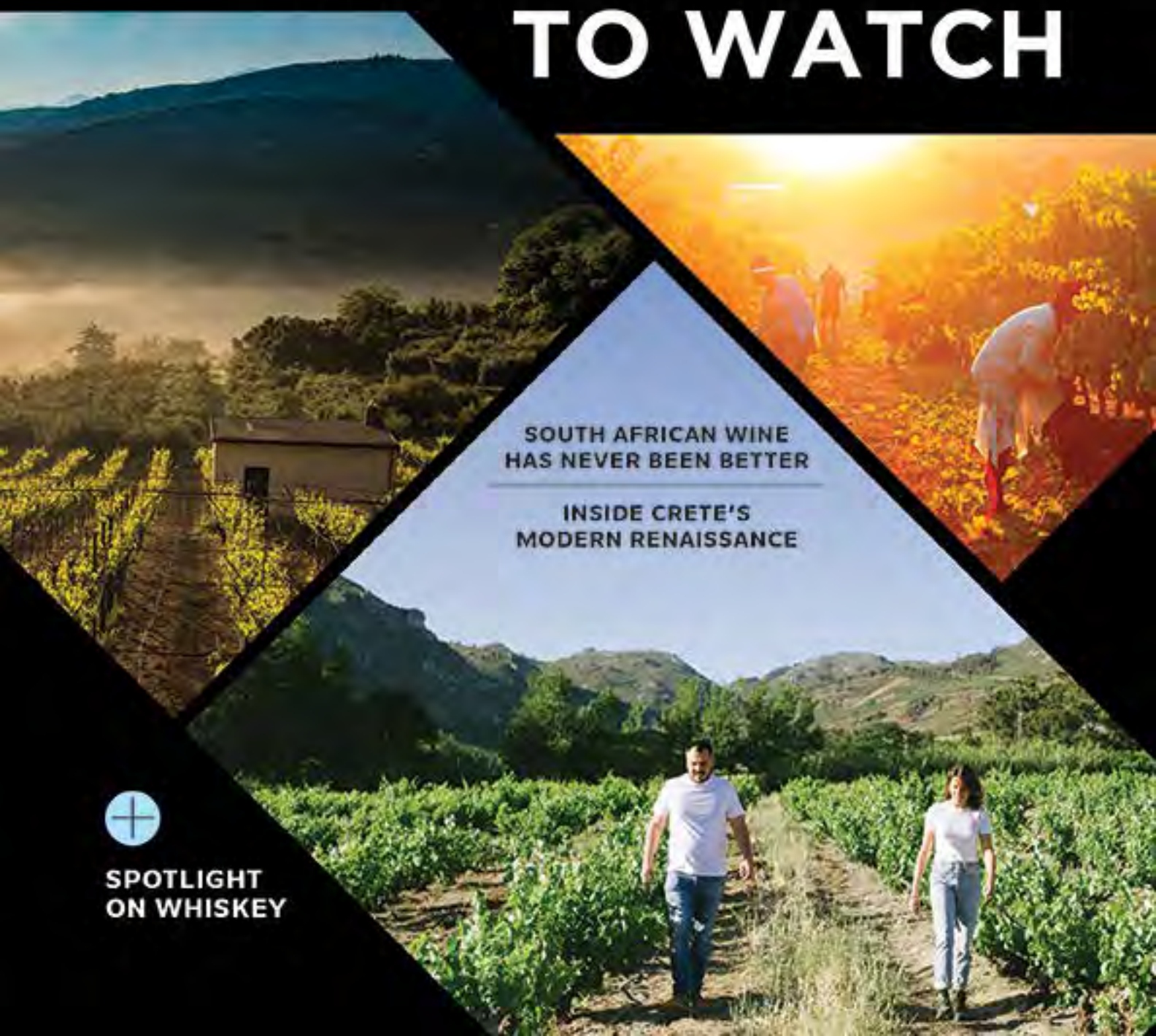


Beverage Journal

OCTOBER 2023

WINE REGIONS TO WATCH



SOUTH AFRICAN WINE
HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER

INSIDE CRETE'S
MODERN RENAISSANCE



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Cover Credit:

Photography courtesy of
Wines of Crete /
Vine Street Imports /
Wines of South Africa

BOOST SALES THIS HALLOWEEN

Halloween presents a golden opportunity for on- and off-premise establishments to boost their sales and engage with customers creatively. By capitalizing on the spooky spirit of the holiday, you can create unique experiences and promotions that entice patrons. Here's an overview of how you can leverage Halloween to increase sales.

On-Premise:

Themed Cocktails: Bars can craft a special Halloween cocktail menu with spooky names and eerie ingredients. These cocktails should not only taste delicious but also be visually striking with garnishes like dry ice, gummy worms, or edible blood. Offering a limited-time menu can generate excitement and encourage customers to try something new.

Costume Contests: Hosting costume contests can draw in crowds seeking to showcase their Halloween spirit. Offer enticing prizes such as gift cards to motivate participation. Promote the event on social media to create buzz and encourage patrons to share their costumes online, promoting your establishment even further.

Decorations: Transforming the bar into a haunted haven can create a memorable atmosphere. Consider cobwebs, jack-o'-lanterns, and eerie lighting to set the mood. Patrons are more likely to stay longer and order more when they are immersed in the Halloween ambiance.

Live Entertainment: Booking bands or DJs who specialize in Halloween-themed music can enhance the experience. Incorporate classic spooky tunes, and encourage dancing and revelry. This not only boosts drink sales but also keeps the crowd engaged and entertained.



Themed Events: Host Halloween-themed events such as horror movie nights, haunted house tours, or psychic readings. These activities can attract a diverse crowd and provide additional revenue streams beyond drinks.

Off-Premise:

Halloween Promotions: Run special promotions on popular spirits, mixers, and party supplies. Offer Halloween-themed beverages like pumpkin spice liqueurs or limited-edition releases. Create eye-catching displays to draw customers' attention.

Tasting Events: Organize in-store tasting events featuring Halloween-themed cocktails. Encourage customers to try new spirits and offer discounts on featured items purchased during the event.

Gift Sets and Accessories: Stock up on Halloween-themed gift sets, glassware, and accessories. Customers looking for unique gifts or party favors will be drawn to these items, increasing sales and enhancing their Halloween celebrations.

Online Engagement: Utilize social media platforms to promote your Halloween offerings. Share cocktail recipes, costume ideas, and tips for hosting Halloween parties. Create interactive events to engage your online audience and drive traffic to your store.

By embracing the spirit of Halloween and tailoring your offerings and experiences accordingly, you can attract a diverse clientele eager to celebrate the holiday. Creating memorable moments and providing unique products or services will not only increase sales during Halloween but also foster customer loyalty that lasts beyond the spooky season. ■

Maryland • Washington, DC

Beverage Journal

Published Monthly by
The Beverage Journal, Inc.
(USPS# PE 783300)

Over 80 Years of Continuous Publication

BEVERAGE JOURNAL, INC.

President / Publisher Stephen Patten
steve@beveragejournalinc.com
410.796.5455

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Thomas W. Murray

Information Technology Director Peter Williams

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief Kristen Bieler

Senior Editor Courtney Schiessl

Contributing Editors Alia Akkam, Arielle Albert,
Keven Danow, Jim Clarke,
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POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to
THE BEVERAGE JOURNAL, INC.
PO Box 2062, Williamsport, PA 17703

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Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, MD and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: MD edition; 1 year \$49.00 plus tax, 2 years \$79.00 plus tax, 3 years \$109.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$10.00 plus tax. DC edition; 1 year \$36.00 plus tax, 2 years \$60.00 plus tax, 3 years \$83.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$5.00 plus tax.

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6

1. RUMCHATA

Just as RumChata's limón, peppermint bark, and coconut cream offerings are clamored for in different seasons, its limited-edition pumpkin spice satiates fall cravings. The liqueur, which melds Caribbean rum with Wisconsin cream and Mexican spice, can be enjoyed on the rocks or to enliven warm coffee concoctions.

\$ SRP: \$24.99 per 750-ml bottle
 rumchata.com

2. ALMA DEL JAGUAR TEQUILA

A collaboration between master distiller Sergio Cruz, tequila expert Adam Fodor, and the Vivancos, a fifth-generation tequila family, Alma del Jaguar is a sustainably produced tequila that was created to help conserve northern Mexico's endangered wild jaguar population. For the reposado, the brand's second release, the blanco distilled from 100 percent Blue Weber agave was aged in Tennessee and Kentucky bourbon barrels for two months before resting in Chardonnay casks from a Santa Barbara winery for an additional month.

\$ SRP: \$59.99 per 750-ml bottle
 almadeljaguar.com

3. DESTRO VINI

Southern Italy's Etna DOC is defined by its volcanic terroir, and it is from these soils teeming with minerals that Destro Vini's Sciarakè red wine is born from 100 percent Nerello Mascalese. Fruity on the palate, it's an ideal companion to meat, cheese, and earthy mushroom dishes, and can easily be aged because of its soft tannins.

\$ SRP: \$18 per 750-ml bottle
 destrovini.com

4. EMPRESS 1908 GIN

Canada's Victoria Distillers, known for its butterfly pea-hued Empress 1908 Gin, has now introduced a delicate elderflower-rose iteration of the spirit. This equally vivid ruby-colored sibling blends its namesake botanicals with classic juniper berries, orange peel, and black carrot, giving way to layers of citrus, spice, and florals that lend itself well to invigorated Negronis, French 75s, and gin and tonics.

\$ SRP: \$39.99 per 750-ml bottle
 empressgin.com

5. REAL SANGRIA

Sangria, a go-to libation for social gatherings, is a breeze to prepare with the arrival of Real Sangria. The pair of fruit-forward, ready-to-drink beverages—there's a red (8% ABV) made from Tempranillo and Garnacha and a citrusy white (7.5% ABV) sprung from Macabeo and Merseguera—simply transform into spritzes when served over ice with a splash of sparkling water and a fruit garnish.

\$ SRP: \$9.99 per 1.5-liter bottle
 realsangriausa.com

6. SUERTE TEQUILA

Along with its blanco, reposado, añejo, and extra añejo varieties, all crafted from 100 percent Blue Weber agave that is slow-roasted and crushed with a tahona stone, Suerte Tequila is producing an extremely limited run (the 1,530 bottles nod to the Norma Oficial Mexicana) of Still Strength Blanco at Tequilera Simbolo. At 104-proof, it's chock full of pure, roasted agave flavor.

\$ SRP: \$69.99 per 750-ml bottle
 drinksuerte.com

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WWW.WHEELHORSEWHISKEY.COM



7. APPLETON ESTATE

Joy Spence, the master blender of Appleton Estate, joined forces with rum collector Luca Gargano of Velier to select the newest limited-edition single marques for Appleton's Hearts collection from an inventory of nearly 200,000 barrels. This series of rare, aged Jamaican rums now includes the honeyed vanilla 1993 (\$300 per 750-ml bottle) and the molasses-laden 2002, distilled in Forsyth pot stills and culled from just 13 and 20 casks, respectively.

\$ SRP: \$220 per 750-ml bottle
appletonestate.com

8. SHIPWRECK RUM

Shipwreck Rum, a product of St. Kitts in the Caribbean, was founded in 2002 by the entrepreneurial father-son team of Bob and Zach Brinley. To convey this feel-good family aspect, photos of the Brinleys now adorn the back label of each bottle as part of the flavored rum brand's upgraded packaging scheme, which also emphasizes the use of such fresh ingredients as Madagascar vanilla beans and Brazilian mangos. Neckers emblazoned with cocktail recipes and QR codes that invite website visits were designed to engage with consumers as well.

\$ SRP: \$31.99 per 750-ml bottle
brinleygoldshipwreck.com

9. NOVO FOGO

Building upon its partnership with Sofi Tukker, Novo Fogo has ramped up its range of USDA-certified organic Brazilian cachaças with Drinkee, named for the dance music duo's hit song. Sofi Tukker's Tucker Halpern and Sophie Hawley-Weld, the co-owners and global ambassadors for Novo Fogo, were eager to give the Silver Cachaça a tropical jolt and did so with an infusion of Brazilian passion fruit, orange peel, vanilla, pure cane sugar, and oak imparted by casks.

\$ SRP: \$31.99 per 750-ml bottle
novofogo.com

10. MAISON FERRAND

The prolific Alexandre Gabriel, the owner of Maison Ferrand, has dreamed up yet another innovation with spirits and cocktail historian David Wondrich. A follow-up to their Ferrand Dry Curaçao, the limited-edition Ferrand Dry Curaçao Yuzu Late Harvest captures the essence of zesty yuzu sourced from L'Agrumiste, a biodiverse orchard in Morocco, well after the citrus has ripened to yield concentrated aromas. The fruit is then fused with a rich base of brandy and Ferrand Cognac for an herbal, sweet pastry finish.

\$ SRP: \$35.99 per 700-ml bottle
maisonferrand.com

11. DON FULANO

Enrique Fonseca and Sergio Mendoza, the fourth- and fifth-generation agave farmers and tequila makers behind Don Fulano, are celebrating the brand's 20th anniversary with a limited-edition añejo produced at La Tequilera distillery. The recipe marries three different batches of añejo and extra añejo tequilas that are naturally fermented and distilled in copper from 100 percent Blue Weber agave, proprietary yeast, and volcanic spring water, then matured in Oloroso and Amontillado sherry casks.

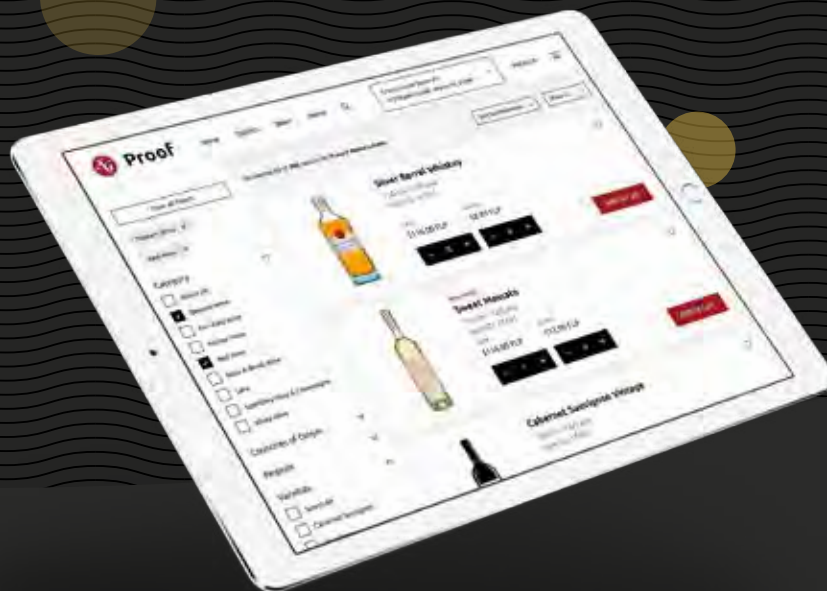
\$ SRP: \$199.99 per 750-ml bottle
donfulano.com

12. CHICKEN COCK WHISKEY

Earlier this year, Chicken Cock Whiskey debuted its limited-release Double Oak expression. Currently, the historic American brand is wooing fans with the 102.4-proof Red Stave, a Kentucky straight bourbon finished in Petite Sirah wine barrels from J. Wilkes, a winery in Santa Barbara, California. Like all Chicken Cock whiskeys, it's made at the Bardstown Bourbon Company.

\$ SRP: \$199 per 750-ml bottle
chickencockwhiskey.com

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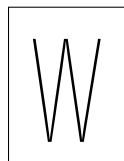
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PREMIUM WHISKEY BRANDS RECONSIDER THE BOX

THE MARKETING BENEFITS OF SECONDARY PACKAGING ARE BEING WEIGHED AGAINST ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, AS WHISKEY BRANDS STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

BY TED SIMMONS



Whether we like it or not, marketing works. Wine sellers might recommend a customer, let's say, a bottle of Glengoyne based in part on its beautiful bright orange box. The perception being that a box, tube, or other piece of secondary packaging elevates the whiskey, especially when gifting. But that notion is beginning to change, as brands confront the environmental cost of standing out on the shelf by redesigning, or even dropping, their secondary pack.

"I think we need to retrain the brain a little bit," says Douglas Taylor, the CEO for Bruichladdich Distillery. Bruichladdich is a certified B Corp, and in furthering its environmental efforts, will be dropping the aluminum tin for its Port Charlotte

and Bruichladdich labels. "We're more reluctant to give things up than we like [to admit] because we think they add value to our lives, but the reality is, when you start to break it down, they don't."

Taylor jokes that some Bruichladdich drinkers have asked where they're supposed to keep their dog treats and loose change now. Mostly, he sees a modern drinker who under-

ABOVE LEFT: Since 2023, Midleton Very Rare has come in a recyclable box.

ABOVE RIGHT: Glenmorangie commissioned illustrator Pomme Chan to create a decorative box for A Tale of the Forest.

RIGHT: Decorative boxes are intended as collectable items rather than disposable packaging.



stands that it's a small sacrifice to make for a greater good. In 2021, the distillery launched its One Tin Lighter campaign—customers at the distillery and on its online shop could opt out of receiving a tin. Taylor says that roughly half chose to keep the tin. "I think perception has changed," he

says, but notes that above a certain price point, the single malt consumer still associates secondary packaging with traditional notions of luxury. "It's a mindset shift that inevitably needs to happen."

Bruichladdich and Port Charlotte expressions tend to retail below \$100, and the distillery

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plans to keep the tin for its higher-end Octomore line for now. The creation, transportation, and eventual discarding of secondary packaging is known to be harmful to the environment, and yet when consumers spend more, they want more. How then do brands balance environmental responsibility with what Taylor calls “an inherent desire” to heighten the romance of whiskey and the occasion of its gifting with packaging embellishment?

FINDING A RECYCLABLE ALTERNATIVE

For Irish Distillers, striving for sustainability meant redesigning the hefty wooden box for its annual Midleton Very Rare release, which retails for \$250. Starting in 2023, the whiskey comes in a 100 percent recyclable box, one that claims to reduce water usage by 39 percent and fossil fuel emissions by 53 percent. The redesign was part of a broader packaging overhaul that includes dropping the secondary pack for Jameson and other lines.

Master distiller Kevin O’Gorman credits Gen Z, his own children included, and the growing alarm surrounding climate change for fueling a shift in consumer perspective toward prioritizing sustainability over perceived luxury. More dedicated whiskey drinkers are coming around as well. “A lot of those people understand that we can’t keep going the way we’re going,” says O’Gorman. “Packaging has to change and we have to change with it. It’s not really a choice anymore, we have to do it.”

The new Midleton Very Rare box sports a Celtic pattern with copper foil accents and what O’Gorman calls a tactile feel. “You can do so much in terms of packaging design now, particularly with cardboard. It looks fantastic and I think it’ll maybe attract more attention,” he says.

Taylor points to new principles composing a sense of modern luxury, one in which simplicity and detail are valued above maximalism. “Glass can be beautiful, and color can be beautiful, and paper can be beautiful,” he says. Brands that rely on secondary packaging are finding inventive ways to convey that sentiment to the consumer.

HIGH-DESIGN PACKAGING FOR SUPER-PREMIUM WHISKIES

Glenmorangie, which is owned by Moët Hennessy, is collaborating with visual artists to create limited-edition secondary packaging for some of its whiskies. It started in 2021, when floral artist Azuma Makoto designed a specialty pack for its 18-year-old single malt. The following year, they commissioned illustrator Pomme Chan to create a decorative box for A Tale of the Forest.

Both whiskies retail at or above \$100, and Luis Frietas, the general manager for Moët Hennessy’s whiskey portfolio, says that the artist collaborations are an effective way to reach new consumers by ap-

pealing to a shared sense of culture. At the same time, Glenmorangie anticipates these bottles, and their artful boxes, to carry additional cachet for whiskey drinkers.

“We are not expecting consumers to be overdrinking us to a point that these collector items will be depleted so fast, that the box just becomes a piece of collateral,” Frietas says. “We expect these to live for quite a long time in the consumer’s household, so we wanted to make them much prettier.”

Frietas says Glenmorangie drinkers have asked for a sense of continuity between these artist collaborations, so that they can be showcased together as a collection, and that the next release in the Tales series will likewise feature custom artwork. “For the foreseeable future, we see a continued collaboration to make that secondary package valuable to the consumer,” he says, “because otherwise it’s just a cardboard box.”

These brands aren’t the only ones rethinking secondary packaging. In August, Laphroaig announced it was shifting to a recyclable carton as part of its packaging redesign. In short, don’t be surprised this holiday season, when your go-to luxury whisky looks or feels a bit different. As Taylor puts it, consumers are slowly learning to leave unnecessary packaging behind. “We believe in a future where there’s no unnecessary packaging,” he says. “There’s a task there, and it will take a bit of time to move away, but I see lots of businesses starting the move and I see a reality facing us.” ■

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Bruichladdich has dropped the tin from its core single malt brands, including Port Charlotte; Floral artist Azuma Makoto designed a specialty pack for Glenmorangie.

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THE OWL BAR

THE HISTORIC OWL BAR IS LUCKY TO HAVE A MAN LIKE
AARON LUNA WHO GIVES A HOOT

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

In crafting a multi-part series on historic bars, restaurants, and taverns in and around Maryland and Washington, D.C., one of the most obvious venues that came to this journalist's mind and just

had to be featured was The Owl Bar in Baltimore City. The Owl Bar was built in 1903 as part of the original Belvedere Hotel. Back then, it was known simply as the Bar at The Belvedere and it was open only to men.

During the Prohibition era, though, the business became much more lax and allowed women (and whiskey). Consequently, it quickly became Charm City's most notorious speakeasy. That's when then-owner Colonel Consolvo added the infamous owl statues to the decor. The legend goes that when the Belvedere's basement was stocked with whiskey, the owls' eyes would



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Aaron Luna
Director of Operations
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It was the 1970s when the bar reopened as The Owl Bar. After going missing for decades, those original owls were returned to their home to watch over The Owl Bar patrons. And if you drown out such modern-day conveniences as beeping, chirping cellphones, you can practically hear, smell, and taste the history of the place.

Aaron Luna is Director of Operations at Belvedere and Co., which operates The Owl Bar. “The Owl Bar is tucked in the back corner off the lobby and is THE original speakeasy!” he stated, during a recent interview. “Our patrons love the moody vibe befitting of an authentic speakeasy. We feel there's a great appreciation for the original materials like the Gothic light fixtures, the masonry work of the 23-foot-high walls, the classic stained-glass rondels, and the original craftsmanship of the 50-foot-long bar, as well as a spectacular back bar that dates back to circa 1900. And, of course, a great place like The Owl Bar has the most welcoming staff.”

For Luna, finding the right Owl Bar staffer begins in the interview process: “I look at the potential candidate to see if they engage with a certain ease and warmth. If you're going to be behind one of the most iconic bars, obviously you need skills, but also a welcoming easy way about you. We've been very fortunate to find the right balance behind that bar.”

Of course, The Belvedere is no longer a hotel, but rather a condo building comprised of residences and businesses since 1990. Luna said, “We pull a lot of folks that reside in the building as well as the surrounding Mt Vernon neighborhood. We get a fair number of guests from the county and other Baltimore City neighborhoods that want a more casual ambience, great libations, and friendly ser-



vice. Since our events company, Belvedere & Co., hosts social gatherings and weddings primarily on the weekends, we'll also get a lot of those guests coming in either before the start of their event or at the end to cap off their special evening.”

For a small, independent establishment, The Owl Bar boasts a unique beverage menu for its diverse clientele. Its draft beer lineup rotates seasonally. But one constant fan favorite made exclusively for The Owl Bar is always available—the Owl Bar Lager, which is brewed by Founders Brewing Company. “Whenever we can, we like to feature local breweries,” remarked Luna. “Our bartenders are very engaged, and they appreciate feedback from our guests. We brought Bud Light & Michelob Ultra on tap because people loved how much they preferred it over bottled.”

He added, “Our cocktails are center stage. We have our classics, but with a twist. We have a popular Peruvian drink, Chicha Sour. We get rave reviews on our Bacon Hazelnut Old Fashioned and the Owl Espresso Martini, which has our unique touch. All of our syrups are prepared in house. Even the ginger syrup is made fresh from ginger root. We also have a nice top shelf selection – Lagavulin 16 Scotch, Elyah Craig Barrel Proof Bourbon, and Clase Azul Anejo Tequila, to



**The Bacon Hazelnut Old Fashioned &
The Owl Espresso Martini**

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Jacque York & Sergio Palestina
Bartenders Extraordinaire
The Owl Bar

mention a few.”

The Owl Bar’s wine selection was undergoing a refresh at the time of this interview in late August. A large cross-section of Luna’s clientele had expressed a willingness to experiment with wines they haven’t tried before. “Although our dinner menu is a more casual fare, people still like a nice wine with their really great Belvedere Burger,” he said. “Fourteen years ago when this owner came in, you wouldn’t see Silverado Cabernet from Napa or Brancott Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand offered, but this is where our clientele is today.”

Luna feels very fortunate to be part of such a historic establishment and a company so dedicated to customer service. Although his title is Director of Operations, he wears many hats. “One of the perks for me is the creativity I express in our beverage development and food menus,” he stated. “I really enjoy meeting with our vendors, exploring the trends and the overall market. Being part of this culturally rich landmark is so rewarding! I have found a home.”

In terms of challenges, Luna listed the business decision that was made not too long ago to reduce The Owl Bar’s hours of operation and make the most of the hours the establishment is open. The rising cost of goods and services is also something he deals with.



Through it all, he keeps a stiff upper lip and lives by the advice: “You’re only as good as you are today. Always strive to do better tomorrow!”

When asked if he had any advice for others reading this who would love to be at the reins of a historic bar, tavern, or restaurant one day, he was quick to provide counsel. “Start with heart,” he said. “Surround yourself with good people, lead with integrity, and be good stewards of your establishment. And always remember your ‘why.’ I do. The hospitality industry is in my bones. I can’t imagine I would love it as much as I do if it were predictable and steady!” ■



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THE SLOW BURN OF SOUTH AFRICAN WINE

SOUTH AFRICA IS PRODUCING SOME OF THE BEST QUALITY-
AND VALUE-DRIVEN WINES ON THE MARKET TODAY—
HAVE AMERICANS NOTICED?

BY CAITLIN A. MILLER





For a select group of dined-in wine professionals, it's common knowledge that the South African wine industry is booming. Today, the wines aren't just good, "the wines are some of the greatest values ever," says Aaron Meeker, the national sales manager for Vine Street Imports in New Jersey. "I firmly believe that South Africa is the most exciting place on the planet making wine."

Hadley Douglas, the cofounder of The Urban Grape in Boston, agrees. "[South African winemakers] aren't bound by a lot of rules so they're able to play with their wine, which means that there are these great, interesting, unique wines coming out of [the country]."

But in the minds of many American wine drinkers, South Africa remains a little-known wine country, or worse, the land of burnt-rubber Pinotage—assuming they can conjure an image of South African wine at all. While other far-off countries like Australia can quickly summon thoughts of cheap and cheerful critter wine, South Africa remains more of a mystery.

"I think the most obvious reason is proximity, both physically and imaginatively," says Robert Lozelle, a sommelier at

Angler in San Francisco. "Imaginatively, for most of us, myself included, we know very few South African people ... and very few [Americans] have traveled there."

This lack of awareness is also reflected in the data. Compared to other major non-European wine-producing countries, South Africa commands the smallest volume share of imported wine to the U.S. at less than half a percent, according to IWSR Drinks Market Analysis data from 2022. This is significantly below other major non-European wine countries; the next-smallest volume share is Argentina at four percent.

With South Africa producing such exciting, high-quality, value-driven wines, why aren't more American wine drinkers—and buyers—paying attention?

A COMPLEX HISTORY

"One of the interesting things about selling South African wine is you have to learn a lot about politics," says Molly Choi, the New York City-based SVP of marketing for Broadbent Selections.



In many ways, the current state of South African wine sales in the U.S. can be traced back to apartheid. Next year is the 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid, but "it is still one of the first things that we think about," says Douglas.

Apartheid, a system of institutionalized racial segregation, was instituted by the South African government from 1948 to 1994, when the government transitioned to a democracy. In 1986, as a response to South Africa's political system, the U.S. passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which imposed sanctions on the South African government—and prohibited, among other things, exports of agricultural products to the U.S., including wine.

During that time, South Africa's wine industry also operated under a heavily regulated system. "The South African wine industry, for a lot of the 20th century, was controlled by the umbrella cooperative organization KWV," explains Jim Clarke, the U.S. marketing manager for Wines of South Africa. The KWV was founded in 1918 to fix the wine industry's production problems, but because the organization developed close ties with the government, it became a controlling force in the industry and ultimately stifled its growth. "In the 1970s, KWV was focused on protecting grower prices. They kept trying to raise prices, whereas South African Breweries aggressively cut prices to attract the South African market. So wine really lost out," says Clarke.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A bottle of South African wine being poured; Stellenbosch Wine Routes vineyard; Mother Rock's Liquid Skin; Aaron Meeker, the national sales manager for Vine Street Imports; Banele Vakele of Tembela Wines; Savage Wines' barrel room.



As a result, the South African wine industry struggled in both domestic and international markets. “Even though there was a very rich history of South African winemaking, everything really fell apart during apartheid,” says Douglas. “The quality of the wine during that time really went down. They just weren’t able to keep up with new techniques, new ways of thinking. They weren’t able to get new grape clones. Everything [was affected].”

Meanwhile in the U.S., “We were supposed to boycott everything from South Africa,” says Douglas. “It takes time to change those buying patterns.”

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Once apartheid ended, the South African wine industry wasted no time returning to the U.S. market—but its reentry was largely unsuccessful.

“In the U.S., we had importers right off the bat taking off at the end of apartheid,” says Clarke. “For example, Cape Classics, which dates to 1992, is our oldest South African specialty importer. There was also some investment from big outside companies like Gallo. There are a few reasons why that didn’t work out so well.”

In the 1990s, 80 percent of South African vineyards were planted to white grapes, like Chenin Blanc and Colombard. But, “the demand in the market at that time was for red wines,” says Clarke. “So, there was a lot of replanting. We shifted, in the course of 10 years, to the balance we have now: 55 percent white grapes, 45 percent red.” The

Trailblazing winemaker Natasha Williams crafts the Lelie Van Saron wines, imported by Vine Street Imports.



RIGHT, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Hadley Douglas, the cofounder of The Urban Grape; at The Urban Grape, cofounder and wine buyer TJ Douglas dedicates 10 percent of SKUs to South Africa.

problem? “A lot of winemakers had to learn how to make good red wines because they didn’t have experience with it.”

At the same time, in an effort to reestablish South Africa’s image and fulfill consumer demand for international-style red wines, Pinotage was promoted in the ’90s as being a uniquely South African red grape. “It really bore the brunt of this poor response,” says Clarke.

“Pinotage was especially handicapped because all of the [winemaking] textbooks were about how to make [Cabernet Sauvignon] or how to make Shiraz,” continues Clarke. “And if you make Pinotage the way you make Cabernet or Shiraz, it’s going to be a disaster. For example, if you harvest Pinotage and Cabernet at the same brix, Pinotage is so nutrient rich that the Cabernet will take a whole week to ferment to dryness, but the Pinotage can ferment to dryness in 24 to 48 hours. When you ferment it that quickly, you can get all sorts of mercaptans and off-aromas.”

By rushing to the market after decades of dwindling quality and a lack of understanding of current market demands, South Africa made a poor first impression in the U.S.—and they are still trying to recover.

A LACK OF POWERHOUSE PRODUCERS

After the poor response to many South African red wines, “[big companies] have been reluctant to make that same investment,” says Clarke.

Today, South Africa lacks a powerhouse producer, such as New Zealand’s Cloudy Bay or Argentina’s Catena Zapata, that can put in a large enough investment to significantly move the needle with the U.S. market. “[South Africa] just doesn’t necessarily have the big volume, big money brands that exist in other regions to create that consumer awareness



in the Piggly Wiggly, and the Kroger, and the Whole Foods, that just sort of cements the thinking, ‘this must be good because I see it everywhere,’” says Choi.

In many New World wine regions, a few large companies make up the majority of the wine industry. “For South Africa, the top four companies only make up 40 percent of the industry,” explains Clarke. “What this means is that we have very few companies who have true economies of scale in the international sense. Fulfilling things like the bulk market, creating low-budget wines, end up falling on to producers that can’t do it as cheaply as their competitors overseas.”

While a big-budget producer could move the needle with the mass market, it’s an approach that not everyone agrees with. “I think that can get you in trouble,” says Meeker. “If you are so reliant on Casella Wines in Australia to produce Yellowtail—was that good for Australia? I don’t know. It was good for farmers at first, but then farmers can’t make a profit because they’re driving prices down so much.”

“With South Africa, we’ve been able to watch [other wine-producing countries] and see what their pitfalls and mistakes are,” says Choi. “But what we’ve never enjoyed is a budget to really build brand South Africa.”

A STAGNANT IMAGE IN THE U.S.

Without that budget, the image of South African wine in the U.S. hasn't changed much over the last 30 years. "I've traveled to 21 states in the U.S. and more than 60 cities, and today that Pinotage-burnt-rubber is still lingering among Americans," says Tinashe Nyamudoka, the founder of Kumusha Wines. "Unfortunately, that's their gauge of what South Africa is as a wine industry."

That lingering image has stuck with trade professionals as well. "We want to think of wine professionals as professionals," says Lozelle. "That is to say, they're up to date, they're keeping up with trends, they're widely tasting from emerging regions, but the truth is most people don't [keep up]. I think a lot of people, especially professionals, formed opinions early on about Pinotage, for example, and then they never really updated that knowledge."

This outdated view of South African wine often persists where it matters most—national accounts. "The largest companies have the longest institutional memory," says Clarke. "I know if someone works for a big company or is more gray-haired than me, they are the ones who are going to say 'Oh Pinotage, rubber, huh!' Whereas when I talk to a young sommelier or independent retailer, they're going to be like, 'What's up with Pinotage right now?' They're curious."

But today, even South Africa's biggest champions are steering clear of Pino-

tage. "We don't sell a lot of Pinotage," says Meeker. "I've not had many that I liked." Instead, the South African wine industry, and the folks selling the wines in the U.S., are crafting a new narrative for the country. The new story, however, is not so straightforward, which may—or may not—be a bad thing.

"Nowadays, we're really focusing on Chenin," says Clarke. "But we're also trying to break apart South Africa so I can say Stellenbosch Cabernet, Swartland Chenin, or Hemel-en-Aarde Pinot Noir, so that each [region] is finding its own home, but it doesn't look like the nation as a whole is desperate to sell anything they can."

A SLOW BURN IN THE U.S. MARKET

With greater barriers to entry at the national level, many people are focusing their efforts on independent wine bars and retail shops, where slow—but steady—progress is being made.

When Vine Street Imports started working with South African wine in 2015, they had their work cut out for them. "The first year was, I'm not going to say a struggle, but it was definitely getting people past that conversation of either, one, 'I don't need to buy South African wine from you because I get it from whomever else,' or two, 'Why would I buy it from you?'" says Meeker. "Year two was when ... we started seeing much more consistent successes. I think it was just doing missionary work; it was getting out there, preaching the gospel of South Africa, door to door, account to account, as much as we could."

At The Urban Grape, an independent wine store that dedicates more than 10 percent of their SKUs to South Africa, "anytime that we turn our focus to South Africa, we get a bump [in sales]," says Douglas. "At our September 2022 event, featuring Tinashe Nyamudoka, Rüdger Van Wyk [of Kara-Tara Wines], Berene Sauls [of Tesselaarsdal Wines], and Ntsiki Biyela [of Aslina], we had \$35,000 in sales and over 1,080 bottles sold over six hours



A lineup of wines from Lourens Family.

and two events. We just have to put it in their glass."

As inflation continues to drive up prices for classic regions like Burgundy and Champagne, South Africa is also seeing more success in the on-premise channel. "We are primarily a Burgundy wine list," says Lozelle, "but we're starting to notice that's becoming unsustainable, especially through your usual restaurant markups. We're having to find wines that have these characteristics, but are from other regions."

This is where South Africa really shines. "Show me what you have in your book from France that hits \$18 wholesale and drinks like this 40-year-old-vine, delicious, single-vineyard Chenin that's native-yeast fermented in old wood," says Meeker. "I'm happy to have that conversation. I think that's where [buyers] started to understand that if you sell these wines in a different way, you can get results and then eventually have a much larger conversation about South Africa."

While South Africa can offer the quality and value that any wine drinker—or buyer—hopes for, there's still a long road toward educating the U.S. market on the true value proposition of these wines. "South Africa is just a tiny drop in the world of wine, especially in America," says Nyamudoka. "Most Americans don't even know where South Africa is. You have to teach them where South Africa is first, then introduce them to the wine. I know for a fact that it's not about quality; it's just about the perception and it's about the South African industry making a collective effort to market themselves." ■

Tinashe Nyamudoka, the founder of Kumusha Wines.



BOTTLING SARDINIA'S UNIQUE VITICULTURAL HISTORY

WITH A CENTURY OF ACCESS TO THE REGION'S MOST LAUDED TERROIRS AND GRAPE VARIETIES, SELLA & MOSCA WINES CAPTURE THE CHARM AND ESSENCE OF SARDINIA

Though grapevines have flourished for over 6,000 years on Sardinia's rugged slopes, the island's complex viticultural chronology might have vanished if it weren't for two turn-of-the-century entrepreneurs, Erminio Sella and Edgardo Mosca, producing charismatic wines that echo their unique island upbringing.

Sella and Mosca—a lawyer and engineer by training, respectively—didn't simply buy a vineyard and begin producing wine. Instead, the two developed a grapevine nursery on the northwestern edge of Sardinia in 1899 to supply mainland vineyards recovering from Europe's phylloxera epidemic. In the process, they became Sardinia's epicenter for clean grapevine material, transforming their I Piani estate into a living library for the island's vinous history.

Today, Sella & Mosca still grows grapes in the same locales as the Phoenicians, yet their wines are beautifully contemporary expressions of the region. By balancing modern technology with time-honored farming and winemaking practices, winemaker and general manager Giovanni Pinna manages to thread the proverbial needle.

"We have always worked to minimize interventions with the utmost respect for the base raw material: the grape," he says. "To be able to achieve this we make use of extremely soft crushing and pressing systems, rigorous control of fermentation temperatures, and very high-quality wooden casks for the refinement of red wines."

HARNESSING THE UNIQUE MEDITERRANEAN TERROIR

While Sella & Mosca has remained on the cutting edge of technology, the team's reverence for their local history is impossible to miss—especially in the native grape bottlings cultivated at their Alghero headquarters.

"The area of Alghero is characterized by a strong marine influence," says Pinna of the terroir around Sella & Mosca headquarters. "It gives the wines a Mediterranean character and aroma rich in spices with fruity, briny and sometimes balsamic notes."

Located on the island's northwest coast, Alghero is the site that first captivated Sella and Mosca over a century ago. Over time, the families expanded their small nursery, converting farm and pastureland into vineyards. Eventually, they expanded into hospitality and became the most ardent champions for Sardinian wine.



Inspired by Sardinia's rugged natural beauty and bounty, Sella & Mosca has always operated with sustainability at its core. Since the original winery was built in 1902, the estate has interplanted native trees like palms and oleanders to naturally combat pests and regulate the vines. The estate also maintains a 12.5-acre nature preserve for local fauna and Mediterranean botanicals. Now owned and operated by the Moretti family, the original I Piani estate covers 1,600 acres of land and 1,200 acres of organic viticulture, making it the largest contiguous vineyard in Italy and the second-largest in Europe.

This predominantly flat land, referred to as the Nurra, is characterized by sandy clay soils with naturally high concentrations of iron. The hot, dry climate and near-constant sea breezes mitigate disease pressure in the vineyards, allowing for easy, high-quality organic viticulture and wines with freshness and verve.

SELLA & MOSCA'S COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS GRAPES

Vermentino grapes, which supply Sella & Mosca's La Cala Vermentino di Sardegna DOC, are the primary white grape variety here and across the island. Named for a picturesque stretch of Sardinia's coastline, La Cala offers up a medley of citrus and tropical fruit in the glass, accented by bursts of wild flowers, salinity, and hints of steely minerality that reflect its island heritage.

Cannonau, the genetic predecessor of Grenache, also thrives on the Nurra creating powerful, elegant red wines and offering color and structure in blends. The grape, which archaeological evidence suggests originated in Sardinia, is a cornerstone of the region's viticultural history and renowned for its intense color. Likely an adaptation that allowed the grape to thrive with little water in the hot Mediterranean climate, Cannonau boasts nearly triple the antioxidant flavonoids of other red grapes. Many researchers now believe Cannonau is Sardinia's secret to its large



Giovanni Pinna, Sella & Mosca's winemaker and general manager.

population of centenarians, which has led the island to be labeled a Blue Zone.

The Cannonau di Sardegna Riserva DOC is Sella & Mosca's love letter to Cannonau. Aged for two years prior to release, including six months in large oak casks, the wine boasts an intense bouquet of violets, kirsch, and juicy red fruit notes accented by herbs and firm tannins.

The estate also produces Tanca Farra, an Alghero DOC wine, with native grapes. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and—above all—Cannonau, the wine is a modern twist on Sardinia's classic reds that boasts dark fruit flavors and a firm structure. Aged for a full year in a mix of used French oak barriques and large casks, the wine exudes a heady mix of floral, herbaceous and tar aromas accented by leather and spice before a segueing to fruit notes on the dry, full-bodied palate.

DEVELOPING A DISTINCTLY SARDINIAN STYLE

"In the past, Sardinia has often produced highly alcoholic, structured and not very elegant wines," explains Pinna. "But starting from the 80s the local wineries, and us first, have changed their style."

Few wines embody Pinna's sentiment like the Marchese di Villamarina, the estate's benchmark Cabernet Sauvignon. Though Cabernet Sauvignon is now grown in winemaking regions globally, Sella & Mosca was an early pioneer of the variety, which it cultivated for mainland European clients at its nursery. When grown on ferrous clay and sand soils of the Alghero region, the team discovered, the grape is capable of producing exquisite Cabernet with a distinctly Sardinian identity. Since

1989, Marchese di Villamarina has stood as a beacon of Sardinian Cabernet Sauvignon, showing layers of fruit and earth flavors plus a distinctive balsamic note.

In particular, the estate is renowned for its Torbato wines—delicate golden bottlings made from a grape variety that barely escaped extinction in the 1960s and '70s. A relative of Malvasia, Torbato was brought over when Sardinia was a Spanish colony in the 1700s and was known for producing vibrant golden wines. But after phylloxera struck the island, many growers abandoned the delicate variety whose grapes naturally produce less must than their peers. But Sella & Mosca continued to cultivate the grape, and the winery was the first to bottle a single-vineyard expression of Torbato. It is now beloved for both their still and sparkling versions of the variety, which pair beautifully with the region's seafood-centric fare.

The families' dedication to Sardinia is palpable on the I Piani estate, but extends far beyond the borders of their vineyards in Alghero, to vineyard sites near Olbia and the island's remote southwestern corner. On the northeastern edge of the island, Sella & Mosca cultivates Vermentino atop highly granitic soils in the Vermentino di Gallura DOCG. With vineyards established midway up Mount Limbara, vines here benefit from broad diurnal shifts that balance Gallura's otherwise sultry climate. The result is a well-proportioned Vermentino di Gallura with rich citrus notes, vibrant acidity, and a throughline of saline minerality that recalls the vineyards' sea-side perch.

From reestablishing Torbato to supplying phylloxera-free grapevines to mainland Europe, Sella & Mosca has had an outsized impact on Sardinian winemaking for over a century, delicately combining a respect for history with the technology required to captivate generation after generation of Sardinian wine lovers. ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, Sella & Mosca.

FESTIVE, DESSERT-STYLE COCKTAILS

WITH A RAMPED-UP ROSTER OF DECADENT FLAVORS, CHOCOLAT DELUXE LIQUEURS HEIGHTEN THE REALM OF AFTER-DINNER DRINKING

It's been more than a decade since ChocoLat Deluxe Liqueurs—part of the M.S. Walker Brands portfolio—have invigorated cocktails like the Espresso Martini and Manhattan. Beyond meshing with the likes of vodka and whiskey to elicit sweet riffs on modern and classic go-to tipples, however, its rich, velvety profile can be savored simply on the rocks by sipping it as a comforting digestif. Drizzling the liqueurs over bowls of ice cream and baking them into other confections also add boozy dimensions to traditional desserts.

Produced and bottled in Boston, ChocoLat Deluxe Liqueurs first pulled in fans with its flagship Triple Chocolate Liqueur, which melds fresh dairy and premium spirits with a mix of milk, fudge, and dark chocolates. In 2022, the same recipe served as the base for two equally coveted silky and versatile spinoffs: the subtly tangy, toffee-like Salted Caramel Chocolate Liqueur, and Peanut Butter Chocolate Liqueur, reminiscent of nutty candy. The newest flavor, the buttery, vanilla-tinged White Chocolate Liqueur, launched this year.

A minimalist but elegant packaging upgrade, complete with scalloped labels, script lettering, and enticing illustrations of chocolate squares, was rolled out two years ago and reinforces the straightforward blends of quality ingredients embraced in this quartet of 30-proof li-

queurs. Despite the premium nature of each of these varieties, they are priced more competitively (\$19.99 per 750-milliliter bottle) than other brands in this booming category.

According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, sales of cordials and liqueurs grew by 12.2

White Chocolate Liqueur, the newest flavor, launched this year alongside the portfolio of Triple Chocolate Liqueur, Salted Caramel Chocolate Liqueur, and Peanut Butter Chocolate Liqueur

percent in 2021—the highest volume since 2002—to nearly 22 million nine-liter cases. Likewise, supplier revenues were also up by 15.2 percent in the same year.

Much of this increasing interest is driven by the shifting, important role that liqueurs are now playing in the renaissance of whimsical martini cocktails. Rather than serving them only neat, on the rocks, or in coffee, as has long been the norm, today's bartenders are unlocking their potential in creative nightcaps, and consumers are following suit.

Demand for ChocoLat Deluxe Liqueurs has resulted in an expansive distribution network across the country and strong double-digit growth in recent years. Although its soft, chocolatey layers are welcome year-round for special occasions and regular cravings alike, sales aptly tend to soar around candy-fueled holidays, such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, and Easter. Whipping up whimsical concoctions at home, capped off with such over-the-top garnishes as chocolate shavings and peanut butter cups, indeed embodies the notion of indulgent celebration. ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, M.S. Walker Brands.



TRIPLE CHOCOLATE MARTINI

1 oz. vodka
1 oz. ChocoLat Triple Chocolate Liqueur
1 oz. crème de cacao
½ oz. milk or cream

Method: Combine ingredients, shake with ice, and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with chocolate shavings.



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INSIDE CRETE'S MODERN RENAISSANCE

AFTER A LATE BOUT OF PHYLLOXERA, THIS GREEK ISLAND'S WINE
IS ENTERING A NEW ERA THANKS TO ENTHUSIASTIC YOUNG VINTNERS
AND A NEWFOUND APPRECIATION FOR NATIVE GRAPES

BY PAMELA VACHON

The fact that evidence of winemaking has been found on Crete dating to the Bronze Age makes it one of Europe's oldest known wine regions, and would seem to put it squarely out of the "emerging" category. However, due to a convergence of political and environmental factors, plus a shifting tourism landscape, the modern era of Cretan winemaking is still effectively in its infancy.



Crete currently accounts for over 10 percent of the wine produced in Greece, from 11 native varieties and seven PDOs, but most of the island industry's growth has taken place only in the past 20 years. "A combination of ancient heritage and modern exploration makes Crete's wine scene both rooted in history, and at the beginning of a new era," says Nikos Douloufakis, the owner and enologist of Douloufakis Winery.

A LATE PHYLLOXERA OUTBREAK

Of singular importance to this renaissance is that phylloxera came



to Crete as late as 1977—well over a century after it plagued Europe’s mainland—wiping out Crete’s vineyards at a time when European wines were rising in popularity worldwide. While devastating to the agricultural industry of Greece’s largest island, this outbreak, timed with the end of Greek dictatorship, plus the growth of post-World War II tourism across Europe, created an opportunity for young, ambitious winemakers in Crete.

“It was a fresh start,” says Afshin Molavi, the owner of Manousakis Winery, of the blank-slate that was arguably necessary to push Crete’s wine industry into unfamiliar territory, and eventually onto an international stage.

Prior to phylloxera, winemaking was common across Crete, with many rural citizens making their own. “Wine was not a luxury,” says Giorgios Mastrakoulis, the events coordinator of Wines of Crete, “and winemaking was just part of an average person’s year,” utilizing communal wine presses located in village centers. Commercially made wine in Crete was therefore of little value to local consumers, and was dominated by a few large co-ops, who largely made wine in bulk, and very little bottled.

What’s more, viticulture and vinifica-

“[Tourists who are] coming now [are] saying they just want the native varieties.”

– Afshin Molavi, Manousakis Winery

tion practices favored quantity over quality. According to Douloufakis, “Vineyards were planted with a mix of native grape varieties in what was known as logado, meaning mixed local varieties.”

This changed when nearly 20,000 acres of vineyards were replanted between 1988 and 1992. Based largely on input from European enologists, the majority of these vineyards were planted with international varieties rather than native grapes. “The first people to try to renovate the vineyards didn’t know the value of the Cretan varieties,” says Maria Titaki, the co-owner and enologist of Titakis Wines, one of the oldest wineries in Crete. Likewise, Cretan producers also had little to no experience

with monocultural vineyards or varietal wines, and weren’t aware of their native grapes’ individual characteristics.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, and Syrah therefore became some of Crete’s most important grapes during its agricultural reconstruction. Not only did these international grapes succeed in Crete’s climate, there was also an assumption that international varieties would have a greater appeal both to Crete’s visitors, and to Crete’s local population, who likewise had no familiarity with or particular esteem for Crete’s native grapes as individual wines. “For quite a long time, there was an idea that something foreign would automatically be something better,” says Mastrakoulis.

THE MODERN ERA OF CRETAN WINE

Today, however, the Cretan wine landscape is driven by indigenous varieties like Vidiano and Liatiko, with young, ambitious producers that are merging tradition and innovation toward the promotion of the region and its capabilities. Whereas Crete used to have only a few large cooperative wineries, the industry has grown to 38 wineries in 2023, mostly boutique in nature, more than doubling itself in the past 15 years. A mixture of ambition,

OPPOSITE: The tasting room at Manousakis Winery.
ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Douloufakis Winery vineyards;
Douloufakis ‘Dafnios’ Vidiano.



data, and a new wave of tourism rooted in authenticity over familiarity all helped to bring about the restoration of Crete's native grapes, and usher in Crete's modern winemaking era.

To begin, a rising interest in enology followed the reconstruction of the vineyards; Titaki and Douloufakis were among those who studied abroad to bring elevated viticulture and vinification techniques back to Crete. With that, "Vineyards started to be cultivated based on microclimate data and scientific vine management techniques," says Douloufakis, all of which pointed toward the native varieties. The rising popularity internationally of Greek grapes from other regions also contributed. "Because of the interest in Assyrtiko [from Santorini], and then suddenly see-



"There's a realization that in order to be able to export our wine we needed to have a product that was different and that it had its own identity."

— Giorgios Mastrakoulis, Wines of Crete

ing Nemea getting famous, then Naoussa, there's a feeling we should also look in our own backyard," says Molavi.

The reintroduction of Cretan varieties took place as early as the 1990s, with most wineries planting or grafting in earnest by the early to mid 2000s, along with the establishment of several Cretan PDOs. Early wines made with native grapes during this time typically appeared in blends with international varieties to aid in their acceptance with visitors and locals alike: "People didn't know exactly what to trust from the Cretan varieties," says Titaki. "If you also have a common variety in the glass it's easier to make them try it."

In the last decade, however, tourism has become a major factor in Crete's success with its native grapes, in a turnabout from the assumption that visitors would primarily prefer familiar ones. Authenticity is at the forefront of visitors' preferences in recent years, and Cretan winemakers have sought to capitalize on that. Most wineries on Crete now offer tasting rooms, many of which are still small enough to have the winemakers themselves on hand to speak about their wines. "Everyone's coming now saying they just want the native varieties," says Molavi.

Authenticity is also a major factor in Crete's ability to export wines, a practice which has been growing steadily over the past several years, with sales of Cretan wines to the U.S. almost quadrupling over the past 10 years. "Crete would never be able to focus on Cabernet Sauvignon, for example, and compete with other established winemaking countries," says Mastrakoulis. "There's a realization that in order to be able to export our wine we needed to have a product that was different and that it had its own identity."

"In a competitive global wine market, regions that offer distinctive native varieties [sic] such as Crete can stand out from the crowd," adds Douloufakis. "Those who produce wines from unique and lesser-known grapes can find a niche market of consumers looking for something different." ■



LEFT: Manousakis 'Nostos' Vidianos

ABOVE: Crete's landscape now produces 10 percent of Greece's wine.

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WHISKEY: WHAT'S NEW



HOME BARTENDING

Ready-to-serve libations are now front and center in **The Glenlivet** portfolio. Easy to prepare, its 80-proof Twist & Mix Cocktails are fueled by technology that combines the single malt Scotch whisky with its natural flavorings upon turning the cap. Up first is an Old Fashioned laced with orange, nutmeg, and cinnamon that can be simply poured over ice and garnished with an orange peel, and the New Manhattan, a riff on the classic with touches of cherry and ginger that only needs a chilled glass and a brandied cherry flourish.

SRP: \$21.99 per 375-ml bottle

NEW AND IMPROVED

It's the same **Maker's Mark** 46 Cask Strength recipe, but the packaging for this barrel-proof bourbon was recently updated. Like the Maker's Mark 46 bottle, its new design captures the distillery's handmade approach to production and distinct embrace of French oak staves. The uncut whiskey, with its robust flavors of caramel and dark fruit, will be released annually as a limited edition.

SRP: \$64.99 per 750-ml bottle



ANCIENT MYTH

The inaugural innovation in Islay distillery **Ardbeg**'s Anthology Collection of experimental single malts is The Harpy's Tale. A tribute to the winged half-human, half-bird creature pulled from mythology, the 92-proof Scotch whisky was aged in former bourbon and Sauternes wine casks and deftly straddles the realms of sweet and smoke.

SRP: \$164.99 per 750-ml bottle



OPEN FLAME

Bib & Tucker small-batch bourbons expand with the arrival of an 88-proof Double Char expression. First aged in new white American oak for six years in Tennessee, the liquid then matures for at least five additional months in a new heavily charred cask smoked with sugar maple that yields notes of toasted cinnamon and sweet corn.

SRP: \$54.99 per 750-ml bottle



CINEMATIC STORYTELLING

Filmland Spirits unites the worlds of North American whiskey and retro-inspired B-movies. Consider the 94-proof Town at the End of Tomorrow, a nine-year-old Kentucky bourbon distilled from 78 percent corn, 13 percent rye, and nine percent malted barley, or the 108-proof Ryes of the Robots Extended Cut, the cask-strength iteration of Filmland's popular small-batch rye. Both new products are paired with over-the-top flicks that revolve around dystopian bourbon shortages and robotic bartenders.

SRP: \$109.99 (Town at the End of Tomorrow) and \$74.95 (Ryes of the Robots Extended Cut) per 750-ml bottle





SAN FRANCISCO ORIGINAL

Showcasing the modern packaging that the brand introduced in 2022 are **Old Potrero Rye Whiskey's** trio of limited-edition, made-in-San Francisco single-barrel varieties. Along with a 129.9-proof straight rye whiskey aged for more than eight years, there is a 126.5-proof sherry cask finish and a 131.2-proof port cask finish, all of them matured in barrels that are toasted and charred by hand over oak fires.

SRP: \$89.99 per 750-ml bottle



FIRST HIT

On the heels of its acquisition by Coors Spirit Co., **Blue Run Spirits** has released its 117.1-proof Trifecta. A small-batch three-age Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey, the company's first of its kind, just under half its composition is a six-year-old whiskey featuring a mash bill of 78 percent yellow corn, 12 percent rye, and 10 percent malted barley. This is bolstered with eight- and nine-year-old barrels that encounter the highest temperatures in the warehouse giving them a jolt of complexity, or what whiskey director Shaylyn Gammon calls "wood heat."

SRP: \$179.99 per 750-ml bottle



ALL TOGETHER NOW

In the late 14th century, King Robert II ruled the Kingdom of Scotland, uniting long-divided regions. Likewise, the blended Scotch whisky named for this historic figure, part of Ian Macleod Distillers, brings together whiskies from the Islands, Highlands, Lowlands, and Speyside. Three **King Robert II** 80-proof variants are now available in the U.S.: the butterscotch-tinged Treble Cask Matured and the 12- and 15-year-olds redolent of vanilla.

SRP: \$14.99 (Treble Cask Matured), \$21.99 (12-year-old), and \$28.99 (15-year-old) per 750-ml bottle

THE JOURNEY

Eighth-generation master distiller Freddie Noe has unveiled the latest chapter in his limited-release **Little Book Whiskey** series. A nod to all that Noe has accomplished and all the creations that lie ahead, the 118.1-proof Chapter 7: 'In Retrospect' melds seven different cask-strength whiskeys. Ranging from four to 18 years old, they include one component from each of the previous six chapters and a new one representing the seventh.

SRP: \$149.99 per 750-ml bottle



FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

This year's installment of The Ryder Cup just wrapped up, but **Elijah Craig**, the official bourbon of the biennial men's golf competition, is keeping the festivities going with its 94-proof limited-edition Toasted Barrel. In honor of the 2023 Ryder Cup taking place in Rome, the classic small-batch whiskey was finished in European toasted oak casks reminiscent of those used in Italy's Lazio winegrowing region. Each bottle is fittingly decorated with The Ryder Cup trophy and logo.

SRP: \$99.99 per 750-ml bottle

REVIVING A HISTORIC WHISKEY BRAND

CHICKEN COCK WHISKEY, ONCE ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS NAMES IN BOURBON, HAS BEEN BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE WITH TOP-QUALITY SPIRITS THAT ARE DISTILLED, AGED, AND BOTTLED IN KENTUCKY



There are certain names in whiskey that are hard to forget. Chicken Cock Whiskey, first created when a brand could get away with a name like Chicken Cock, is among those names for obvious reasons. But the brand is more than just an eye-catching name: It has the history and world-class production quality to back it up.

The story of Chicken Cock dates back to 1856 when James A. Miller established a distillery in the bourbon town of Paris, Kentucky. After Miller died a few years later, a clerk named George G. White took over and expanded both the distillery and its distribution. Over three decades, Chicken Cock became a household name in whiskey from coast to coast.



Prohibition, however, forced G.G. White Distillery and Chicken Cock to sell to the Canadian company Distillers Corporation Limited. Still, the name lived on through the 1920s, and Chicken Cock remained legendary as the house whiskey for the renowned Harlem speakeasy the Cotton Club. Here, patrons and jazz musicians alike sipped on the spirit out of smuggled-in tin cans. Duke Ellington even wrote favorably about drinking \$14 cans (the equivalent of more than \$200 today) in his memoir *Music is My Mistress*.

Post-Prohibition, however, Chicken Cock fell on hard times and its death knell finally rang after a distillery fire in the 1950s.

The brand lay dormant until spirits entrepreneur Matti Anttila resurrected Chicken Cock using original bottles, promotional ma-

terials, and sourced whiskey in 2011. Just seven years later, Grain & Barrel Spirits joined forces with Bardstown Bourbon Company's Collaborative Distilling Program to create new and distinct Chicken Cock mash bills. Now, Grain & Barrel Spirits and master distiller Gregg Snyder are reviving Chicken Cock to its former glory with a core line of whiskeys and special releases all distilled, aged, and bottled in Kentucky.

The modern Chicken Cock is led by two flagship whiskeys. The first is the Kentucky Straight Bourbon, a balanced 90-proof spirit with notes of dried fruit, oak, caramel, and vanilla. It joins Kentucky Straight Rye, the first Chicken Cock rye in over 70 years. Along with these stand-by bottles, Chicken Cock makes up to two limited releases annually, the latest being Double Oak, an eight-year-old 92-proof whiskey aged twice in American oak barrels for a full-bodied flavor.

Under this leadership, Chicken Cock's revival is well underway: According to Nielsen, the brand is the fourth fastest growing ultra-premium whiskey in the \$50 to \$100 price range. More than a century after its heyday, Chicken Cock is once again a must-stock brand worth crowing about. ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, Chicken Cock Whiskey.





Whiskey from the days when **you** **could name** **your whiskey** **Chicken Cock.**

You may presume a bourbon with a name like Chicken Cock has got to be either horrendous or tremendous. But when you consider that it's been around since 1856, that distinction should be fairly evident.



THE STATE OF WHISKEY

AMERICAN WHISKEY IS A MAJOR DRIVER OF CATEGORY GROWTH IN THE U.S., BUT AROUND THE GLOBE SCOTCH IS STILL KING IN TERMS OF MARKET SHARE

BY PAMELA VACHON

THE WHISKEY MARKET TODAY

9.4%

Overall whiskey sales in the U.S. were up 9.4 percent in 2022 compared to 2020 sales.

41 STYLES OF WHISKEY

The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) currently lists 41 distinct styles of whiskey.

Source: TTB

The global whiskey market reached a value of about **\$66.5 billion** in 2022, and is expected to reach **\$85 billion** by 2028. Source: Expert Market Research

2022 **\$66.5 BILLION** → 2028 **\$85 BILLION**



Whiskey Distilleries Worldwide:

809



145



40



8



Sources:
IBIS World, Scotch Whisky Association, Irish Whiskey Association

TOP 3
IN SALES

AMERICAN WHISKEY

\$5.1
BILLION



SCOTCH

\$2.7
BILLION

IRISH WHISKEY

\$1.4
BILLION

The three best-selling whiskey categories in the U.S. in 2022 were American whiskey, Scotch, and Irish whiskey. Source: Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS)



\$1.5 BILLION FLAVORED WHISKEY

Flavored whiskey accounted for \$1.5 billion in sales in 2022, and showed the largest margin of growth among all whiskey categories. Source: Nielsen

Partner

WILDERNESS TRAIL

Blending traditional whiskey making with innovative techniques supported by science, Wilderness Trail defies traditional American whiskey boundaries to create its multi-award-winning range of small batch, bottled-in-bond bourbons and ryes.



On-Premise Whiskey Sales by Category (2022)

Source: CGA

53%

AMERICAN WHISKEY

24%

CANADIAN WHISKY

17%

IRISH WHISKEY

6%

SCOTCH

0.3%

JAPANESE WHISKY

FASTEST GROWING CATEGORIES BY REVENUE

AMERICAN WHISKEY 10.5%

IRISH WHISKEY 6.9%

BLENDED WHISKEY 6.8%

Between 2021 and 2022, American whiskey was the third-fastest growing category by revenue in the U.S. after ready-to-drink cocktails and tequila/mezcal. Source: DISCUS



SCOTCH WHISKY



Scotch whisky has the largest market share of the whisky category worldwide.

Source: Expert Market Research



More Scotch whisky is enjoyed globally than American, Irish, and Japanese whiskeys combined.

Source: Scotch Whisky Association



THE FUTURE OF WHISKEY



Partner

ELIJAH CRAIG

Known as the Father of Bourbon, Elijah Craig is credited with being the first whiskey distiller to age his wares in charred oak barrels. Today, the brand's signature Small Batch Bourbon is still aged in Level 3 charred oak, imparting that distinctive profile of warm spice and subtle smoke.

WHAT'S NEW IN WHISKEY



In 2016, nine U.S. distilleries from all corners of the country came together to form the American Single Malt Whiskey Commission (ASMWC), to "establish, promote, and protect the category of American single malt whiskey," agreeing to six principles that govern the production of the category, which is expected to be approved by the TTB in the coming years. The ASMWC now has nearly 100 member distilleries.

Partner

HORSE SOLDIER

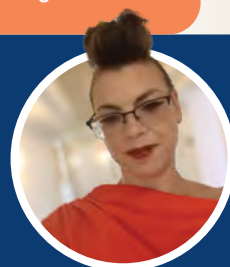
Created by the U.S. Army Green Berets who entered Northern Afghanistan on horseback after 9/11, every bottle of Horse Soldier Bourbon is forged with a mold made from World Trade Center steel. It's American owned and distilled, and crafted with only American-made ingredients.



Billy Abbott, ambassador, The Whisky Exchange, and author of *The Philosophy of Whisky*

"Outside of the traditional whiskey-making countries, Europe, Japan, Taiwan and Australia are almost starting to become mature regions, but South America and parts of the Far East, including China, are starting to make waves. The new wave is not only making more whiskey, but pushing established whiskey makers to innovate and compete again after years of stagnation."

"The future of whiskey is expansive and innovative. Distilleries around the world are creating new unique mash bills, finishing in every available barrel, and aging longer than ever. With all the new craft distilleries popping up, the availability of sourced whiskey, and the ever-growing demand for something new and unique, the whiskey renaissance will continue for many more years."



Ingrid Shawn Rodriguez, brand educator, WhistlePig, and national treasurer, United States Bartenders' Guild



Tracie Franklin, whiskey educator, spirits judge, and founder, Get Spirited Consulting

"The future of whiskey is getting more diverse, creative and cooperative. With the increased supply from contract producers, brand owners are becoming more diverse along with the population of whiskey enthusiasts. I am also incredibly excited to continue to watch and support the growth of the American single malt category ... From Washington State, Nantucket, Kentucky, or Texas, single malt is starting to make some noise."

"I expect to continue to see growth in premium categories as trends tend to indicate that new demographics of consumers, especially those coming into legal drinking age, are drinking less but better. I also hope that we continue to see growth in multicultural demographics for whiskey consumers since everyone deserves to feel included in this great industry."



Melissa Rift, master taster, Old Forester



Christoph Dornemann, bar manager, Arnaud's Restaurant & the French 75 Bar, New Orleans

"Because the traditional whiskey market is so saturated and cost prohibitive, innovation and world influence is pushing people to try to produce new styles of whiskey, and I believe the future will see an increase in styles entering the market from around the world, with grains not traditionally associated with American or European whiskeys such as rice [and] sorghum."

MAJOR CATEGORY DEFINITIONS



BOURBON Whiskey produced in the U.S. at not exceeding 80% ABV from a fermented mash of not less than 51 percent corn and stored at not more than 62.5% ABV in charred new oak containers. *Source: TTB*



SCOTCH Unblended whisky manufactured in Scotland in compliance with the laws of the U.K. There are five subcategories of Scotch, regulated according to factors including location of production and maturation, allowable grains, alcoholic strength, and length of maturation. *Source: TTB; U.K. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs*



IRISH WHISKEY Whisky distilled and aged in the Republic of Ireland or in Northern Ireland to an ABV of less than 94.8% from a yeast-fermented mash of cereal grains in such a way that the distillate has an aroma and flavor derived from the materials used, and aged for at least three years in wooden casks. *Source: Republic of Ireland Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine*



CANADIAN WHISKY Whisky distilled and aged in Canada to an alcohol by volume no less than 40% from a fermented mash of cereal grains in such a way that the distillate has an aroma and flavor consistent with Canadian whisky, and aged for at least three years in wooden casks. *Source: Government of Canada Food and Drug Regulations*



RYE Whiskey produced at not exceeding 80% ABV from a fermented mash of not less than 51 percent rye and stored at not more than 62.5% ABV in charred new oak containers. *Source: TTB*



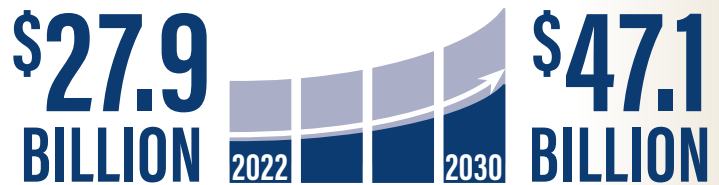
Partner

HEAVEN HILL BOTTLED-IN-BOND

Heaven Hill's original 1939 release became the number one-selling bourbon in Kentucky. Today, Heaven Hill Bottled-in-Bond is an ode to that original, with the latest release aged seven years and 100 proof, showing their ongoing dedication to craftsmanship, excellence, and tradition.



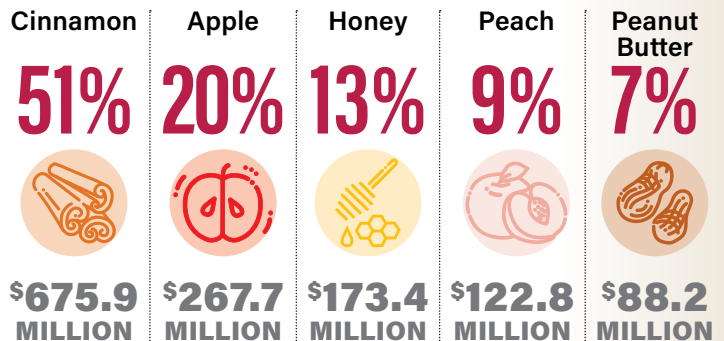
THE FLAVORED WHISKEY MARKET



The flavored whiskey market is valued at \$27.9 billion in 2022, and is expected to increase to \$47.1 billion by 2030. *Source: Vantage Market Research*

TOP 5 FLAVORED WHISKEYS

Here's the breakdown of the five top flavors for flavored whiskey in 2022 in terms of comparative sales:



Source: Nielsen

Partner

CHICKEN COCK WHISKEY

A century ago, Chicken Cock Whiskey was amongst the most famous names in bourbon—and now the historic brand is being revived to its former glory by Grain & Barrel Spirits. Today, it's making tradition-inspired whiskeys with a modern twist, distilled, aged, and bottled in Kentucky.



"Together with Campari Group, we'll continue to push the limits of what Kentucky Bourbon and Rye can be."

*— Dr. Pat Heist & Shane Baker,
Co-Founders of Wilderness Trail*

Wilderness Trail

DISTILLERY

Campari Group welcomes **Wilderness Trail** Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon and Rye to its award-winning portfolio of brands.

Available to order now.



WILDERNESS TRAIL® KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY, 50% ALC./VOL. (100 PROOF).
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HORSE SOLDIER®

BOURBON WHISKEY



LIVE LEGENDARY