COGNAC IN MOTION
GETTING HOT, TRADING UP, & BRANCHING OUT
FEATURES

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A Christmas Story

I recently heard from Bill Boarman of North Ridge Wine & Spirits. He wanted me to come see a Stella Artois display in his Ellicott City store that Katcef Brother’s had assisted with. Bill had told me that the display was probably the most impressive he’d ever seen in his many years of being in the business. Well, Bill wasn’t exaggerating.

The Stella Artois display recreated the living room of the 1940’s Parker family from the Holiday classic, “A Christmas Story.” The movie depicts the trials and tribulations of a young boy named Ralphie as he attempts to convince his parents, his teacher and Santa that a Red Ryder BB gun really is the perfect Christmas gift.

This display is definitely deserving of, “...a major award.”

Here’s Brad Boarman at North Ridge Wine & Spirits in Ellicott City, MD. Brad is one of Bill Boarman’s three sons that own and operate North Ridge Wine & Spirits.
COMING SOON

STRAWBERRIES & CREAM

OH, GO ON THEN

LIMITED TIME ONLY
1. **CAORUNN GIN**
After a decade at the top of the premium gin market in the U.K., Caorunn Gin has introduced an updated bottle for the U.S. market, marrying the spirit’s artisan roots with sleek aesthetics. The bottle’s signature pentagonal form is representative of the five natural Scottish botanicals that surround the Speyside distillery and are hand-harvested by Caorunn’s Gin Master, Simon Buley. The decanter is now more streamlined, ensuring an easier fit behind the bar and on shelf.

**SRP:** $35
375park.com

2. **SOLOD VODKAS**
New from Ukraine, in two expressions, Solod is handcrafted vodka based on malted barley. Its 25-day production cycle starts with a unique water-softening method. Borrowing technique from Irish whisky-making, this malt vodka is twice triple-distilled; then it is filtered through carbon, platinum, silver and birch charcoal. Solod Alpine Crystal is classically pure, soft and light. Solod Bavarian Dark has a light rye bread aroma and honey notes. Both are 80 proof.

**SRP:** $14.99
medcoatlantic.com

3. **MOD SÉLECTION CHAMPAGNE**
Produced in the Vallée de la Marne for over five generations, Mod Sélection Champagne is the latest effort from musical artist Drake and Brent Hocking (founder of DeLéon Tequila). Mod Sélection distinguishes itself in being Pinot Meunier-dominant, and is produced using natural clarification and rigorous fermentation controls. Its Mod Rosé is one of few Champagnes produced via the saignée method. The avant-garde bottle décor represents a modern interpretation of the tradition and elegance that is Champagne.

**SRP:** $35
SRP: Mod Sélection Reserve $300; Rosé $400
modselectionchampagne.com

4. **TERRAPURA CHILEAN WINES**
Having bought and upgraded the TerraPura winery in 2016, Matetic Wine Group, known as a champion of organic and biodynamic farming in Chile, has now given the TerraPura line a makeover, showcasing the best of Chile’s top wine valleys. The six TerraPura varietal wines, all 2018 vintage and carrying a Reserva designation, include: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Merlot from Curico Valley; Pinot Noir from Itata Valley; and Carmenere and Cabernet Sauvignon from Colchagua Valley.

**SRP:** $11.99
quintessentialwines.com

5. **STERLING VINEYARDS ALUMINUM BOTTLES**
Sterling Vineyards is bringing a trio of their Vintners Collection wines to market in resealable aluminum bottles. The recyclable bottles feature a brushed texture in a tall, narrow 375ml size accented by a color cap and base keyed to wine type: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon or Rosé. POS support includes a dispenser display, shelf talkers, case cards and a plastic tote that can carry four cans with ice.

**SRP:** $7.99/375ml
sterlingvineyards.com

6. **DUELING PISTOLS RED BLENDS**
New from Terlato, spun-off after a red-hot start within The Federalist brand, Dueling Pistols takes luxury California red blends up a notch—dramatically. The duo of 50/50 blends from highly regarded regions—Zinfandel-Syrah from Dry Creek Valley and Cabernet Sauvignon-Petite Sirah from Paso Robles—present bold, structured flavor profiles based on varietal tension, just as eye-catching graphics capture the tension of a duel. Dueling Pistols offers modern winemaking with a catchy story and vintage feel.

**SRP:** $49.99 - $54.99
terlatowines.com
Cockburns

[Co-burns]

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**Synonyms:** approachability, flavor, value,

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[Kok-uh-l]

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cockburns.com

SYMINGTON

Family Estates
7. CAFÉ AGAVE SPIKED COLD BREW

Coffee has already found ways to play with rum, whiskey and liqueurs; with its agave link, Café Agave pushes java in a new direction spiritwise. This ready-to-drink coffee and alcohol beverage is made with 100% Arabica Colombian cold brew coffee, real dairy cream, all-natural fermented agave and agave nectar. Available in four flavors: Espresso Shot, Caffe Mocha, Salted Caramel and Vanilla Cinnamon. 12.5% ABV; single-serve 6.3oz (187ml) cans. Limited distribution.

SRP: $13.99/4-pack | $3.49/can
cafeagave.com

8. CONCANNON CLONE 8 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Concannon Vineyard clones are estimated to account for 80% of the Cabernet Sauvignon vines now growing in California. The winery’s Clone Series honors that historic connection by sourcing Concannon Cabernet Clones from various premier California appellations. The latest (second) release is the 2016 Concannon Clone 8 Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley; it joins the inaugural release, a 2014 Concannon Clone 7 from Sonoma’s Chalk Hill. 101 cases made.

SRP: $95
concannonvineyard.com

9. EMPOWER COSMOPOLITAN MARTINI

The first in a planned line of “ready-to-pour” bottled cocktails, Empower Cosmopolitan Martini is based on sweet potato vodka from a family-owned farm in Northern California, triple sec, cooling white cranberry and zesty lime. Empower Cocktails was conceived by Tiffany Hall, a New York City-based entrepreneur aiming to empower women to be bold, confident and celebrate life. The Cosmopolitan Martini is 25 proof and contains 80 calories per 3 ounces. Serve chilled.

SRP: $22
empowercocktails.com

10. BOOKER’S 30TH ANNIVERSARY BOURBON

Booker’s has released a 30th Anniversary Bourbon celebrating the legacy of late Beam Master Distiller Booker Noe and the founding of his namesake brand three decades ago. Booker’s 30th Anniversary Bourbon features a mingling of uncut, unfiltered 9-year-old and 16-year-old Kentucky Straight Bourbon whiskies, which together present robust flavor with signature notes of vanilla. Bottled at 125.8 proof, under the watchful eye of 7th Generation Master Distiller and Booker’s son, Fred Noe.

SRP: $199
bookersbourbon.com

11. SUGARLANDS SHINE ‘COLE SWINDELL’S PRE SHOW PUNCH’

The latest moonshine from Sugarlands Shine comes with a twist as the distiller teamed up with chart-topping country music singer and songwriter Cole Swindell to create his “Pre Show Punch.” It combines tropical flavors with hints of cherry; bottled in the line’s classic mason jar. It’s actually their second collaboration, having already made a 100-proof Peppermint Moonshine. 50 proof.

SRP: $25
sugarlands.com

12. HIGH NOTE ARGENTINE WINES

High Note, owned in partnership by Winebow and Catena Zapata’s Laura Catena, has undergone a re-design, with realist-style label art aiming to convey the revolutionary spirit of Argentina. The Malbec 2017 features a woman playing the bandoneon while the Red Blend 2017 ($12) shows a man playing violin; there is also a ceibo (Argentina’s national flower) in the her hair, and an Andean condor soaring over the man’s head. Both are scheduled to reach market in March.

SRP: $25
sugarlands.com
SRP: $12
winebow.com
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Versatility in wine is usually discussed in the context of food—when a wine works well with distinct types of cuisines. But why stop there? René Barbier is making a statement for flexibility that goes further. The brand’s two fresh, modern Mediterranean wines are right at home at the table; pleasing crowds for parties; and serving as a surprisingly fruitful base for cocktails.

It starts with the wine itself—simple, just red and white, made in Catalunya. Both are blends—positioning them naturally in one of the current wine market’s hottest categories—the red comprised of Merlot and Tempranillo, the white combining native Spanish grapes Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada. Even more telling than the grapes, however, is their style: fresh, clean, fruity and smooth.

René Barbier’s easygoing style perfectly fits the wine’s Mediterranean roots, “where wine is not only a part of every meal, it is a part of life,” notes Alie Burnet, Brand Manager-Import Brands at Freixenet USA. Evocative label imagery and an affordable price point add appeal as well.

Bending the Mold

Intent on making the most of their versatile wine, the team behind René Barbier gave the brand a boost in 2016 by extending both Red and White into a 3-liter bag-in-box format. Then a package refresh gave the René Barbier’s signature watercolor imagery a younger, more modern look while ensuring that Mediterranean Red (or White) appeared front and center.

The unique aspect of the brand’s campaign is positioning René Barbier as a foundation for fun and festive cocktails. Centered around sangria—making for a natural connection to Spain—the six recipes showcased at renebarbierusa.com are enhanced by a “Cocktail Generator” that lets users create batches using the fruits and juices they have on hand. And the campaign has been supported with varied materials (neck hangers, cold-box door clings) as well as print and digital advertising.

Perhaps most important of all, while sangria is typically considered summer fare, the marketing team made sure to develop recipes that stretch across the seasons. Apple Cider Punch fit right into fall; Mulled Wine made a nice choice over the winter. For spring the brand is highlighting Strawberry Lemonade Sangria (see box).

Taken as a whole, the sangria-driven René Barbier campaign is a true departure from the usual wine marketing. But it is hardly unusual for today’s American consumers, who have grown accustomed to drink recipes dispensed perpetually by spirits suppliers. And the focus fits the brand: “Our message is all about fun, DIY ways to enjoy René Barbier with your lifestyle,” explains Burnet. With the economical, eco-friendly 3L box and the seasonal year-round cocktails, consumers are clearly getting the message that René Barbier means business when it comes to making wine fun.
René Barbier’s Red Sangria

In a large pitcher combine:

• 1 bottle of René Barbier Red Wine
• 1 cup of orange juice
• 1 cup of Cognac or orange liqueur
• 2 tsp. of sugar

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

Fill rest of large pitcher with ice & lightly stir.

Cheers!
Maryland’s Beverage Alcohol Industry Holds Legislative Reception

The Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA), the Licensed Beverage Distributors of Maryland (LBDM), and the Maryland Beer Wholesalers Association (MBWA) welcomed industry members and Legislators to their annual Opening Day Legislative Reception at the Governor Calvert House in Annapolis on January 9. The event is held annually on the afternoon of the opening day of the Maryland Legislative session.

The event is a great opportunity for members of Maryland’s beverage alcohol industry to interact and voice opinions with their elected officials about proposed bills that will have an affect on their businesses.
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March 3-4, 2019

Sunday: 11 am - 5 pm
Monday: 11 am - 4 pm
New VIP Buyer Hour:
Monday 10am-11am

OC Convention Center
Ocean City, MD

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Like us at facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES

Call Today for a FREE cooler health check! Mention “BEVERAGE JOURNAL” for an extra $50 OFF a future service.
February is FeBREWary—Maryland Craft Beer Lovers Month! The Brewers Association of Maryland is excited to celebrate FeBREWary at the February 16, 2019 Love Thy Beer event in Silver Spring, MD. All details can be found at marylandbeer.org. Support FeBREWary and stock some Maryland beer today.

Maryland distilleries are gathering at the PAX River Naval Air Museum for Spirits of Maryland: Southern Maryland on February 25, 2019. Cocktails, spirits samples, and great conversations with representatives from many of the state’s distilleries are all on the menu. Event details are at marylandspirits.org.

The Maryland Wineries Association (MWA) is preparing for March–Maryland Wine Month. Wineries will present their wines alongside Chesapeake Bay Oysters at a new, featured event in Silver Spring called Wine on the Half Shell. MWA has partnered with the Oyster Restoration Partnership for this event. Details can be found at marylandwine.com.
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Trendspotting

COFFEE MAKES ITS BREAK

INTENSE CHARACTER AND CRAFTY TECHNIQUES PROPEL MODERN COFFEE LIQUEURS

BY AMANDA SCHUSTER

“Fresh brewed coffee? You didn’t!” When that catchphrase aired in TV ads for Folger’s in the 1970s, it was a BIG DEAL to find coffee that wasn’t prepared by stirring powder in a mug with hot water.

In that same era, most of the coffee liqueur available was missing a crucial ingredient—real coffee. The sweet, flavored cordials were relegated to flavoring desserts and creamy drinks. Alcohol and coffee took a cheeky star turn in the ’90s when Jeff Bridges as The Dude in The Big Lebowski exalted the White Russian, famously warning a handsy thug, “Careful, man! There’s a beverage here!”

However, a funny thing happened on the way to the fair trade espresso shop—coffee liqueurs are suddenly hot again.

Starbucks deserves a hat tip for fueling America’s java mojo. Credit for coffee’s emergence as a versatile partner for alcohol arguably starts with Kahlúa. Comfortably seated in Pernod Ricard’s portfolio, Kahlúa has not only maintained the brand as a back bar staple, it has kept coffee front of mind with an evolving array of variations—such as Midnight, a mix of rum and deeper coffee flavors—and limited-edition flavors, from Pumpkin Spice to Chili Chocolate to Peppermint Mocha. Similarly, Patrón pushed the coffee liqueur envelope with XO Café, a mix of tequila blanco with coffee flavors—drier by design.

Chill Factor

Not surprisingly, coffee’s renaissance has been fueled by emphasis on quality ingredients and technique—and that often calls for a chill. Tom Baker, founder of Australia’s Mr. Black, insists that using cold brew instead of coffee “essences” is key: “A chemical reaction occurs when hot coffee is cooled—resulting in the familiar sour taste found in a bad iced coffee. For cocktails served cold, cold brew is the best process.” Mr. Black’s cold brew starts with beans from a local roaster outside of Sydney. Wheat vodka serves as a base, with only a hint of sweetener. Baker believes this recipe works best in cocktails such as Coffee Negronis.

Pittsburgh’s Allegheny Distillery produces Maggie’s Farm Coffee Liqueur using a similar process on a smaller scale. They create a cold brew concentrate that is then sweetened with dark brown sugar, and infused with homemade vanilla extract. The distillery’s own white rum serves as the base.

New Orleans’ centuries-old coffee culture has inspired mod-
coffee liqueurs are suddenly hot again. There's a beverage here!" mously warning a handsy thug, "Careful, Lebowski! The Big when Jeff Bridges as The Dude in coffee took a cheeky star turn in the '90s desserts and creamy drinks. Alcohol and favored cordials were relegated to flavoring ingredient—real coffee. The sweet, fla-

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favorite, is made from real cold brew coffee. 

//  Mr. Black, quickly becoming a craft bar 
in cocktails or as a dessert ingredient. 

At 70 proof, it can be enjoyed sipped, mixed 
a coffee-infused tequila than a sweet liqueur. 

Kenilworth Liquors

Steve recently brokered the sale of my business and property. I was exceptionally impressed by the way Steve went above and beyond to make the deal work for both Buyer and Seller. He did a great job, and would recommend anyone who is thinking of selling their business to contact Steve prior to signing with anyone else. He does his research and puts people together…. Barry G.

Harbor Spirits

After negotiations with several potential Buyers that eventuality fell apart, I engaged Steve as my Intermediary. The expertise that Steve brought to the sale was appreciated by all parties involved and was the sole reason I was able to complete the sale and retire...Maben K.

Woodensburg Market

Steve recently assisted in the sale of my liquor store. While it was a smaller transaction, I felt like I had Steve's undivided attention. Steve brought a wealth of experience, was always professional and most importantly closed the deal...Michael S.
ern liqueurs with unique characteristics. For its NOLA coffee liqueur—an homage to the chicory-blended coffee style popular in the Big Easy—St. George Spirits out of Alameda, CA opts for a cold infusion process similar to cold brewing to extract flavors from Yirgacheffe coffee beans, which they coarsely grind in a giant grain mill, and roasted chicory root. Café Brulot is a traditional New Orleans coffee cocktail, made with Cognac, hot coffee and spices, often served as a flaming tableside showstopper in the city’s upscale old guard restaurants. Skipping the pyrotechnics, Grand Brulot, produced by Tardey Cognac, uses its VSOP as a base for an espresso liqueur that captures the essence of that cocktail.

Making an Impression
Distiller Todd Leopold of Denver’s Leopold Bros. is among those cognescenti who swear by French press as the best brewing method. Scaling that concept up, he uses 25-liter wine press to produce Leopold Bros. American Coffee Liqueur. Beans from a local roaster are coarsely ground to avoid post-press sediment. A mixture of fresh pressed coffee, the distillery’s own neutral spirit and a touch of syrup from raw cane sugar is bottled while still hot to preserve pure flavors.

Kahlúa has kept the coffee liqueur niche percolating with ongoing innovation and creative mixology. Maggie’s Farm Distillery combines white rum with cold-brew concentrate. Galliano Ristretto is a classic choice for Espresso Martinis. RumChata’s FrappaChata Iced Coffee and Café Agave Spiked Cold Brew are shaking up the RTD sector.

Rieger takes it a step further with Caffè Amaro. This bitter variation is produced using single origin beans locally roasted and chosen to enhance the juniper, cardamom, orange peel, spearmint, gentian and other botanicals infused into the base spirit, which is then lightly sweetened with evaporated cane syrup.

Euro Classics
While new acts have commanded the most attention of late, there’s something to be said for traditional European coffee liqueurs. Galliano Ristretto, made with Robusta coffee beans, and Heering coffee liqueur blended with Caribbean rum, remain perennial go-tos for bartenders to use in cocktails such as Espresso Martinis. In Italy, locals have been sipping Caffè Borghetti since the 19th century. Made with brewed espresso, the spirit recently re-launched stateside just in time for a coffee cocktail boom, with bartenders such as Lucinda Sterling at Middle Branch, NYC and Jeremy Oertel at Donna Cocktail Club in Brooklyn creating updated versions of classic coffee cocktails.

Not unlike the “regular” coffee market, where small coffee houses are holding their own amongst Starbucks, the coffee-flavored beverage alcohol sector will likely continue to grow at both the mass-market and boutique ends.

Perhaps a snapshot of future growth can also be seen in the Ready-To-Drink category. RumChata developed a crowd-pleasing shelf-stable FrappaChata iced coffee in both regular and Mocha. Brand new and at the same 12.5% ABV strength, Café Agave Spiked Cold Brew Coffee is stretching the RTD market with four coffee-forward flavors that include fermented agave in the mix.

With all the new products in the coffee vein, java aficionados have never had a greater selection of variations of their beloved brown brew.
This blend of wines from Dão, Bairrada and Lisboa is ripe, full of black fruits and with subtle signs of the wood aging. Named to celebrate the Portuguese mariners who sailed to the spice islands of the East Indies, it is warm with its own spiciness as well as a juicy aftertaste. Drink now.

Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast
That’s needed because while we’re the world’s largest market, the U.S. drinker prefers the least expensive expressions.

“What makes the U.S. different is the mix is heavily skewed toward the VS category, whereas worldwide the main products that sell are VSOP and above,” says Alexandra Albu, Sales and Marketing Director for Groupe Camus. “Obviously, the mixology trend which is so strong here is not as developed worldwide. A lot of VS cognac is poured behind the bar with the return to pre-Prohibition cocktails.”

VS accounts for about 70% of U.S. volume; of that, Hennessy captures about 60%, Rémy Martin about 15% and Courvoisier about 10%, according to Wall Street’s Bernstein Research.

Success trickling up

“You can see the growth has been made mainly by the brand leaders,” acknowledges Bertrand Verduzier, International Business Director, Cognac Frapin, but he sees a halo effect: “More interest into what’s inside the bottle, more interest in how it is made, where it comes from and what’s behind the production—that’s where we find interest.”

As he suggests, Americans are starting to look for education and to trade up; according to the Distilled Spirits Council, the combined Brandy and Cognac categories accounted for about 16% of the industry’s value growth in 2017.

According to Patrick Raguenaud, President of the producers’ association...
BNIC, the U.S. market continued to be strong in 2018, with total volumes shipped up about 7% over the 12-month period ending October 2018. “Consumption is trending up with a faster growth of aged categories (+13.4%) compared to young categories (+4.2%). We are seeing in the U.S. market the arrival of a generation of consumers interested in authentic spirits, a generation that favors the know-how and the expression of the terroirs. This generation is interested in understanding and learning.”

Consumer interest in Cognac has never been stronger and the growth in the category reflects this, says Stephanie Kang, Director, Cognac for Beam Suntory. “We’re excited to see the future of this category, because many trends within spirits have not fully trickled down to Cognac to the extent of other categories, like bourbon,” says Kang. “More Millennial consumers now view Cognac and other luxury spirits as ‘approachable luxury,’ creating more stable demand than luxury durables.”

**STRENGTHS WITHIN THE CATEGORY**

Beyond the luxury marketing and nightclub scene that has long been the brandy’s core, cocktail culture has benefited Cognac as has consumer demand for affordable luxury. The base of consumers interested in Cognac has broadened recently, says Hennessy’s Senior Vice President for the U.S. Giles Woodyer. “They are embracing the category for its rich history. Cocktail culture will remain a thriving area of interest among millennials, and this will play well to the strengths of Cognac, highlighting the heritage as well as the mixability of the spirit.”

For Guillaume Lamy, Vice President, Americas, for Cognac Ferrand, the current trends are a payoff at just the right time. “For 15 years or so we were growing, mostly from the on-premise and craft cocktail movement, and as of today we are also doing a lot of education with consumers.

**ADDING SKUS, PUSHING LIMITS**

Ferrand has continued tinkering with their Renegade Barrel program, limited annual releases with a twist. The first finished Cognac in Sauternes barrels, with the second labeled an eau de vie de vin aged in oak and chestnut barrels. The first expression fell within Cognac rules, while the latter does not. The limits of those rigid rules are being explored by other bottlers to escape the VS/VSOP/XO/up ladder of age and price.

“We love the U.S. market because people love to experiment,” says Ferrand’s President, Alexandre Gabriel, who also bottles a double reserve Cognac blend of 7-10 and 20-year-old brandies finished for a year in Banyuls casks. “We’re reconnecting with old traditions that the barrel-proof and high-end bourbon consumer understands.”

Woodoyer believes new ideas within the category will drive Cognac into the future, including offerings that change the perceptions of what Cognac has been, from higher proofs to changing
traditional flavors. Hennessy’s Master Blender’s Selection series is an example. Small producers are purposefully diversifying their portfolios not unlike Scotch and other high-end brown goods. Frapin, for instance offers two distinct XOs (Château Fontpinot and XO VIP), as well as a bottling highlighting Grande Champagne, and a cigar blend.

Of course, Cognac has long been able to produce releases from certain years, estate or regions. One vintage-dated example is Hine’s Domaines Hine Bonneuil 2008, the third expression in a collection of single grand cru, single estate, single harvest Cognacs.

Also just arriving: Camus XO Borderies Family Reserve, a single-estate Cognac produced in the Borderies, the smallest in the Cognac appellation, known for aromatic brandies. Camus also distinguishes itself in the market by using small pot stills and distilling on the lees in order to extract maximum flavors.

Broadening the base at a time when the category is surging and more consumers are entering the category makes perfect sense, especially as American consumers are constantly looking to new ways to enjoy their favorite tipple. “There is still room for innovation at every stage of the production process,” says Ned Duggan, Vice President, Brand Managing Director, D’Ussé Cognac. From the aging in casks made of oak from different varietals or origins, to finishing in casks that have before contained other wine-based products, there are already a lot of options.”

Emulating a technique applied to whiskey, Camus “Caribbean Expedition” is produced from barrels of four-year-old Cognac exposed to both oceanic motion and tropical weather conditions as they sailed across the Atlantic for six weeks from France to Barbados.

“MORE MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS NOW VIEW COGNAC AS ‘APPROACHABLE LUXURY.’”
— STEPHANIE KANG, BEAM SUNDORY.

Classic Cognac cocktails include the Brandy Crusta with its sugar-coated rim (example here by D’Ussé). Cognac also works as a novel substitute, with Courvoisier here replacing gin in a French 75.

Cognac has company at the high end. Its artisanal counterpoint in France, Armagnac, also is enjoying a trajectory similar to Cognac. Vintage bottlings are a sub-specialty in Armagnac, and top producers like Château de Laubade offer a range of distinct aged expressions.

Heaven Hill, after upgrading their Christian Brothers brand, in 2016 added 100-proof Sacred Bond to the line, the world’s first bottled-in-bond brandy, aimed to attract bartender attention.

Gallo, of E&J Brandy renown, gained an instant upper-tier foothold in 2017 with a double-move: buying Ukiah-based Germain Robin, California’s first luxury brandy brand, and launching Argonaut, a craft label with distinctive, nicknamed brandies of varied grapes and strengths.

Most recently, O’Neill Vintners & Distillers teamed with bartender Jeff Bell of PDT and sommelier Thomas Pastuszak of The NoMad to launch Bertoux, another high-end brandy, targeting cocktail culture.
charged with identifying and incubating the growth brands of tomorrow, Pernod Ricard’s Jeff Agdern spoke to us about how he fosters entrepreneurship, the mezcal awakening and the uniqueness of the American market.

BEVERAGE MEDIA GROUP: The New Brand Ventures (NBV) division was created in 2016. How do you operate differently than other divisions at Pernod Ricard?

JEFF AGDERN: Our mission is pretty clear: We are looking to create the next generation of growth brands for Pernod Ricard in the U.S. Unlike other divisions, we are purely an incubation and acceleration division, and we have total autonomy within Pernod Ricard to figure out how to unlock the brands in our division at a trade and consumer level.

BMG: You consider most of your brands to be craft spirits, but you do not call NBV a craft division. Why?

JA: Our objective is to incubate and accelerate, not to be the craft arm of Pernod Ricard. It’s an important distinction, because we have many craft products in our main portfolio that aren’t in NBV, like Longmorn. And we have niche products within NBV like Monkey 47 Gin, which will never achieve massive volume, but at $40 for a 375ml, it can be a very serious value play for us.

BMG: Describe the somewhat unconventional structure of your team.

JA: We’ve essentially created a network of entrepreneurs inside our company. Each brand has a business leader responsible for strategy, resource allocation, program development and execution, and that person has total autonomy. It’s up to them to test and explore ways to build the brands they are working on.

When we have a brand that we believe is a very strong proposition, we deploy a route-to-market SWAT team with sales and key account managers throughout the country. They are out there putting energy and focus behind these brands in cooperation with our wholesalers.

BMG: How have your distributors adapted their route-to-market strategy for NBV’s brands?

JA: It requires a mindset shift towards hand-selling. Our distributors have become much better at working with many of the smaller, niche on- and off-premise accounts—the large and chain accounts are often not where these brands belong. It’s amazing how our brands have taken off at some of these specialized accounts: As an example, at Pernod Ricard, we have a 15 million-plus case portfolio and there are certain retailers or restaurants where Del Maguey is the number-one selling Pernod Ricard brand in that account. It really makes a statement about that account.

BMG: Half of your portfolio is composed of brands pulled in from the greater Pernod Ricard portfolio. How do you determine which ones are a good fit for NBV?

JA: We have many brands at Pernod Ricard that are underleveraged. Plymouth Gin is a great example of a brand we never had the bandwidth to really develop. We are taking that love bartenders have for it and translating it to consumers. As more people come into the gin category they are discovering Plymouth, and gravitating to its more citrus-forward taste profile. Aberlour is another example; it’s a fantastic single malt, but kept getting pushed lower and lower on the list of company priorities. So, we are looking for brands in our portfolio with real potential that just lack focus.

BMG: NBV’s other brands were created by outside entrepreneurs that Pernod Ricard has partnered with. How has that worked?
JA: We look for small businesses that have figured out what they are about and want a partner that can help them accelerate. We want entrepreneurs who have had regional success and want to move to a national stage. We also feel very strongly that brands need a sense of place; it’s why Del Maguey and Smooth Ambler have been so successful for us.

Our goal is to maintain what is great about the brand while adding any missing components. For Smooth Ambler, for example, we went to West Virginia and tripled the distillation capacity and brought in operations expertise from Hiram Walker. Yet Smooth Ambler remains the same small, quaint, craft distillery, which is part of its magic. Even when we have a majority ownership stake, we cede management control back to the entrepreneurs who created the business. It’s critical for each brand to retain its personality and vision.

BMG: Del Maguey is one of your most exciting brands right now. Is it your involvement or the category?

JA: It’s a combination: Mezcal grew almost 150% last year. The explosion of tequila has opened the door for mezcal, but I also believe the growth in single malt Scotch and high-end bourbon helped. Today’s premium spirits consumer is looking for flavor and new experiences. Del Maguey, led by its entry-level offering Vida, is the market leader. No other brand offers the variety and quality that Del Maguey does, with 15 different variants from nine different villages. It’s more than 75% on-premise, so it’s been built as a bartenders’ brand, but retailers are starting to recognize the opportunity too, and are building their mezcal sections.

BMG: Have you removed any brands that proved to be a wrong fit?

JA: Yes, we dropped two last year. We had high hopes for Suze, a bitter French liqueur. It’s a very historic brand in France and bartenders love it in White Negronis. We tested it in a number of ways, but recognized it’s better suited in our general portfolio as a complimentary brand. We also thought we could accelerate Lot 40, our 100% rye Canadian whisky. It’s fantastic, but we discovered that in today’s market, Rye is synonymous with American Rye and it wasn’t catching on.

BMG: You have been successful in reigniting Lillet. What strategy worked?

JA: We completely switched Lillet away from being a cocktail modifier to being the base of a cocktail. Lillet makes a fantastic spritz, which is a growing category, and we have been focusing on some warmer-weather markets. Lillet Rosé is growing at 400%; we can’t keep it in stock.

BMG: Now that the word is out about NBV, you must field many calls from entrepreneurs looking to partner with Pernod Ricard.

JA: We do. I think our business development team may have talked to 700 people last year. We get a lot of inbound traffic for sure, but I like to go into stores in local markets, talk to store owners and discover brands that I’ve never heard of before. They could be the next exciting rum or whisky of tomorrow.

BMG: Pernod Ricard has declared the U.S. its priority market. Why do you believe the American market is more open to innovation compared to more traditional European markets?

JA: First, the trade is always willing to give something a try in the U.S. market. The retail environment here—with so many strong independents, as opposed to Europe’s supermarket-dominated marketplace—really promotes innovation.

Second, I’d venture to say that American consumers drink across far more categories than European drinkers. Especially today’s younger consumer. Just look at Scotch: There used to be a very linear progression, with consumers starting with blended Scotch, then graduating to single malt and then exploring island malts. Today, you can have a 24-year-old dive straight in to peaty, iodine-flavored single malt from Islay. The American willingness to experiment really fuels innovation.
While said to be the world’s most consumed spirit, China’s baijiu has yet to conquer the U.S. market in any meaningful way. “Seven years ago there was almost no baijiu in the U.S. market,” notes Derek Sandhaus, author of a book on the spirit and now a partner in the Ming River Baijiu brand. “But in that really short period of time, both awareness of baijiu as a category and receptiveness from both bartenders and consumers have increased dramatically.”

Though clear like vodka, baijiu (báijiǔ / by-joe) is unmistakably unique; and its alcohol by volume can range from 40-60%. When educating, Sandhaus stresses that baijiu is a category of drinks, rather than a specific drink: “Baijiu can be many different things, with different ingredients and different styles.”

The most significant surge in awareness has occurred in the past three years, according to Yuan Liu, Senior VP of Business Development for CNS Imports. “More distributors and retailers are getting involved with this category,” Liu says. “We see this as a natural development of baijiu outside of the Chinese communities.”

China still accounts for about 99.6% of baijiu’s global consumption, according to Euromonitor, representing more than $100 billion in sales. Ming River, launched in early 2018 as a partnership between American and European entrepreneurs and the Sichuan distillery Luzhou Laojiao, joins the likes of top seller Kweichow Moutai, Guotai and the Diageo-backed Shui Jing Fang. It’s priced more moderately than most brands; many top $100.

STARTING SOMEWHERE
The International Wine and Spirits Competition (IWSC) tagged baijiu as one of their key drinks trends for 2019, noting that the Western world is “starting to come around to [its] ‘polarizing flavor.’” “Polarizing” may seem generous to some. There are a lot of flavors on the baijiu tasting spectrum, from the approachably mild (relatively speaking) to the aggressively intense. A particular baijiu would fall into one of four basic styles:

- **Light aroma** (or fragrance) is characterized by light body and subtle floral notes.
- **Rice aroma** is distilled primarily from rice—vs. sorghum, wheat and other grains common in the other styles; it has a light, vodka-like body, with floral and honey notes.
- **Strong aroma** has pronounced body, tropical fruit (especially pineapple) and hints of pepper and anise.
- **Sauce aroma**, as it sounds, is reminiscent of soy sauce and rich in umami with mushroom notes.

American consumers are most likely to discover baijiu in cocktail form, but both Liu and Sandhaus note that mixing baijiu can demand a lot of trial and error. Intense tropical fruit elements of strong aroma baijiu, for instance, makes it ideal in tiki cocktails, says Sandhaus, while sauce aroma baijiu plays well in “wintry, spirit-heavy,” even dessert-like drinks. “There isn’t a well defined idea of how you mix it yet,” he contends. “I discover new things that work with it every day.”

WILL 2019 FINALLY BE BAIJIU’S BREAKOUT YEAR?

BY JEFF CIOLETTI

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**Ming River features elegant, international packaging.** *Trader’s Treasure cocktail by Shannon Mustipher (Glady’s, Brooklyn)*
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Please Drink Responsibly
Perhaps the best thing about being a winemaker in Washington State, according to Joshua Maloney, is the ability to craft wines that are both serious and substantial while also being deliciously easy to drink.

It’s exactly this sweet spot in style that Maloney, the winemaker for Bronco Wine Company’s 585 Northwest portfolio, is aiming for with Komodo Dragon, a red blend he has been producing for four years.

A combination Cabernet, Syrah and Merlot that changes every vintage, Komodo is “friendly, fun and easy to love,” describes Maloney, yet a wine that “a sophisticated wine consumer will also recognize as high-quality, with good structure and really thoughtful winemaking behind it.”

Maloney made wine in many diverse regions before deciding to “plant a flag” in Washington State. “There are pioneering, innovative things I can do here that would be cost-prohibitive in California, for example,” he explains. And no other region has Washington’s enviable confluence of terroir components that enables great wine to be made at affordable price points.

Lab tests reveal that Washington grapes have more tannin and color than those from most other regions in the world; yet the key is that these tannins are ripe and soft. Maloney gives credit for the tannin development to the abundance of sunlight during the growing season. With only six to eight inches of rain a year, Washington wine regions never get excess water, which gives growers a level of control over irrigation that few places in the world enjoy.

Pieces Come Together

While none of these single factors are exclusive to Washington, having them collectively is unique, Maloney attests. And in turn, he believes the wines express a uniqueness: “What I love most about Washington wines in general is the mid-palate density they possess. Many places can produce wines with front and back palate texture, but few can achieve the mid-palate density that Washington can, particularly at lower price points.”

Komodo Dragon’s label lists Columbia Valley as its AVA, but roughly 85% of its fruit hails specifically from the Wahluke Slope, one of the warmer spots in the state with self-draining sandy soils and cooling breezes. “Grapes here produce wines with abundant fruit character and full but softened tannins,” describes Maloney. His insights on vineyard sites across the region came from his time with Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. It’s also where he learned to craft wines that could combine serious winemaking with serious enjoyability.

“A lot of winemakers get lost in the esoteric; they forget that people need to drink these wines at the end of the day,” says Maloney. “My goal with Komodo Dragon is a wine that can be consumed every day after work, alongside burgers and pizza, yet has a clear sense of place and is still relevant to the experienced wine consumer. For under $20. It would be really difficult to create a wine like this any other place than Washington.”
komodo dragon

One Passion, One Blend.

“A zesty blend, vibrant and juicy, with appealing cherry and spicy cinnamon flavors. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.” -2014 RED BLEND

88 POINTS Wine Spectator®
Impressive as Irish whiskey in the U.S. has been—sales here grew over 400% from 2005 to 2015, according to IWSR—the real excitement may lie just ahead. While recent success has been powered by a handful of big brands, premiumization is transforming the landscape, and new brands and independent distilleries are angling for the growing slice of the growing brown-goods pie. Among the relative newcomers, Walsh Whiskey Distillery is primed for success with two lines: The Irishman and Writers’ Tears.

Alejandro Mercado, Trade Marketing Manager of the U.S. for Walsh, sums up the situation in one word: opportunity. Acknowledging that Jameson in particular led the Irish revival and reestablished mass-market appreciation for the smoothness of Irish whiskies, Mercado notes, “We are not chasing the bigger brands. We are aiming at the prestige level, where you see a lot of Scotches, but maybe a handful of Irish whiskies. There is room, and we have the production values to belong there.”

Triple-distilled in the Irish tradition, both Walsh lines stand apart from their peers by emphasizing pot-still and single malt in their production—no grain. And, as Mercado points out, The Irishman and Writers’ Tears are both rooted in real people and a real estate.

Power Couple

Having launched their business in 1999, husband and wife Bernard and Rosemary Walsh were well ahead of the Irish whiskey curve. In fact, their actual distilling operations followed success bottling small-batch Irish coffee and cream liqueurs. Smartly, in 2006 they signed a long-term supply agreement with Irish Distillers to secure Irish whiskey stocks to their specifications. This enabled them to start developing their portfolio while their production facility at the 18th-century Royal Oak estate, in the heart of barley-growing country, was being built. Royal Oak officially opened in 2016, but The Irishman debuted in 2007, followed by Writers’ Tears two years later.

The signature SKU, The Irishman Founders Reserve, is a blend of two styles, single malt (70%) and single pot still (30%), making it the only Irish blended whiskey to contain 100% whiskey distillates from copper pot stills and 0% grain or column still whiskey. It has been followed by The Irishman Cask Strength and Single Malt.

Writers Tears Copper Pot, first distributed in the U.S. in 2015, taps more deeply into Irish culture, with its backstory of 19th century Irish novelists, poets and playwrights (George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce, to name but a few) drawing inspiration from their favorite whiskey at local pubs. Made from a unique old Irish pot still whiskey recipe, this vatting of single malt (60%) and single pot still (40%) whiskies (again, no grain) earned accolades including the top rating for Irish whiskey in Jim Murray’s Whiskey Bible.

The brands are now in 45 countries and marketed nationwide in the U.S. through Disaronno Intl. USA. Moreover, “People are starting to ask for more Irish options,” says Mercado. Looking ahead, the Irish food board Bord Bia estimates that Irish whiskey exports will double in volume by 2020 compared to 2015. As this growth continues to trend upward in value as well, both The Irishman and Writers’ Tears are poised to deliver.
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Please Drink Responsibly.
When assessing progress in the wine industry, the typical approach is to look back, to see how things evolved from the past to present. A subtle but important shift in that pattern involves the increased importance of sustainability—and how, as suppliers increasingly aim to think and be “green,” their focus is as much on the future as the past.

Today, Italian regions and producers are taking bold steps to redefine what sustainability looks like in both vineyards and wineries, addressing new challenges and finding innovative solutions to ensure that Italian wine will thrive responsibly for centuries to come.

While American wineries are certainly more eco-conscious than ever, like many industry trends, Europe’s “green” wine wave is significantly ahead. In fact, three countries represent approximately 90% of the world’s organic vineyards. “Italy is the leading country in Europe for organic vineyards,” says Matilde Foggi, President of the Italian Federation of Independent Winegrowers (FIVI). “About 17% of the vineyards in Italy are organic. Countries like Spain and France are around 10 or 11%. Italy’s 17% doesn’t include vineyards under conversion to organic, a three-year process. According to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, organic vineyard acreage today is double what it was in 2012.

The Commission also points out that many Italian winegrowers follow organic principles but forgo certification, either because of the cost or lack of time; the bureaucratic hoops that need to be jumped through, either within Italy or, for exports, with the FDA, can be too much trouble for small farmers and wineries. “There’s an inherent naturalness to farming in Italy,” says Italian Trade Commissioner Maurizio Forte, “by virtue of having a climate with more hours of sunlight, good air circulation, and overall ideal conditions for healthy grapes. We are also fortunate to have hundreds of indigenous grape varieties that have had hundreds if not thousands of years to adapt to their environment. I would be remiss not to point out that many wineries pursue sustainability not only in the vineyards but in all phases of winemaking.”

SUSTAINABILITY: A BIGGER PICTURE
While organics and natural winemaking tend to focus on the vineyards and what goes into the product, sustainability is in some respects less stringent, but overall more holistic, encompassing wine production but also ecological concerns at the local and global level, plus labor and social concerns.

Bees in vineyards mean more wildflowers, which entice “good” predators that naturally combat damaging vine pests.
“We can’t deny that the problem of sustainability must include all the things related to energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and water management,” says Michele Manelli, a Board member for the Equalitas certification program, “but that has to be all along our value chain, not just what we do in the field.”

Organics, for example, is not concerned with a winery’s carbon footprint, but limiting or offsetting greenhouse gases plays a substantial role in sustainability. So, too, does worker welfare, and even the welfare of neighbors, looking at how vineyard and winery practices might have repercussions for the surrounding community. Water use, respect of local traditions and archaeological heritage, limiting pesticide use—all of these factors are taken under consideration.

And, as with organics, Italy is committed to leading the way in sustainability. The Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land, and Sea created a certification program, VIVA, in 2011; it divides these elements up into Air, Water, Vineyards, and Territory. Federdoc, the National Confederation of Consorti for all wine appellations in Italy, created the aforementioned Equalitas program after cooperating on a 2014 research report, making it a concrete example of Italian winemakers coming together despite their diverse wine offerings and opinions.

Addressing all these points calls for a variety of approaches. Some wineries install solar energy panels; others are improving the efficiency of their irrigation systems, or reducing the weight of their bottles to reduce shipping costs and carbon emissions. As a report in the Annals of Agrarian Science put it: “Sustainable wine growing reaches from the vineyard to the bottom shelf in the supermarket.”

REGIONAL EFFORT, FROM THE ALPS TO SICILY

Climate also impacts the specific adjustments. “In northern Italy it can rain a lot,” says agronomist Marco Tonni of the SATA Agronomic Studio, “and this means you must manage the grasses growing inside the vineyard, because it improves the soil’s capacity to bear the machinery. It’s also very good for biodiversity, for the roots, for the carbon footprint because the grasses capture CO2 and transform it into organic substances and sequester it in the soil.”

These improvements do not come at a cost to wine quality, either: “Grasses are also a way to improve the quality of the wine because you have lower humidity in the air, a lower problem of fungi and botrytis, and better quality of grapes. They mature earlier and the vines are not too vigorous.”

MAKING NATURAL OFFICIAL

With organic vineyard work so prevalent in Italy, it should come as no surprise that Italy also has a large number of so-called natural wines. While generally this has been a loosely-defined category, Italy is actually home to the first organization to create a set of statutes for members, VinNatur.

Founded in 2006, the organization today has 170 members in nine different countries, but three-quarters of the membership remains Italian. Aside from creating a set of guidelines as to what constitutes natural wine production, VinNatur uses funds generated by tastings to conduct research that will aid member wineries, who by-and-large would not be able to afford conducting similar research individually.

“Big agro-pharma companies have done similar studies in the past,” says VinNatur representative Emma Bentley, “but when the resulting recommendation is for a product made and commercialized by the sponsoring body, it’s not as independent or trustworthy as we would like.”
Regional sustainability efforts, like SOStain, developed by some of the most well-known wineries in Sicily, are working together with the national organizations to innovate and adapt ideas to local growing conditions. Water management is more pressing there than in the north, for example. Meanwhile, in diverse areas, the Casa Clima project is helping wineries themselves become more sustainable, working with bioconstruction materials, renewable energy, and climate-friendly construction techniques.

Modern techniques are penetrating even the most established of Italy’s wine regions. Chianti Classico Consorzio President Giovanni Manetti says the push there dates back to “Chianti Classico 2000” with a research project begun in the late 1980s. Today, 30% of Chianti Classico is certified organic, and 35% of their members reported using alternative energy sources such as solar power or biomass.

It’s easy to talk about modern techniques, but really, a lot of the work, especially in the vineyard, amounts to rediscovering the ways of the past. “We have a 16th century book from an agronomist,” says Tonni, “advising a noble on how to work in agriculture. It’s incredible. There are many things very similar to what [EU scientists] say today. There is an incredible quantity of information that we have from our work today that’s very similar to 500 years ago. It’s very beautiful.”

Whatever approach each winery or each region takes, modern solar panels or ancient vineyard practices, the Italian wine industry has taken the values of sustainability to heart. And amidst the nation’s famous diversity, they are unified in wanting their vineyards to prosper into the future.

“The two leading sustainability certification programs in Italy take slightly different approaches while targeting quite similar goals.

**VIVA**

VIVA was developed in 2011, with the support of the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea. The program breaks down their indicators into four categories; for participants, each is validated biennially by a third party.

**Air:** Focuses on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Water:** Evaluates the consumption of fresh water as well as polluted water generated.

**Vineyards:** Conducts research on the use of pesticides, including their effects on the soils, bodies of water, and biodiversity.

**Territory:** Gauges the impact on the surrounding area, e.g., socioeconomic factors, the landscape, traffic from visitors and tourism.

**EQUALITAS**

Equalitas was created by Federdoc, the Italian national confederation of wine appellation consortiums. They approach sustainability in three areas of “practices.”

**Manufacturing Practices:** Including both vineyard and cellar; this covers everything from soil handling, irrigation and chemical use to bottling and winery sanitation.

**Economic Practices:** Monitors practices related to executive functioning, employee management (turnover, advancement plans, etc.), and supplier relations.

**Social Practices:** This branch is devoted to ensuring worker rights, access to training, and non-discrimination practices. Outside of the winery and vineyards, it also includes surveying the local community over concerns and potential conflicts.

**“Sustainability has to be all along our value chain, not just what we do in the field.”**

– Michele Manelli, Equalitas
E&J GALLO LAUNCHES BAREFOOT ON TAP

E&J Gallo recently launched, “Barefoot on Tap” to Breakthru Beverage Maryland’s off premise sales team. Barefoot wine is now available in a 3-liter box.

GORDON RAMSEY CHAMPAGNE DINNER

Moët Hennessy recently hosted a Prestige Champagne Dinner at Gordon Ramsay Steak. Guests enjoyed a variety of marques such as Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Dom Pérignon.

SOUTHERN PROVISIONS HOLIDAY TRADE EVENT

Diageo hosted a holiday trade event at Southern Provisions in Baltimore. Throughout the night, guests mixed and mingled with a Bailey’s Hot Chocolate Bar as well as Crown Royal featured cocktails. Guests were encouraged to bring toys to the event and a donation of over 25 toys was made to Toys for Tots.
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**STORES SOLD TWICE**

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Selling Liquor Stores for 46 Years
This black French-American hybrid grape is known for its ability to make simple, tasty wines. Rougeon produces medium-sized compact clusters. Its grape vines are hardy, but production can be erratic at times, causing its yields to come as often as twice a year or as few as every two years.

Like all other grapes, Rougeon is susceptible to disease. The two highest disease exposures this grape could suffer from are downy mildew and powdery mildew. These diseases have the potential to reduce vine growth, yield, quality, and winter hardiness, especially because the Rougeon grows in tight clusters. Other disease susceptibilities are black rot and botrytis as well as some sensitivity to sulfur.

Rougeon also produces a beautiful red color and is often mixed to make a blended wine. However, it has also been used to make port wines. Rougeon grape is often blended with grapes such as Chambourcin and Baco Noir. Erik Bandzak, of Aliceanna Winery chose this grape due to its deep red color and very dry taste. “Most winemakers use this grape to make port-style wines, but I believe it has a great taste on its own,” said Bandzak.

Bandzak maintains that his use of the grape has little to no downsides. “While most winemakers dislike it because of its inconsistent yields, I have been able to source enough from the farm for the last 10 years to make the smaller amounts I require,” said Bandzak. “I have found it to be consistent in taste and color.”

Romano Winery, founded by Joseph and Jo-Ann Romano, also uses Rougeon in its wines. The founders say that Rougeon boasts “a black cherry aroma leads to a medium-bodied red with a deliciously sweet finish.” The label suggests enjoying with red meat, ripe cheeses or good conversation.

Joe Romano spoke highly of the Rougeon grape. “One of the reasons that I selected Rougeon was because Rougeon wine was not widely available as a varietal as it is typically used in blending for its color,” said Romano. He was looking for a wine that would stand out, and he found the dark red color and aroma attractive and thought as a sweet wine—also atypical or this grape—it would be very interesting. “In the end, the wine turned out to be everything I hoped for, and it’s great with chocolate!”

Taste Maryland Wine

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

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