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ON THE COVER: Cranberry Rose Wine Cocktail
Photograph courtesy of Wine Institute
MORE TRADE WARS TO COME?

The Trump administration is talking tough against European plans to impose new taxes on big (mostly American) tech companies like Amazon, Google, Facebook and others. A U.S. threat to slap 100% tariffs on French cheeses, Champagne and other products, prompted the French President to tell President Trump that the move would amount to an attack on all of Europe.

The U.S. Trade Representative proposed the tariffs on $2.4 billion in goods in retaliation for a French tax on global tech giants.

The U.S. move is likely to increase trade tensions between the U.S. and Europe. Trump said the European Union should "shape up, otherwise things are going to get very tough."

"I’m not in love with those (tech) companies, but they’re our companies," Trump said.

According to the French Finance Minister, the French tech tax is about "establishing tax justice." France wants digital companies to pay their fair share of taxes in countries where they make money instead of using tax havens and is pushing for an international agreement on the issue.

The problem is pronounced in Europe, where a foreign company can pay most of its taxes in the one EU country where its regional base — often a small country like Luxembourg or Ireland — that tries to attract multinationals with very low corporate taxes.

French wine and cheese producers expressed dismay about being caught in the middle of the battle over digital services tax. France disputes that, saying it targets European and Chinese businesses, too. The tax imposes a 3% annual levy on French revenues of any digital company with yearly global sales worth more than 750 million euros ($830 million) and French revenue exceeding 25 million euros.

European 25% tariffs on U.S. whiskey were largely responsible for U.S. exports of whiskey being weak in the quarter ending Oct. 31, with sales to Europe falling 28% from the year-earlier period.

HARD, TO BEAT

The meteoric rise of the hard seltzer category across the US beverage alcohol industry has been nothing short of phenomenal, and a comprehensive new Hard Seltzer Report from IWSR Drinks Market Analysis, the leading source of data and intelligence on the global alcoholic beverage market, forecasts that consumer interest in these products will only continue to grow.

Led by the brands White Claw and Truly, hard seltzer volume in the US is currently about 82.5m nine-liter cases (which is already larger by volume than the leading spirits category in the US — vodka). IWSR forecasts that by 2023, the category will more than triple, to reach over 281m cases. Hard seltzer and other "seltzer-like" products command a market share of 2.6% of all beverage alcohol in the US, up from only 0.85% a year ago.

STEPHEN PATTEN
PUBLISHER
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Over a separate dispute over subsidies to Airbus and Boeing.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative charges that France’s new digital services tax discriminates against U.S. companies.

France disputes that, saying it targets European and Chinese businesses, too. The tax imposes a 3% annual levy on French revenues of any digital company with yearly global sales worth more than 750 million euros ($830 million) and French revenue exceeding 25 million euros.

France 25% tariffs on U.S. whiskey were largely responsible for U.S. exports of whiskey being weak in the quarter ending Oct. 31, with sales to Europe falling 28% from the year-earlier period.
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Revel's Avila is not just a new spirit – it represents the formation of a new category under the agave umbrella. Like tequila, Revel Avila is distilled using 100% Blue Weber agave; however, that's where the similarities stop. Avila can only be produced using agave grown and distilled in the Morelos region, a small state in the south central part of Mexico with a distinctive terroir that's evident in the taste of the final product.

Revel Spirits is setting out to lead and grow a full-fledged movement, educating trade and mainstream audiences on agave options outside of tequila. What's more, the growing tequila shortage means Avila, and spirits like Mezcal, Bacanora and Sotol are poised to fill a tangible need in the market, offering consumers an attractive alternative to tequila.

Revel Spirits is working closely with the Mexican government to build out their operation to neighboring farms. Prior to Revel Spirits' and the new category of Avila, the Mexican government had invested in Morelos' agave farms, but there hasn't been a plan in place to help the farmers distribute their product, until now.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, California, Revel Spirits is the sole manufacturer and importer of Avila, a new category of agave-based spirits. Revel Avila offers a unique profile which has garnered the brand significant awards and accolades since its 2018 debut.
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WHISKEY: WHAT’S NEW

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, YOU MAKE LEMONADE. But what happens when lemons run low? Faced with dwindling stocks, scarcity can be packaged as treasure. The whiskey industry’s ongoing script of proactive and creative sourcing, blending and barrel-finishing continues to yield “new” products.

MICHTER’S UNLEASHES A DRIBBLE OF CELEBRATION SOUR MASH

After a three-year hiatus, Michter’s Celebration Sour Mash is back. The blend is taken from six carefully selected barrels—in this case two bourbon and four rye, ranging in age from 10 to 30 years. The last Celebration, released in 2016, was three and three, notes Master Distiller Dan McKee: “It’s not just a question of finding this great barrel and putting it with that great barrel. It’s a matter of selecting fantastic barrels that go together so well that the whole will be greater than the sum of the parts.” 115.6 proof; $5,000.

THE BALVENIE’S ‘LIQUID MASTERCLASS’ IN MARRYING MALTS

The Balvenie Fifty: Marriage 0197 is the second in a series showcasing Malt Master David Stewart’s skill “marrying” significantly aged single malts; the bottling is comprised of rare liquids aged 50 years or more selected from the oldest sections of The Balvenie’s stocks. The Balvenie has a long history of 50-year-old variants, their first was a 1937, bottled in 1987, from a vatting of four constituent casks at a time when such vintages were incredibly rare. Each bottle of The Balvenie Fifty: Marriage 0197 is presented in a beautiful wooden tube comprised of 50 layers, 48 of walnut and two of brass. The final liquid is rich on the nose with oak, dark fruits, bitter chocolate and intense spice; a balanced malty sweetness and spicy outburst impart a big bold character, finishing with lush oak sweetness. 84 proof; SRP $38,000.

WOW—SPECIAL EDITIONS FOR UNDER $300(?)

Not all limited releases are pushing into five or even four digits. Their rarity and pedigree make them excellent gift candidates.

■ The fourth and final “Booker’s Batch” bourbon of the year, Batch 2019-04 Beaten Biscuits is named for the cracker-like biscuits Booker Noe loved to make. He learned how to make them from his grandmother and was meticulous about getting them just right... just like he was with his bourbon. Uncut and unfiltered: aged 6 years, 6 months, 19 days. 126.1 proof; $79.99.

■ Marking the second release within the “CC Chronicles,” a series that pays homage to the brand’s rich history, Canadian Club has released their oldest expression to-date. Displaying robust rye spice, delicate notes of brown sugar and baking spices, Canadian Club 42 Year Old honors the dock men who delivered quality whisky to bars when counterfeit ran rampant during the Prohibition era. 90 proof; $299.95.

■ Bardstown Bourbon Company has released newest versions of their Fusion and Discovery Series products; Fusion Series #1 (98.9 proof; $59.99) is a blend of their own wheat and high-rye bourbons (60%), with 12-year-old sourced bourbon. Discovery Series #2 (121.21 proof; $129.99) includes three new sourced bourbons, aged 10, 12 and 14 years.

■ Clyde May’s has a system: the Cask Strength Continuity Program, which began in 2016 with an 8-year-old release, followed by a 9- and 10-year-olds in 2017 and 2018, and now Clyde May’s 11 Year-Old Cask Strength Alabama Style Whiskey release is the most recent. 120 proof; $119.99.
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THE FIND

**TEQUILA JOINS THE CAN-DO CROWD**

*Tequila Joins the Can-Do Crowd*

*Dulce Vida Tequila* has launched a line of sparkling canned cocktails that could signal a significant new direction for canned RTDs. The new products are made in the Los Altos de Jalisco, Mexico with the brand’s own 100% Blue Weber agave blanco tequila, then bottled in Austin, Texas. Offered in flavors like Paloma, Margarita and Watermelon Margarita, the canned cocktails are made with real fruit and fresh lime juice, in 200ml (6.8oz) cans. **$12.99-$14.99/four-pack; 12.5% ABV (25 proof)**

*dulcevidaspirits.com*

**CUERVO DRAWS UP A NEW STRAW**

*Jose Cuervo Tradicional* has unveiled a first-of-its-kind biodegradable straw made from upcycled agave fibers. Starting in January, millions of the new straws will be rolled out at bars, restaurants and Jose Cuervo events in a bid to reduce the use of plastic. The straws feel similar to traditional plastic straws and utilize tons of fibrous material left over from tequila production. They also fit into a larger initiative, The Agave Project, which continues Cuervo’s commitment to the land and people of Tequila while harnessing the potential of its lifeblood: the agave plant.

*cuervo.com*

**KATE HUDSON LAUNCHES GLUTEN-FREE, ALKALINE-WATER VODKA**

*Kate Hudson Launches Gluten-Free, Alkaline-Water Vodka*

Ready or not, another celebri-spirit is knocking on your door. Entrepreneur and actress Kate Hudson is launching *King St. Vodka*. Inspired by memories of hosting friends in her former home on King Street in NYC, King St. Vodka is distilled seven times, is gluten-free and uses alkaline water, yielding “vodka that is insanely smooth and clean.” The vodka’s healthy-ish appeal and Kate Hudson’s business track record (she previously launched clothing lines and authored two bestselling lifestyle books) bode well for success. Her partner in King St. is David Kanbar, co-creator of Skinnygirl with Bethenny Frankel. **80 proof; $24.99**

*kingstvodka.com*

**CHERRYLICIOUS COCKTAIL BOMBS, FRESH FROM CROATIA**

*Cherrylicious Cocktail Bombs, Fresh from Croatia*

*Maraska*, the Croatian distiller of Maraschino liqueur and the number one imported Slivovitz in the U.S., has just released jarred Maraschino Cocktail Cherries specifically developed with mixologists in mind. All-natural and certified Kosher, the liqueur-soaked cherries are pitted and ready to join the party as a key garnish for cocktails like The Aviation, The Martinez and the Hemingway Daiquiri. Made in Zadar, Croatia; available to the trade through Maraska spirit wholesalers.

*worldwidelibations.com*

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TIME TO AIM LOW

THE INDUSTRY REACTS TO GROWING DEMAND FOR LOW- AND NO-ALCOHOL COCKTAILS

BY JACK ROBERTIELLO
But it turned out to be prescient in highlighting what has since become a legitimate trend. And not just in terms of offering beverages beyond soda and juice; we’re talking $15 cocktails made with unusual ingredients and as much care as at any craft cocktail bar.

William Grant going alcohol-free at a bartenders’ convention was hardly the only “proof-free” development in the industry. There are continuing efforts afoot to create serious alcohol-free “spirits.” The alpha brand, Diageo’s Seedlip line of three botanical-driven expressions, saw international volume growth of about 270% in 2018. Grant is testing their 0.5% ABV spirit Atopia in the UK; and in America, Arkay has launched a veritable un-liquor cabinet-ful of non-alcohol cocktails and what they are calling “spirit-flavored” drinks.

Also, the “sober bar” concept accelerated in 2019, reaching beyond one-offs and pop-ups. Bars like Getaway in Brooklyn have opened with extensive menus and no alcohol to be found. “Some of the sober bars haven’t had very sophisticated drinks, so we wanted to focus on having ones that really taste good on their own and not just be recipes with the alcohol removed,” says co-owner Regina Dellea.

In that vein, Getaway’s $13 Daters Gonna Date combines Medjool date, peanut butter, lime, banana syrup, vanilla, macadamia nut milk and Coco Rico soda.

“I don’t think most areas are ready for a sober bar five to six days a week,” offers Chris Marshall, who has run Sans Bar in Austin as a weekend-only alcohol-free bar since May 2018; he took the concept on a nine-city tour this year. His Austin Sans Bar charges admission, which highlights the main hurdle “sober bars” face—profitability without alcohol income.

LOWERING POTENCY, EXPANDING OPTIONS

Meanwhile, high-end restaurants such as Kumiko in Chicago are paying attention, adjusting to offer sophisticated no- and low-octane options. Kumiko devotes multiple menu spots to drinks like the Umeboshi Swizzle (umeboshi plum, nasturtium vinegar, lemon and Fever-Tree Mediterranean Tonic).

Julia Momose, who created the Asian-focused drink menu—with and without alcohol—at Kumiko, has found the only price resistance to $13-15 “spiritfree” drinks has come from customers unlikely to order them anyway. But she does warn that good

“We want to focus on having cocktails that really taste good on their own, not just be drink recipes with the alcohol removed.”

– Regina Dellea, co-owner, Getaway
business practices still apply; labor costs to create and maintain winning recipes, especially with house-made ingredients, needs to be kept in check, as do ingredient costs.

Looking at the entire pie of adults, the sliver represented by the so-called “New Sobriety” is of less interest than the larger slice of “mindful” drinkers, those with a conscious interest in lower-alcohol beverages, especially among Millennials. And with January traditionally being a month of belt-tightening (both dietary and financial), this is the perfect time of year to promote low-alcohol options.

Of course, eschewing standard 80-proof alcohol bases certainly does not limit bartender creativity—nor does it necessarily narrow margins. 2019’s proliferation of Spritz menus was a perfect example of operators creating lighter cocktails that did not compromise on flavor, complexity or visual appeal.

Aperitivos—think Dubonnet and Lillet in addition to Aperol—clocking in under 40 proof, are prime drivers of lower-impact concoctions. Ditto vermouths and (lighter) amaros; Sherry and Ports; even sake and wine. Offering low-alcohol cocktails can be as simple as swapping out a full-proof spirit for a liqueur, or highlighting an Americano as “Negroni without the gin.”

**CHALLENGE & PAYOFFS**

Lamia’s Fish Market, on New York’s hip Lower East Side, opened in mid 2019 with a Mediterranean menu, sea-inspired motifs and no hard liquor license. But their range of ten $14 cocktails—carefully developed by owner Lamia Fulti and handsomely presented—are a huge hit. Some play off classic cocktails (One Too Many Margaritas, based on agave wine, mango, salted jalapeño, lemon); others echo the restaurant’s nautical theme (Beachfront Views is sake, pineapple, orange, cinnamon, lime). Their surprisingly savory spritzer, “Basic AF,” combines rosé wine, watermelon juice, grapefruit, rosemary and Champagne.

Manager and buyer Olga Ladna explains that, as Lamia’s has developed into a vibrant dating destination, the cocktails have been a real bonus. “People come, planning to have wine with dinner, but while they wait they do not hesitate at all to order a cocktail at the bar,” she says. “Sometimes two.” Indeed, if lower alcohol means more drinks get ordered, that is a bottom line boost.

Are suppliers gearing up to catch the “less (alcohol) is more” wave? At the end of 2019, Copper & Kings, the Louisville-based spirits specialist, delivered a limited edition of Mistelle—a “luxury dessert wine” made from Zinfandel—exclusively to media, influencers and gatekeepers. The thing is, Mistelle looks like a brown spirit. Acts like one, too, sporting a replaceable cork and a necker with recipes for an Old Fashioned, a Manhattan and a Highball.

While lower-ABV liquids like vermouth, amaro, wines and liqueurs are familiar elements of a mixologist’s toolbox, sake is increasingly being recognized as an ideal cocktail base. Joto Sake partnered with Kyle Linden Webster of Portland’s Expatriate bar to create a sake cocktail guide. The signature Joto Gimlet blends Joto Daiginjo with fresh lime juice, simple syrup and yuzu kosho (a Japanese condiment combining yuzu citrus with green chili peppers). Like the best of these new generation low-octane drinks, it is complex, creative and delicious, at a fraction of the potency. ■
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How do you prepare for major involuntary price increases on some of your most important products? Very carefully.

Last October, the wine and spirits industry got caught in the cross-hairs of a U.S.-European trade dispute over airplane parts, and the result was a 25% tariff hike that is sending ripples of uncertainty across all three tiers of the industry. The new tariffs cover a variety of European products, including French, German and Spanish still wine under 14% alcohol, single malt Scotch, and assorted liqueurs and cordials.

So, how best to react? “We expect our guests to pay just so much,” notes Clara Klein, the head sommelier at Sunday Vinyl, a wine bar in Denver that is part of the Bobby Stuckey’s Frasca Food & Wine restaurant group. “We don’t want them to feel like we’re taking advantage of them. It’s about answering guests’ questions, and telling the truth about why there is an increase. That’s the best way to mitigate any bad feelings.”

“There’s going to be an inevitable price hike, if there hasn’t been already,” reasoned Howie Rubin, who owns Bauer Wine & Spirits in Boston, last November. “Anything we do now, we have to do with an eye on the future. That means adjusting our inventory to move to something else, if the price increase means we can’t sell it. Their first loyalty is not to their brands, but to their wallet.”

Some restaurants and retailers may be facing as much as 25% to 30% increases in wholesale prices on the affected items, though the amount varies by parts of the country and local liquor laws and taxes. In New Orleans, several trade attendees at a wine festival in November said they were optimistic they would be able to hold price increases to a minimum, says wine consultant Tim McNally. And Thierry Nuckles, who oversees pricing at Kelley’s Beach Liquors in Fort Walton Beach, FL, confirmed in November that he had not yet seen “glaringly obvious” price hikes from his distributors, although he was told to expect them.

But in Kansas City, Kansas, Doug Frost, MS, MW, feared he’ll see as much as a 30% increase for the wine he buys for The Restaurant at 1900. That would make his job difficult enough, but it’s further complicated by restaurant wine prices a couple of miles away in Kansas City, Missouri, which are about 10% lower thanks to lower taxes in Missouri.
The price hikes also depend on how much wholesalers want to cut their margins to limit the increase. It’s not necessarily happening a lot, but when it has happened, say owners and operators, it’s happening for brands that are important to the wholesaler. This may limit some increases on single malts, for example, so that they don’t lose shelf space to cheaper brands.

All things considered, the tariff-imposed price hikes could significantly alter how retailers and restaurants do business, says Rubin.

So what can licensees do to cope?

**REMAIN OPTIMISTIC.** In canvassing for this article, the sense on the East Coast is that the tariffs will last forever. People are more optimistic as you move across the country. Of course, political winds can shift again suddenly (at December’s NATO Summit, President Trump threatened to put new tariffs on French wine and cheese. An apparently new talks within the World Trade Organization (WTO) could present an opportunity for compromise. So, optimism is an approach many can live with, despite the disruption that could be possible if the tariffs go through the end of 2020.

**PREPARE FOR THE WORST.** “The best approach, we believe, was to prepare for a world with the tariffs for the long term, but of course we hope they will go away quickly,” says Andy Glaser, Vice President with Maisons & Domaines Henriot America. “So when preparing our plan for 2020, we made the assumption that they will last for at least a year.” That means increasing prices to reflect the tariffs on January 1st. “Our priority is to protect our margins from this tax,” he says, “and to maintain our highest-quality standards and ultimately protect both our terroir and people.”

**BUY BEFORE PRICES GO UP.** Klein says she was trying to stock up on vintages that were in distributor warehouses before the tariff went into effect in October. The catch, though, is that lots of other accounts were trying to do that, so much depends on the relationship with the supplier. In addition, says Rubin, many higher-priced wines, such as Bordeaux and Burgundy, are in modest supply on this side of the Atlantic. Hence, there isn’t much pre-tariff merchandise to buy, even if the distributor is willing to sell it. One more problem: Where do smaller operations keep extra inventory they bought to stock up?

**KEEP LOOKING FOR DEALS.** One uncertainty among the many with the tariff is what wholesalers will do. Will they spotlight some products, and absorb those increases? If so, then there will be deals to be had, but only with specific volume purchases, say retailers. But this has its own dilemma: Will retailers be able to sell a pallet of something – or even 10 cases? How will they display such an inventory?

**FOCUS ON TAX-EXEMPT PRODUCTS.** Rubin says one way he’ll approach the increases will be with high-end brown goods—bourbon and rye, as well as super premium gin and vodka. “Those will also help with the cordials and liqueurs, because they’re not as popular as they used to be for gifts,” he says. “I have to take my cue from the market, and keep track of what people are asking for. If I can listen to my customers, I won’t be caught buying stuff that won’t sell but that I bought because it was cheaper.” Klein says one difficulty with moving to higher-alcohol wines, which are exempt, is customer expectations. People seek lighter, European style wines because they prefer that style, so moving to something heavier may be as counterproductive as increasing prices.

**LOOK AROUND FOR LESS COSTLY ALTERNATIVES.** Frost says his wine list at 1900 concentrates on the very wines that have been included in the tariff. So he has to find something similar to a white Loire to substitute—maybe something from the less expensive Languedoc or a less costly region in the Loire. That could mean, says Rubin, going to Quincy or Menetou Salon instead of Sancerre. Klein says unoaked Central Coast Chardonnay may be able to fill in for French wines. There’s a catch here, too, though: quality. No one wants to use a cheaper wine just because it’s cheaper. This conundrum could also apply to single malt Scotch: Will consumers move to blended whiskey or other single malts that aren’t included in the tariff?

**COULD CHAMPAGNE BE NEXT?** In December, the trade war escalated: In retaliation for France’s new digital tax on providers like Google and Facebook, the White House is threatening a 100% tariff on French cheese and Champagne (previously exempt from the punitive duties). France and the EU have condemned the move, and have promised to fight back swiftly if these new tariffs go through; a decision is expected later this month.
SipSource was created at WSWA (Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America), and Jo Moak, project manager and a Senior Vice President and General Counsel for WSWA, asserts: “SipSource aggregates, arguably, the most brand-specific sales data—specifically, wholesaler depletion sales to retailers—of all the data sources available in our industry.”

Moreover, SipSource has immediately commanded respect across the industry. Rob McMillan, the founder and executive vice president of the Silicon Valley Bank Wine Division, has called SipSource “a breakthrough in an industry that has traditionally been family-owned and quite secretive,” adding that the wine market has never traditionally had “great information about on-premise sales, but “[SipSource] has more information about the marketplace, its size and scale than anybody.”

So, what does it do? SipSource combines data from five top wholesalers—who serve 86% of the U.S. market and represent 47 states—plus retail sales figures from Nielsen, Vermont Processing Information and global management firm A.T. Kearny to provide broad drinks market insights. SipSource features rolling, 12-month volume trends updated quarterly; lists of top brands; and data aggregated to national, regional, chain and independent accounts. It will also provide product category management and segment reporting, as well as insights on how specific segments are faring.
SipSource analyst Dale Stratton emphasizes that, in developing a more comprehensive means of harvesting industry-wide figures, they have been able to "reference and validate" data from other sources. These include not only Nielsen, but also National Alcohol Beverage Control Association (NABCA) and ShipCompliant by Sovos. In short, this confirmation bodes well for the accuracy of SipSource's much broader and deeper data. The added scope inspires confidence both for SipSource’s brand-oriented statistics, but also their ability to account for important channels that previously were untracked, most notably independent retailers.

"Historically wholesalers have not wanted to share their data. They are still reluctant to share data at a brand or account level, but this gives a good view of parts of the market."

— Jon Moramarco, bw/I66 LLC

SipSource expects to cover the remaining three states in 2020. Michael Bilello, Senior Vice President of Communications and Marketing at WSWA, also notes that seven new wholesale partners will be joining as data providers. Stephen Rannekleiv, Global Sector Strategist for Beverages at Rabobank, adds, "The value of the data will only increase as more wholesalers participate. Having more wholesalers will increase the share of the market being covered, which will increase the confidence in the data. It will also likely add greater visibility into specific regions, where certain smaller wholesalers have a stronger presence."

The full loop of depletion data combined with Nielsen data on sales provides a very comprehensive look at the drinks business. Danny Brager, the Southern California-based Senior Vice President of Nielsen’s beverage alcohol practice, shares, “The pipeline starts with what ships out to the retailer and then to the consumer.” As a result, with the tabulation of the two data sets, “any perspective that gives a broader view is valuable.”

"[F]or the first time, we are starting to form a view of how consumption is evolving across channels and with wide geographic coverage."

— Stephen Rannekleiv, Rabobank

MORE REALLY IS MORE...
SipSource data currently comes from five top wholesale players: SGWS, Breakthru Beverage Group, Republic National Distributing Company, Young's Market Company and Lipman Brothers in Tennessee.

“There is an insatiable appetite for high-quality data in the beverage alcohol industry. Along with the data, I am blown away on the weekly calls by the executives and analysts that make up the SipSource team and the brain capital they represent,” added Barkley Stuart, a former WSWA chairman and current SGWS Executive Vice President, who was instrumental in getting the project launched.

Spirits Share And 9L Case Volume Growth Trend By On-Premise Channel

Data such as channel growth is particularly helpful to the on-premise sector.

Wine and Spirits Share and 9L Case Volume Growth Trend

While overall market volume of wine vs. spirits appears quite consistent, wine is clearly trending down.
THE KEY TRENDS

The inaugural SipSource Report reveals some critical consumer behaviors and category trends. Wine, according to SipSource, as well as other industry sources, is slowing down in terms of volume, says Brager. While it “struggles for consumer growth, spirits are chugging along pretty nicely,” he adds. The bulk of growth in the spirits sector, he notes, is coming from whiskey, tequila and the ready-to-drink (RTD) category. The RTD sector is driving sales, Brager adds, by offering diversity in terms of flavor profiles. They also tend to appeal to both genders and many different age demographics. He goes on to note that spirits are currently more affordable than wine both on- and off-premise.

Within RTDs, hard seltzer is rapidly gaining share. It’s affordable and low-carb, so it appeals to health-conscious drinkers, who are a growing demographic. The same demographic that has fueled the sales of hard seltzer also loves hard water and coffee, he notes. He adds that young people are willing explore categories that embrace health and wellness to a greater degree than ever before.

The bottom line, according to Stratton, is that wine “producers need to think of how to appeal to younger consumers.” The level of experimental behavior ensuing in the wine industry is positive, he notes, and the tasting room experience in wine country continues to evolve. This is, in great part, because visitors want to take a deeper dive into the wine country experience. Stratton thinks that this move may well bode for better days ahead for the wine industry.

Hard seltzer is rapidly gaining share. It’s affordable and low-carb, so it appeals to health-conscious drinkers, who are a growing demographic.

year ending November 2nd, 2019 according to Nielsen off-premise data, compared to $440 million one year ago.

Some data-driven conclusions (based on case volume, October 2018 – September 2019)

- The spirits and wine markets are no longer moving in unison as they have in the past. Wine is on the decline, while spirits are on the rise.
- Spirits are seeing an uptick because they are affordable, appeal to a younger consumer and are perceived to be healthier. Overall spirits sales were up by 3.2%.
- Tequila and mezcal are the leading spirits with an increase in of 9.5%.
- They are closely followed by Irish Whiskey at 9% growth and then Cognac at 6.6% growth.
- Wine depletions have seen a 2.2% downturn.
- Red wine was down by 3.5% and white was down by 2.5%.
- Sparkling wine is continuing to grow, particularly Prosecco, which was up by 11.5%.
- Small sizes—such half bottles or 375s—are doing quite well as many of them are canned wine formats. The industry is also ramping up its commitment to 375ml bottles of wine as an aging population enjoys them more than ever.
- Hard Seltzer, which falls into the beer category because it is malt-based, is seeing fantastic success.
Each year in March, the world’s foremost spirits authors, educators, buyers, and journalists, led by F. Paul Pacult, convene to judge spirits entries from all over the world.

- The coveted USC Chairman’s Trophy is awarded to the top scoring spirit in major categories.
- Brands are also recognized with additional accolades: Finalist, Great Value, and Tried & True Award.
- Products are scored on the retailer and consumer friendly 100-point scale.
- USC accepts all categories of spirits plus: aperitifs; vermouths; pre-mixed cocktails; non-alcoholic mixers; hard/spiked seltzers, coffees, iced teas and sample bottles not yet in their finished packaging or with final label.
- Marketing collateral, for both digital and print, is available in numerous formats.
- High-scoring spirits are promoted with Beverage Media Group in top U.S. markets in the annual Ultimate Guide.

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DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 26, 2020
With about 6,900 exhibitors and 60,000 guests expected to converge in Düsseldorf, Germany this March, ProWein is indisputably the world’s largest and most important trade fair for wines and spirits. Having marked a quarter century last year, for 2020 organizers are rising to the challenge of continuing momentum, adjusting their infrastructure, programming and services. Here are some of the ways ProWein continues to deliver as the world’s greatest platform for the wine and spirits trade.

**MASTERING SCALE**

The fairgrounds of Messe Düsseldorf work like a large, flexible campus of connected “halls” smartly organized by country. The last major revision, in 2015, saw expansion from Halls #1-7 to Halls #9-17. (Another possible reconfiguration is already being eyed for 2021.) “As far as exhibitors are concerned, we have certainly reached our limit,” reveals Bastian Mingers, Global Head Wine & Spirits and Director ProWein. “Therefore, we are mainly focusing on increasing the number of trade visitors.”

Functional improvements over the years include:
- Expert stemware service and efficient shuttle buses that have kept up with show volume
- Ever-evolving tools at ProWein.com—most recently a partnership with Bottlebooks, the online platform (software-as-a-service) used by events and organizations to streamline information workflows.
- The ProWein app, helping visitors and exhibitors plan and customize their show plans.

Complementing the question of quantity of attendance is the quality of attendees. ProWein remains strictly limited to professionals in the wine and spirits industry, spanning the retail, wholesale, hotel/hospitality and import/export sectors. In addition, Düsseldorf is easy to get to and free from wine-country distractions. Add to the all-business focus its primacy on the wine market calendar (ideal to show new Northern Hemisphere vintages), and it’s easy to see why the show attracts a Who’s Who of the trade.

**HARVESTING FEEDBACK**

Messe Düsseldorf runs about 50 trade fairs a year, including 23 sector-leading events.
Indeed, in direct response to industry concerns, ProWein is collaborating with Geisenheim University on a major Climate Change impact report, to be presented in March. Also at ProWein 2020, “trend scouts” Stuart Pigott and Paula Redes Sidore will moderate tastings on the topic over two nights at the ProWein Forum.

Tellingly, the most salient of previous years’ thematic trial balloons have become permanent fixtures at the show. Top amongst these: Hall #7.0 has become the home of “same but different” showcasing over 120 producers of craft spirits, craft beer and cider from 24 countries (goat milk liqueur, anyone?). The long-running “Champagne Lounge” features the savoir-faire of nearly 50 bubbly producers. Organic World lends additional gravitas to the already-comprehensive organic wine presentation at ProWein. The blend of special exhibitions is rounded out by the Mundus Vini tasting and the “Packaging & Design” zone.

AMERICAN APPEAL

A natural question is what ProWein offers Americans, who face regulations limiting direct purchases. U.S. attendance has increased tremendously over the past decade (now #6 among visitor countries), notes Mingers. “Any buyer and producer from the U.S. visiting us here in Düsseldorf is impressed with the scale, internationality and professionalism of ProWein.” Moreover, ProWein worked with The Wine Enthusiast Importer Connection to create “Route USA” to guide U.S. buyers to those exhibitors with an interest in finding importing and distribution partners.

Even for Americans not looking to import, ProWein remains a prime arena for sommeliers, retailers and hospitality professionals in terms of tasting education, trend-spotting and networking. Different members of the trade approach ProWein with different goals, and that seems to be working out fine. In exit surveys, for the past three years, more than 90% of ProWein visitors stated that they “completely achieved their goals” at the trade show.
1. COCKBURN’S PORT
Acquired by Symington Family Estates in 2010, Cockburn’s Port is rolling out bold new designs for their Special Reserve, Fine Tawny and Fine Ruby Port expressions. The revamp abandons the traditional curved bottle for a tall, sleek one. The wordmark and signature fonts have been updated, and a bolder color scheme pops off the shelf. Special Reserve incorporates an embossed logo; the Tawny and Ruby labels include the cellar masters’ cask mark and a style description.

SRP: Special Reserve $19.99; Tawny & Ruby $14.99
cockburns.com

2. KIRK AND SWEENEY XO RUM
New from 3 Badge Beverage, Kirk and Sweeney XO Rum, handcrafted in Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic. Starting with hand-harvested sugarcane made into pure blackstrap molasses, the rum is aged in American oak before being bottled at cask strength, adhering to the very strict regulations that allow it to be labeled Dominican Rum. Layers of dried fruits and oak in the nose lead into oak and vanilla with hints of raisin and spice. 131 proof.

SRP: $229
3badge.com

3. CASTELLO DEL POGGIO ’TEMPLAR’S BLEND’
Castello del Poggio, an 1821 Fine Wine & Spirits brand, has released a new Templar’s Blend. Based on Italian local varietals, the dry red has aromas of blackberries, plums and vanilla leading into subtle tannins and a persistent finish; French and American oak enhance roundness and structure. The name is a nod to the Knight Templars who once protected the medieval fortress which controlled the winery property from the 11th century.

SRP: $12.99
1821fws.com

4. SILENT POOL GIN
At the Duke of Northumberland’s Albury estate, on the banks of a legendary Silent Pool, a group of old English farm buildings are now a sustainable gin operation. Some of the botanicals (juniper, licorice, cassia bark, orris, bergamot) are bruised and macerated in base spirit before being transferred to the still; others (citrus peel, et al) are basket-infused; still more (rose petals, kaffir lime leaves, elderflower) are macerated separately. The resulting spirit is bright and floral with depth and complexity.

SRP: $45
silentpooldistillers.com

5. LAPHROAIG 16 YEAR OLD SINGLE MALT SCOTCH
Laphroaig, a Scotch distiller known for full-throttle peaty style of single malt whisky, has a new age statement bottling: Laphroaig 16 Year Old. Dark copper in color, this single malt has aromas of leather, oak, maple and a touch of black pepper. The palate is sweet with treacle, caramel, honey and thyme, as well as wood smoke and lots of floral notes. It finishes long and smoky, with a salted seaweed note.

SRP: $89.99
laphroaig.com

6. HIRO SAKE CUPS
Hiro Sake, a premium sake from Japan, has launched a single-serve glass cup sake (180ml, 15% ABV). Hiro Sake cups debuted in Southern Florida at on-premise accounts initially, followed by the off-premise market and national distribution in 2020. Now in 20 markets, Hiro Sake was introduced in 2011 to the U.S., in 720ml and 300ml bottles, with Hiro Blue, a junmai ginjo sake; and Hiro Red, a junmai sake, which is now also in the “cup.”

SRP: $6.49/cup
hirosake.com
7. CHRONIC CELLARS 2017 ‘SIR REAL’ CABERNET SAUVIGNON
Leveraging their experience in the region, Chronic Cellars has released a Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon, dubbed “Sir Real.” Sourced from the Paso Robles AVA, the wine contains 94% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Petite Sirah. It aims to boldly express the character of the region, displaying layers of black cherry, mocha and fresh savory notes and a core of dark fruit and harmonious tannins.

SRP: $15
wxbrands.com

8. TRES COMAS AÑEJO TEQUILA
Celebrity tequila continues. Tres Comas Añejo Tequila was created “in collaboration with HBO and Silicon Valley,” by entrepreneur Russ Hanneman with the tongue-in-cheek(?) goal of adding a third comma to the founder’s bank account. Tres Comas is made from 100% Blue Weber Agave and is aged in American oak barrels for over a year; enjoy neat, on the rocks, or in the signature “Billionaire’s Margarita”—which is a regular Margarita, but made with Tres Comas.

SRP: $44.99
diageo.com

9. CALLIA ARGENTINE WINES
Taub Family Selections and Bodegas Callia have refreshed the packaging for Callia Wines of Argentina. The range includes a Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Grigio and Torrontés, each crafted to showcase ripe fruit in a food-friendly, easy-drinking style. The new design imparts a modern feel with the grape variety prominently featured at the center of each label. The new back labels will also feature updated messaging in both English and Spanish.

SRP: $8.99
taubfamilyselections.com

10. STRAVECCHIO BRANCA
Branca USA is introducing an Italian brandy, Stravecchio Branca, to the U.S., marking the first release from Fratelli Branca’s new NYC-based import company. Stravecchio Branca, the #1 on-premise brandy in Italy, was first distilled in 1888, joining Fernet-Branca (originally created in 1845) as the second entry in the portfolio. Today, Stravecchio (pronounced Stra-Vech-Key-O, meaning extra old) is produced with techniques passed down through five generations. 80 proof.

SRP: $39.99/1L
brancausa.com

11. COPPER & KINGS AMERICAN CRAFT APPLE BRANDY
Louisville-based Copper & Kings has extended its apple brandy line-up with a new iteration, distilled exclusively from apple wine fermented from fresh-pressed juice in copper pot stills and aged in used bourbon and new American white oak barrels. Non-chill filtered for added body, the brandy is unadulterated with boisé (oak flavor) and has no added flavors or essences. 92 proof.

SRP: $35
copperandkings.com

12. A TO Z ROSÉ BUBBLES IN CANS
A to Z’s Rosé Bubbles debuted in a crown-capped glass bottle in 2017 and is already one of the top three selling sparkling wines produced in Oregon. The brand is now adding a convenient, portable, canned format amid reports of overall canned wine sales up 69% and Oregon wines growing at 18%. Canned wines from the Northwest have more than doubled sales in the past year; A to Z has opted for the 250ml size, for optimal chilling.

SRP: $20/four-pack of 250ml cans
atozwineworks.com
**CLASSES PLUS**

**MICHAEL WYATT, ALL DAY HOSPITALITY RESTAURANT GROUP, BOSTON**

**BY ALIA AKKAM**

Mike Wyatt is Director of Operations/Beverage Director at All Day Hospitality, a collection of Boston restaurants and bars including Ward 8, Ciao Bella, North Oyster Square, Tony & Elaine’s and Bodega Canal.

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** There are several concepts under the All Day umbrella. North Square Oyster Bar emphasizes natural wines, and Tony & Elaine’s, which only serves beer, wine and liqueurs. The others are more cocktail-focused—how would you summarize those programs?

**MIKE WYATT:** Ward 8 was first, and it’s based on the classics. There’s a full page on the menu that’s dedicated to a rotating selection of them. Ciao Bella’s bar program mirrors what you’d find at any Italian bar during aperitivo hour, but also with kitschy throwbacks like the Godfather, Lemon Drop and of course an Espresso Martini. We have 20 types of amari and a section devoted to those cocktails as well. Bodega Canal’s cocktail menu is the biggest of the group. As a Mexican restaurant, there’s obviously plenty of Margaritas. We fresh squeeze gallons of lime juice daily. It’s all built for volume but with quality ingredients.

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** Are there any consistent threads between the restaurants?

**MIKE WYATT:** Classic cocktail standards are the same for all of our bars. You can order an Old Fashioned, Manhattan or Martini at any of the spots and count on it being consistent across the board.

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** What is your training process like?

**MIKE WYATT:** It’s a little intense at Ward 8. Guests like going off menu, so in addition to the 30 or so cocktails on the list, you’re expected to know at least another 20 commonly ordered classics. We spend a lot of time on proper technique, perfecting it. Our GM, Rob, started as a bartender at Ward 8, so either he or myself are always there to observe new hires. Constant quizzing—verbal during shift and written after—ensures they’re learning the material.

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** Is there a collaborative approach to building a cocktail menu?

**MIKE WYATT:** Everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the list. We generally have two meetings, one for ideas and seeing what sticks, and the second where we build and critique. These are optional and there’s no pressure to contribute but the turnouts have been great.

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**BEAR SKIN RUG**

**Ingredients:**
- 2 oz New Holland Beer Barrel Bourbon
- Scant ½ oz Toasted Pecan Demerara Syrup*
- 3 dashes Coffee Bitters

**Method:** Stir all ingredients. Strain over a large ice cube into an Old Fashioned glass and serve.

*Toasted Pecan Syrup:
- 2 cups Pecans, chopped and toasted on sheet pan at 350°F for 7 minutes

**How Long He’s Been in the Industry:** “I started working in bars and restaurants at 15 and took up bartending as soon as I turned 18.”

**Favorite spirit:** Scotch

**Favorite Cocktail:** “A well-made, ice cold Martini”

**If He Wasn’t Working in Hospitality He Would Be:** A doctor

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**BEAR SKIN RUG**

**Ingredients:**
- 4 cups (1 quart) Demerara Sugar, packed tight
- 1 quarter Water

**Method:** Bring water to a simmer. Add toasted pecans and brown sugar. Stir to dissolve. Simmer for 30 minutes. Let cool for 1 hour. Strain pecans.
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A BEVERAGE BIZ LOOK AHEAD AT THE 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY TEDDY DURGIN

A year ago at this time, the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) and other small business interests were gearing up for a 2019 General Assembly where nearly 30 percent of the members were new. That was a lot of new flesh to press, a lot of new ears to tug, a lot of new hearts and minds to win over to our industry’s issues and concerns.

But guys like MSLBA Legislative Chairman Jack Milani and attorney and MSLBA lobbyist J. Steven “Steve” Wise were definitely up to the task. “It was a learning year for a lot of folks,” the former conceded, “especially with regards to alcohol legislation. It can be a difficult learning curve, and we know that. So, we did our usual Lobby Day and made sure our members connected with their legislators. All we ever want is an opportunity to explain our side. Sometimes legislators agree with us. Sometimes they don’t. At the end of the day, you just want to feel like you were listened to.”

Wise agreed, adding, “I think the combination of our Opening Day reception that we do on the first day of session as well as the Lobby Day we do during the session coupled with the regular outreach of our members to legislators helped tremendously. But it’s still a full-time job to educate lawmakers on issues that are important to us, because they have a thousand different subject matters to deal with. It’s a tough job. So, it’s incumbent on our folks to get out there and tell them what’s important to retail, to alcoholic beverages, and to small business interests.”

This past year, Wise said he and his colleagues spent a lot of time working through some modifications to the brewery law. The law’s update was dubbed the “Brewery Modernization Act” and was one of two brewer-backed bills state legislators passed this year and Gov. Hogan signed into law. The second makes it easier for breweries to end or renegotiate their contracts with distributors, beginning Jan. 1.

“I think that was a success story for the whole industry,” Wise said, “because we were able to come together with the brewers, the beer wholesalers, our retailers, and we worked out something that gave craft brewers the predictability they were looking for. But all concerned also recognized there had been significant changes to the
structure of the industry. Many people had entered the industry under a different set of rules. So, the changes had to be done in a measured manner to respect the existing rules of the game, but also reflect that the times have indeed changed. It truly was a compromise in the best sense of the word.

He continued, "We also worked a bit with a legislator this past year, Delegate Steve Arentz, who was trying to make some changes to the alcohol awareness laws to require that someone with alcohol awareness training be on premise at all times. His bill actually went a step further and said that, basically, anybody that serves alcohol on premise off would need to have alcohol awareness training. We're working through that with him. So, that could be back on the table in 2020, but it's been a cooperative thing. He's been willing to hear what the industry has to say, but he's interested in enhancing those requirements. And we understand.

Now, with 2019 almost in the books, both Wise and Milani are looking forward to the challenges and (hopefully) successes of a new year. Wise noted, "We have been trying for some time to get a bill passed regarding underage sales and IDs. When it comes to underage sales, today's fake IDs are terribly difficult to identify because the technology has gotten SO good at creating them. The moment a state has passed a change in the look of a driver's license, somebody online has figured out how to reproduce a fake one. But the retailer is, of course, still directly held responsible for underage sales. So, we're trying to put scanner technology into the law that would say, 'If a retailer has used a certified technology to check an ID, they should be able to use that as evidence if there is an underage sale.' It would be part of their defense, but not an absolute defense. We haven't been able to get this done, but we're going to keep working on it in 2020."

Of course, MSLBA members are always on guard for any chain store legislation being proposed. As of press time, neither the Beverage Journal nor Milani or Wise had heard a bill is imminent or even in the works. "But I would certainly tell our members to prepare like there is," Milani cautioned.

Marshele Burgess, MSLBA Treasurer and proprietor of Rip's Country Inn in Bowie, remarked, "Each business has different issues that are hot-button issues to them, so it is important to keep tabs on those items. Being part of MSLBA and going to the weekly meetings during legislation really helps you to be able to be up to date."

Perhaps the MSLBA's biggest hot-button issue heading into 2020 is a tax one. Any retailer that collects sales tax gets what is called a vendor allowance. So if, for example, you're sending $1,000 to the state in sales tax, you get to keep $100 for the processing of that and so forth.

"When our industry's sales tax went up to 9 percent, that amount was not adjusted," Wise noted. "That's been coupled with the fact that all retailers are now experiencing considerable fees when credit cards are used, and consumers are increasingly paying with credit cards. So, our costs per transaction have gone up. At the same time, the amount of the transaction has gone up because of the sales tax. That's causing retailers to have to fork over more dollars to the credit card companies. We're looking at coming in with some legislation that would adjust that vendor allowance to reflect that the higher sales tax is increasing our costs. Right now, we're trying to get a handle on what would be an appropriate adjustment."

It's a concern for Milani, as well. "We're trying to figure it out," Milani, the owner of Monaghan's Pub in Baltimore, said. "It's not easy to talk about any bill that comes with a price tag. We need to key in on, 'Hey, please help us out with that extra 3 percent the average retailer doesn't have to pay.'"

So, does Milani have a New Year's wish for the industry and Annapolis? When asked this question, he had to laugh first. Then, he replied, "Hey, I always have to play defense. I almost never get to play offense! I guess I would just hope that more legislators come to really know that Maryland is set up for the small business folks who work in their communities. When a bill comes in, we'd love for them to consider, 'What will this do to our small retailers?' And weigh that prior to doing anything. We also have to do our part. And when we do call up about something that affects small business, take a couple of minutes and talk to us. Our story is real, and it's getting harder out here in this age where people want total convenience. They want everything to be delivered right to their front door, and they don't think about the cost that may come with that."

There's no doubt that this is a critical time in state politics, especially where alcohol legislation is concerned. For many reading this, the goings-on in Annapolis can appear overwhelming. But Burgess, Wise, and Milani all urged Beverage Journal readers -- from packaged-goods store owners to bar and restaurant operators to brewers and winery proprietors -- to get involved.

"They need to be members of MSLBA, because we do employ a full-time lobbyist who looks out for our interests. We also have a legislative committee that meets weekly during the Session to monitor legislation. Anyone who is new to business reading this must reach out and talk to their local officials in their area. Introduce yourself, let him or her know how many people you employ, and what you're doing in the community. Don't wait for an issue to make your first introduction to a delegate or a senator. Make that introduction now, and try and develop a relationship. If nothing else, they may call you and ask you a question about a bill. Be a resource for them."

Burgess concurred, adding, "It is SO important to have relationships with your local politicians! A good place to start is to come to the MSLBA Opening Day legislative reception and Lobby Day."

Perhaps Wise summed it up best: "You can never stress enough how much the legislative process matters to small businesses. It's the old saying, 'Get into the politics ... or get out of business!'"
Bill Oertel has worked for the family business for 35 years now. He grew up in it. And this year, he is its new, incoming President. That business is Harris Crab House & Seafood Restaurant, which is situated on the Kent Narrows Waterway just four miles east of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

Oertel’s grandfather, Bill Harris, started the operation -- initially a seafood processing business -- 72 years ago. And for more than seven decades, Oertel said, “we’ve been in business on the Eastern Shore selling and buying seafood. Around 1980, he wanted a place where all of his grandkids could work. So, he started a little crab shack on the [front dock of the W.H. Harris Seafood Processing House] that had picnic tables and just sold crabs and shrimp. Pretty much all of his grandkids worked there and grew up there. Most of us haven’t really left.”

The old processing house, which indeed began operations in 1947, is still home to Harris Seafood Company LLC. But when Granddad was ready to retire years ago, Oertel’s parents, Karen (Bill’s daughter) and Art Oertel, and his aunt and uncle, Jerry and Pat Harris, bought the restaurant. Oertel noted. “In the early ‘90s, the family built a new, 450-seat restaurant and that’s what stands today. We’re open year-round, and we serve as much local seafood as we possibly can. It can be tough to get local crabs in the wintertime, but we do our best. Our recipes have been handed down from my grandparents and my great-grandparents, and that’s how we operate.”
Just because Harris Crab House has an almost total focus on seafood, that doesn’t mean there isn’t some thought given to the beverage component of the menu. "No surprise. Beer works well for us!" Oertel exclaimed. "Remember, though, we’re a family restaurant, so we don’t really pride or tout ourselves as, ‘Come on down and make us your bar!’ As best we can, we offer Maryland beers, and we carry the brands of our local distributors."

For Oertel, it’s been more than a family affair. It’s also been a love affair. "I met my wife at the restaurant,” he said. "We got married there. She was a server, and I [chuckling] was a ‘whatever in the kitchen.’ . . . This past summer, we opened a coffee shop and dessert bar on the premises. We deal with Rise Up Coffee based out of Easton, and they have some of the best coffee around. We love to pare with local folks as much as possible."

And while Harris Crabhouse prides itself on being as much local as possible -- the business buys its seafood from approximately 350 local watermen and employs nearly 140 people from the community -- its clientele is diverse. "Many of our customers are folks who come across the bridge,” Oertel noted. "They love the slower pace of the Eastern Shore. I would say half our customers are from the 'Western Shore.' We also have a lot of local folks, of course, who come to us for birthday parties, anniversaries, and other milestones. We’re trying to promote more to Eastern Shore customers, mainly because the bridge is such a hassle right now."

He continued, "My favorite question is, 'Where are you guys from? What brought you over here?' Everybody loves to come over the bridge and just go, 'Ahhh, I'm out of that rat race for a little bit!' We get so many different bus parties, too. A lot of them are from Baltimore, and a lot are from D.C. We have people who come down from Philadelphia and from Wilmington. We’re the first Maryland seafood crabhouse that you run across when you’re coming down from that way."

And as much as family, friends, and customers from far and near keep the business going, Oertel and his staff also get by with a little help from their friends in the business. Chiefly, the family’s long-time affiliation with the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) has paid dividends.

Oertel concluded, "I love how the MSLBA members stick together and help each other out. There is, of course, the political lobbying component that’s good for everybody. My mother [Karen Oertel] was on the board for a long time, and she was very active. Our most recent [officer] would have been my cousin, our outgoing President Michael Harris. As I get my feet wet this year, I very much hope to participate in the administration end of the MSLBA. I look forward to it, in fact! Keeping a voice in Annapolis for the local, one-off type of restaurants … that is a very important thing."
The Vineyards of San Valentino were born from a dream and a great passion for the land and its fruits. The vineyard is located in the region of Emilia Romagna (Italy) on the hills of Rimini, but a few steps from the sea. Roberto Mascarin and his family have been producing wines from this territory bordered by the Adriatic Sea to the east and by the first peak of the Apennines to the west since 1990.

Their ViVi, Colli Di Rimini Rebola D.O.P. 2017 Organic Selection, wine is dedicated to Valeria Vivian, wife of Roberto Mascarin. The first vintage he made for this wine was the 2017, which is when he lost his wife to cancer.

“Roberto called the wine ViVi,” explained Maurizio Farro of Cantinieri Imports. “ViVi was how his wife was known and, in Italian, means LIVE. Meaning live your life, and I would say, to the fullest.”

ViVi bravely fought against her cancer for years. Her bravery in her battle against her disease is why Roberto chose a painting of Wonder Woman for the label of the wine that bears his wife’s name.

The original Wonder Woman painting that is now on the ViVi wine label is by Antony Lister, a contemporary Australian-born painter and installation artist, best known for inventing ‘adventure painting’.

As well as Antony Lister’s Wonder Woman, also adorning the label is the following text written in ViVi’s own hand:

Prologue ...

Life is worth living... always
for a smile, for a joy
for a tear, for a fight
for a love, for a pain
for a surprise, for a happy event
for a sad news, for a win
for a defeat
Being there
Changes
Everything!!!
ViVi
Turning inventory. And heads. That’s Proof.

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**ONE HOPE WINE TASTING AT GIOlITTI DELICATESSEN**

Joseph Fisher, Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits; was recently at Giolitti Delicatessen in Annapolis where he hosted a One Hope Wine tasting ... each varietal donates to a different charity all year long.

**MAKER’S MARK AND JONATHON OGDEN AT MIDWAY LIQUORS**

Jonathon Ogden was recently at Midway Liquors in Joppa for a Maker’s Mark bottle signing event.

**LA CREMA CREW FINALISTS ANNOUNCED**

Pictured with Liz Kitterman (c), Jackson Family Wine; are Jeremy Corwin and Jenny Gavigan, both with Monument Fine Wines; and La Crema Crew finalists.

Alicia Barnhart, Republic National Distributing; is with Liz Kitterman, Jackson Family Wines; and has been recognized as La Crema Crew finalist.

**ATTENTION ALL LICENSEES!**

**MARYLAND STATE CERTIFIED ALCOHOL AWARENESS COURSES**

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Certification expires four years from the date you are certified.

**DIAGEO & MOËT HENNESSY HOLD ANNUAL WHISKY SOCIAL EVENT**

Diageo & Moët Hennessy’s Annual Whisky Social was recently held at Bond Street Social in Baltimore. The annual event is an opportunity to share knowledge on a wide variety of single malt and blended whiskeys from the Diageo and Moët Hennessy portfolio.