Bevage Journal

September 2019

2019 Bartenders to Watch

Street Cred for Sweet Red

Trendspotting: Craft Ciders
FEATURES

05 THE FASTEST BARTENDER CONTEST
Off and Running ... Again

05 NEW PRODUCTS & PROMOTIONS

18 BARTENDERS TO WATCH
Seven top professionals defining today's mixology culture share their insights

28 SWEET REDS
Dismissed by many in the trade, the sweet red wine trend shows no sign of slowing down as consumers continue to fuel demand

DEPARTMENTS

02 PUB PAGE
Tax Law Deadline...

10 R.I.P. JOE STANLEY
A Winner in Life and in the Beverage Business

12 INDUSTRY NEWS
Sevenfifty + BMG ... Partners

15 MARKET SHOTS
Sutter Home Build a Better Burger ● Bluecoat Gin

34 TREND SPOTTING
Despite many challenges, micro-brands are slowly gaining share in the growing cider category

40 BAR TALK
Washington D.C.'s Jess Weinstein finds cocktail menu inspiration from world travels and global street fare

42 SPECIAL EVENTS
CREATE SPECIAL CUSTOMERS
Vineyards, breweries & distilleries are hosting events on-site ... what’s the affect to both the supplier and the retailer?

46 PROPRIETOR PROFILE
J. Scott Ridgell staying Busy at Buzzy's

ON THE COVER:
BCB 2019 Bartenders to Watch at Lemon's, on the rooftop of Wythe Hotel, NY
Photographed by Andrew Kist
TAX DEADLINE ...

A major tax victory the industry won in 2017 may slip into history if we and our allies don’t mobilize effectively to pass the proposed bill to keep the reform alive. The deadline for action is in December of this year. The Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform Act of 2019 (S. 362; H.R. 1175) has been introduced in Congress. The legislation makes permanent the tax and other provisions passed as part of the Tax Cut and Jobs Act that was signed into law in the closing days of 2017 on a temporary, two-year basis. Specific tax provisions relating to beer include: reducing the federal excise tax to $3.50 per barrel on the first 60,000 barrels for domestic brewers producing fewer than 2 million barrels annually; reducing the federal excise tax to $16 per barrel on the first 6 million barrels for all other brewers and all beer importers; keeping the excise tax at the current $18 per barrel rate for barrelage over 6 million. For distillers, the legislation would permanently establish a reduced rate of $2.70 per proof gallon for the first 100,000 proof gallons of distilled spirits produced or imported annually, and a rate of $13.34 per proof gallon for the next 22,130,000 proof gallons of distilled spirits. Production in excess of 22,130,000 proof gallons would be subject to $13.50 per proof gallon. Comparable tax benefits for vintners are also part of the law.

“The Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform Act (2017) marked the first federal excise tax reduction for distilled spirits since the Civil War and has enabled distilleries across the country to invest back in their businesses and communities,” said Chris Swonger, president and CEO, Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. “Making this legislation permanent would provide stability for distillers in moving forward to generate new jobs and support local agriculture and tourism.” This is a proposal all industry members can unite behind. Don’t be left behind!

GOING UP ...

According to the latest data from the Department of Commerce, retail sales at U.S. restaurants and bars totaled $64.5 billion in June-increasing from both the previous month (0.9 percent) and June of 2018 (4 percent). The year-over-year sales growth at restaurants and bars also outpaced broader retail sales by 0.6 points. ■

(I want to thank Duncan Cameron of Cameron Communications for compiling and sharing the above information.)

STEPHEN PATTEN
PUBLISHER
steve@bevmedia.com
INTRODUCING

VSOP COGNAC AUDACIOUSLY BLENDED
WITH ORANGE LIQUEUR, FOR A Grand SOIRÉE
The Fastest Bartender Contest is back and poised to be bigger than ever. And so, too, is one of its early owners and commissioners, Billy Reilly. An on-premises juggernaut for much of the 1980s, '90s, and 2000s, the contest evolved into an eight-week competition among D.C., Maryland, and Virginia bartenders and led to a finals with a $1,000 prize, trophy, and "bragging rights for a lifetime" (Reilly's words) on the line. (continued on next page)
Some History

“The contest ran from 1981 to 1995 when something miraculous happened,” Reilly recalled, during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal. “That was me winning it finally! It took me eight years to win it, as 1987 was my first year competing. Very rarely do you see a first- or second- or third-year winner, unless you’re someone miraculous. It’s usually people who have been doing it for a few years that win, because you now get the ins and outs, the nuances, the little scoring procedures, what things do well, what things don’t do well, and so forth.”

Reilly then ran Fastest Bartender from 1996 to 2000. That’s when he and his wife decided to purchase the contest from the Lucas family (Paul and Billy). “We bought the copyrights, trademarks, everything,” he recalled. “So, in 2001, F.B.C. Washington, D.C. was born with everything licensed to Billy Reilly. That became a 13-year run of huge success.”

In 2013, Reilly decided the time had come to sell the business to his staff and take a job as Maryland-D.C.-Virginia Territory Manager for Fishbowl Spirits LLC. The three people who bought Fastest Bartender, though, just didn’t have Reilly’s flair. Fastest Bartender essentially “went into mothballs” at that time. But Reilly still retained all of the rights.

Last summer, he was approached by one of those old employees, Chris “Diddy” Hollowell. “He said, ‘We should shut the old company and start a new company, because the fever is still high!’ So, we took all of that fall and the remaining winter and did research, to see if there were still some bars and sponsors willing. We were shockingly amazed that everyone wanted back in. It was a rampage! So we rebooted, and the new company is now F.B.C. USA, and Chris and myself own that company.”

He continued, “We worked all the way through May and decided to kick off at the end of that month and do 20 shows -- 10 in Virginia, five in D.C., and five in Maryland. It’s still something young bartenders looked forward to. And the suppliers -- the beer companies and liquor companies -- have always fought to be a part of it. And that’s good for us, because the funding keeps it going!”

As of press time in early August, the two partners were just coming off the Virginia contests, all of which were powered by Megawatt Inc.’s DJ service based out of Great Falls, Va. Among the sponsors were Dr. Stoner’s, Murlarkey Distilled Spirits, and Evan Williams.

“All in all, it’s back and strong,” Reilly declared. “We’re now looking to expand to the East Coast and then move national. We want to be able to do a statewide show in every state over the next three to five years.” In this regard, franchise opportunities will abound. “It’s been exciting to see something you worked so hard on for so many years re-birth itself,” Reilly said.

Reilly said one of the key selling points of Fastest Bartender has been that it’s a win-win for all who get involved. “The bars benefit,” he noted, “because they may not have seen a particular liquor sponsor in a while. They may not have seen that specific beer sponsor in a while. That’s what we do. We make sure all of our people are connected. It’s not just bartenders coming out for a personal contest.”

Meanwhile, there is still the charity component. Reilly stated, “We raise a lot of money for charity, which is our main angle. We’re proud of the more than $650,000 we’ve raised over the length of this contest that has been donated to...” (continued on page 8)

“Most of those who compete aren’t mixologists. They’re just bartenders. ‘How are you today? What can I get you to drink? Jack and Coke? Coming right up!’... Those kind of folks.”
DR. STONER'S

Crazy Good!

DR. STONER'S
FRESH HERB
Vodka
750 ml / 42.0% alc/vol

DR. STONER'S
SMOKY HERB
Whiskey
750 ml / 42.0% alc/vol

DR. STONER'S
HIERBA LOCA
Liquor de Tequila
750 ml / 42.0% alc/vol

DR. CRAIG C. STONER
540.247.9115
stonercaig@gmail.com

DAVID BAXTER
Managing Member
703.819.1100
dbaxter@drstoners.net

KEVIN KOBYLINSKI
Vice President of Sales
703.625.8987
kevin@drstoners.net

SMALL BATCH CRAFT MADE

Distributed By Madidus Importers

www.drstoners.net
@Dr_Stoners
drstonersherb
facebook.com/drstoners
And there are the contestants themselves, of course. "The importance of what we do is identifying these up-and-comers and their trade," Reilly remarked. "Most of those who compete aren’t mixologists. They’re just bartenders. ‘How are you today? What can I get you to drink? Jack and Coke? Coming right up!’ Those kind of folks. But when they enter Fastest Bartender, we put them on our social media. We talk about them. They get to talk about their place and their work. But, most of all, they get to have the camaraderie of a group of people who are competing in this show."

Reilly added, "I still get calls from across the country and even some foreign countries … calls from people who were in this business for the briefest of times. They worked as bartenders to help with their college tuition or they were just lost in life at the time and had yet to find their career job. But while they were in the timeframe of being in this business, they competed. I’ll get people calling up and telling me, ‘Billy, I’ve got four kids now, I live in Arizona, I have a law practice. I’m doing great … but I just wanted to call and tell you that those two years I competed in Fastest Bartender were some of the greatest times of my life!’"

The fun for beverage industry vet Reilly in rebooting has been getting back in touch with so many of his old industry contacts and seeing what everybody is doing now, where they’re at in their lives, what companies they’re working for now, and so forth.

By contrast, the hardest part has been the legalities. He explained, "You gotta make sure you have everything nipped and tucked. You must make sure no one out there is doing anything like this. You have to make sure old investors are out, new investors are in, that everything is typed in to the letter of the law, that you have logistics covered, that all of your accounting people are in line. Everything’s gotta be covered. It was six to eight months of very hard work for Chris and me."

**Looking Ahead**

Other than that, not much has changed. Reilly sure hasn’t changed. He’s still the same showman he ever was. And he is, by far, Fastest Bartender’s biggest fan and advocate. He was even angling for a follow-up article a year from now in this same publication. "A year from now," he concluded, "we’re going to talk again and you’re going to be covering our national shows! I’ll be telling you about how much money we’ve raised for different charities. And I hope you and I will be discussing how the show has evolved in the different states and how we do a regional final and how we’re heading towards a national show. I hope our discussion is talking about how this thing has survived almost 40 years. A 40-year, on-premise promotion! Wouldn’t you like to cover THAT?!"
DISTRIBUTOR PRICING IS AVAILABLE ONLINE

Call or Visit to REGISTER
410.796.5455 www.beveragejournalinc.com

THE LEASING LEADER
IN ICE MACHINES

100% FREE SERVICE 100% FREE DELIVERY
100% FREE PARTS 100% FREE TAX DEDUCTIBILITY
100% FREE INSTALLATION 100% FREE INSURANCE
100% FREE EMERGENCY ICE REIMBURSEMENT
STEP UP OR DOWN PRIVILEGE
AS LITTLE AS $3.00 PER DAY!

Call us at the number listed below and join the many who already benefit from leasing. Mention this ad and get your first months rent FREE.

CREDENTIAL LEASING TOLL FREE 800-895-1201

OR Email us at: info@credentialleasing.com

AUTHORIZED DEALER KOLD·DRAFT
Manitowoc ICE O·Matic HOSHIZAKI

Lanterna Distributors Inc
PORTFOLIO TASTING
MONDAY September 23rd 2019
11am-3pm
the Wine Kitchen 50 Carroll Creek Way #160, Frederick, MD 21701

Rooster Ridge
RIGA
Black Balsam
Barr
En Uisce
Irish Whiskey
Francis
Vertel
Mezcal
Moskovskaya
Vodka
Palissade
Rock Rose
dashfire
Moskovskaya
Vodka
San Felice
Black Infusions
Cornerstone
Bodegas
community
Stillman St.
Anderson
Cudlo Quarta
Quale
Palladino
Stuhlmuller
Vineyards
So, I’m not. This article will only briefly mention his stroke in 2008 that forced him into early retirement. Instead, it's going to focus more on the people he touched, the careers he shaped ... and the time he nearly ate 50 pot stickers at Oriole Park at Camden Yards!

Throughout the 1990s, Stanley and his longtime friend and colleague Larry Brookman would go to every Orioles’ Opening Day. One particular Opening Day, they and a group of F.P. Winner employees sat around talking old movies. Guys being guys, they discovered a mutual admiration for “Cool Hand Luke,” specifically the scene where Paul Newman’s title character was dared to eat 50 hard-boiled eggs.

Brookman recalled, “So, we finish lunch at the Camden Club and Joe calls over the waitress and tells her, ‘Bring me 50 pot stickers!’ We’d been [there] all day, and we start making bets as to whether or not Joe can finish 50. Joe gets his first plate of pot stickers and downs 10 in no time at all. He gets down 20 with no sign of stopping. At 25, he starts to slow a bit. Some of us are doing our best George Kennedy, rubbing his stomach and jaw to help get more down. I remember the number. He got to 38, and he said, ‘That’s it! I can’t do anymore ... but, uh, could you bring me two large Guinnesses to wash these things down?!’ The Camden Club went crazy. He was larger than life!”

Stanley’s brother-in-law, Kenny Irwin, used that same term when describing the man. “He had a larger-than-life persona,” said Irwin, who’s also been in the business most of his adult life. “His heart was in the on-premise side of the business. That’s where he cut his teeth, and that’s what he taught me when I came in. I spent my whole life on the on-premise side, and I attribute that to him.”

Stanley’s greatest collaborator was his wife, Pam. Stanley started at Milton S. Kronheim in Washington, D.C., as a salesman in the early 1970s, eventually working his way up to vice president status. His ambitions brought him to F.P. Winner where he was given even more responsibility. One of those who worked closest with him was Amedeo “Emery” Coccia. “I was Joe’s Spirit Brand Manager at F.P. Winner,” he said. “We had three brand managers, a spirits manager, a wine manager, and a beer manager.”

He continued, “Some of my favorites memories were Joe and I getting to...
together once or twice a week in his office after hours. We’d just pick each other’s brains and come up with strategies for different brands. He and I had the same thought process. We’d get a LOT accomplished.

Of course, Joe Stanley’s greatest collaborator was his wife, Pam. In speaking with her, she had more insight into Joe away from the job. One of his passions was coaching basketball, football, and Little League baseball. “He loved coaching kids,” she said. “There were so many stories at Joe’s funeral about how he got some of his former players into the business. You’d hear about this once-cocky kid that Joe saw something in at 18, and that kid would go on to have this great career.”

So, how would Joe Stanley like to best be remembered. Each of those interviewed had their thoughts. Coccia remarked, “I think he’d like to be remembered as the kind of guy who worked hard and put 100 percent effort into the brands we represented being successful.”

Irwin stated, “He’d want to be remembered as the type of person who supported his workforce. Joe thought of this industry as a fraternity, a brotherhood. When people would get let go from a wine company or a distributor, he’d tell them, ’This business will not let you down. It will recycle you and keep you in the fraternity.’”

“He’d like to be remembered for always making a difference,” added Brookman, who grew up with Stanley and knew him the longest. “Joe didn’t have quit in him. He was a great athlete. He was always the guy that wanted the ball for the final basket or to run that last play as the QB. He knew the game was best in his hands.”

But Pam Stanley summed up her husband best: “I put this on his prayer card. He would like to be remembered as an ‘afterglow.’ He welcomed everybody, and he would always want everybody to have one last drink with him … and one last drink for him. So, cheers, Joe!”

Does your cooler need a Face Lift?

Does your cooler suffer from:

- Bad shelving?
- Leaky doors?
- Foggy glass?
- Lighting on the fritz?

Call Today for a FREE cooler health check! Mention “BEVERAGE JOURNAL” for an extra $50 OFF a future service.

*$50 discount on purchase of Service within 30 days of a free health check.

Like us at facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES

Serving the Local Beverage Industry since 1933
3141 Frederick Ave. Baltimore, MD
410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 • careysales.com
TEAMING UP
SEVENFIFTY + BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP FORM PARTNERSHIP, OPTIMIZING E-COMMERCE FOR BEVERAGE ALCOHOL TRADE

Beverage Media Group, Inc. (BMG) and SevenFifty Technologies, Inc. recently announced a strategic alliance to provide the beverage alcohol trade with the industry’s most comprehensive marketplace of wines, beers and spirits.

This partnership represents the largest e-commerce channel for the three-tier system. And with this scale comes enhanced functionality, helping distributors reach their entire customer base through digital and print services. By collecting and digitizing the distributors’ inventories and then enabling end users to place orders via a cloud-based system, the new combined platform is a win-win-win for all three tiers of the industry.

The combined marketplaces will contain over 1,000 distributors, 120,000 buyers, and 1 million unique product listings across the country, servicing both on- and off-premise licensees.

ANALYTICS + SYNERGIES

Distributors face increasing pressure to leverage technology for a competitive advantage. Access to this combined marketplace will make it easier than ever to do business in a modern world and achieve digital success at an entirely new scale. The alliance will also put a more robust set of sales and intelligence tools at distributors’ fingertips, from traditional price books to game-changing reporting analytics.

“With these new synergies, we can drive more positive outcomes that lead the digital transformation of our industry,” said Aaron Sherman, CEO and co-founder of SevenFifty. “The drinks business is built on relationships, and aligning with Beverage Media—the gold standard for supporting the three-tier system—strengthens the way our platforms and services can add value to those relationships so that distributors can focus on what they do best: servicing their clients.”

“We view this alliance as a step forward to help our customers gain the competitive edge required to do business in our industry’s rapidly evolving landscape.”

– Jason Glasser,
Beverage Media Group

SevenFifty has built the most cutting-edge technology available, and they have proven to be a dynamic company with a genuine commitment to excellence,” said Jason Glasser, CEO of Beverage Media Group. “Our companies have a shared vision for the services we want to be providing now and in the future. We view this alliance as a step forward to help our customers gain the competitive edge in our industry’s rapidly evolving landscape.”

The combined organizations can now expand digital resources for the entire industry, beginning with improved data processing and enrichment services. Distributors will be able to more efficiently manage portfolio data and ensure products are accurately represented. Buyers at restaurants, bars and retail will benefit from comprehensive and up-to-date listing of products.

The exclusive partnership also leverages each company’s editorial and advertising services by extending trade audience reach. SevenFifty Daily’s award-winning online publication, along with BMG’s iconic print publications, together reach an audience of over 200,000 trade professionals.

Visit our websites for more information on our partnership.

Beverage Media has been publishing regional magazines for the beverage alcohol industry since the end of Prohibition, having evolved from a guide for tavern owners to a robust database and editorial tool for the entire trade. The company’s B2B website connects licensees to distributor brand and price information. Beverage Media also hosts and provides content for 200 e-commerce websites for retailers. beveragemedia.com

Founded in 2011, SevenFifty’s advanced software solutions power a connected beverage alcohol supply chain, enabling importers, producers, distributors, and retail buyers to connect and do business more effectively and efficiently in the modern world. SevenFifty Daily is an award-winning online trade magazine focused on the business and culture of wine, beer and spirits. sevenfifty.com
Thank you for helping us become one of the best-selling wine brands in the Northeast!

Top 5 Premium/Super Premium Retail Wine Brand, Northeast (IRI, 6/19)

THANK YOU!

INTRODUCING

LOT 10

Limited edition 10th Anniversary Cabernet Sauvignon from Stags Leap District, Napa Valley.

NINETY + CELLARS

A global selection of great wines from highly-acclaimed wineries available under one label that stands for unbeatable value.

FOR ORDERS + INFO, CONTACT JOHN@HUBWINECORP.COM
SUTTER HOME
BUILD A BETTER BURGER

In 1990, Sutter Home uncorked the wine industry’s most exciting and longest running retail promotion: Build a Better Burger. This, the contest’s 29th year, offers consumers the chance to compete for a $25,000 grand prize.

“The Build a Better Burger Program runs May-August,” explained Nicole Crews, Trinchero Family Estates. “In that time frame the program offers dynamic Point of Sale and Mail in Rebates to retailers as well as digital and print support targeted directly to consumers.”

The contest came to the RNDC offices in Jessup recently where teams competed for local honors. “Aside from the contest and building up hype for the program, this event at our offices was a way to say thank you to all of the associates at RNDC,” stated Chris Dabrowski, RNDC. “This brand is so big, everyone touches it; from the warehouse to sales.”

Judging the burgers at the local RNDC Build a Better Burger contest were: John Linette, RNDC Montgomery County; Kent Massie, Department of Liquor Control with Montgomery County; Tim Hinckley, Trinchero Family Estates; Wayne Degen, RNDC; Brian Jackson, Nicole Crews, both with Trinchero Family Estates; and John Turner, RNDC.

“The main reason this brand and program has succeeded for so long in Maryland is the leadership of Wayne Degen and Ron Meehan … Both of them have touched this brand in one form or another for their entire careers at RNDC.”

--Chris Dabrowski, RNDC.
This black French-American hybrid grape is known for its ability to make simple, tasty wines. Rougeon produces medium-sized compact clusters. Its grape vines are hardy, but production can be erratic at times, causing its yields to come as often as twice a year or as few as every two years. Like all other grapes, Rougeon is susceptible to disease. The two highest disease exposures this grape could suffer from are downy mildew and powdery mildew. These diseases have the potential to reduce vine growth, yield, quality, and winter hardiness, especially because the Rougeon grows in tight clusters. Other disease susceptibilities are black rot and botrytis as well as some sensitivity to sulfur. Rougeon also produces a beautiful red color and is often mixed to make a blended wine. However, it has also been used to make port wines. Rougeon grape is often blended with grapes such as Chambourcin and Baco Noir. Erik Bandzak, of Aliceanna Winery chose this grape due to its deep red color and very dry taste. “Most winemakers use this grape to make port-style wines, but I believe it has a great taste on its own,” said Bandzak. Bandzak maintains that his use of the grape has little to no downsides. “While most winemakers dislike it because of its inconsistent yields, I have been able to source enough from the farm for the last 10 years to make the smaller amounts I require,” said Bandzak. “I have found it to be consistent in taste and color.” Romano Winery, founded by Joseph and Jo-Ann Romano, also uses Rougeon in its wines. The founders say that Rougeon boasts “a black cherry aroma leads to a medium-bodied red with a deliciously sweet finish.” The label suggests enjoying with red meat, ripe cheeses or good conversation. Joe Romano spoke highly of the Rougeon grape. “One of the reasons that I selected Rougeon was because Rougeon wine was not widely available as a varietal as it is typically used in blending for its color,” said Romano. He was looking for a wine that would stand out, and he found the dark red color and aroma attractive and thought as a sweet wine—also atypical for this grape—it would be very interesting. “In the end, the wine turned out to be everything I hoped for, and it’s great with chocolate!”

“Taking first place was: Team Asian Express, RNDC Off Premise Star Team from Washington, DC (Ada Wang, John Yi, Jae Shin and Soren Ludvigsen).
BLUECOAT AMERICAN DRY GIN

Named after the blue uniforms of the American militia in the Revolution and distilled in a traditional style copper pot still, Bluecoat is an exceptionally smooth, and very citrus forward American Dry Gin.

Bluecoat American Dry Gin is an aromatic and determinedly American take on the classic dry gin. Although the full botanical list has not been disclosed, the “secret” blend consists of only certified organic botanicals, including juniper berries, a selection of American citrus peels, coriander, angelica, chamomile and more.

Bluecoat is distilled in a custom-built, hand-hammered copper pot still. By taking advantage of modern technologies, Master Distiller Robert J. Cassell has married traditional methods with cutting-edge design. A true batch distillation, the process calls for the slow heating of the pot, which allows for maximum separation of alcohols. During distillation, only the heart of the run is selected where the purest, most flavorful alcohols are chosen.

The final gin will have been distilled five times with the spirit then cut using triple filtered water to a final bottling strength of 47% ABV. The result is a gin that opens with an aromatic nose combining piney juniper notes with citrus. The palate itself is also filled with an earthy juniper and a strong citrus presence.

The Breakthru Beverage On Premise sales team recently celebrated their Gin-dependence by “Rocking the Blue” in honor of Bluecoat American Dry Gin.
NEW ABSOLUT® JUICE
STRAWBERRY & APPLE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
ABSOLUT.®
PLANET EARTH’S FAVORITE VODKA

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY.
BARTENDERS TO WATCH

TEXT BY JACK ROBERTIELLO

PORTRAITS BY ANDREW KIST

BEVERAGE MEDIA'S 2019
Beverage Media’s annual “Bartenders to Watch” issue has charted enormous changes in the bar business since we first started looking for emerging stars in 2008. In those days it was easy to pick out new talent; now, bartenders are being trained and challenged at an unprecedented level, which has created a generation of technically adept, historically schooled and creatively bold bartenders.

Our focus has evolved as well, and this year we decided to check in with seven bar folk with varying levels of experience who have climbed the professional ladder beyond taking shifts at the hottest craft cocktail bar. We did so in order to capture a moment in time of the thinking and concerns of some of the bartenders who have been around a while, who have had a few knocks, discovered that bartending isn’t memorizing recipes, and who have a sense of the bar world around them. Folks like these will continue to move bars, cocktails and bartending forward, one way or another.

BROOKLYN BOUND

This year as well, we focused on the latest of the events designed to serve the bartending and spirits world, Bar Convent Brooklyn (BCB), the two-year old off-shoot of the famous Bar Convent held annually in Berlin, and gathered our honorees from bar pros who were either participating in or attending the two-day event.

Not unlike a new bar that opened and needed time to find itself, BCB dug in, retooled and expanded for the event’s second American spin. Same Brooklyn neighborhood and space (Brooklyn Expo center), but the vibe was palpable: square footage of exhibit booths was up 35%; attendance was up 30%. Over 100 new products were launched at BCB 2019—a clear sign that suppliers consider it a breeding ground of gatekeepers. We quizzed them all about some of the most important issues facing the on-premise business today. Specifically:

- increasing interest in healthy and low- or no-alcohol drinking in bars and restaurants
- the need for a more sustainable approach to drink-making and -serving
- health and welfare of workers at all levels in a notoriously arduous and hard-partying field
- the explosion of imported, craft and unusual spirits now being created, and
- how events like BCB can best serve the industry.

ROOFTOP BACKDROP

We arranged to photograph this year’s group of bartenders at Lemon’s atop the Wythe Hotel in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The freshly minted rooftop bar checks a lot of the boxes one would expect of a new cocktail-centric locale, circa 2019—starting with it being a seasonal pop-up.

Opened in May 2019 with beverage gurus Jim Kearns (Happiest Hour, Slowly Shirley) and Christine Kang (Soho House), Lemon’s focuses on light, refreshing beverages (many topped with bubbles), tailored to summer and complemented by small plates and snacks. Low-ABV offerings (led by Aperol Spritz on tap) are plentiful. And the drinks are playful, from “boozy popsicles” to the namesake punch (Lemon’s Squeeze—Absolut Elyx Vodka or Plymouth Gin, lemon, Luxardo Bitter Bianco, lavender, club soda).

These are some highly skilled, diversely experienced and savvy bar pros, and while they come from different backgrounds, regions and points of view, you’ll find that there is a real change from
the years when bartenders were often seen as snooty defenders of the correct cocktail and have now often become socially-aware and thoughtful participants in a business that continues to evolve.

In that regard, it certainly made sense to gather the group at Bar Convent Brooklyn. There, amid the dozens of seminars, scores of suppliers and thousands of cocktails being samples, like-minded bar folk found a lot of positive energy. As Kellie Thorne, one of this year’s featured bartenders, put it: “The brands really brought their ‘A’ game and set up really engaging booths.” It was a backdrop befitting an industry that thrives on convergence of hospitality and networking.

Here, then, Beverage Media’s Bartenders to Watch, 2019.

ASHTIN BERRY

Ashtin Berry, cocktail consultant, is expected to soon open her own bar in NEW ORLEANS. While working in New York City, she created the beverage programs for two distinct operations—Air’s Champagne Parlor and Tokyo Record Bar—both of which focused on low-alcohol drinks. It’s an area she knows well.

“Low alcohol and no alcohol have always been a focus of mine. Specifically, low ABV because getting people to drink moderately becomes easier,” she says, adding, “It also provides more inclusive options for those who are not heavy drinkers.”

Berry challenges the bar business to get serious about the issues that matter to everyday folk rather than simply discuss them: “There are a ton of issues our industry isn’t talking about. We’ve barely even scratched the surface in talking about diversity and inclusion in a non-tokenizing way. Systemic abuse and not just sexual harassment, but also language access, implicit bias in entry-level hiring, media bias, the list goes on.” Berry’s commitment to change includes a recent venture she co-founded called Radical XChange, a collective that produced a symposium earlier this year about the food and beverage contributions of African-Americans.

Her menus past and future are unaffected by the latest hot fad, she says: “I don’t follow trends. What sells at a bar is based on staff knowledge and menu accessibility as well as guest knowledge.”

ON MENTORING: “THOSE WITH PRIVILEGE HAVE MORE ACCESS TO MENTORSHIP. MARGINALIZED GROUPS ARE ALWAYS STRUGGLING TO FIND MENTORS—THERE ARE FEWER OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THEM.”

Bar Convent Brooklyn’s second year brought more of everything—more booths, more seminars, more attendees, and 100+ new product debuts. Education was very much at the forefront; new this year, one session each morning was offered in Spanish. Another educational focus was sustainability and green bar initiatives. Tin Roof Community co-founders Claire Sprouse and Chad Arnholt hosted a booth showcasing ways that bars can set up low-waste, recycling and composting programs.
WE’VE BUILT A NAME ON BOURBON AND A LEGACY ON RYE.

EVERY BIT EARNED

KNOB CREEK® STRAIGHT RYE WHISKEY, 50-63.5% ALC./VOL.
©2019 KNOB CREEK DISTILLING COMPANY, CLERMONT, KY.
**CHRIS PATINO**

Chris Patino is a Partner at Raised by Wolves in **SAN DIEGO**. After years on the trade marketing side with Pernod Ricard, Patino teamed up with Erik Castro to launch Raised By Wolves, which quickly developed into a destination drinkery. As someone who spent years representing spirits to the bar world, Patino has some solid insight into trends.

“The spirits business in general is booming,” he says, “and while we are certainly selling a lot of whisk(e)y these days, and have a stacked deck when it comes to our selected gins and agave spirits, the most important thing that we strive to do at Raised by Wolves is help our guests expand their horizons by experiencing new and exciting flavors, regardless of how a specific category is performing.”

He cites famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy who said, “To sell something surprising, make it familiar; and to sell something familiar, make it surprising.” He explains, “We serve up drinks that are approachable and familiar (after all, we are in an outdoor shopping mall!), but at the same time surprising, because we try to incorporate flavors or ingredients that they might not have tried or even heard of before.”

**ON PRODUCTS:** “WE ARE CONSTANTLY LOOKING FOR NEW AND INTERESTING SPIRITS, BUT THEY HAVE TO BE UNIQUE, WITH AN HONEST STORY. WE HAVE SALES REPS KNOCKING ON OUR DOOR EVERY DAY. MY ADVICE TO THEM IS, ‘DO YOUR HOMEWORK. KNOW YOUR BRAND INSIDE AND OUT—HOW IT’S MADE, WHERE IT SHOULD LIVE. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, KNOW WHAT YOU ARE ASKING FOR.”

**CAER FERGUSON**

Caer Ferguson, Bar Manager at The Eleanor in **AUSTIN, TEXAS**, also works at The Roosevelt Room and recently debuted Daijoubu, a pop-up featuring Asian flavors.

Ferguson is a proud Austinian, especially about bars’ diverse outflowing of cultural pride. “A few months back, some men of color in our community celebrated Black History Month and Tom Bullock [first African-American bartender author]. The next month, Sharon Yeung and I started our pop-up in honor of Chinese New Year. Obviously cultural representation is important in every community, but holding onto cultural identity in a city where that identity is fading away has become a priority.”

Ferguson loves the continuing evolution of the bar, citing culinary cocktails, sustainable operations and charitable events: “Food and beverage is a massive industry with a huge social and monetary presence in society. No bar has to be just a bar anymore.”

Her optimism, however, is tempered: “I’ve gone to seminars on the environment, lifestyle issues, racism and sexism...I don’t always see decision makers there. If your bar manager attends a seminar, they can try to create a better work environment, but usually owners will be the ones who can make real change.”

**ON DRINK MENUS:** “AT A POP-UP, 90% OF THE DRINKS YOU’RE MAKING ARE FROM THE MENU. THOSE HAVE TO BE THE ONES YOU KNOW THE MOST ABOUT—THEY OFTEN BECOME THE ONES GUESTS WILL GEEK OUT OVER.”
COMING SOON

THE NEW TASTE OF COLD BREW

SHAKE & SERVE AT -18°C
Ezra Star, General Manager of Drink, Boston since 2011, didn’t choose hospitality first, but after deciding to leave the medical world she has never looked back from bartending.

From her viewpoint, more attention these days needs to be placed on locality. “Great bars have popped up all across the country and they are concepts that are executed perfectly, but a big issue I see is that the bars are not always addressing concerns in the communities where they exist.”

Trendwise, she sees more guests opting for less alcohol in drinks, plus a move from American whiskies to international styles, and a slow but steady shift from tequila to mezcal. Having seen spirits skyrocket and fall to earth, she looks for specifics when it comes to new products: “We want to know who is making it, why they are making it, and where it fits within the concept we are attempting to offer our guests—and all of this only after it passes taste tests.”

She found valuable takeaways from BCB: “It is truly the best time to begin the mentoring process on all levels and it was great to hear people bringing that up.” Star also singled out a session on “expanding how we see barbacking.”

On mentoring: “We as bar people have an obligation to take care of each other, we work long hours and are still negotiating our rights as employees in many parts of the country. Mentoring allows us to build careers and helps push some of the financial boundaries by making a job into a trained skill.”

Claire Sprouse

After stints at some of America’s best-known bars, Claire Sprouse recently opened her first solo project, Hunky Dory, a bar and restaurant in Brooklyn focused on sustainability. And she brings her awareness of sustainability to bear on every detail, even the water.

“We take water for granted so much, but it is not a limitless resource; [we should think about] how it’s used behind our bars, in distilleries, and the ground around the farms that grow the raw materials that eventually make it into our bottles,” she says.

Sprouse is also concerned that “real hospitality, inclusiveness and excellence can only be achieved if we can take an honest look at ourselves and our intentions.”

Sprouse has spotted micro-trends like brandy cocktails, and making sure that great wine options are more than an afterthought to a cocktail list. Also spirits “on the periphery of these more well-known categories. New releases are now able to take up space on backbars and keep expanding the conversation of what’s in the glass.”

Hunky Dory takes pride in creating sophisticated non-alcoholic beverages. “My favorite exploration into this category is through the lens of Tiki,” she says. “I find that dialing down the octane can make for complex, food-friendly and temperate alternatives, that retain the recognizable charm of Tiki.”

On the industry: “It’s no secret that our industry is rife with high turnover, lots of misinformation and, frankly, bad energy. We need to stop reading so many cocktail books and start digging into the ‘business and leadership’ section of the book store.”
KELLIE THORN

It took a while for industry vet Kellie Thorn to discover classic cocktails, but now the Bar Manager at one of Atlanta’s best-known restaurants oversees a cocktail program that has made Empire State South a drinking destination.

For her, the most important on-premise industry trends center on an understanding of sustainability. Of course, sustainability in the bar world today encompasses minimizing waste in drink making. As Thorne sees it, though, the concept needs to include be more holistic. “How do we make sure our people are getting paid and educated properly, mentored, receiving proper health care, and still run a profitable business?” she asks.

She also is concerned about creating life-supporting paths in bartending: “It’s a career often viewed as impossible to raise a family in and to feel supported in later years. Until we figure out the solution, people will continue to consider hospitality a temporary profession.”

Low-ABV drinking is another priority: “The South has a long tradition of day drinking and Atlanta is a driving city, so our community has historically had to offer thoughtful options for guests who are ‘taking it easy’ or simply abstaining from alcohol.”

STEVE WALTON

One of the most popular bars in Utah, High West Saloon in Park City is known for its eponymous whiskey and the skills of Steve Walton, Head of Beverage there.

Walton has a particular insight into low-alcohol cocktails: Utah dropped its blood alcohol DUI level to .05. “Guests are now looking to enjoy lower ABV drinks and not have to worry about the consequences, he says.

They are also apt to question ingredients, he says: “The on-premise guest is now better informed and has done research in advance,” he says. “They want to geek out on mash bills and botanicals.” Mezcal is one spirit that in has made significant progress, notes Walton: “It is now being specifically called for and is no longer called ‘that smoky tequila.’”

The best way to get a new product on his bar is to interest a member of his bar team. “They love to travel and may come across a product that we do not have. Once you have sold one member of the team and he is working it into a cocktail we will bring it in.”

He admires the way events like BCB have evolved. “They have moved in a positive way towards education being the foundation of the event over it being focused on drinking and partying. The industry is taking education very seriously now and spending big money on it.”

ON COCKTAIL TRENDS: “FOR NO-ALCOHOL COCKTAILS, CBD IS POSITIONING ITSELF AS A PLAYER. CBD CAN ADD A CALMING EFFECT WITHOUT THE HIGH ASSOCIATED WITH THC.”

ON BCB: “AS ONE OF THEIR EDUCATORS, I AM A LITTLE BIASED, BUT I LOVE THE WSET PLATFORM. IN GENERAL THERE WAS A GREAT MIX OF SEMINARS THAT OFFERED EDUCATION FOR THE BUSINESS SIDE AS WELL AS NERDY DIVES INTO SPECIFIC SPIRIT CATEGORIES.”
Bill Oliver’s family has been making wine in Indiana since the state made it legal in 1972. He has seen trends come and go. But one thing has remained remarkably consistent in almost 60 years: Sweet red wine.

“The thing we’ve noticed in all that time is that people who drink sweet red want to be part of wine culture, but they don’t necessarily like anything else,” says Oliver, whose Concord-based Soft Red has been the best-selling wine SKU in Indiana supermarkets for almost two decades—some two times more than No. 2 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay. “And when I say ‘we,’ I mean it collectively. Not just Oliver, but every producer around the country who makes sweet red,” he adds.

These days, when sweet red wine is pushing retail buttons around the country and shows every sign of doing today what White Zinfandel did in the 1980s and 1990s, it’s important to note that sweet red wine is nothing new. Riunite, the Italian Lambrusco, was the best-selling import in the U.S. some 40 years ago, selling as many as 12 million cases a year. And regional producers like Oliver, North Carolina’s Duplin Winery and St. James in Missouri have sold millions of cases of sweet red over the past couple of decades.

So what’s different this time? First, say analysts and producers, there’s the sense that younger wine drinkers see sweet red differently than their parents and grandparents. They don’t care that it’s not “serious” wine; they’re willing to drink it when more traditional wine drinkers opt for dry. Second, as alcohol category lines blur, sweet reds don’t compete with dry wines, but with hard seltzers, bottled cocktails, ciders and other RTDs.

“Wine trends are constantly changing and evolving,” says Collin Cooney, the...
Marketing Director for Franzia, owned by The Wine Group and one of the biggest sweet wine brands in the country. “But some trends cross over from generation to generation, and that’s sweet. We had White Zinfandel, and then we had Moscato, and in the early 2010s, we had sweet reds.”

Endorsement of the sweet red wave is seen in the roster of suppliers now offering expressions presented as sweet—Gallo Family, Barefoot, Sutter Home, Bronco Wine Co., Yellow Tail, Cavít, Lindeman’s, Stella Rosa, Funf, et al. And perhaps most significant of all, there is the still-burgeoning Red Blend category, whose entries often skew sweet.

**BLURRED LINES, SOFT WINES**

What exactly is a sweet red wine? No one is quite sure. Nielsen doesn’t track it as such, but does measure what they call a “custom aggregate” for sweet reds. It’s a sub-category of red blends and is only published occasionally. Significantly, since sweetness levels are not part of the data for any given UPC, Nielsen manually designates each wine it considers to be “sweet” when measuring the “sweet reds” group. Further complicating the issue is the diversity of sweetness levels in red blends, from traditional dry blends to sweeter wines like E&J Gallo’s Apothic and Cupcake’s Red Velvet to fully sweet reds like the Oliver product.

What is certain is that red blends remain one of the hottest categories in wine—Nielsen numbers in 2018 said red blends had a larger market share than Moscato, Pinot Noir, Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc. And the category was 2½ times bigger than White Zinfandel at the beginning of 2018.

Labels themselves provide no consistency in terms of what to expect—even with more wineries apparently eager to put “Sweet Red” front and center. Technical numbers (if known) are no real help either. Off-dry wines generally start to get perceived as sweet at around 1.2% residual sugar (RS), which is measured in grams per 100ml (in this case 1.2 g/100ml) but can also be presented by wineries as grams per Liter (12 g/L). A normal dry Cabernet Sauvignon might be 0.2% RS, or 0.2 g/100ml. A wine of 3% RS—which is also 3 g/100ml and 30 grams per Liter—is definitely sweet. Very sweet wines (Port, stickies, late harvest, etc.) can reach 5% to 15% RS sugar (RS).

But the numbers don’t matter much, because consumers don’t pay attention or even know how to pay attention to RS. Not that knowing the residual sugar is going to sharpen the line between what one person calls “jammy” and another calls “sweet.” To wit: Ménage à Trois’s original red blend (1.1% RS) was extended into Silk (1.35% RS) and Midnight (6.5% RS), among others. Does someone who likes one like them all? Perhaps, but if so it’s not just a function of the residual sugar.

“Sweetness is a continuum rather than binary, and depends partly on the taster’s perceptions,” says Christian Miller of Full Glass Research, which tracks wine data for a variety of clients. “In consumer re-

Sutter Home/Trinchero Family Estates has had a sweet chillable red in their portfolio since Soleo, launched in 1997. The first vintage of Sutter Home Sweet Red was 2009.
A shift toward younger drinkers and increased demand for single-serve formats are among the trends within the Sweet Red category.

search, people will often describe ‘sweet reds’ as smooth and not even mention sugar or sweetness.” No coincidence: the word “soft” has become a code word in the trade for sweet; and it has been appearing with greater frequency on front labels.

Still, sweet red drinkers know what they want. “It’s all about the flavor profile that they like,” says Eric Schisler with Barrel Chest Wine & Beer in Roanoke, VA, whose store sells mostly upmarket sweet reds like German Dornfelders and labels from long-time California stickie specialist Quady.

Andrew Meggitt, the Executive Winemaker at Missouri’s St. James Winery, says he sees the lifestyle factor whenever he goes camping. He’ll bring some sweet reds with him to share with other campers he meets, assuming anyone is interested. They want to drink wine, he says, and sweet reds make it possible in a way drier wines may not. And the green light to have it chilled is equally welcome.

THE TRADE-UP QUESTION
Which raises another important question about sweet red wine. Is it the Holy Grail of the wine business, the gateway wine that will lure younger consumers away from craft beer and spirits to wine? It depends on who you ask.

On the one hand, says Cooney, Nielsen numbers supplied to The Wine Group show that 25% of new wine drinkers buy Moscato or sweet reds. “Those statistics absolutely prove it’s a gateway wine,” he says, “It’s more approachable, if nothing else.”

Still, the ongoing marketing mystery is not so much the appeal of sweet wine for novice drinkers, but whether those sweet-tooth-satisfying wines lead drinkers to other types. Bill Oliver’s take: “People have been asking me that question for 20 years, and I’ve never seen it. People drink wine they like, and I’ve never seen them switch from sweet to dry because they suddenly like dry.”

Gateway or not, sweet red demographics do seem to skew younger and a little more female, though everyone is quick to say that there are also large number of older sweet red wine drinkers. Still, it’s the younger audience that producers like The Wine Group and Oliver see as their target. Bill Oliver is quick to note that his company’s marketing has changed dramatically in an attempt to reach those younger consumers, which included hiring younger marketers.

FIFTY SHADES OF SWEET?
The relative power of sweet red becomes even clearer when looking at some successful brands. The Italian Roscato, launched by Palm Bay in 2011, has developed into a veritable franchise. Rosso spawned Bianco (2013), Rosé (2015); a set of sparklers (2016); and last year Dark and Smooth. Perhaps even more significant: Roscato set the stage for this year’s launch of Cavit Sweet Red. Director of Brand De-
development, Hal Cashman says Cavit Sweet Red has exceeded expectations; distributors and retailers are eager to embrace the Cavit entry thanks to Palm Bay’s track record with Roscato. Interestingly, Cashman notes that the Cavit Sweet Red fan is more likely to slide over from Roscato than from Cavit Pinot Grigio. He also confirmed that starting this September Roscato will be available in two-packs of 250ml cans—a move inspired by 187ml Rossos being the brand’s top SKU.

Jeunesse, by Baron Herzog, is another brand that has enjoyed multiple extensions, most recently a sparkling red. Interestingly, Jeunesse has done so with varietal expressions (not just blends) and by putting style front and center (“semi-dry” and “semi-sweet” label descriptors are supported by a graphic sweetness scale); the wines’ kosher identity is secondary.

Jam Jar, a Cape Classics brand from South Africa, was an instant hit when launched in 2009. Executive Vice President Molly Choi credits the wine itself, which has always unapologetically targeted “the legion of people who want to drink sweet,” and has proved that Shiraz is a grape that can hit that sweet spot while remaining a well-made, balanced wine. Jam Jar added a Moscato-driven white companion, but otherwise has remained steadfastly true to its simple formula—“sweet shiraz”—in one size. Until now, that is: Jam Jar four-packs of 187mls start shipping this September.

Where are sweet reds headed? Younger crowds, perhaps. Frederick Wildman & Sons, which recently took on sweet-red icon Riunite, has also developed a new brand from scratch—Vipra, a light (7% ABV) fizzy red blend tricked out with snakeskin-printed label, Instagram-friendly marketing and provocative “get bitten” tagline. The thinking behind Vipra:

Millennials are ready for their sweet red. “They prefer non-traditional red wine blends and sweeter wines, with sweet and fizzy brands leading the growth,” says Derek Blackburn, Senior VP of Marketing. “Vipra, a delicately sweet and slightly fizzy red blend, meant to be served chilled appeals to these tastes.”

His point about chilling draws attention to the fact that, along with the stigma of sweet reds wine fading, the idea of how to enjoy them is more flexible than ever. Cans, chilled, with food or without—even in cocktails. And as the popularity of lightly chilled sweet reds continues to rise, who knows—there may also be a pink elephant in the room when it comes to future trends. Could rosé step over to the Sweet Side?

Moving forward, here are some sweet red developments to watch:

New Hybrids & Old Standards. There are many ways for wine to be sweet. The Wine Group’s Cooney believes that innovation will continue to blur category lines. That means not just sweet grape wines, but grape wines that include fruit juice to add different flavors to compete with the hard seltzers. Meanwhile, as far as hybrids go, while classic red sangria is typically not labeled as “sweet,” sangria’s ripe, fruity flavor profile and chillability suggest it can and should be cross-marketed with sweet reds and blends. National brands such as Reál, Opici, Casal Garcia and Beso del Sol are well positioned.

Mixing It Up. Wine cocktails? Why not? Sweet red wine is not so far stylistically from vermouth, a mixologist staple. Fruity mixed drink recipes abound on the websites of sweet red suppliers. Ultra simple cocktails are a key part of the marketing campaign for Vipra, a new brand of sweet red wine from Italy. “Half of Millennials today consume wine cocktails,” notes Frederick Wildman’s Blackburn. “Vipra is the ideal cocktail ingredient for a night out with friends—it provides the desired sweetness to the libation while keeping the overall alcohol level of your cocktail from being too stiff, so you can enjoy the whole night.” Expect more marketers to serve up wine cocktails moving forward.

Cost-Efficient & Battle-Ready? The future is bright for consumers who like it sweet and cheap. Sweet wine is less expensive to produce than many traditional dry wines since the appellation the grapes don’t matter as much. In addition, as bigger producers like Gallo get deeper into the sweet red market, they can use their economies of scale to drive prices down even more—better positioning them to compete with the budget-priced hard seltzers and their ilk.
Introducing
Our New Podcast

Heaven Hill Distillery has been distilling and patiently aging American Whiskey for more than eight decades. Now, it’s time to share the stories behind those whiskies and the people who make them on our new podcast, *Tales from the Hill*. From our early days after the end of Prohibition through today’s Bourbon boom, our podcast dives deep into the heritage of Heaven Hill Distillery, told by the people who know it best. Grab your favorite whiskey and listen now wherever you get your podcasts.

*Listen Now*
HeavenHillDistillery.com/podcast
Cider made from fermented apple and/or pear juice has been around in America since the earliest settlers planted orchards from seeds brought over from Europe. However, cider has been one of the slowest beverage categories in the U.S. to recover from Prohibition. And there are still factors in the marketplace that make selling cider a challenge. However, there are companies and enthusiasts looking to raise awareness of this complex and fraught category.

Cider is enigmatic from the get-go, made much like wine but resembling beer more closely in its alcohol level and carbonation. From a marketplace standpoint, cider can be broken down as follows:

1 / Brands that operate effectively as part of the beer segment, made from sourced juice, aka “commodity cider;” think Strongbow, Angry Orchard, Austin Eastcider, Vermont Cider Co. (Woodchuck), Seattle Cidery, Bantam’s and broad-market imports such as Magners or Bulmers.

2 / Ciders that are more akin to natural wine—funky, often austere styles from farm-based or micro producers, sold in large format bottles and even presented as Champagne method sparklers; examples include Orchard Hill, Farnum Hill, Eve’s Cidery, Eden.

3 / An increasing number of smaller-scale ciders that straddle both worlds—think “craft” ciders, typically sold in 12oz bottles or even kegs (Virtue, Hazlitt, Shacksbury, True Believer, Vander Mill, Blake’s, Graft, etc.).

CHALLENGES OF SCALE, SEASON & ALCOHOL FOR 'CRAFT' CIDER
A balanced cider is created using a variety of apples to contribute different flavor characteristics—sour, sweet, bitter, astringent. Complex (some would say less approachable) ciders, made from the fruits of older orchards, is an increasingly popular style, often referred to as “heritage cider.”
With what to call it up for debate, cider aficionados such as Jackson Cannon, a Boston area-based beverage director of the Hawthorne, Eastern Standard Kitchen & Drinks and Island Creek Oyster Bar, are particularly fond of this style since these ciders represent what can be attained after centuries of new world orchard cultivation: “There’s this careful curation of what was created by planting those European seeds into this environment. That makes these the most interesting to me.”

On top of craft cider’s consumer-awareness issues, as a category it suffers from a fundamental distribution conundrum. Karl du Hoffman of Orchard Hill Cider Mill in upstate New York, explains, “When you ferment apples naturally, it’s low alcohol—not as low as beer, not as high as wine,” he explains. Cider can be stuck in the middle in places where wine and beer are sold separately (wine in liquor stores; beer in grocery), such as New York state. This presents a huge challenge to cider makers. “Orchard-based ciders with higher alcohol without dilution are sold with wine distribution. If the cider is diluted below 7% alcohol it can go into the beer distribution system, but then you are competing with commodity cider.” But, he says, “You’ve also diluted the very thing that makes it stand out.”

Another hurdle is label restrictions. Du Hoffman points out that at present, there are no official cider-growing regions as there are AVAs in wine. So Orchard Hill and other cideries in the Hudson Valley, for instance, can only say their cider comes from New York state on the label, not the specific orchard’s region.

Yet another challenge is the seasonal association with ciders, since apples are considered autumnal fruits. However, rosé-style cider has joined the pink beverage wave with brands like Wölffer. Wine director Amy Racine at New York City’s Times Square Edition Hotel serves it in the warmer months into fall. Other ciders can be as refreshing as a cold beer or sparkling wine, and an increasing number of bar operators such as Cannon serve them year-round in cocktails.

SWEET SPOT - OR NOT
But enough about cidersmakers’ challenges—what about cider drinkers? While category diversity has helped erase the misconception that all cider is sweet, proliferation of labels and types has made it harder than ever for consumers to know what they are dealing with.

Paige Fiori of Boutique Wines, Spirits and Cider in Fishkill, NY, keeps 13 taps of different styles of cider available for retail customers to taste. Her mission is to right the wrong that stems from customers forming a sweet cider aversion from a single experience, often with a commercial cider. “We curate the taps so that we have about one-third sweet, one-third mid-range, and one-third dry style, showcasing a wide range of tastes,” says Fiori. “Once customers understand

WITH OVER 900 CIDERS IN 49 STATES, CIDER’S IDENTITY CONTINUES TO TREND CRAFT-WARD.
that concept, they are open to listening to more about cider. But that door needs to be kicked open first.”

In-store displays can also help customers make cider choices based on sweetness. Schilling Ciderhouse in Portland, Oregon, the largest cider retailer in the country, organizes their offerings on a big board, broken down into four categories: sweet, semi sweet, semi dry, and dry. Jennie Schilling, Chief Curator, notes, “We want to make sure that customers understand that all of our ciders are craft ciders and will tend to skew drier than other mass-produced ciders, even the ‘sweet’ ciders we offer are fruit sweet not sugar sweet.”

What if there are no taps to sample from or display charts to peruse when shopping for cider? Increasingly, suppliers are putting sweetness scales and other indicators (“dry,” “bone dry,” “unfiltered,” etc.) on their packaging to help consumers choose. “Customers are getting more sophisticated and want to know what is in their products,” says Fiori. “Transparency is always good in this business.”

KEEPING IT IN THE APPLE FAMILY
Looking at the overall industry, cider is unique in that everyone—from cider purists through big corporate suppliers—needs a slice of the apple to survive together in its fragile ecosystem. “Today, the larger brands are contributing significant resources to support projects that benefit smaller orchard-based cideries more than their own,” says Michelle McGrath, Education Director for the U.S. Association of Cider Makers. “They are doing this through education, by investing in programs like our Certified Cider Professional program, and through advocacy, by supporting USACM’s efforts to change regulations that hinder the growth of smaller ciders.”

McGrath goes on to say that larger brands and communal events like CiderCon (next one is late January, in Oakland, CA) help raise awareness of the category as a whole. Statistics show cider grew 10 times its size in a decade. Much of that boost in volume came via widely distributed brands like Strongbow and Angry Orchard. But with over 900 cideries in 49 states currently in the U.S. (according to the USACM), small, regional and farm producers now account for much of that overall figure, and cider’s identity continues to trend craft-ward.

With such diversity within the category, Cannon and other ciderphiles will tell you, “If you haven’t tasted ten ciders, or you’ve only had one, you’re doing yourself a disservice by not exploring more.”

SELLING POINTS
✦ Cider is gluten-free
✦ Cider is lower in alcohol than wine, generally between 4% and 6%
✦ Cider flavors reach far beyond apple
✦ Single-serve options are plentiful

CIDER VISITS FLAVORTOWN
Flavored cider is a subsegment that adds to the overall success of the category, but can be polarizing. “Cider offers a ton of variety of characteristics and profiles using different types of apples without adding flavors,” says du Hoffman. Brands like Texas-based Austin Eastciders began as a cider-specific apple product only, but evolved into flavors as their popularity grew. “Our fermentation team started playing [off the original unflavored] and we naturally moved into interesting blends with our Texas Honey, Pineapple, Blood Orange and most recently launched Rosé and Watermelon,” says VP of Marketing Dave Rule. “Original still moves the fastest but the fruit and floral blends are close behind and driving growth.”

Rekorderlig, from Sweden, is another cider that specializes in fruit-flavored expressions. And fruit is not the only way ciders are being stretched stylistically: Citizen Cider in Vermont recently came out with a Gose-style cider. Brand new from Nine Pin Ciderworks, New York’s first farm cidery, their Cucumber Lime Light is a modern take on the historical “ciderkin,” as it was called, produced by soaking the remaining apple pomace from the apple press in water. The naturally light beverage was widely produced during America’s colonial era (and was even served with breakfast). The Nine Pin version is made from 100% New York apples and contains fresh water, cucumber and lime; gluten-free, it has 110 calories per 12 oz. and ABV of 4.3%.
Big and bold, with just a hint of spice
1. **TEQUILA DON JULIO REPOSADO, DOUBLE CASK, LAGAVULIN EDITION**
   Don Julio has released their second limited-edition barrel-finished tequila, a traditional Reposado finished in casks that previously held Lagavulin Islay Single Malt Scotch. Master Distiller Enrique de Colsa spent two years experimenting with the vast cask options available within the Diageo portfolio. For the second Double Cask, he collaborated with Colin Gordon of Lagavulin to ensure the appeal to both whiskey and agave connoisseurs.

2. **BÖEN PINOT NOIR & CHARDONNAY**
   Following the success of his Meiomi brand, Joseph Wagner has returned his attention to an accessible version of his signature robust style with Böen. The new brand Böen offers five wines: Pinot Noir and a Chardonnay made from a blend of grapes from Sonoma, Monterey, and Santa Barbara counties; plus AVA-specific Pinot Noirs from the Santa Lucia Highlands, Santa Maria Valley and Russian River Valley.

3. **CAROLANS SALTED CARAMEL**
   A new twist on an old favorite, Carolans Irish Cream is going decadent with their first-ever line extension. Carolans Salted Caramel—the classic Irish whiskey-laced cream liqueur blended with the sweet-and-salty creamy caramel—works well as a complement to both hot and cold drinks. The new expression comes in two sizes; 34 proof. Case cards and recipe shelf talkers (Caramel Apple Pie and Chocolate Carameltini) are available.

4. **INVIVO X, SARAH JESSICA PARKER SAUVIGNON BLANC**
   As announced in late July on Instagram, multi-platform celebrity Sarah Jessica Parker has launched her new Sauvignon Blanc wine in partnership with the New Zealand-based Invivo, and with Taub Family Selections as the exclusive U.S. importer. The final 2019 blend was selected in May when the Invivo founders Tim Lightbourne and Rob Cameron, met in NYC with SJP, sharing samples of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc harvested earlier this year.

5. **CRUZAN WATERMELON RUM**
   Taking aim at summertime refreshment, the limited-edition Cruzan Watermelon Rum balances the sweetness of juicy watermelon replete with a hint of it slightly tart rind for a clean finish. Crafted by Master Distiller Gary Nelthropp, its all-natural ingredients include cane molasses and tropical rainwater. For every case sold, $1 will go to Cruzan’s Island Spirit Fund, providing relief following 2017’s devastating hurricanes in the U.S. Virgin Islands and across the U.S. 42 proof.

6. **J. LOHR ‘PURE PASO’ PROPRIETARY RED WINE**
   Showcasing Cabernet Sauvignon, in a blend with Petite Sirah, J. Lohr “Pure Paso” honors both the winery’s early roots and their ongoing commitment to the Paso Robles AVA. J. Lohr’s very first wine (1974) was a Petite Sirah, which inspired its inclusion here. The P.S. sourced from the Home Ranch provides jammy, dark berry notes; Cabernet from a cooler area offers savory elements. Whole berry fermentation and early pressing accentuate the supple structure.
7. DON PAPA RUM SHERRY CASK FINISH
Why should whiskey have all the Sherry cask fun? The third Don Papa Rum expression to hit the U.S. market, takes cask finishing to a new level. After four years in ex-bourbon casks, the rum is split and finished in four types of Sherry casks: Fino, Pedro Ximenez, Palo Cortado and Cream. The final liquid has notes of plum, dark chocolate and ripe figs; the striking packaging adds various exotic-looking creatures to Papa Isio’s image on the label.

8. SKYSIDE NORTH COAST WINES
Moët Hennessy Estates & Wines has launched Skyside, essentially a fresh mission for Newton Vineyard Red Label wines. Crafted by Winemaker Anne Dempsey, Skyside strives to combine the Californian legacy of the brand with an inspirational sense of freedom while delivering quality wines at great value. With the 2017 vintage and transition from Newton Vineyard, Skyside expanded to source grapes from all five North Coast appellation counties.

9. MOZART CHOCOLATE CREAM PUMPKIN SPICE LIQUEUR
A seasonal favorite from Austria has a new package. Wrapped in pumpkin orange, Mozart Chocolate Cream Pumpkin Spice Liqueur combines chocolate, caramel and natural pumpkin juice, seasoned with cinnamon, clove, vanilla, and a dash of chili. Can be enjoyed lightly chilled, on the rocks, in coffee or cocktails, over ice cream, even in dessert. Made with fresh cream and real sugar; light, creamy texture; 34 proof.

10. GÉRARD BERTRAND ‘ART DE VIVRE’, LANGUEDOC
Continuing to draw attention to the South of France, Gérard Bertrand’s “Art de Vivre” pays tribute to the Mediterranean way of life, its unspoiled nature and its artists. The unique natural ceramic bottle evokes the first amphoras—and for the end-user, it begs to be “upcycled” as a vase. The Rouge is made from classic grape varieties Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre in Languedoc; eight months in oak. Art de Vivre Blanc is 100% Clairette grapes (white ceramic).

11. BOODLES RHUBARB & STRAWBERRY GIN
A modern take on an English tradition, Boodles Rhubarb & Strawberry Gin features garden-fresh rhubarb and juicy strawberries. Pink gins are red-hot in Europe—up by 82% this year—but more than just a hue, the new Boodles unites flavors representing true British culinary staples that just so happen to be the coolest color of the year. Cocktail-friendly, especially mixed with lemonade, tonic water, or in a martini. 70 proof.

12. LA CATRINO VINO
La Catrina Vino is Crafted in California but inspired by the 3,000-year-old Mexican tradition known as Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos), a holiday that focuses on gatherings of loved ones and reminds us all to embrace life now. The eye-catching, ultra-modern, full-bottle shrink-wraps each feature part of a joyous wedding scene. Available in Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Red Blend, Moscato and Sangria.

SRP: $69.99
donpaparum.com

SRP: $19.99 (Chard, Red) $22.99 (Cab Sauv)
lvmh.com/houses/wines-spirits

SRP: $26.99
ourniche.com

SRP: $19.99
gerard-bertrand.com/en.com

SRP: $23.99
boodlesgin.com

SRP: $15.99
broncowine.com
JESS WEINSTEIN is the beverage director at restaurateur Rose Previte’s Compass Rose and Maydan, in Washington, DC.

BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP: The menu at Compass Rose is an ode to global street food, a rich and playful starting point for the drinks. What is your relationship with the kitchen like?

JESS WEINSTEIN: When the chefs share new dishes from different parts of the world it definitely gets us thinking about the flavor profiles we’re working with, and how all of that can come together. I had an awesome moment during a trip with good friends in Jamaica this year thinking about Cognac and jerk spice in a Sidecar-style setup. I got home and chatted with Chef Chris, who loves Jamaican food, and we wound up collaborating on the cocktail ‘Mista Lova Lova,’ which has Cognac, rye whiskey, lime and house jerk spice. It means a lot to me to get to have those moments.

BMG: Compass Rose is so much more than a place to eat and drink. How does the magical atmosphere inspire your creations?

JW: There are lots of small pieces that have stories of how they wound up there, and that’s all part of our story. I think that our space and food and beverage menus all have this awesome ability to stir things up and bring opportunities for every guest to be involved. We get to remind people of journeys they’ve been on and dreamed of.

BMG: Compass Rose is led by women. How do you think that shapes the restaurant’s corporate culture?

JW: The entire team has very different backgrounds, from fine art to marketing to economics. We all process and produce work from different viewpoints, but there is a lot we all agree on, like conscious sourcing, storytelling through food and beverage, the creation of safe and fun spaces and the importance of travel. So much comes from a genuine and vulnerable place, where someone has an idea and we collectively nurture it and see it through as part of who we are.

DESTINATION EXOTICA

JESS WEINSTEIN'S COCKTAIL MENUS ARE INSPIRED BY WORLD TRAVELS

BY ALIA AKKAM

How long she’s worked in restaurants: Ten years ago I got my first paid restaurant gig. We had a fog machine we turned on every night at 11.
Favorite spirit: All things agave.
Favorite cocktail: Gin & soda—no lime, no straw—with a side pop of mezcal or reposado tequila.
If she wasn’t working as a beverage director she would be: Living my life on the road—making hats, distributing edible glitter, reading tarot cards, playing dominoes and drinking yerba mate.

Bar Talk

• COMPASS ROSE

Weinstein’s signature drink combines the tart-sweet flavor of pomegranate with sparkling wine and an aromatic floral lift.

Ingredients:
- 1/4 oz PAMA Pomegranate Liqueur
- 4 oz Georgian sparkling wine (such as Bagrationi)
- 2 sprays Rose Water

Method: In a coupe glass, top the liqueur with the Georgian sparkling wine. Mist with 2 sprays rose water. To garnish, float a large mint leaf and pomegranate seeds on top.
SANTERO
1958

Your Sweet Desire

DISTRIBUTED BY INTERBALT: (855) SANTERO OR (301) 793.1818
Throughout Maryland and elsewhere, more and more vineyards, wineries, breweries, and distilleries are hosting special events on-site. In some cases, they’re putting on shows -- quite literally -- to get people to come out and taste their products. For instance, the Fiore Winery and Distillery in Pylesville, Md., offers its Music in the Vineyard series every Saturday night through mid-September.

Among the most active, though, is Boordy Vineyards in Hydes, Md., nestled in the heart of Baltimore County’s Long Green Valley. Every Saturday evening during the warm months, the property hosts a Summer Concert Series that features a diverse array of local bands and performers. And every Thursday afternoon/evening in the summer and well into the cooler months, Boordy offers its “Good Life Farmers Market.”

For visitors, it’s a chance to come to a working winery, enjoy some good food and drink, and just unwind “in the country.” For Boordy, it’s a chance to promote the brand. “These events are powerful marketing tools,” declared Boordy Vineyards President Rob Deford, “and they have a broad impact since we have visitors from all over Maryland and from neighboring states. When people enjoy a beautiful, festive afternoon or evening at Boordy, it builds a familial bond between us that translates into brand loyalty. I can say this with confidence, because when we started our concert series over two decades ago, sales in our regional stores picked up in direct relationship to the growing popularity of our events.”

Bruce Wills, Boordy’s National Sales Director, concurred. He pointed to the last Farmers Market Boordy put on just prior to our interview in late June. The 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. event drew nearly 1,000 people. “And most probably drank a glass of Boordy at some point,” he remarked.
So, there is a 1,000-person group who will go back into their communities and hopefully go to their local wine store and buy additional Boordy wines. And, yes, these folks come from all over the place. They come from southern Pennsylvania and Delaware. I’ve met folks here from Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. Boordy has become a destination place for nice wine, nice people, music, and food. That impression seems to travel out into the community and throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

The Retailers’ Perspective

Skeptical at first, store owners and operators are beginning to acknowledge that events like the ones Boordy, Fiore, and others put on around the state create new customers for them. Among them is Larry Dean, proprietor of Bel Air Liquors. “It’s helpful, because they really do drive people to the local stores,” he said. “If they’re going there for a specific event, whether it’s a band they want to see or to buy things at a farmers’ market, they also get exposed to the product line. I think it not only drives them to us in the retail market, but it also gets people to ask for the wines or beers or what-have-you when they go to restaurants.”

He continued, “We’re just far enough away that I would say our customer base will buy, say, Boordy’s wines here as opposed to making the trek and going all the way back to the vineyard. And, yes, we do hear, ‘We went to this concert at Boordy last weekend, and we loved their wines!’”

Wills and Deford insist that store owners and operators like Dean should never feel their sales are threatened by such on-site events. The former commented, “There is no conflict in pricing. We might actually be a little bit higher by design here at the winery than at a local wine shop. And it’s not unusual for people to stop at any of the wine shops in this Baltimore County area and buy Boordy wine before they come to the concert. The local wine shops should know they will get residual business from the visitors to Boordy. Hopefully, the people who visit here have such an enjoyable experience that they go back to their homes in York, Pa., or Mt. Airy, Md., and buy Boordy.”

Deford added, “It is often at a farmers market or a concert that people are first introduced to our wines. However, since Boordy is not located on a convenient route for routine purchases of our wines, “

[These events] are helpful, because they really do drive people to the local stores ... it also gets people to ask for the wines or beers or what-have-you when they go to restaurants.”

Proprietor of Bel Air Liquors
Larry Dean
repeat sales are made more in retail wine shops and restaurants around the state. When I wear a shirt with the Boordy logo, I encounter people in all walks of life and all over our state who stop me to say that they have enjoyed an afternoon or evening at the winery and cherish the memory.”

**Longevity is Key**

The Boordy events have been going on for so long and are so well-known that Deford, Wills, and Co. have to do very little promoting at this point. "We no longer have to aggressively advertise," Wills confirmed. "It’s on our website, Boordy.com. It’s on our Facebook page. We sell out to capacity just about every week. We know we’re going to get 1,700 people for the Mahoney Brothers or 1,500 for Mood Swings. People go on the website, see who’s playing next, buy the tickets, and it all just seems to come together."

So for any other winery or brewery operator reading this who is interested in putting on similar events, do Wills and Deford have any advice? Wills, who has been with Boordy since September 2015, was the first to respond. "It’s a handful," he acknowledged, with a slight chuckle. "It is crowd control-plus! You have to have a really crack team of people who just do the concerts, and we do. We have security. We sell tickets. It’s all very well orchestrated, organized, and monitored. And it’s not an easy thing to do until you get a lot of experience. So, my advice would be to start small, take baby steps, and learn what’s involved in growing into a larger event and venue."

Deford agreed, adding, "I have two recommendations for anyone considering hosting events at their facility. One, remember that the quality of your product is your most important asset. So, don’t let events distract you from this primary focus. And, two, be a good neighbor! Do not over crowd your events. Keep them in proportion to the size of your property and to the capacity of public access roads, and be sensitive to noise levels. We have taken many steps to mitigate the impact of our events so that we are in harmony with our community, and this ensures a positive and sustainable relationship well into the future."

Deford concluded, "I have attended so many concerts and farmers markets over the years here that it would be impossible to single out one memory, but I do have a favorite composite memory: it’s of a clear summer evening with dusk just settling in, a good band is playing, people are dancing, enjoying our wine, food, and good company, and a general air of happiness and joy is prevailing. Wine and the celebration of life have belonged together for thousands of years. We are simply continuing that wonderful tradition!"
J. SCOTT RIDGELL: BUSY AT BUZZY’S

BY TEDDY DURGIN

Unlike most packaged goods stores, Buzzy’s Country Store in St. Mary’s County doesn’t have to do much to generate ... well ... buzz. It’s been around in one form or another for decades. The current proprietor, J. Scott Ridgell, has been a part of the store since he was a child as his father, Clarence, and mother, Jean, bought the business from Jean’s dad in 1954. Clarence operated the store until his death in 2007, passing the torch to J. Scott.

One of the first questions Ridgell fielded 12 years ago from locals was: "Are you going to change the name?" It wasn’t even a consideration. "Buzzy was my dad," Ridgell said, during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal. "My mom still refers to him as 'Bussy.' When he was a boy, he was the third youngest of 12, and he was always ‘busy.’ But he preferred Buzzy. So, when I took over in 2007, everyone wanted to know, ‘Are you gonna change the name?’ And I’d answer, ‘Why?’ Everyone knows us as ‘Buzzy’s!’"

Clarence and Jean lived at and operated the store. So, it was truly J. Scott’s home throughout his childhood and adolescence. He recalled. "It was a general store, and we didn’t sell liquor or wine. It was strictly beer. Back in those days, these places were known as ‘gro-bars’ -- combination grocery stores and bars. You could actually come in, drink a beer on premise, give the grocer your list, and he would fill your order. Through the years, gro-bars gave way to 7-11’s and the like. Very few of us are left. We’re technically a store. But, in reality, we’re a bar. The law grandfathered us in, having transferred the license from dad’s name to mine."

Having been at the reins now for more than a decade, Ridgell has come to love the people aspect of the business the most. He left a six-figure job with management responsibilities to become the store’s operator. But, for him, the intangibles ultimately outweighed money and position. "It’s been very much a homecoming," he stated. "I get to hang out with all of my old running mates, people I used to hang out with and party with. Some of my old friends, I see three or four times a week. [laughing] I forgot how much I liked some of them!"

On the downside, Ridgell wishes the administrative side of the business wasn’t so demanding. "You’re always juggling paperwork!" he lamented. "I knew the business from the customer service side -- stocking the shelves, sweeping the floors, and so forth. But as far as the paperwork and filing the sales taxes monthly and having to file your employee withholdings, that’s pretty hard."

He continued, "When I run into some young buck who’s wanting to start his own
Is Your Establishment a Member of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA)?

MSLBA—Representing Alcohol Beverage Licensees since 1950

MSLBA is the multicultural, go-to organization for Maryland retail alcohol beverage industry issues. No matter how proficient you are at the operations and management of your business, many factors influencing your success are outside your direct control. Your best chance for competently and successfully dealing with external forces such as legislation, regulation, suppliers, enforcement agencies and prohibition efforts, is by joining with other retailers for reputable representation through MSLBA.

Contact MSLBA for Membership Information:

Phone: (410) 871-1377 • FAX: (410) 871-2545 • E-Mail: MSLBAmembers@msn.com

Please provide the following:

Name of County or City Alcohol Licensing Board for Your Establishment: ___________________________

Your Name: ____________________________________ Phone: (     ) _________________________

Business Name: _________________________________________________________________________

Business Physical Address: _________________________________________________________________

business, I tell him, 'You may be good with people and you may be good with sales, but there is a whole paperwork side you’re going to need some help with. If you don’t know how to do it, you’re either going to have to learn or pay somebody to do it.’

Even his long-time friends don’t quite grasp how hard Ridgell works. “Some of my buddies are like, ‘Wow, you have it great! You get to ‘shoot the s**t’ with people all day and laugh,’” he remarked, shaking his head at their misconception. “But I tell them, ‘You don’t see the underbelly. You don’t see me down here at 7 a.m. having to meet the beer guy, who wants to work from my end of the county up.’”

Fortunately, Ridgell had a great role model in his father, whose “Clarence-isms” often resonate in his head as he goes about the business of running the business today. “Dad always treated people fairly,” Ridgell recalled. “One of his favorite sayings was, ‘Don’t rip people off.’ It’s tempting and you can do it. But my dad was always stressing two things, ‘Treat people the way you want to be treated’ and ‘You get what you give.’”

Ridgell has found new counsel as a member of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA). “I like seeing the big picture,” he concluded. “[Membership] has helped me keep an eye on the issues going on. And I really enjoy talking to my fellow members here in the county. Many of these guys have been in the business all their lives. And it’s always good joining up with them and going to the meetings. You can’t beat the camaraderie!”
THE FIND

RÉMY MARTIN XO COGNAC GETS A METAL-MINDED MAKEOVER
The new limited-edition Rémy Martin XO was created in collaboration with Steaven Richard, a celebrated French metalsmith who immersed himself in the story behind the Cognac house. The new XO label features an invented way to emboss brass with a unique golden texture of the Rémy Martin XO motif. As part of the project, Richard also created a sculpture of Rémy Martin’s emblematic centaur, glimpsed through metal pillars that represent the vertical vines of Cognac. SRP $200; 80 proof. remymartin.com

SKULL SEASON APPROACHES...
Thinking about Día de los Muertos, spanning Oct. 31st to Nov. 2nd, starts early this year for Tequila Cazadores. The brand teamed up with acclaimed Mexican street artist Victoria Villasana on a limited-edition Blanco bottle capturing the essence of the Mexican holiday, which celebrates the lives of family and friends who have passed away. The design depicts the Cazadores stag alongside two traditional Día de los Muertos skulls, rendered in the artist’s ultra-colorful style. SRP $21.99; 80 proof; available in mid-September. cazadores.com

ST. ELDER MIXES IT UP, ADDING CITRUS FLAVORS
M.S. Walker has introduced two new artisanal liqueurs in their St. Elder line. Pamplemousse (grapefruit) and Blood Orange join St. Elder Natural Elderflower Liqueur, which has become one of the most popular elderflower liqueurs on the market. Both new liqueurs are citrus-forward but strike a balance of fruit and sweetness. The Pamplemousse plus sparkling wine makes a compelling Ruby Spritz; and a splash of the Blood Orange can elevate an Old Fashioned. Elderflower and Pamplemousse are 40 proof, Blood Orange is 70 proof; SRP $19.99. st-elder.com

ORANGE FASHIONED
2 oz. Bourbon or Rye
½ oz. St. Elder Blood Orange Liqueur
2 Dashes Bitters
Orange Twist

TEA TIME WITH A KICK
The tea specialists behind Owl’s Brew now have a spiked version. The brand launched in 2013 as botanically driven tea-based mixers, to be paired with vodka, tequila, rum, whiskey, gin and bubbly. Now, boosted by 4.6% malt alcohol, Owl’s Brew Boozy Tea takes aim at the low-alcohol RTD wave, with three organic expressions in 12oz cans: English Breakfast, Lemon, Lime; Darjeeling, Hibiscus, Strawberry; and White Tea, Watermelon, Raspberry. Like the original, the products utilize organic ingredients and all-natural tea leaves, fruits, spices, and herbs. SRP $10.99/six-pack. owlsbrewboozytea.com