GET IN THE CONVERSATION
PUTTING SOCIAL MEDIA TO WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS

O'NEILL VINTNERS' JEFF O'NEILL
WINE REGION TO WATCH: ALENTEJO
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WASHINGTON DC ONLY

1DC  Wholesaler Directory & Brand Index

VOLUME 81 NUMBER 01  January 2019
The 2019 Legislative Session ... 

The Maryland 2019 Legislative session is almost upon us. There is no doubt that allowing beer and wine to be offered in chain stores and supermarkets is going to be discussed. Another concern of the entire industry is ‘dram shop’ legislation (this legal doctrine would permit vendors of alcohol to be sued by individuals who have suffered injury at the hands of a patron of that vendor). There’s a Supreme Court case that deserves your attention as well: Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association v. Clayton Bird (Tenn. v. Byrd) deals with whether states can require residency for purposes of retail alcohol licenses. This will have implications for every state.

Journal staff writer Teddy Durgin has a great piece on what to expect and has interviewed insiders from the industry. Check out his piece on page 10.

As in year’s past, I am again iterating how important it is to get involved and be prepared to defend the industry to our state representatives. Many of you are involved and are familiar with the process of protecting your business from harmful proposed legislation. However, too many are not. Below is my annual appeal for your involvement...

Your Livelihood Depends on It

Here’s my ‘How-To’ on political involvement ... First, you need to know what proposed legislation is coming down the pipe and how it will affect your business. Becoming a member of your county association as well as the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) would be a great start. The MSLBA was formed, in part, because the association’s leaders understood that actions in the Maryland State House directly impact the operations of your businesses. The MSLBA tracks proposed legislation that will have an effect on its members’ businesses. They do this right at their web site, www.msla.org.

Next, you will need to know who your elected officials are. There is a very quick and easy way to find out ... go to http://mdelect.net and type in your address. Make note of your State Senator and State Delegates.

It’s a very good idea to be knowledgeable as to the contributions you and your business make to the community. American Beverage Licensees (ABL) has a way for you to quantify the significant contribution you make to your community when it comes to jobs, taxes and economic impact. ABL is the preeminent national trade association for licensed beverage retailers. Through the ‘resources’ area of the ABL website, www.ablusa.org, ABL members can create reports and download data that detail the number of jobs and amount of taxes that they provide to their communities, as well as more in-depth economic impact information at the state legislative district level. This is a very powerful tool. By utilizing this economic study data, you now have the ability to tell your overwhelmingly positive story and impact you have in your community to your representatives in Annapolis.

Lastly, you will need to get the attention of your representatives and share your story with them. I would suggest you again enlist the help of the MSLBA. At their web site, www.msla.org, go to their Legislative area and you’ll find information on upcoming events as well as how to put together an email or letter that will be well received by your representatives.

Access to the above mentioned materials at the MSLBA web site are free to all. However, I would highly suggest becoming a member if you are not already. If you want more information than is on their web site feel free to call the MSLBA at 410 876-3464.

Access to state Senate and House district data is free to ABL members and requires additional log-in information, which can be obtained by contacting the ABL office. If you are not a member of ABL, you will need to become one to access the Economic Impact Study data and create reports etc. Visit www.ablusa.org or call them at 301 656-1494 for more information.

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1. MOUNT GAY RUM XO ‘THE PEAT SMOKE EXPRESSION’
In Mount Gay Rum Distilleries’ new XO The Peat Smoke Expression, the island of Barbados meets the island of Islay, marrying the banana aromas and toasted notes of Mount Gay XO with the salty and smoky notes from peated whisky casks. Mount Gay Master Blender Allen Smith selected column and pot still rums that had matured for 8 to 15 years in American oak, then finished the blend in Islay whisky casks for six months. Cask strength: 114 proof.

SRP: $250
mountgayrum.com

2. RUSSIAN STANDARD ‘PLATINUM’
Russian Standard Vodka has relaunched its premium brand, Russian Standard Platinum, with a refreshed bottle and improved taste profile, thanks to technologies such as special rectification and unique silver filtration, followed by extended resting. The new package features smoky glass, metallic silkscreen and decorative monograms. As with Russian Standard Vodka, the Platinum expression uses winter wheat from the Russian Steppes and water of glacial origin. 80 proof.

SRP: $24.99
vodka.com | roust.com

3. CLAN DENNY SINGLE-CASK SCOTCH
Douglas McGibbon’s has named Worldwide Libations as its exclusive USA importer for Clan Denny and has given the brand both a fresh look and a renewed focus on aged Single Cask expressions from distilleries all over Scotland, bottled at 92 proof. The initial Worldwide Libations shipment includes 10 Year Olds from Islay’s Bunnahabhain, Speyside’s Craigellachie and Highland’s Fettercairn in addition to a 14 Year Old Single Grain from the now closed Port Dundas.

SRP: $54.99
worldwidelibations.com

4. KNOB CREEK TWICE BARRELED RYE
The trend of strategic refinishing for whiskey continues apace. Here, Knob Creek Twice Barreled Rye is secondarily finished in new, level 4 charred oak barrels. The expression presents the signature rich and savory notes of straight rye whiskey mingled with the robust oak and a touch of sweetness from the double barreling process. Finishes with lingering oak and spice; recommended neat, over ice or in an Old Fashioned. 100 proof.

SRP: $44.99
knobcreek.com

5. STRONGBOW HARD CIDERS ‘100 CAL SLIM CANS’
Just as New Year’s dieting resolutions kick in, Strongbow Hard Ciders will debut “100 Cal Slim Cans,” a 12-can variety pack with three 8.5oz easy-to-drink flavors containing 100 calories each. The variety pack contains Strongbow’s newest flavor, Dry Pear, a mildly sweet pear-apple cider with a light, dry finish, along with the highly-rated Rosé Apple and the recently relaunched fan favorite Original Dry. All Strongbow products contain no artificial flavors or colors.

SRP: $22.99 | Vinha do Arco $34.99
strongbow.com | heinekenusa.com

6. QUINTA DO ATAIDE DOURO TABLE WINES
The latest table wine from the Symington Family, Quinta do Ataide, showcases the Vilarica Valley and the historic Ataide estate which is unusually flat for the Douro. All 200 acres have been organically farmed since 2007. Quinta do Ataide 2015 DOC Douro Red is a blend of the traditional Portuguese grapes, aged 8 months in French oak. The 2015 Vinha do Arco bottling is 100% Touriga Nacional grapes and spent 10 months in French oak barrels.

SRP: $22.99 | Vinha do Arco $34.99
vineyardbrands.com
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KEVIN KOBYLINSKI
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7. KENTUCKY PEERLESS 3-YEAR-OLD RYE
Kentucky Peerless Distilling Co. has released their 3-year-old Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, which placed fourth in Fred Minnick’s Best American Whiskey Rankings for 2018. The 3-year-old follows the successful re-introduction of their Straight Rye Whiskey in 2017. All under one roof, Kentucky Peerless grains are milled, cooked, fermented, double-distilled and barreled as bourbon and rye; Peerless spirits are crafted never chill filtered and bottled at barrel proof.

SRP: $125
kentuckypeerless.com

10. LEYENDA ‘CUIXE’ OAXACAN MEZCAL
Mezcales de Leyenda’s new limited-edition mezcal showcases a sub-variety from the Karwinskii agave plant called “Cuixe,” known for growing more vertically than typical agave plants and taking 12-15 years to mature. Harvesting Cuixe agave is extremely difficult and only happens for three months out of the year. It yields a smooth mezcal with notes of honey, apple, pine and clove, and joins the Leyenda line of distinct mescals from varied agaves and origins. 92 proof.

SRP: $109.99
mezcalesdeleyenda.com

8. DOZEN ROSES WINE
Dozen Roses wines offer three crowdpleasing semi-dulce wines with timeless label appeal as well. Produced in La Mancha, Spain, known for consistency across vintages, from Sauvignon Blanc (for the white) and Tempranillo (for the rosé and red). All three feature a delicate sweetness, making the wines smooth, balanced and easy to drink. Colorful cartons and case cards make Dozen Roses an even stronger impulse buy; great for romantic appeal, but also for all sorts of celebration.

SRP: $12.99
dozenroseswine.com

11. DOMAINE BOUSQUET ‘GRAN’ CABERNET SAUVIGNON
Leading Argentine producer Domaine Bousquet is adding a Cabernet Sauvignon to their top-tier varietal line, which has also been renamed. The former “Grande Reserve” label will now be known by the easy-to-remember “Gran” moniker and feature Domaine Bousquet’s best grapes from the “home” vineyard, originally planted in the late 1990s. The new Gran Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 consists of 100% organically-grown Cabernet Sauvignon.

SRP: $25
palmbay.com

9. HARLESTON GREEN BLENDED SCOTCH
Following the success of Wódka Vodka, Edgewater Spirits has released a Scotch: Harleston Green. This blended Scotch whisky commemorates the moment in 1786 when a group of Scottish merchants gathered with some sticks and balls at Harleston Green, America’s first golf club, and introduced America to one of Scotland’s two greatest exports. Harleston Green was blended using select single malts aged between 4-5 years, predominantly from The Highlands and Speyside. Available in 16 states.

SRP: $24.99
edgewaterspiritsco.com

12. CAMUS XO BORDERIES FAMILY RESERVE COGNAC
Handcrafted from grape to bottle, Camus XO Bordersie Family Reserve is a single-estate Cognac produced from the Camus family’s private vineyard in the Borderies cru. At only 5% of the Cognac appellation, the Borderies cru is the smallest and most exclusive. Unlike most producers, Camus uses small pot stills and distills on the lees in order to extract maximum flavor. The new Family Reserve is 80 proof and, in line with the new XO classification, is at least 10 years old.

SRP: $199
cilusinc.com | camus.fr
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When ProWein launched in 1994, under the name ProVins, the trade show's fairgrounds in Düsseldorf, Germany welcomed 1,500 visitors for two days and all 321 exhibitors fit into a single hall. Today, ProWein takes up ten halls. And for three days, Düsseldorf becomes the epicenter of the wine world. In 2018, the show welcomed 6,870 exhibitors from 64 countries, and covered 789,500 square feet—compared with the 31,300 square feet at the premiere in 1994.

But as ProWein has grown, the real story is not one of sheer volume, but also of scope: the show has become truly global. In 2018, 60,500 visitors came from 133 countries, with 54% from outside Germany; that figure stood at less than 14% at ProWein 2002. It is also a story of quality:

In its 25th year, ProWein has established itself as THE trade fair for the international wine and spirits industry, serving as an annual sector highlight, central gathering point and order platform.

And a closer look indicates that while the show kept getting bigger, it also kept getting better. It has not just grown, it has matured, right along with the industry it serves.

Flexible Foundation
One pillar of ProWein’s success has always been an unswerving all-business focus. Attendance is strictly limited to professionals in the wine and spirits industry, with emphasis on retail and gastronomy. In addition, Düsseldorf’s central location—not connected to any wine region—ensures a neutral status. Perhaps most important of all, Messe Düsseldorf, ProWein’s operator, runs about 50 trade fairs, including 23 sector-leading events at this location. Their business is not wine—it is trade shows, and in turn they have continually made adjustments, both in infrastructure and programming, to ensure that ProWein meets attendees’ and exhibitors’ needs and goals.

Another pillar of ProWein’s success is how the fairgrounds work as a flexible space, completely modern and modular, like a campus of connected halls. The show’s layout has morphed over the years, always presenting exhibitors naturally by country and ensuring access to ProWein common spaces, such as the ProWein Forum, Champagne Lounge, “fizz Lounge,” and others.

SHOW WITH A PLAN: The Messe Düsseldorf fairgrounds, designed expressly to house trade shows, are like a big campus. The interconnected halls help group exhibitors thematically, are easy to navigate and feature excellent ventilation and signage.

TASTE TEST: Tasting opportunities at ProWein range from self-guided tasting zones to regional seminars and specialized areas such as the Champagne Lounge and ProWein Forum.
This proactive approach to programming is clearly something that sets ProWein apart. “We constantly keep our eyes and ears on the market and exchange ideas with visitors and exhibitors from all over the world,” says Marius Berlemann, Global Head Wine & Spirits, Director ProWein.

For example, he notes that in 2016 ProWein added “same but different”—a show within the show devoted to craft beer, craft spirits and cider. Similarly, organic wine, after several years of being given a dedicated exhibition space, has been integrated back into the entire trade fair. “In the end, we are always a mirror of the industry, which is why it is so important to be always on the move, to classify new trends according to their relevance and, if necessary, to react quickly,” says Berlemann.

Progress Report
Of course, the goal of gathering and acting on visitor and exhibitor feedback is top of mind for the ProWein organizers. Responding to the unique U.S. market, working with the Wine Enthusiast Importer Connection they developed the “Route USA,” a system that guides American attendees to exhibitors who are already exporting to the U.S or are interested in finding importing and distribution partners here.

Besides the obvious appeal to prospective importers, the show has layers of appeal for wineries who want to export, for on-/off-premise buyers, and basically anyone with an interest in wine and spirits as a vibrant global industry. “Nowhere else can you get this spectrum of wine producers,” Berlemann points out. “During the three days of the event, every trade visitor can embark on his or her own personal wine world tour and gain a comprehensive overview.”

Attendee feedback has been extremely positive: after ProWein 2018, about 95% stated that they completely achieved their goals at the trade fair. The high rate is something organizers can be especially proud of this year, being the 25th anniversary. And while getting bigger is no longer a major emphasis, continuing to get better certainly is. “A top priority for 2019 will certainly be qualitative visitor growth,” notes Berlemann. “We are working very hard to attract more trade visitors from on-trade and off-trade from all over the world. Especially from the U.S., Canada, Japan and Africa. This will only succeed if we have a good range of products and services on offer and are able to convince visitors with our quality.”

Managing the Complexity

Messe Düsseldorf runs about 50 trade fairs, including 23 sector-leading events, ProWein is now the largest event staged at their facility, and it presents special challenges as most of the other trade shows there focus on large machines and systems. No other event has as many exhibitors as ProWein; however, the show occupies about half of the overall fairgrounds. On top of the relative density of booths in the exhibition halls, constant maintenance is required; a staff of 200 is dedicated to bringing fresh glasses to the stands. Then, at the end of each day, a stadium-size crowd worth of people all leave at the same time.

Whole World, One Place
With 6,500+ exhibitors, all major wine nations and regions are represented at ProWein; there are also more than 400 spirits exhibitors from 30 countries and 500 ancillary events throughout the show.
The 2019 General Assembly Session is just around the corner, and the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) is once again gearing up to play a big role in looking out for the beverage industry’s interests. This means guys like MSLBA Legislative Chairman Jack Milani and lawyer and MSLBA lobbyist J. Steven “Steve” Wise are expected to step up and drive the discussions.

So, what’s different about this coming year? For one … legislator turnover! “We just had statewide elections back in November,” Wise observed, during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal. “Somewhere between 25 percent and roughly 30 percent of the General Assembly will be new. So, it will be even more of an ongoing effort to educate legislators as to how our industry works, the issues that are important to us, the small businesses that are affected by everything that is done with alcohol in Annapolis, and so forth. This will be the most important thing MSLBA and the other industry associations will do in 2019!”

Milani concurred, adding, “This year, with so many new faces, it’s really important for our members to know their legislators, reach out to them, and educate them a little bit. If people really care about their businesses, it’s not too much to ask them to take a little more time out to contact these people who represent you in your district and to get involved. A lot of times, it’s just a matter of reaching out, having lunch with them, or just going to see them at their office. There, you can explain to them the things that are most important to our industry.”

He continued, “We’ve found that most legislators are more than willing to talk with you about the issues. If nothing else, it opens up a dialogue. So, if there is a bill that will obviously affect us and our interests, they now know people in the industry and will hopefully reach out and get our feedback.”

As for the issues that will matter most in the months to come, Wise was quick to answer. “There will certainly be continued discussion about whether beer and wine should be offered in chain stores and supermarkets,” he said. “This won’t be new to the General Assembly, but it will be new to the new members and it will come up.”

Both men agreed that “dram shop” liability is another issue that will likely generate some dialogue in the new year. If it is ever
This is certainly a critical time in both state and national politics. For many reading this, the goings-on in Annapolis and Washington can appear overwhelming. But Wise and Milani both urged Beverage Journal readers -- from bar and restaurant operators to packaged-goods store owners to brewers and winery proprietors -- to get involved.

"You have to be aware of what's going on," Wise advised. "The best way to do that is through the industry's trade associations. There's the MSLBA at the retail level and on up the chain to the Maryland Beer Wholesalers Association. More than most industries, what's done at the state level on alcohol regulation has an immediate and recognizable impact on your business. That should be reason alone for folks to sit up and pay attention."

Milani concluded, "If you're going to be in this industry, you should really take the time to understand the rules, regulations, and laws. And I can't imagine why you wouldn't be a member of a trade association. MSLBA has a full-time lobbyist in Annapolis. We have legislative committees. We need you to be involved. It's foolish to make such a big investment and then not know what's going on around you." [Note: MSLBA President Darren Barnes was unavailable to comment for this article.]

Wise, an attorney with the law firm of Schwartz, Metz, and Wise in Annapolis, went on to describe Tenn. v. Byrd as the "most significant Supreme Court case since Granholm v. Heald" in 2005. The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision ruled that laws in Michigan and New York that allowed in-state wineries to ship wine directly to consumers, but prohibited out-of-state wineries from doing the same, were unconstitutional.

Another thing Milani and Wise agreed on was how Governor Larry Hogan's recent re-election would be good for the state's beverage interests. "I think the governor's re-election is good for all small businesses, not just those in our industry," remarked Milani, who has co-owned Monaghan's Pub in Woodlawn since 1990. "Gov. Hogan has taken the time to really emphasize small business. His cabinet and his people have been pretty easy to work with, too. It's been nice to have a governor who actually appreciates us! The guy has certainly proven that he listens to people's thoughts and proposals and their considerations. Even if you don't agree with him, you can't fault him for listening to ideas."

Wise was equally positive. He called the Hogan administration "super" and added, "They know that the alcohol industry is made up of Maryland businesses. Thus far, they've been very helpful, have had an open door, and we don't have any reason to believe that won't continue for the next four years."

This is certainly a critical time in both state and national politics. For many reading this, the goings-on in Annapolis and Washington can appear overwhelming. But Wise and Milani both urged Beverage Journal readers -- from bar and restaurant operators to packaged-goods store owners to brewers and winery proprietors -- to get involved.

You have to be aware of what's going on. The best way to do that is through the industry's trade associations. The MSLBA is a very good starting point. Call 410 876-3464 or visit www.MSLBA.org

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So, what's different about this 2019 Legislative Session?

Legislator turnover! Somewhere between 25% and roughly 30% of the General Assembly will be newly seated representatives.

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BOND STREET WHISKY SOCIAL
Diageo and Moët Hennessy recently hosted their annual Whisky Social at Bond Street Social in Baltimore. Over 175 members of the industry attended and were invited to sample a variety of whisky marques from the Diageo and Moët Hennessy portfolio.

APOTHIC WINES AT BRETON BAY FINE WINE & SPIRITS
Don Brock, manager at Breton Bay Fine Wine & Spirits, is gearing up for the Holiday season with Apothic Wines.
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DON JULIO TEQUILA PARTY
Don Julio recently hosted a Tequila Fall Fest Party at Blue Agave Mexican Restaurant. Trade guests competed in a mini Olympics that included connect four, Jenga and basketball. The night was filled with friendly competition, Don Julio featured cocktails and delicious Mexican fare.

OLD FORESTER CELEBRATES REPEAL DAY
A roaring good time was had Celebrating Repeal Day with Old Forester (“the only bourbon distilled before, during and after Prohibition”). Guests enjoyed a Speakeasy-style evening, while learning about Old Forester and tasting a variety of creative cocktails.
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 the accolades:
  - Finalist
  - Great Value
  - Tried & True Award
- Products are scored on the retailer and consumer friendly 100-point scale.
- USC provides an additional component to the competition with the inclusion of a cocktail evaluation in the year’s designated spirits categories. Team Cocktail, comprised of top professional bartenders, tastes and assesses a spirit’s “mixability factor” in several classic cocktail recipes. This groundbreaking innovation, employed by no other competition, provides a multi-faceted evaluation of spirits.

**ENTRY DETAILS:** ultimate-beverage.com/usc2019enter

**QUESTIONS:** info@ultimate-beverage.com or 1-347-878-6551

**DEADLINE:** FEBRUARY 27, 2019
market shots

EL JIMADOR TEQUILA ... PAINT THE SKULL
El Jimador’s “Paint the Skull” event was recently held in celebration of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). Industry guests showcased their creativity and appreciation for the brand by painting and customizing El Jimador sugar skulls.

DOM PÉRIGNON HAPPY HOUR
La Cuchara recently hosted a Dom Pérignon Happy Hour. Guests had the opportunity to taste Dom Pérignon 2009 while interacting with David Cohn, Dom Pérignon’s Brand Ambassador, who educated consumers about the brand’s history and heritage.
René Barbier’s Red Sangria

In a large pitcher combine:
• 1 bottle of René Barbier Red Wine
• 1 cup of orange juice
• 1 cup of Cognac or orange liqueur
• 2 tsp. of sugar

Garnish with your favorite fruit (such as oranges, strawberries, apples, peaches).

Fill rest of large pitcher with ice & lightly stir.

Cheers!
“No matter what size you are, consumers nowadays judge you based on your digital footprint,” says Lisa Mattson, Director of Marketing and Communications at Jordan Winery, recognized as a leader in social media in the wine sector. “They’re making a conscious decision about whether or not they want to do business with you based on your online presence,” she says.

But how to use social media effectively remains elusive, especially for small business owners with even smaller resources and under pressure to look cool, authentic, upload video or grab onto the latest widget—and justify the time commitment and expenditure.

While the goals and audience of a winery may differ significantly from those of a wine retailer or restaurant, the platforms designed for social media are, if nothing else, completely flexible and customizable for other industry sectors.

Fortunately, for the do-it-yourselfer, an entire cottage industry of social media tools has developed, not to mention a growing force of dedicated social media consultants. And social media as an industry is already having to deal with endemic scourges such as phantom followers and over-hyped “influencers.”

The good news is that you can apply what you already know—just think of it as traditional business messaging in a new medium. Another advantage: depending on your approach, it can be quite cost-efficient as SM platforms and tools don’t require new hardware or inventory. A retailer who sends newsletters—email or snail mail—can re-channel monthly content online, spreading the messaging over the entire month—with more graphics, including animation, plus the added benefit of engendering customer engagement and tracking response.

In the end, every business’s social media activity can and should be different. Below are some topics that business owners and managers should consider as they carve out their niche in the Digital Age of sharing, posting and communicating online.

---

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

**Targeting the right people the right way**

Consider your audience and your goals and match them to the appropriate platform. Do you want to generate sales/leads? Drive traffic to your web page? Create brand awareness? Educate consumers? There’s...
Social Media 101

**Know thy Audience, Find thy Platform**

- Establish your goals: do you want to sell, promote, brag or create brand awareness?
- Understand which social media platform best serves those needs.
- Ask your customers how they’d like to hear from you.
- Listen to what your followers and those of your competitors are saying.

---

**BIG TENT: Room for All**

Everyone in the wine and spirits trade today can benefit from the power and reach of social media. Here is a sampling of popular Instagram accounts (with followers) for a variety of types of wine/spirits businesses, associations and individuals.

- beer brand: @pabstblueribbon (166K)
- spirits brand: @whistlepigwhiskey (183K)
- wine blog: @grapefriend (141K)
- Champagne: @krugchampagne (136K)
- winemaker: @andrehammack (84.8K)
- sommelier: @joaniemetivier (57.4K)
- winery: @jordanwinery (37.8K)
- wine region: @bordeauxwines (24.9K)
- craft distiller: @savageandcooke (14.2K)
- retailer: @vervewine (13.7K)

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**TOOLS: Curated Content Rules**

- Be authentic: not every post should look like a fashion shoot. Unless you are, in fact, selling fashion.
- Create a consistent look that tells the story of your brand. Save the sales posters and fliers for email blasts.
- Integrate graphic and narrative trends using tools like Canva, “Stories,” GIFs, animation apps.
- Write appropriately for your audience.
- Never ask “What’s in your glass?”

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**Stay in the Conversation**

Typical monthly pricing for popular social media management tools:

- Buffer: $50 – $225
- BuzzSumo: $79, $239, plus custom solutions
- Hootsuite: $29 – $129, plus individual pricing for custom solutions
- Sprout Social: $99-$249
- Union Metrics: $49-199
- Tweetdeck: free

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**THE PLAYERS**

Get hip to who’s hot

Following competitors, key influencers and brands clue you in to what topics and images resonate with people so you can dig into your own arsenal for content. “We definitely recommend monitoring your competitors, to see what they’re doing and what’s working for them,” says Jenn Deering Davis, co-founder of Union Metrics, which provides social media analytics tools.

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**TOOLS: WORDS + VIDEOS**

Curated content rules

Bill Gates’s 20-year-old mantra, “Content is King,” resonates more today than ever. But for businesses this can be tricky. “Realistically people don’t fall all over themselves to follow businesses, so the content becomes more important,” says Tom Geniesse, owner of retail shop Bottlerocket Wine & Spirit in NYC. Generally speaking, word counts are lower online and images more plentiful and more potent as attention spans shorter.

Rule of thumb: Establish a look that communicates your brand personality or company culture. Tell stories and entertain as well as promote. GIFs and Boomerang mini-videos are efficient ways to create interest without full-on video production. Facebook and Instagram’s “story” features also offer customized creative twists to hub posts. If you lack design skills, check out a free online template tool.
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INFLUENCERS
Caveat emptor...
As covered extensively in Beverage Media’s September 2018 cover story, Influencers—people with large social media audiences who are paid for their endorsements—have grown into big business. Their services range from “liking” a brand to sponsoring a photo, tweet or video. But with the rise of zombie accounts, phantom followers and bots, due diligence is in order to help spot the fakes.

BUDGETS
Put your money where your audience is
Across the board, experts say organic growth—acquired through strategic content, tagging influencers and advocates, use of hashtags, listening and manually interacting with fans—nets the most engaged and loyal audiences. And, it’s a huge time commitment. You can buy fans through a number services offering 100 followers for as little as $3 but chances are you’ll gain phantoms, not people who will engage with your company.

Many companies end up with a mix of organic interactions and those garnered by boosting posts (for at little as $5) or buying ads on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The difference? A boost activates one post (image, video or text) and targets an audience demographic you set yourself in the platforms’ tools. Ad buys are more involved, but can provide greater exposure with a variety of creative formats and more latitude for messaging.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT
It’s up for debate
Unless you’re dealing with hard numbers, ROI on social media is a value proposition—something you feel has a benefit but is still intangible. “We don’t really look at it as something that we need to get an immediate return on—or immediate satisfaction,” says Harmon Skurnik of Skurnik Wines in New York City. “It’s more about overall marketing and imaging support.” And it’s particularly problematic for alcohol brands that cannot directly monetize their investment due to advertising restrictions.

That’s why more marketers in the alcohol space rely on “ROR”—return on relationship, the real and perceived value through loyalty, word of mouth and other sharing. Anecdotal research supports such value. In a study commissioned by Sprout Social, 71% of consumers said they would purchase a brand after a positive, connected social interaction.

BUDGETS
What can money buy?

- Influencers: spend approximately $100 per 1,000 followers
- Boosts (one content item) on Facebook and Instagram; costs start at $5, boosted Tweets $50
- Paid followers, as little as $9.95 per 1,000 & up [not recommended]
- Custom ad buys for campaigns
- Content: video and images
- Social media manager and/or management tools

RETURNS
Is it working?

- Approach social media as digital word-of-mouth; stay consistent and active
- The nature of our industry (involving alcohol) can make it harder to monetize
- Be patient: posts are not always trackable, but over time, harvest “return on relationship”

DIGITAL TIPS

1. Create a content mix—part promotional and parts education, entertainment and awareness. If you’re starting out, try the 80/20 model (80% informing and entertaining; 20% direct promotion) until you see what resonates with your community and tweak.

2. Listen to your audience to see what engages, and find ways to continue the conversation with responses, tags, retweets/reposts and follows. Can’t find the words? That’s what emojis are for.

3. Optimize for mobile. Why? More than 3 billion people globally use social media each month, and 9 out of 10 access their chosen platforms via mobile devices. ‘Nuf said.

4. #Hashtags can help. Hashtags (indicated by “#” preceding a word) guide like-minded people to favorite topics; use them strategically when posting and researching online.

5. Check state-by-state regulations on what you are allowed to advertise/promote on social media, and also check each platform’s community standards. Most alcohol marketers are limited to platforms where 71.6% of the audience is of legal drinking age, and provide either an online age-verifier or disclaimer.

6. Strategize your messaging. Instead of duplicating the same message across platforms, digital-marketing guru Gary “Vee” Vaynerchuk (whose social media career, of course, began with his Wine Library videos) suggests using a single platform for one large story and then segmenting that into pieces of micro-content for other platforms. This way, you can create messages targeting trade, loyalty clubs, known prospects on the most suitable platform.
It’s MiniChatas Season!

The ultimate impulse buy — fifteen 25ml containers of Real RumChata in one box. Put them next to your registers today and watch them fly out the door!
When Jeff O’Neill launched O’Neill Vintners in 2004, it quickly grew to become one of the largest contract producers of California wine and brandy. More recently, the company has been investing in its own wine brands, like Line 39 and Exitus, as well as the recently launched Bertoux Brandy. We sat down with O’Neill to talk about finding opportunity in crowded categories, the rebirth of California brandy and the future of private labels.

**ON SCALE & SUPPLY**

**BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP:** Many people don’t realize that O’Neill Vintners is the 8th largest wine company in the U.S. Have you intentionally stayed under the radar?

**JEFF O’NEILL:** I’ve always liked to stay under the radar. For the last 14 years, we’ve built our B2B business as a major supplier of California brandy and other distilled spirits. We have a bulk wine division as well as a 400,000-case private label business. We don’t divulge the names of our customers, but we produce for around 75 wineries and most major retailers in the U.S.

**BMG:** Many believe that boutique is always better when it comes to wine, but you call attention to the real advantages of being large.

**JO:** We are the third largest facility in the state, but we have eight times more tanks than a winery of our size, so while we are big, we actually consider ourselves a boutique facility. With 700 individual tanks and nine full-time winemakers, 20 back-up lab staff, and vineyard sources all over the state, we are really hand-crafting hundreds of different wines in all volumes. Having scale allows us to tailor-make wines for any customer.

**BMG:** Describe the significant recent investment you made in your facility.

**JO:** We actually have three facilities in California—one in Paso Robles called Robert Hall and a small facility in Sonoma—but our primary winery is in the Central Valley near Fresno. It has 49-million-gallon capacity and we’ve been adding about 2 million gallons of cooperage every year. Our recent upgrades made it, I believe, the most state-of-the-art winery anywhere.

**ON PRIVATE LABELS & BRANDS**

**BMG:** Private labels have become an increasingly disruptive force in the wine business. What do you—as a leader in this segment—see as the value created by private labels?

**JO:** Exclusive labels, are part of the maturation of the U.S. wine business. Our preference, like every supplier, would be to sell our own national brands, but the industry has changed and we don’t want to ignore this increasingly important segment. Today it’s probably less than 10% of the total, but in a decade, I believe exclusive labels will represent 20% of the wine sold in this country.
The reality is that retailers battle one another on price and there is tremendous pressure for them to discount major national brands. The retailer gets squeezed, the wholesaler gets squeezed, the supplier gets squeezed. Exclusive brands allow retailers to offset and protect margins. It allows them to offer unique items in their store that consumers can’t find anywhere else.

BMG: What does this say about the power of brands in today’s marketplace and consumer brand loyalty? What is the strategy behind your own branded wines?

JO: I think most of the data shows that wine consumers are willing to switch and try new wines and brands more than ever before. They want to discover new things; they are more promiscuous and less brand-loyal. That’s not as true with spirits.

That said, we are focusing more on our branded portfolio, which is why we want O’Neill Vintners to resonate with retailers throughout the U.S. We’re focused on the premium $10-$16 tier.

ON HITS & TRENDS

BMG: Line 39 has been hugely successful for you, growing from 120,000 to over half-million cases this year since you acquired the brand in 2015. What’s the magic?

JO: I wish I knew exactly! I think the packaging attracts people initially, but the quality and value brings them back. When we blind taste retailers on Line 39, they usually guess the bottle costs $4 to $5 more than its actual $10 retail price. We’ve learned a lot with Line 39 and we are eager to continue to expand it and replicate this success with other brands.

BMG: You’ve also created Harken Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, which will hit 60,000 cases this year. How does this stand out in the crowded Chardonnay category?

JO: No one is delivering 100% barrel-fermented Chardonnay for $14. We had been selling barrel-fermented Chardonnay in the bulk market for years and we saw an opportunity to offer a huge amount of value that would really resonate with consumers. It’s got all the hallmarks people want from that style—bold, buttery Chardonnay flavor—and sales are up 200% this year.

BMG: With your latest release, Exitus, you’re also betting on the bourbon barrel-aged wine trend.

JO: Yes, we believe there is a real category here. But the industry needs to be careful about overdoing it with these wines, or being too heavy-handed with the bourbon barrel taste influence. Quality to the consumer has to be the first priority and my fear is that there are a lot of crazy innovations in this space before we even let the category grow on its own. Exitus is off to a strong start: It’s a bourbon barrel-aged red blend retailing around $20. We roll out nationally this year (2019).

BMG: Rosé is another crowded category you’ve recently entered, with your brand Day Owl Rosé. How is it doing?

JO: The rosé category is pretty swamped right now but there is no question it’s growing and now domestic rosé is outpacing imports. The idea behind Day Owl was that rosé should be for year-round drinking, not just summer, which is where the category is headed. With our branded portfolio we are trying to move to a lifestyle mindset with our marketing, and thinking of how, where and when people consume.

BMG: It’s fitting that O’Neill is helping drive the California brandy renaissance with the recent launch of Bertoux, given your family’s history in the brandy business.

JO: Yes, we’ve been in the brandy business for many decades and are a big believer in its future. At the turn of the century, brandy was the biggest selling spirit in the U.S.! The California brandy category is dominated by three brands that are producing with a continuous still and we always thought there was opportunity for a premium alembic pot still brandy. We started laying down brandy stocks about 12 years ago and now that brandy is getting more attention, we are one of the few companies with any type of aged inventory. Our brand, Bertoux, was created with Jeff Bell of PDT, Nomad’s Thomas Pastuszak and spirits entrepreneur Jeff Menashe. It’s designed to be an ideal cocktail base and will retail for $45.

California has its own style of brandy and we want to showcase that. It’s more fruit-forward, it’s easier to drink and a lot more blend-able than traditional brandies from France.

BMG: What’s next for O’Neill?

JO: We plan to acquire and build more of our own brands in the $15-$20 arena. And we want to focus on data—across our branded portfolio and for our exclusive wine brand customers—to understand where the consumer is headed and what the next frontier will be. We recently hired Campari veteran Christine Moll as VP Marketing to help us with this effort. It’s complex when we are running a winery this large with so many different styles of wine and price points, but it’s critical that we understand what the consumer wants.
With five-plus years of steady success and a packaging refresh in 2018, Blue Chair Bay Rum—the collection of Caribbean rums owned and launched by singer-songwriter Kenny Chesney—is clearly maturing as a brand. Blue Chair Bay combines true star power, an evocative island-lifestyle image, and simply delicious flavor extensions rounding out a well-defined portfolio.

And that portfolio is still growing. Just as the most recent new expressions established the brand’s firm foothold in Rum Creams, adding Key Lime, Banana and Pineapple to Coconut, the next target is the popular and highly competitive Spiced Rum segment.

Sporting the tagline “The Dawn of a New Bay,” the new Spiced Rum is also wearing a new look, designed to fit into the Spiced Rum arena while still highlighting its unique island-lifestyle identity, thanks to Kenny Chesney’s “No Shoes Nation” flag and signature blue rocking chair front and center.

“Kenny has personally led all the flavor expansion conversations based on combinations he and his friends on the islands like to enjoy,” notes David Farmer, President of Blue Chair’s parent company, Fishbowl Spirits, adding “We’ve also really listened to our customer base as we’ve expanded.” The research that helped develop two creamy hits is now leading the brand into spiced-rum territory.

**Riding the Wave**

The route-to-market focus for Blue Chair Bay Spiced Rum will be off-premise, where a new POS display will showcase the new bottle and shipper. Other forms of promotion include advertising (OOH, print, digital) and social media.

The marketing plan will also incorporate event activations centered on two specialty cocktails, “Pirate Flag” (Blue Chair Bay Spiced Rum and cola) and “Island Girl” (Blue Chair Bay Coconut Rum, orange juice, pineapple juice, lemon-lime soda). Both drink titles are song lyrics from Kenny’s hit song “Pirate Flag.”

Merchants will be pleased to know that the release of the new Spiced Rum expression dovetails with the award-winning musical artist’s latest record and tour, Songs for the Saints, which pays homage to the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. From the start, Kenny Chesney’s rum and musical identity have gone “hand-in-hand,” Farmer asserts. A majority of the brand marketing budget goes toward to consumer engagement, including events, tastings and activations at Kenny Chesney’s shows, and this tour will see BCB as the sole tour sponsor again in 2019. “We have found fans really enjoy the opportunity to take part in something that Kenny has had such a hand in creating,” he says.

While Spiced Rum is sometimes thought of as a cold-weather go-to, the Blue Chair team is confident that the brand’s island lifestyle will translate to the sub-category. Chesney himself agrees. “I drink Spiced Rum year round,” says the eight-time Entertainer of the Year. “When we started Blue Chair Bay, I wanted to give everyone their favorite and a lot of options, so we wanted to make sure we added Spiced Rum. I hope my fans will love it as much as I do.”

**PIRATE Flag**

1½ oz Blue Chair Bay Spiced Rum
Cola
Lime wheel garnish

**Method:**
Fill a highball glass with ice, then pour over the rum then cola. Garnish and enjoy.

To commemorate their fifth anniversary in 2018, Blue Chair Bay redesigned their packaging, showcasing five standout flavors—White, Coconut, Banana, Vanilla and Coconut Spiced—in gloss rather than matte bottles. By contrast, the new Spiced Rum is tailored to fit in with its spiced category peers.
THE DAWN OF A NEW BAY
PREMIUM - NATURAL

KENNY CHESNEY’S CARIBBEAN RUM
WITH SPICE & NATURAL FLAVORS

BLUECHAIRBAYRUM.COM
Smooth Ambler was created as an expression of love for a place. John Little had no hands-on experience crafting whiskey when he launched his distillery in 2009, but he and his partner John Foster share a deep, abiding passion for the rural, mountainous Greenbrier Valley in West Virginia, and the people who live there.

“West Virginia gets a bad rap because it’s economically depressed,” says Little. “But it’s such a wonderful, beautiful place and we wanted to create something to showcase everything we love about West Virginia—the clean air, the clean water, the good people.” Embracing an audacious mission “to create the highest-quality whiskey possible and revitalize the local economy by providing jobs and building tourism,” Smooth Ambler has succeeded by every measure.

Water + Terroir + Style
Little’s pursuit of distillation expertise was critical. But he still credits the raw materials for Smooth Ambler’s widely-acclaimed quality. The Greenbrier River is the “largest undammed river on the East coast,” he says, and its purity and sweetness have an enormous impact. Also, West Virginia’s cool climate is more like Scotland than Kentucky, which gives the whiskies a mellower taste profile than bourbon (in hotter climates, whiskey picks up more toast, coffee and caramel from charred oak barrels—and matures faster).

“From the beginning we were striving for a smooth, lush, easy-drinking style that people don’t have to work to acquire an affinity for,” describes Little. “We filter as little as possible and never chill-filter because we want to maintain that creamy mouthfeel.” Foster adds: “Some craft distilleries are pushing the limits and innovating in wild ways, but that’s not what we do. We want to create whiskies that people can enjoy every day by the grill.”

In addition to buying local grain and creating several dozen new jobs, Smooth Ambler has spurred agritourism for the community; fans trek to the remote distillery, filling hotels and restaurants. (New for 2019: the Smooth Ambler trailer, a 24-foot long tasting room on wheels will travel the country.)

This year, Little and Smooth Ambler's crew will distill almost 3,000 barrels of their own whiskey; but Little has proven just as skilled at discovering and finishing whiskies made elsewhere. Appalachian terroir makes its imprint on these sourced whiskies as well, he maintains: “We are so obsessive with filtering our water to remove impurities, and its great taste really makes our merchant whiskies shine.” Smooth Ambler's much-coveted Contradiction Bourbon is a blend of the distillery's own stocks and sourced whisky.

Two years ago, Smooth Ambler partnered with Pernod Ricard USA (who is now a majority owner); the alliance has extended the brand into 37 states. But Little's dreams of growth remain motivated by local reasons: “I would love to be the largest employer in Greenbrier County. We want this business to be successful for everyone.”

Unbound by precedent, Smooth Ambler gets creative with their bottlings. The Old Scout label was created to feature lots of whiskey that Little selects and brings to West Virginia to further age, blend and bottle. Contradiction is a popular 92-proof combo of the distillery’s stocks and sourced bourbon.

CROWD PLEASER: Smooth Ambler was recently named Best Craft Whiskey Distillery in America by USA Today in a reader-chosen poll.
SMOOTH AMBLER®
“America’s Best Craft Whiskey Distillery”
– USA Today Readers’ Choice

REALLY GOOD WHISKEY COMES FROM SOMEPLACE REALLY GOOD.

Please Amble Responsibly.

ALENTEJO: PORTUGAL PROGRESS

CLIMATE-WISE AND OTHERWISE, THIS REGION OF SOUTHERN PORTUGAL IS HOT

BY LANA BORTOLOT

As Portugal gains traction as a tourism destination, its wines won’t be far behind. And leading that charge are the offerings from Alentejo, a literal hotbed of producers ranging from traditional to modern.

Small as it is—No. 11 in global production, according to Wine Institute rankings—Portugal is mighty when it comes to diversity, boasting the second-largest number of indigenous grape varieties. Increasingly, people are getting to know the likes of Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez (aka Tempranillo), Touriga Franca, Castelão and Manteudo. With Alentejo’s eight subregions producing just about a quarter of the country’s certified (PDO and PGI) wine, the most in Portugal, the region is primed to lead the way for Portuguese wine’s ascent in America.

While wine has been cultivated in Alentejo since Roman times, traction in the U.S. market has proven difficult. For one thing, the dominance of Mateus, brandwise, lingered through the 1980s, inhibiting recognition of other Portuguese table wines and regions. Plus, many Portuguese grape varieties were outside the comfort zone of many Americans.

Blanche Orbe, formerly with Herdade do Esporão and now Managing Director of Wine In Motion, an import company specializing in Portuguese wines, recalls a time when few spoke the language of indigenous grapes. “We started so early, a lot fell on our shoulders. I was getting calls about Portuguese tourism, calls about how to say the grape varieties—we were really the only ones doing it,” she says.

But the tide began to turn around 2010, and exports of non-fortified wines to the U.S. grew by 45% from 2011 through 2015, according to Wines of Portugal. The timing is right for this trajectory to continue. Millennials—who as a group are believed to be much more open to diverse grapes and origins—consume about 43% of the Portuguese wines sold in the U.S. Trendwise, Portugal produces a plethora of blends (red especially), many of which meld native varieties with international ones like Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.
Most important, table wine quality and consistency are much improved across the country, with Alentejo at the forefront. João Soares, owner of Herdade da Malhadinha Nova, believes that Alentejo remained under the radar in part because of its social and political history, and because for a long time it produced rustic wines for local consumption. “We were not known 10 years ago in the United States. Now, just 15 years later we have a totally different mentality and all the conditions to produce top quality,” he said. “We don’t need to send cheap wine to the U.S.”

### What’s Happening Now

About 360 producers and merchants produce mostly red (79%) wines whose big dark-red fruits (plum, blackberry, raspberry) reflect the sunbaked land. Alcohol can hit 14% and higher, but rarely feels heavy. Medium acids and tannins offer immediate drinkability—Orbe says they’re even “great summer reds.” More structured wines, like those from Herdade do Mouchão in Alentejo’s mountainous Portalegre region can age up to 20 years.

Though it’s a challenge producing crisp whites (Vinho Branco) in this climate, the most successful examples feature a blend of some of the nine indigenous white grapes, with Antão Vaz, Roupeiro and Arinto the most dominant. At less than 2%, rosé is still a fledgling category.

Note that quality DOC wines are permitted to indicate subregion names on the labels; all others not following DOC rules are labeled Vinho Regional Alentejano.

### Who to Watch

With wines sold in 50 countries, Esporão may be the most visible face of modern wine production in Alentejo, benefiting from years of solid ratings and distribution, but others are following. Kicking it old-school style are Alicante Bouschet innovator Dona Maria; J. Portugal Ramos Herdade do Esporão, one of the larger, better-known Alentejo producers, makes the Defesa and Monte Velho labels as well as estate wines, single-vineyard bottlings and Reserve wines.

### Homeland Favorite:

One of every two bottles of table wine consumed in Portugal is Alentejo.

Alentejo is unique in Portugal for its “Talha” wine production, a tradition dating to Roman times that uses huge clay vessels—as high as seven feet—for fermentation and storage. Sixth-generation winemaker José de Sousa, whose bodega boasts 114 Talhas in a historic terra-cotta vaulted cellar, says, “For me, clay pots give the wine another dimension with spice and complexity—not tutti-fruit.”

At Rocim, winemaker Pedro Ribeiro stores his Talhas in an energy-efficient building, and uses smaller vessels for experimental wines like Tannat and Alvarinho. “We are making changes all the time. If you asked me 15 years ago if I wanted to bottle an amphora wine, I would have said I’m not sure,” he says. Now: old is new again.
“Mr. Wine”), a pioneer in developing the region’s quality winemaking; and the venerated Mouchão, a historic cork and Alicante Bouschet-focused farm and one of the few wineries outside the Douro that still treads grapes by foot.

Dramatic, ultra-modern architecture—as seen at Herdade do Rocim, Herdade do Freixo and the art-centric Quinta do Quetzal—signals Alentejo’s entry into the New World. Similarly, Malhadinha Nova is the first to offer an integrated wine, hotel and farm-to-table guest experience in the property, with development plans under way for more wine-focused properties. Built in 2003, it’s a working organic farm with cattle, horses and a herd of the region’s famous black pigs (a DOP specialty served in the restaurant).

Moving Wine In Market
Alentejo wines present affordable options on the list and the shelf. At Manhattan’s Tocqueville, Wine Director Bruno Almeida says Alentejo wines go well with a range of the French-inflected cuisine at the restaurant, from seafood to game. “They’re fairly unique while providing parallels to Grenache and Tempranillo,” he explains. “I look for refined reds and clean, acidity-driven whites that cut through cream, fat and dairy, and work with our menu,” he said.

Jesse Salazar, Wine Director for Union Square Wines, says the wines perform well in store, with people asking for versions of what they enjoyed on their Portuguese vacations. “The wines here are still almost as inexpensive as what they found when they were on vacation,” he notes. “You spend 20 euros there and you come back and it’s $15 in the store, what’s not to love?” As for the wines’ stylistic appeal, Salazar adds, “Portugal has analogs in the wine world like Bordeaux, Spain and California. They have some of the same dimensions and flavors without losing their [Portuguese] identity.”

Alentejo (pronounced ah-len-TAY-zhoo) means Beyond the Tejo. The Tejo River cuts across Portugal, flowing roughly east to west, into the Atlantic at Lisbon. North of the river lies the Tejo DOC, (known until 2009 as Ribatejo, for Above the Tejo). South of the river lies the separate Alentejo DOC.

Alentejo is about the same size as Massachusetts and has about the same vineyard acreage as Washington State.

The region also accounts for over one-third of the world’s cork forests.

Malhadinha Nova offers an integrated wine, hotel and farm-to-table guest experience.

Quinta do Mouchão specializes in Alicante Bouschet-based wines—and is one of a handful of wineries still treading grapes by foot.

Portugal has become increasingly popular as a tourist destination. Thanks to a lack of light pollution, the Alentejo boasts Europe’s first Starlight Tourist Destination, the Dark Sky Alqueva Reserve. The wineries of the region offer a mix of agritourism, art and architecture on top of diverse vineyards.
DISTRIBUTED BY INTERBALT: (855)SANTERO OR (301)793.1818

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[Image of various bottles]
Brewers Association of Maryland

FeBREWary is once again Maryland Craft Beer Lovers Month. The industry will be celebrating with unique releases, craft beer takeovers and tastings, and a marquee event: Love Thy Beer. Maryland’s beer industry annual FeBREWary event takes place at the Silver Spring Civic Center on Friday, February 15, 2019 ... Love Thy Beer.

Maryland Distillers Guild

Many Maryland distilleries are continuing the momentum of the inaugural Maryland Spirits Month (November, 2018) with more new releases. Seasonal and holiday spirits from Maryland distillers are in tasting rooms, liquor stores, and bars throughout the state. Fans of homegrown cocktails and spirits are encouraged to attend the Spirits of Maryland: Southern Maryland event at the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum on Saturday, February 23, 2019.

Maryland Wineries Association

With the 2018 harvest behind them, Maryland's wineries look forward to 2019. Kicking off the new year, the Maryland Wineries Association is hosting Winter Wine at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore on Friday, January 25, 2019. This annual event celebrates Maryland's award-winning wines in an astounding setting. March marks Maryland Wine Month celebrating all things Maryland wine. From owners, winemakers, and tasting room staff, Maryland Wine Month is a great time to get to know the folks behind the industry and its fantastic wines.

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t’s become a cliché that once they receive their pin, Master Sommeliers leave the restaurant floor for more comfortable climes. The fact is, whatever their certification, many sommeliers reach a point where better hours or new challenges draw them away. What skill set do they bring with them, and where else can they put those skills to use?

A surprising variety of places, as these folks demonstrate:

WHY: “I was looking to see how the other side of the wine business worked.” With a wife with her own successful career and a daughter in high school, the goal was to find new challenge without moving.

WHAT WORKED: Kast already knew and liked the Broadbent portfolio, both for its range of South African wines and Lebanon’s Chateau Musar, “perhaps my favorite winery in the world.” Kast says selling “non-mainstream” wines in the Southeast has not been the easiest thing, but he’s been enjoying the work.

WHAT TOOK SOME WORK: “Probably the thing I miss the most about not working in restaurants is that daily opportunity to make people happy and the interactions with guests.”

WHY: In May 2015 Wilson left Eleven Madison Park and began work on Verve, which opened in 2016. They now have two brick-and-mortar locations, one in New York and one in San Francisco, along with a healthy online wine club. For Wilson, it was the lure of “a great business opportunity” that pulled him away.

WHAT WORKED: An improved schedule, for one thing. “While the total hours worked in a week certainly have not dropped—in fact I work more now than I did then. Being in control and having flexibility is huge in feeling more balanced. This has helped my personal life, and my own sanity, tremendously.”

WHAT TOOK SOME WORK: “Be sure that you’re ready to change your lifestyle. It’s definitely not as ‘sexy’ as restaurants but can be just as much, if not more, fun. Just be sure that you’ve gotten your fill on the restaurant side first.”
After ten years as a buyer, Nguyen had “planted seeds” with various industry contacts in the hopes a new opportunity would come to light. “When RNDC approached me with this ‘vanguard’ position it was kind of a no-brainer. Our focus is all about growing brands. A lot of sommeliers overlook the large companies because they think it’s all about moving boxes and not about the wine itself. I can sell whatever wine I want. I’m not goaled out on brands or on suppliers, I’m goaled out on market share.”

WHAT WORKED: “I approach the job just like I did when I was in hospitality. I see what these buyers are trying to do, and I ask myself, ‘How would I round out this cluster? What price points, what varietals, what regions would work here?’”

WHAT TOOK SOME WORK: “The best advice I got, from one of my former sales reps, was: ‘You’ve gotten so good at your job that you’ve forgotten how to fail, and in distribution, you have to fail. You fail every day.’ Every time you get a rejection, you have to bounce back and take it in stride.”

WHY: “Both Stevie [Stacionis, Baldivino’s wife] and I had this idea of opening a wine place that was very accessible to everybody. Something with the same sense of hospitality but where I could wear a hoodie instead of a suit and we could listen to, like, Dr. Dre.”

WHAT WORKED: “It’s really cool having all these people who literally treat our shop like an extension of their homes and feel comfortable coming in and being themselves.”

WHAT TOOK SOME WORK: “Always expect the worst when you’re opening a new business. Expect that you’re not going to be as busy as you think. That way when you get in there and you do it hopefully you can exceed those expectations and you’ll be fine.” That goes for sales, but also for calculating construction, the time and work permitting requires, and so forth.

WHY: “I have a little guy, he’s now six but at the time he was two years old. The writing was on the wall. I could have moved out to Seattle and gotten a restaurant management job right away, but it didn’t make sense to move to a new city but then work 60 or 80 hours a week and weekends and holidays and leave them to fend for themselves.”

WHAT WORKED: “I always had this impression that restaurant people were kind of misfits that ended up there because other professions didn’t work out, or had a side gig that became full-time. Now I’m a huge believer in restaurant people; I feel like there’s so many skills that they’re great at. You guys have work ethic, you have people skills, organizational skills, you have thinking on your feet, you have accounting skills. It’s endless.”

WHAT TOOK SOME WORK: Preparing himself to land a prime job in marketing. It starts with presenting yourself: “Look at everything that you’re doing on a day-to-day basis and start labeling it. ‘We have weekly manager meetings.’ What is that? That is team communication. It’s taking what you do and explaining it to somebody in a different world that you’re trying to break into.”
market shots

BACARDI 2020 AT ELITE WINE AND SPIRITS

Whitley Johnson hosts a Bacardi 2020 tasting at Elite Wine and Spirits.

GREY GOOSE AT BELL WINE & LIQUOR

Here’s Alexis Rios, Patrón; Dee Godfay, Dennie’s Liquors, and Aaron Turner, with SGWS.

PATRÓN BARREL PROGRAM AT DENNIE’S LIQUOR MARKET

BACARDI AT BIG CHEF

D’USSÉ AT OZIO

Shani Nelson with samples of D’USSÉ at Ozio.
Buying?  

Bill Atkins specializes in the sale of liquor stores and liquor licenses. This is my full-time occupation. I have over 46 years' experience in the liquor industry. I understand that the morale of your employees is affected if they find out the business is for sale, however they need not know that the business is on the market. All potential buyers will be carefully screened through appointments to insure they are qualified before they are given any pertinent information on your business. I’ll work with the attorneys, accountants, lenders and government agencies to insure that licenses can be transferred, and monetary requirements are met, resulting in a smooth transaction with no surprises at closing.

Advertising will not disclose the name or specific location of your business in order to shield your daily operation from disruption by unqualified lookers. I understand the importance of maintaining your normal revenue flow and customer base during the period your business is on the market.

To discuss the sale or purchase of a liquor store or liquor license, call Bill Atkins at PH. 301-262-0153 or CELL 301-526-3481.

*MOST PROLIFIC BUSINESS BROKER (Prince George's Liquor Board 07/28/09)

Cordially yours,

THE ORIGINAL

Bill Atkins, Broker

BELOW IS A PARTIAL LIST OF STORES SOLD BY ATKINS REAL ESTATE

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*STORES SOLD TWICE

DEAL WITH SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO KNOWS YOUR BUSINESS

Selling Liquor Stores for 46 Years
Rougeon
Dark and Erratic
BY KEVIN ATTICKS

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 or 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!"

Taste Maryland Wine

Come to The Maryland Wine Festival in September. We have passes available for members of the trade to come to The Maryland Wine Festival in September at the Carroll County Farm Museum in Westminster. To register for passes, contact a Maryland winery representative. Limit two passes per account.

Come early on Saturday, September 15 or Sunday, September 16 to try Maryland wines and learn more about our industry before the crowds arrive. Learn more about the event on www.marylandwine.com/events-festivals.

MARYLAND WINERIES

KEVIN ATTICKS is the executive director of the Maryland Wineries Association, the trade group representing Maryland’s wineries. He is a regular contributor to the Daily Record and was the wine editor of The Grapevine magazine. Kevin may be reached at 410 252-WINE or kevin@marylandwine.com.