

LIQUORRETAILER

Keeping the Industry Informed

FEATURING
Liquor Lodge

PAGE 16

BEER STYLES

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES
FOR ADVENTURE

APPEALING TO MILLENNIALS

FIVE WAYS TO ATTRACT THESE
LUCRATIVE CUSTOMERS

THE POWER OF YOUR POS

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STORY ON PAGE 16

FEATURES



6 Increasing Sales: Maximizing Sales per Square Foot

Personable staff, selection, competitive pricing, layout and loss prevention boost profitability.



12 Beer Styles: Endless Opportunities for Adventure

Educate your team on different beer styles and customers will keep coming back.



18 Appealing to Millennials: Attracting these Lucrative Customers

They're tech-savvy, media-savvy and crave new experiences and opportunities to connect.



22 The Power of Your POS: Manage Inventory & Labour Costs, Run Sales & Loyalty Programs and More

Your POS is one of the most important and powerful tools for building a profitable business.

REGULARS

- 4 Editor's Notes
- 5 ALSA's Message
- 10 Spirit Spotlight
- 11 Product Showcase
- 21 Wine Report
- 24 Beer Notes
- 25 AGLC Report
- 29 What's New?
- 30 Names in the News

EXTRAS

- 4 Upcoming Events
- 26 White Wine Varietals
- 28 Selling the Story of BC VQA

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by Joyce Hayne



With the Alberta provincial election being held May 5, it's an important time to talk to the candidates in your area about issues that affect your business. Just look next door to BC to see the massive changes that can take place in the liquor industry.

In BC, as of April 1st a new wholesale pricing model came into effect, so both private and government stores buy at the same price. BC government liquor stores can now be open on Sundays, offer extended shopping hours, and sell cold beer and wine. These benefits all used to be the exclusive privileges of private liquor stores. Stores moving locations no longer need to relocate within 5 km of their previous location, although they cannot move within 1 km of another liquor store.

Probably the most controversial issue is that BC wine can be sold on grocery store shelves. There are a limited number of these licenses available, but the BC government has not shared just how many there are. Liquor stores can also relocate to become a store within a grocery store, and stores had to enter a lottery to get the first option to do this. It will be interesting to watch this changing landscape and its impact on both the private and public stores.

After the election, take time to meet your local representative and make sure that person is aware of the challenges and opportunities you deal with in the liquor industry, so you can maintain a stable working environment.

Joyce Hayne, Publisher & Editor

joyce@emcmarketing.com

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1-2 Calgary International Beerfest, BMO Center, Stampede Park

www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services

May 13 IVSA New Product Tasting and Seminar, Hotel Chateau Lacombe, Edmonton

1:00 pm - Seminar by pre-registration only

2:00 - 5:00 pm - Tasting for Industry only

www.ivsa.ca

June 5-6 Edmonton Craft Beer Festival, Expo Centre at Northlands

www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services

June 19 ALSA Liquor Industry Golf Tournament, Stony Plain Golf Course, Stony Plain

www.alsaweb.ca

October 2-3 Edmonton Oktoberfest, Expo Centre at Northlands

www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services

ALSA'S MESSAGE

by Ivonne Martinez



The Alberta Liquor Store Association is delighted with the interest and feedback from the inaugural issue of *Liquor Retailer*. It was rewarding to get the positive comments and appreciation for our newest publication.

There are a number of things that ALSA has undertaken in the past few months, not the least of which is the physical move to new offices. We are pleased to be now sharing space with the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA). Other than our address, no other contact information has changed.

Our involvement with the AHLA provides us with many opportunities to collaborate with our colleagues in the hospitality and liquor industry. We share many similar concerns and interests. We also will be working with the AHLA on our partnerships, to make more attractive cost-saving programs available to both memberships.

We are delighted to have most of our member stores renewing their memberships with ALSA. Your support and encouragement to

continue our efforts on your behalf keeps us working hard. We will be producing a number of education programs this year with the participation of many of our partners. Look for invitations to attend these events later in the year.

We continually update information on our website and are encouraged by the members who have created a login to review all of the information available. If you have not already done so, please contact us to get a temporary user name and password. New members are provided this information when they join. We do not yet provide an option to sign up online as a security precaution.

Planning has already started for the Alberta Liquor Industry Conference, which will be held in Edmonton again this year. Look for details later this spring, and keep in mind that it is becoming the key education event of the year for the industry.

The spring is also time to think about the Annual General Meeting and Awards

Reception, which is held in concert with the conference. Please review the ALSA's website for award criteria and let us hear from you.

How Can You Get Involved?

ALSA is a not-for-profit organization, which means that the board of directors must be elected by the membership and makes the policy decisions for the association. Every member has a right to participate in those decisions and contribute to the goals and outcomes needed to protect your investment in your business.

Whether you have been a former member or are new to the industry, we would be delighted to hear from you. If you are already members and have questions about some of our new programs and partnerships, please give us a call.

For more information, find us at www.alsaweb.ca, info@alsaweb.ca, or 1-888-233-3370 out of Edmonton, or 780-415-5176 in Edmonton.

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INCREASING SALES

MAXIMIZING SALES PER SQUARE FOOT

by Tom Firth

There are plenty of ways to determine how successful your retail store is, but aside from just looking at the bottom line, examining your sales per square foot is one of the best methods. More importantly, finding ways to increase your sales per square foot can help you change from a merely profitable store, to one with enviable performance.

Calculating your sales per square foot is quite simple: Take your total sales for a given period (typically a year), and divide that by the total square footage of your store, taking care to include your offices and storage areas (both on and offsite). Taking a closer look at your sales per square foot can uncover potential savings or trouble spots to improve upon. It's also a way to measure the efficiency of your store.

Following are some strategies to increase your store's sales:

Trained, Personable Staff

Your staff are the most important variable you can control in your store. Having courteous, helpful staff - who know the product, and can sell it to your customers - cannot be overvalued. Customers should be greeted when they enter the store, assisted while they are making their selections, and thanked for their business after their purchase. Customers will remember the time they visited your store and appreciate that your staff was more interested in them than their iPhones. They'll also remember staff that were helpful.

Good, engaging, and personable staff have skills worth just as much as product knowledge - and it is much easier to train someone on your products than training them to be personable. Good employees can also increase transaction size by recommending additional purchases such as second bottles, complementary products, or even sundries such as corkscrews or gadgets. Trained staff can also turn a transaction that was only going to be a case of beer for a party into a sale that includes a bottle of wine for the host.

Customer-Focused Selection

Take the time to know what your customers actually want. I once worked at a boutique wine shop that - for a time - would delist a product if it was carried by one of the large grocery competitors. You can play that game if you want, but if your customers are consistently not getting what they are looking for, eventually they'll shop somewhere that stocks these products. Take a close look at your inventory and see what is selling and

what isn't. You might love the wines of Morocco, but if your customers aren't buying them, perhaps it is time to clear them out and bring in something that moves.

Determining selection provides a great opportunity to engage with your customers, as you ask them what they would like to see more of in your shop. I recently consulted with a retail liquor store opening close to an upscale grocer, and our product focus was on wines that represent regions, but also ones that were exceptionally easy to pair with foods. A nearby business may be regularly looking for client gifts of high-end whisky. Know your neighbours and find out what they want.

Competitive Pricing

I'm a firm believer in a fair price, and am willing to pay a little more for convenience or in a shop with highly knowledgeable staff. Your pricing should be comparable to your competitors for most products or at least for the larger or common brands. Visit comparable stores in your area to make sure your prices are in line with them.

Buying on LTO or bridge buying can help increase your margin for certain products, but determine whether or not you can carry the added inventory before making the call. Determine the average bottle price of certain categories on your shelf and what the average price of sales are in that category to see if they align.



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CONSIDER ADDING SEASONAL DISPLAYS.

Seasonal & Uncluttered Merchandising Layout

Your store should be clean, uncluttered, and organized. Your customers should be able to find what they are looking for without dodging around endless floor stacks or dozens of shelf-talkers or starbursts. Stores should be brightly lit with product labels easy to read. Burnt bulbs should be changed promptly, and anything broken in the area customers see should be fixed right away.

If you don't have good signage, consider adding or improving signage directing customers to specific spirits, craft beers, or wines of various countries and styles. You can also direct customers to "staff picks" or even a selection of wines for upcoming holidays. Consider adding seasonal displays as well. A simple Cinco de Mayo tequila display or turkey-shaped "Thanksgiving friendly" tags on certain wines can create interest or added sales.

Loss Prevention

Loss is going to happen - it is an unfortunate reality - but there are things that can be done to minimize it. Start by looking at potential trouble spots in and around your store. Is the store well-lit both during the day and night? Are there blind spots inside the store where shoplifters can work unseen? Do you have security cameras and are they working? Are your staff greeting all customers as they walk in? Are they checking on customers as they shop? A polite, "Finding everything ok?" goes a long way.

Occasionally show up unannounced to check on your employees, or even consider an on-site log book for staff to jot down potential issues, problems, or suspicious customers. Do regular inventories of high-volume products or items desirable to thieves. Look at the patterns of when these products are going missing and check your security tapes. If your store has problems with high-value products disappearing, or you anticipate problems, consider adding theft deterrent devices such as security tags or bottle collars and a gate monitoring the exits. Make sure the system works and that your employees know what to do when an alarm goes off.

While there are many ways to improve your bottom line and your sales per square foot, improving the shopping experience is the best way to get more customers to visit your store for their beverage needs. ■

Tom Firth had over ten years of liquor store and boutique experience before jumping the fence to write about and judge fine wines and spirits as a freelancer and editor. He is the competition director for the Alberta Beverage Awards and still consults for various liquor retailers, and tweets as @Cowntownwine.

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SPIRIT *Spotlight*

by Eric Lorenz



The Rise of Tequila

Tequila is a highly regulated, exclusively Mexican spirit with an official Denomination of Origin like Cognac, Armagnac, and Champagne. No longer is it considered merely a cheap way to get drunk, nor is it the party drink that causes you to be sworn off it forever. When you sip 100% blue agave tequila, you taste a spirit that started with harvesting agave at 8-12 years of age by removing the long, spiny blue-green pencas from the heart or piña of the plant. After harvesting, the agaves are steamed for 20-54 hours, and the agave pulp is crushed to extract the sweet, baked caramel goodness of the agave aguamiel (honey water) for fermentation and later double (or triple) distillation into a vegetal, peppery, and citrus-noted Blanco tequila.

If your client prefers aged spirits, they can experience all of the above plus the vanilla and coconut aromas of American oak barrels - or the more reserved characteristics of French

oak barrels - offering just the right amount of woody aromas and flavours in a Reposado tequila, aged two to twelve months. Perhaps your client is a Scotch or Cognac aficionado, who appreciates the sweet cinnamon, cloves, and strong oak notes in an Añejo tequila, aged one to three years. The final option is the deeply woody Extra Añejo tequila, aged more than three years and developing notes of tobacco leaf, spice, and hints of smoke.

Six Tequila Myths Debunked

1. Tequila is made from a cactus.

Tequila and mezcal are made from a number of different agaves. Agaves and cacti are not even from the same genus or family. Agaves are monocotyledons and part of the Agavaceae family, while cacti are dicotyledons, and part of the Cactaceae family.

2. Gold tequila is the best kind.

A customer's preference depends on the flavour profile that person enjoys. Gold tequila is made from only 51% cooked agave, 49% other products, and fermentable sugars. It has caramel colouring added for the purpose of implying that it has been aged in wood.

3. Tequila has a worm in the bottle.

Some mezcals, and mainly value-priced mezcals, have a worm in the bottle. These are usually also mezcals with added caramel coloring, similar to those in the Gold category of tequila.

4. Tequila can be either Mexican or American.

Tequila has to be made in Mexico. Specifically, it's produced in five states: Jalisco, Guanajuato, Tamaulipas, Nayarit, and Michoacan. Not only that, it's protected by a Denomination of Origin, just like Mezcal, Cognac, Armagnac, Grappa, and Scotch.

5. Blanco tequila is only for shooting and mixing, and añejo tequila is only for sipping.

A 100% agave blanco with notes of white pepper and citrus is good for sipping. The more caramelly, oaky 100% agave añejo tequila can be a great addition to a cocktail.

6. The proper way to drink tequila is with lime and salt.

The only reason to have salt and lime is to cover the taste of a bad tequila. There are many fine tequilas that taste great on their own.

Eric Lorenz is president of Lorenz Agave Spirits and a founding partner of the Vancouver International Tequila Expo.

PRODUCT SHOWCASE



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BEER STYLES

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVENTURE

by Tim Vandergrift

“Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”

~ Benjamin Franklin

Beer is the oldest and most widely consumed alcoholic beverage, and beer sales are four times greater than wine sales. In fact, it's the #3 drink on the planet, after water and tea.

Beer also has more opportunities for food pairings than wine (for instance, beer almost always goes better with cheese than wine), and there are hundreds of different styles and tens of thousands of brands. By educating your team about different styles, you can help your consumers choose the beer that will keep them coming back to you as their expert.

Beer Basics

Beer is almost always more than 95% water by volume and includes a fermentable starch that can be converted into alcohol by yeast. Most of the starches are grains like malted barley, wheat, rice, corn, or sugar, but can also come from surprising sources like millet, potatoes, agave, or even cassava. This means that Japanese saké is actually rice beer, not rice wine.

Flavour agents such as hops are also included in most beers to provide a bitterness to balance any sweetness. Hops also help with head retention and to deter spoilage. Many people find very hoppy beers too bitter for their taste, while others become accustomed to highly-hopped beers and begin to seek out a more intense experience (see IPAs).

Other flavour agents are used in some styles - including fruit, spices, aromatic herbs, or even heather flowers in the case of Scottish Fraoch ale.

Lager or Ale?

Beyond this broad outline, beer is split down the middle by the categories of lager and ale. The real distinction between the two beers is the temperature at which the yeast can comfortably work, and the different character the yeast gives to the finished beer. Lager yeast generally ferments at a much cooler temperature, from 7–12 °C. This reduces the amount of fruity, aromatic esters that the yeast produces, giving a “cleaner” taste to the beer, which allows the grain and hop characters to show through more fully. In addition, lagers typically go through a long secondary fermentation, often at 0–4 °C, where they become brilliantly clear and the yeast converts almost all of the starches and sugars into alcohol, leaving the beer more dry and crisp.

Ale yeast typically ferments at 15–24°C. At this temperature the yeast ferments much faster, usually leaving behind slightly more sugar than lagers (resulting in a sweeter, more full-bodied beer) and produces copious amounts of esters, giving aromas of bananas, apple, pears, and many others.

Style Guidelines

Styles provide a common framework and language to accurately describe and analyze a beer's character. There are a number of useful guides available that help categorize different beer styles, and there is one source that rises above the others: the Beer Judge Certification Program Style Guidelines (www.bjcp.org.org/stylecentre.php). Established in 1985, the BJCP was organized to promote beer literacy and has tested and certified over 2,500 judges. Although the guide lists 23 styles of beer and 79 sub-styles, it doesn't claim to be completely inclusive, nor "the law", merely that it provides "description rather than proscription" for brewers and drinkers to speak a common language.

Following are a few styles you can encourage your customers to try:

Belgian-style Beers

Belgium has the most diverse set of beer styles of any country. It has 125 breweries producing nearly 9,000 different beers, and every year Belgians drink 93 litres of beer per capita - compared to the 68 litres Canadians drink! The diversity of styles and the quality of the beers lend themselves to imitation, and there are many Belgian-style beers produced outside of that country.

Belgian ales cover a lot of ground: Belgian golden strong ale with a pale, lager-like yellow colour and dense, rocky head smells of pears and apples with a spicy-perfumed nose and a crisp finish. Duvel is a great example of this beer, and is remarkably easy to drink despite its high alcohol content (8.5% abv).

Belgian strong ales come in blonde, dubbel and tripel, each getting stronger and more



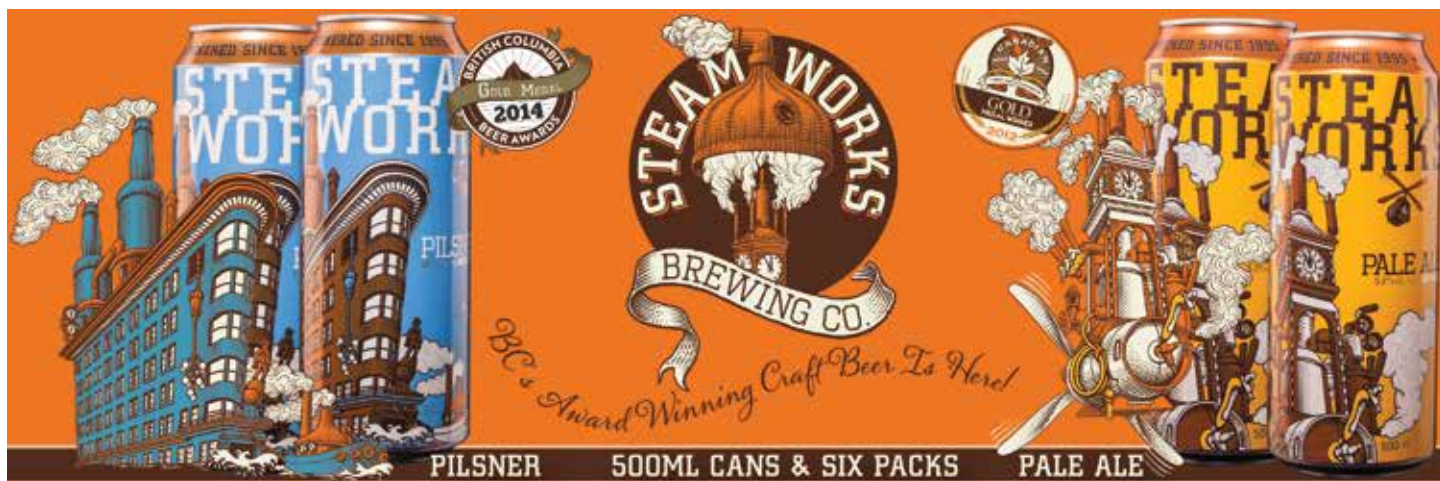
BELGIAN STRONG ALES COME IN BLONDE, DUBBEL AND TRIPEL, EACH GETTING STRONGER AND MORE INTENSELY FRUITY AND SPICY...

intensely fruity and spicy as you go. An excellent example in this style is Karmeliet Tripel, with a deep gold colour, peppery/clove/spicy nose with citrus and banana esters, and finish rounded with malt flavour and gentle hops.

Some inspiring specialties are also available. There's a Belgian sour beer infused with peppercorns that is tart, spicy and complex, and a natural for braising meats. White beer

is a pale, cloudy wheat beer infused with coriander and orange. Spicy, slightly sweet with a dense mousse-like head, this beer is sometimes served with a slice of orange. Try these beers with shellfish or Edam cheese.

One Belgian specialty style gets more attention than others: fruit beers. Belgians have a long history of taking their favourite beer and blending in fresh fruit, a tradition that helped make use of surplus fruit during





MANY CRAFT BREWERIES MAKE EXCELLENT IPAS - SOME BALANCED, OTHERS WILD AND WOOLLY WITH INTENSE FLAVOURS.

harvest. The best-known style is Lambic, in which an intensely sour base beer called “gueuze” is mixed with fresh fruit - usually cherries, raspberries, peaches, black currants, apples, or even strawberries. It's the perfect introduction to beer for people who don't like beer. Tart, with sweet fruit notes, most first-time drinkers mistake it for fantastically good soda pop.

Stout and Porter

The distinction is a bit subtle for the beginning drinker, but porters tend to be substantial English-style dark ales with roasted grain notes and varying levels of malt sweetness and hops. Medium to dark brown, but never completely black, porter shows ruby highlights and a sharp coffee-ish nose, and usually has a creamy, tan-coloured head. It's brilliant with smoked meats and fish.

Stouts descended from porter, but were usually intended to be stronger. The most famous example is Guinness, which falls under the heading of “dry stout”. While some consider it heavy or too potent, Guinness actually qualifies as a light beer, with fewer carbohydrates (and less calories) than skim

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Sweet stouts are more robust, higher in alcohol and have been described as tasting like sweetened espresso. In this category are English stouts.

India Pale Ale

IPA is a beer of very certain history and style: a strong beer with deep amber to copper colour, balanced sweetness from malt, and fruity characters balanced by very high rates of both hop bitterness and hop flavour and aroma. Unfortunately, the term has been appropriated for a number of years by mass-market brewers, resulting in IPAs that are really mild ales. However, many craft breweries make excellent IPAs - some balanced, others wild and woolly with intense flavours. One of the best IPAs in the country is Central City Brewing's IPA.

IPAs are high in alcohol and fruity esters, and are usually extremely hoppy, with highly floral aromas supplementing the citrus/apple/pear fruit character and enormous bitterness in the finish that can leave some drinkers overwhelmed, but others addicted.

Dunkel

All of the examples to this point have been ales, partly because most people are already familiar with mass-market lagers, and several examples of European lagers have wide exposure. Dunkel is a black lager, made with roasted barley malt, combining a smooth, malty flavour and hints of nutty toastiness with the crisp finish of a lager.



LIGHT LAGER BEERS ARE EXCELLENT THIRST QUENCHERS.

Bock

Bock is another lager that is similar to Dunkel, but it has a maltier, sweet finish. Doppelbock is higher in alcohol, very full-bodied, and has an intense malty sweetness. Made by partial freeze concentration, Eisbock is sweet, very dark in colour, and has an extremely high alcohol content. Vancouver Island Hermannator Ice Bock is an example that's best served the same way as you would brandy or liqueur, sipped slowly by the fire.

Maibock is a strong lager that is pale or amber in colour, but has the same malty-sweet characteristics as the other Bock beers. They pair nicely with spicy foods like pepperoni pizza.

There are dozens more styles to explore and taste. Light lager beers are excellent thirst quenchers and very refreshing, but a whole world of aroma, flavour, and food pairings await anyone wanting to stretch their beer education. As the famous British drinks writer, Michael Jackson, once said: "Beer is a playground, not a prison". Hear, hear! 🍺

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Liquor Lodge

JASPER'S DESTINATION LIQUOR STORE

by Chris McBeath



At first glance, the tourism-oriented links on Liquor Lodge's website seem peculiar. Then you see how Marc LeBlanc has created a destination liquor store in what could arguably be one of Alberta's most acclaimed travel destinations, and it all makes perfect sense.

Marc's unique style of liquor retailing even won the peer-nominated, ALSA Chairman's Award last year, which is presented to a store operator who has demonstrably provided outstanding service to the retail liquor industry.

"Jasper is a world-class destination experience for two million visitors each year," Marc says. "So, if you are a part of the Jasper community, then you are a part of fulfilling that destination expectation and the products you offer must be of world-class calibre."

An Experiential Vision

With that vision firmly in mind back in 2007, Marc set out to build a liquor outlet where design, service, and product selection were unparalleled.

Having spent three years with the Coca Cola Company, Marc's shift to beer, wine and spirits enabled him to transfer some tried and true marketing tactics to a different arena.



"Obviously, there was a learning curve moving from pop to liquor, but my time with Coca Cola exposed me to very sound and well-practiced trade executions based on 100 years of accumulated learning and intellectual property," Marc recalls. "I learned how to order properly, merchandise effectively, unload trucks, build sales displays, and sell. Above all, I embraced the mantra to 'clean it, price it, and set it to standard' which is why Liquor Lodge embodies clean visual lines, products that have properly fixed printed price tags, and displays that are set to a standard."

In the case of Liquor Lodge, this translates into a 200 sq. ft. walk-in cooler, clutter-free aisles, custom cabinetry with LED lights, and Vintage View wine racking. The store's entire ambiance exudes a boutique experience that emulates the professional yet relaxed feel of Jasper itself.

Customer Engagement

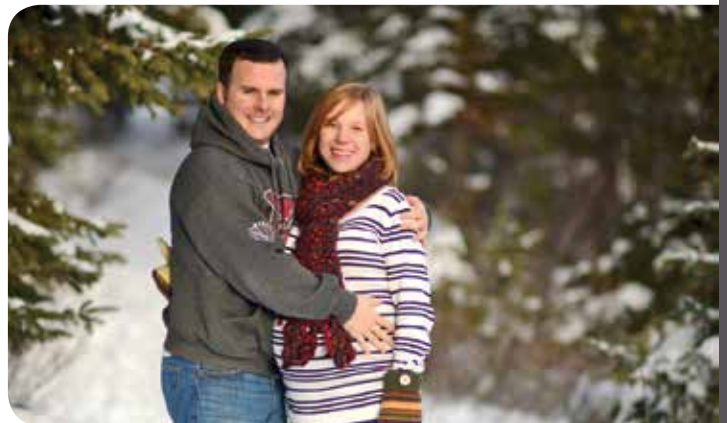
But that's only the start. Marc's philosophy for experiential engagement includes an Enomatic Elite sampling bar where patrons can try up to four ½ ounce samples of wine from an 8-bottle range, before they explore the more than 500 different wines on display. "International visitors want a Canadian experience, so we specialize in Canadian wines - especially from the Okanagan - as well as locally-crafted beers and ciders. We also have a good selection from elsewhere, including some hard-to-find gems such as magnum bottles in our Italian wine section."

In addition to the ALSA Chairman's Award, Marc was also nominated in the BDC Young Entrepreneur Awards contest in 2013. Although he didn't come away with the \$100,000 prize - monies that would have turned the store's basement into a state-of-the-art wine tasting facility - the national recognition fueled his creative thinking elsewhere. "Alberta's centralized warehouse system makes for a hugely competitive industry, so it's vital to keep the branding fresh," Marc notes. "Instead of the renovation downstairs, we invested money and energy into our spirits section. We've since developed an expertise in single malt whiskies and now carry more than 100 varieties."

Marc also uses Alberta's www.liquorconnect.com link liberally throughout his website. "75% of our store inventory comes from

the Connect Logistics warehouse in St. Albert. Because it's always current, I don't have to duplicate the information with website updates. We have 1,500 followers on Facebook and find that platform more effective to share more immediate store-specific marketing and news."

THE STORE'S ENTIRE AMBIANCE EXUDES A BOUTIQUE EXPERIENCE...



The Good Life

As for the future, Marc's earlier plans to enter new markets have taken a back seat for a while, in part because he and his wife, Megan are new parents to Theodore, born in January.

"This industry is hugely competitive, so new markets are very limited, and I'm realizing that what I've got here is pretty much as good as it gets. When I opened the store eight years ago, it was from scratch in terms of securing financing, designing the space, learning the business and working, working, working. I'm so proud of what we have accomplished, and being recognized by one's peers tells me that we're doing something right. I absolutely love the Jasper lifestyle and the Liquor Lodge lets me stay here to enjoy it and to raise a family."

At 35 years old, Marc is no longer eligible for the BDC Young Entrepreneur program, but that doesn't dim his enthusiasm. He is an entrepreneur at heart and while he "may not swing at every pitch, I'm always aiming for the benches." Dragon's Den, watch out!



APPEALING TO MILLENNIALS

FIVE WAYS TO ATTRACT THIS LUCRATIVE CUSTOMER

by Joanne Sasvari | Photos courtesy of Vine Arts Wine & Spirits

Selling booze to twenty-somethings - how hard can it be, right? Truth is, the so-called millennial generation is a demographic unlike any other, and one that does not easily follow traditional marketing patterns. They're tech-savvy, media-savvy, and constantly craving new experiences and opportunities to connect.

Some people consider them entitled - they're "special little snowflakes", scoffs the *Urban Dictionary* - but that's just another way of saying they know what they want and don't see why they should settle for less.

Canada is home to some nine million millennials - those born between approximately 1980 and 2000, also known as Generation Y or Echo Boomers - most of them highly educated and with plenty of disposable income. This is not a generation that can be ignored. Nor is it one that can be easily sold on anything, not even beverage alcohol.

Connecting With Millennials

One Alberta liquor retailer who's figured out the millennial market is Jesse Willis, co-owner of Vine Arts Wine & Spirits in Calgary. In part, that's because he's one of them. Now 31, he was 28 when he and his partner Jeff Jamieson opened the store in the rapidly gentrifying Victoria Park neighbourhood. "When we came up with the idea for Vine Arts, that was an opportunity we saw," he says. "There are a lot of amazing wine stores in Calgary, but there none were specifically targeting those younger customers."

Willis knew that millennials had an appetite for trying new things, but were often intimidated by traditional wine stores. So he and Jamieson designed a space that would be fun and comfortable. "One of the major things [we do] is organize the store by style, rather than country or region," Willis explains. "I think that's how people relate to wine." They opened a tasting room where they hold two to three educational events a week, and added comfy chairs and wine books so customers would hang around.

They also increased their selection of spirits and craft beer, including a growler station. "We've become as known for our spirits and cocktail stuff as we are for our wine," Willis describes. "It's just gone bananas."

In regards to marketing, Willis says, "We've never done any print advertising. We don't do any conventional marketing. Social media is our number one tool." They mostly rely on Twitter, Facebook, and word-of-mouth. They've also collaborated with likeminded

businesses, pairing wine with, say, oysters or charcuterie from nearby restaurants, and promoting the events on social media. "We plug our friends and they plug us - not out of obligation, but out of our friendly relationships."

Does it work? You bet. "Things are flying," Willis boasts. "They're just going nuts."

So, how can you attract millennials to your own store? Start with these five steps:

1. Up Your Digital Game

This is the most tech-savvy generation that ever existed. Many millennials have lived their entire lives online and, increasingly, on mobile devices. They are more likely than their elders to communicate via text and to be active on social media. They are also more likely to check prices online, while they're standing in your store, to see if they can get a better deal elsewhere - a process known as "showrooming". Any retailer that wants to keep up has to offer mobile-friendly technology - but don't expect the technology alone to attract customers. The content has to give millennials a reason to connect. And when they do, they won't be afraid to share their experiences, good or bad.

How To: Offer deals, contests, rewards, and games through Twitter and Facebook. Publish product reviews. Respond promptly to comments online. Promote likeminded businesses (and hope they promote you in return).



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2. Be Social

Marketers often focus on the "media" part of social media and forget that the "social" part is just as important, if not more so. Research shows that millennials crave experiences and social connectivity online and IRL (in real life). That's why, in 2011, the US Mexican casual restaurant chain Chipotle launched Cultivate, a food and music festival that attracted 17,000 people in its first year. Millennials are also more likely than older customers to associate drinking with social events, so consider using your retail space for tastings, cocktail demonstrations, and seminars.

How To: Partner with a restaurant on a pairing dinner. Sponsor a local music or craft beer festival. Encourage your guests to post selfies of themselves at the event.

3. Support Their Causes

Millennials expect companies to take a transparent, authentic, organic, and sustainable approach. They are also more likely to spend their money on brands that align with their own values. This can be a tricky area for a retailer to get into (see Starbucks' disastrous #RaceTogether campaign). Still, there are some things that are a no brainer. Wellness, for instance. It's why McDonalds has introduced the healthy McWrap and breweries are promoting low- and no-alcohol beers. You can also promote sustainability without getting into murky political waters by supporting local wineries, craft breweries and distillers.

How To: Carry and promote local and organic products. Offer "healthy" alternatives such as low-alcohol beer and cider. Support local producers and loyalty programs that raise funds for good causes.

4. Earn Their Loyalty

A lot has been written about millennials' sense of entitlement; a kinder way of looking at it is that they are aware of all that is available to them in a way older generations were not. Millennials are less likely to be brand loyal, but they are more likely to join loyalty programs, especially if they get rewards quickly and easily. They are also highly value conscious. After all, they came of age during the Great Recession; many saw their job prospects vanish at the same time they began carrying huge student loan debts.

How To: Seek their input when launching a new brand or program. Treat them like VIPS: Offer limited edition merchandise, access to exclusive events and loyalty programs that provide great discounts.

5. Improve Your Product Selection

According to a 2014 Nielsen survey, millennials are less likely to drink premium and below premium beer than they are to drink craft brews. They are eager to try new wines, especially if they are perceived to be good value. And they love spirits, especially vodka, as well as rum, whisky, and tequila. Remember that this is the most ethnically and culturally diverse generation we've ever seen, as well as the best educated. As a result, they are eager to try new flavours and to learn about food and drink.

How To: Expand your selection of craft beers. While you're at it, install a growler station. Increase the variety of wines and spirits you carry, and add cocktail supplies such as bitters. And never underestimate the benefit of a good (and fun!) seminar. ■

MILLENNIALS BY THE NUMBERS

Here's what you need to know about millennials:

- 9 million - estimated number of Canadian millennials, about 26% of the population
- 1.7 billion - estimated number of millennials worldwide
- 51% have some post-secondary education, making them the most educated generation in history
- 78% are likely to choose a brand that offers a loyalty program over one that does not
- 23% of Canadian Millennials express interest in joining a rewards program connected to a social cause
- 44% are willing to promote a brand on social media
- 52% their mobile device for review before a purchase
- 34% seek opinions from their social networks

Sources: Statistics Canada, Pew Center, Amia Report on Canadian Millennial Loyalty

WINE REPORT

by Ken Bracke

Sherry: Deserving of Appreciation

Sherry is an undervalued but slowly re-awakening fortified wine from the tiny region around the city of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, in Southwest Spain. The three main sherry producing municipalities are Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Jerez de la Frontera, and Puerto de Santa Maria.

Until January 1, 1996, the word "sherry" (an English corruption of Xeres) had been co-opted as a generic term for a wide range of sherries made from white grapes in a variety of countries. However, sherry has acquired exclusive use of its own name through EU legislation: it may now only be used for the famous fortified Spanish wine, at least in Europe.

The climate of Jerez is influenced by the Atlantic Ocean. Sea breezes alleviate extremes; winters are mild and damp, and summers are hot and dry. The vines are sustained in summer by the porous, white albariza soils, which derive their name from their brilliant white surface; not a chalk, rather a soft, organic marl. It is super absorbent when wet, and extremely hard when dry. The albariza soaks up rain in the winter, hardens to an airtight shell in the summer, and retains water underneath. This unique combination of soil and climate cannot be duplicated anywhere else. Like Champagne, sherry begins with neutral, unbalanced wines until they undergo the elaborate vinification that makes them inimitable.

Originally, a variety of different vines were planted around Jerez, and the 19th Century saw steady expansion. However, many new producers were wiped out by phylloxera - a severe blight that destroyed many vineyards. By the century's end, the industry was near collapse. The boom had spawned spurious sherries from other countries. A spiral of cost cutting began (by the Spanish themselves, to compete with bogus products), and sherry was stretched with poor quality wine from other parts of Spain. After phylloxera, most varieties were never replanted. Only three remain, all grafted to American root stocks. Palomino Fino accounts for around 95% of the total vineyard area; it is versatile in making most types of sherry. Moscatel Gordo Blanco (Muscat of Alexandria) represents about 3% of the Jerez vineyard area, and it is mostly used for sweetening. Pedro Ximenez (Hee-men-eth) or PX, currently represents a fraction of Jerez vineyards, although Spanish law allows importation of PX grape must from neighbouring Montilla-Moriles to compensate.

Since the mid-1980s, sherry faced another period of decline, but the industry has seen revitalization in the 21st Century, with new producers such as Bodegas Rey Fernando de Castilla, and new categories, including vintage dated sherries, and high quality sherry: VOS (Vinum Optimum Signatum) and VORS (Vinum Optimum Rare Signatum), such as the Gonzales Byass Palo Cortado. This has stirred new interest, and qualifying wines command high prices.

Styles of Sherry

Fino: Light, dry, and delicate, it is invariably 100% Palomino, and is the most classic style of sherry. With age (usually after at least 8



years), a Fino becomes an Amontillado (in the style of Montilla). True Amontillado is completely dry, but it will often be sweetened to a medium style for export markets.

Oloroso: Literally meaning fragrant, it has the potential for great finesse if aged properly. Its character derives from the high fortification it receives, and it develops without the aid of flor.

Palo Cortado: It cannot be deliberately made, or even encouraged, and according to Tom Stevenson, only one bottle in a thousand becomes a true Palo Cortado. It also is naturally dry, and the style falls somewhere between Amontillado (bouquet), and Oloroso (palate).

Cream Sherry: This is an Oloroso style that has been sweetened with Pedro Ximenez; its quality ranges from commercial to extremely good.

Pedro Ximenez: Primarily used as a sweetening agent, it occasionally is released in limited bottlings. Invariably very old, it expresses huge, dark, deep, powerfully rich wines; it's one of the very few sherries that can pair beautifully with vanilla ice cream.

What's an Almacenistas?

Almacenistas are independent professionals or entrepreneurs who have, historically, been producing and ageing sherry. An Almacenista is not a sherry shipper, and therefore, his or her wines are usually supplied to larger commercial firms to nurse in their soleras. All Almacenistas existing today work in small, family owned operations, and most of them are run as a hobby or a secondary source of income. Their core businesses are usually based on a completely different activity.

Sherry is a true food-friendly wine. In its various styles, it boldly tackles foods that would overpower other wines, and it's a quintessential sipper before dinner, with dinner, with dessert, and with cheeses.

Ken Bracke is an I.S.G. Certified Sommelier. He works at Aligra Wine and Spirits, and conducts many in-store tasting events



THE POWER OF YOUR POS

MANAGE INVENTORY & LABOUR COSTS, RUN SALES & LOYALTY PROGRAMS AND MORE

by Erin Rosar

No matter what size of business you're running, you'll undoubtedly be inundated with information from business magazines, forums, emails, and sales professionals about what adding a POS (Point of Sale) system can bring to your business. With POS technology changing so quickly in today's marketplace, it seems overwhelming to try to figure out which system is best for you and ultimately how to turn that investment of a new or upgraded system into positive cash flow results in time management, reporting, and ultimately your sales figures.

Here are some key functions of POS systems today that you'll want to make sure you consider:

Easy-to-Use Payment or Till Capability

This may sound obvious, but it's something that you must seriously consider. Your sales team is your most important asset. They greet and interact with your customers on a daily basis and any POS system that you bring in needs to be thought of as a support system for them. The right POS till system will ensure that when a customer is finished with their shopping experience, the check-out process is as fast and seamless as possible, which means they leave your store happy.

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to ensure that the vendor of your POS system offers you and your team a full on-site training program and ongoing phone and web support to ensure that you're always up-to-date on what your system can do for you and your customers.

Inventory Control

If you don't know you have it, how can you sell it? POS systems have become the "mission control" for most businesses today, and inventory tracking and management is key to helping you run a cost-effective business. By having real-time access to your current inventory you can set automatic and seasonal re-order points for key and popular products, track and receive alerts for expiration dates, set up special orders, and handle all your receiving in an easy tracking process.

One of the best things about POS systems today is their ability to translate information about your business into incredible reports, so you can spot sales trends, inventory investment, and stock rotation at the click of a button, giving you information that is invaluable to your business profitability.

Loyalty Programs and Clubs

POS systems can also help you really get to know your customers. Setting up loyalty programs and clubs can be as simple or complex as you would like them to be. Don't underestimate how important this tool can be to your business and your customers' experience. This is an easy way to reward your best customers and attract new ones.

Manage Staffing and Security Levels

Your POS system can also be a key tool in managing your labour costs, controlling and

tracking staff discounts, and setting security levels for your team. Many systems today can connect through to different payroll systems, enabling an easy exchange of information in regards to tracking hours, managing labour cost, and ensuring busy times at your store are properly staffed. You can also set security levels for your team in regards to who can give discounts, handle payouts at the till, and do product returns.

Marketing Integration

You can set up dynamic sales promotions in your POS that can be designed to communicate through apps and other social media to let your customers know about special offers. These can be combined with the data and programming you have in place with your loyalty program to keep you ahead of your competition. Many POS programs can also be utilized for online sales promotions when you're setting up web-based sales, which can be key in growing your business as consumers shift how they shop.

Knowing which system to choose for your business can feel a bit like a moving target with all the options available, so make sure you create a list of your "must-haves" and your "wish-list" and then think about where you want your business to go. For example,



YOUR POS SYSTEM CAN ALSO BE A KEY TOOL IN MANAGING YOUR LABOUR COSTS, CONTROLLING AND TRACKING STAFF DISCOUNTS, AND SETTING SECURITY LEVELS FOR YOUR TEAM.

if online sales is something you'd like to get started on, then look for a system that has that ability built in or has a cost-effective add-on that you can bring in when you're ready.

Investing in a new POS system is not something to rush into. It will quickly become one of your most important and powerful

tools for building a profitable business, so you need to make sure you do your homework, ask questions, see what others are using, and of course try before you buy. ■

Erin Rosar, Sommelier, is Director of Retail Operations and Customer Experience at Willow Park Wines & Spirits.


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Beer Notes

KEEPING THE BEER ON YOUR SHELVES FRESH

by Jason Foster

Beer is a sensitive beverage, and it is meant to be consumed fresh. There are, of course, exceptions. Big barley wines and many Belgian-style beers will improve for years. However, 99% of beer should be consumed within 6-12 months.

For liquor store owners, stocking beer presents a challenge that other products do not. Beer can't sit on your shelf for months without deterioration, unlike whiskey or rum. Customers won't appreciate the bottle of beer that "aged" for two years in your storage room.

Let me be clear. We are not talking about old beer becoming dangerous. Nothing that will harm humans can grow in beer. Instead, we are talking about the inevitable collapse of the beer's flavour and aroma. The lovely hop and malt characteristics you appreciate when a brew is fresh will eventually decay and be replaced with off-flavours like wet paper, Band-Aid, musty cellar, dried fruit, and skunk. The aroma dissipates and the flavour flattens, leaving a lifeless, off-putting experience.

To prevent such unpleasant results and unhappy customers, you have to take some precautions. The good news is that it is actually pretty easy to accomplish. Four simple steps can ensure the beer on your shelves lasts as long as possible. Just follow the rules of cool, date, rotate, and cover, and you will be fine.

Cool - The first rule is to keep your beer cool. At room temperature, the esters and volatile compounds in beer decay quickly. Beer left at room temperature can fall apart in three months or less. You can significantly lengthen beer's lifespan by keeping it cool at all times. Order smaller quantities more frequently and keep extra stock cool as well.

Date - Second, keep track of dates. Ideally all beer would have clear dates on the package indicating its age. Many craft breweries do this, offering a "best before" or a "packaged on" date. If they do, pay attention to those dates. Don't sell a beer past its "best before" and no later than six months past its



"packaged on" date. After six months the beer might still be okay, but it will be a shell of its former self. Good breweries will agree to buy the beer back.

Unfortunately, many breweries only stamp their packages with indecipherable codes requiring a professional code-breaker to crack them. For example, a recent package has this code: L104C059. It means it was brewed on December 10, 2014. You can ask your reps what the code means. Better yet, keep track yourself. Record codes and their date of arrival and you can monitor how long they have been sitting on your shelf.

Rotate - The third rule should already be standard practice in your store. Rotate your product. When a new shipment comes in, take the trouble to stock it behind the existing stuff, so that the older product moves first. It is a sure-fire way to prevent issues of stale-dating.

Cover - The final rule requires a bit more explanation. You need to make sure your bottles are not exposed to fluorescent or natural light (incandescent is fine). Exposure to light will cause a beer to quickly become "skunked", sometimes in a matter of hours. The cause is a photochemical reaction

between particular wavelengths of light and hop compounds in beer. The sunlight causes a transformation that produces the exact same smelly chemical emitted by skunks when stressed - hence the name.

Beer in cans is safe. Brown bottles are moderately effective at filtering out the wavelengths that cause the problem, yet even then light can do its damage over time. Clear, green, and blue bottles are skunk machines.

You can't control how brewers package their beer, but you can control what happens to them on your shelves. Make sure no bottles of beer are exposed to fluorescent or natural light. Closed boxes are good protection. However, with open six-packs or single bottles, consider moving these items to a darker corner of the beer cooler, concocting your own light barrier, or using incandescent light for the beer cooler. This will make your beer customers happy and will quickly build your reputation as a reliable beer store.

Follow these four rules and you can rest easy, knowing you are not selling beer past its prime, and knowing that your customers are getting exactly what they pay for.

AGLC REPORT

Improvement in Content and Features Highlight ProServe Update

In early February, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) launched an updated version of the ProServe training course. After listening to feedback from stakeholders, the AGLC improved the course to make it easier to understand, to emphasize the importance of selling and serving liquor in a socially responsible way, and to introduce a new audio option.

Nearly 295,000 liquor industry workers employed in specific service positions are certified in responsible liquor sales and service. The AGLC would like to remind all industry staff to check their ProServe certification expiration and to get recertified if needed.

ProServe training is an integral part in the AGLC's efforts to reduce underage drinking, over consumption, impaired driving, and the risk of physical harm in and around licensed premises.

For more information on taking ProServe and to find out about AGLC required responsible liquor and gaming certification courses, go to smartprograms.aglc.ca.



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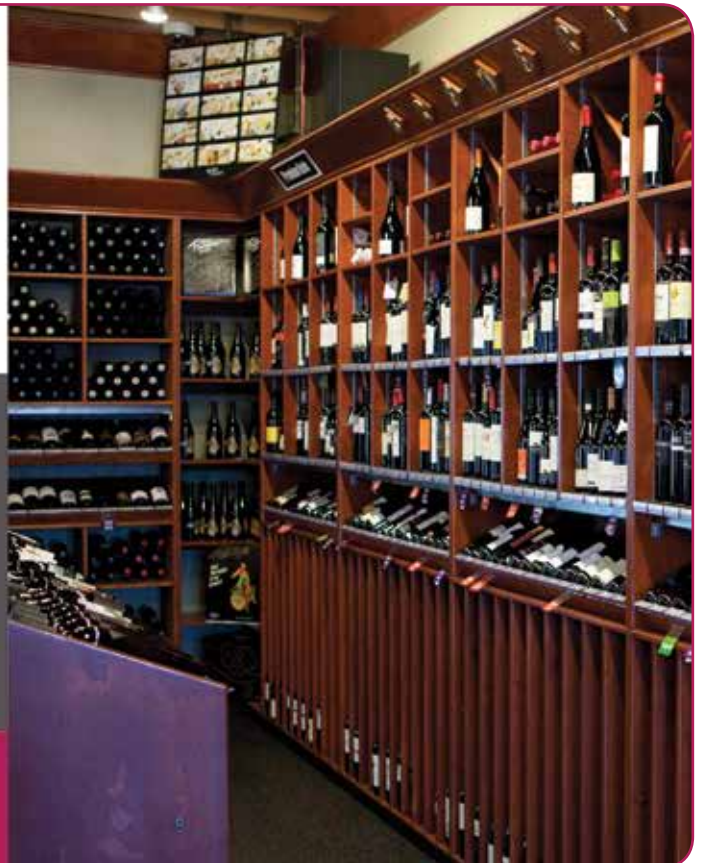
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WHITE WINE VARIETALS

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

by Tim Vandergrift

Chenin Blanc

Native to the Loire Valley, Chenin blanc got its name from Mont-Chenin in Touraine, a few miles upstream from its first documented location at the Abbey of Glanfeuil. In 1652, the vine migrated to South Africa with the Dutch East India Company. South Africa now has nearly tripled the Loire Valley's acreage of Chenin blanc - by far the world's most extensive plantings.

Chenin blanc has very high natural acidity, yielding tongue-pickling wines when not fully mature. The Loire Valley's cool climate and varied soils make for truly great examples,

ranging from steely-dry to luscious, still, or sparkling. Soil profile strongly imprints Chenin blanc: clay soils yield rich, textured wines, whereas chalk and limestone produce vibrant, crisply acidic ones. It is also grown in central California, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand.

Bright and aromatically fruity, dry Chenin blanc wines combine flavours and aromas of green apple and greengage plum with floral nuances and sometimes earthy notes of minerals and damp hay. The nose may give an impression of sweetness, even if the wine is fully dry.

Muscat

Muscat is the oldest of all known vines, traced back to the Greeks and later brought north into Europe by the Romans. The Roman name "uva apiane" (Latin for "bee grape") suggests sweet, perfumed fruit, as does "mosca", Italian for "fly". The Muscat family numbers over 200 sub-varieties in three broad groups: Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, Muscat of Alexandria, and Muscat Ottonel. The Muscat Blanc well outdistances the other two in quality, and all three are entirely unrelated to Muscadelle or Muscadet.

Muscat requires a warm climate and long growing season, and grows well in limestone, sandy loam, and clay soils. Of medium vigour, it is not a prolific vine, and over-cropping eradicates flavour and aroma. Contrary to the name, Muscat blanc has berries ranging from gold-green to black, and some variants produce different coloured berries from one year to the next.

Muscat may be vinified dry, semi-sweet, or sweet; as a still, semi-sparkling, or sparkling wine; as a late-harvest wine; as a passito, in which the grapes are dried to a semi-raisin before fermenting; as a botrytised wine, in which overripe grapes are attacked by a fungus also responsible for Sauternes; or as a vin doux naturel, in which the fermentation is stopped while still very sweet by the addition of grape eaux-de-vie. Famous Muscats include Piedmont's sparkling Asti and Moscato Naturale d'Asti, France's Muscat de Beaumes de Venise, Clairette de Die, and Banyuls.

Muscat's most distinctive trait is its fragrance - an exotically aromatic bouquet of fresh tropical fruits, flowers, rose petals and citrus blossoms, all carried to the palate with bright, clean flavours of fresh grapes and a touch of acidity. Botrytised and fortified versions have lush honey and caramel notes.

Pinot Blanc

Originating in northern France, Pinot blanc has had a bad case of mistaken identity, planted around the world as, and long mistaken for, Chardonnay, which it strongly resembles. In the early 1990s DNA fingerprinting revealed a common heritage between Pinot blanc and a number of other grape varieties indigenous to northern France, all from an original Pinot prototype and an obscure vine called Gouais blanc. Pinot blanc may in fact be a second generation mutation of Pinot gris!

Pinot blanc develops most finesse in chalky soils, but is adaptable to many. The bunches are small and compact, with bright green, oval berries. Pinot blanc is best represented

in Alsace, where it is produced both as a single varietal wine and also blended with other varieties to yield sparkling, still, dry, and botrytised dessert wines. There are significant plantings in northern Italy, where it is called Pinot Bianco, and often interspersed with Chardonnay vines. Oregon's Willamette Valley is yielding the west coast's most interesting wines. It is also grown in Germany, Austria, California, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and Slavic Eastern Europe

On its own, Pinot blanc offers delicate aromas and fresh, creamy fruit flavours of pears and apples, with notes of minerals.

Pinot Gris/Grigio

Though indigenous to northern France, Pinot grigio is today most readily associated with Italy, though it was well established elsewhere before reaching the Alto-Adige and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia regions. One of the variety's regional names, Szürkebarat (gray monk), may refer to the berry's greyish skin or to the vines having been grown by Cistercian monks. As you may have guessed, Pinot gris is yet another of the grapes bred from the prolific Pinot/Gouais blanc crossing.

The skin of the berries varies from green to dusty gray-pink to gray-blue, sometimes lending a pale pink colour to the wine. Usually vinified as a single varietal wine, Pinot grigio is represented in Alsace and Germany by dry, semi-dry, and botrytised wines, the latter a result of the overripe berries being attacked by the fungus responsible for the sweet dessert wines of Sauternes. It is also grown in Austria, California, Oregon, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, and the Slavic countries of Eastern Europe.

These wines are often highly extracted, creamy, honeyed wines with scents of spice, blossoms, and minerals. At the other end of the spectrum, in northern Italy, Pinot grigio yields fresh, crisp, supple wines of genuine charm, which show clean white fruit and aromas of apple and pear offset by notes of almonds and acacia flowers.

Sémillon

Sémillon originated in Bordeaux, in the Sauternes area, and later spread to other parts of the region. Plantings are still mostly confined to Bordeaux and southwest France, though eastern Australia has embraced the variety with notable success.

Sémillon is a cool climate vine particularly susceptible to rot and botrytis. It ripens relatively early and is suited to sandy gravel, chalky clay, and crumbly loam soils. The large, thin skinned berries are high in extract, sugar, and potential alcohol, and are low in aroma and acidity, with a tendency to oxidize.

In Bordeaux, Sémillon is blended with Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle, typically constituting less than 50% of the blend. The reverse is the case in the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac, where it may account for upwards of 90%. The phenomenon behind these luscious, dessert wines arises from the autumn morning mists off the River Ciron, which encourage an airborne fungus, botrytis cinerea, to attack the ripe grapes.

The fungus pierces the skin, allowing loss of water to concentrate the sugar and acidity, and lends its own smoke and honey flavours to the fruit. The shrivelled grapes bring the alcohol level to 14%, whereupon the yeasts expire, leaving considerable unfermented sugar in the wine. These wines are an amalgam of stone and tropical fruit, honey, and toast, layered with a lush texture and crisp, fresh acidity.

Dry Sémillon is mostly identified with Australia's Hunter Valley, and in this version offers more restrained fruit flavours of greengage plum and stone fruit with notes of toast and a fresh lemony twist.

Verdicchio

The Verdicchio vine has been cultivated in the Marche region of east central Italy since the 1300s, but virtually nowhere else. Named for the yellow-green hue of the grapes, it is the best of the Marche's white vines, and exists in two D.O.C. appellations, Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi and Verdicchio di Matelica.

Verdicchio grows best in sandy, alluvial soils over a layer of chalk, which lends it complexity. The fruit is delicately scented, high in acidity, well structured, and of moderately high extract, yielding a pale, straw-coloured wine of good acidic balance offering subtle, crisp, clean white fruit flavours, and aromas offset by nuances of citrus, almonds, and tree blossoms.

Viognier

Viognier is thought to have been brought from Croatia to the Rhône Valley, along with Syrah cuttings, by the Roman Emperor Probus in 281 A.D. It took root in the northern Rhône, in the area that is now Condrieu, and stayed quiet for nearly two millennia. Until the 1990s what little Viognier was made was rare and very expensive, typified by Château Grillet, which made delicious wines halfway between a curiosity and a cult following. Fortunately new interest in the variety expanded plantings in the south of France and to New World vineyards of Australia, Italy, Chile, and South Africa.

Viognier is a difficult and extremely low-yielding vine, which is prone to uneven ripening and coulure, best suited to light, limestone and granite soils covered by sand. Viognier ripens very late, with flavour developing only at the very peak of maturity, and there is a very narrow time window between this and the moment when acidity and aroma plummet.

In the northern Rhône, in Côte Rôtie, A.O.C. regulations allow a little Viognier to be included in the Syrah-based red wine, but elsewhere the variety is usually unblended. It yields seductively perfumed, golden wines with an intense bouquet of honeysuckle, ripe apricots, peaches, and spice refreshed by a subtle touch of acidity.

While this list is by no means complete (or comprehensive) it's a great starting point for learning more about the character and origin of a few of the grapes available for sale in BC. More information on these and hundreds of other grapes can be found in some of those 30-pound coffee table books, such as Jancis Robinson's *Vines Grapes and Wines*, Oxford University Press' *Oxford Companion to Wine*, and Hugh Johnson's *World Atlas of Wine*. 🍷

SELLING THE STORY OF BC VQA

by Lindsay Kelm



BC VQA wines are truly a reflection of the land where the grapes were grown and the people who crafted them. The wines are made from 100% BC grown grapes, which creates a true sense of pride for these locally-made wines.

Selling BC VQA wine is as simple as telling its story - helping consumers connect with that sense of place and creating memories around the wines of BC. And it's working.

Currently, sales of BC VQA wines are increasing in the province, outpacing the overall market growth. In dollars, the BC VQA marketshare has been growing steadily for more than six years, and in December reached 20.9% of all wine sold in BC.

The British Columbia Wine Institute offers many opportunities for those working in liquor establishments and stores to be able to gain a greater understanding of BC wines and access tools to help consumers to continue to choose BC VQA wines. For the past three years, the BC Wine Institute has been offering the Wines of British Columbia Ambassador Program free of charge to restaurants and liquor retailers in Alberta.

The Level 1 course provides an overview and history on the BC wine industry, introducing attendees to the wine regions of BC and the varieties of wines grown and produced as well as providing a tutored tasting of BC VQA wines.

Level 2, which was introduced this year, takes a more in-depth look at the various sub-regions and the elements and issues that affect the current state of the BC wine industry. The Level 2 course also includes a comparative tasting of BC VQA and international wines - from classic to contemporary styles - that illustrate where the industry is and where it's headed.

Hosted by *Westender* wine columnist, critic and educator Kurtis Kolt, the seminars take place throughout Alberta every year. Private courses for larger establishments and stores are also available. Please look out for the 2015 schedule for Levels 1 and 2. For details, go to www.WineBC.org.

Another excellent way to become familiar with BC VQA wines is to attend the Wines of British Columbia trade tasting events that take place in the spring and fall each year in Alberta. These tastings provide an opportunity to taste wines from as many as 90 BC wineries. It's not only a great way to make new contacts; it's also an excellent opportunity to get a sense of the industry's progress. And, with an ever-increasing number of BC wineries, it allows you to stay on top of what's new. The next events are the Discover BC VQA Spring Release Tastings on May 5 in Calgary and May 6 in Edmonton.

While tastings are a great way to stay up-to-date, visiting wineries and encouraging your consumers to visit wineries is also an excellent way to get the full story on BC VQA wines. Experience the terroir with a walk in the vineyard, dine on a patio, chat with winemakers, and then tell your customers all about it.

The BC Wine Institute has partnered with Destination BC to produce the British Columbia Wine Touring Guide, a guide to all wineries in the province. To distribute the guides in your stores or establishments visit HelloBC.com or contact the BC Wine Institute directly.

Also available online at WineBC.com is a handy trip planning tool. Let your customers know they can plan their next trips to BC wine country, and find out more information about their favourite wines and wine regions on the consumer site WineBC.com, where they'll find handy trip planning tools.

For upcoming trade education programs and events, visit WineBC.org.

WHAT'S *New?*

by Debbie Minke

Refreshment Beverages

Alive Iced Tea is a sugar-free, gluten-free, carbohydrate-free vodka beverage that's only 800 calories per 300 ml. This refreshing sweet tea with citrus is a great thirst quencher for hot summer days or anytime. 4x300ml \$8.52 wholesale +771340

Vodka Mudshake is now available in a new flavour - Orange Cream. The classic taste of orange is teamed with vanilla cream and vodka to create a smooth, creamy, delicious mudshake. This ready-to-drink beverage can be enjoyed hot or cold, or used as an ingredient in a variety of drink recipes. 4x270ml bottles \$9.60 wholesale, LTO price \$9.10 +771341

Blackfly Spirit Beverages are Canadian-made, craft-produced RTDs without artificial sweeteners or flavours. **Black Fly Tequila Margarita** is a light, refreshing blend of pure lime juices and genuine Mexican tequila. The re-sealable plastic bottle can be frozen for a summer slushy drink that's perfect for a hot day. 4x400ml \$9.13 wholesale +771357 **Black Fly Vodka Cranberry** features a delicious mix of pure cranberry and wild blueberry juices and 7% abv vodka. It's not too sweet. 4x400ml \$9.13 wholesale +771363 **Black Fly Long Island Iced Tea** is made with Canadian vodka, Mexican tequila, notes of gin, rum, lemon juice and a splash of cola. 4x400ml \$9.13 wholesale +771360.

Dos Locos Strawberry Tequila Margarita has arrived just in time for summer. As with the original lime version, Dos Locos uses real tequila and natural fruit flavours to create these ready-to-drink favourites in tall cans. 440ml \$2.61 wholesale LTO Price May 1-14 \$2.36 +771339

Spirits

Mezcal Union Uno is crafted from 100% agave. It's produced by a group of families in Oaxaca using a blend of three different kinds of agave. On the nose, enjoy white pepper, spring florals, and top notes of citrus with hints of smoke and earth. Tropical fruit flavours emerge on the palate, making this mezcal a natural for cocktails. Beautiful texture and very refreshing. 40% abv. 6x750ml \$44.63 +047563

Van Gogh Melon Vodka features a delightfully smooth blend of honeydew and Spanish cantaloupe flavours - with undertones of honey and cucumber - teamed with Van Gogh's signature vodka. The fresh flavours meld beautifully in the mouth; the taste is refreshing, soft, smooth and long lasting. 750ml \$30.18 wholesale +756424

Tequila Ocho is one of the few tequilas still made slowly in the old-fashioned way. Ocho is the first tequila to designate both the year it was produced and the precise field from which the family-grown agaves were sourced. Each batch comes from a different field or rancho, contributing distinctive characteristics of that place. All 750ml Ocho Tequila Plata \$45.99 +760476, Ocho Tequila Reposado \$54.99 +760477, Ocho Tequila Anejo \$64.99 +760475

Wine

Half Shell White Wine hails from Washington State, a delicious blend of Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Riesling. Delicate floral aromas with honeyed undertones on the nose lead to flavors of crisp citrus, Asian pear and a touch of orange blossom, which lends a graceful acidity to this crisp, light wine. 750ml \$13.99 +770957

Favo Pinot Grigio 2013 is an organic beauty from the Delle Venezie region of Italy. The bouquet offers delicate floral notes followed by aromatic impressions that include tropical fruit, such as banana, pineapple and papaya. The palate is seductively crisp and well-balanced, while the finish, exhibiting a harmonious balance, offers a beautiful vein of slate mineral notes. 750ml \$12.16 +769552

Scratchpad Pinot Noir 2011 is a classic Central Coast Pinot Noir offering a spicy aromatic profile, with hibiscus, dried sour cherries, forest floor, and a hint of vanilla and smoked bacon on the nose. Enjoy flavours of cherries and juicy, red fruit dominating the mid-palate. Scratchpad has a unique interactive label. Each bottle of wine comes with a charcoal pencil, which allows the buyer to sketch directly on the label, take a photo of their design, and share it using post on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. \$16.99 750ml +559359

The Invisible Man Tempranillo is deep cherry red with a violet rim denoting its youth. It offers good aromatic intensity of ripe, red berry fruits. This Spanish beauty is well-structured with soft, sweet tannins, and features hints of toasted wood. Enjoy the intense mouthfeel and a long finish. \$15.99 750ml +769783

Vina Falernia Reserva Syrah 2010 is crafted in the Elqui Valley, in Chile. This award-winner offers rich cherry, raspberry, plum and white pepper on the nose. The velvety mouthfeel highlights flavours of juicy, ripe bramble fruits, strawberries, and black olive tapenade. Great value. 750ml \$13.99 wholesale + 732579

Macho Man Monstreil (MMM) was recently selected as the best barrel-aged wine from Spain. It's elegant and well-balanced. This full-bodied red has aromas of cherries, plums, blackberries and vanilla. Enjoy the rich palate with notes of toasted oak, chocolate, and spices. It has good structure and a long finish. \$16.99 750ml +561977

Beer

Steamworks Brewing Co. has launched their **Imperial Red Ale**, showcasing some of the best hop varieties of North America. Dark copper in colour, it has intense pine, fruity, and flora hop aromas with high levels of warming alcohol. Enjoy flavours of toffee and caramel with aggressive hop flavours and bitterness. 650ml \$4.50 wholesale +512756

NAMES IN THE NEWS

by Debbie Minke

Congratulations to **Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery**, which - for the second time - has won Spirit of the Year and Distillery of the Year (in its category) at the World Spirits Awards 2015 in Denmark. Three Double Golds were awarded for their Blackcurrant Liqueur, which also kept its title of Spirit of the Year with 96 points, their new Haskap liqueur, and Aquavitus. Their Laird of Fintry Single Malt Whisky won Gold - the first Canadian whisky to win Gold at the WSAs - and other medals included Gold for Taboo Absinthe, Gold for Raspberry Liqueur; Silver for Peppered Pete, and Bronze for Gin.

Winefest Edmonton took place on February 13-14. Congratulations to the following People's Choice Awards winners:

Best Sparkling	Casa Bella SRL Rosso NV	Italy
Best White under \$20	Whitehaven Sauvignon Blanc 2013	New Zealand
Best White over \$20	Dirty Laundry Secret Affair 2013	Okanagan Valley
Best Red under \$20	Bostavan Bastardo 2013	Moldova
Best Red \$20-30	Viña Koyle Royale Carménère 2011	Chile
Best Red over \$30 (tie)	Ex Nihilo Vineyards Pinot Noir 2013	Okanagan Valley
	Purcari Negru 2010	Moldova

Best Other* under \$25	Dr. Zenzen Zentini Rose Pamplemousse	Germany
	Dr. Zenzen Battista Brasil	Germany
Best Other* over \$25	Living Sky Winery Rhubarb	Saskatchewan

People's Choice Awards winners from Calgary's Winefest are:

Best Sparkling	Casa Bella SRL Rosso NV	Italy
Best White under \$20	Whitehaven Sauvignon Blanc 2013	New Zealand
Best White over \$20	Dirty Laundry Secret Affair 2013	Okanagan Valley
	Kraze Legs Bees Knees Pinot Blanc 2012	Okanagan Valley
Best Red under \$20	Bostavan Bastardo 2013	Moldova
Best Red \$20-30	Kraze Legs All That Jazz Red Blend 2010	Okanagan Valley
Best Red over \$30	Chayee Bourras Bonarda Reserva 2011	Argentina
Best Other* under \$25	Dr. Zenzen Battista Brasil	Germany
Best Other* over \$25	Living Sky Winery Rhubarb	Saskatchewan

*Fruit wine, Fortified wine, Port, Ice wine and other

UPCOMING ISSUE

Summer 2015

Upselling Techniques – If staff always recommend products to shoppers and assist them in their purchase decisions, customers will walk away happier and the store will increase sales.

Leveraging Social Media – With all the options available, which social media efforts best reach specific target markets?

Building Loyalty – Keep regulars coming back with reward programs that are valued by customers. Build a database and then create an ongoing marketing program to develop their loyalty.

Enhancing the Shopping Experience – The décor, lighting and atmosphere in your store affect how shoppers enjoy their experience and influence their decision to return.

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