

# KANE'S BEVERAGE WEEK

The marketing, regulatory and financial news that matters . . . when it matters  
for bev/al executives and their advisers

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## The Inside Story

Omicron's Toll on On-Premise Likely to Get Worse	2
U.S. Online Alcohol Sales Reach \$6.1 Billion, More Growth Expected — Rabobank	2
Wine Tops New Year's Eve Sales on Drizly	3
The Mess in California Ports Cost Wineries Over \$250 Million	3
Christmas Day Delivered 2d Highest Day for Check Value in 2021	3
Christmas Day Delivered Second-Highest Day for Check Value in 2021	4
Control States Volume Up 4% in November	4
Miller Family Wine Co. Launches New Non-Alcoholic Wine Brand	4
Paulaner USA, Van Diest Beer Cut Ties	5
Molson Coors Halts Production Of Saint Archer, Sells Facility	5
US Beverage Takes Stake in Unita Brewing	5
Spirits, Wine Sales Rose Up to 40% In Early Months of Pandemic	5
Permanent Spirits Direct Shipping Advances in California	6
Boston Beer: Earnings to Fall Dramatically	6
Frozen Cocktail Pop Producer Files as Winery	6
US Chamber Seeks to Make Case That Business is Competitive, Resilient	6
And Much, Much More	

## There's No Glass Shortage from U.S. Producers: GPI

"Domestic glass suppliers have not run out of excess inventory, not is there any shortage of raw materials to make glass," **Scott DeFife**, president, **Glass Packaging Institute**, told the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium. "All the materials needed to manufacture glass in North America can be sourced in North America," he added.

DeFife said you can expect supply chain issues for imported glass and other types of materials to remain until port backlogs clear up. That could be not until late 2023, we've been told. "It's a good time to explore where your glass is sourced and see if you can make the switch from imported bottles to bottles manufactured in North America," he said.

How much glass is imported? About 25% to 30%. The rest is made domestically. Among those raw materials to make glass is, of course, recycled glass. "Glass used in the US by consumers is rarely exported for recycling outside of North America. The pandemic supply chain and trucking logistics issues have impacted the movement of recycled glass, but this has not hampered production of new bottles," DeFife said.

There's been an 11.7% increase in imports of empty 750 ml bottles, he said. About 40% of these came from Canada and Mexico, North American suppliers. Through the third quarter, U.S. glass manufacturers shipped 1.5 million glass bottles. Exact sizes aren't known, but "they tend to fall in the 750 ml category range." A total of 1.38 billion 750ml bottles were imported to the U.S. Nearly half were imported from Mexico and Canada. "Bottles supplied from these North American countries typically do not encounter port of entry focused delays."

## Diageo Net Sales Jump 15.8% in Half

**Diageo plc** reports net sales in the fiscal first half rose 16% to GBP 7.96 billion (20% organic) on a 9% increase in volume. Net profit jumped 24% to GBP 1.97 billion.

"In the off-trade channel, where consumer demand has remained resilient, we have gained or held market share across the majority of our measured markets," said Ivan Menezes, ceo. "We also benefitted from the continued recovery of the on-trade channel, particularly in Europe and North America.

"Strong sales volume growth and continued premiumization drove an improvement in organic operating margin during the half. This was achieved while increasing our investment in marketing to gain share and support innovation, particularly in North America and Greater China. In addition, our focus on revenue growth management and productivity savings are helping to mitigate the impact of cost inflation.

"Strong cash flow generation is enabling re-investment in sustainable long-term growth. We are expanding our production capacity, enhancing our digital capabilities, investing in talent and progressing with our ambitious 10-year sustainability plan," he said.

Menezes said the company expects continued near-term volatility, including potential impacts from Covid-19, global supply chain constraints and rising cost inflation. "Over the medium-term, from fiscal 23 to fiscal 25, we continue to expect organic net sales to consistently grow within a range of 5% to 7% and organic operating profit to grow sustainably within a range of 6% "to 9%

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## Another Sponsorship Compromise. This One for \$305,000

Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau said it accepted a \$305,000 offer in compromise from **Fifth Generation Inc.**, a TTB-permitted distilled spirits plant, to settle charges it entered into sponsorship agreements with various sports and entertainment venues, through which “the venue’s retail concessionaires were induced to purchase” fifth Generation’s distilled spirits to the exclusion of its competitors’ products.

## CBrands Promotes Jim Sabia To Beer Division President

Constellation Brands Inc. promoted **Jim Sabia** to EVP-President, Beer Division. He had been EVP-Managing Director, Beer Division since February 2021. He succeeds **Paul Hetterich** who will assume the role of Executive Vice President and Chair, Beer Division. In this role, Hetterich will continue to have responsibility for Constellation’s Beer Operations in Mexico, including ongoing capital projects designed to ensure that the company’s long-term production capacity keeps pace with the growing consumer demand for Constellation’s iconic beer brands.

Sabia joined Constellation Brands in 2007 as VP-Marketing for the company’s spirits business. He was promoted to Chief Marketing Officer of Constellation’s Beer Division in 2009 and to Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer for Constellation’s full portfolio across beer, wine, and spirits in 2018.

## Proposed West Virginia Statute Would Violate Federal Law

A bill to allow West Virginia residents to make liquor at home for themselves and family members that passed the House of Delegates would run afoul of federal law. “Federally, there is no personal use exemption for spirits (unlike for wine and beer). Changes to state law won’t change the federal prohibition,” **Thomas K. Hogue**, spokesman for **Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau**.

The proposed West Virginia statute would allow people over the age of 21 to make up to 50 gallons of liquor at home in a year. If there are two or more people over 21 living in a household, families can make up to 100 gallons of liquor per year. It’s already legal for West Virginians to make beer and wine at home.

The proposal bans the sale of any liquor made at home. A similar bill passed the House last year but failed in the Senate.

## Remy Cointreau Q3 Organic Sales Up 21%

Remy Cointreau’s Cognac division continued to enjoy strong demand, up 19.4% on an organic basis in the third quarter. Sales at the Liqueurs & Spirits division also grew strongly, up 27.3% in the third quarter.

The company said all regions contributed to its “very strong” third-quarter performance. The Americas region generated strong growth despite a high base, it said.

## Molson Coors Teams with Coca-Cola To Intro Simply Spiked Lemonade

The blurring of the line between alcoholic beverages and soft drinks continues with the announcement that **Molson Coors Beverage Co.** and **Coca-Cola Co.** are launching **Simply Spiked Lemonade** in a variety 12-pack of 12-ounce slim cans. It will contain four flavors made with real juice, Molson Coors says: Signature Lemonade, Strawberry Lemonade, Watermelon Lemonade and Blueberry Lemonade. Select flavors also will be available in stand-alone 24-ounce cans.

Each is made with real fruit juice and check in at 5% alcohol-by-volume and 170 calories per 12-ounce serving.

For Molson Coors, the brand represents “a huge opportunity. There’s nothing in the market quite like it, which is really exciting,” says **Jamie Wideman**, vp-innovation for Molson Coors.

Simply is Coca-Cola Co.’s second-largest U.S. brand after Coca-Cola in terms of net revenue. It is the nation’s top-selling refrigerated juice brand and is found in half of American households, on average, per Nielsen data. Known for its real, high-quality juices and variety of flavors, Simply already is routinely used by consumers to form cocktails.

## Penna. Panel Hears Plan to Amend Constitution to Ban State Stores

“How much do you plan on spending against me for introducing this bill?” Pennsylvania State Rep. Natalie Mihalek (R) asked.

“Everything we can,” replied Wendell Young IV, president of the United Food & Commercial Workers union. And well he should: He represents workers in the **Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board’s** warehouses and state stores. The proposed constitutional amendment would cost the jobs of thousands of those workers.

Not only that, he said, Pennsylvania’s system generates \$300 million in annual profit for the state. That a less-than-1% drop in the bucket of Pennsylvania’s current \$39.8 billion state budget. But it’s presumably money that would have to be made up in higher taxes, most likely on beer, wine and spirits, if the state system was sold to private interests.

The commonwealth’s 600 stores, which generate average sales of \$4.6 million per store. PLCB says 86% of spirits sales occurred at retail while 14% were to licenses. For wine, 73% of sales were to individual consumers and 27% were to licensees.

But, Young said, the commonwealth’s control system is clearly superior, providing great variety and choice to consumers. **Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.’s** Senior VP for state government relations, **David Wojnar**, and **Matt Dogali**, president of **American Distilled Spirits**, didn’t take a position on the bill, but both testified that PLCB’s pricing practices hurt consumers. PLCB can “keep the discount offered by the supplier” instead of lowering prices for the consumer as intended, Dogali said.

Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association representatives joined the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association to cite numerous issues with PLCB’s inflexibility dur-

ing the pandemic. “The current system we have is not only not consumer friendly, it’s designed not to be consumer friendly,” said **Gene Barr**, Pennsylvania Chamber president.

Turning the state system of retail stores and warehouse over to the private sector would mean Pennsylvania taxpayers would be footing the bill for \$24 million a year in pension liabilities for the next 30 years, UFCW’s Young testified.

DISCUS, ADSA and PLCB all said they were not taking a position on the proposal.

**11% of Drizly Orders in 2021 Were Gifts**

December held 32% share of all gift orders in 2020 versus 20% in 2021, Drizly said. But it added other months are seeing gift business grow. Throughout the past year, no month had below a 6% share of gift orders. March held a 9% share, while four months had an 8% share (February, April, January, and May), three months had a 7% share (June, October, and September), and three months had a 6% share (November, August, and July).

That’s compared to 2020, when January, February, and March were all slow gift months with three percent of share or less.

“We believe the shift toward a growing gift order share is a result of increased awareness of the gifting functionality on Drizly, which has skyrocketed amidst the pandemic,” says **Liz Paquette**, Drizly’s head of consumer insights. “Alcohol has long been a favorite gift item, but growth in e-commerce and delivery in the industry has allowed colleagues, friends, and family to send alcohol gifts from afar within the hour.”

Across the United States, beverage alcohol e-commerce has an annual growth of about 20 percent, according to IWSR. E-commerce awareness and interest saw a boost over the past couple of years; The IWSR notes that 54% of online beverage buyers in the country made their first purchase during the pandemic.

**Barenberg Upgrades Brown-Forman to Buy**

In a note to clients, **Barenberg Beverages** noted that **Brown-Forman** has “suffered from severe external headwinds over the past four years.” But things are looking up for the Louisville distiller, Barenberg said, citing distributors sitting on historically low inventory levels and the withdrawal of EU tariffs, which should boost gross margins.

Brown-Forman’s management believes the EU tariffs had a combined impact of \$70 million on gross margin. “The termination of these tariffs, together with a stabilization of agave and wood inflation, and a replenishment of distributor stocks, will kickstart a strong gross margin recovery in 2022,” Barenberg said.

The combination of tariffs, agave, and wood inflation (all affecting gross margins) and a more difficult growth trajectory for its domestic U.S. whiskey business (Jack Daniel’s in the US) has eroded much of Brown-Forman’s traditional premium valuation, creating an attractive entry point, Barenberg said.

**Men Drank Less Bev/al During Pandemic, But Problem Drinking Rises, Study Finds**

Alcohol consumption during the coronavirus pandemic declined among men, while it remained steady among women, according to a new RAND Corporation [study](#).

Researchers found that alcohol-related problems increased during the pandemic, by 49% for women and 69% for men, but the reasons for the problems remain unclear.

The study, which has examined alcohol use at three periods during the pandemic among a representative sample of Americans aged 30 to 80, found that alcohol consumption among men has declined by 20% on average during the pandemic. Among women, there was not a statistically significant change over time.

The findings are published online by the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

“Both men and women report increases in negative consequences from their drinking as the pandemic goes on,” said Joan Tucker, lead author of the study and a senior behavioral scientist at RAND, a nonprofit research organization. “For men, this finding is particularly striking in that the increase in alcohol-related problems during the pandemic was occurring even as there was a steady decline in the amount they were drinking.”

Researchers say it may be the case that men cut back on their alcohol use over time because they experienced negative consequences from drinking. Another possibility is that men perceived their drinking to be more problematic over time, as their responsibilities for domestic tasks such as caregiving and other concerns such as job security increased during the pandemic.

Many studies have raised concerns about an increase in alcohol consumption among Americans during the coronavirus pandemic. An earlier RAND survey found that among

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women there was a pronounced increase in frequency of drinking days and binge drinking days from pre-pandemic to early-pandemic.

The new study extends that work by examining trajectories of alcohol use and related problems over a 9-month period during the pandemic among those who initially reported any past year alcohol use.

The study surveyed 1,118 people who are participants in the RAND American Life Panel, a nationally representative internet panel. Participants were surveyed about their alcohol consumption three times — during May to July 2020, October to November 2020 and during March 2021.

Overall, men's alcohol use has tended to be higher than women's during the pandemic; however, alcohol use decreased steadily for men over the 9-month period, whereas it remained fairly stable for women. By the third assessment during the pandemic, men and women were similar in their average number of drinks per day.

The study found that feelings of loneliness and motivations for using alcohol during the pandemic may play a role in alcohol consumption patterns. For example, feeling lonelier early in the pandemic was associated with an initial higher level of alcohol problems for women and a less-steep decline in alcohol use over time for men.

For both men and women, stronger coping and social motives for drinking early in the pandemic were associated with an initial higher level of alcohol use, and stronger coping motives was associated with an initial higher level of alcohol problems. But neither predicted how peoples' drinking behavior changed during the pandemic.

Researchers say the study points to the importance of examining multiple indicators of alcohol use to understand the full impact of the pandemic on drinking behavior among U.S. adults, as well as a need for more fine-grained analysis to understand the interplay of these drinking indicators.

### **Red Wine May Lower Risk of Getting Covid**

New research suggests that a couple of glasses of red wine a day — but not more than 14 a week — may lower your risk on contracting Covid by 10% to 17%.

The research, published in the journal, "Frontiers of Nutrition," also found that people who don't drink bev/al at all had a higher risk of getting Covid than those who do drink. White wine drinkers who consume less than five glasses a week see their risk cut by 7% to 8%.

The study also indicates that people who have just one drink of beer and cider had a higher risk of getting Covid. At five or more beers or ciders a week the risk is 28% higher.

### **Oregon Bill Would Impose Bottle Tax on Wine in Cans**

The proposed legislation would also make sure all beverage distributors take part on the state's recycling program, which requires most beverages to be subject to a 10-cent deposit on return scheme.

Liquor sold by the state would remain exempt because the state would have to join a private recycling cooperative. Wine bottles also would be exempt because the state's container infrastructure isn't set up to handle them.

### **Bill Would Let Out-of-State Retailers Ship Product to New York Consumers**

A bill that seeks to legalize shipment of wine by out-of-state retailers to New York State residents was introduced in the state legislature. The state is one of more than 30 that prohibit its consumers from receiving shipments from out-of-state retailers.

New York allows its residents to receive wine shipments from New York-based retailers, New York wineries, and out-of-state wineries but not from out of state retailers. That could change if a bill introduced in the New York State Senate becomes law.

The bill requires out-of-state retailers to obtain a New York state wine shippers permit, limits the amount of wine an out-of-state retailer may ship to a New York resident during a single year, requires the remittance of sales tax and shipping reports to the state, and puts in place protections against minors obtaining wine via direct shipment.

### **Drive Launched for S.C. Sunday Sales Vote**

For more than 20 years, South Carolinians have been allowed to vote in local referendums on whether beer and wine can be sold in stores on Sunday. But they haven't been allowed to vote on distilled spirits.

That might change if a grassroots coalition is successful in winning support for House Bill 3013. "House Bill 3013 is a sensible solution that gives power to local voters," explains South Carolina Minority Leader Todd Rutherford. "Our coalition isn't asking for a broad, sweeping state-wide change — we are supporting this legislation so people in each county can decide if Sunday sales are right for them. That's why I'm sponsoring this bill."

An August 2021 poll by RG Strategies shows 73% of South Carolina voters agree beer, wine, and liquor should be regulated the same way, and even more (77%) agree they should be able to vote on this issue.

### **Lange Estate Buys Elkhorn Ridge Vineyard**

**Lange Estate Winery & Vineyards** said it acquired **Elkhorn Ridge Vineyards**, a 65 acre property near Monmouth in the foothills of the Oregon Coast Range. The Lange family will change the name to Lucky River Vineyards, a nod to the Luckiamute River which runs just south of the property. Terms weren't disclosed.

"We've been looking to expand our vineyard portfolio to meet increasing demand and this property checked all the boxes—an established vineyard with a stellar track record, having provided fruit for a number of our good friends and colleagues for a many years. The elevation and aspect are ideal for the production of pinot noir, and the site's predominately Willakenzie soil is a perfect compliment to our 60 acres of Jory soil in the Dundee Hills," said **Jesse Lange**, winemaker and partner.

### **Maker's Mark Becomes Largest Distillery In World to Achieve B Corp Certification**

**Maker's Mark** has earned **B Corporation** Certification, making it the largest distillery in the world and the first in

Kentucky's famed Bourbon Country to achieve the distinction.

The B Corp Certification affirms years of industry-leading efforts by Maker's Mark intended to benefit the greater good and signals a major milestone on the brand's environmentally conscious mission to "Make Your Mark. Leave No Trace" – now and for the future.

"Since 1953, my grandparents instilled a sense of responsibility here at Maker's Mark that started with the way we make our bourbon and extended to the way we impact the lives of our teams, our customers, our communities and our shared environment," said **Rob Samuels**, 8<sup>th</sup> Generation Whisky Maker and Grandson of the Founders at Maker's Mark.

Among the factors that led to the certification:

- a distillery-wide zero landfill initiative; an onsite recycling program that is the first in Marion County, Ky. and open to community members;
- the establishment of a natural water sanctuary protecting the watershed at Star Hill Farm; and
- implementation of a solar array that powers the extensive Maker's Mark warehouse complex.
- community and philanthropic efforts including investing millions of dollars in the hospitality industry, local Kentucky causes and the arts since its founding more than 65 years ago.

### RNDC to Rep Spiritless Non-Al Spirits

**Republic National Distributing Co.** (RNDC) will distribute **Spiritless** distilled non-alcoholic spirits, including its inaugural **Kentucky 74**, in all territories within its nationwide footprint.

"The low- and no-alcohol industry is booming, and that growth isn't slowing down any time soon," said RNDC Chief Executive Officer **Tom Cole**. "We're proud to be on the forefront of this movement and join Spiritless – a women-owned brand we believe in wholeheartedly – in making drinking culture more inclusive."

### Bud Light Launches Zero-Carb Beer

**Bud Light NEXT** is **Anheuser-Busch's** first zero carb beer. In addition to offering zero carbs, the new super crisp light beer boasts 80 calories, 4% ALC/VOL and offers a clean, and refreshing taste, A-B said.

"As Bud Light enters 2022, we are pushing the beer category to new heights with the launch of Bud Light NEXT, our first-ever zero carb beer," said **Andy Goeler**, vp-marketing, Bud Light. "Today's consumers are all about breaking barriers, being trailblazers and setting their own path. We are proud to introduce this new super crisp beer which is brewed to meet their evolving taste preferences; it's a truly symbolic innovation that celebrates the barrier breakers who like us embrace possibility."

To commemorate this occasion, Bud Light is launching its first-ever NFT project, "Bud Light N3XT Collection." The new collection will feature 12,722 unique tokens which are designed with color cues from Bud Light NEXT and celebrates the passion points of today's 21+ consumers. For those who purchase a NFT as part of the project, they will

have the opportunity to vote on Bud Light NEXT merchandise, have access to Bud Light NEXT brand and partner events, and other surprises. Bud Light NEXT NFTs are available to those 21+ beginning February 6 for \$399 per token. To learn more about the Bud Light NEXT NFT project or to join the community visit: [budlight.com/nextnft](http://budlight.com/nextnft).

"As we usher in a new era of beer with the launch of Bud Light NEXT, we're simultaneously seeing a revolutionary shift in the way brands engage with people on the internet," said **Corey Brown, Sr. Digital Director** for Bud Light. "Our NFT project celebrates this new era and those who similarly are breaking barriers in technology and creativity."

Just in time for Super Bowl LVI, Bud Light NEXT will be available nationwide wherever Bud Light is sold beginning February 7, 2022.

### Damn Right Cocktails Launches Tequila Sparkling Cocktail

**Damn Right Cocktails** launched its USDA certified organic, 100% de agave Tequila sparkling cocktail in Texas and California. The line has two SKUs: a lime margarita called **Devil of a Lime** and a Strawberry Basil cocktail called **Son of a Basil. Republic National Distributing Co.** (RNDC) is the distributor.

Damn Right is the only low-alcohol, USDA-certified organic Tequila cocktail on the market right now. At 5% ABV and with only 110-130 calories per serving, the brand is poised to capitalize not only on the RTD cocktail drinker who wants a more premium and better tasting alternative.

"Our consumer is getting exactly what they've been looking for: an affordable, but premium and organic, great tasting tequila cocktail in a can that's also low in calories," explains co-founder, **Gabby Fitzpatrick**. "These drinks are refreshing and taste as if they were just shaken up by an experienced bartender. We pride ourselves on quality and that is just what we're serving!"

Up to 5% of the company's profits will be donated to charities or programs focused on improving access to high-quality primary and secondary school education. "There's a \$23 billion difference in the funding going to schools in wealthy districts vs those in lower income ones," said co-founder **Mark Lewis**. "We both believe a great education is a way to eradicate poverty, but it shouldn't be a zip code lottery."

### 3 Badge Beverage Adds Red Wines To Its Guinigi Wine Portfolio

**3 Badge Beverage Corp.** announced a line extension, building on its popular Prosecco and Pinot Grigio labels with a set of classic premium Italian red wines. The new additions include a Barolo D.O.C.G., a Brunello D.O.C.G., a Chianti Classico Riserva D.O.C.G., and a Toscana I.G.T. Rosso (Super Tuscan). SRP ranges from \$28 to \$60.

The Guinigi portfolio honors the cultural roots of 3 Badge proprietor **August Sebastiani**. "Italian wines have always held a special place in my heart and in my cellar," said **Sebastiani**, a fourth-generation vintner. "I'm thrilled to

complete the Guinigi portfolio with these iconic Italian red varietal expressions. My family has always maintained a deep connection to Italy through our love of Barolo, Brunello, Chianti Classico, and Super Tuscans, so it's wonderful to bring them all home to 3 Badge and to the American consumer."

The red wines join Guinigi's Prosecco D.O.C. from Treviso (\$17), the Prosecco Rosé D.O.C. Spumante Brut from Treviso (SRP \$17) and the Pinot Grigio D.O.C. from Delle Venezie (\$14).

Both the name "Guinigi" and the label art are inspired by la Torre Guinigi, a historical landmark found in the town of Lucca, Tuscany, one of the towns where Sebastiani's ancestors resided. Constructed in the Middle Ages, the Romanesque fortification overlooks the city to this day, distinctly adorned with a unique aerial garden at its topmost outlook. There, the tall Holm oak trees which decorate the tower's pinnacle symbolize rebirth and renewal, which is paralleled in each new Guinigi vintage.

The pearlescent black label features a laser cut Guinigi tower shining in foil, which doubles as a marker as the wine level descends in the bottle. Tactile, geometric designs make for an elegant yet approachable design that stands apart from its more traditionally labeled peers.

### Buffalo Trace Distillery Sets Tourism Record

More than 340,000 guests visited **Buffalo Trace Distillery** in 2021. This is a 134% increase in the number of visitors it welcomed in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and a 16% increase in the number of visitors it welcomed in 2019. Since 2010, visitation to Buffalo Trace has increased by 556%.

The Distillery completed a massive expansion of its Visitor Center in 2020 during the onset of the pandemic. The Visitor Center triples the size of the previous Visitor Center and conveniently allows for easier social distancing and provides ample space and comfort for guests exploring the Gift Shop or tasting in the new expansive tasting rooms. But with visitation continuing to grow at pre-pandemic rates, the Distillery is making further adjustments.

In a related development, **Kentucky Distillers Association** said more than 1.5 million people took the **Kentucky Bourbon Trail** and **Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour** in 2021. Not surprisingly, that's a big increase from 2020 Covid-slashed 587,000. It's offer only 13% from the attendance record of 1.7 million set in 2019, the **Kentucky Distillers Association** said.

### Clase Azul Unveils New Brand Identity

Formerly known as **Clase Azul Spirits**, effective Jan. 25, 2022, the brand is now known as **Clase Azul Mexico**.

"As a fully Mexican-owned and operated brand, 'Clase Azul Mexico' represents our origin and who we are," explained founder/CEO **Arturo Lomeli**. "We will continue to offer the highest quality tequila and mezcal but look forward to introducing new ways of expressing our Mexican heritage."

"We are honored at the opportunity to expand the world of Clase Azul by offering new experiences and prod-

ucts, beyond our tequila and mezcal," explained President **Juan Sanchez**. "Our efforts will continue to resonate with our purpose of sharing the magic of Mexican culture," he continued.

Lead by Clase Azul Creative Director **Miguel Hernandez**, the rebranding includes a new logo, product packaging design, website, and digital assets. Due to the scope and impact of the rebrand, the new identity will be unveiled in different stages throughout the year, beginning with digital channels, followed by Clase Azul brand homes, current product Icons, and other to-be-announced brand offerings.

"One of the most prominent changes will be the evolution of our brand logo," explained Hernandez. "Until now, the agave insignia has been an accurate representation of our involvement in the world of tequila and mezcal. As we transform into much more than a spirits brand, we are adopting a new emblem that offers a timeless view of a bright future full of possibilities."

In 2021, Clase Azul began offering visitors to Los Cabos, Mexico, a rich and unique tasting and culinary experience, [A Taste of Culture](#), where guests are invited to embark on a mystical journey through the world of Clase Azul. Other projects in the works include: The Clase Azul Loft, an experiential space in Dumbo, Brooklyn; an experiential space in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; and a distillery and visitor's center in Jalisco, Mexico.

The company was founded in 1997 in Guadalajara, Jalisco by Lomeli, who began his journey in the spirits industry at an early age. Determined to create a product as exquisite as the land it comes from, Lomeli's dedication to Mexican culture has made Clase Azul one of the leaders in the spirits and luxury categories worldwide. Clase Azul continues to pursue its mission of sharing Mexico's exquisite traditions with the world and is now present in more than fifty countries—including Mexico, the United States, Canada, Europe, the UK, South Korea, and Australia.

The company, which is grounded in artisanal craftsmanship, supports Mexico's artisanal community through Fundación con Causa Azul, a foundation which provides education and resources for underfunded, yet passionate artisans. In addition, Clase Azul has been awarded the "Great Place to Work" certification several years in a row and is a recipient of the Positive Luxury organization's "Butterfly Mark," a certificate that highlights luxury brands that are committed to having a positive impact on nature and society.

### Uncle Nearest Debuts Its Own Whiskey Revamps Packaging

**Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey** released this year was produced by **Nearest Green Distillery** rather than a contract distiller, **Fawn Weaver**, founder/CEO, said.

"Since the inception of our brand, everything in our bottles was blended to perfection by our master blender, **Victoria Eady Butler**, but the whiskey was sourced. Our own whiskey began fully maturing last year, and what we have in our bottles now is what we believe is the best whiskey we've ever released," Weaver said.

"Some call Uncle Nearest a straight bourbon whiskey,

some call us straight Tennessee Whiskey. We don't care, as our whiskey meets the legal requirement of both distinctions. What we do care is that you call us super-premium whiskey as that is what our namesake made, and it is what our team and partners have been working nonstop to make each and every day."

Packaging is changing to, with the sketch of the property where Nearest originally distilled being replaced by the insignia of Nearest Green Distillery, which boasts a dram of whiskey encased by a horseshoe, signifying its iron Tennessee roots. **Victoria Eady Butler**, fifth-generation Nearest Green descendant, who has been named Master Blender of the Year by *Whisky Magazine*, *VinePair*, and *The Spirits Business*, has also added a note and her signature to the front of every newly released bottle.

"Our first-generation Uncle Nearest bottles shared the history of my great-great-grandfather and his significance to the Tennessee Whiskey coming out of the hills and hollows around Lynchburg," said Eady Butler. "Our new generation of bottles reflect the future of our brand and our Shelbyville distillery being what cements his legacy for my family and every future generation of whiskey lovers. This is 160 years in the making and damn it if we didn't figure out how to perfect it! Nearest has always deserved this."

## Chivas Unveils Biggest Redesign Of Packaging in 112 Years

Currently shipping to markets across the US, the redesign sees the iconic **Chivas 12** bottle reshaped and elongated to stand taller and prouder while still retaining its recognizable rounded shoulders. While updated, its crest still boasts the 'luckenbooth,' a symbol embodying the Chivas values of ambition, generosity, and unapologetic success, and shines a light on the beating heart of the brand. The striking new look blends boldness, modernity, and status, while still flexing the luxury and distinguished heritage long associated with Chivas.

The outer box has undergone a complete renewal as well, with a vibrant burgundy replacing the familiar silver and gold tones as the principal color-scheme. The package retains the intricate detailing and textured finish loved by Chivas fans worldwide.

And while the previous packaging remains iconic to drinkers across the globe, Chivas' redesign welcomes new drinkers to explore the world of Chivas. Inspired by the aesthetics of a new, style-conscious generation of Scotch whisky drinkers who are reforming and re-evaluating what luxury looks like, the brand hopes Chivas' new packaging will ignite the same passion for the brand as its prior iteration.

"We are so excited to release a design that speaks the language of a new, fresh generation of Chivas drinkers, yet still resonates with established enthusiasts, too," said **Melissa Linehan**, vp-commercial marketing, **Pernod Ricard USA**. "We have taken a bold-yet-meticulous approach with every aspect of this redesign, and we know our new, taller Chivas bottle will stand out proudly behind thousands of bars and clubs across the US."

In addition to being stylish, the entire redesign project was conceived with sustainability at its heart as part of parent

company **Chivas Brothers'** 2025 target of 100% recyclable, reusable, compostable or bio-based packaging. The new bottle is lighter, saving over 1000 tons of glass annually, while the outer packaging is now made from fully recyclable materials. The whisky in each bottle remains the same renowned smooth, rich, and generous Chivas 12 blend. "I'm particularly proud of the central role sustainability has played in reconceptualising Chivas 12 for a new generation," Blacknell stated. "With this redesign, we have once again reinforced our belief that sustainable luxury is not an oxymoron."

## Jackson Family Wines Partners with RNDC To Speed Diversity Among Sales Teams

**Jackson Family Wines** is partnering with **Republic National Distributing Co.** to create the Accelerate Program that will provide an opportunity for a diverse group of participants to receive a comprehensive sales training and an immersive wine education through a structured path, including ongoing trainings, structured onboarding, transition plans, performance reviews and mentorship. Upon successful completion of the Accelerate Program, individuals will have earned on the job experiences and knowledge to continue to be leaders in the wine industry and advance their career opportunities.

"Republic National Distributing Co. is a valued sales and distribution partner for us and we're proud to collaborate with them on this important initiative to bring more diversity within the sales ranks and provide career training and advancement opportunities for all groups that have been historically underrepresented in our industry," said **Bill O'Connor**, EVP-Sales at Jackson Family Wines.

**Bob Hendrickson**, RNDC Chief Operating Officer said, "RNDC has long recognized the need for underrepresented talent in our industry and we are proud to take these intentional steps to build a diverse pipeline. By partnering with Jackson Family Wines in this inaugural program, we are creating models and processes that introduce the beverage alcohol industry to those who may not know the incredible career opportunities available to them."

The Accelerate Program will be conducted in three phases:

**Phase 1:** Participants will experience life as an RNDC Wine Sales Representative.

**Phase 2:** Participants will build on the foundation and dive deeper into sales distribution by working as a Wine Specialist.

**Phase 3:** Participants will expand their understanding and expertise on wine sales and broaden their development to include people management while also focusing on their individual career path objectives.

## Wolf Spirit Releases 2,000 Cases Of Puncher's Chance D12TANCE

It's the first limited-release offering from Wolf Spirit, and is aged 12 years in traditional stone and wood rickhouses and finished in California Cabernet Sauvignon barrels. SRP: \$120.

With only 2,000 cases produced for the U.S. market, The D12TANCE may be purchased in California, Florida, Ken-

tucky, Colorado, Oklahoma and New Mexico (**Southern Glazer's**); New York, Tennessee and Georgia (**Empire**); Massachusetts and Rhode Island (**Atlantic Beverage**); Missouri (**Major Brands**); Connecticut (**Murphy**); and Wisconsin (**Badger/Frank**).

Just 70 barrels of The D12TANCE, sourced from the **IJW Whiskey Co.** in Louisville were born from a mash bill of 84% corn, 8% malt, 8% rye and a proprietary yeast strain.

### 360PR + Creates New Bev/AI PR Agency

Many public relations agencies create dedicated teams to serve a particular industry. **360PR+** has taken that a step further, creating a separate wholly owned, independently operated public relations agency to serve the adult beverage industry.

**Three Cheers PR** will be led by **Rob Bratskeir**, who helped build a portfolio of adult beverage clients at 360PR+, and whose experience spans some of alcohol's most iconic brands.

## Who & What —

### Riboli Family Expands National Sales, Strategic Planning Team

**Riboli Family Wines** promotes **Paul Roberts** to senior vp-sales. He joined Riboli last spring after 20 years with Banfi Vintners, most recently as VP-sales North America.

The appointment is one of several intended to support the rapid growth of Stella Rosa, the #1 Import Brand and the largest selling brand over \$10 in the US; the **Riboli Estates Group**, its portfolio of luxury wineries sourcing fruit exclusively from the family's 1,400 acres of sustainably farmed vineyards in Paso Robles, Monterey, and Napa Valley, and the rest of the Riboli Family Wines portfolio. In other changes:

**Sales Team Expands with Five Divisions, New Chain Leadership.** Each of the five new divisions includes a Division Vice President, Regional Manager, Trade Development Manager, District Manager, and Area Manager. Division Vice Presidents include **Greg Baldino**, Southeast; **Tom Walker**, Central; **Ryan Deines**, Mid-West; and **Chris Riboli**, West. A search for the Northeast Division VP is underway.

**Kyle Hensley** was named senior vp, chains. To support retailer chain partners, Kyle has been selected to lead a team of eight to manage the company's key chain relationships. **Paul Rinaldi** named vp-national Accounts, overseeing Kroger, Whole Foods, Meijer as well as all Costco divisions. **Rick Rechetnik** is appointed vp of Drug/C-store/Military/West Regional Accounts.

**Penny Kosut** is overseeing the family's portfolio of California estate-based wineries: San Simeon, Maddalena, Highlands 41, Opaque, Windstream and Riboli Family. Three Business Development Managers work closely with Penny and the Out of State team to develop the estate portfolio.

**JR Trevino** has moved into a new position, vp-strategic

planning and business integration, working with **Susan Bertenthal**, the new senior director of business insights.

### Hotaling Revamps Sales Organization After Sales Soared 50% in Year

**Hotaling & Co.** said 2021 was a record year, with sales growing more than 50% from 2020. Anticipating further growth, it said **Stacey Klass**, vp-central division, will become vp-national sales manager, a new position. Other appointments:

**Kathy Kain** has been promoted Regional Sales Manager of Wester Control States, based in Washington and will report into Krista Harris VP Sales-Control.

**Jasmin Caverly** has been promoted to Regional Sales Manager of Eastern Control States, based in Michigan and will report into Krista Harris VP Sales-Control.

**Bobby Wegusen**, RSM North Central whose territory has expanded to include WI, MN, & IL and will report into Brandon Foglio VP-East.

**Marissa Huth** has been promoted to State Manager of Illinois and will report to Bobby Wegusen, RSM North Central.

"We are confident that these changes will improve our sales footprint in essential marketplaces and better serve the consumers seeking out our artisanal brands of unmatched character," said **Gregory Fitch**, senior vp-chief sales officer.

\* \* \*

**Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau** names **Anthony Gledhill**, currently Chief Counsel, assistant administrator for permitting and taxation. He succeeds **Dan Riordan** who is retiring Jan. 28.

**Brown-Forman Corp.** elects **Jan Singer**, most recently CEO of J. Crew, to its board of directors.

**Broken Barrel Whiskey Co.** taps Ro-Bro Marketing & PR, Inc., to handle its public relations.

**Jordan Vineyard & Winery** expanded **Ashley Cesario's** role to include international export director. Cesario will continue to oversee the company's current Northeastern U.S. territories. Jordan plans to add a New York City-based market manager.

**North Coast Brewing Co.** names **Jennifer Owen** CEO. She has been acting as Interim CEO/CFO since October 2021. She will retain the position of CFO as she continues to lead and care for the financial health of the company. Owen was recruited from the City of Fort Bragg 4 years ago where her CPA training and communication skills helped her become a highly successful grant writer and project manager. Her first role at NCBC was Controller, and she was promoted to CFO in 2019.

Continued Success,  
KANE'S BEVERAGE WEEK



JOEL WHITAKER, Editor