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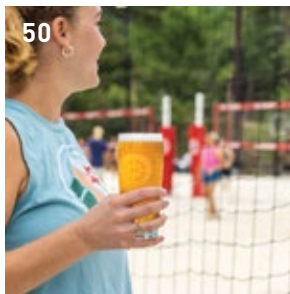
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Cover Photo: Kelly Puleio
On the Cover: A Negroni at Ciccio in Yountville, California.

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Clockwise from top: Jake Lindeman, John Valls, courtesy Marqués de Riscal, Matty Newton, Tim Robison



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Clockwise from top left: John Valis, Eric's Kun, Matty Newton, Peden + Monk, John Valis, Tim Robison, Erin Miller, Tim Robison

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Editor's Note

Pressing Pause

It's been 20 years now, give or take, that I've been exploring the cocktail landscape on professional terms. And one of the lessons I picked up along the way is that—even in a world awash in creative, great-tasting cocktails—it's essential to sometimes hit the pause button on happy hour. I'm in good company here: Many drinkers are increasingly turning off the alcohol tap for an evening or a week at a time, while others are looking more long-term in adjusting their drinking habits.

But cocktails are delicious! Fortunately, many bartenders are turning their creative talents to bolstering the selection of alcohol-free cocktails, with results that can go toe-to-toe on the flavor front with many conventional cocktails. For this issue, we're bringing you some of the essential strategies for making great cocktails at home, no booze needed (page 66).

Another big story from the past 20 years is the surge of interest in mezcal, which emerged seemingly out of nowhere and gradually became everyone's favorite spirit. With its typically small-scale production, mezcal is largely distilled by families who've been making it for generations. For this issue, Noah Arenstein explores the stories of three of these families in Oaxaca as they find out what it means to pass the practice from one generation to another (page 42).

Oftentimes, people go to breweries and taprooms to do more than just drink beer—they're looking for all kinds of fun and games. Josh Bernstein brings us the

story of how some breweries are satisfying this demand, with volleyball and disc golf and roleplaying games all around (page 50). Asheville, North Carolina, is one of America's great beer cities, and Kate Bernot shares how Highland Brewing founder Oscar Wong helped make it that way (page 34).

We're also taking a look at Tempranillo as a great age-worthy wine grape (page 58), the role of verjus in a cocktail context (page 32), and the long history of the Millionaire Cocktail (page 26). And have you ever tipped fish sauce, garum, or other umami bombs into your cocktail shaker? Matt Rowley has, and he brings us that story on page 38.

Before you dig in, remember that Negroni Week is coming up fast, September 18-24. Head to negrониweek.com to find out more about this year's event and which bars and restaurants are participating—and to get in the right Negroni Week mindset, check out the recipe and history of predecessor cocktail the Milano-Torino on page 16.

Cheers,



Paul Clarke
Editor in Chief



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CELEBRATE NEGRONI WEEK

Negroni Week is September 18-24! Once again, bars around the world will come together to serve their best Negronis for a great cause. Head to negroniweek.com to find participating venues near you, and to learn more about this year's festivities.

Tune in (and subscribe) to *Radio Imbibe* at imbibemagazine.com/podcast starting September 5, for an interview with Derek Brown about making spirit-free drinks at home.



Clockwise from top left: Negroni Week logo by Michelle Mark, Farran Skeiky, Kory James/WDS Visuals, Andrew Tim



That's not all! We have more cocktail recipes incorporating bell pepper, such as Punchline from Yellowbelly in St. Louis (left), and a guide to our favorite bars in Central California's Monterey (like the Spanish Gin & Tonic at Stokes Adobe).

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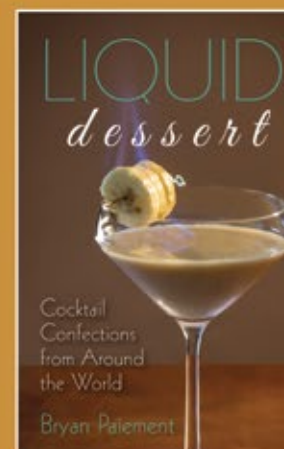
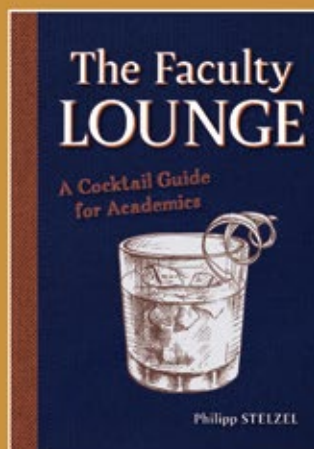
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Compiled by Penelope Bass
and Katrina Yentch

What We're Drinking Now Chopin Bartender's Choice Vodka

Despite long holding the top slot among the best-selling spirits in the country, vodka's still frequently maligned not for what it is, but for what it supposedly isn't—flavorful. Combating the flavorless myth, historic Polish vodka producer Chopin came out swinging with its new release, a rye vodka bottled at a whopping 59.8 percent ABV. Dubbed Bartender's Choice for its ability to stand up in cocktails, the spirit is more than just extra boozy. The distillery's all-rye recipe brings expected spicy notes of cracked pepper and an herbal smokiness, balanced by a hint of bittersweet fruit. Experiment with it in your favorite vodka cocktails—or even swap it in someplace unexpected—to discover just how expressive the spirit can be. \$37.99, chopinvodka.com



At the Market: Bell Pepper



Bell peppers may be more commonly associated with culinary applications, but some bartenders are using the fruit (yes, it's a fruit) for its fresh, earthy sweetness. At Anjou in Cincinnati, the concepts are combined in this culinary-inspired cocktail. "The cocktail is named after Benedetto Alfieri, an 18th-century architect who designed the bell tower in Novara—the birthplace of Campari, a key ingredient in the cocktail," says co-owner and beverage director Chris Wolfe.

BENEDETTO ALFIERI

¾ oz. pisco (Anjou uses Macchu Pisco)
¾ oz. red bell pepper juice
½ oz. gin (Anjou uses Fords)
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
½ oz. shallot syrup
⅓ oz. yellow Chartreuse
⅓ oz. Campari
2 large leaves of fresh basil

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glass: coupe

Combine all of the ingredients in a shaker with ice and shake well. Double strain into a chilled coupe.

Red Bell Pepper Juice: Wash and dry the peppers and remove the stem and

seeds. Chop the pepper, then run the pieces through a juicer, or blend well and finely strain the juice. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 36 hours.

Shallot Syrup: Peel and slice 50 grams of shallots (about ¼ cup) and combine with 175 grams of water (about 6 oz.) in a saucepan, and bring to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes, then reduce to a simmer for 13 minutes more. Fine strain the liquid, then combine with an equal measure (by weight) of granulated sugar and stir until dissolved. Store refrigerated for up to 3 weeks.

Chris Wolfe
Anjou, Cincinnati

The taste of Autumn

Toast the season's harvest of cider apples with their perfect companion:
Bonal Gentiane-Quina.

Since 1865, this spicy, earthy aperitif has been known as “ouvre l'appétit”—the key to the appetite. It is made by an infusion of gentian, quinine and renowned herbs of the Grande Chartreuse mountains in a mistelle base. Traditionally sipped neat with a twist, Bonal also mixes well with fresh or hard cider, sparkling wine, and Scotch or American whiskies.

BONAL & Cider

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2 OZ NON-ALCOHOLIC HOT APPLE CIDER

GARNISH WITH A LEMON PEEL.
TRY ALSO COLD OVER ICE,
ADDING BOURBON

A Few of Our Favorite Things

Teardrop Barspoon

Stir in style with this barspoon from Portland, Oregon-based Bull in China. The teardrop design is a favorite among bartenders for its weighted counterbalance and twisted center. The *Imbibe*-etched back adds extra style and pride for liquid culture. \$20, shop.imbibemagazine.com



LARQ Bottle Filtered

No need to google the tap water quality of your location anymore with this sleek water bottle from LARQ, which features a built-in filter. Using their Nano Zero filtration system, which removes a range of contaminants from chlorine to heavy metals for up to 40 gallons (about two months), the bottle comes in insulated or noninsulated options, depending on how lightweight you want to go. \$58, livelarq.com



The Tini Glass by Molly Baz

Celebrity chef Molly Baz has a penchant for pairing bold aesthetics with bold flavors, as evinced by her latest kitchenware collaboration with Crate & Barrel. (Read our Q&A with Baz on page 24.) The Martini glass pays homage to a midcentury aesthetic in vibrant primary colors, bringing a cocktail party vibe to any occasion. \$14.95, crateandbarrel.com



Negroni Week T-shirt

Declare your devotion to the beloved cocktail by sporting the official 2023 Negroni Week T-shirt. With a unique design created this year by Twin Cities-based artist Meghan Albers, the shirt also benefits Negroni Week giving partner Slow Food, with \$5 from every purchase supporting the organization. \$25, negroniweek.com



Rabble Party Game

Combining elements of charades, Password, and Taboo, Rabble's party-centric card game fills the evening with more talking—and laughing—points. With easy-to-follow rules and cards that feature playful illustrations by diverse, independent artists, Rabble enhances today's wave of modern, thoughtful board games. \$25, rabblegame.com



Yuzu Super Juice

Long adored but elusive to acquire, yuzu citrus brings an unmistakable aroma and flavor to cocktails. Launched this year, LA-based YUZUCO is sourcing directly from farmers in Japan for a cold-pressed, 100 percent yuzu juice, from which they also make their Yuzu Super Juice. Augmented with sugar and citric and malic acids, the Super Juice offers the bright and floral notes of fresh yuzu, but with more stability and versatility for cocktails. \$12/12 oz., theyuzu.co

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Anatomy of a Drink: Milano-Torino

The etymology and provenance of cocktails can be a murky field of study. Not so when it comes to the Milano-Torino, perhaps one of the most logical monikers in the cocktail canon. In fact, for fans of Italian drinking culture, the name is practically the recipe. Comprised in equal measure of Campari (hailing from Milan) and vermouth di Torino, the drink is a marriage of regional Italian flavors—a marriage that resulted in numerous offspring. And while the Milano-Torino may not have global name recognition, its grandchild, the Negroni, has successfully drawn the attention of cocktail enthusiasts back toward all things Italian.

“Without question, the extensive global marketing campaigns of Campari focusing on the Aperol Spritz and the Negroni drove awareness to the transportive power of drinking Italian in the style of *la dolce vita*,” muses Brad Thomas Parsons, author of the books *Bitters*, *Amaro*, and a forthcoming title about Italian drinking culture. “From there you have bartenders leading the charge to dig deeper into the Italian aperitivo canon of drinks, and the countless twists and variations.”

While an appreciation for aperitivi and all-things-bitter continues to grow, Parsons thinks the Milano-Torino still remains more of a deep-cut among the Negroni family tree. “The minimalist spec of the drink can be appealing at times, especially when it’s not gussied up with any other ingredients beyond ice and an orange twist,” says Parsons. “It can work as a reset drink between cocktails as well as a nice first drink of the night, or even an after-dinner option to linger over.”

INGREDIENTS

1½ oz. Campari
1½ oz. vermouth di Torino

TOOLS: barspoon, strainer

GLASS: double rocks

GARNISH: orange slice

TO MAKE: Add both ingredients to a mixing glass with ice and stir briefly. Strain into a rocks glass filled with a large ice cube, and garnish.

TIP

When it comes to vermouth and bitter liqueur, options abound. Parsons notes that it can be fun to “break the rules of the template and expand your boundaries, like using a bitter bianco and a bianco vermouth, or outright abandon the aperitivo bitter element and reach for a number of mix-and-match amaro and vermouth combinations that remain true to the idea of the original mash-up, but go in completely different directions.”

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Three Ways: Rum & Coke

For a drink that's simple in both concept and construction, the Rum & Coke carries with it a surprisingly lengthy history, with facets ranging from the Spanish-American War (hence the drink's Cuba Libre alias) to World War II, and a heavy dose of corporate propaganda. (For those who want to learn more, we suggest the book *And a Bottle of Rum* by contributing editor Wayne Curtis.) Obfuscation aside, the combo has stood the test of time. And while it's unlikely you'll see a standard Rum & Coke on the menu at a craft cocktail bar, you just might encounter a variation riffing on the classic flavor profile.

Smokey Cokey. At Bandits in New York City, a penchant for the playful is demonstrated via cocktails like the Smokey Cokey (pictured)—white rum spiked with fernet and sweetened with cola syrup, served in a Coke bottle “capped” with a lemon candy. “I’ve always wanted to create a Rum Old Fashioned, and this felt like a great marriage between two classics,” says general manager Dan Stern. To make the syrup, add 12 oz. Coca-Cola to a heavy-bottomed saucepan and simmer on low heat until reduced by half. Weigh the reduction, then mix it with half its weight in sugar and stir until dissolved, bottling for use within 2 weeks. To mix the drink, add 2 oz. of white rum (Bandits uses Ten to One), $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. of cola syrup, and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of fernet to a mixing glass with ice and stir to chill. Strain the mixture into an 8-ounce Coca-Cola bottle. (At Bandits, they smoke the bottle with dried lemon peel, but if you don’t have a cocktail smoking gun, feel free to skip this step.) Top the bottle with a Lemonhead candy and serve the drink with a rocks glass and a large ice cube.

“Rum & Coke.” At Drink in Boston, there’s no cocktail menu. Simply tell the bartender what you like, and they’ll create a cocktail to spec. “This drink came about when a guest requested something like a Rum & Coke, without using a Coke product,” says Roberto Cibrian Stockbridge, Drink’s general manager. “Coke’s main flavors are vanilla, caramel, brown sugar, and acid, which are also present in the amaro I used. I combined the amaro with lemon to emulate the Coke flavors, and then added soda to get the fizz.” To mix the cocktail, add 1 oz. of dark rum (Stockbridge uses Flor de Caña 12 year), 1 oz. of Amaro Montenegro, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of fresh lime juice, and 5 dashes of Angostura bitters to a shaker with ice. Shake and strain into a Collins glass filled with fresh ice, top with chilled soda water, and give a gentle stir to incorporate. Garnish with a lemon or lime wedge.

Rum & Cola Daiquiri. “We all know rum and cola is a classic flavor combo, so why not put it into a smaller format like a Daiquiri? Who doesn’t love a Daiquiri?” says Sid Chi, bar manager at Holy Ghost Bar in Portland, Oregon. Chi accomplishes this by making a Coca-Cola syrup to sweeten the rum and lime juice, then adds complexity with a kick of Amaro CioCiaro. “The CioCiaro has notes of flat cola, lemon peel, and licorice root—the perfect addition to a cola-forward tasting cocktail.” To make the syrup, add 12 oz. of Mexican Coca-Cola to a heavy-bottomed saucepan and heat on medium, stirring frequently, until reduced by half. Stir in 180 grams of sugar until dissolved, let cool, and bottle for use within 1 month. To mix the drink, add 2 oz. of white rum (Chi uses Plantation 3 Star), $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. of fresh lime juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of cola syrup, and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of Amaro CioCiaro to a shaker with ice. Shake and double strain into a chilled coupe, then garnish with a lime wedge.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2023 NEW ORLEANS SPIRITS COMPETITION WINNERS

This year's Best in Class Winners and Spirits of the Year represent the finest in craft spirits. Presented by the Tales of the Cocktail Foundation and sponsored by Imbibe, each spirit is tasted blind by a panel of industry experts, without identification, to ensure integrity and secrecy. The judging panels include award-winning bartenders and distillers, decorated beverage writers, and industry luminaries.

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5 to Try: Orange Wine

Despite its ancient roots and modern popularity, orange wine still lacks a legal definition and currently remains categorized under white wine. So it's unsurprising that the resurgence in the style led to both excitement and confusion. Sommelier Doreen Winkler leaned into the former, launching the first orange wine subscription service in 2019. Now a brick-and-mortar shop in Manhattan's Lower East Side, Orange Glou stocks wines from around the globe, and Winkler continues to champion the style and educate. "I became obsessed with orange wine over a decade ago," she says. "The texture, the taste—it's all just so much more exciting than any other category." Winkler offers us five of her current favorites.

1 Grape Republic "Aromatico," Yamagata, Japan 2021

"Japanese wine is very popular right now, and rightfully so," says Winkler. "I'm particularly excited about this sparkling wine made in the ancestral method." From winemaker Kazuomi Fujimaka, the wine is made in Yamagata—a region historically known for sake. The grapes (a blend of Delaware, Shine Muscat, and Niagara) are macerated for one day before the juice is pressed, and immediately bottled and capped to ferment. "This wine tastes like Haribo Tropicana mix in the best way!" she says. \$62

2 I Cangianti by Stoppini "Confine Macerato," Umbria, Italy 2021

"The Stoppini brothers are true *garagiste* winemakers—a French term for small-batch 'garage-made' wine," explains Winkler. Fitting, given that their first vintage in 2019 was literally produced in their garage in Umbria. Using local (but lesser known) San Colombano grapes from resuscitated old vines near the Tuscan border, the brothers ferment the variety in stainless steel with eight days of skin contact, then blend with 10 percent Malvasia that's had six days on the skins. "This is a full-bodied wine with notes of ripe apricot, pink salt, cantaloupe, and orange blossom," says Winkler. "It has lots of texture." \$42

3 Domaine Brand "Tout Terriblement" Macération, Alsace, France 2021

Winemaker Philippe Brand spent time working in Burgundy, Greece, and Australia's Barossa Valley before returning to his family estate. "He joined forces with his father in 2006, bringing new life to their Alsatian vineyard," Winkler says. Their "Tout Terriblement" is made from whole-cluster Gewürztraminer that macerates on the skins for 14 days before



Sam Ortiz

spending 12 months in oak. "This wine is a must-try!" says Winkler. "It's medium bodied, with notes of lychee, tangerine, rose water, cantaloupe, and ginger." \$50

4 Matic "Let's Get the Party Started," Štajerska, Slovenia 2021

Combining truly ancient techniques with a modern philosophy, third-generation Slovenian winemaker Matija Žerjav (nicknamed Matic) is "encouraging everyone to throw a *fête* with 'Let's Get the Party Started,'" says Winkler. Made with hand-harvested Riesling, the wine is both fermented and aged in amphorae (clay pots), receiving more than 200 days on the grape skins and imparting huge texture and depth. "The wine is light bodied and has notes of orange blossom, apricot, lemon, honeysuckle, dried rose petals, and rocks," she says. \$42

5 Pittnauer "Perfect Day," Burgenland, Austria 2021

"What's really special about this one is that the grapes in this blend were treated individually and differently," explains Winkler. Winemaker Gerhard Pittnauer co-ferments Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc on the skins in an open vat for 14 days, while the Muscat gets three days on skins, the Gewürztraminer spends 20 days in amphorae on skins, and the Gelber Muskateller is pressed shortly after maceration. "After having been aged separately in amphorae and old oak for half a year, the four wines were merged right before bottling. The texture feels like a fluffy pillow," says Winkler, noting flavors of lychee, rose petal, and dried mango. \$39

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Day Trip: Sahra Nguyen Nguyen Coffee Supply

Sahra Nguyen launched Nguyen Coffee Supply in New York City in 2018 with the mission to empower Vietnamese coffee-growing communities and to change the narrative around the country's coffee, particularly robusta—a species typically perceived as a lower-quality product compared to its arabica counterpart. In true grassroots fashion, the former activist filmmaker learned to roast and import coffee on her own, securing partnerships with family-owned farms in Da Lat. Nearly five years later, Nguyen's vision of uplifting Vietnamese coffee has been strengthened through grocery and retail sales, expanded offerings, and regular media appearances to educate about the qualities of robusta. We follow Nguyen on a typical workday, which has transitioned to less time on the roaster and more time on growth strategy. *As told to Katrina Yentch*

7:30 a.m. I'm an early bird, and I have a morning routine. I go for a 20-minute treadmill run and listen to a podcast—my current go-to is *All-In*. Afterward, I love a cold shower. It helps me build mental tenacity and manage my stress because I center my mental state and my breath. I may do 15 minutes of stretching if it's an early morning, and I always do a 13-minute meditation to get in touch with my thoughts. Sometimes I'll read before I meditate; I'm currently working through *Bending Reality*. After that, I make my coffee. I have a La Marzocco Linea Mini at home, so I usually make an iced latte with Nguyen Coffee Supply's Loyalty arabica-robusta blend as espresso, with sweetened condensed milk and whole milk. When I get to my desk, I go through my emails, say hi to the team on Slack, and review our current projects on Asana.

10 a.m. I head over to the roastery in Bushwick and check in with the team. Right now, we roast two to three times a week at around 5,000 pounds, which can fluctuate. I also develop all of our roast profiles. Every time we have a new bean or limited release, I'm in the roastery a lot more working on the sample roaster, roasting several batches and cupping it over the course of a month or two. I meet with my director of operations at the roastery. During our weekly one-on-one, we'll cover everything from our retail expansion, which includes the RTD canned coffees we began manufacturing recently, to our production and inventory management to growth marketing stuff to stakeholder management and suppliers.

11 a.m. I often meet with vendors and partners at the roastery, so they understand how we're roasting. Whole Foods is one of our biggest vendors, who now carries the first-ever robusta in their stores because of us. I talk to them about the differences between our beans, and they see our whole production line and packaging. Then I bring them to the cupping room where I'll always brew a full range of our robustas, arabicas, and blends. Currently we're really excited about our limited-release anaerobic-processed robusta, so I'm always brewing that for anybody coming by.

1 p.m. After the roastery visit, I usually have lunch with the team. We'll order something close by, like Dominican food, [or from] a Thai spot, or a Mexican spot called El Santo. After that, I go back to my home office and continue working from there.

3 p.m. I usually jump back into one more meeting for the day, which is typically a marketing meeting. We put a lot of thought into our marketing, especially now that we're expanding more into retail. Afterward, I do more strategy work, answer emails, and focus on my project management to crank out some of the things we talked about.

5 p.m. I have a really great support network of founder friends here in New York who I meet up with at least once a week. We usually share advice and work through different challenges together. Because we love to support our other friends in the food-and-beverage industry, we'll usually end up at a friend's restaurant in the Lower East Side or Brooklyn.



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Q&A with Molly Baz

Molly Baz has a signature style that carries through to just about everything she does, from the colors she gravitates toward (bright, primary) to the flavors she cooks with (acidic, salty) to the way she mixes cocktails (Martinis with ... everything). The cook, recipe developer, and author became a household personality during her years as a food editor at *Bon Appétit* and regular appearances on their YouTube channel. When she left *Bon Appétit* in 2020 and moved to California, Baz brought a devoted following with her, launching a subscription recipe club on her website, mollybaz.com, while her first book, *Cook This Book*, became a *New York Times* bestseller. She's since launched her own natural wine label as well as a line of kitchen and serving ware with Crate & Barrel, and her next book (the aptly titled *More is More*) releases this October. We sat down to chat with Baz about her current projects, how she likes to mix her drinks at home, and her pet peeve when it comes to glassware. **By Penelope Bass**

Imbibe: You have such a passion for entertaining; what's your approach to drinks when you're hosting?

Molly Baz: I like to be sure that there's something for everyone. I'm not really a themed-drink kind of person. We keep a heavily stocked bar in terms of base spirits and different liquors, as well as wine, beer, non-alcoholic, sparkling waters ... My favorite thing about hosting and having a pantry that's well stocked when it comes to beverages is being able to give everyone something different. When I have people over, the first question is always, "What do you want to drink?" And I'm incessant—like, do you want wine? Do you want a beer? Do you want a sparkling beverage? Can I make you a cocktail? Are you feeling like a Martini? How about a Margarita? Basically, I like to run my house like a restaurant or a bar, and the world is your oyster. I pride myself on being able to deliver almost anything. And then as the night goes on, I'll start to make the rounds with a pad of paper, taking people's orders because I used to love playing waitress when I was little.

You created your new line for Crate & Barrel with your husband, designer Ben Willett. What was the inspiration behind the line? And what drink pieces were must-haves for you?

I moved from New York from an 800-square-foot apartment to a larger home in California where we live pretty far outside the city. But I'm very sensitive to, and familiar with, the concept of making the most of small spaces. So when I started thinking of what my line of kitchenware and table settings and entertaining goods would look like, I wanted to make sure that everything was aesthetically pleasing to the extent that the prep ware could show up in the dining room as entertaining pieces, and stuff could play double duty. There's a seafood tower that people also use for produce or as a snack tower. The ice bucket was designed to be an ice bucket, but it's just an insulated bucket so I also like to serve roasted potatoes or fried chicken out of it ... But then also, because I'm the person who asks, what do you want to drink—you can have *anything*—I wanted a line of glassware that satisfies all those moments. So we have a wine glass obviously, because I also have a wine brand, and we have a spritz glass that's slightly larger and designed for ice-filled spritzers. Then we've got Martini glasses and rocks glasses, which can double as water glasses. And then mugs. So really every category of beverage was accounted for, because I have a pet peeve about serving a beverage in the wrong glassware.

Do you have a go-to cocktail that you like to mix for yourself at home? And when you're cooking, is it wine?

Yeah, I'm a big Martini person. In the winter, I make Manhattans, but when it's not the coldest months of the year I'll make Martinis. I have a recipe in my upcoming book that is basically a Martini the way I make it—kinda like a kitchen sink Martini and it's a little different every time. It's called a Martini Thrice; it has olive brine, pickle brine, an olive, a pickle, and a lemon twist, so you get the

best of all three ways. It's very "more is more." Last weekend I was out of cocktail pickles, but I had pickled jalapenos, so I made Martinis with the jalapeno brine and they were maybe the best I've ever made. And then I keep myself well stocked on wine. On an average weeknight, it's typically wine. At parties, we'll start with cocktails, then open a bunch of wine. If I had to only drink one thing forever, it would be wine.

What sparked the idea for the wine company, Drink This Wine, and what was the aim with the wines you wanted to offer?

I partnered with Andy Young, the winemaker for The Marigny. He's been a friend of mine for the last five or six years—I met him when I was working at *Bon Appétit*, and he was like "that cool winemaker" who was always at our events. We started talking about creating this line of wines called Drink This Wine. I have a very clear POV with the way that I cook and my flavor profiles, and I wanted to create a line of wines that really complemented that. So Andy took my book and took some time to cook his way through it to really understand my palate. Only after familiarizing himself with the way that I cook and the flavors that show up the most—high acid, super herby, very salty—did he feel comfortable creating and blending wines that would pair. He's the genius behind what blends go into each bottle, but they're curated by my palate, which he's super familiar with at this point. In my ideal world, people own my books and are at home cooking through my recipes and they crack open a bottle of the wine and we know it's going to pair well because it was literally created for these recipes. We have a fourth style coming out this fall, which is a sparkling red—kind of a throw to a Lambrusco, but a bit lighter.

Your new book also releases this October; what can we expect from *More is More*?

More is More, being my second book, is less about technique and more about learning to cook intuitively and learning to think about and understand what ingredients are in a dish and how to optimize and capitalize on them. So a lot of the recipes will teach multiple ways to use one ingredient in a dish—it's about coaxing as much flavor as possible from the ingredients you have on hand. A great example is the Fennel on Fennel on Fennel Tortilla, which uses fennel instead of onions in the tortilla by sautéing the bulbs. Then you use the fennel oil to make an aioli, and then it all gets topped with a raw fennel salad using the fronds and stalks. We're taking one ingredient, and learning everything we can about it, and maximizing the flavor in one dish. So it's not necessarily a long ingredient list, but it's a thoughtful way to look at the ingredients you have in your kitchen. And then there are maybe six or eight beverages in there—some nonalcoholic, a couple of smoothies, and the rest are cocktails. There's a shaken mezcal Piña Colada. There's something that I call Yummy Juice, which is a cocktail that we developed during quarantine and drank every single night—it's like a mash-up of an Aperol Spritz and a Margarita. You'll encounter them throughout the book marked as a "Drink Break." It's just a reminder to everyone that it might be time for a drink. ■

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John Valls

Aspirational Drinking

The first reference to the Millionaire Cocktail, as best I can figure, was in 1905 in a syndicated newspaper article.

“Down in the financial district the ‘Millionaire’s Cocktail’ is now regarded with general favor,” the account noted, “since even those who have failed to score on the market can comfortably imagine themselves to be wealthy after a second or third.”

Yes, it was a heady time. The stock market had been rising with only minor hiccups since 1896, and eventually peaked the following year. Fortunes arose. Plutocrats swanned. According to Google Ngram, which calculates word usage over time across countless books and magazine articles, the word “millionaire” peaked in popularity in 1905.

That year, America was also home to roughly 5,000 millionaires, a small but growing sliver of a population of about 88 million. Never mind that the average worker at the time made 22 cents an hour. Aspiring to amass a million dollars occupied the minds of the masses: Books released that decade included *The Millionaire Baby*, *The Musical Millionaire*, *The Millionaire Master*, *A Millionaire Girl*, *A Millionaire Daughter*, and *The Menace of the Millionaire*; or *if I Had a Million*.

The plots in the millionaire books varied widely, as did the ingredients in the cocktail. The 1905 reference claims that the drink’s foundation was a Martini with the addition of sugar and lime juice. Other variations included Gordon’s gin and absinthe with orange bitters and anisette; equal parts of brandy, rum, and gin adulterated with lemon juice and maraschino; and Jamaican rum, sloe gin, and apricot nectar.

But the most common version—which appeared in a 1940 *Esquire* article and cropped up in various cocktail books of the era—was three parts whiskey to one part curaçao, often with a touch of grenadine and sometimes shaken with an egg white.

The main allure appears not to be the taste, but its transformative effect. Anyone could feel like a millionaire with a few sips and modest outlay. In Milwaukee, you could order a Millionaire Cocktail at Club Oasis for 35 cents, with the promise that it would “make you feel like one.” The Old Heidelberg Bar in Daytona Beach offered up a Millionaire Cocktail in 1939, when it was the most expensive drink on the list: At 40 cents, it cost a nickel more than their other drinks. It was the featured drink in 1935 at a Brooklyn hotel bar called The Bud, which, to be honest, does not sound like a place where millionaires would hang out.

The notion that millionaires were all Daddy Warbucks types living absurdly large lives faded in the following decades,

largely thanks to inflation. “The mere millionaire is becoming almost an inconspicuous figure,” noted *The Literary Digest* as early as 1927, pointing out that in the minds of many, “a millionaire today is a ‘poor man.’”

Today, America is home to about 22 million millionaires—if they all gathered in one spot, they would exceed the population of all but three states. This overabundance of millionaires has further eroded its golden luster and aspirational allure.

The final turning point, as best I can figure, was in 1997 when Mike Myers’ unfrozen Dr. Evil in *Austin Powers* cluelessly demanded “One ... million ... dollars” to avoid the nuclear destruction of the world. When a million dollars becomes the punch line of a joke, its time is nigh. These days, *The Wall Street Journal* publishes sad-sack stories about boomers struggling to make ends meet because they were foolish enough to retire with a mere million in the bank.

Anyone with gumption these days aspires to be a billionaire. So, the Billionaire Cocktail naturally has arisen. Among the first was a version at the pioneering Manhattan craft cocktail bar Employees Only, which served the drink late in the first decade of the 2000s. Variations of it were featured in the *New York Times Cookbook* and Tom Sandham’s 2012 book *World’s Best Cocktails*.

Another variation of the Billionaire cropped up around 2018 at a New Jersey restaurant called Le Malt. It was made with Grand Marnier Cuvée 1880 and served in a Tiffany Martini glass, dusted with edible gold flakes. It cost \$175 and got a lot of press. “Billionaire Cocktail ... is the state’s most expensive drink,” crowed the headline in the *Morris County Daily Record*.

This seemed emblematic of the times. While the Millionaire Cocktail was designed to be accessible to everybody, to make everyone feel richer than they were, this version of the Billionaire Cocktail was not. The Millionaire Cocktail opened the door to everyone; the Billionaire Cocktail seems to delight in closing it. You can’t be a billionaire, it said. You can’t even afford this drink.

Of course, the joke is on those who actually ordered the Billionaire Cocktail. Because billionaires don’t drink overhyped cocktails dusted with gold. They drink 1869 Chateau Lafite, or 1907 Heidsieck champagne recovered from a shipwreck in the Baltic Sea.

Billionaires are different than you and me. They have better liquidity. **By Wayne Curtis**



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Seeing Red

In an era of rapidly expanding options in the canned cocktail aisle, the Negroni, with its simple equal-parts build, has become a go-to. And while Negroni Week (September 18-24) marks the best time of year to visit your favorite bar—or a new one!—to order the cocktail in support of Slow Food, quality ready-to-drink versions make the cocktail enjoyable anytime, anywhere, all year round. From industry stalwarts to indie brands, makers are increasingly offering their own interpretation in cans and bottles. **By Katrina Yentch**

Straightaway Negroni

\$49.95/750 ml,
straightawaycocktails.com

Straightaway's in-house liqueurs and vermouths lend a hand to most of their RTD beverages, including their bottled Negroni. The herbaceously bitter drink has a bold body that's complemented by balsamic and spearmint notes on the nose, with complex tannic attributes in place of the typical red bitter flavors. This one is best enjoyed over a big ice cube.



Tip Top

\$39.99/8-pack, tiptopcocktails.com

Tip Top's tastefully bold branding is as pleasing as its miniature-sized cocktails, making the experience of sipping from a can at home (or by the campfire) both enjoyable and convenient. Their Negroni cocktail has a bright, cherry-like character, with citrus and mint on the nose and a clean, crisp finish. Its light body makes this one easy to drink without ice—perfect for on-the-go cocktail hour.



Cappelletti Negroni Insorti

\$24.50/750 ml, bittersandbottles.com

Italy's Cappelletti, best known for its red bitter Aperitivo, introduces a wine-inspired take with their Negroni Insorti ("insurgents") cocktail. Rather than blend the cocktail's typical gin-vermouth-bitter components, Cappelletti infuses a range of Negroni-inspired botanicals (such as gentian, wormwood, and citrus peel) into a wine base. The intentional style results in a softly sweet and bright-tasting drink, with flavors reminiscent of cherry brandy.



St. Agrestis Negroni

\$24.99/4-pack,
stagrestis.com

Brooklyn-based St. Agrestis uses their own Inferno red bitter aperitivo for their Negroni, which comes in petite 100-ml bottles. Combined with a house-made Torino-style vermouth and Greenhook Gin, the New York-spirited product is reminiscent of red candy straws, with a light body and lingering bitter finish.



La Perla Negroni Classico

\$35/750 ml, donciccioefigli.com

Washington, D.C.-based Don Ciccio & Figli bring their Italian heritage stateside through their liqueur line, using family-sourced recipes that date back to the late 1800s. Their red Luna Aperitivo contributes herbaceous, earthy notes of cola and pine to their bottled Negroni, complemented by a light touch of anise. This straightforward approach to a Negroni is an ideal entry-level version for those new to the cocktail.



Campari Negroni

\$22.99/375 ml,
reservebar.com

Campari's own bottled product is the no-nonsense version of a truly traditional Negroni, with a crimson color highlighting its expectedly authentic flavors. With notes of baked cherry and a lingering finish, Campari's rendition is simple and uncomplicated in the best way possible—just pour over a large ice cube and add an orange slice.



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gear Modern cocktail jiggers align form and function.

Made to Measure

Contrary to what film and TV might have us believe, bartenders really do measure their ingredients, and so should you. Just like in cooking or baking, accurately measured ingredients will result in consistent and all-around better-tasting cocktails. That makes a jigger an essential tool for any home bar, and with styles ranging from classic to utilitarian to opulent, there's an option to match every aesthetic. **By Penelope Bass**

Heavyweight Koriko Jigger

\$27.49, cocktailkingdom.com

Why we like it: From Cocktail Kingdom's industry-adored Koriko line, the Heavyweight jigger is both sturdy and sleek. Cast from a single piece of stainless steel, the durable Koriko features standard 1- and 2-ounce cups, with interior markings for precise fractional measures.

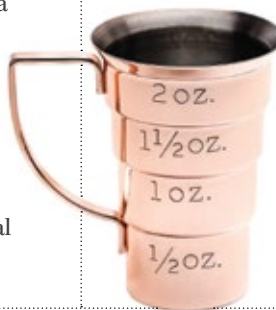


Napier Stepped Jigger

\$37, standardspoon.com

Why we like it: The Napier Stepped Jigger, from the designers behind bar tool company Standard Spoon, marries functionality with an appealing vintage style inspired by a 1930s design.

Stainless steel and copper-plated, the jigger has stepped ½-ounce increments carved on both sides, with interior markings for ¼ and ¾ ounce.



Hammered Bell Jigger

\$26, bullinchinapdx.com

Why we like it: Portland, Oregon-based Bull in China was founded by bartenders, and the barware company still likes to bring a little extra style to their tools. This bell-style jigger is constructed from solid brass and elevated with

a polished, hammered finish. Internal markings on the 1- and 2-ounce cups measure ¼, ½, and ¾ ounce.



The Slim Jigger

\$14.99, pinabarware.com

Why we like it: Bringing a midcentury aesthetic to the traditional, elongated taper of a Japanese-style jigger, the new Slim Jigger from Piña Barware feels thoroughly modern.

Constructed from solid stainless steel in a 1- and 2-ounce capacity, the jigger also has full-circle interior markings at ¼, ½, ¾, and 1½ ounces.



Eco Crystal Tattoo Jigger

\$18, shopehitherlane.com

Why we like it: While the appeal may be more form than function, this stunning lead-free crystal jigger, embossed with an abstract fleur-de-lys, is made with sustainable, carbon-neutral glass by Italian makers Cristalleria Italiana. With the dual ends offering standard 1- and 2-ounce measurements, this jigger will get the job done while standing as a centerpiece of the bar.



Steel Angled Jigger

\$9.99, oxo.com

Why we like it: With easy-to-read interior measurement markings and an angled spout, this utilitarian, stainless steel jigger from OXO functions more like a mini measuring cup, making it particularly well suited to kitchen-counter mixology. Increments are marked in tablespoons and ounces, and it's especially helpful with small measurements.





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Tegroni

1 ounce Santaleza Blanco tequila
1 ounce Botanika Angelica Bitters
1 ounce Dos Deus Blanc Vermouth
Grapefruit twist garnish

Go Green

Fermented grape juice tends to get all the love, but its non-boozy counterpart has played a solid supporting role throughout history. Verjus—the unfermented, high-acid juice pressed from young wine grapes—is the unsung hero of the drinks world. Since at least as far back as the Middle Ages, verjus was used across Europe for its bright, tart character prior to the arrival of citrus. Today, verjus (from the French *vert jus*, “green juice”) is still a go-to ingredient for bringing flavorful complexity to both cocktails and cuisine.

“I use verjus as a replacement for citrus juice in highballs and sour cocktails, as it lends itself to more delicate sours and offers a slightly rounder palate than its citrus counterparts,” says Kate Boushel, director of beverage and education for Montreal’s Groupe Barroco. Boushel notes that verjus has a lower density than citrus juice, so it’s often important to compensate with heavier syrups to reach the desired texture in the final cocktail. In her *Entre Temps* cocktail, Boushel uses a tablespoon of jam to add both sweetness and body to the herbaceous gin drink.

Once an esoteric ingredient, verjus can now be found in specialty-food stores or online. Many brands are imported from France, while American winemakers like Wölffer

Estate and Scribe Winery also produce their own verjus. Jason Hedges, beverage director for Laurent Tourondel Hospitality in New York City, co-founder of Bar IQ, and author of *The Seasonal Cocktail*, notes that verjus can add bright, tangy flavors to cocktails such as spritzes that nicely balance other ingredients. Hedges also swaps verjus for citrus juice in everything from Daiquiris to Whiskey Sours—just be careful not to overpower the other ingredients with too much acidity, he says. “If you’re using verjus in a cocktail that already has other sour ingredients like lemon juice or vinegar, you’ll need to balance the flavors carefully.”

The bright, complex flavors of verjus also make it a natural fit for spirit-free cocktails. At Cure in New Orleans, head bartender Liz Kelley sought to craft a zero-proof cocktail that wasn’t reliant on citrus. Her V&T appeals to the classic Gin & Tonic drinker, with a crisp, botanical profile. “We finish our Verjus & Tonic with rosemary, grapefruit oil, and juniper berries,” Kelley says, noting that the base would also complement a variety of fruits and herbs, once again proving the versatility of verjus as both supporting player and star. **By Vicki Denig**

Verjus Whiskey Sour

Swapping the lemon juice for verjus adds a tart complexity to this classic cocktail.

2 oz. bourbon
1 oz. verjus
¾ oz. simple syrup (1:1)
1 fresh egg white
(pasteurized if you like)

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glass: rocks
Garnish: cherry and orange crescent

Add all of the ingredients to a shaker without ice and shake until foamy. Add ice and shake again to chill, then double strain into an ice-filled glass and garnish.

Jason Hedges
New York City

Entre Temps

Verjus brings a balanced brightness to this herbaceous, fruit-forward gin cocktail.

2 oz. gin
½ oz. verjus
1 heaping tablespoon of berry jam
(blackberry, blueberry, or raspberry)
1 dash Bittered Sling Lem-Marrakech
bitters (optional)

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glass: cocktail
Garnish: 1-2 sprigs of fresh tarragon

Shake all of the ingredients with ice, double strain into a chilled glass, then garnish.

Kate Boushel
Groupe Barroco, Montreal

V&T

Crisp and botanical, this spirit-free twist on a Gin & Tonic sets verjus to work as a base-spirit replacement.

1½ oz. verjus
1½ oz. tonic water
1 oz. chilled soda water
3 juniper berries (optional)
3-5 drops Angostura bitters

Tools: barspoon
Glass: wine
Garnish: rosemary sprig,
grapefruit peel

Combine all of the ingredients in an ice-filled glass and gently stir to combine. Express a grapefruit peel over the drink and place in the glass as a garnish, along with a sprig of rosemary.

Liz Kelley
Cure, New Orleans



Highlander

Brewer Oscar Wong laid the groundwork for Asheville's craft beer community.

Imagine Asheville, North Carolina, without craft beer is like trying to picture Orlando without Walt Disney World or Las Vegas without its casinos. But there was a time just a few decades ago when Asheville was not Beer City USA—in fact, no brewery had opened in the quiet mountain town since Prohibition ended. Oscar Wong changed all that. A quarter century after he founded Highland Brewing in 1994, brewing had become the second-largest manufacturing employer in western North Carolina.

“To go from a tiny brewery in a basement of a historic building, brewing on repurposed dairy equipment, to becoming, in less than 30 years, the second-largest manufacturing sector in the area, that’s in large part due to Oscar,” says Anne Fitten Glenn, an Asheville-based journalist and the author of two books about North Carolina beer history.

Wong couldn’t have foreseen that he’d usher in a golden age of craft brewing in his city, become a leader in the Southeast’s beer scene, and establish himself as the godfather of an entire generation of Asheville food and beverage artisans. Humble and self-effacing, he still shrugs off the enormity of his contributions to the community. “When I was about 11, my mother said to me, ‘You’re fairly bright; you’re very lazy; but by God you’re lucky.’ I’ve run that lucky thing all my life,” Wong jokes.

Story by KATE BERNOT
Photo by TIM ROBISON



Oscar Wong continued

Now 82 years old, Wong has gradually stepped back from a day-to-day operations role at the brewery—handing the reins to his daughter, Leah Wong Ashburn, who is now CEO and president—and he's finally in a position to enjoy the accolades that he's earned. (Ashburn says that after decades of hard work, today her dad finally posts up at the Highland bar on Fridays and holds court with a group of friends.) Not only has Wong made his mark on the region's beer industry, but he's served in countless community leadership roles, from the Rotary Club of Asheville to the board of the University of North Carolina Asheville.

In May, Governor Roy Cooper awarded Wong the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the highest honor granted by the governor to people who have shown extraordinary service to the state. A 2-by-2-foot plaque celebrating Wong was installed outside Barley's Taproom & Pizzeria, which houses the basement where Wong founded Highland. That same month, he was also honored by the Daniel Boone Council of the Boy Scouts of America, which celebrated him at its Distinguished Citizen Award Dinner. "This kind of recognition is over the top for me," Wong says. "I'm honored and humbled at the same time."

Wong's humility—which easily veers into self-effacement—is a hallmark of his personality. Recalling his life in the early 1990s before founding Highland, he refers to himself as a "washed-up old engineer" who was, at the time, "sitting on his butt" and looking for an outlet. Wong's daughter says a brewery was a natural amalgam of her father's creativity, scientific and operational knowledge, and knack for bringing people together through food and drink in service of a larger purpose. "It wasn't just a brewery," Ashburn says. "The brewery was clearly going to be about being a good servant to the community."

Today, Highland sells its beer in four states and is one of the largest independent craft breweries born in North Carolina. Under Ashburn's leadership, the 40-acre brewery complex continues to evolve as a community-building destination with a disc golf course and volleyball courts (read more about Highland's sports connection on page 50). Glenn says that while other breweries followed Highland's lead and opened in the late 1990s in Asheville, none have adapted and survived as long as it has. "It's really important to see someone who's had that ongoing persistence in making the brewery better," Glenn says. "For a family-owned business that has stayed family-owned and independent, longevity and consistency are important."

It wasn't always a given that Highland would pass to Wong's daughter. In fact, she'd established a career in the entirely unrelated field of yearbook publishing and didn't initially express interest in running the brewery. But, in typical fashion, Wong had patience and trust in others that eventually gave Ashburn the confidence to step into leadership at the family business. "He never told me that I had to do it," she recalls. "That's really important in our relationship, because I tend to shy away from things that I'm told to do."

Even once she began working for the brewery, Ashburn says her father was far from a micromanager. He let her make her own decisions—and sometimes her own mistakes. An initial attempt that she made to revamp some of Highland's packaging didn't hit the mark, and the designs had to be redone. But her dad remained positive through the experience. "After the fact, we said: 'Uh oh, that was a goof, and it's okay,'"

Wong says of the redesign. "I've always felt that you really don't learn from success. When it works, you say, 'Oh it works.' But when you stub your toe, you learn."

Most people would find it nearly untenable to work alongside their families, but for Ashburn—whose husband, Brock Ashburn, is Highland's vice president of facilities—the company culture that her father built helps keep all employees united and professional. (She says it's perhaps "weird" that she calls her dad "Dad" at the brewery, but wouldn't it be more weird if she called him Oscar?) Wong says the three tenets on which he built Highland's reputation are quality, integrity, and respect. The first two came naturally; the latter is one that needs to be remade each day, with each employee, in every interaction.

"We've demonstrated that, and Leah and I feel strongly about respect. That permeates our culture here in that we might disagree, but we're going to be respectful about it," Wong says. "Employees who are no longer here and have moved on keep in touch. They always come back to visit, even the ones that we asked to leave. That tells me we've dealt with them respectfully, and they accept that."

One detail of the business-and-personal-life overlap that the Wong family does find challenging is the degree of recognizability and acclaim that they've earned in Asheville. Glenn confirms this, calling Wong "more of an A-list celebrity in Asheville than [fellow resident] Andie McDowell." As a Chinese American, Wong also stands out among the beer industry's still predominantly white faces, and his daughter says that even her identity as "vaguely ethnic and female" makes her memorable within the beer scene. In 2021—the most recent year for which data is available—the Brewers Association trade group reported that 2 percent of craft brewery owners were Asian; 23.7 percent were female.

Besides being local celebrities, there's also the temptation to work—constantly. Ashburn says that when much of your family works for a local business, it's nearly impossible to turn off that portion of your brain when you're out to dinner or even running errands. She's been known to pop into a grocery store on a weekend morning to buy eggs, only to start checking that Highland's cans were properly stocked on the beer shelf. "Thank God I've gotten away from that," she laughs.

But for Wong, his family, his work, and his community have always been intertwined. Asked to define community, he begins at home with his wife, Anna, and his daughters Leah and Nicole. "It starts with family. If you have an intact family you can have stuff to give," Wong says. "I've gotten more than I've given because when we connect with people ... you gain so much from hearing where people are coming from and what their thoughts are. It has enriched me and I feel good about giving back, because it satisfies something within me."

This is perhaps Wong's greatest legacy: as a listener and as a connector of people. Whether he was sharing tips with another bootstrapping brewery in the late 1990s, helping launch the Asheville Brewers Alliance in 2009, or sitting on the board of a community organization a decade later, Wong has always been a central spoke in a grateful wheel of Asheville residents, brewers, and community leaders. No one could argue that the world is richer for his humble and gracious leadership. "I've seen this again and again in terms of his mentorship of other local brewers," Glenn says. "He wants to hear other people's stories." ■

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UMAMI MIA

Savory cocktail ingredients open up
fresh galaxies of flavor.

Story by MATTHEW ROWLEY
Illustrations by MATTY NEWTON





At Selva, a cocktail bar in Oaxaca de Juárez, bartender Elias Perez serves Virgen de Guadalupe, a Bloody Mary riff named for one of Mexico's most beloved visions. Its tomato, celery, and citrus are familiar enough. One ingredient, however, has strayed from its ancient home and, in its odyssey, been remolded: this Virgen is dosed with garum.

Scholars tussle over the semantics of garum, but they broadly agree (with asterisks, footnotes, and fulsome *howevers* and *notwithstandings*) that the term describes ancient Mediterranean sauces made of fish liquified by enzymes in their viscera. After fermenting for months in tanks called *cetariae*, rich, heady fluids emerged in a range of earth tones from amber to umber and nearly pitch. Romans overwhelmingly preferred garum over salt to enhance meals. Legionnaires drank it with water. As Imperial Rome faltered, however, garum floundered, then all but disappeared.

In the last decade, fermentation aficionados have rediscovered garum. Some abide by old methods: fish, guts, water, and salt. Others cultivate koji or use commercial enzymes to liquify cheese, lamb, egg whites, insects, poultry, and other protein-rich foods. These sauces are teeming with amino acids. One in particular, glutamate, is celebrated for conveying umami, that delicious, satisfying taste sensation found in drinks such as Micheladas, kimoto sake, green tea, and Caesars. Experimental chefs and bartenders embrace these sauces with a common refrain: *They make things taste more like themselves.*

At the Lisbon restaurant Can the Can, chef Pedro Almeida champions Portugal's preserved fish industry, including garum. Its history in Portugal is ancient; nearby Tróia is the archaeological site of the largest fish sauce manufactory known from the Roman era. Almeida makes small batches of seafood garums in his kitchen, but in 2021, he joined a cross-disciplinary team at Tróia's coastal ruins. There, in a tank unused for some 1,500 years, the group transformed 400 kilos of sardines with local salt into luxurious, honey-hued liquid, a grand garum as once might have shipped across the empire from its westernmost province.

Bar manager Danny Luis works Almeida's garums into drinks, including a house-made vermouth, and the Tróia cocktail, his nod to local history, with gin, basil, and tomato water. Garum's salt alone can enhance a drink's flavors, but its amino acids hit different taste receptors and can impart cheesy, nutty, and rich aromas—even elements of leather and cured tobacco—that salt cannot. "I love it on toasts when I'm drinking beers with friends," says Luis. Both he and Almeida agree that garum should be used in drops. "Four or maybe five," Almeida says. "Just enough to intensify flavors. If it tastes like fish, it's too much."

Unlike Almeida's mostly orthodox garums, *garum de cotija* in Perez's cocktail at Selva teeters on the cusp of heresy. Made with yellow corn and cotija cheese at a nearby fermentation workshop called Labo Fermento, it is a wonderfully complex example of what an increasing number of makers, influenced by Rich Shih and Jeremy Umansky's 2020 book, *Koji Alchemy*, call an "amino sauce." The term describes sauces and condiments that start with high-protein ingredients and rely on enzymes to rend those proteins into amino acids. René Redzepi and David Zilber's manual *The Noma Guide to Fermentation* had previously detailed how such umami-rich amino sauces

(which they called "garums") could be made with koji. Because koji supplies enzymes needed to break proteins into amino acids, it bumped fish—and their guts—from the roster of definitive ingredients to merely optional. The revelation that any protein-heavy food, from brewer's yeast to chicken wings, could be transformed into these sorts of ersatz garums opened paths to new flavors for brave souls the world over.

Amino sauce making with koji is something like dry-aging, but faster. And wetter. In Japanese, *koji-kin* refers to spores of *Aspergillus oryzae*, an ancient culinary mold essential in the creation of sake, amazake, miso, mirin, and other traditional food and drinks. It is a cornerstone of Japanese cuisine. Koji in English encompasses strains of that mold as well as grains such as rice or barley that have been inoculated with it. Sauce makers blend these grains with high-protein foods, salt, and water. As koji grows, it produces a battery of enzymes including amylase and protease that unlock intense flavors by breaking large molecules with little or no taste into flavorful small ones.

"The difference in flavor between something that's been enzymatically treated versus something that hasn't is incredible," says Chris Stanley. "You develop additional flavors, but you also change its core flavor. It's an exercise in subtleties." Stanley is head of prep and production at The Dead Rabbit in New York City, where he makes modifiers, including amino sauces of his own invention, for the bar's drinks. "I made exactly one of the garums out of the Noma book. It was the bee pollen one and now I make it all the goddamned time for exactly one reason: I love Pearl Divers." The drink was Don the Beachcomber's iced inversion of hot buttered rum. Stanley buttresses its spiced mix of honey and butter with the garum. It is, he says, "the best thing I have ever put in my face."

All of these sauces deliver umami punch-ups that Stanley describes as "middle ground between a texture and a flavor, where it's a more satisfying version of whatever's treated with the garum." Those who hesitate to make their own can buy sauces from Labo Fermento, Can the Can, and other small producers. As a stand-in for Roman-style garum, cognoscenti sometimes turn to Red Boat, a popular brand of Vietnamese fish sauce.

Jeffery Morgenthaler has another solution. For his new bar, Pacific Standard in Portland, Oregon, Morgenthaler wanted to make a Bloody Mary that guests might enjoy throughout the day. He turned to a pantry staple to make a simple and potent amino sauce. After lengthening the drink with water left it tasting washed out, he restored zestiness with citric acid, then amplified tomato and Worcestershire meatiness with refined glutamate in its most readily accessible form: monosodium glutamate. Simple MSG powder in minuscule amounts—batched with lemon juice, water, black pepper, and other spices, then mixed last minute with tomato juice and vodka—gave the drink an umami glow-up. "The bartenders love it. For them, it's only a three-ingredient cocktail," Morgenthaler says.

"And," he notes, "it's fucking fantastic." ■



FAMILY MATTERS

THE MEZCAL BOOM AND THE LIVES
OF THE FAMILIES WHO MAKE IT.

Story by NOAH ARENSTEIN  Photos by JAKE LINDEMAN





Opposite: Eleuterio Perez Ramos, known as "Tío Tello," outside his palenque in El Nanche in Oaxaca's Miahuatlán region.

E

leuterio Perez Ramos, or “Tío Tello” as he’s known among the small community of El Nanche in Oaxaca’s Miahuatlán region, scrambles to cover his freshly roasted agaves. A rare, spring hailstorm has settled over his newly built *palenque* (mezcal distillery). Tío Tello roasts agave only a few times a year, and almost always in the dry season. Small batches can mean higher

risk when you’re making, at most, 2,000 liters of mezcal a year. Any loss is deeply felt, and waterlogged agaves pose specific challenges requiring years of experience to overcome.

Tío Tello’s a little over 70 and sometimes walks with a cane, but he moves quickly when the safety of his agave is at stake. He gathers a mix of bamboo mats and plastic sheets, to protect them from the hail. These agaves took between 10 and 20 years to mature—they could be ruined in an instant.

His youngest son, Eduardo “Lalo” Perez Cortés, works in tandem, doing more of the heavy lifting, moving the agaves to safer shelter while directing two neighbors who are here to pitch in. At 32, Lalo’s the youngest of Tío Tello’s eight sons, deeply tanned and baby-faced, with a bright smile and a compact, strong frame. Some *mezcaleros* tend to have a quiet, wiry strength from constant manual labor—chopping and mashing agaves by hand is among the hardest work around.

Tío Tello and Lalo work with an easy yet practiced rhythm. Lalo’s worked under his father’s tutelage since he was a toddler. Lalo studied accounting in school, but returned to El Nanche to work with his father, and now lives with his wife and two children within sight of their new palenque. It was finished in late 2022, but Tío Tello has been working this rugged piece of land for more than 30 years.

Miahuatlán is a little over two hours’ drive southwest of Oaxaca City, at the edge of the central Oaxacan valley along the Sierra Madre del Sur. Past low, rolling hills and endless variations of brown scrub punctuated by neatly planted fields of agave, down the road from the massive federal prison outside the town of Mengoli de Morelos, sits El Nanche.

Mezcal lovers will tell you that this unforgiving corner of the valley is where the best mezcal in Oaxaca, potentially even in all of Mexico, is made. Spirits produced in pristine environments are frequently romanticized, but the harshness of Miahuatlán seems to provoke a certain intensity of the spirit. High-toned, mineral-forward, and with a marked salinity, these mezcals are unmistakably of Miahuatlán. It could be the terroir, the astonishing biodiversity of agaves, or the technical precision of the region’s producers, but another answer seems simpler: There’s immense value in the generational knowledge passed down in close-knit, extended families of *mezcaleros*.



Mezcal’s soaring global popularity has complicated an already complex generational handoff within Oaxaca’s rural communities. These families need to cope with the past while preparing for their future. Yet there’s only so much planning a family can do to secure their legacy. Ultimately, the next generation has many questions to resolve. Do they maintain the family “recipe”? With many of these families so rooted in tradition, even minor changes are magnified. Do they modernize and chase what could be elusive money through multinational liquor conglomerates? These days, opportunities exist in even the most remote parts of Mexico.

Tío Tello recalls that when he was 11 or 12, he started helping his own father by doing small errands. “I brought lunch and dinner at first, but then I would stay and keep him company,” he says. “Since that time, I’ve dedicated myself to the work of mezcal.” Lalo learned along the same path. By the time Lalo could walk, he was watching his father and grandfather make mezcal. The manual labor is essentially the same across generations: processing agaves by hand, scooping the *bagasse*—roasted and fermented agave fibers—from the wooden tanks into the still.

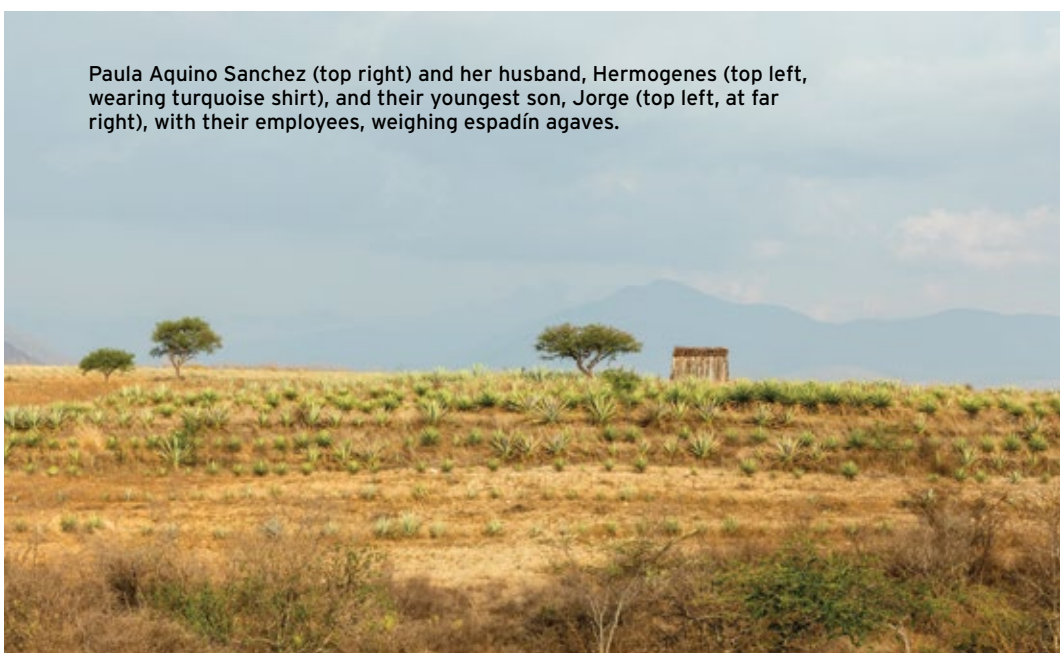
As a young man, Tío Tello and his family mostly worked with arroqueño agaves, sort of a super-charged espadín, along with *bicuixe*, a narrow *karwinskii* subspecies that looks like a giant matchstick once trimmed. The initial wave of modernization started in the 1970s with the introduction of new agave varieties from other parts of Mexico. Arroqueños take more than twice as long to mature as the sweeter and faster-growing espadín. Much of the old agaves were made into mezcal and then not replanted. The rustic field blends of Tío Tello’s youth, using whatever ripe agaves could be harvested at a particular moment, faded away as espadín began to dominate.

The most significant change was the movement to double distillation, mimicking industrialized tequila techniques. Distilling techniques were refined in the ’90s as the Consejo Regulador de Mezcal (CRM) was created to standardize and certify mezcal production. Traditional clay *cantaritos* used for storage were exchanged for plastic drums and glass *garrafones* (demijohns). Many producers switched to copper and stainless steel stills from clay or *refrescadera*-style stills with a plate in the chamber, and many even shifted from making lower-proofed, true single distillates. Tío Tello recalls how the government enticed producers to modernize their operations. “We joined a co-op where I first learned about the dangerous chemical substances in the mezcal—like methanol and lead—and that double distilling would help control that,” he says. “At first, we’d take our single-distilled mezcal to a warehouse outside of Oaxaca City to re-distill in stainless steel tanks. The man who ran the co-op gave me 4,000 pesos that I used to buy two fermentation tanks. But, at the end of the day, I don’t know if the man who ran the program got rich or got lost, but he started putting his family members in the co-op, and one day I was out.” He fought many of the changes but was grateful for the training in the art of double distillation, which he’s refined and trained Lalo in over the past 20 years.



Tío Tello (this photo) and his son, Eduardo "Lalo" Perez Cortés (middle left) at their El Nanche palenque.





Paula Aquino Sanchez (top right) and her husband, Hermogenes (top left, wearing turquoise shirt), and their youngest son, Jorge (top left, at far right), with their employees, weighing espadín agaves.

Tío Tello continues to resist one of the biggest tools of modernization. In Miahuatlán, many producers switched to a tahona, a large stone wheel pulled by a pack animal, rather than the excruciatingly slow and difficult process of hand mashing. Other producers went even further, switching to modified wood chippers to grind their agaves. “We’ll continue to make everything by hand,” insists Tío Tello. Hand mashing is one of a few stubborn steps that makes his and Lalo’s mezcal different from his neighbors’.

By their account, Lalo and Tío Tello have a smooth working relationship. They share work, but now Lalo does most of the manual labor along with anyone local willing to help, and Tío Tello mostly supervises. “The fermentation will talk to you. I sniff the tank every hour and have to make sure I don’t miss the perfect moment,” says Tío Tello. “It asks for water or tells you when it’s ready for the still. You have to listen.” Unsurprisingly, Lalo’s style is similar to his father’s, but he’s made some small adjustments, especially in how he blends his “cuts,” the crucial separations between the heads, hearts, and tails of the distillation. Together they continuously refine their blending techniques over each new batch of mezcal.

The new palenque promises a smooth handoff and a future for Lalo and his children, but “new” here is still relative. Three worn, wooden fermentation vats sit in the shade under a curved, corrugated metal roof. There’s no electricity or instrumentation, just a few open bulbs for late-night checking of the stills. The hail continues, but under the safety of the roof, Tío Tello’s neighbors continue processing the agaves by hand in a practiced dance—one shaving off chips of roasted agave with a machete, while the other smashes the pieces to bits with an old wooden mallet.

At the end of the day, Tío Tello has taught his son to embrace the rhythms of the palenque. The most important things he hopes to impart to his son, he says, are “preparation, organization, and punctuality.” These sometimes feel like totems of a bygone bucolic era, but this is the only way Lalo knows. “We’re making good, *rico* [tasty] mezcal that people like,” says Lalo. “We don’t need to change anything.”



Logoche is a small community of a little over 100 people not far from El Nanche in Miahuatlán. The village is rightfully famous for its concentration of mezcal production, with many producers belonging to the Grupo Productor Logoche cooperative. There’s an openness to mezcal production here—possibly the result of everyone working together on a few palenques until very recently—and many producers are experimenting with technology alongside traditional practices.

Paula Aquino Sanchez is a dominating presence at her family’s palenque. She and her husband, Hermogenes, have recently become well-known mezcal producers in the United States. Their mezcal, bottled as part of the Neta label, sells for up to \$200 a bottle. Likewise, Sanchez commands an unusual level of respect in a country and region where traditional, rigid gender hierarchies are omnipresent. She often takes the lead on mezcal

production, but is now in a position where she can pick and choose how she contributes. She’ll occasionally make a batch herself, like the *cuixe* she pours, laden with so much rich, cooked agave flavor it tastes of maple syrup. Still, she makes the smallest batches among her family because “I’m always in the kitchen,” she says.

Despite that, her presence is inseparable from the palenque. While her husband and youngest son, Jorge, weigh massive, freshly harvested *espadín* agaves at more than 250 kilos each, Sanchez tours around her family’s agave fields, pointing out medicinal herbs and other rare plants. Paula and Hermogenes have three sons and a daughter. They all work together at the palenque and she recalls how, “after school, I would say to my children, ‘Today is the day we learn distilling, or today we learn fermentation,’ and I would make them do that exact activity.”

Balancing a traditional matriarch’s duties on a farm in Mexico alongside making mezcal is a lifestyle few people (even those in her community) can understand. Sanchez’s path was nontraditional and born from necessity. She has few memories of her father, who also made mezcal and died when she was 6 years old. Alongside her older brother Eugenio, who has since also passed away, she was making mezcal at a very young age, primarily as a breadwinner for her impoverished family. Like Lalo, she initially helped by bringing food to the older men working on the palenque—her grandfather, uncles, and older brother—but she was doing the difficult, manual labor at a much younger age. There were only a handful of palenques in Logoche at the time, so everyone worked closely together, sharing knowledge and techniques.

While her grandfather was the strongest presence in teaching her the art of mezcal production, she considers her late brother her mentor. Like Tío Tello, they were taught by the CRM to double distill mezcal in the 2000s. Sanchez says she prefers the double-distilled mezcal because the old style “gave me headaches,” and is proud of the technical precision she honed in distilling alongside her late brother. “We notate everything now, and I can see that it yields more. We make fewer errors and are always improving.”

Here, they use a modified wood shredder to process agaves. A new, unused tahona sits in one corner of the palenque. While her father and grandfather worked with a tahona, they switched to save time and labor. Now, their youngest son, Jorge, is advocating for the tahona, and they plan to return to the practice soon.

The blending of the old and the new is apparent everywhere in Logoche, but especially through Sanchez. She’s shrewd—over the past decade, making mezcal has given her and her children opportunities that would have been unfathomable even a decade ago—but she still must work within the traditional Mexican patriarchy, balancing all of the work of home and family alongside the grueling labor of making mezcal.

Sanchez respects what she learned from her grandfather and brother, but her focus is forward. She’s proud of her family’s mezcal, but sees room for improvement and refinement. Even with all of the changes she’s witnessed, the traditional culture surrounding mezcal remains.



The path forward for many in Miahuatlán seems clear, but what happens when a family on the precipice of success unexpectedly loses its patriarch?

Oaxaca is famous for its microclimates. From tropical rainforests near the Pacific Ocean to the pine oak forests that can reach 10,000 feet of altitude, this wide band of climate is a major factor in the uniqueness and diversity of the mezcal in the state. On the road to the village of Candelaria Yegolé, home of the Garcia López family in the Zoquitlan region east of Miahuatlán, this diversity is fully displayed. Here, you climb and dive through green valleys and rocky canyons dotted with wilting tobala agaves. Past the town of Santa Maria Zoquitlan, on a newly paved road, the last stop before reaching the village, the road, now just dirt, climbs into mountains covered in forests of cactus. Just outside of town, papayas grow alongside fields of agave.

Finally, after passing over a low bridge, Candelaria Yegolé, dominated by a gleaming church, comes into view. Even then, there's more mountain to climb—Aquilino Garcia López's new palenque is up the hill. Farther up the mountain, among tangles of cacti forests and sheer cliffs, are the agave fields.

Aquilino Garcia López was a mezcal success story. After his son-in-law, Judah Kuper, and Kuper's longtime friend, Dylan Sloan, co-founded Mezcal Vago in 2013, Aquilino's name was whispered at cocktail bars across the country, a calling card for some of the greatest mezcal around. Barely a decade ago, his mezcal was among the first artisanal mezcal brands to come north, making him perhaps the first mezcatero known by name in the United States.

His signature Elote mezcal, distilled with toasted corn, became a fixture at cocktail bars. His style was incredibly distinct—startlingly high-proofed, and tasting of cracked, caramelized sugar. Aquilino himself lived up to the hype. When I spent a day with him at his palenque in 2019, he was in his early 60s, but his wiry, muscular frame exuded strength. His striking eyes still penetrate in a photo hung in the family's new palenque. He was exuberant, showing us his fields of agave, full of rarely cultivated varieties, cracking jokes about how his neighbor's new truck had forced them to widen the roads on the mountain, while we sipped mezcal from an old arrack bottle that someone had left for him.

Aquilino died tragically in the spring of 2020. While he was driving home late at night from a party in a neighboring village, his truck went over a cliff in the darkness, and he was gone in an instant. A simple marker at the spot memorializes the loss of this titan of the mezcal community.

His sons Temo, 33, and Mateo, 28, had been under his tutelage for some time. Like Lalo and Paula Aquino Sanchez, they'd grown up in the rhythms of the palenque. While Temo moved to the U.S. in his 20s in search of work, Mateo stayed. In 2015, Aquilino convinced Temo to return, selling him on the growing success of Mezcal Vago.

Complicating matters was the new palenque. Vago was originally independent, but had been acquired by Samson & Surrey (owners of Ocho Tequila and Few Bourbon, among other brands), and has since been bought by Heaven Hill. Production of Elote had increased every year, and Vago needed to keep up with demand. Just before Aquilino died, they'd completed this new, state-of-the-art palenque. "New" here, while still making artisanal mezcal, means something else entirely than the new palenque at El Nanche. Here were 12 gleaming copper stills, more than a dozen wooden fermentation tanks sitting on pallet jacks for ease of movement, two horse-drawn tahonas, and two large pit ovens. An open-air tasting area, featuring a bar and extensive seating, hangs a level above the production area.

Aquilino had only just completed the first run of Elote mezcal when he died. Now, here were Temo and Mateo, left with a massive operation by Oaxacan standards, feeling completely alone. "In the beginning, the hardest part was that he wasn't there," says Temo. "He was in command. We didn't feel ready then, but after three years, we're ready now."

In addition to suddenly losing their father, they'd lost their primary teacher. Leadership and charisma were skills they'd not yet needed, and had to develop themselves. Initially, they hewed exactly to their father's recipes, finding together the rhythm of the new palenque, learning to share work and delegate when necessary. They focused on making Elote, only recently straying into the blends of agave that had won Aquilino acclaim. After three years, the brothers are becoming more confident. "Every day," says Temo, "with every new batch, we're learning something. But without our father, we must assume more and more responsibility." The mezcal is not quite at the level of their father's, but the similarity is apparent.

One of the biggest questions Mezcal Vago faced after his death was how to label the bottles. After much debate, they settled on "Hijos de Aquilino," or the "Sons of Aquilino." Pressed on whether they were comfortable with this label, they demur. "We're cool with it," says Mateo. As fifth-generation mezcateros, Temo and Mateo may never escape their father's legacy, but they seem comfortable in his shadow.

Change happens in Oaxaca, but the rhythm of the palenque is always consistent. Even with a new shredder or a different still, the lifecycle of the agave still controls everything. When that cycle can take up to 30 years, all decisions are necessarily made with a foot in the past and an eye to the next generation. Teasing out that rhythm may ultimately be even more difficult than hand mashing agaves. Tío Tello and Lalo are rhythmically intertwined, while Sanchez is focused on securing her family's legacy, and the "Hijos de Aquilino" are wrestling with their father's legacy. To Sanchez, mezcal is woven into the lives of each generation. "[It's] given to your parents when you're born," she says, "when you're baptized, when you're confirmed, and when you get married." ■



This photo: Aquilino García Lopéz, the family patriarch who died in 2020, and (top left) his sons Temo (left) and Mateo.





COMPETITIVE SPIRIT

Niche sports and games are helping breweries score big.

Story by JOSHUA M. BERNSTEIN

Volleyball courts at Highland Brewing in Asheville, North Carolina.



Clockwise from left: Highland Brewing CEO Leah Ashburn; disc golf at Highland; three-on-three soccer at La Doña Cerveceria in Minneapolis.



ONE MIDNIGHT LAST FALL, HIGHLAND BREWING IN ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, OPENED ONLINE SIGN-UPS FOR ITS SAND VOLLEYBALL LEAGUES. TEAMS COULD REGISTER AT THEIR LEISURE, MAYBE OVER MORNING COFFEES OR EVENING BEERS. INSTEAD, THE NIGHT OWLS GOT THE NET: EVERY LEAGUE SLOT VANISHED WITHIN 30 MINUTES, AND THE WAITING LIST BALLOONED WITH PLAYERS SEEKING TO SERVE AND SPIKE ON THE THREE COURTS. "WE COULDN'T ACCOMMODATE EVERYBODY THAT WANTED TO PLAY," SAYS PRESIDENT AND CEO LEAH WONG ASHBURN, WHO HAS PLAYED VOLLEYBALL SINCE HIGH SCHOOL.



Breweries have historically been centers of industrial production, not pastoral recreation, producing the lagers enjoyed alongside America's pastimes. The lines sometimes blurred as beer barons bought sports teams—August Anheuser Busch, Jr. notably owned the St. Louis Cardinals—but few drinkers visited breweries to blow off steam or join a league team.

"We started out purely as a manufacturing brewery," Ashburn says of Highland, which opened in an Asheville basement in 1994. In 2006, Highland relocated to the former Blue Ridge Motion Picture Studio, and eventually purchased the property overrun with invasive thickets of multiflora rose and smothering bittersweet vines. "You could not walk two feet into the woods," Ashburn says. Taming flora for recreation was never top of mind until the pandemic created an urgent need to congregate outside. Ashburn's husband, Brock Ashburn, the vice president of facilities, led the project to create the disc golf course (the final nine holes were finished this year) and built the adjacent volleyball courts that opened to the public in September 2020. People now play sports "pretty much from sunup to sundown," Ashburn says. Integrating activities creates "a healthier approach to alcohol."

Not everyone wants to spend afternoons analyzing tasting flights. To attract active crowds, breweries are entering the field of play. Last year, Tree House Brewing purchased the Tewksbury Country Club in Massachusetts, including a nine-hole golf course. MashCraft Brewing in Fishers, Indiana, has two outdoor pickleball courts. Forgotten Star Brewing in Fridley, Minnesota, runs summer bocce and winter curling leagues.

Installing a soccer field can help breweries tap a multicultural audience. In 2018, former Marine Sergio Manancero, the son of Uruguayan immigrants, opened La Doña Cervecería in Minneapolis, with a three-on-three soccer field installed outside. "Soccer represents a more worldly culture than any other sport," says Manancero, the president and general manager. "There are so many different ways to display culture and invite people in." La Doña's soccer field, which the brewery temporarily took down in 2022 to accommodate construction, hosts leagues and instructional classes for young children on weekend mornings. Parents invite grandparents and other family members to watch kids play, complemented by the brewery's tacos and beers like Doña Fría, a Mexican-style lager. "The field creates its own business-generating environment."

Taprooms have also become starting lines for brewery running clubs. Wooden Robot hosts

Many breweries are maxed out on square footage, but Highland has abundant acreage—40, to be exact, including an 18-hole disc golf course. So the brewery, located about five minutes outside downtown Asheville, built two additional sand courts this year. The courts bustle daily with a blend of league play, tournaments, and pickup games that attract area athletes. That's a boon in tourism-driven Asheville. "We've been able to augment our local guest attendance with the leagues because you've got to make that commitment every week," Ashburn says. Wipe off the sweat, then wind down with a cold Gaelic Ale. "It's deepening the experience at the brewery."

Sports and beer have long occupied intersections of perspiration and spectatorship. Beer is a reward for exertion, or what fans grip and sip while rooting for home teams and underdogs. I've long argued that local breweries can cultivate similar levels of fandom. Customers wear brewery merch and congregate in taprooms, bantering about smash-hit IPAs and others that swung for the fences but fell short. "People attach themselves to sports the way they've attached themselves to beer," Ashburn says.

That bond is deepening as breweries seek to reach customers through sports and tabletop games, no fan base too tiny. Dropping millions to become a Major League Baseball team's official beer is a fiscal daydream. Breweries are instead sponsoring Little League baseball teams, logos plastered on outfield scoreboards, and up-and-coming sports such as pickleball, a hybrid of ping-pong, tennis, and badminton. Now that student athletes can make money off their names, images, and likenesses (NIL), nonalcoholic brewery Athletic is signing college basketball and football players to sponsorship deals. And breweries are finding that hosting tabletop roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons* can bring in big crowds on quiet evenings.

Tuesday-night RunBots meetups in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Notch Brewing's weekly Meters for Liters runs take place at its Massachusetts locations in Salem and Brighton. In 2012, Morgan Jappe co-founded the Brewery Running Series, whose first event was a five-kilometer run in Minneapolis that began at Fulton Beer. "It was a natural fit," says Jappe, currently the organization's CMO. "You've got breweries, you've got people that like to be active and do things. Let's put them together." The company and its independent chapters annually offer more than 300 races across 21 states, with events most weekends virtually year-round. The low-stakes fun runs are tailored to a taproom's size and might draw from 100 to 500 participants. Finishing a run just starts the fun. "Our joke is that we want to enjoy both the run and the beer."

Since 2019, Nocterra Brewing in Powell, Ohio, located about 20 miles north of Columbus, has incorporated adventure into its arithmetic mission: Beer + Outside = Nocterra. The brewery has a ski club at a nearby Ohio resort, invites customers on an annual whitewater rafting trip, and hosts biweekly mountain-bike rides. "We're just at party pace," says director of marketing James Knott, who leads the ride. After unclipping helmets, "we have some quote-unquote recovery beverages." Later this year, the brewery will open a second location in downtown Columbus by Scioto Audubon Metro Park, on the bike path near the kayak-friendly Scioto River. Oh, and the brewery's neighbor is a climbing gym. "Our downtown location will be this great community hub for outdoorsy people that just happen to have an urban life," says Knott.



Playing games doesn't mean stocking up on Spandex. To quicken customers' pulses and keep them entertained, breweries are embracing board, roleplaying, and arcade games that appeal to broad age ranges. Wallenpaupack Brewing opened in 2017 in Hawley, Pennsylvania, in the Pocono Mountains, a popular family vacation destination. "So many people would come into the brewery and say, 'This is awesome. What else can we do?'" says Becky Ryman, the president. Cornhole alone couldn't cut it. "We didn't have a lot of options, so we created one." Two summers ago, Wallenpaupack opened the Wake Zone, its second location, in nearby Tafton. The new taproom's six simulators offer interactive golf and sports experiences like Skee-Ball and bowling. "I can come up here and golf on one simulator and my kids could be in the simulator next to me throwing frisbees," says director of business development Brad Beneski, a dad to four boys. The brewery "can be a family-inclusive opportunity."

For Thomas and Dez Solar, the roleplaying game *Dungeons & Dragons* doubles as business and family time for the parents of two. The couple began playing D&D in 2020 while living in Orlando, Florida, and working at Castle Church Brewing. Playing at someone's house meant someone hosted what always became a "bottle sharing night," Thomas says. If everyone was drinking beer, why not meet at Castle Church? Local interest led them to launch Dungeons n' Drafts at Castle Church (followed by invites from several area breweries), bringing on Dungeon Masters to lead games and teach players. "Guests would walk by and be shocked that we were playing D&D at a brewery," Thomas says.

The family relocated to Philadelphia in 2022 and relaunched last August, rolling the dice at local bars and taprooms. The company now has around 60 Dungeon Masters in its Rolodex; host regular events at Philadelphia breweries Cartesian, Love City, and Neshaminy Creek; and recently expanded to New York City. "Part of my pitch is, 'Hey, what is your slowest night?' That's when I want to come in," Thomas says. "Our goal is to increase taproom sales by showing up on a Monday night and giving them 40 players."

Putting fantasy games front and center can foster the rare reality: a more inclusive brewery experience. This fall, Elliott Kaplan, Jessica Hardie, and Dana Ebert will turn a former bakery in Portland, Oregon, into TPK Brewing, with tabletop roleplaying games on deck. (TPK stands for "total party kill," or when a group of players are eliminated.) "We wanted a place where we could have craft beer and be able to play games that are important to us," says Kaplan, the CEO of the primarily queer-run brewery owned by people of color. TPK was initially planned for terrible, horrible, no good 2020. Stay-at-home orders strangely expanded the potential customer pool. "Many people got into playing D&D during the pandemic," says Hardie, the head brewer, who met Kaplan while working in the video game industry. "It was a way to connect with friends over Zoom."

TPK will facilitate IRL meetups for extrovert and introvert gamers, including a private room downstairs and secluded space upstairs. "Do you want more private space, or do you want to be the center of attention in the middle of the room pretending to be an orc?" Kaplan says. Customers can settle in to play TPK's custom ongoing post-cataclysmic fantasy campaign, *The Leyfarer's Chronicle*, written by the creative director Ebert. Each quarter, Hardie will brew two beers to complement Ebert's evolving storyline, the beers inspired by new characters or settings. "When we announced the brewery, someone called it narrative drinking," Kaplan says. "That summed it up so much better than we ever could."

To minimize interruptions, TPK will allow guests to order via QR codes. "For the gaming side, that has actually been a really cool technical innovation to come out of 2020," Kaplan says.



This photo and left: Simulators offer interactive golf and Skee-Ball at Wallenpaupack Brewing's Wake Zone in Tafton, Pennsylvania. Top right: Thomas and Dez Solar, owners of Dungeons n' Drafts, at one of their events at Victory Brewing in Philadelphia (top and middle left).



A Dungeons n' Drafts event at
Victory Brewing in Philadelphia.





Sports and beer sponsorships and advertisements go can-in-glove, a financial partnership built upon a bubbly truism: People like drinking beer while watching sports, in stadiums and on screens small and big. Consider the lager commercials that dominate football broadcasts, NFL analyst John Madden and boxer Joe Frazier flogging Miller Lite, and Narragansett sponsoring the Boston Red Sox for more than three decades.

Hitching marketing to marquee athletes and Super Bowl ad slots is prohibitively expensive for the average craft brewery. Forget the major leagues: Flagship Brewing sponsors the Snug Harbor Little League in Staten Island, a few miles from the brewery, its name plastered on stadium fences. “We grew up on the north shore of Staten Island and our families have been there forever,” says Jay Sykes, a co-founder. Sykes and co-founder Matt McGinley both have children that play baseball and softball at Snug Harbor, and the dads swap team naming rights. “Last year my son was team Flagship Brewery, and this year his daughter is team Flagship Brewery,” Sykes says.

I have sticky memories of Dairy Queen ice cream after my childhood soccer and baseball games. Times have evolved, and today’s pee-wee athletes can unwind at taprooms. “The kids love our waffle fries,” says Paul Reiter, the CEO of Great Notion Brewing in Portland, Oregon. The brewery sponsors the North Portland Little League, where the offspring of Great Notion owners play baseball. During games, “parents will be drinking Great Notion beer,” says Reiter, a parent of two. “And then we make sure that all of the end-of-the-season wrap-ups get held at Great Notion.”

A cherished local brewery can help a sports team deepen its regional roots. Major League Soccer team Chicago Fire relocated from the suburbs to the city’s Soldier Field in 2020. The following year, the team reached out to Revolution, Chicago’s largest independent brewery, about teaming up on a beer. “They were using this move as part of an overall strategy to reestablish their identity with the city,” says Doug Veliky, Revolution’s chief marketing officer. Celebrating all things Chicago is central to the brewery, from videos highlighting the city’s history to collaborations with local institutions like Garrett Popcorn. In early 2022, Revolution released year-round cans of the tropical Hazy Pitch pale ale, its moderate 5 percent ABV ideal for drinking into overtime. The labels featured the signature light blue and red colors of the city of Chicago and the soccer team, highlighting the beer’s geographic appeal. “We’re only able to sell it within 75 miles of Chicago,” Veliky says.

Thinking smaller for sponsorships helps breweries target niche sports like the World Axe Throwing League, which counts Pabst Blue Ribbon as its offi-

cial beer. New Belgium prioritizes pickleball. “I can’t tell you how many emails I get a week from someone asking us to sponsor a tournament or partner on a new pickleball idea. The sport is growing so quickly, and it’s amazing to see how many people know to come to us when it’s time to look for a beer partner,” says community market manager Joanna Laubscher. Even if it’s a 25-person tournament, the answer is yes. “We don’t need to just support the big names.”

College teams have huge fan bases, and savvy universities are working with breweries to create tailgate-friendly branded beers. In late 2021, Two Roads Brewing in Stratford, Connecticut, began making the TwoConn Easy Ale in conjunction with the University of Connecticut. This year, the University of Wyoming created Wyoming Golden Ale with Black Tooth Brewing. To support student-athletes at the University of Cincinnati, Rhinegeist Brewery teamed up with fundraising platform Cincy Reigns for the Cincy Light lager, set for a fall release.

Tied to college football season, nonalcoholic brewing powerhouse Athletic is kicking off its Game Changers campaign focusing on offensive linemen at the University of Southern California, Florida State University, and the University of Texas. The hope is that student-athletes can connect with consumers who aren’t receptive to traditional commercial advertising. After all, armchair athletes are a huge potential audience. “The number one occasion for consuming nonalcoholic beer is while watching sports,” says marketing director Rosalie Kennedy.

Done well, an alliance between breweries and sports of all sorts can taste great and fill the bottom line. But betting on sports isn’t always a sure winner. Great Notion partnered with the Portland Trail Blazers basketball team for the 2021–2022 season, selling a custom-label edition of its Ripe IPA at home games. However, a subpar record and the erratic nature of pandemic recovery made it a “bad season to sponsor,” Reiter says, and Great Notion ended the relationship.

The eternal story of sports is giving everything your best shot. We play and watch games to unleash the adrenaline-driven rush of victory, tense nerves unclenching in celebration. Defeat and dismay are the costs when emotional gambles backfire, or when our mental and physical skills are far from par. A beer can be both a cold consolation prize and a frosty trophy. Everyone’s a winner with a favorite IPA or lager in hand.

To help manage its growing recreational side, Highland hired additional staff and is considering expanding into shuffleboard, mini golf, or even indoor pickleball. Adding additional sports should help Highland attract more people, a more sustainable approach than chasing the latest beverage trend, be it smoothie hard seltzers or a sparkling CBD tonic. Says Ashburn, “Our property has allowed us to evolve our business model while staying very focused on beer.” ■

Bottles at the original Marqués de Riscal winery in Spain.



Courtesy Marqués de Riscal

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Slow Tempo

Making the case for Tempranillo
as a great age-worthy grape.

Story by SHANA CLARKE

Said before me are 30 glasses of wine, ranging in color from garnet to molasses-brown. The quantity is impressive enough, but for any wine lover, this is the opportunity of a lifetime—to taste wines dating from 2011 all the way back to 1862.

When one thinks of ageable wine, it's often Bordeaux or Burgundy that comes to mind. But this is at the winery of Marqués de Riscal, and the focus is Tempranillo. Marqués de Riscal is a historically important estate in the Rioja region. It was instrumental in introducing French winemaking techniques to the area, and was known as the first to bottle wine under an estate label. The first sip, that 1862, shocks my palate in the best way possible. There's no discernible fruit, but the wine comes across as meaty, like beef jerky. Not a flavor for drinking necessarily, but a recognizable, not-off-putting one. But it's the texture and body that stop me. There's acidity. Still. And structure. The wine is actually quite enjoyable.

As the tasting progresses, it becomes clear something very interesting is going on. Most of these wines are still alive and kicking. There's a freshness to many of them. When I reach the 1964, I jot "needs more time" in my notes. Could Tempranillo be one of the world's most overlooked age-worthy grapes?



Tempranillo traces its roots back to Spain, specifically to the region of Rioja. Over time, it spread throughout the country and is now arguably regarded as Spain's signature grape. With its expansion came new monikers in the country's various regions: Cencibel in Castilla-La Mancha; Tinta Fino and Tinta del Pais in Ribera del Duero; Tinta de Toro in Toro; and many more.

It's a variety that's not very thick-skinned, is medium to low in acidity, and a grape that doesn't necessarily produce a very deep color. This middle-of-the-roadness gives winemakers a lot of options. "Tempranillo is a very versatile grape," says Juan José Parra Forcén, winery technical assistant manager at Tempos Vega Sicilia. "It is capable of producing carbonic maceration wines"—wines produced using a fermentation process that yields a fresh, light-bodied style—"to wines that evolve very well over time."

Vega Sicilia's flagship wine, Unico, from Ribera del Duero, often commands prices on par with Burgundy and Bordeaux. When Pablo Álvarez bought what is now the Vega Sicilia estate in 1982, there were just 14 wineries in the Ribera del

Duero region; today there are more than 300, and many point to Vega Sicilia as the catalyst for this growth. But the Tempos Vega Sicilia company has also invested in other regions within Spain, creating wineries such as Macán in La Rioja (in partnership with Benjamin de Rothschild), and Pintia in Toro.

Like any grape, as Tempranillo spread, it mutated and formed new clones (a clone is the same variety but with small genetic differences). "Of course, the type of clone plays an important role," Parra says. "Tempranillo is a variety with medium to low acidity, so clones with higher acidity will play a more decisive role. The type of skin that the clone will produce must also be taken into account since the phenolic quality of the wine depends on the skin of the grape." The balance of acidity, structure, and alcohol—three elements which Parra calls the backbone of wine—determines a wine's ageability.

The density of the grape bunches on the vine is also key. Looser bunches, a characteristic that will vary between clones, allow for better aeration and reduce the risk of pests and diseases developing. "The healthier the grape, the better the wine's ability to age," Parra says.



Healthy grapes from specific clones: Check. But as ubiquitous as Tempranillo is throughout Spain, it's not considered suitable for all regions, or even subregions, for that matter. La Rioja Alta was founded in 1890 by five families, and is one of the wineries located near the Haro train station, an important depot that fueled the success of Spanish exports. In its early days, the estate, like many others, hired a French winemaker, Albert Vigier, to make their wines. Over the decades, ownership consolidated to one family, and the company, now called La Rioja Alta SA, owns four wineries in three regions throughout Spain. La Rioja Alta winery, the original, remains the flagship. The Gran Reserva 890, their most prestigious wine, is only produced during ideal vintage years. And like any wine labeled "Gran Reserva" in Rioja, it's aged at least five years, between time in barrel and bottle, before release.

Drilling down, the Rioja region is subdivided into three areas: Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa, and



Above and this photo: Wine from the historical collection at Marqués de Riscal. Left: The winery's Finca Las Tapias vineyard.



At La Rioja Alta, racking the wine to remove sediment (this photo), grapes nearing harvest (above), the barrel room (right).



Rioja Oriental (formerly Rioja Baja). Each has its own climatic conditions that produce different characteristics in grapes. Guillermo de Aranzabal, chairman and CEO of La Rioja Alta SA, goes so far as to call the grapes produced from each place, “different Tempranillos.”

“In the 25 days prior to harvest, we need very special weather conditions,” explains Aranzabal. Large diurnal shifts (the temperature difference between day and night) are essential to provide the acidity Aranzabal says is required for aging. Along with acidity, they seek freshness in the wines, and what Aranzabal describes as a balance among the aforementioned vibrancy, acidity, alcohol, and the polyphenolic ripeness in the grapes—all of which only develop in the proper climate. “We are aging specialists,” Aranzabal says. To him, that means they will only work with Tempranillo from Rioja Alavesa and Alta; in Rioja Oriental, the degree spread isn’t dramatic enough and is overall too warm.

Then there are soils, another key element in the impact of terroir. Parra says the most age-worthy plots of Tempranillo vines grow in clay soils. Summer is essentially drought season, and “these clays act as sponges; they accumulate the water that falls during the rainy season and slowly release it during the summer,” he says, which contributes to grapes’ successful development.



Marqués de Riscal, where my memorable Tempranillo tasting is taking place, could be considered the estate that pioneered quality Tempranillo—and arguably Rioja wines in general. In the mid-1800s, France led the world when it came to winemaking, and rankings like the 1855 Classification of Bordeaux wines served as a marketing tool for the fine wines coming out of the country. But this was also the time of phylloxera, which decimated vineyards, so supply couldn’t quite meet demand. Producers looked elsewhere for grapes and brought in fruit from Rioja, which was eventually passed off as Claret—proof that wine fraud has been happening as long as winemaking. Guillermo Hurtado de Amézaga, founder of Marqués de Riscal, who was living in Bordeaux at the time, became attuned to the Bordeaux vinification practices and quite possibly the use of bulk wine from his homeland of Rioja in some of these chateaux.

In response to France’s viticultural prowess, a style movement called El Médoc Alavés (the Álava Medoc), gained traction in Spain; its goal was to increase exports as well as improve the quality of Rioja wines. Hurtado de Amézaga was an early

member, having even built a cellar modeled after those in Bordeaux upon his return from France, while his son, Camilo, planted 9,000 vines in Álava to further experiment with the French region’s way of winemaking. Hurtado de Amézaga hired Jean Pineau from Bordeaux, who instigated experiments in the region using Bordeaux cellar practices. The first vintage, 1862, immediately showed potential, but it was only produced in tiny, experimental batches. The fact that Marqués de Riscal retains a few bottles in its cellar is a truly historical feat.

Every step, big and small—from how the grapes come into the winery to maceration, fermentation, and maturation—will affect a wine’s life span.

Pineau dictated that wines needed to age for three years, but this proved to be too much of a financial burden for most producers and, eventually, the winemaking initiative fell apart. But Hurtado de Amézaga retained Pineau as Marqués de Riscal’s own winemaker until Pineau’s death in 1889.

Long aging was only one of Pineau’s mandates. He worked on cellar hygiene with winemakers, as well as fermentation, to achieve a more fashionable dry style of wine. (Indeed, in some of the earlier vintages at the tasting, many of us detect a little bit of residual sugar, possibly indicating the nascent stages of this evolution). However, one of Pineau’s most important contributions was the introduction of American oak casks into the aging process, and this type of wood remains a standard in Rioja today.

“The aging capacity of Tempranillo comes from the chemical composition of the grape ... the raw material is the main basis,” confirms Francisco Hurtado de Amézaga, the fifth generation of the family and current technical director of Marqués de Riscal. “However, these qualities must be worked correctly in the wine cellar during vinification to develop these intrinsic properties.” He notes that every step, big and small—from how the grapes come into the winery to maceration, fermentation, and maturation—will affect a wine’s life span.

At Vega Sicilia, Parra agrees. “I think it cannot be one without the other,” he says. “You have to start from the premise that to make a great wine, you need a great grape. What remained was to interpret that potential and give it another dimension and make a unique style of wine.” The Unico flagship is unique in that the wine is aged for at least 10 years before release. When it comes to longevity, it’s already gotten a leg up. “With the long aging, this was achieved respecting what nature gave us to turn it into something special and lasting,” says Parra.



Plot twist: Likely all of the pre-phyloxera wines presented in the tasting (the vineyard pest finally reached Spain in 1898) contain small portions of other grapes besides Tempranillo—definitely Graciano, which had a presence in the region, and most likely even some white varieties. Back then, most vineyards were field blends, often dominated by one variety, such as Tempranillo. But it wasn’t unusual to find white and red varieties co-existing, making their way into the same cuvée. Post-phyloxera, and as research into viticulture evolved, monovarietal vineyards became the norm pretty much all over the world. This begs the question: How much do other varieties contribute to the lifespan of a Tempranillo wine?

“People are missing out on aged Tempranillo. It’s a delicious grape.”

—ALISHA BLACKWELL-CALVERT

“The percentage of the Graciano grape in pre-phyloxera wines brought with it favorable results which could be seen in the tasting, since the extra acidity so typical of the variety improved the conservation properties, at the same time giving structure, thanks to its tannin content,” confirms Marqués de Riscal’s Hurtado de Amézaga. And given the Bordeaux connection, it’s not surprising that Cabernet appeared in blends as far back as the 1870s.

La Rioja Alta adds anywhere from five to 15 percent of Graciano to its Gran Reserva wines, saying it improves the freshness, acidity, and color of Tempranillo as the wine ages in bottle.

“Not deepens the color,” Aranzabal clarifies. “Improves it.” And Vega Sicilia’s iconic Unico, as any fine-wine lover knows, contains a small amount of Cabernet Sauvignon. “Cabernet is like salt and pepper,” says Parra. “You have to choose the minimum and necessary quantity to give the wine another dimension, but without it becoming obvious. It must be a subtle contribution.”

Varietal Tempranillo has fallen in and out of popularity over the decades; wines from the early part of the 20th century were most likely all Tempranillo because Graciano did not immediately take to American rootstock when vineyards were replanted. And that “youthful” 1964? One hundred percent Tempranillo. So whether small additions of other varieties affect aging, or simply the style, remains a bit elusive.

Today, aged Tempranillo still struggles to earn the same cachet as other wines in the U.S. “There’s a prestige of [ordering] a known label,” says Alisha Blackwell-Calvert, advanced sommelier at Cinder House at the Four Seasons St. Louis. Her clientele is a mix of locals and hotel guests, and she sees how the wines from France and California resonate the most with all kinds of wine drinkers. But Tempranillo, because it doesn’t have the same recognition as Cabernet or Pinot Noir, is usually overlooked—especially when it comes to wines with triple-digit prices.

“People are missing out on aged Tempranillo,” says Blackwell-Calvert. “It’s a delicious grape. It reminds me a lot of the ageability of Nebbiolo because of its tannin structure and acidity, which makes it perfect for food.”

There are many other factors that could be considered when examining Tempranillo’s potential for longevity: vine age, position in a vineyard, the use of sulfur (or not). But over the course of the tasting, a funny thing happens. As much as I swirl, sip, and analyze, something remains elusive in the wines that makes it hard to pinpoint why certain vintages stand out from others. After a bit of time, I realize what I’m tasting: There’s a sprightliness to the wines from the early 1900s. Perhaps it’s a sign of rebirth, post-phyloxera. Wines from the 1910s were most likely made by women, as men were away fighting in the war; in their new vocation the women may have brought different ideas and skills to the cellar.

And then we come to 1945. The buzz in the room is palpable. This is a truly great wine, not just in the context of this tasting, but as a wine—period. Given the timing, the end of World War II, one can’t help thinking about the joy and relief everyone must have been feeling during harvest. This element—history—is one we can’t put any technical term to, but can live on in an age-worthy wine like Tempranillo. ■



All photos: Tempos Vega Sicilia.





The NA Cocktail Playbook

Best practices for spirit-free mixology.

The cocktail boom of the past two decades has created a surprising side effect: a true renaissance in the art of *not* drinking alcohol. Long derided as “mocktails,” alcohol-free cocktails (aka NA, zero-proof, or spirit-free cocktails) are increasingly stepping into their own, driven by changing consumer behaviors, a surge in alcohol-free alternatives, and good old creativity.

But what distinguishes a great NA cocktail from a run-of-the-mill soft drink? “There are plenty of nonalcoholic drinks—but why is tea or juice or soda alone not a nonalcoholic cocktail?” asks Derek Brown, a longtime bartender and bar owner in Washington, D.C., and author of *Mindful Mixology: A Comprehensive Guide to No- and Low-Alcohol Cocktails*. “It’s because a cocktail is something specific, and there are sensory characteristics we assign to it that are really important.”

With this in mind, we asked Brown and other bartenders who work in the spirit-free space for suggestions on how to best approach NA cocktails, including recipes that offer all the cocktail character, without the booze.

Words by PAUL CLARKE

Photos by JOHN VALLS



TUNE IN to *Radio Imbibe* starting on September 5 for an extended conversation with Derek Brown about making great NA cocktails: imbibemagazine.com/podcast

Pinch Hitter

"This is, truthfully, some version of lemonade," says Derek Brown. "But I added a few components to make it more complex and compelling."

Together, these components add balance and a spicy spark, as well as depth, complexity, and body, taking a basic lemonade into cocktail territory. Aquafaba is the liquid accompanying canned or cooked chickpeas, and functions as a foaming ingredient.

2 oz. fresh lemon juice
1 oz. ginger syrup
1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
½ oz. aquafaba (or substitute fresh egg white)
6 drops saline tincture (4 parts water to 1 part sea salt)

Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: coupe
Garnish: lemon wheel

Shake all of the ingredients with ice until chilled and foamy, then strain into a chilled glass and garnish.

Ginger Syrup: Heat 1 cup of white sugar and 1 cup of water in a saucepan until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and add 2 Tbsp. of grated ginger (with skin). Allow to cool. Add a squeeze of lemon juice and strain out the ginger. If you prefer a spicier ginger syrup, add a few dashes of freshly squeezed ginger juice before straining.

Derek Brown
Washington, D.C.

Flavortown

Great alcohol-free cocktails rely on some of the same components found in spirited cocktails, such as fresh juices and syrups. But without the flavor boost from booze, these ingredients step more into center stage, so using them creatively requires a little attention to detail.



O Fruit Forward

Citrus is a staple at pretty much every craft cocktail bar, and NA cocktails give this supporting actor the opportunity to step into the limelight. And don't stop at lemons and limes—apple juice can lend texture and body as well as acidity, and some grape juices can add a vinous quality. "The usual contingent is still incredibly useful," says Derek Brown. "There's the acidity [juice] adds to a cocktail, which makes it sharper and more zippy—that's really key."



X Sweet Thing

The spirit-free Orgeat Lemonade is among the cocktails in Jerry Thomas' foundational 1862 bar guide, and flavored syrups and fruit cordials have lost none of their influence over the years. As with every ingredient, quality counts. "Classic syrups add depth and complexity, especially if you're making them from scratch," Brown says. "It may require a little more legwork on these ingredients, but you have to use the best of the best in order for it to be a really great nonalcoholic cocktail."

X Secret Ingredient

Bartenders may add a few drops of saltwater solution to cocktails to create a hard-to-pinpoint *something* in the drink. For NA cocktails, Brown says, salt is no longer an option, but a necessity. "Salt adds a textural component, which is really awesome because we don't think of that in small doses," he says. "Salt also suppresses bitterness, which suppresses sweetness—so it creates this cascade effect where you can add more of certain ingredients, and get more flavor, so the drink seems more *real*."





Grapefruit Almond Tonic

An easy fruit-and-spice cordial meets the rich nuttiness of orgeat in this smooth, sippable no-proof cocktail.

1½ oz. grapefruit-cinnamon cordial
½ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. orgeat (such as Giffard)
Chilled club soda (such as Fever-Tree)

Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: Collins
Garnish: cinnamon stick

Shake the first three ingredients with ice, then strain into an ice-filled glass. Top with chilled soda water, and garnish.

Grapefruit-Cinnamon Cordial: In a saucepan over medium heat, combine 1 quart of grapefruit juice with 2 cups of simple syrup (1:1). Add the zest from 2 grapefruits and 3 cinnamon sticks, and simmer for 20 minutes. Let the mixture cool, then refrigerate in a sealed container for 1-2 days. Strain the mixture and bottle for use; keeps refrigerated for up to 2 months.

Ben Chesna
Banks Fish House, Boston



That's the Spirit

Bourbon and gin form the backbone of many conventional cocktails, and today's NA space increasingly has alcohol-free stand-ins that can fill the base-ingredient vacuum with booze out of the picture. Producers are increasingly venturing into new directions, too, creating NA products full of cocktail-ready aromas and flavors, and with a character all their own.

Secret Letters of the Alphabet

An alcohol-free spirit brings an abundance of herbal complexity to this raspberry-accented NA cocktail.

1½ oz. Pathfinder Hemp Amaro
1 oz. fresh grapefruit juice
¾ oz. raspberry shrub
¼ oz. fresh lime juice

Tools: shaker
Glass: double rocks
Garnish: fresh mint

Shake all of the ingredients with about ⅓ cup of crushed ice, then pour (without straining) into a glass. Fill to the top with crushed ice, and garnish.

Raspberry Shrub: In a blender, combine 6 oz. of fresh or frozen raspberries, 3 oz. of demerara sugar, 1 oz. of red wine vinegar, and 1 oz. of pomegranate molasses. Pulse until smooth and incorporated, then strain and bottle for use. Keeps refrigerated for up to 1 week.

Kayleigh D. Blome
Created for Stampede Cocktail Club
Seattle





Spirit Analogs

"These give you a place to start when it comes to thinking about flavors," says Kayleigh D. Blome, a Seattle bartender and consultant who specializes in NA drinks. Blome says brands like Spiritless (maker of products like Kentucky 74, an alcohol-free bourbon) and Lyre's (which makes a range of NA spirits) are great places to start exploring the category. "These can break down a spirit into its standard components of flavor, and add them all together to get something that's similar."

Bitter & Bold

Makers of NA spirits are taking cues from the producers of bitter aperitivos and amari, and applying similar approaches without the use of alcohol. "Bitterness can provide structural balance, and gives options that are really delightful," Brown says, noting Giffard Aperitif Syrup as a good example. Blome, who lists Pathfinder Hemp Amaro as a favorite, agrees. "It can add so much complexity to a cocktail that otherwise might taste two-dimensional."

Be Original

Seedlip was an early example of an NA spirit capable of stepping front and center in a cocktail, with an aromatic and flavor identity all its own. Today, this part of the NA category is in full bloom. In addition to brands like Memento, from Greece, Blome says Wilderton, from Oregon, is a leading contender. "These can have very particular signatures and flavors, and they're not difficult to utilize in a lot of drinks that are completely different from one another."

Familiar Friends

Most of us keep powerful flavor bombs in our kitchens already, in the forms of coffee and tea, as well as vinegar (and related products like shrubs). By applying a few basic techniques to these old favorites, they can serve as a flavorful base or an influential modifier in great NA cocktails.




Bean Counter

"Like alcohol, coffee also has psychoactive effects, and is wildly popular," Brown says. "If you're looking for something to make you more sociable, coffee's gonna do it." On top of the caffeine nudge, which is also found in some conventional cocktails (we're looking at you, Espresso Martini), coffee offers a wide range of flavors to work with. "You can get amazing coffees that have berry notes, or rich chocolate notes, and you can play with that," Brown says. "That's an amazing foundation."



Easy Does It

"Vinegar's a great way to add flavor," says Blome. "There's a vinegar out there from every type of wine, and sherry vinegar is my personal favorite—that's my NA bartender's ketchup." Blome says just a barspoon of vinegar should be good for a cocktail's balance, and Brown agrees. "Go easy on vinegar, but don't shy away from it," he says. "It's a byproduct of alcohol, and as such it carries a lot of complex flavors."



The Leaf Life

Tea rivals wine and spirits in its range of stylistic diversity. "These styles can affect your drink in the same way different spirits can," Brown says. Tea can convey the bright aromatics of bergamot in Earl Grey, or earthiness in pu-erh, or smoke in Lapsang Souchong. "These can all add flavor and intensity and texture to your drink." To boost these qualities, Brown recommends double-steeping—either using twice as much tea, or steep it twice as long.

Hundred Acre Wood

The deep smokiness of Lapsang Souchong tea forms a robust foundation for this tropically inflected spirit-free cocktail.

3 oz. cold-brewed Lapsang Souchong tea
1 oz. pineapple juice
½ oz. honey syrup (3:1)
½ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. coconut cream

Tools: shaker

Glass: double rocks

Garnish: pineapple leaf,
powdered Lapsang Souchong

Shake all of the ingredients with ice, strain into a glass over a large ice cube, then garnish.

Chris Amirault
The Maybourne Bar
Beverly Hills





← Coconut Matcha Sour

This spirit-free cocktail taps the textural qualities contributed by a fresh egg white (bolstered by coconut water's dissolved solids) and matcha's earthy aromatics to make an appealing, easy-drinking mix.

2 oz. coconut water
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
¾ oz. simple syrup (1:1)
1 fresh egg white
(pasteurized if you like)

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer,
immersion blender (optional)
Glass: sour glass or coupe
Garnish: matcha powder

Combine all of the ingredients in a shaker and blend with an immersion blender until the mixture is very foamy. (Alternatively, shake all of the ingredients without ice until the mixture foams.) Add ice and shake again until chilled, then strain into a chilled glass. Using a fine-mesh strainer, lightly dust the drink's surface with matcha.

John Douglass
Pretty Decent, Louisville

Cocktail Essentials

Cocktails (with alcohol or without) are more than just collections of aromas and flavors. Texture and body, an intensity of flavor, and a “bite” or stopping factor can all distinguish cocktails from simple soft drinks. Here are several ways to help push a spirit-free mix into cocktail territory.

X Body Builders

“Texture comes from the solids that are suspended in a liquid, and there are lots of ways to get a textural component into a cocktail,” Brown explains. Sugar and salt, even in small quantities, can help give a cocktail weight on the palate and a pleasant viscosity. And don’t forget familiar ingredients like egg whites and aquafaba, which bartenders use to lend a body-building foaminess to drinks.

O Water Break

Dilution is essential for taming boozy drinks, but NA cocktails require a lighter touch. “Stirring [an alcohol-free cocktail] is sometimes better than shaking, because you have more control,” Brown says. And while spirited cocktails like Negronis may be stirred with ice and then poured over fresh ice for serving, for NA cocktails, one encounter with the cubes is enough—just build the drink in a serving glass, and give it a quick stir with ice.

O Stop Signs

Soft drinks are gulpable, while cocktails are made to be sipped. Alcohol’s burn provides a slow-down factor, but there are NA ways to accomplish the same result. Sharp flavors like vinegar or the capsaicin in chilis or hot sauce (used judiciously) function as palate speed bumps, as does ginger’s spice. “Ginger is probably my favorite,” Brown says. “When I make an NA Old Fashioned, I’ll always use ginger syrup because it provides a gentle burn, flavor, and texture all at the same time.”

Willamette Valley, Oregon

A series of massive floods tore down the Columbia River 12,000 years ago, reshaping the topography, depositing sediments and, ultimately, laying the foundation for the Willamette Valley's first grape vines. And although those didn't take root till the early 1960s, the region's wines—specifically its Pinot Noirs—have since earned international acclaim and recognition.

Situated between the Oregon Coast Range and the Cascade Range at 45 degrees latitude, the Willamette Valley experiences a wealth of daytime warmth and cooling nighttime temperatures. This creates a diurnal shift ideal for Pinot Noir and other varieties commonly grown in Burgundy—a region with similar growing conditions to the valley. “Pinot Noir is our calling card because of the climate,” says Jessica Mozeico, owner of Et Fille Wines, and whose co-founding father grew Pinot during the 1980s with cuttings descended from the first-ever Willamette Valley vines planted by UC Davis alum David Lett in 1965. “It's perfect for making wines that have a fruit-forward intensity, and also some really nice acidity and tannin development, so they're very complex wines that have an intense sense of place.”

The Willamette Valley's three primary soil types, combined with its rainy winters and long, dry summers, contribute to the region's distinct terroir. Marine sedimentary, volcanic basalt, and loess (wind-blown silt) can diversify the outcomes of a single Pinot Noir varietal, further amplifying the grape's complex capabilities. “A volcanic-soil Pinot Noir from the Dundee Hills will likely have bright red-fruit characteristics and a high degree of minerality and earthiness, whereas a Pinot from the Yamhill-Carlton district, on marine sedimentary, will be a more intense black fruit-driven wine,” Mozeico explains.

As the Willamette Valley's Pinot increasingly enjoys the spotlight, today's collaborative community solidifies its status as an enduring winemaking region. “There's a quest for always elevating the quality level that is part of our culture,” says Mozeico. “We have a collaborative culture that's based on the premise that a rising tide lifts all boats.”

Story by Katrina Yentch

Illustrations by Matty Newton

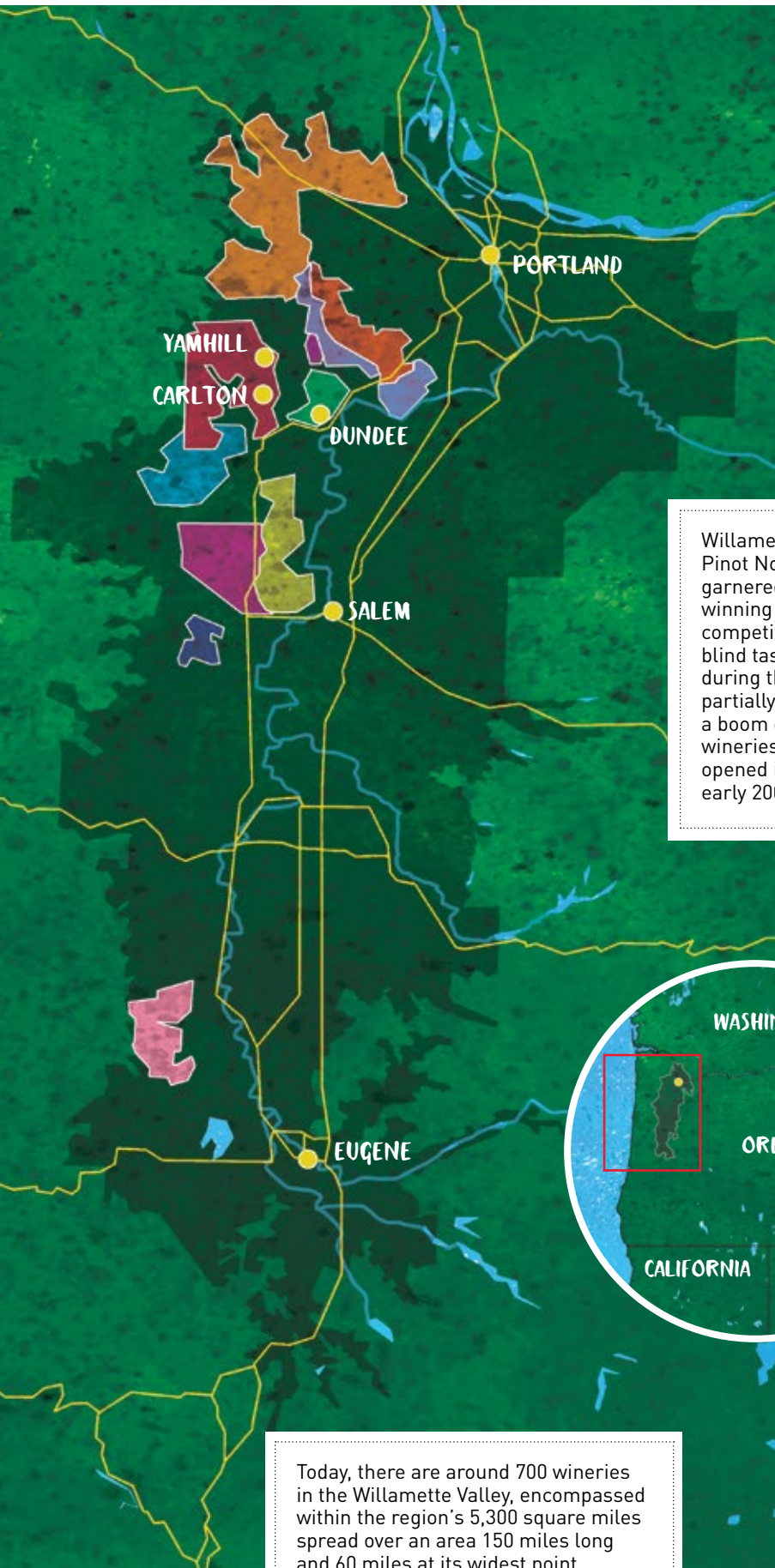
Pinot Noir may be the Willamette Valley's signature wine, but there's growing interest in producing other wines like Chardonnay, Riesling, and sparkling varieties.



The Willamette Valley AVA was established in 1983; since then, 11 sub-AVAs have been identified to further distinguish the region's terroir.

Sub AVAs

- CHEHALEM MOUNTAINS
- DUNDEE HILLS
- EOLA-AMITY HILLS
- LAURELWOOD DISTRICT
- LOWER LONG TOM
- MCMINNVILLE
- MOUNT PISGAH/POLK COUNTY
- RIBBON RIDGE
- TUALATIN HILLS
- VAN DUZER CORRIDOR
- YAMHILL-CARLTON



5 to Try

Eola-Amity Pinot Noir, Matzinger Davies

Matzinger Davies sources grapes from the Valley's Eola-Amity Hills and Chehalem Mountains AVAs for small-lot Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Their Pinot Noir combines grapes from vineyards situated at 700 feet elevation with stony, volcanic soils. "They have a sense of place, and a sense of purity," says Mozeico. "They're just really complex and well-balanced Pinot Noirs." \$50, matzingerdavies.com

Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir, Et Fille

Et Fille ferments both single-vineyard and Pinot Noir blends. The Kalita Vineyard Pinot has grown with complexity each year since they started sourcing from these Willamette Valley growers in 2004. With intense notes of cola and black fruit, the wine is "representative of the marine sedimentary soils in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA," Mozeico says. \$65, etfillewines.com

Winderlea Sparkling Brut

Winderlea produces a sparkling brut using grape varieties that may change from year to year, and typically aged for seven months in neutral French oak with two years of tirage. The result is a balanced blend of brioche on the nose and citrus on the palate, a wine that Mozeico says has "such a lively and rich intensity." \$70, winderlea.com

Bethel Heights Chardonnay

Whole cluster-pressed and fermented for 35-40 days, Bethel Height's 2021 Estate edition Chardonnay is aged on the lees for 12 months in French oak, then transferred to stainless steel for another four months. Full of citrusy freshness, the wine is also light-bodied and silky in mouthfeel; Mozeico describes it as having a "richness and beautiful texture." \$32, bethelheights.com

Division Gamay Noir "Lutte"

"Division Winemaking Company has been at the forefront of advocating for how beautifully Gamay can be grown in the Willamette Valley," says Mozeico. Their take on the Pinot cousin is fermented via carbonic maceration and aged in a combination of concrete, stainless steel, and neutral barrels for eight months before bottling. The vineyard sourcing varies between vintages, but consistently bursts with bright red fruits and an earthy, crunchy mouthfeel. \$30, divisionwineco.com

Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs garnered several winning titles in competitions and blind tastings during the 1980s, partially inspiring a boom of new wineries that opened in the early 2000s.

Today, there are around 700 wineries in the Willamette Valley, encompassed within the region's 5,300 square miles spread over an area 150 miles long and 60 miles at its widest point.

Winter Park, Florida

Since the early '90s, Orlando's gravitational center had been the hub and bustle of Florida's famed theme parks and downtown districts, fueled by the energetic pace of world-renowned hotel and restaurant franchises. But just northeast of downtown, a craft scene has been quietly evolving in the historically tony neighborhood of Winter Park, where a recent influx of independent businesses is spawning a new sense of energy. "When I moved to Orlando [in '95] Winter Park was the food and wine epicenter for the locally owned and operated wine shops and restaurants," says Gene Zimmerman, co-owner (with his wife, Diana) of The Courtesy, one of Orlando's first dedicated craft cocktail bars. Their recent move from downtown to a larger space in Winter Park has been embraced by the community. "You see it on our guests' faces," says Diana Zimmerman. "They're just so happy to be there." **By Katrina Yentch**



The Ravenous Pig

Modus Operandi: Credit for Orlando's first true cocktail program could be given to The Ravenous Pig, a gastropub that's been a cornerstone of Winter Park since 2007. Gene explains how the establishment was an inspiration for opening The Courtesy, noting that "Ravenous Pig was the first business in Winter Park, and really all of Orlando, that was crafting a thoughtful cocktail program and incorporating it on their menu, using fresh and homemade local ingredients, as well as implementing interesting spirits." A small-batch brewery was added later on, brewing an expansive selection of beers, including a saison that The Courtesy keeps on tap year-round.

Coordinates: 565 W. Fairbanks Ave. // 407-628-2333 // theravenouspig.com

The Courtesy

Modus Operandi: Longtime Floridians, the Zimmermans worked in wine and spirits distribution before opening what they call the first true "big kids bar" in Orlando in 2012. The Courtesy changed Orlando's downtown drinking scene from vodka shots and Red Bull to a mature epicenter for proper cocktails. "The first day, we were just so overwhelmed when we opened because there was a line of people anxious to get in," Gene says. More than a decade later, classic cocktails are the new norm at their Winter Park bar, accompanied by an expansive list of house originals like the Bella Donna—a cocktail combining bell pepper-infused Aperol with pineapple syrup and basil.

Coordinates: 1288 N. Orange Ave. // 407-704-9288 // thecourtesybar.com

Forward/Slash

Modus Operandi: A few blocks from The Courtesy is Forward/Slash, a boutique distillery and blending house opened this past spring. Founders Michael Buffa and Tim Bradstreet have long championed Orlando's whiskey scene, with Buffa even founding the Orlando Whiskey Society in 2015. "The guys doing it have a long experience in the wine and spirits industry," says Diana. In addition to hosting whiskey tastings, the industrial tasting room offers cocktails that feature house-made bitters mixed with their own branded gin and vodka, made for Forward/Slash at local distilleries. The tasting room's full bar allows for thoughtful experimentation, showcased in cocktails like the Florida Tea Ceremony—a mix of Florida-grown yaupon holly tea with longan fruit and their signature Treespoon Gin.

Coordinates: 650 S. Capen Ave. // drinkforwardslash.com

Soseki

Modus Operandi: Despite Orlando's proximity to the ocean, the city has only recently been experiencing an explosion of high-caliber nigiri and sashimi over the past year. "There are so many great, small-capacity, Asian-inspired restaurants that are phenomenal, whether it's omakase style or à la carte," says Diana. The pair is especially smitten by Soseki, an intimate omakase whose wine pairings are selected by Michelin-awarded beverage director Benjamin Coumts. "It's really cool to see such a curated experience with the omakase and then the wine that's not an afterthought," says Gene. At Soseki, a nigiri cut of hamachi might be accompanied by a racy, high-acid white, while a Pinot Noir could go fittingly with tuna. "They are totally hand-in-hand there."

Coordinates: 955 W. Fairbanks Ave. // sosekifl.com



Clockwise from top left: Forward/Slash; Ravenous Pig beverage director Joshua Schaeffer; the Bella Donna at The Courtesy; Soseki.



Clockwise from top left: Erin Miller, Blake Jones Photography, Erin Miller, Creative Brew Agency

Sunroom

Modus Operandi: While their bar-hopping days outside The Courtesy are limited, the Zimmermans note that when they go out for drinks, “Sunroom would probably be our first or last stop.” In Winter Park’s neighboring Mills 50 District, Sunroom describes itself as the “younger, spunkier sibling” to its sister bar The Guesthouse, offering a tighter selection of tropical drinks with an emphasis on freshness. Go for a bright, refreshing option like the Golden Gun (mezcal, turmeric, orange citrate) or, for a spicy kick, El Satanico (tequila, chile liqueur, Suze, and ginger). Or you can simply feel comfortable receiving a bespoke cocktail experience. “This is one of the few places I can comfortably say ‘give me something mezcal-forward, citrusy, bright and thirst-quenching’ and they always deliver,” says Gene.

Coordinates: 1315 N. Mills Ave.
// sunroomcocktails.com

“When I moved to Orlando [in ’95] Winter Park was the food and wine epicenter for the locally owned and operated wine shops and restaurants.”

—GENE ZIMMERMAN

BELLA DONNA

This standby from The Courtesy combines bright, tropical notes with a hint of herbaceousness.

1½ oz. blanco tequila
¾ oz. bell pepper-infused Aperol
½ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. pineapple syrup (1:1 fresh pineapple juice to sugar)
4 basil leaves
1 tsp. Ancho Reyes Verde Chile Poblano Liqueur

Tools: shaker, strainer, fine strainer
Glass: Collins
Garnish: orchid

Rinse the glass with Ancho Reyes Verde, discarding the excess. Shake all of the remaining ingredients with ice, then double strain into a glass filled with fresh ice, and garnish.

Bell Pepper-Infused Aperol: Combine 340 grams of freshly cut orange bell pepper with 1 liter of Aperol. Infuse for 6 hours, then strain and bottle. Use within 1 month.

Emily Lanthorne, The Courtesy
Winter Park, Florida

cravings A cheesy, seasonal soup inspired by the flavors of Oktoberfest.



Soup's On

This Oktoberfest-inspired soup has been a year-round favorite at Zingerman's, a fixture in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for more than a decade. Their latest release, *Zingerman's Bakehouse: Celebrate Every Day*, is a follow up to the 2017 cookbook, and categorizes recipes by seasons and celebrations. The 5 O'clock Cheddar Ale Soup is a treat anytime for "its distinctive flavor, [which] comes from sharp cheddar cheese, sherry vinegar, Marash pepper, and a well-chosen amber ale," note the authors. With just over one bottle of ale used in the recipe, there'll still be plenty on hand to sip while the soup simmers.

By **Katrina Yentch**

5 o'clock Cheddar Ale Soup

VEGETABLE STOCK

2 large carrots
1 medium yellow onion
2 large celery stalks
2 or 3 fresh parsley sprigs
1 or 2 fresh thyme sprigs
1 bay leaf
2 whole black peppercorns
7 cups (1.7 L) water

SOUP

½ cup unsalted butter
1¼ cup diced celery
1 cup diced yellow onion
1 cup diced carrot
3 garlic cloves, minced
Fine sea salt
14 oz. amber ale
1 cup all-purpose flour
4¾ cups whole milk
8 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese
3 tsp. Marash pepper flakes
1 tsp. ground white pepper
3 tsp. sherry vinegar

To make the vegetable stock: Cut the carrots, onion, and celery into large pieces. In a medium stockpot, add the vegetables, parsley, thyme, bay leaf, peppercorns, and water. Bring the stock to a boil over medium-high heat, then lower the heat to medium-low and simmer gently, partially covered, for 1 hour.

Strain the simmered stock through a fine-mesh sieve, discard the solids, and reserve 4 cups (910 g) for the soup. Any extra stock can be refrigerated or frozen for later use; if you come up a little short, add water to make up the difference.

To make the soup: In a large stockpot over medium heat, melt the butter, then add the celery, onion, carrot, garlic, and a generous sprinkle of salt and sauté until the vegetables are tender and the onions are translucent, 10 to 15 minutes. Take care not to brown them. Add the ale, lower the heat to medium-low, and simmer for 5 minutes.

In a medium stockpot, bring the vegetable stock to a simmer. If it cooks down below 4 cups (910 g), add more water.

Add the flour to the vegetable mixture, stir, and cook over medium heat until the mixture thickens and starts to stick to the pot. Gradually pour in the milk, stirring as you do, and bring the soup to a simmer. Add the hot vegetable stock to the soup.

Remove the soup pot from the heat and purée with an immersion blender. Return the pot to low to medium heat and slowly add the cheddar, stirring constantly to avoid scorching. Turn off the heat and stir in the Marash pepper, white pepper, and vinegar.

Season with additional salt if needed and serve. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

From Zingerman's Bakehouse: Celebrate Every Day by Amy Emberling, Lindsay-Jean Hard, Lee Vedder, and Corynn Coscia © 2023. Published by Chronicle Books. Photographs © EE Berger.

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Taking Root

An apple tree blossomed in the backyard of my childhood home in North Carolina, but its fruit was too bitter to eat. In grade school, we learned about state crops, but that meant tobacco—not edible fruits. Later, I was surprised to realize that my native state ranks as one of the nation's top apple producers. I hadn't recognized the possibility that my homeland held, in the orchards or beyond. That changed recently, when I returned to the Blue Ridge Mountains after two decades away, and found myself building a new life in Appalachian apple country.

I was 25 when I blew out of North Carolina with gale force, packing my belongings into just a few suitcases. Settling in California, I found that grapes caught my fancy. I threw myself into the magic and mayhem of fermentation—and of the West Coast itself. My transition into the wine business was a leap, not only geographically but culturally.

I was born in Mount Airy, the inspiration for Mayberry on the antiquated, aw-shucks *Andy Griffith Show*. If this sounds like a joke, it's not—it's my motherland. For centuries, my Quaker forebears cultivated the surrounding land. They ushered in the Prohibition era, then mixed and mingled with bootleggers, possibly making a little liquor themselves. Later, a wine and agritourism region emerged, and now the local community college offers a respectable viticulture program. My folks moved down the mountain when I was young, but I've returned to Appalachia to live again and again—drawn as if by ancestral force.

In my working-class household, we drank iced tea and Pepsi by the liter. Dad stocked our icebox with Keystone Light. (Yes, "icebox"—we didn't own a proper refrigerator till I was 12.) Special occasions might warrant a jug of Carlo Rossi. Dad also kept a jar of white lightning in the cabinet. When he'd pull it out, he'd tell a tale or two of the great moonshiners. This is perhaps how I began to think about beverage as craft.

Last year, when I packed up my life in California and moved back to these hills, I was not thinking of moonshine or apples. I was thinking of the wildfires and housing insecurity that had vexed me out West. I was seeking a safe haven. I landed in a place dubbed "Appalachian Eden" by *The Chicago Tribune*. Henderson County, south of Asheville and a couple hours from Mount Airy, grows 80 percent of the state's apples and is home to 20 orchards, many of which date back a century.

I moved into an old farmhouse in late summer, as gnarly trees grew heavy with apples, drawing hungry bears and tourists. In California, harvest season was central to my life; here, I knew

working in the orchards would suit me, so I reached out to a local cidery. Atop a ridgeline with views of distant peaks, I sampled and sorted Mutsu, Ginger Gold, and Winesap. My heart swelled in a way it hadn't since the early days of my wine career. To stay hydrated beneath the Southern sun, I bit into crisp, fleshy fruit.

When I dug into the history of local orchards, I discovered what my farming ancestors had surely known all along: Southern Appalachia, with its small subsistence farms, has played a key role in maintaining crop diversity, particularly where apples are concerned. Importantly, the Cherokee people of this region developed several breeds of apples, including Nickajack, Alarakee, and others. As the story goes, the Junaluska breed was named for a chief who refused to turn his land over to white settlers because his favorite apple tree was planted there.

Over time, North Carolina's apple industry has boomed, but also skipped a few beats. During Prohibition, federal agents suspected apples would be processed for alcoholic cider and chopped down entire orchards. Later, in the 1990s, when commercial juice companies canceled contracts with Hendersonville orchards and began outsourcing to China, it dealt a devastating blow to the local economy.

The effects remain today, with visible poverty throughout the region and abandoned apple warehouses consumed by voracious Virginia creeper.

Yet there is still promise in these orchards. Large-scale cider producers like Bold Rock flourish, while indies like Botanist & Barrel experiment with vinous ciders. It will take investment and effort, but this region's apple industry might just prosper again. As it does, may new light shine on the people, history, and potential of this region, which has too often been reduced to stereotypes and caricatures—like the one depicting my birthplace.

I'm here to witness this growth, starting with the Arkansas Black tree I've just planted in my own backyard.

By Amy Bess Cook



Tim Robison



NEGRONI BIANCO

1oz ITALICUS Rosolio di Bergamotto,
1oz Gin, 1oz dry Vermouth, plenty of
ice, 3 green olives



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SIMPLY POUR OVER ICE,
STIR AND GARNISH
WITH AN ORANGE

