

# Drinks

## INTERNATIONAL

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*Francesco Zonin*



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FEBRUARY 2012

## INSIDE THIS MONTH



### WORLD'S BEST BARS

A ROUND-UP OF THE BEST WHISKY BARS AROUND THE GLOBE



### LIQUEURS

MORE GROWTH FOR THIS NEWLY COOL SECTOR



### PISCO

TAKING THE SOUTH AMERICAN SPIRIT TO NEW MARKETS

# Drinks INTERNATIONAL

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## Bricks, clicks and verdicts

**I**t seems to have been a long month. The pagans got it right by inventing a celebration around the winter solstice, the shortest day, up here in the Northern Hemisphere.



Christmas is a long time ago now and one senses the days are starting to lengthen. Brian Croser, one of the founding fathers of the modern Australian wine industry and now one of the world's leading wine consultants, has been opining on the importance of diurnal temperatures for making quality wine.

To expand on that, basically if you have reasonable temperature extremes – hot days and cool, bordering on cold, nights – you are most likely to get top quality grapes. You have vigorous growth when it is warm and sunny, then the cool nights shut down the vine and force it to rest. Simple. And this reminds us that, for all our apparent sophistication, we are all still simple souls. Warmth, sunshine, longer days – we respond like a seed germinating or a bulb bursting into life.

Similarly, the drinks industry is starting to come back to life, having taken stock and calculated whether it had a good, bad or indifferent 2011 and crucially Christmas.

With so many economies still struggling and businesses going bust, 2012 isn't likely to be any better than what has just gone before. There is only so much some can take. The strong and resilient, those with quality, value-for-money products that consumers need or really want, will forge ahead.

Overlying all of this is the fact that the fundamental change in patterns of buying and selling, from bricks to clicks, is happening so quickly you need to be a near genius to keep ahead of the curve, or mouse, or smart phone.

Have a great rest of the year!

Christian Davis *Editor*



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## Diageo pumps €153m into Dublin brewery

**D**iageo has announced a €153 million investment into a 'brewing centre of excellence' at its St James Gate brewery, Dublin.

Beer production will be concentrated at the site, rising to 7m hectoliters, while brewing at Diageo's Dundalk and Kilkenny sites will stop in July 2013 and December 2013 respectively, subject to planning and construction timelines at St James's Gate.

Diageo has also completed the acquisition of the Meta Abo Brewery in Ethiopia for US\$225 million.

## White Zinfandel rosé gets EU green light

**T**he European Union has ratified the use of the rosé wine labelling term White Zinfandel, following lobbying by the WSTA and Diageo.

A dispute broke out last year over the validity of the term, as White Zinfandel is not a grape variety.

Italian authorities impounded a "small volume" of Blossom Hill's White Zinfandel Rosé, but following negotiations at a US/EU bilateral trade agreement meeting in November, the term has been officially recognised in the EU. The impounded stock has since been released.

## CEDC and SPI Group find new partners

**C**entral European Distribution Corporation has signed a five-year agreement to distribute Beam's Jim Beam and Maker's Mark bourbons, Sauza tequila and Teacher's scotch in Poland. Meanwhile, SPI Group has agreed a deal with A Brand New Day Drinks Company to distribute Stolichnaya premium vodka, flavoured, Gold and Elit in the Netherlands.

# Vinexpo reveals NY show details

**I**nternational wine and spirits exhibition Vinexpo has announced it will introduce a business-to-consumer wine tasting event in New York in November.

Rendez-vous by Vinexpo takes place at the Javits Center, 655 West 34th Street, on November 16, 17 and 18. It is expected to showcase 150 exhibitors and attract 5,000-6,000 visitors in the run-up to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Consumers will be asked to pay US\$180 a day and attendance at one of the masterclasses will cost a further \$300. Exhibitors will pay \$6,000 to show their wares.

Vinexpo CEO Robert Beynat said exhibitors will not be able to sell wine as it is illegal for

producers to sell alcohol direct to consumers under the US three-tier system. Exhibitors will have to refer interested consumers to the local distributor.

He sees the show as primarily for wine lovers who want to know and taste more but he also expected major brand owners to be present at Rendez-vous to cater for new wine consumers.

Beynat revealed that R-V New York will be the first of several. He cited London and Tokyo as likely future venues, with the second event around 2013/14. He said they fitted the profile of sufficient interested consumers within an hour of the city.

He cheerfully ruled out Paris, quipping it was "too close to Bordeaux", therefore not necessary.



## Scotch launches

**A**ngus Dundee distillers has launched a range of whiskies under the Charles Hamilton brand. It features Speyside, Highland, Islay and Lowland regions, has been bottled at 40%abv and will available in "key European, duty free and selected world markets". The range is to retail £18-£22 or €22-€26 per bottle.

Glenfiddich Malt Master's Edition has been released by William Grant & Sons to celebrate Glenfiddich's sixth malt master, Brian Kinsman. For more scotch launches see page 10.

## Altia buys Xanté to reinforce Nordic base

Altia Plc is buying the Xanté Company and the Xanté spirits brand from the Swedish Tilander family.

The company says Xanté, which is a blend of sweet Belgian pears and cognac matured for four

years in barrels made from the French Limousine oak, will help reinforce its position in the Nordic alcoholic beverage business and will play an key role in Altia's international portfolio development.

## News In Brief

Industry stories from around the globe

Chivas Bros has introduced global Tea Salon experiential events to target advocacy among bartenders for its Beefeater 24 brand. The super-premium gin is now available in 50 countries.

**The US arm of Japanese drinks company Suntory has joined US trade group the Distilled Spirits Council (DISCUS). Suntory International is the 13th full member of DISCUS. Others include Bacardi, Beam and Diageo.**

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust named its International Educator of the Year as Fine Vintage, the Vancouver, Canada-based approved programme provider run by James Cluer (see page 48).

**The International Cider**

**Challenge has opened for entries. The blind tasting is carried out by an independent panel that judges on taste, appearance and aroma. Contact Samantha Briney by February 29 on 01293 590053 or samantha.briney@offlicencenews.co.uk**



**TOP 5 STORIES  
ON DRINKSINT.COM**

- 1 World's 50 Best Bars 2011 announced
- 2 Direct Wines reshapes team**
- 3 Russian Standard moves into wine
- 4 Stolichnaya launches The Himalayan Edition**
- 5. Label 5 to be distributed by CEDC



# Making staves

Asian demand for whisky has boosted investment in Scotland, says **Lucy Britner**

Asia, Asia, Asia. That's all we read about these days. A recent headline from UK newspaper *The Guardian* reads: "Exports galore – sales of scotch to Asia rise so fast that supplies may run short". Scottish newspaper *Herald Scotland* went with: "Asian boom fuels distiller's earnings." You get the idea.

So sales are flying, the luxury end is up and emerging middle classes are splashing the cash in the bars and shops. But what does it all mean on the ground in Scotland? How does a luxuriously packaged bottle, costing hundreds of pounds, on the table of a glamorous bar in Hong Kong, translate to warehouses and cooperages down single track roads in chilly Scotland?

Infrastructure is the answer. Companies are investing heavily in bigger, better, faster bottling lines, sustainable distilleries and new cooperages.

Most recently, Diageo announced the opening of a £10m (\$15.5m) cooperage in Cambus. The site is near Blackgrange – a facility that warehouses some 3 million of Diageo's 7 million casks in Scotland.

The new cooperage looks like a car manufacturing plant – not surprising considering the company worked with UK-based engineering firm CI Logistics, which works primarily in the automotive industry. Together they custom-designed a series of mechanical conveyors to move the casks – which weigh up to 85kg when empty. The skill of the cooper remains utilised, but the heavy work is no longer a factor.

The cooperage will turn out approximately 250,000 casks each year.

That's not all. The company has also been granted planning permission to expand bottling facilities. Diageo is to spend £5m on a bottling line in Leven which is to focus on luxury products. It would



Mechanical conveyors have transformed the cooperage production process for Diageo

be fair to link this development to the company's performance outlined in Diageo's most recent annual results (published in August 2011). The results read: "Diageo's growth in Asia Pacific was driven by scotch, in particular the super deluxe segment in emerging markets; Johnnie Walker also saw an increase of 16% in volume and 12% in net sales.

"In Korea, Diageo outperformed a declining scotch market with Windsor 12 extending its leadership position, and in China, Diageo's scotch brands gained share in the standard, deluxe and especially the super deluxe segment where incremental marketing spend drove 41% net sales growth in the whisky segment."

John Paterson, site director at Leven said: "We were granted planning permission in early October to expand our bottling facilities. This work is part of our overall restructuring plans that will ensure the long-term sustainability of our operations in Scotland. It builds on the £86m already invested in

the site alongside the creation of some additional 400 full-time equivalent jobs. It represents a further £5m investment and also a number of additional jobs will be created. Construction has commenced and is due to be completed in the summer of 2012."

## Money pours into premium spirits

Diageo isn't the only company splashing the big bucks in Scotland to provide for the Asian boom. Chivas Brothers – the premium gin and scotch whisky arm of Pernod Ricard – has spent tens of millions of pounds.

Christian Porta, chairman and CEO of Chivas Brothers, said: "On average we invest up to £40m a year in our operations facilities. On top of the £10m investment in distilling capacity at The Glenlivet in 2010, there has been significant investment across both our bottling sites in new machinery to improve efficiency and quality."

Porta talked about the company's high aged and limited edition products and said the company is in a "strong position to deliver" against this demand in Asia with its Chivas Regal, Ballantine's and Royal Salute brands.

Porta said Chivas has introduced "at least five" permanent lines aged from 15 to 45 years old in the past five years as well as "strongly growing" its existing portfolio of luxury aged scotch whiskies.

He added: "The commercial success of permanent products such as Royal Salute 62 Gun Salute at \$2,500 (£1,608) in duty free has certainly demonstrated the demand is there."

Clearly both drinks companies were Scouts and remember the motto: "Be prepared."



Diageo's new cooperage in Cambus will turn out 250,000 casks a year

# Jacob's Creek toasts Chinese New Year

 Pernod Ricard Pacific Travel Retail celebrated Chinese New Year (January 23) with a major promotion on Jacob's Creek wine at Sydney international airport.

The activation in The Nuance Group's main departures store included a sampling bar and educational booklets on the Jacob's Creek range for travellers in both Chinese and English.

The brand's vintage collection, which includes St Hugo, Centenary Hill, Johann and Limited Release wines, formed the heart of the promotion and were

presented to customers in silk-lined presentation boxes.

As part of the promotion, Pernod partnered with glassware manufacturer Riedel to offer consumers stemless glasses as part of a Prestige Vintage Collection magnum pack, which also contained a magnum bottle from the vintage range, as well as a normal-sized 75cl bottle.

Prices for these magnum packs, which were presented in a lockable black case wrapped with a ribbon bearing the message 'Happy Chinese New Year', started at A\$400 (£270).



## Chivas promo at Delhi Duty Free

India's largest single travel retailer Delhi Duty Free has launched a major Chivas Regal promotion with Pernod Ricard at Delhi airport's Terminal 3.

The two-month Art of Hosting activation, which ends this month, gives five couples buying a bottle of Chivas Regal 12, 18 or 25 Year Old the chance to win a luxury, five-day trip to either Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, Prague or Barcelona.

The offer also features \$8 off a purchase of two bottles of Chivas Regal 12 Year Old and \$6 off a bottle of Chivas Regal 18 Year Old.



## Patrón eyes Rome listing for 2012

**P**atrón Spirits International has revealed that gaining a listing at Rome's Fiumicino airport is one of its key European travel retail targets during 2012.

Securing a presence at Italy's busiest airport hub was one of Patrón's top three priorities within European travel retail, alongside Paris Charles de Gaulle airport and Greece, both of which it managed to achieve.

"Within Europe, Rome is definitely a travel retail market we're hoping to penetrate in 2012," said Mike Hill, Patrón Spirits vice-president for Europe, Africa and the Middle East. "We're also focused on further increasing Patrón XO Café listings in those locations yet to take it."

Commenting on the wider outlook for growth within the European travel retail market during 2012, Hill said the eurozone economic crisis was a concern.

"We've weathered tough economic conditions before though, and what we continue to see is that those who have disposable income or are travelling on business still have the ability and desire to spend.

"They might not purchase certain expensive items, but luxury spirits are an affordable luxury that people are usually unwilling to forgo."



## First person

Follador Prosecco marketing director **Cristina Follador**



### In a couple of sentences what does your job involve?

I am the main point of contact for both our domestic and international customers. I am responsible for all winery tours and viewings for individuals and companies. I handle the day-to-day communications between the family and the generic Prosecco body [the Consorzio per la Tutela di Conegliano-Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore], keeping up to date with all sector developments.

### What do you like most about your role at Follador?

I enjoy direct contact with customers. My role has developed in the past couple of years, and I now enjoy playing a more pivotal role in the long-term development of Follador internationally.

### What achievement in your career are you proudest of?

My proudest achievement is helping Follador develop from a recognised domestic premium producer

and introducing the brand to international markets. This gives me a great degree of pride. We all feel a sense of pride in maintaining the traditions of our forefathers.

### What was the most useful piece of advice you have been given in your career so far?

Our father has always instilled in us the passion to continually produce only the finest wines. I remember him saying: "Never compromise quality." To this day I always refer to this quote.

### What book is on your bedside table right now?

The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett.

### What's your favourite airport to fly from and why?

Venice. It connects me with our partners and when I return home it reminds me of everything I love about this region.

### What are some of the key challenges facing the travel retail business?

Travel retail was initially developed

because it offered premium products without duty. Over the years, as domestic markets have developed and accessed products globally, I feel the impact of travel retail has been somewhat diluted.

The key challenge is for travel retail to offer truly unique and quality-driven products. The international traveller is an early adopter and is looking to discover the finest quality products.

### What is the most memorable thing you've ever drunk?

I have always enjoyed the Barbera wines from Piedmont, and I remember asking my father in the past to describe its qualities.

### If you could choose, what would you be doing 10 years from now?

Follador has been making great wine since 1769 and it is our responsibility to continue that tradition. I look forward to continuing to develop the finest Prosecco.

# A month in travel retail



Almost a decade ago I was invited to take a day trip to Calais on SeaFrance's new Rodin super-ferry to inspect the onboard shops. The introduction of what was then the largest and fastest ship to sail on the busy Dover-Calais crossing was meant to mark the start of a bold fight-back by a ferry firm battered and bruised by price-cutting rivals Eurotunnel and P&O Ferries, as well as strike action from its own employees.

Despite the introduction of a sister vessel, the Berlioz, two years later in 2005, SeaFrance's bright new future never materialised. Last month, a French court supplied the coup de grâce, liquidating the struggling company after various rescue packages by employees and even rival operators had been rejected.

It's a sad end for SeaFrance and a clear indication of how competitive the cross-Channel ferry market has been since the Eurotunnel opened in 1994 and intra-EU duty free was axed five years later. More recently, the decline in sterling and duty hikes in France have sucked volumes from the once buoyant "booze cruise" trade. Wine, beer and spirit suppliers now have to fight tooth and nail for onboard space.

From an ailing French firm to one doing rather well in the shape of Aelia, whose joint venture shops at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport closed 2011 with spirit and wine sales up a healthy 14% and 18% respectively. It is Russian and Chinese passengers who have been helping the sales chart

move in the right direction and Aelia plans to keep them happy in 2012 with a string of exclusive promotions and launches from the likes of Moët Hennessy, Pernod Ricard and Diageo.

One of the first exclusives to hit the shelves at Paris CDG, Orly and Nice airports last month was a limited-edition Campari bottle designed by colourful Brazilian pop artist Romero Britto, which is being supported by shop window displays. The heart-dominated design is likely to prove a strong gift buy during the run-up to Valentine's Day.

Meanwhile, over in Holland at Amsterdam Schiphol, the term "bling" fails to do justice to the one-off bottle of The Dalmore, which has gone on sale at Schiphol Airport's Retail Fine Spirits & Cigars store at a jaw-dropping €250,000 (£208,850). The stopper of The Dalmore Brilliance Vintage 1926 incorporates a 1.83-carat diamond from the renowned Dutch jeweller Gassan Diamonds.

The whisky inside the exquisitely made crystal decanter is unbelievably rare, containing single malts from 1868, 1926 and 1978. Anyone with pockets deep enough to actually buy The Dalmore Brilliance Vintage 1926 can have the €40,000 (£33,415) diamond removed from the stopper free of charge by Gassan and made into a piece of jewellery.

On one level, exclusive launches such as The Dalmore Brilliance

**With Drinks  
International's specialist  
correspondent,  
Joe Bates**



are all about in-store theatre and the halo effect on sales lower down the price ladder. However, on another level, they provide ample proof that, while Europe continues to struggle economically, the European travel retail liquor business believes it will continue to benefit from a set of super-wealthy, recession-proof travellers, many from emerging markets, who have huge amounts of discretionary income.

As the trading year gets underway in earnest, industry attention is firmly focused on Hong Kong international airport (HKIA), where the winner of the hotly contested duty free liquor and tobacco concession is expected to be announced shortly. With its dream mix of sophisticated Hong Kong residents, mainland Chinese travellers and wealthy ex-pats, the airport is one of the most

important duty free liquor businesses in Asia. In 2010, liquor and tobacco sales there topped \$200m (£128.47m).

Unsurprisingly, the existing concessionaire, Sky Connection, which has operated at the airport since it opened in 1998, has a fight on its hands to retain its contract. The line-up of bidders is rumoured to include operators from China in the shape of Sunrise Duty Free and China Duty Free Group looking to expand outside the Chinese mainland, as well as international retailers such as DFS Group and South Korea's Lotte Duty Free.

The key concern for the ultimate winner will be to try to actually make some money. Airport retail contracts invariably go to those retailers that have bid the highest minimum annual guarantee, which is fine if passenger numbers keep moving in the right direction, but potentially disastrous if there is another SARS outbreak or a long-dormant volcano decides it is time to spring to life.

Risky stuff, but as that old cliché goes "he who dares wins" – playing it safe won't get you very far in the travel retail game.



## In Brief

 The Edrington Group has revealed that it wishes to introduce a new streamlined deluxe Cutty Sark range for Asian duty free at the TFWA Asia Pacific exhibition in Singapore in May. The range is likely to comprise a 12 Year Old, an 18 Year Old and Cutty Storm, a blended malt.

 Malaysia Airlines has appointed Dr Ron Georgiou as its exclusive wine consultant. Australian-born Georgiou, who is also a dentist by profession, is one of only 299 Masters of Wine worldwide.

 Swiss travel retailer Dufry has purchased a controlling 51% stake in Regstaer Group, which operates stores at Moscow's Sheremetyevo and Vnukovo airports. Dufry already has a strong retail presence at both Moscow Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports.

 LS Travel Retail has opened a new tax- and duty-free store at London City airport, which targets its business passenger base. The beefed-up liquor offer comprises more premium whiskies, champagnes and fine wines.

 Brown-Forman has strengthened its travel retail team, creating three new sales roles and promoting industry veteran Monte Wilson. Nick Mogford becomes travel retail director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, while Barbara Burdina has been appointed area manager for central and eastern Europe. Michael Goh has been named as travel retail manager for north Asia. Lastly, Brown-Forman has expanded Monte Wilson's role. The director of travel retail in the Americas' new responsibilities will now include key travel retail accounts worldwide.



## PLYMOUTH GIN (RELAUNCH)

**BRAND OWNER** Chivas Brothers / Pemod Ricard  
**MARKETS** Spain, Australia. This year: US, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Greece and Japan. 2013: UK  
**RRP** €30, AU\$45.99  
**CONTACT** chivas.com

Chivas Brothers is introducing a new look for its Plymouth gin brand, repositioning it above Beefeater 24 as a “super-premium-plus”. With Beefeater 24 priced at around €24, the 41.2% abv Plymouth is being positioned at €30.

Plymouth Navy Strength (57%) and Plymouth Sloe gin (26%) will have new packaging as well. Plymouth gin falls under a European Union protected geographical indication so can only be made in the Devon town in south west England.

It is made in small batches using an old Victorian still. The gin uses seven botanicals with the main ingredient, after juniper, being sweet orange peel. Beefeater uses bitter orange peel.

Chivas said: “The new rounded bottle shape and antique style pay tribute to the unique heritage of Plymouth Gin, while the oval label sees a return to an earlier example of the packaging, enriched with copper to reflect Plymouth’s artisanal credentials.”

## CHASE & RHUBARB LIQUEUR

**BRAND OWNER** Chase Distillery  
**PRICE** £20  
**MARKETS** UK  
**CONTACT** George Shropshire  
 George@williamschase.co.uk

Produced at William Chase’s Herefordshire distillery, the brand’s latest liqueur is made from potato vodka and rhubarb.

The pink drink, which has been exclusively launched to the UK market it time for Valentine’s day, has an abv of 20%, comes in 50cl bottles and is priced at £20.

The vodka and gin producer has described the taste profile as “crisp, light and refreshing” and suggests the liqueur to be drunk as part of a champagne cocktail.

## COLLABORATION

### THE GLENROTHES EDITORS’ CASKS 3828 (1979) AND 9973 (1996)

**BRAND OWNER** Berry Bros & Rudd Spirits  
**RPP** Cask 3828: £600, €700, Cask 9973: \$375, NT\$7,000  
**MARKETS** Cask 3828: Europe Cask 9973: US and Taiwan  
**CONTACT** Cask 3828 robert.whitehead@bbr.com/Cask 9973 (US) Nathalie. Phillips@skyy.com



Berry Bros & Rudd Spirits has teamed up with a group of journalists to launch these two single casks of The Glenrothes whisky.

Editors’ Casks, distilled in 1979 and 1996, were selected in a blind tasting by the French author of *Les Routes du Malt*, Martine Nouet; German drinks magazine publisher Christian H Rosenberg; US-based Noah Rothbaum, who edits *Liquor.com*; and the Taiwanese Houcheng Yao (aka Kingfisher), one of the Malt Maniacs.

Editors’ Cask #3828 (1979) has an abv of 52.1%, while Cask 9973 (1996) has been bottled at 57% abv. Ronnie Cox, brands heritage director, said: “The assiduous quartet was far from concise in its debating. The experts split into two camps and agreed to disagree – a reflection of personal tastes and preferences but two outstanding casks nevertheless.”

## CASA DRAGONES TEQUILA

**BRAND OWNER** Playa Holding Corporation  
**RRP** £165  
**MARKETS** UK, already available in US and Mexico  
**CONTACTS** Sandra Chollet,  
 schollet@casadragones.com

UK drinks specialist Vanquish Wine is to distribute Casa Dragones tequila in the UK following the brand’s debuts in the US and Mexico.

The distribution partnership sees Vanquish hold exclusive rights to the 100% blue agave joven tequila

in the UK. According to Vanquish, which has a private sales and on-trade focus, the Mexican spirit is a “handcrafted sipping tequila” which balances “platinum tequila with a hint of extra añejo”.



## GLENMORANGIE ARTEIN

**BRAND OWNER** The Glenmorangie Company  
**RPP** £69.99  
**MARKETS** Worldwide  
**CONTACT** Sian Deegan, Moët Hennessy UK

Artein is the third release of the Glenmorangie Private Edition range. Translated as ‘stone’ in Scottish Gaelic, Artein is a blend of two-thirds 15-year-old and one-third 21-year-old ex-bourbon matured single malt whisky. The blend has also been finished in Super Tuscan wine casks and bottled at 46% abv.

Priced at £69.99, Glenmorangie Artein joins Finealta and Sonnalta in the Private Edition range. According to the Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned distilling company, stone is “at the heart of the making of Glenmorangie” as the water used in distillation “slowly filters through layers of limestone, adding rich minerals that contribute to the whisky’s complex fruity aromas”.

The distillery is also close to the ancient Hilton of Cadboll Stone – the inspiration behind the motif on the whisky bottle.



**STONE**

## SEEKING CLOSURE

### NOMACORC SELECT 100

**BRAND OWNER** Nomacorc

**RRP** €100/\$132/£84 – €180/\$197/£126 per 1,000 closures (dependent on quantities, market, and terms)

**MARKETS** Global

**CONTACT** Jay Cummins, vice president of global sales JCUMMINS@nomacorc.com



Normacorc's Select 100 has been developed for fragile wines and those requiring extended ageing – including full-bodied reds.

The US-based synthetic cork producer claims the technology also prevents the process of reduction – the occurrence of sulphur compounds due to a paucity of oxygen ingress post-bottling, a fault widely associated with screwcap closures.

Stéphane Vidal, Nomacorc's global director of oenology, said: "Select 100 provides oxygen ingress levels close to zero during the initial stages of wine development, then introduces a low and consistent level of oxygen during later stages of maturation, when wines are most susceptible to reduction. Through this breakthrough process, which manages oxygen in two discrete phases, Select 100 maximises aroma preservation and freshness while preventing the formation of undesirable sulphur off-notes."

### LEEWIN ESTATE 2009 PRELUDE VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY

**BRAND OWNER** Leeuwin Estate

**RRP** €27-32, £22.50-£27, US\$36

**MARKETS** Global

**CONTACT** Simone Furlong, simone@leeuwinestate.com.au

The latest release from Margaret River winery Leeuwin Estate is said to be directed at fine wine enthusiasts worldwide.

The winemaker's tasting notes say: "The bouquet is vibrant and concentrated with pear, peach and lime. Beneath, layers of lemon curd and fig. Lifted frangipani, subtle cinnamon and peanut brittle provide further complexity. The palate is delicately textured with pear, ruby grapefruit and white peach. Hints of wild honey and cashew add complexity to a palate that exudes balanced weight and persistent length."



## SO FINE

### INFORMATION

Products launched within the last two months are eligible for inclusion within this section. Please submit your products for consideration to: christian.davis@drinksint.com

## COOL CUSTOMIER



### NEIGE APPLE ICE WINE

**BRAND OWNER** La Face Cachée de la Pomme

**RRP** £25 (37.5cl in a gift carton)

**MARKETS** Worldwide

**CONTACT** lafacecachee.com

Neige apple ice wine from Montreal, Canada has been compared to quality Sauternes, according to the company. There are two styles: Neige Premiere (11%) and Neige Winter Harvest (9%).

It is said to be a perfect match for desserts and cheese.

### HERMITAGE WOOD FINISH

**BRAND OWNER** Gordon & MacPhail

**RRP** £45, €54, US\$70

**MARKETS** Worldwide

**CONTACT** info@gordonandmacphail.com

Two rare single malt whiskies are being added to Gordon & MacPhail's portfolio of more than 300 whiskies under the firm's Private Collection label.

With redesigned packaging, the two malts have been selected by the Urquhart family, directors of the firm.

Gordon & MacPhail Private Collection Hermitage Wood Finish 1997 (45%) comes from Diageo's Caol Ila distillery on Islay.

Gordon & MacPhail Private Collection Côte Rôtie Wood Finish 1991 (45%) from Linkwood distillery near Elgin has been finished in Côte Rôtie casks for 30 months and is said to have developed rich, summer fruit aromas with vanilla and roasted malt notes. 1,900 bottles have been released for sale.



**The South American spirit may have failed to make much international impact in its 450-year history, but a new generation of producers are determined to change all that, finds Hamish Smith**

# The pisco kids

**E**xplained simply, pisco is a grape spirit made in Peru and Chile. But then, things are rarely simple. The narrative of pisco can be as complex or as concise as the storyteller chooses, or the reader requires. That in mind, refer – or don't – to the potted history of pisco on the final page of this feature.

Certainly, there is an empty seat at the table of global spirits categories which pisco might have occupied were it not for the historical, cultural and geographical pressures that have divided it to its core.

Right now, the pisco category produces about five million nine-litre cases (collective industry estimates). In the context of its Latin American friends, rum, tequila and cachaça, pisco is smaller than minuscule. And because its sales are domestically-dominated – exports are the preserve of the few, not the many – little notice is taken when small gains are made or positive trends occur. But speak to the people of pisco and they will attest to a quiet revolution. In the past decade the seeds of premiumisation have been sewn in both Peru and

Chile and export strategies are now commonplace. In the bars of cities that embrace cocktail culture, pisco has started to gain some traction.

## Peruvian pisco

Peru's production, which varies from the crude to the high-tech ends of artisanal production, is outnumbered in volume terms 7:1 by Chile. Regulations are tighter here than across the border and, as such, producers are required to use only eight varieties of grape, distillation must be to proof – so no water is added – and the spirit cannot be aged.

Author of *The Pisco Book* Gregory Dicum has chronicled the rise of Peruvian pisco. "Since the 90s the economy has been on track, there's been peace and a growing middle class and the creation of an incredible food scene in Lima. These conditions have combined to revive pisco."

This renaissance has seen the birth of a number of outwardly focused brands looking to quality, not quantity. According to Andina – a promotional agency in Peru – the Peruvian Exporters' Association (ADEX) reported a 35% increase in sales value in the year ending October 2011.



**Pisco Portón's Destilería La Calavedo – a wine press dating from 1684**

The main destination of exports was the US (59%), followed by Chile, Spain, Colombia, Japan and Germany.

Dicum continues: "In the past 10 years pisco has transformed in Peru and it's just starting to be exported outside of the country. It's a challenge for exporters as they're coming into markets where Peruvian pisco isn't known and they're having to say: "It has an incredible history – it's actually 400 years old." The export piscos are only a tiny sliver of the variety of piscos produced in Peru, but the good news is that it tends to some of the best ones."

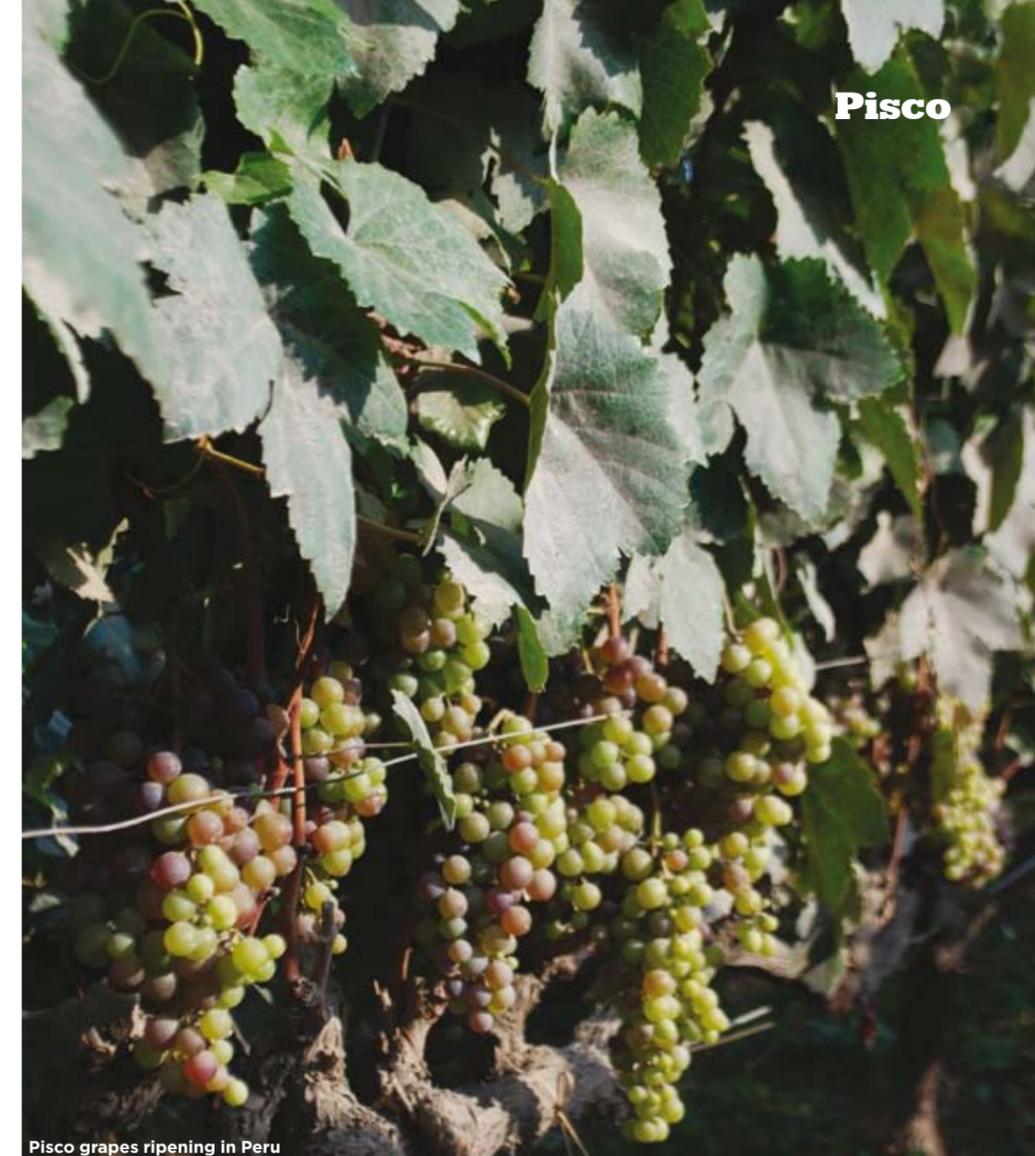
One such brand is Pisco Portón which, in its three short years, has become a front runner in the super-premium, export-focused camp. The brand has been financed to the tune of \$35m by American William Kallop and his son Brent and, under the stewardship

of Peruvian master distiller and pisco bon vivant Johnny Schuler, the brand has grown rapidly.

Schuler says the brand, classified as an anhelado – a blend of grapes – will achieve 100,000 cases in 2012. And the long-term target? "Our ambition is to produce 10 million litres," says Schuler, who also hosts a primetime pisco-themed TV show in Peru. The brand is currently in high-end restaurants and bars in Peru, 28 states in the US and will export to Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, the UK and Spain this year.

"The category doesn't exist yet [in export markets] – we will be creating the category. We will be pulling a train-load of brands that will hitch on to us. It cannot be a one-brand category – in the US there are already 18-20 piscos – but we will be the leaders."

Schuler sees cocktails as key. "It's the cocktail



**Pisco grapes ripening in Peru**

culture that's pulling us. And to make the best cocktail you need the best spirit. We are interested in London, Barcelona, Madrid – hip cities that have a huge and beautiful cocktail culture. Of course, grape makes a wonderful spirit for a cocktail. We're not a vegetable, we're not a cactus, we're not a grain, we're a fruit. Mixologists are having a wonderful time with pisco."

Steve Raye, managing partner at the US-based, self-explanatorily-named agency, Brand Action Team, has his own advice for pisco producers: "Our recommendation is that pisco focuses on competing in the 'white mixable spirit' category that transcends vodka, tequila and rum. Ultimately its emergence has to be driven by consumer interest. In order to get there, however, suppliers have to build awareness of the category and generate the interest and advocacy of mixologists, bartenders and food and beverage directors, retailers and distributors."

## Cocktail hour

The Pisco Sour remains the most common vehicle for pisco – both in Chile and Peru and abroad. But, just as the Mojito and the Caipirinha carry their

respective spirits – rum and cachaça – round the globe, the Sour isn't universally accepted as the right ride for pisco."

"The Pisco Sour is another part of the problem," says *The Pisco Book's* Dicum. "As the quality of pisco plummeted [in the 20th century] it was the perfect drink for masking poor quality pisco. You can pack in sugar, lime and egg then it doesn't matter what pisco you use." Added to this is the cocktail's inaccessibility to mainstream bars or armatures (??).

"Most peoples' experience of pisco is through these cocktails that are quite difficult to make at home," says Dicum. "You have to add egg whites and people are afraid of that."

BarSol is Peru's second biggest export brand and one of the first of the modern era to look beyond home borders since forming in 2001. The brand, which claims to sell around 10,000 cases and expects to double volume within three years, currently exports to 18 European countries, the US, South East Asia, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico.

For Diego Loret de Mola, the brand's founder, the on-trade and restaurants, in particular, represent an opportunity. "The recognition of Peru as

# Pisco

a culinary centre of South America has helped,” he says.

“Yet there is a long journey ahead. At the moment the missing link for pisco to become a mainstream spirit is to be able to have a natural connection between the consumer, the cocktail/spirit and the experience.

“With tequila, [the US] consumer has access to Mexican food, Mexican beaches, Mexican culture and can connect to a Mexican theme in one way or another. At the moment pisco has achieved recognition as something special, hard to get, and connects with people that have had some sort of Peruvian experience.”

## Chilean pisco

Head out of Peru’s southern border and the pisco might assume a yellow tinge from barrel ageing and will have certainly undergone at least two distillations. The powerhouses of CCU (Compañía Cervecerías Unidas) – a large brewery and beverage company – and Capel represent about 90% of the production in Chile.

Capel claims to be the largest pisco producer in the world and through its brands – such as Alto del Carmen, Capel, Cochiguaz Artisan, Monte Fraile and Limari – it offers a plethora of styles and RTD products. According to Capel’s export



director Javier Marcos, the domestic market is showing growth, along with the US and Brazil.

“There is a large market for mass products, however in exports, the premium products market is growing strongly for Capel,” he says. In response to this trend a band of small-scale producers have arrived on the scene.

“The market now shows a clear trend moving from basic pisco to premium,” says Alejandro Aguirre, owner of Pisco Aba – a brand which claims to have seen sales grow by 15% in the past year. “Ten years ago Aba was the first premium pisco launched in Chile. It’s made from the best selection of Muscat grapes from The Elqui Valley, meaning it’s rich in terroir.”

In Chile, Piscalas (pisco and cola) are a popular serve for its national spirit, especially at barbecues and parties, according to Aguirre. But the undisputed king, much like in Peru, is still the Pisco Sour. “Several years ago consumers did not pay much attention to which pisco was used in a Pisco Sour. Now some restaurants are starting to feature a selection of pisco styles on their menus with different prices,” says Aguirre.

Another that sources grapes from the Elqui Valley is Kappa. The super-premium pisco is made from 100% Muscat grapes and even went to the lengths of shipping an alembic still from Cognac.

According to the brand’s owner, Charles de Bournet Marnier Lapostolle, the premiumising trend and newfound attention to exports has seen the creation of Pisco Spirits, an organisation which will promote Chilean pisco in the US.

Aba’s Aguirre explains: “This will be one of the

first chances for all Chilean pisco producers to work together to start shaping the sector. From here, there will hopefully be new markets to explore. Pisco has history. It has been developed by generations of families in northern Chile. It is part of the culture, and identity of Chileans, and is therefore a very exportable product.”

## Generic body

Peru lacks the galvanizing effect of a single-purpose international body. Currently it relies on government organisations which promote Peru’s collective cultural attractions. Perhaps a trans-nation generic body for pisco is the answer.

Lapostolle of Chile’s Kappa certainly agrees – to him pisco is no different from rum, which is also a product of more than one nation. “I think it is key that Chileans and Peruvians work together to build the category,” he says.

Brand Action Team’s Raye outlines the international perception: “One of the big issues in the category is country of origin. Unfortunately that only serves to confuse consumers. While there are some fundamental production differences, at the end of the day, to consumers, pisco is pisco.”

If its history can be archived away and a commonality between Peru and Chile agreed, Pisco would surely be bigger and better as the sum of its parts. Interestingly, in the ancient Peruvian language of Quechua, pisco translates as ‘little bird’. Certainly, up against the pantheon of global spirits categories, the little bird of pisco will need both of its wings if it is to ever really take flight. 

## Getting under the skin of the grape spirit

Pisco came about because of colonialism. Grapes are not native to South America – they arrived with the Spanish more than 500 years ago.

For priests spreading Christianity, no wine meant no mass. Something had to be done and vineyards were planted wherever cities were built. For Peru, it was the evolution from winemaking into distilling when they came into their own. In fact, the spirit was so named because of the port it was shipped from – the little-known town of Pisco.

But for all the country’s 450-year association with pisco, Peru missed a trick, and a rather large one at that.

Chile, having made wine and wine distillate for hundreds of years, gained the protected denomination (DOC) for its own version of pisco in the 1930s. Around the same time, mysteriously, the Chilean town of La Unión changed its name to Pisco Elqui for so called “strategic reasons”. Pisco became officially Chilean.

Peru, meanwhile, was in the midst of a deeply

destructive period. A lost war to Chile (Pacific War 1879-1883) saw land taken and its capital sacked.

There were earthquakes, an endless succession of dictators, the US’s Prohibition – just when the Pisco Punch was gaining popularity – and an ill-conceived land reform programme.

The Pisco Book’s Dicum says: “Quality had plummeted and in the mind of Peruvians, pisco had become associated with gut-rot that desperate old men would drink. There’s a whole generation of people who are now in their 50s and basically in charge of the country who grew up turning their backs on pisco.”

Crucially and somewhat neglectfully, the country failed to gain its own DOC for pisco until 1991.

Johnny Schuler, master distiller of Peru’s Pisco Portón, sums up the feeling in Peru. “The Chileans took the name, but they didn’t take the recipe.”

And, snipe aside, Schuler’s right – the two spirits evolved in isolation so production styles and techniques vary considerably.



Pisco Aba’s Muscat vineyard in Chile’s Elqui Valley

Luxury drinks brands are managing to make the recession work for them, top-global designers tell Lucy Britner

# Driving force



**T**he Rolls Royce. It's a design icon and a euphemism for luxury quality – "It's the Rolls Royce of (insert just about any word here)."

Many believe it's more than just a car, although when you look at it, with its four wheels, steering wheel, engine, seats... it appears it is, well, a car. The BMW-owned Rolls Royce company says it sold 3,538 cars last year, 31% up on 2010 and a new annual sales record for the 107-year-old brand.

And you thought there was a recession? Granted there are some markets that aren't in recession and the company goes on to say that sales in the Asia Pacific region were crucial to its success – rising by 47% on the year before. A familiar tale. Let's face it, a Roller isn't just for popping to the shops in – it sends a message to observers about the driver, in much the same way that a luxury bottle of spirits on a table in a club or given as a

gift says something about the drinker. So luxury isn't just driving sales for Rolls Royce. If you flick back to page seven of this magazine, you'll see that Diageo is investing in a luxury bottling line.

David Rogers, owner and creative partner of UK-based brand and packaging design consultancy We Are Pure, says: "Even through the recession, people have still invested in the odd bit of luxury as a treat and, with home entertaining taking priority over nights out, there's still been a constant need for luxury spirits."

"Obviously there are cheaper alternatives, but the luxury brands have never let their appearance drop for the sake of saving a few pence on packaging and labelling. Packaging plays an important part in the status of a product, and no brand will want to look like it has become a victim of the recession by changing its packaging dramatically.

**The Rolls Royce is the gold standard for luxury in every field**

**Design Bridge's Asa Cook thinks the recession has helped consumers take a more 'down-to-earth' approach to brands**



Brands want to feel consistent and dependable."

Claessens International creative director James Boulton takes this idea a step further and suggests the recession has actually been good for some.

He says: "The global downturn was quite a good time for established brands. People turned to them because they wanted to buy the best quality products and make the most of their limited resources. They found the familiarity of established brands reassuring, equating them with reliability, value and quality."

Do any of those words really sound too promising in innovation terms? "Reassuring, reliability, value..."

But Boulton goes on to say that brand innovation is still important. "You cannot simply recreate old bottle and label designs, as it's vital for brands to be seen to be moving forward and reflecting the times. The difficulty degree is in allowing the consumer to understand the roots of

authentic values, while being relevant to today's lifestyle."

"During a recession, quality remains key in terms of the product itself and the perception of the brand."

## False economy

So what does that all mean when you get to the drawing board?

Packaging design agency Stranger & Stranger's founder and creative director, Kevin Shaw, says producers should avoid making cuts when consumers rein in their spending. "When consumers started spending less, some producers reacted by demanding cheaper packaging, for example, two-colour labels. This is a false economy. At a time when it is harder than ever to get yourself noticed on the shelf, cheap-looking packaging isn't a winning formula. Thankfully, the good ones know that."

Design Bridge design director Asa Cook suggests the recession could be one reason

for the surge in interest in Irish whiskey brand Jameson. In fact, according to Impact Databank's latest figures, sales of the Irish whiskey in the US grew 29% during the first half of 2011. Cook says: "The recession has caused consumers to gravitate towards brands with a slightly more down-to-earth feel and a genuine reason to believe. One example of this trend is the success of Irish whiskey brands such as Jameson. Irish whiskey is typically more down to earth and relatable than scotch whisky, which can be perceived as elitist."

"Brand owners are certainly investing in design as the most effective return on investment, but they need strong thinking so their products really make sense to their consumers. People know when they are having the wool pulled over their eyes and I can't see that changing in the near future."

But it doesn't pay to play it safe all the time. Cook's colleague, Design Bridge

## Design & Packaging



Design Bridge's three Mahiki bottles

creative director Graham Shearsby says that in difficult times, brands should "actively encourage a culture of risk to keep pace with developments in emerging markets".

Shearsby talks about a Diageo project the company worked on – Mahiki Coconut, a liqueur which is the brainchild of its namesake bar in London. He says the project "re-drew the boundaries in its approach and speed, breaking all of Diageo's launch protocols". When I ask how so, Shearsby says: "It was groundbreaking for a brand to use three different designs for one liquid. When we presented to the founders of Mahiki, we saw their faces light up and we knew we had hit the nail on the head. It was right first time, the concept was right and the big idea was right."

He adds: "Brands need to recognise opportunity in risk and to deliver bold, forward-thinking, category-leading results."

## Green flag

Many new words and phrases have crept into our vocabulary over the past few years. Had you heard of a carbon footprint in 2005? What about lightweight glass? And wine

Graham Shearsby at Design Bridge finds 'opportunity in risk' for brands



in Tetra Pak? Are green issues still an issue or have we got bigger, financial fish to fry?

To use the car analogy again, even high-flying BMW has sat up and taken notice of the green curve. The company announced in January that, as the official automotive partner of the London 2012 Olympics, it would roll out low-emission petrol-electric hybrids or electric vehicles. According to the BBC, some 4,000 BMW cars, motorcycles and bicycles are to be on the streets of London this summer.

Christiaan Huynen, group director of business development & marketing at international branding and design consultant Cartils says: "Sustainability is a trend that has gained more ground over the past couple of years and we expect to continue to see such growth over the coming years. Key examples in the drinks industry have been the introduction of plant-based PET as well as lightweight glass. However, the trend is of less influence in the super-premium and luxury category."

Claessens' Boulton says all manufacturers are under pressure to show their sustainability credentials and, while he believes lightweight glass is a plus for the environment and for the pocket, in terms of shipping costs there are still some snags when it comes to perceived value. He uses champagne to make the point.

## No room to devalue

"The problem for many brands – and this is particularly true with champagne – is much of the value for drinks brands comes from their bottling, so there is still a competitive advantage to be had from not moving to lightweight glass," he says. "The last thing any brand wants to be seen to be doing is devaluing its product and, certainly from a consumer perspective, moving to lightweight glass can have this affect."

"What's interesting about the champagne market is the commitment of the [champagne co-ordinating body] CIVC to work towards reducing the weight of bottles across the industry.

Levelling the playing field in this way makes it more likely that this strategy will be adopted across the board. However, there is a technical issue here, too. Champagne is bottled under immense pressure, so you need glass that can withstand this pressure when the bottle is being stored in a riddling rack, where it hangs upside down and is turned regularly. Lightweight glass could present breakage problems."

Design Bridge's Shearsby says his company has been working for the past 10 years to embed sustainability into the design process. His colleague Cook adds: "Sustainability is more of a given these days rather than a specific starting point for a brief. This is because, whether we like it or not, consumers don't buy brands based solely on their environmental credentials."

But Stranger & Stranger's Shaw thinks the responsibility also lies at the retail end of the market. When I ask him if he thinks sustainability and lightweighting are considerations, he says: "No and they should be. The supermarkets have the power to push this a lot more."

Shall the twain ever meet? Can luxury packaging and sustainability ever be comfortable bedfellows? Or, more importantly, should they be? If there's one area where packaging takes up as much of the press release as the liquid, it's

at the luxury end of scotch whisky.

One typical example from *DI* news stories is from a Glenmorangie launch: "The package is a collaboration between French designer Laurence Brabant, who designed the barrique-style Baccarat crystal decanter, and Dutch furniture designer Wouter Scheublin, who designed the box."

But family-owned company Glenfarclas made headlines in 2010 for the opposite reason when it launched its 40 year old whisky, which it says was deliberately not overpackaged to keep the price down. At the time of the launch, Glenfarclas director of sales George Grant was quoted as saying: "Compared to other whiskies of a similar age, this has been priced to open and enjoy."

So I ask design experts what they think



**Cartils has produced a reworking of the design for Snow Queen vodka**

about this. Should the Scotch Whisky Association be called upon to reduce secondary packaging and cut carbon emissions?

Huynen from Cartils sums it up nicely. He says: "Boxes and cartons are still important to the whisky industry as they influence the perceived value (an indicator of premiumness) of a product – a factor which is of importance in a consumer's buying criteria (shelf impact). Therefore banning boxes and cartons will have many negative consequences on the industry as a whole."

## The gift that keeps on giving

He goes on to say that customers looking for gifts may shift to other spirits categories that offer more luxurious packaging. "If it were only the Scotch Whisky Association that was to ban them, then we can safely say all scotch whiskies would lose out to foreign competition which would continue to use them, or to other spirits, for instance bourbon, rum, cognac, vodka, gin, champagne..."

Design Bridge's Cook says secondary packaging is important to the gifting sector. He adds: "As a gifting sector for duty free and premium outlets the box and outer packaging provide an essential story to drive purchasing. It would be risky for an individual whisky distiller not to offer them. That said, if all cartons were banned, consumers would not buy one brand over another for its gift-ability."

Claessens' Boulton suggests a more practical reason for secondary packaging – avoiding damage. He says: "There is a need in certain areas of whisk(e)y sales, due to the prices being paid and the rarity of the product, to ensure packaging is carefully designed to prevent damage while enhancing value through reflecting the high-quality image of the brand. For this reason, consumers, whether sympathetic to green issues or not, will always expect whisky to be packaged in a way that reflects its price, quality and rarity."

I wonder what kind of box a Rolls Royce comes in? Maybe I'll buy one and put it on expenses. **DI**

## Design & packaging trade show calendar

### Luxe Pack Shanghai

March 28-29, 2012 Shanghai International Convention Center

### Luxe Pack New York

May 16-17, 2012 New York

### Pack & Gift 2012

June 13-14 2012 Paris Porte de Versailles

### Luxe Pack Monaco

October 24 thru 26 2012 Monaco Grimaldi Forum [www.luxepack.com](http://www.luxepack.com)

**Left and below: Revamped vodka bottles from Claessens**



Liqueurs  
find their

COOL

Photo: Shutterstock/Monika Oliszewska

## The category is densely populated and very competitive in the mainstream, but there are rich pickings to be had as liqueurs gain a new status. Patience Gould reports

**Y**ou could be forgiven for thinking that the term 'liqueurs' is a catch-all for any alcoholic drink that is sweet and on the sticky side, relatively low in alcohol and as such not a serious alcoholic beverage. But the reality could not be more different. Globally the liqueurs category amounts to more than 85 million nine-litre cases a year and, although growth is not explosive, it is ticking over very nicely.

International growth for this year is expected to be about 5%, and that's well up on the 1%-plus over the past four years. Within the category, fruit liqueurs have been performing well over the past few years, turning in annual growth of 3% (IWSR), and coffee liqueurs are also proving to be something of a hot spot.

Growth is higher in certain key and developing markets, and this is particularly true of the UK, where fruit

liqueurs in value terms increased by 10% in the 12 months ending September (WSET). Japan and the former eastern bloc countries, where the cocktail culture is coming to the fore, are also buoyant stamping grounds, which is all good news for the likes of the high-class French producer Gabriel Boudier and Suntory's melon contender Midori.

"2012 will be the year of the liqueur, with the importance of crafted products with a strong background in the cocktail industry taking priority in most bars where cocktails can be found," says Manuel Terron, Midori's global brand ambassador and mixologist. "Just as with flavoured vodkas, bitters and now spiced rums have caught the attention of bartenders and customers. The time for liqueurs' cool status is just around the corner."

Thanks to consistent investment and ongoing activities behind the Midori brand, global sales are ahead by 6%



Midori's mixologist Manuel Terron is tipping 2012 as 'the year of the liqueur'

and the company has every intention of maintaining the momentum. "The focus for Midori is to show versatility through its use in cocktails and to educate and entice bartenders to mix original drinks," says Terron. "We also want to promote simple mixes that can be easily recreated at home by the average consumer."

This year, Midori will have an up-scale presence at the key industry events around the world including the Moscow Bar Show, Manhattan Cocktail Classic, and Tales of the Cocktail. "We are trying to become top-of-mind for bartenders everywhere by exposing Midori's fresh fruit ingredients and demonstrating the virtues of mixing cocktails with fresh ingredients," says Terron.

Bartenders generally are the prime focus for liqueur producers, but as the cocktail culture takes hold and consumers are more prepared to make their own drinks at home, retailers are beginning

▶ p26

## Liqueurs

to sit up and take notice. This is certainly the case with Gabriel Boudier, who in the UK in conjunction with the number one multiple Tesco, has developed a six-strong range – Creme de Cassis, Curaçao Triple Sec, Apricot Brandy, Blue Curaçao, Crème de Menthe and Cherry Brandy.

Retailing in 50cl bottles from £9 to £12, each liqueur comes with a simple-serve cocktail suggestion, which will change every six months – so clearly the retailer has confidence in this initiative. Tesco's Finest range of liqueurs went on the shelves pre-Christmas and the early signs are very promising.

“When it comes to liqueurs, retailers have not seen the potential – but there is a real opportunity out there,” says James Rackham from Emporia, the UK importer that supplies the Gabriel Boudier range. “This is clearly a development that has huge potential, as consumers are more prepared to make cocktails at home.”

This latest move marks an interesting shift in the liqueurs firmament where on the whole the bartender and mixologists have traditionally been the key target audience. This will not change, but also targeting consumers opens up a potentially massive new market for producers.

Of course, the big names in the liqueur world are the two giant Dutch companies De Kuyper and Bols, the French force Marie Brizard and the up-and-coming Dutch producer Wenneker Distillers. These operations wield huge ranges of liqueurs and in the main their target audience, by necessity, is still the on-trade rather than the consumer.

In this rather more mainstream world, competition is fierce and the need to find new flavours to maintain the competitive edge is a fundamental. Of late, Bols has demonstrated this effectively, with the launches of Bols Foam, and Bols Natural Yoghurt Liqueur.

“There are a tremendous amount of flavours being thrown at the market, but you wonder how long they will last,” says Bols CEO Huub van Doorne. “We are very active in terms of innovation, but the requirements for flavours differ from market to market.”

Available in six flavours, including Blue Curaçao and Amaretto, Bols Foam is a first for the category and at the largest Dutch on-trade fair, the Horecava, the company won the Innovation Award in the Food & Beverages category. “We are very proud of this, because it is a reward for one of the most important innovations in the centuries-old history of

our brand,” says van Doorne. “It adds a whole new dimension to the cocktail and drink experience.”

Bols further reinforces its ties with the international mixologist fraternity via its Bartending Academy. Based in Amsterdam, this now boasts three full-time trainers and has recently taken a reservation for eight bartenders from the US, which underlines the growing reputation of the event.

### Cocktail extravaganza

On a different tack, but with the same goal to reinforce its position with bartenders, Marie Brizard hosts an annual cocktail competition and extravaganza. This year will be the 28<sup>th</sup> International Bartending Seminar, and it “provides a great opportunity” for the company to keep abreast of current and future trends.

“It has always been a key moment for the brand as more than 100 bartenders join us in Bordeaux to compete but also to understand Marie Brizard liqueurs, see our production facility and work with our product,” says Marie Brizard's group marketing chief Aurélie Lory.

The company is currently celebrating the fact that Marie Brizard liqueurs were used in four of the five winning cocktails at last year's IBA convention, which was staged in Warsaw. Of particular pleasure was the fact that its Essence liqueur range, which comprises cinnamon, spicy mix, tea, jasmine, rosemary and violet, took centre stage and not surprisingly this is where the focus will be for the coming year.

“We are looking to concentrate on our new Essence range which got a great welcome from bartenders,” says Lory. “We got a silver medal at the IWSC 2011, and it clearly has great potential. We are also starting to appear on some cocktail menus in high-end bars.”

Other plans for the year include the launch of three more liqueurs, Litchi, Passion Fruit and Green Melon, underlining the importance of adding new flavours. “It is key to our strategy as we have to fit constantly with trends and provide bartenders with liqueurs that will allow them to express their creativity,” says Lory.

Dutch producer Wenneker is finding pockets of growth as it expands into new markets, but the going is none too easy. “There are a limited number of premium ranges and therefore a limited number of distributors,” says the company's export director Richard Ridley. “As a result the going is quite competitive.”



**Bols has targeted the on-trade with variety (above), while Patrón's coffee liqueur XO Cafe (below) is a hit with both bartenders and consumers**



Wenneker boasts a 41-strong liqueur range and is now available in around 50 markets, with the UK and Thailand topping its export league. “Considering there are about 120 markets we should be in – we have a long way still to go – it's daunting but still a big opportunity,” says Ridley.

### Emerging markets

Key developing stamping grounds for cocktails include Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia where, aided by good distributors and training programmes, Wenneker liqueurs are making good headway. “Kazakhstan is very new to the cocktail but indicators are good – consumers are wealthy enough to get involved – and bartenders, though relatively inexperienced, are keen to learn,” says Ridley. “In a presentation we held last November, we had a 100% turnout.”

Another company finding the going tough is the Italian producer Rossi d'Asiago and its Volare range of liqueurs, which feature integral bottle pourers. “It is very competitive because in recent years a lot of new producers have entered this market,” says Rossi d'Asiago's marketing manager Anna Capuzzo.

But in something of a coup, the company recently secured a distribution contract with US importer Kobrand and, not surprisingly, is now “investing heavily in the US market”. Volare is also constantly on the look-out for opportunities to meet demands on the

flavour front, “from partners around the world”.

Most recently it has joined forces with Angostura bitters which will see the development of 20 cocktail recipes made using both brands, among other ingredients, and these recipes will be published in *Drinks International* – which was the magazine selected as its media partner last September.

“The aim of this project is to develop a recipe collection that represents the latest trends in the world of mixology,” says Capuzzo. “One of the coolest aspects of the project will be its interactivity as each recipe will be connected, via a QR [quick response] code, to a video tutorial that shows its execution.”

These videos are then posted on Volare's YouTube channel, Volare In The Mix, which made its debut last September and has received “great feedback” from around the world. In addition, an online cocktail competition using YouTube Volare and Angostura will be launched this year.

While overall it's intensely competitive on the liqueur front, some pockets of the category are storming ahead, especially coffee liqueurs. While this segment is dominated by the Pernod-owned Kahlua, two relative newcomers are making headlines. Most recently Bols has entered the fray



**Marie Brizard (above), Galliano and Gabriel Boudier/Tesco (below) continue to use innovation to extend the reach of their liqueurs**

under its Galliano label with its recent line extension Ristretto – a coffee espresso liqueur. Initially concentrating on its home market Italy, the brand is already proving to be a success.

However, in terms of development, the plaudits have to commend the American Tequila force, the Patrón Spirits Company, which is enjoying growing success with its XO Cafe, a Patrón Silver Tequila-based coffee liqueur that is very more-ish and (mercifully) not too sweet.

“Patrón XO Cafe performed extremely well in 2011, with very substantial growth in markets outside the US,” says the company's director of corporate communications Greg Cohen. “In total, the brand was up 29% in 2011 against the previous year. And internationally, including duty free, Patrón XO Cafe was up more than 83%.”

Patrón XO Cafe's best developing markets are, in addition to duty free, South Africa, Australia, the UK, Canada, Malaysia, Bahamas, the Philippines and Trinidad – and it is gaining the attention of bartenders. “Because of its taste profile, the brand is quite versatile – it's delicious on its own, over ice, or as a chilled shot, or in any number of cocktails,” says Cohen. “Use in cocktails is definitely growing,



as mixologists across the globe are increasingly discovering all they can create with it.”

Indeed, the coffee liqueur has been so successful that the company is already planning a line extension – Patrón XO Cafe Dark Cocoa, a chocolate liqueur, which is also made with Patrón Silver Tequila. This will be initially introduced in the US, but the hope is to expand into international markets.

“Until then, we're focused on building distribution of the base Patrón XO Cafe brand into additional bars, restaurants, hotels and high-end retail establishments,” says Cohen. “We're also focused on growing our other liqueur brand, Patrón Citrónge, a high quality orange liqueur. As margaritas gain in popularity across the world, our message to trade and consumers is to use an authentic Mexican orange liqueur in their cocktail.”

Liqueurs from Galliano and Patrón are arguably easier to market due the simple fact that they have appeal both to the on-trade as well as the consumer – in short they have the best of both worlds.

Indeed this was always the case with brands such as the triple sec Cointreau, the cognac supremo Grand Marnier, the Irish whiskey contender Irish Mist and the scotch whisky-based liqueur Drambuie, which are deemed traditional liqueurs – largely because their alcohol strength is equivalent to a spirit (40%).

These were the brands packaged in their decanter style bottles which

# Liqueurs

reigned supreme on the after-drinks trolley. However, drinking habits have changed: tougher drink-driving laws have made the after-meal drink slot less attractive, thus eroding the position of liqueurs in consumers' drinking repertoire.

But something had to happen to improve prospects, and once again it was the cocktail which proved to be the catalyst for growth. But while Grand Marnier forged a bridge into the world of cocktails and a place in the bartender's mind without changing its presentation, both Irish Mist and most notably Drambuie have had dramatic about-turns. Through new packaging, both now straddle their respective spirits categories as well as their liqueur heritage.

## Trading places

With its latest round of advertising, Drambuie has cemented its dramatic rebirth. "Over the past 15 months, it's been a radical change, which has been very successful," says Drambuie's global marketing director Tim Dewey. "We needed to take the same radical step with our communication. Previously it was not hard-wired enough."

The new global ad campaign under the banner "A Taste of the Extraordinary", primed for 25 to 44-year-old professionals, will front a fully integrated marketing support package that will challenge consumers to re-evaluate the brand and change drinking habits. Unveiled pre-Christmas in the UK, Greece and Chile, the campaign will roll out nationally in the US this year.

"In terms of drinking habits, the brand is in transition," says Dewey. "But research after a presence at key music festivals has shown that consumers are getting the message and are going out to buy a bottle. It's not a battle you win in one day, but we are getting there."

The second raft of advertising will focus on ways to drink the liqueur. To this end the company has a three-tier strategy, which kicks off with the simple/long serve such as Drambuie & Ginger or Coke, or in Latin America Drambuie Lime & Soda.

In the US, the company is concentrating on a range of Rusty cocktails which offers a spin on traditional mixed drinks – ergo the Rusty Margarita. "This is a matter of concentrating on traditional old-style cocktails but with a new spin, and it gives us a way of getting involved," says Dewey. The third tier is primed for the high end of the on-trade – where mixologists are encouraged to produce bespoke cocktails



## A TASTE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY

DISCOVER THE UNIQUE BLEND OF AGED SCOTCH WHISKY, SPICES, HEATHER HONEY & HERBS.

using the brand – "these of course will be harder for consumers to make at home," says Dewey.

This significant Drambuie sea-change has to be managed without offending "a host" of older and traditional Drambuie users. "All we're saying is that it's the same Drambuie – and it doesn't matter how you drink it," says Dewey.

Additionally, the company has fielded a serious line extension, Drambuie 15 Year Old – again emphasising its scotch whisky roots – while offering the more traditional Drambuie user a step up the quality ladder. The 15 Year Old joins the The Royal Legacy of 1745 – a single malt whisky version of Drambuie which was launched in 2009 to mark the centenary of the first commercial bottling of the liqueur, which took place in Edinburgh in 1909.

So it's all go in the Drambuie camp, and the priorities in terms of investment for the coming year will be Chile and Brazil; Chile because the liqueur sector is "very open" and Brazil because it is "a powerhouse for scotch".



## Cocktail champions

### IBA's top cocktails with Marie Brizard Essence liqueurs

**Flairtending Cocktail: gold medal**

**Marek Posluszny, Poland**

#### Sweet Sixties

3cl Bacardi Superior

1.5cl Pagès Védrenne Crème de Cacao

1cl Marie Brizard Rosemary

2cl Monin Fruit Smoothie Strawberry

2cl Lime juice, fresh

**Mixing technique:** Shaker

**Glass:** Durobor Norway

**Garnish:** orange peel, rosemary and bison grass

**Long Drink: silver medal**

**Cristina Jardim Pimenta, Portugal**

#### Atlantic Flower

2cl Bacardi Superior

1.5cl Malibu

1cl Marie Brizard Vanille Madagascar

1.5cl Monin Strawberry

6cl Caraïbos Passion Fruit Nectar

6cl Caraïbos Pineapple Juice

**Mixing technique:** Shaker

**Glass:** Durobor Brek

**Garnish:** cocktail cherry, cucumber, pumpkin and mint

The IBA (International Bartender Association) is a gathering of National Bartenders Guilds from around the world. Founded in 1951, it has 56 member countries.

The Drambuie story underlines the scope for liqueurs in today's drinking world, as indeed does the success story of Baileys, the all-pioneering Irish cream liqueur. But even this cream icon – which sells in excess of 7 million cases a year – has been forced to broaden its options, and since 2008 has introduced Hint of Mint Chocolate, Hint of Coffee, Hazelnut and most recently in the UK Biscotti flavour. In the US, a pre-mix cocktail has made its debut, the Baileys Mudslide.

Without a doubt, the liqueurs category is hugely fragmented, more so than any other in the alcoholic beverage industry – but that's not a bad thing as there are opportunities around the world to be seized. It's definitely not a category to overlook, but as Bols' CEO Huub van Doorne says: "It's a very busy category – and one that's underestimated because it is so fragmented." **DI**

The ebullient head of the Vinexpo exhibition company was recently dismissive of white wines, saying that the world and, more crucially, the huge emerging Chinese market, wants red wines.

Robert Beynat was speaking at a briefing in London regarding the forthcoming Vinexpo Asia Pacific show in Hong Kong. To promote the importance and selling potential of the exhibition and to get editorial coverage he commissions the IWSR (International Wine & Spirits Research) to research global markets for wine and spirits.

In an off-the-cuff-remark, Beynat says: “White wine is declining everywhere – not Burgundy though. People drink more wine with food. White wine is more an aperitif and people drink vodka instead.”

Speaking specifically about China, he went on to smash the conception that white wine (and many would say German white wine in particular) is perfectly suited to Asian food. He says: “Not true. They prefer red. Château Lafite is red and that is the most well-known wine in China.”

Beynat says chefs in China had demonstrated that red wine perfectly accompanies their cuisines. He also added that it is women in China who buy the wine.

With this feature on German wine looming, Beynat’s remarks, albeit off the cuff, were ringing in my ears.

**The position**

Where does that leave a predominately white wine producer such as Germany? Well, it seems to be in a good place. Although a long-established, world-class wine producer, it is small and of the less sexy Old World (Beynat dismissed the Old and New World descriptors, calling for the wine world to be redefined with China and India as the new New World producers). But small can be beautiful, particularly in global wine.

A small harvest in 2010 (7.1 million hectolitres, the lowest in 25 years) meant prices rose and German wines lost some shelf space in multiple retailers. Not good, but hardly a disaster.

Steffen Schindler, marketing director, Deutsches Weininstitut (German Wine Institute) says: “The 2011 vintage is coming in at around 9m hl, which is average. It is the best thing we can ask for. We hope to keep the slightly higher prices but would like to win back some



**German wines are world class but they are predominately white and the world wants red. It is a niche player in terms of volume, so how is it doing, asks Christian Davis**

# Small is beautiful

of the lost shelf space. We are steadily pulling out of lower price brackets.

“We are back on track in the US after the high price of the euro was a problem,” he adds.

Schindler touches on the sensitive underbelly of German wine. While the institute and most of the major export players have been heavily promoting Germany’s world-class Rieslings and latterly Pinot Noirs (see panel), there are still a lot of down-market 1.5-litre flagons of Liebraumilch and Hock in old markets such as the UK. They represent significant volumes but are extremely low margin bottom-shelf supermarket ‘lubricants’, essentially for ageing drinkers or

**Small vineyards on steep hills in picturesque landscapes – niche**

students who are looking for something unchallenging, cheap and cheerful to drink.

Dirk Gennrich, export director of Mosel-based producer ZGM, summed it up: “One of the main challenges we are facing in the UK market is the antiquated image of German wine and the lack of consumer interest in Pinot Noir, Pinot Grigio and Rivaner from Germany.

“The key to putting this right lies in the promotion of modern-style wines such as our Rivaner/Pinot Grigio, as opposed to Liebraumilch and Hock, which will help us to gain back market share in the UK.”

But let us not dwell on the substrata ‘oil’ that keeps the wheels of the German

wine industry turning. The institute rightly concentrates its efforts primarily on the country’s world-class Rieslings, a variety lauded by such Masters of Wine as Jancis Robinson, who regard it as the noblest of white wine grape varieties, capable of long-term ageing.

Marian Kopp managing director of the co-operative Niederkirchener Weinmacher, which recently merged with another co-operative, Deutsches Weintor, to create a “new German wine powerhouse”, sees German wines falling into three brackets:

- low end, former ‘Liebraumilch’ category
- premium segment, ‘modern Germany’:

Rieslings, dry to off-dry with innovative packaging on the levels of New World branding

● premium segment with high ‘pull’ from US and Asian markets (VDP wineries, ultra-premium and noble late harvest).

Kopp used to head up Racke and recently returned from the US where he led a joint venture between Racke and South African producer KWV. He tells *Drinks International*: “German wines are being reinvented now at the very top level with some great sales successes.”

He says Niederkirchener Weinmacher has been active for some years in the premium segment (US \$10) ▶ p32

**Top positions for Pinot Noir**

German Pinot Noir took seven of the top 10 positions in a recent International Pinot Noir tasting. The blind tasting, which took place in London, was organised by the German Wine Institute, chaired by Tim Atkin MW and judged by a world-class panel of wine experts.

The top-placed German wine was the 2008 Winzerhof Thörlé Spätburgunder Hölle from the Pfalz, which came in third position behind Oregon’s 2009 Anticatererra Pinot Noir and the Californian 2008 Au Bon Climat Isabelle.

The other top-placed German wines included the 2009 Rudolf Fürst Centgrafenberg Spätburgunder, 2007 Ziereisen Spätburgunder Jaspis Alte Reben, 2008 Gutzler Westhofener Morstein Spätburgunder, 2008 Ziereisen Spätburgunder Schulen, 2009 Jean Stodden Alte Reben Spätburgunder and 2009 Heitlinger GmbH Königsbecher Spätburgunder.

The judges were: Tim Atkin MW, Hamish Anderson, Jancis Robinson MW, Xavier Rousset MS, Christine Parkinson, Peter McCombie MW, Anthony Rose, Gearoid Devaney MS, Ronan Sayburn, Stephen Brook, Matthew Jukes and Stephan Reinhardt.

The institute says the event was the brainchild of Atkin and Hamish Anderson, who visited Germany the year before last and were so impressed by the quality of the Pinot Noirs they tasted that they challenged the German Wine Institute to hold a comparative tasting, pitting German Pinot Noir against some of the world’s most revered Pinot Noir producers from Burgundy, New Zealand and Oregon, among others.

They returned to the Rheingau last September for a pre-tasting of more than 300 German Pinot Noirs in order to select the top 20. The Pinot Noirs from non-German producers were also selected by Atkin, following a visit to the International Pinot Noir Celebration in Oregon.



# German Wine



**Steffen Schindler: Riesling is the re-positioner of Germany as a world-class wine producer**

consumer) with its brand Blue Fish Original Riesling. He sees 'modern Germany' as the key driver.

Schindler says: "For many years our marketing strategy on foreign markets was very much focused on Riesling. We used Riesling to re-position Germany as a producer of world-class white wines and to overcome stereotypes. This strategy has definitely paid off, at least when it comes to people in the trade, sommeliers, journalists, but it may take a little more time to filter down to every typical consumer in some of our markets."

"For a few years now we have included Spätburgunder, or Pinot Noir as a second 'message' in our marketing activities. On one hand this seems an ever greater task than the re-positioning of Riesling because nobody thought of Germany as a red wine country in the first place, but on the other hand there is the advantage that the overall image of German wine has improved dramatically over the past decade and that Pinot Noir can profit from a growing interest in German wine."

"It certainly helps that Germany is the third biggest producer of Pinot Noir in the world and that many wine writers have endorsed our major red variety in recent years." (See panel again.)

Ernst Loosen, the outspoken and mercurial owner of Dr Loosen, rejoins: "In the German home market, the three Pinot varieties (Gris, Blanc and Noir) and domestic red blends are becoming very popular. But for the international



market, Riesling is still the king of German wine. The international export market is very important for us, and we think there is still enormous potential for growth with German wines. The focus for German wines internationally clearly needs to remain with Riesling. This is the variety that defines Germany as a wine-producing nation.

He adds: "There is a trend towards well-balanced, drier styles. Improved viticulture, better cellar practices and, to be perfectly honest, the warming climate, have made balanced, full-bodied dry Rieslings much more possible in Germany, even in very cool regions such as the Mosel."

Loosen reports that an international coalition of Riesling producers will host major Riesling events around the world each year. The next event is the Frankland Estate International Riesling Tasting in Sydney, Australia (February 6-7). In July 2013, Dr. Loosen will co-host the fourth Riesling Rendezvous in Washington, with Chateau Ste. Michelle. Loosen's other

**Germany is predominantly a white wine country but its reds are starting to attract attention too**

coalition partner, Weingut Robert Weil in the Rheingau, will host the International Riesling Symposium in Germany in November 2014.

Germany's key markets remain the usual suspects: US, UK and the Netherlands. Despite what Beynat says, China, including Hong Kong, is coming up fast.

Schindler says there isn't an institute outpost yet but they have produced a brochure on wine and Asian cuisines (bad luck), a booklet explaining the wine and there is a website in the making.

## Germany's top export markets

- 1 US
- 2 UK
- 3 Netherlands
- 4 Norway
- 5 Russia
- 6 China (inc Hong Kong)
- 7 Canada
- 8 Sweden
- 9 Japan
- 10 France

Source: Deutsches Weininstitut

## Niche player

Armin Wagner, export director, at Langguth, owner of the Blue Nun brand, says proudly: "There has been a lot of hype but we have been in China for 15 years so it is not new to us and we have been in Thailand and Japan for 30 years."

"We are seeing Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Dornfelder taking on almost an equal role to the whites.

We have to accept that the

► p34

# German Wine

German category is a niche player internationally. Nine million hectolitres by its nature is niche compared to our near neighbours. We are not mass market, we cannot be. We have to work on concepts and look for upgrades. It is an ongoing challenge. We have to act as a niche player but not be defensive.

“We must concentrate on specialities and excellent quality as our costs are high anyway. German competence is primarily with white wine but Pinot Noir is a positive aspect.”

To that end Langguth last year relaunched four wines – its Blue Nun Riesling, Pinot Noir, Dornfelder rosé and Pinot Grigio. The original Blue Nun in its fluted blue bottle is now exclusively from the Rivaner grape.

Langguth’s key markets are Scandinavia, UK and the Americas as well as Asia, he says: “And then there is eastern Europe where we have been doing business for 20 years.”

The other big German brand is Black Tower, owned by Reh Kendermann. Joint managing director Nik Schritz tells *Drinks International* that he wants to “be



in the main field”, but acknowledges that the likes of Silvaner, Dornfelder and Pinot Noir are niche varieties compared to the global palate busters of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with a little bit of Tempranillo.

Schritz says the company is pushing Riesling where there is a demand for it. He says it is “like pushing water uphill in the UK”, whereas in the US, the Nordics and China it chimes.

Norway is interesting. It is Germany’s fourth biggest market and its best performing. Every third litre of white wine consumed is German. How come? Is it just that there is a buyer in the monopoly that loves German wine? Schindler puts it down to two things. Firstly, the Norwegians eat a lot of fish. Secondly, he thinks the Norwegians are influenced heavily by some British wine writers who have eulogised about German Rieslings.

Wagner at Langguth points to another trend he describes as a “longer burn”, which is German wines’ natural low alcohol. He says: “There is more talk about it than the consumer asking for it but certainly the trend it will become more important.”

He undoubtedly has a point and, ironically, at the time of writing Langguth

has just announced the launch of Blue Nun Delicate, a range of four 5.5% wine-based drinks made with “full-bodied, aromatic wine and fruit flavours, claiming to bring a different and exciting addition to the category”.

## Lower alcohol

Maybe not something for the purists but, with the likes of Eisberg – the non-alcoholic wine made in Germany – Germany is seen as the home of lower-alcohol wines and wine-based drinks. Supermarket buyers, conscious of media and government pressures, are increasingly looking to offer low alcohol products.

Germany maybe niche and its expertise predominately in white wine, but its industry is highly organised and totally focused. It knows what it is good at so it plays to its strengths. Germany also knows that the wine trade and wine drinkers like to play and dabble, so they have aces up their sleeves with Pinot Noir and alternative white grape varieties. On top of that, as long as the climate does not continue to warm (and that throws up other opportunities as southern France, Spain and Italy become semi-deserts), they can offer refreshing lower-alcohol wines to health conscious drinkers.

International, niche, can be nice. **DI**



(Top) Armin Wagner  
(Left) Marian Kopp

## Key Facts

### Germany is:

- the third largest producer of Pinot Noir in the world
- the world’s largest producer of Silvaner
- the biggest maker of Pinot Blanc and Lemberger (Blafrankisch) wines
- German Riesling has been established internationally
- Riesling defines Germany as a world-class wine producer
- 75 to 80% of German wines are consumed within the home market
- For a wine-producing country, Germany is significantly open, with approximately 46% of wine drunk on the domestic market being local
- The share of white wines drunk domestically is increasing (46% to 48% in 2010) and plantings of white wine varieties rose from 63.6% to 64.1%
- Organic vineyards represent 5% (5,000ha) of Germany’s plantings, The area has doubled in four years – one of the highest proportions worldwide.

**T**he ProWein exhibition seems to continue to do the running when it comes to trade shows in Europe. It is bigger this year and there is a new hall called 7.1. That will be the platform or showcase for organic wines, which now account for 5% of total area under cultivation in German vineyards and 8% in Austria.

The largest producer of organic wines in terms of area is Spain, with approximately 54,000ha. Fepeco (Federación Española de Empresas con Productos Ecológicos), the body for Spanish table wine and sherry producers, will be represented in the new hall along with other like-minded organisations.

Despite the ProWein name, organiser Messe Düsseldorf says it has lined up some 300 spirits suppliers. In the Spirits Hall, 7a, bartenders have been lined up to show off their recipes in the Fizz Lounge. Apparently a guy from the Ritz Curtain Club in Berlin, Arnd Heißen, is developing drinks to go with perfumes. Whatever next? A beer to go with your underarm deodorant? The Fizz lounge sounds like a must.

For buyers and specifiers specifically interested in matching wine with food, Hall 6 is the place to go. Around 30 exhibitors will be showing quality delicatessen-type foods which are said to be perfect for either wine or spirits. Participants come from Germany, Spain and Italy in particular.

The central tasting zone, one of the show highlights where visitors can taste upwards of 1,000 wines, is moving to the new hall, 7.1, which is near the north entrance. This year the theme is Wines of Origin. The organisers say: "People will be able to discover exciting, authentic wines from all over the world, which express the regional growing conditions along with their own recognisable wine profile."

**Exhibitor news**

**Wine Intelligence takes a stand for the first time**

Wine Intelligence will be taking a stand at ProWein for the first time and will be hosting a seminar programme on Tuesday March 6.

Wine Intelligence, the leading UK research-led strategy consultancy, recently announced that it is merging with Wine-Networks, the German-based wine industry consultancy business owned by Wilhelm Lerner.

Wine-Networks is a consulting and research business that serves the wine industry principally in Germany, Austria, Italy and eastern Europe. Its main clients include Sopexa Germany, Felix Solis, Wines of New Zealand, Osborne, Wines of Chile and Casella.

Wine Intelligence has 60 clients in 25 countries. It has associate offices in the US, France, Australia and South Africa.

The companies have worked together for the past eight years.

Wilhelm Lerner will join Wine Intelligence as associate director, country manager – Germany.

His main areas of focus for Wine Intelligence's clients will be identifying market opportunities in Germany and other parts of central and eastern Europe. Lerner will continue to work for Arthur D Little as partner in its Frankfurt office.

**New Look City of London Gin and James Brookes Range**

Burlington Drinks is unveiling the new design of its City of London Gin at Prowein. Hall 7a, stand B15.

Burlington says City of London Gin is a premium London Dry Gin distilled to an original gin recipe. It features nine botanicals including juniper and angelica.

Its James Brookes range has been

**ProWein organisers are expecting more than 3,700 exhibitors for next month's show in Dusseldorf. Christian Davis raises the curtain**

**On with the show**

**ProWein 2012**

International Trade Fair Wines and Spirits. For trade visitors only

**Organiser:** Messe Düsseldorf GmbH

**Venue:** Düsseldorf, Exhibition Centre, Halls 3-6, 7a, 7.0 + 7.1

**Dates:** March 4-6.

**Opening hours:** daily from 9am to 6pm

[www.messe-duesseldorf.de](http://www.messe-duesseldorf.de)

re-launched and upgraded to offer a high quality package at a competitive price. The range includes James Brookes whisky, gin and vodka. James Brookes whisky is a three-year-old blended scotch from the Scottish Highlands. James Brookes vodka is a triple-distilled vodka from 100% grain spirit and James Brookes gin is a London dry gin (40%).

**Hayman Distillers has second batch of 1850 Reserve**

Hayman Distillers will be showing the second batch of Hayman's 1850 Reserve. Hayman's 1850 Reserve is distilled to a recipe from the 1850s which is then cask-rested in scotch whisky barrels for three to four weeks following the tradition of Gin Palace-style gin. Hall: 7a, stand: B15

Hayman's 1850 Reserve is

distilled in small batches of 5,000 bottles to a specific gin recipe with juniper and coriander being the key botanicals. Each bottle is individually numbered alongside the batch number. Smith & Cross Traditional Pot Still Jamaica Rum (navy strength: 57%) will also be on the stand.

**German Wine Institute presents regional wines**

The German Wine Institute (DWI) is using a regional focus to highlight

the German Tourism Board's focus on German wine regions as a tourist destination in 2012.

Visitors will have the opportunity to taste wines from all 13 German wine-growing regions at the tasting zone on the DWI stand (4G86).

The wines shown will be chosen by regional wine associations, will be typical of the region they come from, and will cover all price points, from entry level to premium.

A press conference with DWI managing

director Monika Reule will be held in English at 11.30am on Monday March 5. This will focus on the market position of German wine on a domestic and international level.

The DWI will be holding networking events for buyers and sommeliers from across the world during ProWein, including the Orange Hour, an event for Dutch wine business professionals on March 4, and the Nordic Icebreaker for Scandinavian visitors, also on March 5.

**ProWein Research**

Conducted by Wine Intelligence in China, US, Germany and the UK

**The headlines**

All four countries care about alcohol content of wine and are increasingly looking for lower alcohol wines. Consumers care about the country of origin, especially China. Organic, sustainable and Fairtrade wines are especially important to German and Chinese drinkers and only to some extent to US consumers. UK consumers are not particularly bothered. German consumers are willing to pay more than €5 a bottle. France is more popular than Australia in the strategically important UK market, particularly among younger wine drinkers.

**China**

Chile is the second preferred country of origin. France is the clear leader with 57% preference among upper middle class wine drinkers, followed by Chile (10%), China (5%), Italy (4%) and Australia (3%).

Young wine drinkers (18-29) are more likely to choose white (8%) and to say they don't know or don't care which colour their ideal wine is (9). Chile is more popular among men and 30-plus.

Argentina is more popular among women and 18 to 29-year-olds.

Women are more likely to choose Italian wine than men.

**Germany**

43% of German regular wine drinkers claim that their "ideal" bottle of wine costs €5 or more.

Key drivers of this:

Red wine

Men: their average is €5.06 but their "ideal red" is €5.25

Countries of origin: average price for ideal German wine is: €4.82.

France: €5.44, Italy: €5.22, Spain: €5.55, South Africa: €5.07.

**US**

Red wine is considered more premium.

Natural cork remains the preferred choice.

18 to 34s most likely to view white wine as their ideal wine.

Preferred white wine by age: 18 to 34s prefer Pinot Grigio; 35 to 44s and 55-plus prefer Riesling; 45 to 54s prefer Chardonnay.

**UK**

Abv does matter and women and drinkers of white wine are looking for lighter styles.

15% of regular wine drinkers say their ideal wine is from France, yet Australia is the UK's leading source of imported wine.

Affinity to French wines is greater among men.

16% of young wine drinkers (18 to 34s) opt for France with Australia lying fifth behind Italy, Chile and Spain.

UK regular wine drinkers favour screw cap over natural cork closures, but men prefer cork; women screwcap.





## From our own correspondent



*In his regular column for DI, David Wrigley, the WSET's international development director, is moving on to look at some of the various providers of WSET qualifications around the world, highlighting the opportunities – and problems – they face as they look to satisfy the global thirst for wine and spirit knowledge*

**W**hat better place to start than in Canada, with a commentary from James Cluer MW, who runs Fine Vintage. James received the coveted Riedel Trophy for the WSET International Educator of the Year at the WSET's annual Awards & Graduation Ceremony in London's Guildhall on January 23rd. But James wasn't just satisfied with Canada – he saw opportunities farther afield, as he explains here.

"I sat my first WSET course when I was 18 while working for an importer in Hong Kong. At the time, my boss said it was required training if I hoped to have a career in the drinks business. And he was right – WSET courses are the gold standard in wine and spirit education, with international recognition.

"The courses were very useful to me personally. They helped me get job offers and also gave me a degree of credibility with my peers. I had no idea that one day our core business would be offering WSET courses in several cities in Canada, as well as to thousands of cabin crew at an airline in the Middle East, and various hotel chains, retailers and local governments.

"Fine Vintage began providing the courses in 2005. We wanted to offer students expert instruction, extensive tastings of top quality wines, a professional yet fun atmosphere, and to administrate the courses and exams efficiently.

"Once we had set our programme in place we started opening schools. Today we have an active enrollment in six Canadian cities, including major centres such as Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and now Montreal. We found that at least 50% of students were taking the courses for general interest, and those in the trade were doing them for the same reasons that I did a few decades ago.

"We also contacted various Liquor Control Boards and offered our services to train their

**James Cluer MW explains the role of his Canadian company, Fine Vintage, in providing WSET training to top airline Qatar**

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"Fortunately, I am still working with Qatar and over the years it has won several awards at the prestigious Cellars in the Sky competition. It is currently considered to have one of the best wine programmes in the sky.

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"The level of interest in wine education is growing in many parts of the world. When people in the trade and others research the possibilities they seem to conclude that the WSET courses are the very best. After that, it's just a question of who you take the WSET course from. There are hundreds of providers around the world, each offering different learning options, and at Fine Vintage we like to think we have got it about right."

Watch out for the next issue of *Drinks International*, when we will look at another provider of WSET programmes from around the world.

Contact David Wrigley at [dwrigley@wset.co.uk](mailto:dwrigley@wset.co.uk) or via [wsetglobal.com](http://wsetglobal.com)

# Seismic shift in South American Wines

Report: Christian Davis

**T**here has been a seismic shift in the Chilean and Argentinian wine industries, according to some leading experts.

Master of Wine Peter Richards was speaking at a seminar on South American wines last month in London.

The author of a definitive book on Chile, Richards said the two main wine-producing countries in South America were growing so fast that there has been a “seismic shift in the two competing industries”. He went on to say in his opening remarks that it was “a time of great opportunity and there were opportunities as well as risks”.

Tim Atkin MW chaired the conference, which was sponsored by Santa Rita Estates, the major Chilean wine producer that farms 4,000ha in both Chile and Argentina. Atkin said that when he first visited Chile in December 1990 there were 11 companies that exported their wines. There are now 300.

While Argentina is a long-standing, traditional grape grower – the 10th largest in the world – in 1989 Chile produced only 400 million litres of wine a year – valued at US\$35m and of which 7% was exported. Chile is now the largest exporter of wine in the world after Australia and was increasingly looking to new markets such as Brazil, China and Canada. It

now produces 1 billion litres – worth \$1.4bn and of which 70% is exported. It was also described as the most consolidated wine-producing nation in the world.

Attendees tasted flights of Chilean and Argentinian Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Carmenère and Malbec. There was a major presentation by Brian Croser, one of the founders of the modern Australian wine industry and one of the world’s most respected consultants on vineyard management and winemaking.

During the Chardonnay flight Atkin commented that he was “appalled” by the ABC (Anything But Chardonnay) campaign. The well-known journalist and broadcaster said that, in his opinion, Chardonnay – the grape variety of white Burgundies such as Chablis – was a more noble grape variety than Riesling. He said we are living in a “golden age of Chardonnay”, adding that he had recently tasted a Chardonnay from one of Argentinian producer Catena’s highest vineyards and it was “one of the greatest Chardonnays I have ever tasted”.

## Moves to diversify

Richards in his address, titled Heritage & Heresy, warned that Chile was not going to be a “low cost producer (of wine) forever”. Therefore Chilean moves to more diversity in its wine offerings, more premium wines and plantings near to the coast and closer



View from the venue, Altitude in Millbank Tower by the Thames, London

to the Andes to seek more elegant wines, was to be applauded.

Argentina is widely regarded as having the highest commercial vineyards in the world. There are some at just over 3,000m above sea level. Richards told the seminar audience that a vineyard was currently being planted at 3,500m in Chile’s Atacama desert as part of a mining company’s social welfare project. *Drinks International* asked what grape varieties were being planted but Richards had no further details.

Brian Croser gave a quite technical presentation revolving primarily around optimum diurnal temperature ranges for wine grape growing, the genetics of varieties, Cabernet Franc being the ‘father’ of Carmenère and Malbec and Pyrazines. He said the Chilean wine industry was centred on the Cabernet family of grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Carmenere and spoke of the “rewards of refining that base”.

Croser went on to talk about the new exciting matrix of possibilities in familiar varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Pinot Noir. Also, he sees tremendous opportunities in cool southern Chile for sparkling wine grape varieties.

Croser complimented Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon saying that it had spicy briary notes plus the essence of Cabernet: mulberry, cassis on a

plain of grainy, fine, savoury tannins that were virtually unique to Chile and quite different from Bordeaux and Napa Valley Cabernets. He cited Western Australia’s Margaret River and south-eastern Australia’s Coonawarra as the only regions which produced Cabernets of similar distinction.

On Malbec, Croser said that Argentina had managed to get a fleshiness in its texture that Australia had failed to get. Atkin said he preferred the new generation of Argentinian Malbecs, which were fresher compared to those of some well-known consultants such as Michel Rolland or Paul Hobbs which he found he could only drink one glass of.

In an amusing aside, Atkin asked whether Chile’s ‘unique’ grape, Carmenère was a “first division grape variety”.

Richards, after some hesitation, said he thought it was. A far more sceptical Atkin gave a football analogy: “It has recently been promoted to the Premier League (UK football’s first division) and under new management it may avoid relegation but it will never make Europe, the Champions’ League.”

He felt that for Carmenère to succeed as a single grape variety in a wine, where the vines were planted and who was the winemaker or consultant (nod to Croser) was crucial – more crucial than with other leading grape varieties. The two best Carmenères in the Carmenère flight both turned out to be blends.



Tim Atkin, Andres Ilabaca and Brian Croser get to grips with the tasting





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# Whisky

For as long as I can remember I have travelled – for interest, for work but mostly for Johnnie Walker. Going to bars isn't quite in the job description, but it might as well be. Twenty-four years later and I have seen a few. Some good, some bad, some great, but all different. It should be so straightforward, a venue – some bottles, some glasses and paying clientele – but it is not.

The bars listed here are among my favourites because they are at the top of this impossible game. Most have a very real sense of geographic identity; all have incredible staff, skill and service that you never notice but which is omnipresent.

There are many that are not on this list because a) they are secret: there is a bar in Sydney where Austin Powers would simply blend into the walls and

you're not getting that one from me; or b) I can't remember exact locations. Like the small riverside bar in Saigon that mixed chocolate with scotch in a bain marie then chilled it. Served in small glasses as the sun went down, sublime.

In the end these are all experiences. There is nothing like arriving at these 10. They all surprised me when I first went there and they all embody that magical combination of style and substance. All of them form a wonderful sensory map of the world over time. These are destinations for those who like to/have to travel but want to find something extraordinary, welcoming and ultimately memorable.

Jonathan Driver, global brand ambassador, Johnnie Walker Blue Label

## World bars: quest for the best

This month, well-travelled whisky expert Jonathan Driver shares his take on the World's Best Whisky Bars

Shutterstock/Alexey Lysenko

**CAMPBELL APARTMENT**  
15 Grand Central Station, Vanderbilt Avenue, New York 10017  
hospitalityholidays.com

#1



Shutterstock/SeanParonePhoto

New York, the ritual. Grand Central Station, the Oyster Bar and evening drinks at the Campbell Apartment. Voted best bar in America by *Playboy* (natch), this is open to all but a devil to find. Once the luxurious office of tycoon John W Campbell, it was rediscovered in the 1990s when the station had its facelift. There is a curious *Mad Men* meets *The Borgias* combo in the design. Baroque decoration, leaded windows, medieval fireplaces and a very cool NY clientele mere yards from the tracks. Johnnie Walker Black Label, rocks, delivered with surgical precision to the discerning rail migrant.

**ANGEL'S SHARE**  
2/F, Amber Lodge 23 Hollywood Road Central, Hong Kong  
angelsshare.hk

The traveller's city, Hong Kong. My favourite harbour in the world. Just above Central is Lan Kwai Fong, an insanely concentrated entertainment district packed with bars, restaurants and bustle. Charlene Dawes, the glamorous owner of the Angel's Share in LKF holds court in a beautiful repository of fine taste and flavours. Smoke wafts over the glasses for a multisensory whisky cocktail. The drinks and attention to detail and fun is that wonderful Hong Kong amalgam of 1920s classics and 21st century experimentation. As befits a trading entrepot, the Angel's Share is an emporium of the exotic and delicious. They have fish and chips too.



#2

## FOCUS ON WHISKY

### NEWYORK BAR

**Park Hyatt Hotel, Nishi-Shinjuku**  
[tokyo.park.hyatt.com](http://tokyo.park.hyatt.com)

There is always going to be Tokyo. More bars than anywhere else on earth. Choosing a favourite bar in Japan is like choosing a favourite offspring – pretty much impossible. But for so many reasons the New York Bar at the Hyatt in Shinjuku is almost pitch perfect and out of this world. You won't find Ms Johansson but there is recompense – the view from the 52nd floor as Tokyo's metropolis disappears out to 360°. It is *Bond*, *Blade Runner* and a little bit of *The Shining* all thrown in together. Did I mention the jazz is pretty sublime?



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### EAU DE VIE

**229 Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst, Sydney**  
[eaudevie.com.au](http://eaudevie.com.au)

Australia has it all – every size, shape and style of bar/restaurant imaginable. I've been to Eau de Vie (above) every single time I've been to Australia, a speakeasy in look and feel, nestling in the Darlinghurst district. Sven Almenning gets my custom because he brings it all together: modern art, vintage drinking paraphernalia, a hidden room of super-premium scotch that is one of the great hidden delights. But for knowledge, passion and breathtaking service in a place that looks like it is about to be raided by Eliot Ness at any moment, Eau de Vie just captures the excitement of being a great bar.

### CENTRALE RESTAURANT AND BAR

**Mar Maroun Street, Saifi, Beirut**  
[centrallerestaurant.com](http://centrallerestaurant.com)

The Paris of the Mediterranean. I came to Beirut late in my career but I seem to have known it all my life. The seafront, the mountains, the narrow streets, the cafes and the 24-hour life were just exactly how I imagined they should be. Centrale, just near Gemmayze, combines old premises with an amazingly futuristic tunnel bar that hangs suspended above the newly rebuilt 1920s restaurant below. A retractable roof gives stunning views of the harbour. The feel is of a cocktail bar at 35,000ft. The crush is amazing but works as a young crowd sip and converse as the Beirut night grows later and later.

## FOCUS ON WHISKY

### LE LION BAR DE PARIS

Rathausstrasse, Hamburg 20095

lelion.net

Something out of Len Deighton. Le Lion Bar de Paris on the Rathausstrasse in Hamburg is Jörg Meyer's European cocktail emporium. This is the cocktail lounge redux; the charm lies in the manners, the attention to detail. It is regarded as the finest cocktail bar in Germany. I remember the enormous Meyer serving smoky Blood & Sand with Blue Label, then Whiskey Mash with fresh mint. Sophisticated, mellow and very sexy ambience mixes with gorgeous cocktails and a cleverly edited drinks menu (15 drinks), but you come back for the service. I love that it is, for once, not on the other side of the world.

### AREA BAR AND TERRACE AT THE HABITA

Av Presidente Masaryk 201, Polanco, Mexico City

hotelhabita.com

Decadence. And why not? The Area Bar on the roof of Hotel Habita in Mexico City appears never to close. During the day you can sit with some gorgeous and scantily clad members of the elite at the pool (if you get past the bouncers). Watching the sun go down over the verdant avenues and squares of Polanco, it is a bit like starring in a Mexican version of *Dynasty*. However, sitting on a bar stool, looking out over the city below and the mountains far away, Cosmopolitan in hand, listening to the music and dancing a little (OK, a very little) – very, very hedonistic.

### COBURG BAR

The Connaught, Carlos Place, London W1K 2AL

the-connaught.co.uk

The Coburg (below) at the Connaught with Mark Jenner at the helm is a chance to get that little piece of deluxe on a wet, cold December afternoon in ye olde London town. Historic, elegant and grand but the atmosphere is completely unstuffy, as new and old rub shoulders and the buzz allows for conversation of every manner imaginable – assignments, assignations and possibly assassinations. This is Mayfair after all. The drinks are of the highest order. A whisky Sour at the Coburg is like nothing else you've ever tried. Perhaps not the cheapest bar you'll ever go to, but you get what you pay for. A grand night out.



### ENTRÉE

2 Battersea Rise, London SW11 1ED

entreebattersea.co.uk

However far you travel there is nothing quite like turning the ship for home. Part of coming back to south west London will inevitably involve a visit to the small and perfectly formed Bentley Bar at Entrée. Just on Battersea Rise proprietor Jayke Mangion has created a wonderful subterranean enclave for lovers of great drinks. A clever, well edited drinks menu, fresh ingredients, some great classic cocktails and fastidious preparation add to the intimate experience of dropping in on the way home. The Negroni are beautiful to look at and delicious to drink.



### THE BLUE BAR AT GLENEAGLES

Auchterarder, Perthshire, Scotland PH3 1NF

gleneagles.com

When the day job is selling Johnnie Walker at the far edges of the world there is a time when you just have to come back to where it all began – Scotland. In the wilds of Auchterarder you can find the new Blue Bar (above) at Gleneagles in which to savour this experience. The whisky selection is of the highest order and can be sipped in a courtyard which is literally under sail with big heated sofas, a roaring wood fire and pre-embargo Cuban cigars. Even in midwinter this is an extraordinary experience to be sipping Johnnie Walker Blue Label while watching the snow fall around the bar.



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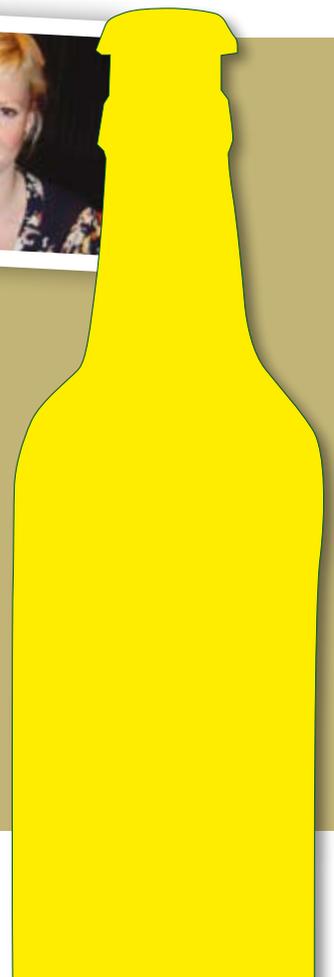
## BRITNER'S BEERS

DI's Lucy Britner shares her passion for a pint

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# From our own correspondent



*In his regular column for DI, David Wrigley, the WSET's international development director, is moving on to look at some of the various providers of WSET qualifications around the world, highlighting the opportunities – and problems – they face as they look to satisfy the global thirst for wine and spirit knowledge*

**W**hat better place to start than in Canada, with a commentary from James Cluer MW, who runs Fine Vintage. James received the coveted Riedel Trophy for the WSET International Educator of the Year at the WSET's annual Awards & Graduation Ceremony in London's Guildhall on January 23rd. But James wasn't just satisfied with Canada – he saw opportunities farther afield, as he explains here.

"I sat my first WSET course when I was 18 while working for an importer in Hong Kong. At the time, my boss said it was required training if I hoped to have a career in the drinks business. And he was right – WSET courses are the gold standard in wine and spirit education, with international recognition.

"The courses were very useful to me personally. They helped me get job offers and also gave me a degree of credibility with my peers. I had no idea that one day our core business would be offering WSET courses in several cities in Canada, as well as to thousands of cabin crew at an airline in the Middle East, and various hotel chains, retailers and local governments.

"Fine Vintage began providing the courses in 2005. We wanted to offer students expert instruction, extensive tastings of top quality wines, a professional yet fun atmosphere, and to administrate the courses and exams efficiently.

"Once we had set our programme in place we started opening schools. Today we have an active enrollment in six Canadian cities, including major centres such as Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and now Montreal. We found that at least 50% of students were taking the courses for general interest, and those in the trade were doing them for the same reasons that I did a few decades ago.

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## PURE GOULD

Former Drinks International editor Patience Gould on whether scotch will end up as common as salmon



It's hard to remember those long lost days when salmon, let alone smoked salmon, was a rarity and only served – if you were lucky – as a treat on high days and holidays. Thanks to fish farming and the like, fresh and smoked salmon are as commonplace on retail shelves these days as eggs and bacon. But sadly they no longer have that special-occasion feel.

So too it must seem an awful long time ago when scotch whisky was as revered in Japan. There was a time when giving a bottle of scotch, and which particular brand, said more about your standing than money ever could. But when the Japanese government gave way to the scotch Whisky Association et al and gave scotch a level playing field in terms of tariffs and duties, it seemed that overnight scotch had become an affordable spirit and had lost that all-important cachet.

Unthinkable though it is, this could have happened to Champagne, but thanks to the unerring belief the Champagne Bureau has in its sherbet, it remains the hallmark of a special occasion. I remember years ago listening in growing amazement to the then head of the CB telling me how they had to take action over a bubble bath manufacturer who had the temerity to call it Champagne something or other.

At the time I thought the CB's actions were quite unnecessary – but oh shallow youth! I can, of course, now see it was absolutely necessary – if the term Champagne was allowed to be splattered on anything it would be a disaster. I am not sure Picasso would have been too thrilled having his name plastered on the Citroën C4 – or indeed whether one of the founders of cubism is the ideal nomenclature for a car – but that's another argument.

Cognac, too, is zealously protected both in terms of its AOC status and even to the ways and occasions of drinking it. Some might say too much in this case and that's why the eau-de-vie producers are finding it such a hurdle to jump onto the cocktail bandwagon. This, I have to say, has never been the case with scotch whisky.

Scotch is the most exported spirit in the world, and producers have never been fussy about how consumers enjoy their product. They advise, but if some idiot wants to dump ice and Coke in the likes of The Macallan 18 Year Old, then so be it. After all, it happens in China with Petrus.

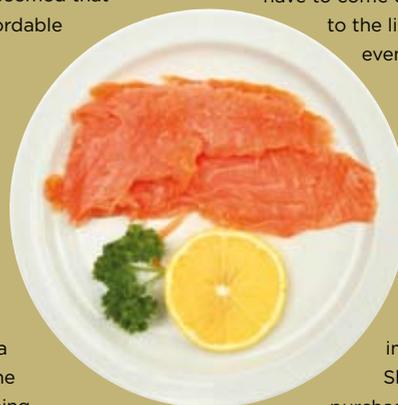
All of which is a very long way round of coming to India, where the SWA is involved in talks which will result in the Free Trade Agreement which is currently being negotiated with the European Union. If successful, then tariffs would have to come down. The SWA is looking for a reduction to the likes of 20% (currently levied in Brazil) or even 10% (currently levied in China).

At the moment in India, tariffs are a whopping 150%, which means that a £10 bottle of scotch becomes £25 before it even gets into distribution. Pre-2000, the tariff was in the order of 750%, which is patently ridiculous. But ironically these tariffs do – albeit inadvertently – add an allure to scotch that no amount of marketing could imbue the spirit of Scotland with. Should scotch become an affordable purchase on a weekly or even daily basis, it will go the way of salmon and smoked salmon.

India is the largest spirits market in the world with an annual tally of 250 million cases sold and of that total 140 million cases are whisky, and scotch accounts for 1.5m cases, which is pretty good going considering the obstacles. Additionally, in the six months ending June 2011, 24.2 million bottles of scotch were shipped to India – a 26% increase on the corresponding 2010 period.

It's these statistics that have producers drooling all the way to the bank – because on paper the potential is enormous if they were playing on a more level pitch – and I don't dispute this. I adore caviar, but if I could afford to eat it every day or even once a week, I think that adoration would probably soon wane.

That said, I wouldn't mind putting it to the test.



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