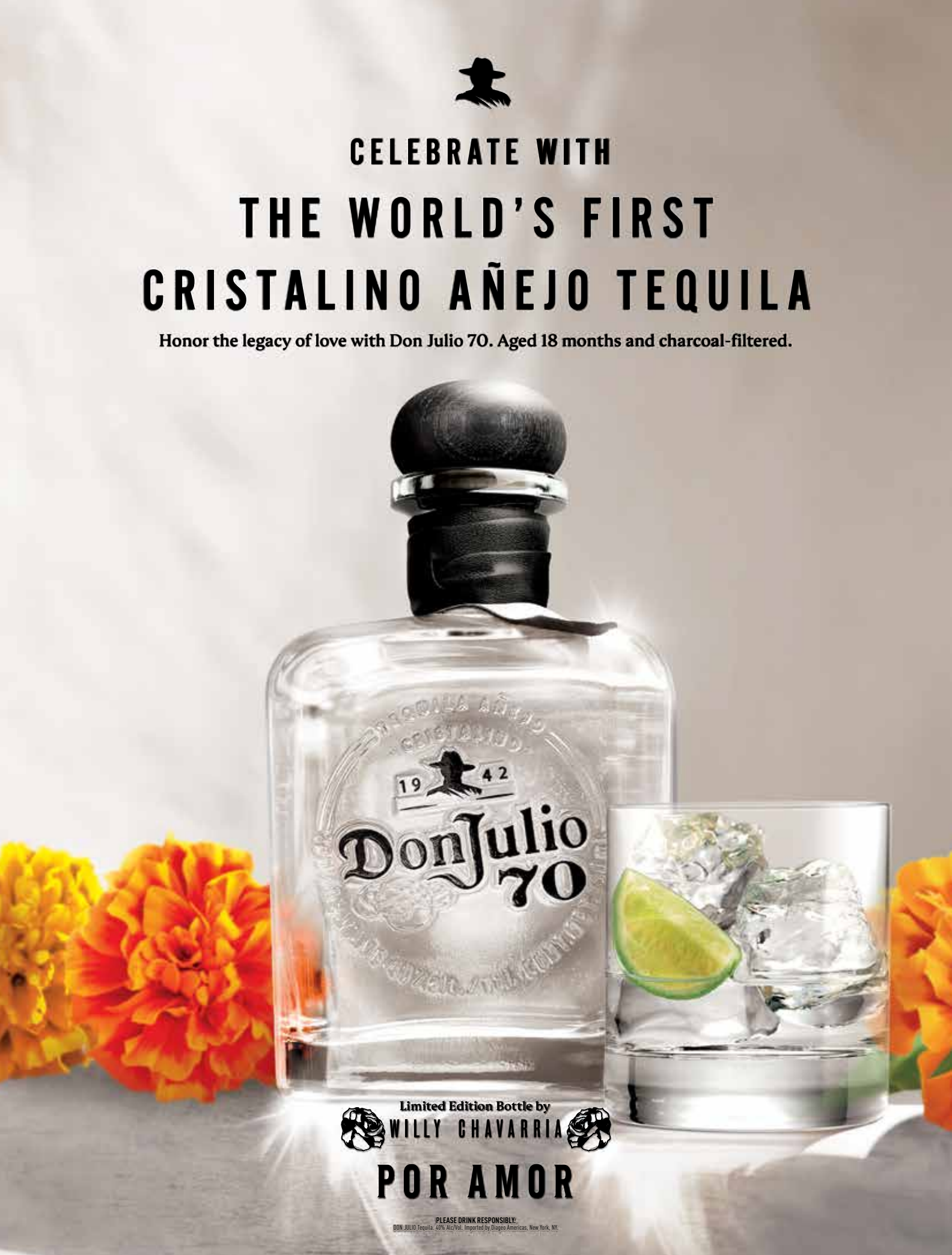

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Photos by Michael Leung.

WHISTLEPIG WHISKEY SHOWCASED IN WEST HARTFORD

Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), in collaboration with West Hartford's Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, hosted a whiskey-pairing dinner featuring WhistlePig Whiskey on Sept. 4. Guests enjoyed a six-course meal prepared by Fleming's Chef Headley Wilson paired with craft cocktails mixed by the venue's bar team. During the evening, guests tasted WhistlePig Double Malt 18 Year Straight Rye Whiskey, Small Batch Rye, PiggyBack Bourbon Whiskey, 15 Year Estate Oak Rye, PiggyBack Rye Whiskey and CampStock Wheat Whiskey. Produced at a farmhouse distillery in rural Vermont, WhistlePig Whiskey is the world's most awarded rye whiskey.

1. Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), in collaboration with West Hartford's Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, hosted a whiskey-pairing dinner featuring WhistlePig Whiskey on Sept. 4.
2. All with CDI: Brenny Savoy, Mixologist; Ruvin Bogati, Sales Representative; William Steindl, Vice President of Operations and Government Affairs; Jeff Kasiewicz, Purchasing Director; Nadine Gengras, Field Sales Manager; and Paul Puhalla, Vice President, Sales.
3. WhistlePig Double Malt 18 Year Straight Rye Whiskey, Small Batch Rye, PiggyBack Bourbon Whiskey, Estate Oak Rye, PiggyBack Rye Whiskey and CampStock Wheat Whiskey.
4. Ruvin Bogati, Sales Representative, CDI making a Smoked Old Fashioned featuring WhistlePig CampStock Wheat Whiskey.
5. A Smoked Old Fashioned featuring WhistlePig CampStock Wheat Whiskey.
6. Brenny Savoy, Mixologist, CDI pouring WhistlePig 15 Year Estate Oak Rye.
7. WhistlePig Double Malt 18 Year Straight Rye Whiskey.
8. WhistlePig PiggyBack Rye Whiskey and CampStock Wheat Whiskey.
9. A pour of a cocktail featuring WhistlePig Estate Oak Rye.


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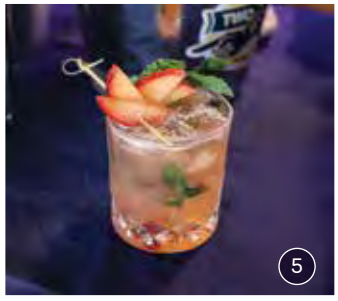
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Photos by Andrew Dominick.

TWO ROADS HOSTS COCKTAIL COMPETITION FEATURING REDEMPTION BOURBON

Connecticut Distributors, Inc. (CDI), in collaboration with Two Roads Brewing Company, hosted a cocktail competition featuring Redemption Bourbon at Two Roads Food Hall + Bar in Stratford on Sept. 5. Competitors were challenged to make their best cocktails using Redemption Bourbon as a base spirit for a panel of judges: Ben Raré, Director of Hospitality, Two Roads Brewing Company; Lauren Rotolo, Sales Representative, CDI; Andrew Dominick, Managing Editor, CTbites; and Peter Apotrias, Field Sales Manager, Diamond Division, CDI. The Public Winner was Emily Messina, Prime One Eleven; Judges' Choice: Jimmy Ortiz, Match; second place: Rebecca Romano, Founders House; and third place: Annie Sutila, Two Roads Food Hall + Bar. Founded by Connecticut resident Dave Schmier, Redemption Whiskey uses a classic pre-Prohibition rye mash bill in its full range of premium award-winning whiskeys. Produced by Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits, the Redemption Whiskey line is distributed in the state by CDI and Brescome Barton.

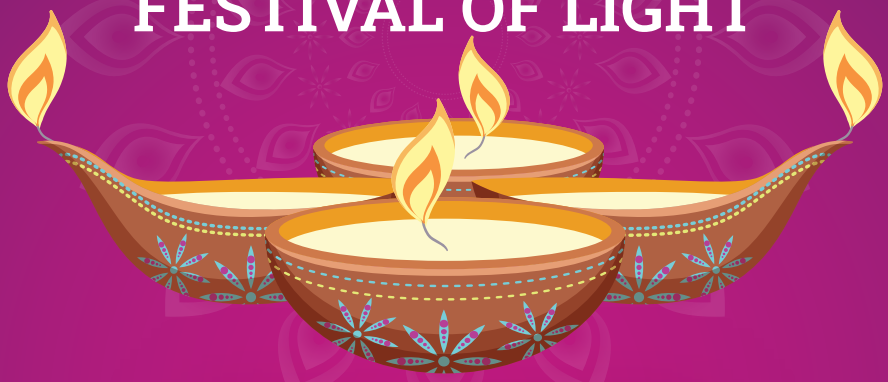
1. Connecticut Distributors, Inc., in collaboration with Two Roads Brewing Company, hosted a cocktail competition featuring Redemption Bourbon at Two Roads Food Hall + Bar in Stratford on Sept. 5.
2. Competitors used Redemption Bourbon as their base spirit.
3. Guests enjoyed assorted Two Roads brews on tap along with event cocktails.
4. Public Winner Emily Messina, Bartender, Prime One Eleven in Trumbull.
5. Messina's cocktail.
6. Judges' Choice Winner Jimmy Ortiz, Bartender, Match in Norwalk.
7. Ortiz's cocktail.
8. Second-place winner Rebecca Romano, Bartender, Founders House in Milford.
9. Romano's cocktail.
10. Third-place winner Annie Sutila, Bartender, Two Roads Food Hall + Bar.
11. Sutila's cocktail.
12. A Bourbon Smash cocktail featuring Redemption Bourbon, made by Ben Raré, Director of Hospitality, Two Roads Brewing Company.
13. A Coffee Negroni featuring Two Roads Distilling Gin, Select Aperitivo and Shearwater Espressway roasted coffee infused sweet vermouth, available on the menu at Two Roads Food Hall + Bar.

INDIAN AMERICAN PACKAGE STORE ASSOCIATION
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Diwali

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SCAN TO BECOME A MEMBER

Coastal Wine & Spirits

BY **SARA CAPOZZI**







LOCATION
103 N Main Street
Branford, CT



FACTS
Square footage:
25,000

Years in operation:
9 years
under current ownership

Centrally located off Route 1 in Branford, Coastal Wine & Spirits has brought its unmatched selection and personal brand of customer service to the area for nine years. According to Assistant Store Manager and Beer Manager Dominique Kolodziejczyk, Coastal is a destination store and part of the family of stores owned by Chip Delaney, which includes Amity New Haven, Amity Hamden, Classic Liquors in New Milford and Town Line in Stratford. And with 25,000 square feet of retail space, Coastal is able to carry a wide range of inventory.

"I think we have more of a vast selection here because we try to be kind of a destination store and make sure we have as many different SKUs as possible—we want to be a one-stop shop—so you don't have to go anywhere else for anything," Kolodziejczyk said. "Also, I think having the knowledge in all three departments makes us differ [from competitors] because we have specialists for all three, so there's always somebody who can help you."

The store employs several experts, including Kolodziejczyk in craft beer and its Spirits Manager Jason Sabatine and Wine Manager Sergio Leon. "We try to treat customers with as much respect as we can give them and we like teaching customers," Kolodziejczyk said. "We like educating them about products and talking to them about what we like. Jason will educate some people with bourbon in the bourbon aisle and teach them fun facts and things ... I love passing on any knowledge I can to anybody and it's fun for us."

Kolodziejczyk said she has seen an increased demand for ready-to-drink vodka sodas and tequila, while craft beer sales have decreased. "Craft beer is unfortunately on the downslope," she said. "[Ready-to-drink cocktails] are definitely cutting into that market. And a lot of the better-for-you things are coming up, too, like a lot of the lower-calorie wines, the no-sugar wines, that's also a big trend too. It seems like people are trying to be healthier after what happened with COVID."

Coastal serves a diverse customer base. Many shoppers skew older due to the store's proximity to several senior living facilities; yet, that is combined with a younger boating crowd who stops in during the warmer months. The team gives its customers personalized customer service and often shares its extensive knowledge with shoppers.

Customers enjoy a variety of other perks, including in-store tastings on weekends and in-store classroom tastings where brand representatives educate customers on wines and liquors. Past classes have covered brands including Woodford Reserve, Dos Hombres Mezcal and Decoy. Coastal also offers shopping and pickup through its website, where customers can see staff picks and pairing suggestions as they look for purchases.

"I think delivery is big with customers and we surprise people with how far we deliver," Kolodziejczyk said. Coastal offers delivery services via City Hive for a large range of the central Connecticut coastline area of Madison to New Haven and reaching into Hamden. Coastal also works closely with caterers to provide beverage services for special events and weddings. ■

FEATURE YOUR STORE If you own a small, medium or megastore and would like to be featured, email **dana@thebeveragejournal.com.**

NEW PRODUCTS



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1. CONNIPTION GIN

North Carolina's Durham Distillery has released its annual limited-edition Conniption Barrel Aged Gin. Taking cues from the botanical blend in the distillery's own navy strength gin, the sought-after spirit, of which only 8,000 bottles are available, is aged for 10 months in six-year-old bourbon barrels from High West Distillery in Utah. At 94-proof, it's reminiscent of a bourbon too, standing up especially well in cocktails like the Old Fashioned and Martinez.

SRP: $44.99 per 750-ml bottle
durhamdistillery.com

2. QUINTALIZA TEQUILA

Quintaliza, the first coffee-aged tequila on the market, now has a limited-production high-proof option. Like the reposado, it's born from 100 percent Blue Weber agave and aged in oak barrels that previously held organic coffee produced from sustainable beans harvested in Chiapas, Mexico. This 90-proof, double-distilled version has layers of fruit and dark chocolate that make it ripe for cocktails.

SRP: $79 per 750-ml bottle
quintalizatequila.com

3. FAR NIENTE WINERY

1982 marked the first vintage of the celebrated Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley's Far Niente Winery, and the 2022 edition commemorates that 40-year winemaking legacy. Overseen by winemaker Nicole Marchesi, the new release stars fruit from Oakville as well as other premier sites for a complex, elegant blend that benefited from an ideal growing season.

SRP: $130 per 750-ml bottle
farniente.com

4. KNOB CREEK

Knob Creek's nine-year-old bourbon and seven-year-old rye whiskey come together in a 113-proof limited-edition blend. Made by eighth-generation master distiller Freddie Noe, the robust Bourbon x Rye opens with maple and vanilla aromas that lead to a mix of sweet, fruity, and peppery flavors on the palate.

SRP: $44.99 per 750-ml bottle
knobcreek.com

5. NOMADICA

Summer vibes carry on all year long with Nomadica's low-ABV (7%) Rosé Yuzu Spritz, a collaboration with British-American Olympian Gus Kenworthy. The slightly fizzy, canned apéritif pairs California rosé (64 percent Merlot, 28 percent Grenache, and eight percent Gamay) with a honeyed Muscat grape concentrate and a splash of fresh yuzu juice from Yuzuco.

SRP: $48 per eight-pack of 250-ml cans
explorenomadica.com

6. MUYU LIQUEURS

They've been a hit in the U.K. since 2019, and now Muyu Liqueurs have arrived stateside. Conceived by bartenders Monica Berg and Alex Kratena of London's Tayer + Elementary and Simone Caporale of Sips in Barcelona in partnership with aroma experts, the cocktail-friendly liqueurs are inspired by perfume. Floral Jasmine Verte, earthy Vetiver Gris, and citrusy Chinotto Nero are accented with ingredients like neroli, patchouli, and oak moss.

SRP: $39.95 per 700-ml bottle
muyu-liqueurs.com

NEW PRODUCTS



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7. TIP TOP PROPER COCKTAILS

Bartender Joaquín Simó created the Naked & Famous, a riff on the Last Word, while working at Death & Co. in New York City's East Village. Now, the libation has been reimagined in 25% ABV canned form as the most recent addition to the Tip Top Proper Cocktails portfolio. Alongside Simó, bartender Miles Macquarrie developed a four-ingredient recipe—mezcal, lime, alpine liqueur, and aperitivo bitters—that captures the drink's bitter, herbal, and citrusy profile.

SRP: $39.99 per eight-pack of 100-ml cans
tiptopcocktails.com

8. REDEMPTION WHISKEY

Redemption Whiskey expands its Specialty Series with Sur Lee, a 94-proof straight rye whiskey that nods to sur lie, the French method of aging wine on the lees. In this rendition, the backset that comes off the still during distillation was placed into barrels before the liquid was matured. Throughout the maturation process the barrels were rotated, ensuring the whiskey and "lees" were in contact to yield nutty, spicy results.

SRP: $59.99 per 750-ml bottle
redemptionwhiskey.com

9. EL TEQUILEÑO

Following the 2023 debut of its first extra añejo expression, El Tequileño has rolled out Still Strength, a tequila made with 100 percent Blue Weber agave from Los Altos de Jalisco bottled straight from the still. Highlighting agave in its purest form, the spirit is rounded out with notes of lemon peel and white pepper.

SRP: $64.99 per 750-ml bottle
tequileno.com

10. SILVERBELLY WHISKEY

Named for the color of his famed cowboy hat, Silverbelly, Alan Jackson's signature straight bourbon whiskey has introduced its fifth offering. Aged and bottled in the hills of Tennessee, the 115-proof single-barrel expression, hand-picked by the country music artist, was matured for five and a half years.

SRP: $68 per 750-ml bottle
silverbellywhiskey.com

11. STONECAP WINES

Crafted entirely from fruit grown at Goose Ridge Estate Vineyard in Washington's Columbia Valley, the bright, aromatic 2023 vintage of StoneCap Chardonnay balances notes of tangerine, lime, and stone fruit with minerality.

SRP: $11.99 per 750-ml bottle
stonecapwines.com

12. ASTRAEA SPIRITS

The gins from master distiller Danielle Leavell, the founder of Seattle-based Astraea Spirits, conjure the disparate landscapes of the Pacific Northwest. Consider the single malt Desert. It's the final installment in Leavell's terroir-driven collection comprising Meadow, Mist, Ocean, and Forest varieties that illuminate the region's wild botanicals.

SRP: $99.95 per 700-ml bottle
astraeaspirits.com





The Voice of the Retail Liquor Industry in Connecticut

CONNECTICUT PACKAGE STORES ASSOC, INC.
cpsa
MEMBER OF AMERICAN BEVERAGE LICENSEES

The CPSA is your ally. Each session we address key issues to protect the industry and your business. What legislation will harm and what will benefit package stores? Several issues return each year and new issues arise. While we will not know the answer to all these questions until the next session, we know based on the past sessions, that there will be undoubtedly new introduced legislation that could harm your business irreparably. That is why we are here; to fight for you in the halls of the Capitol by communicating the great benefit small businesses such as yours offer to the framework of the Connecticut economy and the service and products you provide to your customers.

The Connecticut Package Stores Association (CPSA) is YOUR trade organization that promotes retailer interests across the state. We will always fight legislation that negatively affects your business and advocate for legislation that makes your business better. We are the only entity at the capitol that advocates 100% for package stores. We need you to join!

WHAT **VICTORIES** HAVE WE HAD?

Fought successfully against wine in food stores, against the repeal of minimum bottle, against beer in gas stations and box stores, against the addition of wine and spirits bottles in Connecticut's bottle bill, and more.

Now is the time to send in your membership dues which we use to support these efforts. CPSA has a team of lobbyists that communicate every day to legislators from both parties when the legislature is in session. This takes a tremendous amount of work and we need you to help support that effort.

APPLICATION FORM

Name _____ Business Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

☐ Tier 1: 10+ full & part time employees $500.00 x #of stores ____ = $ _____
☐ Tier 2: 5-9 full & part time employees $400.00 x #of stores ____ = $ _____
☐ Tier 3: < 5 full & part time employees $300.00 x #of stores ____ = $ _____

CALL us at 860.346.7978 OR **FAX** or email this page to 860.346.7978 OR **PRINT** an application or PAY ONLINE: ctpsa.com and mail your check to: 455 Boston Post Rd, Suite 203B, Old Saybrook, CT 06475

LOCAL VS. NATIONAL ELECTIONS: WHY THEY BOTH MATTER

BY **SEAN HUGHES**, CONNECTICUT PACKAGE STORES ASSOCIATION

As Americans, we have the invaluable right to vote for representatives who will advocate for our interests and shape our laws. From municipal to congressional and presidential elections, we have the opportunity to select individuals we believe will best represent our values and priorities. While not everyone exercises this fundamental right, elections are held every November at local polling places, providing a chance for all to participate in the democratic process.

While most voting-age citizens are aware of yearly November elections, not all receive the same level of media attention. Congressional and state legislative races take place every two years in Connecticut, coinciding with even-numbered years. Municipal elections, involving mayors, selectmen and various boards, are held in odd-numbered years, also every two years. Presidential election cycles, which happen every four years, are particularly high-profile, with candidates and political action committees spending significant sums on advertising and public outreach.

With Labor Day marking the unofficial kickoff to full-blown campaign season, members of the public are met with a significant increase in TV commercials, social media ads and candidate lawn signs. While some of the unrelenting deluge of election-related information can be helpful, it can overwhelm some voters, leading to a lack of interest or engagement in the process.

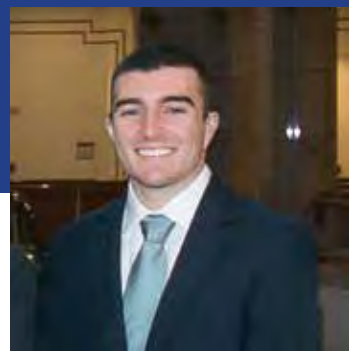
There has also been a growing sentiment among Americans that their vote simply does not count. When comparing voting totals nationally and statewide, it is easy to feel that a single vote is insignificant. In the 2020 presidential election, for example, one vote out of 159.6 million might seem inconsequential. However, several states in that election were decided by a narrow margin, often within a few thousand votes.

In races for state legislators serving in Hartford, the margins are far smaller, making each vote incredibly important. The 2022 state election featured several close races that demonstrate the impact of even one single vote. In the 81st House District, which encompasses most of Southington, the race was for an open seat with no incumbent. Democrat Chris Poulos defeated Republican Tony Morrison by just one vote out of 10,593 cast. Similarly, in the 134th House District (Fairfield and Trumbull), Democratic candidate Sarah Keitt won by a margin of 14 votes out of 10,272 total votes. Even more recently, in a Democratic primary for the 91st House District seat (Hamden), the initial vote count showed one candidate as having won by just two votes, triggering a recount. The results of the recount, which included a missing batch of in-person ballots, flipped the results by a margin of 15 votes. These examples highlight the common occurrence of Connecticut General Assembly elections being decided by narrow margins, often under 100 or 200 votes out of tens of thousands cast.

Every single vote matters. Whether it's for a presidential candidate or a local planning and zoning commission member, your vote is crucial. Citizens throughout history have fought to secure this right for you and me. Voting only takes a few moments but can have a lasting impact on the future, depending on the legislative priorities of those elected. With another busy year of legislative activity impacting the liquor industry ahead in Hartford, be sure to know where your candidate stands on issues that are important to you. To stay informed on the election, candidates and other legislative action, join the Connecticut Package Stores Association today.

LEARN MORE

Find out more about any of these issues and the benefits of membership at **ctpsa.com**.



SEAN HUGHES
Account Director, Connecticut Package Stores Association

I'M A SMALL, INDEPENDENT RESTAURANT: DOES MY VOICE MATTER?

CONNECTICUT Restaurant ASSOCIATION

BY **KATIE GERBER**, ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR, CONNECTICUT RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

The Connecticut Restaurant Association's (CRA) goal is to help your restaurant or hospitality business succeed, no matter the size. Whether that's fighting at the State Capitol or providing resources to our members, the CRA helps people overcome industry-wide business challenges.

It is a common misconception that only the large restaurant groups or corporate giants need to be part of their state restaurant association; however, small operators have a huge impact and can equally benefit from membership. In fact, 97% of restaurants in Connecticut are independently owned, the largest number in the country! (Source: National Restaurant Association, based on 2023 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis and U.S. Census Bureau).

Independent restaurants are a vital part of their communities and have unique perspectives on local issues. By being active in their state association, restaurant owners and operators can influence policies that affect their businesses.

While it is perhaps the most important membership benefit, advocacy and representation can be the most difficult to understand, especially for small operators who aren't engaged with our efforts every day. Each year, the CRA tracks multiple bills that directly impact restaurants and food-service businesses. From issues like labor laws, health regulations and taxes, the CRA fights for the best interests of the industry, blocking harmful legislation, forging relationships with government officials and proposing alternate bills that better support the industry. In the 2024 Legislative Session alone, the CRA fought off harmful bills including the Elimination of the Tip Credit (Senate Bill 221), Junk Fees (Senate Bill 3), Predictive Scheduling (Senate Bill 413) and many more.



Keith Beaulieu, Owner, The Main Pub, and CRA Chairman, presenting awards at the 2023 CRAZIES.

As a small operator, you already have a lot on your plate—from staffing and cleaning to ordering and everything in between. Managing a small business is no minute feat. By staying informed about the latest advocacy efforts and legislation through our regular communications and timely member updates, you can ease the burden of figuring out what actions need to be taken and focus on what you do best: running your business.

"As an independent, single-location owner-operator, I didn't expect to be taken seriously when I first got involved. Whether speaking with elected officials in my district or testifying at the State Capitol, I've seen firsthand the power of grassroots advocacy," said Keith Beaulieu, Owner, The Main Pub, and CRA Chairman. "The CRA has been an indispensable lifeline for me, and my business has never been stronger."

Getting involved with advocacy isn't always standing up to speak in front of legislators, it can be as simple as staying an active member. Your annual dues are an investment in the growth of the industry, allowing us to continue to do this important work, 365 days a year.

Over the years, our voice has only become as loud and impactful at the State Capitol as it is because of our members. The more members we have, the more our voice is heard. Independent restaurants, often more vulnerable to legislative changes, can ensure their specific needs and challenges are heard alongside larger chains by joining their state association and speaking up. The CRA can also help facilitate introductions with local representatives.

In short, you don't have to be a multimillion-dollar restaurant to make a significant impact at the legislative level. Restaurants are the backbone of many communities, and legislators want these communities to thrive. You have the power to highlight how proposed bills and regulations directly affect your establishment, helping to shape policies that support the local restaurant industry.

By joining your state restaurant association, independent restaurants not only gain access to essential resources but also ensure that their unique perspectives and needs are represented in the broader conversation about the future of the restaurant industry.

For more information, or to become a member, visit **ctrestaurant.org/join**. Questions? Drop us an email at **info@ctrestaurant.org**.

LEARN MORE

Interested in learning more about CRA and member benefits?

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KATIE GERBER
Administrative Coordinator, Connecticut Restaurant Association

WELCOME TO THE WORLD: ONE NEW MASTER SOMMELIER

BY RYAN ROBINSON



The arduous Master Sommelier examination recently concluded, welcoming a single new Master Sommelier to join the ranks of 171 professionals who have earned the title in the Americas. The Master Sommelier diploma is the pinnacle of professional beverage service. According to Gallop, it is the second most difficult exam in the world, trailing behind a Chinese math exam. Years of sacrifice and dedication are endured by eager sommeliers who have hopeful visions of being one of the few to earn such a title.

Sommeliers are beverage professionals who are involved in beverage service. They are often mistaken as focusing solely on wine. A sommelier must have knowledge of all fermented beverages and their interactions with food, as opposed to Masters of Wine, who exclusively study wine in absence of a service component. This includes cocktails, spirits, beer, sake and wine. Not only does a successful candidate have to have an expert level of knowledge of these categories, but they also must know the production steps, applicable regional laws and iconic producers of each category.

A sommelier must be certified by an accredited organization. Just because someone is passionate about wine or sells or collects wine does not automatically grant them sommelier status. It is not a title to be self-anointed, although begrudgingly many erroneously do so.

The Court of Master Sommeliers is the largest sommelier accreditation and certification organization in the world. The first Master Sommelier exam was held in London in 1969 and, a surprise to many, was proctored by the Institute of Masters of Wine! As an organization, the Court of Master Sommeliers is relatively new. It was founded in 1977 in London. Ten years later, the first Master Sommelier exam in the United States was held, creating the Court of Master Sommeliers – Americas.

Within the Court of Master Sommeliers, there are four levels of achievement. Level 1 is known as the Introductory Course. Upon completion, a student should have a working knowledge of the beverage world. At this stage, a student is not yet a sommelier, but they're starting their journey toward certification.

A student of wine becomes a Certified Sommelier after completing the second level. At this stage, successful candidates can now officially call themselves a sommelier. There are thousands in the Americas who have passed this level after completion of a three-part exam; theory, tasting and service. It is at this stage where most students of wine remain. The few that want to continue submit an Application of Intent and, if chosen, will have the chance to test at/on the third level: the Advanced Sommelier.

There under 1,200 Advanced Sommeliers in the world. Connecticut is home to three Advanced Sommeliers. This process is much more demanding of time and is painfully rigorous. The exam is divided into three parts; those that get invited to test must first pass a written Theory exam. The few that pass are then invited to take Service and Tasting later in the year. Service is a scenario-type exam where candidates must provide tableside beverage service while being asked a barrage of beverage questions. The tasting portion of the exam is often the most difficult, as the candidate is presented with six glasses of wine, three red and three white. These wines can be still, sweet or fortified. Each student has 25 minutes to verbally assess the sight, smell and taste of the wines. Success comes to candidates who can conclude the grape variety, vintage, region and quality level of the wine flight.

At the crest of achievement is the Master Sommelier Diploma or Level 4. Only Advanced Sommeliers get invited to sit for the exam. This year, 104 people were invited to sit for Theory. Of those, only four candidates were successful in passing the verbal Theory exam. Following Theory, a student must then pass both Service and Tasting, which are held later in the year. A student has three attempts to pass the remaining two portions. If they do not achieve success after the third attempt, then they must start the process over. This year, 25 candidates who had previously passed Theory, sat for Service and Tasting. Only one emerged with a pass, Myles Trapp of Napa, California.

Students dedicate hours every day for years on end to prepare for this gauntlet. They relocate to find study and tasting groups. It takes dedication, discipline, a great group and an even better mentor to attempt success. So much is sacrificed at the individual level, which is why I urge you to think twice before proclaiming you're a sommelier.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryan Robinson

Ryan Robinson is the Director of Education for Brescome Barton and Worldwide Wines in Connecticut. He is also the Wine Director for Cornerstone Restaurant Group in North America and South Korea, and an Adjunct Professor at the University of New Haven. He holds the credentials of Advanced Sommelier-CMS; WSET Diploma and WSET Educator in Wine, Sake and Beer; Rioja Wine Educator; Wine Scholar Guild Educator and Spanish Wine Specialist; and Certified Scotch Whisky Professional from the Council of Whiskey Masters.

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Wildcat is a cocktail-forward New American restaurant and bar in Hamden, recently opened by restaurateurs Kris and Shane McGowan. Described as "small scale upscale," its ambience invites guests to settle in amid the deep teal walls with wood, brass and gilded mirror accents, where they can enjoy beautifully set dishes from seafood to vegetarian from a rotating menu that focuses on seasonality. From behind the backlit bar, the team offers curated cocktails, with categories such as Shaken, Stirred, Boilermakers/Large Format and Sans Booze, each a flavorful showcase. Bubbly and still wines plus plenty of brews on tap and in cans round out the beverage program.





Co-owner
Kris McGowan

Cocktail
Clever Coyote

Ingredients

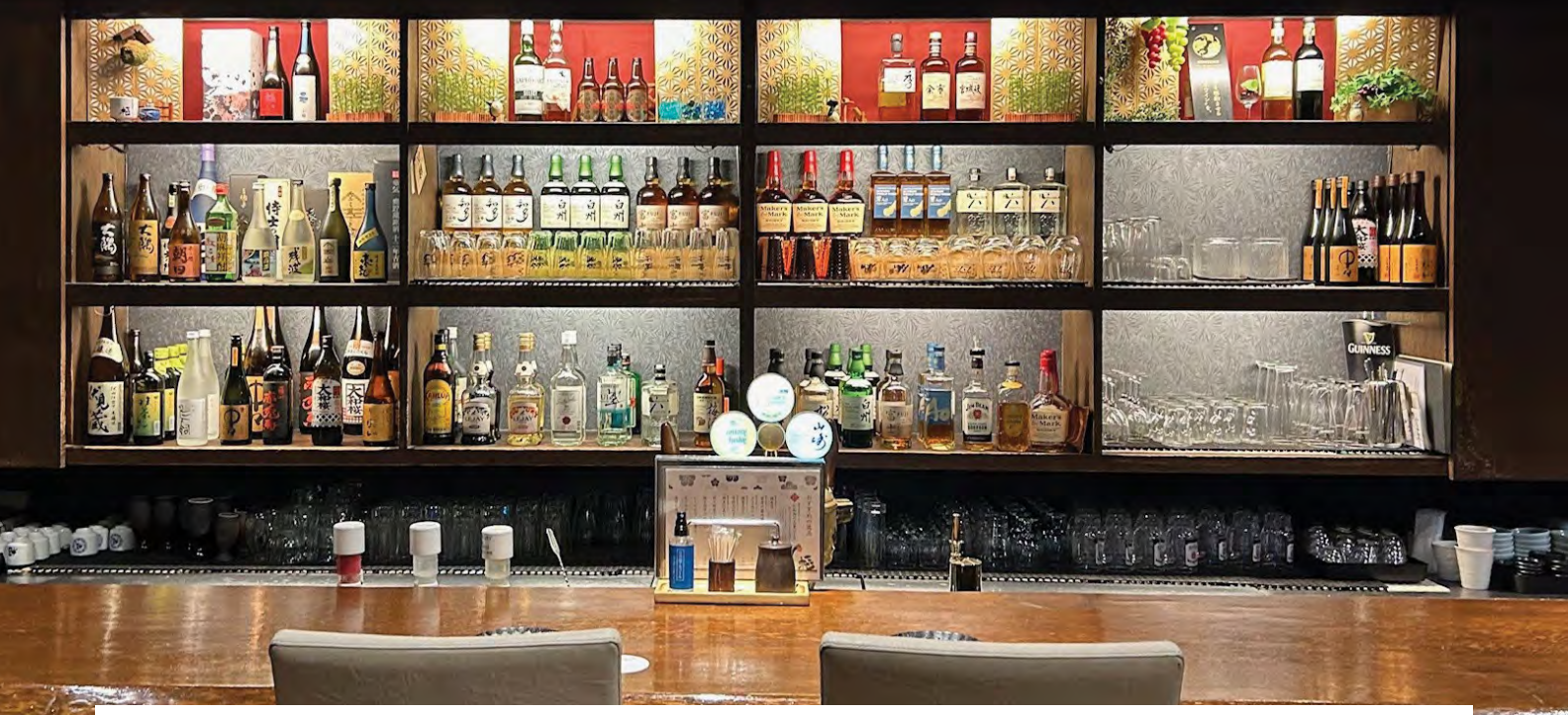
- .75 oz. sotol
- .75 oz. tequila
- .5 oz. Strega Liquore
- .75 oz. peach-habanero cordial
- .5 oz. lime juice
- 1 oz. grapefruit juice
- Garnish: cucumber wave
- Big ice rock

Method: Add all measured ingredients to a shaker tin. Add ice and shake well. Strain the mixture into a rocks glass over ice. Garnish with a cucumber wave.

Co-owner Kris McGowan and the Clever Coyote.

"Sotol, the main ingredient in this cocktail, was the inspiration. A unique and underutilized spirit, sotol creates a great backbone for a variety of flavor profiles. The sotol plant that the spirit is derived from is one of the most adaptive plant species in Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert," said Wildcat Co-owner Kris McGowan. "The name comes from this adaptability that is a characteristic of the coyotes who roam the same desert. They are also incredibly adaptive and intelligent, which allows them to thrive in the desert's rough terrain and climate. The combination of habanero, peach and sotol all work seamlessly together while being 'brightened' by the herbaceous-ness of the Strega liqueur. A unique blend of spice, smoke and citrus makes this a great summer-into-fall-forward beverage."





THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE WHISKY

NEW, STRICTER STANDARDS AROUND THE ORIGIN OF JAPANESE WHISKY WENT INTO EFFECT IN APRIL. HOW WILL THEY IMPACT THE EVOLUTION OF THE CATEGORY?

BY BETSY ANDREWS



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SUNTORY SPIRITS LIMITED // KANOSUKE DISTILLERY

Kanosuke Distillery was suffused with the scent of Scottish malt when a group of U.S. whiskey experts visited earlier this year. At this coastal facility on the Japanese island of Kyushu, fourth-generation master blender Yoshitsugu Komasa was brewing the wort for his single malt.

One of three of his whiskies to launch in the U.S. this past July, the single malt is also a component in Kanosuke Double Distillery Whisky, which includes peated malt and a grain whisky vacuum distilled at nearby Hioki Distillery, where his family has made shōchū for 140 years. Its separate parts are aged in an array of barrels—new American oak, ex-bourbon and sherry barrels, and re-charred ex-shōchū casks. But for all the innovation behind the Double Distillery Whisky, under new guidelines implemented in April 2024, it can still be labeled Japanese whisky, while many other whiskies from Japan cannot.

"Komasa-san decided to make products that we think would not violate the guidelines," says Roland Ng, Kanosuke's general manager for the Americas. The distiller had been approached by would-be partners to bottle his whisky outside of Japan or age it at sea in international waters, but Komasa

ABOVE: While exports have declined, U.S. demand for Japanese whisky remains high; LEFT: Roland Ng, Kanasuke Distillery's general manager for the Americas.



ABOVE: The Suntory Yamazaki Distillery near Kyoto opened in 1923.

had declined. "He is on the committee that wrote the guidelines. If we want to lead by example, we can't do those things."

The guidelines were set by the Japan Spirits & Liqueurs Makers Association (JSLMA). In 2021, its members unanimously adopted voluntary standards: To be labeled Japanese whisky, a spirit must contain malted grain; be made with only grain and Japanese water; and be saccharified, fermented, distilled (to less than 95% ABV), and bottled (to more than 40% ABV) in Japan.

The standards represent the next stage in the evolution of a young yet volatile category. In 2016, there were 10 active whisky distilleries in Japan. This year, the Japanese Whisky Research Centre counted 127, as producers jumped on the soaring export market. For the 54 whisky distilleries in the JSLMA—some of whom, like those owned by Suntory and Nikka, have been making the spirit for decades—the standards help control what had become a chaotic category. The JSLMA seems to be onto something; from a high in 2022, Japanese whisky saw exports decline nine percent in volume and nearly 11 percent in value, with some believing consumer confusion was contributing to the downturn. "When it's less Wild West and consumers are more confident it's a real product, that helps with mainstreaming Japanese whisky," says James Bowker, the global advocacy manager for House of Suntory.



These are only agreed-upon rules not legal mandates, and many distilleries are not JSLMA members. Nonetheless, the standards provide essential clarification about what Japanese whisky should be, and several observers see them as a step toward a legal definition, such as that of Scotch or bourbon. But while they might be a boon to established producers, who can use them to market both their Japanese and world whiskies more effectively, for newer, craft distillers, the standards are more complicated. Some will be able to capitalize on the elevated status of the category—and there is already an influx of new Japanese whiskies—but others will fail to meet the expectations of the premium market and fall by the wayside.

SevenFifty Daily spoke to producers and Japanese whisky experts to dive into what these changes mean for the category.

CONTROLLING THE EXPORT MARKET

For much of its first century, Japanese whisky was a sleeper. That is, until 2015, when Jim Murray's Whisky Bible named Suntory's Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2013 the world's best whisky. "All of a sudden, the category was moving," says Tommy Tardie, the owner of New York's Flatiron Room. "People wanted to try the Sherry Cask, but it was never released in the U.S. So they would say, 'Let me try something else.' Big, bold, or heavily peated whiskies were not approachable to everyone. Japanese whisky was light, elegant, and accessible. It was empowering for people."

"Aficionados started buying up Japanese whisky," recalls Jonathan Adler, the beverage director of the Manhattan-based Japanese whisky specialist Shinji's Bar. "In a few years, the price skyrocketed."

This boom and the opportunity it represented had consequences for the category, however. "Companies started importing Scotch or bourbon, aging it a little, and selling it as Japanese whisky," explains Liam McNulty, aka Whiskey Richard, the editor of the Japanese whisky site *Nomunication*. "They relied on customers outside of Japan being unaware of what is legitimately Japanese whisky." Cheaper, more plentiful, and sometimes suspiciously similar in look to prominent brands, these spirits threatened to

CENTER: Yamazaki 12 is Suntory's flagship Japanese single malt. BELOW: Tommy Tardie, the owner of New York's Flatiron Room.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SUNTORY SPIRITS LIMITIED / LISA RICHOV



RIGHT: Kanosuke Distillery launched its core three whiskies in the U.S. this summer.

undercut the market for whisky actually distilled in Japan. "It ruins your first experience if you buy cheap Scotch and pay extra because you think it's Japanese whisky," says McNulty.

Repackaged whisky isn't the only product worrying the JSLMA. "Distillers tell us their main issue is the sale of unlicensed products, mainly shōchū, as whisky in other countries," says K&L Wine Merchants spirits buyer David Othenin-Girard. "In Japan, these can't be called whisky." Since the TTB doesn't have the same rules, producers can legally pass off shōchū as Japanese whisky in the U.S.

Hence, the new labeling requirements. "The standards will help buyers make sure that, when they are creating their stock lists, they are selecting brands that are really Japanese whisky," says Bowker.

Why did the JSLMA make the move now? "Part of it was the big guys were waiting for their inventories to mature so they could meet the moment," says Eric Swanson, the founder and partner at Tokiwa Imports. But he also credits American buyers. "Great shops and wholesalers were inquisitive enough to ask the right questions and push for it."

ELEVATING BOTH JAPANESE AND WORLD WHISKY

As the head of an association representing all spirit and liqueur makers, Tomo-o Arai, the executive director of the JSLMA, is careful to note the legitimacy of shōchū and world whisky blends. "There is no difference in quality between Japanese whisky that fits the definition and Japanese whisky that doesn't, for example, those produced by blending whisky produced in Japan and whisky produced outside of Japan; each has its own deliciousness," he says.

"It ruins your first experience if you buy cheap Scotch and pay extra because you think it's Japanese whisky."

—Liam McNulty, *Nomunication*

But because a well-regarded blend like Nikka From the Barrel contains some Scotch, Nikka has removed "Japanese whisky" from its label, making sure to note on its website, "This product does not meet all the criteria of 'Japanese whisky' defined by the Japan Spirits & Liqueur Makers Association.'" The three-year lag time in the full enactment of the JSLMA standards allowed producers time to change labels of whiskies like this that were already on the market.

"Suntory, Nikka, Kirin, Mars, and Chichibu—why would the big boys want to regulate themselves, if they're already controlling most of the market?" asks Pedro Shanahan, the spirit guide at Pouring With Heart, a hospitality company headquartered in Los Angeles. One reason, he says, is "to protect the sanctity of their high-end single malts." But they're also using differentiation to strengthen the world whisky market. "You can still blend Japanese and other whiskies. From a historic point of view, they always did." After all, he says, Masataka Taketsuru, Japan's first master distiller, learned to make whisky in Scotland, where trading spirits for blending is common.

"Japan's flexibility in product development is unique. The currently established category of world whisky is a progressive product that is unparalleled abroad," says Chichibu global ambassador Yumi Yoshikawa. "We believe that what matters is not whether it is Japanese or not. The important thing is transparency. Consumers may mistakenly believe

BELOW: Liam McNulty, the editor of Japanese whisky site *Nomunication*.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF KANOSUKE DISTILLERY // GINZA SILKIA





TOP LEFT: Yumi Yoshikawa, the global ambassador for Chichibu; TOP RIGHT: Chichibu Distillery in Saitama, Japan.

that Japanese whisky is higher in the hierarchy, but the standards only provide a clear indication of where the whisky originates. We are conscious of communicating clearly what kind of whisky each product is made from and the concept of the product itself."

In this way, distillers like Chichibu can capitalize on their history of global blending with clearly labeled products like their Ichiro's Malt & Grain World Blended Whisky, at the same time that they're promoting other bottles that fit the new definition of Japanese whisky.

STANDARDS AS A MARKETING TOOL

The JSLMA standards, says Othenin-Girard, are "really are about marketing. You need an identity, a way to tell people what Japanese whisky is. It gives people a framework to make the best purchase."

Given a history of limited supplies, Japanese whisky has been expensive. "When you're competing with Wild Turkey 101, which is excellent at $20, how can you break in when your base price is $90? Transparency is going to give the consumer confidence in their willingness to pay higher prices. It will allow smaller distilleries that are really able to say they are creating Japanese whisky to get shelf space," says Shanahan.

"We believe that what matters is not whether it is Japanese or not. The important thing is transparency."

—Yumi Yoshikawa, Chichibu

"Any Japanese craft whisky distillery will potentially benefit from a standard," McNulty agrees. "It enables them to give more of a luxury, hand-crafted image. Whisky fans appreciate that." He cites Toyama prefecture's Saburomaru Distillery, which he says has been "quite vocal about the need for a standard since several years ago," as well as Hokkaido's Akkeshi Distillery, which has "been pretty specific about recreating Islay malts using Japanese ingredients, w ood, and peat."

Adler sees precedence in other geographically designated brands with a reputation for luxury. "It helps Japan in the same way Champagne is a designation. There might be Crémant just as high quality, but they are saying this is Champagne and it is only Champagne."

THE CASE FOR FURTHER MEASURES

For some observers, voluntary standards are not enough. Shanahan and Othenin-Girard argue for a holographic tax stamp indicating authenticity. That would require government action. Whisky critic Mamoru Tsuchiya of the Japanese Whisky Research Centre has launched a nonprofit, the Japanese Whisky Culture Promotion Committee (JWCPA), to lobby the National Tax Agency to issue a decree that would make the JSLMA standards law.

"They went to the JSLMA, but the JSLMA said they are not going to help," says McNulty. He complains that the JSLMA has done no global marketing or English-language press release for the new standards beyond a PDF on its website. "A lot of people are still not aware that the standards exist." He suspects bigger producers have a vested interest in keeping compliance voluntary. "If you look at Suntory sales, 98 percent of whiskey they sell here doesn't qualify as Japanese whisky."

Yet, Bowker, Suntory's global ambassador, asserts, "Suntory would be supportive of legal regulations to protect these guidelines. We've been pushing for good regulation for some time, now in negotiation with government agencies and the JSMLA. This is the first step." Chichibu, says Yoshikawa, supports a law, too.

If producers are in favor of legalizing the definition, why hasn't more been done? "One thing you find that's different about how Asians perceive things com-

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHICHIBU

pared to Westerners, we don't expect a hard law to change our behavior," Ng says. Bowker agrees: "The soft power of these trade associations is not to be overlooked."

Arai is taking a wait-and-see approach. "First, after establishing the standards, the situation of products being sold as Japanese whisky in both domestic and international markets will be investigated to decide whether legalization or regulation by the National Tax Agency is necessary."

In the meantime, Tardie has faith in the ability of trade pros and serious whiskey consumers to discern authenticity now that they have guidelines to point to. "We saw that with transparency in the American whiskey market, when people were held accountable for these romantic stories that were fictional, like they found the recipe in the attic, but really it was produced at MGP. The information is out there, and people are vocal about it," he says.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Experts say there will be attrition, as the market corrects itself, calming its earlier fervor. "There are small craft distilleries that will follow the standards, but they're built on this ideal of an insatiable market, and I don't know that it's insatiable. I think we have to earn it," says Swanson. With labeling requirements in place, "now you have to win by quality. How many will survive? Maybe they're so small-scale that they can't."

Ng points to the competitiveness of the export market. "For someone who doesn't speak English, drop-shipping through an importer and distributor to America and expecting them to explain why your whisky is different—it is going to be tough. Some will succeed through investment or consolidation. Some can't."

But a group of upstarts will succeed. "There's a new wave of Japanese whisky coming, and American buyers should give it a try," Ng continues. "There are a lot of different choices than just those of the larger houses." Take the distillery he works for, Kanosuke. With a three-year-old minority investment from Diageo, the brand has been able to market itself in an iconoclastic way. "We are positioning as next-gen craft whisky from Kagoshima following whisky-making tradition but also challenging convention. We're not beholden to making whisky like Scotland. That's the difference you'll see."

"Kanosuke is in a prime position to see growth," Shanahan observes. "They have land, the soil is great, there are hot summers, cold winters, and massive drops in temperature during the year for faster maturation, so Kyushu sounds like Kentucky to me. Kentucky's whiskey trail is a huge economic engine. It could be the same for Kyushu, where you can surf, hike the volcano, eat sashimi on the beach, and taste whisky."

That would take more whisky production on the island. But with multiple shōchū makers there, it's not inconceivable that others join Kanosuke, and regional economies engender regional styles. Adler points to Nikka's smoky Yoichi Single Malt. "Masataka Taketsuru went to Hokkaido thinking it was similar terroir to Scotland and he could replicate a peated style. Now there is Akkeshi in Hokkaido. Their goal is Islay-style whisky. So I'm interested to see if heavily peated is going to be a trend in Hokkaido. Just as we have different designations of Scotch based on loose styles, it would be interesting for the Japanese to do the same now that they have a standard in place."

Ng sees another new phenomenon on the horizon. "Largely for the whole history, it was two distilleries that didn't like each other," he says, referring to Suntory and Nikka, the distillery Masataka Taketsuru launched when he left Suntory. Now whisky distillers have unified around the new standards. As they purchase less juice from abroad in the future to meet the criteria for their Japanese whiskies, "we're going to see collaboration. Chichibu and Mars collaborated on a malt exchange. The five blenders from the biggest houses all got casks from each other and made blends in commemoration of 100 years of Japanese whisky. So times are changing."

In the meantime, he has a message for American buyers: "Don't be afraid to ask questions. Producers who are making authentic whisky have nothing to hide." ■



ABOVE: Jonathan Adler, the beverage director of Japanese whisky specialist Shinji's Bar in New York City.

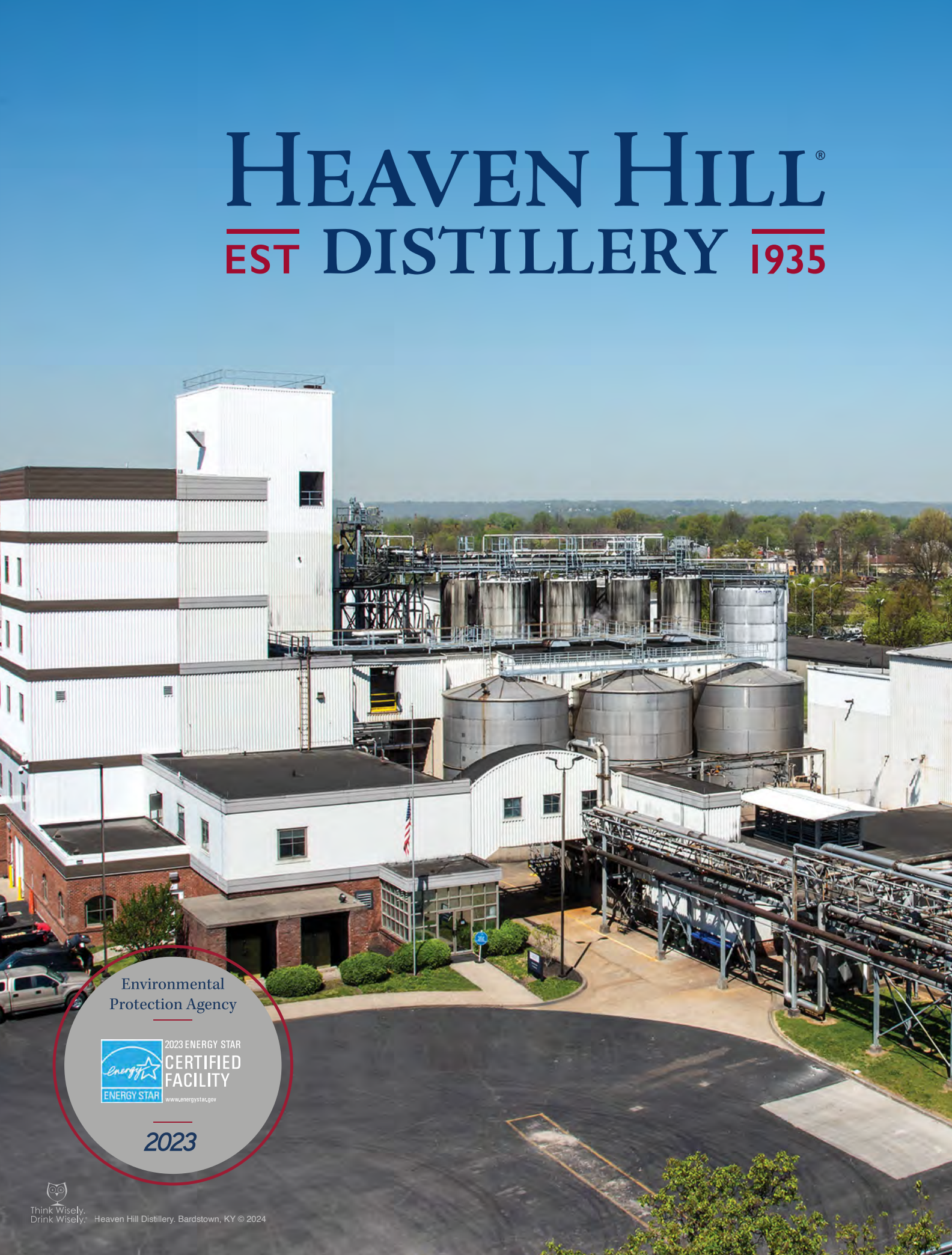
"Just as we have different designations of Scotch based on loose styles, it would be interesting for the Japanese to do the same now that they have a standard in place."

—Jonathan Adler, Shinji's Bar

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JOANNA LIN

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GOOD LOOK

The Busker Irish Whiskey's Single Collection, comprising a single malt, single grain, and single pot still, is now packaged in thicker glass bottles flaunting embossed details. This elegant revamp, designed to convey the spirits' quality and craftsmanship, also features a refined label.

SRP: $29.99 per 700-ml bottle





BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Oregon's **Westward Whiskey** has unveiled a bottled-in-bond offering, its third club release of 2024. The 100-proof floral single malt was aged for seven years—three more than the norm—and showcases layers of subtle ginger, dark fruit, and honeyed pecans.

SRP: $99.95 per 750-ml bottle

THE COMEBACK

Baker's Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey—named for Jim Beam's grandnephew—has relaunched its coveted limited-edition 13-year-old bottling. On the palate, the 107-proof single-barrel spirit expresses oak, vanilla, fruit, and toasted nuts.

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AFTER DINNER

Melding notes of brazen tobacco and gentle smoke, The QuintEssential: The Untitled Cigar Malt Project is **Cedar Ridge Distillery**'s third expression in a limited-edition series of American single malts. The 114.9-proof whiskey evokes the ritual of unwinding with a Havana, and to achieve this distinctive flavor profile, master blender Murphy Quint finished a blend of single malts matured in former Cedar Ridge bourbon barrels in the Iowan distillery's own Madeira-inspired dessert wine casks as well as first-fill amontillado sherry, new French and American oak, and ruby port-finished peated malt varieties.

SRP: $99.99 per 750-ml bottle

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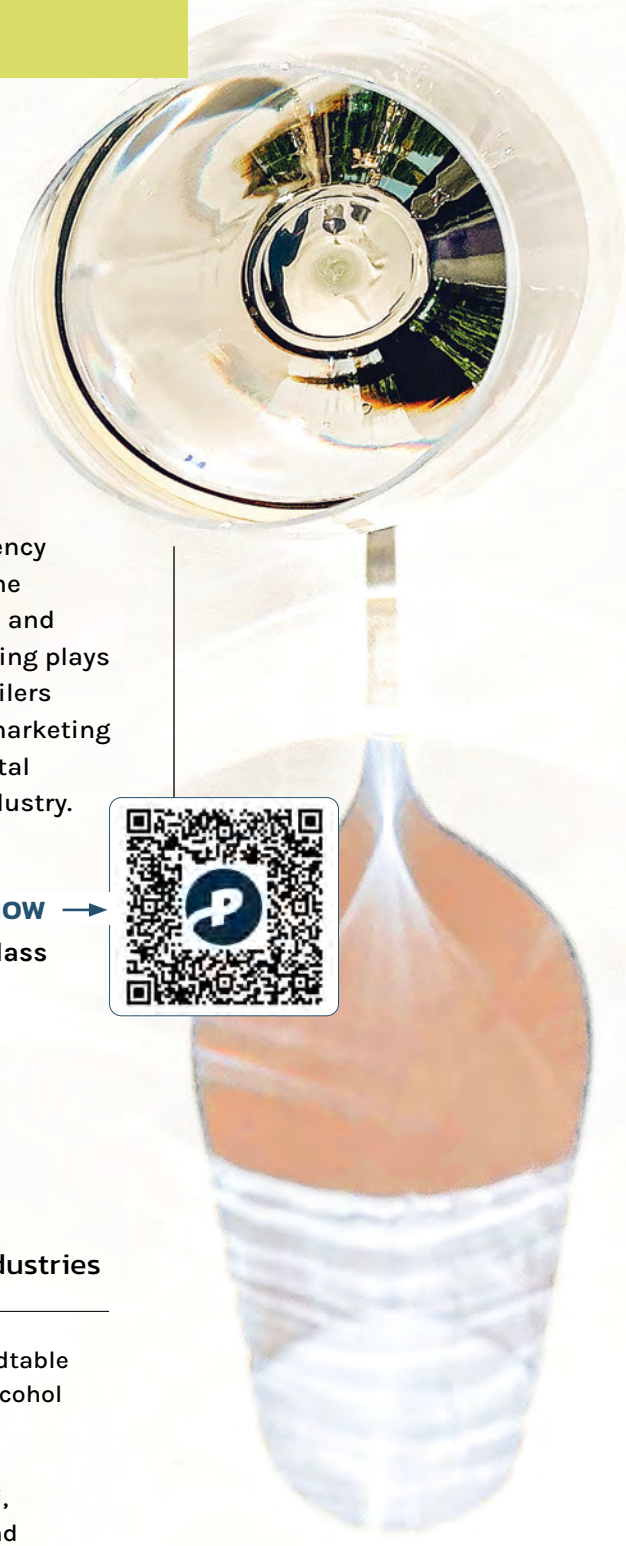
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Currently, Lambrusco is the third best-selling Italian red wine variety in the United States, and second in volume of cases sold nationally. Though its roots are ancient, Riunite Lambrusco's refreshing fizz, zero added sugars, and 8% ABV make it appealing to modern consumers seeking fresh, easy-to-enjoy, and lower-alcohol wines.

Founded in post-war Italy in 1950, Riunite—which literally translates to 'reunited'—brought together nine local wine cooperatives in Emilia Romagna, giving over 1,400 local farmers the purchasing power and marketing clout to put Lambrusco, long a regional speciality, onto the world stage. Today, Riunite remains the global leader in Lambrusco and continues to build on its collaborative foundation: The brand still relies on hundreds of small farmers to source their grapes, which are processed across eight local, cooperative wineries.

This year, Riunite unveiled eye-catching new labels featuring bold colors and sketches of the Emilia Romagna landscape, highlighting the wines' connection to their agrarian origins. Each label utilizes a unique color and includes the grape variety, making it simple for consumers to choose their preferred wine. With sleek, premium design elements, including an "R" embossed into the glass, Riunite's refreshed look pays homage to the brand's history while appealing to modern wine drinkers.

Similarly, the introduction of the Riunite Lambrusco Spritz confirms Riunite's connection to current drinking trends and the inherent versatility of lightly sparkling Lambrusco. Made with Riunite Lambrusco, sparkling wine, and lemonade or a squeeze of lemon, the drink offers a vibrant twist on the current spritz craze. Simple and visually appealing, it resonates with contemporary consumers seeking a delicious cocktail that's photo-ready yet easy to make. The drink likewise embodies how lower-alcohol, wine-based cocktails are ideal for myriad occasions and settings.

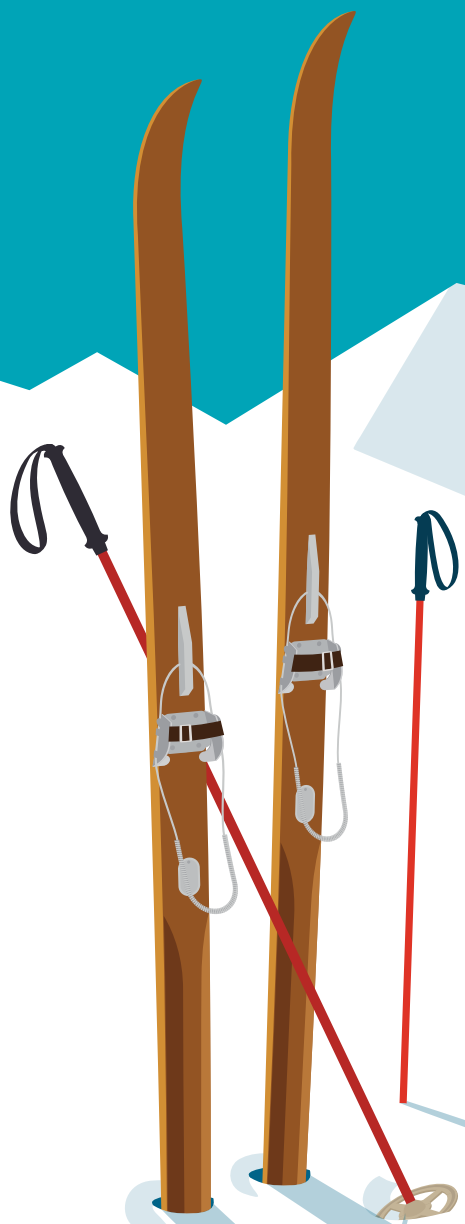
Grounded in ancient traditions yet looking forward, Riunite is poised to continue leading the way for the Lambrusco category and for the next generation of drinkers. ■

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HOW SAGAMORE SPIRIT PUT MARYLAND RYE BACK ON THE GLOBAL MAP

A DISTILLERY COMMITTED TO RESPONSIBLE FARMING AND HISTORICAL ACCURACY USHERS A LOST RYE WHISKEY STYLE ONTO THE WORLD'S STAGE

It can seem like bourbon gets all the glory. That corn-based whiskey may lay claim to the title of official American spirit, as declared by Congress in the Bourbon Act of 1964, but American rye whiskey commands heritage and prestige of its own. It was, after all, the first whiskey produced and sold commercially on American soil when the U.S. was still a nascent nation.

And Maryland is part of that story; rye production boomed in the Free State in the 19th century, and then vanished over time—but not before a distinct regional style emerged. Today, one distillery is committed to not only reviving it, but making sure the signature old-world style is recognized on the world's stage.



Baltimore-based Sagamore Spirit released the Sagamore Small Batch Rye Whiskey in May; its first core range release since Illva Saronno Holding S.p.A group, the family-owned Italian company known for Disaronno, purchased a majority stake in the company, and its first 100 percent Maryland rye whiskey to be available worldwide. This release is representative of a milestone for the brand, expanding its reach globally—and in doing so amplifying not just the brand, but the whole Maryland rye story.

A HEYDAY, A FALL, A REVIVAL

Sagamore Spirit's award-winning distillery sits across five acres on the Baltimore Peninsula, overlooking the Middle Branch Patapsco River. It could be called hallowed grounds for founders and Baltimore natives Kevin Plank, best known for creating sportswear brand Under Armour, and Bill McDermond, a tech entrepreneur and previous director of the sportswear brand. That's because Maryland played a key role in the American whiskey industry's evolution.

The first whiskey commercially made and sold in America—albeit a much smaller nation than it is today—was distilled by George Washington (yes, that George Washington). His Scots-Irish farm manager taught him how to make whiskey at a distillery the first president built at his Mount Vernon estate. Rye-making was a keystone of Colonial commerce well before settlers even reached Kentucky, where abundant corn was available to ferment and distill. Rye whiskey production spread so vastly that different regions developed their own signature style. Arguably the best known were Monongahela rye from Pennsylvania and Maryland's sweeter variety.

Distilleries proliferated in Maryland in the late 1800s. By the early 20th century, there were 44 distilleries in Maryland, 21 of which were in Baltimore. While many didn't survive Prohibition, a significant number did. Chalk that up to the fact that when the 18th Amendment enacting Prohibition went into effect, Annapolis legislators declined to pass legislation enforcing the federal law. World War II, however, marked the demise of Maryland

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SAGAMORE SPIRIT



Sagamore Spirit's rye whiskeys are triple distilled and aged separately prior to blending.

rye, as distilleries were tapped to distill fuel ethanol. Moreover, subsidies for corn came into play, giving farmers financial incentive to grow it.

Only one distillery, Pikesville, made rye in the state that had turned out a third of the country's supply before the war. But in 1972, Pikesville shuttered, too. Production moved to Kentucky when Heaven Hill bought the brand in 1982.

Plank and McDermond recognized that a large part of America's whiskey heritage would be lost if Maryland rye continued to be forgotten. In 2012, Sagamore Spirit unveiled its new facility, marking the return of whiskey-making to Maryland after a 40-year drought.

"Kevin and Bill believe strongly in Maryland and Baltimore specifically and want to put Maryland back on the map for making rye," says Ryan Norwood, Sagamore Spirit's vice president of operations. "They've done a lot to change the narrative around the city. Under Armour has long been based here. It creates jobs and lifts the city up. Their investment in building a distillery is no different."

EXCAVATING AND RECREATING A LOST STANDARD-BEARER

It takes some detective work to resuscitate a virtually extinct whiskey style. "When we started the process, we approached it historically and talked to families whose grandparents distilled in Maryland," says Norwood. "We tasted through some of what was found in attics. We talked to historical societies and dug up old articles, but we knew there was no set recipe. Our whiskey recipes are what we interpreted from recipes we were able to see."

Sagamore Spirit partners with Maryland farmers to grow and develop rye for its whiskey.



One fact they knew for sure is that Maryland rye was traditionally less spice-forward than Monongahela rye. It was sweeter, more balanced, and all-around more approachable, too, which they figured out was due in part to the slight corn content, explains Norwood. That signature profile is honored in each Sagamore expression thanks in part to careful attention to sourcing ingredients and thoughtful distillation and aging methods.

In 2012, as the brand got started, they contract-distilled at MGP in Indiana. The distillery wouldn't be ready until 2017, and they were open about distilling outside of Maryland. The whiskey was of such high quality, says Norwood, that they used the same grain brokers when the distillery opened. Then things changed. The development of Sagamore's grain-to-glass process started in 2018 when they partnered with the University of Maryland Agricultural Extension to plant several rye varietals and determined which varieties were best suited for distillation.

As the project developed, so did relationships with area farmers. Growing rye is a mutually beneficial proposition, explains Norwood. It's a superior cover crop that traps nitrogen in the soil and protects against erosion. Farmers receive subsidies when it's used that way, but once it's harvested, they're stuck with it. This agricultural excess is a whisky-maker's jackpot—and a farmer's unexpected revenue stream. Moreover, the distillery's promise to buy the harvest reduces the farmers' financial risks, which allows them to experiment with new rye hybrids. Over 1.6 million pounds of rye was harvested in Maryland last year for use in Sagamore whiskey.

The newest release, Sagamore Small Batch Rye Whiskey (SRP $39.99), is the culmination of years of research on Maryland rye's flavor profile. The exclusively non-GMO grains are used in two separate mash bill recipes: high-rye (95 percent rye, five percent malted barley) and low-rye (52 percent rye, 43 percent corn, five percent malted barley). They're individually tripled distilled, matured separately for four to six years, then blended, when ready, 20 barrels at a time. Sagamore Small Batch Rye Whiskey clocks in at a muscular 93-proof, but the strength doesn't overwhelm the characteristic easy sweetness.

A versatile spirit that stands up on the rocks, it's also an ideal whiskey to use in cocktails, especially those classic whiskey drink recipes that were first made with rye. The historically accurate sweetness manifests with a nose of clove, nutmeg, allspice, and cinnamon stick woven through with golden apples, honey, and light oak. Rye spice makes a bold entrance on the palate and leaves a finish of robust graininess, white pepper spice, and vanilla in its wake. Sagamore Small Batch stands as a tribute and a living paradigm of Maryland's heritage. ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, Sagamore Spirit.





HOW BARREL ENTRY PROOF IMPACTS WHISKEY CHARACTER

THE FILLING STRENGTH OF WHISKEY WHEN IT ENTERS A CASK IS A CRUCIAL YET UNDEREXPLORED FACTOR IN ITS MATURATION PROCESS

BY JACOPO MAZZEO

Whiskey professionals tend to agree that the primary factor influencing a whiskey's character is the time it spends in wooden barrels. Throughout maturation, the whisky engages with the wood, absorbing various compounds and undergoing complex chemical reactions, all interactions that gradually shape and refine its flavor, aroma, texture, and appearance.

Among all factors that influence this process, however, the effect of cask filling strength is one of the least understood. Most distilleries base their processes on conventions that owe their current state to economic and historical factors. For example, in Scotland, new make spirit destined to become single malt is typically barreled at 127 proof. In other whiskey-making regions, conventions are often dictated by law, such as in the U.S., where the maximum strength for freshly distilled spirits entering barrels is 125 proof.

Lower entry proof thresholds are based on the minimum strength required for a spirit to be legally called whiskey. For example, in Scotland, a bottle of single malt Scotch must have a minimum strength of 80 proof. To meet this requirement, producers barrel their new make spirit at a proof somewhat above this threshold, ensuring that, even with alcohol evaporation during maturation, the whiskey does not fall below the legal minimum before bottling.

Yet, the global whiskey industry is undergoing transformative changes. In traditional whiskey-making regions, craft distillers are challenging established conventions, while new producers in emerging markets are developing their processes from the ground up, free from the constraints of tradition. Among these evolving practices, established approaches to barrel entry proof are being questioned, debated, and reimagined. Here *SevenFifty Daily* explores the science behind this crucial step in the whiskey-making process and looks at how distillers—seasoned and novel—navigate the complex decisions involved in choosing their approach.

TOP LEFT: Grasmere Brewing Distillery barrels.
TOP RIGHT: Brent Elliott, Four Roses master distiller.

THE ACADEMIC CONSENSUS ON BARREL ENTRY PROOF

Distillers deciding on their approach to barrel entry proof often draw on decades-old—albeit still relevant—literature. A seminal study, published in the *Journal of the Association of Official Analytical Chemists*, reports on trials conducted between the 1960s and 1970s that examined congener development—essentially, the amount of flavor compounds—in bourbon matured at various proofs in new American oak barrels. The study found that as

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FOUR ROSES // GRASMERE BREWING DISTILLERY





TOP LEFT: Cascade Hollow Distillery Co., where George Dickel Tennessee Whisky is made.
TOP RIGHT: Nicole Austin, George Dickel Tennessee Whisky distiller.

"Industry consensus generally suggests that lower proof yields softer, more rounded flavors, while higher proof may result in brighter, more robust, and woody characteristics."

—Brent Elliott, Four Roses

the entry proof increases (from 109 to 155 proof), both color intensity and overall concentration of congeners in the whiskeys decreases. This occurs because the compounds released from the barrel are more soluble in water.

While no subsequent research has matched the scope of that multi-decade study, several have touched on the issue of cask filling strength, often corroborating—and occasionally shedding further light on—its findings. Some, for example, emphasize the impact that distillate strength has on maturation speed, highlighting that while reactions such as the breakdown of polymeric materials require water, the solubility of the resulting compounds increases with higher alcohol concentrations. This suggests that the optimal rate of extraction occurs at the point where the water-to-ethanol ratio is most effectively balanced.

Further studies stress that different cask filling strengths significantly affect the color intensity of whiskey, showing that higherer ABVs tend to reduce the level of color developed during maturation. Meanwhile, a recent doctoral thesis examined cask filling strength in relation to different types of casks. The research indicates that casks filled at 125 proof have the highest levels of wood-derived congeners, with French oak casks reaching levels similar to those of American oak casks. It also reveals that a lower entry proof may reduce the risk of developing off-flavors when using ex-wine casks.



LEFT: Grasmere Distillery tends towards a lower barrel entry proof, but founder Paul Abbott is still assessing the impact of different strengths.

DISCOVERING THE NUANCE BETWEEN FILLING STRENGTHS

To refine their processes and adapt insights to their specific conditions, distilleries often complement academic research with their own trials. Four Roses Bourbon, for instance, has long been filling casks at 120, which is below the maximum allowed in the U.S. for bourbon production. In the early 2000s, the distillery conducted a six-year experiment to test different entry proofs, aiming to determine if its long-standing approach was truly optimal to achieve the desired flavor profile.

"Industry consensus generally suggests that lower proof yields softer, more rounded flavors, while higher proof may result in brighter, more robust, and woody characteristics," says Brent Elliott, Four Roses' master distiller. "Our experiment largely confirmed this theory, finding that a medium-high entry proof of 120 produced the distinctive Four Roses character we seek."

As part of his ongoing research at Independent Stave Company, the director of spirits research and innovation Andrew Wiehebrink recently conducted a similar, six-year-long experiment to evaluate the development of whiskey at 100, 110, and 125 entry proof. It involved investigating approximately 45 compounds through gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS), a technique that allows the analysis of small, volatile molecules in complex chemical mixtures. The experiment revealed that components like vanillin, trans isoeugenol, phenol, and cis isoeugenol, which are associated with vanilla

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CASCADE HOLLOW DISTILLERY // GRASMERE BREWING DISTILLERY

and spicy aromas, tended to favor higher entry proofs. Conversely, elements such as guaiacol, furfural, 5-HMF, and 5-methyl furfural, which are associated with nutty, caramelly, and smoky flavors, were more pronounced in the lower ABV samples.

"Our expectations based on previous studies were largely confirmed," says Wiehebrink. "But, when we then tasted the samples, we noticed significant differences in the whiskeys' structure, fattiness, and sweetness. This suggests that barrel components are not the sole factors influenced by entry proof during maturation. Elements like acids, esters, and aldehydes [in the new make] also play a role."

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF A LOW ENTRY PROOF

Ari Sussman, the whiskey maker at Outsider Spirits and Three Chord Bourbon, fills his casks with liquid at varying alcoholic strengths and evaluates their progress quarterly. He confirms that a lower entry proof makes whiskeys more palatable at a younger age, arguing that this approach is especially suited for distillers targeting a so-called more "modern" whiskey drinker, keen on spirits that focus on the raw ingredient, rather than wood character and length of aging.

"When working with single grains, it's crucial to use a [low] entry proof between 105 and 110," he explains. "It helps control the wood's potentially aggressive influence early on while preserving the character of the new make spirit. Plus, the proofing water is also aged in the barrel, which imparts much more character to the entire whiskey."

"When working with single grains, it's crucial to use a [low] entry proof ... It helps control the wood's potentially aggressive influence early on while preserving the character of the new make spirit."

— Ari Sussman, Outsider Spirits and Three Chord Bourbon

Nicole Austin, the distiller at George Dickel Tennessee Whisky, notes that the distillery's historical practice of using a lower 115 entry proof has proven beneficial. "Our whiskeys can age for 15 to 18 years and still remain vibrant and lively." There are, however, significant downsides to this approach. The longer maturation time and the need of more wooden casks to mature lower ABV liquid result in both a higher carbon footprint and increased costs for the distillery. This led Austin to start filling some casks at the maximum allowed proof of 125, too.





TOP RIGHT: A George DIckel whisky pour.
BELOW: Ari Sussman, the whiskey maker at Outsider Spirits and Three Chord Bourbon.

Meanwhile, Paul Abbott, the founder of England's Grasmere Distillery, argues that lower entry proofs present an additional, more practical challenge. "Our cask entry ranges from 94 up to 140 proof. At 94 proof, the liquid is extracting color and tannin much faster," he says. "But because the ABV is low, it does not have a long aging potential due to ethanol evaporation. Once the liquid falls below 80 proof it is no longer legally whiskey so if you start at 94, you don't have many years before it has to be bottled."

Despite the downsides, Abbot remains committed to using lower entry proofs. "We will likely settle in the low 100s to allow more margin for error," he says. "[But] I need a few summers before I can make a full assessment."

Indeed, when it comes to entry proof, available data must be backed by empirical testing that takes into account specific factors from warehouse conditions to the new make's character, alongside market and financial considerations. As Elliott puts it: "You can't simply take an experiment and apply it globally. You should adapt it to different conditions. There's a lot of complexity involved, but it's precisely that complexity that makes this work so fascinating." ■

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