

Beverage Journal



JANUARY 2022

2022 THE YEAR AHEAD

TRENDS TO WATCH
IN THE WINE, SPIRITS,
AND BEER INDUSTRIES



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COVER CREDIT:
Photograph courtesy of Helen Rushbrook / Stocksy



2022...

As we say adieu to 2021 and ring-in 2022, it's a good opportunity to reflect on the past and (do our best to) plan for the future. Unfortunately, in this era of covid, our elected -- and unelected -- leaders have added an extra stratum to the already volatile beverage alcohol marketplace.

The Maryland General Assembly will convene on January 12. There is little doubt that legislation allowing chain stores and supermarkets to obtain retail liquor licenses as well as some beverage alcohol tax increases are going to be proposed during the 2022 legislative session. *Beverage Journal* staff writer Teddy Durgin has interviewed industry insiders on what to expect and how to combat this looming threat. Check out his piece on page 26.

**YOUR LIVELIHOOD
DEPENDS ON IT**

If you believe the happenings and decisions made at your local liquor board and in the Maryland State House do not influence your business, I'm afraid you may not be long for the beverage alcohol industry. The era of covid has spotlighted the affect the regulatory and legislative process can have on the bottom line of a small business. Here's a CliffsNotes-style 'How-To' on political involvement and influence:

You will 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.org) is a necessary 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 such proposed legislation.

Next, you will need to build a relationship with your local and state representatives. Start attending your local liquor board meetings ... you can find a comprehensive list of local liquor boards for the entire state of Maryland at <https://md.alcohollaws.org/local-liquor-boards>.

You will need to know who your state elected officials are. Go to <http://mdelect.net> and type in your, or your business' address. Make note of your State Senator and State Delegate(s). You will want to build a relationship with your state representatives. Introduce yourself and your business as being in their district. Make sure they are on any communications (electronic or otherwise) you distribute to your customers/community. Make sure you are on their lists as well. Sending a hand-written letter of introduction with a request for a meeting is a great way to begin building a relationship with your representatives.

When the opportunity arises to interact with your representatives, 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 when it comes to jobs, taxes and economic impact. Through the 'resources' area of the ABL website, www.ablusa.org, ABL members can create reports and download data that details the number of jobs and amount of taxes related 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 can communicate the overwhelmingly positive impact you have in your community to your representatives in Annapolis. ■

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WHISKEY: WHAT'S NEW



SEASONAL SPIN

A cozy snow-day wool sweater is what sparked Dr. Bill Lumsden, **Glenmorangie's** director of whisky creation, to make A Tale of Winter. The 92-proof 13-year-old single malt, finished in Marsala wine casks from Sicily, mixes warming notes of cinnamon, ginger, and clove with honey, red pepper, and Brazil nut toffee. SRP: \$99.99 per 750ml bottle

THE COGNAC TOUCH

Rye-forward whiskey brand Redemption has added the 99-proof **Redemption Cognac Cask Finish** to its specialty series, which also includes rum cask-finished and wheated bourbon varieties. To create this limited-edition bottling, master blender Dave Carpenter partnered with Ferrand Cognac to further mature new American white oak barrel-aged Redemption High Rye Bourbon in Cognac casks for 12 months. SRP: \$69.99 per 750ml bottle



FEELING BLUE

For the first release of its Tintype series supporting the Music Maker's Relief Foundation (photography by Timothy Duffy, the nonprofit's founder, adorns the bottle), Mississippi's **Cathead Distillery** honors the late blues legend "Captain Luke" Mayer. The 119.2-proof Tintype Old Soul Bourbon, aged for seven years and bottled at cask strength, is distilled in Indiana with a high-rye mash bill of 75 percent corn, 21 percent rye, and four percent malted barley, and is aged onsite at the Jackson distillery. SRP: \$99.99 per 750ml bottle



TASTE OF THE AMERICAN WEST

Distinguished by notes of vanilla-glazed banana bread and charred lemon peel, the 88-proof **High West High Country Single Malt**, blended in Utah's Wasatch Mountains, is the first in the High Country collection of whiskies to be finished in part in Oloroso sherry barrels. To elicit a distinctly rich personality, it is fermented and distilled "on the grain" rather than filtered out. SRP: \$79.99 per 750ml bottle

IN SYNC

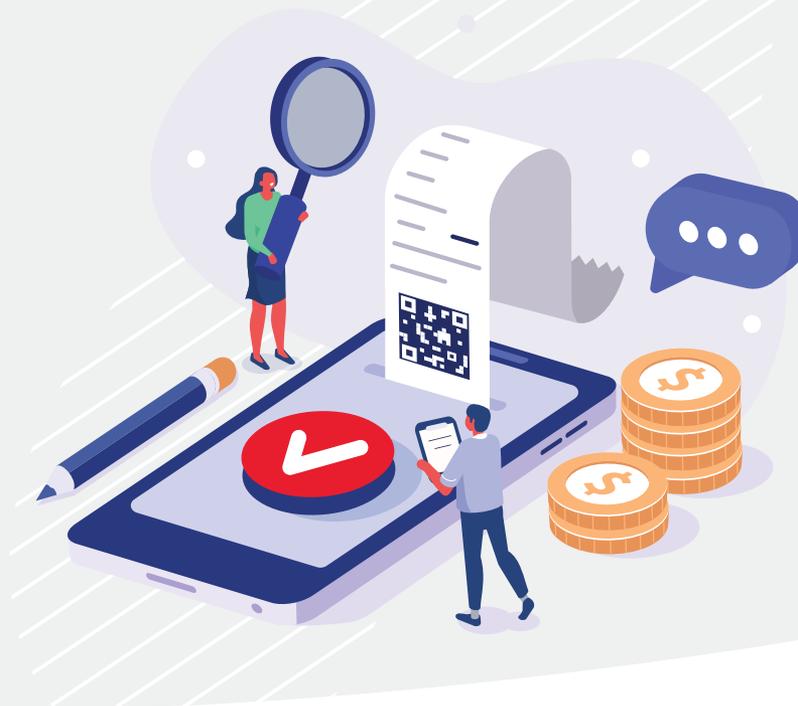
Bowmore Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky and luxury car manufacturer Aston Martin have joined forces on the Bowmore Masters' Selection, a 103.6-proof whisky that embraces the balanced "Golden Ratio" principle found in nature. Ron Welsh, Bowmore's master blender, took a mathematical approach, establishing the "divine proportion" of 61.8 percent from a base of 21-year-old Bowmore aged in first fill Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks. The other parts are precise ratios of more than 35-year-old whiskies. SRP: \$400 per 750ml bottle



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IRELAND-MEETS-AMERICA

Clonakilty Distillery, in County Cork, Ireland, has unveiled a robust limited-edition expression of its Irish whiskey. Finished in 30-gallon Roundstone Rye quarter casks from Virginia's Catoctin Creek Distilling Company, the 124-proof whiskey combines fresh fruit notes with honey and vanilla imparted by the American oak. SRP: \$69.99 per 750ml bottle



RARE FORM

One of **Johnnie Walker** master blender Jim Beveridge's final releases prior to retiring is the 83.6-proof Johnnie Walker Masters of Flavour. This extremely limited-run Scotch (there are only 288 bottles) is the last in the Johnnie Walker Master series, following the John Walker Masters' Edition and Johnnie Walker Master's Ruby Reserve. Made in collaboration with malt master Donna Anderson, cask master James Carson, and distillation master Douglas Murray, it blends whiskies that are aged for at least 48 years. SRP: \$25,000 per 750ml bottle



UNCONVENTIONAL SIDE

In preparation for **Nikka Whisky's** 90th Anniversary in 2024, the Japanese brand has released its first two limited-edition installments in the "Nikka Discovery" series. Along with the Single Malt Yoichi Non-Peated is the 96-proof Single Malt Miyagikyo Peated made from batches of bold peated malts, a significant departure from the light and fruity nature that is typically characteristic of Miyagikyo. SRP: \$274.99 per 750ml bottle

SECOND ROUND

The next small batch of Mountain Angel 10-year from **Stranahan's Colorado Whiskey** has arrived. Crafted from 100 percent malted barley and Rocky Mountain water, the 94.6-proof single malt, one of Stranahan's rarest releases, is matured for 10 years in new charred American white oak casks. Marked by flavors of dark chocolate and molasses, its deep profile is the result of aging in Denver's high-altitude and dry climate. SRP: \$129.99 per 750ml bottle



THIRD EDITION

Lisa Wicker, **Widow Jane's** president and head distiller, has selected 15- to 17-year-old bourbons from Tennessee and Indiana in the brand's Brooklyn rickhouse for The Vaults 2021, the third limited-run bottling in Widow Jane's old, rare whiskey collection. This complex 99-proof blend, exhibiting toffee, pecan, and sweet tobacco, is finished in Adirondack oak casks air-seasoned outside for 42 months and proofed with limestone mineral water from the Rosendale Mines of New York. SRP: \$225 per 750ml bottle





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For customers craving the taste of tequila sans the booze, non-alcoholic spirits brand **Lyre's** has just the solution: Agave Blanco and Agave Reserva made with natural essences, extracts, and distillates that mimic tequila's flavor profile. The citrus-forward Agave Blanco is ideal in a Paloma, while the complex, peppery Agave Reserva is a hit in the Tommy's Margarita. SRP: \$35.99 per 700ml bottle

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Hospitality veterans Jeremy Bohlen and Tara Merdjanoff created **QNSY Sparkling Cocktails** during the pandemic. An ode to Queens, the couple's home borough, the 5 percent ABV ready-to-drink beverages are the first of its kind in the hard seltzer category, available via Sarene

Craft Beer Distributors. Featuring a sugar-brew base and real fruit juices, the initial lineup includes Mojito, Cosmo, and Lovely Rita, a spin on the Margarita. SRP: \$14.99 per four-pack of 12 fl. oz. cans



TO JAPAN

Japan is the inspiration behind the **Boulard XO Mizunara Cask Finish**, the newest addition to the experimental Boulard Calvados 12 Barrel Series, which follows the Boulard V.S.O.P. rye and bourbon cask finish variations. The XO stars a blend of Calvados Pays d'Auge aged in French oak barrels in Boulard's Normandy cellar. Then, it is mellowed for several weeks in new casks fashioned out of Japan's native Mizunara oak that are used to age the country's finest whiskies. SRP: \$100 per 750ml bottle



GIANT LEAP

Hard kombuchas with organic green tea and honey are what put **Jiant** on the map, and now there is Jiant Hard Tea. These five percent ABV sparkling concoctions highlight freshly brewed organic tea fermented 100 percent dry and finished with a splash of real fruit juice. The Keemun Black Tea with Raspberry and Mint, Pu'er Tea with Blood Orange and Grapefruit, and Oolong Tea with Mango and Lime are brewed with organic lemon juice, cane sugar, and Champagne yeast. SRP: \$14.99 per variety eight-pack



OLD-FASHIONED LOVE

Known for its range of bitters, **Dashfire**, the family-owned micro-distillery in Minnetonka, Minnesota, has rolled out an Old Fashioned variety pack. The three canned cocktails, available in timeless orange- and cherry-tinged Bourbon, rum-based Cane & Allspice, and warm Rye & Ginger varieties, showcase the classic libation's versatility. SRP: \$14.99 per three-pack of 100ml cans

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6 WINE INDUSTRY TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2022

DURING A TIME OF CHANGE, THE WINE INDUSTRY IS ONCE AGAIN PROVING ITS RESILIENCE. HERE ARE THE KEY TRENDS SHAPING THE WINE WORLD IN THE YEAR TO COME.

BY ZACHARY SUSSMAN

The wine industry is emerging from yet another chaotic year of conducting business in the middle of a global pandemic. Between catastrophic weather events (including California wildfires, devastating April frosts in France and Italy, and flooding in western Germany) and global supply chain disruptions, plus the growing threat of price inflation, instability has often felt like the only constant.

Despite it all, however, the outlook for 2022 is far from bleak. With restaurants steadily on the rebound and off-premise sales continuing their post-pandemic boom, the industry is once again proving its endless capacity for creativity, adaptability, and resilience. “There are many reasons for optimism,” says Ian Downey, the executive vice president of Winebow Imports. “The market will be more responsive to the bold, the new, and the innovative in the year to come.”

In that indomitable spirit, explore six key trends that will continue to shape the wine world’s trajectory in 2022—whatever else the year to come may bring.

01 | SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES AND PRICE INFLATION WREAK HAVOC—WITH AN UNEXPECTED UPSIDE

Poll a cross-section of wine professionals across all sectors of the industry, and the consensus is unanimous: Supply chain issues will continue to disrupt all aspects of the trade in 2022, causing inevitable price inflation and shortages for familiar brands.

While we’ve already seen these issues impact the Champagne market, fueling fears of inevitable gaps through the holidays and beyond, experts expect the ef-



fects to be much more widespread. “Our industry is no different than others that have been impacted by supply chain difficulties, and we are starting to see inflationary prices from our winery partners that will go into effect in 2022,” explains Rocco Lombardo, the president of Wilson Daniels. “We’re definitely headed into an interesting time with regards to managing costs and margin structure.”

Faced with rising prices, shipping delays, and limited inventory, buyers will increasingly be forced to look beyond the usual tried-and-true options. While that’s bound to create no shortage of headaches, Christopher Struck, the beverage director for ilili’s New York and Washington, D.C. locations, predicts that the situation will incentivize restaurants to turn to boutique wholesalers that carry alternatives to the usual large brand names.

“In my experience, smaller distributors will be more inclined to hustle and get you what you need,” explains Struck. “They also tend to work with independent, conscientious growers that better align with my ethos as a buyer.”

ABOVE FROM LEFT: Eric Moorer, Domestique Wine // Champagne selection at Denver Wine Merchant // Dallas-based sommelier Tiffany Tobey // The Per Se edition of Wine Access’ Michelin Wine Subscription

Vanessa Conlan, MW, the chief wine officer at Wine Access, agrees. In her view, 2022 will set the stage for up-and-coming regions and producers to gain newfound visibility and market share. “These shortages actually offer a chance to get lesser-known wines in front of consumers who would have otherwise reached for familiar things like Burgundy or Napa Cabernet.” As these European benchmark items become more difficult to secure, “we’re going to see other regions making a play to fill the gap,” says Conlan. That’s welcome news for regions eager to break through.

02 | STYLISTIC CATEGORIES CONTINUE TO BLUR

The world of wine has long conformed to a fixed set of stylistic categories, grouped primarily according to color. But as a younger generation of boundary-pushing winemakers across the globe explore an array of alternative winemaking approaches and techniques, those once-stable classifications are beginning to blur.

“We’re seeing more and more people making these experimental wines that don’t have a firm definition,” explains Chris Leon, the owner of Leon &

“These shortages actually offer a chance to get lesser-known wines in front of consumers who would have otherwise reached for familiar things like Burgundy or Napa Cabernet.”

- Vanessa Conlan, MW, Wine Access

Son retail shop in Brooklyn, New York and Grand Rapids, Michigan. He draws a parallel between the previous fashion for genre-defying macerated whites, or orange wines, and a recent interest in co-ferments, produced by fermenting multiple grape varieties (both red and white alike) together in one vessel.

Bright, fresh, and eminently crushable, the resulting wines successfully blur the line between pale red and dark rosé, but couldn’t be more attuned to the current “chillable red” zeitgeist. According to Leon, we can expect to see more of this stylistic ambiguity in the future. “The rise



“There are many reasons for optimism. The market will be more responsive to the bold, the new, and the innovative in the year to come.”

– Ian Downey, Winebow Imports

of this style of wine feels very apropos at a time when people are increasingly willing to sidestep strict classifications or labels and simply take things for what they are,” he says.

03 | NATURAL WINE EXPANDS INTO NEW MARKETS

There once was a time when the natural wine counterculture operated within a few clusters of activity confined to large coastal cities like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. With a growing number of small-scale, natural-focused importers, however, the movement is quickly making inroads into parts of the country that had long been dominated by large national distributors and corporate-owned brands.

Case in point: the Raleigh-based distributor Kellogg Selections, run by former New York sommelier Jeff Kellogg. Emblematic of this larger shift, he moved

south in 2017 with the goal of introducing independent and, in many cases, low-intervention producers (such as Beaujolais’ Mee Godard or California’s Birichino Winery) to consumers across the Carolinas.

“I knew there was a real thirst among consumers here to drink things other than Napa as a category, but there weren’t enough people filling that void,” explains Kellogg. “My favorite part of selling these kinds of wines in the Carolinas is that I’m able to introduce natural wines to people for the first time. I get to provide that experience all the time to buyers who were previously working in places that just made sure they were checking off the usual boxes of California Chardonnay or Argentinian Malbec.”

With interest in the category steadily expanding across the United States—“We don’t see interest in natural wine slowing down at all in 2022,” observes Sally Stewart of Colorado’s Denver Wine Merchant—the movement has officially passed from fringe to an essential pillar of wine’s new mainstream. As that evolution continues to unfold, the naturalist gospel is poised to convert a whole new demographic of consumers, many of whom never considered themselves wine drinkers. “If we’re talking about the market in our region, so many people are coming to wine from other beverage categories, especially craft beer,” says Kellogg. “In my mind, natural wine has so much more room to grow.”

04 | SPARKLING WINE FINALLY BECOMES AN EVERYDAY STAPLE

According to off-premise sales data from Nielsen, the sparkling wine category grew by more than 13 percent among American drinkers over the past two years—an upward momentum that shows no sign of abating anytime soon, even with the threat of Champagne shortages and price hikes.



ABOVE: Though Champagne has led sparkling wine growth, Wilson Daniels has also seen growth for sparklings like the Bisol Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore.

Unsurprisingly, Champagne sales have dominated the premium sector of the sparkling market, “with sales between January and August jumping 11.9 percent compared to the same period in 2019,” according to Reuters. But value-driven options have fueled much of the category’s surge in popularity. “We’re seeing the same dynamism with our Prosecco Superiore, our Crémant d’Alsace, and our premium domestic sparkling wine,” reports Lombardo.

As drinkers gravitate towards these more affordable forms of fizz, they’re finally knocking the category off its “holidays and special occasions” pedestal and reclaiming bubbles as part of the everyday drinking repertoire. Though still extremely niche in terms of national sales, one alternative sparkling wine style has played an outsize symbolic role in that transformation: cloudy, crown-capped pétillant-natural.

“There’s been a steady interest in pet-net throughout the year, not just on holidays,” says Eric Moorer, the sales director at Washington, D.C.’s natural-focused Domestique Wine. If his experience on the sales floor had taught him anything, it’s that the category’s appeal has yet to peak, helping to make the wider bubbly landscape more democratic. “As somebody who has always championed sparkling wine as an everyday wine, pét nat has made that conversation much easier for me,” he says.



“The real winners in the ecommerce space over the coming five to ten years will be the ones like us, who focus heavily on this aspect of personalization.”

– Joshua Lincoln, Vivino

“People no longer believe that sparkling wine is for Fridays and Saturday nights; they're popping open bottles of pét-nat on Mondays and Tuesdays.”

05 | ECOMMERCE GETS CREATIVE TO RETAIN RECENTLY ACQUIRED COVID CLIENTELE

Even as the world has largely reopened, online wine sales have remained strong. But the future of the ecommerce sector now faces an important challenge: namely, how to find creative ways to drive digital engagement and retain their recently acquired customer base.

The key to maintaining that growth? Convincing customers that shopping for wine online can be every bit as gratifying as seeking recommendations from a trusted neighborhood wine merchant.



ABOVE: Platforms like Vivino are relying on their data to continuously appeal to consumers.

“We gained a lot of new customers during the pandemic, so a lot of what we did over the past year was try to set ourselves up to deliver a better experience than customers were able to get in a traditional store or retail environment,” says AJ Resnick, the chief experience officer at Wine Access.

Critically, as Joshua Lincoln, the senior commercial director—Europe, for Vivino, points out, digital platforms enjoy a distinct advantage: a treasure trove of data with which to customize the consumer's experience. To him, capitalizing on that ability will be the wave of the future for the ecommerce space. “We've got more data than any store manager could ever keep in their head, so we can actually be way more personalized than any single individual,” he explains. “The real winners in the e-commerce space over the coming five to 10 years will be the ones like us, who focus heavily on this aspect of personalization.”

06 | ESCHEWING FORMULAIC RESTAURANT WINE LISTS FOR EXPERIMENTAL BY-THE-GLASS PROGRAMS

With prices rapidly rising, the pre-pandemic trend of smaller, more focused wine lists will surely extend into 2022. At the same time, though, we can also

expect beverage programs to become exponentially more experimental, moving beyond the established templates and reference points that were once considered the industry's standard. In particular, as sommeliers feel increasingly empowered to depart from expectations, they're radically reconsidering conventional wisdom about what it means to run a successful by-the-glass program.

To Dallas-based sommelier Tiffany Tobey, the glass pours she offers function as a critical form of research and development, allowing customers to explore more obscure expressions in a non-threatening and cost-effective format. “My by-the-glass program is geared towards a completely different compilation of regions and off-the-beaten-path stuff,” she explains. “I'm offering stuff by the glass that people have never heard of before, but they're still willing to try it because the rest of my list still contains plenty of the familiar favorites that make them feel comfortable.”

At the two restaurants he oversees, Struck has adopted a similar approach. “I think there's too many self-fulfilling prophecies with beverage directors who insist that you set yourself up for failure if you don't offer certain specific reference points by the glass,” he says. “That may have been true in the past, but not so anymore. I mean, we've already entered a whole new era of dining, haven't we?” ■



5 SPIRITS & COCKTAIL TRENDS THAT WILL DEFINE 2022

COCKTAILS AND SPIRITS EXPERT NOAH ROTHBAUM FORECASTS SOME OF THE BIGGEST TRENDS THE SPIRITS INDUSTRY WILL SEE OVER THE NEXT YEAR

BY NOAH ROTHBAUM

I've traveled around the world in search of delicious cocktails and the finest spirits—from New York to Tokyo, and even to the Arctic Circle. But during the last two years, I've barely left my neighborhood. The experience of living through the pandemic has drastically changed how I drink, what I drink, and where I drink. (Most of my tipling now takes place in my living room.) When will things return to normal? When will I go back to my old routine? I have no idea. But as the editor of the Daily Beast's Half Full section, it's my job to predict drink trends and consumer behavior.

Taking a step back from the realities of our everyday life to examine the period, like I would with any other influential and important era, yields interesting insights into what the next 12 months might bring. While the roots of many of these trends go back to the beginning of the pandemic, 2022 won't just be a continuation of the last few years—it will offer its own set of challenges and potential rewards.

Read on for five spirits and cocktail trends that will help define the next year.

01 | SUPPLY CHAIN PROBLEMS WILL CONTINUE

Supply chain issues have become the norm for spirits producers over the past two years, and they are sure to get worse before they get better. Thanks to manufacturing delays, shipping issues, staffing problems, and even a scarcity of shipping containers, we will continue to see significant shortages of both rare and well-known spirits brands in the United States.

Companies will also have trouble obtaining essential supplies, including bottles, labels, and possibly grain. Some of the delays will fortunately be relatively short-lived as solutions surface, but other delays have the potential to drag on for months.

Brands may be forced to take a serious look at their portfolios and decide which bottlings to focus their resources on. Thanks to shortages, some producers this year will need to rethink their packaging or switch their suppliers. Wyoming Whiskey, for instance, announced that it needs to temporarily start using a stock bottle instead of their custom one.

As old standbys become unavailable, opportunities open for people to discover new brands or spirits categories. This will surely evolve into a customer service issue for liquor stores, which will need

to patiently explain why certain spirits are out of stock and help customers find substitutes.

02 | CELEBRITY SPIRITS CEMENT—AND EXPAND—THEIR PRESENCE

Is there a celebrity in Hollywood that doesn't have a liquor brand? It's been hard to keep up with the onslaught of wannabe George Clooneys who are looking for a Casamigos-like payday. The good news is that some of these brands, like Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's Teremana Tequila, will transcend their novelty factor and become best sellers.

The bad news is that the success of the Rock and others will only inspire other entrepreneurial-minded stars to enter the industry. I imagine we will continue to see ever more celebrity brands launching until the market reaches oversaturation—which will likely happen in the next two years.

While vodka, tequila, and mezcal have traditionally attracted most of the big names, this year we'll see lots of stars entering different spirits categories, as well as the ready-to-drink market. The next 12 months will be a real test of the effectiveness of using star power to sell alcohol.

03 | THE RISE OF THE HOME MIXOLOGIST

The hottest bar of the last two years has been the home bar. With many restaurants and establishments closed for long stretches or functioning on severely reduced schedules, people took matters of drink into their own hands. The result? A new generation of accomplished amateur bartenders who are quite good at mixing up a range of drinks from both obscure and common ingredients.

Just as Prohibition changed the way Americans drank at home, including the popularization of living room happy hours, we'll see some long-term effects from this pandemic. For one, drinks that were once almost exclusively served in craft cocktail bars (think the Negroni, the Old Fashioned, the Boulevardier, the Moscow Mule) will become best-sellers in all kinds of establishments, including casual-dining restaurants.

Advanced home bartenders will also continue to explore more spirits categories. As a result, we'll see brands and categories popular with bartenders (think rye whiskey and mezcal) reach new heights in the next year.

04 | CONSUMERS WILL CLAIM EXTREME BRAND LOYALTY

On the flip side, plenty of people solidified their loyalty to their favorite whiskey, rum, vodka, or gin by buying it over and over again. These shoppers will continue to stock up and fill their bar carts with their favorite brands. They are far less interested in exploring new brands or spirits categories, which is bad news for upstart or craft brands that don't have the same level of name recognition or credibility with consumers.

While liquor shoppers may have always fallen into these two general categories, I think the pandemic has only deepened the

divide. Many drinkers are first introduced to new cocktails, brands, and trends at bars and restaurants. Without that experience, many won't deviate from their standard routines and will remain extremely loyal to their favorites.

05 | SINGLE MALTS ARE TAKING OVER

Single malt whiskey is beyond old school, given that it's been produced for hundreds of years in Ireland and Scotland. But over the last 20 years, it has become incredibly chic and modern, as distillers from around the world give the spirit new twists. These bottlings were once pulled out to impress or entertain friends looking for something obscure to try. But from Italy to India, a large selection of high-quality, global single malts now exists, and they can sell for even more than equivalent Scottish or Irish whiskies. (In the U.S., Suntory just released a few bottles of a very rare Yamazaki 55-Year-Old Single Malt Whisky with a suggested retail price of \$60,000.)

While Scotland and Ireland will continue to dominate this category, it will continue to grow and, as a result, become less synonymous with those two countries. ■

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TEREMANA / COURTESY OF HOUSE OF SUNTORY



A FABULOUS NEW ERA FOR FAT BASTARD

THIS FRENCH FAVORITE IS GETTING A PACKAGING MAKEOVER THAT FULLY EMBRACES ITS UNAPOLOGETICALLY BOLD, VIBRANT PERSONALITY



Like a cultural ambassador to the U.S. wine market, FAT bastard wears its French identity on its sleeve—and now it’s debuting a vibrant, fresh, fabulously bold look. Featuring FAT bastard’s recognizable hippo, the brand’s new packaging embraces the vitality and *joie de vivre* consumers have come to love and expect from this French favorite.

One of France’s best-selling and most recognizable brands, over 3.5 million cases have been sold in the U.S. since FAT bastard entered the scene more than 20 years ago. Dubbed the “wine for the anti-snob” by *TIME Magazine*, FAT bastard is the original in this category—a brand unmatched for its crowd-pleasing style and dedication to quality.

Born from sun-drenched vineyards in Languedoc-Roussillon, FAT bastard’s new



FAT bastard is the original in this category—a brand unmatched for its playful style, approachable price, and dedication to quality.

mood fully embodies the vibe of southern France. Each varietal wine label—led by its Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Sauvignon SKUs, as well as its Merlot and Syrah—features a realistic hippo in a different, fun-loving position. The new labels highlight the brand’s “fabulously full-bodied” personality—a nod to the delicious, approachable, full-bodied wines that FAT bastard has become known for.

FAT bastard wines are produced at iconic Maison Gabriel Meffre, the first winery in the Rhône Valley to earn the “Exemplary” designation in sustainable development and corporate responsibility by AFAQ 26000, a respected third-party evaluation.

Winemaker Véronique Torcolacci has nearly three decades of winemaking experience at Gabriel Meffre and a degree in

le FATbastard

oenology from University of Toulouse. She has earned an influential role as one of the lasting women winemakers of the region, with a reputation for high-caliber expectations of grower partners, securing only the best fruit for FAT bastard wines.

A conversation-starter from their launch in 1998, FAT bastard wines are recognizable to consumers thanks, in part, to the brand’s charming name. It’s a nod to the reaction from the brand’s French co-founder, Thierry Boudinaud, who called the first sip of a barrel sample a “phet bast-ard” because of its intense color and rich palate. People continue to return to the brand in search of this profile, embracing its personality with the expectation of satisfying, generous wines that express food-friendly versatility.

FAT bastard’s wines are vegan-friendly and produced with the brand’s demonstrated commitment to environmental and corporate duty. These high standards are reflected by an unapologetically bold character delivering the classic profile fans love, while constantly rejuvenating for a bright and sustainable future. ■

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6 BEER-INDUSTRY TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2022

BREWERIES PERSEVERED THROUGH AN UNPREDICTABLE YEAR. WHAT ADAPTATIONS WILL THEY MAKE IN 2022?

BY JOSHUA M. BERNSTEIN

Riding a vaccinated wave and a fitfully receding pandemic, breweries and taprooms reopened doors last year to a changed drinking landscape. Cautious customers didn't flood back indoors. Hard seltzer's breakneck growth decelerated, leading the Boston Beer Company to dump excess Truly hard seltzer. And the supply chain snapped, leading to delays and price increases in raw materials, equipment, and shipping.

"We are absorbing those costs and not passing them on to consumers, but that may not be sustainable long term," says Kelsey Roth, the general manager of Exhibit 'A' Brewing in Framingham, Massachusetts. The average pint and four-pack

will get pricier, from small-batch IPAs to bulk-buy lagers. "We should be ready for inflation and higher-priced beer," says Brandon Richards, the president of Ale-Smith Brewing in San Diego.



Kelsey Roth, general manager of Exhibit 'A' Brewing

ABOVE FROM LEFT: Exhibit 'A' Brewing // Scrag Mountain Pils by Lawson's Finest Liquids // LUKI Brewery // Hi-Wire Brewing

Climate change, a clenched job market, and evolving drinking preferences will also impact the industry, beginning another round of adaptations. As another pandemic year recedes in the rearview mirror, here are six trends that will steer the industry in 2022.

01 | FACING CLIMATE CHANGE, HOPS AND YEAST GO HIGH-TECH

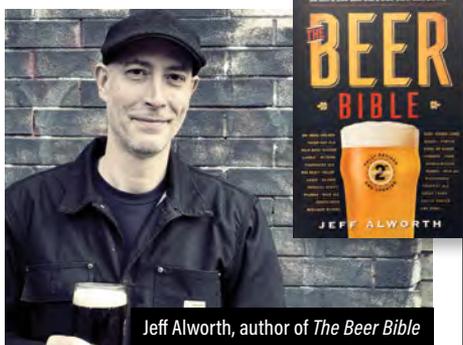
Breweries seeking bigger flavors and aromas are turning to science to satisfy an IPA fan's "demand for heavily tropical beers," says Jeff Smith, a founder of LUKI Brewery in Arvada, Colorado.

Hops supplier John I. Haas now offers several concentrated liquid products, including Incognito and Spectrum, the latter designed for dry hopping. Derived from Sauvignon Blanc grape skins, New Zealand's Phantasm powder is packed with thiols, a family of sulfur compounds, and is used during active fermentation to deliver tropical fragrances. Trillium Brewing, Burial Beer, and WeldWerks Brewing are among early breweries playing with the powder.

"I expect breweries to go even more heavily into synthesized ingredients, whether hop products, flavor additives, or bioengineered yeast," says *The Beer Bible* author Jeff Alworth.



Chris Frosaker, Hi-Wire Brewing



Jeff Alworth, author of *The Beer Bible*

Omega Yeast in Chicago created a “thiolized” series of strains including Cosmic Punch, which helps yeast create aromas of passionfruit, guava, and grapefruit. Berkeley Yeast in Oakland, California, is a leader in genetically engineered yeast. The company has seen success with its Galactic strain that quickly produces lactic acid, plus the Tropics strain that delivers scents of guava and passionfruit.

CEO Charles Denby views bioengineered strains as a coming necessity, especially as climate change and wildfire smoke adversely impact fruits and hops. With reduced supply and increased cost, “brewers are going to have to figure out how to make the same great-tasting beer with fewer high-quality raw ingredients,” Denby says.

02 | CRAFT LAGERS TARGET MAINSTREAM AND HEALTH-CONSCIOUS DRINKERS

To increase market share and appeal to devotees of domestic lager, “breweries will

brew more craft lagers because that’s what consumers are already used to drinking,” says Sam Kazmer, the president and a founder of Elsewhere Brewing in Atlanta.

Beyond mainstream appeal, lagers are generally lower in alcohol and calories, aligning with prevailing trends toward moderation. “As a result of the pandemic, a hefty segment of the beer-drinking population has become more aware of their health and overall wellness,” says Sean Lawson, the CEO and founding brewer of Lawson’s Finest Liquids in Waitsfield, Vermont.

The slew of bubbly, 100-calorie hard seltzers over the past two years “took this step a bit too far,” says Ryan Fry, an owner of Sudwerk Brewing in Davis, California. A well-made pilsner, by contrast, can deliver flavor, body, and anytime refreshment. The People’s Pilsner, which makes up the majority of the brewery’s volume, continues to grow by “double digits” each year.

To differentiate themselves from mainstream lagers, craft breweries are embracing lesser-known European lagers.



Sean Lawson, CEO of Lawson’s Finest Liquids



Em Sauter, Pints and Panels

For example, Cohesion Brewing opened in Denver last summer with a focus on Czech lagers served with proper foam from side-pour faucets.

Certified Cicerone Em Sauter, the founder of illustrative beer education company Pints and Panels, specifically sees smoked lagers having an overdue moment. Fox Farm in Salem, Connecticut, makes the subtly smoky Cabin helles lager and Suarez Family Brewery, located near Hudson, New York, offers the Stand to Reason dark lager inspired by the traditional smoked beers of Bamberg, Germany.

“It’s kind of the final frontier for beer geeks,” she says.

03 | CLASSIC CRAFT BEER STYLES MAKE A COMEBACK

The IPA remains craft brewing’s most popular style, but “it’s hard to get blown away by an IPA anymore,” says Chris Morley, the owner of Mason’s Brewing in Brewer, Maine.

RIGHT: Elsewhere Brewing // Schlafly Beer

The glut offers an opening for first-generation craft beers, such as amber and brown ales, to attract the next generation of drinkers. “I expect interest to grow in styles popular in the 1980s,” says the author Alworth. “Brewers will update them for modern palates, but they won’t carry a stigma for drinkers in their 20s, who will find them fun and accessible rather than old-mannish.”

Ben Bruker, the chief of brewery sales at Schlafly Beer in St. Louis, is betting on the English-style pale ale. “Before craft really began kicking in the mid-’90s, the balanced amber ale was the non-light lager drinker’s choice,” he says.

Consider it something old, something freshly brewed. Smooth cream ales, toffee-tinged brown ales, and darkly flavorful milds can provide clear counterpoints to hazy IPAs or stouts freighted with lactose and cookie batter.

“We’ve spent more than a decade seeking new customers by pandering to different palates and increasing residual sugar, so hopefully there is a full generation of consumers that can discover the joy of beer-flavored beer,” says Cosimo Sorrentino, the head brewer of San Diego’s Original 40 Brewing Company, where modern IPAs are served alongside ales both red and brown.

04 | SEEKING BEER SALES OUTLETS, BREWERIES LAUNCH MORE SATELLITE TAPROOMS

With nearly 9,000 American breweries and competition from hard seltzer, kombucha, tea, and ready-to-drink cocktails, off-premise space remains pinched. Instead of seeking new sales outlets, breweries will create their own through additional taprooms and locations.

“The margins make up for the lost distribution,” says Hayes Humphreys, the COO for Devils Backbone Brewing in Rose-



land, Virginia. Tens of thousands of restaurants and bars have closed during the pandemic, meaning “there’s lots of available retail space.”

Other Half Brewing of Brooklyn now operates six locations, including a taproom in Manhattan’s Rockefeller Center and a Philadelphia venue that previously housed the Goose Island Brewhouse. Hi-Wire Brewing started in Asheville, North Carolina, in 2013 and now runs seven locations, including taprooms in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Louisville, Kentucky. The brewery will open a brewery and taproom in Charlotte, North Carolina, this spring and plans to open three additional locations going forward. “They are great marketing and revenue hubs,” says Chris Frosaker, an owner.

As travel returns, breweries will also double down on becoming destinations.



Wendy Yuengling, D.G. Yuengling & Sons

D.G. Yuengling & Son is upgrading its Tampa, Florida, campus with a hotel, concert pavilion, private dining, and interactive brewing museum. “We believe that creating destinations and authentic brand experiences will be a growing opportunity,” chief administrative officer Wendy Yuengling says of the project slated to open in the second half of 2022.

05 | SUPPLY-CHAIN SNAFUS WILL SPOTLIGHT DOMESTIC MALT

From aluminum cans to brewing equipment, the misaligned supply chain has impacted every facet of brewing. Overseas freight will continue to be backed up into 2022, and “this will disrupt the flow of imported malt,” says Brent Manning, a founder of Riverbend Malt House in Asheville, North Carolina.

Domestic malt companies are primed to fill the void. “It’s an opportunity like no other for brewers and distillers to solve real problems in partnership with craft maltsters,” says Phil Neumann, a founder and the CEO of Mainstem Malt in Walla Walla, Washington.

When Atlanta’s Elsewhere opened, the brewery primarily used German malt. Now the brewery is testing American malt “in an effort to cut down on shipping times and costs and reduce the probability of supply-chain issues affecting manufacturing beer,” Kazmer says.



ABOVE FROM LEFT: Original 40 Brewing // Our Mutual Friend Brewing with head brewer Jan Chodkowski

The great curveball is climate, and inclement weather negatively impacted last year's barley crops across America and Canada. Growers were hit with heat stress, drought, and too much rain, potentially creating gushing — that is, beer aggressively overflowing upon opening a can or bottle — and off flavors in finished beer.

“Figuring out how to brew with 2021 malted barley may require adjustments to milling, mashing, and brewing,” cautions Jesse Bussard, the executive director of the Craft Maltsters Guild. “Working closely with a maltster ... will prepare brewers to meet this challenge.”

06 | THE BREWING INDUSTRY TACKLES DISCRIMINATION AND WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

The craft brewing industry is grappling with reckonings on racial equity and inclusion, as well as sexual discrimination and abuse thanks to allegations brought to light by Brienne Allan on her Instagram account, @ratmagnet. Coupled with labor shortages, the industry will address the health, pay, and safety of employees.

“Putting HR policies into place is crucial, as is realizing that you run a business, not a tree fort for your buddies,” says Tara Nurin, the author of *A Woman's Place is in the Brewhouse*.

Industry stakeholders are looking beyond lip service to effect lasting change.

The Brewers Association, Cicerone Certification Program, Pink Boots Society, and other organizations banded together to create the BRU (brewing, respect, and unity) Coalition that aims to fight discrimination and sexual harassment by organizing trainings, creating codes of conduct, and prioritizing safe events.

“Talking about these topics is the first step in progress, and this gives me hope that we will move to true change,” says

Veronica Vega, the product development director at Deschutes Brewery in Bend, Oregon.

Retaining and attracting skilled employees will also be challenging, especially as other industries allow employees to work at home. “It’s vital that breweries strive to be places where people want to work,” says Jim Mackay, the CEO of Ska Fabricating in Durango, Colorado.

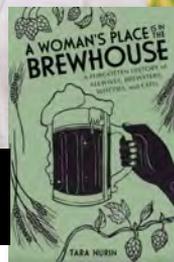
“It’s on us as employers to find new ways to attract a smart, passionate team through unique compensation packages that demonstrate the values of our brewery as much as our pay rates,” says Fran Caradonna, the CEO of Schlafly.

One way Other Half demonstrates its values is through its Women’s Forum series of discussions. “Culturally and operationally, there’s been more care and conversation about safety and equality that will rightly continue,” says Sam Richardson, a founder and the brewmaster.

Beer begins as a passion, then it becomes a profession. Let’s hope breweries begin to treat employees as their most valuable resource. “Gone are the days of cheap craft beers and paying people bottom-of-the-barrel wages to make it,” says Jan Chodkowski, the head brewer at Our Mutual Friend Brewing in Denver. “We’ll have to continue to prove that we’re an industry worth supporting by treating everyone who works in the industry fairly.” ■



Tara Nurin, author of *A Woman's Place is in the Brewhouse*



NEW PRODUCTS



1. JOHNNIE WALKER HIGH RYE

Outgoing Johnnie Walker master blender Jim Beveridge and Johnnie Walker whisky specialist George Harper have developed Johnnie Walker High Rye Blended Scotch Whisky, the brand's first product exhibiting such a profile with a mash bill of 60 percent rye aged in American oak barrels. Drawing from Johnnie Walker Black Label tasting notes, it is meant to either sip or savor in classic cocktails like the Manhattan.

\$ SRP: \$34.99 per 750ml bottle

johnniewalker.com

2. ZAYA RUM

For the first time, Caribbean-made Zaya Rum, part of the Infinium Spirits portfolio, has expanded its lineup. Zaya Cocobana and Zaya Alta Fuerza are both aged rum blends, but while the Cocobana is ideal for tiki cocktails with its notes of banana and citrus, the Alta Fuerza, redolent of black pepper and maple sugar, lends itself to sipping.

\$ SRP: \$29.99 and \$39.99 per 750ml bottle

zayarum.com

3. EL TESORO MUNDIAL COLLECTION

El Tesoro Tequila kicks off its new limited-run Mundial Collection with the Laphroaig Edition. All Mundial expressions will showcase single barrels of El Tesoro tequilas finished in casks holding other spirits from around the world, and this one, which spends four months in 10-year-old Laphroaig barrels, combines the peaty profile of an Islay whisky with the depth of an añejo.

\$ SRP: \$125 per 750ml bottle

eltesorotequila.com

4. BOLS COCKTAIL TUBES

Dutch spirits brand Lucas Bols is shaking up the ready-to-drink segment with its new compact Bols Cocktail Tubes (and complementary multi-serve bottles). The inaugural selection, a quartet of classics—Bols Margarita Azul, Bols Espresso Martini, Bols Red Light Negroni, and Bols Very Old Fashioned—features 100 percent natural flavors. Containing one or two cocktails, the sustainably-packaged black tubes need only be chilled, poured, and garnished.

\$ SRP: \$6.99 per 200ml tube

lucasbols.com

5. GEORGE DICKEL X LEOPOLD BROS.

Nicole Austin, general manager and distiller at Tennessee's Cascade Hollow Distilling Co., and Todd Leopold, founder and master distiller at Leopold Bros. Distillery in Colorado, have joined forces on a straight rye whiskey. The George Dickel x Leopold Bros. Collaboration Blend melds Three Chamber Rye from Leopold Bros. with George Dickel's never-before-released traditional column still rye for a whiskey rife with rosewater, caramel, and fig.

\$ SRP: \$109.99 per 750ml bottle

georgedickel.com/leopoldbros.com

6. PROCERA GIN

Procera Gin from Nairobi, Kenya, can now be found stateside via Innovation X Marketing. The sustainable sipping and Martini gin, which references the Juniperus Procera, a juniper variety indigenous to the highlands of Kenya, blends fresh juniper with a number of other botanicals native to the country, including Swahili lime, Pixie orange, and green tea, as well as pink peppercorn from Madagascar, Moroccan coriander and orris root, Somali acacia honey, cardamom and mace from Zanzibar, and Nigerian Selim pepper.

\$ SRP: \$84.99 per 750ml bottle

proceragin.com



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NEW PRODUCTS



7



8



9



10



11



12

7. PAPA'S PILAR RUM

Ernest Hemingway is the inspiration behind Papa's Pilar, a collection of solera-aged rums made in Key West. Joining the blonde, dark, and sherry- and bourbon-finished varieties is Papa's Pilar Rum Legacy Edition 2021, a blend comprised of nine different rums from the Dominican Republic, Panama, Venezuela, Barbados, and Florida that are finished in rye and amontillado sherry casks. On the palate, hints of vanilla pave the way to dark chocolate.

\$ SRP: \$79.99 per 750ml bottle
 papas pilar.com

10. PATSCH TEQUILA

Newcomer Patsch uses only sustainably grown and harvested 100 percent Blue Weber agave that is then brick oven-cooked and double distilled for the blanco, reposado, and extra añejo expressions made at its Jalisco distillery. The glass bottle, pairing a long neck with a balloon-shaped bottom, makes a memorable first impression with its knuckle handle and spiky cap.

\$ SRP: \$68-\$248 per 750ml bottle
 patschtequila.com

8. CURAMIA TEQUILA BLANCO

Dafna Mizrahi, a New York-based chef from Jalisco, is the mastermind behind Curamia Tequila Blanco. A tribute to Mizrahi's hometown, as well as her grandmother, Curamia, which translates to "Queen of Beauty," is a 100 percent female-owned business. Flaunting warm notes of fresh agave, pineapple, and pear, the tequila stands out for its sustainable distillation process utilizing water.

\$ SRP: \$38.99 per 750ml bottle
 curamatequila.com

11. ST. GEORGE SPIRITS

California distillery St. George Spirits has released its latest iteration of St. George Single Malt Whiskey: Lot 21. Head distiller and blender Dave Smith selected and blended 26 barrels of liquid aged between 4.5 to 10 years from the distillery's inventory to make Lot 21, which exhibits layers of roasted nuts, bittersweet chocolate, and honey. Just as it has been since the inaugural Lot 1, the whiskey stars a mash bill of 100 percent barley,

\$ SRP: \$100 per 750ml bottle
 stgeorgespirits.com

9. DEXTER THREE WOOD STRAIGHT BOURBON

An ode to Ohio bourbon pioneer Edmund Dexter, Dexter Bourbon Company, known for its custom barrel blending program, was established by Doug Hall and Joe Girsch of Brain Brew Custom Whiskey. Dexter Three Wood Straight Bourbon, made at Brain Brew's distillery close to Cincinnati, stands out for its flavors elicited from a trifecta of woods: cherry, maple, and 200-year-old oak.

\$ SRP: \$49.95 per 750ml bottle
 dexterbourbon.com

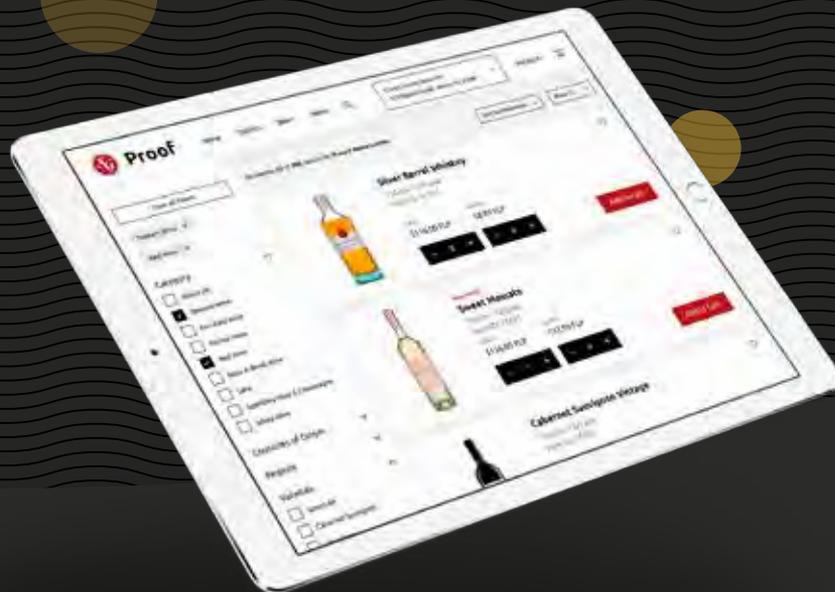
12. WESAKE

Pablo Rivera, formerly of ZX Ventures/ AB InBev, has launched Wesake to help demystify the sake category. Packaged in easy-to-tote cans, Wesake is a crisp, fruit-forward Junmai Ginjo-style drink created solely with rice from the fields of Tagocho, Japan, along with water, yeast, and the Japanese fermentation starter koji. Made in collaboration with a nearly 300-year-old Japanese brewer, Wesake has a 13% ABV.

\$ SRP: \$18.99 per four-pack of 200ml cans
 wesake.co

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A Beverage Biz Look Ahead ...

The 2022 Legislative Session

BY TEDDY DURGIN

With new variants popping up, it's clear that the coronavirus will be a factor in all aspects of our lives for some time to come, whether it's personal or professional or political. But the wheels of government grind on. I've been penning these annual legislative update features for the *Beverage Journal* for a decade now. Last year's edition was unlike any I had ever written up, with 2020 being the birth of COVID-19 and the absolute height of business restrictions statewide.

So, with the vaccines and booster shots and eased government policies, was 2021 really any better? Compared to 2020? Of course, it was! But two years of this now are

starting to constitute an "era." And Annapolis has adapted to these times, as have beverage industry interests looking to have their voices heard in the state capital.

For this year's update, the two Legislative co-Chairs of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) agreed to go on record and chat about the year ended and the year to come. David Marberger of Bay Ridge Wine & Spirits in Annapolis proudly declared, "This past legislative year, we were able to defeat chain stores from being able to sell alcoholic beverages. They were trying to disguise it as 'food deserts,' a term we have to deal with from now on, I guess. One of the arguments was that there are some un-

deserved areas throughout the state that don't have access to quality food, fresh fruits and vegetables, good meats, and so forth. In an attempt to lure supermarkets and grocery store chains into those areas, there was a bill proposed that would have allowed alcohol sales in grocery stores to help bring national chains to those 'food deserts.' From a public health perspective is the angle, I guess, they were taking. Fortunately, we were able to defeat that."

MSLBA's other Legislative Co-Chair Jack Milani also applauded the victory. But he acknowledged that the discussion about supermarkets, grocery stores, and other chain retailers like Target selling beer

(continued on page 28)

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Ron S., Frederick County

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Maben K., Anne Arundel County

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- Phelps’s Liquors
- Harbor Spirits
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- Market Place W&S
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- Dual Hwy. Liquors
- Decker’s Wine & Spirits
- Hideaway Lounge
- Franks Den
- Shop Rite Liquors
- Harpers Choice Liquors
- John’s General Store
- Star Liquors
- Cranberry Liquors
- Woodensburg Market
- Ye Old Packaged Goods
- Old Orchard Liquors
- The Liquor Store
- Camelot Liquors
- Centreville Liquors
- Federal Hill Wine & Spirits
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"It may not be on people's minds yet, but 2022 is an election year in Maryland where the statewide offices of Comptroller, Attorney General, and Governor are all up, as well as all 188 seats in the General Assembly. That will be in the backdrop of everything that occurs for January all the way through the election in November."

J. Steven 'Steve' Wise, MSLBA lobbyist

and wine will certainly come up again. "It is a constant and never-ending battle that I am sure we will have to look for in 2022," he remarked. "Last year, there was also an attempt at an alcohol tax increase. I'm not sure if we'll see that again. But if it does come around, we'll be ready for it. I don't know. Maybe in the year to come in Annapolis, it will be other businesses and industries in the headlines. That'll be fine by me!"

Nevertheless, Milani and Marberger are indeed prepared for battle, and they want others to be ready also. So, too, does

attorney and MSLBA lobbyist J. Steven "Steve" Wise, who noted that beverage industry interests should be particularly aware that the year ahead is one where voters will eventually be going to the ballot box. He said, "It may not be on people's minds yet, but 2022 is an election year in Maryland where the statewide offices of Comptroller, Attorney General, and Governor are all up, as well as all 188 seats in the General Assembly. That will be in the backdrop of everything that occurs for January all the way through the election in November."

Milani, proprietor of Monaghan's Pub in Baltimore, added that the bigger picture may be comprised of smaller snapshots. "Some of the issues that go under the radar each year are local issues, county by county," he explained. "That brings to mind the importance of every retailer to get involved at the local level. You should not only get to know your elected officials and talk to them well before session even starts ... also attending your liquor board hearings. Everybody should be doing that. That's when you hear these things first pop up that no one else knows about. The only

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Jack Milani, MSLBA Legislative Chairman



way you are going to find out about it is if there is someone there at the meeting to hear what's being proposed. Then, you can possibly stop it at the very beginning if it's going to be detrimental to the rest of the state. Most things start out on the local level and they turn into a statewide issue."

Another issue that will likely draw attention in 2022 is direct shipping, specifically from distilleries but wine and beer also. "As retailers, when we open our doors every day, we are susceptible to stings and undercover operations," explained Marberger. "With direct-to-consumer, there

are very little – if any – compliance checks. How do you make sure packages are delivered only to those people who are 21 years of age or older or make sure the person who ordered it is 21 or older. There is none of that. It's certainly not a fair system, and there could be a lot of underage people getting their hands on alcohol that way."

One positive that all three men say has happened in the COVID era, and that they are hopeful will continue, is state legislators becoming more sympathetic of the plight of small business owners and their importance to the communities these elected

officials serve. Milani said, "They've heard from a lot of folks who have talked about small businesses and the importance of looking out for them. We just hope they keep that same attitude and urgency once COVID passes, where they do look out for the small, independent-owned, family-owned type businesses. Hopefully, they saw how much the general population was supportive of their small, local businesses during troubled times."

He continued, "I had customers who sent checks to our waitstaff while we were going through the worst of COVID. A lot

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"Last year was not a typical year in terms of the Legislature. Everything was done virtually. You couldn't roam the halls and see your legislator and talk to him [or her]. But I do think there was increased opportunity for all of us to work with the Legislature to make whatever changes or tweaks needed to come ..."

David Marberger, MSLBA Legislative Chairman

of people tried to help, and a lot of legislators saw how small businesses have that connection with their neighborhoods. When you live in a neighborhood and work in a neighborhood and that's where you are from, you have a different sense of how things should operate. I do think legislators enjoy hearing from regular folks. They hear from lobbyists all session long. They need to hear from the people who are actually doing things every day in their communities."

Marberger concurred, adding, "Last year was not a typical year in terms of the

Legislature. Everything was done virtually. You couldn't roam the halls and see your legislator and talk to him [or her]. But I do think there was increased opportunity for all of us to work with the Legislature to make whatever changes or tweaks needed to come, such as drinks to go. I personally had a difficult time seeing our business boom so much while our neighbors – specifically the restaurant operators – were dying on the vine. Retailers didn't do anything right or wonderful to warrant doing all of that extra business, and restaurants didn't do anything wrong to warrant hav-

ing to fight for their lives. Drinks to go was put together to help those on-premise accounts, and that was done with constant communication with our elected officials to craft something that would get them through the times, but eventually have to sunset."

As for what's ahead, both Milani and Marberger cited a certain amount of fatigue trying to plan for what challenges await their businesses even a week from now, to say nothing of what will come during the entirety of the new year.

Milani commented, "I'm cautiously



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"If this article could stress one thing, it's the importance of getting the retail community to try and form relationships with their elected officials to the point where they know who you are, they actually expect you to call them about certain issues, and maybe they'll even reach out to you and ask your opinion on those same issues."

Jack Milani, MSLBA Legislative Chairman



optimistic. People are certainly going out more to restaurants. Hopefully, more people will be going into their offices, and that will help restaurants with their daytime business. We're all just hoping the vaccines stay ahead of the virus, and we can continue to try and return to normal. Again, if this article could stress one thing, it's the importance of getting the retail community to try and form relationships with their elected officials to the point where they know who you are, they actually expect you to call them about certain issues, and maybe they'll even reach out to you and

ask your opinion on those same issues."

Marberger remarked, "I've stopped trying to guess what's coming next in this industry. I think things are going to get worse on the supply chain side before they get better. We're still experiencing a lot of out-of-stocks and limited quantities. All of the shipping costs have doubled even tripled for products coming from overseas. Even products that are being moved around the country domestically are getting more expensive. So, we're going to start seeing higher prices. It will get worse before it gets better . . . but I do hope it

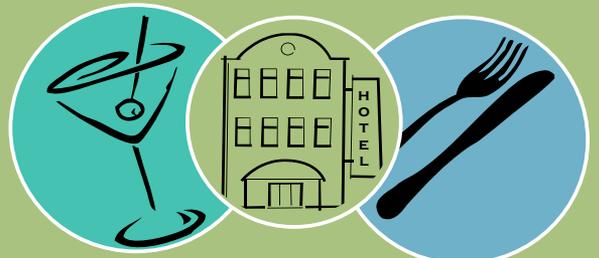
gets better soon!"

Wise is still buzzing over the successful year just concluded that the beverage industry had in Annapolis and is hoping the momentum will carry over to 2022. "We were able to defeat the beer and wine in supermarkets bill, and there had been discussions about increasing the alcohol tax, and that turned out to not happen. Given the great uncertainty we went into last Session with, we came out tremendously well. I'm cautiously optimistic for the year ahead." ■

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SEEING PINK

After a successful debut in the United Kingdom and Portugal, historic Port house **Croft** has introduced Croft Pink & Tonic stateside. The first-ever ready-to-drink Pink Port & Tonic cocktail (5.5 percent ABV), it pairs Croft Pink with a proprietary tonic for an effervescent beverage laden with ripe strawberry, raspberry, cherry, and citrus flavors. SRP: \$17.99 per four-pack of 250ml cans



A COLLECTIBLE

Super-Tuscan estate **Masseto** (sibling to Ornellaia) has released Massetino 2019, flaunting the same grapes selected for its eponymous flagship. This third vintage of the primarily Merlot blend weaves in a small percentage of Cabernet Franc and expresses deep notes of licorice and seasoned oak. SRP: \$345 per 750ml bottle



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