

Drinks International

PURITY
THE SPIRIT OF SWEDEN PURITY VODKA
VODKA

Thomas Kuuttanen
BY THOMAS KUUTTANEN, MASTER BLENDER



IMPORTED VODKA
40% ALC. BY VOL.
80 PROOF

**The World's
50 Best
Bars – with
this issue**

Special report International Spirits Challenge Awards night
Spirits focus Vodka | Whiskies of the World | Rum | Brandy
Wine focus Spain | South Africa

Contents

Editor Christian Davis

+44 (0)1293 590047 christian.davis@drinksint.com

Deputy editor David Longfield

+44 (0)1293 590045 david.longfield@drinksint.com

News and website editor Lucy Britner

+44 (0)1293 590046 lucy.britner@drinksint.com

Travel Retail correspondent Joe Bates

Production editor Jaq Bayles

+44 (0)1293 590048 jaq.bayles@drinksint.com

Advertisement manager Justin Smith

+44 (0)1293 590041 justin.smith@drinksint.com

Senior sales executive Carmen Poel

Francesch
+44 (0)1293 590042 carmen.poel@drinksint.com

Sales executive Renata Stefanovic

+44 (0)1293 590043 renata.stefanovic@drinksint.com

Events director Caroline Berry

+44 (0)1293 590049 caroline.berry@drinksint.com

Accounts Annette O'Connell

+44 (0)1293 590051 annette.oconnell@agilemedia.co.uk

Publisher Russell Dodd

+44 (0)1293 590052 russell.dodd@drinksint.com

Drinks International

Gateway House

42a East Park

Crawley

West Sussex

RH10 6AS

United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1293 590040

Reader services/Subscriptions

please contact:

Drinks International

Subscriptions Department

Tel: +44 (0)20 8606 7533

E-mail: mandy.scott@optimabiz.co.uk

Subscription Rates

	UK Price	Europe Price	ROW Price
1 year	£105.00	€151.00	\$179.00
2 year	£189.00	€271.00	\$322.20
3 year	£267.50	€385.05	\$456.45

© Agile Media Ltd 2009

All rights reserved.

Drinks International (ISSN 0012-625X) is published monthly by Agile Media Ltd and distributed in the USA by SPP, 75 Aberdeen road, Emigsville, PA 17318 – 0437. Periodicals postage paid at Emigsville PA. Postmaster; send address changes to Drinks International PO Box 437 Emigsville PA 17318 – 0437.

Volume 40, issue 11

Published under licence from William Reed Business Media, Broadfield Park, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 9RT 01293 613400



News

5 Business News

8 People and Events

10 Travel Retail

16 Launches

34 Brandy

Brandy is set to become the second largest spirits category by 2013. Gavin D Smith distils the latest

Analysis

12 Travel Retail Excellence Awards

Pictures of the awards night during TFWA Cannes

41 Rum

All the noise has been about the dark stuff. Lucy Britner sees the white stuff putting up a spirited recovery

14 News Analysis: Drinks Conference

Cracking the US market. Lucy Britner travels to New York to attend the US Drinks Conference

44 Spanish Wine

Spain and Spanish wine have been having a torrid time. Rebecca Gibb reports

18 Profile

Maximilian Riedel is the 11th generation of the Austrian crystal glass and stemware dynasty. Christian Davis meets the man who went stemless

48 South African Wine

The wines continue to improve as the Rainbow Nation gears up for the football World Cup

Features

20 Vodka: Diageo

David Longfield gets an insight into Diageo's strategy for its vodka brands – Smirnoff, Ciroc and now Ketel One

52 Fortified Wine Challenge

Results of Drinks International's inaugural Fortified Wine Challenge tasting event

24 Vodka: Hasse Nilsson

A Swedish spirits writer has carried out an interesting comparative tasting of all the leading vodka brands

54 International Beer Challenge

For beer aficionados, here are the results from one of the world's biggest and best beer competitions

28 International Spirits Challenge

The trophies, the Red Hot Strings, Bar Wizards... A splendid time was had by all at the awards dinner

In the Zone

56 Bar Zone

The Manhattan man, G'Vine's gin genius and Britner's beers, to name but a few

30 Whiskies of the world

Gavin D Smith bestrides the world of whisk(e)y

58 Departure Zone

Akvinta's A-list parties, handbags made from ring pulls, Robert Parker's recommended wines and cool brands



Beyond Ballantine's

Chivas Brothers' blended whisky Ballantine's has developed a new creative platform for its 12 Year Old expression entitled Beyond.

This is the latest in the company's campaign across the Ballantine's portfolio, Leave an Impression, which started in 2007 and is part of a €70m spend.

Created by brand agency Dragon Rouge, Ballantine's Beyond campaign will be rolled out in key markets, following on from its global launch in October 2009.

Beyond includes advertising, point of sale materials and merchandise that incorporate a trompe l'oeil (trick the eye) theme. The launch also includes serving rituals and cocktails – including a gazpacho, a smoothie and a cappuccino.

Chivas says that Ballantine's 12 Year Old should act as a bridge within the range, providing consumers with a trade-up from Ballantine's Finest.

Four-way tasting approach

In an effort to establish a “new language” for the vodka category, Diageo has devised an analytical approach to tasting with the “4Fs” – Fragrance, Flavour, Feel and Finish.

The company plans to use the new method as a training tool for the on-trade, allowing a clearer understanding of the characteristics of the premium

vodkas in its portfolio.

Bartenders will be able to explain signature serves more easily to consumers, based on the profile of each brand, such as the Clean & Classic Smirnoff No 21 (Red); Rich & Distinctive Smirnoff Black; Crisp & Sophisticated Ketel One; and Fresh & Sensual Ciroc.

New rules introduced to protect scotch whisky

New scotch whisky regulations covering every aspect of the making, bottling and labelling of scotch whisky have come into force.

The new rules provide robust legal protection for scotch whisky from imitations and ensure consumers receive clear and consistent information on bottle labels.

The regulations have been introduced by the UK government.

Requirements include only bottling single malts in Scotland, tighter rules on the use of distillery names on labels, and better protection of traditional regional

names such as “Highland” and “Lowland”.

The industry plans to use the regulations as an opportunity to increase understanding of the different categories of scotch whisky.

Paul Walsh, chairman of the Scotch Whisky Association, said: “Protection and promotion of scotch whisky is at the heart of the new UK regulations, which are in the best interests of whisky consumers, distillers, and the wider economy. Working with the UK government and officials in Scotland, these regulations are a major step forward and form the definitive statement

of the rules on making, bottling, and labelling scotch whisky.

“This landmark legislation will help us to ensure consumers always receive the genuine article and help us to explain better to consumers why scotch whisky is so special.”

The SWA has also introduced measures to ensure all scotch whisky adverts and point of sale materials carry a responsible drinking message.

This was announced alongside the SWA's call for a ban on alcohol sold at prices below the level of taxation.



Jameson rolls out ad campaign

Irish Distillers, part of Pernod Ricard, has launched TV campaigns for its Jameson whiskey – one for the US and one for the rest of the world.

The advert destined for the US is entitled The Lost Barrel, with the one for the rest of world called Hurricane.

The brand message is that Jameson is a serious whiskey that also knows how to have fun.

Alex Ricard, chairman and chief executive Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard said: “This year we will spend €70 million globally on marketing

activity. This investment will further build on the dynamism and success of Jameson and is a clear demonstration of our belief and confidence in this brand.”

This will be the first time in history that Jameson have had a TV campaign in the US.



Grey Goose vodka created a pop-up bar in London's Covent Garden. Several bars designed by famous designers opened for two days only in an event for the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Designer Roland Mouret's signature Grey Goose Mouret Miracle cocktail was served at his Origami Bar

More First Quench stores go

The joint administrators of First Quench Retailing, which trades in the UK as Threshers, Wine Rack, The Local, Haddows, Bottoms Up and Victoria Wine, have announced the closure of a further 381 stores.

This will result in 1,908 redundancies within the stores which are closing and a further 34 redundancies at First Quench's head office in Welwyn Garden City.

Richard Fleming, UK head of restructuring at KPMG and joint administrator, said: "We are now in advanced talks regarding the sale of the business with a number of interested parties and have ascertained that parts of the portfolio, consisting of just

over 500 stores, are of interest to these potential purchasers.

"These stores will continue to trade while we progress with our negotiations.

"Unfortunately there has not been sufficient interest in these 381 stores as part of the going concern sale, so we have no option but to close them.

"However, we have had an enormous amount of interest in these sites from some 700 small local businesses and private individuals.

"Christie & Co is assisting us in assigning the leases of the remaining stores to interested buyers."

Depending on stock levels, the 381 stores are due to close by December 16 and stock



liquidation sales started on November 24.

Details of the stores which are closing will be available on the company's website, threshergroup.com.

This follows an announcement on November 5 that 373 loss-making stores were to close following the administrators' initial review of the business.

Vodka distribution deal

In a deal between Panama-based distributor Scottish Spirits and the Federal State Enterprise FKP Sojuzplodoimport in Moscow, Scottish Spirits has been granted rights for worldwide distribution of the Russian government's Stolichnaya and Moskovskaya vodkas.

Scottish Spirits, based

in Panama, is a major distributor of whiskies in Latin America and other international markets.

For the distribution of Stolichnaya and Moskovskaya, Scottish Spirits is planning to appoint new distributors and sub-distributors throughout the world.

Salvatore at Fifty closes

Famous London cocktail establishment Salvatore at Fifty has gone into liquidation.

A statement on the cocktail maestro Salvatore Calabrese's website said: "Despite the plethora of awards and its financial success until the last drop was poured from the silver shaker, the bar was caught up in a joint venture situation, which is now in liquidation.

"I am shocked because it happened so quickly. What made the bar such a magical

place was the bond between the people who worked there, my team. They were loyal to me to the last and I say thank-you to them. The bar was successful to the end. It just could not be extricated from the escalation of an unfortunate situation.

"It's been great to have support from people all over the world."

The person answering the old phone line said the company went into liquidation on November 16.



Lacroix Chivas 12 magnum win

Shortly after unveiling their high-profile design collaboration, Chivas Regal and Christian Lacroix are celebrating winning the Jury Prize at the Monaco Formes de Luxe

2009 Awards for the Chivas 12 Magnum by Christian Lacroix.

It is the first time the award has been presented to a spirit brand.

The Formes de Luxe

awards in Monaco are presented each year as part of the Monaco Luxe Pack international exhibition to celebrate the most exceptional examples of packaging.

People & events

Leader Page

Things can only get better...

And so the year ends. It has not been a great one for most people – after years of so-called boom, most of the western world has been licking its wounds. Stalled economies, falling house prices, zero growth – you name it. Although a flicker of hope remained in Asia with India and China both showing some growth.

The IWSR (International Wine & Spirits Record) has just published its 2009-2013 Forecast Report. Looking at 54 countries, it estimates that the global spirits market will grow by a miserly 0.4% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2008 and 2013, down from 2.4% from 2003-2008.

It predicts whisky and rum/cane will be the only major categories to increase their share of the global market between 2008 and 2013. Whisky will show a 2.7% CAGR growth over the next five years, entirely due to Indian whisky, which is already a substantial market.

Brandy is predicted to become the second largest spirits category, overtaking rum/cane by 2013. Mexico will be the only market to see growth of one million cases, says IWSR.

The US will be the fastest-growing white spirits market as vodka remains resolutely popular. Also, the category is seeing most investment as more and more brands chase the mouthwateringly profitable premium categories.

As for wine, it is expected to grow by 0.6% over the forecast period, down from 1.4% between 2003 and 2008. Wine in China

Christian Davis

Editor



is expected to continue to grow rapidly and Asia Pacific will take share from Europe. Traditional wine-producing countries, specifically France and Spain, are drinking less and less of their natural beverage.

Not great, but it could be a lot worse. Having a drink remains an affordable luxury for the majority of people in most, if not all of the major economies. That is as long as governments continue to resist the shrill cries of the anti-alcohol lobby and the more extreme elements in well-meaning bodies such as the World Health Organisation.

The alcoholic drinks industry is under no small amount of pressure. Hopefully, a good summer (in both hemispheres) and the football World Cup in South Africa in June will prove restorative. In the immortal words of D:Ream, Things Can Only Get Better. Have a pleasant, peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Appointments

Stock Spirits Group, the central European branded spirits and liqueurs producer, has appointed **Tomas Tarcala** marketing director of Stock Plzen. He will lead marketing operations in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Tarcala's appointment follows a decision to split the role of marketing and sales director, reflecting the continuing growth of the group in this region. Tarcala has 15 years experience in marketing positions gained principally at Reckitt Benckiser, the global consumer goods company.

G&J Greenall has appointed **Edmund Baker** finance director. His career has included directorships at ProZone (a sports analysis company) and Coventry City Football Club. Further appointment news at the company includes the promotion of **Christian Rose**, managing director since 2008, to chief executive officer. Board changes have also been made with **Donna Alder**, human resources manager since 2005, promoted to human resources director, and **Mark Parton**, who joined the company in 2005, promoted to operations director.

Ludovic Ducrocq has been appointed Grant's Blended Scotch Whisky's first global ambassador. His role is "to inspire people with the incredible Grant's story and share his infectious passion for the award-winning Grant's range of scotch whiskies".

Italian producer Cavit has appointed a new export

director for Europe/Asia/Africa/Australia. **Andrea Nicolini** joins the Trentino-based company from Ilva Spa Wine & Spirits.

Heaven Hill Distilleries has added **Art Riley** to its sales team as regional manager for Louisiana and Arkansas. Riley brings 15 years of management in the beverage alcohol industry.

Stefano Chioccioli, the renowned Tuscan enologist with more than 20 years of experience in Italy and abroad, has joined the team at Masseria Li Veli. He is working with Alberto, Alfredo and Edoardo Falvo in the vineyards and cellars of the property in the Salentino.

Global premium spirits business and independent family distillers William Grant & Sons has announced the appointment of **Brian Kinsman** as its new master blender. Kinsman will become the sixth master blender in the company's history when he takes over the reins from David Stewart, who, after 47 years' service, will remain with the company as The Balvenie malt master.

Heineken has appointed **Alexis Nasard** group commerce director, effective February 1 2010. Nasard will join Heineken's executive committee reporting to Jean-François van Boxmeer, Heineken chief executive. Nasard will have global responsibility for the company's marketing, sales, innovation and wholesale strategies.



Andrea Nicolini



Alexis Nasard



Brian Kinsman

Diary

● **Millésime Bio**
January 25-27
Montpellier, France
millesime-bio.com

● **Taste India International Wine Fair**
January 28-30
Mumbai, India
taste-expo.com

● **Salon des Vins de Loire**
February 1-3
Angers, France
salondesvinsde Loire.com

● **Vino 2010 Italian Wine Week**
February 2-6
New York
italtrade.com

● **Pinot Noir New Zealand**
February 1-4
Wellington, NZ
pinotnoir2010.co.nz

● **Prodexpo**
February 8-12
Moscow Expocentre
prod-expo.ru

● **International Wine & Spirits Convention**
February 18-21
Cannes, France
winemeetings-cannes.fr

● **Pianeta Birra**
February 21-24
Rimini Fiera, Italy
pianetabirra.it

● **Duty Free Show of the Americas**
February 21-25
Orlando, Florida, USA
iaadfs.org

● **Vinisud**
February 22-24
Montpellier, France
vinisud.org

● **Prowein**
March 21-23
Düsseldorf, Germany
prowein.de

Farewell, mom and pop

New York is one of 15 US states in which grocery stores are not allowed to sell wine. Ongoing attempts to “modernise” the law have proved controversial: liquor store owners say they will be put out of business if they have to compete with supermarkets. But are they right? And would such a move, in New York and elsewhere, fundamentally change the way Americans buy wine?

All eyes are currently on the US wine market, which has become the most lucrative on earth despite the relatively small proportion of its adult citizens who drink wine – just 33%, which is less than half the figure for Sweden or Denmark.

But, as is generally the case with all things American, it’s a question of scale. That 33% equates to 73.7 million consumers, which means the US wine market is bigger than those of France, the UK and the Netherlands put together.

Exporters sometimes have issues with America’s three-tier distribution system, but they are impressed by the enthusiastic consumers they find at the end of the chain. Two Buck Chuck may have given the impression that US wine drinkers are merely after a cost-effective alcohol delivery system, but there is evidence that regular American wine consumers are increasingly knowledgeable, eager to learn, and happy to pay a premium where they can see a reason for doing so. This is where specialist liquor stores come into their own.

Buying on advice

According to the most recent Wine Intelligence Vinitrac survey of regular drinkers, 60% of Americans had bought wine from a supermarket in the past six months; in the UK, where grocers have been selling wine for decades, the figure is 94%. Fifty per cent of Americans had bought wine in a liquor store, and 32% had purchased from a

specialist wine shop – higher figures than recorded for the equivalent outlets in the UK.

Many feel that wine has avoided commodity status in much of the US because, in much of the country, it is not something that can be picked up with the groceries in a weekly shop. This has, it is claimed, trained Americans to be more open to retailer advice – and less obsessed by pricing – than their British counterparts.

Wine Intelligence data bears this out. Just 28% of UK wine drinkers say that recommendations from store staff influence their choices; in the States, the figure is 54%. And 60% of UK consumers say the promotional offer is a major factor in their purchasing decision, compared to 51% in America.

Hidden costs for independents

Proponents of New York’s Liquor Store and Wine Revitalization Act say the legislation will immediately generate millions of dollars for the state in new licensing fees. It will also, they argue, free up “mom and pop” liquor stores from antiquated liquor laws. Under the Act, such traders will be allowed to open new branches, develop cooperative buying agreements and even broaden their product offering beyond alcohol. But still the independents resist the change, because they do not believe the sums add up for them.

Bradley J Rickard, assistant professor at the department of applied economics and management at New York’s Cornell University, last month published research into the implications of liberalising wine retailing laws.

Using detailed economic modelling, Rickard was able to predict that specialist stores would indeed lose out. He calculated that “government revenue from additional tax would increase by \$22 million per year”; that “the



Steve Payne

market share of out-of-state wines would grow and revenues increase between 30% and 40%”; and also that “the quantity of wine sold, and revenue earned, by liquor stores would fall by between 17% and 32%”.

It has been calculated by opponents of the plans that, in New York, the new law would legalise wine sales in 19,000 new outlets, with the effect of putting 1,000 specialist stores out of business with the loss of 4,000 jobs.

The state, some have pointed out, does not have the resources to police this vastly enlarged retail sector and to keep a grip on New York’s under-age drinking problem.

Less attention has been given to the effect that liberalisation will have on consumer habits. Some producers – especially Australian – have turned their attention to the US after seeing their UK revenues curtailed by grocery discounting and rising margin demands. They will be hoping they have not exchanged one supermarket-controlled market for another.

Independent wine retailers have good reason to be wary of proposed moves to end the restrictions on grocery store wine sales in the US. Graham Holter reports

Who restricts?

Fifteen US states ban or restrict the sale of wine in grocery stores. They are: Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Utah.

Travel retail

Nuance puts Swiss drinks in the spotlight

The profile of Swiss wines and spirits at Geneva International airport has strengthened in the past month following the opening of a major new shop operated by The Nuance Group.

Swiss retailer Nuance has also recently showcased Swiss wines and spirits as part of a Taste of Switzerland promotion at its store at Zürich airport.

At Geneva airport Nuance

has opened a flagship duty free outlet in the departures lounge, which, at 650sq m, is some 30% larger than the previous shop. The store is part of a wider renovation of the airport's retail offer, which will be completed by the end of the year.

In addition to a selection of New and Old World wines, local Swiss wines have been showcased at Geneva airport for the first time, with around

20 Lake Geneva-based suppliers represented. Wall bays and educational materials have also been dedicated to Swiss wine-growing cantons such as Ticino and Valais.

Nuance has revealed that more than 50% of its wine selection at the new store is "premium" with prices for individual bottles in this high-end segment ranging from CHF500 to CHF1,200 (£300-£711).

Nuance has built a permanent tasting bar in the shop to host regular promotions on local wines and spirits. Other notable store features include a central events area for promotions and live events and two video screens installed outside to highlight promotions, launches and special events.

Meanwhile, in October at Zürich airport's Airside Center, Nuance relied on key Swiss spirit and wine producers to assist in staging a major Taste of Switzerland exhibition. Winery Cave Amann helped provide details on the country's major winegrowing regions, while spirit producers Dettling and Etter showcased the production processes behind their fruit-based spirits, most notably kirsch.



Rare Rémy Martin cognac launched

Rémy Martin made history at the TFWA World Exhibition by unveiling its first cognac to originate from a single cask.

At a celebratory launch in the historic setting of the Château de la Napoule in the Bay of Cannes, Louis XIII Rare Cask was unveiled to invited guests, as was the cask itself, which was first discovered to be of exceptional quality by cellar master Pierrette Trichet in 2004. The cask contains a blend of 1,200 eaux-de-vie aged between 40 and 100 years.

Rare Cask is limited to 786 decanters bottled at a higher strength of 43.8% abv rather than the standard 40%, and priced at around €10,000 (£8,956). The Baccarat decanters, which are individually worked on by 20 craftsmen for two weeks at a time, are made of black crystal with necks dressed in palladium, a rare metal.



World of Whiskies unveils website with holiday competition

The UK's largest airport retailer, World Duty Free (WDF), has launched a website promoting its chain of eight World of Whiskies airport shops.

The new site coincides with the opening of a World of Whiskies outlet in Heathrow Terminal 4, which boasts a tasting bar and updated design.

The worldofwhiskies.com

site allows registered members to order their purchases online before they travel and collect them at the airport.

The shops' entire range of some 300 whiskies is listed online with sections for travel retail exclusives and World of Whiskies exclusives, such as the £6,000 Balvenie 50 Year Old and the £375 Hazelwood Reserve 17 Year Old.

Site membership benefits include free gifts on selected purchases, information on special events and offers, monthly recommendations from whisky writer Charles Maclean, and the chance to swap reviews and opinions with other site users.

WDF is running a free competition for anyone registering for the site to win a luxury

holiday for two to visit 12 whisky distilleries in Scotland, Ireland, Canada, the US and Japan.

"The website takes the passion and expertise of our staff beyond the airport, enabling us to reach current and new audiences," said WDF senior brand manager Jonathan Kelsey.

The new-look World of

Whiskies shop in London Heathrow T4 is part of a £200m redevelopment of the terminal's 85,000sq ft of retail space. New features include a wood-panelled tasting bar and an armchair area near a Rare & Vintage section dedicated to high-end lines.

World Duty Free is the UK's largest retailer of single malt whiskies.



Dewar's strikes gold in the Gulf

Bacardi Global Travel Retail Division (BGTRD) has achieved triple-digit sales increases for its Dewar's Scotch whisky brand following a gold-themed promotion at five leading Gulf duty free airport locations.

The Dewar's Gold Rush promotion, which has been rolled out to Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar's Doha, Dubai and Oman's Muscat airports, invites customers to buy three bottles of Dewar's 12 Year Old and receive a scratch card, which gives them the chance to win one of three possible prizes – a gold coin (valued at \$30), a gold-coloured iPod Touch, or a half bottle (37.5cl) of Dewar's 12 Year Old.

Consumers are also invited to enter a free prize draw to win a bar of gold or, in the case of the Dubai airport promotion, two bars of gold.

The promotion has yielded impressive results, leading to sales increases at Bahrain, Muscat, Dubai and Doha of 130%, 288%, 1,211% and 1,700%, respectively.

"Offering customers instant wins brings tactile brand interactivity to the shop floor and increases category footfall," commented BGTRD regional manager for Greece, Middle East and Africa Erwin van Outheusden.

Pernod Ricard narrows gap on leader Diageo

Diageo Global Travel and Middle East continued to enjoy the largest slice of the duty free and travel retail liquor business last year, but second-placed Pernod Ricard narrowed the gap, according to figures released by the International Wine & Spirit Record (IWSR) last month.

Diageo took a 25.8% share of the global travel retail market last year, but saw sales of its leading brand, Johnnie Walker, dip by 1.2% due to a sharp fall in sales in key markets such as the Americas, the UK, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The company owns nine of the top 50 spirit brands in duty free and travel retail.

The sale of V&S saw arch rival Pernod Ricard build its market share to 23% in 2008, up from 22.3% the previous year. Newly acquired Absolut, travel retail's second largest spirit brand, recorded sales growth of 1.3% to reach 1.05m cases. The French group now owns 11 of the top 50 brands



in duty free, and seven of the top 25 fastest growing brands in the channel.

Bacardi Global Travel Retail Division also enjoyed a comparatively good year, achieving big sales gains for its four priority brands – Bacardi (7.3%) rum, Dewar's Scotch whisky (29.4%), Bombay Sapphire gin (10.4%) and Grey Goose vodka (32.9%).

In contrast, Beam Global had a mixed 2008, according to IWSR's reckoning, with Courvoisier cognac increasing volumes by more than

5%, but seeing sales of Sauza tequila, and Canadian Club and Teacher's whiskies all decline.

The two leading cognac brands did well in 2008, outperforming the overall category, which grew just 1.7% last year. In contrast, category leader Hennessy achieved sales growth of 9.7%, while main rival Rémy Martin saw a 7.9% rise.

Other star duty free performers last year were The Famous Grouse (10.4%), Skyy vodka (32.2%) and Tullamore Dew Irish whiskey (23.7%).

Grant's ultra-premium extension



The world's fourth biggest whisky brand, Grant's, was one of the few major blended Scotch whiskies not to have an ultra-premium expression. That gap has now been filled after the launch of Grant's 25 Year Old at the TFWA World Exhibition in Cannes last month.

Grant's 25 Year Old is priced at £145 per bottle and will be available exclusively in travel retail from June next year, with quantities for the first batch limited initially to 2,000 bottles.

Travel retail is Grant's third largest export market. Selected domestic distribution of the new whisky will

start in 2011. The whisky contains the first spirit ever distilled from William Grant's Girvan grain distillery and each batch is married in oak tuns for six months before bottling.

It is presented in a bespoke glass bottle and stored in a blue presentation box with gold-engraved metalwork decoration.

The launch of Grant's 25 Year Old is part of a five-year plan by the company to propel the brand to become the third largest whisky brand, which has also seen the recent appointment of Ludo Ducrocq as the whisky's first global brand ambassador.

Liquor shorts

The new ultra-premium Johnnie Walker whisky, **The John Walker**, has gone on sale at Abu Dhabi airport with DFS Group priced at \$3,000 (£1,788). The bottle will be auctioned to benefit children's charity The Smile Train, which provides cleft lip/palate surgery to children in the Third World.

Pinky vodka has gained a key US duty free listing at Dallas Fort Worth airport with Duty Free Air & Ship Supply (DFASS). The brand is now available in 14 duty free markets worldwide.

Joint-venture Cypriot airport retailer **CTC-ARI** has opened a new Uisge Beatha whisky shop at the island's new Larnaka Zenon international airport. The operator has also opened a Kelari wine cellar showcasing local Cypriot wines.

William Grant & Sons has bolstered its global travel-retail team with two new appointments. Inver House Distillers executive Rajiv Bhatia will become regional manager Middle East, Gulf & Indian subcontinent from January next year, while Andrew Torrance has been named business development manager – global travel retail.

Caçhaca brand **Sagatiba** has gained a listing with Dubai Duty Free. To support the launch the brand is offering customers a free CD of Brazilian music with every purchase of a 1-litre bottle.

Bacardi Global Travel Retail Division (BGTRD) has appointed Trent Russell its new global marketing director. Australian-born Russell was previously marketing director for Bacardi China.

Excellence in travel retail

The winners of Drinks International's Travel Retail Excellence Awards received their trophies at a special ceremony at the TFWA Cannes exhibition



The Winners

Best Launch at Cannes 2009

Winner: The Royal Legacy of 1745 – Drambuie Liqueur Co

Highly commended: Champagne Cuvée 2.25 Rosé Vintage 2004 – Champagne Nicolas Feuillate

Best Launch 2009

Winner: Piper Heidsieck Rare Vintage 1999 – Rémy Cointreau

Highly commended: The Balvenie 14 Year Old Golden Cask – William Grant & Sons

Best Packaging/Repackaging

Winner: Piper Heidsieck Rare Vintage 1999 – Rémy Cointreau

Highly commended: Armagnac Chabot Extra – MG Cellars

Highly commended: Scapa 16 Year Old Single Malt – Chivas Brothers/Nude Brand Consultancy

Best Marketing/In-store Promotion

Winner: Johnnie Walker Centenary – Diageo

Highly commended: Get the Summer Spirit Campaign – Diageo

Highly commended: Tequila Patrón – Patrón Spirits International

Travel Retail Operator of the year

Winner: Maritime & Mercantile International

Travel Retail Drinks Buyer of the year

Winner: Brooke Supernaw – DFS Group, Hong Kong

Judges

P&O Ferries head of buying **Neil Towns**

Duty free consultant **Peter Ayling**

Managing director of King Power **Susan Whelan**

Drinks International travel retail correspondent

Joe Bates

Drinks International editor **Christian Davis**

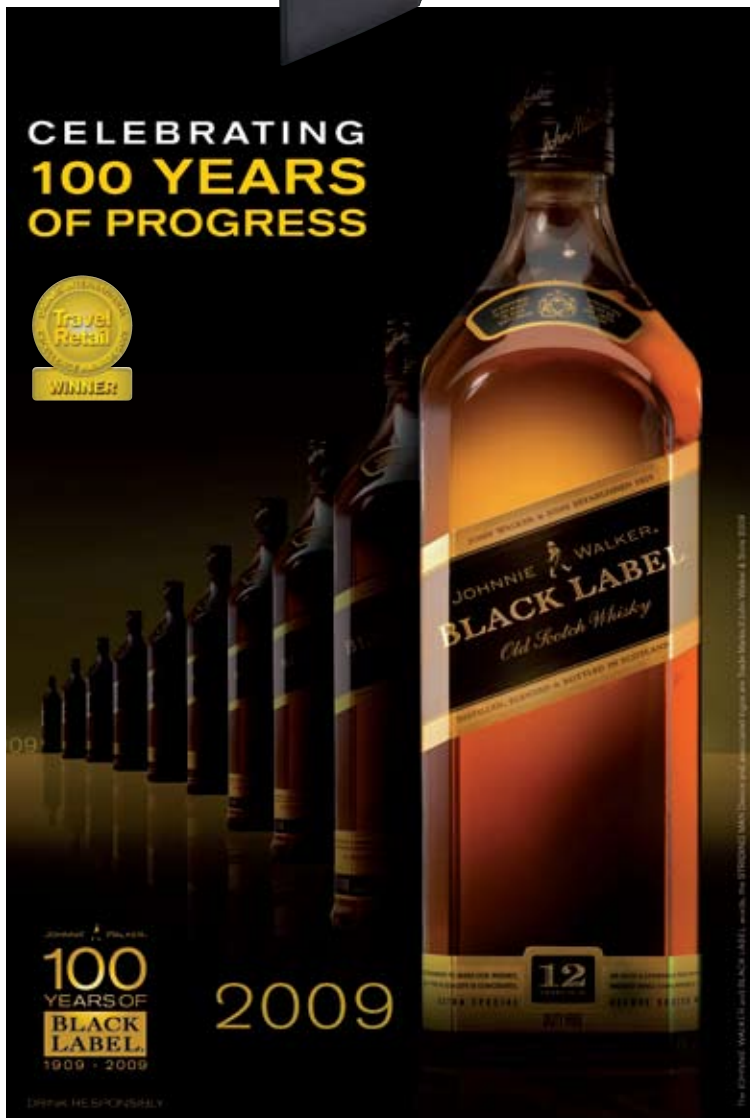
Villiger's director of export sales **Chris Pfister** (right) and area export manager **Lydia Garcia** present the award for Travel Retail Drinks Buyer of the Year to **John Hoover** (centre) of DFS Group, accepting on behalf of **Brooke Supernaw**, merchandise manager for liquor at DFS Group in Hong Kong



Sponsors:

Freixenet

VILLIGER 1888



L-R: Mike Greggs from Diageo, Aude Minc from Remy Cointreau, Laurent Cosson from Remy Cointreau, Christian Davis from Drinks International, Miranda Rennie from Drambuie, John Hoover from DFS Group, Marek Sheridan from Maritime & Mercantile International



Being there

A trip to the US Drinks Conference in New York gave Lucy Britner an insight into making it in the American market



Pictured at the conference are: (l-r) Jeff Grindrod, Steve Raye, John Beaudette and Mike Ginley

In the neighbouring room to the famous Harry's Bar, New York, distributors, importers, lawyers, brand owners and people with aspirations to be one of the aforementioned, gathered at the US Drinks Conference 2009. The topic: Getting Your Brand into the US Market.

The two-day conference provided a fascinating insight into the sector Stateside – the three-tier system, legal implications and tips to get your brand known for the right reasons. This is by no means an exhaustive round-up of the event, but it should help you get started.

According to the statistics, it looks like, despite the recession, now is a good time to do it – volume growth estimates for 2009 include spirits up 1.5%, wine up 0.6% and beer up 0.2%, though Mike Ginley, from Next Level Marketing, and Jeff Grindrod, from Brand Action Team, who provided the stats, say beer is almost too hard to call.

Importer and distributor MHW's president, John Beaudette, says that, despite the recession, 225 spirits brands were launched in the US during 2008, led by vodka, then rum and tequila. About 40% of these new brands are imports and Beaudette says this is down slightly because of the 2007 microdistillery phenomenon in the US.

The top five spirits brands by volume are Smirnoff, Bacardi, Captain Morgan, Absolut and Jack Daniel's.

There were 260 wine brands launched and only 26% of the total wine brands are imports. The top three import countries are Italy, Australia and France.

Many US potentials are put off by the

seemingly complicated three-tier system. Experts at the conference aimed to dispel the myths and explain the system effectively.

The three-tier system

This came about in 1933 when Prohibition was repealed. The aim was to ban tied houses and give states the power to regulate how alcohol was sold. Thirty-two states abide by the three-tier system and 18 control the sale of alcohol themselves.

The system works with sales passing from the supplier or importer to the in-state wholesaler then on to the retailer. This ensures the taxes remain in the state.

All brands hoping to launch into the US also have to have a COLA – Certificate of Label Approval – which is issued by the Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau.

Beaudette insists it's easy to launch in the US, saying: "You can have a brand on the shelf in New York City 60-90 days after its conception."

What you need to get started

- Quality liquid
- Unique and attractive packaging
- Product point of difference
- Merchandising/POS
- Consumer sampling
- Dedicated local manpower

Ginley and Grindrod say the last three points need to be provided by the brand owner or supplier.

"Today's distributors are simply too big and too busy to focus on brand-building for smaller or

new brands. The distributor can place products at retail but can't make them sell," says Grindrod.

"Brand owners and suppliers are responsible for making their brands sell and they must play an active role in building the brand."

The pair say this means a long-term approach with no shortcuts and they offer a six-step guide to building a brand:

- 1** Develop a target account list for each market and build relationships with the key decision-makers – in both the on and off-trades.
- 2** Place your products in the right accounts in the right place to drive consumer awareness and impulse purchase.
- 3** Drive consumer pull-through with drink menu listings in the on-premise and featured ads and displays in the off-premise.
- 4** Training and education is key to building premium beverage brands because it turns account staff into ambassadors.
- 5** Consumer sampling is the best way to drive product trial and secure increased account support.
- 6** Set measurable goals for all on- and off-premise activities and make sure they are tracked, measured and reported on.

So who gets a share of what?

Beaudette's summary of a spirit with a shelf price of \$29.99 (\$360 for a case of 12)

Importer's margin: \$88.24

Distributor margin: \$67.65

Retailer margin: \$89.29

Supplier FOB: \$65

Other costs (including \$41 tax): \$49.70

The alchemist

Case study: James Fellowes left Britain to set up the Alchemy Portfolio – exporting, marketing and distributing premium drinks. He gives Drinks International the unique perspective of an Englishman in New York



Is the three-tier system easy to work with?

No, the system is exceptionally challenging, to say the least.

The system dates back to post-Prohibition and is managed by individual states (not on a federal basis), so every state has a different legal framework for adult beverages and the wholesaler tier in particular.

To make matters worse, there are effectively two separate routes to market, one for beer (including cider, RTDs etc) and one for wine and spirits.

When the system works it can work very effectively – a good distributor can do an invaluable job for your brand.

What advice would you give to brand owners who want to break into the US market?

1 – Find an “in-market” expert to help you navigate the legal minefield and highly fragmented route to market. As a Brit, working at the time with Diageo (and formerly with Bass Taverns), it took me more than five years from arriving in the US to really get my head around the nuances of the US system. It really couldn't be more different to the UK drinks market.

2 – Partner with a mid-sized importer that is a good fit for your company and your respective brand. It is not sufficient just to get listed in a few distributors and assume they will sell your brand for you.

These companies have hundreds of brands competing for share and without your own sales force and significant marketing dollars, your star brand is likely to be confined to obscurity in a hurry. Partnering with a tier two or three importer will allow your brand to be actively sold by its own sales force and through its well-oiled wholesaler network. In addition, its marketing teams can help translate your brand positioning for the US consumer.

3 – Walk before you run. The temptation is to try

to go national on day one. This is a huge error, as the US is effectively 50 separate countries. You are far better off testing the market in a couple of representative states (say, for example, NY and Florida) than to try to go national in one hit.

The American consumer thinks differently, drinks differently and is altogether a very different “animal” to European consumers – that is before you get to the disparities and nuances by region and state.

Do not assume that just because your brand positioning or marketing message has been a huge hit in the UK it will be understood – let alone appreciated – on this side of the Pond. Remember, “soccer” is still a minor spectator sport over here – say no more.

Which brands are you helping at the moment?

The company was only founded in July this year. Our first partner clients targeting the US are David Boyle and the export team of Halewood International.

Halewood has a broad portfolio of brands, but in its initial foray into the States in the 1990s, the management found it a challenge.

David was keen to learn from the lessons of the past and in August suggested that The Alchemy Portfolio cherry-pick a few brands that would have the most potential for the US market.

As a result, we are in the advanced stages of negotiation with some key importers on a select number of Halewood brands for targeted/focused launches and are both very encouraged by the initial response.

Boyle, head of

international at Halewood says: “Given the complexities of the US market system, UK suppliers can avoid potential pitfalls by dealing with a thoroughly experienced and professional company such as Alchemy.

“We have only been working with them for a relatively short period, but we are already well ahead of the game in terms of identifying like-minded US distribution partners who can bring a well targeted and focused approach to launching some of our brands into the US.

“This has removed much of the mystery of dealing with the three tier system and also the myriad regulatory issues.”

The Alchemy Portfolio is taking Halewood International brand Crabbie's Original Alcoholic Ginger Beer to the States



Launches



Dupeyron Limited Edition 1979 Sauternes Cask Finish

Brand owner Ryst Dupeyron Armagnac
Price €57.50 or £53 for 50cl
Markets Europe
Contact Aurelie Desombre,
 adesombre@vintageandco.com

Ryst Dupeyron, known for its large collection of vintage Armagnac dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, has launched what it says is the first Armagnac to be finished in a premier grand cru classé Sauternes barrel.

This 30-year-old vintage Armagnac has spent most of its life in a traditional French oak barrel and producer Jacques-François Ryst sought to develop additional flavours by transferring the Armagnac to the Sauternes barrel for an additional six months.

Ryst Dupeyron is only releasing 1,571 bottles of this rare Armagnac this year.



Glen Grant Cellar Reserve 1992

Brand owner Gruppo Campari, Italy
Price UK £50
Markets Worldwide (only 13,500 bottles)
Contact Ben Pick, Cellar Trends,
 +44 (0)1283, cellartrends.co.uk

Glen Grant has introduced a 16 Year Old expression to its range of Speyside single malts.

The Glen Grant 1992 Cellar Reserve vintage malt, bottled in 2008 at 46% abv, is available in a limited edition of 13,542 bottles worldwide. Aged in bourbon and sherry casks, the 16-year maturation is said to have created a "beautifully balanced bouquet and flavour with the bright golden barley colour that is the trademark of Glen Grant whiskies".

The Glen Grant 1992 is the first in a new line of limited edition vintage malts which will see further expressions in coming years.



The Glenrothes John Ramsay Legacy

Brand owner The Edrington Group
Price UK £699
Markets UK (only 100 bottles)
Contact theglenrothes.com

The Glenrothes single malt has launched a limited edition John Ramsay Legacy bottling to mark the malt master's retirement.

The non-vintage selection of 30 casks was personally chosen by Ramsay to create a single malt in celebration of his long-standing relationship with the Speyside distillery. The casks are all second fill American oak sherry casks from vintages ranging from 1973 to 1987.

"Bursting with aromas of spice, blood orange and vanilla, this limited edition single malt has a rich palate of fruit and mango with a long, mature, unmistakably American oak finish. Only 100 bottles of this Legacy bottling (46.7% abv) are available in the UK."

Each 70cl bottle is individually numbered and presented in an oak box designed to showcase the rare single malt. A booklet scripted by John Ramsay, including tasting notes, is also kept in a hidden drawer at the base of the box.



Chivas 12 Magnum by Christian Lacroix

Brand owner Chivas Bros
Price UK retail £125; duty free: US\$100
Markets Global
Contact chivasbrothers.com

Chivas Bros has broken new ground with a limited edition of Chivas 12 in 1.5-litre size. The special release bottle, designed by fashion guru Christian Lacroix, has a metal coating with the design etched in by laser.

In typically elaborate Lacroix style, the designs for the special edition were initially feared to be too complex, but a producer was found in the south of France with technology previously used only for perfume bottles. The etching process takes 10 minutes per unit.

"We are giving priority to the prestige on-trade," says Chivas brand director Sophie Gallois. "Night clubs and bars, the likes of where super-premium vodkas have been doing really well."

The company has produced only 15,000 units, all pre-sold into 50 markets globally. "We think it really captures the heritage and novelty of the Chivas brand," Gallois told Drinks International. "It brings a touch of theatre and really comes alive [in a bar] at night."



Three Barrels XO Aged 15 Years

Brand owner First Drinks
Price £24.99
Markets UK
Contact +44 (0)2380 312000

Three Barrels brandy is investing in a repackaging of its flagship offering, Three Barrels XO Aged 15 Years. From now on, the age statement will feature more prominently on the bottle label, in a bid to reinforce its top-end credentials.

The gift carton has also been redesigned to reflect the variant's quality and give it greater standout on shelf.

Anthony Habert, senior brand manager for Three Barrels at First Drinks says:

"This packaging refresh will continue to demonstrate how the brand understands its target audience, and reinforce its relevance to both the brandy and the gifting markets. With many brands suffering in the economic downturn, the continued success of the XO Aged 15 Years indicates that consumers are still willing to 'trade-up to treat', and this really is a must-stock, must-support brand designed to drive sales and profits for the trade."



Winds of Change Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé Sparkling

Brand owner African Terroir (Pty)
Price CA\$19.90, €10.98
Markets Scandinavia and Canada initially
Contact s.miserez@germanier.ch

African Terroir says the Winds of Change brand was developed in celebration of the change and freedom inspired by Nelson Mandela.

When Mandela walked through Cape Town as a free man a new South Africa was born and the winds of change blew through the country.

Inspired by him, Sonop Wine Farm (the vineyards of African Terroir) established an empowerment project which gave rise to the Winds of Change brand and is seen as a celebration and commemoration of a rich history daring to change.



Stolichnaya Gala Applik

Brand owner SPI Group
Price US\$23.99 retail
Markets Global
Contact grantusa.com

Russian vodka Stolichnaya has added to its portfolio with a 10th flavour, described as having "a fresh red apple taste with a hint of citrus". The 70-proof Stolichnaya Gala Applik is made to the usual recipe, with Russian grain and clear natural water, offering "a more subtle, interesting flavour profile than sour apple drinks".

The launch is supported by advertising visuals titled Forbidden Fruit No Longer, highlighting a signature cocktail recipe, Gala Temptress (see p57, Barzone), intended to "reinvigorate the traditional apple martini". The ads will be seen nationally in US lifestyle press as well as online and in selected trade channels.

"Stoli Gala Applik complements our existing brand mix and reinforces our place as the pioneer in flavoured vodkas," said Andrei Skurikhin, partner at Stolichnaya brand owner SPI Group.

Stolichnaya's "naturally flavoured" vodka range also includes Ohranj, Blueberi, Razberi, Vanil, Citros, Cranberi, Peachik, Strasberi and Blakberi.



The King's Ginger

Brand owner Berry Bros. & Rudd
Price £17.95, €20
Markets Worldwide (not the US)
Contact edward.bates@bbr.com

The King's Ginger is described as an "emphatically ginger liqueur made by Berry Bros & Rudd in 1903 for King Edward VII. It was created to stimulate and rectify His Majesty during morning rides in his new horseless carriage and has been appreciated by bon viveurs, sporting gentlemen and high-spirited ladies ever since".

One suspects Berrys has had some fun with this brand – delightfully retro packaging. More prosaically it is made in the Netherlands, it is 41% and comes in a 50cl bottle.



We have had tastings with 500 people and we have built up a loyal customer base and are now getting second-generation wine drinkers

Not for Maximilian. He claims to have hoofed around all 50 states. “I have had fantastic feedback in states such as Montana and Idaho,” says he, striving to impress. “We have had tastings with 500 people and we have built up a loyal customer base and are now getting second-generation wine drinkers.”

Moving into sales mode he says: “Glasses are tools to taste wine. Many people have not tasted their favourite wine because they are using the wrong glass (I have to declare, he’s preaching to the converted right here). People need to discover the glass for the wine of their choice.”

You have to admit that when you browse Wine Spectator or visit wineries in California’s most well known wine region, Napa Valley, all you see are Riedel glasses. They’re everywhere – like shattered crystal.

As to the future, Riedel says the company is setting up its own branch in Australia – it is easy to foresee lots of Riedel Shiraz glasses (a personal favourite) could be shifted Down Under. As with so many other companies, Riedel sees China as enticing, and Maximilian says he has a good pool

of knowledge and expertise from people who have worked for the likes of Pernod Ricard, Diageo and Rémy Cointreau in the Far East.

Interestingly, he sees a complete departure through Reidel’s purchase in September 2004 of crystal stemware rival FX Nachtmann, which made it the world’s largest maker of fine wine glasses, with a combined annual turnover of US\$267 million and 1,900 employees.

Far from mere glasses, Riedel sees the new, enlarged company as moving in the car industry, offering glass rather than Perspex headlight lenses and also the construction industry, with ceiling and roof tiles. It begs the question: which prestigious winery will boast Riedel floor tiles or a Vinum crystal ceiling? Napa Valley, or Rioja, with Chile’s Colchagua valley as a sound outside bet.

Back to the stemware, there is now a cognac and a tequila glass and on the blocks are glasses with smaller bowls for lower alcohol wines – these are increasingly being called for.

As to 10th generation Georg, he is still in charge. Turning 60, he runs marathons and still relishes getting in front of people.

“He is definitely not retiring, stepping down or stepping back. Whereas before he would make the business decisions, now he discusses them with me and we make the decision jointly. He used to be the sole designer (of decanters) whereas the last couple have been me,” Maximilian says.

And his hobbies? “I’m an adrenalin junkie,” he admits, somewhat gleefully. Parachuting, horseback riding, hunting, shooting. He was six weeks in a wheelchair after a skiing accident. His response was to take up snowboarding but he then had another accident.

“I then discovered carving skis,” he says, cryptically. Well, carvers help you carve a turn better, so it suggests he wasn’t turning his skis and therefore being in control much before they carved up the market for skis.

At 32 and still single, the 11th generation doesn’t appear to be thinking too much about the 12th generation, but at least his sister, lawyer Laetizia, has two boys.

No clichés about crystal ball gazing, but Riedel seems to be in safe hands.

For the first time Diageo has presented its premium vodkas to the trade as a complete package, in an event at the windmill headquarters of its Dutch partner Ketel One. David Longfield was there

The king

Describing itself as “the world’s leading premium drinks business”, Diageo is accustomed to dealing in superlatives. Essentially, it is the world’s biggest spirits producer and, in Smirnoff, it has the world’s most popular distilled spirit.

In 2008 the vodka category leader was the first International category spirit brand to break through the 25 million 9-litre case sales barrier. Showing 5.8% year-on-year growth in the Drinks International Millionaires Club listing published this year, it continued the consistent progress it has made over the past decade.

Not bad for a spirit that already rules the roost in many markets.

In two eventful years, Diageo has tied up groundbreaking joint venture deals in the premium sector. October 2007 saw the announcement of a 50/50 arrangement to split profits on Ciroc vodka sales in the US with former bad-boy rapper Sean “P Diddy” Combs.

The following February, the company announced another 50/50 partnership, in which it paid US\$900m for exclusive global distribution of the Ketel One brand.

An impression persists that all vodkas are in essence the same – colourless, flavourless spirit. It’s not true, and the range of styles and character available in the spectrum of vodkas was reflected in the style and character of each of the presentations given in the auditorium at Ketel One.

Leading light

What needs to be said about the category leader? The headline figures are shown above, and it is produced or distributed at 32 sites around the globe. Smirnoff global brand director Philip Gladman – an Englishman, resident in New York’s trendy Tribeca district – describes the “mission” for the brand as: “To have the most powerful consumer equity in vodka”.

As you’d expect, Diageo has done all the research – who drinks vodka, where, when, with whom and how. The global market for vodka priced above the US\$8-9 level, we were told, is 100 million 9-litre cases in volume. In terms of value it is worth \$4.5 billion in the US alone and is worth \$36 billion globally, growing at 8%. Consider that Smirnoff alone accounts for a quarter of that total volume and you’re getting the picture.

On top of that, Gladman estimated that the “\$1-a-bottle stuff” in Russia, eastern Europe and Asia accounts for a further 300 million cases, so that has to show huge long-term potential in the developing markets.

There followed a masterclass in high-level marketing, beginning with a look at Smirnoff’s place in the history of vodka – which is a fascinating story, in fact, as told in Linda Himmelstein’s book, *The King of Vodka*, published earlier in 2009.

It wasn’t until 1975 that vodka overtook bourbon as the leading spirit in the US, but now, said Gladman: “It tends to be Smirnoff that builds the category first, and it’s a fantastic innovation vehicle.”

The latest innovation for Smirnoff’s established markets is the global Be There campaign. The focus is on extraordinary experiences and the importance of “being there” – inspiration, living and creating a community. It’s a multi-platform approach, of course, exploiting all the online/virtual channels and centering on nightlife, music and one-off events. It’s an impressive package, typified by a music event with group Faithless that reached 500 million people, including TV syndication.

This is balanced by a different ethos for the emerging markets. Here it’s all about “building credentials” and establishing a lead in the category, making the link between Smirnoff, its Russian heritage, “purity” and working with partners such as Manchester United football club.

“You can drown in all the analysis that’s out



there,” said Gladman, “but you need to have a brilliant [consumer] insight at the heart of your product. The really good insights are truly global.”

Rapid riser

Had we not had such an early start to the day, Marc Strachan, director of brand marketing for Ciroc, may actually have had the assembled audience whooping along with his upbeat synopsis of the rapid ascent of this emerging style icon. Here was American “up and at ’em” spirit personified.

Made, as it is, in France and from grapes, Ciroc has had its detractors among the purists of the vodka world – and you’ll still hear grumblings from those who believe a grape spirit should be classified “eau-de-vie” rather than vodka. But vodka it is, and it’s certainly marketed as such.

Now aimed squarely at the likes of Grey Goose, Belvedere and Level, Diageo’s Ciroc is targeting a group of consumers who aspire to leading life in a certain way. Ciroc’s identity, says the company, is one of “sophisticated celebration”, and is rooted in style, prestige and charisma.

Hence the choice of figurehead to lead the marketing assault on the American public. Having emerged from his hip-hop music



of spirits?



roots, Sean Combs has proved a formidable entrepreneur in many areas of luxury lifestyle and design. No doubt there are many young Americans of all backgrounds who would dearly love to emulate his success.

“Consumers really wanted one thing,” asserted Strachan. “Brands that served as badges that allowed them to be, or seem to be, at the forefront of the aspirational mindset.” Sean Combs, he said, was: “A man known to live a certain kind of life, wanting the best in quality, who could quickly take the Ciroc brand there.”

The result is unarguable, with sales rocketing in the two years since then from 60,000 cases to almost 400,000 cases a year.

A powerful and persuasive package then, coming from the self-assured, energetic and dapperly presented Strachan – all adjectives, note, that could easily be applied to the Ciroc brand he represents.

Under the radar

The story behind Ketel One couldn't be more different. The

Nolet family began distilling in 1691, but it was 11th-generation Bob Nolet's father who decided to focus on two core products – Ketel One vodka, which represents 90% of the production, and Holland's biggest genever brand, sold under the same name in the domestic market.

Ketel One is made from wheat, sourced “from as nearby as possible”, being redistilled in Schiedam in the company's copper pot stills, the oldest known as Ketel One. Tradition is clearly a major factor, but the operation is bang up to date, with a modern packaging and warehousing line that has the capacity to handle double its current two million case output level.

Prior to its 1992 launch in the US, Bob Nolet himself spent years researching the market including tasting, as he puts it, “a phenomenal amount of Martinis”. The tactic thereafter was to approach and talk to bar owners and bartenders directly.

It worked. “It became the bartender's drink,” said Ketel One global brand director Peter Fairbrother (from England). “These were the influencers who could communicate why they drank it to their consumers.” Nolet added: “We didn't let anyone in San Francisco buy Ketel One without us going in to run training for the whole staff.”

By 2002, Ketel One was a million-case brand, with no consumer-facing activity – a method the Diageo marketers refer to as the “discovery model”, consumers uncovering a “trade secret”.

“We've learned a lot from Nolet,” said Fairbrother.

While sales remain 90% in the US, the same “seeding process” is being utilised as Ketel One goes global. “I've been working in the UK for 10 years,” said Nolet. “You have to get the right level of bartender understanding and on-trade distribution. We only needed three months in Berlin because they already knew the products.”

A new campaign, Gentlemen, This is Vodka' commenced this year in the States. Target consumer, said Fairbrother, is “early 30s, married or about to be, wants to stay ahead of the curve but doesn't really care about trendy”. Not another Ciroc, then.

Again, this “world of modern



masculinity” may be primarily an American phenomenon, but the Diageo/Nolet partnership is taking the message of “self-assurance, integrity, timelessness” into the wider world. Plans are to launch into 15 markets by the end of June 2010, including Australia and Brazil.

“For us Diageo brings a lot to help make the Ketel One brand the truly global brand we think it can be,” said Bob Nolet.

Whole package

So there it is: three vodkas, three “consumer insights”, three different marketing approaches.

Diageo has a Global Segmentation Model by way of analysing the place of drinks brands in the marketplace, looking at how and why people drink. In it, Smirnoff is placed in the Release category – lively, fun-loving, spontaneous, after-work enjoyment. Ketel One sits in Independence, for those who like to pick up new trends quickly and show individuality. And Ciroc, unsurprisingly, is in Status, for those who like to associate with particular brand values.

What makes them work at the top of a portfolio is the differences in the history and personality of the three brands. Like a soccer team that has three of the world's best players in attack, defence and goal, it's the sum of the parts that enhances the whole.

And it's driven by the marketing package. Talking of the vodka category as a whole, Philip Gladman said: “It's an area where, if you don't innovate, you pretty much die.”

Taking stock

A once underused distillery in the quiet town of Lublin is now home to the country's largest spirits producer and the number one clear vodka, Czysta de Luxe. It also houses the country's top flavoured vodka, Wódka Żoładkowa Gorzka.

When Stock and Polmos Lublin merged in 2007 to become Stock Spirits Group, the company was selling 26 million litres of vodka a year. Group operations director Ian Croxford predicts that, by the end of 2009, this figure will be 90-95 million litres.

Chief operating officer for Stock Polska Ewan MacLean says: "We have halved the workforce and doubled the output. Since we took over the company, we have gone from lower quartile salary payers to mid quartile and there are now more prospects and career paths at the distillery."

Aggressive growth stems not only from a more efficient distillery, but also from a constant flow of new products. During the last quarter of 2009, Stock launched a raft of vodkas, most notable of which is the premium Stock Prestige. Then came a bison grass & apple vodka in the Wódka Żoładkowa Gorzka range, and the lemon Lubelska Cytrynowka.

The company has committed €20 million to operations in Poland – a new rectifier is currently being installed at the Lublin plant and money is also being spent on a high speed bottling line and upgrading existing bottling lines.

So why is Poland – and central Europe – so important to Stock? According to the company, central and eastern Europe account for more than 20% of the value of the US\$300 billion global spirits market.

Stock Spirits' newly appointed chief executive, Chris Heath, says: "This area has consistently higher growth than the US and western Europe and the multinationals have focused on the US, western Europe and the BRIC countries."

Polish vodka market at a glance

- Vodka in Poland accounts for 94.3% of spirits volume and 91.6% of value.
- Since 2007, Stock has gone from having around 12% of market share to more than 30%.
- Central European Distribution Corporation has fallen from 30% share in 2007 to about 26% in 2009.
- Falling from 27% to about 16% is Belvedere's Sobieski
- Pernod Ricard (Wyborowa) fell from 13% to 10%
- Private labels, Finlandia Polska and Diageo have remained fairly constant between 1-5%

Source: Nielsen

Lucy Britner visits Stock Spirits Group, which this year became Poland's largest spirits manufacturer



Wódka Żoładkowa Gorzka on what Stock claims is one of the fastest bottling lines in Europe

The company has core businesses in Poland, Czech Republic and Italy. It's "domestic market" comprises Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, along with the "Italian Block" countries Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia.

Part of Stock's strategy is to acquire businesses in other domestic market countries and use Stock's global links and expertise to make them more efficient. During 2009, Stock purchased businesses in Croatia and Bosnia.

Heath says: "We aim to acquire and integrate new brands and businesses to fill in the gaps in our portfolio." That portfolio already includes liqueurs, bitters, brandy, vermouth and a Czech whisky called Printer's.

But we're talking vodka, so let's have a closer look at Stock's Polish vodkas. The company has brands covering every price bracket. They range from 18 Polish zloty for the 1906 to 18-22 zloty

for the mainstream Wódka Żoładkowa Gorzka and Czysta de Luxe, then Stock Prestige in the premium segment at 22-26 zloty and spelt vodka Orkisz at the premium end at 26 zloty.

Heath adds: "Loyalty in Poland tends to be to a price point rather than a particular brand, though that is starting to change a bit. It is possible to gain market share through promotions." Heath also feels markets outside central Europe are starting to take Polish vodka more seriously. "In the US, the quality message is getting through."

It's no wonder then that the US is the company's biggest export market and Stock's 1906 vodka is to launch there in January 2010. Other exports to the US include Stock's Italian-produced Gran Gala – badged as Italy's answer to Grand Marnier – and Limoncé lemon liqueur.

Stock is also test-launching an Italian wine range in Poland. Villa Julia is what Heath describes as a "basic wine range" with a red and a white, adding: "At the moment, wine is not a core business for us. We are waiting to see how these products perform in Poland."

We'll end with Stock's priority – vodka – and the big question: Would Stock be interested in buying ailing Belvedere's Sobieski brand should it be up for grabs and there aren't any competition issues?

Heath says: "Never say never..."



Vodka redefined

Discerning consumers are looking to identify differences in the taste and character of vodka. Hasse Nilsson helps with a new way of tasting

Vodka is the world's best-selling spirit and, strangely enough, also the one we care the least about. But something is happening on the international drinks market. Just as with whisky and cognac, modern vodka consumers veer away from traditional mass-produced brands toward interesting newcomers with character and body.

Vodka is often described as the world's most versatile spirit, which of course is a nice way of saying it lacks flavour. According to US regulations, vodka should be a neutral spirit without distinctive character, aroma, taste or colour. For some brands this is actually true. In fact, some of the best known vodkas are not even produced by the brand owners, but supplied to them by industrial producers of neutral grain spirits.

As these brands do not stand out in character they are instead trying to distinguish themselves by pricing and marketing. However, anyone who claims that all vodkas taste the same is certainly not a vodka drinker. And it does not take vodka in a sniffer at room temperature to discover the differences between brands and styles of vodka.

So, what is it then that creates the differences between vodkas? The key variables in order to define vodka into styles and categories are: raw material, distillation, filtration and the water used for dilution.

Raw material

Vodka can be made from anything containing starch able to be converted into fermented sugars. Cereal grains are the most common, although molasses and corn are becoming popular for low-priced, mass-market products. At the same time a



Hasse Nilsson is a journalist and copywriter who has been writing about whisky and wine in Scandinavian drink and food magazines for 15 years. He is also the author of the book *Feel Famous for Maxxium*

great number of innovative ingredients are chosen for the growing number of inventive newcomers. The most common ingredients for vodka production are:

Wheat – produces smooth, sweet, fresh and bready vodka with a vinous texture, not uncommonly with a hint of anis on the finish. Soft winter wheat is generally the preferred choice for high quality vodka.

Barley – offers the finest quality of starch and the lowest level of fatty oils which results in clean, crisp and rather light vodka, sometimes with a delicate sweetness in the background.

Rye – provides soft, clean, slightly sweet and delicate aromas with a light oiliness. The major cereal used in Poland.

Potato – results in a vodka heavy in style with a creamy texture. As the preparation is labour intensive and the yield is low, mainly high starch varieties are used for vodka production. Mainly used in Poland and Norway.

Grapes – controversial and rather new



ingredient to vodka production which, depending on grape variety, results in anything from very neutral to a refreshing spirit with characters of citrus and bubble gum.

Molasses – produces a neutral, clean spirit which often lacks balance due to its overly sweet character. Inexpensive ingredient extensively used for low-priced brands.

Corn – provides a neutral and low-cost spirit with little body. Generally considered to produce inferior spirits. Corn is mainly chosen when pricing is the key issue.

Multiple ingredients – as consumers are becoming more demanding, vodka blenders have started combining multiple ingredients to compose a complete experience which transcends individual characteristics. One example of this is *Ultimat*, which Ed Blinn, commercial director at the Patrón Spirits Company, describes as “unique



in that it combines the richness of potato, the smoothness of wheat, and the complexity of rye to create a perfectly crafted, exceptionally high-quality spirit”.

Distillation

Traditionally, all vodka was made using pot stills and single batch distillations, just like cognac and single malt whisky. Pot still distillation results in alcohol which is rich in character and body and contains the delicate aromas and flavour elements of the crop from which it was produced. The downside is that this production method is slow, labour-intensive and expensive.

However, the major problem is the fact that



Nilsson's flavour chart shows that many vodka newcomers in the premium sectors have a flavour profile with more body and 'character' than the well established brand favourites



nowadays, most markets have regulations stipulating that vodka must be distilled to a minimum of 95% or 96% abv, which is not possible in traditional pot stills. Recently, a modern version of the pot still has been developed with positive results which may lead to a revival for artisan vodkas.

Since the 19th century, vodka producers have moved on to column stills (aka continuous stills) which perform numerous distillations in a single process, allowing large batches of neutral alcohol to be produced industrially at low cost. The column still produces neutral spirit with little or none of the character of the raw material.

A third option, which brings out the best of both worlds, is to marry the distillates from the two distillation methods in balanced proportions.

Distillation is basically a matter of separating a more volatile component, alcohol, from the less volatile component, water. The process results in ethanol (good), methanol (bad) and small amounts of impurities, including fusel oils, esters and acids collectively known as congeners. Most other spirits keep small amounts of congeners as they, if correctly used, contribute to positive flavours. But most vodka producers strive to remove impurities through a rectification process. As a result, whiskies and cognacs contain one hundred times as many congeners than standard vodka, which is one of the reasons why many vodkas are light and neutral in style.

The aim of vodka producers is either to remove all traces of impurities in order to obtain the cleanest flavour possible or to preserve flavours and characteristics which make their products unique.

Filtration

For some brands, distillation and rectification are not sufficient. In order to reach complete neutrality many brands filter their vodka. Charcoal is the most common method and is considered to be particularly effective for removing oily contaminants, even though there are many other filters with similar results. For example, French Grey Goose is filtered through limestone, Finland's



Finlandia uses glacial rock and Poland's Ultimat has a repeated copper filtration system.

In recent years, a multitude of new filtration methods have been presented, including marble, silver, gold, platinum and even diamond filters. Whether these methods make a difference or are just a marketing device is difficult to say.

However, not everyone is completely in favour of filtering their vodka. Thomas Kuuttanen, master blender of Sweden's non-filtered Purity vodka, says: "The slow, 34-times distillation process in our proprietary pot still results in a spirit so pure that no filtration is necessary. All character and flavours preserved after the distillation are there for a reason."

Water

An old Polish saying claims that "water breathes life into vodka" and this is a well known truth for all vodka connoisseurs. The final step in the production process is to reduce the alcohol to drinking strength. Accounting for as much as 62.5% of the product, the water can have great influence on the vodka.

Different water sources deliver significant variations, even on vodka distilled from the same ingredients. However, as with filtration, the marketing departments of the vodka companies often tend to play up the significance of the various waters they use. The truth is often that the water is allowed to keep little of its original qualities. In the worst cases, vodka producers



use distilled water – this can be described as a hollow water which brings no qualities to vodka. Most common are waters which, to different levels, have been filtered and deionised. Least common is natural water which gives the best result, but the minerals tend to merge and become visible in the bottle and therefore are rejected by most producers. The general rule is the less the producer tampers with the water, the more interesting the end result.

The connoisseur's vodka

For a long time vodka has been a drink of image and marketing rather than substance. However, in recent years the vodka industry has developed in a new direction. Many new vodkas back up their high profiles with quality and character quite different to the traditional brands. First up were super-premium vodkas such as the

extremely successful Grey Goose, together with Polish Belvedere and Dutch Ketel One. Stolichnaya subsequently raised the bar with its ultra-premium Stoli Elit, followed by the Polish multi-grain vodka Ultimat, Russian Kauffmann Vintage and the French grape vodka Ciroc, which all aim for a growing connoisseur market.

As the presence of super and ultra-premium vodkas has increased so has consumption. The traditional brands are losing market share to newcomers which often cost twice as much, but offer a different quality and taste profile.

The great vodka tasting

I recently made a comprehensive tasting comparing the new style of ultra-premium vodkas with traditional brands. The result was quite fascinating, as many of the newcomers are producing vodkas loaded with character and flavour, which implies new patterns of consumption. The tasting compared different categories, varying from value to ultra-premium vodka, with a base of traditional brands as a reference.

To sample such a great number of examples of a spirit for which taste and flavour span are somewhat limited requires methodology and accuracy. As many of the tasting notes tend to be rather similar, a flavour chart was

developed using a coordinate system based on two axes: light to full-bodied; and neutral to character (see page 25). Vodkas were positioned on the chart according to their respective characteristics. The evaluation was based on character/ neutrality as well as how light/full-bodied the vodkas were perceived to be. The blind test used numbered glasses and all varieties were tested at the same time, with several breaks. They were grouped according to aroma and taste. The outcome was clear. Many of the brand leaders ended up far down the left side of the coordinate system, where the simpler varieties could be expected, while most super-premium vodkas were placed slightly above the middle and virtually all ultra-premium brands were diametrically opposite the traditional brands, up in the top right of the coordinate system.

To appoint a “winner” from such an extensive tasting is unfair as taste is individual and many of the best vodkas have a taste profile which is rather similar. But the brands found to be more interesting than the majority are presented here.

The conclusion from the tasting is that the world of vodka is changing and anyone who claims that all vodkas taste the same is certainly not a vodka drinker.

Kauffmann is an extremely expensive Russian vodka produced in small batches, sometimes with the vintage designation. The flagship of the portfolio is the Kauffmann Luxury Vintage. It is fresh and delicate with pronounced wheat and soft mineral sweetness. Outstandingly well-balanced. Kauffmann has gained a reputation for producing one of the world's most exclusive vodkas.

Purity Vodka is an organic, unfiltered Swedish vodka based on wheat and barley. Small-batch distillation in a pot still results in an astonishingly smooth vodka loaded with character. Its oily texture is dominated by minerals and umami, backed up by delicate tones of white chocolate, vanilla and liquorice. Purity Vodka is the crown jewel of ultra premium vodkas.



Ultimat is a Polish luxury vodka made from wheat, rye and potatoes, where the multiple ingredients contribute to an impressive whole. It is smooth, fresh, spicy and tasty with a significantly rich, oily tone. The producers claim this is the vodka which set the standard for the ultra-premium category – and it is very good.

Oval 42 is a subtle, rather sweet and peppery vodka in a wheat-drenched style. Quite flavoursome and full of character with some burn to the finish. It is produced by using a patented distillation technique based on molecular theory.

Level is oily, fruity and spicy with citrus tones. Its rather robust presentation makes it somewhat unbalanced. Level is produced by the Absolut Company, combining continuous distillation and batch distillation.

U'Luvka is a small batch vodka from Poland which uses a blend of rye, wheat and barley. It is crisp, clean vodka which goes from a nutty, cereal-grain grassiness to a sweet, flowery tone, and is balanced with spices and sweet anis.

Stoli Elit is made with Russian winter wheat, fermented in soft glacial waters. After fermentation the mash is distilled twice and the “heart” of the distillate is slowly filtered three times. It is fresh, clean and remarkably silky with a sweetness and an almost creamy richness that is matched by notes of tangy citrus.

Cavalli is an Italian grain vodka in an incredibly beautiful bottle. It is soft, light and neutral with a pleasant tone of minerals, but with an unfortunately aggressive burn in the finish.



Vodka in brief

Vodka is a clear spirit produced from fruit, grain, vegetables or potatoes. The word ‘vodka’ is Russian and means ‘the little water’. Bottling strength ranges from 37.5% to 50% abv, but the original Russian vodka is always 40%. Vodka is a protected name in the EU. It has to be distilled to at least 95% abv and not watered down to below 37.5%. Vodka is categorised as low price, standard, premium, super-premium and ultra-premium.

Stoli adopts urban chic

In repositioning its iconic Stolichnaya, SPI Group has dropped retro imagery in favour of 'new' Russia. David Longfield reports

The SPI Group has stated its intention to "grow Stolichnaya by 100%" by 2014. Ownership of the brand outside Russia has reverted to SPI in the wake of former distributor Pernod Ricard's acquisition of the V&S Group, along with which came the Swedish government monopoly's leading vodka premium, Absolut.

SPI Group partner and minority shareholder Andrey Skurikhin says: "Stoli is recognised as a global icon relevant for today's discerning premium vodka consumers, and the marketing needs to communicate that. Our dynamic plans reflect that, with new partners, new routes to market and significant investment from the group."

Packaging upgrades for Stolichnaya include a taller, "more elegant" bottle; enhanced label; new closure cap; and new embossing to "increase the premium cues of the brand". Indeed, the 360° marketing package is said to draw inspiration from the "wealth, glitz and danger" of modern-day Russia, positioning Stolichnaya as: "An integral part of a dark, sexy, intrigue-filled metropolis."

New advertising places emphasis on the stylised letter 'S' from the label, aiming for a "sleek and fashionable feel", using straplines such as: *The Wild Wild West Is In The East*; *Who Will Be Your Accomplice Tonight*; and *Admit To Nothing*.

There will be a heavy focus on the

world's most dynamic vodka market, the US, but print, billboard, phone kiosk and transit advertising will also be seen in key global centres such as San Francisco, Athens, Tel Aviv, Vienna and London.

Huge support

An on-trade programme will ensure Stolichnaya is "seen in all the right places", such as Maxim's Hot 100 Party in Santa Monica and the annual Tribeca Film Festival in New York in April/May 2010.

Off-trade, which accounts for the majority of Stoli's sales, will see new gift packaging and merchandising developed to reflect the brand's new positioning. Off-trade consumers will also be encouraged to visit the revamped stoli.com website.

"We have developed a huge support programme to effectively relaunch Stolichnaya on the international market and are confident that this strategy will catapult the brand to the position of global leader that is its rightful place," adds Skurikhin.

Value proposition

So does all this mean SPI is targeting Absolut in its position as the world's biggest selling premium vodka? In the *Drinks International Millionaires Club* listing published in July this year (2008 sales figures), Absolut was the top international vodka brand with volumes of 10.73m 9-litre cases (V&S Group figures),

New look for a "style-conscious" era

while figures from Pernod Ricard for 2007 sales showed Stolichnaya at 3.33m cases (international sales only, excluding Russia).

"You need to think about it in conjunction with the price," says Skurikhin. "I believe in our plan it is [about] 'premiumness'. This changes over the years. How long it will take I don't know, but we are trying to do it organically."

Stoli's new looks are intended to "have heightened appeal to style-conscious consumers who are willing to pay for the best", the company claims. Does all this suggest price rises to come?

"It's a difficult question during a recession," admits Skurikhin. "We're not going to reposition our brand [pricing]. We have not dropped one dollar from our brand. To put the price back up after the recession would be very difficult."

Cult of the new

So it's very much the dawn of a new era for Stolichnaya. Distribution has now reverted in some countries to pre-Pernod Ricard arrangements,

and SPI is taking a market-by-market approach. The new Stolichnaya advertising was launched in New York in December 2008, and new SPI chief executive Val Mendelev was appointed the month before, at which time distribution agreements were cemented with William Grant & Sons for the US market and Edrington/Maxxium in the UK.

In March this year, Corby Distilleries signed a five-year extension for distribution in Canada, while deals have also been struck with WS Karoulis in Greece, Schlumberger in Austria and Gabriel Bocti in Lebanon.

There was a time when retailers would have priority lists for customers waiting for fresh stocks to emerge from the behind the Iron Curtain, and the customers loved its unpolished presentation and raw labeling as something of a cult.

No longer though. Despite the changes of distribution and ongoing legal disputes with the Russian government, SPI's Stolichnaya has very much joined the ranks of leading modern vodka brands. □



Winning ways

The glittering awards ceremony for the annual International Spirits Challenge took place at the prestigious Marriott, Grosvenor Square, London



Chairman of judges Ian Wisniewski with co-presenter Lucy Britner, Drinks International news editor, and winner of the Outstanding Contribution award, John Ramsay, Edrington Group master blender



Asahi Nikka's Taketsuru 21 Year Old won Whiskies of the World



Irish Distillers used the ceremony as a platform to give Brendan Monks, former master of maturation, an outstanding contribution award. he is flanked by Paco Lozano (left), of Paez Labato, Lucy Britner and Alex Ricard



Rajbir Singh Sawhney, of The



Whisky Exchange



James Rackham (right), of Emporia Brands, which distributes Admiral Rodney in the UK, winner of Best Rum, with His Excellency Eldridge Stephens, of the St Lucia High Commission, and Lyubov Rackham



Dan Wilkes accepted Best Vodka Premium for Poliakov



Hege Sundberg with best liqueur Merlet Creme de Cassis



Bill Oddy with Best Tequila – Borco Sierra Tequila Extra Anejo



Distell's Martin Kellerman – Van Ryn's 12 Year Old won Best Brandy



Yusup Shakhshae collected on behalf of Best Vodka Kuchino Russian Premium



Richard Paterson with Best Scotch Blend for Whyte & Mackay's 30 Year Old



Cocktail Challenge Champion Santa Teresa Claro, collected by Jim Wrigley



Neil Mathieson accepted Best Cognac on behalf of Dupuy Cognac Hors D'Age



Fraser Dunlop took International Spirits Retailer of the Year for World Duty Free



Best Gin went to Martin Miller's Tenth Anniversary, accepted by Lucinda McCaffrey



Raymond Davidson from Glencairn presents Distiller of the Year to David Stewart, William Grant & Sons



Paul Foulkes-Arellano presented Nick Wykes with the Design & Packaging Award for Bacardi

Beyond Scotch

Producers in 23 countries are innovating in whiskey styles. Gavin D Smith assesses the rising popularity of 'world whiskies'

For many consumers whisk(e)y will only ever be associated with Scotland, but the spirit, in some shape or form, is actually distilled in 23 countries, from Sweden to New Zealand, and Wales to Pakistan.

Historically, the biggest rival to Scotch whisky was made in Ireland, arguably the cradle of whiskey-making, though that hypothesis is inevitably disputed by the Scots. For many years, the world of Irish whiskey was entirely dominated by the Irish Distillers Group, since 1988 owned by Pernod Ricard, and proprietor of Midleton distillery in County Cork and Bushmills in County Antrim.

However, the establishment of the independent Cooley Distillers near Dundalk in 1987 served to challenge Irish Distillers' monopoly, and Diageo's acquisition of Bushmills from Irish Distillers in 2005 also added new impetus and momentum to the Irish whiskey category. With some £6 million invested in the Bushmills brand and in a major production expansion programme at the distillery, consumers can look forward to some new expressions in the not too distant future.

Cooley Distillery, to the north east of Dublin, nestles in the foothills of the Cooley Mountains, giving it access to clean, pure water from the river that runs down from the mountain and right by the distillery

Irish

Nonetheless, the undisputed international leader of the genre looks certain to remain Irish Distillers' Jameson brand, which sold 2.73 million cases in 2008, representing 10.1% growth over 2007. Alex Ricard, chairman and chief executive of Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard, says: "I am very pleased that Jameson continues to grow in key markets across the world, and that its status as one of the most dynamic, consistently successful global spirit brands is very firmly established.

"While global conditions are tough, we are very confident about the performance of Jameson over the next 21 years, which will bring us right up to 2030, the 250th anniversary of the foundation of John Jameson's famous Bow Street Distillery in 1780. To mark this special occasion we are setting aside some very special casks of whiskey, selected by our master distiller, Barry Crockett. These will

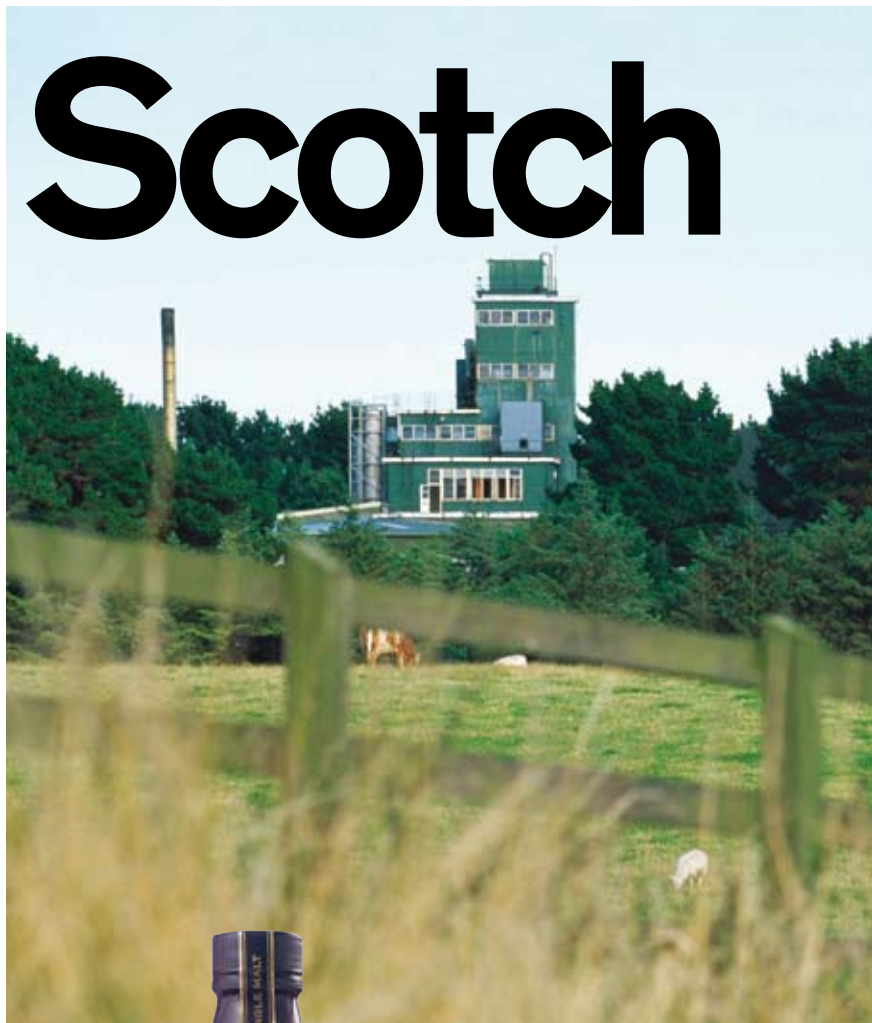
mature slowly, smoothly and gracefully over the next 21 years, when they will be at the peak of perfection to celebrate this special occasion."

This year €70 million are being spent on the promotion of Jameson, including broadcasting its first television commercial in the US, where growth of 22% was recorded during the 2008/09 financial year.

When it comes to differentiating Jameson's from Scotch whisky in consumers' eyes, Alex Ricard declares: "As an Irish whiskey Jameson is a completely different proposition. Jameson has very impressive craft credentials and is renowned for its smooth taste,

which is a result of its triple distillation, but its Irish heritage means that it is a fun, upbeat whiskey which people drink with friends on a good night out. Also, our target group is 25 to 35-year-old males."

C&C International's historic Tullamore Dew brand is described by international marketing





Cooley Distillery



manager Ann O’Leary as “the number two Irish whiskey brand in the world”, and the standard expression now sells more than 600,000 cases per annum. This year saw the release of a 10 Year Old single malt variant to join the existing line-up of blends, a move that reflects the growing diversity and confidence of Irish whiskey. “Adding a single malt to the collection is a very prestigious step,” says O’Leary.

Diversity and confidence are also



appropriate words to use in relation to the Cooley operation, which is responsible for a wide range of brands, including Locke’s, Kilbeggan and The Tyrconnell.

Cooley offers blended Irish and single malt Irish whiskeys, but has been notably innovative by introducing Greenore Single Grain Irish Whiskey and Connemara Peated Irish Single Malt Irish Whiskey. Connemara has recently undergone a significant presentation makeover, while the first release in its Small Batch Collection offers just 10,000 bottles of a Connemara sherry finish, to be followed in future by a heavily-peated expression and other variants.

Cooley Distillers sales & marketing director Jack Teeling says: “Connemara doesn’t compete with your everyday Irish blended whiskey, but against the Bowmores and Bruichladdichs of the world.”

Teeling says: “At Cooley we continue to lead innovation in the Irish category, and in particular in the malt area, always trying to create interesting expressions to keep consumers interested in Irish whiskey. The Irish category is dominated by multinationals which are

focused on developing standard blended Irish, thus leaving us as the only independent distiller to push the boundaries of what people expect from Irish whiskey.”

Indian

Despite its cultural and historical significance, and growing self-confidence, Irish whiskey is dwarfed in terms of volume sales by Indian whisky, which accounted for well in excess of 100 million cases during 2008 – almost twice the combined total of all other non-Scotch whiskies.

Five of the top six best-selling brands listed in the Drinks International Millionaires Club this year were Indian, with United Spirits’ Bagpiper leading the way, notching up 15.41 million cases last year and growing more than 10% in the process. The same distiller’s McDowell’s No 1 brand was runner-up, with 13.39 million cases to its credit, representing growth of 16.8%.

According to a United Spirits company spokesperson: “United Spirits whisky brands span the entire liquor ladder in India across the price spectrum, from Bagpiper in the regular segment, which is expected to overtake Johnnie Walker in pure volume terms this year. McDowell’s No1 whisky is the hero in the prestige segment, with the largest share of the market in its category.

“Per capita consumption of whisky in India is low compared with more mature markets such as the US and UK, which signals high growth potential. Traditional and innovative consumption, such as cocktails, are together

spurring consumption in the country. Several other trends, including evolving population, greater disposable incomes, stronger brand consciousness and the emergence of 'modern trade,' have further led to an increase in spirits consumption. Whisky is the largest contributor to this increase."

As with Cooley in Ireland, so there is a significant, smaller Indian player operating shrewdly in the shadow of the million-selling brands, namely Bangalore-based Amrut Distilleries, which was established back in 1948.

Amrut's international sales manager, Ashok Chokalingam, explains how his company's best-known whisky differs from many other Indian whiskies. "We started to produce malt whiskies in the early 1980s, mainly to use it in our domestic blended whiskies," he says. "In general, the domestic blended whiskies in India are made out of molasses-based spirit, along with some percentage of malt whisky.

"Over a period of time, the malt whisky production has been developed, and in 2004 we started to bottle some as single malt whiskies. We wanted to expand our premium category and eventually started to sell the single malt brands in the global market."

Amrut has added cask-strength and peated variants to its range, and most recently has been innovative in its introduction of Amrut Fusion, a 50% abv malt whisky, comprising a mixture of 25% peated Scottish barley and 75% unpeated Indian malt, both mashed and distilled independently. The result is matured in a mixture of old and new American oak barrels at the distillery in Bangalore.

"We are proud that our vision to combine Indian and Scottish barleys in a subtle fusion, which produces a malt whisky rich in flavour and character, has been so well received," declares Chokalingham. "As we see the whisky industry become more global, and good single malt whiskies coming from all parts of the world, it is exciting to be at the leading edge. We are also planning to release a few new lines in the course of the next year."

American

India's stranglehold on the leading brands of "world whisky" is broken by the iconic US whiskeys Jack Daniel's, owned by Brown-Forman,



and Jim Beam, with the former managing a 2% volume increase during 2009, recording sales of 9.52 million cases.

Increased emphasis on the off-trade in its home market helped Jack Daniel's continue the trajectory of growth it has recorded in recent years, albeit at a more restrained level, and, according to global brand director Gus Griffin: "While the global economic climate is certainly a challenge, we have continued to meet our performance expectations. Most importantly, our brand health continues to be at historically high levels in our most important markets."



When it comes to marketing Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, the company takes what Griffin terms a "two-pronged approach". He adds: "Part of it is continual consumer education about the product, process and place that make Jack Daniel's so special and unique. The other part is effectively communicating this specialness in ads such as our current outdoor campaign It's Not Scotch. It's Not Bourbon. It's Jack."

Meanwhile, despite a 1.5% decline in volumes during 2008 (to 5.16 million cases), the team at Beam Global Spirits & Wine remains confident, with Kelly Doss, senior director bourbons & whiskies, declaring: "Business is good. Historical trends prove that spirits are typically recession-resilient and are an affordable luxury, in spite of the economy. Jim Beam has remained consistent over the year and is ahead of pace of the category.

"As the number one bourbon brand in the world, with 96% brand

awareness in the United States, we continue to make bold choices and innovate in new ways. We're proud to be the first in the spirits industry to leverage a wide range of social media tools and will continue putting timeless values into a context that makes them contemporary and relevant to today's consumer.

"During the first half of 2009, Jim Beam flipped conventional marketing on its head by developing a social media campaign that invited consumers to create their own original video by imitating, spoofing or improving upon Jim Beam-created commercials."

Staying in North America, a number of Canadian whiskies have traditionally ridden high among the ranks of "world whiskies" in volume terms, with Diageo's Crown Royal breaking through the five million cases barrier in 2008, while Canadian Club, Constellation Brands' Black Velvet and Brown-Forman's Canadian Mist all make it into the top 20 of world whiskies.

Canadian Club is owned by Beam, and Kelly Doss reports: "The overall Canadian whisky category has been relatively flat over the past few years, although we are seeing a recent uptick in sales and interest in the category. The largest markets for Canadian Club continue to be the US and Canada, but a real growth area for us has been Australia."

In international terms, Canadian whisky does not enjoy the comparatively well-defined image of scotch or bourbon, but Doss says: "Canadian Club is a different and special whisky. For more than 150 years it has stood for quality, from its 'barrel-blended' process to its ageing. Canadian Club is an extremely flexible and mixable whisky with wide distribution. We've seen a resurgence in the premium end of the Canadian Club portfolio, including Canadian Club Classic 12 Year Old and the limited edition Canadian Club 30 Year Old."

Many of today's flourishing "world whisky" operations are altogether more boutique in size than the likes of Canadian Club, Bagpiper, Jack Daniel's and Jameson, but, regardless of scale, this remains a sector with a great deal of dynamism and diversity. Whisk(e)y is most definitely not just scotch.



The world's local

Gavin D Smith talks to some of the key producers in the global brandy sector where, despite the economic climate, cautious optimism prevails

There are few global players in a contemporary international brandy market that consists, essentially, of a series of comparatively localised brands.

Indeed, in the Drinks International Millionaires Club 2009 (our annual listing of distilled spirit brands registering sales of a million or more nine-litre cases), only Rémy Cointreau's Greek brandy and wine blend Metaxa constitutes an "International" rather than "Domestic/Local" brand, occupying ninth place in the listing, with 1.15 million cases sold during 2008.

As cognac values have continued to decline for the "big three" of Hennessy, Rémy Martin and Martell, non-cognac brandies produced in a number of countries have taken up some of the slack, but the principal growth in the global brandy sector has come from the dynamic Indian spirits market.

India: growth driver

There, smaller brands progressed significantly in 2008, partly at the expense of the world's best-selling brandy brand McDowell's, with the United Spirits market leader seeing volume fall by 1.4% in 2008 as the young pretenders in the Indian market made their presence felt.

Climbing fastest were Amrut's newcomer Silver Cup, which rose by more than 80%, and Tilaknagar Industries' flagship Mansion House (up 34.6%), though United Spirits' established Honey Bee label also did well, increasing volumes by 28.2%.

No fewer than five of the top dozen performers in the 2009 Millionaires are Indian brands, namely McDowell's No 1, Honey Bee, Mansion House, John Exshaw (United Spirits) and Silver Cup.

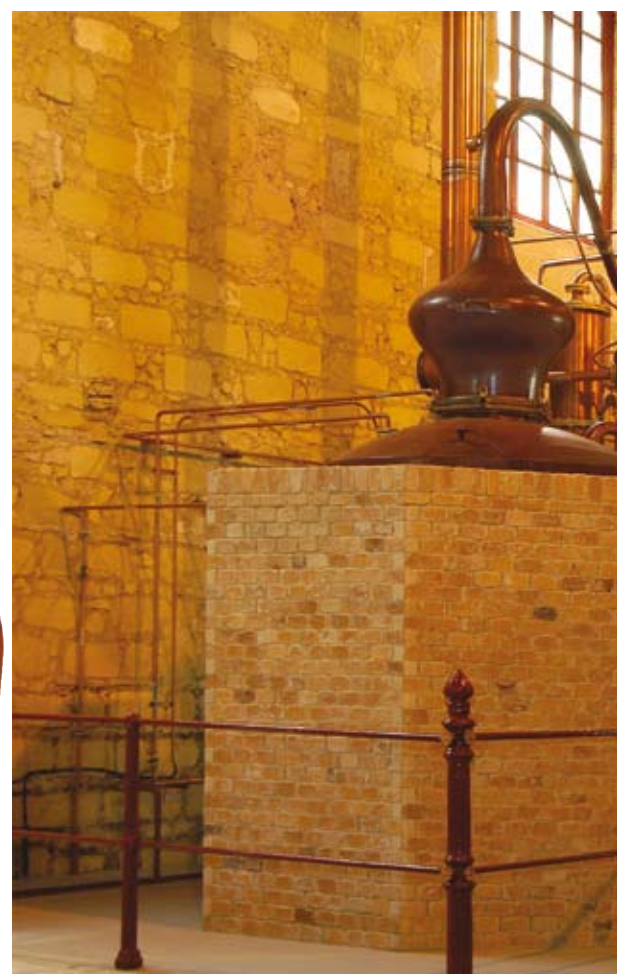
Indeed, only Campari's second-placed Dreher, distilled in Brazil, where it enjoys an unparalleled following, spoiled the Indian clean sweep of the top six brandy places in the Millionaires listing,



and Dreher volumes fell by 4% during 2008.

United Spirits has more than a dozen brandy labels in its portfolio and, according to company spokesperson Shefali Kotnala: "The Indian brandy market forms 17% of the IMFL industry [Indian Made Foreign Liquor, ie western-style alcoholic drinks], having the third-largest share after whisky and rum. The annual brandy volumes for the financial year 2008-9 were 36 million cases, and the market is currently growing at 23% per annum, compared with overall IMFL, which is increasing at 13%.

"McDowell's No 1 Brandy is the largest selling brandy in the world," she adds, "clocking 7.5 million cases in 2008-9. It holds 39% of 'regular' brandy market share, and registered a growth of



24% for the first half of 2009-10."

Kotnala says that Indian brandy drinkers represent an older age profile. "They are composed, more controlled and responsible. They desire quiet bonding rather than boisterous fun. They are health-conscious and believe brandy has a medicinal benefit, usually consuming it with water or soda."

Buoyant Americas

Apart from Indian brands and Metaxa, the only brandies in the Millionaires listing to experience growth during 2008 were produced in the US. Constellation Brands' Paul Masson Grand Ambre increased volume by 4.7% to 1.35 million cases, while Heaven Hill Distilleries' Christian Brothers

brandies



Torres puts Spanish spin on mojito

Latest to join the growing trend for mojito-style drinks is Spain's Torres. The Catalonian producer, reputed for its consistent wine selection, also produces a range of Spanish brandies using local grape varieties: Torres 5 Solera Reserva, Torres 10 Gran Reserva, Fontenac, Torres 20 Hors d'Age, Jaime I and Honorable.

Next year the company will be pushing its newly released Mojito Torres 10 recipe, made with a twist or two, using the brandy instead of rum (see below). Styled as The Real Spanish Mojito, the company says that the Mojito Torres 10 was preferred by eight out of 10 in a blind tasting of 100 consumers when tested against a conventional white rum mojito. The campaign will be supported by point of sale material, advertising and themed clothing, and the company has planned more than 100 events to target travellers and tourists.

Mojito Torres 10
4cl Brandy Torres 10
4cl ginger ale
2 quarters of lime
16g brown sugar
1 sprig of mint
1 unit mint blossom to garnish



Alembics at the Gonzalez Byass bodega in Jerez

expressions grew by 1.7% to 1.17 million cases.

Heaven Hill's director of corporate communications, Larry Kass, says: "The domestic brandy market in the US is up again, and we have now seen 10 years of uninterrupted growth for 'domestics' here. The trend is undoubtedly aided by consumers trading down from cognacs, which are really suffering in the States."

According to the Beverage Information Group, adds Kass, cognacs were down 7.3% in 2008 in the US, and are at their lowest volumes since 2004. "Understandably, this has translated into good results for Christian Brothers," he says.

Tenth place in the 2009 Millionaires brandy listings was occupied by Pernod Ricard's Mexican-produced Presidente, the leading

imported brandy in the US, but it saw volumes fall by 7.2%. However, 11th and final place fell to the South African producer Distell Group's Klipdrift brand, which grew volume by 2%.

South Africa: reliable favourite

Dr Caroline Synman, business director spirits for the Stellenbosch-based company, notes: "Distell is the foremost player in the South African wine, spirits and RTD market. Brandy is a key focus in the company, with Distell being the country's category leader." The company's principal brands include Klipdrift, Richelieu and Viceroy.

"Brandy remains South Africa's favourite spirit," says Synman. "Growth has been steady

since the start of the decade, with some 47 million litres now sold annually in a country with a population of around 47.8 million people.

"Black consumers account for about three-quarters of all brandy consumed in the country. Over four-fifths of brandy drinkers are below the age of 50, and brandy is most popular among those aged between 35 and 49. More women are enjoying brandy than ever before and constitute about a quarter of all brandy drinkers."

Despite the recession, brandy sales in South Africa showed a marginal year-on-year increase during the second quarter of 2009, according to the SA Liquor Brandowners' Association, and Snyman observes that: "Initial consumer reaction to the global credit crisis was to take dramatic, belt-tightening measures, but it appears that now people are adapting to the realities of the downturn and allowing themselves occasional treats once more.

"While most brands are holding their own during the recession, there has been good growth at the higher end of the spectrum, notably with brands such as Klipdrift Gold, Van Ryn's 10 Year Old, Oude Meester Demant and Collison's, as South Africans respond to the ▶



extensive innovation taking place at the top end of the market. Klipdrift Gold is an example of a relatively new, speciality offering from Distell. It is a pot-still brandy, blended from components up to 21 years old."

As well as Distell, KWV is another leading South African brandy producer and, like its main rival, a shelf-full of international awards attests to the quality of brandies coming out of the country.

James Rackham, chairman of brandy category specialist Emporia Brands in the UK, says: "We have always been involved with Spanish brandies, but we also moved into the New World, specifically into South Africa. South African brandy didn't have a real presence in the UK market, so we got together with KWV, which is the largest South African distiller of pot-still brandy. It has more than 200 stills on one site.

"KWV formulated a brandy especially for the British market, and it was launched late in 2007 under the name of African Spear, selling through Morrisons supermarkets and Wine Rack off-licence stores, as well as the on-trade.

It was re-blended and relaunched this summer under the name Mishale, which is Swahili for spear. It contains some pot-distilled rather than column-distilled brandy and is a minimum of five years old.

"The fact that the rand is a 'soft' currency at present means there are good commercial opportunities with Mishale, and we are pitching it against Three Barrels in the UK. It is going to be seriously big."

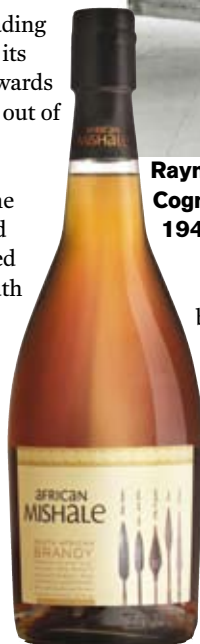
Spain: point of difference

Emporia also maintains a foot in the "old world" of brandy, through its UK representation of Domecq Carlos Brandy de Jerez, owned by the Spanish drinks company Osborne.

"There's a big interest in Spanish brandies," says Rackham, "and Osborne is the market leader in Spain. Their brandies are drunk with cola by British people on holiday there. Spanish brandy is naturally sweet – the solera system means the brandy spends two years in oloroso sherry casks – and this makes it perfect with cola.



Raynal's former production site in Cognac. The picture dates from the 1940s ©William Grant & Sons



"In the past 18 months we have been concentrating on quality brandy alternatives to cognac and, while the gender mix with cognac is skewed towards male drinkers, with Spanish brandy it's 50-50, and younger drinkers are attracted to it."

Gonzalez Byass also produces brandy in the sherry heartland of Jerez, and the firm's Claire

Henderson notes that: "According to Nielsen, the brandy sector in Spain has seen sales of 27 million litres [MAT Dec 08-Jan 09], which is a fall of 4.5%. Gonzalez Byass has two ranges of Brandy de Jerez, namely Soberano, which falls into the Solera category, and Lepanto in the Gran Reserva (premium) category. Soleras make up 80% of the brandy sales in Spain."

France: grabbing the opportunity

With cognac sales continuing to fall, French brandy makers have joined their international competitors in eagerly supplying cheaper alternatives. Estelle Sauvage, export brands manager of Bordeaux-based Bardinet, states: "In times of economic crisis, some consumers can't afford to buy cognac any more, and Bardinet considers this a real opportunity for brandy to recover growth.

"French brandy is the best alternative to cognac, compared to other brandies, due to the same French origin and the quality image linked to this segment. That is the reason why Bardinet has adapted and improved the presentation of its French Brandy VSOP."

Sauvage points out that, with the exception of cognac, the vast majority of French brandy is exported, rather than consumed on a domestic basis, and this point is echoed by Antoine Couvreur, St Rémy brand and markets manager at Rémy Cointreau.

"Since St Rémy was established at Mache coul

in 1886, the export markets have always been key to the development of the brand," he says. "St Rémy is the number one French brandy worldwide. Today, St Rémy Authentic is leader of the French brandy category in many markets such as Canada, Nigeria, New Zealand and Norway."

Another French producer capitalising on cognac's misfortunes is Raynal, owned since 2005 by William Grant & Sons Distillers. Global brand director Gregoire Vincent says: "We have seen consumers trading down from cognacs to our brands. In the context of the economic crisis, we offer a very decent alternative to traditional cognacs. Raynal and Three

Barrels are authentic, quality French brands which compete easily with some cognacs. Also, our brands are more accessible than cognacs, and in that sense less intimidating, which is also an asset."

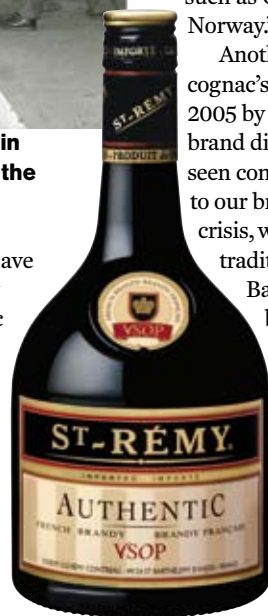
Three Barrels is far and away the UK's leading French grape brandy, while Raynal performs strongly in China and the US. Vincent makes the point that: "When talking about non-French brandies, the US is a very large

market, with big, domestic brands – mostly Californian – dominating. Additionally, Russia and some former soviet republics (Georgia and Armenia, in particular) are very large producers of brandies that they market mostly on a local basis, under popular, domestic brand names."

Recent innovations for Three Barrels and Raynal include "XO aged 15 years" expressions. Vincent says: "These are an outstanding blend of eaux-de-vie, sourced in the most prestigious region of France. This brandy has no equivalent on the market, and we are extremely proud of its growing success, especially in the UK and US."

He concludes that: "In a time when consumers favour special treats, brandy is still a popular drink, being regarded as very versatile, accessible, rich and smooth."

With an apparently ever-growing Indian market for brown spirits, and wider opportunities among drinkers trading down from cognac, the brandy category, if not exactly booming, certainly has the potential to benefit from the long, slow return to global economic growth that many predict.



White charger

Lucy Britner investigates how the white rum category is moving forward, as consumers familiar with the brand staples show more interest in premium offerings

It's hard to ignore recent interest in white rum. Although there was talk last year that the sector might be losing ground to its aged, often more complex, big brothers, the category is awash with launches, relaunches and brand activity. It's coming back and it's coming back at the premium end.

Bacardi has been busy reconnecting with its once-Cuban roots to bring the world its mojito campaign, followed by its daiquiri campaign. The most recent activity focused on the launch of the Bacardi Superior Rum Limited Edition Heritage bottle. The rum is bottled at the same alcoholic strength as it was 100 years ago: 89 proof (44.5% abv).

The design takes its inspiration from the original 100-year-old bottle, which would have been used to make the first daiquiris.

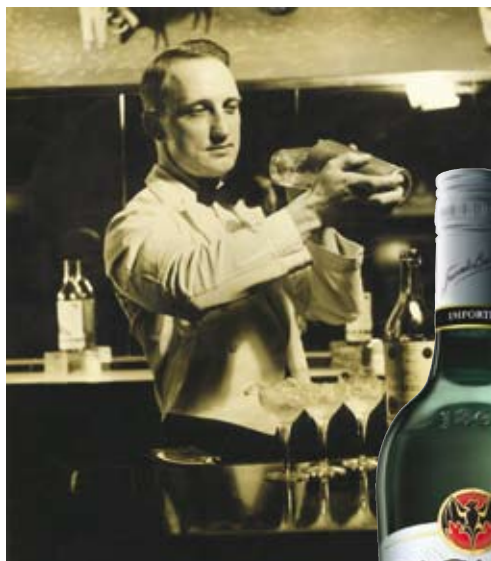
There are only 7,500 cases and each bottle will sell for US\$50.

Next up, Lamb's relaunched its white rum and brand owner Halewood International also launched a spiced variant just last year.

Sue Beck, senior brand manager, says of the white rum launch: "Lamb's Rum has been around for 160 years but as a brand we are not content to sit back – we want to introduce new consumers to the rum category. White rum is very popular but there are few options for consumers beside the brand leader and own-label.

"In the current economic climate we saw an opportunity to offer consumers a well-known branded alternative which is a quality product but which offers value for money."

St Lucian rum Chairman's Reserve also announced the launch of an aged white rum, currently in the domestic market and the UK. Toz White Gold is named after the abbreviation for the troy ounce gold measure (Toz). It is both column and pot distilled, aged first in American



oak then finished in port barrels and crystal clear filtered.

The brand was tested by bartenders at London's Trailer Happiness and Mahiki style bars before launching at the Boutique Bar Show.

Finally, Smatt's from Jamaica showcased its Smatt's Silver rum at the 2009 UK Rum Fest in London. The company says of the white rum: "Smatt's Silver mixes surprisingly better than vodka with its iconic super-smooth and pure finish." Interesting that it makes the comparison with vodka and not with other rums.

Stealing from vodka

One of the first so-called premium white rums was Elements Eight, whose founders also feel premium white rums could steal a few vodka drinkers.



Elements Eight co-founder Carl Stephenson says: "We are focused on the super-premium segment and have been developing top-end aged white rum on our own for the past three to four years.

"Lamb's White has been relaunched. I was actually working on that in the early 90s and I can comment that the conditions for developing alternative white rums to Bacardi are much better now, due in main to far more interest in rum as a category in the past 10 years."

Stephenson feels that, in the mainstream/premium market, white rum interest is still lagging behind the more established gold brands. But he says he feels the gap closing more and more.

Co-founder Andreas Redlefsen adds: "White rum is a much more logical category to attract vodka drinkers – it fits much more with what they are looking for as far as taste and character compared to golden, aged rums."

But J Wray & Nephew's European manager, Peter Martin advises producers of white rum to proceed with caution. The Jamaica-based distiller produces Overproof rum, which is known for its 63% abv and loyal following from Jamaican residents and ex-pats, as well as the global





(Left) St Lucia Distillers took a mobile rum shack to London's annual Rum Fest event

(Above) Elements Eight founders Andreas Redlfesen and Carl Stephenson



bartending community.

He says: "There is a danger that packaging could become more important than the liquid inside – like some vodkas.

"It would be a shame for white rum to become style over substance and for producers to ignore the product's fantastic heritage."

Playing for premium

As customers punt for premium, it's great to know there are aged white rums available, but why filter an aged rum in the first place? Michael Speakman, sales & marketing director of St Lucia Distillers, says: "Toz white rum is filtered as it has been in barrel for a number of years and has therefore taken on colour from the barrels. We do a light charcoal filtration to remove the colour to make it clear, or 'white', which still allows us to produce a high-quality white rum with plenty of character and richness on the palate."

So that explains the science – but what advantages are there to selling filtered rum? As the product's main launch was in the UK, it seems sensible to talk to the guy who sells it.

Andrew Scutts, UK sales manager for importer Emporia Brands, says: "We chose Toz white rum as it always surprises customers who taste it – it challenges their perceptions of what white rum can be. The category of premium white

rum is still a tiny fraction of the market so it's an interesting area to be in, challenging customers' expectations and showing that the simple perception of colour equals age equals quality does not always hold true."

The ideal serve for Toz is apparently in a Martini with a sprinkling of Hotel Chocolat chocolate, also from St Lucia.

Pernod Ricard's Havana Club 3 Year Old enjoys ageing, but the product retains a light straw colour. For Pernod Ricard, the 3 Year Old white rum is of equal importance to its flagship 7 Year Old. The company also has an añejo blanco, but marketing director Yves Schladenhaufen says around 80% of this brand's sales are in Cuba.

"The international player is 3 Year Old, which has experienced double-digit growth almost every year for the past 15 years. For us, white rum is not an accessory – it's a pillar of our portfolio."

Schladenhaufen adds: "I believe the success story for the 3 Year Old is the ageing – it gives it a premium edge. It doesn't seem to bother consumers because they can see that it's an aged rum, so they expect a certain amount of colouration. It has become the product's unique selling point.

"Removing colour is a matter of sticking to market expectations."

This might be why Schladenhaufen sees the main opportunity for the brand not in new launches but in getting bartenders and, in turn, consumers to trade up. He says: "For us it's not really a question of launching into new markets because we are available widely throughout the world. It's more a question of premiumisation – a cocktail is better with 3 Year Old than with blanco."

Although Schladenhaufen says he hasn't seen a particular acceleration in sales of white rum, he has seen enthusiasm "fuelled by the still-growing cocktail culture".

He adds: "When I started working with spirits

15 years ago, people said you couldn't build a brand through cocktails because back then cheap brands were used for mixing.

"Now, people look for quality. They recognise it is better to cook with decent ingredients and better to make cocktails with decent ingredients."

In the mix

Bacardi's promotion of quality cocktails is seen by many as a way of driving the category forward. Global brand director Sylvia Woon says: "Over the past seven years we have emphasised the Original Bacardi Mojito. As a result, we have given consumers around the world the opportunity to taste a classic cocktail.

"In the US and the UK, the focus has also been on the Bacardi Daiquiri. In the US, training and education has been on the importance of hand-shaking the Daiquiri."

Havana Club's Yves Schladenhaufen says: "Bacardi's efforts have helped to stimulate consumers.

"We have a different argument. We believe a Cuban cocktail is better with Cuban rum."

J Wray & Nephew also encourages bartenders to use its Overproof in a mojito and the brand's Peter Martin says the distinctive flavour of the pot-stilled rum makes for a "memorable drink".

But Martin wasn't so enthusiastic about other categories marketing their brands as a mojito ingredient. Most notable is the Smirnoff mojito – and now the Torres mojito, made with Torres 10 brandy. He says: "They are jumping on the bandwagon. These drinks should have rum in them. I think that people will turn back to rum."

Proceed with caution seems to be the message here. It's fantastic that so much is happening in white rum and new consumers are flocking to the category, but producers must avoid the temptation to stray into the realms of style over substance. □

Learning curve



In the words of former British prime minister Tony Blair: “Education, education, education.” That’s what activity seems to be all about in dark rums. That, and premiumisation

Appleton Estate Exclusive is only available during the estate tour



Education

Dominican Republic rum Brugal launched in the UK in 2008 and in 2009, fifth-generation maestro ronero (master rum-maker) Gustavo Ortega toured the on-trade to talk to bartenders about history, tasting and rum production. The brand’s Mixxit with Rum campaign is to be developed further in 2010, working alongside rum generic WIRSPA.

Brugal brand manager Karen Dobie says: “When it comes to consumers, it is important we educate them on our brand and highlight the fact that different islands create different styles of rums and each has its own unique flavour profile. To help we will be working on our digital strategy and driving traffic to brugal-rum.com.”

According to Brugal, the brand is currently the fourth largest and fastest growing rum in Europe, with more than one million cases being sold a year in Spain alone.

Moving from the Dominican Republic to St Croix, Cruzan has been busy with its Legendary Rum of St Croix campaign, showcasing the island of St Croix, its people and the rum that has been made there since the 18th century.

But education has been a key growth driver for Cruzan in 2009. “Rumology” explains to



consumers and bartenders the science of rum and what differentiates Cruzan. Brand education manager Andrea Bearbower works with consumers, trade partners and Beam Global’s sales teams teaching “Rumology”.

Cruzan has also expanded its ambassador programme to include on- and off-premise consumer education on how to enjoy the brand through mixing and sipping.

In Guatemala Ron Zacapa’s Europe area manager, Mario Navarro, says the business has changed in a positive way since it merged with Diageo in 2008. He says the brand is now able to expand into new markets and gain greater penetration into existing ones. Navarro talks about the global emergence of the super-premium rum market and, like his colleagues, education and awareness are on the agenda.

He says: “We need to continue to generate awareness, trial and usage of Zacapa. This will entail opening new markets and reaching new consumers through focused efforts. At the same time, we need to maintain close contacts with the trade who adopted this brand early on.”

Premiumisation

Havana Club has extended its €1,400 premium rum Máximo in European travel retail and from December, Istanbul airport will be the latest to carry Máximo Extra Añejo.

The product was initially listed in Frankfurt airport and in Paris TE in July 2009.

John Smailes, regional marketing manager, Pernod Ricard Travel Retail Europe, says he hopes the extension of the promotion for Máximo Extra Añejo will “introduce our ultra-premium range to more customers”.

As well as appointing a UK rum ambassador to help with the education side, Jamaica-based Appleton Estate launched a luxury rum only available at the Appleton Estate Rum Tour.

Appleton Estate Exclusive is a blend created to celebrate the terroir of the Nassau Valley where the estate is located. It costs US\$250.00.

Judy Schoenbein, general manager of the Appleton Estate Rum Tour, says: “In addition to making a journey of discovery of the rich history and heritage that is our legacy – and learning how we make our rums – visitors can now take home something exclusive to the experience.”

Want to test your rum knowledge?
Visit ministryofrum.com/quiz

Spanish eyes on America

Five hundred years after the conquistadors colonised the Americas, Spanish producers are looking to conquer the US wine market. Rebecca Gibb reports

In common with many traditional wine regions, Spain has many challenges to face, but many of the country's producers and generic bodies believe they should focus their efforts across the Atlantic before tackling emerging markets.

The UK and Europe continue to be important and, being mature markets, they have their own difficulties. But Spain is currently hip and happening with its world-beating gastronomy, football teams and acclaimed tourist destinations.

In 2008, Spanish wines accounted for just 1.1% of the US market by volume and 1.7% by value – being comprehensively outsold by Australia, France, Italy and Chile. However, it has already established itself as a quality producer with the average bottle price reaching \$9.51 last year – the second highest price point behind France.

The US market is dominated by sales of domestically produced wines, yet growth in wine consumption is expected to soar and the country's Spanish-speaking population is an obvious target.

An unprecedented Wine Intelligence survey of

consumer perceptions in Spain's six major export markets was published by the Observatorio Español del Mercado del Vino earlier this year and it threw up some interesting insights for Spanish wine exporters.

Wine Intelligence research manager Juan Park says: "In the US, wine knowledge was not very high but they were interested in drinking new wines. Compared to Germany or Switzerland, the US has a lot of younger consumers who are very involved in the wine scene. Unfortunately not many of them have tried Spanish wine and those who have don't drink much, so it's a matter of penetration and getting them to drink more, because they are willing to try."

Companies and regional bodies are heading to the US in their droves but there's a lot of work to be done. Miguel Torres Jr, says: "We are focusing our efforts on the US market where we believe there is still a lot of space for improvement."

The story is the same at Rioja's trade body, the Consejo Regulador, which changed its strategy in

Montsant: physically in the shadow of Priorat but hoping to be recognised for its own merits

the US in the middle of 2009. Ricardo Aguiriano, Rioja's director of marketing and communications, admits: "Rioja has not got a good position in the US. We need to build up stronger relations with the supermarkets and restaurants."

The body is switching its tactics from PR and image-building to more direct "sales-oriented" action, including money-off promotions, in-store tastings and on-trade educational programmes. The on-trade continues to be difficult for Spanish wines to gain a foothold in and even Rioja struggles, says Aguiriano. "On US wine lists you find Tuscany, Australia, Chile and, at the end of the list, you find Spain. This needs to improve. We are trying to forge our own category and we feel Rioja needs its own category too."

However, producers admit that the US three-tier distribution system is difficult to navigate and is proving the biggest challenge to their efforts. Andrés Perez de Herrasti, deputy chief executive of United Wineries, which owns wineries across Spain, says: "Each state has its own rules and regulations so it's complicated, especially if you



Spanish wine exports by value (€m)

	DO wines	Bottled table wines	Bulk wine	Sparkling	Other wines	TOTAL	% total	2008 vs 07
1 Germany	155.35	20.7	33.03	111.77	16.89	337.74	16.9%	14.0%
2 UK	161.24	21.63	1.81	64.68	34.14	283.51	14.2%	-7.4%
3 US	119.57	10.46	2.97	39.85	15.21	188.05	9.4%	-6.1%
4 France	26.99	5.15	94.78	9.36	7.64	143.93	7.2%	28.6%
5 Italy	3.02	2.24	19.97	87.23	2.75	115.21	5.8%	35.7%
6 Switzerland	78.4	6.14	3.84	8.49	1.09	97.95	4.9%	-0.8%
7 Netherlands	59.1	7.09	1.19	7.58	6.58	81.54	4.1%	6.7%
8 Russia	3.59	11.65	43.41	0.64	0.47	59.76	3.0%	-0.8%
9 Belgium	30.17	3.07	1.29	23.29	9.2	67.01	3.4%	15.2%
10 Portugal	1.42	14.22	41.19	1.99	4.16	62.98	3.2%	33.3%
Other Countries	271.6	111.83	63.1	79.67	29.98	556.18	27.9%	15.6%
TOTALS	910.46	214.17	306.58	434.55	128.11	1,993.87	100%	8%

Source: OEMV



**Andrés Perez de
Herrasti**



Amelia Aragon



Miguel Torres Jnr

Spain: where the value lies

Premium-priced regions such as Rioja and Priorat will bear the brunt of the downturn. Amelia Aragon, European sales director for Ribera del Duero winery Cillar de Silos says: "All the markets are trading down. Our El Quinta label, made at the local cooperative, is selling well, but higher price points are struggling".

Super-premium Priorat is likely to feel the pinch but neighbouring DO Montsant provides excitement and great value for money. It forms a horseshoe around the Priorat denominación and produces wines in a similar style, but without the price tag. Bottled exports doubled in 2008 and are continuing to grow.

Gerard Amorós Mestres, president of Montsant DO, says: "We are physically in the shadow of our neighbour Priorat, but we would like to be recognised for our own merits. We are producing quality wines at affordable prices and our winemakers are young and willing to try new things."

Other regions including La Mancha and Aragon are likely to see volumes rise as consumers look to trade down or find cheaper alternatives to Rioja. Carolyn d'Aguilar, brand manager still wines for Grupo Codorniu UK, says: "Due to price increases, many outlets are looking to offer their customers quality red wines from an alternative DO, rather than trading down and listing a cheaper Rioja. As such, consumers are starting to associate other wine regions with Spain and becoming familiar with non-Rioja wines."

want [direct] control of your distribution and who's buying your wine, rather than appointing a national importer."

Uncertain times

The UK had long been Spain's most important market by value until Germany stole its number one spot last year. But it continues to be the biggest importer of quality wines. The pound continues to perform badly against the euro, compounding the economic crisis for Spanish and other eurozone wine producers and the UK director of Wines from Spain, Maria José Sevilla, is realistic about the country's performance. "2009 has been a difficult year," she says, "and I'm dreading seeing this year's figures – they will make me cry. But it's the same for every wine-producing country."

Low quality perceptions may also need to be tackled in the UK. While it may be one of the most important export markets for Spanish wine, the Wine Intelligence research suggests it has an image problem. Wine drinkers awarded Spain

a quality rating of just 5.6 out of 10 – the lowest mark of all six major export markets. Juan Park says: "All other markets rated Spain's wines below France and Italy but above the New World. In the UK, Spanish wines were seen as lower quality than Australia and only just in front of Chile."

These findings are perhaps too hard on Spain. It is the fifth best-selling country by volume and value in the UK with almost 10% market share and a respectable average bottle price of £4.43 – above the national average and outdoing many of its competitors. Maria José Sevilla concedes: "You can't take away the past and there was a time that quality perceptions were very low, but this has changed."

But, she argues: "When I came to the UK four years ago, the average price was around £2.69 and value growth has been absolutely staggering. If the image of Spain is low then value would not have grown like that."

Of course, duty hikes, inflation and currency fluctuations have to be taken into account but it's a fair argument when you consider that Germany is still stuck at an average price (equivalent) of

£2.99 and an increasing amount of high-priced Spanish wine is reaching the market.

Spain can draw on many positive associations to raise its image and sell its wines. This year, Wines from Spain collaborated with London's National Gallery to promote the wines of Rías Baixas, Navarra and Rioja alongside events including a Picasso exhibition.

Campo Pancho MW, former director of the Wine Academy of Spain, says: "There are so many things that make Spain easy to market, and these are unlikely all to happen again at the same time. Spain is fashionable now thanks to Barcelona FC, Rafael Nadal, Ferran Adrià (chef, El Bulli), Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem. Spanish food is also fashionable. The wine industry has to take advantage of all these factors."

Many other generic wine bodies would kill for these positive associations and Spain needs to make the most of it.

Germany, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland continue to be strong markets for Spanish exporters. Uncertain times mean ►

Spanish wine

exporters are likely to consolidate those markets that are already well-established rather than looking to emerging markets. While there is a great fuss about the Far East and Russia, they are not yet the goldmines some predicted, and it is a long-term project for many Spanish exporters. Aguiriano says: "We are focusing on our top 10 markets and that's the idea for the next two years. There are several wineries with their own importers in the former Soviet and Asian countries. We are not launching a marketing campaign there yet, but we will in the future."

Life beyond red

Other opportunities for Spain lie in pushing its whites and rosé wines. Spain tends to be seen as a red producer, yet exciting whites from Rueda and Rías Baixas have been slowly – but deservedly – gaining recognition. Rioja has also made the monumental decision to permit up to 49% Sauvignon Blanc or Chardonnay to modernise its white styles.

On the rosé front, UK sales increased by 13.5% in 2008, while whites and reds declined slightly. In the US, rosé accounts for a whopping 39% of all Spanish wine sold.

UK buyer James Griswood, of influential multiple retailer Tesco, says: "A core challenge is to bring white and rosé sales up to fair share, as red wines still represent the largest segment of Spanish sales. With the massive increase in rosé consumption and a growing number of people who mostly drink only white or rosé, it's important Spain gets its fair share of this market."

Sweetish Californian pinks have dominated the rosé boom, but Maria José Sevilla believes the dry styles such as Spain's rosados will become increasingly popular. "Traditionally [Spanish] producers have made dry rosados but the UK market likes a bit of sweetness," she says. "However, I think the rosé market will become increasingly sophisticated like it did with white wine."

Regions such as Navarra, Catalonia and Cigales produce high quality dry rosados, predominantly from Garnacha and Tempranillo, and there is a massive opportunity for them. Unfortunately, many Spanish winemakers think rosé is a second-class wine and prestige is all about a Reserva red. This will stifle Spain's attempt to take advantage of current trends. Recently, British retailers called on Rioja to "extend" its brand strength and produce more whites and rosés. Will the Riojanas respond to their call?

Branding diversity

Spain's Achilles' heel, according to Sevilla, is its brand strength – or lack of it. Brands can build a country's entire wine industry and allow smaller players to benefit. Chile is the classic example, with



Concha y Toro dominating the scene there, but also bringing Chile to a wider audience. Brands bring reassuring familiarity for consumers.

A number of producers are trying to build their brand, such as Torres, Berberana and Faustino, but Spain still lacks true brand power. Perez de Herrasti says: "A country can become famous for doing one thing – Switzerland for watches; Germany for cars. Having more powerful wine brands would put the country in the mind of the international consumer. There's a lot more to do on brand building and that will help the country's wine industry as a whole."

Spain does, of course, already possess one immensely powerful wine "brand" in Rioja. There is an argument that the northerly region has been so successful in marketing its wines and its name that, for many consumers, it has become synonymous with Spain, perhaps to the detriment of the country's other wine regions. Equally,

in sparkling wine, the generic cava could be regarded as a brand in itself, although it has been dogged by an image of cut-price sparkling wine that cannot compete with champagne.

But Spain is fragmented, with more than 70 individual quality wine-producing areas covering more than one million hectares. The full impact of the economic downturn has yet to be realised, however, and it is inevitable (particularly with attractive EU subsidies for grubbing up vines) that many producers will drop out of the industry or sell up to bigger companies. Such consolidation could be an opportunity for bigger companies to create more brands to push the Spanish cause forward.

There's no doubt, Spain is "in" at the moment. It has enormous potential in the US, with its Spanish speaking population, and can cater for all segments of the market, from entry-level to the super-premium wines of Pingus and L'Ermita, as well as the top Riojas. It also has a great diversity of styles – but producers need to listen to consumer trends as well as producing wines that reflect their roots.

The US market looks set for a concerted and targeted effort from the Spanish, but they will have plenty of competition from other countries looking for a slice of the American pie. Elsewhere, strengthening its rosé offer and encouraging brands will help to consolidate and grow its market share in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Spanish wine exports by volume (litres) 2008

	DO wine	Bottled table wines	Bulk wine	Sparkling	Other wines	TOTAL	% total	2008 vs 07
1 France	23.7	7.0	271.2	8.5	11.1	321.6	19.0%	17.7%
2 Germany	88.9	16.4	92.2	46.8	16.1	260.4	15.4%	1.7%
3 Russia	1.8	13.9	116.2	0.2	0.5	132.5	7.8%	-13.9%
4 Portugal	1.4	37.6	111.8	1.3	5.6	157.6	9.3%	27.5%
5 UK	67.0	19.4	2.8	27.0	10.0	126.1	7.5%	-1.3%
6 Italy	2.9	2.7	53.0	8.6	2.1	69.4	4.1%	28.2%
7 US	28.8	4.1	2.7	11.2	6.8	53.6	3.2%	-8.4%
8 Netherlands	31.8	5.0	1.6	2.3	4.8	45.5	2.7%	2.6%
9 Switzerland	22.5	1.7	10.1	2.5	0.6	37.5	2.2%	8.6%
10 Belgium	10.3	2.9	2.7	7.8	10.0	33.7	2.0%	8.6%
Other Countries	82.2	176.2	143.3	26.6	23.8	452.3	26.8%	14.9%
TOTALS	361.4	286.9	807.7	142.8	91.5	1,690.3	100%	8.5%

Spanish wine exports by volume (litres) Jan-Aug 2009

	DO wine	Bottled table wines	Bulk wine	Sparkling	Other wines	TOTAL	% total	Vs 2008
1 France	8.2	2.7	167.5	7.5	9.3	195.2	20.6%	-10.5%
2 Germany	48.0	14.2	63.1	16.9	10.4	152.5	16.1%	-11.0%
3 Portugal	1.9	23.0	95.2	0.5	5.1	125.7	13.3%	32.4%
4 UK	39.6	12.4	1.5	14.3	4.8	72.5	7.7%	-4.9%
5 Russia	0.7	5.6	52.6	0.3	0.3	59.2	6.2%	-45.6%
6 US	18.7	2.9	0.2	6.2	4.7	32.7	3.5%	-6.6%
7 Belgium	6.7	3.0	2.3	7.3	8.8	28.1	3.0%	30.3%
8 Netherlands	18.7	1.5	0.8	0.7	3.0	24.7	2.6%	-14.9%
9 Switzerland	15.1	1.2	5.4	1.0	0.5	23.3	2.5%	-4.5%
10 Denmark	6.0	4.8	5.7	0.9	1.8	19.4	2.1%	32.7%
Other countries	44.4	71.2	67.3	18.9	12.3	214.2	22.6%	14.9%
TOTALS	208.0	142.5	461.6	74.4	61.0	947.6	100%	-16.8%

Source: OEMV

The big game opportunity

South African wines have improved no end since the country emerged from the political wilderness. Next year South Africa hosts the FIFA World Cup. Christian Davis has just returned from a visit

After a year or more of global credit crunch and recession, what the drinks industry needs is a hot summer and a major sporting event. So bring on 2010 and the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Well, one out of two isn't bad – this event won't actually coincide with its host country's summer...

Love it or loathe it, football is the most popular sport in the world and if anything brings people and nations together it is the World Cup.

The Rainbow Nation – which began its journey to political acceptance with the release from prison in 1990 of anti-apartheid champion Nelson Mandela – will witness a landmark in June 2010. With hundreds of thousands of people descending on the various cities staging the games and millions more worldwide tuning in to watch the matches and listen to the commentaries, this is the best opportunity South Africa has to show off its beautiful country and showcase its wares.

As people congregate to watch the matches – be it in South Africa or in their local bar, club, pub or at home – the ideal would be that those people

have something South African in their hands to get in the mood.

Whether it's wine, brandy, beer or biltong, this has to be the big opportunity – nay, goal – for South African producers of consumables.

"This World Cup is good for us," says Simon Barlow, of wine producer Rustenberg, although he admits that the benefits are, as yet, an unknown quantity and rues the fact that the world is still dealing with the global credit crunch. He wonders whether this will stifle the opportunity the World Cup ought to present.

And many South Africans have concerns about the event, with Singapore Airlines bringing in 20 jumbo jets to deal with increased passenger traffic, and reports of 20,000 German police officers being imported for crowd control. Several winemakers grumbled at the prospect of much-increased air fares during the tournament and the government is said to want a lot of industry to close down to get lorries and cars off the road.

Neil Ellis, of the eponymous wine company, wants to take his two sons to a match, seeing it as



Distell has produced a limited edition range for the FIFA World Cup next year

a "once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity". But at R11,500 (£958) for one ticket with a "modest amount of hospitality", that opportunity doesn't come cheap.

Ellis says: "The World Cup is important to South Africa. Soccer makes the Olympics look like a picnic. It is the responsibility of every South African to make sure it is a success."

Barlow and Ellis aside, the significance and opportunity presented by the forthcoming soccer bonanza seems to have left South African wine producers bemused and slightly disgruntled.



Hamilton Russell



Razvan Macici



Bruce Jack



Neil Ellis



Andre Van Rensburg



Andrew Gunn



The view from Ruperts vinyard in Franschhoek

Keeping up with the trends

When quizzed about the evolution of South African wine, Gary Jordan of Jordan Estates, states: “Over the past 20 years there has been a jump in quality, better than the previous 200 years. And the past five years have been better than the previous 15.”

Neil Ellis rejoins: “We are hardly scratching our true potential. Thirty years ago we made all sorts of mistakes. We are now consolidating to improve quality.”

“In terms of winemaking, we have grown up very quickly,” says Jacques Roux, of DGB.

Ellis said South African winemakers took their cues from Europe: if they wanted to make Chardonnay, they visited Burgundy; if they wanted to make Syrah/Shiraz, the Rhône was the only place. But now in South Africa a lot of research is going into viticulture and vinification and a lot of research is going into getting the best rootstocks and looking at the art of blending. The University of Stellenbosch has a world class

reputation for its courses and research facility.

Ellis predicts Elgin, which is currently best known for Sauvignon Blanc, will be better for reds than white wines: “Viticulturally it is a very challenging environment, but I believe it will become known for cool climate reds.”

Andrew Gunn, of Iona, says of Elgin: “I agree with Neil Ellis. I think Elgin has the potential to produce the best red wines in South Africa. We are just painting the canvas.” Sauvignon Blanc is the cash cow and can support the release of our red wines, moving towards later releases. Even at five years they are still babies.

“Cooler climate means reds are more European, with higher acidity and minerality, low pH,” says Gunn. He admitted a consultant advised him to plant Cabernet but he ignored the advice and planted Sauvignon Blanc. He now has 1.5ha of Cab and “a lot of Merlot planted”. Previously an engineer, he bought what was an apple farm in 1997. He claims that what is now Iona within sight of the sea, is the coolest vineyard in South Africa.

It is politically sensitive but, as a generalisation, wine is the drink of the white population while South Africa’s black population prefers beer and brandy. But that is changing.

“There is an emerging middle class. Well educated, looking for brands, they are adopting a western life style,” says Don Tooth managing director of Vergelegen. He notes that between 60% and 70% of their volume goes to Gauteng, the most northerly province of South Africa, which includes Johannesburg, Soweto and Tshwane (previously known as Pretoria). He quipped that they regard it as an export market along with the UK, Sweden, the Benelux countries and the Far East.

Beyond the usual

Organisations such as the Chenin Blanc Association and the Pinotage Association have sprung up to promote the qualities of varieties which have been overlooked, probably because of indifferent quality in the past and lack of consumer knowledge. “Preaching beyond the choir,” as ►

South African wine

leading Chenin light Ken Forrester puts it.

“It is important to carry the message locally,” says Ross Sleet, of Kleine Zalze, also a member of the CBA. “We do not want to rip out the old Chenin vines.”

There is twice as much Chenin in South Africa as there is in France, where it is mostly planted in the Loire Valley. The grape represents a hefty 18% of South Africa’s vineyards and the quality is improving all the time. The CBA does six roadshows a year promoting the variety and its wines.

Similarly, Beyers Truter, of Beyerskloof, is the champion of Pinotage, backed by an association with some 200 members. A cross of Pinot Noir and Cinsault, Pinotage is pretty much unique to South Africa, as it is not highly regarded. Nevertheless, better viticulture for this early ripener – a vine replacement programme, improved winemaking skills and more adept use of oak – have seen huge improvements. Those tarry, bubblegum, banana notes seem to have been eradicated from the better quality wines of the leading lights.

Beyerskloof has introduced a sparkling rosé Pinotage, made using the “méthode charmat” – or tank method – and it has a Chenin Blanc/Pinotage (25%) blend, which was made primarily in response to the need to have a white wine offering in the estate’s restaurant wine list. It also has a “port” – 63% Touriga Nacional/37% Pinotage. Fortified with locally produced grape spirit, it is 18.5% abv and comes in 50cl bottles at R100 (£8.30, €6.40).

KWV, historically the most conservative of producers, has caused a stir with two of its wines – Café Culture and Choccochino. Purists are concerned these styles of wine amplify flavours to the extent that some question whether they are “real” wines.

Café Culture, the more successful of the two, has attractive modern labelling and on the nose there is an overwhelming smell of coffee and mocha due to skilful use of oak in the Pinotage. Choccochino is a Shiraz but the chocolate notes, which are traditional descriptors or elements in Shiraz, are less pronounced than those of the Pinotage.

Time will tell whether these are novelty wines or the start of a new trend to “flavoured” wines, naturally or artificially.

Meanwhile, better-known wines are attracting attention. “Malbec is doing amazingly well in South Africa,” says Constellation’s Bruce Jack, while “Cinsault is a missed opportunity for South Africa,” according to Marc Kent, of Boekenhoutskloof in the Franschoek region.

Rustenberg (pictured) moved production of its Brampton brand to DGB after it outgrew capacity



Anthony Hamilton Russell, one of South Africa’s best known wine producers, makes Burgundy-style Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs and maintains that South African Pinot Noirs lie between the so-called Old World (Burgundy) and the New World (New Zealand, California and Oregon). Well known UK wine writer, Jamie Goode reckons that Cape Chamonix’s Pinot Noir is the “best Pinot Noir he has tasted from South Africa”.

Generally speaking, wine writers favour South Africa’s whites over its reds. In the past the reds suffered from green or unripe notes and clumsy oak management. Without doubt the vineyards are being cleaned up - Leaf Roll virus which inhibits ripening has been a long term curse in South Africa – and the winemaking just gets better and better. The Sauvignon Blancs are regarded as a match for anyone, lying stylistically between the Loire and New Zealand and its Chenin Blancs are coming into their own. On the red front, Shiraz, or Syrah, is the hot favourite but the Cabernets are more than competent and cool climate Pinot Noirs are establishing a reputation for elegance and finesse.

As to South Africa’s various major markets:

The US market

Here are a few soundbites on the States from some of South Africa’s producers.

Piet Momberg, business executive international for KWV, says: “America is very challenging for the whole of South Africa; extremely difficult. It’s easy to get an importer but then it is getting distribution in every state.”

Jacques Roux of DGB (Douglas Green Bellingham) says that in US

supermarkets, women shoppers are most interested in grape varieties and are not “hung up about origin”.

Simon Barlow of Rustenberg reckons: “The US is looking for single varieties.” Rustenberg specialises in blends.

Gary and Kathy Jordan, of Jordan wines in Stellenbosch, have been significant exporters to the US but, with the recession and US consumers switching away from on-premise to drinking at home, they have switched their attention to the restaurant trade, opening one in London, High Timber, with another about to open on their 143ha Stellenbosch estate.

The UK market

And on the UK...

“Selling is for fun in the UK,” says Distell’s Nederberg winemaker Razvan Macici, with more than a hint of irony.

“The UK is a volume market,” says Piet Momberg, business executive international for KWV. “The exchange rate is against us and the ▶



South African wine

prices (that the supermarkets which to charge) are against us. Some 80%-90% of sales are on promotion. Otherwise it just sits on the shelf. Destroys the value of the brand and the consumer does not know the value of wine."

"With three-for-£10 in the UK it's difficult to go the extra mile," says Constellation's Bruce Jack. "It's a bread & butter market – well bread anyway." Nevertheless, Jack has concentrated on improving the quality of Kumala, South Africa's largest single wine brand.

His work has been rewarded with 21% volume and 19% value growth in the UK and 42% volume growth in Canada. The wine is shipped to the UK in bulk and bottled in Bristol. It is the biggest South African brand in Quebec and significant in Japan and Finland. It is also number two in Poland; "cracking Scandinavia"; and has distribution in Germany, Holland and Russia.

"I've had so much fun with Kumala and I'm still learning," says Jack – who has had so much fun that Constellation changed the quirky labels on his beloved Flagstone wines without consulting him. Expect to see them change back.

Neil Ellis says: "With UK retailers, you have to play that game. There is pressure on price points. The question is: Will consumers go back to old buying patterns? We have had lavish spending and then we have had to tighten our belts.

"I believe there is still room for quality but there are too many wines under £10."

Jacques Roux of DGB reports that the company has had wines delisted by Tesco and Waitrose because it is struggling to supply wine at the prices they are asking. It has got the Douglas Green brand into the Netherlands but the Dutch market is half the size of the UK.

"The UK used to have the best offering for its punters. That is no longer the case," says Kent of Boekenhoutskloof, which produces the Porcupine Ridge brand.

Barlow of Rustenberg says: "The UK wants everything for nothing. Holland wants everything yesterday – at least the British are patient."

Other markets

Anthony Hamilton Russell, who pioneered the Walker Bay region and is one of South Africa's best known wine producers, says places such as Hong Kong and Japan are not ready for South Africa's top wines yet. All his wines are on allocation to the likes of the US, UK, Germany and Denmark.

He says: "In Hong Kong and Japan they are going for first growths from Bordeaux and top Italians. The wine markets there have yet to evolve."

Similarly Gary Jordan of Jordan Estates recounts that one of his top wines, Cobblers Hill, a Bordeaux blend, is drunk with 7Up in Asia. □



A vineyard worker at Iona – regarded as the coolest vineyard in South Africa

On the wild side...

Leopard's Leap

They love their animals in South Africa.

Leopards live in the mountains which surround the La Motte estate, producer of the Leopard's Leap brand.

Beyers Truter – aka "Mr Pinotage" – named one of his top wines after his dog, Diesel, a 95kg half Great Dane/half Boerboel, the South African equivalent of a Bull Mastiff. Truter would know when it was time for the vintage to come in because Diesel, who liked to chew the grapes, would stop spitting them out. He is buried in the vineyard – Pinotage of course.

Meanwhile, Gottfried Mocke of Cape Chamonix, Marc Kent of Boekenhoutskloof, maker of Porcupine Ridge, and Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen of Oak Valley, Elgin, all complain about baboons eating their Pinot Noir grapes. You have to hand it to them – they have taste.

André van Rensburg, Vergelegen's winemaker, says they are thinking about reintroducing hippos into the Stellenbosch estate... And Gary Jordan of Jordan Estates has chameleons.

Tongue tingers

Among South African wines that made an impression were:

- Shannon Vineyards Mount Bullet Merlot,
- Cape Chamonix Pinot Noir
- Vergelegen Mill Race bordeaux blend
- Iona Sauvignon Blanc & Gunnar
- Bouchard Finlayson Hannibal & Galpin Peak
- Hamilton Russell Chardonnay & Pinot Noir
- Nederburg Ingenuity Italian blend



Feeling fortified

The inaugural Drinks International Fortified Wine Challenge gave the expert judges plenty of food for thought



Below (L-R): Caspar Auchterlonie, freelance writer and on-trade consultant; Peter Cobb, specialist port writer; Andrew Catchpole, drinks journalist; Matthew Hudson, wine business course leader, Plumpton College Wine Science Centre, England; Drinks International deputy editor David Longfield

GOLD

Port – aged tawny

Ronçao 20 Anos Tawny – Vinhos Borges

Port – colheita

Quinta do Noval Colheita 1995

– Quinta do Noval

Vermouth

Vya Sweet Vermouth NV – Andrew Quady

BRONZE

Port – vintage

Rozès Vintage 2003 – Rozès

Port – single quinta vintage

Quinta do Grifo Single Quinta Vintage 2003

– Rozès

Quinta do Pêgo Single Quinta Vintage 2007

– Quinta do Pêgo

Quinta do Pêgo Single Quinta Vintage 2006

– Quinta do Pêgo

Port – aged tawny

Borges Soalheira 10 Anos Tawny

– Vinhos Borges

Quinta do Noval 10 YO Tawny

– Quinta do Noval

Rozès 20 YO Tawny – Rozès

Rozès Over 40 Years Old Tawny – Rozès

Vermouth

Noilly Prat Rouge – Bacardi Global Brands

Other fortified styles

Starboard Batch 88 – Andrew Quady

SILVER

Port – vintage

Ramos Pinto Vintage 2003

– Adriano Ramos Pinto

Ramos Pinto Vintage 1994

– Adriano Ramos Pinto

Port – single quinta vintage

Cockburn's Quinta Dos Canais 2007

– Beam Global Spirits & Wine

Quinta de Ervamoira Single Quinta Vintage

2004 – Adriano Ramos Pinto

Port – aged tawny

Cálem 10 YO Tawny – Sogevinus

Infanta Isabel 10 YO Tawny – Rozès

Quinta de Ervamoira 10 YO Tawny

– Adriano Ramos Pinto

Port – colheita

Kopke Colheita 1975 – Sogevinus

Burmester Colheita 1963 – Sogevinus

Port – late bottled vintage

Quinta do Noval LBV 2003 Unfiltered

– Quinta do Noval

Madeira

Justino's Malmsey – Justino's Madeira Wines

Vermouth

Noilly Prat Dry – Bacardi Global Brand

Other fortified styles

Secret Spot Douro Moscatel

– GR Consultores

COMMENDED

Port – single quinta vintage

Quinta de Ervamoira Single Quinta Vintage

2005 – Adriano Ramos Pinto

Other fortified styles

Elysium Black Muscat – Andrew Quady

Vermouth

Noilly Prat Ambre – Bacardi Global Brands



Messages in the bottles

This year's trophy winners were announced and awarded at the Royal Society of Arts in London, where trade, press and enthusiasts got to sample all our medal winning beers throughout the course of the day and evening



Super Jury 09

Name	Company
Melissa Cole	Beer writer
Jeff Evans	IBC chairman and beer writer
Glenn Payne	Beer2Love
Neil Whelpton	Waitrose
RETIRED BREWERS	
Josef Tolar	Board Director, Budvar
Agostino Arioli	Birrificio Italiano
Roger Protz	Beer writer

IBC Results 2009

Brand Name	Entered by	Brand Name	Entered by
LAGERS			
Trophy			
The Boston Beer Company	Samuel Adams Traditional Bock		
Gold			
Baltika Breweries	Baltika No 4 Original		
Harviestoun Brewery	Schiehallion		
Whitewater Brewery	Belfast Lager		
WHEAT BEERS			
Trophy			
Weihenstephan Brewery	Hefeweissbier	Branded Drinks	
FRUIT BEERS			
Trophy			
Redoak Boutique Beer	Redoak Framboise	Froment	
SPECIALITY			
Trophy			
Thornbridge Brewery	Bracia		
Gold			
Holgate Brewhouse	Tempress		
Okell & Son	Aile		
NABLABS			
Trophy			
Harvey & Son (1% abv)	Bill Brewer		
ALES			
Trophy			
Fyne Ales		Highlander	
Gold			
Adnams		Broadside	
Black Sheep Brewery		Black Sheep Ale	
Fuller Smith & Turner		Golden Pride	
Greene King		Old Speckled Hen	
Hook Norton		Haymaker	
Hook Norton		Old Hooky	
Hook Norton		Twelve Days	
Jennings Brewery		Jennings Snecklifter	Marston's Brewery
Lord Nelson Brewery		Three Sheets	
Purple Moose Brewery		Dark Side of the Moose	
Salopian Brewery		Darwin's Origin	
Shepherd Neame		Gentleman Jack	Asda
The Breconshire Brewery		Ramblers Ruin	
The Orkney Brewery		Skullsplitter	Sinclair Breweries
Thornbridge Brewery		Kipling	
STOUTS AND PORTERS			
Trophy			
Harvey & Son		Prince of Denmark	
Gold			
Cheddar Ales		Totty Pot Porter	
Fyne Ales		Vital Spark	
Harviestoun Brewery		Old Engine Oil	
Hook Norton		Double Stout	
Nail Brewing Australia		Nail Stout	
The Boston Beer Company		Samuel Adams Imperial Stout	
Williams Bros Brewing		Midnight Sun	Heather Ale

Judges

Name	Company
BREWERS	
Peter Ogie	Retired brewer
Kelly Ryan	Thornbridge Brewers
RETAILERS	
Danny Cameron	Lewis and Cooper
Sue Daniels	Marks & Spencer plc
Alan Dunn	Open All Hours
Jim Helsby	York Beer & Wine Shop
Gareth Jones	Beer Essentials
Chris Waters	Asda
JOURNALISTS	
Jeff Bell	Freelance journalist
Des De Moor	Freelance journalist
Tom Fryer	Oxford Bottled Beer Database
Tim Hampson	British Guild of Beer Writers
Nigel Huddleston	Freelance journalist
Sylvia Kopp	German beer writer
Gustav Jorgensen	Norwegian beer writer
Maurizio Maestrelli	Freelance journalist
Sue Nowak	Freelance journalist
Ron Pattinson	Freelance journalist
Jeff Pickthall	Freelance journalist
Tom Sandham	Freelance journalist
Jasper Smith	Oxford Bottled Beer Database
Howard Winn	Freelance journalist
OTHERS	
Marc Stroobandt	F&B Partnership
Martyn Railton	Importer and Stiegel UK rep



Pictured with their trophies at the event are: (L-R) Miles Jenner, Harvey's; Jim Morrison, Thornbridge; Tuggy Delap, Fyne Ales; James Clarke, Hook Norton (on behalf of Frederic Robinson); Jeff Evans, IBC chairman; Glenn Payne (on behalf of Samuel Adams); Gray Olliver, Branded Drinks; David Lipman, Beer & Brewer (on behalf of Red Oak); Chris Miller, Harviestoun Brewery; Mark Payne, Hook Norton (on behalf of Frederic Robinson)



Design & Packaging

ESTABLISHED

Trophy – Best Established

Company	Brand Name	
Frederic Robinson	Oliver Mason Ltd	Old Tom

GOLD

Molson Coors Brewing Co UK	Worthington's White Shield
----------------------------	----------------------------

REPACKAGED

Trophy – Best Repackaged

St Austell Brewery	Cloured Yellow
--------------------	----------------

GOLD

Sharp's Brewery	Doom Bar
-----------------	----------

NEW

Trophy – Best New

Harviestoun Brewery	Ola Dubh 40
---------------------	-------------

GOLD

Three Troupers Brewery	Three Troupers Pale Ale
------------------------	-------------------------

Judges

Name	Company
Richard Dinwoodie	Utobeer
Derek Strange	
Jo Copestick	
Dale Tomlinson	British Guild of Beer Writers
Dave Beard	Creative Director, Brandhouse
Pete Brown	Chair



Bar zone

Take Manhattan

When it comes to mastering the Manhattan, a trip to America is in order.

Woodford Reserve bourbon and Esquire magazine searched the US to find the cocktail king. In the end, they crowned Jeromy Edwards (pictured) with his Cider Manhattan, as Master of the Manhattan for 2009.



Cocktails were critiqued on creativity, ingredients, presentation and taste.

Here's how you make the winner:

Cider Manhattan



2oz Woodford Reserve bourbon
¾oz cider reduction
½oz Antica Vermouth
Dash Angostura bitters
Grand Marnier-flambéed cherry (preferably Rainier)
Flambée cherry in the martini glass, allowing it to caramelize. Place drink in shaker and turn, don't shake. Pour into a glass after it has cooled



G'Vine seeks world gin genius

Boutique French gin G'Vine is off around the world in search of the most exceptional gin bartender.

According to G'Vine, "the winner will garner worldwide recognition from the brand and its followers as the gin category's leader in mixology and bar-smarts" – earning the title G'Vine Gin Connoisseur.

If recognition alone is not enough, how about the lure of prizes including a year's supply of G'Vine, US\$3000 and a luxury trip for two through Amsterdam, London and Paris to explore the past, present and future of gin?

The competition's 12 global finalists will be flown to Paris and Cognac for a week of connoisseur challenges, seminars and the opportunity to run their own bar at the G'Vine Spring Ball.

The entry process is organised to ensure it attracts only the most passionate of gin connoisseurs. Each entrant must complete an online examination process that includes five "interactive modules" which together make up an extensive overview of the gin category.

The deadline to complete all exams is December 15.

Winning ways

Cognac Ferrand has announced the five winners of the first Citadelle Gin & Mathilde Liqueurs Bartender Competition.

The winning mixologists will travel to the Ferrand Estate in Cognac, France, in summer 2010 to distil Citadelle Gin with president and owner Alexandre Gabriel and master distiller Frederic Gilbert.

Winners are: Enzo Lim, Minetta Tavern, NY; Brian Matthys, Izakaya Ten, NY; Eryn Reece, Louis 649, NY; Alex B Smith, Ramblas and Thirsty Bear, San Francisco; and Max A Solano, Emeril's Table 10 and Delmonicos Steakhouse, Las Vegas.

Our favourite is Brian Matthys'

Smoked Pear

1 ½ oz Citadelle Gin
¾oz Lillet Blanc
¾oz Mathilde Pear Liqueur
¼oz Mathilde Raspberry Liqueur
¼oz Del Maguey Chichicapa Mezcal
Add ingredients to a glass with ice. Stir. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with a flamed orange twist

Britner's Beers

DI's Lucy Britner shares her passion for a pint

October in New York was a real treat for beer lovers. Not only was the Oktoberfest in full swing, Halloween meant pumpkin ales were available and, as the nights were drawing in, the winter ales were starting to make an appearance.

Friday night at the Brooklyn Brewery was the highlight. \$20 for six beer tokens! Top of the hops had to be the Manhattan Project – which I found out a few weeks later is the workings of Brooklyn cocktail guru Dave Wondrich and Brooklyn Brewery head brewer Garratt Oliver. It really was the bomb (sorry...)

The beer is aged in Rittenhouse Rye barrels and flavoured with herbs, spices and cherry so as to echo the taste of a

Manhattan cocktail. Often beers "flavoured with" are to be approached with caution, but Manhattan Project had none of that artificial aftertaste that tends to come with the territory.

Sadly for beer lovers across the pond, the brewery never bottles the beer. It also regularly sells out and so far it hasn't stuck around long enough for them to take a picture of it.

A bit further south to Maryland and Flying Dog brewery – which is also selling fast in New York city. Most notable is the brewery's tribute to Hunter S Thompson – Gonzo Imperial Porter. The brewery describes the beer as "mysteriously dark with a rich malty body, intense roasted

flavours and a surprisingly unique hop kick. With Gonzo weighing in at 7.8% abv, it will bite you in the ass if you don't show it proper respect."

No surprise then that this heavyweight drinks well with rich Christmas cake and hearty beer stew.

If you're knocking around New York and in need of a bit of fear and loathing, try the Ginger Man on 11 E. 36th street or the Rattle 'n' Hum on 14 E. 33rd street. Make sure you see the bottle – the label illustrations are done by Thompson's illustrator Ralph Steadman and, although this word is banded about far too much in the drinks industry, they truly are "iconic".



Bright idea: Ballantine's self-illuminating bottle

Chivas Bros is breaking new ground in the on-trade with a new self-illuminating bottle design for its leading whisky expression, Ballantine's Finest.

Created by London-based agency The Core, the label on the dark blue, spray-coated bottle is styled on the look of a graphic equalizer. Powered by mains electricity or batteries, it lights up intermittently as if in reaction to an audio signal passing through it.

The new bottle can be used for display or for pouring, and forms part of an on-trade initiative for Ballantine's Finest, entitled Listen to Your Beat – an extension of the brand's global Leave an Impression campaign.

Rolling the initiative out across 35 key markets, Chivas Bros said: "It is based on the idea that by listening to your own beat and following your own instincts, you will make choices that leave an impression on others."

20,000 units of the flashy Ballantine's Finest have been made available, with distribution already under way in the on-trade in Germany.



Global brand director for Ballantine's, Peter Moore, said: "The Listen to Your Beat initiative will energise our on-trade accounts by engaging consumers in a creative and eye-catching way.

"Having spearheaded the hugely successful Leave an Impression global marketing campaign recently, Finest is enhancing its reputation for innovation with this world first."

Apple of SPI

Stolichnaya international brand owner SPI Group has launched the 10th flavour in its Russian premium brand's portfolio, Gala Applik (see Launches, page 17). Playing on the theme of the apple as forbidden fruit, the company says it wants to "reinvigorate the traditional apple martini".

Here's how it's done:

Stoli Gala Tempress

- 1 part Stolichnaya Gala Applik vodka
- 1 part lemon sour mix
- 1 dash Angostura aromatic bitters
- A few mint leaves

Method: Combine ingredients and shake well. Serve in a martini glass and garnish with apple slice

Belfast Black to brighten up St Patrick's Day



A bit ahead of March, but good to know in advance: When it comes to St Patrick's Day, it doesn't always have to be about Guinness... apparently.

We know it's a bit premature, but St Patrick's Day revellers in New York will be toasting Ireland's patron saint with new Belfast Black Stout, developed by Whitewater Brewing Company in the foothills of the Mourne Mountains.

With the help of Invest Northern Ireland, Whitewater, a small artisan brewer of ale, lager and now stout, has signed a distribution deal that will see its products on sale in New York bars and off-licences early in 2010.

Managing director Bernard Sloan said: "There's a developing market in the US eastern states for ethnic beers brewed using only natural ingredients and traditional techniques."

A gem from Sapphire



Gin may be Bombay Sapphire's main claim to fame, but it's stylish approach extends beyond the bottle. German designer Bruno Everling has been named the £5,000 winner of the eighth annual Bombay Sapphire Designer Glass Competition.

Apparently, thousands of emerging designers from around the world enter the Bombay Sapphire competition. The brief: design a martini cocktail glass inspired by the distinctive blue bottle. In 2009, nine finalists were selected for the global final of the competition held as part of the London Design Festival.



When it comes to talking cocktails, there's no question that Dave Wondrich is a pro. And, on a recent cocktail pilgrimage in London with Plymouth gin, the renowned cocktail connoisseur proved with this giant hip flask that he's also a pro when it comes to drinking cocktails

Janet Brown

Departure zone

Getting handbagged

Can maker Rexam has donated 100,000 ring pulls to a project which teaches poor people in the Philippines to make them into handbags and purses.

The Philippines Community Fund (PCF) runs three schools for children who live in the poorest squatter areas in their region – two schools are located on rubbish dumps and the other is in a cemetery.

John Kirby, sales manager for Rexam in the UK and Ireland said: “The tabs will be made into handbags by the most disadvantaged parents of the children, who would normally be working on the open dump site scavenging for pieces of plastic and metal to sell.”

PCF chief Jane Walker said:



“The parents are now earning four times higher than their normal income and they have a real sense of achievement – not just because they have mastered a new skill but also because they know that they are helping our charity to raise money as well as earning an income for themselves.”

In Manila PCF has started a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) that handles more than eight tonnes of waste materials a day.

The rest of the aluminium from the can ends will either be sold in the MRF, with the profits going towards funding the activities of the school, or it will be used to decorate another school that is being made from unwanted shipping containers.

The 100,000 ring pulls will make approximately 300 handbags.

A percentage of the profit from each bag will provide the parents with a substantial income, while the remaining profit will be invested back into the various PCF programmes.

Akvinta vodka gets into full-on party mode



The ‘bride of Christ’ clutching three glasses of Akvinta vodka is supermodel Ben Grimes, who was one of the faces of Burberry’s ad campaign. To be fair, she was attending a Halloween-themed party in London. Akvinta, the premium Croatian vodka, ran the bar and cocktails, including the Akvinta Gold Ghoul (Akvinta with cloudy apple juice) and the Akvinta Blood Bath (Akvinta and RDA organic elderberry, pear and apple juice).



David Furnish, Elton John’s other half, Little Britain’s David Walliams and comic Jimmy Carr were at the Harrods Emerald Ball to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Wizard of Oz, in aid of the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Akvinta laid on a Ruby Slipper cocktail containing passoa, strawberry purée, vanilla syrup and cranberry juice, finishing off with an Akvinta Goodnight Kiss (a chocolate cup filled with red fruits macerated in Akvinta).

BOOK SHELF



● Robert Parker’s Great Value Wines

Arguably the world’s most famous wine critic, Robert Parker, has put his name to this book that claims to recommend more than 3,000 wines which are “seriously good wine at remarkably good prices”. As 90+ points from Captain Bob usually results in a wine’s price going sky-high, you have to wonder what is going to happen to these 3,000 wines. This man’s word is law among oenophiles in the US; not sure about the rest of the world though. A decent enough Christmas stocking filler for any wine enthusiast.



Published by DK
Price £12.99

● Cool brands 2009/10

The 2009/10 CoolBrands book lists Belvedere vodka, Cobra beer, Disaronno liqueur, Dom Pérignon champagne, Grolsch beer, Russian Standard vodka, Stella Artois, Tanquerary gin and The Glenlivet single malt whisky among its current cool brands.

Publisher Superbrands UK claims to have an expert council of 33 “style leaders, creative thinkers and media movers and shakers of our generation who have genuine insight into what constitutes ‘cool.’” As well as polling about 2,500 people.

Maybe we’re just too close to all of this but we can’t really see as ‘cutting edge cool’ brands such as Stella Artois (once upon a time maybe, when it was “reassuringly expensive”), Dom Pérignon or bog-standard Tanquerary – Tanquerary Ten, maybe.

Is the online bank brand First Direct cool? Or Dermalogica skincare? Are we past it, out of touch, or just cutting-edge cool ourselves?

Published by Superbrands UK
Price £45