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WHAT HAPPENS **OVER THE BAR**

SBE GROUP'S **Yael Vengroff** GETS
REAL ABOUT THE ART OF BARTENDING
AT S BAR BRENTWOOD

Yael Vengroff is head of bars and mixology programming for SBE's Katsuya and S Bar concepts. Styled by her colleague Nevina Warsito, she's pictured here at the latter in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles, CA.

An ode to anime culture, **Shinigami Eyes** combines passion fruit and green chile vodka, orgeat, fresh orange juice, and Galliano liqueur for an innovative take on one of Katsuya's original cocktails.

Yael Vengroff is not your typical mixologist. In fact, she told me, shaking her head, when I met her for an interview at S Bar Brentwood in Los Angeles, “I hate that term so much. As a bartender for so many years, we fought tooth and nail *not* to be called that.” Why? Because “at the end of the day, there are plenty of people who can be mixologists at home—but are they bartenders? The romance is the bar,” she said, tapping her hand insistently on the metal bar top. “It’s *not* the cocktail, it’s what happens over the bar. It’s what happens to the couple that sits at the bar. Yeah, good drinks are awesome, but there are so many people who can create a good drink. It’s not about that.”

Yael has built her career as an artist and a curator, so to speak, of bar programs. When she reflects on the start of her career as a 21-year-old craft bartender in New York, she regrets the snobbery she had then toward “basic” drinks, admitting, “I guess I associate mixology with looking down on somebody who orders a vodka soda”—implication being that mixology is a mindset that can inadvertently involve judgement, whereas bartending is a skill that requires genuine hospitality.

Yet in her new role as the head of bars and mixology programming for hospitality management company SBE’s Katsuya and S Bar concepts, Tales of the Cocktail’s 2018 Bartender of the Year no longer finds herself bartending either. Instead, she’s designing menus for each of their several locations, training staff, and spending a lot of time on Excel, codifying her work into training manuals, standards, protocols, and more.

Katsuya is a sophisticated Japanese restaurant with four branches in the L.A. area, plus one in Miami, one in the Bahamas, and another soon to open in New York City, where the hip lounge that is S Bar—which boasts outposts in Miami, Las Vegas, and Dubai—will also be launching. (The New York branch is designed by David Rockwell and Rockwell Group.) S Bar Brentwood, which opened in 2020 and was conceived by architect Philippe Starck, is located inside a Katsuya that opened over 16 years ago and enjoys an established local following. (For more information and to make reservations, visit sbe.com/restaurants/katsuya.) For that reason, Yael takes great care to avoid upsetting regulars by not revamping the beverage list too quickly, even as she introduces cocktails in the lounge that are exciting for more adventurous drinkers. “S Bar [Brentwood] essentially functions as the mothership for what [the bar] program will look like” at all the locations she oversees, she said, explaining that most recipes will be tested here before the results are added to the menu elsewhere.

As we talked, Yael artfully styled the first cocktail for our shoot: Shinigami Eyes, which blends passion fruit and green chile vodka, orgeat, fresh orange juice, and Galliano liqueur. The drink is finished with a banana leaf reminiscent of a pom-



padour as well as chile oil that represents the anime concept of red Shinigami eyes, which allow you to see your future, but there’s a price to pay for the privilege; the name is also the title of a recent release by imaginative Canadian singer-songwriter Grimes, who is among the influences from music, art, and dance that Yael leans on for inspiration when designing the experience of a given venue. “As a white girl, I’m never going to put out anything that is traditionally Japanese—ever; that’s not my role,” she said. Nevertheless, she added, “I wanted to pay homage to contemporary Japanese culture.” The drink was also designed to serve as a refreshing spin on one of Katsuya’s long-standing staples, the Burning Mandarin, which her new colleagues had insisted could not be replaced. The idea of launching the drink at S Bar was to familiarize locals with a similar but more interesting recipe.

To give another example, Yael’s Tiger Julius is a new spin on an old technique: clarified milk punch, which was first popularized by the English in the early 1700s. “I make it like I make a soup,” explained Yael, who blends mandarin vodka, Cognac, Campari, cinnamon, black tea, pineapple, hazelnut, and lemon together in a large stockpot for her recipe. She then adds milk and allows curds to form; as it’s strained through cheesecloth, prolonged contact with the curds changes its color from a deep red to a translucent almond. “It’s a pretty long process of figuring out what ratios work in general,” said Yael. “I always use black tea or some form of tea in a milk punch because it needs a lengthener. The resulting product is mellower.”

With aromatics reminiscent of pumpkin pie, the cocktail is silky, almost glycerol, with only a slight bite from the cinnamon that warms the back of the throat. Its mouthfeel makes an ideal match for the texture of sashimi. Meanwhile, if you were to taste it blind, you would insist it had color,

which was exactly Yael's point: "I love to play with people's heads and hand them something that looks entirely different than how it tastes."

Because she too understands what it's like to go to your favorite bar or restaurant with the intent of ordering your usual, only to discover it's been nixed from the menu, she explained, "A lot of it is about establishing trust. The last thing I want is to be the mysterious girl behind the cocktail program who took their favorite drink off." Having had a similar experience at her job at Genghis Cohen, a popular Fairfax District restaurant, she knew exactly what to do when she joined SBE. To innovate Katsuya's and S Bar's programs strategically, she first replaced all packaged ingredients with fresh juices, housemade syrups, and so on. Next, she incorporated the three most popular drinks from the old list into her new one. From there, she and her staff made suggestions to regulars, gently nudging them to try this or that—and eventually, they accepted the changes.

Like any creative, Yael is learning to balance her pursuit of perfection with the reality of her job. Throughout the shoot, she constantly tinkered with each drink, admitting that letting go of the day-to-day minutiae behind the bar in order to focus on the bigger picture is still "a really hard pill to swallow." That said, her favorite part about her new role is helping her staff in their professional development: Mentorship is critical for Yael, and she "find[s] any opportunity to transfer what I know [to my team] and guide them on their journey," as she put it. After all, she knows creativity doesn't occur in a vacuum: It's found through a sharing of ideas and inspirations. She hopes to motivate colleagues to conceive their own recipes and, by working together, to create flavors beyond expectations. She also hopes to work with other artists to produce content that fuses cocktails with music, cinematography, and dance. **LZ**



Yael's take on clarified milk punch, the Tiger Julius, combines mandarin vodka, Cognac, Campari, cinnamon, black tea, pineapple, hazelnut, and lemon with milk.



Yael created her canned cocktail, Crystal Shiso Mojito, in collaboration with LiveWire.

Yael's New Hit Single

Flipping open the top of a mint-green can, Yael unveils a project she worked on for the better part of 2020 in collaboration with LiveWire. The beverage company, built on the model of a record label, was established to give talented bar professionals a creative platform that might also net a sustainable income: Each bartender invents a cocktail that's released like a single to earn them royalties.

LiveWire also gives its artists a stipend to create their own packaging. For her Crystal Shiso Mojito, Yael enlisted her tattoo artist, Tom Haubrick, to design the can, reflecting the inspiration she drew from an astrology reading she did at the beginning of the pandemic—a time when she was trying to make sense of what was going on. It taught her that the wolf is her symbol and the god who rules her is Typhon, which she says represents "change and evolution through hard processes and transformation." Haubrick's intricate pattern of overlapping geometric diamonds narrows in on the image of a wolf and a shiso leaf—which Yael notes makes her think of the wolf's jagged teeth.

The combination of coconut rum, soju, shiso, and "fizzy lime" (citrus solution in carbonated water) is light, refreshing, void of any sticky sweetness, and perfect for drinking while walking down the beach in Santa Monica or at a concert. But while it's meant to be consumed from a can, Yael serves a version of the cocktail at S Bar in a glass garnished with a shiso leaf; it pairs wonderfully with a dish of yellowtail accompanied by lime-chile kosho and onion ponzu.

For Yael, it's a thrill to see her success actualized this way. Although she's created hundreds of recipes over the years, "I don't own them," she points out. "They're not memorialized anywhere." She thinks of her parents in Texas: They may never get to taste her cocktails at S Bar, but now, they can experience her drinks exactly the way she intended them.

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Pacifica Hotels Welcomes Manny Nieves as Corporate Beverage Manager

Pacifica Hotels recently announced that Manny Nieves has joined its team as corporate beverage manager. “We’re beyond excited to welcome Manny Nieves to Pacifica Hotels to oversee all the beverage programming throughout the portfolio’s 34 hotels,” says Thomas Gregory, corporate director of food and beverage. “In the short time that he has been with [us], Nieves has taken our cocktail program and propelled it forward [by] leaps and bounds. Guests will no doubt be impressed by his unique and innovative cocktails that have become a staple at our full-service properties.”

Nieves began his career in the restaurant industry at 17, landing positions at several coveted programs in Southern California. Prior to Pacifica Hotels, Nieves worked for the famous 213 Group of downtown Los Angeles as assistant general manager at Seven Grand. He joined Pacifica Hotels at The Wayfarer DTLA during the pandemic and has played an integral part in the reopening of many of the portfolio’s restaurants and bars.

“I’m looking to take the beverage program to a whole new level by creating a lasting impression that sits with you far after you have left the table,” says Nieves. “I’m committed to putting every crazy idea that I’ve had shot down over the years on every menu possible. Pacifica Hotels has given me a platform for my art, and I am so thankful for their trust in my abilities to make memorable experiences.”

Cartoonist Graham Harrop Shows Appreciation for Restaurant Workers With His New Collection



Cartoonist Graham Harrop, creator of the award-winning comic strip *TEN CATS*, has released a new cartoon collection that, in his words, is “a fun and timely way to show appreciation” for restaurant employees who have weathered the pandemic. “My thought was to give restaurant workers a laugh,” Harrop says.

“This little gift book could be an inexpensive way for restaurant owners to say thanks.”

Available on Amazon as a black-and-white paperback



or color e-book, *I Only Came to Ask the Time! The Restaurant Thank-You Book* “contains 35 cartoons related to restaurant services and is meant to bring a smile to those who have hung in there during these trying times—and welcome those new to the industry,” according to Harrop. For more information, visit grahamharropcartoons.com.



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Chef Aaron Meneghelli to Lead Culinary Programs at J Vineyards & Winery and Louis M. Martini Winery



Aaron Meneghelli has been appointed as executive chef for both Louis M. Martini Winery and J Vineyards & Winery. Born and raised in Napa Valley, he has an inherent understanding of the local food and wine industry and brings with him a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will allow the producers' wines to shine alongside innovative culinary offerings.

At Louis M. Martini, Meneghelli will enhance the winery's progressive Californian cuisine with traditions of Northern Italy, a place near and dear to both the Meneghelli and Martini families. To mark his debut, he planned a sumptuous, multi-course menu for the Celebration of Cabernet, an intimate dinner for club members to celebrate the Crown Cabernet Collection, a line of wines that

embody the winery's most coveted mountain vineyards.

His arrival at J, meanwhile, marks an exciting new chapter for the producer. The Bubble Room reopened last September with an elegant and inspired pairing menu that emphasizes fresh, local products and exquisite technique. In developing his menus, Meneghelli begins with the wines, building flavors and textures within his dishes that showcase the nuances and structure of each pairing. "I've been working toward this kind of a challenge," he says. "I'm excited to be part of the culinary and winemaking history at these properties. . . . There are so many aspects [and] details to explore."

Thomas Allen Wine Estates Acquires Provenance Vineyards in Major Growth Play

Thomas Allen Wine Estates, which makes the Lodi-appellated wines of Hook Or Crook Cellars, has added 22-year-old Napa Valley brand Provenance Vineyards to its portfolio, representing the first acquisition for the family-owned winery. Provenance Vineyards was previously owned by Treasury Wine Estates; in a simultaneous transaction, its real estate in Rutherford, California, was acquired by luxury Napa Valley producer Far Niente Family of Wineries and Vineyards.


"Adding a Napa Valley brand to our portfolio is a meaningful acquisition for our winery," says Allen Lombardi, founder and president of Thomas Allen Wine Estates. "The word 'provenance' means origin or a sense of place, and that mindset aligns well with our company's core values of family, determination, and work ethic. We are proud to bring Provenance Vineyards back to its roots as a family-owned and -operated brand."

The Provenance Vineyards portfolio currently includes Napa-appellated Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and rosé as well as Fortitude Cabernet Sauvignon, a premier expression from exclusive Napa vineyards.



Scheid Family Wines Announces First Chief Marketing Officer

Scheid Family Wines, based in Monterey County, California, has welcomed Sylvia Bronson as its first chief marketing officer. With over 14 years of experience as a global brand marketing leader and growth strategist for Fortune 500 corporations and early-stage start-ups, Bronson brings an extensive skill set in all aspects of marketing. Her hiring reflects Scheid Family Wines' commitment to its growing portfolio of global wine brands, including Sunny with a Chance of Flowers, and focus on expanding its distribution and market share.

Prior to leading the marketing department at Bently Heritage Estate Distillery, Bronson held several positions at Constellation Brands, moving from its premium brand division into innovation commercialization and ultimately serving as global marketing director for its imports division. Bronson launched her career in the wine industry at E. & J. Gallo Winery, where she worked in various capacities across its value and luxury wine portfolios. 

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

'Tis the Season for Surprises

WINES TO RING IN WINTER

I enjoy writing about wines that I think will resonate with my readers and help their retail or restaurant programs achieve seasonal success. But these days, as some trends take permanent root—insert rosé here—and as tastes evolve, the customary lines between seasons are blurring. More often than not, I now find myself eschewing tradition as I discover wines that can't be pigeonholed as summer or winter pours. While in New York City last fall, I got the chance to try some good examples.

At a tasting featuring Italian producer **Albino Armani**, whose family has been producing wine in the Triveneto (as the contiguous regions of Trentino–Alto Adige, the Veneto, and Friuli–Venezia Giulia are called) since the 1600s, I tasted two delightfully complex single-vineyard Pinot Grigios that made me question why I rarely drink this varietal. The first, Corvara (\$15), is made from estate grapes grown in the southernmost part of the sliver that is the Valdadige DOC. Easily recognizable as Pinot Grigio, it shows hints of peach, pear, and floral notes; with a straw-gold color and a medium weight, it's a delightful wine by any standards.

The second, Colle Ara (\$22), comes from the Valdadige Terradeiforti DOC, which lies a bit further north. Presenting a pink/gold/coppery color from extended skin contact, this wine made in the ramato style shows peach, tropical notes, and a hint of spice and florals on



Above: Taylor Fladgate's Very Old Tawny. Left: Andy Seymour pours The Port Gobbler, a Fonseca Bin 27–based cocktail, at the Pick Your Port Adventure event.

the palate. It's a simply gorgeous expression made by one of Italy's Pinot Grigio authorities.

On another evening, I sampled a few exciting new fortified wine offerings—both traditional and non-traditional—when I attended **Pick Your Port Adventure**, a tasting hosted by a trio of top producers. While Croft and Taylor Fladgate unveiled their new Port-based canned cocktails (quite possibly my go-to RTDs for next summer!), Fonseca showcased its products in seasonal cocktails expertly crafted by renowned mixologist Andy Seymour, owner of beverage agency Liquid Productions. All of these made a lovely prelude to the evening's star attraction:

Taylor Fladgate's just-released limited-production Very Old Tawny—a 90-year-old Port of such character it deserves a place on my all-time favorite wines list. With only 100 bottles available for \$3,800 per, this stunning and ultra-rare expression should

have a place of honor in only the most exclusive wine programs. **W**

These days, as some trends take permanent root—insert rosé here—and as tastes evolve, the customary lines between seasons are blurring.



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A Feast for the Eyes (and Palate)

AT TWO SPLASHY D.C. SPOTS, GUESTS FIND MASTERPIECES ON CANVAS AS WELL AS CHINA

Walking into WHINO on a buzzing Friday night, I'll admit that my first thoughts were "Why is it so loud in here?" followed by "Why is everyone so young?" It is, after all, in the heart of Arlington's Ballston neighborhood, where the 20-somethings congregate.

The combined restaurant, bar, and gallery is the brainchild of Shane Pomajambo, a trained architect who transitioned his gallery of pop surrealist works to incorporate his love of all things epicurean. At WHINO, the art changes monthly and often sells out quickly. But before I even set my eyeballs on the current collection, I soaked up the view in the massive, 6,200-square-foot, warehouse-inspired space, with its polished concrete floors, exposed steel ceilings, 16-foot-high windows, and four huge murals by renowned artists from around the globe. The only design miss is the sal-low skin-inducing yellow neon lighting overhead, which also makes food and drink photography difficult.

Maybe we couldn't snap it, but we nonetheless devoured it. Fun options for w(h)inos include racy Txakoli and earthy Agiorgitiko—but since it was fall and all, I chose the boozy and stirred Ancient Assassin with rye, Madeira, and Gran Classico Bitter. Ceviche-like oyster shooters came in their shells, chopped and mixed with mango, lime, tequila, cilantro, and pickled Fresno chiles; and the saffron- and lobster broth-infused rice in the Carolina shrimp, clam, and monkfish paella consisted entirely of the crispy *socarrat* scraped from the bottom of the pan—or as I like to call it, the rice version of the muffin top.

Across the bridge in D.C., I attended my first vaccination-required event: the Grand Finale Collaboration Dinner at The LINE hotel in Adams Morgan,

Oysters with guanciale, ginger, and scallion were served at an Indie Chefs Community dinner attended by the author.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WHINO



WHINO is a restaurant, bar, and gallery in Arlington, VA.

hosted by Indie Chefs Community (ICC), a collective promoting equality in the culinary industry. Grover Smith founded ICC in 2017, and so far he's produced approximately 40 events around the country that are billed as "anti-food-festivals"; featuring marquee chefs and charitable partnerships, they involve seated meals instead of chaotic walkaround tastings, so vaxxed guests can take the time to truly appreciate what's coming out of the kitchen.

Several chefs—D.C.-based and otherwise—collaborated on each wine-paired course. Pittsburgh's Justin Severino and Baltimore's Steve Chu topped a just-shucked oyster with guanciale, ginger, and scallion, while chefs from The LINE's own restaurant, No Goodbyes,

used sunchoke in a vegetarian take on Nashville-style hot chicken. But my favorite dish came from Tim Ma of Lucky Danger in D.C. and Jamilka Borges, whom I met this summer when she was part of the culinary team at a glamping resort. Their catfish glazed with anchovy, cabbage, burnt eggplant puree, crispy shallot, and satay sauce ticked off all the flavors: umami, tangy, smoky, earthy, and sweet. When the duo made their way around the dining room, I was super-bummed to learn that Borges' plans to open a new venture were scrapped due to the pandemic; amid so much incredible talent in the house that night, she stood out. To paraphrase my boyfriend: Universe, get this chef a restaurant. **LT**

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Al Scheid

Al Scheid, Founder



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A saké lineup at Tarbell's.

East Marries West

AT PHOENIX EATERY **TARBELL'S**, AMERICAN FOOD AND JAPANESE SAKÉ ARE A NATURAL MATCH

Mark Tarbell wants to take diners on a cross-cultural journey that will transform how we perceive traditional food and wine pairings. In introducing guests at his American eatery, Tarbell's, in Phoenix to the idea of pairing Western food with Japanese saké, the restaurateur, *Iron Chef* winner, and Emmy Award-winning host of Arizona PBS' *Plate & Pour* and *Check, Please! Arizona* hopes to break culinary barriers.

Tarbell explains that the seed of inspiration was planted during his time at culinary school in Paris, where he was introduced, in his words, to the "provocative, elegant, and interesting" idea of including saké on a traditional wine list. Because "we [Westerners] don't have a clear understanding of the breadth and depth of what saké is, about what it means to the people of Japan and how diverse it is," he explains, the challenge has been to convince "highly educated [U.S.] servers to be confident in serving saké in lieu of, say, a Chardonnay, and for the diners to be equally confident in the choice."

In 2008, at the International Wine Competition in Los Angeles, Tarbell



PHOTOS: GRACE STUKOSKY

Mark Tarbell is the owner of Tarbell's in Phoenix, AZ.

met Certified Master Sake Sommelier Toshio Ueno. Sensing an opportunity to incorporate saké onto his wine list, he invited Ueno to train his staff on the intricacies of Japan's national beverage and prepared a saké dinner where the unlikely East-meets-West combinations, he says, "politely shocked yet fascinated" Ueno.


It clearly had an impact, for Ueno invited Tarbell back to LA to teach a class on pairing saké with Western cuisine at the Japanese Food and Restaurant Expo in 2019, where he met some of the world's premier saké producers. With newfound encouragement, he started hosting saké dinners

Noguchi Naohiko Junmai Daiginjo Muroka Nama Genshu has the alcohol content and acidity to stand up to Tarbell's sesame seed-crusted strip loin with cured egg yolk, pickled hiratake, green onion, and steamed rice.

at Tarbell's. "I am not the first or only person doing it," he concedes, "but it is something that I would like to get Arizonans interested in."

Tarbell finds the correlation between wine and saké compelling; like wine, every process in the production of saké is intentional and influences the outcome. "Consider [some of] the factors that influence the world of saké: the sources of water, [the] strains of yeast, [the] types of rice, how they polish the rice, how and at what temperature they ferment," he says. "What do they ferment it in? Do they barrel age? Do they bottle it fresh, without filtering, or is it incredibly pure and unfiltered? Is it pasteurized? Does it have thickness and weight? Does it have residual sugar [or] high acid? Is it sparkling, dry, or sweet?" In crafting the wine list at Tarbell's, he builds on these parallels. "If it has a sparkling profile, I am putting it under Champagne; if it has a high-acid, clean profile, under Sauvignon Blanc; and barrel-aged sakés [go] under Interesting Reds," he explains.

The end game is to open his guests up to exploration. For instance, by pairing a steak with a saké that has some richness, structure, and weight to it, Tarbell believes he can offer both familiarity and fresh insight. As another example, he adds, "You can take something that might be typical of Champagne and pair with a sparkling saké . . . so you are having a very similar experience."

Acknowledging the hesitancy of many customers, however, Tarbell notes that the first step is simply to encourage people to try it: "I ask, 'Hey, can I take you on a ride instead of ordering what you normally order? Then you will walk away having had it, and if you continue to order it, then that is up to you, but at least you will have had a taste.'" 





HEAVEN'S DOOR

The restless spirit of Bob Dylan

#1

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Brando Lapuh and Kris Lilley manage the bar programs for Central Standard and Lobby Bar, respectively, at the South Congress Hotel in Austin, TX.



PHOTO: LORI MOFFATT

Crushing the Curveballs

AT AUSTIN'S **SOUTH CONGRESS HOTEL**, BRANDO LAPUH AND KRIS LILLEY WELCOME BACK GUESTS WITH OPEN ARMS

Exploring the shops around Austin's South Congress Hotel mid-morning recently, I was intrigued to find people working on laptops in the sun-dappled courtyard between the hotel and its restaurant Central Standard. Such an abundance of sidewalk seating (and of industrious daytime regulars) hadn't existed here before the pandemic. Central Standard bar manager Brando Lapuh and his colleague Kris Lilley, who manages the hotel's aptly named Lobby Bar, tell me that this Parisian café vibe wasn't the only positive change to arise out of upheaval.

While the venues were closed at South Congress—part of the New Waterloo hospitality group, which operates hotels and restaurants in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas—the team took the opportunity to evaluate and

improve how they did things. (There's nothing like a full stop to encourage change.) Expanding outdoor seating and nonalcoholic beverage options for guests, shortening shifts, and tightening communication and collaboration among the staff, "we emerged as a stronger team," Lapuh says.

Of course, there was plenty of opportunity to be creative as the pandemic threw curveballs. Curbside pickup only! Cocktail deliveries! Covering three shifts simultaneously! Shortages! Learning the software to print new menus because of shortages! Yet they found themselves able to respond to trends more quickly as a result, be it an interest in low-ABV cocktails or a call for products with ties to the community. For instance, as nightlife and tourism began to resume, Lapuh opted

to refocus his beer taps on brands made in the Austin area. "We changed everything on our menu to be as local as possible," Lapuh says. "The farthest beer we offer is from Fredericksburg, and that's only about 80 miles."

"People visiting here want the full Texas experience," adds Lilley, who relocated from Seattle to Austin during the pandemic. "At the Lobby Bar, a lot of people ask for Texas whiskey. But also, for some reason, everybody here loves Espresso Martinis. Everybody has their own rendition; one of my bartenders likes to add a little bit of green Chartreuse for an extra bitter note. We sell so many we have to pre-batch it on the weekends. It's great to see some sense of normalcy again. The dust is starting to settle, and we're starting to think about what's next." **LD**



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BY PARIS VASSER

Cuisine Meets Community

BEHIND **EATOKRA'S** DIRECTORY OF BLACK-OWNED RESTAURANTS AND BARS

When Anthony and Janique Edwards moved from the Bronx to Brooklyn in 2016, they felt an immediate need to connect with their new community. Driven to seek out spaces that reflected their own culture, they nonetheless found it difficult to identify the Black-owned restaurants in their area. So the husband-and-wife team began to research and piece together their own database of such establishments, leaning on Anthony's tech background as an app developer. That year, EatOkra was born.

Though the app was initially built for the founders' personal use, it began to garner enough interest among friends and family that, in 2018, they decided to redesign it to be more user-friendly and release it to the public; after all, they couldn't deny the benefit it could have for proprietors and consumers all over the country. "We are bringing people together, making these connections through food and beverage," Anthony says. This sentiment ties into the directory's namesake: Okra is a vegetable that's often used as a natural thickening—or unifying—ingredient, for instance in gumbo. "Okra was brought over during the slave trade and has a lot of nods to our heritage," Anthony explains.

Adds Janique, "It's not just about the food; it's about what spaces these restaurants create for people. And to see yourself reflected in the business is very valuable to the people in those communities." Covering not just restaurants but bars, food trucks, caterers, and, soon, the producers of retail items such as sauces and spice blends, EatOkra is a powerhouse that strives to connect with business owners in a meaningful way. In 2020, its influence skyrocketed: As the world made strides to support Black communities, EatOkra was there to make supporting COVID-impacted Black restaurants infinitely easier,

and engagement with the app grew a thousandfold.

An idea born out of necessity now thrives thanks to its community of users, Janique says: "Before it was just me doing all the research with Google and phone calls; now the users are our advocates, and it shows they see the value in our business." The couple has also partnered with heavy hitters like Uber Eats, making it possible to order delivery from the app; during the shutdown, Uber Eats and EatOkra teamed up to provide for Black restaurateurs to host pop-up outdoor dining experiences in various cities. They've also joined Pepsi in its Dig In initiative, which rallies consumers to support Black-owned restaurants and upload their receipts to its passport platform with a goal to reach \$100 million in sales in the next five years.

What's more, Anthony and Janique are creating an e-learning platform to mentor up-and-com-

ing entrepreneurs and help them find their footing in the restaurant space. "When you're talking about building community and sustaining community, small businesses play such a major role in helping to do that," Janique says. "They create these cultural hubs for people. When a business goes under, the community mourns that. For us to be able to create something that is a resource that can potentially help with that means a lot to us." **LD**

Anthony and Janique Edwards of EatOkra.



PHOTO: RHEA KAY



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Connection on Tap

IMAGINE NATION BREWING CO. POURS POSITIVE PROGRESS IN MISSOULA, MT

by **Jessie Birschbach**

It's not uncommon for a brewery to serve its community or aid a particular cause in the process of producing delicious brewskis: Women-owned Lady Justice Brewing, which partners with organizations to support women and girls in its home state of Colorado, and Los Angeles-based Crowns & Hops, a Black-owned brewery that empowers people of color through community building and other efforts, are just two examples. Historically speaking, too, beer has played a role in bringing society together, with some anthropologists citing it as one of the main reasons why humans transitioned from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle into an agricultural existence: We had to grow enough grain not only to make bread but to brew beer.

The potential for human connection shared over a beer is undeniable, and on a recent trip to Missoula, Montana, I forged a durable bond with Imagine Nation Brewing Co., which is the first brewery in the country to build a dedicated space for community transformation. I noted its door when I first walked into Imagine Nation's colorful taproom, where husband-and-wife team Robert Rivers and Fernanda Menna Barreto Krum sat at a small table under a chalkboard listing the brewery's current selection. Above it was the phrase, "We are because of each other," and as Soundgarden's "Spoonman" played to the beat of our cheerful conversation, portraits of Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg quietly observed from their place on the wall.

Rivers and Krum—whose backgrounds are in international peacebuilding and trauma psychology, respectively—met in Romania and worked together in conflict zones from Africa to Asia. But after about 20 years, as much as they loved "working in the trenches," said Rivers, "I hit a wall. And

PHOTO: TIME MACHINE MEDIA



Fernanda Menna Barreto Krum and Robert Rivers own Missoula's Imagine Nation Brewing Co., the first brewery in the country to offer a dedicated space for community transformation.

the brewery hosted a Pride event on behalf of Missoula's LGBTQ+ community, bear spray was extinguished into the crowd on their patio. "It was a full-on hate crime . . . but to see the resilience and hope and togetherness that that community maintained even after, I found myself in tears," said Rivers.

when we returned to Missoula, we had dreams of building a retreat or educational center but realized that would be difficult to do without having something else to offer besides programs." So in 2015, they opened Imagine Nation Brewing Co.—and since then they've hosted almost 4,000 community events and contributed about 25% of the brewery's net profits to support at least 500 local organizations.

The success of Imagine Nation's community space is fortified by the couple's expertise, which inspires creative ways to earn more money for these organizations. "We sit down . . . and we ask them, 'What is your goal with this event?'" said Krum. Their experience working with marginalized people has perhaps made them all the more sympathetic and determined, even in the face of adversity. Last summer, when

All this is not to say that the beer alone isn't a good enough excuse to visit. The goodwill might have gotten me through the doors, but it was the flight of Imagine Nation's latest New England-style IPAs that kept me there. The citrusy, guava-like Stardust hazy lingered on my palate as Rivers discussed the similarities between brewing and making art: "For me, the most important ingredient of beer is the intention that goes into it. Yes, we do try to create art [in the form of a good beer], but the real purpose of creating that art is to help facilitate a space where people can sit around that art form and connect so that we can somehow push forward in our society—to create a space where we can come together and address the challenges that confront us, which, let's face it, are myriad at this point." **VT**

GIFT A NAPA ICON
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



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Lisa Redwine

GENERAL MANAGER AND WINE DIRECTOR,
MARKET RESTAURANT + BAR, DEL MAR, CA



by Michelle M. Metter



With an apt last name for a career in the beverage industry, Lisa Redwine has worked myriad positions in hospitality. A classically trained chef, she eventually jumped to a career in wine that would set her on a path toward certification as an Advanced Sommelier and positions as a restaurant GM, buyer, and sales representative. We caught up with Redwine to discuss her newest role at the famed Market Restaurant + Bar in Del Mar, California, where she works alongside award-winning chef Carl Schroeder.

Q Which sales skills have you brought to your return to the floor?

I believe the biggest takeaway is how challenging being a sales rep is and how the entire sales cycle works. I also know what questions to ask and what I can and cannot request. It gives me positioning to acquire hard-to-access wines and . . . to be an effective buyer. The most important skill that being in a sales role gave me is to maximize profitability while keeping inventory low. In a post-COVID world, this [will continue to be] a must.

Q Tell us about the wine program at Market.

The cuisine is the star and the wines on the list should pair well with the food. The wine program is a thoughtful global collection that changes often. I seek out older vintages of Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Barolo as well as California Cabernet. I balance the selections with [both] well-established producers and small producers to discover from around the world.

Q How would you describe your day-to-day?

It's like being on your favorite roller coaster. There is the anticipation of arriving, the ups and downs of the day, and the excitement to return the next day. The aspect I love the most is how the day you plan is never the day you face. It allows you to problem solve and put pieces . . . together. The majority of the day is focused on the night ahead of us—making sure wine is stocked, the wine lists are correct, [and] coolers and storage are organized; [knowing] where the next changes are happening as well as ensuring staffing is secure; speaking with the chef about the menu for the evening; [overseeing] staff education; and harboring a culture that is focused on food and wine.

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

This question is the equivalent of asking a 10-year-old to select their favorite candy bar. [But] after careful reflection, the answer is simple. It's not so much the what but rather who. It would be my father. He passed away five years ago from ALS, but he never lost his passion for drinking wine and learning about it. He lived in Oregon for over 30 years, and according to him, this is where all the great wines come from. . . . I would pour one of my favorite producers from Oregon[, Etude]. We would toast to life and doing what we love with Tony Soter's 1997 rosé. I have not only loved his sparkling rosé but the hard work and philosophy behind the wine. I truly appreciate [that] when you love what you do, it doesn't feel like work. It is a gift that is invaluable. *LM*



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PHOTO: JANET FLETCHER/PLANET CHEESE

Out to Lunch

A TRIO OF CHEDDARS TO PAIR WITH AN OLD-FASHIONED MEAL

For farmers who've spent all morning laboring in the fields, a ploughman's lunch doesn't seem remotely substantial enough. But for those of us who are mostly deskbound, it's the perfect midday pause, an excuse to order a pint along with a nice chunk of good cheddar and all the accoutrements that make this uniquely British invention a balanced and wholesome tradition worth reviving.

If you operate a restaurant, café, or pub and want to sell more craft beer, offer a ploughman's lunch. The origins of the dish are obscure, but the parameters are not: It's a cold plate built around farmhouse cheddar, hard-cooked eggs, pickled onions, sweet butter, and sturdy whole-grain bread. Beyond that, you can get creative. Add olives, chutney, radishes, cherry tomatoes, pickled beets, or sauerkraut. Sliced ham or pâté are not out of place. You shouldn't have to cook much of anything apart from the eggs.

For the centerpiece, consider one of these excellent American cheddars:

Deer Creek The Imperial Buck

(Wisconsin): Deer Creek is a brand, not a creamery; owner Chris Gentine doesn't make any cheese. But he is a master cheese grader, which means he knows how to pick the best wheels that others produce. The Imperial Buck is a four- to five-year-old clothbound white cheddar produced by a master craftsman, Kerry Henning, and marketed by Gentine. Creamy, mellow, and moist, it recently won a gold medal in the "Best USA Cheese: Extra Mature/Vintage Cheddar" category at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards, and that's hardly surprising. Who wouldn't put this exceedingly tasty cheddar at the head of the class?

Fiscalini Bandaged Cheddar (California):

This raw-milk farmstead cheese, modeled on traditional English recipes, is arguably California's finest cheddar. The Fiscalini family operates a sizeable dairy farm in Modesto and, for the past 20-plus years, has diverted some of the milk for use in cheesemaking. Their "bandaged" (aged in cheesecloth) cheddar has deservedly won numerous

national awards. It has the signature creamy, crumbly, waxy texture of artisan cheddar along with aromas of roasted nuts, just-mown grass, and candlewax. It finishes with the tang that serious cheddar lovers expect.

Milton Creamery Prairie Breeze (Iowa):

The Musser family started Milton Creamery about 20 years ago to support neighboring Amish dairy farms. Neville McNaughton, a renowned consultant, helped them develop the recipe for Prairie Breeze, which quickly became one of the top-selling cheddars at cheese counters around the country. Matured for about nine months in a sealed bag, Prairie Breeze never develops a rind like a clothbound cheddar, nor does it have the complexity of a traditional English or English-style clothbound wheel. But it does have a lot of consumer appeal, thanks to its moderate price and the use of Swiss-type cultures (in addition to cheddar cultures) that contribute sweet and nutty flavors. Supremely mellow, with a fruity pineapple scent, Prairie Breeze is a reliable crowd pleaser. **V**

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TAKING INVENTORY

YOUR BUSINESS, YOUR VOICES



What are your best tips for hand selling?

Dan Davis

“The Wine Guy,” Commander’s Palace, New Orleans, LA

I like to think of hand selling as an exercise of service rather than an exercise of ego. A lot of people go wrong in hand selling by trying to push a customer into a predetermined selection or, even worse, trying to aggressively upsell their customer. I’ve always believed that if you take just a moment to get to know what it is your customer’s looking for, what they’re interested in . . . and for goodness’ sake, don’t be afraid to ask them how much they want to spend . . . then [you can] suggest something that meets those criteria but might take them a little outside their comfort zone. It is really important, especially with a list like ours at Commander’s, to figure out if the customer’s comfortable with and/or excited about wines with age, because we put a lot of effort into presenting wines that are fully aged, and not every customer is used to that. You start getting really strong tertiary development in a wine and they might not be crazy about it. [So] it’s about understanding what experience they’re wanting to have and finding a way to delight them with something that they hopefully can’t get anywhere else, and that’s when they get excited.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KNEAD HOSPITALITY + DESIGN

If I have a customer who's only comfortable talking about California Cabernet, I'm going to try to find out what it is about California Cabernet that they like. If they like that tannic shellac that you get on the front of your teeth . . . then I know they're not looking for a 25-year-old Languedoc. But if they say, "Yeah, I like earthy, I like a wine that's got more turned leaves and depth and interesting funkiness going on," I just happen to have five pages of great older wines from the south of France that range in age and every price point. I could bring them a ten-year-old bottle of Pic Saint-Loup for under \$100 that's going to blow their mind. . . .

I also think your by-the-glass program can be a really big help in hand selling. . . . We have over 40 wines by the glass, and quite a few of them are wines that have aged for a good long while in the cellar here. And [what's] cool is that I just happen to have them all open, so I can bring a few tastes to the table. We also offer all of our wines by the glass in half and full portions, so someone can taste around some really cool, interesting stuff without having to commit to one full bottle or even a full glass. They can just have some fun.

But . . . the most important thing to me is and the thing that turns me off the most when someone's trying to hand sell to me is when they're more focused on what they like than on what I like. Understand what your customer likes and wants from you: That's just the essence of good service. And for goodness' sake, don't sell them a bottle that's \$5 more than the price range they gave you. You make more money off selling two bottles to a customer who trusts you than you do off of selling a bottle just out of the price range that they're comfortable with. And they have a better time.



Mark Moulton

Beverage director, Laurel Brasserie & Bar, Salt Lake City, UT

You want to find out as much about the guest as possible. So as you touch a table, you introduce yourself; there should be nothing intimidating about the wine world, and so your presence as a sommelier or a beverage manager should just be to make the guest feel welcome and comfortable. Starting out, you want to ask them what they like to drink, where in the world they have traveled, if there's a particular varietal that they enjoy most. You could then go on to ask if they're celebrating something, is it a special occasion of some sort, does it warrant Champagne or something bubbly? Do they like red wine or white wine? . . . And then you start to ask questions about what they're ordering, and any suggestions you can make in regard to pairing come last. So it's creating a customized experience for the guest [by] learning as you much as you can about [them].

Of course telling a story is most important as well. Once you have an idea of what they would like, then paint a picture of, say, a vineyard or a vintner and a winery that is your favorite, and you can begin to tell them why: their farming practices, where they're located, what they're particularly good at producing, if there's a varietal that relates well to the guest that they produce. An example might be Robert Sinskey as a personal interest of mine. His business card reads "Daydreamer," which I personally appreciate. He thinks outside of the box. I would say he has an Old World palate despite being in Napa Valley, where there's really warm weather; it's a growing region that produces a pretty ripe, robust, full-bodied wine, but he's utilized cooler growing sites within Napa Valley and he's pushed the envelope. His Point of View is one of my favorite wines. It's meant to drink like Right Bank Bordeaux. Historically, he was growing Merlot in a cooler growing site in the Carneros region, which is an area where no one would think Merlot could grow. So he definitely had some skeptics, and he named it Point of View because it was all about his opinion that Merlot would be . . . perfectly suited for growing in Carneros in a little cooler site. . . . It's a lighter-bodied wine, an elegant style with higher acid, which works really well with food. So tell a story; take them to a place. In terms of hand selling that's really important because you're creating an experience; they're walking away having learned about a new producer. The next restaurant they're dining at they quite possibly would ask, "Do you have Robert Sinskey?"

Hand selling is [also] what your staff is excited about, rather than [just] taking an order. I think it's really important to have input and knowledge from your staff. The entire experience as you go into a restaurant is accentuated by them and what they're excited about and what you may have talked about with the chef—he's presented a special for the night and now the staff has tasted a new wine, a new producer to the list, and they're communicating that to the guest. If you can share their excitement, ultimately that is hand selling. **V**

*
Dear*
Emma

* by Emma Roberts

By Popular Demand

PREDICTING THE BEVERAGE TRENDS OF 2022

In the new year, I've been noticing some interesting menu developments at my local watering holes. For one, coffee-infused cocktails seem to be making a stealthy return (including the one that has magically appeared on the menu of the bar I run). It makes sense: Combined with the sweetness of spirits, the bitterness of coffee creates a balanced drink. This observation prompted me to consider what else is changing in our industry.

So I asked Matt Hirsch, the Miami-based Southeast U.S. manager for Chinola Passion Fruit Liqueur, what he thought the big trends in 2022 would be. Hirsch likewise believes that coffee cocktails will become increasingly popular. "It started with the resurgence of the Espresso Martini, but now I have seen coffee being used in many different and unique ways in cocktails with a variety of base spirits," he told me. "Whether it be used for its bitter properties, additional flavor notes, and/or its caffeine, it is adding a new dimension to drinks."

Hirsch also envisions that the growth of both premium and low-ABV beverages will continue this year, and for the same reason: health. "Many newer bars have shunned [products with] food coloring, artificial flavoring, and chemical preservatives and instead use natural and/or better-quality ingredients," he pointed out, and I couldn't agree more: People appear to care more about what they put in their bodies than they did before the pandemic, which makes sense given that a lot of us gained the "COVID-29." (That is the average weight gain from overindulging during the pandemic, according to a 2021 survey by the American Psychological Association.) Meanwhile, Hirsch has found that while on lockdown, people had fun learning to make zero- or



Matt Hirsch is Southeast U.S. manager for Chinola Passion Fruit Liqueur.



PHOTO: CARA HARMON PHOTOGRAPHY

Coffee-infused cocktails have been making a comeback cross-country.

low-proof cocktails for themselves to break up the monotony of the workday, a phenomenon that has now translated to the style of cocktails people are drinking at bars, especially at brunch and happy hour.

Based in New York, Greg Boehm, CEO and founder of Cocktail Kingdom and Cocktail Kingdom Hospitality Group, thinks that people will pay more attention to how drinks are presented in 2022. Interesting glassware, for instance, is fun for guests to showcase on social media; eye-catching presentation also helps to justify the higher prices we are seeing everywhere. Added Boehm, "I also see people making more reservations for cocktail bars rather than just walking in," which can help management prepare for

special celebrations, table requests, allergy restrictions, and so on. "This may be wishful thinking, but this plus more unique presentations are both things that can help bars create a better environment while they focus on greater hospitality."

Of course, other trends beyond those mentioned here are sure to emerge, ensuring that 2022 is equally spectacular for their devotees as it is for fans of Espresso Martinis, visually appealing glassware, and lower-ABV offerings. **LT**

Comments or general life questions? Send Roberts an email at 100proofemma@gmail.com or reach out to her through her YouTube channel, 100 Proof Emma, or Instagram @100proofemma.

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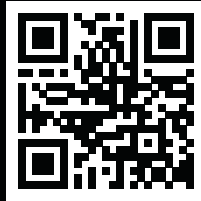


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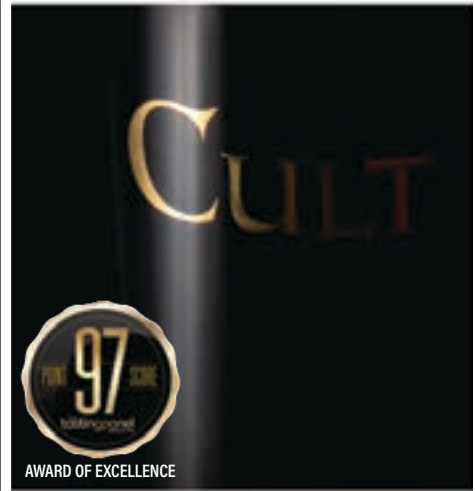


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A Primer on Sustainable Wines

by Taylor Grant

Over the past few years, “sustainability” has been among the biggest buzzwords in the wine industry. Yet, shockingly, few people know what it actually entails. For a wine to be truly sustainable, it must be 1) environmentally sound, 2) socially equitable, and 3) economically viable. To obtain leading certifications through programs like Sustainability in Practice (SIP) or the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), producers must meet standards involving water and energy conservation; maintaining and improving soil, air, and water quality; reducing energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and pesticide use; enhancing relations with employees and communities; preserving local ecosystems and wildlife habitats; and improving the economic vitality of vineyards and wineries.

The term “sustainable” is often linked with organic and Biodynamic winemaking, each of which has its own standards. In the United States, a wine can be labeled as organic if it was made from organic grapes without added sulfites and other prohibited ingredients like GMOs and exclusively uses organic additives. Europe and Canada are similar in that they must still use organically grown grapes, but organic wines in these regions may contain added sulfites.

Biodynamic, on the other hand, relates more to the vineyard itself. It includes many principles of organic farming (including no chemical intervention) but also adds mostly herb-based preparations—as Biodynamic soil treatments and sprays are called—for optimal soil and fruit management, both of which also follow processes based on the phases of the moon.

Regardless of whether they’re also certified organic or Biodynamic, producers that push the limits of sustainability often turn to the practice of regenerative farming, which aims



Author Taylor Grant is the sommelier behind SALUTAY, a quarterly wine club focused on sustainable, organic, and minimal-intervention bottlings.

to reverse soil degradation through practices like adaptive grazing, no-till planting, and limited use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizer. One such example that might be the future of viticulture are electric tractors produced by companies such as Monarch, which is currently based in Napa.

In the winery, meanwhile, the focus remains on keeping energy use and emissions as low as possible. Diana Snowden Seysses of Burgundy’s Domaine Dujac and Napa’s Snowden Vineyards is currently at the forefront of the process known as carbon capture, which involves trapping the carbon dioxide released during fermentation and using pipelines to move it to a central carbon recycling center where biofuel can be produced throughout the year. This practice is most likely to

succeed once it evolves beyond isolated use into a collective movement.

Finally, the industry is making significant strides in making the manufacturing, packaging, and transportation process more sustainable, with companies like the New York-based Good Goods, which aims to reduce waste with its reusable glass, leading the charge.

Ultimately, wine buyers and sommeliers are the driving force determining which wines consumers see on wine lists and retail shelves,

so supporting brands that use these practices is the easiest way to relay the importance of sustainability. For more information on the sustainable wine movement, follow organizations like Gotham Project (gothamproject.net), Napa Green (napagreen.org), and International Wineries for Climate Action (iwcwine.org). **W**

Founded by sommelier Taylor Grant, SALUTAY (salutay.la) is a quarterly wine club focused on sustainable, organic, and minimal-intervention wines from small producers around the world.

Grant has had years of experience at some of the leading hospitality groups in Los Angeles, with roles as sommelier at Osteria Mozza and wine director at Scopa Italian Roots, Old Lightning, DAMA, and Dudley Market.

TATTOO GIRL

WINE



93

Rosé

93

Chardonnay

92

Riesling

91

Cabernet
Sauvignon

91

Riesling

California Pinot Noir Begins Here

HOW GERMAN WINEMAKER **WALTER SCHUG** INTRODUCED THE BURGUNDIAN GRAPE TO THE U.S. **by Natasha Swords**

To truly understand a wine, it's important to first understand the character of the varietal it's made from. In the case of California Pinot Noir, no producer is more qualified to provide this understanding than the one that started it all: Schug Carneros Estate Winery. For 100 years, the Schug family has been making wine from the famed Burgundian grape, first in Germany and then in their winery's namesake AVA—even back in the 1970s and 1980s when nobody in the U.S. knew what it was. "When my father, Walter, left Germany, Pinot Noir was what he knew best," says managing partner Axel Schug. "He was born and raised on a 12th-century Pinot Noir vineyard managed by his father." After Walter arrived in California in 1961, he eventually began making Pinot Noir for Joseph Phelps, but when Phelps ceased production of the varietal in 1980, "he gave my father his blessing to make his own under the Schug name," Axel says. "Really, you could say Mr. Phelps' gesture spurred our family's Pinot legacy."


Walter maintained his trust in Pinot Noir from then on, though it wouldn't be widely sought after by the public until the mid-1990s. When a horde of new brands hopped on the bandwagon as soon as the grape became fashionable, Schug differentiated itself by "offer[ing] a true sense of place and terroir," explains Axel. "Still today, we create Carneros wines that offer a great central point of reference for consumers. This is what a Pinot from one of the oldest appellations in America tastes like and should taste like."

Schug aims to balance the firm structure of its Pinot—imparted by the Carneros AVA's soils of clay loam over broken basalt, cool temperatures, and fierce winds—with richer, riper fruit for a more contemporary profile. Enter Johannes Scheid, who hails from a small family winery in the Mosel Valley



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCHUG

The stunning carving on the German cask behind Schug Carneros Estate winemaker Johannes Scheid and managing partner Axel Schug illustrates the ancient monastic vineyard on the Rhine where Axel's father, Walter, grew up. The inscription reads, "Whether wine from the Neckar, the Mosel, or the Rhine, it should be pure like the grape it comes from." Axel paraphrases this as "Wine should reflect the purity of its place," a mantra that Schug still holds dear today.

of Germany and studied viticulture and winemaking at Geisenheim University (which happens to be Walter Schug's alma mater). The young winemaker is charged with developing a modern approach to his craft while staying true to both the house style and Carneros terroir, so rest assured that Schug will never abandon its sense of place. As Axel puts it, "We're not interested in making just another drink. We define Carneros Pinot Noir, and that's a responsibility we take seriously." 

TASTING NOTES

Having produced Insignia for a decade, Walter built a reputation for Bordeaux varietals, which Schug produces in addition to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Schug 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma Coast (\$28) Tart lemon and white grapefruit zing out of the glass, enlightened by tarragon and pea tendrils. Just-ripened pineapple and melon lend more crispness to this fresh, balanced white. Aged 85% in barrel and 15% in stainless steel. **90** —*Meridith May*

Schug 2019 Chardonnay, Carneros (\$35) Aged sur lie for eight months in 20% new French oak, this iconic Chardonnay is creamy and toasty, though its richness is reined in by its bright acidity. Kiwi, pineapple, and gardenia effortlessly show a tropical character, followed by key lime and vanilla on the finish. **92** —*M.M.*

Schug 2020 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$28) A portion of this wine aged sur lie in neutral oak barrels; the result, offering lemon ice, white grapefruit, honeysuckle, and peach meringue, is startlingly clean, crisp, and crystal in clarity. The enhanced texture brings out the best of its character. **94** —*M.M.*

Schug 2020 Rosé of Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$28) Cold fermented in stainless-steel tanks, this is one stunning rosé, and we've tasted our fair share this year. Rose and raspberry scent the glass, while cherry and pomegranate are inviting on the palate, with jasmine kicking in midway. A refreshing floral bloom, the wine is part creamy, part stony, but streamlined and pure all the way. **93** —*M.M.*

Schug 2019 Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$38) Roses are sweetened by bright red cherry, cinnamon sugar, and spiced cranberry. Burgundian in style, with lovely acidity, this wine is as lighthearted as a soft-shoe dance down to its velvety entrance and exit. **92** —*M.M.*





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Scottish Craft Whiskies Come of Age, *Part 2*

To return to the topic I introduced in my September/October 2021 column about the exciting growth of craft distilling in Scotland, here are three more new producers that are rewriting the Scotch whisky story.

Hardcore Johnnie Walker enthusiasts may wish to follow **Annandale Distillery**; located in the Scottish Borders, it's one of only a few Lowland single malt brands. Established originally in 1836, it made whisky that was used in early Walker blends until its closure in 1924. Eventually much of the property was demolished, but the husband-and-wife team of professor David Thomson and Teresa Church purchased it in 2014, aiming to restart production. After eight years and many millions of dollars, they now have two whiskies on the market. The Man O' Words pays homage to poet Robert Burns and the peated Man O' Sword is a tribute to King of Scots Robert the Bruce; both namesakes are Scottish heroes with links to Annandale's locale.

Keen golfers try to make a pilgrimage to St Andrews' Old Course at least once in their lives. Now there's another reason for the trip: nearby **Eden Mill**.




After a very limited launch in 2018, the distillery has announced an ambitious £7 million plan for expansion with the goal of becoming Scotland's first completely carbon-neutral distillery. Head distiller Scott Ferguson is nothing if not experimental in his approach, using pale, chocolate, brown, and crystal malt barley as well as employing bourbon, Pedro Ximénez, and Oloroso Sherry barrels in recent expressions. Kudos to his innovative spirit: After all, what's the point in running a boutique operation if you don't have the freedom and confidence to explore the rich and varied possibilities of grain and cask?

Also stressing their environmental credentials is the largely female-led team at **Nc'nean**, located on the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula on Scotland's west coast. With their self-declared mission "to change the way the world thinks about whisky from Scotland [and] create a whisky [that] could exist in harmony with this planet we call home," they have impressed with efforts to minimise their environmental footprint, installing a biomass boiler



powered by sustainably sourced wood pellets, sourcing organic barley, bottling in recycled glass, and offering a healthy discount for online purchasers who omit the outer tube packaging. They have also made an admirably transparent Sustainability Report available on their website, which rivals might look to emulate.

While their marketing strategy tends to the self-congratulatory, it undoubtedly speaks to an audience concerned with more than the taste of their whisky. Like the other distilleries featured here and in my previous column, Nc'nean's approach reflects the values of younger drinkers and a new direction for Scotch in a rapidly changing world.

These companies are a big part of the future, so heads up, savvy importers and distributors. While, at the time of this writing, Annandale has launched an e-commerce platform and can ship directly to U.S. customers who live in states permitting the importation of alcohol (it also anticipates wider brand availability during 2022), neither Eden Mill nor Nc'nean has yet secured U.S. representation. Opportunity knocks! 

The Nc'nean distillery is located on the remote Ardnamurchan peninsula on Scotland's west coast.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NC'NEAN



Chef Javier Plascencia features dishes like *sopes de tuétano* on his ever-evolving menu at Animalón.

Down in the Valle

IN BAJA CALIFORNIA, LOCAL WINES WERE MADE FOR **ANIMALÓN'S SOPES DE TUÉTANO** by Michelle M. Metter

In the Valle de Guadalupe, just one hour from the Mexico-U.S. border, chef Javier Plascencia has carefully curated a spectacular dining experience inspired by the flavors of Baja California and the Mediterranean. Unfolding beneath a 200-year-old oak tree, service at Animalón involves an ever-evolving menu and up-and-coming wines from throughout the region as the restaurant hosts an ongoing series of chef collaborations and pop-ups.

Born in Tijuana, Plascencia is known for his down-to-earth charisma and his persistent search for new flavors. In addition to Animalón, he has opened a string of successful restaurants across Baja California, including Lupe, Caffé Saverious, Finca Altozano, and Jazamango, and is also the author of a cookbook titled *The Soul of Baja*.

To make his rendition of *sopes de tuétano*, Plascencia tops small sopes of fried masa with roasted bone marrow and shrimp as well as aromatic vegetables and herbs reduced with red wine and bay leaves, adding a twist to the classic dish. The sopes are then served alongside a selection of hot sauces, grain salt, fried parsley, and bone marrow pan gravy.

For pairing, Plascencia's daughter, sommelier Lauren Plascencia, suggests a blend of Grenache, Merlot, Malbec, Mourvèdre, and Cabernet Sauvignon from Valle de Guadalupe winery Bruma, which was founded in 2017 and produces roughly 3,000 cases per year. "The Bruma 2019 Plan B Red Blend is a ruby color with purple hues; [it has an] expressive and persistent nose, with



PHOTOS: JAMIE FRITTSCH

Chef Javier Plascencia of Animalón in the Valle de Guadalupe.

subtle notes of fresh cherry, [blood] orange, vanilla, sweet tobacco, rosemary, cedar, and hints of eucalyptus; a silky but frank attack; [and] a broad and long mid-palate," she says. "The fat and richness from the bone marrow stacks up well against the wine's persistent tannins and permanence in the mouth from beginning to end."

For an alternate perspective, we asked Fernando Gaxiola, sommelier and proprietor at Baja Wine + Food in San Diego, California, for his selection. "Despite [Chef Plascencia's] notoriety, he is approachable, so the wine needs to have the same refined but approachable balance. I selected the Paoloni 2018 Sangiovese Grosso, which . . .

is the only Mexican Brunello in the world," he says. "On the nose you'll find floral, red fruit, cherry, and vanilla aromas. [It's] powerful but gentle on the palate, with silky tannins, great acidity, and a long finish. . . . This is a complex yet very elegant wine in perfect harmony with the creamy and fatty bone marrow—a velvet explosion of flavor!" Founded in 1997, the winery professes to make "Mexican wines with Italian heart," as its founding family has roots in Le Marche, near Tuscany. **LV**

Michelle Metter is a San Diego-based writer and event producer; contact her @michellemettersd on Instagram or via email at metter@fastforwardevents.

Shedding Light on Sustainability

A RECENT WEBINAR EXPLORED THE VIRTUES OF **BERINGER**
AND ITS LUMINUS CHARDONNAY **by Stefanie Schwalb**

Many of the best TV shows involve serious topics shrouded in a mystery that keeps audiences coming back for more (*Mare of Easttown*, anyone?). By the same token, the latest episode of our SOMM Sessions webinar series, “Making the Best Wines Possible: A Snapshot of Sustainability in Wine Production,” tackled a subject that had a lot of viewers tuning in to ask questions about a complex subject that’s top of mind in the industry today.

Hosted last October by Treasury Wine Estates (TWE) education manager Gillian Ballance, MS, and *SOMM Journal* VP of education Lars Leicht, the webinar transported attendees to the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley for insight into Beringer’s 2019 Luminus Chardonnay, illuminating the critical role that sustainability plays in the wine’s production as well as covering the ongoing efforts of TWE to help all its brands put sustainable practices in place.

Sustainability, Organic, Biodynamic— What’s the Difference?

As the session got underway, Leicht took time to explain the distinctions between the terms *organic*, *biodynamic*, and *sustainable* before delving into the benefits of the latter. Simply put, organic farming adheres to a set of principles that include the prohibition of artificial chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides. “There are many producers who don’t necessarily go for the certification but do follow those practices,” he noted. “I’m seeing that more and more, but it’s nice to get that certification—it’s just a little bit more reassuring. I know it’s certainly simpler to qualify for making wine with organic grapes, which is a farming technique, as opposed to applying some of those practices in the winery [to produce] organic wine.” Biodynamic farming takes it a step further, encouraging biodiversity; a closed nutrient system

that ensures no raw material goes to waste; and a personal connection to the farm. “It’s definitely a higher form of organic farming and has its roots in the 19th century with [Rudolf] Steiner and the different studies they did—including following the phases of the moon,” Leicht explained.

Sustainability, meanwhile, considers the environmental impact on local ecosystems, from water and energy conservation to the effects of agriculture on air quality to the carbon footprint of packaging. It also supports recycling efforts, strong community relations, and the well-being of workers within the framework of sound business practices. “It’s one thing to make wines that have a sense of place, but wines that have a sense of responsibility to a place become very important—it’s thinking not only what you can get from the land but what can you give to the land to make it and its produce even better,”

Beringer Luminus Chardonnay hails from Big Ranch Vineyard in the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BERINGER



All of Beringer's vineyards, both estate and leased, are certified by Fish Friendly Farming, including Steinhauer Ranch.

noted Leicht. "It's [about] acting as a steward. It involves a serious investment to meet the needs of today while still considering the impact of tomorrow." There's an understanding of the consequences of production that, in the long term, also leads to greater profitability, he added, so sustainability makes a lot of business sense, too. Some sustainable practices employed at wineries include the preservation of wildlife corridors; habitat restoration; integrated pest management to promote "good" bugs; and the use of organic matter, cover crops, and sheep "mowers."

Why Be Sustainable?

"The wine of 20 to 30 years ago, where we were doing all sorts of things to produce massive amounts of wine—which included using chemicals—wasn't a quality effort, it was a quantity effort," noted Ballance. But with more and more wineries gravitating toward sustainable endeavors, "a lot of that has now reversed. Ultimately, being sustainable is more cost effective—but it takes a long time to achieve the results, and it's more labor intensive as well," she added.

Even so, TWE has been committed to numerous initiatives for several years now. All TWE Americas properties are sustainably farmed; since 2018, the company has provided annual sustainability reports detailing its strategies, goals, and commitments. To address water efficiency and conservation, it has utilized drip irrigation, barrel steam-cleaning, rainwater capture, and recycled water, among other things. To increase energy efficiency, LED lighting, solar panels, and pulse cooling to lower tank temperatures in batches (rather than send out coolant faster than it can be used) are examples of a

few things in practice, while waste is managed through alternative packaging, composting, the use of lighter-weight glass, and recycling.

TWE Americas properties also seek to make continuous improvements through research and innovation. One development is the application of Fluidized Bed Cold Stabilization (in partnership with the University of California, Davis, Department of Viticulture and Enology), a technology that will radically reduce energy use, water consumption, and chemical use in the pre-bottling phase of wine production. "It is a major step forward from the traditional method of chilling the entire wine tank, allowing the winemaker to 'turn up the thermostat' on the entire winery to save both energy and water used in refrigeration," Ballance said. They are also utilizing irrigation technology (to accurately measure vines and locate zones of water stress, leaks, and soil variation) and AI technology to detect and react to risks (frost or excessive heat). As for community support, TWE Americas encourages employee volunteer work, provides donations to the Napa Food Bank, and protects natural wetlands.

During the webinar, Ballance also revealed some upcoming sustainability targets that are quite aggressive (and therefore impressive) in their reach: TWE intends for 100% of its product packaging to be recyclable, reusable, or compostable in 2022 and to comprise 50% recycled content by 2025. It also aims to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Electricity is considered scope 2 and accounts for 70.4% of TWE's total scope 1 and 2 emissions, Ballance explained, so achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2024 (another key target) is the quickest path to

decarbonization. "The sources of our scope 1 emissions vary from lawnmowers and generators to gas-fired boilers," added Ballance. "Our approach is going to be multifaceted: We'll electrify what we can, as that will be powered by renewable; continue to focus on improving efficiency; and then switch technologies and to alternative fuel sources where possible—ultimately sequestering remaining limited hard-to-decarbonize emissions."

Let There Be Light

Certified under the Napa Green Winery and Napa Green Land programs as well as by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, Beringer Winery has reduced its energy consumption by more than 30% since 2007; it also installed the largest solar array of any winery in the state at the time it was commissioned in 2012. All of its North Coast vineyards, both estate and leased, are also certified by Fish Friendly Farming.

That includes Big Ranch Vineyard in the Oak Knoll District, from which Luminus hails. This 100% Chardonnay, which spends eight months in (30% new) French oak, is meant to be food friendly at 14.9% ABV. "The name is taken from the word 'light' in Latin," said Ballance. "Luminus is meant to be a departure from what you might typically think a Beringer Chardonnay tastes like—especially Private Reserve—because it's so big and intense. This is meant to be the contrasting partner in terms of Chardonnay styles." **W**



Beringer 2019 Luminus Chardonnay, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley (\$40) Lit from within, notes of ginger, Anjou pear, lime sorbet, and sweet cream converge with a satiny mouthfeel. As the wine opens up, acidity and minerality come through along with a crispness on the finish that is in sync with toasty hints of butterscotch. **93** —*Meridith May*

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

Party ON THE PEAK

RECAPPING THE 2021 FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN ASPEN, CO, WITH **LA ADELITA TEQUILA** AND **FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS**

by Amanda M. Faison

Last fall marked the return of the annual Food & Wine Classic in Aspen after its 2020 cancellation due to the pandemic—and, boy, were people ready to gather, raise a glass, and party. Here's our take on the festivities from two different angles.

La Adelita Tequila Took the Ski Town by Storm

Usually held in June, the Classic roared back to life in mid-September 2021—and Chris Radomski, the founder of La Adelita Single Estate Tequila, was right in the middle of it.

Months earlier, Radomski had teamed up with “Caviar Queen” Deborah Keane of California Caviar Company and Matt Zubrod, the culinary director of famed Aspen resort The Little Nell, to unseat the champions of tequila adjuncts—salt and lime or lemon—with curated caviar pairings. The trio developed three distinct flavor combos: La Adelita Blanco and White Sturgeon, La Adelita Reposado and Siberian Osetra, and La Adelita Cristalino and Kaluga. It's this last one—fondly called the La Adelita Bump—that Radomski brought to Aspen.

Zubrod and Radomski first debuted the La Adelita Bump in Miami last June. This time, they turned the patio of Little Nell outlet Ajax Tavern at the base of Aspen Mountain into the see-and-be-seen party of the festival. Though there was an open bar with Margaritas, Palomas, and Ranch Waters as well as a DJ spinning beats, among other amenities, the centerpiece of the bash was an embossed ice sculpture that held chilled tins of Kaluga and, of course, open bottles of Cristalino. Two ice luges dispensed shots of the spirit at the perfect temperature for guests to enjoy with small lumps—or “bumps”—of caviar licked from the natural well between their thumbs and pointer fingers for a clean, minerally—and tantalizing—taste sensation. You can imagine the crowd that gathered (and the fun that ensued).

“We could have done a dinner party where people do a bump and a shot, but the intention was to do something different,” says Radomski, whose roots in the beverage industry reach back to fine wine production. “I was willing to see if we could be the ingredient in a high-quality culinary event. The vibe was amazing, people understood the concept—and they loved the tequila.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LA ADELITA TEQUILA

Tequila flowed from the ice luges at La Adelita's bash at Ajax Tavern in Aspen resort The Little Nell.



California Caviar Company's Kaluga was served at the event.

Pedro Garcia, Félix Solís Avantis managing director for the U.S. and Canada, at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, CO, with Bosq chef/restaurateur C. Barclay Dodge.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS



A Q&A With Pedro Garcia

FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR THE U.S. AND CANADA

The Tasting Panel: Food & Wine is finally back—how does it feel?

Pedro Garcia: Fantastic! After being locked down from March 2020 to September 2021—that’s a long time for our industry—it feels good to see [our] peers and distributors and to reconnect with buyers and the end consumer. Plus, it’s great to see the Wines of Spain tent, where Spain gets its shiny moment—it’s the only country with a dedicated tent.

Tell me about your event at Aspen restaurant Bosq.

Chef [C. Barclay Dodge] and I met in 2018 when I first attended Food & Wine and had dinner at Bosq with a colleague. I was blown away by his food, and we connected. Our first event was in 2019, and everyone loved it. For me, it’s a privilege to pair my wines next to his food—[the] number-one [reason being] his talent and his roots in Spanish food. [Author’s note: Dodge once worked at the legendary El Bulli in Catalonia, Spain.]

Based on the reaction here, Mucho Más seems to be poised for success. What is it about this wine?

[E-commerce platform] Vivino was our entry into the U.S. market, and we’re starting to get nice feedback and interest from retailers and wholesalers alike. Now it’s all about focusing on supporting that strategy. Mucho Más is a priority brand for FSA USA. I believe it can . . . bring more U.S. consumers into the Spanish wine category while not screaming “Spanish.” It’s disruptive; it’s minimalist. It’s a multivarietal blend where we take advantage of fruit from [estate] vineyards to create a fruit-forward, approachable red blend that can be the bridge [to Spanish wines]. This is all contingent on us playing in that red blend category. Mucho Más needs to capture U.S. consumers in varietal sets with other leading red blends. It’s definitely our desire to penetrate the U.S. market and grow Mucho Más by way of the white blend, red blend, and rosé categories [as well]; we also developed a Crémant-style sparkling to give that [line a] full spectrum.

Tell me about this Tempranillo you’re pouring today.

Yes! La Única is a multiregional, multivintage Tempranillo. . . . It’s

a selection of the best wines from Pagos del Rey, with 30% 2017 and 2018 Tempranillo from Fuenmayor in La Rioja, aged for 338 days in new American oak; 60% 2018 Tinto Fino from Olmedillo de Roa in Burgos, aged for 405 days in new American oak; and 10% 2018 Tinta de Toro from Morales de Toro in Zamora, aged for 386 days in American and French oak. The percentages [vary by] region; we do this blend as a panel—we select the best barrels from each DO and create collectively. We’re in our fourth edition. It’s never been sold in the U.S. market, and the first time I’m showing it is here at Food & Wine. I brought six bottles—we produced 15,000—to gauge what the pros and people of all backgrounds and knowledge are saying about it. It’s expressive and delicious, and I wanted to witness reactions to it. It’s unanimous that it’s delightful. It’s an ultra-premium product for us with a small production. I’m going to bring in my first round of allocation and focus on white-tablecloth [establishments] and high-end wine shops. We’re very focused on value and supermarkets, but we have these incredible projects too. [↗](#)

~ PROMOTION ~

ESTD 1870

Aveleda

Where dreams grow

Aveleda Reflects the Guedes Family's Devotion to Wine Since 1870

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

PHOTO: KENTONHATCHER

PHOTO COURTESY OF AVELEDA

Aveleda was founded in 1870 by Manoel Pedro Guedes, a creative man with a passion for wine and a thirst for innovation. Located in Vinho Verde, Aveleda has led the way in bringing the region to markets worldwide with its Casal Garcia label, known for its unique character. A century and a half since its establishment, the fifth generation of the Guedes family upholds tradition while maintaining its creative energy by launching new wines each year. Today the company's portfolio includes Aveleda's elegant wines; the brandies of Adegas Velhas; the top-rated Quinta Vale D. Maria from the Douro; the fresh rosés and whites of Villa Alvor in the Algarve; and the ageworthy Quinta d'Aguieira wines from Bairrada.

Vinho Verde: Aveleda

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

Douro: Quinta Vale D. Maria

Every wine created at Quinta Vale D. Maria tells a story, reflecting the singular nature of the individual plots from which they come. Respect for their unique terroir is critical to revealing both the diverse characters of indigenous grape varieties and the magic of field blends. Quinta Vale D. Maria preserves such local customs as plowing vineyards by horse and treading handpicked grapes by foot in granite lagares in accordance with the rhythms of ancient times. Each detail is important to ensuring unmatched quality in the wines, widely recognized for their distinctiveness. Quinta Vale D. Maria has captured the attention of wine lovers across the globe as it communicates the Douro region's identity and traditions.



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



Quinta Vale D. Maria upholds the Douro region's identity and traditions.

Visit company.aveleda.com/pt to follow its story — and please enjoy responsibly.



BEYOND *the* BARREL

In **Beyond the Barrel**, we taste everything from craft spirits and fine wines to brilliant innovations and zany concepts that land outside the box. We then review the products with a judicious approach and the cognizance that all goods have a market. In this edition, we focus on wine-based RTD cocktails.

Chandon Garden Spritz (\$21/750-mL bottle)

Toasted brioche can be discerned beneath the herbal aromas of this quaff, a blend of Chandon sparkling wine and bitter liqueur made from Argentine-grown Valencia oranges. Tiny bubbles tickle the tongue while notes of blood orange and pomegranate flood the palate, generating just enough acidity to create a mouthwatering effect that'll have you taking a second sip before setting down your glass. **93**



Ohza (\$39/12-pack 355-mL cans) Ohza's brunch-oriented RTDs are made with only natural ingredients and no added sugar. The Mango Mimosa and Classic Bellini are the most

crushable of the lineup, which also includes a Classic Mimosa and Cranberry Mimosa. The Bellini is especially dynamic, with its bold notes of overripe peach; juicy, full body; lush mouthfeel; and slightly vegetal, savory note. **90**

Aperol Spritz (\$15/3-pack 200-mL bottles) If any spirit brand should have an RTD spritz, Aperol should. And the brand's fans are in luck: There's no shortage of the aperitivo in the blend, mixed with sparkling wine and soda water. On the sweeter side, the result showcases Aperol's combination of orange pith, rhubarb, and herbaceous components even as pulpy, juicy notes of tangerine sing loudly at center stage. Though balanced, it delivers a relatively high ABV for the category at 9%. **89**



Line 39 Rosé Spritzer (\$13/4-pack 250-mL bottles) Made with only three ingredients, each Line 39 Spritzer expression weighs in at 5% ABV and contains a mere 100 calories per bottle. The Rosé Spritzer consists of crisp sparkling water, a hint of strawberry, and the same wine that goes into the brand's 750-milliliter bottle. A perceptible note of vanilla at the fore makes for a lively, easy-drinking pink charmer. **89**

Line 39 Pinot Noir Spritzer (\$13/4-pack 250-mL bottles) Made with Line 39 Pinot Noir, this spritzer delivers a whisper of oak and intense black-cherry notes, making for an effervescent, refreshing super-sipper. Recommended on ice garnished with blackberries or black cherries (when in season). **90** *IV*

O'NEILL VINTNERS

THE WILD WEST OF THE

WINE WORLD

THE PASO ROBLES CAB
COLLECTIVE BRINGS ITS
BOUNTY TO TEXAS

story and photos by Lori Moffatt

Due to their ageability, Paso Robles CABS (Cabernets and Bordeaux-style wines) sometimes require decanting.

CABs and smiles filled GRACE in Fort Worth, TX, as the Paso Robles CAB Collective showcased exceptional wines from its home region.



On a sunny day in mid-September, more than 20 winery representatives from the Paso Robles CAB Collective (PRCC) arrived in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex via a new direct flight from San Luis Obispo, the urban hub of Paso Robles, for a two-day Texas celebration of the ascendant California region's acclaimed Bordeaux varietals. Before hosting a dinner at the new Hotel Drover in Fort Worth's Stockyards District, the group kicked things off with a midday tasting for area sommeliers and wine buyers at GRACE, a fine-dining restaurant in downtown Fort Worth known for its modern American cuisine and extensive wine list. Here, attendees enjoyed a deep dive into Paso Robles' history, diverse terroir, family-run vineyards, cowboy culture, and tourism opportunities.

Established in 1983 with 17 wineries and about 5,000 vineyard acres flanked by the Santa Lucia Mountains along the Central Coast, the Paso Robles AVA now encompasses more than 40,000 vineyard acres and more than 200 wineries in 11 distinct sub-appellations. The region's varied topography, moderating maritime influence, and abundant calcareous soil—similar to that found in Bordeaux—distinguishes it from other California growing areas.

In 2012, to educate consumers and trade professionals about the region's history and potential, the PRCC was formed by wineries specializing in Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Carménère, and, of course, Cabernet Sauvignon; it's since expanded to 23 members.



GRACE pulled out all the stops to pair great small plates with the PRCC lineup.



DAOU Family Vineyards senior VP—strategy and business development Maeve Pesquera, J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines co-owner and chief brand officer Cynthia Lohr, and Ancient Peaks Winery executive VP and second-generation owner Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins.



Eric Henry, owner of Summit Wine Tastings, LLC, was a guest at the PRCC's tasting event at GRACE.



Luis Velez, wine director at Stonebriar Country Club, won a trip to Paso Robles wine country courtesy of the PRCC.

“A benchmark profile for Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon is balanced acidity and really soft tannins that allow the fruit flavor to shine through,” Cynthia Lohr, co-owner and chief brand officer of PRCC member J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines, told the audience as we discussed the featured wines.

As an event co-host with Ancient Peaks Winery executive VP and second-generation owner Amanda

Wittstrom-Higgins, DAOU Family Vineyards senior VP—strategy and business development Maeve Pesquera, and PRCC executive director Linda Sanpei, Lohr emphasized that the AVA’s division into smaller subregions allows winemakers to tell their stories in a more meaningful way. “In large part, it’s all about diversity,” Kevin Eyster, division VP of sales at Hope Family Wines, told me. “In the 11

subregions, there is broad diversity in elevation—ranging from 700 to 2,200 feet above sea level—and annual rainfall, ranging from a slim 8 inches in the east [to] 36 inches in the west. All regions benefit from a dramatic diurnal temperature shift; our cool evenings act as a guardian of [the] elevated acidity and balance [that are] reflected in all varietals produced in Paso Robles.”

“What’s happening in Paso Robles

is really exciting,” added Pesquera, a native Texan who joined the team at DAOU after two decades as a sommelier in Houston. She referred to the region as “the Wild West of the wine world”: “Twenty years from now, I think we’ll all look back at the growth of Paso Robles and think, ‘I was there when this started.’ Wineries here are mostly family-owned and -operated, many [of them focused on] sustainable practices, Biodynamic winemaking, and regenerative farming. As buyers, you can feel confident placing these wines on your list, knowing that these are real people doing things they’re passionate about.”

Sommelier Rachael Ramirez, who works for a private resort as well as The Leadership Center at Deloitte University north of Fort Worth, grew up near Paso Robles; she said her childhood memories are full of horseback rides past vineyards set among the walnut trees. (In Spanish, *paso robles* means “pass of the oaks.”) “To me,” Ramirez said, “Paso Cabernet has a personality so uniquely Central Coast California. It’s reminiscent of dusty cowboys and fields of sun-ripened fruit. The wines are unpretentious, accessible, and delicious. For my money, it’s one of the best deals in terms of quality-to-price ratio.”

“This is my first time in Texas, but I’m a cowgirl,” said Wittstrom-Higgins, whose family oversees the southernmost vineyard in the Paso Robles AVA. “We run cattle, farm hay, and grow pistachios; our single-estate vineyard sits on the edge of [Ancient Peaks’] ranch.” Here, only 14 miles from the ocean, calcium-rich soils from fossilized oyster shells contribute pronounced minerality to the wines. As the group tasted several Ancient Peaks offerings, Wittstrom-Higgins passed around soil samples for us to examine and explained that Paso Robles has more than 30 different soil types. “What’s interesting about California is we have an extremely tortured geology,” she observed of the powerful geological activity that formed the state. The division of the AVA into smaller subregions, she continued, allowed winemakers to focus on the nuances of terroir in each area.

It doesn’t escape me that Paso Robles has a lot in common with Texas: an expansive footprint with influences



Top DFW buyers and sommeliers were eager to learn about Paso Robles wines.



Educational seminars were hosted by representatives from the PRCC.

that range from 18th-century Spanish settlements and ranching to a varied topography and a wine industry that’s somewhat underestimated, though that’s changing in both regions. How interesting to learn that enologist André Tchelistcheff, who helped supervise some of Paso Robles’ first significant plantings in the 1960s and 1970s, also lent his expertise to influential Texas winemaking pioneers Susan and Ed Auler. I wonder if there’s something metaphysical that makes Texans so receptive to the plush, bright Paso Robles flavor profile—though perhaps it’s simply because the approachable style complements many of the state’s popular cuisines and dishes, barbecue

and steak among them. “As a buyer in Texas, [I found] my people loved Cabernet,” Pesquera said. “So let’s find them something new and different they can fall in love with; let’s find their new favorite wine. That’s always a pleasure for a somm, right?”

“Clearly, Texas is not only geographically and culturally important, but we also recognize the diversity of the culinary experience here,” Lohr offered. “We know that Texans want to know what is next, what is innovative, what is delicious, what is affordable and yet ageworthy, and what they can share with friends and family. And there’s nothing like Paso Robles in terms of Bordeaux varieties and blends.” **LZ**



COMING
UP

Roses

ADAM LEVINE AND BEHATI PRINSLOO PARTNER WITH A LONGTIME JALISCO DISTILLER TO CREATE CALIROSA TEQUILA

Calirosa co-founders Adam Levine and Behati Prinsloo at the brand's launch party in West Hollywood, CA.

by Eric Marsh



While it's become common as of late for craft distillers to experiment with aging their spirits in barrels previously used to mature other spirits, beer, or wine, the process is not new. Scotch distillers have been experimenting with finishing their whiskies in a variety of containers, most famously Sherry casks, for over a hundred years. Finishing essentially adds complexity to the flavor profile, which can be favorable even when the spirit is already exceptionally good on its own. It also, as in the case of the Scotch-Sherry marriage, bridges countries and cultures.

Similarly, it's common for tequila distillers to rest their reposados and age their añejos in spent bourbon barrels. Such had been the practice at the Tequila Selecto de Amatitán distillery in Jalisco, Mexico, when the facility was established in the 1940s. In the 1950s, something serendipitous happened: Distillery founder Dionisio Real received an erroneous order of three California red wine barrels instead of bourbon barrels. Rather than return-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CALIROSA TEQUILA

Calirosa co-founder and Tequila Selecto de Amatitán proprietor Roberto Real with his daughter Margarita, wife Marina, and daughter Estefania.

ing or discarding them, he opted to implement them. "After aging tequila [in the wine barrels] for three years, he noticed the tequila had a fine silky consistency and body with a pleasing red fruit and citrusy flavor," says Roberto Real, Dionisio's son and current proprietor of the distillery. "Ever since, Tequila Selecto has adopted the practice, becoming pioneers in this type of tequila maturation and finishing process."


It's at the kosher-certified Tequila Selecto distillery that Real and his team craft Calirosa Tequila, a label founded by Maroon 5 frontman and former *The Voice* coach Adam Levine and his wife, Victoria's Secret model Behati Prinsloo, after they visited Mexico and experienced red wine barrel-aged tequila for the first time. So excited by the revelation was the celebrity couple that they opted to start a brand that would make the style more readily available. "We were shocked that it hadn't really

been done more on a larger scale," says Levine. "We were hooked on the idea and that turned into a passion, [which] led to the creation of Calirosa."

"Tequila is about bringing people together and celebrating the special moments in life," adds Prinsloo. "When we initially started this company, it was because we really enjoy having tequila with our friends and family. . . . Many of our huge life milestones have been spent in Mexico, and we have made incredible memories [there] over tequila."

As the duo began researching distilleries and tasting tequilas, they sought to find a smaller producer that they could build a new brand with from the ground up, Levine says. "The other thing that was vital to us was the juice—we needed a distillery that had true experience with finishing their tequila in red wine barrels. The Reals were pioneers, and they produce incredible tequila."





**"WE NEEDED A
DISTILLERY THAT HAD
TRUE EXPERIENCE WITH
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IN RED WINE BARRELS. THE
REALS WERE PIONEERS,
AND THEY PRODUCE
INCREDIBLE TEQUILA."**

—ADAM LEVINE

Prinsloo adds that after the couple tasted several examples of the category, "We kept going back to Selecto as their story, product quality, and what they stood for really resonated with us." Not only did it check all their boxes, she notes, but "[it is] a family-run distillery . . . and they are an incredible family." Calirosa launched in July 2021 with the motto "A fusion of Mexican spirit and California style."

Walking the Walk

According to Real, there's a saying in his family: *Somos family de campo, arraigados a la tierra como el agave mismo*, which translates as "We are a family of farmers rooted to the land, the same way our agaves are." His father built the Tequila Selecto facility in 1942 "after working the agave fields for many years," says Real. Ever since, his family has been "involved in the business, from growing agave to participating in the production."

The Reals farm Blue Weber agaves in calcium- and phosphorus-rich luvisolic soils at over 4,100 feet above sea level. The plants are harvested

when fully matured—after seven to nine years—and the piñas are cooked in old-fashioned brick ovens for 30–40 hours. The juice from the caramelized agaves is then fermented for more than two days and double distilled. The heads and tails of the distillate are removed to leave only the heart, which Real says maintains the true aromas and flavors of the agave.

For Calirosa Blanco Rosa, it's then aged in California red wine barrels for 30 days. The relatively brief maturation process produces a tequila that manifests the vegetal and herbaceous components derived from the agave plant yet is softer than a true blanco; though there is only the faintest note of oak, it also shows subtle notes of red berries and roses from the red wine,

the devil's share of which naturally tinges the spirit a translucent pink that brings a pale rosé to mind.

In the case of Calirosa Añejo, which is aged for 18 months, the liquid takes on a darker amber hue, though a pink tint can still be discerned—like a rose-gold aureole around the glass. Woodier notes abound on the palate, along with cinnamon and nutmeg, caramel and vanilla bean, orange zest and cocoa.

As for the crown jewel in the portfolio, the Extra Añejo—which was released just in time for the brand's official launch party in West Hollywood, California, last November—aged for 36 months and showcases aromas of butterscotch, leather, and honeycomb followed by notes of toffee and spiced nuts on the palate.



The bottles stand out too. The print on the label, using UV-cured ink in bold font, is intentionally lopped off the top and bottom, making for a brazenly austere contemporary package—especially given the contrast of the colorful liquid inside.

All of this sets Calirosa up to not only flourish in the agave spirit category but perhaps play a part in redefining it. With help from the largest spirit distributor in the United States, that certainly seems feasible; the brand recently signed a national alignment agreement with Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, which has already made Calirosa available in select markets across the country, with full national distribution on the horizon.

Where Homage Is Due

Whether or not you're a superfan of Maroon 5 or *The Voice*, it's hard to deny that Levine has managed to remain a pop icon for an impressively long time, which suggests that he knows what a wide swath of the public likes and wants. No wonder he's so confident that Calirosa will do well. "[It] really is the greatest tequila I've ever had, and the 36-month red wine barrel-aged Extra Añejo is my favorite tequila ever created," he says.

While Levine and Prinsloo are hardly the first celebrities to found a spirit brand, they are far more transparent about it than others: Discovering where exactly such products are distilled and who actually crafts them can become a laborious research project, which then makes it seem like they have something to hide. Not only is the couple quick to laud the Reals, they evade any pretenses of, say, wielding a *coa de jima* themselves, making clear that they serve simply as partners in Calirosa and have invested in the family-owned distillery to help introduce its tequila to the world.

Family is an obvious thread in the Calirosa story: Prinsloo and Levine are the proud parents of two young daughters. "Our kids are our life," says Levine. Prinsloo adds that the Tequila Selecto distillery "being family run is just such a plus for us because it's these two families coming together—ours and the Reals." And so while it could be said that Calirosa bridges two cultures, two countries, and two beloved beverages, it also unites two families. **LV**



Calirosa Tequila Rosa Blanco, Mexico (\$50) Aromas of white tea, raspberry, and vanilla give way to clean agave notes wrapped in rose petals. White raspberry and cherry envelop fine minerality, which maintains freshness on the palate. 80 proof. **93** —*Meridith May*



Calirosa Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$74) Aromas of cinnamon, clove, and brown-sugared walnut are appealing and deep. Opulent notes of white-peppered almond brittle give way to cedar, chocolate, and clove tea, making a luscious impact on this aged tequila's semisweet flavor profile. Distinctive and totally gratifying all the way through the finish of orange peel and gingersnap. **95** —*M.M.*



Marina Real, Calirosa CCO David Gimpelson, Behati Prinsloo, Adam Levine, and Roberto Real toast to their partnership.

Follow the

WINTER

*Crafted With Premium Grapes
From World-Class Sites,
BLACK BOX Is a Leader
in the Boxed Wine Category*

by Jonathan Cristaldi



PHOTOS COURTESY OF E. & J. GALLO

THE secret to crafting a great boxed wine is no secret at all—the viticulture has to be precise, and the winemaking demands consistency. E. & J. Gallo-owned Black Box qualifies on both counts.

After acquiring the brand from Constellation in 2021, Gallo met the second criterion by keeping the same four-person winemaking team, led by head winemaker Ryan Flock, at the helm. And the first? In short, Gallo's farming protocols provide a distinct advantage. "The grower collaboration is unique with Gallo," explains Nick Dokoozlian, vice president of winegrowing innovation at Gallo, in that "the vineyards that Black Box comes from are vineyards that the family has worked with for over 85 years." And with such long-standing relationships that allow for consistent communication throughout the growing season—a rarity for boxed wines—it's easy to be proactive instead of reactive when responding to farming challenges.

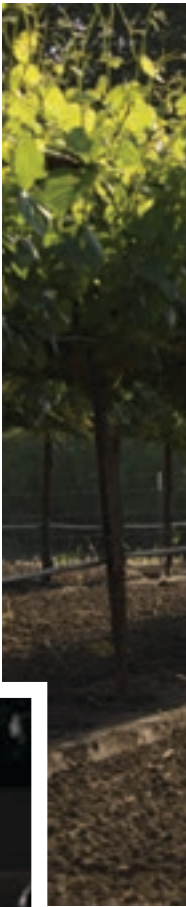
"Nothing is more important than water usage in California right now," says Dokoozlian, "and we're leveraging remote sensing and satellite real-time data to monitor vine water use on a regional basis. We use the same satellite imagery and sensing to determine how much water a vineyard is using." In 2021, depending on their advancement of these practices, growers partnering with Gallo were able to reduce their use by as much as 25% as compared to the year prior. "In turn, we have also improved the quality of grapes," Dokoozlian notes, adding excitedly, "without reducing yields!" (That's a critical factor in maintaining the affordability of boxed wine: Lower yields would mean a price hike.) What's more, he points out, "If we irrigate correctly, we have slightly smaller canopies, allowing for more sunlight and earlier ripening," which can shorten the growing season and hence reduce water use further.



Black Box head winemaker Ryan Flock.

Early spring at the Dusty Lane Vineyard, shortly after bud break. This is the source for several of Black Box's red varietal wines.





Fall colors at the Cowell Ranch Vineyard, a primary source of Black Box Chardonnay.

On that note, the team has also invested a lot of time looking at data to understand “how the exact time of harvest impacts wine style and wine quality,” Dokoozlian says. In short, they’re fine-tuning their ability to identify that moment for each vineyard they farm. Some blocks may have been harvested too early or too late in previous years, he asserts: “We farm 25,000 acres, and we purchase grapes from around another 100,000 acres. So, in order to create a great-tasting box wine, you have to have your quality control down.”

Innovation in the Winery

In 2012, when Flock first began producing Black Box, every expression—save for a Chilean Cabernet—was produced under one roof in Lodi, California. As the brand gained momentum in the market and expanded, production spread out to other facilities. Once acquired by

Gallo, however, Black Box returned exclusively to the original venue, which Flock says is a blessing for two reasons: One, it eliminated the quality risks inherent in transporting grapes from one location to another, and two, “we’re able to tap into [Gallo’s] history of innovation, and that’s helped us make changes too,” he explains. “We’re utilizing different types of oak and different yeast strains we hadn’t thought to use but that Gallo had discovered [and that] produced some desirable traits in the finished wines.” Flock also points to a renewed focus on quality thanks to higher-quality grapes from the northern Central Valley.

But Black Box’s greatest advantage may simply be its name recognition. “Consumers know what they’re going to get, know it’s a quality product,” asserts Flock, proudly adding, “We’re up to over 100 gold medals for these wines! And after opening, [they] will keep their integrity for up to six weeks easily without deteriorating.”



Innovation on the Shelf

Currently, there are 13 different 3-liter Black Box expressions (\$22) in production, but some exciting new changes are coming. For starters, additional wines will soon be available in lightweight, recyclable 500-milliliter cartons known as Tetra Paks. And in keeping with key consumer trends, Gallo is introducing two new lines to supplement the core portfolio.

First, the new Flavor-Forward wines (\$22) aim for “consumers looking for wines that clearly signal their flavor, like buttery Chardonnay, which has had an explosion of growth,” says Adrienne Daniels, E. & J. Gallo’s senior director of marketing. “We’ve launched our own, and in the spring of 2022, we’ll introduce a Deep and Dark Cabernet, a



Valley Oak Vineyard is located along the Cosumnes River Preserve.

Tart and Tangy Sauvignon Blanc, and a Vibrant and Velvety Red Blend.”

Second, following the well-being trend, “we’re bringing three new wines in the Black Box Brilliant Collection [\$22] in March of 2022, which will offer 70 calories per 5-ounce serving. And they taste amazing!” says Daniels. “The Cabernet offers notes of jammy dark fruit, the Chardonnay delivers toasted oak and coconut, and [the] Pinot Grigio has notes of honey and pear.”

Over the past two years, the premium box category “has grown four times faster than the overall table wine category,” says Daniels, adding that consumers are finally beginning to realize its potential. Pointing to a report from market research company IRI that covered the 52 weeks leading up to November 28, 2021, Daniels notes that “Black Box is already the number-six overall wine brand in America by volume, and when we look at it on a per-SKU standpoint on the shelf, Black Box wines are selling fastest in the premium box wine category.”

It doesn’t take outside-the-box thinking to carry a wine that practically sells itself. It just takes carving out some shelf space—for Black Box. **LV**



Notes From the Tasting Panel Team

We review boxed wines as we do any bottled wine. Our editorial team tasted these wines, which demonstrate a new era for quality in their category, based on aroma, mouthfeel, and flavor profile.

Black Box 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Chile Aromas of pink grapefruit, jasmine, and tarragon-kissed pineapple. Lively and refreshing—a true palate cleanser. Honeysuckle and kiwi intertwine and the acidity is energetic. **92**

Black Box 2020 Pinot Grigio, California Delicate scents of pear and vanilla custard lead to flavors that tiptoe lightly on an ethereal texture. A mineral sheath surrounds notes of white-peppered honeydew melon and green apple. **90**

Black Box NV Chardonnay, California Brioche, chamomile, and lemon verbena perfume the glass. Toasty notes of marshmallow, lemon blossom, and fig are unctuous. **90**

Black Box 2020 Pinot Noir, California Fragrant notes of chocolate-covered cherry match subtle flavors, including rose petal and sandalwood. Ripe plum and cherry are uplifted by good acid structure, making this red refined and elegant. **91**

Black Box 2020 Merlot, California Robust aromas of ripe plum and mocha wake up the senses. What a sumptuous texture: silky and glossy with supple tannins. A juicy combination of purple plum and boysenberry melds with roasted coffee and cedar. **92**

Black Box 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile Ripe summer berries show off a lovely perfume while plush tannins augment gliding notes of mulberry, blackberry, heather, and chocolate. Rich and well balanced, with a cedar-coffee finish. **91**

Anthony Dias

BLUE REVIEWS



by THE TASTING ALLIANCE

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

88-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

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

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

For additional Blue Reviews, go to bluelifestyle.com.

Prices are for 750-mL bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC



94 **Flora Springs 2019 Ghost Winery Malbec, Napa Valley (\$60)** A brilliant Napa Valley showcase for this variety, with a deep garnet color, rich notes of blackberry, a fine acid structure, and spice and toast on the finish.

92 **Tablas Creek Vineyard 2020 Grenache Blanc, Paso Robles (\$30)** Fresh on the nose and bright and tangy on the palate, with notes of citrus and green apple as well as persistent minerality. This delightful variety is underutilized in California.

VINEYARD BRANDS

93 **Tablas Creek Vineyard 2019 Esprit de Tablas Blanc, Paso Robles (\$50)** Lush and mineral, this wine is led by the richness of Roussanne and the crispness of Grenache Blanc and Picpoul Blanc.

VINEYARD BRANDS

91 **Ridge Vineyards 2018 Hooker Creek Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley (\$36)** A silky Zin from Sonoma Valley that has floral and spice components but lacks intensity.



92 **Tablas Creek Vineyard 2019 Mourvèdre, Paso Robles (\$45)** A spicy nose gives way to notes of deep red fruit and roasted meat; long and tangy.

VINEYARD BRANDS

94 **Alma Rosa 2019 Pinot Noir, Bentrack Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$68)** Deep, meaty, ripe, and lush yet fresh. Spiced, balanced, and long, it's a remarkably Burgundian wine by Pinot master Richard Sanford.

92 **Vanderpump 2018 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$27)** Light gold color; smooth, elegant, and restrained, with notes of citrus, pear, and toast. From Lisa Vanderpump and family, it's a bonus for Bravo watchers.

92 Lucas & Lewellen 2018 Cabernet Franc, Valley View Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley (\$26)

Smooth, spicy, and deeply colored, with notes of orange peel, cinnamon, and earth plus lush texture.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

95 Paradigm Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$91)

Another masterpiece from winemaker Heidi Barrett: Loaded with nuance and finesse, it deserves three or four years in the cellar.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

94 Spot Dog 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$100)

Showing deep color and soft, lush notes of blueberry and plum, this is a pure and classic wine that needs cellaring.

WESTLIFE IMPORTS



98 Tierra Roja 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$170)

Another stunning wine from this tiny vineyard. Dark and dense, with notes of plum; rich, complex, and long.

OBSESSION WINE COMPANY

95 Paradigm Winery 2017 Merlot, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$60)

Generous and ripe, full-bodied and intense, with great balance and soft structure; another winner from Heidi Barrett.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

93 Cumulus Cellars 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40)

Fresh and creamy, with bright minerals and lush citrus; rich, deep, and balanced.

CAPE WINEVENTURES

94 Knights Bridge 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley, Sonoma County (\$122)

Dense, plummy, and velvety, with deep, soft structure.

97 Knights Bridge 2018 Christobel Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley, Sonoma County (\$150)

Dark and dense, with consummate style and finesse. Clearly the 2017 vintage was no fluke: This one is graceful, elegant, and everything one would expect from a wine of this quality.

94 Oleandri 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Broken Rock Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$90)

Juicy, toasted, long, and loaded with berry fruit. Very good aging potential.

92 Samuel Charles 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Samuel Charles Vineyard, Paso Robles (\$45)

Smooth and spicy, with deep color; clean yet luscious.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

92 Jonata 2018 Todos, Ballard Canyon, Santa Ynez Valley (\$56)

Buttery yet fresh, with ripe berry notes and a silky texture; dense, spicy, and rich. 45% Syrah, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Petit Verdot, 9% Petite Sirah, 5% Merlot, and 6% other varietals.

94 Jonata 2018 Fenix, Ballard Canyon, Santa Ynez Valley (\$90)

Concentrated with lovely, balanced flavors of plum, berries, spice, and hints of toasted oak. 66% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot, and 5% Cabernet Franc.

93 Alma Rosa 2019 Chardonnay, El Jabali Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$37)

Rich, creamy, and smooth, with notes of toasted oak; balanced and long. Another lovely Richard Sanford creation.

93 Morgan Winery 2019 Pinot Noir, Double L Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$65)

Deep ruby color; fresh and juicy, lush and tangy, with bright cherry plus balance and style.



92 Dutcher Crossing 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma County (\$33)

Spiced nose and a smooth texture. Floral, juicy, and bright; layered and dense. Balanced, long, and quite impressive.

94 Beekeeper Cellars 2018 Hidden Hillside Reserve Zinfandel, Sonoma County (\$75)

Very dark and opaque, with a ripe berry nose; smooth, rich, and complex. Showing notes of blackberry and boysenberry, it's deep and intense but not heavy.

93 Mount Veeder Winery 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$55)

Dark and juicy, with ripe plum, black raspberry, and spice; lush and dense yet elegant.

CONSTELLATION WINE U.S.

BLUE REVIEWS



95 Acumen Wines 2019 **PEAK Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley** (\$115) Smooth and velvety, with lush flavors of plum, cherry, and spice. Young but impressive, showing great depth and style.

97 Crown Point Vineyards 2016 **Cabernet Sauvignon, Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara** (\$150) Lush and deep, complex and lovely, with elegant and lively notes of plum, cherry, and spice as well as great balance.

93 Trujillo Wines 2017 **Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley** (\$85) Silky and juicy with bright plum and berries; fresh, tangy, and balanced. Energetic yet elegant, with a long finish.

IMPORTED

94 Kurtatsch 2017 **Brenntal Gewürztraminer Riserva, Südtirol/Alto Adige, Italy** (\$45) Rose petal shows on the nose; smooth, luscious, and dry, with rich floral notes and crisp acidity. A lovely example of this difficult-to-pronounce variety.

VINEYARD BRANDS

93 Domaine Delaporte 2019 **Sancerre Les Monts Damnés, France** (\$57) Silky, fresh, and tangy, with layers of flavor and considerable finesse. Rich yet subtle and elegant; charming and long.

VINEYARD BRANDS

96 Hertelendy Vineyards 2016 **Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley** (\$135) Fresh yet rich and creamy, with notes of plum, cherry, and soft toast; deep and complex. A stunning wine.



93 Bernardus 2014 **Marinus, Carmel Valley** (\$75) Aromas of plum and earth lead to a velvety palate of crisp fruit—plum, cherry, orange—and a firm acid structure. Toasty, balanced, and long. 52% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, 7% Petit Verdot, and 3% Malbec.

93 Famille Perrin 2018 **Vacqueyras Les Christins, France** (\$29) A meaty and bright blend of 75% Grenache and 25% Syrah, with notes of plum, racy acidity, and an elegant style. This appellation flies under the radar but deserves significant attention.

VINEYARD BRANDS

96 Domaine Delaporte 2019 **Sancerre Silex, France** (\$47) Fresh, spicy, and mineral-inflected nose; silky and rich, with deep flavors of vanilla and spice and crisp acidity. A dramatic and elegant example of how brilliant a great Sancerre can be.

VINEYARD BRANDS

92 Azienda Agricola Inama 2019 **Foscarino Soave Classico, Italy** (\$28) Golden color; aromatic with racy fruit and showing soft minerality on the palate; juicy, crisp, and long.

DALLA TERRA

94 Domus Aurea 2018 **Cabernet Sauvignon, Upper Maipo Valley, Chile** (\$70) Toasty, rich, and smooth; rounded and fresh, with bright berry notes. One of a handful of world-class Chilean wines.

GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

93 Pierre Sparr 2018 **Riesling Grand Cru Schoenenbourg, Alsace Grand Cru, France** (\$48) Rich, perfumed nose; lush, dense, and floral, with a smooth and creamy texture.

WILSON DANIELS



94 1848 Winery 2017 **7th Generation Cabernet Sauvignon, Judean Hills, Israel** (\$40) A deep, dark Cabernet with lovely balance, a rich style, and a long finish. Layered, lively, and exceptional, it's an example of deeply expressive winemaking. Kosher.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

93 Nana Estate Winery 2019 **Caspioeia, Mitzpe Ramon, Israel** (\$50) This intense kosher wine, mostly composed of Syrah, is lush, concentrated, and spicy, with deep and dark color and rich flavors. A fine expression of modern winemaking.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

94 Nana Estate Winery 2019 **Tethys, Mitzpe Ramon, Israel** (\$50) Bright, tangy, and fresh, this charming and lovely red blend shows good balance and length. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Syrah, 8% Petite Sirah, and 8% Petit Verdot.

ROYAL WINE CORP.



93 **Martin's Lane 2017 Pinot Noir, Simes Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, Canada (\$80)** Fresh and juicy, with meaty, ripe cherry; spicy and long.

MARK ANTHONY GROUP INC.

94 **Martin's Lane 2018 Riesling, Naramata Ranch Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, Canada (\$80)** Juicy yet crisp, with a dry, racy style; elegant approach; and lovely balance.

MARK ANTHONY GROUP INC.



95 **Herdade São Miguel 2018 Reserva, Alentejano, Portugal (\$35)** A blend of Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Trincadeira, Cabernet Sauvignon, and other varieties, with an intensely dark color. Smooth, rich, and dense with dark berry fruit and spice, considerable depth, and a smooth texture.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

VALUE

90 **Les Jamelles 2019 Chardonnay, Pays d'Oc, France (\$15)** Golden color; tangy and balanced, with clean, bright flavors culminating in a long finish. Smooth, lively, and juicy, it's a good value. ☺

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

90 **Les Jamelles 2019 Merlot, Pays d'Oc, France (\$15)** Dusty nose; smooth, ripe, and juicy, with fresh berry notes and good balance. ☺

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

92 **Borgo Scopeto 2018 Chianti Classico, Italy (\$21)** Tangy and lush with notes of violet and plum; rich and balanced, stylish and long.

VINEYARD BRANDS



90 **La Playa 2021 Estate Series Sauvignon Blanc, Curicó Valley, Central Valley, Chile (\$9)** Smooth yet fresh and crisp; spicy, lively, and juicy. A delightful Sauvignon at an incredible price. ☺

CABERNET CORPORATION

92 **Gush Etzion Winery 2020 Lone Oak Tree Sauvignon Blanc, Judean Hills, Israel (\$22)** Clean and balanced, elegant and silky, this is a lovely kosher wine from a small family winery.

ROYAL WINE CORP.

92 **Soalheiro 2019 Alvarinho, Monção e Melgaço, Vinho Verde, Portugal (\$25)** Smooth, aromatic, and rounded; juicy, layered, and long.

SPIRITS

94 **Bossca! Mezcal Conejo, Mexico (\$100)** Smooth, mellow nose. Elegant and rich agave appears on the palate, which delivers depth, exceptional finesse, and good length and balance.

WOLF SPIRIT LLC

95 **Parker's Heritage Collection Heavy Char Wheat Whiskey, USA (\$140)** Soft amber color and a rich and refined nose. Toasty, elegant, and pure, this is a classic that bourbon lovers will relish and well worth the price.

92 **Bellion Vodka, USA (\$40)** Touting itself as "the world's first functional spirit," this clean vodka has a pure and natural fleshy taste that lasts for a long, long time.

96 **Benriach Malting Season Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$149)** Amber color and a soft, toasted nose. Smooth and elegant, complex and toasty; subtle, deep, and long, with considerable finesse.



90 **Paul John Indian Single Malt Whisky Christmas Edition 2021, India (\$85)** Deep amber color and a spicy nose. Intense, rich, and toasty; clean and balanced, with exotic flavors and good length.

94 **Benriach Smoke Season, Scotland (\$72)** This elegant spirit smells like a wood fire. Toasty and deep, with a creamy texture, smoothly balanced style, and lengthy finish.

91 **Airem Organic London Dry Gin, Spain (\$37)** This silky, dry organic expression shows soft herbs and botanicals; mild, balanced, and long, it hails from the country that consumes the most gin.

93 **Siempre Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$45)** Light amber color. Soft nose of agave and honey; silky and lightly spiced, with a soft texture and a long finish that has a slightly sweet note.

AMERICAN SPIRITS EXCHANGE LIMITED

92 **Siempre Tequila Plata, Mexico (\$50)** Gentle notes of agave appear on the smooth, elegant, and dry palate; clean and crisp, balanced and very long. ☺



NEW YORK WORLD WINE & SPIRITS COMPETITION RESULTS



BEST IN SHOW: WINE

BEST IN SHOW: WHITE / BEST OF CLASS: AMERICAN CRAFT SAKÉ

Proper Saké Company 2021 Yamahai Saké, Tennessee (\$23) PROPER SAKÉ COMPANY

BEST IN SHOW: RED / BEST OF CLASS: PREMIUM BORDEAUX BLENDS

Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Symmetry Premium Bordeaux Blend, Sonoma County (\$55) RODNEY STRONG WINE ESTATES

BEST IN SHOW: SPARKLING / BEST OF CLASS: SPARKLING ROSÉ

Luna Nuda 2020 Prosecco Rosé DOC, Italy (\$18) WINESOURCE INTERNATIONAL

BEST OF CLASS: BORDEAUX BLENDS (UNDER \$25)

Be Human 2019 Red Blend, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$17) AQUILINI WINES

BEST OF CLASS: CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wakefield 2018 St. Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley, Australia (\$50) WAKEFIELD TAYLORS WINES

BEST OF CLASS: CHARDONNAY

Talbott Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$23) E. & J. GALLO

BEST OF CLASS: ITALIAN REDS

Pasqua Winery 2012 Mai Dire Mai Amarone della Valpolicella DOC, Veneto, Italy (\$113) PASQUA WINERY

BEST OF CLASS: MERLOT

Be Human 2019 Merlot, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$17) AQUILINI WINES

BEST OF CLASS: OTHER SPARKLING

Muse Orchard NV Shenandoah Sparkling Apple Wine, Virginia (\$25) MUSE ORCHARD/WIDOW'S WATCH CIDERY

BEST OF CLASS: OTHER WHITE VARIETALS

Dogliotti 2020 Moscato d'Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$17) R. S. LIPMAN COMPANY, LLC

BEST OF CLASS: PINOT NOIR

Oupé Wine Cellars 2019 Pinot Noir, California (\$25) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

BEST OF CLASS: PREMIUM NON-BORDEAUX BLENDS

ROWEN Wine Co. 2017 Cooley Vineyard Premium Red Blend, Sonoma County (\$55) RODNEY STRONG WINE ESTATES

BEST OF CLASS: ROSÉ BLENDS

O'Leary Fine Wines 2020 Rosé, California (\$25) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

BEST OF CLASS: SAUVIGNON BLANC

Invivo Wines 2020 X Sarah Jessica Parker Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) TAUB FAMILY SELECTIONS

BEST OF CLASS: SHIRAZ

Wakefield 2019 Shiraz, Limestone Coast/Clare Valley, Australia (\$18) WAKEFIELD TAYLORS WINES

BEST OF CLASS: VARIETAL ROSÉ; BEST OF CLASS: OVERALL ROSÉ

Inches 2020 Horse Heaven Hills Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé, Washington (\$12) AQUILINI WINES

BEST OF CLASS: WHITE ITALIAN VARIETALS

Pasqua Winery 2019 Garganega, Veneto IGT, Italy (\$16) PASQUA WINERY

DOUBLE GOLD

Barramundi 2019 Red Blend, South Eastern Australia (\$8)

J. Lohr 2018 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$35)

Knotty Vines 2018 Pinot Noir, California (\$15) RODNEY STRONG WINE ESTATES

Louis M. Martini Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$23) E. & J. GALLO

Lustau Palo Cortado Sherry Peninsula, Jerez de la Frontera, Spain (\$25) EUROPVIN

SAFU Sake Co. 2021 Sake, Kyushu, Japan (\$75) SAFU SAKE CO.

GOLD

Barefoot Cellars NV White Zinfandel, California (\$7) E. & J. GALLO

Barefoot Fruitscato NV Pineapple, California (\$7) E. & J. GALLO

Barramundi 2019 Merlot, South Eastern Australia (\$8) BARRAMUNDI WINES

Davis Bynum Winery 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$35) RODNEY STRONG WINE ESTATES

Jasper Woods 2019 Red Blend, California (\$25) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

Knotty Vines 2018 Red Blend, California (\$15) RODNEY STRONG WINE ESTATES

Le Chemin du Roi NV Brut Rosé, Champagne, France (\$325) SHAW ROSS

Louis M. Martini Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$42) E. & J. GALLO

Louis M. Martini Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$38) E. & J. GALLO

Lustau Vermut Rojo, Jerez de la Frontera, Spain (\$20) EUROPVIN

Mt. Monster 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Limestone Coast, Australia (\$13) MORAMBRO CREEK PTY LTD

Quoin Rock Wines 2015 Shiraz, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$27)

Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Sonoma County (\$45)

Taylors 2019 Shiraz Special Release, Clare Valley, Australia (\$14) WAKEFIELD TAYLORS WINES

Sidewood 2018 Shiraz Mappinga, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$65) SIDEWOOD ESTATE

Sierra Batuco 2018 Red Blend Lone Rider, DO Maule, Chile (\$25) MHW LTD.

Sonoma-Cutrer 2020 Rosé of Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$25)

SŌTŌ NV Junmai Sake Premium, Japan SOTO SAKE

SŌTŌ NV Junmai Daiginjo Sake Super Premium, Japan SOTO SAKE

Vara 2018 Monastrell, USA (\$30) VARA WINEY & DISTILLERY

Wakefield 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley/Limestone Coast, Australia (\$18) WAKEFIELD TAYLORS WINES

Zilzie Wines 2020 Shiraz, Victoria, Australia (\$15) ZILZIE WINES

BEST IN SHOW: SPIRITS

BEST IN SHOW: BRANDY / BEST OF CLASS: COGNAC

Branson Cognac XO Grande Champagne, France (\$250) SHAW ROSS

BEST IN SHOW: LIQUEUR / BEST OF CLASS: CREAM/DAIRY LIQUEUR

LS Cream Liqueur, USA (\$35)

BEST IN SHOW: WHITE SPIRIT / BEST OF CLASS: MEZCAL

Los Vecinos del Campo Tobala Mezcal, Mexico (\$100) SAZERAC

BEST IN SHOW: WHISK(EY) / BEST OF CLASS: CRAFT DISTILLER WHISK(EY)

10th Street Distillery Peated Single Malt Whiskey Wine Cask Finish, California (\$72)

BEST OF CLASS: AÑEJO TEQUILA

Calirosa Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$74) 222 SPIRITS COMPANY

BEST OF CLASS: BLENDED SCOTCH

The Sassenach Limited Batch Release, Scotland

BEST OF CLASS: DARK/GOLD RUM

Edward Teach Legacy Rum, Cayman Islands (\$30) PARK STREET IMPORTS

BEST OF CLASS: EXTRA AÑEJO TEQUILA

Cierto Tequila Reserve Collection Extra Añejo, Mexico RILO IMPORTS

BEST OF CLASS: EXTRA-AGED RUM – 5 YEARS AND OLDER; BEST OF CLASS: OVERALL RUM

Ron Colon Salvadoreño High Proof Dark Aged Rum, El Salvador (\$37)

BEST OF CLASS: FLAVORED VODKA

Rolling Still Red Chile Vodka, New Mexico (\$26) ROLLING STILL DISTILLERY

BEST OF CLASS: GIN

Revivalist Spirits Summertide Expression Botanical Gin, Pennsylvania (\$30)

BEST OF CLASS: HARD SELTZER

Volley Tequila Seltzer - Zesty Lime, Mexico (\$12)

BEST OF CLASS: OLD TOM GIN / BEST OF CLASS: OVERALL GIN

Bareksten Old Tom Gin, Norway (\$38) OSS CRAFT DISTILLERY AS

BEST OF CLASS: OTHER AGAVE SPIRITS

AQARÁ Reposado Agave de los Andes, Peru (\$54) CHOPIN: AQARA

BEST OF CLASS: OTHER SINGLE MALT WHISK(EY)

Togouchi Single Malt Japanese Whisky 1st Release Cask Strength, Japan PARK STREET IMPORTS

BEST OF CLASS: OTHER WHITE SPIRIT

Walialhex Areke, Virginia (\$35) DALLOL SPIRITS

BEST OF CLASS: PRE-MIXED COCKTAILS

Coit Spirits Paradisio, California (\$5) COIT SPIRITS

BEST OF CLASS: REPOSADO TEQUILA

Cierto Tequila Private Collection Reposado, Mexico RILO IMPORTS

BEST OF CLASS: RYE WHISK(EY)

Bespoken Spirits Rye Whiskey Batch X, Indiana (\$35) BESPOKEN SPIRITS

BEST OF CLASS: SILVER/GOLD (UNAGED) TEQUILA

Flecha Azul Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$50)

BEST OF CLASS: SINGLE BARREL BOURBON UP TO 10 YEARS

John J. Bowman Single Barrel Virginia Straight Bourbon, Virginia (\$50) SAZERAC

BEST OF CLASS: SMALL BATCH BOURBON UP TO 10 YEARS

King's Family Distillery Wheated Bourbon, USA (\$49)

BEST OF CLASS: SPECIAL BARREL-FINISHED BOURBON / BEST OF CLASS: OVERALL BOURBON

Rabbit Hole Dareringer Straight Bourbon Finished in Pedro Ximenez Sherry Casks, USA

BEST OF CLASS: STRAIGHT BOURBON

W. L. Weller Antique 107 Wheated Bourbon, Kentucky (\$50) SAZERAC

BEST OF CLASS: TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Uncle Nearest Master Blend Edition Bourbon, Tennessee (\$149)

BEST OF CLASS: VODKA

Townes Vodka, Texas (\$12) DYNASTY SPIRITS BRANDS LLC

DOUBLE GOLD

Alpha Tango Mission Kosmos Vodka, Québec, Canada PARK STREET IMPORTS

BACARDÍ Gran Reserva Diez Rum, Puerto Rico (\$41)

Bad Bitch Spanish Marie Rum, Florida (\$50)
KEY WEST FIRST LEGAL DISTILLERY

Bainbridge Battle Point Wheat Whiskey, Washington (\$60)

Bainbridge Two Islands Islay Cask Wheat Whiskey, Washington (\$90)

Bainbridge Two Islands Islay Cask Barrel Proof Wheat Whiskey, Washington (\$110)

Bainbridge Yama Mizunara Cask Single Grain Whiskey, Washington (\$526)

Bareksten Lightness Gin, Bergen, Norway (\$50) OSS CRAFT DISTILLERY AS

Batanga Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$28) HOOD RIVER DISTILLERS

Bespoken Spirits "Untitled Malt Project" Whiskey, USA (\$30)

Blanton's Straight From the Barrel, Kentucky (\$150)

Boldr Mango Vodka Soda RTD, Canada (\$11)
AQUILINI BEVERAGE GROUP

Bud Spencer The Legend Rauchig Single Malt Whisky, Bavaria, Germany ST. KILIAN DISTILLERS

CALAZAN Ron Añejo Rum, Monagas, Venezuela PARK STREET IMPORTS

Cierto Tequila Private Collection Extra Añejo, Mexico RILO IMPORTS

Garrison Brothers Cowboy Bourbon, Texas (\$200)

Garrison Brothers Laguna Madre Bourbon, Texas (\$300)

Gentle Ben Gin, USA (\$25) PERSEDO OPERATING COMPANY, LLC

GlenPharmer Distillery Reserve Spiced Rum, Massachusetts (\$36)

GlenPharmer Distillery GlenQuila, Massachusetts (\$40)

Hiatus Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$55) MHW LTD

Jung & Wulff Trinidad Rum, Trinidad & Tobago (\$44) SAZERAC

King's Family Distillery Single Barrel Tennessee Bourbon, USA (\$65)

Liba Spirits Lafcadio Botanical Rum, USA (\$35)

Manifest Florida Citrus Vodka, Florida (\$29)

Mano y Corazon Agave Madre Cuishe 37, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$40) PARK STREET IMPORTS

McCarthy's Oregon Single Malt Whiskey, USA (\$55) HOOD RIVER DISTILLERS

Missouri State University Rum Navy Strength, Missouri (\$16)

Nauti Spirits Straw Rum, USA (\$30)

Ola Brew Co. Okolehao, Hawaii

Penderyn Rich Oak Welsh Single Malt Whisky, Wales (\$85) IMPEX BEVERAGE

Penderyn Sherrywood Welsh Single Malt Whisky, Wales (\$80) IMPEX BEVERAGE

Scottish Kings Highland Dry Gin, Scotland (\$50) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Seven Seasons Native Yam Vodka, Australia (\$66) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Stauning Kaos Triple Whisky, Denmark (\$90) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Vara Rum Añejo, New Mexico (\$38)

W. L. Weller Single Barrel Wheated Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50) SAZERAC

Wheyward Spirit Whey Spirit, USA (\$55)

Widow Jane 10 Year Old Bourbon, New York (\$70) SAMSON & SURREY

Yappy Dog Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Florida (\$60)

GOLD

10th Street Distillery California Coast, USA (\$40)

All Nations 11 Year Straight Rye Whiskey, Kentucky (\$70) SOUTHERN SOUL SPIRITS

All Nations Prohibition Reserve, Kentucky (\$300) SOUTHERN SOUL SPIRITS

Archie Rose White Rye Whiskey, Australia (\$99) PARK STREET IMPORTS

BACARDÍ Reserva Ocho Rum, Puerto Rico (\$30)

BACARDÍ Gran Reserva Limitada Rum, Puerto Rico (\$130)

Bainbridge Whiskey Forty Saloon Small Batch Bourbon, Washington (\$90)

Bainbridge Two Islands Hokkaido Cask Wheat Whiskey, Washington (\$100)

Bareksten Navy Strength Gin, Norway (\$42) OSS CRAFT DISTILLERY AS

BELLEVOYE Vert Whiskey, France (\$94) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Bespoken Spirits Straight Bourbon, Indiana (\$40)

Bespoken Spirits Rye Whiskey, Indiana (\$35)

BHAKTA Spirits 27-07 Brandy, France (\$80) BALTHAZAR REX

Big Gin, USA (\$27) HOOD RIVER DISTILLERS

Bird Dog 7 Year Old Small Batch Kentucky

Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$25)

Blanton's Original Single Barrel Bourbon, Kentucky (\$70)

Blanton's Gold Edition, Kentucky (\$120)

Blue Run Golden Rye Whiskey, Kentucky (\$99)

CALAZAN Ron Añejo Calazan Special Rum, VENEZUELA PARK STREET IMPORTS

Camus Cognac VSOP Intensely Aromatic, France (\$57) CIL-US

Camus Cognac Port Cask Finish, France (\$65) CIL-US

Cierto Tequila Private Collection Añejo, Mexico RILO IMPORTS

Corazón de Agave Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$35)

Corsair Triple Smoke Whiskey, Tennessee (\$47)

Courvoisier Cognac VS, France (\$25)

Courvoisier Cognac VSOP, France (\$35)

Courvoisier Cognac XO, France (\$150)

Devils Backbone Distilling Co. Lemonade Smash, Virginia (\$13)

Distillery 291 Small Batch Colorado Rye Whiskey Finished with Aspen Staves, Colorado (\$75)

Doc Whiskey Cask Strength Single Barrel Bourbon (Barrel #58), Indiana (\$35)

Fast Penny Spirits Amaranco, Washington (\$65)

Fris Vodka, Denmark (\$13)

Grace O'Malley Blended Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$37) MHW

Horse Soldier Reserve Barrel Strength Bourbon, Ohio (\$80) AMERICAN FREEDOM DISTILLERY

Jung & Wulff Barbados Rum, Barbados (\$49)

King's Family Distillery Single Barrel Select American Light Whiskey, USA (\$99)

Kintaro Shochu, Japan NISHIYOSHIDA-SYUZO CO.

Los Vecinos del Campo Espadín Mezcal, Mexico (\$34)

Manifest Florida Botanical Gin, Florida (\$36)

Mano y Corazon Agave Espadín Mezcal, Mexico (\$30) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Millstone 100 Rye Whiskey, Netherlands (\$100) WILLIAM WOLF BRAND, LLC

Mr Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, Australia (\$40) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Nikle Vodka, New Mexico (\$25)

Off Hours Straight Bourbon, Indiana (\$47)

Penderyn Myth Welsh Single Malt Whiskey, Wales (\$60) IMPEX BEVERAGE

Revivalist Spirits Dragon Dance Jalapeño Gin, Pennsylvania (\$30)

Rolling Still Lavender Vodka, New Mexico (\$26)

Sakurao Single Malt Japanese Whisky 1st Release Cask Strength, Japan PARK STREET IMPORTS

ShortBarrel Founders Reserve Small Batch Bourbon, Kentucky (\$200) SHORTBARREL LLC

Smoke Lab Classic Vodka, India (\$20)

Sonbi Gin, Korea (\$38) PARK STREET IMPORTS

St. Kilian Signature Edition FOUR Single Malt Whisky, Germany

St. Kilian Signature Edition FIVE Single Malt Whisky, Germany

St. Kilian Signature Edition SIX Single Malt Whisky, Germany

Starward Solera Single Malt Whiskey, Australia (\$70) PARK STREET IMPORTS

Tepozan Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$45)

Tequila Enemigo 00 Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$160)

Tequila Ocho Añejo, Mexico (\$65) SAMSON & SURREY

The Clover Single Barrel Straight Bourbon, Indiana (\$50)

Thomas S. Moore Port Finished Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$70)

Uncle Nearest 1820 Premium Single Barrel Whiskey (US-53), Tennessee (\$120)

W. L. Weller Full Proof Wheated Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Kentucky (\$50)

Widow Jane Oak & Apple Wood Rye, New York (\$45) SAMSON & SURREY



In each issue, Tasting Panel publisher/editor-in-chief Meridith May selects her favorite wines and spirits of the moment. Check here for the latest arrivals in our offices, the hottest new brands on the market, and an occasional revisited classic.

Publisher's

PICKS



Publisher/editor-in-chief Meridith May at Jordan Winery in Alexander Valley.

WINES



Fetzer 2020 Gewürztraminer, California (\$10) With a low ABV of 11%, this blend of 76% Gewürztraminer, 7% French Colombard, 7% Chenin Blanc, and 10% other white grapes offers succulent scents of guava, lychee, and almond cookie. The pungent, luscious array of apricot and white rose petal in a round body would be deliciously decadent if

not for the on-point acidity. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Simple Life 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$12)

Aged for 12 months in French and American oak, this lush red shows personality through rich and ripe aromas of boysenberry and mocha as well as flavors of roasted coffee bean, dried lavender, blue fruit, and toasty oak. The fruit is sourced from Lodi and Clarksburg, with percentages of Merlot, Petit Verdot, and Teroldego blended in. **89**

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS

DON SEBASTIANI & SONS



Trivento 2020 Reserve Malbec, Uco Valley and Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11) This wine is meaty and juicy, though its low ABV of 13.5% keeps it balanced and fresh. It's also herbaceous, opening up to basil and oregano within a convergence of lushly spiced mulberry and rhubarb. **89**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Concha y Toro 2020 Casillero del Diablo Reserva Malbec, Valle Central, Chile (\$12)

This juicy, full-bodied blend of 85% Malbec and 15% Syrah has a low ABV of 13.5% and alluring aromas of boysenberry. Spiced cedar, dark plum, and a wash of chocolate gain attention up front. Vanilla envelops espresso and Worcestershire sauce while boysenberry unites with

blueberry on the big finish. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS


Worthy of a smooch.


French-style double bizou.


Wildly infatuated.


Seriously smitten.


Head over heels in love.



Hook or Crook Cellars 2019 Reserve Merlot, Lodi (\$13) Chocolate and roasted coffee bean are expressive top notes. Blackberry peeks through cedar and brown sugar. Easy drinking! **88**



Ménage à Trois NV Sultry Smooth Red Blend, California (\$14) Here's something different: This blend of 40% Zinfandel, 32% Syrah, and 13% French Colombard, along with some Muscat and other white grapes, is from its brand's Sweet Collection. Carbonation is delicate in the mouth and the resulting bouquet is stunning. To make the palate even more layered, natural strawberry, rose, and chocolate flavors are added. It's a liquid valentine. **91**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Contour 2020 Pinot Noir, California (\$14) Aromas of ripe red and black fruit plus date and currant announce this rich, bold Pinot Noir, which features mocha-kissed wild strawberry and black cherry. Sassafras and tobacco leaf are savory on the finish. **89**

VALKYRIE SELECTIONS



Cline Family Cellars 2020 Seven Ranchlands Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$15) The clean, opulent nose reflects stainless-steel aging, bringing out scents of sugared tangerine peel, spearmint, and lemon blossom. The palate of lime sorbet is almost waxy, creating a gliding texture that paves the way for fresh melon,

kiwi, and white grapefruit. This standout would be a marvelous by-the-glass pour for \$9. **93**



Barón de Ley Varietales 2019 Garnacha, Rioja, Spain (\$15) Aging in 10,000-liter oak *foudres* reduces this wine's contact with wood and strengthens its fruit character. Buoyed by fresh rhubarb and wild strawberry, notes of cocoa and oregano give the delicious red its lift and complexity. Beetroot, tilled soil, and white pepper prolong its cedar finish. **93**



Alta Via 2020 Pinot Grigio Vigneti delle Dolomiti IGT, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy (\$15) Grapes from 25- to 60-year-old vines planted close to the border of Trentino are selected for this wine. Vivacious and light, the mineral-driven white delivers honeyed peach, peach pith, and jasmine. It awakens the palate with a spark, revealing bright acidity and a clean finish. **90**

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINES



Muirwood 2019 Merlot, Arroyo Seco, Monterey (\$16) This blend of 79% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 6% Malbec aged for 12 months in French oak and shows ripe aromas and flavors of mulberry, earth, and red beet. Milk chocolate, black cherry, and sun-dried tomato work well on a bed of toasty oak thanks to supple

tannins. **91**

ASV WINES



Highway 12 Vineyards 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma County (\$17) Asian pear, vanilla, lemon blossom, and sweet basil appear on the entry of this slightly creamy white. Lemon-wedge aromas linger atop the glass while flavors of green apple and honeysuckle coat the tongue. Clean, balanced, and refreshing. **91**



Ancient Peaks 2019 Merlot, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$22) What we love about this big, brawny red (with 5% Petit Verdot) is its delivery from start to finish. Arresting scents of roasted coffee and dark plum lead to an entry that is silky, but with a twist: A core of minerality courtesy of ancient seabed soils—distinct from salty limestone or wet stone—has a grandness to it, revealing the power of the wine, buoyed by dark chocolate, dried lavender, and lush black fruit. **93**

Publisher's PICKS



Antigal 2019 UNO Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$18) Antigal's first wine made with organic grapes—housed within a screwcapped bottle whose label bears a large, three-dimensional number 1—is a labor-intensive, hand-harvested feat that wowed us at first sip, blessed as it is with natural

acidity. The nose is fruit-filled: plum, strawberry, and a hint of violets. On the palate, this Malbec is as intense as it is elegant, with its eight months of aging in French and American oak showing in toasty coconut and mocha. **92**



Flat Top Hills 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$18) The standout factor in this red's profile is its bright fruit. Mulberry and salted plum meet supple tannins as floral tones, tobacco, and sweet basil work their way into a vanilla-oak finish. **90**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



Villa Monti 2019 Chianti Superiore, Tuscany, Italy (\$19) This certified-organic red is stored in cement tanks after aging for seven months. We found rose and straw-

berry on the nose as well as a mouthfeel of powdered rose petal, but they were just the start of an exquisite experience: Soft tannins, sweet red berries, and delicate acidity kept the palate fresh even as a dense quality came in midway, adding a layer of chocolate cake and violets. **93**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Duca di Salaparuta 2019 Passo delle Mule Nero d'Avola, Terre Siciliane IGT, Italy (\$20) Bright cherry, sweet tobacco, and a chalky middle bring this wine to life. Cinnamon and rose petal add more character to the round body before a spicy finish. **90**

DISARONNO



Jules Taylor 2021 Grüner Veltliner, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) Scents of lime and apricot scone heighten the senses in preparation for notes of key lime, white flowers, and fresh linen. Crisp and clean, this wine is a true standout. **93**



Jules Taylor 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) Perky aromatics of star fruit, pink grapefruit, pea tendrils, and Asian pear join crisp notes of grapefruit and lime plus ground stone and peach blossom. The tremendous mouthfeel finishes with sweet basil and kiwi. **92**



La Braccessa 2019 Achelo Rosso, Cortona DOC, Tuscany, Italy (\$22) A blend of Merlot and Syrah, this wine was named for the shape-shifting Achelous, the Greek river god. Its elegant, satiny entry is lined with black cherry and chocolate; fine acidity and a flow of earth and roasted coffee follow. Light-boned and ethereal, with black fruit that's underscored by slate and cedar on the finish. **92**

STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES



Wente Vineyards 2020 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$18) Buttercup, lemon ice, and toasty cashew make a lasting impression on the nose. Delicate flavors of vanilla wafer and honeyed peach plus a dollop of crème fraîche settle on the palate. Fermented half in barrel and half in stainless steel, this wine is expressive and well balanced between its zippy acidity, its leesy character, and its energy. **92**



Paula Kornell NV Brut, California (\$22) This blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir produced in the méthode Champenoise comes in at a low 12% ABV. The tiny bubbles leave behind refreshingly clean notes of apple pie, peanut brittle, and lemon chiffon. Nicely balanced, with a finish of apricot and biscuit. **92**

Medieval Times

IL BORRO'S 2,700-ACRE ORGANIC TUSCAN ESTATE SURROUNDS A 1,000-YEAR-OLD VILLAGE



Salvatore Ferragamo is CEO of Il Borro.

Translating from Italian as “The Gorge,” the Il Borro estate has been handed down through some of Europe’s best-known families since 1766—names like the Medici and the House of Savoy, among many others, have been connected to it. History has also informed some of its wines, like its 100% Syrah named for 17th-century military figure Alessandro dal Borro.

As far as modern times go, it was in 1993 that Ferruccio Ferragamo took over the conservation of the estate and its heritage, along with his son Salvatore and his daughter Vittoria. And in 2012, Il Borro became part of the exclusive Relais & Châteaux group—a validation of its luxurious reputation.



The Il Borro estate in the Valdarno Valley.

Il Borro 2017 Polissena Valdarno di Sopra DOC, Tuscany (\$39) The Valdarno di Sopra DOC sits between Florence and Arezzo on the bank of the Arno River; it became the first organic DOC in the world in 2011. From the highest-elevation vineyard on the Il Borro estate, standing at over 1,110 feet above sea level, this 100% Sangiovese is certified organic and shows tart, sweet, and bright cherry in a brace of high acidity. The flavors linger, including earthy soil with a dot of salinity. Tannins are present but supple. **94**



Il Borro 2020 Lamelle Toscana IGT (\$23) Fermenting this Chardonnay in stainless steel allows its lovely fruit and floral tones to shine through. It's steely, crisp, and earthy, with soothing herbs and a keen citrus edginess. **92**

Il Borro 2016 Toscana Rosso IGT (\$65) A blend of 50% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 15% Syrah, this wine spent 18 months in French Allier oak. It's a gentle soul, with violets and ripe dark cherry entwined in a bath of oregano, tomato leaf, and white pepper. The mouthfeel is wonderful, exhibiting a down-pillow texture. **96**



Publisher's PICKS



Silverado Vineyards 2020 Miller Ranch Sauvignon Blanc, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$27) With 7% Sémillon, this Sauvignon Blanc boasts breathtaking aromatics—a wedge of lime squeezed over juicy pineapple. Honeydew melon, key lime, and grapefruit converge on the palate as perky tangerine strikes a

sensational note with white flower petals. Honeyed pear defines the lean-bodied, athletic palate on the crisp finish. **93**



Anthony & Dominic 2019 Reserve Chardonnay, Castellucci Vineyards, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$35) Seeing no malolactic but undergoing 18 months of aging in French oak, this Chardonnay has a rich texture, a crisp fruit character, and lots of underlying minerality. Toasty notes of hazelnut, cedar, grilled

pineapple, creamed corn, and vanilla reveal a big personality; floral tones show its gentle side. **91**

SCOTTO CELLARS



Metz Road 2019 Chardonnay, Riverview Vineyard, Monterey (\$30) The qualities we love in the 2019 vintage of this estate-grown, small-lot, single-vineyard Chardonnay from the Scheid family are its aromatics and texture. Tropical fruit forms layers and layers with citrus and sea breeze—and that's just its

intriguing perfume. Jazzy on the palate, it shows salty minerality that weaves through lemon verbena, chamomile, and vanilla, while its lush, leesy mouthfeel charms. A whisper of croissant melds with buttered pear and a finish of grilled pineapple. Aged 14 months in French oak. **93**

SCHEID FAMILY WINES



Maison du Midi 2020 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France (\$34) This youthful blend of 84% Grenache, 11% Syrah, and 5% Mourvèdre is round and ripe, indulging in fresh, delicious

blue and red berries, yet it's also noteworthy for its spicy and fragrant elegance. White pepper and cranberry star in a mid-palate performance, establishing a silky texture while washing the tongue with chalky tannins. Red cherry adds sweetness to the toasty finish. **93**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



pureCru 2016 Sangio Vetta, Napa County (\$30)

Proving that Sangiovese can triumph in Northern California, this small-production red, aged 38 months in barrel, shows all the charm of the Old World thanks to its acidity and vivid red-cherry notes. Its juicy middle is seasoned by oregano and chervil, while salty minerality intertwines with chalky plum-skin tannins. **92**

PURECRU



J. Lohr 2018 Tower Road Petite Sirah, Paso Robles (\$35)

For the first time in 13 vintages, a small amount of Viognier is present in this wine. The grapes are grown on well-draining, heavy soils in Paso Robles' Estrella District, where cooling winds meet warm days. Aged 16 months in (50% new) French oak, the result is not your typical Petite Sirah. Yes, it's a true teeth-coater, with blue fruit surging on a velvety sheath of black cherry and vanilla, but the aromas and flavors of violets, sweet plum, garden herbs, and white pepper remain distinct. It finishes with a lovely cranberry brightness. **93**



J. Lohr 2019 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$35)

As we taste J. Lohr's flagship wine year after year, we notice that it continues to grow in terms of mouthfeel, plushness, and strength of character. The 2019 vintage has a *je ne sais quoi* that's partly explained by red winemaker Brenden Wood's blending practices. Prior vintages incorporated Petit Verdot and Malbec, but this one gives voice to Cabernet Sauvignon at 99%. Mocha and sandalwood are a driving force on the broad, dense palate. Blackberry, Worcestershire sauce, and wet earth work in tandem to bring out a savory character and textural depth. **94**



Silverado Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Vineburg Vineyard, Carneros (\$40)

This Chard shows body and style in droves. Its aromas of green apple are an intriguing nod to the orchard that once was located on this vineyard site; the grapes are sourced from vines planted in 2000 and situated on both sides of wetlands preserved by the winery. Loam soils and the breeze from the San Pablo Bay lend to its hallmark searing acidity. Layered flavors of caramel, orange, and chamomile balance atop a thread of minerality. **92**



Twin Suns 2019 Special Edition Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$36) Earthy aromas are seasoned with basil and oregano. Tart cherry and damp leaves on just-tilled soil meet Old World acidity as white pepper lends snap to ripe wild strawberry. This kosher wine aged 14 months in 20% new French oak. **89**

THE RIVER WINE



Cline Family Cellars 2019 Zinfandel, Live Oak Vineyard, Contra Costa County (\$40) From ancient, head-pruned vines, this single-vineyard Zin shows modern, elegant style. Aromas and flavors of blue flowers, ripe cranberry, pomegranate, and rhubarb lead the way. Milk-chocolate sleekness and a finish of licorice and toasted oak reflect ten months of aging in (40% new) French oak. **92**



Cline Family Cellars 2019 Estate Grown Syrah, Los Carneros (\$40) The grapes in this cool-climate, Rhône Valley–style Syrah are grown on an 18-acre hillside site that overlooks the Carneros wetlands. Meaty notes of dark chocolate, espresso, and black pepper–crusted charcuterie are bold. On the finish, soy sauce, anise, and black olive sit atop a velvet cloud. Aged 18 months in French oak. **93**



Truth & Valor 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$40) Laden with sea fossils, the soils in the southernmost sub-AVA of Paso Robles add depth and complexity to this Cabernet. Aromas of blackberry preserves, vanilla, and peanut brittle show sweetness; the palate, however, is concentrated, with black plum, cassia, and sage as well as supple tannins. Dark chocolate meets white pepper on its round finish. **90**



Highwayman 2018 Reserve Proprietary Red, Sonoma Valley, Sonoma County (\$40) Black pepper, tobacco, and sage rush in on the entry, while a troop of concentrated dark fruit advances. Rustic, rich, and savory from start to finish, with firm tannins guiding the way. **92**

HIGHWAY 12 WINES



Pillar & Post 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40) Dense and satisfying, with cherry bark, anise, sandalwood, and dark chocolate. The mouthfeel is silky yet structured by drying tannins. Graphite and woody notes peek through black plum, accenting brightness on the finish. Aged 18 months in (15% new) French oak. **93**

PAUL HOBBS WINES



Perrin + Dobbs Vineyards 2018 Pitch Black Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$42) More like pitch perfect, this small-production Cab with 15% Syrah is truly a balanced beauty, releasing an elegant, steady stream of dark-chocolate mint, sweet earth, and a confection of wild strawberry and dark raisin.

Bold and delicious. **93**

ATC WINES



Domaine de la Mordorée 2020 La Reine des Bois Rosé, Tavel, Rhône Valley, France (\$43) Large, round stones surround the vineyards that yield this blend of 60% Grenache, 15% Clairette, and 10% Syrah with Cinsault and Bourboulenc. Dark strawberry-pink in hue, it's crisp and dry, with heather and raspberry engaging in a savory-sweet duet. Stony throughout, the palate is lyrical, with a finish of mint and rose. **93**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD



Bien Nacido Estate 2019 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$45) With rich, opulent notes of vanilla wafer, pear, hay, and toasted coconut, this is not your everyday Chardonnay: Its French accent shows in its texture and balance. Sunshine-blessed citrus and peach bask in a glossy, round mouthfeel. Aged 16 months sur lie in (45% new) French oak. **95**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Domaine de Châteaumar 2019 Secret de Nos Vignes, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France (\$47)

This blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Mourvèdre spent eight months in French oak followed by four months in concrete tanks. Chewy tannins develop in this well-behaved, upright red along with pronounced notes of spiced plum, dried violets, and earthy sweetness met by high-fidelity acidity. Silky chocolate-covered cherry comes in midway, and the wine continues to go deep as it opens, maintaining its elegance all the way. **94**

JP BOURGEOIS



Dutton Estate 2019 Karmen Isabella Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$48) Cherry, chocolate, clove, and cinnamon-dipped rose petal are just some of the heavenly flavors that emerge from this exquisite red. As it opens up, notes of mulberry and deep plum surface. In addition to a fine acid structure and earthy sweetness, it boasts a silky mouthfeel that adds to its complexity. **94**



Domaine de la Mordorée 2019 La Reine des Bois, Lirac AOC Rouge, Rhône Valley, France (\$48) This blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre grows on 40-year-old vines among the famous *galets roulés*—large stone pebbles—marking this part of the Rhône's sand and clay soils. While 10% is fermented in used casks, 90% of the wine goes into stainless steel. The result is a garden of heather and sage along with chocolate mint, charcuterie, and anise. Its prowess shows in its red-fruit aromas, elegant mouthfeel, and freshness on the palate. **95**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Reptil 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) Ripe fruit sweetens notes of cocoa within a frame of graphite and clove. Floral notes persist on the nose and palate. Mulberry and red plum remain prominent as velvet tannins manage to grip with finesse. Aged in French and American oak for 18 months. **94**

VIÑA COBOS/PAUL HOBBS



Paula Kornell 2018 Blanc de Noirs Méthode Champenoise, Napa Valley (\$50) Tangerine flows sweetly throughout this blend of 58% Pinot Noir and 42% Chardonnay from Napa Valley's Carneros District, bursting from delicate bubbles. Salted peach, melon, white flowers, and caramel make for winsome flavors, and the acidity is vivid. **93**



Résonance 2019 Chardonnay, Hyland Vineyard, McMinnville, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$50) Steel-framed and edgy, this superb white is the best of Oregon, with its French heritage shining through. As Meyer lemon takes a stance alongside honeysuckle and a hint of peppermint, it's fresh, crisp, perfectly balanced, and delicious. **96**

KOBRAND



Preludio de Sei Solo 2018 Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$56) Graphite and other minerals take charge of this dynamic 100% Tempranillo from vines ranging between 20 and 80 years old. Juicy blackberry soon emerges and blue floral notes grab the tongue, part of a concentrated array of dried fruits and flora. Elegant to the core. **95**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Red Phoenix 2017 Rubeus, Napa Valley (\$60) With a fraction of Merlot on a foundation of 95.8% Cabernet Sauvignon, this bold and juicy red offers dry, tongue-coating espresso tannins that become more supple as it opens. Centered and elegant, it's a gentle giant with a firm grip and layered flavors of dark chocolate, blackberry, porcini mushroom, and cedar. **94**

VERTICAL PALATE WINE COMPANY



Bien Nacido Estate 2019 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) In a stellar vintage, this world-class site creates a world-class wine for its owners, the Miller family. Cinnamon and black cherry are prominent scents that also decorate the palate. Baking spices and brush spread across

a layer of rhubarb, cherry, orange peel, and sweet tobacco before light red-tea tannins are joined by salinity on the finish. Aged 16 months in (50% new) French oak and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, the wine shows magnificently now and will no doubt be among the classics of the next decade. **95**

MILLER FAMILY WINE CO.



Öömrang 2019 Müller-Thurgau, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60) Aged in stainless steel and coming in at 12% ABV, this floral beauty offers notes of lemon blossom and salted pine nut. Combining considerable freshness with linear edginess, it takes green apple and linen down a lean path to its prickly, exciting finish. The food-pairing possibilities are tremendous. **95**



Smith-Madrone 2018 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$62) Blue flowers, blackberry, and a touch of mint on the nose are telltale signs of the beauty of this wine, which was dry farmed on a steep mountainside and aged 21 months in (50% new) French oak. While plush, its

mouth-coating notes of blueberry and mocha are precise. White pepper inspires a mouthwatering effect led by espresso, graphite, and cedar that lingers on the palate. **94**



Trione Vineyards & Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Block Twenty One, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$69) A savory and soulful wine, with notes of mountain brush and ripe, red fruit threaded with mild herbaceousness. Showing salty minerality, cinnamon, cedar, and cigar box, this plush

Cabernet evolves as it opens, completing cycle after cycle of finesse. **94**



Two Horns 2014 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$80) Bridled energy is released as tart red cherry and woody spices spring forward. White pepper darts between mulberry and mountain sage. The oak comes through on the finish, but the spice remains on the palate. **91**



Domaine du Cellier aux Moines 2018 Givry Premier Cru Clos du

Cellier aux Moines, Burgundy, France (\$80) Red rose and ripe, juicy strawberry are fragrant, flavorful, and impactful, creating an experience that's evocative of a late summer sunset. Cinnamon and clove eke out jasmine and cumin. **96**



Mai Dire Mai 2012 Amarone della Valpolicella DOCC, Veneto, Italy (\$113) Mature and round-bodied, this deep, concentrated beauty maintains its stature through its structure. Chewy tannins, salted plum skin, and dark chocolate-caramel win us over; while floral aromas and flavors of ripe black fruit

are memorable. A blend of 65% Corvina, 15% Corvinone, 10% Rondinella, and 10% Oseleta, this magnificent beast (16.7% ABV) with a tamed soul aged for 24 months in new French oak. **95**



J. Davies 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Diamond Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$130)

This is the 18th vintage of the Davies family's Diamond Mountain Cab; its bounty of concentrated plum and dark chocolate reflects the vintage's long growing season. With some Malbec and Petit Verdot blended in, it's creamy and deeply arresting; as it glides across the palate, we find graphite washed in licorice along with black pepper and espresso on the finish. Aged 22 months in 65% new French oak, it was released last October. **96**

SPIRITS



Ole Smoky Tennessee Mountain Made Peanut Butter Whiskey, USA (\$20)

Authentic to this 60-proof spirit's name, the nose also shows a note of buttercream cookie. On the palate, the unctuous nature of the liquid is enhanced by a glossy texture, and side notes of toffee with a hint of mocha come through. Balanced and delicious. **94**



New Amsterdam Stratusphere London Dry Gin, USA (\$14)

Cucumber, white pepper, coriander, and a squeeze of lime define this spirit's tremendously extroverted aromatics. It's creamy and bright on the palate, with a full range of fruit tones from zippy white grapefruit to kiwi and salted Bosc pear. Peppermint mocha on the finish is accompanied by a burst of high-toned citrus and white flowers. **95**

E. & J. GALLO



Limousin 6-Year-Old Rye Whiskey, USA (\$40)

Aged in three different types of vintage and new oak and finished in a solera system using French Limousin oak, this 93-proof whiskey displays aromas of gingerbread, peach, cedar, and orange peel. Rich and smooth on the palate, it's expressive, with warming notes of oatmeal, maple, apricot, peach, and tangerine peel that reach a crescendo as white pepper, pineapple, and orange reverberate on the long finish. **93**

DANCING GOAT DISTILLERY



Mezcal Don Ramon Joven, Mexico (\$45)

Comprising 100% Salmiana agave from Zacatecas that's matured for eight to ten years, this 80-proof spirit offers sweet, smoky scents of earth and mocha. Elegant texture and perfect balance are evident here; the mouthfeel is dry but not astringent. As soft tobacco accents milk chocolate and white pepper, the palate spreads out generously, leaving behind notes of fresh agave, jasmine, and a hint of peppermint. **94**



Papa's Pilar Legacy Edition 2021 Dark Rum, USA (\$80)

This sultry 86-proof spirit is a blend of nine different ultra-premium rums sourced from Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Florida, Panama, and Venezuela. Finished in rye whiskey barrels, it exhibits warming aromas of pekoe tea, cedar with a hint of varnish, maple-almond biscuit, patchouli, and honeyed fig. And if the stream of scents doesn't pull you in, the flavors and textures will, as buttery maple and pecan sail across the palate with notes of papaya, jasmine, and an exotic array of tropical flowers. As in a well-aged Cognac, power and elegance coexist here. **97**



Calirosa Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$74)

Aromas of cinnamon, clove, and brown-sugared walnut are appealing and deep. Opulent notes of white-peppered almond brittle give way to cedar, chocolate, and clove tea, making a luscious impact on this aged tequila's semisweet flavor profile. Distinctive and totally gratifying all the way through the finish of orange peel and gingersnap. **95**



Beluga Gold Line Vodka, Russia (\$85)

Housed in a statuesque bottle adorned with a three-dimensional badge, this top-tier 80-proof vodka demonstrates luxury at first sip. Black-peppered vanilla bean is creamy and settles neatly on the palate. Cigar leaf and anise maintain an unusual boldness of character, while mocha and herbs leave a clean, memorable taste on the finish. **95**



Courage & Conviction Bourbon and Single Malt Whisky, USA (\$85)

Scents of vanilla, oatmeal, and walnut are heady yet refined. Light in color; this expressive, dynamic, and extroverted 92-proof spirit offers flavors of banana bread, black-peppered orange peel, and caramel. **93**

VIRGINIA DISTILLERY CO.



Old Settler Old Fashioned Sour Mash Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)

This high-rye bourbon emits scents of peanut brittle and cedar-kissed peach. On the tongue, a laser beam of tea tannins merges with the spiced, sour flavor of apple cider. Cigar leaf and mocha come in, meeting cookie batter and oak resin on the finish. Potent at 100 proof but well-mannered. **93**

MISA IMPORTS



Much of the fruit for the Baron Herzog label is sourced from a 230-acre estate vineyard in the Clarksburg AVA.

“No Shortcuts”

BARON HERZOG PROVES THAT HERZOG WINE CELLARS HAS BEEN PLAYING THE LONG GAME WHEN IT COMES TO QUALITY **by Amy Antonation**

When's the last time you made a liquor-store expedition and emerged triumphant from a thicket of bottles and shelf talkers, bearing a nice bottle of wine and only \$10 poorer? Was it your sophomore year of college, when youthful optimism convinced you that a wine with a quirky label must be the cream of the crop? Was it 2008, when you could still reliably get a full liter of juice for a Hamilton in most American cities?

Those days seem awfully far away—especially for those of us who matriculated before the turn of the 21st century. But intrepid drinkers on a budget need not fret even as inflation soars: With SRPs ranging from \$10 to \$13, Herzog Wine Cellars' Baron Herzog label offers value-priced wines whose quality far

exceeds what consumers are used to seeing in the category. That, according to winemaker Barry Henderson, is the natural result of a careful, calculated approach. “There are no shortcuts,” he explains. “Decisions are made on what’s best for the wine, period. It takes diligence and patience.”

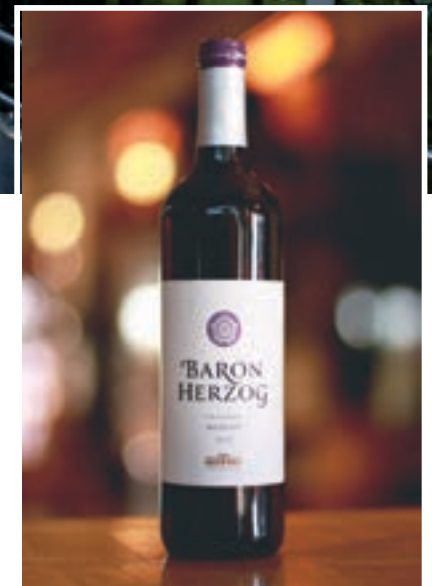
A key factor in the concept for the line took root long before Henderson joined the company in 2008. The Herzog family began making wine in Slovakia in the early 1800s, with patriarch Phillip Herzog eventually nabbing a sweet gig as imperial winemaker for Emperor Franz Joseph and receiving the title of Baron. Phillip’s grandson Eugene survived World War II and immigrated to New York City in 1948, where his descendants continued to make wine

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HERZOG WINE CELLARS





Herzog Wine Cellars
winemaker
Barry Henderson.



for 37 years until the family business ventured out west in 1985.

“Baron Herzog is the brand that launched us in California in 1985,” says Henderson. “The company really did its due diligence in the Central Coast and Lodi for the Baron brand in particular. It found some great growers, and while it was doing that, it was researching terroir with the intent of purchasing its own vineyards.”

With the land secured, it established relationships with a handful of those growers to source additional fruit; most of them have now worked with Herzog for over two decades, and the winery has a huge influence on their farming practices, ensuring the proper number of leaves on the vine, amount of sun on the grapes, and pace of sugar production for so long that Henderson has seen farmers’ children grow from toddlers running among the vines to adults bringing in harvest. “What is unique about Baron is our complete control of vineyards and [our relationships with] growers,” Henderson points out. “Farmers have a sense of pride in their product. The fact we have worked together for so long is a testament to our partnership, which is focused simply on making the best wine possible.”

It’s also unusual for a brand of

Herzog’s size to grow its own fruit, notes Henderson. About 90% of grapes used in Baron Herzog’s white wines as well as many of the grapes used for its reds are sourced from its 230-acre estate vineyard in the Clarksburg AVA. But instead of using that designation, the company opted to have “all Baron Herzog wines [bear a] California appellation,” says Henderson. “We could label them if we wanted to and command a higher price, but we want the flexibility to use other grapes.” He points to a cross-pollination of sorts between Baron and Herzog’s other lines that ensures consistency and quality. “We have so many tiers of wines and products that if we’re not happy with a certain lot of grapes, we can augment some of the fruit,” he says, mixing and matching estate and grower fruit to achieve the classic profiles they’re after. “With Baron, it’s about varietal character. We don’t want people to be surprised. If for some reason we pick grapes too early or a block doesn’t develop quite like we’d like, we can redirect them.”

Of course, having excellent fruit doesn’t automatically translate to excellent wine—especially if you don’t have a cellar crew with the expertise to turn grapes into great juice. Henderson is

well aware of how much his team contributes to the success of the wine. “Some of them have been there since 1988, longer than me. It’s the same crew that produces some of our ultra-premium Napa wines,” he says. “These guys know how important attention to detail is.” He cites an incident during last year’s harvest that exemplifies their commitment: A shipping delay resulted in a refrigerated truck of grapes arriving at the Ventura County winery eight hours late, so “we did what was best for the fruit and began crushing past midnight and working into the night. We all left the winery around 6 a.m.” The wine, he says, is developing wonderfully and will surely be a highlight of the vintage—not bad for a bottle that will run you well under \$20. **LZ**

Championing the Agricultural Workforce

GEODESY WINES IS JUDY JORDAN'S NEW LEGACY LABEL

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEODESY WINES



After selling J Vineyards & Winery to wine giant E. & J. Gallo in 2015, vintner Judy Jordan fulfilled a long-held dream to dedicate her time and resources to advancing the next generation of the agriculture community.

Geodesy Wines founder Judy Jordan

donates all the profits from her new label to support WG Edge, a scholarship program she created for young women seeking careers in agriculture. The name, which stands for Women Gaining an Edge, reflects its aim to increase young women's ability to carry on the agricultural legacy of Sonoma County in partnership with Santa Rosa Junior College, which provides a path to four-year schooling.

Jordan created the program out of gratitude for the local ag community, which has been central to her family's life since they came to Sonoma County. The wines that fund it, meanwhile, hail from two heritage sites: one in Oregon's Willamette Valley and the other on a mountain-top in Napa Valley.

An aerial view of Sage Ridge Vineyard in Napa Valley.



Geodesy 2018 Chardonnay, Eola Springs Vineyard, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$75)

Eola-Amity Hills became an AVA a decade ago, but Eola Springs Vineyard was planted long before that, in 1972. Cool winds funneled from the Pacific through the Van Duzer Corridor and a diversity of soil types set the tone for this wine's complexity. Aged 14 months sur lie in French oak, the unfiltered, unfinned white fully engages the senses with honeyed pear, salted lemon wedge, and a wash of herbal notes. High-toned acidity ignites the palate. **95**

Geodesy 2018 Chehalem Mountain Vineyard Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$75)

Focused and lean, with notes of tart cranberry, pomegranate, and plum. A cola twist mingles with orange peel and forest floor midway, while wet stone and an echo of strawberry are layered on the finish. Winegrower Scott Zapotocky farms vines that date back to 1968, when Dick Erath pioneered viticulture on this ridge. Jordan acquired the vineyard in 2015 as the third owner to continue its legacy in Oregon wine. **93**

Geodesy 2017 Red Wine, Sage Ridge Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$175)

Jordan acquired the Sage Ridge Vineyard from restaurateur/vintner Pat Kuleto in 2015 and replanted it to all five Bordeaux grapes with new clones and rootstocks. Delivering 73% Cabernet Sauvignon with smaller percentages of the others, this red blend is grown in the site's rugged, high-elevation terrain on decomposed shale and sandstone outcrops amid madrone, pine, and bay trees a mile from Pritchard Hill. Aromas of pine, sage, and brambly sweet fruit intermingle. Luscious and mouth-filling, with ripe fruit, plush tannins, and a touch of chalkiness, the structured, broad-shouldered wine aged for 20 months in French oak. **96**

The Mojo of Billy D Wines

"MY WINES NEED TO BE RELEVANT TO A NEW GENERATION," SAYS BILLY DAVIES



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILLY DAVIES



Left: Billy Davies and his daughter Abbie. She created the labels and web design for his new portfolio and has a lot of input into the business.

Billy Davies grew up in wine royalty: His family owns Schramsberg, that lauded producer of sparkling wines from Northern California. He remembers moving to Napa Valley in 1965 when there were only 12 wineries in the area: "I liked working chores," he told *The Tasting Panel* when we tasted his new label, Billy D, at an outdoor restaurant on the Central Coast this past summer. "It was tasks such as pulling weeds, hoeing, and the smell of earth when we were replanting that's burned in my mind with positive thoughts. [Memories of] getting up close with a Caterpillar tractor and learning Spanish in the vineyards are as crystal clear as the color of the zinnia flowers in the garden."

So why would Davies create a new value-oriented brand, given that he has been surrounded his entire life by exclusive sparklers like Schramsberg's and the luxurious still wines of the J. Davies and Davies labels?

"It's my provocative return to the

1960s and '70s," he confessed. "It's the wine business as it was then. My new label defines offbeat character: The Billy D initiative circles back to where it all began, and I am that billy goat bucking the old-school varieties and high alcohol content."

Ramble, under the Billy D umbrella, particularly impressed us with its flavor profile and its price point. Here are some of our faves.

coming from California," remarked Davies; the organically dry-farmed vines in Buddha's Dharma, which go back over 75 years, yield just that. This edgy wine is unfiltered and sealed with plant-based corks made from North Carolina sugarcane. Its nose is a sea breeze of pineapple and chamomile. Along with great acidity, there's a flower garden of aromas and flavors, plus key lime on the finish. 12.2% ABV. **93**



Billy Davies is on the right. His brother Huey on the left is CEO of Schramsberg.

Ramble 2020 Valdiguié Rosé, Buddha's Dharma Vineyard, Mendocino County (\$25) At 11.8% ABV, this rosé offers a peachy, salty mineral nose. Flavors of apricot, melon, wet stone, ginger, and guava follow with a zippy edge. **93**

Ramble 2020 Charbono, Napa Valley (\$32) Made with carbonic maceration, this 85% Charbono also includes Petite Sirah, Valdiguié, and Carignan from dry-farmed 100-year-old vines. The nose speaks of roasted coffee bean and grilled beef. Fresh cigar leaf joins dark plum and a rustic earthiness before a refreshingly Old World finish. **92**



The label for Ramble Chenin Blanc depicts Billy Davies as a man alone in a vast vineyard.

Ramble 2020 Chenin Blanc, Buddha's Dharma Vineyard, Mendocino County (\$27). "Imagine great Chenin Blanc

Billy D 2019 Mountain Barbera, Sierra Foothills (\$13/500-mL; \$20/1-L) Screwcapped in a lightweight glass bottle, this Barbera shows superb acidity, while notes of spiced plum and café mocha bring in loads of California sunshine. 14.1% ABV. **92**

Billy D 2019 Daydreamer Rosé, California (\$20) At 11.5% ABV, this blend of primarily French Colombard with some Aglianico, Barbera, and Chardonnay is light and refreshing, with some salinity. Ripe strawberry, lemon-grass, and sweet basil offer dimension. "I am a négociant and blender," claimed Davies, "delivering a novel package that can hopefully appeal to a younger consumer." **92**

A Fortified Collaboration

NEW MEXICO ENTERS THE PICTURE WITH A NEW ROSÉ APÉRITIF

Vara is a winery, distillery, and dining and retail space soon to offer agritourism experiences, event venues, and lodging in close proximity to Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Associated with the project is famed New Mexico winemaker Laurent Gruet, known for his méthode champenoise sparklers, as well as legendary Central Coast winemakers Bob and Louisa Lindquist.



Vara Viña Cardinal, Mission Ridge Vineyard, Mesquite, New Mexico (\$32) This pale, dry rosé aperitif is made with heirloom Listán Prieto grapes—the first *Vitis vinifera* variety to be planted

in what is now the U.S.—and fortified with unaged brandy to 17% ABV. It shows richness and depth, with notes of wild strawberry, sage, and rose leading to a finish of chocolate and lemon zest. **95**

Tasting Bacigalupi Vineyards

With Guest Reviewer Wilfred Wong, Chief Storyteller at Wine.com



Bacigalupi Vineyards 2019 Renouveau Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$85) This wine brings purity to the fore. Its alluring and complex aromas and flavors of tart apple, savory spices, and mineral notes recall the true essence of the vineyard. Forty percent of the grapes that comprised the winning wine at the historic 1976 Judgment of Paris came from the Goddard Ranch; the Bacigalupi family purchased the site in 1956, and it still yields outstanding wines like this one. The Bacigalupis and winemaker Ashley Herzberg are adamant about showing that sense of place; as grower Nicole Bacigalupi proudly comments, “We can be what we want to be and [still be] true to the Russian River Valley.” **95**

Bacigalupi Vineyards 2017 Brillante Blanc de Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$75) One of the Russian River Valley’s finest sparkling expressions, this wine pays homage to Pamela Bacigalupi’s father, Paul Heck, whose family owned Korbel Champagne Cellars. It exhibits very fine beads and a tremendously active mousse. On the palate, it’s bright with lovely red-fruit flavors, while the finish is crisp, with an excellent al dente bite. **96**



Loving the Languedoc

Moulin de Gassac 2019 Guilhem Rosé, IGP Pays d’Hérault, Languedoc, France (\$11) Grown on a series of terraces with clay and limestone soils along the western shore of the salty Lake Thau, this rosé comprises 50% Carignan and 50% Syrah and offers up notes of rose, jasmine, ginger, and white cherry. It’s pretty and well balanced, with crisp acidity and underlying minerality. **92**



Hecht & Bannier 2019 Rouge, Languedoc, France (\$13) A blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Carignan in which beefy aromas and flavors meet black-peppered plum and an iron-mineral core. Earthy and a touch smoky, with a hint of soy sauce on the savory finish. **91**



Les Vignobles Foncalieu 2019 Caractère Unique, Languedoc, France (\$17) We love the floral nature of this blend of Grenache Blanc, Vermentino, and Marsanne. Almond and peach tones are inviting, with underlying minerality. Unctuous on the palate, with stone fruit steeped in jasmine. **92**



Waiting for Its Moment to Arise

BLACKBIRD VINEYARDS FLIES ONTO OUR RADAR

Winemaker Aaron Pott continues to improve upon Blackbird Vineyards' stellar Napa Valley portfolio. As we tasted some of the newest releases, he gave us these notes: "The 2017 harvest saw a wonderful year turn very hot post-veraison, with a tough combination of triple-digit temperatures and single-digit humidity [that] would leave a lot of vineyards with grapes ripening through dehydration and not coming to ripeness naturally. Blackbird works in the coolest sites possible in Napa Valley, [so we were] able to escape most of the . . . heat and humidity issues that would lead to the late-season fire in early October. All of our grapes were harvested at perfect ripeness before the fires and created wines that were very traditionally California in style, with rich fruit aromatics and intense density."

Blackbird 2017 Illustration Proprietary Red Blend, Napa Valley (\$135)

Sourced from three prestigious Napa Valley vineyards—Stagecoach, Ballard, and Crocker & Starr—this blend of 49% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 23%

Cabernet Franc makes a statement with broad, ripe fruit. Tightwire tannins soon stretch out to fill the mouth with texture. Emboldened, the powerful palate perks up with black fruit and fragrant violets. Aged 21 months in (75% new) French oak. **96**



Blackbird 2017 Contrarian Proprietary Red Blend, Napa Valley (\$135) The boldest bird in the flock is feathered with intense purple fruit, dried violets, cigar box, and licorice. Structured, with lush tannins, the palate triggers notes of black cherry and graphite. The blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Cab Franc, and 1% Merlot, which saw 21 months in (75% new) French oak, will age well. **95**

Exploring the 2019 Vintage at Merry Edwards

Merry Edwards winemaker Heidi von der Mehden's 2019 vintage, released in September, shows ripeness, lush textures, and dark-fruit tones. The year saw lots of rain early on, leading to strong canopies and long hang time. "The grapes held on to their acidity well and provided firm tannins with beautiful structure," says von der Mehden.

Merry Edwards 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$54) Earthy and regal, with thrilling aromas of white pepper, cherry bark, and red flowers. Spirited and spiced, with nutmeg and gingersnap weaving between cinnamon-soaked cherry and dried heather. An earthy note lengthens the streamlined finish. **94**



Merry Edwards 2019 Meredith Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$80) Aromas of rose and red cherry show against a backdrop of blue fruit with a mocha-mint middle. The depth of this wine's sumptuous mouthfeel is impressive. Aged sur lie for 11 months in (55% new) French oak. **95**

Merry Edwards 2019 Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$63) "It's John and Diane Bucher's commitment to sustainable farming that has been the guiding force for their winegrowing," explains von der Mehden. "I work closely with them in the vineyard and can attest to the fact that the fruit we get from this site is high-quality and produces powerful yet balanced Pinots." Beetroot and dark plum unite to bring out sandalwood and basil in this profound wine, in which ripe fruit with a savory side meets superb acid structure. **95**



Merry Edwards 2019 Pinot Noir, Warren's Hill, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$70) The nose of mulberry, Asian cooking spices, and black tea is phenomenal. Plum-skin tannins offer dryness on the entry, but the energy soon picks up to deliver the most dynamic palate of the four wines we tasted. Milk chocolate comes through on the mid-palate, joined by candied apple and a finish of rosebud and earth. Aged nine months sur lie in (65% new) French oak. **98** *LV*

Merry Edwards Winery is part of the Champagne Louis Roederer family and is marketed by Maisons Marques & Domaines.



WHAT'S OLD IS

NEW

WITH THE HELP OF SOMMELIER CRISTIE NORMAN, **CLINK DIFFERENT** AIMS TO BRING ATTENTION TO LESSER-KNOWN BORDEAUX AND GERMAN WINES **by Stefanie Schwalb**

Sommelier Cristie Norman knows how to make wine education fun, and she proved it during an interactive webinar she co-hosted in partnership with the Clink Different campaign last November. A collaborative initiative between the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux (CIVB) and the Deutsches Weininstitut (DWI), Clink Different aims to promote the lesser-known wines of Bordeaux and Germany, educating the trade through a series of seminars, press and study trips, pop-up tastings, and more. “As a young wine professional, you get really excited talking about new and upcoming wine regions,” said Norman. “As I’ve grown, what I’ve been more interested in personally is looking at these people and places that have been doing this for seven generations [or more]. I think that’s amazing.”

**Sommelier
Cristie
Norman.**

PHOTO: MADE VANDERVOORT



Stefan Braunewell (right) and his grandfather Adam at Weingut Braunewell in Essenheim.

Joining Norman for the webinar were panelists Shelley Cartland, U.S. adviser for the Bordeaux Wine School, and Steffen Schindler, the DWI's head of national and international marketing, who provided insights on every notable trend from the impact of global warming on viticulture and the eco-friendly movement to women in winemaking and the reasons you may soon find more Sekt stateside. The experience also included a blind-tasting game, with attendees sharing their notes and best guesses on six wines that were revealed at session's end. From Germany were the Theo Minges 2019 Gleisweiler Scheurebe Trocken from Pfalz; the Dautel 2019 Weissburgunder Trocken from Württemberg; and the Stefan Vetter 2019 Dry Silvaner from Franken. From France were the Château Roquefort 2019 Bordeaux Blanc; the Château Haut-Rian 2019 Bordeaux Blanc; and the Château Climens 2003 Sauternes.

GERMANY

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

Germany is renowned as the top Riesling producer in the world, but it also deserves recognition for the significant strides its industry has made toward sustainability. “We’ve just had a new counting last year, and the latest figure is that 9.4% of German vineyards are certified organic,” revealed Schindler. “Of course there are—as in every other country—many producers who also work organically without certifying, but [certification is] increasing very fast at the moment.” Young winemakers want to see change, he added, and there’s also a lot of interest in Biodynamic farming—as proven by 15% annual growth in that sector. “We have three organizations for Biodynamic farming in Germany, and together they now stand for about 1,000 hectares,” he explained, “which is exactly 1% of the whole German [land area].”

What’s even more surprising? The fact that approximately 23.9% of all organic wine in the world is consumed in Germany. “We have a huge market for organic wines, and that’s even more important for young winemakers,” Schindler noted. “There is a real reason [to go organic—] not just because they believe in [it], but also because they can sell their organic wines here.” ECOVIN is the largest federal association for organic winemaking in the country, and as of 2020, it represented 245 estates and 2,705 hectares. “It keeps growing every year,” he continued, “and within the European Union itself, by 2030, 25% of all agricultural land should be organic.”

GLOBAL WARMING

“Viticulture in Germany has benefited from global warming to a certain degree because we have no more problems with the ripeness of grapes, which we used to have in the last century,” said Schindler. “But we now also see negative side effects. There were 170 people who died in the floods [within the district of Ahrweiler in Rhineland-Palatinate this past summer].” Although fortunately none of the winemakers in the Ahr Valley were affected, he added, they face other challenges on a regular basis, including the threat of the recently migrated European cherry fruit fly, which attacks grapes; the fact that sprouting takes place about one month earlier than it used to; and heavy hailstorms.

WOMEN IN WINE

Schindler noted that there are plenty of established as well as up-and-coming women in the German wine industry. Praising their work, he mentioned several of them, including Katharina Prüm (JJ Prüm) and Caroline Diel (Schlossgut Diel), who have ably taken the reins from their famous fathers. “They are daughters of some of the best German winemakers,” he noted, “but they have succeeded in driving the quality even further and are doing a great job.” Schindler also called out Juliane Eller, who has teamed up with one of Germany’s best-known actors and directors—Matthias Schweighöfer—and television host Joachim “Joko” Winterscheidt to launch a label named Three Friends: “She’s really done



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOPEXA

Riesling on the vine at Weingut Wittman in the Rheinhessen.

a great job in taking a completely unknown wine [brand] and making it well known.”

SEKT ON THE RISE

“What’s important to know is that Germany has the most sparkling wine drinkers in the world,” said Schindler. “There’s no other nation that drinks as much sparkling wine as we do, and we are also the third biggest producer [of it] in the world.” The problem, he added, is that most of the Sekt made in Germany is not German because it’s not made from German grapes. “We import huge amounts of basic wines from Spain, France, Italy, and wherever it’s cheap at the moment,” Schindler explained. “We bring that into Germany, and we have five big producers who completely dominate the

market. The brands all have German names, and people think it’s German.”

However, in the past 20 years, more and more producers have begun making sparkling white wines with native grapes—especially Riesling and Pinot. “Riesling [is] perfect for sparkling wine because it has a lot of acidity by nature,” Schindler said. “That’s what you need when you make a sparkling wine. What we look for in our wines anywhere in Germany is freshness.” Encouraging the acceptance of high-quality German sparkling wine domestically is the first step to selling it abroad. “In our activities with the German Wine Institute, we started to showcase German sparkling wine only a few years ago,” he concluded. “We never talked about that before because . . . there was just not that much real German sparkling wine.”

Three Friends co-founder Juliane Eller.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOHEXA

Beekeeping at Bordeaux's Château La Clotte Cazalis.

Penelope Godefroy among the vines in Bordeaux.

BORDEAUX

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

When it comes to going green, Bordeaux has been leading the charge in France, with 2,200 properties certified HVE (High Environmental Value as determined by the Ministère de l'Agriculture)—more than any other French region. “[In] Bordeaux, there’s a very dedicated effort [among] winegrowers and the industry, and the CIVB is behind it,” said Cartland. “Right now, 75% of vineyard [land] is sustainable. There’s a lot of different approaches, but working toward sustainability, organic, and Biodynamic is the goal. By 2030, [we will reach] 100% . . . sustainable vineyard[s].” In addition, about 18% of producers are certified organic or on their way to certification, Cartland noted. It’s a three-year process, but because many winegrowers are living on the properties, they’re especially committed to reducing their carbon footprint. “A lot of the carbon is coming from the transportation . . . and the weight of the bottles, so you’re seeing a lot of winegrowers looking into reducing bottle weight and moving from wood boxes to cardboard,” she said. As for Biodynamic farming, it is still an emerging practice, though some of the leading Biodynamic winegrowers from there consult for other wineries around the world.

GLOBAL WARMING

“We’ve done a series of webinars in the U.S., and we’ve had a lot of winegrow-

ers on,” said Cartland. “All of [them] say they’re doing everything they can in the vineyard [to manage the effects of global warming], adapting to keep the freshness of the wines and the grape varieties that Bordeaux is known for.” To maintain the regional style, she explained, the measures being put in place include delayed pruning, reduced plant density, and limits on leaf removal.

Meanwhile, she acknowledged, “Everybody always asks about the new grape varieties that were approved and different stylistic changes. . . . While [it’s] a hot topic for us to talk about here in the U.S., especially with sommeliers, it’s not something everyone is jumping to do.” Long-term research is definitely taking place, but currently, Bordeaux’s winegrowers aim to maintain the region’s traditional style and stick with the classic grape varieties.

WOMEN IN WINE

With respect to bringing Bordeaux’s female winemakers recognition state-side, Cartland mentioned the “Strong Women Make Big Bottles” campaign, which included events that took place in New York City pre-pandemic and in Texas during the fall of 2021, as well as a series of Instagram videos on the Bordeaux wine account, in which some of these women talk about themselves and their work. “It’s not something new that there’s women winegrowers in the region, but it’s something to highlight,” she said. “They’ve taken over for their families that are seventh, eighth, and even 13th generation.” Of the many examples, she singled out Céline Lannoye of Célène Bordeaux, known for her Crémant de Bordeaux, and Bérénice Lurton of Château Climens, who hails from a renowned winemaking family, as just two. **LV**



PHOTO: WADE VANDERORT

A Clink Different tasting at Wein Garten LA in Los Angeles, CA.

The Complete PACKAGE



Elise Som is the director of sustainability at Mijenta Tequila.

MIJENTA TEQUILA
SHOWCASES SUSTAINABILITY
INSIDE THE BOTTLE AND OUT

by Amy Antonation





I'll start at the end,

with one of the last things Elise Som said to me when I interviewed her for this story: “What I want to reiterate is that sustainability is a global message. Whether you’re in Mexico or the U.K. or Italy, everyone is caring about and understanding our message: Eat better, drink better. Don’t go for the cheapest brands; go for what is made in a way that is honest.”

Som is the director of sustainability at Mijenta Tequila, and her allusion to global consciousness was playing out quite literally at that moment. We were chatting over Zoom—one of us west of the Mississippi River, the other in the vicinity of the Thames. It was fitting for a conversation about the positive environmental impact of the super-premium tequila brand’s packaging and production processes: Mijenta’s commitment to sustainability is rooted in a fierce insistence on keeping all aspects of production local as well as creating packaging that—no matter what part of the world it ends up in—will be beneficial for not only for the brand but for the industry as a whole and, of course, for the earth.

Som’s background isn’t in spirits or sustainability. The French-born exec describes herself as a sort of late bloomer, acknowledging that when she moved to the U.S. at the age of 20, she did “anything and everything to decide what I *didn’t* want to do.” She built a career as an interior designer, but eventually realized she was unsatisfied with creating merely beautiful things: Som



Barrels on the move at Mijenta’s distillery in the Jalisco Highlands.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIJENTA

Mijenta maestra tequilera Ana María Romero Mena (right) inspects an agave plant.

wanted to marry her love of design to a conservationist ethos. What came next for her was a stint at Harvard, where she earned a master’s degree in sustainability, followed by a pitch from former Bacardi CEO Mike Dolan to join him in creating Mijenta.

Director of sustainability is an unusual role, especially in the spirits realm, admitted Som, adding that getting in on the ground floor with Mijenta co-founders Dolan and fellow Bacardi alum Juan Coronado made her job much simpler: “I will tell you, it was a lot easier to start as a new brand, with a brand-new slate, and to build it in the most sustainable way.” She pointed to decisions the team made early on: “We chose to work locally, we chose to work with our community, we chose our suppliers carefully.”

Like all juice that bears the label “tequila,” Mijenta must be produced in designated agricultural regions. Mijenta’s distillery is situated at over 6,700 feet above sea level in Arandas within Los Altos de Jalisco (the Jalisco Highlands). Arandas is the largest center of tequila production in the state outside of its eponymous town, and when Mijenta was setting down roots there, it elected to work exclusively with Mexican glass, label, and packaging suppliers, all of which are located within 30 kilometers of the distillery.

The most tangible marker of sustainability for the majority of consumers is probably packaging. Som started there, but not before offering a refresher

on the basics of a circular economy: reduce, reuse, and recycle. “When we designed packaging,” she said, “we thought of all the waste we were creating.” So she turned her focus to *bagasse*, or agave pulp that’s a byproduct of the distillation process. That pulp is turned into paper products that are used for all Mijenta’s labels, promotional materials, and shipping boxes. But the brand went further: It utilizes a foldable box that fits together neatly and sturdily thanks to its creases and pleats and needs only a single seam of non-toxic glue for construction. “Every detail counts,” said Som.

Mijenta’s labels stand out on the shelf not only because of their sleek design but also because they are 100% post-consumer waste and are printed only with vegetable-based inks and dyes. The brand’s flagship Blanco—which is also the foundation for its Reposado and its forthcoming Añejo—bears a modern, blush-pink label with deep green contrasts. Of her choice to employ pink packaging, Som noted, “I went to a tequila shop in Guadalajara and saw about 1,000 brands. I didn’t see the color pink, I tell you that. I wanted something a bit more inclusive because”—cue a round of eyerolls—“people don’t think women drink tequila.”

The bottles themselves are as carefully considered as their labels. “The circular economy is about working with your community and reducing everything you can possibly reduce,”

Mijenta's labels are made with 100% post-consumer waste and vegetable-based inks and dyes.



Som emphasized. Mijenta elected to purchase already existing bottles from a local supplier rather than manufacture new stock: “Glass is easily recyclable whether you’re in the U.S. or Mexico. We’ve been lucky enough that we found a [bottle] design that’s been sitting on the shelf, and we designed around it.” She was nonchalant when asked what will happen if and when that stock is exhausted. “We’ll adapt,” she said. “Changing the shape of the bottle is not scary for us, so it could be that. Our message has been very well received by the consumers and public, so if we change, they understand that’s what we’re about.”

Of course, all the sustainable packaging in the world means nothing if you don’t have high-quality juice harvest

after harvest, so Som and her team are adamant about promoting agricultural practices that ensure that the *jimadores* tending the Blue Weber agave fields will have beautiful plants, yielding Mijenta’s mouthwatering flavor, to pick from for years to come. Like the brand’s suppliers, all of its fields are within 30 kilometers of the distillery. Som pointed out that some tequila brands make liberal use of pesticides and fertilizers before declaring, “We don’t use cheaper agave; we use plants that are stronger and older and that don’t use pesticides. The places you get the agave from have a variety of other plants on the land. We *want* that diversity. . . . You *need* that biodiversity to create such a generous and rich taste.”

Ana María Romero Mena, Mijenta’s

maestra tequilera, “is always testing the soil,” Som continued. “She is a scientist testing the minerals, and [she’s] also like a poet, because she’s so in love with the land.” The brand encourages its *jimadores* to let land lie fallow after harvest and has begun discussions with educators at the University of Guadalajara that Mijenta hopes will yield resources and methods to assist farmers with regenerative farming practices.

It would be a shame to adulterate any of that pristine tequila after distillation, but according to Som, it’s nonetheless a common practice that Mijenta has eschewed. “We are one of the very few brands that have no additives,” she noted. “It takes a lot of time to tweak the recipes without adding sugar or glycerin or caramel color.”

When I asked her what’s next for Mijenta’s sustainability initiatives, her excitement was palpable. “So many things—let me show you!” she exclaimed, briefly dashing offscreen to return with a snowy white product resembling polystyrene. “I’m working on mushroom packaging right now that is biodegradable in 21 days. If you break it up, you can put it in your garden to biodegrade.”

So despite the many challenges the planet is facing, Som insisted, it’s an exciting time to be developing new and greener processes and materials. “We are not perfect,” she said, “but we’re trying our best, and we’ve been very lucky because our message is resonating with the public. They’re looking for authenticity and people who care for the planet.” **LT**

Ana María Romero Mena among the agave plants.





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Spinning a Tale With **DUKE SPIRITS**

**THE BRAND LAUNCHES ITS GRAND CRU
TEQUILA TO BENEFIT THE JOHN WAYNE
CANCER FOUNDATION**

Chris Radomski is the
founder of Duke Spirits.





story by
AMANDA M. FAISON
 photos by
RAFAEL PETERSON

When Chris Radomski answered his phone on the morning of October 8, his earnest, soft-spoken Canadian lilt sounded a bit gravelly. As he distractedly said *thank you* and *see you soon* to those around him, Radomski explained that he was saying goodbye to the country trio Runaway June, who had played a benefit concert for 250 people in Newport Beach, California, the night before. The bash had been a wild success, marking not only the official launch of Duke Spirits Commemorative Grand Cru tequilas but also the announcement of the brand’s \$50,000 donation to the John Wayne Cancer Foundation.

This is the essence of Radomski: He’s always got his hands in one compelling project or another. After obtaining degrees in biochemistry and law in Canada and working in the business world, he made a name for himself when he followed his true passion and co-founded an exclusive Napa Valley winery with a friend in the 1990s; then came the more affordable Layer Cake brand. What unites all his endeavors, he says, is “authenticity and value at all price levels.”

The same has applied as Radomski has turned his astute eye toward spirits. In addition to Duke, he has a whole portfolio of wines and spirits that have grabbed headlines and 94-plus point ratings, as with his La Adelita Tequila, for which he recently collaborated with California Caviar Company on a proprietary label of caviar that can replace the traditional salt and lime accompanying a shot of tequila—especially when it’s served as a “bump” placed between the thumb and forefinger.

UNCOVERING A STORY

For Radomski, great stories born of life experiences lead to the creation of great brands, whether based on childhood memories or close friendships. And when Radomski first met Ethan Wayne, the youngest son of late Hollywood legend John Wayne, in California, he discovered a true American story waiting to be told via Duke Spirits.

Much of Ethan’s childhood was spent traveling with his dad or spending time with him on movie sets, even acting in a film or two before ultimately joining the entertainment industry himself. Before Wayne died of stomach cancer in 1979, he told then-17-year-old Ethan and other family members that they should use his name and legacy to fight cancer. The John Wayne Cancer Foundation was established a few years later and has since become one of the country’s leading centers for cancer research.

When Radomski and Ethan met, the reins of the foundation and control of his father’s name, image, and likeness had recently been handed to Ethan. As part of the transition, he reunited with his father’s belongings, which had been collected, cataloged, and sealed for decades. When Ethan stepped inside the vault, it was like a time capsule, complete with costumes, boots, hats, guns, and an Academy Award for *True Grit*, not to mention banker’s boxes full of letters, notes, and other mementos.

And then there was Wayne’s liquor collection, including bottles of bourbon, tequila, and more from the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. As Ethan showed Radomski the memorabilia, he told him he’d discovered that Wayne had been working on his own bourbon and tequila recipes. Could they bring his passion for spirits back to life?

Radomski’s first reaction, naturally, was: There’s a great story here. “We began distilling as we found a collection of old barrels [we could use to] reverse-engineer [Wayne’s] recipe” from 1962, he explains. “We used our skill set from the wine industry and blended that into our expressions.” It took seven years and a lot of, yes, grit to get the brand—which they named Duke Spirits after Wayne’s childhood nickname—to market, and Radomski is adamant that its sense of authenticity forbids it from becoming just another celebrity label. “It’s an American story: John Wayne, how much more



Duke Spirits recently donated \$50,000 to the John Wayne Cancer Foundation.

American does it get? It's an homage to a time when things were done differently," he says.

As Radomski continued to develop Duke Spirits, he began thinking about the finishing process and how they could, in his words, "elevate" it by utilizing "the finest single-use French oak barrels from California wineries and introduce that to aged high-proof whiskey." Thus Duke's Grand Cru Bourbon Founder's Reserve—a nine-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon aged in barrels that housed cult single-vineyard California Cabernet Sauvignon—was born. Showing notes of stone fruit and butterscotch and earning a 97-point score from *The Tasting Panel*, it joined the caramelly Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (96 points) and vanilla- and almond-tinged Double Barrel Rye Founder's Reserve (98 points) in the Duke portfolio.

MAKING A STATEMENT

Wayne was also a connoisseur of tequila—perhaps even more so than whiskey, according to Ethan—and had a love for Mexico and its people that got the duo's wheels turning as they perused his liquor collection. As Radomski already had an established relationship in Jalisco and access to "great juice," he was eager to use the same barrel trick on tequila that had enhanced Duke's whiskey. As part of a calculated risk, he sent ten former wine barrels that had also aged Duke 100 Proof Bourbon to Mexico, where he finished a reposado and an extra añejo, and then waited for the results of the

"experiment." Radomski adds, "I had a gut feeling that it would be a really great experience based on the quality of all the components."

Radomski flew down to the distillery multiple times to taste the expressions. He was beyond impressed, but it wasn't until a master distiller declared it the best tequila he'd ever had that Radomski knew they had nailed it. Still, true to form, he wasn't finished, opting to turn the endeavor into a philanthropic effort benefitting the John Wayne Cancer Foundation. "[Tequila] makes sense in the brand, there's a story, it's an extension of Duke Grand Cru line," Radomski says. "But how do we make this different and not just get into tequila? [By taking] the opportunity to pay homage to [not only] John Wayne's love of Mexico [but also] his wish to use his name to help cure cancer."

Which brings us to the Runaway June concert this past October. The band, which has toured nationally with country singer Luke Bryan, has a familial connection to Wayne: His granddaughter, Ethan's niece Jennifer, is one of the three vocalists. So, with live music secured and a cause to champion, Radomski and the foundation opened up the event to some 250 people, offering free admission, the promise of good tunes, an opportunity to give, and, of course, a chance to be the first in the nation to taste and purchase Duke Spirits' Grand Cru tequilas.

In addition, Radomski pledged to donate all the profits in advance from the sale of Duke 6 Year Extra Añejo Tequila Founder's Limited Edition, a

six-year-old expression of which only 1,000 bottles were made, to the foundation. "Along the way, we've contributed to the foundation and supported it at benefits, but I wanted to make a larger impact," Radomski says. The spirit, which is aged in third-use French wine barrels, features deep notes of cherry and oak that complement the agave flavor rather than overpower it. The line also includes a dark and oaky Extra Añejo Founder's Reserve and a Grand Cru Reposado Founder's Reserve with flavors of wood and red cherry, a percentage of whose sales also go the foundation. Many partygoers bought bottles, whose SRPs range from \$65 to \$250, through online retailers after sampling them; on-premise, Southern Wine & Spirits is allocating the portfolio quickly across three states for starters (California, Arizona, and Texas).

The evening reached a crescendo when Radomski joined Ethan onstage to present the \$50,000 check. "Chris has always been super-philanthropic way before even partnering with us," says Stacy Mulder, vice president of the John Wayne Cancer Foundation. "And when he wanted to launch the tequila just for the foundation, what liquor company does that? He wants to do such good."

This is hardly the first time Radomski has dabbled in philanthropy. At the onset of the pandemic shutdown, he launched an initiative called the Ultimate Tip, challenging bartenders to make a cocktail using Duke Spirits; he'd then tip them \$200. "A friend told me I was crazy and that I'd go bankrupt," Radomski says with a laugh, noting that his company was among the first to step up when it came to industry support. He ultimately capped the program to 250 people, tipping upwards of \$50,000 via Venmo and Zelle.

As with all stories he has a hand in, Radomski insists on spreading credit to "a great team." But he has the last word when explaining the driving force behind Duke Spirits' growth: "The goal was to have purpose and connection when expanding the brand. Ethan was wanting us to create a tequila, but it had to be for the right reasons. He had fond memories aside his father in Mexico, and [we felt we could] recreated some of those and make a difference . . . by simply telling the story of a great man and a great American. Then the time was right to give back to the foundation."



Dale Rohde, general manager of Mastro's Ocean Club in Newport Beach, CA, and Chris Radomski were the co-hosts of an evening dedicated to the debut of Radomski's new wine project, *As One Cru*.

Flight Cru

A NIGHT OUT WITH **CHRIS RADOMSKI** INCLUDED A TASTING OF HIS NEW LUXURY WINES **by Rich Manning**

It's November 18, 2021, about 30 minutes before a dinner trumpeting the debut of *As One Cru*, the latest wine project from acclaimed industry vet Chris Radomski. The private dining space at Mastro's Ocean Club in Newport Beach, California, is already bustling with fiery energy: Trays of Palomas whip around the room, affixed to the palms of swiveling waiters. Hostesses dart from table to table, adjusting seating arrangements on the fly, as the keyboardist checks sound levels in fits and starts.

Radomski, acting as the evening's co-host along with Mastro's general manager Dale Rohde, sits at a table amid the controlled chaos, warmly greeting people as they gradually trickle into the room. Suddenly, as he's called upon for assistance, he gets up and flashes a quick smile in my direction. It

lasts about a quarter-second, but it beams a thousand watts of confidence, assuring that this night is going to be exceptional. It's appropriate considering the source: After all, Radomski's resume includes working on the production of 100-point wines and the creation of a flourishing wine and spirits portfolio, so such radiance should come naturally.

Technically, the event itself has been arranged to introduce the approximately 150 guests to *As One Cru*'s sumptuous Napa Valley wines: the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon from Howell Mountain and St. Helena, given a 97-point score by *The Tasting Panel*, and the 96-point 2018 Pinot Noir from Carneros. But as Radomski addresses the patrons settling into their seats, he makes it clear that the proceedings will not be shrouded in stuffiness. "This is

not a wine tasting," he proclaims. "This is a wine drinking. Giddy up."

Radomski keeps things loose and freewheeling throughout the event, periodically taking to the mic to crack jokes and describe the excellent wines in a self-deprecating manner. ("They certainly don't suck," he says during one interlude.) During the meal, he makes a point to introduce "the Cru," the collective of friends in attendance whose spirit Radomski honored through the wine's creation. I'm flanked at my table by two "Cru" members: former National Hockey League player Russ Courtnall and Matt Zubrod, culinary director of The Little Nell resort in Aspen, Colorado. The wines become the conduit that spurs jovial conversation between us, the sheer breadth of which captures the gist of what Radomski intends *As One Cru* to deliver whenever someone opens a bottle. "This night is a reflection of what this wine's about," he says. "It's a symbol of friendship among people that love wine, sports, food, family, and each other."

That sentiment—and the wine behind it—is certainly worth smiling about. **LV**



John Notter, owner of the Westlake Village Inn & Spa and its fabulous wine bar, Stonehaus, hosted Pups 'N Pinot to help find homes for adoptable dogs. He is pictured with the team from Shelter Hope, a pet shop that helps shelters by setting up adoption "boutiques" in malls. "We foster dogs when shelters shut down," says founder Danielle Caouette (far right). In the past two years, she and her group of volunteers have found homes for 2,000 adoptees.



Gimme Shelter

PUPS 'N PINOT PROVED TO BE AN IMPAWTENT EVENT FOR DOG LOVERS AND WINE FANS ALIKE AT WESTLAKE VILLAGE WINE BAR STONEHAUS

story by Meredith May / photos by Azusa Takano



Stonehaus is the most popular wine bar in the Westlake Village area of Southern California.



John Notter built a paradise in Westlake Village, California, a bedroom community located about 30 minutes north of Los Angeles. Its namesake inn is a romantic getaway—a Tuscan-style retreat with a world-class wellness spa and a top-of-the-line restaurant called Mediterraneo that weaves through the center of the property with two outdoor patios. And then there’s Stonehaus—a mostly outdoor wine bar with its own vineyard, over 50 wines by the glass, several outdoor service areas, and a giant pizza oven that produces some of the most memorable cheese pies in the county.

Built in 2012 on the far end of the property, where it’s surrounded by grapevines—a rare scene in this part of Southern California—Stonehaus was conceived to serve flights of wines. It has since evolved into the number-one hangout in Ventura County, seven days a week from midday ‘til night. Meant to also be inclusive of our furry friends, this canine-happy haunt offers walking paths, dog-friendly drinking fountains, and plenty of opportunity for pups to socialize.

When KTLA reporter and weathercaster Kacey Montoya wanted to hold a fundraiser for shelter dogs, her first thought for the location was the Westlake Village Inn property. Pups ‘N Pinot became an event, and several shelter groups brought their spectacular and hopeful mutts for potential adoption. *The Tasting Panel* jumped at the chance to *stay, sit, and write it all down.* [📄](#)



The proceeds from the sale of Stonehaus’ private label Pinot Noir and Pinot Grigio went toward the Pups ‘N Pinot fundraiser.



KTLA reporter and weathercaster Kacey Montoya championed Pups ‘N Pinot. Her charity organization, Fix’n Fidos, provides assistance to low-income pet owners in spaying and neutering their dogs. On October 17, 2021, her golf-tournament fundraiser alone raised more than \$150,000 for the cause.



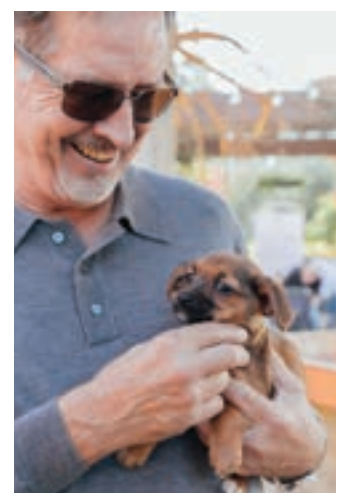
Travis Welton, director of operations for Stonehaus, said, “We’re honored to offer our space for this open adoption event.”



Tasting Panel publisher/editor-in-chief Meridith May with her rescue dog, Porter.



Trevan McClure performed for the crowd.



Tasting Panel COO/marketing Bill Brandel finds a friend.

Lyre's Non-Alcoholic Spirit Co. has made a foray into the agave category with its new Agave Blanco and Agave Reserva expressions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LYRE'S NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRIT CO.

The highest form of Flattery

LYRE'S NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRIT CO. RELEASES TWO AGAVE EXPRESSIONS JUST AHEAD OF THE NEW YEAR

story by **Jessie Birschbach**
photos by **Rafael Peterson**

I can't say that I have personally ordered a nonalcoholic cocktail, but I can say that when I think of nonalcoholic spirits, I think of Lyre's. Perhaps that's thanks to the Australian company's marketing savvy, but I also had an experience involving Lyre's that I've never forgotten: In 2019, the same year the brand was founded, I helped to organize our sister publication *The SOMM Journal's* Concours d'Spirits competition at SommCon in San Diego, California. I reluctantly slotted the Lyre's Apéritif Rosso into a flight of vermouths, concerned that it might not be fair to compare a single nonalcoholic product to a lineup of boozy counterparts—an opinion I thought the judging would certainly reflect.



Carlo Bracci Devoti, co-founder of Tahona Bar and its adjoining speakeasy, Oculito 477, in San Diego, CA, serves Lyre's senior VP of North America Joshua Carlos a Margarita featuring Lyre's Agave Blanco and Lyre's Orange Sec.

Yet Lyre's ended up leaving with a double gold medal, and to this day, I can still smell the citrusy, vanilla-laden vermouth variant in the glass: In disbelief, I rushed to pour myself a sliver of the Apéritif Rosso after learning of the judges' assessment. It was nearly a dead ringer for sweet red vermouth, and I assumed it would be all the more uncanny when featured in a cocktail.

Now, not even three years later, Lyre's is already the most awarded nonalcoholic spirit brand in the world and offers a substantial portfolio in over 30 markets worldwide as it caters to a growing segment of the beverage industry. My own curiosity about the brand was recently piqued anew when I learned it was releasing both joven/silver and reposado variants just in time for the new year. In truth, as a tequila enthusiast, I wondered what had taken so long.

Joshua Carlos, the company's charismatic senior vice president of North America, has an answer: "We purposefully take our time to launch products into each market that make sense. If it was solely a revenue-based

model, we should have launched a vodka, as it is the bestselling category of spirits in America. However, our passion [for] and dedication [to] being category leaders dictate our new product development. We now feel as though we can truly pay homage to my personal favorite space of spirits with our line of agave mimics. To a true aficionado, we may be scrutinized for our approach to replication; however, I cannot wait to make my dad his first Margarita in many decades" (see recipe on page 98).

Dubbed the Agave Blanco and Agave Reserva, the new expressions were conceived via the same meticulous methods by which all Lyre's spirits are created: Rather than simply removing the alcohol, the brand's team built each profile from the ground up, even going so far as to replicate the sensation delivered by an alcoholic drink. The final product is the result of layering various extracts, distillates, and all-natural essences sourced from around the world. According to sommelier David Murphy, who landed a job as the company's flavor architect in 2019,

"We were aiming to deliver [an] agave blanco spirit that has a lifted bouquet of agave, coriander, saline, earth, and pepper. The finish is full and the burn runs through the palate, building as it goes. The mouthfeel is generous and has good weight, perfect for mixing into your favorite tequila drink. For the Lyre's Agave Reserva, we have increased the texture" compared to that of the Blanco, replicating the tannic mouthfeel often derived from barrel aging, "and introduced some lovely oak components, offering a richer-flavored drinking experience."

Like the other Lyre's expressions, the agave bottlings are meant to shine in cocktails, and as demand for nonalcoholic options continues to grow, beverage professionals are rising to the challenge. For her part, Lyre's regional manager Maria Denton takes advantage of her background as the former director of the Society of Wine Educators by helping to get the trade up to speed, noting that the approach to tasting—let alone selling, storing, and mixing—zero-proof products is different from that of traditional spirits.



Regarding product development, Lyre's senior VP of North America Joshua Carlos says the company's team members "purposefully take our time to launch products into each market that make sense."

"Beverage directors and buyers have been amazingly receptive, when even a year ago they would have discounted the need for nonalcoholic spirits," she says. "Lyre's is especially attractive because it is easy to understand our products and how to use them. Our nonalcoholic spirit bottlings are direct stand-ins for their alcoholic cousins, and the sheer range of our selections makes it easy to have a lot of choices for the retail customer and superior versatility for mixologists."

Just ask Carlo Bracci Devoti. The

Oaxacan-inspired restaurant he co-founded in Old Town San Diego, Tahona Bar, has thrived since it began spreading the gospel of mezcal and Mexican culture in the neighborhood in 2018. His guests are asking for nonalcoholic cocktails now more than ever: "It's a growing trend that I've embraced very quickly myself. I've been an active drinker for a long time, and the signs of aging are coming quicker than they should," he jokes. "Even before I was introduced to Lyre's, I used to play with Italian bitter sodas to give

my guests a placebo effect, making them feel [as though] there is actual alcohol in their cocktail."

Devoti and his team are now serving a Lyre's Agave Blanco-based mixed drink at Tahona as well as at its adjoining speakeasy, Oculito 477. Drawing inspiration from its historic surroundings—including El Campo Santo Cemetery, founded in 1849, across the street—Oculito 477 pays homage to the history of cocktails, which, of course, includes the temperance movement.

The Lyre's team views themselves less as arbiters of that movement than as supporters of the power of selection: As Carlos says, "I don't think we have created a trend or done anything more than offered consumers a choice. For the first time ever, you can have the adult flavor profile of a cocktail without booze. After all, it's not the ABV in one's glass that matters. What truly matters is enjoying the moment you are in with the people you love, sipping on something that brings a smile to your face." **LT**

Lyre's Classic Margarita

- ▶ 1½ oz. Lyre's Agave Blanco
- ▶ ½ oz. Lyre's Orange Sec
- ▶ ½ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- ▶ 1 dash orange bitters (optional)

Shake ingredients briefly with ice and fine strain into a coupette with a half salt rim. Garnish with a lime wedge.



PIVOT for the PLANET

DRAKE'S ORGANIC SPIRITS
APPLIES ITS CARBON-
NEGATIVE APPROACH TO
THE RTD AND FROZEN
BEVERAGE CATEGORIES

by **Natasha Swords**



Drake's Organic Spirits has created a new health-and-wellness category of ultra-premium spirits that aims to be both better for consumers and better for the planet—not only by exclusively using USDA Organic ingredients but also by becoming the first and only spirits line in the world to also be certified as Non-GMO Project Verified, gluten-free, vegan, and kosher. With an annual capacity of 12 million cases and distribution in 46 U.S. states and five countries, Drake's expanded the category it invented with its Premium Vodka (\$19/750-mL), White Rum (\$16/750-mL), and Spiced Rum (\$16/750-mL) by innovating two RTD categories: the “adult popsicle” in 2018 and the boxed cocktail in 2020.

Drake's was the first mover in the frozen cocktail space in the form of Spiked Ice, which comes in three flavors: Mango Vodka Punch, Black

Cherry Limeade, and Watermelon Tini, all 12% ABV. There are nine 100-milliliter packets per box, which retails for \$15. “The spiked ice category is worth \$1 billion today,” says Mark Anderson, Drake's Organic Spirits founder and CEO. “Consumers want ‘freeze and eat’ solutions when they go on hikes, picnics, on a boat . . . that sort of thing. We responded to that with Drake's Organic Spiked Ice. Each packet is only 100 calories and consistent with the good-for-you, good-for-the-planet practices we hold so dearly.”

Next, the company innovated Drake's Organic BOXTAILS (\$19/1.75-L), which come in five flavors and are handcrafted with organic fruit juice and extracts: Black Cherry Limeade, Mango Punch, Minted Mojito, Perfect Margarita, and Watermelon Tini. Each BOXTAIL contains 14 pre-mixed cocktails that have approximately 5 grams of sugar per serving, and at 12% ABV—twice that of most traditional hard seltzers—they're completely shelf-stable. What's more, thanks to eco-friendly recycled paper packaging, each container can be composted or recycled—preventing the equivalent of five seltzer cans from eventually ending up in a landfill.

The company is especially proud of its carbon-negative footprint. “Our

cane alcohol comes from sugarcane, which . . . takes CO₂ out of the air and puts oxygen back in,” Anderson explains. “The more we grow, the better it is for the environment. Also, sugarcane yields two crops a year for four years before replanting is required. This is kinder on the soil and uses [fewer] resources.”

Anderson, a nature lover who grew up on a farm in North Dakota, encourages more brands to follow in his carbon-negative footsteps. When asked if that's counterintuitive for business, he says, “The more brands that move to organic and sustainable practices, the better for the planet and for the consumer. And you know what? Their products will taste better too.”

Dark 'N' Stormy

- ▶ 2 oz. Drake's Organic Spiced Rum
- ▶ 2 oz. ginger beer
- ▶ ½ oz. fresh lime juice

Fill a glass with ice cubes and add the rum, ginger beer, and lime juice. Stir with a barspoon and garnish with a fresh lime wedge.

All Heart, NO ALCOHOL

MILLER FAMILY WINE
COMPANY INTRODUCES
HAND ON HEART, ITS
BREAKTHROUGH ENTRY
INTO THE NONALCOHOLIC
CATEGORY

by Christina Barrueta

*W*idely acknowledged as one of the premier winegrowing families of California's Central Coast with a farming legacy dating back to 1871, the Millers have added another label to their impressive portfolio. Recognizing the explosive growth in the low- and no-alcohol beverage category, they have created a dealcoholized wine that retains the distinctive nuances of the fruit.

Due to an increased focus on health and wellness among consumers, there has been a resurgence in low- and nonalcoholic beverages of late. According to the International Wines and Spirits Record (IWSR) Drinks Market Analysis, the U.S. registered a 30+% increase in the segment in 2020, a trend that is forecast to show similar growth globally by 2024. "The genesis of the program was the clear consumer demand," says Tommy Gaeta, the Miller Family Wine Company's marketing director. "While consumers were really looking for these options, we hadn't seen a viable challenger in the nonalcoholic wine space."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Celebrity chef Cat Cora has partnered with the Miller Family Wine Company to promote Hand on Heart.

For winemaker Jonathan Nagy and his team, the priority was to create a product that fulfilled avid wine drinkers' expectations. "We tried to capture all the aspects that go into wine—the tannins, the structure, the acid, and the fruit—to create an experience that partners with the food that you're eating," he explains. Also involved in the development of the brand was promotional partner and celebrity chef Cat Cora. "I am thrilled to be involved with the Miller Family Wine Company and Hand on Heart," says the acclaimed *Iron Chef* star and restaurateur. "For some time, I've been on a mission to find a nonalcoholic wine for people like myself who seek superb flavors and want to enjoy a delicious wine, even in the dry times, and the Miller Family team has developed a product and a brand that I can confidently stand behind."

Geared toward the "sober-curious," Hand on Heart fills a void for wine drinkers seeking a change of pace and a balanced lifestyle, such as the growing number of partakers in movements like Dry January. According to the IWSR report, the most popular occasion to consume low- and nonalcoholic beverages is when relaxing at home. "As a wine lover, I enjoy a glass of wine, but to maintain balance and stay focused on healthy habits, I like having low- or no-alcohol beverages on hand," says Cora. "Nonalcoholic wine is perfect for those times when I want to enjoy a 'wine occasion' but I just don't want the alcohol."

"The real linchpin is starting with well-grown grapes," says Nagy, who sourced fruit from leading wine regions across California. "I looked upon it as a challenge [to come] up with a product that is representative of what can be enjoyed with food." To that end, the team tapped the experts at BevZero, a Santa Rosa, California-based company known for its innovation in producing superior-quality low- and nonalcoholic wine, beer, and hard cider. Its cutting-edge GoLo technology involves a one-pass tech-



PHOTO: MACDUFFE EVERTON

Winemaker Jonathan Nagy was inspired to develop the Hand on Heart brand as a "representative of what can be enjoyed with food" in the nonalcoholic space.



The Hand on Heart Cabernet Sauvignon was designed to pair with pastas, burgers, and other hearty dishes.

nique utilizing vacuum distillation and molecular segregation to remove the alcohol without diminishing the aroma, flavor, and mouthfeel of the grapes. “It’s a process that really preserves the essence and aromatics of the wine,” says Nagy. After a year of lab trials and tasting tests, Hand on Heart has launched with a trio of expressions: a full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon, a fruity Chardonnay, and a crisp Rosé.

“Jonathan and his team did a fantastic job crafting a premium product that, as much as is possible, drinks like a normal wine and captures all the wine cues needed to satisfy that consumer desire,” says Gaeta; whether poured with meals, during festive social situations, or as a way to wind down at the end of a long day, Hand on Heart fills its role in the wine-centric lifestyle. “As a chef, I am particularly drawn to these wines because they are so food friendly and pair so well with an array of dishes,” says Cora. “While you may not be drinking your standard, full-octane Cabernet or Chardonnay, these wines still interact with the food as a regular table wine would.” She suggests pairing the Cabernet Sauvignon with a juicy burger or savory pasta dish; enjoying the Chardonnay as the perfect partner for roasted chicken, cedar-planked salmon, or paella; and pouring the rosé to complement the Mediterranean flavors of Greek stuffed eggplant or watermelon and feta salad.

Similar care has gone into the design of the Hand on Heart label, which

depicts a hand gesture associated with truthfulness in intent and purpose. “It represents our commitment and promise to bring high-quality wine that delivers on the occasion we’re trying to satisfy, but doing so in a very health-conscious way,” explains Gaeta. Cora believes they’ve succeeded. “That’s why I am thrilled to showcase this line of great-tasting and food-friendly non-alcoholic wines,” she says, “that truly meet the needs of both wine lovers and health-conscious individuals, all without sacrificing quality.” **91**



Salads and light Mediterranean fare are a match for Hand on Heart Rosé.

Tasting Notes

Publisher’s note: In the past two years, I have received an abundance of waters, sodas, and nonalcoholic wines and spirits. We are always asked for scores, but we do not score these products in the same way as we do alcohol-based beverages. The nonalcoholic category is scored on merit—flavor profile, mouthfeel—and by comparison: When I taste with editors, we always ask not only “Would we buy this?” and “Would we feel comfortable selling it as a retailer?” but also “How does it compare to what we have already tasted?” Hand on Heart came through with authenticity of flavor. We tasted it chilled and non-chilled and paired it with food as well.

Hand on Heart 2020 Chardonnay, California (\$15) Even without alcohol, this expressive white indulges in a fruity and floral array of yellow apple, ripe melon, and a twist of lemon. Chamomile flowers perk up the mid-palate while honeyed Anjou pear highlights a clean finish. **92**
—*Meridith May*

Hand on Heart 2020 Rosé, California (\$15) A chorus of apricot and sweet root vegetables—carrot and yellow beet—lend a complex tone and a ray of sunshine to this crisp and refreshing nonalcoholic pink sipper. Juicy and bright, with fine acidity, it is primed for food pairing. **91** —*M.M.*

Hand on Heart 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15) Ribbons of freshly picked blueberry are just ripe to the taste. Semisweet chocolate chimes in on a dry palate that shows cooling acidity—proof that a nonalcoholic wine can be well balanced. There’s even a hint of earth and stoniness on the satisfying finish. **92** —*M.M.*



GIN *is in*

OUR LATEST **BACK TO {SPIRITS}**
SCHOOL SESSION SHOWED WHY THIS
WHITE SPIRIT IS ON THE RISE

by **Stefanie Schwalb**

We can't think of a better way to celebrate our Gin-uary issue than with a wrap-up of the most recent installment of our educational Back to {Spirits} School webinar series. "A New Year for Gin," which took place in late October, offered a look at the art of gin production, providing intel on its history and methodology as well as modern industry trends. Presented in partnership with the Florida International University Bacardi Center of Excellence and co-sponsored by Lyre's Non-Alcoholic Spirit Co., the session was moderated by *SOMM Journal* VP of education Lars Leicht and co-host Bacardi Center director Brian Connors, who were joined by five brand representatives bringing a range of gins to market.



DENTED BRICK DISTILLERY

The Great Basin is the largest area of contiguous endorheic (closed) watersheds in North America, running through most of Nevada, half of Utah, and sections of Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, and California. Wanting to pay homage to its region, the Utah-based Dented Brick Distillery aptly named its featured product Great Basin Bristlecone Gin.

The name of the company, meanwhile, "came from [one of] the original well drillers who lived on site at the distillery," explained head distiller Harley Norwood. "They found the artesian well that is below us that feeds our mashes and our spirits program. There was a gun shootout [near the building at one point] and some [of the] dented bricks were retrieved [afterward], so that's where the name came from."

Year round, the well provides Wasatch Mountains snowmelt for the brand's mash water, while the eponymous plant is incorporated into the botanical bill. *Pinus aristata*, also known as the Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine, can live for 2,000–3,000 years; the distilling team uses its spruce tips as well as Albanian juniper berries, angelica root, coriander, lavender flower, orange peel, and lemon peel. "For fermentation, we use 80% rye and 20% hard winter wheat, both locally grown, with our artesian well water that's rich in nutrients for yeast health," said Norwood. "After conversion, we do a 66-hour fermentation and send the wash over to the low-wines column to strip out the alcohol produced during fermentation. The collected low wines and previous batch of heads and tails are charged in our hybrid pot still/vodka column and distilled all the way up to neutral—and a little below—so we can get some nice mouthfeel."



After a 48-hour maceration period at 100 proof, the botanical bill is added and the team does another distillation; then, said Norwood, "We'll pull off a good spirit and reduce it to 90 proof. That provides us with a beautiful plum scent and [a] textured spirit with well-balanced pine, floral, vanilla, key lime, and white pepper [notes]."

LYRE'S NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRIT CO.

"Gin is a tonic for the times," said an enthusiastic Kyle Billings, director of marketing, North America, for Lyre's Non-Alcoholic Spirit Co. "Some of my personal favorite cocktails include the Corpse Reviver No. 2, the Aviation, and the Clover Club. There's a ton of things that you can do with these cocktails, and we're thrilled that Lyre's can offer a nonalcoholic option for people."

With its Dry London Spirit, Lyre's has captured the essence of a classic gin for use in numerous drinks. Billings introduced Timothy Rita, who serves as the Lyre's brand ambassador in Las Vegas, to the webinar to showcase the product's flavor profile and versatility by making zero-proof variations on a Saturn and a Negroni.



Zooming in on location from The Golden Tiki in Sin City's Chinatown, Rita noted that even though rum reigns supreme in the realm of Polynesian-inspired bars, the Saturn is actually reemerging in popularity. Created in 1967 by a California bartender named J. "Popo" Galsini to include falernum, orgeat, passion fruit syrup, and lemon

juice as well as gin, it's been beloved by bartenders who put their own personal touches on it ever since. "Why? Because it's made with gin," he says. "I love rum like everyone else—and like every other pirate in the tiki world—but when you get to turn someone on to a gin cocktail in general and a tiki one [in particular], there's wins all around." Rita's version, the Rings of Saturn, featured a flaming cherry-and-peach ring garnish.

For his take on a Negroni, Rita combined Lyre's Apéritif Rosso and Italian Spritz with the Dry London Spirit. "Just when you thought you had all the stories you could tell about a Negroni, here's another one," he said. Called the Viking Negroni, it's also made with a nondairy frozen dessert known, in Rita's words, "at the world-famous Golden Tiki" as Dole Whip. Aside from his vibrant, gorgeous presentation, Rita was just as enthusiastic about working with Lyre's: "I love that we can do a nonalcoholic [take on a] Negroni." Not to be outdone, Billings revealed that a new gin-inspired expression will be released by the company in the coming months.

DEATH'S DOOR GIN



Distilled and bottled by the Wisconsin-based Dancing Goat Distillery, Death's Door Gin was named for the strait that links Lake Michigan and Green Bay between the northern tip of the Door County peninsula and Washington Island. "There's the most freshwater shipwrecks there of anywhere, and

it comes from people coming in to try to supply Chicago via water," said Dancing Goat VP of distilling and innovation Nick Maas. "We like to say it took a lot of treacherous courage and resilience to complete passage," he added while likening those traits to "the character of our spirit."

Although Death's Door Gin didn't originate at Dancing Goat, the distillery fought hard to keep it in Wisconsin after the original producer went bankrupt, considering it an important emblem of the state. "We don't like to revisit too much of the complicated story of its brand life," Maas said, "but basically, [it] started as an economic development program for Washington Island. Originally, they were [trying] to get wheat and juniper on the island to bring jobs there and reinvigorate it. Our mission and journey now is trying to put all those elements into place," including terroir. "Today, Dancing Goat Distillery not only forages wild juniper from the island but seeds the botanical there, [though it's] a rather small component of the botanical basket."

As one of the first craft spirits in the U.S., steam-infused Death's Door Gin is based on an intentionally simple recipe that also includes coriander and fennel: The juniper activates the palate, the coriander carries citrus-like flavors across it, and the fennel provides a cooling finish. "If I do my job right, that creates a much more bright, beautiful, and robust bouquet than just three notes," explained Maas.

According to the seminal 2008 work *The Flavor Bible*, he added, the three ingredients have a relationship known as a "flavor affinity." "What [that] ends up doing is triggering actual hormonal emotional responses," asserted Maas, adding that the concept can be employed in making cocktails.

BOMBAY GIN

“Bombay Sapphire was . . . key to sparking the gin revolution in the late 1980s; the whole brand in itself is focused around innovation,” said Bombay’s New York brand ambassador, Zoë van der Grinten. “We source all of our botanicals from Ivano Tonutti. He’s our master of botanicals, and as far as we’re aware, we are the only gin brand that has someone with that title. Ivano has created these relationships directly with the farmers and suppliers that allow us not only to get the most consistent and best-quality botanicals but [to] really [focus] on the terroir,” an example being the juniper sourced from a Tuscan co-op that’s the backbone of Bombay. Once gathered, the botanicals are handed off to Bombay’s master distiller, Dr. Anne Brock, who uses a unique vapor-distillation process for production: The botanicals are suspended above the neutral base spirit, and as the alcohol vapors pass through, they extract flavors in a way that allows the terroir to shine. The result is a clean, fresh, and bright gin that’s perfect for cocktails.

Bombay Dry was one of the fastest-growing gins on the market when it launched in 1959 to appeal to the American palate. “It was really popular with the three-Martini-lunch crowd,” said van der Grinten. It features eight classic botanicals, all sustainably sourced, including juniper berries, orris, and coriander. These are also found in Bombay Sapphire, which contains cubeb berries and grains of paradise as well. “Bombay Sapphire is a bit drier and spicier, with pine and lemon zest on the nose and a signature peppery finish on the palate,” she explained. “It was launched in 1987, and we worked with Michel Roux. He was also the marketing mastermind of Absolut, but he really helped to bring gin back on the scene with Bombay Sapphire. We showed up with this iconic blue bottle and the name, and it’s kind of hard to miss.”

Fast-forward to 2021, when the company released its first new product in ten years: Bombay Bramble. The inspiration comes from the Bramble cocktail, which was originally created by the late Dick Bradsell with Bombay Sapphire—“a wonderful connection,” noted van der Grinten. “[We] start with Bombay Dry as the base and blend it with a rich fruit infusion made by the Merlet family [of liqueur producers] and Ivano. This bespoke infusion not only lets the botanicals and the gin shine but allows that fruit to really speak for itself. It’s a bit more complex and a bit more time-consuming, but we think it’s important.”

Using only 100% natural flavorings and colors, Bombay Bramble has no added sugar and contains only 9 grams of residual sugar per liter from the fruit, “so you have more sophisticated flavored gin,” said van der Grinten. “It’s a bit cleaner and a lot more versatile.”

Also newsworthy? This year, Bombay Sapphire is on track to become the first major gin brand certified by Ecocert for using 100% sustainably sourced botanicals. “We’re always looking toward that future and what we can continuously keep doing,” van der Grinten concluded. “I think it continues the conversation about how Bombay is founded in innovation and always looking toward the future.”





NEW AMSTERDAM STRATUSPHERE GIN

New Amsterdam Stratusphere Gin launched in 2007 with the goal of elevating gin to new heights, from the botanicals its team selects to its approach to the 400-year-old practice of distilling it. Its portfolio includes two products: New Amsterdam Stratusphere Original and London Dry.

The former features a botanical bill of juniper berry, orange, lime, and vanilla; master distiller David Warter explained that the mix is meant to emphasize citrus. “We are big believers in the new American style,” he said, “so our citrus note is prominently coming forward. That way, when you make a mixed drink with our original New Amsterdam Stratusphere Original, you’re going to sense that juniper—but that citrus is competing with it. It’s got a great, strong orange and lime note.”

The latter, meanwhile, is made from a range of botanical oils, including juniper berry, coriander, cassia, lime, and angelica root. “A couple of years back, we decided to launch our own London Dry, and this is where the geeky side of me comes out,” Warter revealed. “We took a 1-gallon still [and] 35 different botanicals [and] started doing combinations, having some fun and tasting it all.”

Using the analogy of an all-star sports team, Warter noted that roots such as orris and angelica are equivalent to the glue player—the person who brings everyone together and complements their strengths. “To me that’s the key,” he added. “We said, ‘How do you get that balance?’ The balance is [in the] right amount of the root.”

Because New Amsterdam Stratusphere Gin is part of the E. & J. Gallo portfolio, Warter and his team pride themselves on using the resources they have to the best of their capabilities. “Not only did we do all those distillations, but we did chemical analyses in each of those distillations,” he said. “When we found that right recipe, we then analyzed every single distillation on a GC [gas chromatograph] to make sure that not only are we tasting everything but we’re also trying to figure out exactly how to make sure that we have the right sourcing.” The team analyzes every single one of its key ingredients as well, added Warter, to make sure that when customers open up a bottle of New Amsterdam Stratusphere Gin, they know it will taste the same as the last bottle (and the next).

BENTLY HERITAGE ESTATE DISTILLERY

Nevada may not be the epicenter of America’s distilling scene, but if Christopher and Camille Bently—the ambitious proprietors behind Bently Heritage Estate Distillery—have anything to say about it, that might be poised to change. Located in Minden just east of South Lake Tahoe, the producer sources 100% of its grains from its sister company, Bently Ranch. It then distills and bottles its portfolio in a former creamery built in 1916 that was renovated to meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification standards before the brand made its debut in 2019.

Comprising five botanicals, its triple-distilled Juniper Grove American Dry Gin is akin to a traditional London Dry gin, with bright citrus and juniper notes. Its Atrium Gin is also triple distilled but skews New World, owing its bold, floral-forward character and hints of grapefruit, lavender, and spice to its profile of ten botanicals. Produced in small batches, it finishes in copper pot stills. Together, the expressions exemplify Bently Heritage’s mission of melding time-honored distilling techniques with a sustainable, terroir-driven approach that highlights the estate’s proximity to the Sierra Nevada mountain range.



WINTER FIZZ

- ▶ 1½ oz. Juniper Grove American Dry Gin
- ▶ 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- ▶ ¾ oz. simple syrup
- ▶ 1 egg white

Combine and dry shake ingredients, then add ice and shake until chilled. Strain into a Collins glass and top with soda water.

Bently Heritage Juniper Grove American Dry Gin, USA

(\$40) Grains from the Bently Heritage Estate plus five different botanicals make up this stellar dry gin. Aromas of juniper and spearmint rouse the senses. The mouthfeel is silky, with prickly notes of white pepper calmed by creamy vanilla. Pine cone and lavender are piqued by lime zest, and on the finish, a hint of roasted coffee leaves a lasting touch. **95** —*Meridith May*

Bently Heritage Juniper Grove Atrium Gin, USA (\$44)

A squeeze of lemon and a spray of pine hits the nose of this complex gin. The palate shows peach blossom, chocolate mint, and jasmine on entry before brightly lit notes of lemon drop candy are wrapped in sinewy hints of white pepper. Spicy and heady. **92** —*M.M.*

ZEST FOR LIFE

UNCLE VAL'S GIN HONORS ITS EPICUREAN NAMESAKE WITH A NEW EXPRESSION

by Ruth Tobias



According to his grandnephew August Sebastiani, the president of wine-and-spirits négociant 3 Badge Beverage Corporation, Valerio Cecchetti was an avid gardener who grew his own fruits, vegetables, and herbs and who loved to cook for his family. He was, in short, a bon vivant worthy of the honor of a namesake spirit—particularly a line of botanically driven gins.

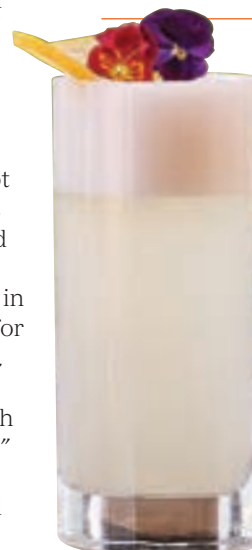
Explains Sebastiani, “When we introduced this brand back in 2012, the craft spirits movement was just taking off. To a great extent, the clear spirit category had yet to be defined. We thought that a botanically infused gin could fill that space. Also, at that time, the gin category was still rather traditional. We wanted to create unique tasting profiles that were unlike anything else on the market.” So they did just that, starting with Uncle Val’s Botanical Gin. Featuring a base spirit made with corn and water from the Sonoran Desert, distilled five times for purity, and boasting a lemon- rather than juniper-centric flavor profile, it offered bartenders an opportunity to experiment with citrus-forward recipes “at a time when mixology was start-

ing to become imperative in [every] bar,” he says. To further the brand’s reach, it was soon joined by the savory Peppered Gin and the more soothing, cucumber- and rose petal-infused Restorative Gin. And now there’s a new expression for straight sippers and cocktail connoisseurs alike to play with: Uncle Val’s Zested Gin.

Launched last summer, Zested “complements the existing Uncle Val’s lineup [but] also distinguishes itself from the others with its fresh citrus profile balanced against a spicy sensation of white pepper,” says Sebastiani. “While Botanical uses lemon, sage, lavender, cucumber, and juniper, Zested uses bergamot orange as its primary botanical as well as coriander, barley malt, and juniper to add herbaceous notes.” The result, he adds, “fits perfectly in a Gin Fizz [see recipe]. However, for those looking to be more creative, it can even replace the orange component in some cocktails, such as a Margarita, for a unique twist.”

With a 94-point score from *The Tasting Panel*, Zested has received “very positive feedback” from the

trade as well as consumers, notes Sebastiani, whose team plans to increase distribution to almost all 50 states within the next year even as they eye their next expression. After all, he says, based on the response to the new release, “We see that there is a demand for . . . gins with bold flavor profiles. Opportunities to bring new Uncle Val’s line extensions with new botanicals are never off the table.” **Z**



ZESTED GIN FIZZ

- 2 oz. Uncle Val’s Zested Gin
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- ¾ oz. simple syrup
- 1 fresh egg white
- Club soda

Add the gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and egg white to a shaker and vigorously dry shake for 15 seconds. Add 3–4 ice cubes and shake until well chilled. Double strain into a chilled Collins glass and top with club soda.



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

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

1 TALKIE

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

2 TALKIES

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

3 TALKIES

Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. Great for retail.

4 TALKIES

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

5 TALKIES

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

WINES



Fetzer 2020 Pinot Grigio, California (\$8) Blended with 17% French Colombard, this dashing white offers sweet stone fruit and lime seasoned with basil. The crisp finish keeps you coming back for more. **89**

FETZER VINEYARDS



JM Fonseca 2020 Twin Vines, Vinho Verde, Portugal (\$10) High-wire acidity spritzes the palate as vanilla bean and passion fruit set it alight with a squeeze of lime. 10% ABV. **89**

SHARE A SPLASH WINE CO.



Trivento 2020 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$11) Aromas of grilled meat and blackberry are stunning. A splash of juicy red fruit in an herbaceous center sets the tone for the palate, while dried lavender, rhubarb, and mocha leave a memorable impression on the finish. **89**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Gnarly Head 2019 Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi (\$12) Brushy aromas and flavors and a sturdy body are the hallmarks of this Zin grown on old, untamed, indeed gnarled vines. Toasted graham cracker, cocoa, and cedar merge with blue plum to hearty, juicy effect; French and American oak impart creaminess and spice. A tribute to Lodi! **90**

DELICATO FAMILY WINES



Ménage à Trois NV Hot Pink Sweet Rosé Blend, California (\$14) From the brand’s Sweet Collection, this unique pink sipper starts with a rich white blend that includes French Colombard as well as natural strawberry, raspberry, and pineapple essences. A glorious mouthfeel of sparkling acidity turns up the volume, and the flavors came across like just-picked summer fruit. **90**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Hook or Crook Cellars 2018 Reserve Field Blend, Lodi (\$13) Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Merlot, and Petit Verdot make up this concentrated red. With notes of blackberry on a mocha backdrop, it’s a smooth, medium-bodied operator that offers round, easygoing tannins surrounded by toasty cedar, ripe mulberry, and an earthy finish. **90**





Flat Top Hills 2020 Rosé, California (\$14) Peach, melon, and a hint of basil lead into slate and floral tones on the palate of this lovely blend of Grenache and Carignan. Tart strawberry lingers on the tongue for an intensely bright, clean finish. **89**

C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



Cline Family Cellars 2019 Cashmere Red Blend, California (\$15) This marvelous blend of Mourvèdre, Syrah, and Grenache showcases spiced plum, black pepper, garden herbs, cinnamon, and cedar. Just-ripened cherry and cherry pith add texture to the overall bright profile. **90**



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

OAK RIDGE WINERY



Nola Grace Cellars NV Carbonated Pinot Grigio, California (\$15) This vivacious sparkler incorporates Chardonnay, Moscato, and other dry white varieties into its base of Pinot Grigio. At only 10% ABV, it is light and lively, with Anjou pear, a honeyed veneer, and a crisp body. Cookie dough intertwines with lemon blossom and wet stone midway. **89**



SCOTTO CELLARS



Cannonball 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15) Following a medium-bodied entry, gentle tannins meld with spiced plum and powdery mocha in this easy-drinking, uncomplicated red. **89**

SHARE A SPLASH WINE CO.



The Better Half 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16) Scents of cut grass, grapefruit zest, and basil draw you into this charmer at first sip, which delivers a glaze of pineapple, a pinch of oregano, a hint of spearmint, and a punch of salinity. **91**

JULES TAYLOR WINES



Cline Family Cellars 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$15) Edgy and crisp, with white grapefruit sidling up to searing acidity alongside impressive notes of yellow apple, dill, and guava. White pepper dots the citrusy finish. **89**



Carmen 2019 Gran Reserva Carménère, DO Colchagua, Chile (\$16) Plump, juicy notes of plum meet savory tobacco leaf and dried lavender; anise and bittersweet chocolate add plushness to the texture. Layered, balanced, and beautiful, this is a true tribute to the Colchagua Valley. **92**

SANTA RITA WINES



Infamous Gold 2020 Cabernet Blanc, Vin de France (\$19) Jewel-like flavors of yellow raisin, spiced citrus, honeyed pear, and ginger precede banana on the mid-palate, which comes across with a subtle sweetness while adding weight and dimension. Good acidity resurrects notes of dried stone fruit. **90**



Three Pears 2020 Chenin Blanc-Viognier, California (\$14) Sourced primarily from the complex, mineral-driven soils of the Sacramento Delta, this blend of 80% Chenin Blanc and 20% Viognier aged in stainless steel. The profile of the Chenin Blanc reminds us of the Loire Valley, its stony, steely character coming through with delicacy, while the Viognier sends off a bouquet of honeysuckle, chamomile, and ginger. Aromatic, bright, and well balanced, with a clean vanilla note on the finish. **92**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES





Nielson 2018 Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara County (\$19) With its nose of cinnamon, cherry, and rose, this inviting Pinot Noir shows brilliant minerality and a light, airy mouthfeel. A touch of white pepper seasons cherry, cranberry, and red tea. **91**

JACKSON FAMILY WINES



60 Souls 2020 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$19) Earth and tobacco mingle with dark cherry, tree bark, and beetroot within a lush texture, adding up to a bright wine with soul. Aged ten months in neutral French oak. **90**

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINES



Duca di Salaparuta 2018 Nerello Mascalese di Làvico, IGT Terre Siciliane, Italy (\$20) Fragrant and lithe, this is a whisper of a wine, with rose-petal delicacy. High-toned acidity matches notes of Queen Anne cherry, peach, and a hint of peppermint before an anise-touched finish. **92**

DISARONNO



Requiem 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$20) A bouquet of blackberry, tar, and espresso denotes a bold palate. However deep, dark, and concentrated this wine may be, with its grainy, chewy tannins, it's a well-crafted and balanced surprise that immediately overdelivers for the price, its juicy core revealing anise, dried violets, and dark chocolate. Plush dark plum and cedar make for a fine finish. **92**

VALKYRIE SELECTIONS



Michael David Winery 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Lodi (\$20) Anjou pear, honeysuckle, white tea, and vanilla custard combine for a mouthwateringly tart start to this crisp and cooling wine. High acidity and a touch of sweet basil leaf help the notes of key lime on the finish to burst into song. **90**



John Legend Signature Series by LVE 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, North Coast (\$20) Ripe boysenberry surges forward on the nose and palate. A thread of vanilla makes its way through toasty cedar before dry, supple tannins leave a note of licorice and espresso on the finish. **90**

BOISSET COLLECTION



Averaen 2019 Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$22) This exciting, pretty 100% Chardonnay is sourced from five vineyard sites in the Willamette Valley and aged ten months in French oak. Tart lime and sweet caramel on the nose lead to a palate with an abundance of minerality. As slate underscores the crisp, dynamic acidity, oak notes lend body to bright citrus for an Old World feel. **91**

VALKYRIE SELECTIONS



La Braccasca 2018 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano DOCG, Tuscany, Italy (\$25) This blend of Sangiovese and Merlot offers refined notes of cherry, tomato leaf, and rhubarb. Earthy tones and white pepper uncloak an inherent grace that leaves the piquancy behind while bringing out a juicy quality. **92**

STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES



Angels Ink 2020 Pinot Noir, Monterey County (\$25) Blueberry runs rampant, generously dousing the palate; vanilla and cinnamon follow. Juicy and bright yet toasty, with teeth-coating plum-skin tannins, this wine also presents concentrated notes of cherry preserves. **92**

WENTE FAMILY ESTATES



Game Box 2020 Pinot Grigio, California (\$25/3-L box) Remember the days when you took the time to peruse the details on your favorite cereal box? Game Box is an amusing and time-consuming read: There are indeed games and puzzles to enjoy as well as a spout for dispensing. As for the wine, the blend of 82% Pinot Grigio, 16% French Colombard, and 2% Muscat Canelli is light and mineral-rich. Notes of fresh pears, white flowers, and lime sorbet make it a true player in the glass. 12% ABV. **91**

O'NEILL VINTNERS & DISTILLERS



Game Box 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$25/3-L box) This easy-dispensing box wine with a plethora of word games and puzzles printed on the package shows the true flavors of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot (blended with some Rubired and Syrah). Juicy and jammy blackberry notes are highlighted by a generous array of earth, cedar, coffee, and mocha. **90**

O'NEILL VINTNERS & DISTILLERS





Jules Taylor 2020 On the Quiet Sauvignon Blanc, Meadowbank Vineyard, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$28) Accented by white grapefruit, notes of banana, ginger, and meringue surface at the front of the palate before the mineral-driven core is enveloped in subtle creaminess. French in style, with a white-pepper finish. **92**



J. Lohr 2019 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$35)

This classic French oak-aged label is one of J. Lohr's finest Pinot Noirs. Composed of two Dijon clones grown on well-drained, loamy sand and gravelly cobblestone, it testifies to its quality with its concentrated flavor; silky mouthfeel, and stylistic elegance. A wash of cinnamon on roses is buoyant, almost weightless, on the palate. Red cherry and tomato leaf are accented by clove, basil, and dried sage. **94**



Twin Suns 2019 Reserve Zinfandel, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$30) Aged for 15 months in French oak, this kosher wine offers a satinated entry, with blackberry and molasses leading the way. Plush tannins and a slight jamminess join white pepper, a blueberry middle, and an acid structure that gives the wine its elegance. **91**

THE RIVER WINE



CULT 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$32) We found this blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 8% Petite Sirah, and 7% Syrah to be a balanced pleasure to sip. Mocha and blueberry perform well on a sandalwood stage. Dry, round tannins give way to a lengthy finish. **92**



Imperial Stag 2020 Reserva Iconic Red, Mendoza, Argentina (\$38) Rich, jammy, and juicy, this single-vineyard wine is composed of 55% Malbec and 45% Syrah. Violets shine on the nose as well as on the palate, where boysenberry bursts from a dense envelope of mocha and cedar. Peanut brittle sweetens on the finish. **93**



KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Kith & Kin 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$45) Dense and meaty against an anise and roasted-coffee backdrop, a parade of red and black fruit marches around the upright structure of this wine, which finishes with burnished cinnamon and cedar to keep the palate satisfied. **92**



ROUND POND ESTATE

SPIRITS



Darnley's Original London Dry Gin, Scotland (\$32)

From Scotland's east coast, this clean and uncomplicated gin features elderflower in its botanical profile. Distilled four times in copper pot stills, the 80-proof spirit shows aromas of vanilla spice and lemon blossom before the round and silky entry. White pepper, pine, sweet pear, grapefruit zest, and fresh elderflower offer a sensation of purity. **94**



PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL



G'Vine Floraison Gin, France (\$40)

Made with grapevine blossoms, French grape brandy, and ten aromatic spices and herbs, this spirit exudes aromas of pea tendrils, tangerine peel, and vanilla that lead to a more floral palate surrounded by vanilla bean, pistachio, spearmint, and a dot of white pepper. Cooling on the tongue, the white-petal notes combine with fresh herbs such as sweet basil and a hint of sage. **93**

MAISON VILLEVERT



Chardonnay

A BALANCE OF VALUE AND QUALITY

One of the most common varieties to show up for editorial review is Chardonnay. We sift through hundreds, maybe over a thousand, bottles every year—but lately, this abundance has given us pause. For all the diversity of labels, appellations, and styles, there was one common thread: a high caliber of taste and texture for the price. The following Chardonnays of note are \$20 and under (suggested retail).



Dark Horse 2019 Buttery Chardonnay, California (\$9) Scents of toasty oak and lemon cookie give way to a creamy mouthfeel that goes deep. Buttered popcorn, pineapple upside-down cake, and a dollop of crème fraîche leave us longing for that next sip. **90**

E. & J. GALLO



Concha y Toro Casillero del Diablo 2020 Reserva Chardonnay, Chile (\$12) One cannot ignore the extravagant scents of buttercream, daffodil, chamomile, and lemon oil that exude from the glass of this rich wine. The palate is equally complex, with a generous mouthfeel and toasty notes of banana, vanilla wafer, and ripe pineapple that culminate in a lengthy finish. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS





Four Vines 2020 Naked Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$11) Toasty croissant and crisp apple on both the nose and palate join notes of guava before a caramel finish. **89**

PURPLE BRANDS



Bonterra 2020 Chardonnay, California (\$14) From certified organically grown grapes (95% Chardonnay, 2% Viognier, 2% Muscat, and 1% other white), this vintage is possibly the shiniest yet from this label. Clean aromas of lemongrass and fresh linen fill the air. On the mouth-filling, juicy, and ripe palate, flavors of peach, papaya, vanilla, and lime are rich and vibrant. White flowers bloom on the finish. **90**



FETZER VINEYARDS



Flat Top Hills 2020 Chardonnay, California (\$14) Fermented in 50% stainless steel and 50% French oak, this aromatic white sure comes through. A nose of buttered pecan and ripe pineapple leads to a hint of stoniness on the palate. Clean notes of lime, guava, green apple, and toasty oak keep its balancing act interesting. **90**



C. MONDAVI & FAMILY



Heavenly Cream 2020 Chardonnay, Mendoza, Argentina (\$14) Buttery aromas include vanilla wafer, banana, and marzipan. The pineapple-papaya entry is clean and buoyant. Orange peel enhances the perky acidity, and the toasty finish of meringue and lemon cookie is delightful. **90**

GRUPO PEÑAFLORES



Cline Family Cellars 2020 Seven Ranchlands Chardonnay, Sonoma County (\$15) At a suggested pour of \$9 by the glass, this bright, distinguished wine is superbly appointed, with toasted oak, salted orange peel, and apricot scone tempered by a fine acid structure. An array of food-pairing possibilities strengthens its potential. Aged ten months in 40% French oak. **92**



Cannonball 2020 Chardonnay, California (\$15) Bright aromas of lemon oil and honeysuckle pave the way for notes of vanilla nougat, pineapple, and key lime on the clean, clear, and round palate. Pretty from start to finish, with just the right amount of toast and acidity. **89**



Frey Vineyards 2020 Sun & Rain Organic Chardonnay, Mendocino County (\$17) A pleasant nose of buttered croissant, peach, and lemon blossom precedes stark acidity, accompanied by lively notes of lemon zest and cut greens. The melon-lime finish completes the circle. **90**



Wente Vineyards 2020 Morning Fog Chardonnay, Central Coast (\$18) Light and breezy, with gorgeous aromatics of stone fruit and honeysuckle. Pineapple and peach tones are clean and the liquid is crisp, with vanilla-drizzled white flower petals and green apple. **91**



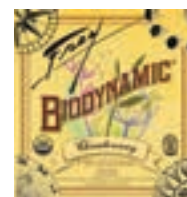
B Side 2018 Chardonnay, North Coast (\$18) Opulent aromas of chamomile, buttered pecan, and lemon chiffon make an outstanding first impression. The palate does not disappoint: Rich with honeyed pear tart and bright lime, its plump body is balanced out by its fine acid structure. Aged 12 months in French oak. **91**



DON SEBASTIANI & SONS



Frey Vineyards 2020 Biodynamic Chardonnay, Mendocino County (\$20) This stainless steel-aged white delivers aromas of bright lemongrass. The palate is mineral-driven, with crisp salted pear and edgy lime filling in the middle. It finishes with a biscuit essence augmented by high-toned acidity. **89**



Smashberry 2020 Chardonnay, Paso Robles (\$15) Plump in body, with an unctuous coating of white flower petals, this blend of 88% Chardonnay, 11% Viognier, and 1% Malvasia Bianca revs up with pineapple and apricot, which peek through a vanilla-nougat middle. Tasty, refreshing, and juicy. **91**



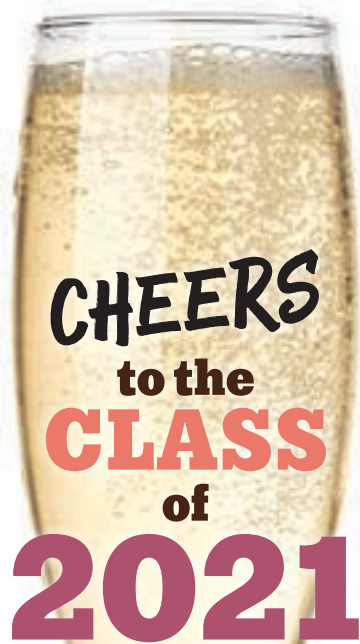
MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Verraco Ridge 2019 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$20) Sunshine-bright with cashew, biscuit, lemon verbena, and pineapple. Animated on the tongue, with a surprise appearance by Italian herbs that accent stone fruit on the finish. **91**



ASV WINES



“What a year it’s been” is something people often say before belting a few bars of “Auld Lang Syne.” But really—what a year it has been. Rather than reliving all that happened *out there*, we’ve got a much better way to commemorate 2021: With a look back at the best of what happened *in here*, within these pages. The following wines and spirits have all received scores of 93 points or higher over the past 12 months, so they’re just the thing with which to ring out the old and ring in the new of 2022. (What a year it will surely be.)

WINES

- 94 Acumen 2018 Mountainside Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)**
- 93 Aereña by Blackbird Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, North Coast (\$25)**
- 94 Agricola Punica 2016 Barrua, Isola dei Nuraghi IGT, Sardinia, Italy (\$55) KOBRAND**
- 93 Agricola Punica 2019 Montessu, Isola dei Nuraghi IGT, Sardinia, Italy (\$30) KOBRAND**
- 93 Agricola Punica 2020 Samas Isola dei Nuraghi IGT, Sardinia, Italy (\$22) KOBRAND**
- 95 Akatombo 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$150)**
- 93 Alain Jaume Domaine Grand Veneur 2018 Les Champavins, Côtes du Rhône, France (\$25) KYSELA PERE ET FILS**
- 93 Alain Jaume Domaine Grand Veneur 2018 Les Champavins, Côtes du Rhône, France (\$25) KYSELA PERE ET FILS**
- 97.5 Alea Fina 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford Bench, Napa Valley (\$125) FETZER VINEYARDS**

MOST AWARDED AUSSIE:

ACCOLADE WINES

The founder of Australian wine brand Hardys, Thomas Hardy, could always sense a great opportunity, and in 1850, he saw just that in the British colonies. So at the age of 20, he departed Devon for Down Under on a ship named *The British Empire* with only £30 in his pocket. From there, he set out in what he called “an uncertain world” to make wines that would be revered globally for their consistent quality.

Three generations later, Barossa Valley native Eileen Ponder married Hardy’s grandson, Thomas Mayfield Hardy, and became the company’s brand ambassador. In 1977, her enormous contribution to the Australian wine industry was recognized when she was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE). To date, Hardys, now in the Accolade Wines portfolio, has collected more than 9,000 awards.

Similarly, but more recently, Ed Carr embarked on a journey in 1988 to craft an exceptional Australian sparkling wine, equal to the world’s best. The pristine terroir of Tasmania, with its cool climate and ancient soils, proved perfect for realizing his objective. Today, his House of Arras is Australia’s most awarded sparkling wine brand, with nearly 100 trophies and more than 242 gold medals to its name. —*Natasha Swords*

Eileen Hardy 2016 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$100) Red fruit melds with cocoa and spiced nutmeg in this round, well-developed red, which features defined flavors of grilled meat, dried lavender, and new leather. The fruit is not jammy—instead, it lends a refined note to plum and boysenberry, which also sees a touch of vanilla. **94** —*Meridith May*

House of Arras NV Brut Elite, Tasmania, Australia (\$50) This creamy, layered sparkler shows notes of fresh croissant, mandarin orange, mushroom, and pine nut. Dry and elegant, its rippling bubbles burst with aromas and flavors of jasmine. **93** —*M.M.*



TOP FAMILY TIES:

GOLDSCHMIDT VINEYARDS

New Zealand natives Yolyn and Nick Goldschmidt founded Goldschmidt Vineyards in 2002 to focus on single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from the Alexander Valley and Napa Valley's Oakville appellation. Their five grown children have since become involved in the business, adopting various roles from harvesting to working in the cellar. They've playfully coined the phrase "the Goldschmidt Expertise" to refer to the wisdom that their parents pass down to them.

Among the family's list of accomplishments in 2021 was the opening of a new tasting room at the Pour House Collective in Dry Creek Valley; the growth of their Goldmark Wine Club; and the replanting of their best vineyard, The Staircase. —*Natasha Swords*



Goldschmidt Vineyards 2017 Game Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$90) This Cab is packed with power and extroverted character—much like Nick Goldschmidt himself. Spiced black fruit and dry tannins take hold and coat the teeth with dried violets and tobacco. The tarry middle is surrounded by elegance, acidity, and structure that sing. **95** —*M.M.*



Goldschmidt Vineyards 2016 PLUS Cabernet Sauvignon, Yoeman Vineyard, Alexander Valley (\$120) This small mountain vineyard sits just south of Geyserville on glacial loam soils. Aged for four years in French barrels, this big, bold, and juicy red is a fruit-forward and beefy beauty. Violets and espresso coat the luxurious mouthfeel and round tannins are washed with black licorice and dark plum before velvety notes of blackberry appear on the finish. **96** —*M.M.*



Chelsea Goldschmidt 2019 Guidestone Rise Merlot, Alexander Valley (\$22) Planted along Route 128 just east of Geyserville, the estate vineyard that yields this 100% Merlot—named for Goldschmidt's oldest daughter, Chelsea—is on the cooler side. With flowers perfuming the glass, the wine is chewy, dense, and delicious. A rapturous array of chalky tannins is bathed in black cherry and coats the teeth with beet, plum, and rhubarb. Mocha and sweet tobacco round out the juicy finish. **93** —*M.M.*



Goldschmidt Vineyards 2016 Ultimatum Cabernet Sauvignon, Double Rock Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$500) The first vintage of this stellar red makes a spectacular entry on a silk road. The name translates in Latin as "final," which is fitting, as Goldschmidt sees each vintage as the final result of exceptional winemaking and viticultural practices. The name Double Rock, meanwhile, "comes from the idea that the hillside is rocky, and as we farm by hand, we take the rocks in the middle of the avenue and add them under the vines, doubling the number of rocks there," he explained. "The vineyard, being so steep and closely planted, is farmed all by hand, and [it's] so easy to farm organically." Ripe red berries hit the palate's pleasure center, joining a sweet, velveteen thread of peony, rose, and mountain brush. Notes of thyme and spiced mulberry are flavorful and fragrant. **98** —*M.M.*

BEST FAIRY TALE COME TRUE: Y. ROUSSEAU

Gascony, France, is famous for being home to both the Fourth Musketeer, D'Artagnan, and the Tannat grape. Also hailing from Gascony is Yannick Rousseau—who's now based in the Napa Valley with his Texas-born wife, Susan. Through Y. Rousseau Wines, the dynamic couple is putting Tannat on the map in the U.S. as part of their own exciting adventure together.

All for wine, and wine for all! —*Natasha Swords*



Y. Rousseau 2018 Pépé Merlot, Napa Valley (\$54) Fruit from the Mount Veeder and Stags Leap AVAs brings this 97% Merlot and 3% Cab Sauvignon to liquid life. Barrel aged for 18 months in 50% new French oak, it's a big, expressive red that stays savory thanks to notes of dark-chocolate espresso, black olive, pencil shavings, and sandalwood, but it finishes with bright enthusiasm. **93** —*M.M.*

Y. Rousseau 2018 The Musketeer Tannat, Napa Valley (\$75) Embodying the cheerful pun "all for wine and wine for all," Yannick Rousseau's interpretation of this swashbuckling variety intrigues. Built with blocks of concentrated red cherry, new leather, violets, and licorice-bathed slate, it demands attention. *En garde!* **93** —*M.M.*

HEAD OF THE CLASS:

TESTAROSSA WINERY

Testarossa Winery strives to create the lowest-intervention, most true-to-vine wines from Monterey County, taking a minimalistic winemaking approach to honor the sense of place yielded by Garys' Vineyard.

The site is a partnership between Gary Pisoni and Gary Franscioni, two of the most dynamic growers in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Originally planted in 1997, it has made an unmistakable impact on the region with its 42 acres of the powerful, broad-shouldered Pisoni Clone Pinot Noir, which makes wines that speak to the terroir of the SLH—a quality that Testarossa treasures. —*Natasha Swords*

Testarossa 2019 Garys' Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey (\$76) Rich ruby color; elegant and pure, with a toasty nose, racy acidity, and lifted flavors of cherry and raspberry. **95** —*Anthony Dias Blue*



PHOTO COURTESY OF TESTAROSSA WINERY

- 93** Alma Rosa 2018 Chardonnay, El Jabali Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$48)
- 94** Alma Rosa 2018 Pinot Noir, El Jabali Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$68)
- 94** Alma Rosa 2019 Barrel Select Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills (\$72)
- 94** Alma Rosa 2019 Pinot Noir, El Jabali Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$68)
- 96** Almaviva 2018 Puente Alto, Chile (\$145)
- 93** Alta Vista 2014 Single Vineyard Alizarine Malbec, Las Compueratas, Luján de Cuyo, Argentina (\$50) KOBRAND
- 95** Alta Vista 2017 Single Vineyard Malbec, Albaneve, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) KOBRAND
- 94** Amulet Estate 2018 Mad Hatter by Tuck Beckstoffer, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 96** Amulet Estate 2018 Oakville Ranch Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$175)
- 95** Ancient Peaks 2017 Pearl Collection Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$70)
- 94** Ancient Peaks 2017 Oyster Ridge, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$60)
- 95** Angwin Estates 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain (\$125)
- 93** Argento 2018 Single Vineyard Malbec, Finca Altamira, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 97** Argiano 2015 Vigna del Suolo Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Tuscany, Italy (\$200) LUX WINES
- 93** Aridus 2017 Syrah, Cochise County, Arizona (\$37)
- 93** Artesa 2018 Estate Pinot Noir, Los Carneros (\$45)
- 99** As One Cru 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 96** As One Cru 2018 Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$50)
- 95** Atlas Peak 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak (\$80)
- 93** Atlas Peak 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 97** Attilio Ghisolfi 2016 Bricco Visette, Bussia, Barolo, Italy (\$90)
- 94** Attilio Ghisolfi 2016 Bussia, Barolo, Italy (\$70)
- 95** AXR 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$84)
- 96** Bacigalupi 2018 Renouveau Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$82)
- 93** Baron de Ley Varietales 2019 Garnacha, Rioja, Spain (\$15)
- 97** Beau Vigne 2018 Juliet Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$100) ATC NAPA
- 95** Beau Vigne 2018 Legacy Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75) ATC NAPA
- 97** Beau Vigne 2018 Romeo Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$100) ATC NAPA
- 94** Beaulieu Vineyard 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Napa Valley (\$80)
- 93** Benziger Family Winery 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$20) THE WINE GROUP
- 94** Benziger Family Winery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$15)
- 98** Beringer 2017 Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$170) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 94** Beringer 2018 Knight's Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 96** Bien Nacido Black Label 2018 Old Vines Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$100) MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY
- 95** Bien Nacido Estate 2019 Syrah, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY
- 97** Bien Nacido Estate Black Label 2018 The Captain Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$100) MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY
- 96** Bien Nacido Estate Black Label 2018 The XO Syrah, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$100) MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY

TOP OF THE HEAP: **LADERA**

In Spanish, *ladera* means “hillside”; for the founders of Ladera, grower-producers Pat and Anne Stotesbery, the word signifies their mission to make exceptional high-elevation wines—one that they’ve been fulfilling for a quarter century. Starting in 1996 with a vineyard on Mount Veeder, they bottled their first harvest of Cabernet Sauvignon two years later, then went on to acquire a property on Howell Mountain in 2000.

They’ve since sold their Howell Mountain holdings, but winemaker Jade Barrett continues to oversee day-to-day operations, and they haven’t stopped living their dream of producing elegant, food-friendly expressions primarily from Napa Valley mountain fruit. On the contrary, says Pat, “[Our] knowledge and experience . . . is resulting in our finest wines ever.”



Ladera 2016 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$145) Ladera is Spanish for “hillside,” and this winery lives up to its name with its wonderful interpretations of mountain fruit. Winemaker Jade Barrett refers to 2016 as “one of those classic vintages in Napa Valley, with no serious heat spikes or threat of rain. Our Cabernet Sauvignon was able to mature gradually.” Thanks to that maturity, luxury comes in via a blissfully generous array of black and blue fruit. While dark chocolate paints the palate, sturdy tannins are bound with fine acidity and a balanced richness. **97** —*M.M.*

Ladera 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75) Grapes from Howell Mountain and Calistoga make up this sturdy yet silky red with just a small percentage of Petit Verdot. For all its concentration and power, the mountain fruit enables the wine to maintain its complexity without overwhelming the palate. Cedar and chocolate braid through high-toned blue fruit. Fennel, black tea, soy sauce, and black pepper merge on a highway to heaven. **96** —*M.M.*



Ladera 2018 Chardonnay, Pillow Road Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$55) The vineyard’s 10-mile proximity to the Pacific forms this wine’s alert, eloquent personality, and sur lie aging in French oak for 15 months provides its lush texture. A veil of chamomile and custard surrounds a creamy core. Daffodil and lemon blossom merge to create an acute sense of focus on the palate, where they’re bolstered by high-toned acidity. **95** —*M.M.*

Ladera 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$36) This small-production blend of 58% Sauvignon Blanc and 42% Sauvignon Musqué is sourced from Ryan’s Vineyards in the Oak Knoll District AVA. The mouthfeel is in another dimension, while the fruit has a mysterious quality, both ripe and opulent. Penetrating notes of jasmine rice, tangelo, pea tendrils, and lemon sorbet form its juicy core. A luxurious sheath of creaminess sparks with fine acidity and herbal tones. **94** —*M.M.*



A TRUE TRAILBLAZER:

PIÑA NAPA VALLEY

“My grandfather John Piña Jr.’s first harvesting job was at his mother’s side in the vineyard when he was first able to walk,” says Katherine Piña-Capponi, director of sales at Piña Napa Valley. John and his wife, Arline, went on to found John Piña Jr. and Sons Vineyard Management in 1960 and established the family winery in 1979 with their four sons—the younger Piñas thereby following in the footsteps of their great-great-grandfather Moses Stice, who settled in Napa Valley in the 1850s.

In short, while others were flocking to California for the gold rush, this family was blazing a trail for California winegrowers—and today, wine is the only way of life for them. —*Natasha Swords*

Piña Napa Valley 2016 Cahoots Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$49) Refined vanilla nose; silky and succulent, with notes of toasted oak, ripe plum, and spice as well as excellent acid structure. Balanced and persistent on the finish. **94** —*A.D.B.*



MASTERPIECE IN THE MAKING:

ALEA FINA



From the Origins Collection comes Alea Fina Cabernet Sauvignon—an outstanding wine in which the sedimentary soils of Napa’s Rutherford Bench show off their enviable dusty tannins.

Alea Fina 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford Bench, Napa Valley (\$125) With consultant Paul Hobbs, Chilean winemaker Sebastian Donoso has crafted a masterpiece from Napa Valley as part of a new Viña Concha y Toro project. The name Alea Fina is inspired in part by the Chilean expression *hilar fino*, which means an obsessive attention to finer details. In Latin, meanwhile, *alea* translates as “chance.” As with any terroir, climate and soil are key and can certainly dictate the wine’s outcome. The use of clone 337 aged for 18 months in new French oak ensures richness and ripeness in every complex layer of this wine; blackberry, dried fruit, and soil dusted with teeth-gripping plum-skin tannins make for an exquisite mouthfeel. Licorice and heather come in midway with dense notes of dark chocolate that extend through the finish. **97** —*M.M.*

ORIGINS COLLECTION BY FETZER VINEYARDS

- 95** Black Stallion Estate Winery 2017 Limited Release Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60) TRANSCENDENT WINES
- 97** Blackbird Vineyards 2016 Contrarian, Napa Valley (\$135)
- 98** Blackbird Vineyards 2016 Paramour, Napa Valley (\$135)
- 96** Blue Farm 2018 Chardonnay, Laceroni Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$70)
- 97** Blue Farm 2018 Estate Farmed Pinot Noir, King Ridge Vineyard, Fort Ross-Seaview (\$85)
- 97** Blue Farm 2018 Estate Farmed Pinot Noir, Riverbed Vineyard, Carneros (\$95)
- 95** Bodega Norton 2018 Lote Negro, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40)
- 96** Brancaia 2018 Il Blu, Rosso Toscana IGT, Italy (\$92) LUX WINES
- 94** Brandlin 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Mount Veeder, Napa Valley (\$75) CUISAISON ESTATE WINES
- 95** Brick Barn Wine Estate 2017 Cabernet Franc, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$85)
- 93** Brick Barn Wine Estate 2019 Estate Grown Albariño, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$38)
- 94** C. Elizabeth 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Game Farm Vineyard, Oakville (\$150)
- 93** Cadre 2019 Sea Queen Albariño, Edna Valley (\$28)
- 93** Cadre 2019 Stone Blossom Sauvignon Blanc, Edna Valley (\$28)
- 94** Calera 2017 Pinot Noir, Mills Vineyard, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast (\$75) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 96** Calera 2017 Pinot Noir, Ryan Vineyard, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast (\$75) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 96** Calera 2018 Chardonnay, Mt. Harlan, Central Coast (\$55) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 94** Calla Lily Estate Ultimate Red 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)
- 95** Canard Vineyard 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 94** Canard Vineyard 2017 Estate Zinfandel, Napa Valley (\$45)
- 95** Canvasback 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Klipsun Vineyard, Red Mountain, Washington (\$72) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 96** Canvasback 2018 Grand Passage Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon, Walla Walla, Washington (\$84) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 95** Canvasback 2018 Syrah, Funk Vineyard, Walla Walla, Washington (\$70) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 95** Cap Maritime 2018 Chardonnay, Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, South Africa (\$54)
- 94** Caprio Cellars 2018 Eleanor Estate Red, Walla Walla, Washington (\$48)
- 93** Carlos Serres 2012 Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$25) WINESELLERS, LTD.
- 93** Casanova di Neri 2018 Irrosso, Toscana, Italy (\$22)
- 93** Castello di Amarosa 2019 Rosato, Cresta d’Oro Vineyard, Green Valley of Russian River, Sonoma County (\$39)
- 94** Cattleya 2019 Cuvée Number Five Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$55)
- 95** Cattleya 2019 The Initiation Syrah, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$70)
- 93** Cedar & Salmon 2019 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 93** Chalk Hill 2016 Estate Red, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$70) FOLEY FAMILY WINES
- 93** Chalk Hill 2019 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$26)
- 93** Chalone Vineyard 2019 Chardonnay, Chalone, Monterey County (\$22) FOLEY FAMILY WINES
- 93** Champagne À L’EST NV Brut, Epernay, Champagne, France (\$45) OUT EAST WINES
- 95** Champagne Delamotte NV Brut Champagne, France (\$66)

**LEADING THE RENAISSANCE
IN RIOJA, RUEDA,
AND RIBERA DEL DUERO:**

**MARQUÉS
DE CÁCERES
AND FINCA LA
CAPILLA**

In 2007, when Cristina Forner took over as president and CEO of famed Rioja winery Marqués de Cáceres, she set out to expand the business and establish it as the reference point for Spain's best Denomination of Origin. Operating estates in both Rioja Alta and Rueda, the winery continues to use French winemaking techniques to produce its lineup of distinctly modern expressions made with native Spanish grapes.

In 2019, Marqués de Cáceres also purchased fellow Spanish producer Finca La Capilla, based in the Ribera del Duero denomination of Roa de Duero, while retaining winemaker Rodrigo Miñón, who co-founded the winery with his father, Juan. It specializes in Tempranillo, yielding rich wines with powerful tannic and polyphenolic structures.

Forner hails from a family entrenched in the wine business for generations and draws on this rich legacy with every new endeavor. Her father, Henri Forner, established Marqués de Cáceres in 1970, breaking from custom in Rioja to source from a widespread area and applying estate-bottling techniques he'd learned in Bordeaux after the Forners had fled their homeland during the Spanish Civil War.



Marqués de Cáceres 2020 Verdejo, DO Rueda, Spain (\$13) Fermentation on the lees with no barrel aging brings out aromas of peach, pine nut, and lemon sorbet. Stark acidity creates liveliness on the palate around a mineral core. Vibrant notes of lemon chiffon, meringue, and honeyed pineapple demonstrate an inner freshness. **90** —*M.M.*



Marqués de Cáceres NV Cava Brut, Penedés, Spain (\$13) Blending 50% Xarel-lo, 30% Macabeo, and 20% Parellada from 25-plus-year-old high-elevation vines makes for an extroverted sparkler. A nose of croissant and lemon oil leads to flavors of lemon pudding, candle wax, and white flowers. Lively and focused. **90** —*M.M.*



Marqués de Cáceres 2016 Reserva, DO Rioja, Spain (\$25) Aged 15 months in French oak, this blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% other varieties offers cherry-skin tannins and note of cherry pith and red tea. Red fruit is perfused with radiant notes of cedar, violets, and clove. Clay, limestone, and iron-rich soils show in a stony core surrounded by bittersweet dark chocolate. A labor-intensive beauty, the wine spends 22 months in barrel, with decanting every four to six months, before aging a minimum of two additional years in bottle. **93** —*M.M.*



Marqués de Cáceres 2014 Gran Reserva, DOCa Rioja, Spain (\$40) Spending about a year in French oak, this mature, serious red is aged for at least four years before release. Toasty oak is beautifully integrated with bittersweet dark chocolate, ripe plum, and espresso. Firm tannins are tempered with cherry, pomegranate, and rhubarb before savory notes of soy sauce and heather arrive on the finish. **94** —*M.M.*



Finca La Capilla 2017 Crianza, DO Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$35) From a label owned by Marqués de Cáceres since 2019, this expression of 100% Tempranillo was made with grapes grown on altitudes exceeding 2,600 feet. The harsh conditions of this region—extremely cold winters and hot, dry summers with large diurnal swings—result in a concentrated wine with abundant character. Dusty tannins are surrounded by dried blue flowers, pencil lead, and a streak of blueberry preserves. The richness is palpable, with dark chocolate adding to the powdery mouthfeel, but the elegance of the acid structure and a wash of violets leave an undercoat of silkiness on the finish. **93** —*M.M.*

VINEYARD BRANDS



- 98** Chappellet 2017 Pritchard Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$250)
- 97** Chappellet 2018 Pritchard Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$250)
- 93** Chappellet 2019 Mountain Cuvée Proprietor's Blend, Napa Valley (\$39)
- 94** Chappellet 2020 Signature Chenin Blanc, Napa Valley (\$40)
- 93** Château de Pizay Morgon, Beaujolais, France (\$20) DAVID MILLIGAN SELECTIONS
- 93** Château des Jacques 2019 Clos du Grand Carlequin, Moulin-à-Vent, Beaujolais, France (\$42) KOBRAND
- 93** Château des Jacques 2019 Morgon Côte du Py, France (\$42)
- 94** Château des Jacques Estates 2018 Morgon, Côte du Py, Beaujolais, France (\$40) KOBRAND
- 93** Château des Jacques Estates 2018 Moulin-à-Vent Clos du Grand Carlequin, Beaujolais, France (\$40) KOBRAND
- 95** Château La Nerthe 2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée des Cadettes Rouge, France (\$165)
- 95** Château La Nerthe 2019 Blanc, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France (\$60) KOBRAND
- 93** Château La Nerthe 2019 Les Cassagnes de La Nerthe, Côtes-du-Rhône Villages, Rhône Valley, France (\$25) KOBRAND
- 93** Cherry Pie 2018 Pinot Noir, San Pablo Bay Block, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$50) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES
- 93** Cigar Box 2019 Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$14) VINTAGE POINT
- 91** Cigar Box 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$14) VINTAGE POINT
- 93** Cigar Box 2020 Pinot Noir, DO Leyda Valley, Chile (\$14) VINTAGE POINT
- 95** Cliff Lede 2017 Dancing Heart Rock Block Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$110)

- 95** Cliff Lede 2018 Magic Nights Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$110)
- 93** Cliff Lede 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$78)
- 94** Colomé 2018 Auténtico Malbec, Calchaquí Valleys, Argentina (\$40) FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS
- 93** Concha y Toro 2016 Terrunyo Malbec, Los Indios Vineyard, DO Paraje Altamira, Uco Valley, Argentina (\$40) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Concha y Toro 2018 Marques de Casa Concha Etiqueta Negra, DO Puente Alto, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$40) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Concha y Toro 2018 Syrah, DO Buin, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$22) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Concha y Toro 2019 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, DO Marchigüe, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$17) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 95** Cono Sur 2017 Ocio Pinot Noir, Casablanca Valley, Chile (\$70) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 95** Corison 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$195)
- 96** Corison 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sunbasket Vineyard, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$195)
- 95** Covert Wineworks NV Petit Manseng, Virginia (\$29)
- 94** Craggy Range 2017 Pinot Noir, Te Muna Vineyard, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$50) KOBRAND
- 97** Cult 2019 by Beau Vigne, Napa Valley (\$125) ATC NAPA
- 95** Cuvaision 2019 Kite Tail Small Lot Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$50) FREDERICK WILDMAN & SONS
- 95** Dancing Hares 2017 Red Blend, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$125) AMULET ESTATE
- 95** Davies Vineyards 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65) SCHRAMSBERG
- 95** Davies Vineyards 2019 Pinot Noir, Nobles Vineyard, Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast (\$75) SCHRAMSBERG

- 94** Dora 2018 La Grande Lumière Chardonnay, San Bernabe Vineyard, Monterey (\$40) TRANSCENDENT WINES
- 95** Dora 2018 La Grande Majesté Pinot Noir, San Bernabe Vineyard, Monterey (\$40) TRANSCENDENT WINES
- 93** Dogwood & Thistle 2019 Carignan, Mendocino (\$26)
- 94** Domaine Anderson 2017 Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$45) MMD
- 96** Domaine du Cellier aux Moines 2018 Mercurey Blanc Les Margotons, Burgundy (\$40)
- 94** Domaine de Châteaumar 2019 Secret de Nos Vignes, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France (\$47) JP BOURGEOIS
- 94** Domaine Della 2018 Pinot Noir, Earl Stephens Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$78)
- 93** Domaine Houchart 2020 Côtes de Provence Rosé, France (\$20) DAVID MILLIGAN SELECTIONS
- 93** Domaine J.A. Ferret 2018 Pouilly-Fuissé, France (\$48)
- 96** Domaines du Cellier Aux Moines 2018 Premier Cru Beaugregard, Santenay, Côte de Beaune, Burgundy (\$88)
- 94** Domäne Wachau 2020 Grüner Veltliner, Federspiel Terrassen, Wachau, Austria (\$18)
- 93** DoublePlus Wines 2020 Rosé, Oak Knoll, Napa Valley (\$30)
- 96** Duckhorn 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$100)
- 94** Duckhorn 2018 Chardonnay, Huichica Hills Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$58)
- 94** Dutcher Crossing 2015 Winemaker's Cellar Kupferschmid Red, Dry Creek Valley (\$40)
- 95** Dutton Estate Winery 2017 Syrah, My Father's Vineyard, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$56)
- 95** Dutton Estate Winery 2018 Pinot Noir, Thomas Road, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68)
- 94** Dutton Estate 2019 Karmen Isabella Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$48)
- 94** Dutton-Goldfield 2018 Pinot Noir, Devil's Gulch Vineyard, Marin (\$72)
- 94** Dutton-Goldfield 2018 Zinfandel, Dutton Ranch, Morelli Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$50)
- 94** Echo Bay 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$19)
- 95** Edict 2019 Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$52) ATC NAPA
- 94** Eduardo Vidal 2018 Nube Negra Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$35) CONCURRENT WINES
- 96** Ehlers Estate 2018 Cabernet Franc, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$72)
- 96** Ehlers Estate 2018 Petit Verdot, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$36)
- 94** Ehlers Estate 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$36)
- 93** Eileen Hardy 2016 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$100) ACCOLADE WINES
- 93** El Pino Club 2018 Funky Jory, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$70) FOLEY FAMILY WINES
- 94** El Pino Club 2018 Sea Floored Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$60) FOLEY FAMILY WINES
- 94** Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Pinot Noir, Clay Court, Chehalem Mountains (\$60)
- 95** Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Pinot Noir, Mount Richmond, Yamhill-Carlton (\$60)
- 94** Elk Cove Vineyards 2019 Mount Richmond Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60)
- 93** Esk Valley 2019 Red Blend, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$22) WINEBOW
- 93** Etrusca 2018 Velia Red Blend, Russian River Valley, Sonoma (\$49)
- 94** Famiglia Bianchi 2018 Enzo Gran Corte, Mendoza, Argentina (\$70)
- 98** Far Niente 2018 Estate Bottled Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$200)

BEST SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY:

TALISMAN

A talisman is an object imbued with the power to ensure good fortune—and Talisman has indeed proven auspicious for husband-and-wife team Scott and Marta Rich. Twenty-eight years since its founding, the winery has carefully increased production from 200 cases of its deeply soulful single-vineyard Pinot Noir to 4,000. “Our nod to our Talisman actually pays homage to Scott’s Native American heritage,” says Marta. “The logo on the front of our label represents a *paho*, which is a Native American charm that protects one from harm.”

The couple appreciates “that so many other people connect with the name and with our wine too,” Marta adds. “Our customers reach out to us with their own Talisman stories and pictures. We love it. We’ve made a great connection.” —*Natasha Swords*

Talisman 2016 Pinot Noir, Gunsalus Vineyard, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$60) Medium ruby color and a spiced cherry nose; juicy and ripe, lush and mellow, with good acid structure. **94** —*A.D.B.*



MOST ADVENTUROUS:
MARUSSIA
BEVERAGES
USA

At first glance, a Japanese gin, a pumpkin-spiced chocolate liqueur, an island rum, and the world's first Cognac aged in steam-toasted barrels may not seem to have anything in common. But that's the brilliance of Marussia Beverages: The importers and distributors collect a diverse group of spirits, unified by their excellence, and bring them to the U.S. to be discovered by a new audience.

Led by the adventurous father-daughter team of Dr. Frederik Paulsen—the man was the first to reach all of the Earth's eight poles, after all—and Eda Paulsen, Marussia is all about exploring the world's flavors, collaborating with brands to help them thrive while giving drinkers a taste of something different. —*Allyson Reedy*



135° East Japanese Artisan Gin, Japan (\$29) Following a perfume of black and red pepper, orange peel, coriander, juniper, and red fruit, the unctuous liquid coats the mouth with a wave of vanilla. Lemongrass and green tea are subtle, while a kick of red pepper contributes an underlying earthiness. 84 proof. **93** —*M.M.*



Larsen Aqua Ignis Cognac, France (\$45) Rich and full-flavored, this dynamo offers hallmark notes of roasted mocha and vanilla derived from a proprietary barrel-toasting process. Hearty aromas of dried fruit go deep, and the palate is balanced and broad. Saddle leather and oak form a foundation for intensified notes of mocha on the finish. 84.6 proof. **94** —*M.M.*



Mezan Chiriqui Rum, Panama (\$25) Heady aromas of guava and sun-drenched sugarcane lead to honeysuckle and passion fruit on the palate, where the tropical notes are enveloped by sandalwood and salted pine nut. Aged in Moscatel casks, this spirit possesses warmth, with hints of yellow pepper and sweet potato, that's opulent and generous to the finish. **93** —*M.M.*



Mezan XO Rum, Jamaica (\$35) This unique and linear molasses-based rum is aged in ex-bourbon casks. Its aromas of porcini mushroom, orange peel, and grilled pineapple are heady and earthy. The free-form palate defines lightness: Pineapple and pine nut are juxtaposed with white-peppered snap pea, lemon custard, and oatmeal. 80 proof. **93** —*M.M.*



Mozart Chocolate Coffee Liqueur, Austria (\$25) Blending fudgy Belgian chocolate, cream from the Netherlands, high-quality Arabica coffee beans, and other all-natural, gluten-free ingredients results in this symphony of rich, bittersweet, and roasted flavors. **93** —*M.M.*



Mozart Chocolate Cream Pumpkin Spice Liqueur, Austria (\$25) This fall-favorite premium chocolate liqueur consists of milk chocolate, caramel, natural pumpkin juice, cinnamon, clove, and a hint of vanilla. As usual, the liqueur is packaged in a chocolate praline-shaped bottle to make consumers feel as if they're unwrapping a special confection from Austria. **93** —*M.M.*

MARUSSIA
 BEVERAGES USA



RISING STAR:

DULCE VIDA TEQUILA

Everything really is bigger in Texas—including the tequilas. A regional favorite since its inception more than a decade ago, Dulce Vida Tequila has now jumped Lone Star state lines, experiencing explosive growth nationwide: Its ultra-smooth taste profile, wide range of offerings, and USDA Organic Weber Blue Agave certification are all resonating with tequila drinkers to the tune of more than 100,000 cases sold in 2021. And with no signs of slowing down, the company expects 2022 to be an even bigger boom.

Although the majority of the Austin-based brand's sales come from what it calls its "Core 4" expressions—the 80-proof Blanco, 70-proof Lime Infusion, 70-proof Grapefruit, and 70-proof Pineapple Jalapeño—its portfolio also comprises 80- and 100-proof aged tequilas and some compelling reserve tequilas, namely the Texas whiskey barrel-aged Lonestar Añejo and the Napa Cabernet and Merlot barrel-aged 5-Year-Old Extra Añejo. And why stop there? Dulce Vida promises additional big, albeit still hush-hush, offerings in the year to come. —*Allyson Reedy*

Dulce Vida Pineapple Jalapeño, Mexico

(\$23) This 70-proofer is surprisingly complex. With brisk herbal aromas of freshly sliced jalapeño joining an authentic pineapple perfume, you might ready yourself for a foray into picante territory. But its "bite" is balanced: The palate's not too spicy, and though the ripeness of the pineapple is evident, it's not too sweet either, complemented by side notes of chamomile and lemon tea. We're impressed! **93** —*M.M.*



- 95** Far Niente 2019 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$70)
- 94** Faustino 2010 Gran Reserva, DOCa Rioja, Spain (\$40) PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 94** Ferrari-Carano 2015 Trésor, Sonoma (\$55)
- 93** Finca La Capilla 2017, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$35)
- 93** Firriato 2013 Harmonium Nero d'Avola, Sicily, Italy (\$43) CARDINAL WINE GROUP
- 93** Firriato 2014 Ribeca Perricone, Sicily, Italy (\$42) CARDINAL WINE GROUP
- 96** Flora Springs 2018 Flora's Legacy Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$175)
- 93** Flora Springs 2018 Flora's Legacy Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$70)
- 95** Flora Springs 2018 Trilogy Red, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93** Fort Ross Vineyard 2018 Sea Slopes Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$35)
- 93** Frey Vineyards 2018 Chateau Frey Pinot Gris, Mendocino (\$20)
- 94** Fringe Collective 2019 Seafall Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$50) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 95** Frisson 2018 Proprietary Red, Toucher Vineyards, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$65) ATC NAPA
- 95** G by Guarachi 2018, Napa Valley (\$80)
- 94** Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2018 Zinfandel, Family Ranches Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$47)
- 95** Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2019 Zinfandel, Mesana Vineyard, Sonoma (\$65)
- 93** Gamble Family Vineyards 2017 Paramount, Napa Valley (\$80)
- 96** Gamble Family Vineyards 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$33)
- 95** Gary Farrell 2018 Chardonnay, Olivet Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 95** Gary Farrell 2018 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$35)
- 94** Gary Farrell 2018 Russian River Selection Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 93** Gehricke 2020 Rosé, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$29)
- 93** Georges Dubouef 2019 Moulin-à-Vent, France (\$30)
- 93** Giesen 2016 Pinot Noir, Clayvin Vineyard, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$60) PACIFIC WINES & SPIRITS
- 93** Girasole Vineyards 2019 Pinot Blanc, Mendocino County (\$14) BARRA WINE
- 96** Goldeneye 2017 Ten Degrees Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, Mendocino County (\$130) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 94** Goldeneye 2018 Pinot Noir, Confluence Vineyard, Anderson Valley (\$85) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 95** Goldschmidt 2017 Game Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$90)
- 98** Goldschmidt Vineyards 2016 Ultimatum, Double Rock Vineyard, Oakville (\$500)
- 96** Goldschmidt Vineyards 2016 Yoeman Plus Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$150)
- 93** Goldschmidt Vineyards 2019 Guildstone Rise Merlot, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$22)
- 94** Grieve Family 2018 Double Eagle Red, Napa Valley (\$89)
- 93** Grieve Family 2018 Double Eagle White, Napa Valley (\$48)
- 98** Guarachi Family Wines 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Meadowrock Vineyard, Atlas Peak, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 95** Guarachi Family Wines 2019 Chardonnay, Sun Chase Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast (\$50)
- 96** Guarachi Family Wines 2019 Pinot Noir, Sun Chase Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast (\$75)
- 97** Guarachi Family Wines 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$295)
- 98** Guarachi Family Wines 2017 G by Guarachi Cabernet Sauvignon, Meadowrock Estate, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 95** Gust 2017 Pinot Noir, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$40) CLINE CELLARS

MOST EVOLVED: TEQUILA KOMOS

“Respect the traditions of Mexico [without] being bound by them”: This is the core philosophy driving Tequila Komos founder and CEO Richard Betts. “We keep evolving, and we keep responding to how people enjoy tequila, and this is what motivates more delicious flavors,” he says.

There are three expressions in the Komos portfolio: Añejo Cristalino, Reposado Rosa, and Extra Añejo, each of which is based on a premium Blanco sourced from the highest-quality agave in the highlands and lowlands of Jalisco. The plants are roasted in traditional stone ovens and the juice is combined with spring water before it’s double-distilled in copper pot stills.

The brand’s flagship label is the Tequila Komos Añejo Cristalino, which is aged in French oak barrels previously used for white wine. The result is a delicate, light, and smooth tequila with, as Betts defines it, “a shading of influence from the barrels.” Tequila Komos Reposado Rosa is aged in red-wine French oak barrels from Napa for 65 days to develop a vibrant pink hue. And the most opulent of the trio, Tequila Komos Extra Añejo, is aged for a minimum of three years in a combination of French oak and American oak barrels that previously held white wine and whiskey, respectively.

In addition to producing a premium line of high-end tequilas, the Tequila Komos team is pioneering sustainability initiatives in the industry alongside the Orendain family, pioneers in the Tequila region and the owners of the distillery where Komos is produced. These include repurposing distilling byproducts into the manufacture of bricks that are then given to the local community for use in building infrastructure.

“I think tequila should be reflective of the place, the process, and the agave,” muses Betts. “And it’s also a representation of the added notes that come from oak aging and every other step that creates an orchestra of flavors. All these different elements at work are what make tequila remarkable.” —*Natasha Swords*



Tequila Komos Añejo Cristalino, Mexico (\$120) A stunning nose of sugared pineapple is surrounded by bright agave freshness and lime zest. The satin-coated liquid warms the palate as lilac, lime, and a wash of tangerine peel converge for a tart starkness. It’s mineral driven and dry, with a gravitas that’s also palpable in its seamless finish. **98** —*M.M.*

Tequila Komos Reposado Rosa, Mexico (\$110) The pink ceramic-glazed bottle is a work of art, as is the liquid inside. Aged in French oak barrels that held Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, it has a rosy hue. A heart-melting perfume of cinnamon-dusted rose petal, caramel apple, and fresh agave leads the way. Butterscotch and milk chocolate surround a fresh agave character, enhanced by underlying notes of clay and white pepper and a wash of juicy strawberry. Toasty oak tones are well integrated until a flash of cedar and tobacco shines through. **98** —*M.M.*

Tequila Komos Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$400) Aged three years in French ex-white wine barrels and used bourbon barrels, this tequila is as graceful as an old Cognac. Scents of dried peach, pecan pie, and turmeric are profound. Fig meets sandalwood, caramel, and vanilla as spice and apricot nectar unmask the most sensual of mature agave. Banana, pineapple, and gardenia not only add a tropical twist but round out the mouthfeel to the point of paradise. **100** —*M.M.*

- 94** Gust 2017 Syrah, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$40) CLINE CELLARS
- 93** Gust 2018 Chardonnay, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$30) CLINE CELLARS
- 93** Gustave Lorentz 2015 Gewürztraminer, Alsace Grand Cru, France (\$74)
- 93** Hamilton Russell Oregon 2019 Zena Crown Pinot Noir, Eola-Amity Hills (\$86)
- 93** Hammeken Cellars Toscalet 2019 Garnacha Blanc, DO Terra Alta, Spain (\$22)
- 94** Hawk & Horse Vineyards 2017 Block Three Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills, Lake County (\$60)
- 95** Hawk & Horse Vineyards 2017 Cabernet Franc, Red Hills, Lake County (\$65)
- 95** Hawk & Horse Vineyards 2017 Petit Verdot, Red Hills, Lake County (\$65)
- 94** Hawkes 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$70)
- 94** Heitz Wine Cellars 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Lot C-91, Napa Valley (\$100)
- 96** Hertelendy Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$135)
- 95** Intipalka 2018 No. 1 Gran Reserva, Ica Valley, Peru (\$50) SANTIAGO QUEIROLO
- 93** Ironstone 2019 Cabernet Franc Reserve, Sierra Foothills (\$26)
- 95** J. Bucher 2018 Opa's Block Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County
- 93** J. Bucher 2018 Bucher Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County
- 93** J. Bucher 2018 Three Sixty Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County
- 96** J. Bucher 2018 Pommard Clone Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County
- 95** J. Lohr 2017 Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 95** J. Lohr 2017 Cuvée Pau, Paso Robles (\$50)
- 95** J. Lohr 2017 Cuvée St. E, Paso Robles (\$50)
- 95** J. Lohr 2017 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$100)
- 93** J. Wilkes 2019 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$25) MILLER FAMILY
- 93** J. Wilkes 2019 Pinot Blanc, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$) MILLER FAMILY
- 93** J. Wilkes 2019 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$30) MILLER FAMILY
- 97** Jada 2017 Sawbones, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$85)
- 93** Jada Vineyard & Winery 2017 Hell's Kitchen, Paso Robles (\$65)
- 94** Jordan 2019 Chardonnay, Russian River, Sonoma County (\$35)
- 93** Jules Taylor 2021 Grüner Veltliner, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)
- 94** Justin Vineyards & Winery 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Paso Robles (\$60)
- 96** Justin Vineyards & Winery 2018 Platinum Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$170)
- 96** Justin Vineyards & Winery 2018 Focus Syrah, Paso Robles (\$110)
- 94** Justin Vineyards & Winery 2018 Trilateral, Paso Robles (\$55)
- 95** Kay Brothers 2016 Amery Block 6 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$117)
- 93** Kay Brothers 2018 Amery Hillside Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$60)
- 96** Kay Brothers 2017 Amery Block 6 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$120)
- 95** Keermont 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$58) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 93** Keermont 2017 Terrasse White Blend, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$34) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 93** Keermont 2018 Terrasse White Blend, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$34) KYSELA PEER ET FILS
- 93** Kim Crawford 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16)
- 93** King Estate Winery 2018 Paradox Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$35)
- 93** Kith & Kin 2020 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$25) ROUND POND
- 97** Knights Bridge 2017 Collinwood Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley (\$150)
- 97** Knights Bridge 2017 Haggerty Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley (\$150)
- 97** Knights Bridge 2017 Linville Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley (\$150)
- 94** Knights Bridge 2019 East Block Chardonnay, Knights Valley (\$75)
- 95** Knights Bridge 2019 West Block Chardonnay, Knights Valley (\$85)
- 95** L'Ermitage by Roederer Estate 2013 Brut, Anderson Valley (\$55) MMD
- 95** La Braccasca 2019 Bramasole Syrah, Cortona DOC, Tuscany, Italy (\$50) STE. MICHELLE WINE ESTATES
- 95** La Scolca 2019 Black Label Gavi dei Gavi, Piedmont, Italy (\$40) SHAW-ROSS
- 96** Ladera 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75)
- 97** Ladera 2016 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$115)
- 95** Ladera 2018 Chardonnay, Pillow Road Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$55)
- 94** Ladera 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$36)
- 94** Landmark Vineyards 2018 Chardonnay, Lorenzo Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$55)
- 95** Landmark Vineyards 2018 Pinot Noir, Escolle Road Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$60)
- 95** Lanson NV Brut Champagne Green Label, France (\$61)
- 93** Lasseter Family Winery 2017 Chemin de Fer, Justic Creek Estate, Sonoma Valley (\$38)
- 93** Les Costieres de Pomerol 2020 Picpoul de Pinet H.B., Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$15) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 94** Les Demoiselles 2020 Sancerre Blanc, Loire Valley, France (\$30) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 95** Leverage Wines 2017 Trajectory, Paso Robles (\$56)
- 94** Lloyd Cellars 2018 Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$50)
- 94.5** Lloyd Cellars by Robert Lloyd 2019 Chardonnay, Carneros
- 95** Longwood Estate 2016 Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$100)
- 95** Lorenzi Estate 2016 Double Down Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Temecula Valley (\$95)
- 94** Lorenzi Estate Vineyards 2017 The Swale Petite Sirah, Temecula Valley (\$75)
- 93** Lost Eden 2018 Red Blend, Georgia (\$19) GLOBAL BRAND LLC
- 94** Louis M. Martini 2017 Cabernet, Napa Valley (\$45) E. & J. GALLO
- 95** Lucienne 2018 Chardonnay, Lone Oak Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$40) HAHN FAMILY WINES
- 94** Lucienne 2018 Chardonnay, Smith Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$40) HAHN FAMILY WINES
- 95** Lydenhurst 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$85) SPOTTSWOODE
- 94** MacRostie 2018 Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Vineyard, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$46)
- 94** MacRostie 2018 Clockwise Cabernet Sauvignon, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$68)
- 93** MacRostie 2018 Klopp Ranch Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$58)
- 94** MacRostie 2018 Wildcat Mountain Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$58)
- 94** MacRostie 2019 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$25)
- 95** Mail Road Wine 2016 Pinot Noir, Mt. Carmel Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$100)
- 94** Maison Roche de Bellene 2018 Beaune Premier Cru Hommage a Françoise Potel, Vieilles Vignes, France (\$73)
- 93** Maison Roche de Bellene 2018 Meursault Vieilles Vignes, France (\$48)
- 94** Maquis Viola Carménère 2014, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$50) GLOBAL WINE IMPORTERS
- 95** Marqués de Riscal 2012 Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$50) SHAW-ROSS
- 93** Mas des Etoiles 2016 Malbec, Cahors, France (\$18) JP BOURGEOIS
- 94** Mascota Vineyards 2017 Unánime Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$20)
- 93** Mascota Vineyards 2018 Unánime Merlot, Mendoza, Argentina (\$23) GRUPO PEÑAFLORES
- 93** Matchbook 2018 The Aronist, California (\$22)
- 93** Mathis 2017 Überblend, Mathis Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$35)
- 93** McGrail Vineyards and Winery 2017 Patriot Cabernet Sauvignon, Livermore Valley (\$48)
- 94** Merry Edwards 2018 Pinot Noir, Flax Vineyard, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68) MMD
- 94** Merry Edwards 2018 Pinot Noir, Meredith Estate, Russian River Valley MMD
- 95** Merry Edwards 2018 Pinot Noir, Meredith Estate, Russian River Valley (\$85) MMD
- 95** Merry Edwards 2019 Coopersmith Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$73) MMD
- 97** Merry Edwards 2019 Olivet Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$80) MMD
- 94** Merry Edwards 2019 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$60) MMD
- 94** Merry Edwards 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$45) MMD
- 93** Migration 2018 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$42) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 96** Migration 2018 Pinot Noir, Drum Canyon Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$70) THE DUCKHORN CO.
- 94** Milsetentayseis 2018 1076 Tinto, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$80) ALMA CARRAOVEJAS
- 93** Minus Tide 2019 Chenin Blanc, Buddha's Dharma Vineyard, Mendocino (\$29)
- 93** Montinore Estate 2017 Reserve Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$40)
- 93** Montinore Estate 2019 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$20)
- 93** Morgan Winery 2019 Albariño, Arroyo Seco (\$22)
- 95** Morgan Winery 2019 Twelve Clones Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$35)
- 94** Morgan Winery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Arroyo Seco (\$18)
- 93** Mud House 2019 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand (\$20)
- 93** Muirwood 2020 Chardonnay, Zanetta Vineyard, Arroyo Seco, Monterey (\$22) ASV WINES, INC.
- 93** Mullan Road Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$45) KOBRAND
- 94** Murrieta's Well 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Livermore Valley (\$19) WENTE VINEYARDS
- 93** Napa Cellars 2019 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$20) TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- 97** Navarro Vineyards 2019 Riesling, Anderson Valley (\$22)

- 95** Nickel & Nickel 2019 Chardonnay, Truchard Vineyard, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$55)
- 92** Nino Negri 2016 Quadrio, Valtellina Superiore DOCG, Lombardy, Italy (\$20) FREDERICK WILDMAN & SONS
- 93** Notre Vue 2019 GSM, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$69)
- 94** Notre Vue Estate 2019 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 94** Oleandri 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90)
- 94** Oleandri 2018 Cabernet Franc, Stagecoach Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$110)
- 94** O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain (\$100)
- 93** Ossian Vides y Vinos 2018 Verdejo, Castilla y León, Spain (\$50) ALMA CARRAOVEJAS
- 96** Out East Syrah 2017 Hermitage, Rhône Valley, France (\$90) OUT EAST WINE
- 94** Pago de Carraovejas 2018 Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$55) ALMA CARRAOVEJAS
- 93** Painted Fields 2018 Amador Classico, Sierra Foothills, Amador County (\$25) ANDIS
- 93** Painted Fields 2020 Cuvee Blanc, Sierra Foothills, Amador County (\$25) ANDIS
- 93** Palladino 2015 Ornato, Barolo, Italy (\$66)
- 93** Palladino 2017 Superiore Bricco delle Olive Barbera d'Alba, Italy (\$27)
- 93** Pamplin Family Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley (\$50)
- 97** Pascual Toso 2018 Magdalena, Mendoza, Argentina (\$130)
- 94** Pascual Toso 2019 Alta Malbec, Barrancas, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50)
- 93** Pascual Toso 2019 Alta Syrah, Barrancas, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50)
- 98** Patel 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$150)
- 94** Patel 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 100** Patrimony 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$275) DAOU VINEYARDS
- 94** Paxton 2017 Baterista Single Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$70)
- 93** Paxton 2019 MV Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$20)
- 95** Peju 2019 Legacy Collection Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)
- 93** Peju 2020 Legacy Collection Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$28)
- 93** Penfolds 2018 Max's Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, Australia (\$25) TTEASURY WINE ESTATES
- 93** Perrin + Dobbs Vineyards 2018 Pitch Black Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$42) ATC NAPA
- 93** Pfender Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Petaluma Gap-Sonoma (\$45)
- 93** Pighin 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Friuli Grave DOC, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy (\$30) KOBRAND
- 93** Pike Road 2018 Pinot Noir, Shea Vineyard, Yamhill-Carlton, Oregon (\$50)
- 93** Pillar & Post 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40) PAUL HOBBS
- 94** Piña Napa Valley 2016 Cahoots Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$70)
- 93** Poggio del Moro 2016 Rosso, Toscana, Italy (\$20)
- 95** Ponzi Vineyards 2018 Aurora Chardonnay, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$65)
- 96** Ponzi Vineyards 2018 Avellana Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$105)
- 94** Priest Ranch 2018 Snake Oil Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$110)
- 93** Psăgot NV The Land Red Blend, Jerusalem, Israel (\$28)
- 94** Quilceda Creek 2017 CVR Red Wine, Columbia Valley (\$58)

MOST LIKELY TO GET A HUG FROM A TREE:

BESPOKEN SPIRITS



Thanks to its proprietary, microstave-driven ACTivation technology, Bespoken Spirits crafts whiskey with only 3% of the wood typically used to produce the spirit. The process is not only sustainable but allows for Bespoken's blenders to more precisely tailor the color, aroma, and taste of their expressions, which in just two years have already won 70 awards.



Bespoken Spirits Rye Whiskey, USA (\$49)

Following arresting aromas of brown-sugared walnut, coffee, and peach nectar, the sumptuous, melt-in-your-mouth texture and flavor of milk chocolate is joined with divine notes of ripe apricot and oiled saddle leather. The finish of charred orange peel lasts impressively long. 100 proof. **97** —*M.M.*



Bespoken Spirits American Light Whiskey, USA (\$46)

Starting with cedar and resin, scents of dried apricot and walnut soon follow on the nose. The entry is opulent for a 100-proof whiskey, with high-toned notes of orange peel covered in dark chocolate, black pepper, and apricot nectar. Cedar threads down a path laden with peach preserves and honeyed chamomile. **93** —*M.M.*



Bespoken Spirits Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$57)

Aged for two years, this 94-proof whiskey has a mash bill of 75% corn, 21% rye, and 4% malt. Black pepper zings on the entry before making way for a warm cloak of peanut brittle and deep, honeyed peach tones. The liquid lies regally on the tongue: Satin-lined yet sturdy, it brings dark chocolate-covered tangerine and corn husk into place. **96** —*M.M.*

MOTHER NATURE'S FAVORITE:

MIJENTA

We're not saying that men can't be good stewards of the earth, but it's not *Father Nature*, is it? There are strong women among the leadership of sustainability-forward tequila company Mijenta, from master distiller Ana María Romero Mena to co-founder and sustainability director Elise Som, and they do things a little differently. (See also page 86.) All of the brand's labels and paper packaging are made from agave waste; vegetable ink is used for printing; and all the glass for the bottles is sourced at home in Jalisco, Mexico. In fact, nearly every component that goes into crafting these exquisite, carbon-neutral tequilas comes from the producer's community, as working with local materials avoids the heavy carbon footprint of supply shipping.

Being sustainability-first also, of course, means avoiding the use of pesticides and herbicides in farming and eschewing additives to ensure an all-natural product. If Mother Nature's a tequila sipper, we think Mijenta is her pick. —Allyson Reedy

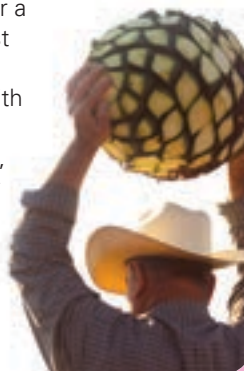


Mijenta Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$50) Rose petals and acacia sweeten the aromas of clay, agave, and lime in this ethereal 80-proof spirit; almost weightless, it's the liquid version of a down comforter. Honeyed floral tones continue to take shape and wind around vanilla candle wax, pine nut, and a pinch of white pepper before tobacco, cocoa-kissed agave, and grapefruit zest take over on the persistent finish. **97** —M.M.



Mijenta Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$70) This expression invests in the senses with aromas of gardenia, ginger, and green tea. Lime and patchouli deliver a flush of flavor at first sip. Stunning agave notes are coated with caramel apple that generously spreads, incorporating a flow of exotic florals.

99 —M.M.
ALTOS PLANOS COLLECTIVE



- 94** Quinta do Vallado 2018 Superior Red Blend, Douro, Portugal (\$40)
- 94** Quinta do Vallado 2018 Tinta Roriz, Douro, Portugal (\$80)
- 95** Qupé 2017 Roussanne, Bien Nacido Hillside Estate, Santa Maria Valley (\$30)
- 94** Qupé 2019 Marsanne, Los Olivos District, Santa Ynez Valley (\$24)
- 94** Raeburn 2019 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County PURPLE BRANDS
- 93** Raeburn 2020 Rosé, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$20) PURPLE BRANDS
- 94** Raeburn Winery 2019 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$20) PURPLE BRANDS
- 95** Ramos Pinto Reserva 2018 Duas Quintas, Douro, Portugal (\$30) MMD
- 91** Rebuli NV Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Superiore D.O.C.G., Veneto, Italy (\$25) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 93** Reptil 2017 Malbec, Valle de Uco, Chile (\$50) VIÑA COBOS
- 94** Reptil 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) VIÑA COBOS
- 96** Résonance 2019 Chardonnay, Hyland Vineyard, McMinnville, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$50) KOBRAND
- 95** Résonance Vineyard 2017 Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$ 65) KOBRAND
- 93** Résonance Vineyard 2018 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$34) KOBRAND
- 93** Reyneke 2016 Syrah, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$29) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 95** Ridge Vineyards 2016 Syrah, Lytton Estate, Dry Creek Valley (\$48)
- 95** Ridge Vineyards 2017 Klein Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Bello Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$85)
- 93** Ridge Vineyards 2018 Zinfandel, Boatman Vineyard, Alexander Valley (\$36)
- 94** Ridge Vineyards 2019 Zinfandel, Guadagni Vineyard, Dry Creek Valley (\$36)
- 93** Ridge Vineyards 2019 Three Valleys Zinfandel, Sonoma (\$28)
- 94** Ridge Vineyards 2019, Geyserville Vineyard, Sonoma (\$45)
- 95** Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Brothers Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$75)
- 93** Rodney Strong Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$28)
- 96** Round Pond 2018 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75)
- 97** Round Pond Estate 2017 Louis Bovet Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$110)
- 96** Round Pond Estate 2018 Louis Bovet Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Home Ranch, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$120)
- 93** Round Pond Estate 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$28)
- 94** Ruffino 2017 Modus, Toscana, Italy (\$25)
- 94** Rusack 2017 Reserve Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$40)
- 94** Rusack 2017 Zinfandel, Ballard Canyon State, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$48)
- 93** Rusack 2018 Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$40)
- 94** Saint Clair Family Estate 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$30) E. & J. GALLO
- 95** San Polo 2015 Brunello di Montalcino D.O.C.G., Italy (\$70) TRINCHERO HERITAGE COLLECTION
- 95** Sanctuary 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$40) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Santi 2016 Ventale, Valpolicella Superiore D.O.C., Veneto, Italy (\$16) FREDERICK WILDMAN

- 96 Scattered Peaks 2017 Small Lot Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$125)** PURPLE BRANDS
- 95 Scattered Peaks 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Morisoli Vineyard, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$150)** PURPLE BRANDS
- 95 Scheid Vineyards 2017 Reserve Pinot Noir, Doctor's Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$75)**
- 92 Scheid Vineyards 2019 District 7 Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$18)**
- 95 Scheid Vineyards 2019 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$36)**
- 94 Scheid Vineyards 2019 Metz Road Pinot Noir, River-view Vineyard, Monterey (\$36)**
- 94 Schild Estate 2016 Edgar Schild Reserve Bush Vine Grenache, Barossa Valley, South Australia (\$30)**
- 95 Schild Estate 2017 Narrow Road Shiraz Cabernet, Barossa Valley, South Australia (\$50)**
- 93 Schild Estate 2018 Grenache/Mourvèdre/Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$30)**
- 93 Schild Estate Prämie 2018 Shiraz, Narrow Road Vineyard, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$40)**
- 95 Schloss Johannisberg 2016 Riesling Spätlese, Grün-lack, Deutscher Prädikatswein, Rheingau, Germany (\$50)** FREIXENET MIONETTO USA
- 95 Schloss Johannisberg 2018 Riesling, Silberlack, VDP Grosse Gewächs, Rheingau, Germany** FREIXENET MIONETTO USA
- 96 Schramsberg Vineyards 2012 Reserve, North Coast (\$120)**
- 93 Schramsberg Vineyards 2017 Blanc de Noir, North Coast (\$43)**
- 93 Schug 2018 Chardonnay, Carneros**
- 93 Schug 2018 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$50)**
- 93 Schug 2018 Pinot Noir, Carneros**
- 93 Schug 2019 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$25)**
- 93 Screen Door Cellars 2020 Chardonnay, Asern Vineyard, Green Valley, Sonoma County (\$35)** DAYLIGHT WINE CO.
- 93 Sculpterra 2019 Pinot Noir, Paso Robles (\$38)**
- 93 Sea Smoke 2018 Ten Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$80)**
- 96 Sea Smoke 2018 Southing Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$80)**
- 94 Sequoia Grove 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)** KOBRAND
- 94 Sequoia Grove 2018 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$28)** KOBRAND
- 94 Sequoia Grove Vineyards 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)**
- 97 Serego Alighieri 2013 Vaio Armaron, Amarone della Valpolicella Classico D.O.C.G., Veneto, Italy (\$119)** VINEYARD BRANDS
- 98 Shafer 2017 Relentless, Napa Valley (\$95)**
- 95 Shafer Vineyards 2018 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$98)**
- 93 Shafer Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Red Shoulder Ranch, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$52)**
- 94 Shiloh 2018 Amichai Solomon Red Blend, Judean Hills, Israel (\$40)**
- 94 Signaterra by Benziger 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sunny Slope Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$59)** THE WINE GROUP
- 94 Silverado Vineyards 2019 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$38)**
- 93 Silverado Vineyards 2019 Miller Ranch Sauvignon Blanc, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$27)**
- 96 Silverado Vineyards 2016 SOLO Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$125)**
- 93 Silverado Vineyards 2018 Merlot, St. George Vineyard, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$45)**
- 94 Silverado Vineyards Estate Grown 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60)**



BEST AGAVE LEGACY:

FORTALEZA

When your family's been making tequila since the 1870s, you've probably learned a thing or two about distilling the Mexican spirit, like how to best nourish the agave plants—goats and horses are excellent weed munchers—and coax the juices out of the piñas (donkeys pull a mean tahona). Father-and-son team Guillermo Erickson Sauza and Billy Erickson are using those traditional methods and the expertise that's in their blood to craft Fortaleza Tequila. And while it initially started as more of a hobby than a resurrection of the family business, the results they yielded out of their tiny Jalisco distillery were just too good not to share. —*Allyson Reedy*

Fortaleza Blanco Stone Ground Tequila, Mexico (\$50) This bottling offers up scents of vanilla, clay, and agave. White flowers bloom on the palate while white pepper tingles the tongue and vanilla has a soothing effect. Delicious, fragrant, and elegant. **95** —*M.M.*

Fortaleza Blanco Still Strength Tequila, Mexico (\$65) The floral aromas and flavors of this 92-proofer are enhanced by a wash of blue fruit and cocoa. Unusual notes of lemon blossom and pear custard allow the agave to shine through a hedonistically unctuous curtain. **96** —*M.M.*

Fortaleza Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$65) A rush of caramel, pear nectar, and honeysuckle inspires. The agave here is unmasked, yet without heat or astringency. Sandalwood and jasmine are soft and graceful on the finish. **96** —*M.M.*

Fortaleza Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$90) Following a clean entry that shows restrained oak, peach and brown sugar bathe in agave with a hint of earth. Jasmine and ginger play into the seamless, succulent profile. **95** —*M.M.*

MOST FINESSE WITH FRUIT:

BLACK INFUSIONS

It's pretty simple, really. Black Infusions Vodkas have only two ingredients, dried fruit and the spirit itself—and yet the combination creates a sip so complex and fresh that you'll wonder how they do it. Spoiler alert: How they do it is pretty simple, too. The small-batch vodkas are hand-bottled in Oregon after they're infused with California-grown figs and apricots for four to six weeks, extracting all of those sweet, jammy flavors. —*Allyson Reedy*



Black Infusions Black Fig Vodka, USA (\$32) Deep mahogany color and aromas of ripe fig. Creamy, authentic, and rich, with profound flavors of dried figs—all that's missing are the little seeds. Deep and sweet, long and balanced; try it on the rocks. **93** —*A.D.B.*

Black Infusions Gold Apricot Vodka, USA (\$32) Brilliant orange-gold hue, with ripe apricot prevalent on the nose; rich apricot flavor comes through deliciously on the silky texture. The test of any flavored vodka is that it be fresh and authentic, and this one passes by a long shot—it would also be great on the rocks. **93** —*A.D.B.*

- 93** Simi Winery 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Landslide Vineyard, Sonoma (\$50)
- 93** Smith Madrone 2017 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$40)
- 94** Smith-Madrone 2017 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$42)
- 94** Smith-Madrone 2017 Riesling, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$34)
- 94** Smith-Madrone 2018 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$62)
- 94** Sonoma-Cutrer 2019 Chardonnay, Limited No. 40 Edition, Sonoma Coast (\$70)
- 97** Spot Dog 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$100) WESTLIFE IMPORTS
- 98** Spottswoode Estate 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 94** Staete Landt 2017 State of Grace Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$33) USA WINE WEST
- 94** Staete Landt 2019 Annabel Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20) SARANTY IMPORTS
- 95** Staete Landt 2020 Duchess Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$30) SARANTY IMPORTS
- 96** Stags' Leap 2017 The Leap Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$115) TREASURY WINE ESTATES
- 95** Stark-Condé 2017 Oude Nektar, Jonkershoek Valley, Stellenbosch, South Africa (\$80)
- 94** Ste. Chapelle Winery 2018 Panoramic Malbec, Shoshone Falls, Snake River Valley (\$30)
- 94** Sullivan Rutherford Estate 2017 Coeur de Vigne Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa (\$90)
- 97** Sullivan Vineyards 2013 James O'Neal Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$270)

- 90** Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2019 Positively Pinot Noir, Monterey County (\$17)
- 94** Tablas Creek Vineyard 2019 Esprit de Tablas Red, Paso Robles (\$60)
- 93** Tablas Creek Vineyard 2020 Cotes de Tablas Blanc, Paso Robles (\$30)
- 93** Tablas Creek Vineyard 2020 Vermentino, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$40)
- 95** Taittinger 2014 Brut Champagne, France (\$103)
- 97** Taittinger 2014 Brut Champagne, France (\$103)
- 95** Taittinger NV Brut Champagne La Française, France (\$50)
- 95** Taittinger NV Brut Champagne La Française, France (\$50)
- 94** Talbot 2017 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County E. & J. GALLO
- 94** Talbot 2018 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County E. & J. GALLO
- 94** Talisman 2016 Pinot Noir, Gunsalus Vineyard, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$45)
- 92** Talley Vineyards 2018 Syrah, Rincon Vineyard, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$60)
- 93** Talley Vineyards 2019 Rincon Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$55)
- 94** Talley Vineyards 2019 Rosemary's Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$65)
- 94** Talley Vineyards 2019 Rosemary's Pinot Noir, Arroyo Grande Valley, San Luis Obispo County (\$85)
- 93** Tassajara 2019 Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$18) VINO DEL SOL
- 93** Tattoo Girl 2019 Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$13) WILLIAM WEAVER WINE, LLC

- 100** Taylor Fladgate 1970 Very Old Single Harvest Porto, Douro, Portugal (\$300)
- 94** Telaya Wine Co. 2018 Syrah, Snake River Valley (\$34)
- 94** Tempos Vega Sicilia 2018 Oremus Mandolás Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary (\$34) VEGA SICILIA
- 93** Tenuta di Capezzana 2015 Trefiano Carmignano Riserva, Italy (\$59)
- 95** Tenuta di Fessina 2018 A'Puddara Bianco, Etna, Italy (\$66)
- 95** Tenuta Scerse 2016 Nebbiolo Infinito, Sforzato di Valtellina, Italy (\$60)
- 95** Tenuta Sette Ponti 2017 Oreno, Tuscany IGT, Italy (\$100) KOBRAND
- 93** Terres de Princes 2019 Sancerre AOP, Loire Valley, France (\$38) SEAVIEW IMPORTS
- 93** Testarossa 2016 Single Vineyard Series 200% Oak Cabernet Sauvignon, Black Ridge Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$97)
- 94** Testarossa 2019 Chardonnay, Santa Rita Hills (\$44)
- 94** Testarossa 2019 Single Vineyard Series Chardonnay, Sierra Mar Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$53)
- 94** Testarossa 2019 Pinot Noir, Fogstone Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$74)
- 95** Testarossa 2019 Single Vineyard Series Pinot Noir, Gary's Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$76)
- 94** Testarossa 2019 Single Vineyard Series Pinot Noir, Pisoni Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$90)
- 93** The Pale Rosé by Sacha Lichine, Provence, France (\$17) SHAW-ROSS
- 93** The Specialist 2018 Zinfandel, Lodi (\$18) TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES
- 94** Thorne-Clarke 2019 Shofire Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$26) KYSELA PERE ET FILS
- 94** Three Sticks 2019 Pinot Blanc, Sonoma Coast (\$50)
- 97** Tierra Roja 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$165)
- 93** Tribute 2018 Chardonnay, Monterey County (\$20) BENZIGER/THE WINE GROUP
- 94** Trione Vineyards 2016 Henry's Blend, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$58)
- 93** Trione Vineyards & Winery 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$42)
- 94** Trione Vineyards 2018 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$35)
- 94** Trione Vineyards 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Block Twenty One, Alexander Valley (\$69)
- 95** Trois Noix 2019 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 93** Trois Noix 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$40)
- 95** Trujillo 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93** Trujillo 2020 Madelyn Cuvée, California (\$24)
- 96** Turnbull 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Leopoldina Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$135)
- 94** Turnbull 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 96** Turnbull 2020 Josephine Sauvignon Blanc, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 95** Turnbull Reserve 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93** Two Angels 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, High Valley (\$25)
- 95** Two Birds 2019 Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$50) WESTLIFE IMPORTS
- 93** Two Birds 2020 Rosé, Rogue Valley, Oregon (\$25) WESTLIFE IMPORTS
- 96** Umani Ronchi 2016 Campo San Giorgio Conero Riserva DOCG, Marche, Italy (\$87) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 94** Umani Ronchi 2016 Conero Pelago, Marche, Italy (\$56) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 94** Umani Ronchi 2016 Pelago, Marche Rosso, Italy (\$56)
- 94** Verndon Estate 2018 BlueLine Vineyards Proprietary Red, Napa Valley (\$58) ATC NAPA

- 94 Vietti 2018 Barbera Tre Vigne, Barbera d'Asti, Italy (\$18)**
- 93 Vietti 2019 Arneis, Roero, Italy (\$25)**
- 94 VIK 2015 Milla Cala, Millahue Valley, Chile (\$50)**
GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS
- 93 Vik Winery 2021 La Piu Belle Rosé, Cachapoal Valley, Chile (\$25)** GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS
- 93 Vilerma 2019 Blanco, Ribeiro DO, Galicia, Spain (\$21)**
KYSOLA PERE ET FILS
- 93 Viña Almaviva Winery 2018, Puente Alto, Chile (\$145)**
JOANNE BORDEAUX - US
- 96 Vincent Girardin 2018 Chambolle-Musigny Les Vieilles Vignes, France (\$100)**
- 97 Vincent Girardin 2018 Corton Perrieres Grand Cru, France (\$126)**
- 94 Vinedos y Bodegas Garcia Figuero 2017 Crianza 12 Tempranillo, Ribera Del Duero, Spain (\$32)**
- 94 Vintage Longbottom 2019 Hery's Drive Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$50)**
- 94 VJB Vineyards & Cellars 2017 Estate Montepulciano, Sonoma Valley (\$52)**
- 94 Volker Eisele Family Estate 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Chiles Valley District, Napa Valley (\$60)**
- 95 Volker Eisele Family Estate 2016 Terzetto, Chiles Valley District, Napa Valley (\$80)**
- 93 Wente Vineyards 2019 Riva Ranch Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$22)**
- 93 Wente Vineyards 2020 Erik's Small Lot Unoaked Chardonnay, Livermore Valley (\$35)**
- 93 Wente Vineyards 2020 Niki's Pinot Noir Rosé, Arroyo Seco, Monterey (\$35)**
- 95 Westwood 2018 Estate Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$52)**
- 97 Westwood 2018 Legend Proprietary Red Wine, Anadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$65)**
- 94 Westwood 2019 Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Roberts Road Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$55)**
- 93 Willakenzie Estate 2018 Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carton, Willamette Valley (\$55)** SJ SPIRE COLLECTION
- 93 Wine Foundry 2018 Chardonnay, Courtney's Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$52)**
- 94 Wine Foundry 2018 Pinot Noir, Lindsay's Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$62)**
- 96 Work Vineyard 2018 Lamy's Cabernet Sauvignon, Calistoga (\$130)**
- 93 Y. Rousseau 2018 Pèpè Merlot, Napa Valley (\$54)**
- 93 Y. Rousseau 2018 The Musketeer Tannat, Napa Valley (\$65)**

SPIRITS

- 93 135 East Hyogo Dry Gin, Japan (\$29)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGES USA
- 94 1509 Mezcal El Principio del Fin, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$50)** TRINITY BAY
- 93 6 O'Clock Gin, U.K. (\$35)**
- 93 818 Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$45)**
- 96 Aberlour A'Bunadh Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$95)**
- 95 Alberta Premium Premium Cask Strength Rye Whiskey, Canada (\$70)**
- 95 Ammunition Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$40)**
- 94 Anteel Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$42)** TEEQ SPIRITS
- 96 Appleton Estate 15-Year-Old Single Estate Black River Casks Rum, Jamaica (\$65)** CAMPARI GROUP
- 96 Barnacles Rum 12 Year Old Gran Reserva, Dominican Republic (\$40)** DOUBLE EAGLE IMPORTS LTD.

- 94 Barnacles Rum 8 Year Old Signature Blend, Dominican Republic (\$35)** DOUBLE EAGLE IMPORTS LTD.
- 93 Belvedere Blackberry and Lemongrass, Poland (\$35)**
- 93 Belvedere Lemon and Basil, Poland (\$35)**
- 94 Benjamin Chapman 4-Year-Old Corn Whiskey, USA (\$36)** 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY
- 95 Benromach 15 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$60)** CHOPIN IMPORTS
- 97 Bespoken Spirits American Light Whiskey, USA (\$33)**
- 97 Bespoken Spirits Rye Whiskey, USA (\$49)**
- 96 Bespoken Spirits Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40)**
- 93 Black Infusions Black Fig Vodka, USA (\$40)** BLACK INFUSIONS
- 93 Black Infusions Gold Apricot Vodka, USA (\$40)** BLACK INFUSIONS
- 96 Blue Run Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$169)**
- 95 Booker's Batch 2020-03 Pigskin Batch, USA (\$90)**
- 93 Brother's Bond Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40)**
- 93 Café Dashfire Rum Café Mocha** DASHFIRE LLC
- 95 Calirosa Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$74)**
- 93 Calirosa Tequila Rosa Blanco, Mexico (\$50)**
- 95 Casa Herradura Tequila Añejo Barril Acanalado, Mexico (\$125)**
- 98 Casa Komos Tequila Añejo Cristalino, Mexico (\$120)**
- 100 Casa Komos Tequila Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$400)**
CASA KOMOS BEVERAGE GROUP
- 98 Casa Komos Tequila Reposado Rosa, Mexico (\$110)**
CASA KOMOS BEVERAGE GROUP

- 93 Casa Mexico Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$32)**
- 94 Casa México Reposado, Mexico (\$38)**
- 93 Castle & Key London Dry Gin, USA (\$28)**
- 93 Cathead Bitter Orange Vodka, USA (\$20)**
- 94 Cocalero Negro Picante Herbal Liqueur, South America (\$30)**
- 93 Coco Sky Coconut Crème Liqueur, USA (\$25)**
- 93 Coconut Cartel Guatemalan Dark Rum with Coconut Water (\$45)** PARK STREET IMPORTS
- 95 Connoption Barrel Aged Series, USA (\$45)**
- 93 Courage & Conviction Bourbon Cask Single Malt Whisky, USA (\$85)**
- 94 Courage & Conviction Cuvée Cask Single Malt Whisky, USA (\$85)**
- 95 Crystal Head Onyx Agave Vodka, USA (\$55)**
- 94 Cutwater Tequila Añejo, Mexico (\$50)** CUTWATER SPIRITS
- 93 Dashfire Martinez Cocktail** DASHFIRE LLC
- 93 Dashfire Old Fashioned Cocktail** DASHFIRE LLC
- 95 Del Maguey Vida Vida de Muertos Mezcal Artesanal, Mexico (\$50)**
- 93 Demuller Vermouth NV Reserve, Catalonia, Spain (\$25)**
THE ARTISAN COLLECTION
- 95 Disaronno Originale Italian Liqueur, Italy (\$28)** DISARONNO INTERNATIONAL
- 93 Disaronno Velvet Cream Liqueur, Italy (\$30)** DISARONNO INTERNATIONAL
- 94 Don Q Añejo XO Gran Reserva Rum, Puerto Rico (\$50)**
DESTILERIA SERRALLÉS
- 93 Don Q 7-Year-Old Reserva Rum, Puerto Rico (\$25)**
- 93 Doña Vega Mezcal Espadine, Mexico (\$50)**

MOST INSPIRING:

ANTEEL TEQUILA



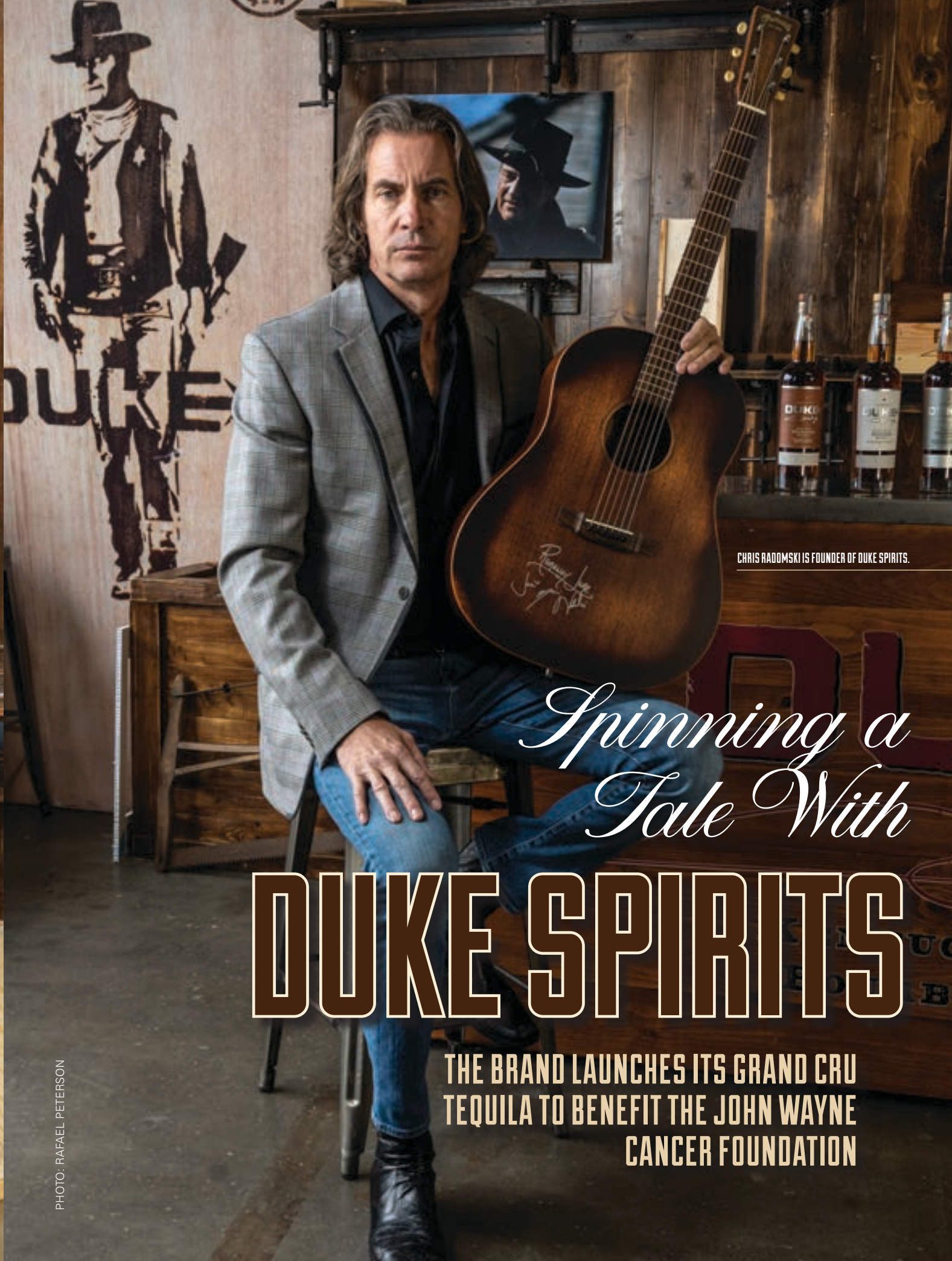
The hummingbird has held a sacred place in many ancient mythologies; for the Aztecs, it symbolized rebirth. So it does for Don and Nayana Ferguson, the husband-and-wife team behind Anteel Tequila—and for good reason: Nayana is a survivor of both pancreatic and breast cancer. She also happens to be the first Black female co-owner of a tequila brand.

Of course, as compelling as it is, her backstory isn't what inspires agave aficionados: The quality of the couple's portfolio is. Containing four slow-fermented, double-pot distilled expressions—Blanco, Coconut Lime Blanco, Reposado, and a limited-edition Blood Orange Blanco—it has amassed nearly 30 awards since its launch in 2018; for more on the brand, see Paris Vasser's "A Voice Uncorked" column in our June 2021 issue.

Anteel Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$42) This elegant blend of highland and lowland agave is aged for eight months in Tennessee whiskey barrels, which impart defined character. The nose of brown-sugared agave and Rainier cherry is superb; on the palate, yellow sweet pepper leads with sage, caramel, fresh agave, and salted grapefruit zest. **94** —M.M.

TEEQ SPIRITS

- 93 Dulce Vida Pineapple Jalapeño Tequila, Mexico (\$20)** MILESTONE BRANDS
- 95 E. Cuarenta Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$55)** ESS
- 95 Elijah Craig Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$114)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 96 Engine Organic Gin, Italy (\$30)** DISARONNO INTERNATIONAL
- 93 Five Brothers Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$60)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 94 Five Brothers Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$60)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 93 Flecha Azul Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$48)**
- 95 Fortaleza Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$90)**
- 96 Fortaleza Blanco Still Strength Tequila, Mexico (\$65)**
- 95 Fortaleza Blanco Stone Ground Tequila, Mexico (\$50)**
- 96 Fortaleza Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$65)**
- 95 Green Hat Original Batch Distilled Gin, USA (\$30)**
- 93 Harmonie by Alfred GIRAUD French Malt Whisky, France (\$190)**
- 95 Heaven's Door Double Barrel Whiskey, USA (\$50)**
- 97 Heaven's Door Redbreast Master Blenders' Edition Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$100)**
- 95 Heaven's Door Cask Strength Single Barrel Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$60)**
- 95 Heaven's Door Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)**
- 96 Heaven's Door Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$90)**
- 93 Heritage by Alfred GIRAUD French Malt Whisky, France (\$155)**
- 95 High Goal Gin, USA (\$50)** GRAIN & BARREL SPIRITS
- 94 Highclere Castle London Dry Gin, U.K. (\$40)**
- 100 The Perfect Fifth Highland Park 31 Year Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$3,000)**
- 96 The Perfect Fifth Cambus 42 Year Single Grain Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$1,250)**
- 99 The Perfect Fifth Springbank 25 Year Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$1,500)**
- 98 The Perfect Fifth Glen Scotia 27 Year Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$850)**
- 94 Hinch Small Batch Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$33)** CHOPIN IMPORTS
- 94 Ingram Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$73)**
- 96 Jack Daniel's 10 Year Old Tennessee Whiskey, USA (\$70)**
- 94 James Ownby Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40)**
- 95 Kasama Small Batch Rum, The Philippines (\$30)** CHOPIN IMPORTS
- 93 Kikori Whiskey, Japan (\$45)**
- 94 Kirk and Sweeney Gran Reserva Dominican Rum, Dominican Republic (\$49)** 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY
- 95 Kirk and Sweeney Gran Reserva Superior Dominican Rum, Dominican Republic (\$59)** 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY
- 94 Kirk and Sweeney Reserva Superior Dominican Rum, Dominican Republic (\$39)** 3 BADGE MIXOLOGY
- 95 Kuiper Belt Kentucky Bourbon, USA (\$85)** ESS
- 94 Kuleana Rum Works Nanea, USA (\$40)**
- 94 Larceny Barrel Proof Batch No. B521, USA (\$42)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 94 Larceny Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Batch A121, USA (\$127)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 96 Larceny Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Batch C920, USA (\$141)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 94 Larsen Cognac Aqua Ignis, France (\$45)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGE USA
- 95 Los Siete Misterios Espadín Mezcal Joven, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$90)** CHATHAM IMPORTS
- 93 Maison Ferrand Mathilde Peach French Liqueur, France (\$15)**
- 94 Maison Ferrand Mathilde Blackcurrant French Liqueur, France (\$15)**
- 93 Maison Ferrand Mathilde Raspberry French Liqueur, France (\$15)**
- 93 Mezan Chiriqui Rum, Panama (\$25)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGE USA
- 93 Mezan XO Rum, Jamaica (\$35)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGES USA
- 99 Michter's 10-Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Rye, USA (\$170)** CHATHAM IMPORTS
- 99 Michter's 10 Year Old Single Barrel Kentucky Rye Whiskey, USA (\$160)** CHATHAM IMPORTS
- 95 Michter's 10 Year Old Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$130)** CHATHAM IMPORTS
- 99 Mijenta Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$70)** ALTOS PLANOS COLLECTIVE
- 97 Mijenta Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$50)** ALTOS PLANOS COLLECTIVE
- 93 Mozart Chocolate Coffee Liqueur, Austria (\$30)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGES USA
- 93 Mozart Chocolate Cream Liqueur, Austria (\$30)** MARUSSIA BEVERAGES USA
- 96 Naud Extra Fine Cognac, France (\$285)** MS WALKER
- 94 Naud XO Fine Cognac, France (\$180)** MS WALKER
- 93 New Amsterdam Vodka, USA (\$14)** E. & J. GALLO
- 93 O.H. Ingram River Aged Flagship Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$100)**
- 94 O.H. Ingram River Aged Straight Whiskey, USA (\$78)**
- 96 Old Fitzgerald Bottled-in-Bond Fall 2021 Edition, USA (\$110)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 96 Old Fitzgerald Bottled-in-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$140)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 96 Old Fitzgerald Bottled-in-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$85)** HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 96 PaQuí Silvera Tequila, Mexico (\$50)**
- 93 Penelope Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished in Rosé Wine Cask Limited Release, USA (\$65)**
- 95 Pierde Almas Mezcal Artesanal Joven Maguey Espadín, Mexico (\$63)**
- 95 Puncher's Chance Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$35)** WOLF SPIRIT DISTILLERY
- 93 Puncher's Chance Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$35)**
- 94 Red Door Highland Gin, Scotland (\$40)** CHOPIN IMPORTS
- 94 Redwood Empire Grizzly Beast Straight California Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$80)** PURPLE BRANDS
- 95 Redwood Empire Rocket Top Straight California Rye Whiskey, USA (\$80)** PURPLE BRANDS
- 95 Redwood Empire Lost Monarch Straight Whiskey Blend, Sonoma County (\$40)** PURPLE BRANDS
- 98 Remus Repeal Reserve Series V Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$90)**
- 94 Rhum Barbancourt 8 Year Old Réserve Spéciale, Haiti (\$28)** CRILLON IMPORTS
- 96 Rod & Hammer's SLO Stills Distiller's Reserve Rye, USA (\$60)**
- 95 Ron Abuelo XII Años Two Oaks Aged Rum, Panama (\$60)**
- 95 Ron Añejo Carúpano Reserve 21 Years, Venezuela (\$60)** CHOPIN SPIRITS
- 95 RY3 Rum Cask Finish Whiskey, North America (\$56)** PHENOMENAL SPIRITS
- 94 Sagamore Spirits Tequila Finish Rye Whiskey, USA (\$69)**
- 95 Santo Tequila Reposado, Mexico (\$55)**
- 94 SAP56 Maple Flavored Canadian Whisky, Canada (\$35)**
- 93 Sia Blended Scotch Whiskey, Scotland (\$52)**
- 93 Sixty Men Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$35)**
- 94 Smoke Lab Aniseed Flavored Vodka, India (\$20)**
- 93 Smoke Lab Vodka, India (\$20)**
- 95 Sombra Mezcal Joven, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$35)** DAVOS BRANDS
- 94 Starward Nova Single Malt Whisky, Australia (\$55)** BLACK STAR SPIRITS
- 95 Starward Two Fold Double Grain Whisky, Australia (\$35)** BLACK STAR SPIRITS
- 94 Stray Dog Wild Gin, Greece (\$40)**
- 93 Sweetheart of the Rodeo Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$44)** KOOPER FAMILY
- 94 Takamine 8 Years Old Koji Fermented Whiskey, Japan (\$99)**
- 95 Tanduy Double Rum, The Philippines (\$50)**
- 93 Tanduy Gold Asian Rum, The Philippines (\$20)**
- 96 Tequila Cabal Añejo, Mexico (\$87 for bar bottle/\$109 for horse bottle)**
- 95 Tequila Cabal Blanco, Mexico (\$50 for bar bottle/\$65 for horse bottle)**
- 95 Tequila Cabal Reposado, Mexico (\$65 for bar bottle/\$80 for horse bottle)**
- 94 Tequila Dahlia Cristalino Reposado, Mexico (\$40)**
- 95 Tequila Tromba Añejo, Mexico**
- 93 Tequila Tromba Blanco, Mexico**
- 93 Tequila Tromba Reposado, Mexico**
- 94 The Balvenie Single Malt Scotch Whiskey Caribbean Cask 14 Year Old, Scotland (\$70)**
- 95 The Busker Irish Whiskey Single Malt, Ireland (\$30)** DISARONNO INT'L USA
- 94 The Busker Single Grain Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$30)** DISARONNO INT'L USA
- 93 The Busker Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$30)** DISARONNO INT'L USA
- 96 The Clover Single Barrel Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)** PIEDMONT DISTILLERS INC.
- 94 The Clover Single Barrel Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$50)** PIEDMONT DISTILLERS INC.
- 97 The Clover Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$70)** PIEDMONT DISTILLERS INC.
- 96 The Dublin Liberties Irish Whiskey Aged 10 Years Copper Alley Single Malt Oloroso Sherry Cask, Ireland (\$85)**
- 95 The Glendronach Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky Port Wood, Scotland (\$90)**
- 93 The Lost Explorer Mezcal Espadín, Mexico (\$85)**
- 96 The Lost Explorer Mezcal Salmiana, Mexico (\$180)**
- 95 The Lost Explorer Mezcal Tobala, Mexico (\$150)**
- 93 The Real McCoy Single Blended Rum Aged 5 Years, Barbados (\$35)**
- 95 The Real McCoy 12 Year Old, Barbados**
- 94 The Sassenach Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$99)**
- 94 Uncle Val's Zested Gin, USA (\$30)** 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 96 Villon Cognac Liqueur, France (\$33)**
- 93 Weed Cellars Vodka, USA (\$30)**
- 93 West Cork Distillers IPA Cask Mated Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$33)** M.S. WALKER
- 93 West Cork Stout Cask Mated Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$32)** M.S. WALKER
- 96 Woodford Reserve Very Fine Rare Bourbon, USA (\$130)**
- 93 Yebiga BELA Rakija, Serbia (\$30)**
- 94 Zignum Mezcal Añejo, Mexico (\$60)**
- 93 Zignum Mezcal Joven, Mexico (\$35)** 



CHRIS RADOMSKI IS FOUNDER OF DUKE SPIRITS.

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THE BRAND LAUNCHES ITS GRAND CRU
TEQUILA TO BENEFIT THE JOHN WAYNE
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