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December 2010

INSIDE THIS MONTH



DI DOZEN

THE BEST OF 2010



SOUTH AFRICA

WINE WINNERS AND
LOSERS IN THE WAKE
OF THE WORLD CUP

VODKA IN THE US

A CATEGORY
DIVERSIFIED

PORT RESULTS

THE
SECOND
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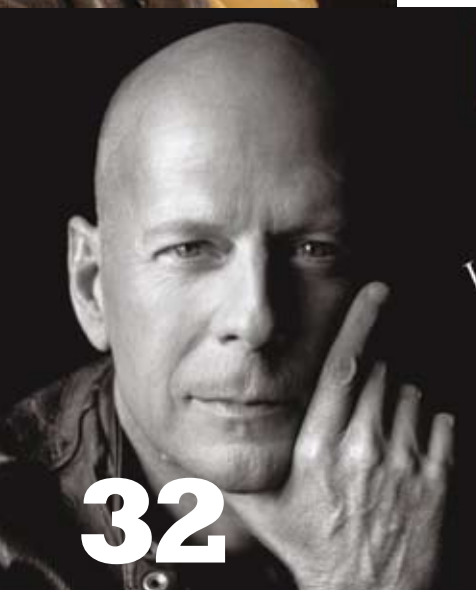
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Time to unwind

We are approaching that time of year when we overindulge – overeat and drink excessively. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! For many, January is a month of abstinence before spring approaches.

As I type this I am listening to a woman who, after a troubled childhood due to a brutal father, developed a massive drink problem. Yesterday and last night I looked at Robert Beardsmore's book *Guilt-Free Drinking – Why a diet including wine, beer and spirits in moderation is NOT bad for your health* (see Book Shelf in Departure Zone). This morning I see an email from Helena Conibear, a well known figure in the UK wine and spirits industry, forwarding on the conclusions of the International Scientific Forum on *Alcohol Research – Examining risks and benefits of alcohol consumption**. Basically, this report looks at 'sick quitters' and comes to the conclusion that people who are ill but continue to drink moderately appear to have better outcomes.

Beardsmore, as the title suggests, does his best to debunk a lot of the anti-alcohol claims and promote sensible drinking. He acknowledges "the medical scrutiny to the test" of two doctors, one of whom is his brother, plus "Laurie Edmond who has spent many years in the area of biomedical research". Cynics and the anti-alcohol lobby would probably dismiss Beardsmore's conclusions as less than robust.

As one who drinks virtually every day, I derive comfort from Conibear's email and Beardsmore's book at a time when drinkers and the drinks industry are under scrutiny and under siege.

Alcohol can be addictive and is dangerous if consumed in large quantities particularly over a short space of time. But it is also pleasant, joyous and at times inspiring.

Obviously I am biased, having a 'vested interest' in the drinks industry, as are most of you reading this. Therefore our views are disregarded. So, at the risk of repeating myself (not due to memory loss from over imbibing) have a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Christian Davis *Editor*

*helena@alcohol-forum4profs.org. Full critique: bu.edu/alcohol-forum/critique-022-alcohol-consumption-decreases-with-the-development-of-disease-21-november-2010

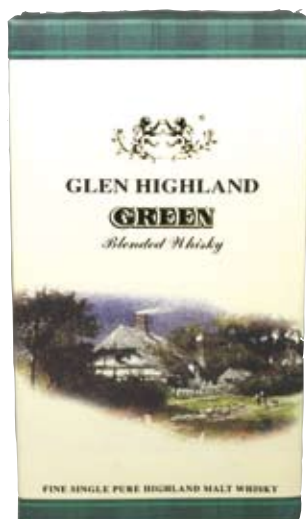
China protects scotch

China – an important market for scotch whisky – has announced it will recognise and protect ‘scotch whisky’ as a Geographical Indication.

Scotch whisky’s registration as a GI in China – recognising that scotch whisky can only be made in Scotland – is the culmination of three years of discussions between The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) and the Chinese government.

The announcement was made at a ministerial meeting in Beijing between Vince Cable MP, the UK business secretary, and Zhi Shuping, minister of China’s General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ). The SWA chief executive, Gavin Hewitt, attended the meeting as part of the UK business delegation.

According to a statement from the SWA, the decision ensures the highest levels of protection by China’s enforcement authorities. The new rules also ensure that local consumers will be better protected from imitations,



while the integrity of scotch whisky as a product made in Scotland is supported.

The SWA has also announced that GI has been granted in Panama, scotch’s 20th largest export market. The Central American country has more than doubled its imports of scotch in the last ten years, with value rising from £16m to £42m.

Oz wine boss slams retailers

Paul Henry, outgoing general manager, market development for the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation (AWBC), has accused retailers of being only interested in “volume and price” and described retailer consolidation and price compression as direct threats to proprietary brands.

“Retailers are not interested in building brands,” he said. “The reality is first and foremost: volume and price.”

Henry also described the large Australian wine producers’ strategy of chasing volume at almost any price as the “price of everything, the value of nothing”.

During an impassioned briefing in London, Henry said Australia needs to find a new identity – “not Old World, not New World, our world” – new ways of communicating with wine

consumers and new channels to get wine to them.

He said the challenge for the Australian wine industry was to “rattle the cage of world orthodoxy” and predicted a number of well-known Australian wine brands would disappear.

“Some brands will disappear from the market because they cannot afford to stay in the game,” he said.

During the briefing Henry also outlined details of A+, his initiative to promote Australian regional and fine wines.

Henry said Australia needs to improve its image, price and representation. It was an “intersection to be more targeted, defined and commercially relevant”.

A+ was an attempt to “connect with excellence and high achievement”.

Calabrese to open bar in new London Playboy Club

Top bartender, mixologist and one of the gentlemen of London cocktail bars, Salvatore Calabrese is to open an eponymous bar in the new Playboy Club in London.

London Clubs International and Playboy Enterprises has announced that *Salvatore’s* will be on the ground floor of the newly-designed club and it will be run on an exclusive ‘members-only’ basis.

The club is scheduled to open

around the middle of 2011. It will be at 14 Old Park Lane, the current site of the Rendezvous Casino.

Calabrese, with interior designers Jestic & Whiles, will come up with a bespoke design and the great man will be bringing his own hand-picked staff.

Calabrese is quoted as saying: “My vision is to create the best, most luxurious cocktail bar experience in the world.”

Michael Silberling, London Clubs International managing director said: “When it comes to cocktails, Calabrese is truly deserving of his Maestro title and his success as FIFTY St James’s is the reason LCI is so keen to work with him again.

“Quite simply he is the best in the business worldwide and his bar will help to make the Playboy Club an unmissable destination.”



News In Brief

Industry stories from around the globe

The European Spirits Organisation has announced a commitment to promote responsible drinking. The CEPS roadmap, a collaboration of 31 national associations, aims to implement two educational programmes in each country by the end of 2015.

Spanish wine group Baron de Ley-El Coto has announced the purchase of winery Carbonera-Bergasa as part of a €5m (£4.2m) investment in Rioja white wines. The group plans to grow non-indigenous white grape varieties at the 500ha estate.

A bottle of 64-year-old The Macallan sold for \$460,000 (£280,000) at an auction in New York. The Macallan and decanter creator Lalique set a record for a bottle of whisky sold at auction. All of the proceeds will go to a charity called Water.

Great news for The Balvenie Thirty and The Balvenie Forty. Both expressions scooped a gold medal in the International Spirits Challenge. Unfortunately the gongs were missed off the medals table.

International wine export volumes up but value lags

International wine export volumes have recovered to near pre-recession levels, but value is still lagging, according to Rabobank Wine Quarterly.

The 2010 first half results, according to the report, show that export volume increases are due to “improving performance in the global economy” and are also “a reflection of the easy comparisons to H1 2009”, a period when “trade slowed dramatically”.

“While 2010 will almost certainly prove to be a much better year than 2009 for global wine trade, pricing for many suppliers remains under pressure”, the report continued.

Rabobank Wine Quarterly highlighted the UK market (the largest for imported wine), as a major driver of slow value recovery.

A combination of tax duty increases, regulation and a consumer shift to the off-trade, where supermarkets have

“enormous negotiating leverage to push pricing down from suppliers”, have all contributed to a value decrease in the UK import market.

The H1 2010 results for Australia show exports have grown by 3.1% by volume, but value has declined by 8.7% as bulk shipments increase at the expense of bottled.

Spanish exports rose 17.4% by volume and 7.1% by value, with growth attributed to the success of “lower priced wines”.

The report said that, in France, “the price of French wines is under pressure, with volume growth far outpacing value growth.”

In New Zealand exports increased 18% by volume but only 6% by value, and in Chile wine exports increased 13% by volume and value.

The US and Italy bucked the trend with value growth exceeding volume.

Report shows spirits invaluable to Europe

According to a new report, sales of European spirits reached €58 billion in 2009.

This created €27bn in added value for the European economy and tax revenues of around €31bn – a figure equivalent to the total income tax revenue of Spain or the total government expenditure of Slovakia.

The report, prepared by Ernst & Young and commissioned by CEPS – the trade body for the European spirits industry – also showed the industry creates some 900,000 jobs, around two thirds of which are in the hospitality (638,800) and retail sectors (85,200). This is more than the combined total labour force of Malta and Estonia.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Jamie Fortescue, director general of CEPS, said: “Many European industries are still nursing their post-

recession hangovers but this report shows that our sector continues to be an important pillar of the European economy. We create jobs, contribute significantly to government coffers and are unrivalled in terms of global exports.”

With more than €5.7bn in annual exports, the European spirits industry is the largest exporter in the agro-food sector.

“Our most important export markets are the US, Singapore – as a transit to the Far East – Russia, China and South Africa,” added Fortescue.

“Spirits exports to these countries currently generate a positive trade balance of €8.8bn for the EU. The outlook for 2011 is even more positive, with continued strong growth in Asia in particular.

For more on the Ernst and Young Report see europeanspirits.org.

London ceremony reveals 2010 ISC trophy winners



The International Spirits Challenge winners were announced at a ceremony in London.

The top trophy for supreme champion was awarded to Japanese whisky The Yamazaki Single Malt 1984. The whisky's creator, Suntory, also scooped the coveted Distiller of the Year award. This is the first time in the event's 15-year history that the two top awards were given to one distiller.

The event, held at the Marriot Grosvenor Square, was attended by 200 distillers, blenders, cellar masters, journalists and drinks trade professionals.

The Outstanding Contribution award was picked up by Wild Turkey's master distiller and industry veteran Jimmy Russell. French distiller ABK6 took the Excellence in Craftsmanship award.

The crowd was entertained by Bollywood dancers Threebee, who were Britain's Got Talent finalists, as well as flair bartenders the Barwizards.

To see pictures of the winners, go to page 22.

UK beer brewer Adnams has opened a small-scale distillery, producing vodka, gin and whisky. The Suffolk-based brewery believes it is the first in the UK to brew beer and distil spirits on the same premises.

Tax Free World Association's World Exhibition in Cannes next year takes place September 18-23 – not in October. The move is attributed to President Nicolas Sarkozy's announcement that Cannes will host the November G20 meeting.

Harrods, the world famous department store in London, has unveiled its wine and spirits department. Situated under the famous food halls, the department will offer 3,000 wines, spirits and a limited selection of beer.

Wine producer François Lurton has said he expects China to become the largest wine producing country in the world. He said: “China has great potential for vineyards and places like Qingdao (Tsingtao) have similar climates to Bordeaux.”

TOP 5 STORIES ON DRINKSINT.COM

1. Best Bar in the World revealed
2. Diageo launches Baileys hazelnut
3. Pernod sets up wine division
4. International Spirits Challenge results revealed
5. Marie Brizard's International Bartender

A career in wine

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust has introduced a sommelier qualification. **Lucy Britner** finds out what's on offer

Shutterstock/sinicak

Finally. The UK is taking wine service more seriously. OK, so if you're reading this from a top restaurant or a place that prides itself on its wine selection, you might already be jumping up and down, but I challenge you to take a walk to a pub or even a high street bar and ask about the wine selection.

If you aren't met with an embarrassed side-glance and awkward shuffle to the dog-eared, laminated wine list, you might get a glass of something. If it's red, odds are it has been open for weeks, sitting under a display light on the back of the bar. As for port or sherry – it could have been there for years.

The fear factor

Then there's the other end of the spectrum and the term 'sommelier'. Frankly, it strikes fear into the heart of many a humble diner. There's a common misconception that sommeliers only want to sell you expensive wine and will try to scare you into purchasing it with complicated language.

Enter the Wine & Spirit Education Trust's (WSET) Certificate in Wine Service qualification.

Course tutor Christopher Cooper, who is set to be Gordon Ramsay's wine manager at the Savoy Grill in London due to open as we go to press, says: "The course aims to change people's perception of the arrogant sommelier and also teach people that

sommellerie is a career path."

Cooper says it's important for a sommelier to treat customers equally, no matter what their budget.

So what does the course teach? Well, it's tied to the Foundation Certificate in Wines & Spirits and candidates must first acquire the knowledge about the wines they wish to serve.

Though the programme is in its infancy, the plan is to introduce an intermediate and an advanced sommellerie course to tie in with the relevant WSET certificates. There are also plans to take the course to other WSET outposts, including Hong Kong.

The course kicks off with customer service and what customers expect when they come for a drink. This includes clean and tidy staff, help with wine selection, and wine to be served at the correct temperature and in the correct condition.

The course cites research about why customers leave a restaurant or bar and never return – 67% of those surveyed said this is due to staff attitude. Next on the list is product dissatisfaction, which rang a bell with 16% of those surveyed.

Asking the right questions is also a skill and Cooper says it's important to avoid jargon and technical terms.

He adds: "Make sure you ask questions to check a customer's understanding. Make the customer feel important."

The next element is about equipment for wine service and the tutor takes you through all aspects of using a 'waiter's friend' bottle opener, choosing the correct glassware, handling glasses, carrying trays and using a service cloth.

Order of Service

Next comes the grandly titled Order of Service. This includes marking the label on the water bottle with the covers that are drinking still or sparkling, serving to the right and clearing from the left, presenting the label to the customer and correct service temperatures for champagne (4.5-7°C), sweet white wine (7-10°C), white and rosé (10-12°C), young light reds (12.5-15.5°C) and full-bodied reds (15.5-18°C).

Cooper adds: "If you don't know the answer to a customer's query, don't guess. Giving the wrong information is more upsetting to the customer than politely asking them to wait for a minute while you find someone who can help."

Using three words to describe a wine helps to avoid confusion and Cooper concludes: "Don't start talking about the winemaker or about terroir in a busy restaurant. Leave that for when you're not busy."

Overall, the course seems to succeed in taking the confusion and snobbery out of wine service as well as introducing sommellerie as a career.

DI

Appointments

Ann Doherty has been appointed sales account manager for wine bottles at Saxco Pacific Coast, in Vancouver. Doherty will be directly responsible for the day-to-day sales function and new account development with wineries in Washington. Previously, Doherty worked as sales and wine club manager for Kestrel Vintners, a winery specialising in premium and ultra premium wines.

FirstCape Wines has appointed Hayley Bromley to the position of national account manager for UK retailer, Sainsbury's. Bromley has been with FirstCape Wines for four years and was previously sales and brand ambassador for the Brand Phoenix/SHS wine division. FirstCape supplies Sainsbury's with 35 wines from its range.

Anthony Reeves has been appointed to the role of chief financial officer at Foster's Group. Reeves was previously CFO of OneSteel and has held senior executive roles with the ICI Group in the UK, USA and Australia. Foster's Group says Reeves' prior experience with corporate demergers will be valuable as the board evaluates the potential demerger of its beer and wine businesses.



Hayley Bromley

Syrup manufacturer Monin has appointed James Coston as its UK brand ambassador to help develop drinks for bartenders and baristas as well as provide one-on-one training. Coston will work closely with bars and coffee houses to find drinks that suit their clientele and will suggest the best way to create, market and sell the products. Coston previously worked at Jake's Bar in Leeds.



James Coston

The board of Wineworld London has announced the appointment of Samantha Cox as managing director at Vinopolis. The wine and spirits tasting venue is looking to expand its product range and has enlisted Cox because of her experience in the food and drink industry. Cox was previously sales and marketing director of London caterers Chester Boyd.



Samantha Cox

Australian Anthony Walkenhurst has been named chief winemaker at Kim Crawford Wines, based in Marlborough,

New Zealand. Prior to joining Kim Crawford Wines in 2005, Walkenhurst worked harvests in Barossa Valley, Australia; Napa Valley, US; and Ontario, Canada. Walkenhurst's first vintage working with Kim Crawford Wines saw him win the Sauvignon Blanc trophy at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards. He replaces Matt Large in his new role.



Anthony Walkenhurst

International Beverage Holding has recruited **Geoff Tirrell** as general manager and **Donna Harrison** as marketing manager to head its Chang Beer operations in the UK. Tirrell, formally of Entbe, brings 10 years' experience of sales and distribution to his role, while Harrison, also previously of Entbe, has six years' experience in the Asian imported beer sector.

Jeanette Morgan has been appointed to the role of executive director by the Oregon Winegrowers Association, the Oregon Wine Board, and the Trust for Oregon Wine Education and Research. Morgan will join as strategic leader and administrator to all three organisations. Previously she served as vice president of global government affairs at the National Semiconductor Corporation in Santa Clara, California.

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DIARY

International Food & Drink Expo India

December 2-4

Pragati Maidan Exhibition
Grounds, New Delhi
indiafooddrinkexpo.com

IndSpirit

December 3-4

The Lalit Intercontinental,
Mumbai
indspirit.in

2011

Wine4Trade

January 18

Lord's Cricket Ground,
London
wine4trade.fr

Sirha Hotel, Catering & Food Expo

January 22-26

Eurexpo, Lyon, France
sirha.com

Millésime Bio

January 24-26

Montpellier, France
millesime-bio.com

Taste (India)

February 3-5

Bombay Expo Centre,
Mumbai
taste-expo.com

Bleu Wine Expo

February 7-8

Palais du Pharo, Marseille
bleuwinexpo.com

Prodexpo

February 7-11

Expocentr, Moscow
prod-expo.ru/en

BevIndia

February 11-12

Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi
bevindia.in

Duty Free Show of the Americas

March 20-24

Orlando, Florida, USA
iaadfs.org



The Macallan expands travel retail range

The Edrington Group has added a fifth expression to its The Macallan's 1824 travel retail collection.

Named after the Spanish word for 'dark' and not bearing an age statement, The Macallan Oscuro is taken from 100% Spanish sherry seasoned casks. Bottled at 46.5% abv, the new whisky is described as being dark in colour with a rich, complex taste.

Oscuro is positioned in the 1824 range at €490 between The Macallan Estate Reserve and The Macallan 1824 Limited Release.

The Edrington Group global travel retail area director Steven Sleight said: "The Macallan 1824 Collection continues to perform exceptionally well across travel retail, contributing to the continued growth of the brand globally. Oscuro will extend this appeal further."

According to the International Wine & Spirit Research (IWSR), The Macallan was the sixth fastest-growing spirits brand in travel retail last year, increasing sales by more than 12% to reach nearly 95,000 cases.

Johnnie Walker new 21 Year Old at Delhi



Diageo Global Travel Middle East (GTME)

exclusively launched a Johnnie Walker variant with one of India's youngest and most ambitious travel retail operators, Delhi Duty Free, last month.

Johnnie Walker XR 21 Year Old, which includes rare whiskies from now silent distilleries, is priced at \$105 and was sold exclusively at Delhi Duty Free's stores at Delhi airport's recently opened Terminal 3 for the whole of November. *Drinks International* understands the whisky will not be sold outside the Indian travel-retail market.

Johnnie Walker XR 21 Year Old is inspired by the handwritten notes of Sir Alexander Walker, the grandson of company founder John Walker, who was knighted in 1920 for his contribution in achieving the armistice of the



First World War.

Commenting on the launch, Delhi Duty Free CEO Nicholas Palmer said: "Delhi Duty Free is viewed today as a premium retail destination within India, catering to a diverse audience who are well travelled and brand conscious.

"With an estimated 10 million travellers passing through India's international airport, Delhi Duty Free offers a comprehensive range of scotch whiskies, besides having a dedicated speciality area for single malts, Uisge Beatha. It is

one of a kind in India, where more than 80 single-malt whiskies are available. We have experienced overwhelming passenger interest and interactions across the Johnnie Walker portfolio and are honoured to be a part of the worldwide launch of Johnnie Walker XR 21 Year Old blended scotch whisky," said Palmer.

Delhi Duty Free manages the duty free concession at Delhi airport's Terminal 3, the world's sixth largest airport terminal, which opened during the summer.

Bacardi promotions help to deliver strong 2010 growth

Bacardi Global Travel Retail Division (BGTRD) has revealed strong travel-retail sales increases over the first 10 months of 2010.

BGTRD global marketing director Trent Russell revealed that the division's travel-retail sales by volume had grown 17% by volume and 24% by value during this period. "On both counts we are well ahead of passenger growth, and sales of all four of our key brands (Bacardi, Bombay Sapphire, Dewar's and Grey Goose) are performing well," he added.

Russell attributed much of this growth to BGTRD's promotional programme, which seeks both to educate and entertain travelling consumers. Ongoing programmes include the long-running Bacardi

Mojito sampling campaign, the Dewar's gift-oriented, personalised engraving service, and the Bombay Sapphire Collins cocktail sampling programme. Russell also hailed the early success of Martini Gold—the brand's new line extension, which features distinctive packaging and a gold bottle from Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana, which was launched in September. "Within the European travel retail market it has proven very popular with Russian travellers, who are once again showing their importance in this market," he noted.

He added that the introduction into travel retail this year of Bacardi Mojito Ready to Serve (RTS) had also been a big success. "We are noting particularly good sales at arrivals stores in holiday destinations as it is such a convenient way to experience this classic cocktail," said Russell.



In Brief

✈ Whyte & Mackay has released yet another rare The Dalmore bottling into travel retail this month. The Dalmore Eos is a 59-year-old single malt whisky named after the Roman goddess of the dawn and priced at £3,000. Quantities are limited to 20 bottles.

✈ José Chao, one of the most experienced and respected travel retail drinks executives, has left his position as vice president of Bacardi Travel Retail Americas. Bacardi has not yet announced his successor.

✈ Chivas Brothers has raised \$21,712 for the children's cleft palate surgery charity The Smile Train by donating \$2 for every bottle of Chivas Regal sold at DFS' shops at Abu Dhabi airport over the summer. The promotion celebrated the 50th anniversary of DFS Group.

✈ Las Vegas County officials have given the green light for plans to open a duty-paid liquor shop in the baggage claim area of McCarran international airport. The new outlet will be the first US airport arrivals liquor shop.

✈ The Glenrothes has launched a new travel retail exclusive expression. The Glenrothes 1991 Vintage will be exclusively available for travel retail customers priced at €80 for a 1-litre bottle.

✈ Cointreau has joined forces with fashion house Paco Rabanne for a cross-category promotion at The Nuance Group's stores at Sydney airport. It involves a gift with purchase activity and sampling around the launch of Paco Rabanne fragrance Lady Million and Cointreau's brand ambassador, burlesque performer Dita Von Teese.

William Grant to revamp Glenfiddich's profile

William Grant & Sons is set to embark upon a £1m merchandising campaign to raise the profile of Glenfiddich single malt whisky at the world's top 20 busiest travel retail locations.

The new campaign will include a new look for the brand's packaging, a new crystal stag logo, the introduction of more branded in-store merchandising units and sampling activity.

The first of three Glenfiddich crystal stag gondolas, which include elements made of copper and oak, was unveiled at World Duty Free's (WDF) Heathrow Terminal 5 store last month.

The two remaining stag gondolas will be installed at Frankfurt and Dubai airports.

Commenting on the fixture campaign, William Grant & Sons global travel-retail director Rita Greenwood said:

"With outstanding fixtures, made of materials that echo Glenfiddich's proud history, in colours that draw people toward them, we stand out from the crowd and create the right platform to run the interactive sampling and high profile activity that we believe will elevate Glenfiddich to the next level."

William Grant has also launched a permanent travel retail-exclusive Glenfiddich whisky as part of the new campaign.

The Glenfiddich Age of Discovery is a 19-year-old single malt finished in Madeira casks.

With a gift box featuring an antique-style nautical map of the world, the whisky's packaging is inspired by the historic voyages of Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama. Its recommended price in travel-retail is £75.



Winemaker Grant Burge in action at the SYD Tax & Duty Free store at Sydney airport

Top Australian winemaker hosts Sydney airport sampling sessions

The Nuance Group has further enhanced its reputation as one of the best travel retailers of wine with the recent promotional appearance of an award-winning Australian winemaker at the company's SYD Tax & Duty Free store at Sydney airport.

Barossa Valley-based Grant Burge, owner of Grant Burge Wines, visited the store to host sampling sessions for travelling customers, sign wine gift boxes, and give Nuance sales staff a masterclass on some of the company's wines stocked by the store.

Wines available for in-store tasting included the limited edition Shadrach

Cabernet Sauvignon 2006, Meshach Shiraz 2005, Filsell Shiraz 2008 and Holy Trinity Grenache Shiraz 2005.

The Nuance Group's 4,000sq m flagship store at Sydney airport, which opened earlier in February this year, features a World of Wine area, which stocks more than 100 fine Australian wines. The retailer's World of Wine in-store concept is also to be rolled out at its new departures store at Melbourne airport, which opens this month.

Australian wine expert Phil Reedman has provided tasting notes and educational notes for each fine wine the new outlet stocks.

Heineken launches Mexican beers into travel retail

Heineken Duty Free & Travel Retail has diversified its product portfolio within travel retail with the addition of two Mexican beers, Sol and Dos Equis.

Heineken purchased Mexican brewing group FEMSA Cerveza, which produces the two brands, in May this year in a deal worth \$7.6 billion.

Heineken Duty Free & Travel Retail brand activation manager Audrey Schillings said the company was still working on the price positioning and marketing strategy for Dos Equis and Sol within travel retail, but was confident that the brand had potential.

"Sol is a light tasting 4.5% abv beer with a sunny party image,

which we feel will do well in a lot of different channels with the 18-25 age group," she added.

"Dos Equis, which is very popular in the US domestic market, is also 4.5% abv, but is more of a pilsner-style beer."

Schillings said that the brewer's overall sales in global travel retail had picked up well in 2010 after a slow start to the year.

Scandinavian ferry lines and emerging markets such as Africa and Asia were performing particularly well, she noted.

Heineken's priority brands in global travel retail include Heineken, Amstel, Newcastle Brown Ale and Strongbow cider.



IN MEMORY



OCHO DAY OF THE DEAD TEQUILA

BRAND OWNER Tomas Estes

PRICE £13-£15, US\$20, €16

MARKETS US, Europe, Australia

CONTACT herb@inspiritbrands.com, Inspirit brands +44 20 7739 1333

Inspirit Brands has announced the arrival of Ocho Day of the Dead tequila. The bottles are released as a limited edition in celebration of the Mexican 'day of the dead' festival that commemorates the memory of friends and loved ones.

The tequila is from the last harvest of the Los Mangos fields (The Melon Fields) in the Los Altos region of Mexico. The tequila is said to have a buttery aroma with lively fruit, pineapple, lemon herbs, cloves & white pepper with green pine.

BUSHMILLS 10, 16 AND 21 YEAR OLD SINGLE MALTS

BRAND OWNER Diageo

PRICE 10YO £29.99, US\$47, €35 / 16YO £39.99, \$63, €47 / 21YO £120, \$190, €143

MARKETS Global

CONTACT: kathy@bushmills.com

Bushmills Irish Whiskey has unveiled new premium packaging for its 10, 16 and 21 Year Old single malts.

The new packaging was shown to global media at a special event at London's famous Irish bar, Waxy O'Connor's, with guests given the opportunity to be the first to taste from bottle number one of the new look Bushmills 21 Year Old single malt.

The new packaging features imagery of the old Bushmills distillery, embossing of the 1608 original licence to distil date and a prominent display of the trademark Bushmills pot still - features said to be testament to the heritage, authenticity and quality of the range.



NEW LOOK

NATURAL AROMAS

WEMYSS MALTS

BRAND OWNER:

Wemyss Malts

PRICE £24.99/US\$39.99/€28.99

MARKETS UK, US, France, Spain, Germany, Japan, Canada

CONTACT

info@wemyssmalts.com



Wemyss malts (pronounced 'weems') are produced and bottled by the Scottish family of the same name, whose estate still supplies barley to this day for many of the leading distillers.

Their whiskies are bottled according to their natural aromas and taste and in the 8 Year Old

blended malt range are called Spice King, Peat Chimney and Smooth Gentleman.

Target consumers are 25 to 40-years-olds who are switching out of blended whiskies into malt whiskies and are daunted by the industry terminology (single malt, blended malt, vatted malt etc).

US FIRST

WOODFORD RESERVE MASTER'S COLLECTION MAPLE WOOD FINISH

BRAND OWNER Brown-Forman

PRICE US\$89.99, €67, £56

MARKETS United States (45 states), Canada, UK, Belgium, France, Germany, New Zealand and Australia

CONTACT Svend Jansen: svend_jansen@b-f.com

Woodford Reserve has released 'the first' maple wood-finished bourbon, as part of its Masters Collection range.

According to the brand, the sugar maple wood barrels used to finish Maple Wood Finish, have never been used before by the US bourbon industry.

The limited edition bottle continues Woodford Reserve's experimentation with what the distillery calls, "the five sources of flavour - grain, water, fermentation, distillation and wood-ageing".





SAIL AWAY

INISH TURK BEG WHISKEY MAIDEN VOYAGE

BRAND OWNER: Inish Turk Beg Ventures

PRICE £125/€155

MARKETS Global, but Eire and UK for first phase launch

CONTACT Simon Erlanger simon@inishturkbeg.com, UK +44 7808 713 860

Inish Turk Beg has launched an aged single malt in hand-blown Mooring Buoy bottles, developed on the island of Inish Turk Beg (and with each having some island sand in the glass). They derive their shape from traditional glass mooring buoys and floats.

The whiskey is finished in Poitin casks and, when being reduced from cask strength for bottling, rainwater collected on the island "after thousands of miles of being scrubbed clean across the Atlantic, is used to produce 44% strength, full-bodied but easy-drinking whiskey". The limited edition first bottling will consist of 2,888 one-litre bottles, called Maiden Voyage.

Maiden Voyage is available to both on and off-trade. It will initially launch in Harvey Nichols, London, The Celtic Whiskey Shop, Dublin and the new flagship terminal at Dublin Airport before an international roll out during 2011.

LUXURY PACKAGING

BOMBAY SAPPHIRE LIMITED EDITION BOTTLE

BRAND OWNER Bacardi Global Brands

PRICE £1,250, US\$2,000, €1,500

MARKETS UK, US, Spain + wider worldwide distribution in 2011

TRADE CONTACT Sarah Lyons, Bombay Sapphire Global Marketing +44 (0)207 563 3429

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the secret recipe on which Bombay Sapphire gin is based, the brand has developed a luxury limited-edition hand-blown crystal bottle and stopper, in partnership with Garrard, the world's oldest jewellery house. Bombay Sapphire global category director John Burke said: "We wanted to replicate the partnership of hand-crafted tradition with imaginative design that is found in Bombay Sapphire."



CAIAROSSA

BRAND OWNER Eric

Albada Jelgersma

PRICE £40/€45

MARKETS Global

TRADE CONTACT

Berry Bros & Rudd

Caiarossa's three IGT Tuscan wines are the red IGT Tuscan Caiarossa and Pergolaia, and an IGT Toscana Caiarossa Bianco. Eleven grape varieties make up this vineyard, highlighting the complexity of this land in the heart of the Val di Cecina, on the Tuscan coast.



COMPLEXITY

NAPA VALLEY RANGE

MICHAEL MONDAVI WINES

BRAND OWNER Michael Mondavi

PRICE £26/£42/£199

MARKETS UK initially

CONTACT bibendum-wine.co.uk

Michael Mondavi, one of the best known names in Californian wine, has launched his latest range of Napa Cabernets in the UK market in partnership with Bibendum Wine.

Bibendum will be importing three Napa Valley wines from Michael Mondavi: Emblem Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 (RRP £26), Emblem Oso Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (RRP £42) and the flagship M by Michael Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (RRP £199).



MERLET - CRÈME DE MELON CHARENTAIS (MELON LIQUEUR)

BRAND OWNER Distillerie Merlet & Fils

PRICE £19/€19

MARKETS Europe

CONTACT infos@merlet.fr

This is a unique product made with a local melon (cantaloupe) variety from the Charentes region of France, the heart of Merlet activity.

Merlet teamed up with a neighbour producers' co-op to obtain fruits at "the perfect maturation level in order to preserve the delicate melon flavours which can be altered if fruits are too green or overripe". The drink has been added to the Merlet range as a limited edition.

It will be distributed to top cocktails bars and specialist retailers.



UNIQUE

INFORMATION

Products launched within the past two months are eligible for inclusion within this section. Please submit your products for consideration to:

christian.davis@drinksint.com

Just say yes

That's what it says on the business card of mixologist and author Gary Regan. So he could hardly say no to meeting Christian Davis



Photo: Jim Ferrara

F

or someone so famous in bartending circles, Gary, or “gaz” as he likes to be called (he specifically states a lower-case “g”), Regan seems remarkably self-effacing, down-to-earth and modest. But frankly, in the man’s own words, in the past he appears to have been “a shit”. At 22, he walked out on his first wife and fled to New York and he has recently separated from his wife of 30 years. He appears saddened when he says he is currently renting a log cabin on a horse farm “in the middle of nowhere”, up-state from the Big Apple. But then, with more than a hint of a twinkle in his eyes, he sort of winks and says: “Mate, I’m loving it. I’m way happier.”

The 59-year-old admits to being a bit of “an old git”, but you can’t help liking him. There is something about lovable rogues. If ever you feel moved to compiling a rogues’ galley, gaz would be in the line-up.

He is over in London courtesy of Beam Global Spirits & Wine, to help promote Courvoisier cognac during London

Cocktail Week. Due to fly out the next day, he looks as though he has put in a few shifts already.

He has written eight seminal books about booze (various) and bartending but is apparently unaffected by his near-legend status and sort of ordinary – except for the giveaway wispy goatee. He also has an amazingly intact “British/Lancashire” accent, despite having spent the best part of 37 years in New York. He describes it as “mid-Atlantic”. Just off Blackpool and no further, I’d say, but he counters by claiming it changes depending on where his feet are standing.

As well as his impressive list of books (see panel), he also writes *The Cocktailian*, a bi-weekly column for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and has published a compendium of those articles, titled *The Cocktailian Chronicles*.

Next year, confides Regan, he is going to publish the *Annual Manual for Bartenders*, which he claims will comprise all of the innovations of the 21st century so far.

The intention is that it will be updated every year and will include the 101 best cocktails created during those 12 months. He says the manual will include a section on “mindful bartending”.

“I want to adopt a ‘buddhist’ approach to bartending.

It involves meditation before going behind the bar. Setting your intentions to make customers happier when they leave than when they came in.” Interesting, but it’s hard to imagine too many of the young up-and-comers sitting in the lotus position with scented candles, meditating their navels before hitting the speedrail. Contemplating, speculating over their groins more likely.

The early years

So how did it all begin for the young Regan from Rochdale, Lancashire?

Well, his parents were publicans around Bolton. Then they got a “dream pub” in Thornton Cleveleys a middle class seaside resort just north of the famous British seaside resort of Blackpool. So he was behind the bar from the age of 14 and was once the youngest person in Britain to hold a liquor licence.

“I got married at 18 and had a little restaurant. But then in 1973, at 22, I panicked and wondered, what was I doing being married and running a restaurant? I left my wife and buggered off to New York.”

And so it begins. “I had a friend who had been a regular in my dad’s pub. He had an apartment and his roommate had just gone back to Ireland. So, automatically, I had somewhere to live and he got me a job behind a bar.”

Regan’s intention was to give it two years then return. “A New Yorker told me: ‘If you last two years, you’ll never leave.’

“Bear in mind,” Regan is eager to point out, “I was moving from a small town to New York. It wasn’t like moving from London to New York.”

He worked in various bars – “never fancied cocktail joints, always preferred neighbourhood places”. One of his final establishments was the North Star pub in South Street, Seaport, near Wall Street. It was frequented by British people so had an authentic British pub feel, featuring an impressive collection of single malt scotch whiskies.

Time magazine did a feature on single malts and, while Regan wasn’t quoted, his picture was featured. His then-wife, a food writer, showed the article to her editor who asked to see him. He commissioned two features from Regan: one on single malts and another on pubs in America.

And so Regan’s writing career began. “Two years later, I got out of the bar business and started writing full-time. That kinda brought me here, to where I am today.”

Fixing his eyes on the benighted interviewer, that twinkle reignites. “Well, it is better than working, isn’t it?” He chuckles.

So the inevitable question is: “What’s next?”

“Punch,” says Regan emphatically, cradling the draft of David Wondrich’s yet-to-be-published book on punch (apparently it was a significant section in his seminal book *Imbibe*, but the publisher took it out because the book was

too long). “It has taken off like crazy in America. Punch is where it’s at. We had the ‘spice wars’ around the 17th century between England, the Netherlands and Portugal. Sailors went to Indonesia to get spices. They stopped in India. The ‘wine’ they were drinking was spoiling so the

answer was to add spirit to preserve it and cognac was the preferred spirit. Sailors also used what they then called ‘arrak’, which was just a rough spirit. But it kept what they drank fresh,” says Regan.

From getting off on punch, his efforts on behalf of Courvoisier at the London Cocktail Week comprise “a history of punch, anecdotes and bullshit”, according to Regan, while the affable Joe McCanta, bar manager of London and Istanbul organic vegetarian restaurant chain Saf, makes the punch.

Regan’s bonhomie all but evaporates

when you get him on the subject of the up-and-coming generation of bartenders. Whereas Alex Turner (see profile, November) is ever the teacher and just sees the positives in the younger generation, Regan rails against them.

“In the 1970s and 80s you had superstar chefs. Now we have a generation of bartenders who do not understand how to take care of customers,” he says. “Also, they do not know their methodology – shaking for just three seconds, temperature not right and not dilute enough. Bar tweenies – they think they are superstars but the fact is they do not know what the f*** they are doing,” says Regan.

“I don’t want to become ‘the old fart’. I do not want it to sound: ‘Like it was’, what I am thinking about, is just four years ago. That is when the superstar bartenders started to happen. For some of them, their intentions are not honourable. It is just ‘100% look at me’, accuses Regan.

“It is all about taking care of your customers.” Regan says he recently went into a pub (he couldn’t remember the name) in Greek Street in London’s Soho. “The landlord did not have a clue who I was but he took care of me so f***ing well. It still exists. You just have to find it.”

Going all mystical and ascending a flight of fancy, albeit just off Leicester Square, he says: “Bartenders can change the world. If you can make 10 customers happy, they will go back and make their friends and partners happy, so you may have changed the lives of, say, 15 to 20 people. If 100 bartenders do it, that is a lot of people. If it were 100,000 bartenders, they would be changing the world.”

Wow, this is powerful stuff. If only Barack Obama and Hu Jintao, let alone Stalin and Hitler, had been bartenders...

And how is Regan in these straightened times? Estranged from his wife, living in a log cabin in the middle of nowhere, about 50 miles north of Manhattan. He describes it, contentedly, as close to a typical road junction in the US, with “four supermarkets, three gas stations and a Blockbuster”.

For all his experiences, being some sort of latter-day tree-hugging backwoods man now seems sufficient for Regan. Let’s hope *The Annual Manual* doesn’t turn into the animal manual, the annual mammal, or even worse, the annual mammary.

Bring it on. **DI**

I WANT TO ADOPT A BUDDHIST APPROACH TO BARTENDING. IT INVOLVES MEDITATING BEFORE GOING BEHIND THE BAR

Regan on ...

Writing – “It is better than working.”

Marketing – “I’m just marketing myself.”

Bar tweenies – “They think they are super stars but the fact is they do not know what the f*** they are doing.”

Bugbears: “Bartenders who do not care about their guests. That is what pisses me off.”

What’s next? “Punch.”

Pick of the Year

In keeping with tradition, Drinks International rounds up its favourites of the year, paying tribute to the brands and companies that have achieved prominence in 2010



Gin: Beefeater

There has been no shortage of gin launches in 2010 and, as exotic or unusual botanicals battle it out with traditional recipe gins, one brand has managed to straddle both camps. Not only has Beefeater oozed more London cool than supermodel Kate Moss, the brand has also managed to remind its audience that its roots are firmly and deeply rooted in the English capital.

Through its Forever London campaign, the brand has staged a London punk movement in Serbia, an 80s music and fashion event in Bulgaria and a London fashion show in Turkey. If that wasn't enough, the Pernod Ricard-owned brand used its premium Beefeater 24 extension to wow Spanish drinkers in Madrid, opening a Midnight Labyrinth. The 750sq m hedge maze, next to the Picasso Tower, paid tribute to the 350th anniversary of London's famous Vauxhall Gardens, in which Europe's largest vertical maze existed.

Then, on the botanicals front, the gin has launched two variants this year – Beefeater Summer and Beefeater Winter.

Launched in May, Beefeater Summer was intended by master distiller Desmond Payne to capture the essence of summer through the selection of floral botanicals, including elderflower, hibiscus and blackcurrant.

Four months later, at the beginning of the northern hemisphere's autumn, the company was back with Beefeater Winter Edition. Launch markets included US, Spain, UK, Japan and travel retail.

This time botanicals included cinnamon, nutmeg, pine shoots and extra Seville orange peel.



Rum: Sailor Jerry

Hello Sailor (Jerry). The tattoo-loving rum brand underwent a recipe change to bring the UK version in line with the US version in February. The change was met with both praise and criticism, but one thing's for sure – everyone has been talking about it.

The Caribbean spiced rum product was launched at 40% abv in the UK in 2004 with more sugar and lime than the 46% abv US version.

The rum is now a closer relation to the US liquid, with no added sugar, more cinnamon notes and the packaging has been stripped back.

Some former fans – so outraged by the change – started a Facebook group called Petition Against Sailor Jerry's New Recipe. At the time of going to press, it had 26,247 members.

But there's no question that the brand has worked tirelessly to make sure the message of Sailor Jerry gets out there.

UK senior brand manager Tom Wade,





Vodka: Absolut

Absolut has turned our heads again. When you ask people in the trade which brands they admire, many say Apple for a non-drinks brand and Absolut for a drinks brand.

And the Apple of the drinks world's eye hasn't failed to amaze us this year. From the launch of Absolut Berri Açai to the new Glimmer bottle, the brand has courted the media and its consumers alike.

Then came Absolut Watkins – launched amid the glamour of the Tax Free World Association fair in Cannes at a party that was peopled by uniformed bellhops, old-fashioned maids and synchronised swimmers.

The Watkins bottle was created by Swedish fashion illustrator and artist Liselotte Watkins, known for her designs for fashion brands such as Miu Miu, Anna Sui and Barney's.

Said to be exclusively for global travellers and available from January 2011, Absolut Watkins is described as having “mysteriously luxurious qualities of freshly ground coffee with notes of almond, caramel and warm chilli”.

Not enough? How about Absolut Brooklyn. In May, the company launched the product in collaboration with American film director Spike Lee. The red apple and ginger-flavoured vodka features the stoop of a Brooklyn brownstone on the bottle. The campaign was met with criticism by some Brooklyn teenagers with one telling the *New York Daily News*: “You're not supposed to be promoting stuff like that in areas that can barely afford food.”

But, criticism aside, the brand has still turned more heads than a tennis match.



who also looks after William Grant's maverick malt Monkey Shoulder, told *Drinks International*: “You are never going to bring everyone with you when you make changes like that.

“We've done a lot of work with our music project, Sailor Jerry Presents, to give people a chance to try the product.”

Brand ambassador Emma-Li Stenhouse adds that she invited the founder of one of the petition groups to a tasting but they didn't show up.

The change can't have been that bad for the brand since Nielsen's UK off-trade stats for the 52 weeks to 07 August 2010 show that the total golden rum market is up 36% in value, with Sailor Jerry up 400%.

Packaging: Chivas Regal/Christian Lacroix

In the words of Edina in the 90s British sitcom *Absolutely Fabulous*: “Lacroix, sweetie, Lacroix!”

Whether you love this design or want to use it as a jewellery box there's no escaping the new partnership between Chivas Regal and Christian Lacroix. The designs are bold, to say the least.

Chivas Regal 12 Year Old was paired with the brand in 2009 and Christian Lacroix designed a limited-edition Chivas 12 magnum in travel retail, at Singapore airport.

The launch was limited to 15,000 and, according to Chivas, the packaging was designed to exude “essence, exuberant luxury, audacity, authenticity and glamour”.

Lacroix says of the collaboration: “To my rather vivid imagination, the mere sound of certain names, when spoken or read, seems to destine them straight away for celebrity, such is the sense of quality, prestige or luxury their syllables convey. That is why, for me, the name ‘Chivas Regal’ has always been synonymous with ‘style’, ‘palace’, ‘royal’.”

And the brand didn't stop at its 12 Year Old. In October 2010, Chivas Regal 18 Year Old was also given the Lacroix treatment.

The blurb is as lavish as the bottle. It reads: “Lacroix's bottle is presented in a mirrored treasure box, wrapped in embroidered jacquard fabric,

maintaining the haute couture style of the fashion house. Through the use of an innovative laser metallisation technique, Lacroix delivers a lavish and sophisticated design.”

Chivas Regal 18 Year Old by Christian Lacroix has been released as a limited edition with only 3,000 bottles available internationally and is available at the travel retail price of US\$495.00.



Vermouth: Martini Gold by Dolce & Gabbana



Gold. It's the colour associated with luxury and coming first. It's also the name of Martini's new vermouth. Bacardi (the parent company) doesn't take launching a product lightly and says it spent 18 months working with project partners Dolce & Gabbana to get the end result.

Then there was the launch party. Plane-loads of journos were flown to fashion capital Milan for a party with D&G as well as the star of the new ad and official pretty lady Monica Bellucci. So proud were they of the new ad campaign – directed by well-known music video director Jonas Akerlund – that they played it three times before dinner. Mind you, it was pretty spectacular.

Dolce & Gabbana were so precious about the launch that they even had “their people” send out rules when it came to the write-ups, including that “the focus of the articles should be about the project, not on Monica Bellucci's life or personal matters”. *Drinks International* was obviously gutted by this veto.

So what about the liquid, then? Well, no bog-standard botanical here. We're talking saffron from Spain, myrrh from Ethiopia, ginger from India and bergamot from Calabria, Italy. Yes, myrrh – one of the gifts brought to baby Jesus by the three kings – is added to a high-end quaff from the Bacardi stable.

If you want to know how to drink it, *Drinks International* would recommend a Gold Finger – one part Martini Gold and one part Grey Goose vodka. Garnish with a large black Italian olive.

We'll leave you with Bacardi's description of the drink, to whet your appetite: “A contrast between the aromatic flavours of the Mediterranean world and the exoticism of the spice bazaar.”

Beer: Pilsner Urquell

Despite Pilsner Urquell's sponsorship of golf's Open Championship in 2010, the brand's behemoth International Master Bartender competition still dominated promotional activities.

In its fifth year, the event was jacked-up a notch with the winner, Lukáš Svoboda, taking home a prize of €10,000.

The brand didn't let on how much it had spent but with guests at the Žofín Palace numbering in their hundreds and a schedule of brewery visits, bar tours and even tux fittings, the event felt more exposition than competition.

But for Pilsner Urquell, targeting bartenders is the fastest

way to communicate the brand message and educate the consumer.

And so for the bartenders, each of them national winners, their task – beyond the arduous series of interviews, exams, tastings and pouring tests – was to spread the word of Pilsner Urquell. That message, according to the brand, is one of quality, provenance and history.



Whisky: Johnnie Walker Double Black

The launch of this blend marked the 100th anniversary of the introduction of Johnnie Walker and Double Black was initially tested at six international airports – Bangkok, Dubai, Lebanon, New York (JFK), Singapore and Sydney. Following the success of the trial, Diageo rolled out the product to duty free and it will remain a travel retail exclusive until March 2011.

The 1L bottle retails at a price premium to its Johnnie Walker Black Label sibling and, while packaged in a smoky grey glass bottle to reflect the smoky flavour, retains the branding elements of Johnnie Walker whiskies. Jim Beveridge, master blender of Johnnie Walker whiskies and creator of Johnnie Walker Double Black I built on the house style of Johnnie Walker whiskies, their big taste and trademark smokiness.”

The launch was supported by what Diageo grandly described as “an unprecedented shopper experience”.

Known as the Mentorship Experience, the initiative was said to “take the target shopper on a unique personalised journey of discovery of Diageo's elite portfolio”.

The Mentorship Experience was a pod in which brand ambassador Tony Shoushani waited to give consumers a Diageo knowledge injection and, hopefully, a drink. The pod first appeared in Dubai airport as part of the Double Black experience.



Cognac: Hine

Hine is a cognac house that is very easy to take to your heart. It is not one of the biggies, owned by one of the giants, LVMH, Pernod Ricard, Beam. OK, it is owned by CL Brands, about which we know precious little, but Bernard Hine is still very much there, if not at the helm. There is still a small-scale, family feel about the team with managing director François le Grelle and cellar master Eric Forget eager, enthusiastic and attentive.

Hine has forged its own niche with its vintages, something a bit alien to cognac, which is quintessentially about inventory, blends and fancy packaging.

Earlier this year Hine launched its 1960 vintage and very recently its 1961 and 1981. There has also been its XO. No fancy booklets on Dead Sea scroll paper, rich vellum or wafer thin aluminium with a deliberately out of focus picture and five words of text. Just Bernard with his hand-written notes about every vintage he has been around for. He'd probably say: “Let the liquid speak for itself” if it wasn't for the fact that he is so busy enthusing to notice everyone else savouring the nectar.



On-trade initiative: Licor 43

Plucky little (in the UK) liqueur brand Licor 43 first announced its search for a UK brand ambassador back in June.

The months that followed saw bartenders up and down the country shake their way to a September final, each hoping to become the J Wray & Nephew brand's first UK ambassador.

And what were finalists doing in between, you ask? Well, they were touring the Med's finest drinking establishments, of course.

The five finalists toured Barcelona,

Valencia and Ibiza Town to see how the brand is consumed in Spain.

Joey Medrington, of Tigerlily in Edinburgh, took the £4,000 prize and will represent Licor 43 as brand ambassador in 2011.

He said: "I want to raise the awareness of Licor 43 [in the UK]. It's a product that's in every bar, but not many people know much about it, or how to use it. We need to get people working with it and enjoying it."

Cheers, Joey.



Company to watch: William Grant

It's been a busy year for UK-based distiller William Grant. In April, the company announced it was set to purchase C&C Group's spirits and liqueurs arm.

The portfolio included the Tullamore Dew Irish whiskey brand, as well as Frangelico liqueur and Carolans cream liqueur.

By July, the deal was set in stone and by September the company had sold the liqueurs to Campari, slimming down its C&C acquisition to Tullamore Dew.

Though famed for its scotch portfolio, which includes the mighty Glenfiddich, the company previously lacked an Irish jewel in its crown.

Though Tullamore Dew stands in the shadows of Pernod Ricard's



Jameson giant, William Grant & Sons has proven it can make brands into huge success stories – cue Hendrick's

gin, Sailor Jerry spiced rum and The Balvenie. Look out – 2011 will be interesting.

Liqueur: Triibe

The extra 'i' may be a tad irritating to those of a pedantic bent, but Triibe is a liqueur that spells success for producer Reformed Spirits.

A true innovation in a mature category that generally relies on flavour variants for growth, Triibe is a dairy and lactose-free, clear "cream-style" liqueur.

Not only does it address the chosen intolerances of the hip and trendy, it allows those consumers who wouldn't normally admit to drinking a cream liqueur to openly 'imbiibe' without their guilty pleasure being revealed.

Jacob Ehrenkrona, chief executive of Reformed Spirits, said: "We wanted to make it a bit cool and to be something that people would not just drink at home."

The drink, "blended with charcoal filtered Irish malt whiskey, softened with honey and royal jelly", was launched last year in Holland, Australia, Germany, Niigeria, America, Puerto Rico and latterly in the UK.

It certainly seems to be attracting a lot of subscribers and bartenders like it as a cocktail ingredient.

But enough with the double-i.



Wine: Nederburg

Leading South African drinks producer, Distell, gets the *DI* nod in wine for its Nederburg twenty10, official FIFA wine for the World Cup earlier this year.

There is no mention of what the company paid for the honour of the licence but it will not have come cheap.

Anyway, there were other interesting developments, not least of which were Quinta do Noval's Noval Black, the Alta Helena collection of Chilean Cabernets representing regional differences and La Riojana's Fair & Square range of Fairtrade wines in cartons. But for sheer commercialism, talking about wine globally, we had to go for twenty10.

Affable Nederburg winemaker Razvan Macici's three limited-edition blends, a Cabernet Sauvignon, a dry rosé and a Sauvignon Blanc scored well. Better than most of the tournament itself – unless you happen to be Spain or Spanish.



The annual ISC awards ceremony saw jubilant winners enjoying a glittering night of recognition for their efforts



1 John Ramsay presents Jimmy Russell's Outstanding Contribution award – it was collected by Terry Barker from Wild Turkey's UK distributor Cellar Trends; 2 Best Design & Packaging for the on-trade goes to Bushmills Original; 3 Whyte & Mackay's 30 Year Old wins Best Blended Scotch; 4 St Lucia Distillers takes the Rum trophy for Chairman's Reserve Spiced; 5 Wren & Rowe's Paul Foulkes-Arellano presents the Innovative Pack Format Design trophy to Family Business for Absolut Rock Edition; 6 Suntory wins the Overall Trophy for its Yamazaki single malt 1984 as well as Distiller Of The Year; 7 Borco International picks up best in class for Sierra Tequila Reposado and Finsbury Platinum Gin; 8 Distell wins the brand trophy for Van Ryn's 15 Year Old Fine Cask Reserve; 9 Dawn Davies collects the Best Independent Spirits Retailer award for Selfridges; 10 ABK6 CEO Elodie Abecassis picks up the award for Excellence In Craftsmanship; 11 Fraser Dunlop with World Duty Free's award for Best International Spirits Retailer; 12 Waitrose picks up the award for UK Spirits Retailer; 13 Fell's marketing controller Mark Symonds picks up the Liqueurs trophy for Green Chartreuse; 14 Stranger & Stranger's Kevin Shaw collects three design awards for the Kraken rum and Paulsen Cognac Collection; 15 Tony Roberts from Stock Spirits picks up the Vodka trophy for Wodka Zoladkowa Gorzka Na Trawie Zubrowej; 16 Balblair takes best pack design for travel retail; 17 Cognac Frapin picks up the Cognac trophy for Frapin Multimillésième Grande Champagne No.3; 18 Arcus wins best Other White Spirit for its Hammer Ulagret aquavit; 19 The Glenfiddich 40 Year Old is named Best Scotch Malt Whisky



ISC Awards Dinner



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



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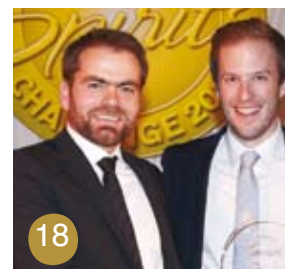
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Smoke gets in your eyes

Gavin D Smith investigates the phenomenal rise in popularity of heavily peated single malt scotch

It may just be vegetable matter decomposed by water and partially carbonised by chemical change, but when it comes to whisky, peat has the power to exert a remarkable fascination over drinkers.

Traditionally, peat was used in distillery malt kilns to dry barley prior to the principal processes of scotch whisky-making, though in modern large-scale, automated, commercial maltings, hot air is usually employed for drying purposes. If peat is used at all, it is merely to add a phenolic flavour to the malted barley which will carry right through into the bottle. Phenol levels of peating are measured in parts per million (ppm),

with many distilleries using malt that is entirely unpeated, or peated to just one or two ppm, while the most heavily peated Islay will use malt with a phenolic level in excess of 50ppm.

Today, substantially peated single malt scotch is the hottest property in many global whisky markets, with distilleries on the Hebridean island of Islay – the heartland of peated single malts – booming as a result.

In addition to the growth in heavily peated Islay single malt sales, however, there has been a corresponding increase in demand for the relatively peaty and very distinctive Talisker malt from the Isle of Skye and the Orkney Islands' Highland Park, with the latter growing

MORE PEOPLE SEEM TO BE LOOKING FOR WHISKIES THAT CHALLENGE THEM

IAN
MACMILLAN
BURN STEWART
DISTILLERS

cased sales from 40,000 in 1999 to 110,000 in 2008, and significantly augmenting its range, most recently with a 50-year-old expression.

Although it uses peated malt, Highland Park differs significantly in style from the “hardcore” Islays such as Ardbeg, Lagavulin and Laphroaig, partly due to the unique character of Orcadian peat used in the distillery’s own floor malting.

So just why have more overtly “characterful” peated single malts achieved such a cult following, and which notable peated expressions have been hitting the shelves of late?

The likes of Ardbeg, Lagavulin,





Laphroaig and Bowmore have always been associated with peaty whiskies, but Bunnahabhain is an example of an Islay which, for the last half century at least, has been notably muted in its use of peating, but is now getting in on the heavily peated act. According to owner Burn Stewart Distillers' master distiller Ian Macmillan: "We bought the distillery in 2003 and started making a heavily peated style known as Moine – the Gaelic word for "peat". The peating level

is around the same as Laphroaig and Lagavulin but, because the stills are large and onion-shaped, it's not as medicinal or antiseptic as some other Islays."

Moine is an important element in Burn Stewart's popular and peaty Black Bottle blended Scotch, and Macmillan says: "We do six or seven weeks of heavily peated production per year, and there is lots of demand from blenders for it. We are now keeping back more of the Moine style of Bunnahabhain for single malt bottlings and are considering increasing the amount we make."

Positive reception

Bunnahabhain Toiteach (Gaelic for smoky) was launched three years ago and comprises proportions of young (five and six-year-old) Moine and 20-year-old heavily sherried "standard" Bunnahabhain. Previously only available in mainland Europe but now retailing in the UK, sales figures are very promising, according to Macmillan.

Encouraged by the positive reception for Toiteach, Bunnahabhain has recently added Cruach Mona (Gaelic for "peat stack") to its line-up. This expression contains a greater proportion of younger, heavily peated spirit and some heavily sherried Bunnahabhain, upwards of 20 years old.

Macmillan's view on why peated whiskies have become so "sexy" is centred on the idea that: "Now more and more people seem to be looking for whiskies that challenge them, that are more multidimensional."

In terms of markets, Macmillan notes: "Taiwan never previously looked at peated whiskies, but there's more and more interest there, and that applies

Half of the annual production at Burn Stewart's Tobermory distillery on Mull is spirit peated to a minimum of 35/40ppm and destined for Ledaig bottlings

Bunnahabhain Distillery has focused on heavily peated releases of late

to other countries in the Far East, too. In the past they liked light, smooth, unchallenging whiskies."

Like Bunnahabhain, the Islay single malt of Bruichladdich was associated with a lightly peated profile from the 1960s until recent times, but the distillery has hit the headlines during the past couple of years thanks to its Octomore bottlings.

The third (2010) release of Octomore has been peated to a massive 152ppm, and follows on from two previous expressions, respectively peated to 131 and 140ppm. Opinion has been divided on whether such a high peating level results in a comparatively one-dimensional whisky, or whether the innate character of the spirit shines through.

Bruichladdich has made much of Octomore being "...the most

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Malt Whiskies



highly peated whisky ever,” and master distiller Jim McEwan describes Octomore 3 as being “...like getting hit by a 20ft wave that’s crashed over the peat bogs of Islay”. If, however, this is just too much of a good thing for some consumers, there is always the distiller’s Port Charlotte variant, peated to 40ppm and now in its eighth incarnation, as Port Charlotte An Turas – Gaelic for “the great journey”.

Phenol wars

Meanwhile, across the “whisky island” at Ardbeg, Supernova has been taking on Octomore for the bragging rights to “who has the biggest phenol”, with the latest 2010 version being peated to around 100ppm. Before so many distillers started dialling up their peating levels, Ardbeg boasted the overall highest level of peating in its “standard” expressions.

David Wondrich (esquire.com) wrote of Ardbeg: “For some men, drinking is an adventure, an experiment and even a challenge. Ardbeg is the single malt for

them: a huge, powerful scotch that takes no prisoners and shows no mercy. The only adequate alternative is hand-to-hand combat.”

However, Ardbeg brand director Hamish Torrie is at pains to stress that: “Fundamental to what we do is that we will always be true to the distillery, and we only put whisky into the market that we feel is absolutely top dollar. Accordingly, Supernova was made with a very high peating level, but we made sure it was still good to drink. We didn’t just do it for the sake of it. Ardbeg’s signature fruity, floral complexity was still there.”

Musing on the public’s love affair with peaty malts, Torrie says: “There has certainly been a phenomenal growth in this sector of single malts. The level of growth has been way ahead of the overall single malt category in the past decade. Islays are challenging, which helps create a cult following. There’s a tribal element to it; people love to be part of a collective. Islays sell well in the main malt markets such as the UK, Germany, France, the US, and also in the Nordic countries, where there is a passionate following for strongly flavoured whiskies generally. In Europe we have seen guys in their late 20s and early 30s getting into it in increasing numbers. The

idea of the cult following appeals to Japanese consumers, too.”

Other “island” single malts which have not previously been associated with heavy peating

Ardbeg Distillery claims a signature of fruity, floral complexity in its whiskies

levels have also begun to appreciate the advantages of having something more phenolic in their portfolios, too, with Isle of Jura following its medium-peated Superstition bottling with last year’s launch of the more phenolic Prophecy.

David Robertson, of Jura owner Whyte & Mackay Distillers, notes: “With Prophecy we were inspired to build on the phenomenal success of Superstition and have kicked it up a notch.”

Meanwhile, half of the annual production at Burn Stewart’s Tobermory distillery on Mull is now a spirit which is peated to a minimum of 35/40ppm and is destined for Ledaig bottlings. Recently repackaged and now offered natural coloured and un-chill-filtered at 46.3%abv, Ledaig has been enjoying significant growth in Europe and the US, according to Burn Stewart’s Macmillan, who says: “There are prospects of some limited edition Ledaig releases, matured in a variety of sherry cask types, next year.”



Pushing peat levels

Across on Arran, the profile of the local single malt, first distilled in 1995, has never encompassed peat, but this autumn saw the release of Arran Machrie

Moore, which comprises spirit produced in 2004 and 2005 and peated to 14ppm.

According to Euan Mitchell, managing director of Isle of Arran Distillers: “We first produced peated Arran back in 2004 and it has been distilled in small quantities each year since. Originally only 10,000 litres per annum were produced but we have doubled that in 2010 and plan to continue at this level from now on. Initially the peating level was 14ppm, but more recently we have pushed this up to 20ppm.”

Mitchell is keen to point out that the use of peated malt does not alter the essential Arran character, but rather enhances it. “We deliberately went for a medium peating level to ensure the Arran character



was not obliterated in the process,” he says. “Unlike several other distillers (no names!) we have not gone down the road of the big peat guns where all other flavour characteristics have been sacrificed at the altar of peat smoke. Machrie Moor is classic Arran, but with a peaty twist in the tail.”

When it comes to markets with a particular thirst for peated malts, Mitchell notes: “There is a huge demand in northern Europe for them and consumers are always hungry for new expressions. Years back, when I first went to Asia, I was told there was limited demand for ‘smoky whisky’, but at this year’s Whisky Live Taipei the younger generation of whisky consumers were going crazy for peated malts, so it is not possible to generalise about this anymore.”

“In terms of the popularity of peated malts, I believe the growth of ‘fusion food’ has helped as well, as people are no longer put off by ‘unusual’ flavours and, indeed, appreciate something so distinctive.”

In recent years the lure of peat has led a number of slightly unlikely mainland distilleries to offer comparatively heavily peated expressions, including Benromach, Bladnoch, Edradour (under the Ballechin label) and Tomintoul, while, down in Campbeltown, on the Kintyre peninsula, the quirky and iconic Springbank distillery has been bottling its peaty Longrow variant since 1985.

One Speyside distillery that has fully embraced peated expressions is BenRiach, which offers 10-year-old Curiositas and 21-year-old Authenticus in its regular line up, along with a younger and more “in your face” peaty expression by the name of Birnie Moss,



Annan's old Annandale distillery is currently being restored

which was added to the portfolio a couple of years ago.

Alistair Walker, regional sales director for the BenRiach Distillery, says: “Given the great success of Islays during the past 10 years, it’s only natural that some mainland distilleries start making peated expressions to share some of that business. However, I should stress that we aren’t participating in bandwagon-jumping here. They have been making peated whisky at BenRiach since 1972, basically to be used in various Chivas blended whiskies. When we acquired BenRiach in 2004 we couldn’t believe our luck when we started examining the distillery stocks and found all of these casks of peated whisky.”

Fuel source

Walker also makes the point: “It’s worth noting that 100 years or so ago, the majority of whiskies in Scotland were distilled from peated malted barley, as peat represented an affordable and readily available fuel source, and it was only when consumer tastes demanded a softer style of whisky, a few decades back, that most mainland distilleries switched to a non-peated style.”

Also on Speyside, William Grant & Sons has recently added a peated expression to its portfolio, with The Balvenie Peated Cask being launched earlier this year, while the reformulated and repackaged Highland region Fettercairn from Whyte & Mackay Distillers contains a significant amount of heavily peated spirit in its composition.

Balvenie malt master David Stewart points out: “In the early 2000s we bought in some heavily peated malt and distilled with it. We didn’t have some

great masterplan of using it for blending or to release it as a single malt, it was just part of our ongoing programme of innovation. The peating level was up with the likes of Ardbeg and Laphroaig. The Balvenie 17 Year Old Peated Cask came about when we took some of our peated malt whisky out of casks, and subsequently filled some ‘standard’ older Balvenie into them. Essentially it’s a peated malt finish.”

Like Balvenie, Fettercairn has produced batches of heavily peated spirit, in common with its Whyte & Mackay stablemates of Jura and Dalmore. The company’s David Robertson explains: “This allows us to make spirit with the bespoke character our master blender, Richard Paterson, requires for his needs. Fundamentally, it also protects the integrity of supply, allowing us to become less reliant on the vagaries of the market and thus more self-sufficient.”

Gaelic tradition

At the heart of the new Fettercairn line-up is Fìor, which embraces the prevailing philosophy that any heavily-peated whisky worth its salt must have a Gaelic name – in this case one which means “pure”. Fìor comprises a proportion of 14 and 15-year-old spirit, along with 15% heavily peated five-year-old whisky from first-fill Bourbon barrels. “I think ‘peat freaks’ will find it an intriguing mainland smoky style and not be too disappointed at its subtlety and soft smoke nature,” says Robertson.

Meanwhile, in the far south west of Scotland, the long-silent Annandale distillery is currently being restored to working order, with the intention that a significant amount of the spirit it produces will be heavily peated, despite the distillery’s Lowland regional status – stylistically more readily associated with light, delicate and decidedly un-smoky characteristics.

The distillery was owned from 1893 to 1924 by the great blending house of John Walker & Sons and, during the latter years of the 19th century, was producing heavily peated malt. Indeed, it is thought that Walker took over Annandale principally in order to secure a source of peated malt for blending purposes.

So, when the new stills are fired up once more in 2012, there will be a distinctive “peat reek” in the air around Annan, as yet another distillery starts producing the style of whisky with which the drinking world has fallen so deeply in love. **DI**



WE COULDN'T BELIEVE OUR LUCK WHEN WE FOUND ALL THESE CASKS OF PEATED WHISKY

**ALISTAIR WALKER
BENRIACH**



Heading the A-list

Bucking all economic trends in the States, vodka's star remains in the ascendent – and the stars are lining up with brand endorsements. **Hamish Smith rounds up all the latest activity**

With the flexibility of a contortionist the vodka category has managed to dodge the worst effects of the downturn in the US and, on current estimates, accounts for one in three spirits bottles in the States.

Far from relaxing its grip, according to International Wine & Spirits Research, vodka will gain 12 million cases over the next five years.

"People in America like vodka", says Elwyn Gladstone, vice-president of marketing at Proximo, the group that owns vodka brands Hangar One and Three Olives. "You get people saying absinthe is going to be the next vodka, gin is the next vodka – but vodka is the next vodka." This confidence is based on solid foundations – even with five-year forecasts shelved, right now vodka is on the rise, with end-of-year predictions that value will be up 4.5% and volume 5% on 2009 (Euromonitor International 2010).

For Diageo – the group that owns the 24 million-case Smirnoff brand – the US is the world's leading vodka market, despite being inferior to Russia in the volume stakes (Euromonitor). Diageo

refers to vodka as "the most contested and fastest growing category in the US" and has developed a programme of "aggressive innovation", with a bullish strategy entitled Winning In Vodka.

Upon the arrival of countless new vodkas the category has fragmented, with consumers showing interest in non-mainstream subcategories such as non-premium imports and organic and craft vodkas. Flavoured and infused products also continue their march, now making up almost 12% of the US market, according to Euromonitor, while premiums have had to extol provenance and history rather than rely purely on brand image.

For Diageo, stuttering global performances in 2009 from two of its top vodka brands – Smirnoff, down 6.6%, and Ketel One, down 5.3% (Euromonitor) – spelt a change of tack. "Right now, growth in the vodka category is being driven by novel flavours, artisanal vodkas and affordable imports," says Adam Rosen, brand director of vodka at Diageo.

Diageo's response to the changing marketplace was to "unleash" the aforementioned strategy. Principal to

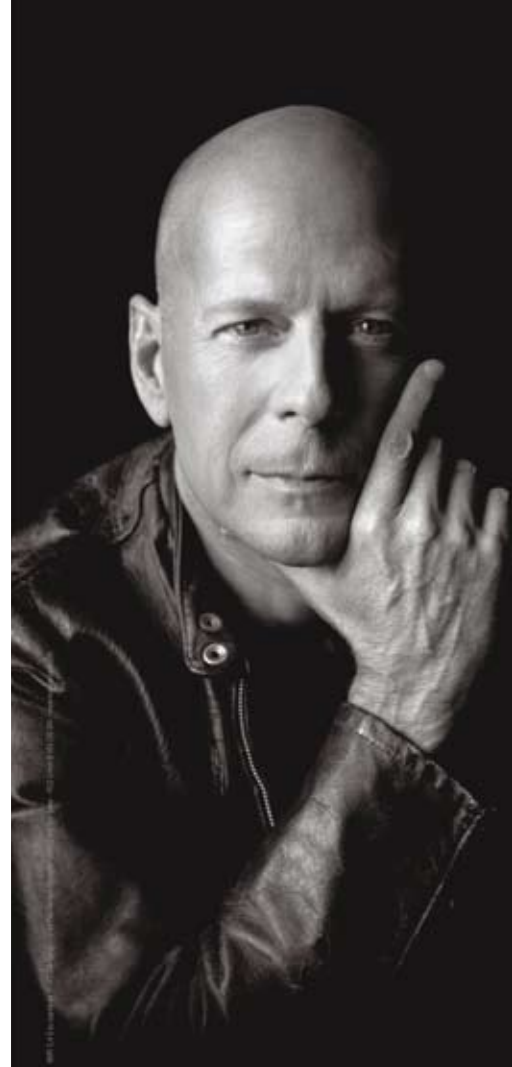
Bruce Willis, Hugh Hefner and Sean Combs are three celebrities happy to reap the rewards of putting their names to a vodka

this was four new vodka brands, each with a remit to conquer its subcategory. First up was Rokk, a mid-priced premium, inspired by market demand for Scandinavian provenance, good design and value vodka. Then there was the economy-tiered flavoured offering Ursus, launched, says Diageo, to "compete with the influx of new entrants". Towards the back-end of the year came Godiva – a high-end chocolate infusion vodka – and, completing the quartet, Moon Mountain, an organic vodka. So what of the progress of Diageo's class of 2010? Sadly the group only issues sales figures on priority brands.

Diversification

For many premium brands, the post-recession plan was not only to diversify the offering, but to recapture strayed consumers. It is universally observed that the downturn left many mainstream consumers calibrated to value and mid-market vodkas, with restraint now the default consumer mindset.

"Many customers will be satisfied with their experience at lower



SOBIESKI

THE BEST
VODKA I KNOW.

BRUCE WILLIS




price points”, says Andrey Skurikhin, partner at SPI Group, which owns Stolichnaya. “Since the downturn the mid-priced category has witnessed significant growth and has challenged the premium segment.” He believes regaining consumers is about the premium brands establishing clear value or differentiation.

Absolut, the number two vodka in the US (Euromonitor), has started to see growth following a challenging time. And, while comparisons with fiscal 2009 are problematic, the brand has recorded encouraging recent growth. In the 12 months leading up to mid-October 2010, Absolut says growth was up 5% by volume. “It was a difficult period for premium vodkas,” says Jack Shea, vice-president, corporate communications, at brand owner Pernod Ricard USA, “but Absolut appears to have turned the corner and is returning with strength.”

The instability of the US on-trade has seen many premium brands struggle to regain footing. For Absolut, this represents 30% of its US business and, in light of solid off-trade sales, it is here the brand

disproportionately suffers.

But as 2010 draws to a close it looks as though on-trade sales may be getting back on track?

“Trends have stabilised in the on-trade versus what they were a year ago”, says Shea, “and this makes us cautiously optimistic that consumers are coming back. However, recovery will remain a work in progress until the US employment picture improves.”

Sharing the premium market with Stolichnaya and Absolut is the Gruppo Campari-owned Skyy, which claims 4.2% growth in the past three months. Andrea Conzonato, chief operating officer at Skyy Spirits, says there are indications that the consumer is retuning to the on-trade. “We have seen a lot of the chain outlets responding quickly and assertively to the shift in consumer buying patterns by offering lower-priced cocktail options, extended happy hours and special meal pairings,” she says. “Slower to respond have been the white-tablecloth restaurants, where it remains really tough for a \$12 cocktail to compete with a \$6 beer.”

The on-trade may be showing signs of improvement for premium vodkas but, to borrow Conzonato’s phrase, brands “are

Vodka in the US

not out of the woods yet”.

With some of the market’s established players showing flat sales – such as Smirnoff (H1 of 2010) – and others in decline, someone must be picking up the slack. Step forward Sobieski, the Belvédère Group-owned Polish vodka. In 2009 it was the fastest growing vodka in the US and the brand says 2010 sales have grown 45% to an estimated 850,000 cases.

“Our target is to become the fastest vodka brand to reach sales of a million cases annually”, says Chester Brandes, president & chief executive of Imperial Brands, the US subsidiary of Belvédère Group. Given that this newcomer of less than four years has pushed so close to the million-case mark in a market so saturated, that target does not look unlikely.

“The vast majority of Sobieski volumes at this point comes from off-trade – that has been our focus,” says Brandes. That and the price point. Sobieski has propagated a reputation for being a big vodka at a small price, and fits squarely with consumer hankerings for imported European vodkas.

Sobieski’s rise has been a short one. Around a decade ago the Belvédère Group sold its pioneering ultra-premium vodka brand, Belvedere, to invest in the production of Sobieski. The adroitness of this policy u-turn can only be judged by history but, at least for now, many consumers are eschewing ultra-premiums and heading sideways to organic offerings or south down the price scale.

Marketing

Sobieski’s rise has not just been predicated on the right product at the right time. Like Ciroc’s marketing partnership with rapper Sean Combs, Sobieski has enlisted its own A-lister in Bruce Willis. “We wanted a celebrity spokesperson whose personality and values would be synergistic with the values of our brand,” says Brandes. In contrast to the image of style and bling projected by the marketing marriage of Diageo’s Ciroc and Combs, Sobieski’s values are purity and simplicity. “Bruce Willis is not Polish but he could be Polish”, says the brand, “he liked the type of company we are, so the fit is very good.”

It seems Willis also liked Sobieski’s parent company and now owns 3.3% of the Belvédère Group. Celebrity endorsement comes at a price – since 2007 Diageo has handed half of Ciroc’s yearly profits to Combs, but sees the collaboration representing

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Vodka in the US

an attention shift to the targeting of multicultural consumers, a group according to the brand that is “imperative to future growth”, and already has “influence and power” in many major markets.

Elsewhere in the world of celebrity endorsement Hugh Hefner has been involved in the limited edition Stoli Ohranj as part of Stolichnaya’s advertising campaign Would You Have a Drink With You? While Smirnoff’s Be There campaign and its global Nightlife Exchange project put the focus on experiences.

Absolut also went down the collaboration route with eminent African/American filmmaker Spike Lee for its Absolut Brooklyn launch. Interestingly, the brand has also looked to the US’s strong cocktail culture for traction with its Cocktails Perfected campaign.

Flavoured vodkas

The US vodka market in 2010 is considered by many brands to be “saturated”, yet infusions and flavoured products continue to arrive. According to Skyy, volume in the sector is up 14% year on year and brands neglect it at their peril. For those struggling in the on-trade, flavoured vodkas are a must, being as happy in the hands of bartenders seeking unusual cocktail combinations as they are in the hands of customers as a shot.

“The US vodka market differs most significantly from that of other markets with the popularity of flavoured vodkas,”

says SPI’s Skurikhin. “Americans have strongly embraced flavoured vodkas and this has spurred the growth.”

Sobieski, which has so far concentrated on more recognised flavours such as vanilla, orange, raspberry and caramel, says the flavoured range opens up a different market of drinkers.

Absolut has observed that consumers are looking beyond the standard flavour options. The brand currently has 11 flavoured vodkas in the US market, the latest of which follows the non-standard trend. Berri Açai is described by Absolut as “a unique twist on berry flavours delivered through açai”.

Sky, which says sales of its Infusions range have grown 23%, also wants to set itself apart when it comes to flavoured. “We are not interested in playing the ‘me too’ flavours game, so every Infusions we introduce will have a unique proposition for the consumer in terms of the flavour we choose,” says Conzonato. Sky’s Infusions range also incorporates another consumer trend, with only natural ingredients used in its flavouring.

Organic/craft vodkas

The farm-to-glass movement arrived on the coat-tails of food’s farm-to-plate trend and, with more than a dozen organic vodkas on the market, this is a sector on the move. “Microdistilleries are popping up all over the country and many are beginning to work with local growers to produce specific grains to be distilled,”



says Jim Meehan, managing partner at New York bar PDT.

While the market share of organic vodka is not tracked independently of regular, many organic brands are seeing exponential growth. “Rain Organics vodka has steadily increased its volume year on year”, says brand manager Tracey Clapp. “We have also seen an increase of offerings in the marketplace.”

For many organic brands, the recovery of the on-trade will drive the category further, allowing vodka to cruise in the slipstream of the restaurant-based organic successes of food, tea, wine and coffee.

Ocean Vodka, the Hawaiian brand sourced from desalinated ocean water, says it has seen consumption and growth rise by 40% year on year as consumers have been attracted away from traditional ultra-premium vodkas. “We have consumers telling us they used to drink Grey Goose, but now Ocean Vodka is their favourite”, says Gill Newton, chief financial officer of brand owner Hawaii Sea Spirits.

Melkon Khosrovian, co-founder of Tru Organic vodka, a brand that has seen sales double from last year, also sees organic vodkas competing in the high-end price bracket. “Not many consumers are chasing down the cheapest organic drink,” she says. “We make a fine organic wheat vodka which has a cleaner profile, is a little more versatile on the back bar and appeals to fans of Ketel One.”

And surely Diageo’s launch of Moon Mountain is the ultimate proof of a burgeoning sector.

For Meehan organic practices in vodka may see the category open up further to an even broader consumer base. “Wine-savvy imbibers, who are familiar with the farm-to-glass movement and enjoy spirits, will certainly appreciate these microdistilleries’ efforts.”

What is clear, vodka-clear, is that America’s number one spirit has adapted to meet the increasingly diverse demands of the US consumer. Whether through flavours, organics or affordable imports, vodka has maintained its hold on the US spirits market with remarkable vigour. It will take something big to topple America’s favourite tipple. **DI**

Behind the Bar

Jim Meehan, managing partner, New York bar PDT
Dave Kaplin, co-founder Death & Co, New York

Which vodkas do you stock?

Meehan: Belvedere, because I admire the creamy texture and rich, bready character. Karlsson’s as I think it’s the most flavourful vodka on the market and it captures the essence of Swedish new potatoes. Absolut 100: it’s a clean distillate that’s high proof, making it perfect for infusions.

Kaplin: We carry one – Charbay. We believe it is one of the best vodkas and a family-owned and run brand.

How do you serve vodka?

Meehan: I have an old fashioned-style cocktail prepared with Karlsson’s on the menu and we make Moscow Mules and Parkside Fizzes.

Kaplin: Vodka is most often served as a Vodka Soda or Vodka Martini.

What are your thoughts on vodka in 2010?

Meehan: Flavourful vodkas such as Karlsson’s have helped reinvigorate the category, by giving us something other than tall, frosty bottles, multiple distillations and filtration methods to talk about. I use neutral vodkas for cleaning glasses.

Kaplin: We specialise in non-vodka based cocktails and our clientele is often aware of this when they come in.



PDT



Death & Co





Time to shine

The abiding memory of the World Cup South Africa style was the din of the wretched vuvuzelas. They seemed like a cool idea – Africa’s own noise, like bagpipes in Scotland. But the reality was not everyone’s cup of tea or glass of wine.

Nevertheless, the global football tournament put South Africa and its wares in the shop window. An estimated three billion people watched the matches – if just 0.5% of them visited Cape Town over the next five years, it is estimated the city’s international annual visitor traffic would grow from 1.8 million to 4.8m.

On the one hand you do not associate sedate wine drinking with marauding football fans. On the other, the South African wine industry has developed wine tourism arguably like no other nation or region, with the possible exception of California’s Napa Valley (second only to Disney as a state tourist destination).

As the Rainbow Nation returns to normal after the World Cup, **Christian Davis** looks for wins, draws and defeats, vuvuzelas permitting

Su Birch, chief executive of Wines of South Africa, the generic body for the industry, reports that the World Cup had the desired effect. Sales of South African wines in Germany were up 50% for the six months to the end of last June. The US, hardly a soccer-mad country, bought more tickets to matches than any other foreign country and posted a 32% increase. Japan reported a 33% increase. Canada, Finland, Belgium and Ireland all showed double-digit growth. Sales in the United Arab Emirates and China doubled, albeit from a small base. Even in rival wine-producing countries, such as France, New Zealand and Australia,

South African wines sales were up.

Birch says: “The growing awareness of the country is seeding opportunities for the local wine industry in countries such as Japan, China and Korea, where knowledge of South Africa as a wine-producing country is still in its infancy. We are starting to see the impact already.”

Distell, one of SA’s largest drinks companies, paid probably a king’s ransom to football authority FIFA to be official wine of the World Cup. Nederburg twenty10 came in three varieties (see DI Dozen, page 16): Cabernet Sauvignon, dry rosé and

Kleine Zalze’s 18-hole golf course is part of its commitment to encouraging wine tourism in South Africa

Above right: The beautiful landscape around Warwick Estate



Sauvignon Blanc. Group general manager Carina Gous reports healthy sales in Germany, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, the UAE, Brazil and Mexico.

A note of caution comes from Distell's managing director for Europe. Gary Greenfield told *Drinks International*: "As South Africa's peak tourism period begins during the festive season, it is difficult to gauge if exposure to the country during the soccer tournament is positively impacting on traffic.

"A stronger rand, as well as depressed economic conditions in many of the country's key travel markets, could curtail growth. However, tourism specialists Grant Thornton are expecting improved traffic from Asia and Latin America, with more muted movement coming from the traditional European and American markets," says Greenfield.

Warwick Estate's Mike Ratcliffe reports a switch in wine ratios from

60% exported in June/July to the exact reverse as fans flooded in, the strong rand, strengthening by 24%, held back progress, particularly in extremely price sensitive markets such as the UK.

Lucy Warner, who works for wine supplier Thierry's and represents the interests of several producers, tells *Drinks International*: "It is unsurprising that South African producers are unable to hit the deals and margins their UK customers want any longer. South Africa has never been able to produce cheaply. It was only the exchange rate that enabled deals to be done for such a long time. Now is the time for South Africa to shine where it is really good, at the seven quid (£7, US\$11, €8) and above price point," she says.

"I think for the first time in years the UK buyers are accepting this and are seeing South Africa in a different light and I hope we will see some more excitement in the ranges," says Warner.

Graham Nash, the South African wine buyer for Tesco the UK-based global multiple retailer, says: "In general, it (South Africa) is performing well for us. Though the oversupply is now gone and exchange rates are very unfavourable, performance continues to be solid.

"This is based on strong brands, a very strong range in the middle price bracket and some interesting USPs in Chenin Blanc and Pinotage. South Africa has a strong tourism business and, compared with other southern hemisphere countries, is much easier to get to with no time difference," he adds.

"Recent years have seen much acclaim for Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz, while there are interesting developments around other grape varieties, notably Cabernet Sauvignon," concludes Nash.

Thierry's Warner says Nielsen figures for SA wine drinking in the UK to October show a 10% decline. Jo Wehring, WOSA's UK marketing manager, clarifies the situation: "The UK figures are harder to interpret as there has been a move to UK bottling for some of the major brands, so packaged wines have dropped.

"Overall, we were not expecting to see huge increases in exports as SA exports peaked during 2009 at 400m litres, clearing tanks. At the moment there isn't enough wine in SA to drastically increase exports, even in a year such as 2010."

Richard Theron, sales manager with producer De Grendel, is more ► **p39**



South African Wine



Kleine Zalze has invested heavily in this lodge

downbeat. “The World Cup had no real effect, not as big as expected, on our local wine sales, except in the restaurant trade in and around the stadia. Internationally, it definitely gave us an opportunity to do themed sales promotions.

“The most important thing the World Cup has done for the country as a whole is it made people aware that we exist, that we are capable of delivering (services, goods) and that people got a glimpse of what the country is about,” says Theron.

Wine tourism

Ross Sleet of Kleine Zalze also sees more fundamental things than the blip of the World Cup. His company has invested heavily in providing world-class facilities for visitors and boasts a top 10 restaurant (in South Africa), a premier golf course and a four-star lodge with pool and gym.

“Return on investment for wineries executing such plans is extremely difficult to measure,” says Sleet. “Who has the skills to run a restaurant, hotel or other tourist-friendly establishments without destroying the core brand elements of the wine business? How do you prevent the ‘Disneyfication’ of your wine brand while selling lots of good quality wine?”

Sleet believes South Africa seems to be getting mixture of commercial wine tourism and quality wine sales about right.

Stellenbosch is the pioneer of wine tourism. A couple of hours drive to the north east of Cape Town, it boasts more than 150 wine farms. You can stroke a cheetah at Spier, fine dine at Jordan, fly fish at Eikendal and go looking for game at Villiera. Wines aren’t bad either. Not to be left behind, neighbouring Paarl has

plenty to offer and Franschhoek (‘French corner’) is a destination for gourmards and lovers of everything for the home.

But South Africa is not a one or two-trick pony. There is more to it than chasing tourists, punting out postcards and making the odd bottle of wine. The industry has announced two significant initiatives which may not save the world in themselves but will go some way to helping that cause.

Firstly, screwcapped bottles weighing only 350g are available to local producers and bottlers. The average weight four years ago was more than 500g. Distell’s Greenfield claims that it along with glass supplier, Consol, have spearheaded the introduction of the 350g bottle.

WOSA’s Birch says: “As we raise our export volumes of mostly bottled wines, we also increase our carbon emissions, so it becomes a delicate balancing act to enhance our sustainability profile while pushing up our output.

“On the face of it, one solution might be to ship more of our wines in bulk directly to their export destinations for offshore bottling. This poses a major problem in that many jobs would be lost during what must rank as the worst recession in current memory. Last year more than one million jobs were shed in the formal sector, forcing further millions into a state of dire poverty.”

The South African Wine Industry Information Systems (SAWIS) estimates that for every 10m litres of wine shipped in bulk, just over 107 jobs would be lost. That does not factor in the knock-on effect on other jobs, according to SAWIS. The SA wine industry directly employs

nearly 276,000 people.

Last year South Africa exported 389m litres of wine, less than half (150m ltr) was exported in bulk, a volume drop of 18% while packaged exports rose by 7%.

Sustainability

Not content with easing the burden of weight and carbon emissions, the South African wine industry has also launched a ‘sustainability seal’ so every bottle of wine can be traced back to its source, at every stage of the supply chain, to confirm the integrity of production.

More than 95% of the SA wine industry has signed up to sustainable wine growing and winemaking principles, so it is anticipated that about half of the country’s producers will use the seal for the 2010 vintage, with the figure rising to 80% for the 2011 vintage.

Birch once again: “At this stage, South Africa is the only country that has the means to implement and certify the concept across the entire industry.

“The seal is a continuation of South Africa’s pioneering approach to sustainable winemaking and wine growing. The launch of the Integrated Production of Wine (IPW) in 1998 was an important benchmark for environmentally responsible wine production,” she says.

“This was followed, in 2004, by the establishment of the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative, which seeks to reserve land within the Cape winelands for protection and rehabilitation to indigenous habitat,” says Birch.

So, buy, drink South African wine and save the world. **DI**



Diary date

Wines of South Africa ‘Mega Tasting’, London, October 11 and 12, 2011.

Sommeliers, buyers and press from key markets across Europe, the US and Canada will be flown in. A splendid time will be had by all, certainly if WOSA has anything to do with it

Argentina has shown there is more to it than Malbec. Paula Krizanovic attends the recent Vinos & Bodegas wine expo and reports

Argentina evolves

The Argentinian wine industry is regaining its dynamism after a rough beginning to 2010. Fresh investment, new projects and young vineyards coming into production are evidence of a confident, burgeoning industry.

Interestingly, and possibly significantly, there was a good turnout to the Vinos & Bodegas, the largest wine expo in Argentina, organised by Bodegas de Argentina AC and with more than 70 companies participating.

Argentina was not strongly affected by the international economic crisis, according to José Alberto Zuccardi, director of the Familia Zuccardi winery. "It was an opportunity for Argentina, because consumers realised we offer products with good value and a good cost/benefit equation," he told *Drinks International*. However, this has not always translated into sales: "Argentina follows the global trend, dropping in volume and increasing in high quality wine sales," says Martín Pérez Cambet from the Bodegas de Argentina's marketing commission. This trend also responds to local demand. "Many consumers have become more educated about wine. They're looking for better products and remain open to trying new things," says Alejandro Panighini, exports manager of Bodegas Norton.

The beginning of 2010 was an example of this phenomenon. According to the National Viticulture Institute (INV), from January to August, Argentina commercialised 7,947,280hl of wine, 6.45% less than in the same period in 2009. "Argentina will finish

2010 with a drop of 5% in wine sales in relation to the previous year because the first five months of 2010 were abnormal for us," estimates Guillermo García, president of the INV. "The 2009 harvest was low due to prejudicial climatic factors such as early snow, extreme heat and hail storms. We harvested 21 million quintals of grape, 4 millions fewer than we needed. This caused several price increases in different parts of the commercialisation chain, impacting the sales results," he adds.

García is confident that Argentina is already recovering: "The 2010 harvest has allowed us to recompose red wine stocks, reaching acceptable production levels to be regular providers." And he is not alone in his optimism. "Production has not regained the volumes of 2008, but in terms of quality this has been the best harvest in the last decade," said Exequiel Barros, director of the private consultant firm Caucasia Wine Thinking.

Malbec succes

Malbec has been so far Argentina's biggest success. According to Wines of Argentina (the organisation devoted to promoting Argentine wine in foreign markets, formed of some 190 companies) it was brought to the territory from Bordeaux by the French agronomist Michel Aimé Pouget, hired by the Argentine president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento to create an agronomic estate in Mendoza. The variety developed in this country reaching better quality than anywhere else.

Malbec was the variety that allowed Argentina to enter international markets. In 2009 it accounted for

12% of the surface planted with vines in Argentina, and in 2010 represented 40% of its exports in volume. This year Argentinian Malbec was sold to 114 countries, according to Caucasia Wine Thinking, including the US, Canada, Brazil, the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

It is not strange then that Wines of Argentina declared 17 April – the date on which the project to create the Agronomic Estate of Mendoza was presented to the provincial legislative body in 1853 – Malbec World Day. Starting in 2011, promotional activities related to Malbec will be developed



The first Freixenet Vineyard in Argentina, in Valle de Uco (Mendoza) at 1,300m above sea level





simultaneously that day in Argentina, the US and the UK.

But is it not risky for Argentina to be identified so strongly with one variety? Most Argentinian winemakers are not worried. “Argentina still has a lot of room to grow with regards to Malbec, which is our differential product,” argues Panighini. “It is inevitable to associate Argentina and Malbec. We must not lose this advantage of our terroirs since the Malbec boom will allow us to introduce our other varieties,” adds Alejandro Vigil, head winemaker, Bodega Catena Zapata.

“Malbec has put Argentina on the map and Argentina has put Malbec on the map as well. However, Argentina is much more than just a Malbec producer. Our second red variety is Bonarda, which also has a lot of potential, and the Torrontés (an originally Spanish variety that is currently only produced in Argentina) is a ‘unique’ product that brings a distinct identity to the local industry,” says Zuccardi.

On the other hand, “the Torrontés is in the same

road as Malbec, but Argentina has also a great opportunity in Cabernet and Syrah production, the two most commercialised varieties in the world,” says Adrián Cura. “Experienced consumers in Argentina are always looking to try new varieties, such as Syrah or Merlot. Currently, in the Patagonia region, some great Pinot Noir is being produced. And before the Malbec boom, the wine of choice was always the Cabernet from Mendoza, in which there’s still lots of potential,” adds Pablo Tengeruán, sales manager for the Argentine winery Escorihuela Gascón.

Domestic market

The domestic market remains Argentina’s most lucrative. According to the president of the INV, 75% of local production stays in Argentina. However, local winemakers are looking further afield. “The main foreign market for Argentina is the US, accounting for 33% of its exports in volume in the first seven months of 2010,” says Barros. “Malbec is in fashion there and Argentina has to sustain this favourable trend, consistently responding to the demand and becoming a reliable supplier,” he adds.

However, other analysts are looking for markets near home: “In Brazil demand is still only two litres per capita a year. If this increased by only one litre a year, it would generate a 180 million litre demand. And that wine will not come from anywhere else but Chile and Argentina,” affirms Pérez Cambet. In the first seven months of 2010 wine exports to Brazil grew by 53.9% in value and 34.4% in volume, according to Caucasia Wine Thinking.

Argentinian winemakers are looking deeper into Latin America. Sebastián Guichon, PR manager for Zuccardi, says: “Argentinian wine took the opposite road to other local products: it began exporting to the US and the EU and it’s just now beginning to gain ground in Latin America. This region’s potential is huge, considering the wine demand is still low.”

The UK is the only large market in which the Argentinian presence has decreased in relation to

the previous year. “It is the most competitive market in the world and therefore all countries have some problems placing their production there. I believe in Argentina’s case, the drop responds to difficulties of market access,” says García. “It is more profitable for Argentina assigning resources to markets in which it is receiving a better response than to the UK, where commercialisation is concentrated in a few large chains,” says Barros. However, the latest report of this consultant to Wines of Argentina states that shipments to the UK began recuperating between April and July 2010, showing growth of 18.9% in value compared to the same period in 2009.

Natural attributes

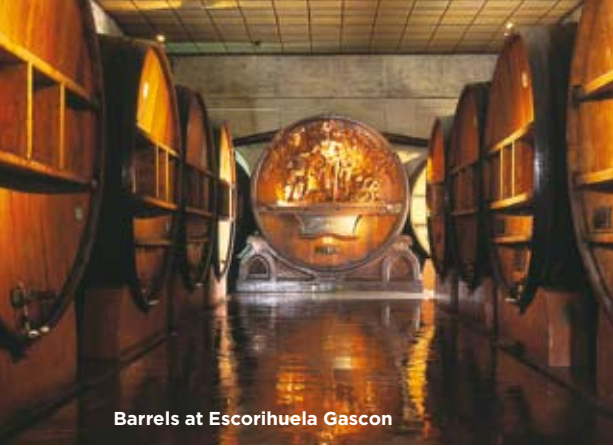
If Argentina has managed to become the 5th largest wine producer in the world, according to the 2009 OIV ranking, it has been due to its natural attributes: continental vineyards, a wide range of soils and climates, and wines of high-altitude with vineyards at 3,100m above sea level in Salta. “High altitude vineyards receive more sunlight, which is fundamental for maturity of the grapes,” says Pérez Cambet. Also, it gets very hot during the day and really cold at night. The plant learns to live with extreme temperatures and the result is an extremely concentrated wine with high alcoholic grading, reaching 16° or 17°.”

These aspects are not the only ones making Argentina unique. Zuccardi says: “Argentina is a hybrid: it has the freedom to try new varieties as the New World producers, but with regard to tradition and internal demand it is more alike the Old World. Since the European immigrants who first came to this country knew how to cultivate the vines, Argentina has a strong internal market other New World countries don’t usually have.”

Barros agrees: “In most New World countries, the industry is concentrated in only a few companies, while in Argentina it has a pyramidal shape, with a very wide base of more than 90,000 small producers. Commercialisation is more concentrated, ► p43



Argentinian Wine



Barrels at Escorihuela Gascon

but still between a large amount of companies.”

“When concentration occurs, craftsmanship is lost. Argentina will always be about diversity of companies, lands, climates and varieties,” adds Zuccardi.

Finally, viticultural firms and institutions work closely with the public sector in the Argentine Viticulture Corporation (COVIAR). It is fronted by representatives from the main local companies, the INV, the National Institute of Agro-Technology, and the production ministers of Mendoza, San Juan and one for the other winemaking provinces. “In the COVIAR the public and private sector work together to promote Argentinian wine in the local and foreign markets as well as integrating small producers. We don’t always see eye to eye but, none the less, the main issues are discussed and other industries look at us as an example,” says Zuccardi.

As a relatively new player in the world of wine, Argentina is still researching varieties and productive lands, looking to grow as an exporter. Consequently local and foreign companies are investing heavily in renovating and modernising installations. This was the case with Catena Zapata: “The company has invested over US\$20 million in the past seven years to improve infrastructure. We are currently extending our fractioning lines and deposits, and developing new projects for high end wine in San Juan, Salta, la Rioja and the Patagonia,” says Vigil.

Familia Zuccardi is also expanding in the Mendoza province, in Valle de Uco, with a project for a new winery for the Zuccardi line. “Zuccardi was the first Argentinian winery to produce high quality Tempranillo in ’99 – the Zuccardi Q – and later the first fortified Malbec, the Malamado. We are currently investigating over 35 new varieties” affirms Sebastián Guichon.

“Escorihuela Gascón has just finished two new wineries in Godoy Cruz (Mendoza) since their original building burned down in 2008. Also, we inaugurated the Agrelo winery in Mendoza, specialized in Ultra Premium wines,” says Escorihuela Gascón’s Tenguierian.

The Spanish group Freixenet recently began operations in its first Argentine winery. It was

installed in a 60ha vineyard in Valle de Uco (Mendoza) and it has capacity to process 300,000kg of grapes a year for Malbec, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Tempranillo and Tannat.

Last April the Terold society bought 50% of Peñaflor from DLJ Merchant Banking Partners, a private equity fund. Terold was the previous owner of Cervecería Quilmes, the largest brewery in Argentina, which was sold in 2009 to Anheuser-Busch InBev. Peñaflor is the creator of some of Argentina’s most emblematic labels, such as Trapiche, El Esteco and Michel Torino. For the Trapiche brand, the company inaugurated a new winery in 2008, in Maipú (Mendoza), in a recycled 1912 building which produces quality wines through biodynamic agricultural processes.

Future challenges

As a relatively new industry, a range of challenges faces Argentinian winemakers in the next years. “Local wine companies are reconverting their vineyards into quality species but they need to accompany that process with investments in cooling technology, one of Argentina’s weak spots. The COVIAR is implementing programmes for wineries that integrate small producers to improve their technology. So, we will shortly see a substantial improvement, especially in white wine,” says the president of the INV.

“Argentina needs to continue working on the identification of new productive areas and terroirs – it is the only way to move forward,” says Vigil, mentioning that the Government needs to take an active role in this research, and also offer guarantees and economic stability to develop investments.

Another challenge will be that of economics. Bodegas Norton’s Panighini points out: “The inflation of more than 3% in Argentina and a fixed exchange rate with the American dollar is affecting companies that see an increase in production costs while their profits remain the same. They cannot translate the increases to the prices in foreign markets, where price ranges are strongly set. So they will need broad shoulders to endure this situation.” Following the same line, Barros argues: “This situation resulted in lost profitability. This needs to be addressed, as well as granting better access to credits and arranging bilateral agreements for the wine industry in the main markets”. **DI**



The new Trapiche winery in Maipú (Mendoza) built in the Florentine style and which remained closed for over 40 years until Trapiche began the renovation process in 2006

Argentina in brief

Population: more than 38 million

Vines: More than 220,000ha of planted surface a year

Viticulture areas: From the 22° to 42° of latitude in the country’s territory. (Wines of Argentina)

Viticulture provinces: Mendoza, San Juan, La Rioja, Catamarca, Salta, Neuquén, Río Negro, Córdoba and Buenos Aires.

Internal demand: 27 litres per capita a year. The internal market represents 75% of the local wine production

Main foreign markets: US, Canada, Brazil, México, and the UK.,

Guillermo García,
Natural Viticulture
Institute president
and (right) José
Alberto Zuccardi



A question of port

Some of the world's leading experts on port meet at the International Wine & Spirits Centre in London for this year's Drinks International Port Tasting. **Christian Davis** reports



On Thursday November 19 the judges convened at the Wine and Spirit Education Trust's London headquarters to taste 40 ports submitted for this year's *Drinks International* Port Tasting.

Most styles were represented, from white and the new category of pink or rosé, through to tawnies and single quinta vintages and vintage port.

The tasting and judging was done

blind and trophies were awarded after discussion, still without knowing what the brands were.

Among the judges were the author of probably the most authoritative books on port and two who are inextricably linked to port through family interests.

Of the eight gold medalists they singled out Real Companhia Velha Delaforce Vintage 1992 and Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos Quinta do Bom Retiro 20 Years as overall trophy winners.





Port Taste Awards

TROPHY & GOLD

Delaforce Vintage 1992 – Real Companhia Velha
Ramos Pinto Quinta do Bom Retiro 20 Years – Adriano Ramos Pinto, Vinhos

GOLD

Rozès Colours Collection White Reserve – Rozès
Dow's Finest Reserve Port – Symington, courtesy of Waitrose
Marks & Spencer's 10 Year old Tawny Port – Marks & Spencer
Ramos Pinto Porto 30 Years – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos
Quinta do Pego Vintage 2007 – Amka
Ramos Pinto Porto Vintage 2003 – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos

SILVER

Sandeman Apitiv White Port – Sogrape, courtesy of Waitrose
Marks & Spencer's Pink Port – Marks & Spencer
Marks & Spencer's Finest Reserve Port – Marks & Spencer
Rozes Terras do Grifo Special Reserve – Rozes
Ramos Pinto Porto Collector Reserva – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos
Waitrose Ruby Port – Waitrose
Quinta do Pego LBV 2006 – Amka
Delaforce LBV 2004 – Real Companhia
Ramos Pinto Porto LBV 2005 – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos
Waitrose Late-Bottled Vintage Port 2004 – Waitrose
Marks & Spencer's Late Bottled Vintage Port 2004 – Marks & Spencer
Sandeman's Imperial Tawny Port – Sogrape, courtesy of Waitrose
Delaforce His Eminence's Choice 10 Years – Real Companhia Velha
Marks & Spencer's 20 Year Old Tawny Port – Marks & Spencer
Delafore Curious and Ancient 20 Years – Real Companhia Velha
Ramos Pinto, Vinhos Quinta de Ervamoira 10 Years – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos
Rozes Terras do Grifo Vintage 2006 – Rozès
Warre's Quinta da Cavadinha 1996 Vintage Port – Symington, courtesy of Waitrose
Ramos Pinto Porto Vintage 2007 – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos
Ramos Pinto Porto Vintage 1994 – Adriano Ramos Pinto Vinhos



Judges (l-r) writer and Drinks International contributor Andrew Catchpole; Ben Campbell-Johnston, organiser of the Big Fortified Tasting; writer, port judge and Drinks International contributor Peter Cobb; group shot with DI editor Christian Davis; and author and port judge Richard Mayson



COCO BONGO

Blvd Kukulcan Plaza Forum,
Zona Hotelera, Cancun, Mexico

#1

Coco Bongo featured in this year's Top 50 World's Best Bars, where it was described as a "show & disco", which is exactly what it is. Within the massive venue there are a number of bars, of course, and by taking top spot it provides evidence that being a small bar with good drinks isn't the key to success with visitors to Mexico.

With a humongous 1,800 capacity, it's a fair bet anyone who's taken a holiday in Cancun will know all about this place and, by the looks of the website, they probably had a hell of a lot of fun.

Set in the middle of the hotel complexes, it's perfectly located for tourists, so expect plenty here, particularly Americans who seem to go c-raaaayzee for the place. The music policy refuses to pin its badge to anything in particular, other than the decades, so expect seventies, eighties and nineties tunes mixed with some salsa and trance, apparently. All of which is consumed as voraciously as the spirits and mixers. People bongo down suspended from the rafters, while the congo line on bar tops is encouraged rather than being an exuberant and occasional happenstance. Fancy dress is also a regular, as are weird challenges, such as sliding down banisters holding a pile of glasses and, with Coco Bongo named after an insane fictitious bar in Jim Carrey vehicle *The Mask*... well, you should be getting the point.

SENIOR FROG'S

Blvd, Kukulcan Km. 9.5, Frente a la
playa Chac Mool, Zona Hotelera, C.P.
77500, Cancun, Quintana Roo

#2

We had to check these folks weren't being offensive to the French, or indeed offering a retreat for Kermit. Then we looked at their mission statement and discovered they will entertain at any cost – "even if we have to hold you down and tickle you". We're pretty sure that's assault.

As it happens though, the bar is all about 'fun', fun that includes the Yard Glass, which seems a cornerstone of the drinking experience here and one other bars are undoubtedly green with envy over.

More of a restaurant during the day, in the evening this place becomes one of the favoured hangouts for partying tourists. With DJs and space for around 1,500 revellers, it comes second in this particular poll for obvious reasons (it's smaller), but you should be getting a general picture of a massive party with plenty of reptilian-esq writhing on the dancefloor. They advise you to bring a swimming costume, which implies some of the action will be taking place in the water, and much like the tickling, that'll be whether you like it or not.

HARD ROCK CAFE CANCUN

Blvd. Kukulcan Lotes 10&10-C Centro
Comercial Forum by the Sea local A-20,
Zona Hotelera, Cancun

#3

We're not entirely sure what there's left to say about Hard Rock Cafés. They're invariably large, serve equally large portions of American food, decorate themselves with rock memorabilia and offer live music. This one ticks all the boxes and, much like numbers one and two on the list, is in the Zona Hotelera, an area rich in hotels and therefore tourists.



Central Am

For me the romantic ideal of a Mexican bar has always been typified by La Capilla in Tequila. This rough and ready shack of a bar gets busy during the late afternoon as workers from the agave fields head out of the beating sun for a Batanga. Drinks are served by Don Javier, an octogenarian bartender who has worked in Tequila Town all his life, and tequileros quench their thirsts while eating snacks off a ramshackle barbecue. It's a beautiful place, an expression of all things Mexican, and if anyone is out that way I'd implore them to check it out.

Having said all that, I should state now that the votes for the top bars in Central America reveal Brits like me have a very different idea of what makes a worthy venue in this region. Dominated by Mexico and showcasing a top three all from Cancun, this list of the World's Best Bars in Central America sees voters shun the dusty, rustic haunts in favour of epic warehouses, pumping music into patrons necking spirit mixers.

But there are one or two glimmers of hope for more discerning drinkers and Mexico City, Mexico's food and drink hub, offers a more European approach in parts. Melissa Méndez is the manager of the number four bar on the list, The Whiskey in Mexico City, and points out that mixed drinks are clearly more popular than tequila. "There are some bars that have more than 100 kinds of tequilas, but we have many more cocktail bars than exclusive bars for tequila. If

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a bar is to sell cocktails then a lot depends on location, but we do well. The most sold drinks for us include vodka, rum and whiskey, with cocktails ranging from Jägerbomb, Hypnotic and Mojito to the Cosmopolitan and Margarita."

Over in Guadalajara you would expect a slightly different cocktail perspective, with the city only a stone's throw from tequila production and Tequila Town. Stefano Francavilla of tequila Calle 23 confirms this: "Cocktail culture here is still an unknown territory. The good thing is we are seeing some Mexicans who've spent some time abroad (US, London) returning and trying to move the culture forward a bit. But I personally have an attraction to old cantinas in town, in which you can feel still the unpretentious, warm feeling. And I'll be very happy with a cold beer and a good tequila."

It's true these classic cantinas don't make the list, but Tomas Estes, European tequila ambassador, is on hand with some suggestions for fans. And anyway, ours is not to judge – the World's Best Bars lists continue to prove that bars offer different strokes for different folks. All the votes are from bar professionals who would undoubtedly argue that, during these times of economic hardship, it is these mega clubs that rake in the cash. And ultimately, what is a bar if it's not a business? OK, it's a business and it should be an experience, but it seems the clubs deliver on both counts and if that's what works for the region, fair play to them.

Tom Sandham, World's Best Bars editor



World bars: quest for the best

In the sixth of Drinks International's in-depth surveys, owners and managers of 50 elite bars throughout Central America were contacted directly by Leslie Henry Research to learn their choice of top bars and spirits. This month's report covers the best bars within this area, as selected by this group of industry insiders.

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FOCUS ON MEXICO

The experts' view

Tomas Estes has travelled extensively around Mexico and is the European Tequila ambassador. He also knows a thing or two about the Mexican bar, having opened hi-Mexican-style Café Pacifico and La Perla bars around the world



In general the scene for drinking does not take in cocktails – beer is the choice of the common man out there. Nor is there much wine, although this is a developing category. I actually wrote a piece on wine in Mexico 10 years ago and discovered then that the per capita consumption of wine in Mexico is below that of Turkey. I'd imagine the figure has increased but I'm not sure where it stands today and it remains way behind beer.

Tequila is back on the rise. It's usually enjoyed straight or mixed very simply with Squirt (grapefruit soda) or cola over ice. A variation is to add fresh lime and a pinch of salt.

A generation is waking up to tequila though and now the spirit is in with the whole strata of society, especially women and youths.

It's a big generalisation but fair to say that in Mexico cocktails remain in their infancy. They are on their way in and it's about a new generation of drinkers taking notice. Most serves will be found in hotels and resorts and they tend to offer Margarita as a standard. But actually outside the hotels the Margarita isn't consumed as much.

In terms of bars, there are a number of famous places in Mexico that need a mention. Hussong's Cantina in Baja has been open well over 100 years and is a drinking spot for sailors, surfers, adventurers and travellers. In fact the town of

Esenada has grown around Hussong's and the early visitors were said to ride burros into the cantina and sit on them while being served at the bar. No pretence, passionate musicians keep the music going and there's no bullshit. In other words, it's the perfect place to enjoy a drink with friends.

La Capilla (below) you mention in the introduction, which remains a great bar.

Elsewhere in Guadalajara you'll find Los Equipales and La Fuente, both old-fashioned drinking places. A newcomer is El Nacional where cocktails are reasonable and across Guadalajara if you do find cocktails they are imaginative and inspired.



While much of the tourist scene encourages a spirit mixer/shot culture in mega club bars, there are some bar operators who strive for discerning alternatives. **Chris Cooper, a mixologist and director of operations at the La Luna Seaside Restaurant & Bar on Isla Mujeres, Mexico, is one.**

As an avid mixologist for many years I've had the privilege of experiencing many cultural differences travelling and working the globe when it pertains to drink trends.

Having lived in and experienced Mexico for the past year and a half, this couldn't be more evident. Having a restaurant/club in Mexico has opened my eyes to one thing – many bars or restaurants around the globe have turned to more creative styles of selling their product, including infused vodkas, rums, etc. The problem is, some have resorted to cheaper, less time-consuming mixes. Here in Mexico, it's fresh, fresh, fresh. Everything we use is freshly squeezed – lime, orange, mango, grapefruit juices etc. This makes an enormous difference to the outcome of your cocktail.

If I had to choose the most popular cocktail here, it would be a toss up between the hand-squeezed

Margarita, or the classic Mojito.

There are a few misconceptions about Mexico when it comes to alcoholic beverages. The perception is beer, tequila, beer and tequila. While these two drinks are very popular, there is a resurgence in the cocktail.

Both locals and tourists tend to enjoy many different styles of drinks. Tourists hang on to the Margarita or Mojito, and locals, while still beer-based, lean toward either a Michelada, or a Bloody Beer. The two are versions of the Bloody Mary and the Caesar, with the base being beer instead of the normal, vodka or tequila. These are known to be the hangover drink, but I find it is a great way to start your evening if beer is your drink of choice for the day.

I was interested to see how the tequila trends are down here as well. The tequila shot is a staple for sure. The difference I have noticed lately is that instead of simply ordering a well shot, or house tequila, most patrons are now very particular in the brand and style of tequila they drink.

The brand makes a major difference down here, with José Cuervo Traditional served cold seeming to lead the way. However, I've noticed many people choosing to savour their tequilas, either sipping

them with a brandy snifter, or sipping directly from the shot glass.

The front runners for sipping tequilas are either the Clase Azul Reposado, Centenario Anejo, or the many Don Julio tequilas. Hornitos and Sauza tequilas are ordered by tourists.

There are a few other spirits to note that are popular here as well. Bacardi Anejo is one of our most popular back bar rums, while Buchanan's 12 Year Old is our most requested back bar scotch whisky.

Vodka is still as popular as it will ever be, with Absolut, Smirnoff and Three Olives leading the pack. The latest high-end vodka that could really make a statement here is the Russian Standard line, with Imperia being the most sought after. We carry it, people love it and they always come back for more. It will be on our shelves for a long time.

So, while everyone enjoys an ice-cold cerveza, there is a steady climb in the area of cocktails, fresh ingredients and the classic sipping of a quality tequila. Mexico is on the rise, and ready to be known for more than simply a beer-driven destination.

I look forward to the years to come and seeing how we embrace it.



4 THE WHISKEY

Campos Eliseos 252, Chapultepec, Polanco, Mexico City
starwoodhotels.com

A hotel bar with all the trappings you'd expect, from pricey cocktails and bottle service to modern Mexican cuisine and more pretty people than you can shake a piñata stick at. A better cocktail list than most, the drinks offerings are split over four levels, including an outdoor area, and it is invariably heaving with local fashionistas. To give you an idea of just how pretty the patrons really are, George Clooney was pictured at the opening night.

5 ZONA VIVA

bambooamador.com/inicio

Moving away from Mexico and into Panama we have another mega club experience to consider. Zona Viva is an entertainment area, pedestrianised and complete with all manner of drinking and dancing options.

6 PLANET HOLLYWOOD

Boulevard Kukulkan Km 11.5, 77500 Cancún, Quintana Roo, Mexico

The Planet Hollywood franchise hits the hotel zone and, much like the number three venue on the list, the concept will be familiar to most. Substitute 'rock' with film memorabilia and you have a very similar concept to Hard Rock. But with films. Instead of rock.

7 BULLDOG

Kukulcan Boulevard, Quintana Roo PH Cancun, Mexico

bulldogcafe.com

Another humongous club for the party people, this time with a live music bent. Indeed the acts to have performed here range from Guns 'n' Roses to Shakira, so

some big hitters. More importantly they have a hot tub here and it's reserved for pretty girls.

8 BABY O

Avenida Costera Miguel Alemán 2, Acapulco
babyo.com.mx

Interesting place that looks a little like a cabaret bar from the *Flintstones*. Big drinks for big nights, it's a club that ticks all the club boxes.

9 DIABLITO CHA CHA CHA

Riviera Maya, Playa del Carmen, Mexico
diablitochachacha.com

Relatively new to Playa, this bar and restaurant is already considered an institution among the locals. The well-worn retro furniture and vintage bar seats feel like they've been there since they were bought new, but are homely in a millionaire way. Set in the heart of the nightlife district, Diablito Cha Cha Cha is *the* place to go for dinner or drinks before a big night out and, as a result, you should book well in advance for a table or a place in the much sought-after lounge area.

10 CONDESA DF

Av Veracruz 102, Mexico City
condesadf.com

A sexy bar for sexy people and one of the more exclusive hotel retreats in Mexico City. Lauded as one of the best roof terraces in the world, we suspect this has much to do with the patrons, although there are few finer things in life than lying in the sunshine with a tequila, and the luxurious surroundings of this roof-top bar ensure this is one of the best places to do just that.

FOCUS ON THE CARIBBEAN

In the movie *Cocktail* Tom Cruise flees a life of ignominy in New York to run a bar in the Caribbean and, let's face it, we've all wanted to do the same at some point.

Aside from the fact that Cruise's character can't actually make a drink to save his life (watch the movie closely and you'll realise the same), the Hollywood stereotype of beach bars isn't too far a cry from the reality. Particularly with hotels, where you'll invariably find a terrace looking out on to a beautiful beach.

And actually, that Cruise can't make a complex cocktail is equally faithful to the drinks scene in this region. This isn't a slur on the Caribbean bartending community, simply a consequence of the demand for simpler offerings. Frozen Daiquiris, Piña Coladas, messy Mojitos and a lot of rum & coke make up the bulk of orders.

But you're here for the rum – or at least you should be – so hopefully a lack of cocktails shouldn't be too much of a hindrance.

So it's no surprise that bars listed here would be a tourist's choice, or at least playing to the desires of expats who have moved to this part of the world – sports bars, Irish pubs and restaurants dominate. As a result they've been lauded for the hearty grub and beer and the ability to entertain long into the night.



Cuba makes an appearance with a couple of iconic venues, and the two bars mentioned have made a name with tourists thanks to two world-famous cocktails, which is almost all they actually serve.

But if you're looking for something more discerning, then the more premium the hotel, the more interesting the drinks offer. Meanwhile,

travelling bartenders will be keen to point out there are some fantastic locals-only shacks hidden away, although a guide into some of the towns would be advisable.

As we say though, you're here for the rum, so as long as the sun is shining, a bottle and a bit of beach with friends could still stand up as one of the best bars in the world.

BUBBA'S SPORTS BAR

Rockley Main Road, Christ Church, Barbados
bubbassportsbar.net

The name is a give away – this is a sports bar. So expect massive portions of burger and chips as well as plenty of shouting at screens. Cocktails are all about the fun times in the Caribbean so nothing massively discerning. But it's a sports bar, so what do you expect?

DELIRIOUS BAR

Rodney Bay, St Lucia

Delirious brings some new and modern style to the St Lucia scene, perfect for the millionaires who sail into the yachting marina. Expect fancy drinks and fancy people.

FLORIDITA

Obispo No.557 esq. a Monserrate, Habana Vieja, Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba
floridita-cuba.com

It was Ernest Hemingway's favourite Caribbean hangout and has made a



name for itself with the iconic Daiquiri, a cocktail every good bartender should know how to mix. You'll get a lot of the frozen variety here, playing to the tourists, but they're perfectly refreshing and watched over by an impressive life-size statue of the great writer.

MCBRIDE'S

St Lawrence Gap, Christ Church, Barbados

McBride's Pub & Cookhouse is evidence that the Irish can truly make their concept bars work anywhere. How you convince a Bajan to sit indoors, look at bicycles on a ceiling and listen to the Chieftains is anyone's guess, but the food is celebrated and they have 2-4-1 happy hours from 6pm-8pm and 11pm-1am.



LA BODEGUITA DEL MEDIO

Calle Empedrado No 206. Ciudad de La Havana

The bar is the home of the Mojito, fast becoming the most popular bar call in the world, so it comes as no surprise that these guys fire them out incessantly. Don't expect the crushed ice interpretations though, these are

rough and ready with huge bits of mint that almost strangle you as you drink. Visitors write on the wall and many of the patrons are famous. Meanwhile, the food is excellent. A tourist trap it might be, but drinks enthusiasts need to visit all the same.

SHIP INN

St Lawrence Gap, Christ Church, Barbados

Another venue set in St Lawrence Gap's hub of nightlife, this is more of an English pub and further evidence that much of this list has been voted for by visitors to the island. As with McBride's, expect the highlight to be the imported beer and staple fodder.

BLUE MONKEY

Paynes Bay, St James, Barbados

Another bar within a restaurant this venue does have a cocktail list which includes some serious disco – the Heavenly, for example, comes with the tagline: You Will Be Seeing The Angels, and includes gin, Baileys, white Crème De Cacao and Grenadine Syrup. Hoo ha.

MARIE BRIZARD HAILS THE 27TH IBS WINNER

Cocktail competitions seem to be etched into the marketing schedules of most spirit and liqueur brands at the moment. But for the Bordeaux-based Marie Brizard Belvédère Group, this month's event was no latecomer's fling.

The group's 27th edition of the International Bartender Seminar (IBS) was a behemoth three-day event that staged 43 bartenders from 27 countries.

The French liqueur brand and Belvédère's vodka Sobieski took centre stage at the event, as bartenders – all national winners – competed over three rounds. In the end Amit Gilad, of Tel Aviv bar Otto 76, Israel, won through, taking the crown of IBS champion and a prize of €3,000. He said: "It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be here. I am going to make sure that every penny [of the prize] is spent on enjoying myself."

With professional seminars in liqueurs, cocktail garnishing and



molecular mixology all scheduled over the three days, and a prize pool of €6,000, organisers estimated that the event cost €100,000 and was "the second biggest cocktail competition in France". The judging panel was charged with finding the bartender who exhibited the most "energy, knowledge and experience", marking on technical proficiency and the appearance, aroma and taste of the cocktails.

Round one saw bartenders each

deliver a cocktail using ingredients of their choice, within six minutes. The 20 highest scoring competitors were recalled for the semifinal, where the blind-tasting judges were given a second opportunity to test the bartenders' signature cocktail and to whittle the field down to eight. Final round competitors were tasked with creating a cocktail that contained one Marie Brizard liqueur, within 10 minutes.

Brand ambassador Nicolas Destors

described the standard as "very high", and said many of the cocktail recipes would be listed on the website and used in future promotions.

Gilad's winning cocktail (pictured) comprised 20ml Marie Brizard Anisette, 20ml passion fruit juice, 20ml Marie Brizard jasmin liqueur, 40ml grapefruit juice and mint leaves. The ingredients were stirred together and served in a long glass with a garnish of redcurrants and mint.

BRITNER'S BLOG

DI's Lucy Britner partakes of a wee dram at The Whisky Show

The Whisky Show was £95 a ticket this year. Was it worth it? Well, I went along to find out how much bang you could get for your buck. On entry, we were given plastic bags with a tasting glass and a large bottle of water – The Whisky Show is serious about its responsible drinking policy and the ticket included a three course meal and as much water as you could quaff.

The bag also contained a poker chip, which you could spend on an 'ultra premium dram' – one per person. I spent mine on Glenglassaugh's Jim Cryle 1974 – a single cask bottling which is the first in a series to celebrate the achievements of distillery managers. Stewed plums and brown sugar were the order of the dram and it was terrific. Mr Lucy spent his on Johnnie Walker King George V and enjoyed its velvety, approachable character and its peaty kiss goodbye enormously. The fact these were called ultra premium drams of course left us expecting to be wowed. But we weren't expecting to be wowed by so many other whiskies. Among our favourites was The Balvenie Peated Cask – a delicate floral and peaty nose with a good balance of honey and spice on the palate.

WE WEREN'T EXPECTING TO BE WOWED BY SO MANY WHISKIES. AMONG OUR FAVOURITES WAS THE BALVENIE PEATED CASK

Then there was Suntory's Yamazaki Puncheon – so-called because it's matured in 480-litre puncheons. Obviously maturation is slower than if the liquid was in a smaller cask, so it's comparatively pale and at 48%abv, it really packs a punch(eon). Sorry.

I also enjoyed trying Four Roses bourbon and Maker's Mark but these stands didn't seem to hold much store for the hardcore scotch fans, which is a real shame because they missed a few treats. It would be nice to see a bourbon section there next year.

There were even a couple of new kids on the block and I got talking to Alastair Day from The Tweeddale Blend – a mix of aged single grain whisky and eight individually selected aged single malt whiskies. Day told me the story of his great grandfather Richard, a licensed grocer born in 1880, who blended whisky – one of which was The Tweeddale.

Day said of the show: "We have had some good follow-up from the show and The Whisky Exchange now stocks The Tweeddale Blend – our first retailer outside Scotland. We sold 18 bottles at the show itself and poured a fair few drams."

With some of the master classes an extra £50ish, this is an expensive day out, but for people who are into whisky it's a safe investment.





COLD COMFORT

Southern Comfort has developed a new seasonal cocktail as part of its UK Christmas marketing push. The brand aims to reinforce its "originality" and New Orleans heritage.

CHRISTMAS COMFORT & JOY

- 40ml Southern Comfort
- 20ml lemon juice
- 80ml cranberry juice
- 10ml sugar syrup
- Dash of bitters (optional)

Add all ingredients into a pan and heat gently (do not boil). Pour into a glass and garnish with an orange peel twist.

TUACA'S FESTIVE TIPPLES

Liqueur brand Tuaca has been busy creating cocktails for the Christmas period. Here are two of its festive recipes.

TUACA CRUMBLE

- 50ml Tuaca
- 100ml apple juice
- 25ml fresh lemon juice
- Half tsp ground cinnamon

Mix the Tuaca, lemon juice and warm apple juice together, scatter over cinnamon so it gently infuses. Add a slice of apple to garnish.

TUACA TODDY

- 25ml Tuaca
- 1 tsp honey
- 15ml lemon juice
- 250ml hot water

Mix ingredients and serve.



GO TEAM BACARDI

Bacardi Brown-Forman Brands (BBFB) has launched an online hub for bar owners and bartenders.

Training Team is designed to give users access to the BBFB's training videos, course literature and images, while also featuring blogs and a calendar of industry events.

The web portal aims to build an online community by linking into Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

At the heart of the site is a specially assembled team, headed by mixologist Alex Turner, which will respond to questions and inform the community of news and events.

Turner said: "The needs of bartenders are very different to the rest of the trade so it was important to us to launch something tailored to them."

"To ensure the resource remains current for users we will



enlist the help of other BBFB personnel, industry experts and rising stars of the bartending world.

"We also wanted to give bartenders access to the Training Team outside of actual training days so advice can be obtained at the touch of a button."

In addition to Training Team, the BBFB has recently re-launched its trade website Pourfection.

Visit: pourfection.com/trainingteam.



Seven of London's top bartenders did battle at the first Tabasco British Bloody Mary Challenge in Selfridges, Hix Restaurant & Champagne Bar.

Contestants created a classic and alternative Bloody Mary before a judging panel that included chef Mark Hix and mixologist Nick Strangeway.

The classic round, won by Jake Burger of Portobello Star in London, saw bartenders mix staple ingredients of tomato juice, worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, vodka, lemon, salt and pepper. Burger said: "Bloody Mary is the benchmark for any barman; I just did the one I make in the bar."

Winner of the alternative round, Pete Jeary of Hawksmoor Seven Dials in London, joins Burger in winning a three-day trip to New Orleans. He mixed bacon and clam broth and Tabasco Chipotle to the drink's base ingredients.

JD CELEBRATES 160TH LANDMARK WITH TENNESSEE COMPETITION FINAL

Jack Daniel's celebrated the 160th birthday of its founder this month, with the fourth edition of its UK cocktail competition.

Alex Clark from 64th & Social in Clapham, London, was the eventual winner, prevailing from an eight-strong field of regional finalist flown out to Tennessee for the event.

The bartenders were shown around the home of Jack Daniel's, Lynchburg, and taken to the distillery, with the event culminating in a cocktail contest before an expert judging panel.

Whiskey specialist and judge, Nidal Ramini, said: "Overall it was a fantastic trip, reflecting the genuine talent within our bar industry. The quality this year

has been superb and it really was a close call."

Cocktails had to contain Jack Daniel's Old No 7 whiskey, a maximum of 50ml alcohol, and carry a name with a connection to the brand.

The winning cocktail, Smack My Jack Up, comprised: two dashes of chocolate bitters, two dashes Peychaud's bitters, 5ml agave syrup, 5ml crème de cacao, 15ml Australian Shiraz/Cabernet, 35ml Jack Daniel's, shaved sea salt chocolate and orange peel.

To make: stir all ingredients until agave syrup is diluted. Add ice cubes and stir until chilled and condensed. Strain into a chilled glass goblet. Garnish with a twist of orange.



Room with a view

London's Trafalgar Hotel has launched a spa experience 'wherever you are' within the hotel (including the window, by the look of it), which includes a 'Spa @ the bar' cocktail. Passers-by were invited to sample the cocktails on offer. Our favourite was Hot Lips – a vodka martini infused with chilli, ginger and mandarin. It's served with a handy sized All Talk lip balm. Pucker up.

A very rapid engagement

With remarkable rapidity and unashamed opportunism, Drambuie has created the Engaging Dram – a tribute to Prince William's engagement to Kate Middleton. Brand ambassador Jamie Stephenson was behind the stunt, mixing the brand's Royal Legacy 1745 expression with lemon juice, orange bitters and rosé champagne. According to the brand, Drambuie has long been imbued with a sense of regality, having been first created 260 years ago for Scottish royal Bonnie Prince Charlie.



BOOK SHELF

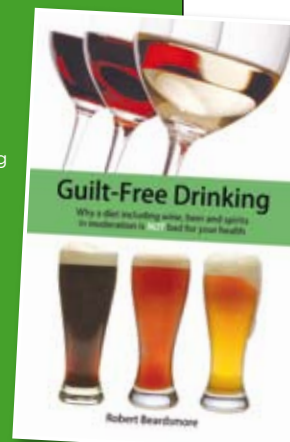
Guilt-Free Drinking

Why a diet including wine, beer and spirits in moderation is not bad for your health is the standfirst to the title or headline of this book by Robert Beardsmore.

The author acknowledges the help of his brother Dr John Beardsmore and Dr Elizabeth Eaton in providing "medical scrutiny to the text". Well, that's all right then.

Read on because we all want to keep on drinking... in moderation of course.

Published by
Vinifera
Price £11.99



THE LAST
WORD

'A' IS FOR HORSES, AS MY DAD USED TO SAY

PAUL HENRY, OUTGOING GENERAL MANAGER, MARKET DEVELOPMENT, FOR THE AUSTRALIAN WINE AND BRANDY CORPORATION, TAKING ABOUT HIS A+ INITIATIVE PROMOTING PREMIUM AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIAN WINES



BOOZE RAIDER

Misanthropic whisky connoisseurs will raise a smile now that they can visit their favourite single malt cellars without leaving their home. The Fine Malt Whisky Cellar by Elitmarket.com, allows online users to view and buy bottles of Scotland's finest in an all-virtual environment.

Graphics are slightly Tomb Raider circa 1990s, but with the internet's most complete collection of The Dalmore and Fettercairn, the Fine Malt Whisky Cellar will appeal to cyber-savvy imbibers. The site also offers Balblair and Old Pulteney ranges and will be adding Isle of Jura and Ben Nevis cellars in the coming months. Visit: elitmarket.com



Prime minister David Cameron was fortunate to receive the gift of a three-litre bottle of 2006 E&J Gallo Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, courtesy of the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. The large bottle is etched with the Union Flag and personalised with the prime minister's name.

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BUSINESS MEDIA



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