

June - July Issue 2022

BEVERAGE MASTER



CRAFT BREW & SPIRITS MAGAZINE®

10 Ways to Maximize Beverage Sales Through Every Spring & Summer Holiday

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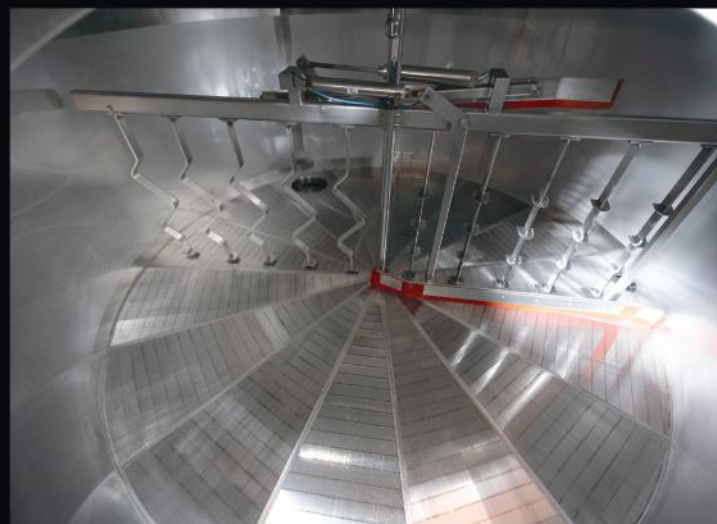
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1409 13th Street North
Humboldt, IA 50548

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Website: www.BrickerPublishing.com

BEVERAGE MASTER targets the Craft Beverage market and located in Fort Dodge, Iowa. BEVERAGE MASTER is printed bi-monthly and distributed to the most qualified buyers. Opinions expressed in BEVERAGE MASTER are not necessarily those of the publication personnel, but of the writers who contribute stories to BEVERAGE MASTER.

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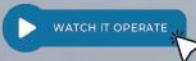
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Island Brands: Leveraging Technology for Success

By: Nan McCreary

When entrepreneurs **Brandon Perry** and **Scott Hansen** launched Island Brands USA in 2016, their goal was to create a mainstream, easy-drinking beer with the highest quality ingredients. That was challenging given the hyper-competitive landscape and complexity of the three-tier system. But they were undaunted, and through ultra-strategic planning using branding and technology, they found a niche among “thrill-seekers, outdoor enthusiasts, and beer drinkers everywhere.”

By 2020, the Charleston, South Carolina company saw combined sales of its two existing brands—



Island Coastal Lager and Island Active—grow 70% to \$1.9 million in sales, according to IRI data. In

2021, sales grew 99% to \$4.2 million. Today, Island Brands is the fastest-growing super-premium domestic beer in the Southeast U.S. and is poised to take an even bigger bite out of the competition this year.

For Perry and Hansen, the journey began on a “rum-soaked” trip to Cuba, where they discovered that the only beer available was of limited quality. This inspired them to make better beer more accessible to Cubans, and they began working on a recipe for an all-clean, easy-drinking brew to build a lifestyle brand.

“They decided from the beginning to only use the finest ingredients,” Island Brands’ Director of Operations Valerie Williams told *Beverage Master Magazine*. “Their first beer, Island Coastal Lager, was made with only water, malted barley, hops and yeast—no fillers, no adjuncts—to create a crisp, clean, crushable lager that had only 137 calories

and an ABV of 4.5%. They contracted with a brewery in Florida to make their product, then they hit the road and started selling it.”

Their success was immediate. “Publix Super Market, the largest and fastest-growing employee-owned supermarket chain in the United States, loved it in a big way and started putting it in every store,” Williams said. “Now we have multiple products in 1,250-1,300 stores.”

In 2020, Island Brands launched its second beer, Island Active, a crisp and clean premium light lager. Developed as a “Better for You” beer, Island Active is only 88 calories with an ABV of 4.2% and, like Island Coastal Lager, is made without fillers or preservatives. These flagship products quickly set Island Brands apart.

According to Williams, Island Brands’ beers are fully pasteurized and have no fillers that could



cause the beer to “go skunky,” giving them a shelf life of 365 days, as opposed to 110 for most beers.

Riding on this wave of success, in November of 2020, Island Brands launched a crowdfunding campaign with StartEngine, where everyday people can invest and buy shares in startups and early-stage companies. Within 34 days, Island Brands raised its maximum funding goal of \$1.07 million. These investors, called the Islander community, are on the front line of Island Brands’ marketing objectives. As a community, they help support the company’s brand. In turn, they receive discounts on merchandise, beer, events and travel.

“The key to our success has been our following,” Williams told *Beverage Master Magazine*. “Crowdfunding was huge in getting us started. It provided a way for folks to engage with us and support our brand to help us grow.”



The Islander community are not just advocates for the beer: They also promote Island Brands’ lifestyle partners, including merchandise from Island Supply Company, guided Adventure Experiences and the flagship Island Cabana Bar in Charleston. This diversification is specifically designed to help reach Island Brands’ target demographic.

Rounding out Island Brands’ marketing efforts is a

partnership with Carnival Cruise Line to serve Island Coastal Lager to 14 million passengers as their ships navigate the world. The partnership is a perfect fit for Island Brands’ founders, whose approach to life includes a love of travel, the outdoors and an appreciation of high-quality beers. “Our partnership with Carnival has been enormous,” Williams said. “It makes sense to have our beers on a cruise. Passengers come off the boat and start asking for our products. When it’s available in their market, our Islanders make sure it’s kept in stock wherever they shop.”

While Islands Brands has built brand recognition, they have also employed data-analytics strategies to get their branded products in front of their target market. The key to this is digital technology. “Technology is the cornerstone,” Williams said. “We are a small company—there are only 18 of us—and with distribution in seven states, we have to sell by proxy. Our relationship with our middle tier, our distributors, is critical to us. To provide them with what they need and when they need it, we rely on data analysis, whether it be to evaluate market trends or determine inventory needs.”

According to Williams, when Perry and Hansen founded the company, part of their business plan was to use technology to collaborate with the middle tier and the consumer. For that reason, they assembled a team with over 100+ years of combined experience that includes technology, marketing and consumer packaged goods.

“We’re all technical,” Williams said. “We have two data analysts on our team, and they’re constantly digging into data and identifying potential issues so we can address them.”

To facilitate operations, this data—including branding and marketing tools—is shared across the board with internal teams as well as external collaborators.

Island Brands’ use of data analysis has been a lifesaver in today’s market, where supply chain issues have plagued the industry. “Our biggest enemy,” Williams said, “is being out of stock. By providing data and guidance to wholesalers, we can anticipate volumes and ensure that there is no single point of failure in the supply chain. We have multiple vendors, and if one doesn’t have availability, we go to another one. If we have shipping problems,

we optimize our loads or call on multiple logistics providers to potential solutions. Strategy plays a big role. You can have the best liquid in the world, but if you can't get it on the shelves, then you're dead." Island Brands' marketing strategies have paid off. In 2021, the company sold 160,000 cases in seven states: Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Virginia. Beers are available at Walmart, Costco, Publix and other southeastern grocery stores. But it's not just consumer demand that has led to this success: It's strategic planning, with growth carefully timed and targeted.

"We analyze data on items that are growing or not growing in certain territories and work with our wholesalers to collaborate and strategize," Williams said. "When we bring a product to our wholesalers, we ask them to help us grow in their territorial footprint, and, at the same time, ask how we can help them get the items they need to fill voids in their portfolios."



Energized by success—and demand determined via data analysis—in 2021, Island Brands introduced two new products: Island Lemonade, a balance of the finest premium beer and freshly-squeezed lemonade, and Southern Peach, a combination of sun-ripened peaches, fresh-brewed Southern tea

and premium beer. Like Island's flagship brands, these are flavorful beverages without added fillers, made for easy drinking with an ABV of 4.5%.

In 2022, Island Brands will enter the Flavored Malt Beverage category, one of the most rapidly growing segments in the beverage industry. Created under the CRUSH brand, flavors include Lime Margarita, Strawberry Daiquiri and Tropical Punch. "These will not be super-premium beverages," Williams told *Beverage Master Magazine*, "but will still be better for you than others out there, as they have natural flavorings and less sugar than competitive brands. ABV will be 10%."

Beyond that, Island Brands has set its sights on expanding distribution (they will add Mississippi and Louisiana in 2022), opening more Cabana Bars in the Southeast, adding another brewery for contract production, and increasing its crowdfunding goal (now at \$5 million). According to Williams, the company expects to double its sales in 2022.

The key to success, she said, is leveraging technology to keep up with the growth. "Behind all of this expansion, we have to make sure we can honor our retail commitments," she told *Beverage Master Magazine*. "We will use our data to determine when we can launch, where we can launch, and how much we can launch."

For more information on Island Brands USA, visit www.islandbrandsusa.com



Efficient and Sustainable Hops Ensure Creative Craft Brew Hoppy-ness

By: by Gerald Dlubala

Sustainability is at the forefront of brewing in general, and it's a focus point in each specific aspect of the brewing process," said Doug Wilson, Director of Sales and Marketing at Hopsteiner, recognized as one of the largest global vertically-integrated hop growers and distributors in the world. "The sustainability mindset naturally carries over to a brewmaster's ingredients, including the hops they choose. Likewise, craft brewers need successful and sustainable hops to replicate their beer offerings. Fortunately, we have experienced a quick rebound in crop growth and availability as hop growers after the recent heatwaves and drought that proved harmful to many hops, malt and barley growers. That rebound,

combined with the general open-mindedness of both craft brewers and craft beer drinkers, lends itself to a successful and sustainable relationship between brewers and hop growers."

Hopsteiner utilizes a genome breeding program that is molecular marker-assisted, identifying the key and desirable traits they want available in their hops. The hops are, in turn, bred to be stronger, more resistant, and ultimately, more efficient and sustainable. For example, Hopsteiner identified the powdery mildew resistant component in hop strains and, through selective breeding, now offers those popular hop varieties with bred-in powdery mildew resistance traits.

"Brewers look for a couple of things in their hop provider. Usually, it centers around cost savings and sustainability. Sustainability means new agro-nomically superior and disease-resistant varieties requiring less spraying and fertilizing, ultimately producing higher yields with more drought resistance. By providing our own breeding technology, Hopsteiner can offer products like Salvo, derived from CO2 hop extract and predominantly containing hop essential oils and beta acids, that can be used in hot applications without adding bitterness or causing beer loss. Its use has also reportedly extended the shelf-life for hoppy-style brews," said Wilson.

"We see a lot of the sameness in brewing. When I say sameness, I'm talking about a combination or mix of hops used to produce a particular flavor profile. But that sameness can also bring about a hesitation by consumers to try a new beer if they see a hop flavor profile with which they are already familiar. That type of consumer behavior directly opposes the inherent purpose of a great brewpub.



The true craft brewer wants their consumers to want to try new flavor profiles, aromas and combinations. And one of the best things we, as hop growers, can tell a brewer is, with prices of most goods going up, the costs of hops aren't that bad right now. On top of that, there are new varieties available to the craft brewer that will produce those new formulas and beers that can lure in, excite, and satisfy the craft beer consumer."

Hopsteiner offers the familiar products they've traditionally provided. They can drive additional efficiencies into those offerings using their in-house programs, allowing craft brewers to dare to be different. For example, Hopsteiner's Tetra-S, derived from CO2 hop extract, provides an excellent flavor profile and offers foam-enhancing abilities for an increased visual appearance on beers that typically



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may not show or hold a head of foam.

“Brewers have to get out of the rut that I feel craft brewing has been in for the last couple of years,” said Wilson. “We help them do that with our breeding program. We use worldwide hop hunters that allow us to offer new genetic materials to bring out new chemical compositions that allow craft brewers to use their creativity. Additionally, by brewing sustainable beers with new flavor profiles and aromas, craft brewers can gain the upper hand in gaining and keeping valuable shelf space that is already limited.”

Wilson told *Beverage Master Magazine* that craft brewers must be their own advocates and do their research regarding sourcing hops. “Don’t just take one supplier’s word for it,” said Wilson. “Work on developing a good and comfortable rapport with all your suppliers, and then have open and honest conversations with them about supplies. The market is currently flush with hops. We’ve rebounded quite well from past climate issues in all varieties, with no slowdown in the foreseeable future. As a craft brewer, you have to talk with suppliers to determine where you need to contract supply and those places where you may not need to contract. In some current instances, it can be safer and more economical to play the spot market to fill your hops needs.”

Cryo Hops Offer Sustainability, Efficiency and Savings

Yakima Chief’s Cryo Hops are processed using cryogenic technology, separating whole hop cones into the concentrated lupulin and the bract, or leaf component. The hops are processed and individually preserved using low temperatures in a nitrogen-rich, ISO-9001 certified production facility with limited opportunities for oxidation from initial separating through the final pelleting process.

Cryo Hops pellets are the concentrated lupulin of whole leaf hops, housing the resins and aromatic oils that provide an even more intense hop flavor and aroma to your brew. Brewmasters can use these pellets anywhere traditional whole leaf or T-90 hop pellets are used but contain nearly twice the amount of flavor and aroma producing resin content. That extra resin content allows craft brewers to efficiently dose large quantities of alpha acids and oils without introducing astringent or

polyphenol flavors or unwanted vegetative material. They also increase yield by reducing brewhouse and cellar trub and offering cost savings and net revenue increases with each batch.



The pellets are specifically designed to offer efficiency and savings and provide greater sustainability in use, packaging, shipping and storage. The leafy material of the hop cone gets removed during the production process, reducing the overall amount of plant material brought into the brewing process. This reduction further eliminates trub loss and results in increased yields (3 to 5%) and improved quality. Yakima Chief reports that water, malt, utilities and labor are utilized more efficiently for every barrel of beer gained while only requiring half the storage and shipping requirements.

Yakima Chief’s Cryo Hops perform similar to T-90 hop pellets with comparable density and dissolving characteristics and are appropriate as a full or partial replacement for whole leaf or T-90 pellets. However, they are only dosed at 40-50% of T-90 pellets by weight because of their concentrated qualities. Additionally, they do not pose a clogging risk to heat exchangers because of their fine particle size. They should be added to the kettle late in the process to prevent boiling out the intense flavor and aroma characteristics. Introducing the pellets in the whirlpool is preferred to increase aroma and reduce trub load from significant late additions. Using them in the fermenter is another excellent way to increase aroma and reduce trub loss. Cryo Hops will settle out during standard conditioning and can be fined, filtered or centrifuged.

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A man with a beard, wearing a green beanie and glasses, is pouring beer from a can into a glass. He is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt. The background is a bar with many bottles of beer on shelves. The word "Oktober" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the top of the image.

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low alcohol or no alcohol beer is now widespread and quickly trending upward, with breweries of all sizes taking note.

In a video address, Richard Hodges, Regional Sales Manager of Yakima Chief Hops, said that the NA and LA beer markets provide an opportunity to shine for craft brewers, allowing them to display their creativity in brewing using a variety of quality, sustainably grown hops.

"The low and no alcohol beer markets are without a doubt the fastest moving market," said Hodges. "The last ten years have provided improved methods and innovation in flavor and aroma, thereby enhancing more widespread acceptance of new low alcohol or no alcohol brews. The main consumer base for these markets is the 25–45-year age range with an interest in a healthier beer alternative that fits into a moderation or abstinence lifestyle. In more direct cases, some regions have adopted stricter alcohol laws that have moved beer consumers to try low or no alcohol craft beverages."

"The biggest challenge we see in LA and NA beers is the lack of beer complexity and character loss involved due to the absence of alcohol," said Hodges. "As a brewer, you have the option to either mask that lack of complexity or make up for it by using essential hops and malt profiles. But, of course, we believe it's always better to make up for any lost taste profiles rather than simply trying to mask them. And because of the continuous growth of NA and LA beer, the improved and successful methods to make up for any lost character and complexity have become available to the smaller microbrewers, allowing them to appeal to and welcome a whole new demographic of potential patrons."

Hodges said that bittering hops like Yakima Chief's Warrior, Columbus, and Chinook offer ways to add the traditional solid-yet-smooth bitterness needed to complement conventional hoppy and West Coast beer styles. Other options, including their Sabro and Talus, will add the fruit and cream, vanilla or coconut flavors to give LA or NA beverages a perceived body.

Aromas in our favorite craft beers also add complexity but can get lost in the NA brewing process. To add those aromas that get lost in low ester production, Hodges recommends Simcoe, Idaho7

or Ekanot for a sweet tropical smell and an extra layer of complexity. Crystal, Columbus and Nugget varieties will give the familiar and expected woody, green and pungent hoppy flavors that craft beer drinkers expect.

Expect The Unexpected

New flavor profiles and chemical compositions are quickly becoming available in conjunction with more sustainable sources of hops. As these hops make their way into the hands of creative brewers, there's every reason to believe that craft brewpubs can creatively challenge the patrons' tastebuds, causing them to raise a glass to an ever-evolving menu, including the exploding no and low alcohol market.



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Bottling & Canning Innovation: Companies Deliver Premium Technology, Raising the Stakes in Productivity!

By: Cheryl Gray

When it comes to bottling machinery for craft breweries and distilleries, technology is king. The work that goes into fabricating, filling and sealing bottles and cans begins with the expertise of companies that understand what craft brewers and distillers need most—a cost-efficient way to boost output while also protecting the integrity of their products.

One of those companies is **Pneumatic Scale Angelus**, part of BW Packaging Systems. The Ohio-based firm is a global industry leader in designing and manufacturing beverage canning lines and fill-

ing technology for the craft beverage industry. The company's numbers are impressive, starting with its years in business—more than 130. It has seven manufacturing locations and more than 700 members on its worldwide team.

Pneumatic Scale Angelus has installed more than 16,000 canning operations across 132 countries with applications that include liquid and dry filling, capping, can seaming and labeling. Global Marketing Director Gigi Lorence said that as an expert in beverage canning lines and filling technology, the company has built a reputation for knowing how to leverage the innovation of its



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high-speed beverage lines, scaling them down to the slower production speeds and lower volumes required for craft beverages. Lorence broke down the specifications for the company's inline volumetric canning lines.

"Our fully-integrated filler and seamer machines allow brewers to take control of their can filling operations. Running at speeds from 15 to 100 CPM, our inline canning machines are suited to small batch production and frequent changeover," she said. "Our CB50F and CB100F open-air systems use our proprietary flowmeter technology to ensure a perfect fill at speeds to 100 CPM, with a gas flush system that keeps oxygen levels under control. The high-speed seamer design, scaled for single- or dual-head operation, delivers the only repeatable hermetic double seam in the industry.

"Our CB50C system leverages the CB50F design but uses counter-pressure filling technology to meet the demand for high-carbonation beverages, including hard seltzers, sparkling wines and high-carb beers. The CB50C uses true isobarometric filling technology, with the fill tank above the fill heads, allowing the product to be gravity-fed, as

opposed to pumped upward. This minimizes product agitation for a quiet fill and lower CO2 loss."

For brewers ready for the higher speeds of a rotary canning system, Lorence described PSA's options for rotary volumetric canning lines. "These systems run from 100 CPM to up to 400 CPM, depending on configuration, which means brewers can expand their overall production without drastically increasing their overall footprint," said Lorence. "Our larger CB244/324/404 rotary open-air systems serve brewers ready for higher speeds. These systems have 24, 32, or 40 electro-mechanically controlled filling heads that ensure fill level accuracy to within plus or minus 0.5 grams of the target volume and four seaming heads that offer the same industry-leading seal as our slower-speed machines."

There is a brand-new addition to PSA's craft beverage canning lines. Lorence described the CB100C, launched this May at The Craft Brewers Conference in Minneapolis.

"This rotary counter-pressure system builds upon the capabilities of the CB50C but leverages a 12-head rotary filling turret design, coupled with a

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dual-station seamer, to allow brewers to increase their throughput to more than 100 CPM. Using a motorized, recipe-driven turret design allows for automatic turret height adjustment,” she said. “Like the CB50C, the CB100C uses a true isobarometric filling, with an onboard product supply tank rated to 60 psi. The addition of the 12-head rotary filling turret enables the system to move more cans smoothly through the line, filling faster without creating an increase in product agitation as speeds increase. This gentle fill virtually eliminates the unwanted reductions in carbonation levels seen with other filling methods.



“The CB100C also employs magnetic flowmeter technology to help you get a perfect fill with little waste and an under-cover gas flush system to keep dissolved oxygen levels low. In addition, our industry-leading Angelus double-seam technology keeps cans sealed tight, extending critical shelf life. The system is optimized for sleek and standard can bodies and designed with quick-change adjustments for easy changeovers accommodating various can heights and body diameters with no valve change required. A compact footprint and an intuitive HMI for individual fill-head volume adjustments simplify operation.”

Another expert in bottling and canning operations for the craft beverage industry is **XpressFill**, a California-based company in operation since 2007. XpressFill offers a broad range of can and bottle filling systems for brewers and distillers, all of which promote ease of use, longevity and post-sale service as a top priority. It manufactures bottle fillers to accommodate volumetric, level fill and carbonated beverage technology, providing for nearly every bottling need. Rod Silver is head of the company’s marketing and sales.

“XpressFill prides itself on its ability to respond to the needs of its customers. Our support of our products is unmatched,” said Silver.



XpressFill specifically targets smaller breweries that need guidance on the best equipment choices for their operations. “All XpressFill products are designed with the smaller, craft artisan in mind. We have been able to build affordable yet efficient and effective filling machines for this market,” Silver said. “The most popular filler for distillers is the XF460HP, specifically designed for spirits, using materials that are more resilient to ethanol. Our proprietary technology allows for filling well within TTB tolerances.”

Silver explained how the volumetric filler controls the amount of fill using a precision timer. The filler is calibrated to specifications and capable of accurate fills, regardless of inconsistencies in the bottle glass. The volumetric filler is also suitable for bottling various sizes, even down to 50 ml bottles. Silver said XpressFill’s most popular products for craft brewers accommodate both cans and bottles. “The most popular fillers for brewers are the XF4500C (cans) and XF4500 (bottles). Both fillers use counter-pressure to minimize oxygen pick up during the fill.”

Silver told *Beverage Master Magazine* that all XpressFill systems have a pre-fill CO2 purge cycle. The company’s counter-pressure systems require a minimal air compressor to operate the pneumatic actuators. Open can fillers have a moveable shelf that is easily adjustable for various sizes, with a maximum can diameter of four inches.

The counter pressure filler has a stopper that fits

tightly into the can or bottle opening to seal and pressurize the container. Filling a container, Silver said, is an exact science. XpressFill's level fillers control the rate of fill using a level sensor. As the liquid reaches the sensor, the filler automatically stops the fill. The liquid level is set by adjusting the height of the shelf, which can be adjusted to about one-sixteenth inch increments. The level filler can be used for all products, including wine and distilled spirits. Silver said that the level filler is perfect if the sightline in the bottleneck is a concern for shelf presentation due to glass variations.

Although Colorado-based **Ska Fabricating** was born out of the need to address the brewing, packaging and distribution of Ska Brewing, its innovations have helped breweries worldwide.

Marketing Director Elise Mackay described the company's most popular depalletizers. "Our most popular can depalletizer is the Can-i-Bus. It is our original depalletizer, obviously updated and



improved upon many times since its creation, and a full-height automatic depalletizer that is capable of speeds up to 250 CPM. It comes with three different trim levels that come with a variety of different features. It's perfect for mid-sized operations and a great option to grow into for smaller operations," said Mackay. "Our Nimbus is like our Can-i-Bus Jr. It features the same robust construction and pallet sweep mechanism that the Can-i-Bus does but uses a rotary table discharge that allows for additional accumulation with the added benefit of being able to fold down to save space when it isn't in use. The Nimbus is also portable. You can use a pallet jack to move it from your production floor once you're finished with your packaging day, so it's perfect for smaller-scale operations looking to grow."

Mackay said that innovation is always at the forefront at Ska Fabricating. "The newest addition, the Microbus, is our smallest footprint, most flexible, most affordable depalletizer yet. It's rated up to 30 CPM and is an ideal product for operations that are just getting started in canning. Low speeds, manual pallet lifting, and ultimate portability make the Microbus special. It features the same foldable rotary table discharge that I mentioned with the Nimbus, but it also has a foldable dead plate, so when it's completely dismantled, the footprint is minuscule."

Mackay points out why her company is considered in the industry as, in her words, the "likable expert."



"We have an incredible team of engineers that create robust and reliable machines and then work with every single customer to create custom layouts to suit their exact needs; a personable and reliable sales team with tons of brewery and packaging experience; an installation crew that will travel to the ends of the earth to set our customers up for success; and a top-notch customer support team that is available 24/7 to assist with any issues that arise."

Industry experience, innovative products and after-sale customer service are common threads among these companies. These experts say that this combination is what breweries and distilleries should look for when choosing a company for bottling and canning products.



Boosting Brewery & Distillery Business with Entertainment and Lodging

By: Alyssa L. Ochs

With thousands of craft breweries and distilleries in operation today, it's no longer enough to simply produce amazing beers and spirits. Brewers and distillers are quickly learning that to thrive and stand out among the competition, they need to build a unique brand and expand their reach to a broader customer base.

Some of the best ways to achieve this are to offer entertainment and recreation opportunities for everyone to enjoy and onsite lodging that makes an evening out safer and more convenient. With the right event-planning strategy, you can keep

consumers coming back to your business even after they've sampled everything on the drink menu multiple times.

Types of Entertainment and Recreation

In recent years, both breweries and distilleries have gotten very creative with the types of entertainment they offer. You'll regularly find local establishments offering board game nights, yoga classes, musical concerts and karaoke nights. Trivia, open mic comedy nights, painting and crafting events and book club meetings are also held at breweries and distilleries.

Low-key options, such as yard games and photo booths, are easy options to add, as well as professional networking events, poker tournaments and sport-themed events for big games. Breweries and distilleries can become more involved in their communities by partnering with other businesses to promote local products, nonprofits to support important causes and artists to display pieces of original artwork on the walls. Meanwhile, it's fun to host holiday-themed festivals, offer educational brewing or distilling lessons and highlight new beverage releases in a way that entices people to walk through the door.

Dana Koller, the president of Kaktus Brewing in Bernalillo, New Mexico, told *Beverage Master Magazine* that his brewery's most successful events have been celebrating Oktoberfest, St. Patrick's Day and other cultural events. Kaktus always has a full lineup of exciting events on the brewery calendar and offers small-batch brews, organic bites, and a refreshingly chill atmosphere.

"I think what makes them successful is that we are genuine about the celebration and not just there to make a quick buck," Koller said. "Although we may

not be the most authentic option, we make sure that we have a blast doing what we do and show our appreciation for those wanting to celebrate."

On the distillery side of things, Sledge Distillery in Tolar, Texas, has been adding lots of events to its calendar lately, including tastings, tours, food, retail offerings and live music. Sledge Distillery specializes in hand-crafted spirits based on a World War II family moonshine recipe.

"Private shopping nights for new releases have been very successful," said Susan Sledge. "Also, we have found that the addition of live music adds to the atmosphere. Our clients are looking to re-engage with us and bring their friends along. We consider their repeat business a huge honor."

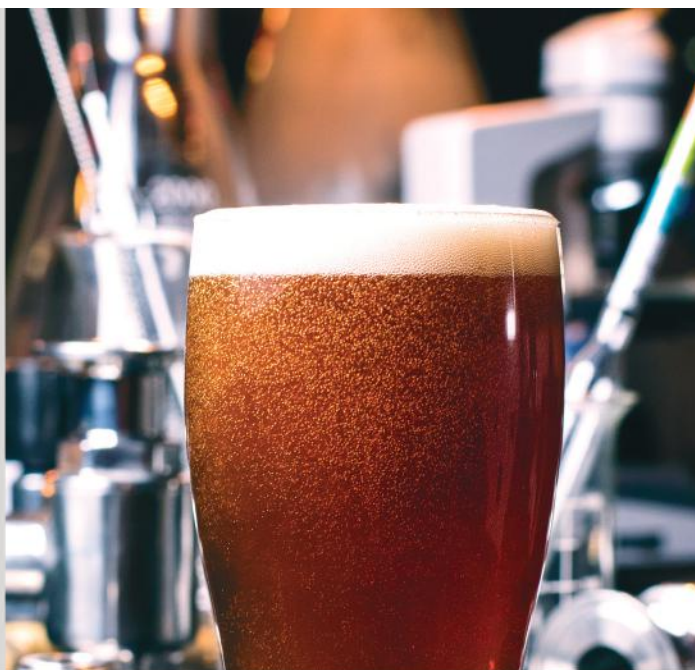
Onsite Lodging Options

Another unique idea for breweries and distilleries to consider is adding lodging near the taproom to welcome overnight guests. Some craft beverage producers have locations in historic buildings that can be renovated to include accommodation in an adjacent space.

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Alternatively, producers can purchase or build a separate building that provides lodging on the same property. Not only is this a good way to keep customers safe from drinking and driving, but it's an opportunity to make your business a true weekend destination rather than just a quick stop along the way.

One brewery that has added lodging to its offerings is Riff Raff Brewing Company in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Founded in 2013, Riff Raff operates in a historic, Victorian-era house in the downtown area and offers flagship beers, seasonal taps and eclectic twists on favorite foods. Visitors can currently rent apartment units above the downtown brewpub through Airbnb.

"The building that houses Riff Raff Brewing Company is registered on the Colorado State Historic Preservation roll and has been used and repurposed multiple times since it was built in 1898," said Jason Cox, founder and CEO.

"When we purchased the building and opened the brewery in 2013, the upstairs housed apartments with long-term rentals," Cox said. "We underwent a major remodel in 2015 and converted to short-term rentals because of the fact that there was a brewery downstairs. We thought it would be a type of beer-and-breakfast kind of offering!"

What Consumers Want Right Now

There is a high demand for entertainment options at breweries and distilleries because people are looking for fun ways to get out and experience their communities in different and social ways. Breweries and distilleries have emerged as ideal destinations for date nights, family-friendly fun and free things to do that don't require a big commitment. Many businesses are finding success with inclusive events that are pet-friendly and welcome children. You can give consumers what they want by keeping participation costs low or free, offering something different from what they can find anywhere else in town, providing fun photo opportunities and maybe even selling specialized merchandise to mark the occasion.

"I think what people are looking for is true community, a place and time to connect without expectations," said Koller. "The music and events are the excuse to get out and socialize for them."

"Our customers are looking for a way to relax and take a break from the pressures of life," said Sledge. "Our distillery is located in the country and gives our guests a feeling of truly 'getting away.'"



"I can't speak directly to data or analytics, but I do know there are several experiences where lodging is packaged with craft breweries, and it creates a more complete experience," said Cox. "Our friends own a brewery in northern New Mexico that allows camping on the premises, and they have lots of concerts, so it provides an opportunity to have an immersive guest experience. We aim to do the same type of thing with our lodging above Riff Raff Brewing Company."

Considerations for Breweries and Distilleries

Planning events may seem overwhelming to some brewery and distillery owners because it's just one more thing added to the to-do list and budget. It often pays off in terms of business sustainability and professional satisfaction in the long run. Events, recreation, entertainment and lodging provide fun opportunities in relaxed environments to build your brand and get people engaged with what you're doing. It's an effective way to make personal connections with your customers and perhaps even raise money for charitable causes.

There are many things to think about when planning a new event, type of entertainment or onsite lodging. Cost tops the list since some things will inherently cost more than others. If the event requires renting or buying extra furniture, party supplies, or sound equipment, you'll need to budget ahead. Although it may be an initial goal to make extra money from an event, it might be worth it to break even for the sake of outreach and exposure.

Breweries and distilleries with large spaces may be able to rent out entire sections of the building or property for private events and make extra income in that way.

Regarding onsite Airbnb offerings, Riff Raff's Cox sees significant benefits in breweries entering the lodging business.

"We rent more than 325 nights a year in each of the two rentals, which include a three-bedroom, two-bath unit and a one-bedroom, one-bath unit," Cox said. "We do see people who book because it's above a brewery, and they definitely want that experience. Sometimes I conduct VIP tours and add other offerings for guests who stay upstairs."

Event Planning Tips

When considering hosting an event, make sure to see what else is already scheduled in the community so that there are no conflicts that would prevent someone from attending what you have planned. In general, it's best to keep the event size manageable so that the lines for beverages don't get too long or the spaces too crowded. Fun themes will catch people's attention, while free and low-cost ticket prices will make your events more accessible to everyone.



Recurring events, such as activities that happen on the same day each week, make scheduling events easier and allow more people to participate when it works for their schedule. It may also be worth inviting another local brewery or distillery to co-host your event.

Koller from Kaktus Brewing said that one of the most important things to plan for when hosting events is "making the numbers work so that you are

not understaffed since this is always a major challenge."

"From the moment a guest arrives on property, we want them to feel welcome," said Sledge. "Signage has been strategically placed, so people know where to go and the options they have for entertainment, food and beverages. Our employees are intentional about greeting guests and orienting them to the facility and events."

What's Next for Craft Beverage Entertainment?

Producers are just getting started with what they have in mind to entice craft beverage enthusiasts.

"For Kaktus Brewing, we have been working on plans to expand parking to host larger events with games, a new stage, more shade structures and outdoor cooking," said Koller. "This will allow us to do full weekend events instead of just evening events."

"We are programming smaller, more intimate events where people share a particular interest," said Sledge. "For example, we are doing a three-event women's workshop called 'Feel Good Fridays' where the group has drinks with a licensed therapist who facilitates a group session on various topics."

Meanwhile, Cox recommended that any brewery looking to add short-term lodging should check with the local planning or zoning department to understand rules regulating short-term rentals.

"Depending on the type of zoning district, it may or may not be allowable for a brewery to offer lodging," Cox said. "After that, I would put myself in the shoes of a guest to understand the entire experience. For example, some of the equipment that a brewhouse uses runs 24/7, and the noise could have an impact on the lodging, depending on the configuration. Beyond that, I would say to create a great experience for the guests and make it happen. Remember, it's all about the craft beer and having fun with it."



Trends in Beverage Packaging to Look Out For in 2022

By: Preston Geeting

Building healthy lives entails nourishing our bodies, both mentally and physically. As such, the beverage industry will continue to be an essential component in improving the health of societies across the globe for as long as we call it home. More presently, however, the products we choose to consume from brands in today's world often reflect our own personal values.

Packaging plays a huge role in how impactful a product is on its target audience. Much of the information regarding what is considered healthy or not is often presented on the packaging of consumable beverage products, so their packaging must clearly communicate how it reflects the values of individual consumers. This makes the packaging industry a crucial component of the beverage industry.

According to MarketWatch, the beverage packaging industry, in particular, is expected to reach a value of \$142.28 billion by 2023 at a CAGR of 4.17%, a significant growth from \$111.36 billion in 2017. This growth can be credited to the constant

demand for groundbreaking, trendy beverage packaging across both industry sectors of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

Each sector serves as a quintessential example of the beverage industry's permanent dependency on the packaging industry, fostering a crucial and long-lasting partnership between the two. Thus, companies must now shift their focus on the ever-changing trends within both industries, while simultaneously aligning with the demands of consumer markets to maintain a competitive edge.

A product's packaging often complements its brand image and desired messaging, empowering a brand to sell not merely a product, but a lifestyle to its target audience. In the era of 2022, with headlines abuzz with topics encompassing Web 3.0, the Metaverse, and other digital innovations, product packaging that may be deemed 'Instagrammable' or trend-worthy is far more appealing to consumers than those perceived as more "traditional" or mundane.

In the beverage industry, packaged products often reflect what value the brand can add to a consumer's life, and how that value complements or enhances their current lifestyle. What makes your product unique enough to stand out on the shelves, compared to hundreds of others, relies almost entirely on the impact of its packaging.

Additionally, in the luxury beverage space — such as high-end alcohol brands — product packaging is the first element consumers interact with showcasing why the product is desirable. Nightclubs and bars are excellent examples of this. In these settings, the most sought-after alcohol purchased is typically the one that stands out the most and similarly emulates a high-class, sought-after, yet rarely-obtained lifestyle.

In the case of non-alcoholic beverage packaging, the packaging must communicate why one brand is better than another. This is commonly seen with packaging for companies that sell water. Although water is rarely perceived as little more than a standard beverage, all the details of its product packaging — from visual designs and colors to its sourced location, packaging material, and more — can spell the difference between its sales stagnating or skyrocketing. Other factors listed on the product's packaging, such as the brand's sustainability efforts or even the sheer convenience of its packaging, likewise play a key role in targeting specific consumer markets.

For example, plastic water bottles that have a twist-off top may be less desirable to consumers in comparison to those boasting a sports-bottle style cap. Furthermore, sustainably-packaged water, or reusable metal water bottles, might be more appealing to eco-conscious consumers.

The trends witnessed within both the beverage and packaging industry are constantly evolving alongside a growing consumer market. These industries must continue to work harmoniously to understand what makes consumers tick. Competition is always intense in the beverage industry, and companies spend immense periods researching competitors, as well as the needs and wants of consumers, to ensure that standards are met through superior packaging.

Packaging must serve a purpose other than simply protecting products in retail stores or back-of-

house storage to be memorable and appealing. The little details are essential regarding a beverage's packaging, and these seemingly small details can have a significant impact on sales. With all of this in mind, here are the top ten trends in beverage packaging to look out for in 2022.

1. Biodegradable Packaging: Biodegradable packaging comprises of biopolymers, which are often found in the cellulose of plants. Since this form of packaging comes from plants, they easily decompose naturally over time in comparison to plastic packaging. Traditional plastic packaging, unfortunately, never decomposes. Instead, it slowly breaks down into microplastics which often wind up in our oceans or, even worse, our food.

Recently, it was found that microplastics were detected in human bloodstreams. While this hasn't been directly tied to plastic packaging, single-use plastics — such as those frequently utilized in beverage packaging — have been a significant cause of ocean-dwelling microplastics.

To combat this, companies like Boxed Water Is Better are taking an active stance in ensuring that their product packaging is decomposable to fight the ever-growing single-use plastic issue; an issue which has also been recognized across various consumer markets. Throughout 2022, expect more beverage companies to release (or, at least, announce) their products being packaged in a similar, more sustainable manner.

2. Internet of Packaging or Smart Packaging: Internet of packaging, or innovative packaging, comprises the integration of QR codes, smart labels, RFID, and AR/VR into packaging technology. The industry will begin to see the next evolution of packaging personalization through technology, especially QR codes, as adoption rates have soared since the pandemic in 2020.

An example of this is 19 Crimes, a famous Australian wine company that has become a global phenomenon that works with celebrities like Snoop Dogg to craft fine wines, with each one telling a new story. The bottles of wine are brought to life via AR integration with a mobile app. Once labels are scanned via the app, it tells consumers the tales of notorious criminals through a pop-up video. Several coffee suppliers in the Australian market have begun implementing this method to provide

consumers with a story element behind the type of coffee they purchase. This informs consumers who advocate for ethical and sustainable farming practices that the product they purchased aligns with their personal values.

For another example of this trend, imagine purchasing a bottle of wine as a gift. If the bottle has a scannable QR code, the sender can write a message, and the recipient can see the message enclosed in the app. This eliminates the need to send additional paper cards and advances the gifting process.

From a design perspective, we will quickly begin to see more minimalistic styles as a direct result of QR codes; if brands design packaging to have a QR code containing all the written content, it eradicates the overwhelming amount of information consumers currently see on packaging. And because product information is often small, making readability an issue, QR codes could also add an element of accessibility.

3. Recyclable Packaging: Recyclable packaging is similar to sustainable and biodegradable packaging;

it helps the environment and appeals to more environmentally-conscious consumers. However, biodegradable packaging merely degrades, whereas recyclable packaging can be reused, making it more sustainable in the long run.

One new interesting element of recyclable packaging not seen typically is referred to as circular packaging. Circular packaging is forecasted to become an industry trend, as it utilizes a single layer for the packaging, rather than multiple layers, significantly reducing waste in the process. Along with this reduction in waste, circular packaging encourages companies to optimize the materials used in their packaging, maximize and amplify supply, and protect brands while inspiring them to make a significant impact against high-waste packaging.

4. Edible Packaging: In 2019, London marathon runners made headlines worldwide after news broke that they were provided with seaweed pouches filled with energy drinks, rather than plastic water bottles. This enabled them to consume their water and leave zero waste. While edible packaging may not yet be very common, this example highlights how such a trend can genuinely help

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niche industries advance and make a difference — both for the environment and consumers.

5. Custom Packaging: Beverage brands looking to differentiate themselves from competitors are increasingly utilizing custom packaging platforms to meet their needs. These platforms eliminate the physical component of fully-stocked warehouses, offering beverage manufacturers, brand owners, and suppliers with streamlined tools that both align with their marketing initiatives, and efficiently and effectively deliver eye-catching packaging for their products. This simplified process is quickly gaining traction across the beverage industry, providing companies with a one-stop-shop for their custom packaging solutions.

6. Active Packaging: Active packaging consists of new technological techniques that extend the shelf-life of products, especially in the food, beverage, and pharmaceutical industries. Active packaging works by interacting directly with the packaged product and is designed to eradicate residual oxygen, bringing the product to a level where there is zero-permeation. This trend could lead to increasing the shelf life for beverage products that may otherwise spoil on retail shelves or in warehouses, thus mitigating costs for companies.

7. Packaging Automation: Packaging automation for the manufacturing of products has witnessed a significant boost through AI. When combined with platforms that can serve as a one-stop-shop for custom and stock package purchasing options, this trend shows how robotics in the packaging industry can turn companies into genuine industry titans like Amazon, which continues to lead in terms of warehouse robotics and automation. Packaging automation enables the e-commerce giant to stay ahead of the game and on top of the retail charts. The same tactics could easily apply to companies in the beverage industry.

8. NFT Integration and Utility: Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are one of the fastest-growing trends in 2022, and the beverage industry is leading the way. Penfolds, Glenfiddich, Hennessy, and other luxury brands are now selling NFTs that corresponded to a limited edition physical bottle; the NFT acts as a digital receipt that validates the authenticity of the wine bottles. Many start-up beverage companies, however, are finding ways to leverage this technology with their physical pack-

aging as a marketing tool. From startup Perfy's customized NFT soda cans, to The Bored Breakfast Club including the famous Bored Apes collection on their packaging materials, NFTs are proving to be a unique way for beverage companies to help promote their brand and acquire a larger portion of consumer markets.

9. 3D Printing: 3D printing has become cheaper for companies to prototype their packaging designs, materials, and even manufacturing machines. 3D printing boosts packaging designs by removing the typical challenges packaging designers face. Some of these challenges tend to include the need for multiple prototypes (which generate additional waste), fewer resources and materials to source prototypes, as well as reduced costs during the packaging design stage. This evolving trend streamlines the design process, and can enable beverage manufacturers and suppliers to conduct more in-house prototyping with their packaging without the presence of a middle man.

10. Nanotechnology: Regarding the beverage industry, nanotechnology in the form of nano-coating or nanosensors is most commonly used. Nanotechnology-enhanced packaging reduces microbial bacteria and can help improve the quality of the product, especially in water.

Overall, each of these trends holds the potential for companies within the beverage industry to successfully outgrow their competitors, and each is deserving of careful consideration when designing packaging solutions throughout the remainder of 2022. In a market that is as ever-changing as it is necessary, it is imperative that brands stay one step ahead, understand the true importance of these trends, and implement them accordingly.



Preston Geeting is a Co-founder of Packform. Along with Philip Weinman and Peter Williams, he recognized the opportunity to transform the antiquated packaging industry with innovative technology, creating new service levels, better customer experience, and more significant opportunities for all involved. As of 2020, Packform officially became the fastest-growing packaging company and won the gold International Stevie Business Awards for Technology Startup of the Year.

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The Indemnification Clause: A Lease Landmine?

By: Brian D. Kaider, Esq.

Most breweries and distilleries are built on leased property. Negotiating the lease can be a daunting task, as these contracts are commonly over fifty pages long and full of dense legal language that can be difficult to understand. Additionally, many landlords have “standard” leases to which they expect the tenant to agree with minimal changes. Aside from definitions of rent and the duration of the lease, many tenants simply accept the remainder of the lease, as is. More savvy tenants may negotiate issues such as the right to penetrate walls or ceilings for equipment ventilation, the use of outdoor space/common areas, or the state to which the premises must be restored following termination of the lease. But, there is a section in virtually every lease that is typically ignored and has important consequences: the “indemnification clause.”

What is an Indemnification Clause?

In the simplest terms, an indemnification clause identifies who is responsible if a third party (e.g., a customer) is injured on or around the leased property. Most often, the injury refers to a physical injury, such as when a customer slips and falls on a wet floor. The language of the clause typically provides that in such a case, if an injured customer sues the landlord as a result of the fall, the tenant agrees to compensate the landlord for any expense associated with the claim. This makes sense, because the landlord cannot be expected to supervise every action of the tenant and if the tenant allows a hazardous condition, like a wet floor, to exist, the landlord should not be held responsible for the tenant’s negligence. Of course, circumstances are often not as simple as this example and

there is a lot of gray area in these clauses that may not be immediately apparent.

After reading this article, it may be tempting to try to negotiate taking the indemnification clause out of the lease entirely. First, it is unlikely any landlord would agree to the deletion. Second, it would actually cause more problems that it solves. Absent the indemnification provisions of the lease, the landlord could still file a legal claim against the tenant under a variety of legal theories to recover any damages they suffer as a result of the third-party claim. The better course is to negotiate the terms of the indemnification clause to minimize exposure of the tenant and ensure that the terms are clear and unambiguous.

The Guts of an Indemnification Clause

The typical indemnification clause is composed of very long sentences with multiple subparts that make it difficult to even read, much less understand. The following is a breakdown of some of the key terms.

Definition of the Parties – “Landlord Parties” and “Tenant Parties,” or similar terms are defined to include each respective company along with their owners, officers, directors, shareholders, affiliates, agents, employees, representatives, etc. In other words, if an injured customer sues the owner of the landlord company, this definition includes the owner as an indemnified party, just as if the customer had sued the landlord company, itself.

Required Actions – Every indemnification clause will use some or all of the following terms: “indemnify,” “defend,” and “hold harmless.” While at first glance these terms would appear to mean the same thing, they are very different and which terms are used has important consequences. In particular, “indemnify” and “hold harmless” seem similar and, in fact, the differences between them varies from state to state. In general, “hold harmless” means that the landlord will not be held liable for any injuries or damages caused by the tenant. In other words, if the tenant is sued by an injured customer, tenant will not blame the landlord or try to bring the landlord into the case as a separate defendant. “Indemnify,” on the other hand, means that if the landlord is sued by the injured customer, the tenant agrees to reimburse them for costs incurred as a result of the lawsuit. “Defend,”

however, means that tenant is responsible for defending the landlord from lawsuits. That word in the clause should then trigger other questions, such as, who chooses the counsel to defend the landlord? Does the landlord have the right to approve the proposed counsel? And what happens if there is a conflict of interest between the landlord and tenant being represented by the same counsel? Those issues should all be addressed in the indemnification clause. If the word “defend” is not in the clause, though, that means the landlord is free to choose its own counsel to represent them and tenant is still responsible for the landlord’s legal fees, meaning tenant may be paying two different law firms to fight the same case.

Scope of Covered Claims – The clause should have some description of the types of expenses that are covered. In some cases, it is extremely broad, such as “any and all costs suffered by or claimed against landlord, directly or indirectly, based on, arising out of, or resulting from tenant’s use and occupancy of the premises or the business conducted by tenant therein.” The description may be limited to only physical injury, death, or damage to property. In some cases, it may refer to “reasonable claims.” Of course, what is reasonable is a subjective question and likely to spur additional legal battles. In some cases, the lease may require the tenant to warrant that they do not and will not infringe on another party’s trademark rights. The tenant should always try to limit the scope of such terms to only “knowingly” infringe or infringing “known” trademark rights. Otherwise, it would impart on the tenant an obligation to scour the earth for all trademarks that could possibly be asserted against it; an impossible task.

Scope of Covered Property – It should be clear exactly what property is covered by the indemnification clause. Often a lease will make a distinction between the “Premises” and the “Property.” Premises usually refers to the actual unit that the tenant is renting, whereas Property refers to the entire parcel of real estate owned by the landlord, which may include other rented units and common areas. Obviously, a tenant should not be required to indemnify the landlord against something done by another tenant in a separate unit. But, common areas are much more tricky. Often, either explicitly in the lease or by oral agreement, a landlord will permit a brewery tenant to occupy common areas, including parking lots, to serve beer and/or allow

customers to eat and drink. If someone drops a glass in the parking lot and the brewery does not clean it up promptly and a customer is cut by the broken pieces, the indemnification clause should protect the landlord if the customer sues. But, if the landlord is responsible for snow removal in the parking lot and fails to adequately perform its obligations and a customer slips and falls when getting out of her car, the tenant will want such incidents to be outside the scope of indemnification. If the clause is not worded carefully, that distinction may not be recognized by a court.

Carve-Outs for Landlord's Activity - This raises the broader issue of carve-outs in the indemnification clause for landlord's activity that contributed to the injury. For example, if the landlord was responsible for the build-out of the premises and was negligent in the installation of the electrical system, then if a customer is electrocuted, the tenant should not be required to indemnify the landlord against such latent defects. Even then, the choice of wording in the clause is important. Some leases only carve out "gross negligence," "recklessness," or "willful misconduct." In that case, if the injury is caused by landlord's "ordinary negligence" that does not rise to the level of gross negligence, the tenant would still be required to indemnify the landlord against such claims. It is worth noting, however, that some states hold such clauses to be against public policy, void, and unenforceable. Those cases, however, often turn on whether the part of the property in question was under the exclusive control of the tenant.

Conclusion

Landlords generally provide the first draft of a commercial lease and, not surprisingly, they are drafted heavily in favor of the landlord. While a tenant's focus may be on maximizing building improvement allowances and minimizing rent, they should review the entire lease thoroughly, and preferably with assistance from an attorney knowledgeable about the beverage industry. Often, the landlord will be in a position with greater bargaining power than the tenant, but the law will view both parties to a commercial lease as being sophisticated enough to negotiate the terms of the agreement they consider important. A court is unlikely to be persuaded that the tenant did not understand the terms or had no choice but to



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accept them. The indemnification clause should clearly set forth the responsibilities of each party in clear and unambiguous terms, including: the covered property, the scope of covered claims, what actions the tenant is required to perform in the event of a complaint, and what landlord activity is excluded from the indemnification.

***Brian Kaider** is the principal of KaiderLaw, a law firm with extensive experience in the craft beverage industry. He has represented clients from the smallest of start-up breweries to Fortune 500 corporations in the navigation of regulatory requirements, drafting and negotiating contracts, prosecuting trademark and patent applications, and complex commercial litigation.*



10 Ways to Maximize Beverage Sales Through Every Spring & Summer Holiday

By: Raj Tulshan, Founder of Loan Mantra

The arrival of spring means sunshine, warmer temperatures, gatherings and lots of drinking. This often involves celebrating with a cold pint of beer, glass of wine or festive cocktail. Special days are a great time to attract crowds planning to connect with family and friends at area restaurants and pubs and to increase beverage sales.

More than 335,000 gallons of tequila are consumed in the U.S. during Cinco de Mayo fiestas. An estimated 92 million Americans take their moms out for a meal for Mother's Day, making it the most popular day for restaurant dining. People don their big hats and spring finery, while sipping Mint Juleps at Kentucky Derby-themed parties. Then it's time to toast to dads on Father's Day, celebrate gradu-

ations, for bachelor and bachelorette parties and bridal showers. So, how can you maximize beverage sales all throughout these warm weather celebrations? Here are 10 tips:

1. **Spring into Theme** - Jump into action with some tropical themed drinks. Serve a refreshing Cherry Blossom, Tequila Honeysuckle, or a Lemon Drop for festive seasonal celebrations and, of course, don't forget a Mint Julep for Kentucky Derby parties. Source fresh ingredients whenever possible and use fun garnishes, like edible flowers. For a Spring Fling, use sorbet as a drink ingredient, with fancy glasses and pastel cocktail napkins. Get patriotic with red, white, and blue themed drinks for Flag Day, and consider garnishing the drinks (or the tables)

with cute little sparklers. Throw a tropical party and encourage employees and guests to wear Hawaiian shirts and leis, with mai tai or pina colada specials. Have a taco and tequila party for Cinco de Mayo and decorate with bright colors and a cactus or two. What about hosting an ice cream party with boozy milkshakes on a hot summer night social? The possibilities are endless, so be creative!

2. **Partner with the right vendors** - Many beer, wine and liquor vendors will provide plenty of marketing materials to help restaurants and bars drive beverage sales. They'll often give you free table tents, branded coasters, and other materials to promote their brands. Some vendors will go a step further and provide giveaway items, like branded pint glasses, t-shirts, or baseball caps for customers that order their products. This is an easy way for you to boost excitement and sales – and a fun incentive for your guests to enjoy.
3. **Get your financing in order** - Restaurants and bars have, understandably, had a tough two years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And now the COVID fallout includes a trifecta of major challenges, including soaring prices on food and beverage supplies, ongoing supply chain disruptions and continued staffing shortages. Be sure that your financing is stable enough to sustain your operations, especially amid this turbulent period and as you recover from the pandemic hardships. If you need a business loan, talk to an expert that can advise you about which path to take. There are many viable options available to help your business through the short-term or for your longer-term needs.
4. **Get the funding for your marketing needs** - You might have the most amazing place that serves the best food and drinks in the area, but if people don't know about you, you won't maximize sales, profits and other key metrics. Elevate your marketing efforts to generate awareness and excitement and drive traffic and sales. Be sure to have a professional, easy-to-navigate website with updated menus, drink lists, and specials. Become more active on social media and buy online ads that target your priority populations. Host special events and tastings. Send out emails about upcoming events and other incentives. If your budget is strained, consider a loan to boost your marketing efforts and attract more attention.
5. **Host VIP tastings. Boost customer loyalty with VIP tastings** - Valued customers will feel special to be part of an "elite" event, so make these tastings feel exclusive and important. Send out VIP invitations. If your budget allows, you can go all-out with a red carpet and champagne. Or create a different vibe with beer flights, a wine tasting or a sampling of different types of whiskey. Ask your vendors to provide experts to discuss their products and educate your guests about the types of beer, wine, or liquor they offer. Your vendors might provide VIP gift bags or other SWAG, as well.
6. **Create a comfortable atmosphere** - Be certain that your guests feel comfortable at your establishment, whether that means continuing to social distance during higher COVID transmission periods or keeping plastic partitions up for a while longer. Guests want to see "proof" that your restaurant or bar is still following strict cleaning and sanitation protocols, so place hand sanitizer dispensers around the facility and continue to sanitize tables, bars and other high-touch locations frequently. Have comfortable seating that will make people want to linger and have another drink. Use appealing soft (not harsh!) lighting and play fun music. Also, consider what would appeal to your target demographics. Men will want the big game on your TVs. A bachelorette party will want a fun waitstaff that will dare them to do shots. And guests appreciate some creative decorating for the holidays, whether that's flowers and champagne flutes for Mother's Day, or big hats and roses for Derby Day (also called The Run for the Roses).
7. **Provide outdoor seating** - One of the silver linings of the pre-vaccination landscape was that many restaurants and bars added outdoor seating, which customers loved. Now that spring is finally upon us, people will welcome the opportunity to eat, drink and celebrate outdoors. Set up tables and chairs outside. Consider adding fire pits or offering blankets on chilly evenings. Offer boozy popsicles or milkshakes to boost beverage sales when the weather gets warmer. String up pretty lights. Plant colorful flowers. Make your outdoor area feel lovely and inviting.

8. **Offer special incentives** - Promote special deals around the spring holidays, like “Moms drink for free on Mother’s Day” or “Dads get a free beer for Father’s Day.” Promote specials on tacos and margaritas for Cinco de Mayo. Offer Mint Juleps and tiny sandwiches for a Kentucky Derby watch party. Offer discounts on your special spring drink menu. Consider discounts on beer buckets for the spring or 2-for-1 drink specials on a typically slow weekday.
9. **Train your staff about the drink specials** - Make sure your staff are educated about your drink specials and encourage them to upsell to your guests. This is especially important when you add new seasonal cocktails to your menu or if you’re having special holiday-themed drinks. Be sure your employees know what each drink tastes like, how it’s made, and what it pairs well with. Your staff are your best ambassadors. The way they describe your menu and drink specials will matter. In fact, it will have a direct impact on your sales.
10. **Be active on social** - Social media can be a very effective way to incentivize your events, spotlight drink specials, and highlight fun plans and celebrations for the season. Post about what you’ll do to treat soon to be brides well for bachelorette parties (Champagne toasts! Bloody Mary specials!), so they’ll come to your establishment instead of your competitors.’ Feature different staff members raving about their favorite spring drink or talking about the upcoming events or parties that you’re hosting. Share photos of beautiful spring drinks garnished creatively. Showcase that your place is the place to be this summer, for any seasonal celebration.

Spring is in the air and there are so many opportunities to celebrate. There are also so many opportunities to promote your establishment, drive traffic and boost your beverage sales. Try these 10 tips to increase traffic to your establishment, customer loyalty and profits.

Neeraj (Raj) Tulshan is the Founder and Managing Member of Loan Mantra, a financial advisory firm with best-in-class and proprietary FinTech, BLUE (Borrower Lender Underwriting Environment). Loan Mantra, Powered by BLUE, is next-level finance: a one-stop-shop for business borrowers to secure tra-

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Move Over Scotch, Here Comes American Single Malt

By: Kris Bohm: Distillery Now, LLC

Just about anyone you meet who says they like whiskey has probably heard of single malt whiskey. When it comes to whiskey in America, bourbon is the undisputed reigning champion in sales, with Canadian whiskey right behind it. There are many craft distilleries making bourbon and rye whiskey, but there are not nearly as many distilleries making single malt whiskey. American single malt whiskey is a lesser known sub-category of whiskey and is growing quickly in popularity. American single malt whiskey, or ASMW, is a unique spirit made in America from malted barley. ASMW presents an opportunity for distillers to show creativity with a whiskey whose flavor profile is far different from the wood dominant flavor profile that most American whiskeys exhibit. Let's explore what ASMW is by examining the rules that define the spirit and how it is typically made. With this understanding, let's meet the people who

are leading this newly emerging spirit category. By developing an understanding of ASMW we hope to give you the confidence to consider making malt whiskey and joining this new spirit category.

Redefining Single Malt

The average consumer of spirits logically assumes that single malt whiskey is just another phrase for Scotch whiskey. In liquor stores and bars, Scotch is the predominant malt whiskey that people see. While Scotch is malt whiskey, not all malt whiskey is Scotch. Malt whiskey is defined by the ingredient used in production, malted barley. And to further specify, malt whiskey that uses only whiskey from one distillery is known as single malt whiskey. While it is beneficial to the distillers and producers in Scotland to imply their region is what makes Scotch, well, Scotch, it is in fact the ingredients and

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production methods that make a great malt whiskey a single malt whiskey. American single malt whiskey strives to break away from Scotch whiskey and become a separate, recognized category.

Defining the Spirits

Malt whiskey is defined by the TTB in The United States as a whiskey that is made from at least 51% malted barley and aged in new American oak barrels. This definition does not meet the expectation of most consumers or distillers of malt whiskey. This standard of identity has held back the potential for malt whiskey made in America to be the best whiskey possible. Most malt whiskey made outside America is made from 100% malted barley aged in used barrels. American single malt whiskey does not have a legal definition. This is a hurdle to the spirit becoming an accepted category of whiskey. Several American distillers and their respective distilleries have banded together to form the American Single Malt Whiskey Commission in 2016. The mission of ASMWC is to establish, promote, and protect the category of American single malt whiskey. Prior to 2016 there were already distilleries producing malt whiskey in America, but most distillers felt the TTB standard of identity was outdated. The goal of establishing the commission was to define a unique standard of identity and type to allow ASMW to be the best whiskey possible. The ASMWC set forth and created new standards of identity for American single malt whiskey and is working with the TTB to incorporate those standards into federal guidelines.

AMERICAN SINGLE MALT WHISKEY COMMISSION NEWLY PROPOSED STANDARD OF IDENTITY MADE FROM 100% MALTED BARLEY

DISTILLED ENTIRELY AT ONE DISTILLERY

MASHED, DISTILLED, AND MATURED IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MATURED IN OAK CASKS OF A CAPACITY
NOT EXCEEDING 700 LITERS

DISTILLED TO NO MORE THAN 160 (U.S.)
PROOF (80% ALCOHOL BY VOLUME)

BOTTLED AT 80 (U.S.) PROOF OR MORE
(40% ALCOHOL BY VOLUME)

These proposed standards of identity are thoughtful with specific intent, laid forth by the distillers

who wrote them. This new proposal came together to allow for creativity in the hands of those producing the whiskey within this standard of identity.

How is ASMW Made?

For the sake of discussing single malt production methods, we will give an overview of the traditional method of distilling malt whiskey as it is done in Scotland.

Malted barley is crushed by a mill and mixed with hot water. This hot water and barley mixture is mixed in a vessel called a lauter tun. This lauter tun separates the sugary liquid (called wort) from the barley. As the wort is drained away from the grain it is cooled off and transferred to a fermentation vessel. The fermentation takes place and the sugar in the wort is consumed by yeast to become alcohol and carbon dioxide. This now fermented beverage is referred to as distiller's beer or wash. The alcohol content of the wash will vary but can be as low as 5% to upwards of 12%. The wash is pumped to a still where the alcohol is distilled out of it. This alcohol, also known as white whiskey, is then placed in barrels to age. The ABV of the whiskey entering the barrel will vary for some folks as low as 50% to upwards of 75% ABV. This process is a very general overview. There are many different ways to go about producing malt whiskey, and most distillers all have unique processes that produce amazing spirits.

The Folks Behind ASMW

Steve Hawley is the vocal individual who is leading the charge of the American Single Malt Whiskey Commission. Steve, who is the president of the commission, had much to say about ASMW. On the growth of this newer whiskey category, Steve credited the distillers producing the spirits and working to grow their brands as the primary force growing the ASMW category. Hawley went further to talk about the future of single malt, saying he believes that for single malt to grow and reach the levels of popularity of other whiskies that single malt producers must be unified in the language of how they promote their spirits. Being a member of the commission is a great step for distilleries to be a part of this new category. Hawley also pointed out that the key to unlock more category growth is for distilleries to focus and educate the consumer on what ASMW is.

In the state of Oregon and beyond Rogue Ales and

Spirits is well known for their beer and whiskies. In a discussion with Jake Holshue, the Head Distiller for Rogue Spirits in Oregon, Holshue had the following to say. American single malt is best kept simple. Good base malt makes exceptional single malt whiskey. Holshue has years of experience producing single malt whiskey and has learned many things the hard way through experimentation. "Don't add chocolate malt and definitely do not add hops," says Holshue, "These unnecessary ingredients can ruin the magic of good whiskey made from malted barley." Jake's perspective on producing a wonderful ASMW is summed up well, "You should keep it simple."

One of the pioneers that started production of ASMW early on is the founder of Santa Fe Spirits, Colin Keegan. Santa Fe Spirits opened in 2010 in New Mexico and produces a whiskey called Colkegan. Their particular ASMW is made from malted barley with a portion of the malt being mesquite smoked. This whiskey is reminiscent of a smokey Scottish whiskey, but their smoke carries flavors of southwest mesquite instead of traditional Scottish peat. Colkegan is firmly rooted in the traditions of Scottish single malt production, but the use of mesquite smoke and dry New Mexico climate has created a whiskey that is truly unique.

When it comes to whiskey in America there is no question that ASMW is a fast growing category with many new entrants. While there are many craft distilleries making bourbon and rye whiskey, there are not nearly as many making ASMW. This category of whiskey has big opportunities for a distillery that does not necessarily exist in other categories of spirits. As more brands become established players in the whiskey business ASMW and the demand for it will continue to grow. We highly encourage you to join the American Single Malt Whiskey Commission to help be a part of the collective voice of distillers. If you are just considering making single malt whiskey and not sure where to start you can contact the author for more info. There is no doubt that ASMW is the next big trend in whiskey. Are you ready to be a part of it?

*The author of this article is **Kris Bohm**, owner of **Distillery Now Consulting LLC**. When Kris is not helping distilleries he can often be found seeking out adventures on two wheels, or defending his beer mile record.*



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Exploring the Nuances of Distilling Bourbon

By: Becky Garrison

Jason Parker, co-founder of Copperworks Distilling Company in Seattle, Washington and a native of Kentucky, may distill American Single Malt whiskey. Still, his collection of 600 bourbon bottles speaks to his love of this particular whiskey. “Whiskey made from corn produces a lighter and oiler texture than other whiskeys such as Scotch, Irish, Canadian or Japanese rye.”

Tom Jones, Global Brand Ambassador for Kentucky Owl, offers this succinct history of bourbon. “Immigrant farmers discovered ways to turn

wheat, rye and corn into dollars, which flowed all the way down the Mississippi, fueling celebration on the streets of New Orleans.”

While some claim bourbon was named after Bourbon Street, others like Jay Erisman, co-founder of New Riff Distilling in Newport, Kentucky, believe the name came from Kentucky’s Bourbon County, where this spirit emerged.

In summarizing the history of bourbon, Parker reminisces how modern expressions of whiskey have someone named Beam as their master distill-

er or on their board of directors. This points to the brotherhood and family network of individuals who have distilled Kentucky Bourbon since the 1700s.

For example, Buffalo Trace Distillery, an award-winning distillery based in Frankfort, Kentucky, has a rich tradition dating back to 1775. According to Kristie Wooldridge, Buffalo Trace's PR associate manager, Kentucky has many unique natural features that make it the ideal location for producing bourbon. "We experience all four seasons, which plays a big role in the aging process, and our water is naturally limestone-filtered. Early settlers found Kentucky's ground to be quite fertile for growing corn, an essential ingredient for bourbon, and put down roots here. The rest is history."

Jones cites Kentucky's natural resources as contributing to the quality of Kentucky Owl's bourbon, which it's been distilling since Charles Mortimer founded the distillery in 1879. "The blue limestone-filtered water provides us with a good supply of clean, fresh and filtered water unlike anywhere else."

In addition to using water to produce bourbon, the water also feeds the growth of raw materials. Also, in Jones' estimation, the hot summers and cold winters provide the perfect conditions for bourbon to expand and contract, passing in and out of the oak barrels. "This gives us color, mouthfeel, and flavor," he said.

Defining Bourbon

For a U.S. spirit to be labeled "bourbon whiskey" by the TTB, it must not exceed 80% alcohol by volume (160 proof) from a fermented mash of not less than 51% corn and stored at not more than 62.5% alcohol by volume (125 proof) in charred new oak containers. New American wood imbues bourbon with a full-bodied flavor profile quite different than barrels from Europe and Scotland. Due to the difficulty in sourcing new American oak, bourbon is produced primarily in the United States.

Straight bourbon whiskey has been stored in charred, new oak containers for two years or more, and may include mixtures of two or more straight bourbons, provided all are produced in the same state. Blended bourbon whiskey is the classification for bourbon produced in the U.S. containing not less than 51% of straight bourbon. The TTB does

not specify the requirements for the remaining 49% ingredients, thus allowing for considerable creativity among distillers.

Distillation processes typical to the Kentucky whiskey-making regimen differ from the Celtic traditions. Erisman told Beverage Master Magazine, "We distill 'on the grain,' meaning that the still is fed with both liquids and the ground grains from the mash. This extracts more flavor from the grains than in other distilling traditions."



While Kentucky may be considered the home of bourbon, one can find distilleries throughout the U.S. producing this spirit. Molly Troupe, Master Distiller at Freeland Spirits in Portland, Oregon, speaks to the regional differences inherent in bourbon distilled outside of Kentucky. "Each of those ingredients has their own nuances, particular to the region that they are grown, that makes them special."

Following are some examples of bourbons distilled in different regions of the United States.

30A Distilling Company (Santa Rosa Beach, Florida) - Like many small-batch producers, 30A Distilling founder **Brian Rabon** sources his bourbon. He describes 30A's process for making bourbon as "distilled in Indiana, rested at Sugarfield Spirits in Louisiana, and then finished at 30A Distilling Company." Like its other spirits, its Blue Mountain Beach Bourbon (81.4 proof) is named for one of the local Florida beaches. The mashbill is very rye forward at 36%, which gives this bourbon some spicy and peppery notes. Also, Rabon produces a lower-proof version that allows for sweeter corn notes.

The Aimsir Distilling Company (Portland, Oregon)

According to co-owners **Christine and Steve Hopkins**, the Pacific Northwest's cooler, drier environment affects how the bourbon extracts from the barrel. Steve, head of production, told *Beverage Master Magazine*, "Even though we're using new oak barrels, our bourbon does tend to extract a little bit slower from the wood. So you get more of the mashbill flavor and less of the barrel flavor."

Aimsir uses 51% corn and 45% wheat for its mashbill, resulting in a high-wheated bourbon with a smooth flavor, bottled at 94.5 proof. The bourbon ages between four and four and a half years, with distillers testing the barrel periodically after the fourth year until it gets to that sweet spot. "If you age it too long, you start to get too much barrel notes," Steve Hopkins said.

Alchemy Distillery (Arcata, California) - When they first started their distillery, co-owner and head distiller **Amy Bohner** said they made batches of 100% single grains to get to know each grain's flavor profile. "Being able to choose which corn, rye and wheat makes each batch unique. And every batch for us is a single barrel, so the options for our mash bills are vast."

Alchemy chose to work with local farmers and keep the grain in whole form until milling the day of the cook. According to Bohner, this ensures optimal freshness, similar to grinding beans just before making a cup of coffee.

Brother's Bond Bourbon (Fort Smith, Arkansas) Co-founder **Paul Wesley** describes Brother's Bond Bourbon as hand-selected, four-grain, high rye, straight bourbon with the grain flavors optimized. It is distilled in a copper column and copper pot-doubler, aged four years in virgin American Oak, staves charred #4 and heads charred #2, and chill-filtered once at a distillery in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Then the bourbon is bottled at 80 proof, 135 barrels at a time, and distributed at Brother's Bond's facility in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Ian Somerhalder, co-founder, highlights their commitment to sustainability. "We partner with organizations that use sustainable and regenerative practices to combat climate change. Also, we aim to use our platform to help reverse climate change by giving back a portion of proceeds to support regenerative farming practices."

Freeland Spirits (Portland, Oregon) - According to **Molly Troupe**, Freeland Spirits' bourbon is a sourced whiskey, which means that only the aging and blending take place at the distillery. Distillers finish the bourbon in Pinot Noir barrels, where it sits for about six months. Then, they select barrels for blending, adding water to bring the bourbon to bottle-proof.

In Troupe's estimation, one of the best parts of living in the Pacific Northwest is its proximity to makers of all kinds. For example, through their relationship with Elk Cove Winery, they get barrels delivered to them the day they are dumped.

Hood River Distillers (Hood River, Oregon) - Hood River distillers purchase bourbon in barrels from a source in Kentucky. Then, they experiment and manipulate the bourbon through those barrel finishes, which Master Distiller **Joe O'Sullivan** finds best define the region and complement the flavor of the base spirit itself. He told *Beverage Master Magazine*, "By finishing the same spirit in various, unique regional casks, we focus entirely on the Northwest and its culinary strength."

Maverick Whiskey (San Antonio, Texas) - Maverick Whiskey pays homage to founder **Kenneth Maverick's** storied Texas roots and the family patriarch Sam Maverick (1803-1870). Its Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey mash, which consists of locally sourced corn and rye, is distilled in a hybrid pot still, a combination of a pot still and a column still. As the bourbon ages, it gets proofed to 88, using reverse osmosis filtered water and then non-chill filtered, thus ensuring a bold flavor. In Head Distiller Kevin Graham's assessment, the Texas grains—corn, in particular—are sweeter with a bigger flavor than grains grown elsewhere in the county. Also, the Texas Hill Country is home to artesian wells that produce hard water with a high carbonate, ideal for distilling spirits and making beer.

Mile High Spirits (Denver, Colorado) - **Wyn Ferrell**, co-founder of Mile High Spirits, distinguishes his distillery not by the spirits but by the people. "We have an amazing vibrant staff that produces our products with passion, heart and soul, but also has a lot of fun with music pumping and people dancing."

Ferrell sources unique grain profiles from around the world for Mile High's mashbill, which is distilled

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in a pot column hybrid from Germany-based Arnold Holstein Stills. As part of its commitment to regenerative agriculture, Mile High sends all its spent grain to a local rancher.

Port Chilkoot Distillery (Haines, Alaska) - Heather Shade, Port Chilkoot's founder and co-owner, sources the distillery's organic, certified non-GMO corn and Kentucky barrels from a barge that floats up the famed Inside Passage from Seattle to Haines once a week. Distillers cook, ferment and double-distill the bourbon mash on-site using a traditional method of open-fermentation, distill on-the-grain and a batch double distillation process. The bourbon is proofed down to barrel strength after distillation using water from their glacier-fed mountains and aged in a climate-controlled barrel house. According to Shade, "The unique water source and the stormy weather patterns/large barometric pressure swings here give their maturation a different character, more similar to the Scotch whiskies made in Scotland."

Side Hustle Brews & Spirits (Slippery Rock, PA)
Chad McGehee, Founder, Balmaghie Beverage Group (dba Side Hustle Brews & Spirits, Side Hustle

Hops Farm, Balmaghie Artisanal Spirits), sees his core business objective to build a farm so they can produce their own artisanal spirits from farm to glass. Starting in May, they moved from sourcing their bourbon to producing their first runs of produced recipes. They will purchase their Western Pennsylvania historic grains from a neighboring farmer. In particular, the Jimmy Red Corn used historically by Western Pennsylvania moonshiners produces a higher sugar content than normal corn that results in a sweeter Straight Bourbon Whiskey with an ABV of 50%. Their mashbill, which is high in rye and aged for seven years, is mixed either in their single pot or in space they rent from other distillers as need be. Also, they use American White Oak, which has been cured in the rain, snow, heat, and cold for a full eight seasons before they are transformed by coppers into barrels.

The Golden Beers of South Africa

By: Hanifa Sekandi

In North America, beer is a much-loved beverage. It is the go-to drink during cottage season. It is a trusted companion for every sports event. It is the bridge between strangers who will find themselves bonding over a pint. Everyone has their favorite brew. Brand loyalty is common and set at a high standard. Just take a stroll through a tailgate party, and you will see what beer drinkers prefer. Imbibing beer is a culture that spans the globe. Each country has its unique approach to this nuanced fermented beverage. As we travel to South Africa, you will learn about its rich history of beer.

In South Africa, the sun's heat will graze your skin as the sound of life in this vibrant country will propel you to live boldly. Truly, those who have been to South Africa will tell you there is nothing like it. It is an experience that will change you in ways you could not imagine. South African people and the culture awaken the soul.

As you raise your glass in the celebration, you cannot help but feel the rhythm of South African Zulu dancers. They harmonically chant songs about better days ahead, accompanied by the rhythmic-thunderous sound of the djembe drums. When we drink beer, we dance and sing. We gather with friends and family to tell stories; feel connected. Beer is the ultimate connector where alcoholic beverages are concerned. Even for those who do not prefer beer, a light lager is an exception. When you attend a gathering in South Africa, coolers will overflow, and beer runs throughout the party are continuous. Sounds a lot like North American beer culture, doesn't it? So, what makes South African beer culture so unique? More importantly, how did beer become a star beverage in this African country?

Golden Brew Beginnings In South African

Along with wine in South Africa, European immigrants – Dutch and British settlers – brought their beer-making knowledge to this country. One cannot solely attribute their arrival for the presence of alcohol, since traditionally made alcoholic beverages existed before. However, their presence ushered in the beer industry and set forth a new enterprise

that has thrived for more than 300 years.

The beginnings of the European golden brew in South Africa first began in the mid-1650s with the Dutch. An excerpt from Jan van Riebeeck's diary noted that the first bottled beer was brewed on October 4, 1658. Similar to wine and other spirits, beer was used for its medicinal properties. Since beer was initially brewed to treat scurvy, the Nieuwe Haarlem shipwreck that landed Dutch sailors on South African soil may have been a saving grace for the scurvy-ridden explorers.

The idea that beer is deemed a beneficial natural beverage in some countries still exists. Of course, with modern beer-making and innovative methods, the composition of beer has changed, particularly when one looks at commercially sold beer brands. Concerning local homebrews, this belief is still firmly held. As with spirits, the purpose evolved as the desire for beer and its use changed. When European settlers first arrived on South African shores, it was essential to eliminate the plague impacting trade between the East Indies and the Netherlands. One could say that the recreational consumption of alcoholic beverages is a haphazard event. The original intent was not to intoxicate people or add more fun to the party.

Malan Liquor Commission in 1960 noted its concern about the intoxicating effects of beer and liquor. This assessment concluded that alcoholic beverages should be consumed with care and with food. As a result, an initiative was created to stabilize drinking habits. It also demonstrated how what was once an essential remedial beverage had transitioned into a leisure one. At the time, beer still held a high standard where natural beverages were concerned. Unlike spirits, it was dubbed a drink consumed by moderate drinkers.

A seed must be planted to see growth, quite evident today in the rapidly expanding beer industry in South Africa. The burgeoning beer industry was not foreseen at its inception or use in the mid-17th century. One would not know its initial purpose unless they did a deep dive into its beginning.

South Africa now takes up significant space on the world stage with approximately 34% beer consumption, a number expected to grow roughly 10% annually. South African Breweries (SAB), established in 1895, holds a monopoly on beer production and distribution in South Africa. It is the largest brewer and is a subsidiary of AB InBev, with seven breweries operated under its helm. It maintains an impressive annual brewing capacity of 3.1 billion liters. Familiar premium beer brands Hansa Pilsener and Carling Black Labels are among their diverse portfolio of beers.

Competing with Local Brews

As the beer industry expands globally, it may appear that local or homebrews are popping up out of nowhere. The truth is, local brews and brews endemic to the land have always been there. For example, Bantu Beer, an essential part of the Bantu tribe's life, is a traditionally brewed beer. The Bantu create this beer with water and kaffircorn. The consistency of this brew is quite thick – almost smoothie-like – since it is partially strained. It is considered a food and drink for this tribe. What differs from European beer is the fermentation process. Bantu beer is fermented until it begins to sour. European beer is pasteurized after bottling. The longer fermentation process that Bantu beer undergoes creates a higher alcohol content.

The legalization of Bantu beer for sale in 1962 could be attributed to its mainstream prevalence. People are looking for something that cuts through the norm. Bantu beer, along with other homebrews, satisfies this desire. It also encourages new brands to enter the market and perhaps borrow from traditionally made brews to expand the South African beer market with something somewhat familiar. When looking at the South African beer market, Bantu Beer is a nouveau niche beverage for those unfamiliar with South African culture or traditional drinks. Its consistency also sets it apart from the silkier texture of most beers.

Industrially-made Bantu Beer changed in composition. Now, the mash consists of maize grits combined with kaffircorn malt. These changes are spurring more innovations to expand Bantu's profit potential. Breweries are looking to entice niche beer consumers who want to drink premium, naturally brewed beers or beers that support their lifestyle. Microbreweries trying to break through the

market may take the lead and tap into local blends.

Sharing Traditions

The changing political and economic landscape in South Africa is a nation of people who endured the cruelties of apartheid. For this country, it is time to rebuild and restore. Imagine being born in a country where you have no rights? A land where your ancestors lived freely for thousands of years and have no right to live off the land? Or make profits from your labor? South Africans are claiming not just their land but their birthright to live freely, feed their families and create a life for themselves.

This shift also extends to the beer industry. Local brews are owned and made by South Africans. Breweries owned by the Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu tribes are making beers used for cultural practices. For example, The Xhosa beer is shared as a beverage of reciprocity during the harvesting of crops, a time that requires neighboring farmers to come together for additional labor. Beer is offered as a way to show appreciation.

Sorghum, gluten-free beers made by modern breweries are most likely borrowed from these tribes. The traditional beer, Umqombothi, is made using sorghum malt, maize malt, corn maize, water and yeast. Another noteworthy find highlights that gluten-free, digestive-friendly beers are not an innovation. As the South African beer industry continues to soar, Umqombothi will become the brew watch since it meets the desires not just of the local consumer but tourists who prefer locally made beers low in alcohol and gut-friendly. A beer with a smooth texture and slightly sour aftertaste refreshes the tastebuds. A great sipping beer enjoyed without the overwhelming intoxicating effects experienced with other beers. The art of making this traditional beer passes through generations. It is also brewed in South African homes with unique spices, herbs or citrus additions to create new flavors.

If you ever find yourself in this beautiful country, tasting local beers is a worthwhile experience. Travel back in time with each sip and feel the warmth of the South African people.



Sake To Me!

By: Tod Stewart

It's "rice wine." You serve it hot. It comes from Japan. And it only really pairs well with Japanese dishes like sushi and sashimi. Well, no, no, not necessarily, and no. If there's a misunderstood libation in the world of alcohol, sake is surely it. However, once you dispense with the myths and misconceptions – and once you treat yourself to some higher-end examples served properly – you'll likely find sake to be one of the most enjoyable and versatile tipples out there.

So, first things first: if sake isn't "rice wine," what exactly is it? Yes, it's made from rice, but technically speaking, sake is closer to beer because it's not fruit-based, and its production process sees starch converted to sugar prior to fermentation. (In comparison, wine fermentation involves the production of alcohol via the fermentation of naturally occur-

ring sugar found in grapes).

If you're super keen to learn about sake production, you might want to read all 230 pages of *The Text-book of Sake Brewing*. Admittedly, it's not exactly a riveting read, but it is thorough if nothing else. One part of the book I found particularly interesting was the glossary of sake brewing nomenclature. Here, I learned the meaning of such terms as *shinseki*, *hikikomi*, *tsubodai*, *dakidaru* and *bōshitsu*. The latter was particularly interesting. *Bōshitsu*: Accidental disappearance of finished sake. Translated to English: theft.

Book not for you? Okay, the condensed version goes something like this:

Sake's main ingredients are rice, water, yeast

and a curious ingredient called *kōji*. Sake rice (*shuzō kōtekimai*) differs from table rice in that the grains are typically larger and contain less protein. It is possible to make sake using table rice. Still, for premium sake, true sake rice – you’ll hear names like Yamadanishiki, Gohyakumangoku, Miyamanishiki and Omachi thrown around by sake geeks – is *de rigueur*. The reason is that the rice, at the start of the production cycle, is first polished to remove fats and proteins and expose the starch core. Smaller, more brittle table rice grains contain less starch and tend to break apart during the polishing process.

The degree of polishing has an impact on the “quality” – and price – of the final liquid. The polishing ratio (*seimaibuai*) refers to the percentage of the grain that remains after polishing (60% *seimaibuai* means 40% of the rice grain has been milled away). I put the word quality in quotations because I’m unsure whether the word should be quality or character. Yes, the more the rice is polished, the more subtle and refined the sake’s flavor tends to be. And since there’s physically less rice to ferment, the reduction in quantity leads to an increase in price, which, rightly or wrongly, is typically indicative of higher quality. But in my experience, the result of varying polish levels comes down more to stylistic variation than a case of one being “better” than the other. This brings us to the question of how you, as a consumer, can tell the difference between moderate and high-polish sake. Welcome to the wonderful world of sake classification.

Within the premium sake (*tokutei meisho-shu*) realm, there are several “tiers” that correspond to the polish level of the rice used. The highest is *daiginjo*, with a polish ratio of 50% (or less). This is followed by *ginjo* (60% or less polish), *honjozo* (70% or less) and finally, *junmai* (polish level not stipulated). So far, so understandable. Where things get a bit dicey is when you see something like *junmai-daiginjo*. Is this some sort of combination that blends ultra-high polish rice with relatively low polish rice? Though that would make sense in a weird sort of way, when you see “*junmai*” stuck in front of either *daiginjo* or *ginjo*, it indicates that no additional alcohol has been added. *Daiginjo* and *ginjo*, with no qualifier, denote sakes that have a small amount of distilled alcohol added to them.

Got it? Good. But we’re not done yet. Enter *tokubetsu*. *Tokubetsu* indicates that some “special”

element has been used during production. The nature of these elements is exactly why Google was invented.

Now, having a superior rice strain milled to the ideal ratio is still nothing but a pile of – albeit special – rice. As noted earlier, you’ll need water, yeast, and *kōji* to turn that polished pile into something drinkable. Before you can do anything with the rice, though, it needs to be steamed.

A few years back, I was fortunate to be a guest of the Japan Sake and Schochu Makers Association on a sake tour of (mostly) Hiroshima. On this winter excursion, I was able to see first-hand how all the components of sake come together.

I began my days watching clouds of vapor billow out of rice steamers. Steaming typically takes place early in the morning, when most nocturnally-inclined writers are still half-dead. Nonetheless, I bravely hauled myself out of bed to board the bus, don slippery slippers (shoe-wearing being forbidden on brew-ery floors) and observe the rice-steaming ritual. After the rice is washed and soaked to wash away rice dust, it’s steamed to soften the grains, preparing them for the infusion of *kōji* and ensuring they break up during fermentation. The aim is to get them firm on the outside, soft on the inside.

When it comes to water used in sake production, there is a distinct difference between the impact of hard and soft water. Hard water has historically been the preference of sake brewers, but soft water is what you typically find in the Hiroshima Prefecture. This area has some of Japan’s most premium sake today, but this wasn’t always the case. About 120 years ago, the water in the region lacked the minerals necessary to nourish fermentation. This led to a lackluster brewing reputation that changed when a brewer named Senzaburo Miura, from the village of Akitsu, mastered soft water brewing. He also created a new (at the time) style of sake – *ginjo*. As the sake produced here started to consistently take home top awards from the Zenkoku Shinshu Kampyou-kai, Japan’s most prestigious sake competition, it focused national attention on the area.

Yeast and *kōji* work as a tag team to turn polished, steamed rice and hard or soft water into finished sake. For a sake brewer, a *toji*, the decision of which yeast strain to use is a very big deal in that

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it impacts the end product's aroma, texture, acidity and alcohol concentration. After several hours in a highly technical lecture on sake yeast, I became aware of two things: I have no real interest in learning anything more about yeast, and there are many, many yeast strains from which a brewer has to decide.

Getting the rice to a state where the impact of yeast actually amounts to something requires the rice to be inoculated with *kōji*. *Kōji* is a mold cultivated – or sometimes purchased – by sake brewers. When introduced to steamed rice, it initiates the saccharification process. *Kōji* converts rice starch into sugar that can, in turn, be converted by yeast into alcohol (in much the same way *qu* acts in the *baijiu*-making process).

If I learned anything from my Japan sake tour, it was this: making premium sake is a very labor-intensive activity, even if modern technology is employed to assist, which is rarely the case with smaller, family-run breweries.

As fascinating as crafting sake can be, drinking

it is much more fun. Of course, these days, trying to find authentic Japanese sake is a bit of a problem due to: supply chain issues, transportation issues, fuel cost issues, COVID, Putin, etcetera, etcetera. The good news is that sake production isn't confined to Japan. There's plenty of top-notch sake being created in the United States – Oregon and California in particular. There is even a very respectable sake brewery in downtown Toronto. But if you're a brewer looking to fill a niche, sake might be something to consider as we'll likely be depending on local suppliers for a little while yet.

Assuming you can procure some quality sake from somewhere, enjoying it is basically as simple as getting it into your mouth. However, as with many things, a few things can up the pleasure level a bit.

While you don't need any particularly fancy glassware, there's now a Riedel junmai glass available, but a standard ISO wine glass works fine. In any case, serving temperature is probably the most important – and misunderstood – factor when it comes to fully appreciating sake. The most delicate and arguably, complex styles – *daiginjo*, *ginjo*,

and the like – are best served chilled. More robust types – honjozo, for example – can be served anywhere between fairly chilled and fairly warm. Never hot.

It's interesting to see how the character can change based on serving temperature. I remember being at a sake dinner (back in the "before time") where the sake samurai (yes, there is such a thing) served the same sake chilled with sashimi and warm with pork belly. In both cases, the match worked beautifully. Try doing that with a lager beer. (Sure, a chilled lager with sashimi would work fine; a warm lager with pork—or anything—not so much).

Which brings me to sake and food. Yes, it pairs perfectly with what we might consider "typical" Japa-nese food. But as with all countries, Japanese food varies considerably depending on which part of the country you are in. So do the sakes from each region. But don't stop with Japanese food. Sake and cheese can yield some surprising combinations. So can sake with chocolate, sake with nuts, sake with fruit, sake with fried foods....

So, if you're looking to expand your knowledge and enjoyment of Japan's national drink, say kam-pai to a glass of premium sake...at the proper temperature, of course.

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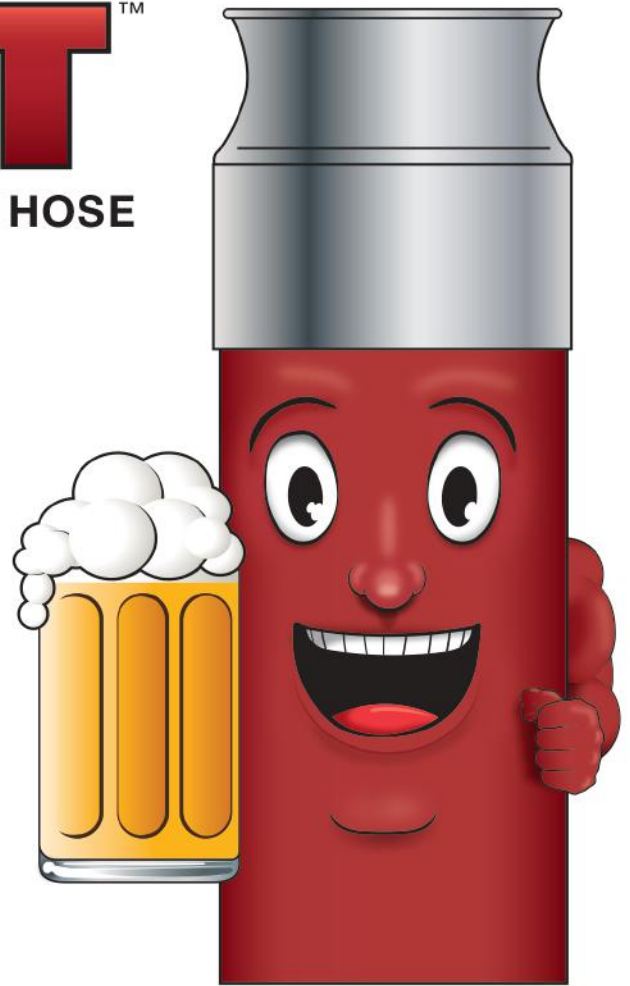
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