

Beverage Journal

SEPTEMBER 2024

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ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

I don't need to tell you all this, but inflation has reduced consumer spending and increased costs. It's a tough economy to turn a profit. I did some research and a little asking around in the Maryland and Washington, DC, on- and off-premise owner/operator network. I found some interesting strategies worth sharing about how to prepare for and offset the current economic situation.

Diversify Product Offerings:

Offer a Range of Price Points: Ensure that your product offerings cater to a wide range of budgets. Stocking both premium and more affordable options allows you to appeal to consumers who may tighten their spending during economic downturns.

Optimize Inventory Management:

Lean Inventory Practices: Adopt lean inventory practices to reduce waste and avoid overstocking items that may not sell quickly during an economic downturn. AI-driven inventory management systems can help predict demand more accurately.

Cost Control and Efficiency:

Streamline Operations: Review your operations to identify areas where you can cut costs without sacrificing quality. This might include energy-efficient practices, reducing waste, or optimizing labor scheduling.

Invest in Technology: Implement technology solutions, like AI-driven POS systems, that can streamline operations, reduce errors, and improve efficiency, ultimately lowering costs.

Focus on Value-Added Services:

Host Events and Experiences: Offer experiences like tastings, pairing events, or mixology classes that add value beyond the product itself. These can attract customers even in a slow economy, as people are often willing to spend on unique experiences.

Community Engagement:

Engage with the Community: Build a strong local presence by engaging with the community through events, partnerships, or supporting local causes. Strong community ties can help maintain customer loyalty during tough times.

Enhance Customer Loyalty Programs:

Reward Repeat Customers: Strengthen your loyalty programs to incentivize repeat business. Offer discounts, exclusive offers, or perks for frequent purchases, encouraging customers to choose your establishment over competitors.

Adapt to Consumer Trends:

Monitor Consumer Behavior: Stay attuned to shifts in consumer behavior during economic uncertainty. This might involve adjusting your product mix, pricing strategies, or marketing approaches to better align with current consumer needs.

This sounds like something a financial advisor would tell you, but by being proactive and adaptable, (beverage alcohol retailers) will better navigate the challenges of economic uncertainty and be in a position for long-term success. ■

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President / Publisher Stephen Patten
steve@beveragejournalinc.com
410.796.5455

Board of Directors Lee W. Murray
Thomas W. Murray

Information Technology Director Peter Williams

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief Kristen Bieler

Senior Editor Courtney Schiessl

Contributing Editors Alia Akkam, Arielle Albert,
Keven Danow, Jim Clarke,
Edward Durgin, Jeff Siegel

ART & DESIGN

Creative Director Larry Lee

Senior Designer Jeff Tsui

TECHNOLOGY & WEB

eCommerce Director Ian Griffith

Online Web Programming Vali Balescu

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MD & DC Advertising Sales Stephen Patten

National Advertising Sales Jody Slone-Spitalnik

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1. CROWN ROYAL

Crown Royal has ventured into the single malt category. Buoyed by the cold Canadian climate, the 90-proof whisky is produced from 100 percent malted barley grains at Valleyfield Distillery in Quebec. Aromas of vanilla and banana lead to caramel, apple, and cinnamon.

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

4. PA'LANTE

His father made rum in Cuba and the stories prompted Eric Zurita to start a brand of his own. Family-run Pa'lante Rum, although made in Chiapas, Mexico, is decidedly Cuban in spirit. Along with a blanco that works well in everyday mojitos, there's a funky reposado for daiquiris and a leather- and walnut-laden añejo for sipping.

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

2. SILVER OAK

Building upon a friendship with the late pioneering winemaker Dick Erath, Silver Oak's Duncan family has made its mark on Oregon's Willamette Valley with the launch of Prince Hill Vineyards. Its historic location in the Dundee Hills AVA is where Erath first planted Pinot Noir Clone 95 from Burgundy's Clos Vougeot. Winemaker Chris Burrough's initial lineup includes three wines from the 2022 vintage: Willamette Valley Chardonnay, Dundee Hills Pinot Noir, and a Prince Hill Vineyards single vineyard Pinot Noir.

\$ SRP: From \$70 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 princehill.com

5. MAR DE FRADES

Situated in the Salnés Valley, in Spain's Rías Baixas DO, Mar de Frades turns out maritime-driven wines that capture its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. The pioneering Albariño Brut Nature, a sparkler made with 100 percent Albariño, also exhibits a distinctive salinity, complemented by layers of eucalyptus and toasted bread.

\$ SRP: \$34.99 per 750-ml bottle
🌐 mardefrades.es

3. OLD POTRERO

Old Potrero Toasted Barrel Whiskey, formerly dubbed 18th century-style—an era when coopers heated staves over flaming oak chips and bent them into casks—is back on the market. The 102.4-proof spirit is distilled in a small copper pot still from a mash of 100 percent rye malt then matured in new, toasted, American white oak barrels for at least six years.

\$ SRP: \$64.99 per 700-ml bottle
🌐 oldpotrero.com

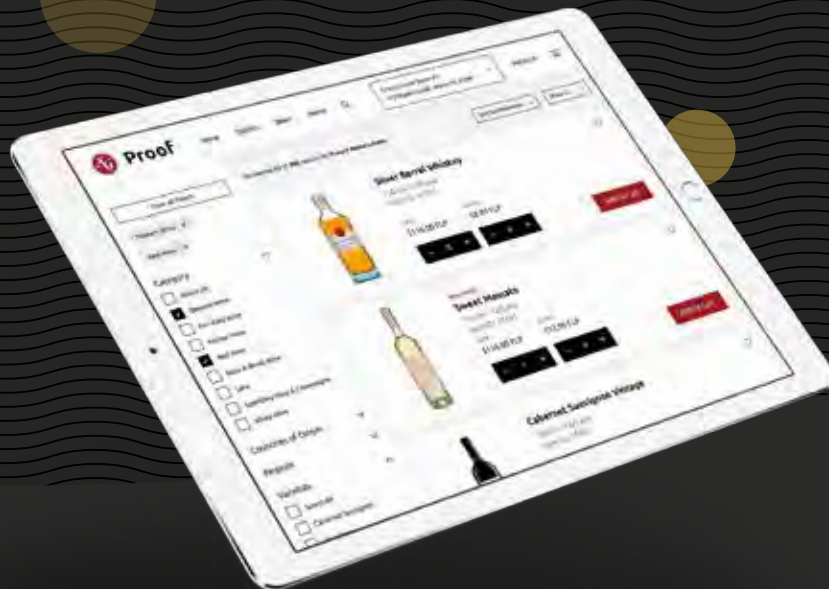
6. DE-NADA TEQUILA

Sleek, colorful aluminum bottles define De-Nada Tequila's second act. The recently re-launched carbon neutral-certified brand is made with 100 percent Blue Weber agave from Jalisco's Highlands, tended to by fifth-generation growers and distillers. Choose from the cocktail-friendly, vanilla-and lime-accented blanco or the reposado aged for a minimum of four months in former American oak barrels that exhibits caramel and vanilla on the palate.

\$ SRP: From \$40 per 700-ml bottle
🌐 denatequila.com

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7. PLANTERAY RUM

Showcasing a mélange of rums from Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica, the limited-edition Planteray Mister Fogg Navy Rum is an homage to the late Michael Fogg, a navy veteran and the go-to authority on the navy rum style. After the liquids were matured in former bourbon barrels, they were transported from their home in the Caribbean to Southwest France, where they underwent double aging in once-used oak barrels and oxygenation in large, open wooden vats that recall the humidity of British docks.

\$ SRP: \$35 per 700-ml bottle

planterayrum.com

8. TRES TRIBUS

B Corp-certified, small-batch mezcal producer Tres Tribus has added an espadin that embraces generations-old family traditions to its portfolio. The maguey is cooked in a volcanic stone-lined underground oven and uses water from the Tidaá volcano aquifer, giving way to an herbaceous and gently smoky spirit for cocktails like the Naked and Famous.

\$ SRP: \$49.99 per 750-ml bottle

trestribus.com

9. MOZART CHOCOLATE LIQUEUR

Tropical cocktails are a breeze with Mozart Coconut Chocolate Liqueur. Like all flavors in the portfolio, it's made in Salzburg, Austria, with West African cocoa and Fair Trade vanilla from Madagascar. Its mix of creamy and tangy Caribbean rum notes make it ripe for Piña Coladas and spiked hot chocolates alike.

\$ SRP: \$29.99 per 750-ml bottle

mozartchocolateliqueur.com

10. LARCENY BOURBON

Bottles of Larceny Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey's small batch and barrel proof expressions, made with wheat instead of rye, have a new look that connects them to the historic Old Fitzgerald brand, based on the legend of the U.S. Treasury agent who stole bourbon out of barrels in the late 1800s. The original Old Fitzgerald seal is found in foil atop the capsule and on the label, which is graced with Fitzgerald's signature on the bottom, and the sculpturally embossed foil key takes cues from Old Fitzgerald's version.

\$ SRP: From \$27.99 per 750-ml bottle

larcenybourbon.com

11. YALUMBA

As part of its 175th anniversary celebrations, family-run Australian winery Yalumba has released the 2019 vintage of its flagship Yalumba The Octavius Old Vine Shiraz. A true reflection of Barossa's terroir, it uses parcels from only the region's finest vineyards, culminating in a classic Shiraz tasting of black fruit, vanilla, and spice.

\$ SRP: \$139.99 per 750-ml bottle

yalumba.com

12. VIAMUNDI

Shining a spotlight on artisanal Mexican spirits is Viamundi, founded by industry veterans Adam Castelsky and David Weissman. Kicking off with a raicilla from Jalisco's Sierra Madre Occidental mountains, a sotol made in Chihuahua, and an Espadin Mezcal crafted in Santa Ana del Rio in Oaxaca, the portfolio will soon ramp up with tequila, bacanora from Sonora, and rum-like charanda distilled in Michoacán.

\$ SRP: From \$50 per 750-ml bottle

viamundispirits.com

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MICHAEL'S CAFÉ

A TIMONIUM LANDMARK TURNS 40!

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY ASHLI MIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael's Café is a family-owned and operated bar and restaurant that is thriving in two Baltimore County locations, Timonium and White Marsh-Middle River. In 1984, The Dellis family opened the doors of the Timonium site, and family patriarch Michael Del-

lis endeavored to give locals something they were lacking. In recognition of this success, Michael's Café is our latest pick to be featured in our ongoing series on bars, restaurants, and taverns around the Maryland-D.C. area to be named after their owners, families, or a specific person.

**Steven, LoAnn
and Michael Dellis**
Michael's Café



Steven Dellis, who currently runs Michael's Café with his sister, said during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, "This place started as a dark, dingy bar back in '84. We had 60 seats. It was a rough-around-the-edges neighborhood kind of place. But my father's intentions were to put his mother's crab cakes on the menu along with some really good food. It was an immediate success. And over the years, we've gradually built to what's now a 400-seat restaurant with three bars, sever-

al dining rooms, and an outside patio that includes one of those bars. I like to say you can go bar-hopping right here, because each bar has its own kind of feel."

The crab cakes with the secret family recipe remain. But now the menu also features prime steaks, homemade soups,

an array of sandwiches, and a weekend brunch. "Our dining rooms are great for date nights or any kind of celebration," stated Dellis. "People are celebrating all of the time here, whether its 50-year anniversaries or first dates."

The family opened the second location

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And is Michael still with us? *"Absolutely!" exclaimed his similarly entrepreneurial son, Steven. "I'm 47 and he'll be 77 soon ... He is still very much active ... he keeps us on our toes."*

in 2019 where they occupy 9,900 square feet in the Greenleigh at Crossroads town center just off Interstate 95 and Route 43. Each Michael's Café offers happy hour deals from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and every first Friday in Timonium there is live music.

Dellis said he definitely feels a heightened responsibility to continue "making good" with his dad's name on the front of the business. He remarked, "We're three generations into it now, and we're constantly looking to improve things. My father along with the rest of my family have built a great business. He has always had high standards in terms of the quality of the food, the service, and so forth. My sister and I are running things now, and we don't want to let down the family name."

And is Michael still with us? "Absolute-

ly!" exclaimed his similarly entrepreneurial son. "I'm 47 and he'll be 77 soon at the end of August. He is still very much active. Not like he was before. But he keeps us on our toes."

In addition to the crab cakes and other fine eats, Michael's Café has become known for its impressive beverage menu. "I like to think we have something for everyone's tastes," stated Dellis. "We have an extensive wine list, plus a lot of great ryes, whiskeys, single malts, and everything else in between. Our cocktail program, I think, is one of the best around and we change it seasonally. We don't have one particular signature drink that stands out. But a couple that remain on the menu are our Old Fashioned and our Manhattan. Currently, one of my favorite drinks is a nod to our Greek heritage. It's called a Wayfinder and has such ingredients as metaxa ouzo, apricot liqueur, elderberry syrup, fresh lime, and orange bitters. It's super well-balanced."

He continued, "Our beverage philosophy is 'let's empower our staff with all the knowledge we can.' We're constantly testing them on our cocktail program, our wine program, and so forth. They have to have a great knowledge of what we do

have. And then we tell them to get to know the customer, see what their preferences are. From there, they can steer them in various directions. We also have some really great mocktails."

Having been in the bar and restaurant business most of his adult life, Dellis says the favorite part of his work – that which keeps him interested and engaged – is watching team members grow. Joshua Vorke, the general manager in the Middle River store, has been with the Dellis family for over 20 years. "He started as a busboy!" said Dellis with more than a bit of glee. "I consider him a brother at this point. It's stories like his that keep me inspired, keep me motivated. Our beverage manager, Mickey, started as a barback, and he runs our entire beverage program with me and



"Our beverage philosophy is 'let's empower our staff with all the knowledge we can.' We're constantly testing them..."



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also runs all of our social media and marketing.”

At the same time, one of the Dellis family’s great and lingering challenges also has to do with staffing. Dellis noted, “We have a lot of great people. But finding those people has been a little bit tougher in the last two or three years than it was before. Aside from that, one of the biggest obstacles we deal with is the inflation aspect of things. Sometimes, customers don’t understand why things are priced the way they are. But a lot of restaurants over the past couple of years have kept prices down by cutting quality and reducing portion sizes. That’s something I will never entertain! Quality is first. I would guess 90 percent of our customers get it, and what we’re all about. But it’s challenging.”

Because he has had several employees rise through the ranks to take on management responsibilities, Dellis is a good man to hit up for career advice. After all, a lot of busboys, barbacks, waiters, and waitresses read the Beverage Journal each month, and

probably more than a few dream of owning their own bar and/or restaurant one day – maybe even one that has their name on it.

Dellis remarked, “I’d tell them that it’s important to stick to your core values. Quality and service first, and never ever cut corners. That’s my biggest philosophy. But, first and foremost, make sure you are passionate about it! If you don’t have the passion for this business, it can wear on you. It’s a rollercoaster, and there will be a lot of ups and downs. Just learn to embrace it all, every part of the journey.”

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2024, is Dellis optimistic or pessimistic as to where we’re all headed? He was quick to reply: “I am a bit of both. It’s a big election year, and there is a lot of anxiety. Consumer spending habits, in general, tend to change somewhat when there is a big election like this. That impacts business. Either way, change is coming, and I will try to get excited for that change. Because with change, there is always opportunity.”



Steven Dellis of Michael's Café

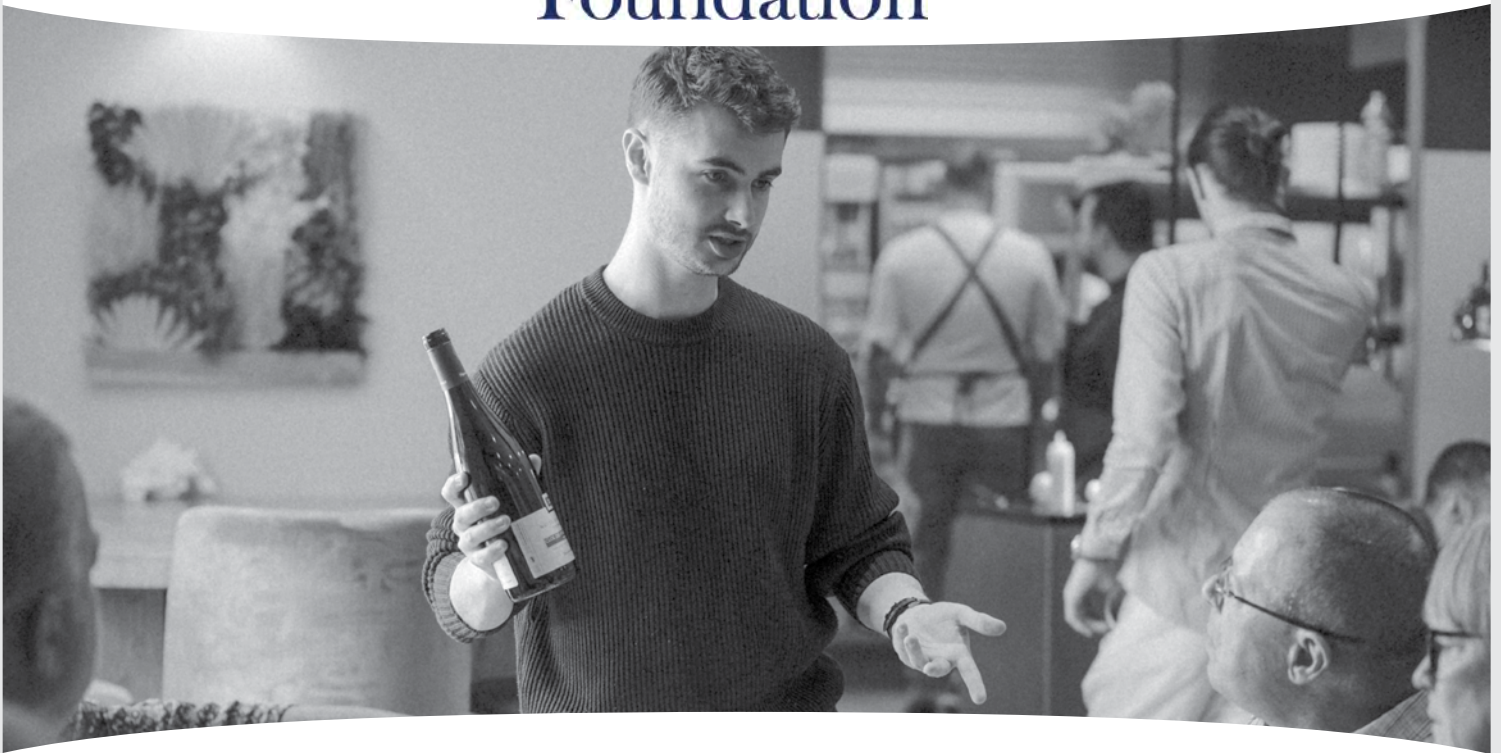


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"SommFoundation, with one trip, gave me the hope that I could be professionally worth something in this world."

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- their work is also helping to create a more diverse and accessible
- wine industry.



"Organizations such as SommFoundation are essential for rebuilding our industry and encouraging more diversity in the upper echelons of the wine world. The opportunities I received from SommFoundation quite literally changed my life, and I am so grateful to everyone that helped to make that possible."



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2024 DRINKS INNOVATORS TO WATCH

The beverage industry is never static. Growth is not just an economic demand, but also a cultural, social, political, and personal one. And the drinks professionals who are most passionate about their work, whether that's on the vineyard, in the brewery, or behind the bar, are always looking for ways to do their jobs better—to grow.

When looking for our next cohort of Drinks Innovators, we turned to you, our community, to ask who is doing that right. Which professionals are turning up at their workplace each day and not just looking to improve their own undertaking or bottom line, but instead looking to better the industry as a whole? From over 100 nominations, we narrowed it down to just 11, representing

every sector of the industry—spirits, wine, beer—and from the fields of distribution, technology, media, and production.

Our criteria were simple: Have they created positive change within the industry, and are they on a path to continue to do so? We think the 11 award winners below have done just that, whether it's by coming up with experimental brews or by challenging systemic injustices in the wine world. Some might be at the start of that journey, while others might have a long career of innovation behind them, but all of their work is worthy of recognition.

Please join us in congratulating our 2024 class of Drinks Innovators!

★★★
AWARDED
FOR

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE WITH EXPERIMENTAL SMALL-BATCH BEERS

TONYA CORNETT

Innovation brewmaster,
10 Barrel Brewing Co., Bend, Oregon

Tonya Cornett has been making great beer since the emerging craft scene of the 1990s. After attending the World Brewing Academy in Germany, she moved to Colorado in 2002 and began working as a brewmaster for Bend Brewing Co. There her penchant for experimentation took shape; she was one of the first brewers in the country to brew kettle sours. Now at 10 Barrel Brewing Company, she and her team imagine new experimental beers for production, such as the Spiral Staircase: a 2018 blend of Baltic Porter, some of which had been aged

**"TO KEEP CUSTOMERS
ENGAGED, IT IS IMPORTANT
TO CONSTANTLY LEARN
... TO ME, INNOVATION IS
CONSTANTLY INSPIRED
CREATIVITY."**

in bourbon casks, with a touch of sour beer and Montmorency cherries. "We recently pulled bottles out of the library for a beer dinner and were blown away with how good it still tasted," she says.

Coming up in the then still male-dominated industry, Cornett became the first woman awarded World Beer Cup Small Brewpub Brewer of the Year in 2008. She has gone on to win 29 medals between the Great American Beer Festival and the



World Beer Cup, most recently winning the prestigious Brewers Association Russell Schehrer Award for Innovation in Craft Brewing—so it's not just us taking note of her continued contribution to the industry.

—TYLER WETHERALL



AMPLIFYING THE CONVERSATION AROUND U.S. WINE

PATRICK CAPIELLO

Owner and winemaker, Monte Rio Cellars, Sonoma County, California

For many winemakers, 2023 brought about a stark reversal of pandemic-era sales growth. For Patrick Capiello, sales were down 80 percent at his Sonoma-based winery, Monte Rio Cellars. “Either I fucked up and my winery is no longer relevant or there’s a bigger problem,” he thought.

“I’M GOING TO CONTINUE TO BE THERE TO HELP PEOPLE WHO, LIKE ME, WANT TO SEE WINE SUCCEED.”



After conversations with many other U.S. winemakers, it became clear that the issue went well beyond a single winery.

Soon, Capiello turned to social media, where a previous web series with *Playboy* and 17 years as a New York City sommelier had earned him more than 37,000 followers. A controversial post on cross-flow filtration was viewed over 100,000 times and got nearly 500 comments. “I thought, ‘Ok, when I say things that are honest and true, that are polarizing and surprising, people are

responding. What if I’m honest about the fact that [sales are down]?”

On February 25, Capiello made a post that called attention to the struggles he and his colleagues were experiencing as American winemakers. Little did he know that the post—asking people to support American wineries by buying their wine—would spark a major and important shift in the conversation around American wine that continues today.

—CAITLIN A. MILLER



CREATING A SPRINGBOARD FOR MEZCAL FROM UNDERREPRESENTED REGIONS

JULIA CUTHBERTSON

Cofounder, Las Chingonas, Brooklyn

Las Chingonas (meaning “the badassess”) began by importing mezcal from Guerrero. Despite being one of the most prominent mezcal-producing states in Mexico, Guerrero is sorely underrepresented in the U.S. Founder Julia Cuthbertson (along with Tiffany Collings, who has since stepped aside) wanted to “get these exceptional products into the hands of people in the States,” she says. From there it expanded, now importing from Durango, Sonora, and Nuevo León. What makes Las Chingonas stand out, however, is its commitment to keep ownership with the families

“WE REALLY LIKE AGAVE SPIRITS AND REALLY WANT OTHER PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE THEM LIKE WE DO. WE WANT TO EDUCATE AND GET THESE EXCEPTIONAL PRODUCTS INTO THE HANDS OF PEOPLE IN THE STATES.”

in Mexico, a rarity amongst U.S.-imported mezcal, and this means any success is shared by the producers as well.

While Las Chingonas predominately imports agave spirits—uncertified mezcal—these represent an amazing range of often overlooked distilling traditions across Mexico. Take the very rare Lechu-

quilla, produced by the legendary distiller Gilberto Roldán and made from a species found only in the Chihuahuan Desert, or the Pechotierra, which is fermented with pulque giving it a lactic funk. The labels prominently display production details so consumers can learn while they sip. While Las Chingonas operates under a small, bespoke business model for now, plans are afoot to expand and find more bottlings new to U.S. palates.

—MAX GARRONE





DEVELOPING GAME-CHANGING INNOVATIONS IN WINE DEALCOHOLIZATION

CLAUDIA GEYER AND DR. ALEXANDER HÄSSELBARTH

Claudia Geyer, director, Solos Technology, Flavologic; Alexander Hässelbarth, Ph.D., director, research and technology development, Flavologic, Germany

Advances in dealcoholization technology are rapidly opening new frontiers in the wine industry, such as the work of food chemists Claudia Geyer and Alexander Hässelbarth, Ph.D., which has been instrumental in giving an edge to German non-alcoholic wines. In 2024, building on their invention of a proprietary filtering medium to capture and add back aroma compounds evaporated out of dealcohol-



ized wines, the team introduced another breakthrough: they can now reduce alcohol content from the legally required 0.5% ABV to 0.0% ABV while retaining high fidelity to the source wine. This opens myriad markets and export possibilities for dealcoholized wines (for instance, 0.0% ABV wines can be labeled halal). “We are helping to give the industry another chance in this [changing] generation,” says Geyer.

Geyer is leading Solos Technology (part of Flavologic GmbH) as they install aroma recovery units around the globe. The team has also expanded processing capacity in

“IT’S ABOUT KEEPING WINE ON THE SHELVES, CARRYING THE SIGNATURE OF THE WINEMAKER, AND HELPING CLIENTS ENJOY SOMETHING THAT IS MORE DIVERSE.”

Germany and is investing in service centers that offer everything from bespoke dealcoholization to bottling, making their technological advances available to more producers. As consumers increasingly look for non-alcoholic beverages, Geyer and Hässelbarth’s work stands out for enabling winemakers to pursue new avenues of revenue and growth.

—VALERIE KATHAWALA



SPEARHEADING 86 HARASSMENT TO TACKLE WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IN THE BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

WOMEN OF THE VINE & SPIRITS

A global nonprofit organization

When revelations of sexual harassment in the Court of Master Sommeliers broke in 2020, Deborah Brenner knew she had to do something about it. In March 2024,



Brenner, the founder of Women of the Vine & Spirits (WOTVS), an organization working to advance and empower women in the industry, launched 86 Harassment. Her aim was to create a sustained, industry-wide initiative to prevent and respond to workplace harassment.

With input from experts and consultants, including RAINN, the largest anti-sexual violence organization in North America, and critical support from partners like Pernod Ricard North America, Brown-Forman, Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, Republic National Distributing Company, Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America, and Spirits Canada, Brenner oversaw the development of a robust set of interactive resources. These include a confidential, industry-specific hotline staffed around-the-clock in Spanish and English and live trainings on harassment awareness, education, response,

“BY CREATING A SAFER INDUSTRY WE WILL BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE TO INCREDIBLE TALENT THAT IS SOMETIMES HESITANT TO EXPLORE THE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES OUR INDUSTRY OFFERS.”

and bystander intervention. Brenner and her team specifically considered the needs of smaller companies, like craft breweries, wineries, and distilleries, that might not have comprehensive policies, as well as industry members, such as sales reps, who may encounter harassment in the field. All resources are offered to employers and employees free of charge.

—VALERIE KATHAWALA





BROADCASTING CHINA'S DYNAMIC FOOD AND WINE SCENE TO THE WORLD

EMILIE STECKENBORN

Founder and host, *Bottled in China*, Hong Kong, China

After first arriving in China at age 17 to master Mandarin, Canadian native Emilie Steckenborn went on to a career in wine. She earned a WSET diploma, and, using her bilingualism, developed relationships with wine importers, distributors, and brands to raise their market awareness across Asia. In 2016, she launched what she says was the first podcast on Chinese wine: *Bottled in China*. Her aims were to share insights on the Chinese beverage market and to dismantle stigmas and

misconceptions around Chinese food and wine. "If you don't understand the dynamics, the Chinese market is complex and very, very layered," says Steckenborn. "It took me eight years to understand how to navigate [it]." From her base in Hong Kong, she explores topics such as how brands can build their social media pres-



"I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU ON A JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION."

ence in China and how the Chinese fine wine market functions.

She cites the dramatic evolution of China's wine industry over the past decade as the most compelling reason to focus on where it is headed in the future. Through innovative partnerships, such as with Air Canada, who featured podcast episodes on their in-flight entertainment, and by layering in food topics, she has expanded the show's following to more than one million downloads worldwide, with its largest audiences in the U.S. and China.

—VALERIE KATHAWALA



REIMAGINING MEXICO'S OVERLOOKED BEVERAGE TRADITIONS FOR A U.S. AUDIENCE

RIO CHENERY

Managing director, *Tepache Sazón*, San Pancho, Mexico

Mexican-Australian Rio Chenery didn't start by producing tepache, the beloved fermented fruit beverage sold by street vendors across Mexico in plastic bags with straws. In 2014, Chenery moved to Jalisco, where his mother lived, and opened Estancia distillery to make raicilla, a local mezcal, which has blossomed in the shadow of tequila. After Chenery successfully established Estancia Raicilla in the U.S., in 2018, he went on to launch one of the first destilado de pulques to reach the States, too.

Chenery first discovered his love of tepache while drinking with the distillery's caretaker, Margarito Álvarez, who, like

"IT'S A VERY DEMOCRATIZED DRINK, EVERYONE MAKES IT IN THEIR OWN WAY. THEY SAY 'HECHO EN MÉXICO, HECHO CON AMOR, HECHO CON SAZÓN.'"

many Mexicans, fermented his own. Then when the pandemic hit, Chenery went into R&D to create his own, and Tepache Sazón launched in the U.S. in the spring of 2023. Sazón, meaning "ripeness," refers to the local pineapples, sourced from the fruit bowl surrounding San Pancho where it's produced. Through the work of Estancia distillery, Chenery has helped spotlight some of the great Mexican beverage traditions that haven't received as much exposure in the U.S. until now.

—MAX GARRONE





EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND WORK PLACEMENT

TOURÉ FOLKES

Executive director, Turning Tables, New Orleans

Living in New Orleans, Touré Folkes noticed an absence. “In a majority Black city, you don’t see that reflected in management or behind the bars or in leadership positions,” he says. Joining forces with a local partner in workforce development, Folkes proposed what would in 2019 become Turning Tables, a nonprofit organization that builds careers for marginalized groups in the food and beverage industry. “We’re so many things to so many people,” says Folkes, emphasizing that their program’s reach doesn’t stop at the

“THERE’S A LOT OF BLACK CULTURE THAT IS ROOTED WITHIN THE SPIRITS INDUSTRY. WE TELL [STUDENTS] THOSE STORIES, THEY FEEL EMPOWERED BY THOSE STORIES.”

bar. Alumni and participants of Turning Tables range from bartenders and brand ambassadors to distillers and distributors. Their primary externship program builds a foundational knowledge of the beverage trade, along with the historical significance of Black voices within the industry.

Turning Tables’s efforts also extend to the lives of industry professionals, partnering with the city to address mental health and childcare issues, as well as joining forc-



es with nonprofits like Glass Half Full and Another Round Another Rally, who recently awarded Turning Tables a \$25,000 grant to fund their wellness and sustainability efforts. As far as the future goes, Folkes is most excited to see how tomorrow’s alumni go on to blaze their own trails.

—VIVIAN BELTRAN



MAKING THE WINE INDUSTRY MORE INCLUSIVE THROUGH LANGUAGE

ALICE ACHAYO

Founder, The Wine Linguist, Boston

How can conversations about wine’s production and taste become more inclusive and representative of the global world we live in? East Africa native Alice Achayo is working to answer this question with The Wine Linguist, an organization dedicated to revolutionizing the language used to interpret and discuss wine.

“I really saw the language that we use to talk about wine and the culture that’s been built around wine, especially here in the U.S., being very exclusionary and not very representative of the diverse demographic we live in,” says Achayo, who has worked in wine, sustainable agriculture, and hospitality.



With The Wine Linguist, which was founded in 2022, Achayo brings people from all walks of life together through wine and dinner series that challenge pairing norms; at a recent Boston event, she partnered with a local Thai chef to

“YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE VOICING WHAT THEY DON’T LIKE ABOUT WINE AND WINE CULTURE. SO IT IS ABOUT US LISTENING AND REALLY TRYING TO TAKE THAT IN, APPLY IT, AND GIVE THEM THEM A MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL WAY TO ENGAGE WITH WINE.”

show drinkers how wine works with global flavors and ingredients. Achayo is also gearing up to roll out new educational programs through the “TWL Wine 101” YouTube series, which will provide foundational knowledge on wine basics like how to open a bottle.

—JANICE WILLIAMS



EMPOWERING OREGON'S VINEYARD STEWARDS

SOFIA TORRES-MCKAY

Co-owner, Cramoisi Vineyard, and cofounder, AHIVOY, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Though the people who work in the vineyards have some of the most important responsibilities in the wine production process—labor-intensive work tending vines and picking grapes—these people often are not given a title beyond “laborer” or “vineyard worker.”

Sofia Torres-McKay, a Mexico City native and the co-owner of Oregon’s Cramoisi Vineyard, is looking to change that. In 2014, Torres-McKay coined the term “vineyard steward” to recognize and empower the individuals who look after the vines day after day, and more recently, she cofounded AHIVOY (Asociación Hispana de la Industria del Vino en Oregon y Co-

“I JUST WANT THE INDUSTRY TO FEEL COMFORTABLE AND TRUST IN INVESTING IN THEIR PEOPLE. GIVING THE KNOWLEDGE AND POWER OF EDUCATION IS GOOD FOR EVERYBODY, AND IT’S GOOD FOR OUR INDUSTRY.”

munidad) with Yuliana Cisneros-Guillén, Miguel A. Lopez, and the late Jesús Guillén. The group is on a mission to bolster Oregon’s largely Hispanic vineyard stewards with resources and education.

AHIVOY’s bilingual, 17-week course includes in-depth information about the state’s various grapes, the best techniques for pruning, and other vineyard-specific information that helps vineyard stewards take ownership over their roles, which



Torres-McKay says is key for strengthening and diversifying the greater wine industry. The program is free for all students and even provides a \$20-per-hour stipend to cover the costs of potentially missed days of work.

—JANICE WILLIAMS



CULTIVATING A MORE DIVERSE VIRGINIA WINE SCENE

REGGIE LEONARD

Cofounder, Oenoverse, Charlottesville, Virginia

By day, Reggie Leonard spends his time poring over résumés through his work in career development at the University of Virginia’s School of Data Science. But after 5 pm, Leonard’s second shift starts as the unofficial mayor of Virginia wine.

A passionate advocate of the region’s wines and winemakers, Leonard is helping drive diversity and awareness of his home state’s wine scene with Oenoverse, an organization he cofounded in 2020 with Tracey Love, the marketing and sales manager of Blenheim Vineyards. A frequent attendee of local wine tastings and events, Leonard noticed how little people of color actually knew about Virginia’s



growing wine industry and created Oenoverse to bridge that gap.

Through educational events, winemaker-led tastings guided, and winery visits, Oenoverse puts curious consumers

“WE SEE A FUTURE [FOR UNDERREPRESENTED WINE CONSUMERS] IN WINE. AND WE ALSO SEE THAT SPECIFICALLY HERE IN VIRGINIA.”

from all backgrounds face-to-face with the experts fueling the industry. Leonard also launched the annual Two Up, Wine Down festival, which Oenoverse hosts in Charlottesville in partnership with The Veraison Project. The festival, which will return on November 2, draws hundreds of people from all over the state who are interested in learning more about Virginia wine and the people who make it.

—JANICE WILLIAMS



AT TILIA, SUSTAINABILITY IS A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY

GREAT WINEMAKING STARTS IN THE VINEYARD, WHICH IS WHY THIS ARGENTINE WINERY IS EXCITED TO SHARE ITS NEW ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FOR THE 2023 VINTAGE

TILIA has long been a pioneer in sustainable viticulture. In fact, it was the first winery in Argentina to receive a formal certified-sustainable seal from Bodegas de Argentina on its label. Now, TILIA is advancing its mission to create wines that respect nature and the local community with a new organic certification: Made with Organic Grapes.

Supporting organic agriculture is increasingly important to wine drinkers, so the ability to clearly signal that a wine is made from organic grapes is a significant step forward for sustainability in the wine industry. TILIA's new certification is a clear, concise communication that represents a much larger, comprehensive commitment.

The Made with Organic Grapes certification guarantees wines are made with 100 percent organic grapes, and further promotes TILIA's efforts to create world-class wines that protect ancestral lands, strengthen biodiversity, and advocate for social responsibility. Prominently displayed

on the bottle, the certification offers transparency to buyers and consumers so they can be confident that the wines they purchase are produced in a responsible manner. It also verifies that organic practices are utilized during every step of the winemaking process, and that the wines are made without synthetic chemicals, fungicides, and pesticides.

The organic certification also encourages TILIA to continuously improve its farming, winemaking, and production practices for the greater good of the environment. "It's crucial to demonstrate to consumers that we meet rigorous environmental care criteria, which is becoming incredibly important to them," says Silvina van Houten, TILIA's vineyard sustainability expert and agronomist.

A NEW FLEET OF ORGANIC WINES

Beginning with the 2023 vintage, nearly all of TILIA's wines will feature the new organic certification. The new release includes TILIA's fresh and intense Organic Chardon-

nay 2023, produced with organic grapes from high-elevation vineyards in the eastern and southern regions of Mendoza, and a complex and full-bodied Organic Cabernet Sauvignon 2023, made with organic grapes from Mendoza's eastern and central regions. Both TILIA's Organic Malbec 2023 and Organic Malbec-Syrah 2023 are made with organic grapes from Mendoza's eastern region and the Uco Valley.



The wines come packaged in bottles that align with TILIA's sustainable efforts. To further reduce its carbon footprint, the winery uses ultra-lightweight bottles that weigh about 385 grams—30 percent lighter than the industry standard of 550 grams per bottle. TILIA also works with local glass manufacturers in Argentina to source the bottles. It's measures like these that van Houten says make TILIA a winery that “wine lovers can feel good about supporting,” as its mission, in addition to protecting and preserving its vineyards, is to “prioritize social and environmental responsibility, aligning with their values and preferences.”

A LONGTIME COMMITMENT

Nestled in Junín, Argentina, TILIA makes wines with grapes sourced from several vineyards around Mendoza. Although the vineyards are close to the Andes Mountains and sit at high elevations—vineyards can reach 3,000 to 5,000 feet above sea level—the desert region of Mendoza is particularly dry, which can be challenging for organic viticulture. The region's short but intense summer rains and well-draining alluvial mountain soils reduce the odds of fungal diseases, but make water a precious resource to come by.

However, TILIA implements a number of practices to promote the health of their vineyards. Many of the processes that contribute to TILIA's organic winemaking have been in place long before the win-



Silvina van Houten, TILIA's vineyard sustainability expert and agronomist.



ABOVE: TILIA has identified 37 native bee species in its vineyards.

ery received its official organic certification, like using cover crops to improve soil health by increasing organic matter and promoting microbial activity. Cover crops also help to prevent erosion by binding the soil with root systems that help retain soil moisture, which is essential in a climate as dry as Mendoza. Meanwhile, water management is maintained through drip irrigation, which ensures vines receive adequate hydration without water waste.

“We carefully manage our water sources, relying on glaciers and underground aquifers, and implement water conservation techniques such as mulching and using cover crops,” says van Houten. “Regular monitoring of vineyard conditions allows us to make timely adjustments in our management practices to better cope with changing climatic conditions.”

Having practiced biodiverse farming from the beginning, TILIA relies on native vegetation to create a more resilient vineyard ecosystem that can better withstand pests, diseases, and environmental stresses. Along with plants, like the winery's namesake tree, TILIA entrusts various native birds and bees to support the health of the vineyards through pollination and pest control. In fact, the winery has identified 37 native bee species in its vineyards, all of whom help create a harmonious ecosystem for the vines to thrive.

“Biodiversity reduces our reliance on chemical inputs by promoting natural pest control and soil fertility,” says van Houten, who adds that “healthier vines and soil contribute to the production of high-quality grapes, which is crucial for producing high-quality wines.”

The winery's sustainability efforts extend well beyond the vineyards, though. TILIA's longtime commitments also support the people who work the land and in the winery, as well as the neighboring communities. TILIA sponsors programs that support local high school students pursuing careers in viticulture; transportation services that help farmers travel to the vineyards; and summer camps and activities for the children of employees working during harvest.

“Investing in people is crucial because it fosters a loyal, skilled, and motivated team,” says van Houten. “This enhances productivity, quality, and the overall sustainability of our business. Happy and supported staff are more likely to contribute positively to our winery's success and advocate for our wines.”

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

With an organic certification signifying TILIA's growth and dedication to sustainable agriculture, the winery plans to develop new methods and technologies to improve sustainability in viticulture and winemaking beyond its estate. While the certification is “a great honor and validation of our commitment to environmentally responsible farming practices,” van Houten says, TILIA's work is far from over.

“Our next major focus will be on further enhancing our climate resilience, innovating sustainable practices, and expanding our community engagement,” says van Houten. “Our goal is to inspire others to adopt similar practices and contribute to a more sustainable future for the wine industry.” ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, Tilia.

COLLEMASSARI'S WINES ENCAPSULATE THE ESSENCE OF AN UNSPOILT TUSCANY

FROM THE POGGIO LOMBRONE TO THE MELACCE, EACH BOTTLE OF COLLEMASSARI REFLECTS THE VITICULTURAL LEGACY OF THIS PRISTINE CORNER OF ITALY



In the foothills of Mount Amiata, cradled between the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west and the rolling hills of southern Tuscany to the east, lies the Maremma region, its landscape adorned with lush vineyards, ancient olive groves, and cypress trees. The winemaking tradition in this pristine area of central Italy has deep roots, tracing back to the times of the Etruscans—an Iron Age civilization that predates the Romans. When siblings Claudio Tipa and Maria Iris Bertarelli established the ColleMassari winery there in 1998, their aim was to pay homage to and preserve the region's rich tradition of winemaking.

Since its inception, ColleMassari's pursuit for excellence has been guided not only by a deep reverence for the land, but also by a profound commitment to its people. By emphasizing teamwork and fostering an educational culture centered

on “learning by living”—where knowledge grows through direct engagement with the environment—ColleMassari benefits its team and ensures that every aspect of its winemaking is closely intertwined with Maremma's unique viticultural terroir.

With this ethos, ColleMassari's wines have been instrumental in enhancing the quality and international reputation of Maremma's Montecucco denomination, whose establishment in 1998 coincided with the foundation of ColleMassari itself. The winery's integral role in shaping the region's vinicultural landscape has been evident since the release of its inaugural 2000 vintage and continues to benefit the region's reputation today.

A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY FROM ARCHITECTURE TO VITICULTURE

Designed by renowned architect Edoardo Milesi, the ColleMassari winery epitomizes his approach: Milesi's principles of



bio-architecture informed every aspect of the project, from the selection of materials to the overall design, with a particular focus on maximizing energy efficiency. The use of untreated cedar wood, for instance, ensured that the structure blends seamlessly with its natural surroundings while maintaining a low environmental impact. The winery's vertical structure is also intended to minimize its footprint on the surrounding natural landscape.

The gravity-flow cellar, which spans four levels, allows for the movement of grapes and must solely by gravity, eliminating the need for pumps or other mechanical means. Meanwhile, the subterranean aging cellar is nestled deep within the solid rock, providing a naturally stable and cool environment year-round that is

OPPOSITE PAGE: ColleMassari's leading white wine, Melacce.

RIGHT: ColleMassari's wine estate in southern Tuscany.

ideal for the long maturations of its wines. Such innovative choices not only cleverly enhance operational efficiency, they significantly reduce the winery's energy consumption, too.

Beyond the winery walls, ColleMassari's commitment to sustainability permeates its land cultivation practices, with the entire estate—a thriving ecosystem consisting of nearly 1,000 acres of farmland, 222 acres of olive groves, and about 300 acres of vineyards—maintained through organic methods. Situated at an elevation of 1,050 feet above sea level, the vineyards are strategically oriented toward the Tyrrhenian coast. This prime location nurtures an optimal microclimate: significant diurnal temperature variations enhance the grapes' freshness and flavor complexity, while coastal breezes mitigate the risk of diseases, reducing the necessity for intensive preventative measures.

BOTTLING THE QUINTESSENTIAL GRAPES OF TUSCANY

ColleMassari's vineyards predominantly feature Sangiovese, the quintessential grape of Tuscany. The estate also cultivates Ciliegiole—a minor yet highly regarded and historical local variety—alongside Montepulciano and Cabernet Sauvignon, both of which thrive in the Maremma region. ColleMassari's red grapes take center stage in its intensely aromatic and robustly structured Super Tuscan, the ColleMassari Riserva.

The ColleMassari Riserva is spontaneously fermented in both stainless steel and open-top oak vats, the process involving lengthy macerations and daily manual punching down, followed by 18 months of maturation in tonneaux and large 40-hectoliter Slavonian oak casks. Crafted primarily from Sangiovese, the wine is enhanced by equal parts of Ciliegiole and Cabernet Sauvignon, resulting in a



harmonious blend of flavors and textures. The Sangiovese component delivers vibrant fruitiness and subtle spice, complemented by a robust structure promising remarkable longevity. Ciliegiole contributes smoothness and an additional layer of red fruit aromas, while Cabernet Sauvignon infuses the wine with its characteristic depth and nuanced bouquet. The culmination is a harmonious and refined wine that mirrors the viticultural legacy of this pristine corner of Tuscany.

A smaller portion of ColleMassari's vineyards is dedicated to the cultivation of white grape varieties. A limited section is allocated to Grechetto, while a larger expanse is devoted to Vermentino, the flagship of all Tuscan white grapes. Flourishing elegantly on the slopes of the estate, this classic, delicately perfumed Mediterranean variety benefits from the characteristic warm days and cool nights of these vineyards' microclimate, which translate in heightened aromatics and a vibrant palate.

Vermentino takes center stage in ColleMassari's leading white wine, Melacce, a Maremma Toscana DOC that mesmerizes the senses with its bold, saline character. It undergoes fermentation in stainless steel vats at low temperature to preserve the typical varietal aromas, followed by a short period of refinement in steel tanks.

PROTECTING TUSCANY'S OLD VINES

ColleMassari's profound connection to the natural environment informs its efforts

RIGHT: ColleMassari Rosso Riserva Montecucco DOC.

to safeguard the local agricultural genetic legacy. The vineyards at ColleMassari are the result of meticulous mass selections from the region's oldest and most prized vines. In collaboration with the Consorzio Agrario and the University of Pisa, ColleMassari established its initial plot by incorporating genetic material from four ultra-centenarian vineyards in the surrounding area. This plot then became the progenitor, serving to propagate all subsequent vineyards across the property.

The ColleMassari estate is home to its own cherished legacy vineyard, too: Poggio Lombrone. Here, thrive vines of over 60 years of age; their fruits concur to the creation of the ColleMassari Montecucco DOCG Sangiovese Riserva expression that bears the vineyard's namesake. ColleMassari's olive groves also stand as a testament to the rich history of the Tuscan Maremma, with three trees having been silently witnessing the enduring legacy of this land for over 1,000 years.

This commitment to preserving and championing the winemaking and agricultural heritage of the Tuscan Maremma is evident in every bottle ColleMassari produces. From the Poggio Lombrone to the Melacce, each label encapsulates the very essence of this remarkably unspoiled corner of Tuscany. ■

This content was produced in collaboration with our partner, ColleMassari.





A boisterous and supportive atmosphere pervaded the 2024 Tales Catalyst celebration.

Eileen Wayner, Tales of the Cocktail Foundation

AT TALES CATALYST, COMMUNITY TAKES CENTER STAGE

AT THE 2024 TALES OF THE COCKTAIL, TALES CATALYST HONORED KEYATTA MINCEY PARKER AND BECKY PASKIN AS CHANGEMAKERS IN THE BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

“This is going to be such an amazing couple hours of our day, and I’m already charged up,” said Eileen Wayner, Tales of the Cocktail Foundation’s CEO, as she took to the podium for the opening of this year’s Tales Catalyst at The Ritz-Carlton on July 23, in the midst of the annual New Orleans conference. She laid the groundwork for what would be a deeply moving event.

“We want to focus on what the goal of this program is,” continued Wayner. “To really make sure that we’re honoring individuals that are reshaping this industry—reshaping it to be more equitable, to be more inclusive, folding in new voices, and really taking this industry where we want it to go.”

And this year’s honorees—Tales Catalyst U.S. Honoree Keyatta Mincey Parker, the executive director of A Sip of Paradise Garden; and Tales Catalyst International Honoree Becky Paskin, the founder of OurWhisky Foundation—have done just that.

Tales Catalyst—formerly the Catalyst Luncheon—was founded in 2012 as the Dame Hall of Fame to recognize women in the industry who were often overlooked by male-dominated bar awards. Last year, Dame reimagined itself as the Catalyst Luncheon to broaden its remit to

all genders, and in doing so expanded on its mission to be both a collective of diverse changemakers and a catalyst for the industry’s continued growth.

2020 honoree Tiffanie Barriere, known as the Drinking Coach, paid tribute to Mincey Parker during her introduction. “She’s just so chill, and so to see her get what she wants and move in the spaces she’s moving is our dream come true.”

When Mincey Parker took to the podium she stated, “I deserve this,” and the whole room exploded with applause. And she’s right: Beyond being a prominent bartender, Mincey Parker founded A Sip of Paradise Garden, a nonprofit community garden for bartenders and hospitality

professionals in Atlanta—and soon New Orleans, too.

“Just because I made this look easy doesn’t mean this isn’t hard—it is hard,” she said. What drives her to keep pushing for change in the industry is all of the people continue to lift her up.

Robin Nance, the co-chair and events and strategy director for Speed Rack, introduced Paskin. “There’s a pretty heavy group of amazing women in this room that have a lot of love for you and your work.”

When it was Paskin’s turn to speak, her words moved the crowd to tears. “It’s amazing to have all of your faces looking at me,” Paskin said. “The first talk I gave was in London, and half the room stood up and walked out when I took to the stage.” A lot has changed for Paskin since that moment: OurWhisky Foundation is the first nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and empowering professional women in whisky across the globe.

Paskin said she felt like whatever she achieved as a woman in the industry was never enough. “It hasn’t been easy in a male-dominated industry, as you can imagine ... [but] we’re in this together. This is all our fight and we are just getting started.”

Keyatta Mincey Parker (left), A Sip of Paradise Garden; and Becky Paskin (right), OurWhisky Foundation



SevenFifty Daily and Beverage Media were media sponsors of Tales Catalyst.