

Beverage Journal

DECEMBER 2022

ALL THINGS BUBBLY

IS IT TIME TO
CONSIDER VINTAGE
WHEN BUYING CAVA?

SPARKLING WINES
TO WATCH

BY-THE-GLASS
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LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

2023 will be the 85th year of continuous publication of the *Beverage Journal*. Originally a single publication, the *Seaboard Beverage Journal* served both the Maryland and Washington, DC markets in one publication. In 1968, the *Maryland Beverage Journal* and the *Washington, DC Beverage Journal* came into existence as you know them now.

The *Beverage Journal* has evolved and adapted over time, meeting the needs of licensed beverage retailers as well as licensed beverage distributors. Because of a relationship that started decades ago with the Beverage Media Group, the *Beverage Journal* has been able to offer a national perspective, while continuing to provide local coverage and local distributor price listings.

Through that relationship, we offered access to the Beverage Media Group's **Dynamic Search** ... this was a wildly successful internet sort and search database of the pricing information that is provided in the price listing section of the *Beverage Journal*. As you are probably aware, that service was taken offline earlier this year due to a hack of the system. This event accelerated an already 'in the works' plan to migrate the Beverage Media Group's **Dynamic Search** (and the **SevenFifty marketplace**) to a single, unified marketplace ... **Provi.com**.

Because this migration was initiated ahead of schedule for the Maryland and Washington, DC markets, there have been some growing pains. However, **Provi.com** is adding distributors and brands as quickly as possible so you have access to the most comprehensive pricing data for your market available in a one-stop-shop.

The print publications remain locally owned and operated, based in Hampstead, Maryland, and will always support the local market. We will continue to blend our monthly, locally produced information with syndicated, national news features as well as the local distributor price listings each month.

2023 is around the corner. Are you ready? We're ready.

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1. LICOR 43

Last year, Spanish liqueur Licor 43 introduced a vegan horchata cream variant to the U.S. market. Now, in response to the rising interest in chocolate cordials, Zamora Company USA is further growing the brand with Licor 43 Chocolate. It pairs the original Licor 43 with chocolate from 100 percent sustainably sourced cocoa. Given its fruit and spice undertones and milk chocolate texture, it's ideal for dessert Martinis.

\$ SRP: \$29.99 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 buylicor43.com

4. GOSLINGS RUM

Bermuda-based artists Nhuri Bashir and Domico Watson took a mixed-media approach to reimagine the first-ever limited-edition Black Seal Rum bottle for Goslings, the island's largest export product. Drawing from vintage Goslings advertisements and street and pop art, the vibrantly colored bottle captures the island's soul through techniques like paint dripping and stenciling.

\$ SRP: \$21.99 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 goslingsrum.com

2. CÓDIGO 1530

One of the few tequila brands to own the entire field-to-bottle process, Código 1530 maintains its ambitious streak with the Estate Harvest Still Strength Blanco expression. Aging the blanco in French oak white wine barrels is typical for the brand, but this time around it boldly fermented the tequila inside the casks in small batches, resulting in a buttery profile tasting of clove and pumpkin seed.

\$ SRP: \$79 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 codigo1530.com

5. BASIL HAYDEN

Oenophiles will gravitate toward the Basil Hayden Red Wine Cask Finish, eighth-generation master distiller Freddie Noe's newest cocktail-friendly, limited-edition release. Partially aged in California red wine barrels, it marries dried fruit and sweet nectar notes with the jolts of vanilla and charred oak that Basil Hayden Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey is known for.

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

3. HIBIKI

Springtime in Japan is renowned for its blooming cherry blossoms, and the beauty of these lush Sakura trees is articulated in House of Suntory's 86-proof Hibiki Blossom Harmony. A blend of malt and grain whiskies from the Yamazaki, Hakushu, and Chita distilleries finished in Sakura wood casks, its acacia honey and French pear flavors evolve into a long-lasting finish.

\$ SRP: \$160 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 beamsuntory.com

6. DON PAPA RUM

Filipino and American culture come together in Negros, an island in the Philippines that is home to small-batch Don Papa Rum. Joining its seven- and 10-year-old varieties is the limited-edition Don Papa Rye Aged Rum, crafted from local molasses and matured for four years in first-fill American rye casks beneath Mt. Kanlaon, a still-active volcano.

\$ SRP: \$54.99 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 donpaparum.com



COCKBURN'S.
PORT

WHAT A TIME TO BE A PORT





7. GLENMORANGIE

Dr. Bill Lumsden, Glenmorangie's director of whisky creation, was so inspired by the walks he took in the woods near his house, that it motivated him to create the limited-edition A Tale of the Forest. The 92-proof whisky, featuring a profusion of peppermint, eucalyptus, and pine on the palate, is created from barley kilned with botanicals like juniper berries, birch bark, and heather flowers. It's aptly complemented by dreamy colorful packaging from Bangkok-based illustrator Pomme Chan.

\$ SRP: \$102.99 per 750-ml bottle
glenmorangie.com

8. CITADELLE

Alexandre Gabriel, the restless Maison Ferrand owner and master blender, has rolled out Citadelle Gin Vive le Cornichon. The inaugural offering in the brand's new limited-edition Les Excentriques collection, which explores the relationship between gin and unexpected ingredients, Vive Le Cornichon is the first product to be made at the new Citadelle distillery. It showcases an infusion of juniper and 19 other botanicals, including cornichon pickles from the family-owned Maison Marc in Burgundy, and unconventional salty, vinegary notes.

\$ SRP: \$29.99 per 700-ml bottle
Citadellegin.com

9. TEMPLETON

For the fourth iteration of its Barrel Strength series, Templeton Distillery, in Iowa, selected optimum rye whiskey barrels of varying ages. Following the 2018, 2019, and 2020 releases, the 114.6-proof 2022 imparts layers of raisin, dark chocolate, and black pepper.

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

10. EL TESORO

La Altea Distillery was founded in the highlands of Jalisco 85 years ago. To celebrate, El Tesoro Tequila's third-generation master distiller Carlos Camarena partnered with seventh-generation James B. Beam Distilling Co. master distiller Fred Noe on an 85th Anniversary Limited Edition bottle aged in Booker's Bourbon 30th anniversary barrels. The vanilla-laden casks, brought to La Altea from Kentucky, held the whiskey for up to 16 years before the tequila rested in them for a minimum of 36 months.

\$ SRP: \$499 per 750-ml bottle
eltesorotequila.com

11. DEWAR'S

Stephanie Macleod, the master blender of Dewar's, has elevated the 12-year-old blended Scotch whisky expression. After a decade of experimenting with various cask types, Macleod has settled on double-aging the whisky in first-fill American oak bourbon barrels to lend it a richer mouthfeel. The 80-proof reformulated spirit is made with up to 40 quality single malt and grain whiskies from Scotland.

\$ SRP: \$29.99 per 750-ml bottle
dewars.com

12. WOODFORD RESERVE

It's time for Woodford Reserve's annual holiday bourbon bottle. A departure from previous editions that were adorned with artist-designed labels, the 2022 rendition is simply dressed in a thick band of gold that accentuates the Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey's warm hue.

\$ SRP: \$50 per 750-ml bottle
woodfordreserve.com

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Big Bats Café

Swinging for the Fences in Stevensville

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY JADE KOETZ

The Major League Baseball season may be over, but the crack of the bat can still be heard at The Big Bats Café in Stevensville. This is the latest eating and drinking establishment that we are spotlighting in our ongoing series on themed bars and restaurants around the state of Maryland, and it's certainly one of the most fun to visit.

Big Bats Café is a 100 percent baseball-themed sports eatery that some locals have come to call "Little Cooperstown." Owned and operated by Stephen "Steve" Garland since its opening in March 1997, Big Bats is closing out its 25th anniversary year with the same great food, drinks, and customer service it's been known for from the get-go. Much credit has to go to Garland, who has always set the tone and pace at the business he still



has a passion for at age 73.

"I grew up with great parents," he said, during a recent interview with the *Beverage Journal*. "I was taught early on that there is only one way to do things . . . the right way! After spending four years in the military after high school, I went into business for myself doing construction work. I eventually started doing custom homes. I learned through that business that you can't afford not to do

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Stephen 'Steve' Grland
Owner and Operator
Big Bats Café



things right the first time. But that's in every business. You don't cut corners on anything. I know in today's economy, you would want to. But you can't do that. You still have to have the best of what you put out there."

That means a menu of food items made mostly out of all-fresh products, including bar wings that have won multiple local awards. The menu is separated into sections with such

baseball-themed headers as: Coach's Choice (the specials), The Starting Lineup (appetizers), Bullpen (burgers, hot dogs, and cheese steaks), Field of Greens (salads), Sluggers (sandwiches and subs), Pinch Hitters (side dishes), and Grand Slam (main entrees). And the kids' selections are touted as "The Little League Menu." The kitchen staff also makes their own wing sauces, soups, salad dress-

ings, and more.

As for beverages and spirits, Garland noted, "We have 24 beers on draft. We have over 40 different craft cans and bottles of beer [including Atlas Brew Works' Bullpen Pilsner, of course]. We do our Orange Crushes with fresh squeezed orange juice. We have seasonal mixed drinks that our wait staff will recommend to people. In fact, we have some new



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selections that we're working on right now, because the weather is about to change."

But it's the theme that keeps the customers coming in. In Garland's view, there's nothing like good food, drinks, and America's Pastime. "The restaurant speaks for itself," he said. "Anyone who really likes baseball, they are pretty much in awe when they come in here with all of the memorabilia. There's a Nolan Ryan baseball jersey over here, a Pete Rose jersey over there. There is a Johnny Bench jersey on display. We have a room that has nothing but Baltimore Orioles stuff in it. I'm an Oriole fan, and

we're in an Orioles area. Chairs hang on the ceiling from the old Memorial Stadium, and there are Earl Weaver and Brooks Robinson signatures on them. I have an infield painted on the floor of the bar. The legs of our barstools are made out of baseball bats, and the seats are bases."

He continued, "We have 27 TVs throughout the restaurant. We have a large outdoor seating area that holds about 140 people, with three TVs and a bar outside, too. We have advertisement signs on the fence all around it that makes it look like a minor league ballpark."

And regardless of whether it is pennant race time or the off-season, Big Bats Café draws a healthy mix of locals and out-of-towners who either visit specifically because they love the place or are in town for other reasons and stumble upon the Café as a happy surprise. Garland remarked, "Just this past weekend [Garland was interviewed right at the start of the recent Astros-Phillies World Series], we were inundated with Philadelphia Phillies fans. They kind of took over the place for a while. We're located near a large venue that does a lot of weddings from all areas and different parts of the country."

So, why a baseball theme as opposed to football or hockey or sports, in general? Garland was quick with his answer: "Because I just love baseball. Period! I started playing amateur or-



ganized baseball at the age of 40 and played all the way until I was 67. To me, it's the greatest sport in the world -- one that if you play the game right, it can also teach you in so many ways how to live your life the right way." ■



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THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF VINTAGE IN CAVA

WITH UPDATED REGULATIONS FOR DO CAVA AND THE VAGARIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE PUTTING VINTAGE AT THE FOREFRONT, CAVA IS GAINING A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY

BY CAITLIN A. MILLER

Cava is undeniably unique in the world of sparkling wine, from its place of origin to the trio of indigenous grape varieties used in its production. Nevertheless, parallels are often drawn between Cava and other traditional method sparkling wines, such as Champagne. In light of recent changes to production regulations set out by DO Cava and the escalating impact of climate change, some of these parallels have become much more pronounced. Most notably, the growing influence of vintage.

Jose Maria Ferrer, the owner of Familia Ferrer, jokes, “We used to say that the difference between Champagne and Cava is that Champagne has a very exceptional vintage every 10 years, but with Cava, it’s the other way around; we have a bad vintage every 10 years.”

However, in recent years climate change has impacted nearly every wine region, including Spain, and producing consistent crops each year is no longer a guarantee. At the same time, new DO Cava rules could make it more challenging for producers to adapt during difficult weather events, amplifying vintage differences. Now, Ferrer suspects, “we’re going to have more and more bad vintages. And we have to try to adapt to that.”



In light of this confluence of events, vintage may soon become a driving factor in both the style and quality of Cava. As most buyers already do with Champagne, is it time to consider vintage when buying Cava?

THE NEW RULES FOR DO CAVA

As of January of this year, several new rules went into effect for DO Cava, which impacts everything from aging to farming practices. Cava is now divided into two categories: Cava de Guarda, the youngest bottlings that must be aged for a minimum of nine months; and Cava de Guarda Superior, which includes three quality tiers—reserva, gran reserva, and paraje calificado—that must comply with a suite of new quality-minded regulations, including that all wines be vintage dated and made from 100 percent organic grapes.

The vintage dating requirement is more of a formality, but it provides buyers with a clear understanding of what vintage a wine is made from. Currently, both Cava de Guarda and Cava de Guarda Superior are made from a single vintage; the use of reserve wine is almost nonexistent within the category. If reserve wine is used, it is usually to produce expedition liqueur. In the past, reserve wine simply wasn't necessary as there was little vintage variation. But as climate change progresses, this may not be the case in the future.

The new organic farming requirement, on the other hand, is one of the first of its kind. While many wine-region regulatory bodies oversee production rules, almost no regions stipulate how the grapes should be farmed. DO Cava now

requires that all Cava de Guarda Superior be 100 percent organic by 2025. While this is widely considered a positive development, it's not without broader impacts to Cava production.

CONVERTING TO ORGANIC FARMING

While most of the new DO Cava rules only apply to Cava de Guarda Superior, the regulations are reverberating across all Cava because most producers are choosing to convert all farming to organic for practical, environmental, and commercial reasons. According to DO Cava, sales increased by 17.34 percent in 2021 and much of that growth was led by organic (65 percent) and long-aging (104.25 percent) categories.

For Giró Ribot, a winery that started converting their vineyards to organic farming in 2017, it made sense to convert everything because they knew it was the right direction for the brand. "We produce organic Cava de Guarda," explains winemaker Joan Rovira. "However, some of our clients do not want to pay the small price difference of organic Cava de Guarda, and therefore we are forced to buy non-organic grapes to produce Cava for them. We believe this will soon be over [due to changing consumer demand] and all the Cavas we will commercialize will be organic certified."

Mireia Pujol-Busquets Guillén, the second-generation owner of Alta Alella, a winery that has worked organically since its founding in 1991, agrees that all Cava

production is moving closer towards becoming fully organic. "Cava is going to be organic 100 percent in ten years," suspects Guillén. Codorníu has also made the choice to farm all of their vineyards organically. "All [Codorníu] Cavas will be organic by 2023 ... as a commitment to the environment," says winemaker Bruno Colomer.

For Ferrer, the logic is simple. "I think in the long term it will make sense to convert everything into organic because the price you are getting for your grapes is better, the consumer is demanding more and more of this type of product, and we want to be competitive."

THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Like nearly all winegrowing regions, Cava production areas are dealing with the effects of climate change—which can be more difficult to combat when farming organically.

"Traditionally, the harvests in the Cava region have been very regular," says Colomer. "Although, in recent years we have been facing frequent challenges: droughts, high temperatures, torrential rains, frost and hail at unusual times, and massive pest attacks." As Ferrer describes it, "The weather is crazy. It rains less, but when it rains, it rains badly. It rains a lot in a short period of time, it causes a lot of damage, which is not good for the harvest or the quality of the grapes."

As with many regions, increased heat during the growing season has also pushed harvests earlier in the year. "Over the last 20 years, the start date of the harvest session has been brought forward by approximately 20 days," explains Colomer. "This is

OPPOSITE: Juvé & Camps vineyard // ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Familia Ferrer vineyard // Giró Ribot vineyard

the trend, and it is very likely to get earlier and earlier due to climate change.” At Alta Alella, the experience has been similar, but Guillén elaborates, “In the last few years, the difference is that everything is ready to harvest [at the same time]. The ripening is more concentrated. You have to work harder in five weeks. Before [the harvest lasted] two months.”

For Meritxell Juvé, the CEO of Juvé & Camps and a fourth generation family member, working organically has become much more challenging in light of these climate-induced changes. “In some years, when we had a strong impact of mildew in the vineyard, working organically was a clear handicap. In fact, [we saw] a reduction of our yield by about 50 to 60 percent, while nonorganic producers had only a 25 to 30 percent reduction. It really makes it more difficult.”

EMBRACING VINTAGE VARIATION

While the new DO Cava regulations may leave producers with fewer tools to combat challenges in the vineyard, the benefits of working organically—and embracing each vintage’s unique crop of grapes—far outweigh the costs.

Despite the ups and downs of each vintage, Juvé stresses, “This doesn’t mean that we are not speaking about excellent vintages, [it’s just] much harder to work and to deal with.” Colomer adds, “Pro-



“All [Codorníu] Cavas will be organic by 2023 ... as a commitment to the environment.”

– Bruno Colomer, Codorníu

duction is higher or lower or starts earlier or later, but in terms of winemaking, the wines are still the same or even better.”

While Ferrer believes that “most Cava producers are going to try to make reserve wines and to make blends to make a more uniform product,” he, along with many other quality-minded Cava producers, have chosen a different approach. “We are treating our Cava more like a wine than a

Cava. We want to express the differences of every harvest.” Familia Ferrer’s Can Sala wines, for example, aim to highlight the climatic differences of each vintage.

At Alta Alella, vintage is also a core component of their winemaking philosophy. “For us, the most important thing is the vintage,” says Guillén. “When you have been [making wine for] a long time, you have the same vineyard, you have the same soil, you have the same brand and the same kind of consumer, and you have the same team. The only thing that changes is the vintage. So I really want to let the vintage express [itself] every year.”

The Alta Alella 10 Gran Reserva series is a prime example of the breadth of diversity of Cava vintages. Started in 2010, the series showcases Alta Alella’s winemaking philosophy: each year’s bottling is entirely consistent—100 percent Chardonnay, Brut Nature, no added sulfur dioxide—except for the vintage. The wines range from acidic and structured, as in the cool 2010 vintage, to ripe and concentrated, as found in the warmer, drier 2012 vintage.

Guillén sees vintage variation as more than just a variable in winemaking. “Wine makes you travel around the world,” she explains. “Vintage makes you travel, but through the past and through the years, and I think this is quite interesting. That’s why we don’t add any expedition liqueur, we don’t add any sugar, we don’t want to make any vintages the same.”

With the days of consistent vintages and predictable weather behind us, vintage variation will continue to be a growing factor in the production of all wine, including Cava. Combined with DO Cava’s new organic farming and vintage dating requirements, the impact of vintage on both the style and quality of Cava will only increase. As a growing number of Cava producers embrace these variations and the challenges that come with it, Cava is gaining a whole new level of complexity—and buyers should pay attention. ■



The barrel cellar at Alta Alella.

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SPARKLING WINES TO WATCH

With a mix of new-to-market varieties and old favorites, these festive bubblies shouldn't be overlooked when stocking up on party essentials

BY ALIA AKKAM

● Cinzano

Cinzano's fruity, subtly herbaceous Prosecco DOC is a welcome pre-dinner aperitivo. Laden with green apple and pear notes, it's also a fine companion to the likes of rustic vegetable tarts, seafood curries, and hearty cheese platters.

● Piper-Heidsieck

Earlier this year, Piper-Heidsieck became the first Champagne to achieve B Corp Certification. Already known for its lightweight bottle and use of 100 percent renewable energy, the house has embarked on a slew of other sustainable initiatives, such as planting 1,000 trees and shrubs to promote biodiversity and aiming to become net-zero by 2050.

● Gloria Ferrer

August marked the 40th harvest anniversary of Gloria Ferrer—as well as the 40th personal harvest of Harry Hansen, the

senior vice president of winemaking and wine growing—at the sparkling winery in Sonoma. The Pinot Noir grapes culled from the Carneros estate vineyards have retained ample natural acidity and are poised to express a bright profile when the 2022 vintage is ready.

● Soter Vineyards

The certified biodynamic and organic Mineral Springs Brut Rosé 2018 from Soter Vineyards, in Oregon's Willamette Valley, balances 79 percent Pinot Noir and 21 percent Chardonnay. With its layers of strawberry, peach, and cherry, it should certainly make an appearance at the dinner table.

● Kind of Wild

Adam and Jordan Sager's Kind of Wild certified-organic and vegan wines comprise a Chardonnay from France, a Chilean Sauvignon Blanc, an Austrian Grüner Veltliner, a Montepulciano d'Abruzzo



from Italy, among others. Now Spain is in the limelight with the debut of the Brut Nature Sparkling from Penedès. Aged for 12 months on its lees, it has just 92 calories and 0.03 grams of sugar.

● Maison Henriot

L'Inattendue honors Maison Henriot founder Apolline Henriot's passion for celebrating the diversity of her vineyards' terroir. The limited-release bottling, aged for a minimum of four years, is a pure expression of Grand Cru Chardonnay from Avize in the Côte des Blancs. Its bouquet is distinguished by robust minerality and lemon notes.



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13.75% Alc
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● Rosa Regale



Rosé provides just as delightful a reprieve in the winter as it does when it abounds in the summer. Consider the Rosa Regale Sparkling Rosé Brachetto d'Acqui DOCG, produced at Banfi's Piemonte estate. Its sweet grapefruit and orange blossom notes make it ideal for sipping alongside de rigueur platters of Christmas cookies.

● Segura Viudas

Reserva Heredad is part of the Segura Viudas portfolio, known for the Cava it has been turning out since 1959. A union of 75 percent Macabeo and 25 percent Chardonnay, the premium sparkler combines the best wines from each vintage, and is then aged in a regal, eye-catching bottle for more than 30 months.



● Brilla!

A lively Prosecco DOC that conjures peach and lilac, Brilla! stands out from the crowd with its jewel-like packaging. The textured bottle is emblazoned with pear-shaped motifs representing the luxe diamonds that once shimmered in the crowns of nobles and is capped off with a glittery label.



● Château La Coste



In Provence, Château La Coste has introduced the extra brut La Bulle NV, exhibiting red fruit aromatics. Combining hand-picked Grenache, Syrah, and Cinsault grapes that are sorted in the vineyard and cellar, it is fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks on fine lees for 14 months.

● Paul Cheneau

Following the 2021 regulations implemented to protect the Cava appellation, Paul Cheneau Brut Reserva Blanc de Blancs now falls under the Cava de Guarda Superior category, marked by lower yields and the inclusion of a vintage year. The 2017 showcases estate fruit from the Penedès region and has been matured for 40 months.



● Cleto Chiarli

Italian restaurateur Cieto Chiarli established his eponymous Emilia Romagna



wine company in 1860, and the brand remains synonymous with Lambrusco. Unlike the two-fermentation process embraced by many sparkling wine producers, the Cleto Chiarli Lambrusco di Sorbara Premium Vecchia Modena DOC 2020 is birthed from a single fermentation under pressure.

● Le Grand Courtâge



Wanderlust led Tawnya Falkner to France, where she created the affordable, fizzy Le Grand Courtâge brand, owned and managed by women. Both the Blanc de Blancs Brut and Brut Rosé can be woven into crowd-pleasing cocktails like the French 75 and Mojito, and are available in stocking stuffer-friendly 187-ml mini versions.

● Accademia Prosecco



Accademia Prosecco DOC encourages jubilant New Year's Eve shindigs with this two-bottle set. Green apple, white peach, and citrus notes pave the way to an acacia flower finish, inviting pizza and charcuterie pairings. ■



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MEET THE PRODUCERS CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MÉDOC

BEST KNOWN FOR ITS EXCEPTIONAL REDS, THE MÉDOC IS ALSO A HUB OF ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION—WITH WINEMAKERS LIKE THESE LEADING THE WAY



Almost ninety percent of vineyards in the Médoc are cultivated according to environmentally-sound practices.

The Médoc is home to Bordeaux's most prestigious red wines. The Atlantic Ocean moderates its temperatures and feeds into the Gironde estuary, which runs alongside this region. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot thrive here, favoring its gravel and clay soils respectively.

Vintage variation is nothing new for this maritime region; however, extreme weather events, which were once a rarity, have become more common, and it's clear Médoc vignerons are now experiencing the effects of climate change firsthand. They are adapting by pruning later in order to protect vines from frost, changing canopy management to shade vines during heatwaves, and selecting drought resistant rootstocks when planting new sites. They are also trying to address the root of the problem by doubling down on their commitment to sustainability.

"Ecological awareness is part of the everyday lives of many winegrowing families who live and work year-round on the land they cultivate," says Carole Vidal, the director at Conseil des Vins du Médoc. "It is in their interest to take care of it."

Almost ninety percent of vineyards in the region are cultivated according to environmentally-sound practices. With so many vineyards already on this path, the Médoc is now looking to incorporate sustainability into AOC guidelines.

"Eventually, several appellation organizations (*organismes de défense et de gestion des AOC*) are looking at integrating environmental certifications into the appellations' rules," explains Vidal. Doing so will increase the region's resilience and help ensure its wines are available for generations to come. Until then, these initiatives are being spearheaded by some individual châteaux. *Beverage Media* spoke to some of these local leaders in sustainability, who are finding innovative solutions to complex problems.

CHÂTEAU BRANAS GRAND POUJEAUX

The complexity and depth of the wines of Château Branas Grand Poujeaux can be attributed to the unique environment of Moulis-en-Médoc. Its soils are a microcosm of the Médoc and it boasts a high amount of biodiversity. Small forests are interspersed amongst vineyard blocks,

home to bat colonies that feast on pesky vineyard insects. When Justin Onclin purchased the 17 hectare estate in 2002, he immediately set about reconnecting the château with its natural environment.

"We stopped using pesticides and herbicides and replaced them by working the soils mechanically and only using natural fertilizers, like sheep manure," says Arjen Pen, the general manager of Château Branas Grand Poujeaux.

Their profound respect for their terroir led them to pursue and ultimately obtain Haute Valeur Environnementale (HVE) III certification in 2018. HVE is a three-tiered environmental certification



Harvesting grapes at Château Branas Grand Poujeaux.

that encourages producers to protect biodiversity, improve water management, and cut out synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers throughout their estate. For tier three, producers are also audited against industry and global sustainability indicators. The process takes a minimum of three years and requires engagement from everyone at the estate.

“Unlike other certifications, which only look at products used in the vineyard, the HVE looks at the whole production chain in wine, including how you treat your winery wastewater,” Arjen elaborates. “We liked this holistic view and how it corresponded to our philosophy of sustainable farming.”

Not one to rest on their laurels, Château Branas Grand Poujeaux is working to capture rainwater and reduce their overall water usage. They are also leading corporate and social responsibility initiatives via their Bordeaux Cultivons Demain program, a new, collective approach to implementing change. They plan to imbue environmental and social sustainability throughout their organization with the goal of achieving external certification by 2024.

CHÂTEAU LAROSE-TRINTAUDON

Château Larose-Trintaudon lay fallow for decades before it was restored in the 1980s. It has since regained its prestige, and is now a Cru Bourgeois Supérieur. In the process they eliminated herbicides, now recycle 70 percent of their waste, and have lightened their bottles and cases to reduce their carbon footprint. As a result of their commitment to sustainability, they’ve received HVE III and Terra Vitis certification.

This ethos of humility and respect at the château informs everything they do, from how they manage their vineyards in the Haut-Médoc to the way their workers are treated. Social sustainability is often forgotten, but improving the well-being of workers, consumers, and communities is key to achieving an equitable and sustainable future.



Franck Bijon, Château Larose-Trintaudon chief executive.

“A growth strategy only makes sense if you consider the impact on your environment and all stakeholders involved,” says chief executive Franck Bijon. “It is in this way that we find meaning in the production of our wines and the relationships with our customers.”

The school of viticulture and wine is a great example of this in action. Started by Château Larose-Trintaudon and its peers as part of the collective Responsible Vineyards initiative, the school partners with local government groups and training organizations to provide oenology and viticulture training. “The vineyard school has proven very useful to inspire new vocations and train people directly on the properties and teach them the skills needed for the specific estate. The vineyard school also reveals important soft skills and encourages positive attitude in the workplace,” says Bijon.

Students spend three months in the field with instructors before beginning a fifteen month apprenticeship program. At the end of the program, they are recruited to work at one of the châteaux provided they have passed their exams. The school has been a boon to the region, which is in the thralls of a labor shortage.

CHÂTEAU DE CÔME

This small, family run estate in Saint-Estèphe was purchased by Baron Maurice Velge in 1997. His son, Guy Velge, manages the estate alongside winemaker José Bueno, formerly of Philippe de Rothschild, and oenologist Eric Boissenot, who has consulted for several premier and second

crus classés. In 2018, Château de Côme became the first certified organic producer in Saint-Estèphe.

To some, maritime climates may seem ill-suited to organic viticulture, but this isn’t the case. Organic farming in the Médoc may differ from more arid regions, but the commitment to environmentally-friendly practices is equally resolute. As the first to transition to organic viticulture in their appellation, Château de Côme had to develop techniques that worked best for their site. Over the years, they carried out several trials, refining their approach as they went.

“[Switching to organic viticulture] was a matter of mindset and responsibility,” says Bueno. “Preservation of the health of our staff, our neighbors, respect for the well-being of fauna, flora, water, the microbial life of our beautiful terroir and nature in general as well as the world of insects.”

They now hold HVE III and are sharing their learnings with other châteaux in the region “at every opportunity during discussions or professional meetings,” so they too can transition to organic viticulture. “We value our practices in the vineyard, our vinification process and our maturation method and we encourage all professionals to follow this example,” Bueno says. “We are completely satisfied when we taste our wines, which present a real authenticity and a bright fruitiness.” ■



José Bueno, Château de Côme winemaker.



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A SEASONAL UPDATE FOR YOUR BTG BUBBLY LIST

SOMMELIERS SHARE THEIR MUST-POUR BY-THE-GLASS SPARKLING WINES TO FUEL THIS YEAR'S FESTIVITIES

BY ZACHARY SUSSMAN



The U.S. wine industry has waged a years-long, heroic campaign to remove sparkling wine from the special-occasion pedestal and convince drinkers to embrace the category as an everyday indulgence. But even as bubbles are finally being enjoyed all year long, the age-old association between carbonation and celebration remains, and consumption of all things fizzy still climaxes during that magical stretch of the calendar known as the holidays.

For sommeliers and beverage directors, the annual festivities mean one thing: maintaining a steady rotation of excellent by-the-glass options to fuel the seasonal cheer. Fortunately, the U.S. sparkling wine market has never been broader or more diverse, with an unprecedented array of styles and expressions to choose from.

When *Beverage Media* asked ten buyers which bubbly bottles they're banking on for their BTG lists this holiday season, their responses ran the gamut from elegant grower Champagne to cloudy Italian

col fondo, German pét-nat, Crémant du Jura, and more. (All wines are listed with price per glass.)



PIRI NATUREL MATHILDA SILVANER BLEND 2020, NAHE, GERMANY; \$18

Served by Jodie Battles, beverage director, JK Food Group, Boston

For the recently opened Faccia Brutta and Bar Pallino, conceived as a speakeasy-style natural wine bar located below a coastal Italian restaurant, JK Food Group beverage director Jodie Battles highlights producers

that share a core ethos of organic farming and low-impact winemaking. She fell in love with this fizzy German pét-nat—a blend of the Silvaner, Kerner, and Riesling grapes—the moment she tasted it. “[Wine-maker] Christine Pieroth’s family has been making wine for hundreds of years in a very classic way, but she broke out to do her own line focusing on organic and natural viticulture, which is our focus at Bar Pallino and Faccia Brutta,” says Battles. Highlighting the wine’s freshness and “super versatility” with food, she likes to pour it alongside bar snacks like Bar Pallino’s foie gras torchon with sweet and sour apricots.

IN SORDINA CIANO MACIA GLERA FRIZZANTE IGT 2020, VENETO, ITALY; \$17

Served by Raquel Vo, wine director, Tonchin Brooklyn, Brooklyn

Sommelier Raquel Vo actively welcomes “the challenge of non-intuitive pairings” at Brooklyn’s Tonchin, where she has



assembled a thoughtful list of natural-leaning wines to complement the restaurant's emphasis on raw seafood and Tokyo tonkotsu-style ramen. To her, that means leaning hard on wines that allow her to "play with texture, fat, and softness," such as this bottle-fermented, col fondo-style Veneto sparkler that sees three days of skin contact. Vo likens it to "eating an apricot at the beach in the early hours of the morning," noting that it possesses the briny backbone and tension toward which she inherently gravitates as the granddaughter of a fisherman.



KEUSH ORIGINS BRUT NV, VAYOTS DZOR, ARMENIA; \$16

Served by Scott Stroemer, bar director, Galit, Chicago

With its seasonal and localized approach to dishes of the Middle East and Israel's immigrant cuisines, the "unwritten wine rules" at Chicago's Galit prohibit the inclusion of any selections from Napa, Italy, or France. According to bar director Scott Stroemer, the point of this constraint is "not to discourage those regions," but rather "to celebrate what makes the wines of the Middle

East so unique." Forced to explore beyond the usual bubbly horizons, one of his earliest discoveries was the Keush Origins Brut, a traditional-method blend of Armenia's indigenous Voskehat and Khatouni grapes that has been one of the list's longest staples. "Both grapes are full bodied and high-acid, making them ideal for sparkling wine," says Stroemer. "This has been our little secret at Galit since opening in 2019, but the wine is too good not to get noticed."



ZUCCARDI CUVÉE ESPECIAL BLANC DE BLANCS BRUT 2016, MENDOZA, ARGENTINA; \$25

Served by Nicolás Andrés Martianhes, head sommelier, Balvanera, New York City

The list at Manhattan's Balvanera exists as an ode to the glorious yet still unsung diversity on display across Argentina's various growing regions. "We honor the better-known, world class wineries as well as the boutique, small-production houses, and everything in between," says beverage director Nicolás Andrés Martianhes, who looked to the perilously steep slopes of the Andes to discover this traditional-method Chardonnay from Mendoza's Uco Valley. Grown at elevations of up 3,600 feet, the wine possesses all the qualities of a great Champagne, according to Martianhes, plus a purity and finesse that speaks to its cool climate, high elevation origins. To him, it's a perfect match with yellowtail crudo: "The acidity of the bubbles works brilliantly alongside the freshness of the fish and the richness of the ajo blanco."



DOMAINE HUBERT CLAVELIN BRUT COMTE CRÉMANT DE JURA NV, JURA, FRANCE; \$15

Served by Liz Martinez, wine director, Mink and Marrow, Detroit

"I have been having a little bit of a love affair with Crémant lately," says Liz Martinez, the beverage and hospitality director at Detroit's Mink and Marrow restaurants, who is drawn to the category for both its value and uniqueness. The example she's featuring on the tightly curated, Old World-centric list at Mink and Marrow's sister establishment, The Royce, a combination wine bar and retail shop located in the city's historic downtown, is Domaine Hubert Clavelin's Brut Comté. This traditional-method Jura sparkler combines "a luxurious texture" with notes of "sweet apple and ripe stone fruit" and "lively and bright acidity," according to Martinez. Priced at \$15 per glass, it "checks off a lot of boxes," she explains, making it a versatile BTG pour for guests whose tastes range "from the adventurous to the everyday."

RED TAIL RIDGE PERPETUAL CHANGE RÉSERVE PERPÉTUELLE BRUT NATURE NV, FINGER LAKES, NEW YORK; \$19

Served by Danya Degen, wine director, The Duck and the Peach, Washington, D.C.

According to wine director Danya Degen, the beverage program at D.C.'s woman-



owned and operated The Duck and the Peach directly supports like-minded businesses “through exclusively featuring womxn makers and owners in our wine program” and giving “a platform to these makers and owners to showcase their wines to our guests.” Featuring wines from across America “with a nod to the coastal regions that inspire us,” her by-the-glass list currently highlights this “delightfully blush-colored” traditional-method sparkler from Nancy Irelan of Red Tail Ridge in the Finger Lakes. “Finding a bubbly that works for our ethos and makes everyone super happy is always a win,” says Degen. Calling it “a beautiful domestic alternative to Champagne,” she’s a fan of the wine’s complex marzipan-y note, the result of the solera-aged reserve wine included in the final blend.



**LANSON PÈRRE ET FILS
NV, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE; \$28**

Served by Tonya Pitts, sommelier and wine director, One Market Restaurant, San Francisco

Depending upon the seasonal items in the kitchen, Tonya Pitts pours a wide range of sparkling selections—both interna-

tional and domestic—by the glass at San Francisco’s One Market Restaurant. But she says this complex, long-aged Champagne from the historic house of Lanson will be her mainstay this year. A special cuvée specifically designed for restaurants, the Lanson Père et Fils strikes her as the ideal all-purpose bubbly. “It can be your first sip or it can carry a meal,” says Pitts, adding that the wine’s extended aging (a minimum of five years) and high percentage of Grand Cru sites gives it an unexpected level of elegance. “I like the idea of longer aging for complexity, and the profile is surprisingly fresh,” she explains—a quality that allows her to pair it with boldly flavored dishes like chef Mark Dommen’s grilled octopus with sunchokes and romesco.



**RAVENTÓS I BLANC DE NIT BRUT
ROSÉ 2020, CATALONIA, SPAIN; \$16**

Served by Christopher Struck, corporate beverage director, ilili restaurants, New York City and Washington, D.C.

Overseeing the lists at ilili’s locations in Manhattan and Washington, D.C., beverage director Christopher Struck draws inspiration from Lebanon’s ancient tapestry of culinary traditions—a place where, as he puts it, “beverage, food, and people are one and the same.” In keeping with the country’s timeless spirit of hospitality, this year he’s pouring the Raventós I Blanc de Nit Brut Rosé, a tangy, frothy pink sparkler from one of Catalonia’s

pioneering organic estates. “Its notes of raspberry, blood orange, minerality, and biscuit play surprisingly well with myriad different Lebanese dishes from our menu, just as they do with seasonal American holiday favorites,” explains Struck. In this way, it offers diners a perfect balance between experimentation and crowd-pleasing familiarity.



**PHILIPPE FOURRIER BLANC DE
NOIRS BRUT PINOT NOIR NV,
CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE; \$25**

Served by Rachel Van Til, wine director, The Clubs at Houston Oaks, Houston

“My BTG list always follows the same rule: 75 percent comfortable, 25 percent adventurous,” says Rachel Van Til, the wine director at The Clubs at Houston Oaks. When it comes to Champagne—always a core component of her program this time of year—that means rotating in “names that are familiar to our members,” such as Louis Roederer or Charles Heidsieck, alongside small, independent growers like her latest obsession, Philippe Fourrier. Deliciously rich and bursting with red-apple flavors, this complex Blanc de Noirs hails from the Côte des Bar, Champagne’s southernmost sub-zone, where the fifth-generation Fourrier family farms a mere 18 hectares of vines. “With prices of Champagne going up, it’s taken a lot more digging to find exciting wines that fit this price point,” says Van Til, but discoveries like this make the search worth it. ■

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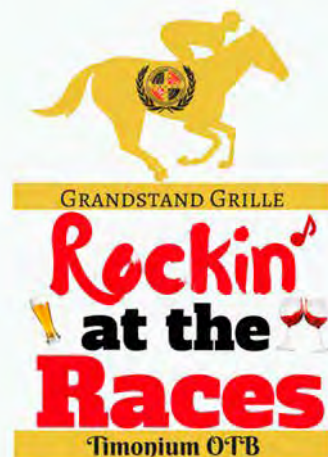
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BCLBA ... Rockin' at the Races

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHLI MIX

Members of the beverage alcohol industry recently gathered for the Baltimore County Licensed Beverage Association's (BCLBA) Rockin' at the Races event at the Timonium Fairground Grandstand Concourse. Industry members from all over Maryland joined the fun. Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to gather and take part in corn hole competitions, beer, wine and liquor tasting stations, local restaurant tasting stations, pig on a pit, pit beef, raw oysters, money wheels, liquor wheels, betting on the ponies and much, much more. ■



BCLBA's two most-senior, as well as longest-standing members, Tom "Goose" Kaiser (The Wishing Well) and Dan Minnick (Minnick's Restaurant) are joined by BCLBA's former legal counsel, Congressman Dutch Ruppersburger (top left).

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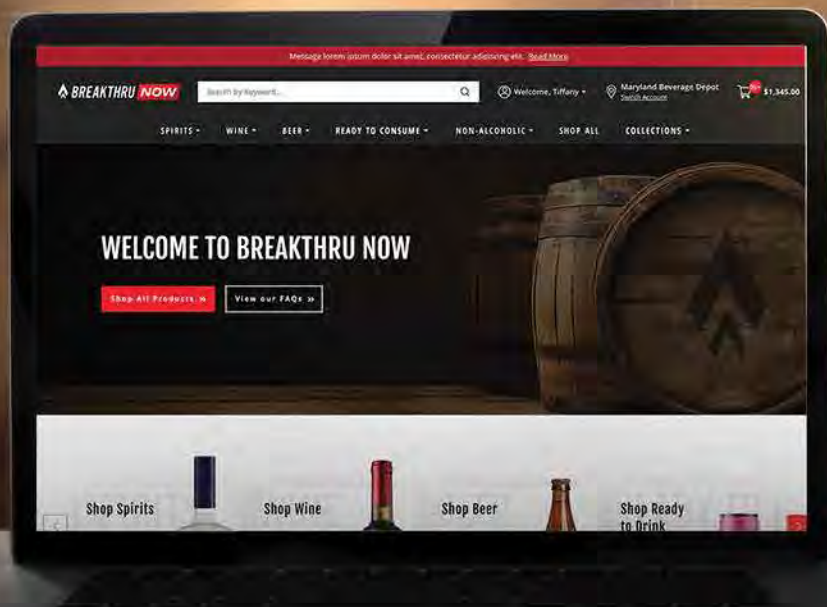


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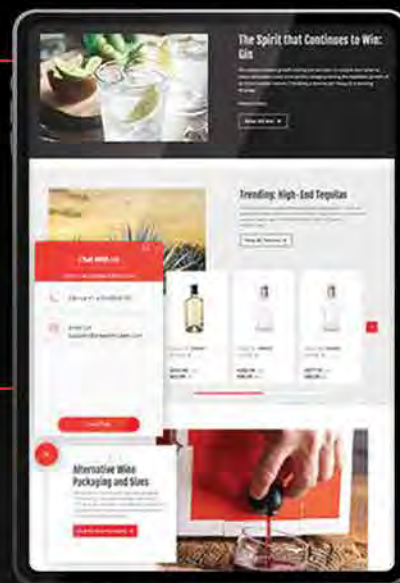
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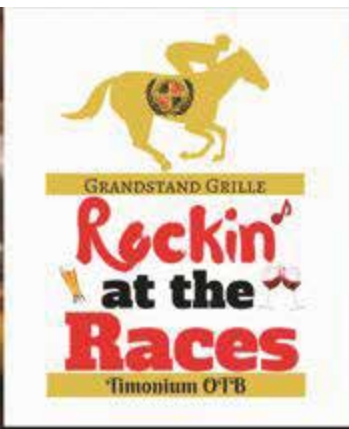
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WHISKEY: WHAT'S NEW



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Both Batch #1 and Batch #2 of **Castle & Key Distillery's** Small Batch Wheated Bourbon reimagine the mash bill of the brand's flagship Small Batch Bourbon Whiskey. While the 100-proof Batch #1 mixes notes of shortbread, leather, and subtle allspice, the 98-proof Batch #2 reveals a palate of caramelized sugar, roasted cashew, and dried apricot.

SRP: \$59.99 per 750-ml bottle



CENTURIES-OLD TRADITION

In 2021, **Benriach** Single Malt Scotch Whisky released its first edition of Malting Season. For the second, master blender Rachel Barrie used the same Concerto barley in the original but increased the barrel strength, culminating in a honeycomb flavor infused with citrus and orchard apple. The 97.8-proof whisky is an ode to Benriach's continued embrace of turning over water-steeped barley by hand on the malting room floor.

SRP: \$159.99 per 700-ml bottle



DOUBLE TIME

Dixon Dedman, the former master blender at Kentucky Owl, has launched a new whiskey brand. **2XO** (Two Times Oak) showcases Dexman's distinctive blending process, in which he places already-aged whiskey into new charred oak casks that yield rich wood notes. The first in his series of limited-edition small-batch and single barrel releases is The Phoenix Blend, a 104-proof Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey rife with caramel, vanilla, and red fruit.

SRP: \$100 per 750-ml bottle

INDIAN SPIRIT

Indri's Indri-Trini Single Malt Indian Whisky: The Three Wood, from Piccadilly Distillers, was made in Indri, in the state of Haryana, from six-row barley grown for hundreds of years in Rajasthan. The 92-proof, non-chill filtered whisky is the first from the country to combine liquids matured in former bourbon, wine, and PX sherry casks.

SRP: \$55 per 750-ml bottle



THE LOOK

Walsh Whiskey has completely revamped **The Irishman** lineup of whiskeys to reflect its luxe character. London studio Here Design spearheaded the overhaul, including a new bottle that flaunts a tall, tapered design, complete with a cork seal and embossed phrases. Likewise, the label and packaging have been updated with a new brand icon, braille for the visually impaired, and cream, green, gray, blue, and burgundy hues to differentiate the six core expressions. Other changes at Walsh Whiskey include the permanent addition of The Irishman Caribbean Cask to the portfolio and renaming The Founder's Reserve blend as The Harvest.

SRP: \$44.99 to \$159.99 per 700-ml bottle





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CALIFORNIA DREAMING

The refreshed label of **Julia James**, a proprietary wine brand from Opici Wines & Spirits that honors the Opici family's fifth generation, is now embellished with a bronze-hued signature "J" set against a crisp white background. Buoying the California Chardonnay and Pinot Noir's instantly recognizable new look is the knowledge that Opici has partnered with a well-respected California producer to source more fruit from top-tier wine-growing regions in the state, potentially translating to a line extension in 2023.



SRP: \$15.99 per 750-ml bottle



HISTORY LESSON

Elisabeth Salmon cofounded Champagne **Billecart-Salmon** back in 1818, but the house continues to pay tribute to her legacy with the newest edition of its prestige cuvée (the first was unveiled in 1988), the Elisabeth Salmon 2009. The complex rosé, characterized by an unusual minerality, melds 55 percent Pinot Noir from Mareuil-sur-Aÿ and Aÿ—10 percent of which is vinified as a red wine using grapes from an old parcel—with 45 percent Grand Cru Chardonnay from the Côtes des Blancs.

SRP: \$225 per 750-ml bottle



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Cornus Virginicus is an ode to flowering dogwood, Virginia's official state flower and tree. **Barboursville Vineyards**, in the Commonwealth's Monticello AVA, has joined forces with Virginia's First Lady, Suzanne S. Youngkin, to create this limited-release, Bordeaux-style red comprising estate-grown grapes (57 percent Merlot, 28.5 percent Cabernet Franc, and 14.5 percent Petit Verdot). To solidify the wine's connection to Virginia agriculture, a donation is being made to both the Virginia FFA and Virginia 4-H foundations.

SRP: \$40 per 750-ml bottle



YEAR-ROUND FESTIVITIES

As the first brand in the U.S. to exclusively sell its wines in the robust magnum format, **Bondie** fosters the idea of everyday celebrations. The Automne-Hiver collection of small-batch natural wines curated by Bondie's sommeliers span the Champagne by Monial, Red by Domaine de l'R Cabernet Franc 2021, Orange by Les Terres Promises Carignan Blanc 2020, White by Domaine de la Mongestine 2021 blend, and Rosé Blend Domaine de la Navicelle.

SRP: \$100 to \$120 per 1.5-liter bottle



MODERN LEGEND

Seña, the iconic Chilean wine estate founded by Eduardo Chadwick and Robert Mondavi, has debuted its 2020 vintage. Composed of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Carmenere, and Petit Verdot from Seña's Aconcagua Valley, it expresses juicy cherry and raspberry accompanied by a jolt of sweet spice.

SRP: \$150 per 750-ml bottle



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JUST ADD WATER

Canned cocktails are the focus at **Cutwater Spirits**, but the San Diego distillery has introduced an 80-proof bottle innovation that's ripe for the season: Cutwater Heaters. Hot water is all that is needed to bring this trifecta of wintery concoctions—Whiskey Hot Toddy, Vodka Apple Pie, and Hot Buttered Rum—made with Cutwater's own bourbon, vodka, or rum to life.

SRP: \$13.99 per 375-ml bottle

COZY NIGHT IN

Social Hour, the line of craft canned cocktails from Julie Reiner and Tom Macy, has brought back its 40-proof Harvest Whiskey Sour flavor starring complex 13-year-old **George Dickel Tennessee Whisky**. The ready-to-drink libation, rounded out with warm notes of Honeycrisp apple, Meyer lemon, cinnamon, maple, and cardamom, can be poured simply over ice and plumped up with apple slice or cinnamon stick garnishes.

SRP: \$28 per four-pack of 250-ml cans



ARTISTIC FLOURISH

In 2020 and 2021, **Bombay Sapphire** celebrated the oeuvres of Hebru Brantley and Steven Harrington by collaborating with the artists on special-edition bottles. For the third iteration, the gin brand has teamed up with the estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat—a follow-up to its role as official spirits sponsor of the hit Jean-Michel Basquiat: King Pleasure exhibition in New York City—to highlight the late Basquiat's California-inspired *Untitled (L.A. Painting)* from 1982. It melds his signature crown, bird, skull, and coin motifs against a soft blue background.

SRP: \$23.99 per 750-ml bottle



TURNING 40

California's **St. George Spirits** was founded in 1982, and to celebrate four decades in business, the craft distillery has unveiled its 40th Anniversary Edition Single Malt Whiskey. For the limited-release, 96-proof bottling, which joins Baller Single Malt Whiskey and the annual Lot Series release, master distiller Lance Winters and head distiller and blender Dave Smith selected liquid from 14 disparate casks, including umeshu and handmade tawny Port varieties, that are a minimum of four years old. To further commemorate the milestone, St. George Spirits is donating \$40,000 to the spirit industry's barrier-breaking Stepup Foundation.

SRP: \$500 per 750-ml bottle

ST. GEORGE SPIRITS PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICOLA PARISI



MACABRE PREDILECTIONS

The Warrens' Occult Museum in Monroe, Connecticut, home to the purportedly haunted Annabelle doll, was a magnet for paranormal fans before it closed to the public. But the doors parted for **Harridan Vodka's** Paranormal Reserve. The 666 bottles of organic certified vodka, produced in New York State with local corn, spent 30 days resting at the museum. Aptly packaged in a custom wooden box adorned with a Ouija board, it conjures Halloween vibes all year long—and brightens Christmas by donating a portion of sales to Toys for Tots.

SRP: \$199 per 750-ml bottle



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