

# Beverage Journal



DECEMBER 2024

## RAISING THE BAR

ON-PREMISE PROS WIND DOWN 2024  
BY SETTING GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD



BUBBLY THAT  
OVER-DELIVERS



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**2024, THE YEAR IN REVIEW ...**

2024 was a year of further transformation for Maryland and the District of Columbia's beverage alcohol industries. Operators continued to evolve in response to both enduring and emerging market forces. Resilience and innovation again defined the landscape, with businesses adapting to shifting consumer expectations, economic challenges, and an increasingly digitalized world.

Restaurants and bars made strides in creating personalized, immersive experiences, leveraging data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) tools to understand and respond to customer preferences. As on-premise establishments expanded digital offerings, they found new ways to engage patrons beyond the table—from virtual events to online “cocktail kits,” encouraging consumer involvement at every level. Technology remained a central pillar, with QR codes, mobile ordering, and contactless options now firmly entrenched, while exterior and themed dining setups continued to appeal, even as weather posed challenges.

For off-premise outlets, 2024 brought growth in premium product sales, driven by heightened consumer interest in distinctive, high-quality beverages. Local and craft selections held strong, with many operators reporting that their customers’ preference for authentic, small-batch products remained strong. Sustainability also emerged as a central theme, with packaging and sourcing practices being scrutinized. This consumer preference for eco-friendly, artisanal brands has allowed stores to offer selections that appeal to a socially conscious customer base.

With COVID restrictions (hopefully) something of the past, events and festivals were back in full swing. The return of these gatherings not only boosted consumer enthusiasm but also gave a critical lift to the industry.



The regulatory landscape, however, continues to demand vigilance from operators. Changes at both local and federal levels influence how businesses operate. Many establishments have adapted to this regulatory fluidity by staying nimble and proactively adjusting their strategies to align with the latest policies.

**2025, WHAT TO EXPECT ...**

In 2025, sustainability will remain a top priority, with consumers expecting continued commitment to environmentally responsible practices. This might manifest in greener packaging, energy-efficient production methods, and ingredient sourcing. Craft and premium products should keep their momentum, with an increasing focus on hyper-local options as consumers seek products that resonate with their communities and values.

Technology will advance, too, with AI and analytics playing a larger role in personalizing customer experiences and enhancing operations. From inventory management to tailored product recommendations, these tools will likely streamline processes, helping businesses meet demand more efficiently.

Regulatory trends remain unpredictable (more on this next month). Adaptability will remain an asset for industry players. As the beverage alcohol industry in Maryland and DC approaches 2025, a proactive mix of sustainability, innovation, and adaptability will be essential for continued success in this dynamic market. ■

**STEPHEN PATTEN PUBLISHER**

Maryland • Washington, DC

**Beverage Journal**

Published Monthly by  
**The Beverage Journal, Inc.**  
(USPS# PE 783300)

Over 80 Years of Continuous Publication

**BEVERAGE JOURNAL, INC.**

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**POSTMASTER:**

Send address changes to  
**THE BEVERAGE JOURNAL, INC.**  
**PO Box 2062, Williamsport, PA 17703**

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Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, MD and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: MD edition; 1 year \$49.00 plus tax, 2 years \$79.00 plus tax, 3 years \$109.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$10.00 plus tax. DC edition; 1 year \$36.00 plus tax, 2 years \$60.00 plus tax, 3 years \$83.00 plus tax, FedEx Ground delivery \$85.00 plus tax per year per edition, single copies \$5.00 plus tax.

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# NEW PRODUCTS



## 1. DROP OF SUNSHINE

Treasury Wine Estates has joined forces with Candle Media's Hello Sunshine, the multi-channel powerhouse founded by Reese Witherspoon, on Drop of Sunshine. This range of California-made wines aimed at female consumers celebrates conversation and connection and currently includes a bright, citrusy sparkling rosé and Central Coast Chardonnay and a Central Coast red blend dominated by Pinot Noir and rounded out with Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon.

**\$** SRP: \$20 to \$25 per 750-ml bottle  
[dropofsunshine.com](https://dropofsunshine.com)

## 4. SOCIETY DE LA RASSI

Disappointed by the non-alcoholic sparkling wines on the market, Steve Jackson, inspired by luxury heritage brands like Louis Vuitton, launched his Society De La Rassi label with the Neue Brut flagship. Showcasing sustainably-sourced Spanish Chardonnay grapes from the 2023 vintage, the dealcoholized bubbly, achieved through a vacuum distillation that preserves its effervescence, features less than 0.5 percent alcohol and 1.2 grams of sugar per 100 milliliters.

**\$** SRP: \$70 per 750-ml bottle  
[societydelarassi.com](https://societydelarassi.com)

## 2. YÉYO

It took one year of experiments to bring Yéyo's smooth, sippable high-proof tequila (48% ABV) to life at its family-run distillery in Arandas, a town in the highlands of Jalisco blanketed in red volcanic soil. The result? Banana, mango, and citrus aromas that pave the way to layers of sweet agave, warm cinnamon, and white pepper, and a spicy finish underpinned by fruit and spearmint.

**\$** SRP: \$69.99 per 750-ml bottle  
[yeyotequila.com](https://yeyotequila.com)

## 5. CONVITE

For six generations, the Hernández family, now led by brothers Daniel and Tucho (aka Cosme), have been producing mezcal based on artisanal traditions, and Convite's Pechuga expression is made up of their recipe of local herbs, fruits, spices, and, upon a second distillation, turkey breast. Distilled from wild agave in the San Baltazar Guelavila community in Oaxaca's Zapotec mountains, the espadín mezcal exhibits sweet spice and tropical fruit on the palate.

**\$** SRP: \$79.99 per 750-ml bottle  
[convitemezcal.com](https://convitemezcal.com)

## 3. CONTE CAMILLO NEGRONI

Ready-to-serve Conte Camillo Negroni (30% ABV) is an homage to the Italian aristocrat purportedly responsible for the birth of his namesake cocktail. Produced at La Valdôtaine distillery in the Italian Alps, it is composed of gin that fuses wild juniper berries harvested at high altitudes, local herbs, and mineral-rich water from the Acqueverdi spring as well as vermouth and bitters. It can be sipped neat or simply over ice with a slice of orange.

**\$** SRP: \$34.99 per 700-ml bottle  
[mack-brands.com](https://mack-brands.com)

## 6. DEKO COCKTAILS

Home parties are a breeze to orchestrate with ready-to-drink libations from Deko Cocktails. The good-looking bottles are packed with thoughtful ingredients like a riff on the Bee's Knees (17% ABV) sweetened with organic wildflower honey, or a bourbon-based Gold Rush (20% ABV) upgraded with clarified lemon juice. In the crisp, floral Firefly (21% ABV), a blend of vodka infused with hand-shredded cucumber is balanced with elderflower, tea, lime, and a whisper of habanero.

**\$** SRP: \$24.99 per 375-ml bottle  
[dekokocktails.com](https://dekokocktails.com)

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**7. MANOJO**

Renowned Mexican chef Enrique Olvera and his partners Alex Ferzan, Gonzalo Gout, Thomas McDonald, and Nes Rueda, have partnered with husband-and-wife mezcaleros Joel Velasco and Felicitas Hernández on mezcal newcomer Manojo. The inaugural expression is produced from a medley of seven- to nine-year-old espadín agaves grown on mineral-rich soil in the Oaxacan town of San Luis del Río. Roasted piñas, ground in a horse-pulled tahona, are distilled twice in copper stills with water from the Rio Hormiga Colorada.

**\$ SRP: \$49.99 per 750-ml bottle**  
**🌐 manojomezcal.com**

**8. HINE**

Hine has replaced its Antique XO expression with XO 1er Cru, redolent of honey, ginger, cinnamon, and botanicals. Hatched by cellar master Eric Forget and maître de chai Paul Szersnovicz from a new blend of eaux-de-vie made solely from Grande Champagne grapes, it's double distilled on the lees and matured in lightly toasted oak. The updated decanter, fashioned out of faceted glass and red gilding, is a more lightweight, eco-friendly alternative to its predecessor.

**\$ SRP: \$300 per 700-ml bottle**  
**🌐 hine.com**

**9. MONKEY 47 GIN**

Every year, Monkey 47, the dry gin from Germany's Black Forest laden with 47 botanicals, unveils its limited-edition Distiller's Cut heightened by one extra outlier. For 2024, the special ingredient is caper, often paired alongside anchovy in pasta dishes. The ones Monkey 47 chose were grown on a small, historic farm on the Italian island of Pantelleria. Then, they were hand-picked just before blooming and underwent a two-step salting process that imparts the gin with nutty and maritime characteristics.

**\$ SRP: \$79.99 per 375-ml bottle**  
**🌐 monkey47.com**

**10. CHAMPAGNE BARONS DE ROTHSCHILD**

With Triptyque, its limited-production vintage cuvée, Champagne Barons de Rothschild explores the ever-evolving intersection of the Avize, Ambonnay, and Aÿ Grands Crus. For the inaugural 2018 release, cellar master Guillaume Lété blended Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes from 40 ares in Avize, 20 in Ambonnay, and 20 in Aÿ, proportions that will remain to underscore the power of terroir and the subtleties of climatic shifts. Matured for five years, the Champagne melds notes of fresh red fruit and orange peel with a zip of minerality.

**\$ SRP: \$110 per 750-ml bottle**  
**🌐 champagne-bdr.com**

**11. EL TESORO**

El Tesoro de Don Felipe Tequila, distilled at La Alteña Distillery in the Jalisco highlands, has unveiled its third incarnation of The Mundial Collection Limited Edition Cask Finishing Series. The previous releases embraced Knob Creek rye and Laphroaig Scotch whisky, and this time around reposado tequila rested in flash-charred Basil Hayden Toast oak barrels for nearly six months. This limited-edition spirit, meant for sipping, marries flavors of cooked agave, cinnamon, and crème brûlée.

**\$ SRP: \$175 per 750-ml bottle**  
**🌐 eltesorotequila.com**

**12. OATRAGEOUS**

Buglisi Recobs Group, the founder of the Misunderstood Whiskey Company, has ventured into the world of dairy-free cream liqueurs with Oatrageous. These plant-based concoctions unite oat milk made with 100 percent sustainably-sourced, non-GMO oats and bourbon distilled at MPG in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Containing 30 percent less sugar than traditional counterparts, the three varieties—bourbon cream, arabica essence-infused espresso, and coconut bolstered by real fruit—are only 100 calories per 1.5-ounce serving.

**\$ SRP: \$27.99 per 750-ml bottle**  
**🌐 drinkoatrageous.com**

# HOW TO TOUCH A MAN'S HEART







# DAVIS' PUB

## A NAME TO SEEK OUT IN ANNAPOLIS

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

**W**hen you talk about a business like Davis' Pub in Annapolis, you don't refer to its longevity in years. You tell tales of its evolution and survival in terms of decades. In the 1920s, on the corner of 4th and Chester Ave., lifelong Eastport businessman George Washington Davis opened a general store. Two decades later, his business had evolved to be known as Davis' Lounge, serving the local, predominantly black watermen in the neighborhood. In 1986, a decade after Davis' death at the age of 92, the building became known as it is today, Davis' Pub.

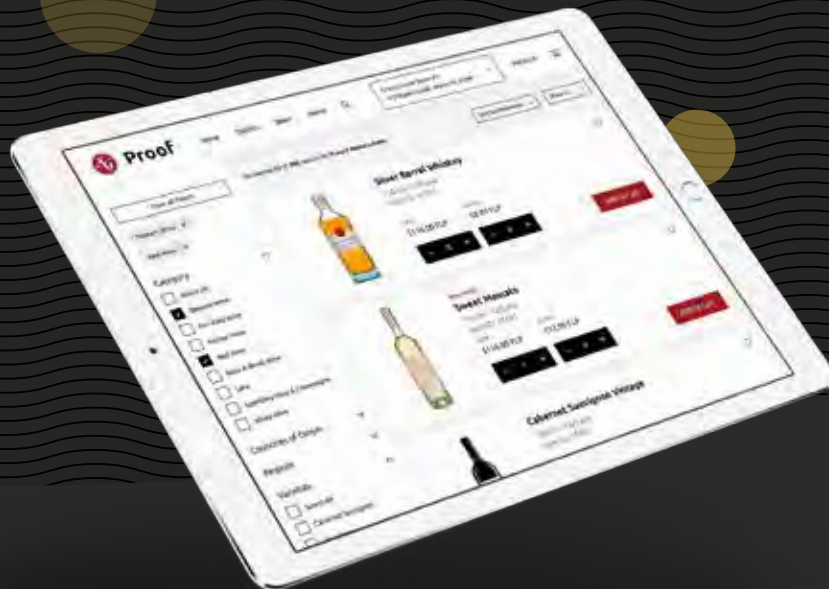
Current proprietor Kevin Colbeck has been working there nearly three decades. In a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, he remarked, "I started at Davis' Pub as a bartender and thought it was just going to be a summertime job. That was close to 30 years ago! While the neighborhood has changed quite a bit, there's been no need to reinvent the wheel. We've tweaked the menu a bit and made it more health-conscious. But we have a lot of the old-school stuff on there."

Colbeck says it's the customers who make Davis' Pub stand out as much as its history. "The customers make it cool," he declared. "There's a diverse universe that comes through here. We're not on the main drag in downtown. We're a bit of a find. But once you find us, you'll find our customers and our staff are super-friendly and make it all work."

Given this is the latest in our series of articles on bars, restaurants, and taverns named after an individual or even an entire family, it's kind of rare to find such an establishment that has kept the last name of a

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*“I started at Davis’ Pub as a bartender and thought it was just going to be a summertime job. That was close to 30 years ago!”*

**Kevin Colbeck**  
**proprietor**  
**Davis’ Pub**



long-dead man completely unrelated to the current ownership. “Why change?” Colbeck asked. “George Washington Davis Memorial Park is right across the street. We’re the last of a dying breed. We’re a mom-and-pop establishment. We’re not corporate. We’re not a franchise. We don’t sit on the prettiest piece of property. The beauty of Davis’ Pub is we

‘Keep It Simple, Stupid.’ We sell a lot of beer. We have gotten a little more crafty with our cocktails. But I know we’re still a bit more ‘down and dirty’ than other places around town.”

He added, “The great thing about being in the restaurant and bar business is you see people at their best, whether coming down

the street from a wedding, or they just enjoyed some great sporting win, or maybe their kid just graduated. And then you also see them somewhat at their worst. In those moments, whether they’re getting a divorce or they’ve just lost a loved one or whatever, you can be there to help pick them up. They’ve come into your place to be around

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people. You want to help them get over whatever their life's challenge is.”

Colbeck faces many challenges himself, day in and day out. “We’re not a high-end place,” he noted. “So balancing between what we need to charge to keep the doors open and what I feel is fair is challenging. In this day and age, everything is so expensive. It hurts whenever you have to raise the prices, knowing you might lose some people. That’s the challenge now.”

But he says what energizes and inspires him are the personalities: “I love the people on both sides of Davis’ Pub – the customers AND the staff. We are a boating town. So, we will start seeing people when the weather gets nice, and then they’ll leave us when the weather gets colder. Then, it’s great to see those familiar faces come back in the spring. But there is our local, hard-core crowd that sticks with us year round. We also have the Navy kids that come and go, graduate, and then ultimately bring their families back. It’s the relationships! I like standing back and seeing the smiles when a customer comes in and one or more of our employees recognizes them, remembers their name, and asks, ‘How are the kids?’ or ‘Where are you at these days?’”

Colbeck went on to speak of how tough the days of COVID-19 were. From an operational standpoint, things are certainly easier now post-pandemic. Colbeck observes there has been a greater appeal to eating outside than ever before. Davis’ Pub’s sidewalk seating had been very

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seasonal. “But the weather has changed,” he states. “There are now beautiful, sunny, 55-degree days in December, January, and February where people want to sit outside. I think we have adapted to that to where we now keep those options open. But, that’s not to say when it’s 12 degrees outside and the wind is blowing sideways, we seat customers outside. Then they want to be inside a nice, warm pub enjoying some food and drinks

with your friends! We have that appeal, too.”

And if owning your own place one day has a certain appeal to anyone reading this, Colbeck had some words of wisdom: “If it’s your dream, don’t give up on your dream. Get a plan, do your homework, and make sure you have fostered relationships. If you’re a ‘little guy’ like a bartender or an assistant manager, you may not have the deepest pockets. Reach out to local lenders who will help

you navigate rather than big banks who are much more likely to look the other way. And develop a clientele who would be willing to follow you.”

He concluded, “You have to be optimistic. But you also can’t stick your head in the sand and not pay attention to what’s going on. Even the smallest of problems can manifest and turn into something large.” ■



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# RAISING THE BAR

RESTAURANT AND BAR PROFESSIONALS SHARE THEIR GOALS FOR 2025, FROM REIMAGINING BEVERAGE MENUS TO OVERHAULING OPERATIONS

BY SHANA CLARKE

W

Whether you think of them as resolutions, intentions, or vows, the start of a new year is an ideal time to kickstart new plans. January offers a fresh beginning, for goals both personal and professional.

But what do on-premise beverage professionals hope to accomplish in their restaurants and bars in 2025? Some see opportunities to improve internal operations, while others are pausing to rethink their beverage programs altogether. As the final holiday push comes to an end, *Beverage Media* spoke with on-premise beverage professionals about their hopes and plans for 2025.

## INVESTING IN EDUCATION

In 2024, Stacey Gibson opened her first wine bar with Parallel, an evolution of the wine-centric pop-up she started with husband and chef Joe Gibson in 2016. An alum of Momofuku Má Pêche and Corkbuzz in New York City and Park Avenue Fine Wines in Portland, Oregon, Gibson has long believed in wine's ability to connect with guests, and she's doubling down on that concept in 2025.

**“Because beverage revenue is so crucial to the restaurants, the beverage managers deserve more admin time to keep up with their programs.”**

—Braithe Gill, Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

“In 2025, one of my key focuses is to expand the wine flights we offer at Parallel, diving deeper into specific regions, varietals, and winemaking techniques,” says Gibson. “Flights offer a unique opportunity for our guests to explore a range of wines. By curating themed flights—whether it’s a deep dive into a particular region, a comparison of vintages, or an exploration of different winemaking methods—I aim to create more meaningful and engaging experiences for our guests.”

Education is a key tenet of her wine program. “Providing maps and overall context is a great way to allow guests to continue learning after they leave,” says Gibson. “This focus on wine flights will not only elevate the guest experience but also enhance the knowledge of our staff, allowing them to share more insightful stories and recommendations.”

At Corkbuzz, one of Gibson’s alma maters in New York, education has also long been at the forefront. “I’ve always felt strongly about community, social sustainability, and inclusivity in wine,” says Amber Rill, a partner, assistant beverage director, and director of special projects at Corkbuzz. In 2025, she plans to expand its virtual wine education curriculum to take hospitality beyond the wine bar’s physical space.

Corkbuzz has already published hundreds of classes filmed between 2020 and 2022 on YouTube, which brings wine education to those who cannot physically attend in-person classes. “We are also working with colleagues in our industry to film Wine 101 classes in other languages,” says Rill, “so they can be a resource to professionals in our industry interested in



Braithe Gill, Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

learning about wine or training up to new positions, but may be more comfortable learning in a language other than English.”

### STREAMLINING OPERATIONS

As Braithe Gill, the corporate beverage director for Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group in New Orleans, looks to the year ahead, she sees opportunities to make beverage operations more efficient across the company’s five restaurants, which include spots like the casual Café Noma and the landmark Brennan’s.

“Company-wide, I want to find more time and efficiency for my beverage managers,” says Gill, who notes that Brennan’s alone has seen a 50 percent growth of its list during her 10-year tenure and now counts 18,000 bottles in its cellar. “We ask a lot from beverage managers running wine and bar programs: maintaining service, running inventories, managing COGS, purchasing, creating menus, and more. My goal is to carve out more time for them to do their jobs.”

And in the City of Saints, there’s an extra emphasis on drinks programs. “Because beverage revenue is so crucial to the restaurants, the beverage managers deserve more admin time to keep up with their programs,” she says. “Two ways that I’m looking to improve time and efficiency is to research inventory management sys-



Stacey Gibson, Parallel

tems to find the quickest and most efficient way to run inventory. I would also like beverage managers to be scheduled for at least eight hours of dedicated beverage management time each week.”

At Jungle Bird in New York City, owner and beverage director Krissy Harris plans to streamline her decision-making process for new SKUs. “There are so many spirits and non-alcoholic offerings these days, I feel that I’m asked to bring some new item in the bar every day,” she says. While price is important, Harris values brand integrity above all else. “There are countless times where I’ve chosen to work with a product almost twice the cost because I know the product is legit and the people behind it care,” she says.

For 2025, “I want to lean into and focus on maintaining the relationships I have with the creators, distillers, and brand ambassadors who have integrity and are genuine,” says Harris, who has developed many close bonds over her 25 years in the industry. “It’s not all about bringing the price down. There has to be a real person and product for me to bring something new in.”



Shawn Westhoven, Newport Restaurant Group

**“Throughout the last half of 2024, there were many price reductions across the distribution and importation chains. I think 2025 will allow us an opportunity to pass some of those savings along to the guests as current vintages will show better value.”**

—Steven McDonald, MS, Pappas Bros. Steakhouse

### REIMAGINING THE BEVERAGE MENU

Other beverage professionals are rethinking their approach to their programs as well. Steven McDonald, MS, the executive wine director of Pappas Bros. Steakhouse in Houston and Dallas, has curation on his mind at this trio of steakhouses. “One of my goals for 2025 includes reevaluating each section of all three wine lists and trimming down selections so they reflect a range of the best vintages and price points while maintaining a range of producer styles we believe are excelling in their category,” he says.

It’s a strategic move for a wine program with over 73,000 bottles in inventory and more than 60 by-the-glass selections—but one that allows him to bring in more offers at a great value to guests. “Throughout the last half of 2024, there were many price reductions across the distribution and importation chains,” he explains. “I think 2025 will allow us an opportunity to pass some of those savings along to the guests as current vintages will show better value.”

The menu transformation is somewhat opposite at Bar 'Cino, which has locations in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The wine program has been intentionally small since inception, “to match the simple, little food menu,” says beverage director Shawn Westhoven, who has been with Newport Restaurant Group in various roles for almost three decades. But as the Italian-focused wine bars gained a

loyal clientele, repeat customers started requesting something new.

“Over the years we’ve collected quite a few regulars looking for more high-end wines. Since we have the space and knowledge, we are going to do it,” says Westhoven. “We hope this will be one more way we can connect with our guests and create experiences.”

The benefits extend beyond customers; Westhoven sees it as an opportunity to further engage the Bar 'Cino staff. “It’s exciting not just for the potential increase in sales but as a team, we can’t wait to do more training and tasting,” he says.

Since Katie Forstner, the sommelier



Steven McDonald, MS, Pappas Bros. Steakhouse

**“My challenge to myself is to drink horizontally as well as vertically this next year. Not only to drink upwards—looking to try the benchmarks or the next weirdest thing—but to drink broadly.”**

—Kaleigh Brook,  
The Thief Fine Wine and Beer

at Urban Hill in Salt Lake City, joined the restaurant in August, she immediately noticed a growing guest request. “One challenge we’re eager to meet is elevating our beverage program to be inclusive to our guests who want to engage with more non-alcoholic and low-ABV selections,” she says.

The cocktail menu now features several zero-proof options and the program includes non-alcoholic beer; the team



plans to continue to evolve what’s on offer. “We are very lucky to have one of the most talented bar teams in the city, and they have dedicated themselves to creating cocktail menus that reflect this industry-wide change,” says Forstner.

For Kaleigh Brook, the manager of The Thief Fine Wine and Beer in Walla Walla, Washington, 2025 won’t be as much about overhauling the shop’s selection as it will be about overhauling her focus within it. “I work in a truly epic wine shop,” she says. “We have thousands of wines from all over the world.

“It’s so easy to get caught up in the esoteric, drinking on the fringe, dabbling in oddities,” she continues. But for the average shopper, the “oddballs,” as Brook calls her recent favorites—Syrah from Hanspeter Ziereisen in Germany’s Baden region, and Rhône Valley Chaselas from Pierre Gonon—hold little appeal.

“So, my challenge to myself is to drink horizontally as well as vertically this next year,” says Brook, who uses The Thief’s selection as a study guide for her Master Sommelier and Master of Wine exams. “Not only to drink upwards—looking to

try the benchmarks or the next weirdest thing—but to drink broadly.”

Brook points to the breadth of Côtes du Rhône or Albariño from Rías Baixas (“a style which often gets pigeonholed but really explores an insane spectrum”) as examples. “These are the wines our customer base is most often asking questions about,” she says, noting that meeting customers where they are “is the best skill I can have.” ■



Katie Forstner, Urban Hill



Kaleigh Brook, The Thief Fine Wine and Beer



More consumers are popping bubbly year-round, but they're also looking for value. Which bottles make the cut?

# HOLIDAY SPARKLERS WITH SERIOUS VALUE

SOMMELIERS PICK THE BOTTLES OF BUBBLY THAT OVER-DELIVER FOR THEIR PRICE, FROM DOMESTIC PÉT-NAT TO GERMAN SEKT—AND YES, EVEN CHAMPAGNE

BY COURTNEY SCHIESSL MAGRINI

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e know that sparkling wine sales spike at this time of year, driven by the category's association with the celebrations that are abundant throughout the holiday season. And increasingly, consumers have integrated bubbly into their year-round purchasing habits; a January report from IWSR Drinks Market Analysis found that about 25 percent of all adults are sparkling wine consumers, and the category saw a six percent CAGR in volume between 2017 and 2022, even as still wine volume declined.

But we also know that consumers are tightening their budgets amidst stubborn inflation, cutting back on some of their spending and seeking out value when it comes to alcohol purchasing. With this in mind, *Beverage Media* asked sommeliers and beverage directors across the country to name the sparkling wines that over-deliver for their price points. There were domestic pét-nats and German and Italian sparklers, and yes, some even pointed to value in Champagne. These are the bottles that seriously punch above their weight. (All wines are listed with suggested retail price per bottle.)



ABOVE: Cressida Greening (left) with husband and Winona's partner Emir Dupeyron

**BARBICHETTE 'CLARO QUÉ SI' 2022, SENECA LAKE, NEW YORK; \$26**

Selected by Cressida Greening, partner, Winona's, Brooklyn

At Winona's in the Bed-Stuy neighborhood of Brooklyn, the dinner vibes are casual and convivial, complemented by a list of natural, organic, and biodynamic wines. The sparkling wine that delivers the most value for its price on this list also keeps things local; Barbichette started in a building just down the block from Winona's before moving upstate. "It's increasingly difficult to find domestic wine that is delicious, well made, and at an approachable price point, and this wine knocks it out the park on all fronts," says Cressida Greening, a partner at Winona's. Made from Chardonnay, the Claro Qué Si is a "near-perfect pét-nat—bright acidity with a racy, mineral backbone and just enough body," she says.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF TEDDY WOLFF / KERMIT LYNCH / DANIEL BEEDLE

**"It's increasingly difficult to find domestic wine that is delicious, well made, and at an approachable price point."**

—Cressida Greening, Winona's

**J. LASSALLE 'PRÉFÉRENCE' BRUT NV, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE; \$54**

Selected by Ariana Tsuchiya, director of beverage, G.Lion Hawaii, Honolulu

"It's hard to find quality, value-priced Champagne in 2024," says Ariana Tsuchiya, the director of beverage for G.Lion Hawaii, which includes La Vie, Hy's Steak House, and Quiora in Honolulu. She calls Champagne J. Lassalle one of her personal favorites, a family-run Champagne house with three generations of women at the helm. The Préférence, a blend of about 60 percent Pinot Meunier, 20 percent Chardonnay, and 20 percent Pinot Noir, is aged for four years on its lees yet retaining "freshness and elegance" in the finished wine.



**PETER LAUER RIESLING SEKT 2020, MOSEL, GERMANY; \$40**

Selected by Daniel Beedle, assistant director of food and beverage, Kimpton The Forum Hotel, Charlottesville, Virginia

The Sekt category as a whole can sometimes be overlooked, but this 100 percent Riesling



ABOVE: Daniel Beedle, Kimpton The Forum Hotel

bottle from Peter Lauer absolutely should not, says Daniel Beedle, the assistant director of food and beverage at Kimpton The Forum Hotel. "This is one of the only sparkling wines I've had to date that fully expresses the typicity and purity of the grape while undergoing full [traditional method] production," he says. "There is also a touch of petrol [from TDN] that makes this wine all the more intriguing for a sparkling."

**DENIS SALOMON 'HISTOIRE DE FAMILLE' BRUT NV, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE; \$55**

Selected by Justin Parramore, beverage director, Petit Pomeroy, Chicago

In the notoriously pricey Champagne category, Justin Parramore, the beverage director for Parisian-style bistro Petit Pomeroy, looks to a cuvée that takes advantage of the underdog history of Pinot Meunier. "The Salomon family brings a





lot of value to the table by using this less-popular grape,” he says. The Histoire de Famille uses 100 percent Pinot Meunier to create a rich yet balanced Champagne. “It’s true to style with notes of brioche, ripe green apple, zesty citrus, limestone minerality, and a texture that shows complexity and finesse,” says Parramore.

**CONTRATTO ‘MILLESIMATO’ ALTA LANGA 2020, PIEDMONT, ITALY; \$36**

Selected by Erin Lindstone, sommelier, Barolo Grill, Denver

Unsurprisingly, the wine program at Barolo Grill centers on Italy, but its sparkling list goes beyond well-known Italian bubbly like Prosecco or even Franciacorta. Sommelier Erin Lindstone finds immense value in the Contratto ‘Millesimato,’ which comes from the Alta Langa region of Piedmont. All Alta Langa wines, including this one, must be made using the traditional method, and this bottle spends 30 months on the lees. “To me, it punches way outside its weight class,” says Lindstone, who points to the wine’s brioche and hazel-

BELOW: Erin Lindstone, Barolo Grill



nut notes. “It has such depth, complexity and richness.”

**CAZÉ-THIBAUT ‘CRAYÈRE’ BRUT NATURE NV, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE; \$65**

Selected by Jhonel Faelnar, beverage director, NA:EUN Hospitality, New York City



Guests often flock to Atoboy, Atomix, and Naro, the restaurants that comprise NA:EUN Hospitality (which translates to “better” in Korean), for unforgettable dining experiences, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t deals to be found on the wine list. When it comes to sparkling wine that exceeds expectations, beverage director Jhonel Faelnar looks to the Cazé-Thibaut ‘Crayère,’ a blend of Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay from a producer that prioritizes meticulous farming. “It over-delivers

BELOW: Jhonel Faelnar, NA:EUN Hospitality



ABOVE: Adele Corrigan Wade, 13 Celsius

on the palate in terms of complexity and texture, not to mention the reasonable price point behind it,” says Faelnar. “The experience is well worth it and then some.”

**PIERRE SPARR CRÉMANT D’ALSACE BRUT ROSÉ NV, ALSACE, FRANCE; \$20**

Selected by Adele Corrigan Wade, general manager, 13 Celsius, Houston

The team at 13 Celsius in Houston aims not only to emulate the classic wine bars of Europe, but to surpass them, offering a wide range of selections from around the world. Earlier this year, the wine bar spotlighted bottles made by women winemakers, such as the Pierre Sparr Crémant d’Alsace Brut Rosé, a traditional-method sparkling made from Pinot Noir. “As Houston had yet to really get fall-like temperatures, any pink bubbles are in high demand,” says general manager Adele Corrigan Wade. ■

