

Beverage Journal

MARYLAND

JANUARY 2023

2023 TRENDS TO WATCH

SPIRITS AND COCKTAILS DRIVING GROWTH
CHANGING DEMAND IN WINE
WHAT'S BREWING
IN BEER





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YOUR LIVELIHOOD DEPENDS ON IT

The Maryland General Assembly will convene on January 11th. There is little doubt that legislation allowing chain stores and supermarkets to obtain retail liquor licenses as well as third-party delivery of beverage alcohol is going to be proposed during the legislative session. *Beverage Journal* staff writer Teddy Durgin has interviewed industry insiders on what to expect and how to combat potential threats to your livelihood. Check out his piece on page 34.

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 and 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 proposed legislation that will influence its members' businesses.

Next, you will need to build a relationship with your local and state representatives. Start attending your local liquor board meetings ... here's a comprehensive list of local liquor boards for the entire state of Maryland: <https://mdalcohollaws.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 a 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 community. Make sure you are on their lists as well. Sending a handwritten letter of introduction with a request for a meeting is a great way to build a relationship with your representatives.

When the opportunity arises to interact with your representatives, it's a very good idea to know 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. Through the 'members only' 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 and worth the ABL membership fee. By utilizing this economic study data, you can communicate the overwhelmingly positive impact you have in your community to your representatives.

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WHISKEY: WHAT'S NEW



A QUARTER-CENTURY LATER

First came BCS Gray Label Dovetail, and now indie blender **Barrell Craft Spirits** has unveiled the limited-edition BCS Gold Label Dovetail. Although it also stars the same Gray Label blend of whiskeys finished in rum, Port, and Dunn Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon casks, the robust 140.18-proof Gold solely highlights liquid aged up to 25 years from Indiana, Tennessee, and Canada.

SRP: \$499.99 per 750-ml bottle



CUSTOM MADE

Whiskey produced by way of a double-barrel process is common, but Dallas brand **Oak & Eden** takes it one step further with its patented In-Barrel Finishing practice, wherein a medium-toasted, long, spiral-cut piece of oak named the Spire is placed within a bottle of aged whiskey to unleash flavor. In the case of the 90-proof Wheat & Honey—51 percent corn, 45 percent wheat, and four percent malted barley—the spire is infused with American honey for a naturally sweet finish.

SRP: \$59.99 per 750-ml bottle



AN EDUCATION

Castle & Key Distillery and the Kentucky Black Bourbon Guild have once again teamed up to present The Untold Story of Kentucky Whiskey, Chapter 2, honoring the significant multicultural influence on the spirit throughout history. All sales of the limited-edition 102.5-proof whiskey, composed of 50 percent traditional bourbon and 50 percent wheated bourbon, will be donated to scholarship funds that support diversity and inclusion within the industry. Labels donated by Eurostampa cover the bottles designed gratis by Stranger & Stranger.

SRP: \$174.99 per 750-ml bottle

BOUNDLESS CREATIVITY

Master distiller Greg Metze brings more than 40 years of expertise to Colorado's **Old Elk Distillery**, and that deep knowledge of whiskey is reflected in his Infinity Blend series. Following the original 2021 release, the 114.1-proof 2022 edition comprises some of Metze's favorites, including hand selected barrels of Old Elk straight bourbon whiskey, Old Elk straight wheat whiskey, the 2021 Infinity Blend, and two vintage Kentucky straight bourbon whiskeys.

SRP: \$149.99 per 750-ml bottle



LAYER BY LAYER

There is a duo of new cask-strength Stellum Black specialty blends from Stellum Spirits. The woody 115.52-proof Hunter's Moon is defined by oak and plentiful rye spice, while The Lone Cypress, at 115.34-proof, expresses dried herbs, pine, and a pinch of salinity. As with all Stellum Black products, they marry Indiana bourbon and rye with older bourbons and ryes from Kentucky and Tennessee.

SRP: \$99 per 750-ml bottle

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WHISKEY: WHAT'S NEW



LAST ACT

The Legacy Series: Chapter Three, the final installment in **Glengoyne Distillery's** collection, is an ode to Sir Arthur John Tedder, who was instrumental in establishing the rules of Scotch whisky-making. The 96-proof spirit is equal parts rich and fruity, redolent of booze-soaked raisins, Tarte Tatin, and cream sherry.

SRP: \$94.99 per 750-ml bottle



SCOTTISH LEGENDS

Age-old whisky-making practices, such as floor maltings, continue to flourish at **The Balvenie**. Capturing the brand's craft heritage is the Stories collection, which now broadens its lineup with The Second Red Rose (aged 21 years; \$459.99), A Rare Discovery from Distant Shores (aged 27 years; \$1,500), and The Tale of the Dog (aged 42 years; \$14,500). Each celebrates offbeat moments throughout The Balvenie's history, like coppersmith Dennis McBain, then an apprentice, learning the term "taking the dog for a walk" firsthand.

SRP: \$459.99 to \$14,500 per 750-ml bottle



SEEING GREEN

Next up in the **Blue Run Spirits** rye whiskey series is the 116.7-proof Emerald, the first to be contract-distilled by Jim Rutledge, the company's liquid advisor, at Castle & Key Distillery in Kentucky. Joining the award-winning Golden Rye, the bottled-at-proof Emerald was born from just 189 barrels, several of which were aged at locations more than 50 miles apart in Bardstown and Frankfort to help create an inviting profusion of apple, shishito pepper, and clove flavors.

SRP: \$109.99 per 750-ml bottle



PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

Unconventional barrel finishes are the hallmark of **Broken Barrel Whiskey Co.'s** Kentucky straight bourbon and rye whiskeys produced at Owensboro Distilling Co., and the 100-proof Americana is no exception. A mash bill of 80 percent corn, 14 percent rye, and six percent malted barley plumped up with 40 percent charred American oak, 40 percent toasted American oak, and 20 percent American apple brandy cask staves, yields cashew, butterscotch, and marshmallow notes.

SRP: \$35 per 750-ml bottle

THE HEAVYWEIGHT

Eugene, Oregon-based **Wolf Spirit** expands its boxing-inspired Puncher's Chance Bourbon line (The D12tance, a 12-year-old bourbon finished in California Cabernet Sauvignon barrels hit the market in 2022) with The Left Cross. The 96-proof, limited-release whiskey (there are only 2,000 bottles), overseen by master distiller Kevin Curtis and master blender Stephen Hughes of IJW Whiskey Company, was aged for 14 years in American oak barrels, then spent two to six months in 12-year-old Jamaican rum casks acquiring flavors of brown sugar and Bananas Foster.

SRP: \$150 per 750-ml bottle



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AMERICAN CRAFT DISTILLERS

Ted Dumbauld Returns

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

Hitting store shelves in Maryland and Washington, DC, is a line of whiskey, gin, and other spirits under the SoNo 1420 brand. What makes this line of premium spirits that includes names like 1420 BBN and Blaze Whisky stand out? They are the products of America's first distillery to incorporate hemp seed in its whiskey mashbills.

SoNo 1420's founder is Ted Dumbauld, a rather remarkable man who first got a taste for Maryland and all it has to offer when he attended the U.S. Naval Academy in the early

1980s. In his career, he has gone from serving our country as a submarine officer to earning his MBA from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to working on Wall Street for two decades at such powerhouses as Deutsche Bank and Bear Stearns.

Dumbauld eventually launched his own hedge fund and money management business, which got him involved in the lucrative medical cannabis business as an investor and operator. In those states that would come to legalize cannabis, his research showed there was almost always a corresponding drop in bever-

age alcohol sales. His vision became to launch a new company that would be a nimble competitor, "at the intersection of cannabis and beverage alcohol."

That essentially was how SoNo 1420 was born. First, though, Dumbauld taught himself how to make whiskey. He bought a still and had it installed in his basement. He eventually developed a rather unique flavor profile, stating, "We're making standard bourbons, whiskey, and rye. But rather than using traditional grains like wheat and/or barley, we've substituted in some hemp seed. That

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Ted Dumbauld

Founder

SoNo 1420

created our unique flavor profile that has given us a way to distinguish ourselves from a marketing perspective and has won multiple awards."

He continued, "The hemp seed has a different flavor profile. It has a nuttiness associated with it. You can find hemp seed at Whole Foods and a lot of health food-associated stores in its raw format. We don't use the whole seed. We used what it is known as the 'hemp heart.' You crack off the hard shell and inside is this small kernel that has this nutty flavor. But in addition, it is an oil seed. When we do our mash in, our fermentation, and our distillation, a portion of that oil makes it through that process. After it has been aged in the barrel, you sample it and it gives you this fuller mouth feel. The oil allows the whiskey to coat your tongue, keeping those flavor molecules on your tongue for a longer period of time."

And the company's name? On Feb. 4, 1919, the Connecticut State Senate -- by a vote of 14 to 20 -- failed to ratify the 18th Amendment. This made Connecticut the first of only two states to defeat Prohibition. The distillery chose the number '1420' as a nod to the revolutionary spirit embodied by this vote and to symbolize the rights of personal freedom for which the brand still stands today. The



'SoNo' pays homage to the distillery's home in South Norwalk, Conn., and its storied past.

"Our Double Gold award-winning distillery in historic South Norwalk is a destination unto itself," states Dumbauld. "A respite for you with a tasting room that's open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays with live music and rotating art exhibits. It is the

place where innovation happens."

Looking ahead, Dumbauld describes his firm's focus as "narrow, but deep. Because of my roots in Annapolis and Maryland, it made sense to be down there. The state has double the population of here in Connecticut. So just the number of potential customers in Maryland is very attractive to us. We want the same penetration there that we have here in the Connecticut market. I think our products appeal to everyone. There's a market for rare, premium whiskeys in Maryland, and we aspire to be in those lofty levels."

He concludes, "I am more of an engineer-type person. I don't have a lot of marketing and sales experience. So, I have found you have to hire the right people then pound the pavement to get the product out there. In the spirits world, you have to have a great product. But you also have to know how to market and sell. What I am good at and what I love is developing new flavor profiles -- not just with our whiskeys, but with our gins and our ready-to-drink cocktails. The best is yet to come!" ■





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CELEBRATORY SIPPER

Matured for over seven years in 35 French oak barrels, **Illegal Mezcal's** extremely limited 7 Year Añejo tastes of honey, fig, and dark chocolate, bolstered by a rush of peppery heat. Meant for special occasions, the rare mezcal is housed in an eye-catching bottle capped in jet black wax.

SRP: \$175 per 750-ml bottle

OREGON PROUD

First came the impressive craft beer scene, and now it's Oregon's indie spirits that are nabbing attention. Consider **Thinking Tree Spirits**, the distillery and tasting room in Eugene known for its gin, vodka, and rum imbued with sustainable ingredients from the Willamette Valley. The brand's first whiskey, a 95-proof wheated bourbon distilled from corn, wheat, and rye, is the latest extension. Aged in French oak barrels for almost four years, the palate evolves from sweet caramel to earthy clove.

SRP: \$80 per 750-ml bottle



TASTE OF WINTER

Spiced Pear, the newest seasonal flavor from **Boochcraft** organic hard kombucha (7% ABV), mixes California-grown Bosc and Bartlett pears with warm cardamom, allspice, and toasted American oak. Subtly sweet and smoky, it pairs especially well with mushroom and tofu dishes.

SRP: \$15.99 per six-pack of 12-oz. cans



LUXURY LIFESTYLE

Código 1530 and Playboy deepen their relationship with the second iteration of the brands' Rare Hare Añejo Conejo. A nod to **Playboy's** inaugural issue in 1953, there are just 1,953 bottles of this limited-edition tequila matured in French white oak Cabernet Sauvignon casks for 18 months and finished for an additional six months in Cognac barrels (the first edition was finished in a sherry cask). Each black crystal bottle is nestled in a wooden box made in Mexico and accompanied by two stemmed Riedel tasting glasses.

SRP: \$990 per 750-ml bottle



ZEN APPEAL

Ann Soh Woods is well regarded for Kikori, her 100 percent rice whiskey, but **Yuzuri**, her citrus liqueur with a delicate profile that gives cocktails like the Paloma and Whiskey Sour a boost, has also reeled in fans. Yuzuri's backbone is Japanese yuzu harvested once a year and combined with local sugar beets and Australian sugarcane. Like Kikori, it is also distilled from rice and groundwater that hail from Kyushu, an island in southern Japan.

SRP: \$39.99 per 750-ml bottle



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EVERYDAY NAPA VALLEY

Tom Gamble, a third-generation farmer and champion of sustainable viticulture in California, didn't want Napa Valley wines to be reserved for special occasions. Fondly remembering the region's humble roots, he founded **The Mill Keeper**, a range of affordably priced, environmentally conscious wines that put the spotlight on fruit from small, family-owned farms. The wines, including the flagship multi-vintage Chardonnay, are packaged in lightweight, foil-free bottles crowned with sugarcane corks.

SRP: \$28 per 750-ml bottle

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

After taking a chance on Italy with its well-received recent Prosecco, **Kim Crawford** has ventured to France to produce a bright, dry French Rosé that joins the original easy-drinking variety made in the brand's New Zealand home. The crisp wine opens with a white floral bouquet and morphs into a palate of red fruit, conjuring a summertime terrace on the French Riviera.

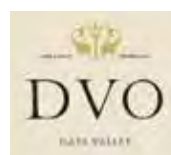
SRP: \$15.99 per 750-ml bottle



TWICE THE IMPACT

Argentina's **Trapiche Winery**, famed for its affordable Oak Cask Malbec, now beckons to fans with its Iscay wines. Just released in the U.S., they bear the imprint of winemakers Sergio Case and Daniel Pi, who worked in collaboration with agronomist and director of viticulture Marcelo Belmonte to select grapes from Mendoza's premier vineyards. The Iscay Syrah/Viognier 2019 features a small but impactful three percent of Viognier, while the Iscay Malbec/Cabernet Franc 2019, with just a touch of Cabernet Franc, has mellowed with three years of aging.

SRP: \$100 per 750-ml bottle



CALIFORNIAN-ITALIAN POWERHOUSE

Napa Valley's **Dalle Valle Vineyards** and Tuscan winery **Ornellaia** merge traditions from California and Italy with

the second release in the estates' collaborative DVO collection. Dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon and rounded out with 15 percent Cabernet Franc, the 2019 vintage (harvested at Dalle Valle) was aged in 70 percent new French oak barrels for 22 months, eliciting soft tannins and notes of violet and black and red currant.

SRP: \$300 per 750-ml bottle



POSITIVE PATH

Eco-minded, health-conscious consumers will gravitate to LOCA, **Domaine Bousquet's** first organic, low-calorie, low-alcohol, low-sugar wines. Kicking off the line are a light-bodied, approachable Malbec that flaunts red and black fruits and a refreshing Chardonnay exploding with green apple, both of which are made with grapes sourced from Argentina's high-altitude vineyards in the Andean foothills of the Uco Valley in Mendoza.

SRP: \$14.99 per 750-ml bottle



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M.S. Walker Brands has partnered with Coppa Cocktails to bring its award-winning classic to contemporary premium pre-mixed cocktails to U.S. shores. Beautifully designed from the inside out, Coppa Cocktails are packed with natural flavors to offer a high-quality cocktail experience that is fun, easy, and delicious. With its shaker-inspired bottle and decorative floral elements, Coppa Cocktails were created to spread love, laughter, cocktails, and sunshine to all parts of the world where celebration is due. They are the perfect conversation starters at any event.

With natural flavors and premium spirits, 15% ABV, and disruptive packaging, Coppa Cocktails appeal to the modern consumer who seeks high quality, convenience, and aesthetic appeal. Republic National Distributing Company currently distributes the brand in the Maryland and Washington, DC markets.



The Core Flavors:

Margarita, made with tequila, orange liqueur, lime, and natural flavors, its distinct yet smooth agave aroma is followed by a tart, refreshing palate

Mojito, made with premium Caribbean white rum, lime, and mint, with prominent initial aromas of fresh and sweet mint leaves, followed by a palate led by refreshing sour lime

Strawberry Daquiri, again made with premium Caribbean white rum and lime juice, this time with the addition of fresh strawberries; the sweet and sour flavors of freshly muddled strawberries are very evident on the palate

Piña Colada, made with premium Caribbean white rum, vodka, rich cream, coconut, and the sweet flavor of pineapple juice, this Gold Medal winner from the Denver International Spirits Competition speaks for itself: no blender, no problem; just add ice!

Coppa Cocktails' **Cosmopolitan**, **Long Island Iced Tea**, **Mai Tai**, **Rum & Ginger**, **Sex on the Beach**, and **Tequila Sunrise** are also currently for sale in the U.S.

José B. Chao, President of Coppa Cocktails USA, says, "We pride ourselves on offering the world's best cocktails. Whether making life easy at home, or increasing speed and consistency on-premise, every Coppa Cocktail delivers a delicious, premium, and effortless cocktail experience."

"As the ready-to-drink category continues to grow, we see a tremendous opportunity for a brand of Coppa Cocktails' quality and visual appeal," says Gary Shaw, Executive VP of Sales for M.S. Walker Brands. "Our strategy includes a vigorous in-store tasting and retail activation program, and we are confident consumers will experience the outstanding quality of these cocktails." ■

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5 TRENDS IN SPIRITS AND COCKTAILS FOR 2023

THE SPIRITS INDUSTRY IS EVOLVING TO MEET SHIFTING CONSUMER DEMANDS AND A CHANGING WORLD. HERE'S WHAT WILL SHAPE THE YEAR TO COME

BY NICKOLAUS HINES

Consumer spirits preferences saw a drastic change over the past three years. Of course, there was the pandemic; drinkers sought out more local products and showed a new willingness to both spend more on premium bottles and embrace novel formats like single-serve cans. By the second half of 2022, restrictions had mostly lifted, but those trends continue to have a lasting impact.

In recent years, for example, consumers became accustomed to higher quality beverages outside of the bar space in the form of ready-to-drink (RTD) cocktails. And while a growing number of people began moderating their alcohol intake, many did so without compromising on flavor and complexity.

A shift in the type of premium liquor people seek out, mindful moderation, and the evolution of newly embraced formats are just some of the spirits trends that look set to shape how people drink over the coming months.

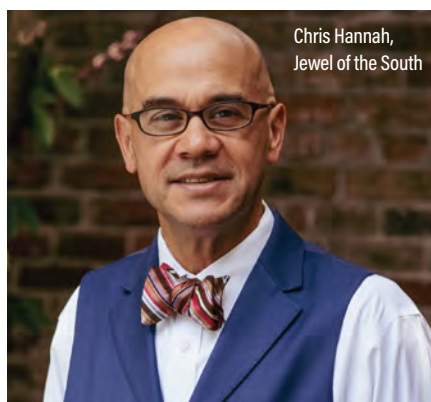
01 NA SPIRITS COME INTO THEIR OWN

Beer has long been the leader in non-alcoholic (NA) adult beverage options. Now, it's time for spirits to shine. "Spirits is one of the greatest areas of growth for the category," says Marcos Salazar, the CEO of the Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association (ANBA), which was founded in 2021. Part of that growth can be attributed to direct NA spirits alternatives, but

there are also new botanical NA spirits that don't tie themselves to an alcoholic original yet serve the same purpose when used in a cocktail.

The growth trajectory of the non-alcoholic category has continued to rise over the past couple of years as more people focus on moderation. In January of 2022, 35 percent of U.S. consumers took part in dry January compared to 21 percent in 2019, according to Nielsen IQ's CGA report. An IWSR Drinks Market Analysis study found that the volume of no- and low-alcohol alternatives will grow by an eight percent compound annual growth rate between 2021 and 2025. "Awareness is building, shelf sets are expanding, and NA or dry stores and bars are opening at an unprecedented rate," says Ila Byrne, the cofounder of the NA agave spirits brand Parch.





Chris Hannah,
Jewel of the South

Bars and restaurants will lead the way in 2023, Salazar says, with the increase of NA options becoming as common as having gluten-free and vegetarian items on the menu. That will benefit NA spirits sales across the board.

"I believe non-alcohol spirits on cocktail menus will only increase and will stay a thing for the future," says Chris Hannah, the co-owner and bartender at Jewel of the South in New Orleans, which serves NA cocktails like the Mockley Pomegranate Basil Sour, Tangerine Lemongrass Collins, and Orange Tea 75. "The brands that I've worked with are Lyres, Free Spirits, and Bare. Bare came out with a non-alcoholic Fernet for the spirit-free bartender's handshake [a cocktail of equal parts Fernet-Branca and Branca Menta], which is clever."

02 FULL STRENGTH RTDs TAKE PRIORITY OVER SELTZERS

An IWSR Drinks Market Analysis study found that spirit-based RTDs held a 45 percent category volume share in 2021 and are seeing the most innovation in the category. In 2023, vodka and tequila RTDs will be the driving force. IWSR predicts vodka-based options will make up 50 percent of the market by the end of 2022 with the help of releases from established brands like Deep Eddy, Ciroc, and New Amsterdam.

The popularity of tequila in general has helped that segment branch out, with full-strength options from brands

"I believe non-alcohol spirits on cocktail menus will only increase."

— Chris Hannah, Jewel of the South

like Epic Western and Ranch Rider Spirits. Independent brands that have already entered the market will be able to capitalize most. Waterbird Spirits in Charlottesville, Virginia, which makes vodka- and tequila-based RTDs, recently opened a new canning facility after expanding to 40 states and increasing sales by 222 percent since 2019.

Premiumization trends will give an added boost. Premium-priced RTDs have grown faster than any other segment over the past two years, according to IWSR, and people are paying about double what they would for a single beer. This only increases the number of consumer choices, which will help the category as a whole, according to Robby Haynes, the founder of Sunday's Finest, which makes the Gold Fashioned.

"Now that we've pulled top-quality cocktails out from the walls of cocktail-focused bars and restaurants, folks have the opportunity to enjoy elegantly crafted

drinks that compete with world-class bar programs wherever and whenever suits them best," says Haynes.

03 DISTILLERIES ENHANCE THEIR VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Distillery tourism hasn't yet seen the type of attention that wineries and breweries have, despite decades of on-site tourism opportunities. The exception has been destinations known for whiskey. The Kentucky Bourbon Trail, for example, opened in 1999, and today, that head start is paying off—it received the most annual visitors in its history in 2021.

Now, even distilleries in lesser-known regions are taking a leaf out of the brewery playbook and offering taproom-like experiences, like John Emerald Distilling Co. in Opelika, Alabama, which serves the downtown community as a cocktail bar using solely the spirits produced at the attached distillery.

Distillery bars and tasting rooms are opening in city centers, too. The recently opened California Brandy House in Napa brings the distillery to the heart of wine country with a tasting room. In Louisville, Brough Brothers Distillery is opening a second location in 2023 where it will make vodka and gin and have a bar and outdoor



The Sunday's Finest Gold Fashioned RTD cocktail.

area for games. In St. Joseph, Minnesota, a new distilling test site from Obbink Distilling that's planned for 2023 will have a tasting room and outdoor space with the goal of incorporating the brewery model into the business plan.

"As a distillery, it's easy to just sell some whiskey, vodka, or gin, but having a story behind it and the opportunity to show that story is important to what makes you stand out and what makes people come back," says Seth VanLaanen, the general manager at The Family Jones Spirit House in Denver, which offers distillery tours tastings and serves small plates and cocktails on-site.

It comes with its challenges. Many states only allow distilleries to sell the alcohol they make, so distillery bartenders have to get creative, and distillers must approach new on-site releases with a cocktail-first mentality on what can supplement the on-premise. As more distilleries build out their cocktail tasting room capabilities, the industry will see a boom in distilleries as places to visit rather than just production facilities.

"It really empowers guests to dive a little deeper and ask questions," says VanLaanen. "People come in and they get to see our whole lineup, get to see our little nerd lab

upstairs, and the distillery itself. It's more tangible for them than sitting at a table, ordering something, and getting a tab."

04 | HYPER TRANSPARENCY GOES MAINSTREAM

There's a subset of whiskey distillers that provide an in-depth level of detail for the most passionate consumers. In some cases that information is seemingly coded for in-the-know drinkers, like the four letters that Four Roses uses to note the distilling location, yeast strain, the fact that it's straight bourbon, and the mash bill. Others reveal the exact source of each blend of whiskey, like High West, which notes the mash bill and whether the bourbon or rye came from MGP, Heaven Hill, or was distilled in-house. But now an increasing number of consumers are seeking out that information, and more vodka, rum, gin, and whiskey distilleries are happy to provide it.

In tequila, the Tequila Matchmaker Additive Free confirmation is an opt-in program that serves as a way for brands to highlight the production process. To be confirmed additive free, distilleries must open up their production process and sourcing to on-site inspections. It started in 2020, and in 2022, 69 brands from 28

distilleries took part to prove to consumers that their spirits are additive-free and natural, with six more currently going through the process, according to Taste Tequila cofounder Grover Sanschagrin.

"We are also seeing an increase in the number of distilleries who want to participate ... they want to be seen as a '100-percent additive-free facility,'" says Sanschagrin. "The brands and distilleries [that are] already part of our program have told us regularly that being on our list has given them a boost in sales and shelf space in the USA."

Elsewhere, a new line of "single origin" spirits from Bar Agricole founder Thad Vogler puts provenance and ingredients front and center with its Golden Alpine Amaro, Biodynamic California Brandy, and Demeter Certified Curaçao, as well as its rum, gin, and agave spirits. Redemption Sur Lee takes its entire production style and puts it right on the front of the bottle, and gins from Vara Spirits and Portofino list the location of where the brands source local juniper and other botanicals.

05 | PREMIUMIZATION ADOPTS A SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

Premiumization and sustainability have been guiding trends over the past couple of years. In 2023, these will merge as



Four Roses



Redemption Sur Lee

consumers seek out premium options that also have an eco-conscious way of doing business. According to IWSR Drinks Market Analysis, 48 percent of U.S. drinkers say sustainability initiatives positively influence purchasing decisions, and studies show that the majority of consumers are willing to pay extra for environmentally friendly products (and that people want to know sustainability credentials up front).

More distilleries are using local, traceable ingredients that command a higher price point now. Consumers can already see that from estate distilleries that grow their own core ingredients, like Waterford in Ireland, which sells bottles in a single-farm series, including the first biodynamic whiskey, that starts at about \$95 for each farm-specific release.



Portofino Gin

Eco initiatives offer distilleries a chance to justify the high cost of premium releases. This also relates to the move toward greater transparency as distilleries ensure their practices are easy for consumers to identify. Carbon-neutral distilleries in Scotland, Australia, and the U.S. lead the way through a mix of sustainable

energy alternatives, waste and energy reduction, and carbon offsets. As consumers become increasingly wary of greenwashing, brands will make commitments to releases that have a real-world impact on the environment but inherently raise the cost of operations. And consumers will be there to pay for it. ■

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6 BEER INDUSTRY TRENDS COMING IN 2023

VARIETY PACKS, HOMEGROWN GRAINS, AND FEWER SKUS ARE ALL ON THE DOCKET FOR THE BEER INDUSTRY IN THE COMING YEAR

BY JOSHUA M. BERNSTEIN



Last year, the brewing industry surfed the choppy waves of carbon dioxide shortages, a tight labor market, and spiking expenses, as inflation impacted everything from cans to grains to freight.

“Nearly everything costs more than it did before the pandemic,” says Bart Watson, the chief economist at the Brewers Association. “Brewers haven’t been able to fully pass those costs onto customers, meaning lower margins.”

Compounding matters, “capital is harder to come by and COVID-19-related government aid programs have come to an end,” says Justin Catalana, the CEO and cofounder of Fort Point Beer Company in San Francisco.



With draft sales yet to reach pre-pandemic heights, breweries are right-sizing for a profitable future. The Lost Abbey in San Marcos, California, is reducing its brewery’s square footage and selling its 30-barrel brewing system, downsizing to a smaller setup. Modern Times, which Maui Brewing bought in 2022, closed five West Coast taprooms last year, and Salt Lake City’s Epic Brewing also shut its Denver brewery and taproom. According to David Cole, Epic Brewing’s founder, volume had dropped so much that the overhead was no longer feasible.

Seeking new sales opportunities, breweries will continue exploring sparkling hop water, ready-to-drink cocktails (like Boston Beer Company’s Loma Vista Tequila Soda), and beverage crossovers,

including the forthcoming Cantaritos by Jarritos hard soda from Anheuser-Busch InBev. Facing another year of uncertainty and evolving customer tastes, here are six more trends that will guide the brewing industry throughout 2023.

01 CONSUMERS SEEK VALUE IN BULK BEER AND HIGHER ALCOHOL LEVELS

Inflation is ballooning, and “we’re seeing signals that the dollar needs to go farther for consumers,” says Jamie Wideman, the vice president of innovation for Molson Coors Beverage Company. “To remain relevant and competitive, brands need to add value.”

Consumers will start seeking brands that deliver “the most bang for their buck,” says Jimmy Seifrit, the senior brewmaster at 10 Barrel Brewing Co. in Bend, Oregon.



That could mean buying in bulk, such as 10 Barrel's 18-pack of Pub Beer that might sell for \$15, or seeking "higher-ABV products to get more buzz for the dollar."

In fall 2021, 10 Barrel introduced the All Ways Down double IPA that weighs in at 9% ABV, part of a broader push toward stronger beers. Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. makes Big Little Thing, also 9% ABV, and New Belgium Brewing is led by the Voodoo Ranger Imperial IPA (9%) and Juice Force IPA (9.5%), the latter set to be released in 12-packs in 2023.

The trend has also buoyed Redhook's trio of brawny Big Ballard IPAs, says Jason Dodson, the Seattle brewery's brand manager. The growing franchise includes an 8.6% ABV imperial version sold in 18-packs of 12-ounce cans for around \$20 to \$23.

Higher levels of alcohol is changing "the conversation about how to define value in the craft segment," says Dodson.

02 | BREWERIES WILL TRIM SKUS AND FOCUS ON SPECIFIC STYLES

Increasing competition for shelf placements in grocery and liquor stores will



lead breweries to eliminate slow-moving brands and rally around core beers. Prioritizing profitability "will result in smaller distribution footprints and tighter portfolios of the highest-performing SKUs," says Catalana, where the flagship is the kölsch-style ale KSA. "Fort Point is focused on doing fewer things better."

The industry is glutted with copycat beers. Does the world need another hazy IPA? The Bruery and its sister brand, Offshoot Beer Co., based in Placentia, California, are reducing the beers they package and market "unless they are truly different," says CEO and cofounder Barry Holmes.

Focusing on fewer beers can help breweries better weather the vagaries of ingredient availability. Moreover, a tight beer portfolio "makes it easier to keep really fresh beer in the marketplace," says Matt Riggs, the brewer and owner of Riggs Beer Company, in Urbana, Illinois, which produces four year-round beers, including a hefeweizen and American lager.

Instead of aiming to appease everyone, breweries will also double down on "specific styles of beer," says freelance journalist Beth Demmon, the author of the forthcoming *The Beer Lover's Guide To Cider*. Sacred Profane Brewing in Biddeford, Maine, only makes two kinds of beer, a pale and dark lager, eliminating overwhelming choice and appealing to drinkers "seeking quality over quantity."

03 | BREWERIES RECLAIM CARBON DIOXIDE IN THE FACE OF SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

The carbon dioxide shortage will cause innovation to "grow as brewers look for ways to solve gas supply availability and lessen dependence on delivery," says Julia Herz, the executive director of the American Homebrewers Association.

In November, New Glarus Brewing in Wisconsin, finished installing equipment to reclaim its carbon dioxide, which



is compressed into liquid and stored for later usage. Texas company Earthly Labs created the CiCi system that lets breweries capture, purify, and reuse carbon dioxide created during fermentation. (Roadhouse Brewing, Trillium Brewing, and Alvarado Street Brewery are among the breweries using the technology.)

Breweries are also turning to a traditional technique called spunding to naturally carbonate beers, trapping carbon dioxide in tanks during fermentation. "We purchased a few more spunding valves to allow us to carbonate more of our beer naturally," says Logan Ackerley, the head brewer at Wallenpaupack Brewery in Hawley, Pennsylvania.

Maximizing resources benefits the environment and bottom line. "Most of these choices also impact the efficiency of making beer, which saves money," says Brandon Proff, the managing partner at Our Mutual Friend Brewing Co. in Denver.

04 | GLOBAL CRISES SPUR MORE LOCAL BEERS

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, which together export more than a quarter of the world's wheat, and a terrible harvest for European hops—German crops dropped around 20 percent, while Czech yields fell more than 40 percent from 2021—will lead breweries to look closer to home for raw materials.

"My hope is that brewers will see that locally sourced ingredients can be reliable when times are uncertain," says Andrea Stanley, the owner and maltster of Valley Malt in Holyoke, Massachusetts, which



Dan Peterson, Ferment Brewing

makes malts with locally grown barley, rye, wheat, and more.

To that end, researchers are developing barley varieties able to weather distinct climates, says Brent Manning, the cofounder of Riverbend Malt House in Asheville, North Carolina. It worked with Virginia Tech to create Avalon, a disease-resistant winter variety that can handle heavy rainfall. Such efforts will “support a more diverse and durable crop of quality malting barley for the challenges ahead,” says Manning.

Going local is also a good sales pitch. “You can connect with your community if you can say your ingredients are coming from a farm down the street,” says Zeke Ottemiller, the beer brand marketing manager for Crooked Hammock Brewery, which is based in Lewes, Delaware, and sources grains from the nearby Proximity Malt.

Tapping into a region’s unique natural bounty can also deliver market differentiation. At Ferment Brewing in Hood River, Oregon, brewmaster Dan Peterson captured local yeast that lends a touch of banana and lemony zing to its White River Saison. The brewery also works with the local forestry department to pick Douglas fir tips for its Woodsmen Porter, the landscape in liquid form. “Forests and farms just outside of town can provide a deeper layer of terroir,” says Peterson.

05 BEER MERCH AND VARIETY PACKS OFFER SALES OPPORTUNITIES



The pandemic caused a spike in online shopping, and the digital shift will continue to lead breweries to emphasize online sales for merchandise and, where legally permitted, beer. Tree House Brewing, based in Charlton, Massachusetts, offers house-roasted coffee, pennants, spare-tire covers, and even Tree House trading cards featuring crew members.

“As online shopping increases, we’re willing to try more,” says Erin Smith, the vice president of marketing for Stone Brewing in Escondido, California. The brewery sends beer directly to three states, plus Washington, D.C., and ships clothing, condiments, candles, and more nationwide.

With most anything available by clicking a button, breweries are looking to make it easier to buy beers by creating variety packs. In December, Stone debuted a mixed six-pack featuring Delicious IPA and the new Double Delicious and Citrus Delicious IPAs.

Variety packs are also fostering after-market interactivity. Primary Colors Brewing of Chicago produces a mixed six-pack featuring three different styles, such as a gose, hazy IPA, and Belgian pale, and encourages customers to try blending the beers.

The Most Wonderful Beer of the Year variety 12-pack from Tröegs Independent Brewing includes six different beers, and customers are encouraged to combine Grand Cacao Chocolate Stout and DreamWeaver Wheat with the Mad Elf holiday ale.

06 TAPROOMS WILL BECOME ATTRACTIVE INTERACTIVE HUBS

People are dropping masks and making plans with family and friends, seeking compelling places to gather that meet the needs of the young, old, and every age in between. A bland taproom only offering cold beer won’t cut it.

“A unique taproom experience will continue to be a major factor when deciding where to spend time and money,” says Ackerley. Wallenpaupack’s second taproom, which opened in 2021 in nearby Taffton, Pennsylvania, is called the Wake Zone and features indoor golf and sports simulators alongside a family friendly menu of flatbreads, tacos, and sliders.

Just outside of Rochester in Honeoye Falls, New York, Okay Beer Company opened in 2022 inside a bowling alley where customers can roll on 16 lanes, then crush house-made cream ales, cocktails, and smashburgers; there’s a kid’s menu too.

In August 2022, F.X. Matt Brewing Co. in Utica, New York, opened its outdoor biergarten that was “designed with the customer experience as priority No. 1,” vice president of operations Dan Voce says of the space that serves up concerts and experimental beers.

Highland Brewing in Asheville, North Carolina, is focusing on recreation at its 40-acre property, offering sand volleyball, a wooded hiking trail, disc golf course, run club, and corn hole league. “We’re finding success in developing our destination brewery,” says president and CEO Leah Wong Ashburn, “for people to engage with our brand where the beer is made.” ■



Leah Wong Ashburn, Highland Brewing

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6 WINE INDUSTRY TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2023

IN THE COMING YEAR THE WINE WORLD WILL RESPOND TO LONGER-TERM INFLUENCES, NAMELY CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENERATION SHIFTS

BY BETSY ANDREWS



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ISTOCK - MAXIMFESSENKO / MARKZHELEZOGLO

For the past few years, the wine world dealt with the global pandemic. Consumers demanded sparkling wine for everyday partying in the face of adversity, and producers and buyers grappled with the supply chain problems of a worldwide shutdown. But now, the industry is turning to other concerns. The craze in bubbles hasn't abated, but the planet and the wine-drinking public are changing, and the industry is responding.

Though baby boomers still dominate the higher end of the market, mainstream wine drinkers have sensibilities different from their parents. "The millennial drive to seek out more value and off-the-beat-



en-path varieties continues," says Sarah Trubnick, the wine director and cofounder of The Barrel Room in San Francisco, "while Gen Z is infusing a strong support for sustainability, which applies not only to viticultural and vinification procedures, but also ethical workplace philosophy."

These forces, abetted by technology, are propelling the wine world forward, shaking up its approach to production, marketing, and sales. Here is what 2023 has in store, according to pros in the field.

01 | VALUES-BASED WINEMAKING AND PURCHASING COME TO THE FORE

There was a time when consumers were unconcerned with monocropping and

chemicals, and cares dissolved with the uncorking of a heavy glass bottle. Not anymore. Wine drinkers are asking questions about how grapes are grown, workers are treated, and wine is packaged. They want wines that align with their values, and their values are focused on a sustainable future.

"Due to climate change, undoubtedly trends will highlight wineries that uphold



Nicolás Andrés Martianhes, Balvanera

practices that preserve the environment, use fewer pesticides, recycle water, and provide fair treatment to the producers and workers of the vineyard,” explains Nicolás Andrés Martianhes, the sommelier at Manhattan’s Balvanera. “Likewise, wines with low intervention, organic, and biodynamic [attributes] will take center stage due to the growing interest of new consumers whose pillars are based on the betterment of ecology and health.”

As social justice movements compel the industry to address equity and inclusion, they also inspire consumers to support diverse producers. “It’s been a long, hard road” to recognition for Black and female winemakers, but the interest is increasing, says Bruno Almeida, a wine educator and Portuguese wine advocate. “It’s baby steps, but it’s happening.”

Trubnick sees that recognition as a function of the changing face of wine drinkers. “As Gen Z, the most racially and ethnically diverse generation to date, takes the stage, consumers are keen to support groups that have experienced discrimination historically—read: BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and female producers,” she says.

02 | EMERGING REGIONS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Marquee locations like Burgundy and Napa have seen fires, frost, and drought. With prices high and supplies limited in those areas, younger winemakers are turning elsewhere to purchase grapes or vineyard land. Buyers seeking bargains for shelves and lists will find them in unsung regions, and consumers will follow pros to new parts of the wine world.



Lisa Komara,
Blackfoot Hospitality



Rosemary Walker, CultureWorks

“It’s a difficult, fascinating time, providing a once-in-a-lifetime shift,” notes Lisa Komara, the beverage director at Blackfoot Hospitality in New York City. “As regions become warmer, Sancerres and Burgundies, among others, are drinking differently. This is forcing us to focus on new regions. That’s one of the silver linings: New regions that were struggling can succeed in these new temperate patterns.”

Komara is impressed by Virginia and its Petit Mansengs. Rosemary Walker, the global director of wine at CultureWorks, looks to the Finger Lakes for value, consistency, and approachability. “When a guest asks for a domestic wine, it’s fun to put a place like the Finger Lakes on their radar, especially when they are only familiar with Sonoma, Napa, and the Willamette Valley,” she says.

The trend will be similar in Europe, as classic regions that “have remained stagnant for so long,” get shaken up by “innovative producers making incredible wines” in sleeper subregions, says Courtney Wieland, the director of private clients for Thatcher’s Wine. Indeed, Mark Bright, the wine director and co-owner of California-based Saison Hospitality, calls out “the migration to Beaujolais, Mâcon, and Côte Chalonnaise” from Burgundy’s pricier Côte d’Or, while Monte Rio Cellars winemaker and sommelier Patrick Cappelletto looks to the Jura and Savoie for “super-lean white wines that aren’t Chablis, which is getting expensive and difficult to get.”

03 | HYBRID AND INDIGENOUS GRAPES GAIN POPULARITY

“We will see more hybrid varieties, especially in the U.S. We will also see more

indigenous varieties overall,” observes Madeline Maldonado, the beverage director at Mercado Little Spain in Manhattan. Ancient, native grape varieties and new hybrids that can handle extreme growing conditions go hand-in-hand with emerging regions.

“Some lesser-known wine regions are proving especially resilient, with indigenous grapes showing the best chances to survive and thrive,” explains Go There Wines cofounder Rose Previte. She name-checks Lebanon’s “delicious” indigenous white grape, Merwah. “It has survived war and upheaval and is now standing up to climate change.”

The same can be said for hybrids developed for their resistance to vineyard pests, mildew, drought, and other effects of planetary warming. In the U.S., these grapes are “opening up interesting regions that are attracting consumers’ attention,” says Trubnick. “The University of Minnesota varieties such as Frontenac, Marquette, and La Crescent have been particularly promising,” bringing winemaking capacity to northern states.

Though many hybrids are so new they won’t hit drinkers’ glasses for some years, their cultivation is trending among winemakers. The Comité Champagne is now allowing growers to plant Voltis, a hybrid resistant to the mildew that is an issue in Champagne now. Major houses are betting on the grape. Charles Heidsieck will be planting it in 2023, says chef de cave Cyril Brun, as “a potential answer to global warming and preserving the identity and profile of Champagne.”



Cyril Brun, Charles Heidsieck



Lauren Hoey, Hawksmoor

04 | NO- AND LOW-ALCOHOL WINES ELBOW ONTO SHELVES

The days of ever-boozier bottles are over. “An increasing number of wine consumers are concentrating on their health and wellness. No- and low-alcohol (NOLO) wines represent a healthier alternative to this demographic,” says Carlos Varela, the CEO of BGPL USA, which has added zero- and low-alcohol French wines like Veuve du Vernay Zero and Listel Pet Nat to its portfolio. “We’re paying attention to the LDA [legal drinking age] Gen-Z consumer and younger millennials, who we see moderating their alcohol intake.”

But it’s not just twentysomethings that are thirsty for NOLO options. “There’s an increase in non- and low-alcoholic wines growing among a wider range of people,” notes Lauren Hoey, the lead sommelier at the New York steakhouse Hawksmoor.

Indeed, Julia Littauer, the founder of the no-alcohol wine Sovi, whose bottles hit stores just in time for 2023, says, “Restaurants are curating no- and low-alcohol beverage sections, including de-alcoholized and non-alcoholic wines, proxies, verjus, and naturally low-alcohol wines, like some sparklings or piquettes.”

05 | ULTRA-PREMIUM WINES CONTINUE TO ROCK IT

Despite winds of change, at the pinnacle of the market the weather report is sunny. “The luxury wine market remains vibrant. We’ve seen this straight through the pan-

demic, and it’s continued,” says Rocco Lombardo, the president of Wilson Daniels. Inflation has Lombardo concerned with overall prospects for the first quarter of 2023, “but Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Domaine Leflaive, Gaja—those wines will be sold,” he says.



Rocco Lombardo, Wilson Daniels

Scott Diaz, the senior vice president of marketing and global brand strategy for Napa Valley-based importer Demeine Estates, concurs: “At the more expensive price points, price increases have been well-received.” With inflation, “consumers are drinking less but drinking better. We see fine wine bucking all of the trends.”

Couple that with the fact that the world’s richest people got richer during the pandemic, and “what the market saw was this huge increase in demand from private clients and drinkers,” says Robbie Stevens, the Americas territory manager for Liv-ex. The middle class, too, “had more disposable income” from money they would have spent on other experiences. “There was a huge increase in the depth and breadth of wines people were buying and selling,” he says.

06 | THE WINE WORLD EMBRACES TECHNOLOGY TO DRIVE SALES

Marketing sustainability, selling new regions and unfamiliar grapes, establishing whole categories, and trading collectible bottles—all these activities rely on technology for success. That’s especially true when the target audience grew up in the Internet age.

“Consumers who are 35 are starting to come into higher income brackets. At the forefront, exaggerated by COVID-19 consequences, is digital engagement,” says Alexander Michas, the president and COO of the New York-based importer Vintus. “If you’re short-staffed at a restaurant or retailer, who’s telling your customers about the wines? QR codes on labels, signage. Wineries are creating videos, and investing in better websites and social media. The marketing—or lack of marketing—of 25 years ago isn’t good enough anymore.”

Wine clubs and online subscriptions will continue their relevance. Though some, such as Naked Wines and Winc, got dinged by the economy and the return to on-premise dining, both Cara Patrica, the co-owner of the San Francisco bar and bottle shop DECANTsf, and Vanessa Conlin, the head of wine for Wine Access, report sign-ups are better than ever. “It’s become easier to discover and learn about wine without ever leaving the house,” says Conlin.

The most successful DTC efforts will combine storytelling with smart tech. “Today’s wine consumers are looking for a connection between the wine they are drinking and the people who create it. Whether it’s via video, Zoom, or in person, their stories and passion help translate what is in the glass,” says William Sherer, MS, of Elyse Winery in Napa Valley. a

With all these things trending amid uncertainties in the economy, an evolving consumer base, and the vicissitudes of climate change, the industry is building its resilience. ■



Cara Patrica, DECANTsf

NEW PRODUCTS



1. FARMER'S ORGANIC GIN

Chatham Imports is the mastermind behind a revamped version of Farmer's Organic Gin. The spirit is crafted from certified organic wheat grown at 1,000 Springs Mill Farm in Buhl, Idaho, that then migrates some three and half hours north to Distilled Resources in Rigby, where it is fermented, distilled, and steeped into such botanicals as juniper, elderflower, hemp seed, lemongrass, coriander, rose, and Angelica root.

\$ SRP: \$34.99 per 750-ml bottle

🌐 farmersgin.com

2. SALDO

The Prisoner Wine Company has already launched its burgeoning Saldo brand with a flagship Zinfandel, a Petite Sirah-forward red blend, and a California Chenin Blanc. Now, it is making its mark on international territory with a Shiraz. Balanced with five percent Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine, which hints of cocoa and vanilla, centers on fruit sourced from premier sites across South Australia's Barossa Valley, Limestone Coast, and Clare Valley.

\$ SRP: \$34 per 750-ml bottle

🌐 thepriisonerwinecompany.com

3. ABERFELDY

Cherry frangipane and vanilla spice meld with green pepper and lime in Aberfeldy's 18-year-old, 86-proof Scotch whisky finished in Tuscan red wine casks from Bolgheri. Part of the brand's limited-edition Red Wine Cask collection (there are also whiskies finished in barrels from Bordeaux and the Rhône), it underscores malt master Stephanie Macleod's passion for experimentation.

\$ SRP: \$119.99 per 750-ml bottle

🌐 aberfeldy.com

4. GOSLINGS RUM

For Spirited Seas, its first ocean-aged expression, Goslings Rum filled 60 former bourbon barrels with a proprietary blend of aged dark rums and placed them aboard the Oleander. The product-laden ship makes weekly runs between New Jersey and Bermuda, where the brand is based, and Spirited Seas spent more than 40 weeks on the vessel, traveling nearly 60,000 miles across the Atlantic. Extreme shifts in weather led to the creation of a complex rum that can be sipped neat or woven into classics like the Old Fashioned.

\$ SRP: \$59.99 per 750-ml bottle

🌐 goslingsrum.com

5. KENTUCKY OWL

Stoli Group's Kentucky Owl debuted Batch #1, its first bourbon since Prohibition, in 2014. The latest limited-edition offering, the 115.8-proof Batch #12, was crafted by master blender John Rhea from a medley of seven- to 14-year-old bourbons and two different four-year-olds that illuminate spice, cream, and caramel.

\$ SRP: \$400 per 750-ml bottle

🌐 kentuckyowlbourbon.com

6. FEVER-TREE

Wintry blood orange is Fever-Tree's newest ginger beer innovation. Developed with Maker's Mark Bourbon, the 35-calorie bottles of ginger beer are meant to pair with the whiskey for a riff on the simple, quenching Kentucky Mule. The mixer fuses juicy Italian blood oranges harvested between December and March and three kinds of real ginger.

\$ SRP: \$4.99 per four-pack of 6.8-oz bottles

🌐 fever-tree.com

NEW PRODUCTS



7



8



9



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11



12

7. PATRÓN TEQUILA

It took four years to craft Patrón El Alto, a blend of remarkable extra añejo, añejo, and reposado tequilas from 100 percent Blue Weber agave grown in the Jalisco highlands. As Patrón's inaugural foray into the prestige category, El Alto is the culmination of more than 300 tastings conducted by master distiller David Rodríguez and his team. Layered with caramel, dried fruit, and vanilla, it is packaged in a distinctive azure bottle.

\$ SRP: \$179 per 750-ml bottle

g patrontequila.com

8. LA MARIELITA RUM

Janet Diaz-Bonilla was six years old in 1980 when she and her family emigrated from Cuba to the U.S. during the mass exodus known as the Mariel boatlift. As a tribute to that profound history, she collaborated with fellow Cubans Francisco José "Don Pancho" Fernández Pérez, aka the Godfather of Rum, and artist Humberto Benitez to bring La Marielita to life. The rum's burst of vanilla, coffee bean, and orange blossom comes courtesy of the American white oak bourbon barrels it was mellowed in for at least 18 months.

\$ SRP: \$59.99 per 750-ml bottle

g lamarielita.com

9. TEQUILA CAZADORES

To commemorate the centennial anniversary of its original reposado recipe, Tequila Cazadores has introduced the limited-edition 100 Year Estate Release that is rife with citrus and vanilla notes. One hundred percent Blue Weber agave sourced from the distillery's property in Los Altos de Jalisco is showcased through a blend of tequilas aged in hand-selected American oak and new French oak casks.

\$ SRP: \$39.99 per 750-ml bottle

g cazadores.com

10. STRANAHAN'S WHISKEY

Mountain Angel Batch 3, Colorado distillery Stranahan's 10-year-old, ultra-premium single malt whiskey produced in limited quantities, is shaped by Denver's high altitude and the embrace of new American oak barrels. Together, these factors allow for a loss of angel's share that lend the 90.2-proof spirit (cut with Rocky Mountain water) a depth of flavor and velvety finish that is typical of whiskey twice its age.

\$ SRP: \$99.99 per 750-ml bottle

g stranahans.com

11. HONEY & CO.

Puerto Rican singer and songwriter Rauw Alejandro regularly drinks a combination of honey, tea, and ginger prior to his performances. That comforting ritual has since led to Alejandro joining forces with historic Cognac producer La Société des Vins et Eaux-de-vie on the cocktail-friendly Honey & Co. Más Miel is a VS Cognac ramped up with a liqueur that unites raw Spanish honey and a hint of ginger.

\$ SRP: \$35 per 750-ml bottle

g masmielcognac.com

12. SCHLAFLY BEER

St. Louis craft brewery Schlafly Beer has rolled out its Stout Bout winter variety pack. Along with two newcomers—spiced Chai Latte (6.0% ABV) and tropical Coconut Coffee (5.7% ABV)—the quartet of cold-weather stouts includes the brand's tried-and-true British-style Oatmeal (5.7% ABV) and the return of creamy, cinnamon-tinged Mexican Hot Chocolate (6.0% ABV).

\$ SRP: \$17.99 per 12-pack of 12-oz bottles

g Schlafly.com



SWISS WINE IS FINALLY COMING STATESIDE

A NEW WAVE OF U.S. IMPORTERS IS TURNING ITS ATTENTION TO THE TINY ALPINE NATION—AND THE RESULTS ARE PROVING WELL WORTH THE WAIT

BY ZACHARY SUSSMAN

Despite sharing borders with such viticultural heavyweights as France, Italy, Germany, and Austria, and boasting an equally storied wine culture, Switzerland's reputation as a purveyor of cheese, chocolate, and complex financial instruments has always eclipsed its standing as a producer of fine wine.

A tiny Alpine nation whose wine industry is composed of thousands of small, independent growers who earn their livelihoods tending the perilously steep, low-yielding slopes of its six unique growing regions, Switzerland ekes out barely over one million hectoliters of wine per year. Compared to Italy's 50 million hectoliters, or even Germany's eight million, that amounts to a minuscule quantity—less than half the amount necessary to satisfy domestic demand. As a result, the

Swiss maintain a time-honored tradition of consuming the bulk of their wine within their own borders, with fewer than two percent of the country's output earmarked for export.

It should therefore come as no surprise that Swiss wine has never commanded more than a marginal presence in the U.S. market. According to Neal Rosenthal, the founder of Rosenthal Wine Merchant, one of the first U.S. importers to introduce estate-grown, small-production Swiss wines to American audiences, several related factors have conspired to perpetuate this chronic lack of visibility—not least of all, the wines' scale of production, unfamiliarity, and price.

However, within the span of just a few years, it has been possible to detect, if not a full-blown boom, then at least a noticeable uptick of industry interest in Switzerland. As a new crop of boutique importers scours the country in search of the next generation of winemaking talent—a group that includes Polaner Selections, Schatzi Wines, Convivium Imports, and European Cel-



lars, among others—the bottles that have emerged from this quest have finally started to claim their place on wine lists and retail shelves across the U.S. This evolution is helping to flesh out a greater understanding of Switzerland's historic importance as a winemaking nation, offering stateside drinkers a taste of the country's full depth and diversity for the first time.

THE NEW CLASS OF SWISS WINE

This process of discovery comes at a critical inflection point in the trajectory of the Swiss wine industry. With little financial incentive to sell their wines abroad, the country's producers never needed to look beyond their own backyards to seek out business. While that remains as true today as it was for generations past, a small but growing number of winemakers have come to view that insularity not as an advantage but a liability.

"We have been spoiled by the fact that we don't need to export," says Chandra Kurt, one of Switzerland's leading wine writers, who also produces a vibrant range of Swiss wines under her own name. "Because the competition has been missing, we've been a bit too content to rest in our comfort zone, but over the past five to seven years that has been rapidly changing."

Breaking with tradition, Kurt joins an expanding roster of producers who have made it their mission to demonstrate Switzerland's potential to the rest of the world. That list includes legends such as Marie-Thérèse Chappaz and Domaine de Beudon—Switzerland's great pioneers of biodynamic farming—Domaine de la Colombe's Ray-

"There is this generational shift taking place right now [in Swiss winemaking], and it's impossible to ignore."

– Daniel Hess, Convivium Imports

mond Paccot, Domaine Jean-René Germanier, and the Vaud's Louis Bovard, as well as rising stars like Martin Donatsch (based in the tiny valley of Bündner Herrschaft), the Argau's Tom Litwan, and Hans Peter-Schmidt of the fiercely naturalist Mythopia project, to name just a few. In many cases, such as that of Catherine Cruchon of the Vaud's Domaine Henri Cruchon, they're taking the reins of their family estates with the goal of converting to organic or biodynamic farming and embracing a more minimalistic approach in the cellar.

THAT ALPINE FEELING

To anyone familiar with the latest evolutions in consumer taste, Switzerland's growing recognition will seem long overdue. With a diverse grab bag of nearly 200 native grapes—from Chasselas, Cornalin, Humagne Rouge, and Petite Arvine to Gamaret, Completer, Müller-Thurgau, Heida, and more—its heroic, high-altitude viticulture, and

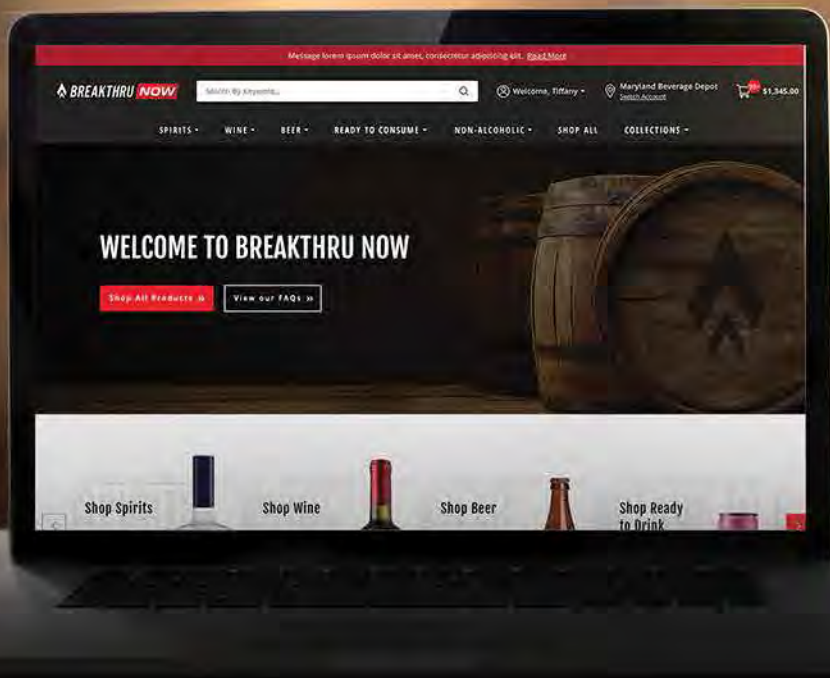
its increasing embrace of organic farming, Switzerland ticks off all the right boxes to resonate with the current in-crowd of sommeliers and industry tastemakers.

This significance isn't lost on Kevin Pike, the owner of Schatzi Wines, who now includes three Swiss producers in his portfolio. More than a fringe footnote or curiosity, he has come to view the country as one of Europe's most essential destinations for wine. "What drew me to Switzerland is the fact that it represents the headwaters of the wine regions that I truly love," he explains. "The Rhine River starts there, and so does the Rhône. So if you're working your way back to the origins of these massively foundational wine cultures, Switzerland is the endpoint at which you're going to arrive."

From this perspective, one of the biggest historical impediments to Switzerland's viability in the U.S. market no longer appears quite so daunting: the question of cost. While no one would characterize Swiss wine as cheap, few countries deliver such a consistently high level of quality for the money. Victoria James, the wine director and partner at Cote Korean Steakhouse in New York City and Miami, aptly sums up the relevant calculus.

"Maybe Swiss wines are expensive if you're looking for a \$10 bottle, but not when you're buying for Michelin-starred restaurants here in New York," she says. "Honestly, we're talking about this amazing country squeezed in between France, Italy, and Germany. If you're a sommelier and you're not paying attention to Switzerland, then what the hell are you doing?" ■

OPPOSITE PAGE: A Swiss vineyard.
ABOVE LEFT: The vineyard at Cave Caloz.
TOP RIGHT: Winemaker and journalist Chandra Kurt.



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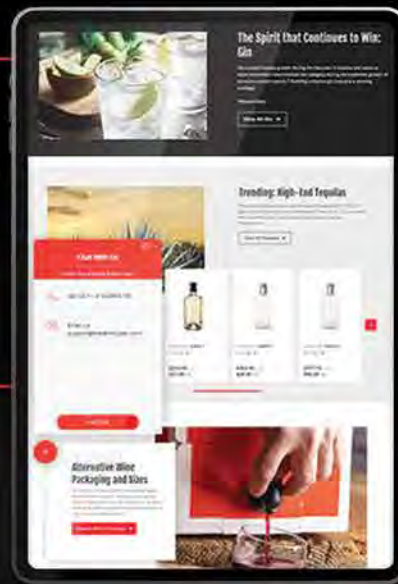
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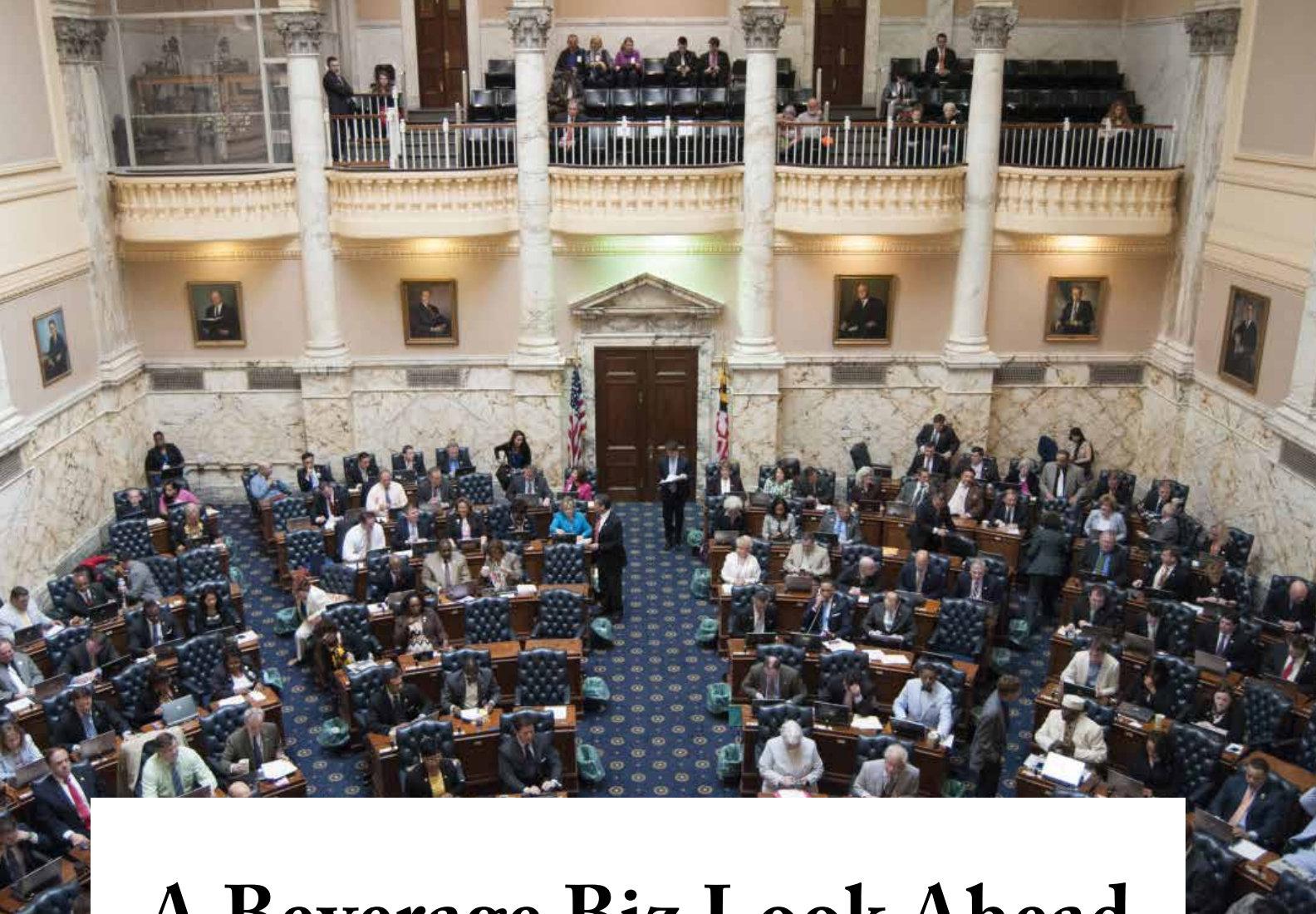
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A Beverage Biz Look Ahead

at the 2023 Legislative Session

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

I've been writing this Maryland state legislative preview article each year at this time for more than a decade now. And this is the first time since 2019 where the annual feature won't be so mired down in pandemic-era hand wringing. For Annapolis and the beverage industry, it's been back to business . . . eh, almost as usual. Thankfully, so is this look ahead to the next General Assembly session.

But first a look back at the past year and its wins. No victory was bigger than the defeat of a bill to allow supermarkets and convenience

stores to put beer and wine on their shelves. Attorney and Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA) lobbyist J. Steven "Steve" Wise was happy for the win. But he warned, "It's a perennial issue, and it does not seem that the supermarkets intend to give up. So, we'll keep fighting."

MSLBA Legislative co-Chairman Jack Milani shared Wise's caution, adding, "Defeating the chain store bill was a big victory. That was probably of the most interest to our members. It's different how they come at us from year to year, and it's been fairly aggressive the last couple of

sessions."

Another big triumph was getting legislation passed that hiked lottery commissions, something Wise believes will be "a huge benefit to a lot of our members who are lottery retailers." Milani concurred, "We had been working on that for a while, and that came to fruition finally. We got a half-percent increase for lottery sales. There are a little over 4,000 agents in the state. So, that affects a lot of folks. The increase takes us from 5.5 percent to 6 percent. So, that was a really good thing."

Both men agreed that it has been

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"The retailers around the state have to make it a priority to get to know their legislators, especially if they are new. So that when they consider things that affect our industry, they are putting it in the perspective of the businesses in their district when they vote. It's a constant effort and more so after an election."

J. Steven 'Steve' Wise, MSLBA lobbyist

good to gradually get back to "pressing the flesh" and taking concerns to legislators face to face as opposed to COVID-era Zoom sessions, e-mails, and phone calls. There was still a fair amount of limitation in this regard during the last session. Too many virtual meetings, Wise and Milani both lamented.

But Wise is ever hopeful. "This year," he said, "it seems like there is going to be much more of an effort to get back to the way things used to be. I, for one, am a big fan of 'in-person.' It allows me to be in the halls of the Legislature, and you pick up an immense amount of information just hanging around. I also enjoy one-on-one conversations with legislators. It's just not the same virtually, even if it's a one-on-one Zoom session."

Such "face-to-faces" are going to be even more important with the election recently concluded and so many new legislators for Wise, Milani, and MSLBA's membership to get to know. "Some faces moved from the House to the Senate, too," Milani noted. "So, this is a good time for our members to reach out to their delegates and senators, introduce themselves, invite them to their stores, and let them know what we are all about. It's critical that you know your elected officials, especially with all of the things that can come up with respect to our businesses. Let them know how many people you employ, how long you've been at your current location, what you do in the community. Hopefully, your elected official will then reach out and talk to you before he or she

votes or takes action on anything industry related. Oh, and let them know that most times, the big guys are not nearly as invested in the community as the small guys!"

Wise says it helps with his job that most lawmakers have some passing familiarity with the alcohol business. After all, most have had a glass of wine with dinner, a beer with buddies, or a visit to their local packaged goods store for supplies. However, he pointed out, "Most of the time, they are just an end user. A consumer. So, when you are talking about how the industry actually works -- the delivery system, taxation, the concentration of retail stores-- they don't think about those parts of it. So, while they are familiar with the product, until they have been in the Legislature a little

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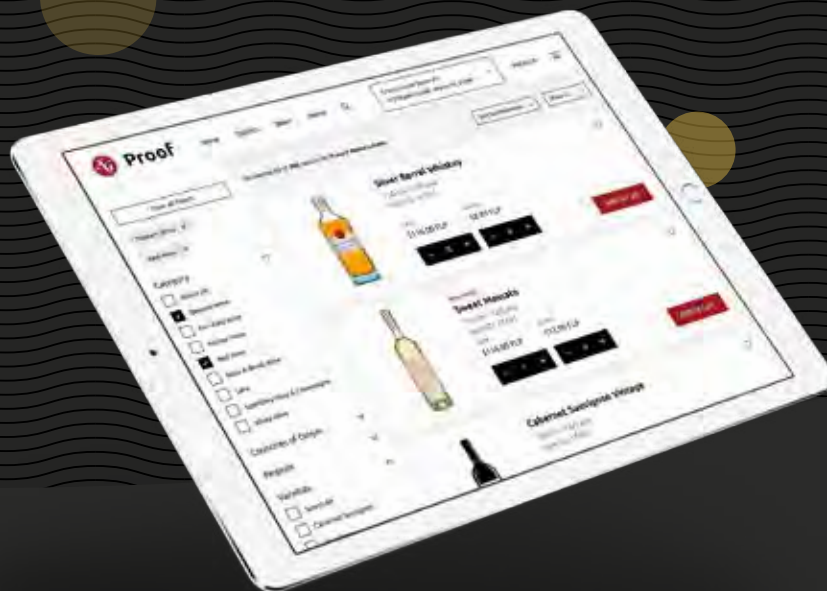
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"Anyone new to the business reading this article; you have to become members and get involved in MSLBA! We have a legislative committee that meets weekly during the session. We track all of the bills having to do with employment, taxes, anything that can impact our business that we can weigh in when appropriate. If nothing else, being a member of MSLBA will get you the newsletters and keep you up to date."

Jack Milani, MSLBA Legislative Chairman

while, they are generally not as familiar with the regulatory aspects of it."

He added, "We've been lucky sometimes. Throughout my 25 or so years, we've had legislators who have owned packaged goods stores, bars, restaurants. They bring with them an immense amount of knowledge. But out of 188 legislators, at any one time you might have had two or three of those individuals. . . . The retailers around the state have to make it a priority to get to know their legislators, especially if they are new. So that when they consider things that affect our industry, they are putting it in the perspective of the businesses in their district when they vote. It's a constant effort and more so after an election."

As for 2023, a supermarket bill al-

most certainly will come up again. Wise believes relief mechanisms that were put in place during COVID that are due to sunset will certainly be discussed. Milani added, "Third-party delivery will be an issue that will certainly be discussed in 2023. Some of the delivery platforms and delivery companies want to get into delivering alcohol. So, expect a lot of talk about that in this session. We think the sale needs to be done by a retailer."

Finally, another issue that will be paramount is keeping MSLBA's membership strong and active. Milani concluded, "Anyone new to the business reading this article, you have to become members and get involved in MSLBA! We have a legislative committee that meets weekly dur-

ing the session. We track all of the bills having to do with employment, taxes, anything that can impact our business that we can weigh in when appropriate. If nothing else, being a member of MSLBA will get you the newsletters and keep you up to date. There's also a lot of knowledge in the room. So, if you are new and have any questions that are business-related, a lot of the older members will try and help you. We were all new once and went through it. So, come and pick up some knowledge and be aware that we're all in the same boat. We're all trying to make a living and take care of our families. If we work together and stay together on the issues, we have a much better shot at being successful." ■



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