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Keeping the Industry Informed

FEATURING

*Rocky Mountain
Wine & Spirits*
P16

BEER & FOOD

EXPERIENCE THE
DIVERSE FLAVOURS **P6**

SECURE YOUR DATA

PROTECT YOUR CUSTOMERS **P10**
& YOUR BUSINESS

BUYING STRATEGIES

FRESH IDEAS TO BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE **P18**

SELLING AS MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION

INVESTING IN YOUR STAFF IS KEY **P22**

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ALBERTA
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Wine & Spirits*
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EDITOR'S NOTES

by Joyce Hayne



It's great to see that demand is high for craft beer and spirits produced in Alberta! Other categories are also showing strong increases from last year, notably refreshment beverages with cider increasing 19% and coolers up 13.5% this spring. Gin and tequila are also showing strong growth.

In this issue of *Liquor Retailer* we're reviewing Buying Strategies to help you save money, and sharing Selling Techniques to help you increase sales. We also have tips on Preventing Fraud to keep your data secure and ideas for Pairing Beer & Food so your staff can give recommendations to customers.

Please let us know if there are topics that you'd like us to address in the future. We always enjoy hearing from our readers.

If you want to reference previous articles visit www.LiquorRetailer.com for archives of all our past issues. You can also subscribe to *Straightshots* bi-weekly newsletter to stay updated on upcoming events and industry news.

Congratulations to the Alberta liquor industry for celebrating 25 years of private retailing. You've been a showcase for other provinces of how private industry does the best job of selling liquor!

Joyce

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 19-20 Alberta Liquor Industry Conference Westin Edmonton Hotel
www.albertaliquorconference.ca

Sep 22-23 Calgary Oktoberfest Stampede Park
www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services/calgary-oktoberfest

Sep 29-30 Edmonton Oktoberfest Edmonton Expo Centre Hall C
www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services/edmonton-oktoberfest

Oct 12-13 Calgary Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival Stampede Park
www.rockymountainwine.com/calgary.html

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ALSA'S MESSAGE

by Ivonne Martinez



As the liquor industry gets ready to celebrate 25 years of success, we do it on a high note. Over last year, our compliance rate was 98%, an all-time high! This speaks highly of the commitment our members have to responsible retailing. It also demonstrates the dedication of the AGLC to assist liquor retailers to comply with all regulations.

ALSA is proud of the working relationship it has developed with AGLC over the years. It is a partnership that has resulted in the success

of our liquor retail system, and one that will take our industry into the next 25 years.

The Alberta Liquor Industry Conference 2018 will take place in Edmonton on September 19th and 20th, at the Westin Hotel. We have two full days of seminars, presentations, and speakers that we know will bring value to our members. We are excited to be hosting our members during this historic occasion, the 25th anniversary of the Alberta Liquor Model. We look forward to seeing you there.

UPCOMING ISSUE

Fall 2018

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BEER & FOOD PAIRING

EXPERIENCE THE DIVERSE FLAVOURS

by Ron Scott

It's certainly not uncommon to have customers come into a store and ask the staff about wine pairing options for their dinner. Now that many customers are becoming more familiar with different beer styles, they'll also be looking to beer to complement their food. Many experts assert that beer offers more diversity of flavour than wine, and as such offers a broader range of pairing choices.

Combining beer and food to create a multidimensional flavour profile is by no means a new phenomenon or trend. However, not so long ago, a person's ability to select a great pairing was limited by the lack of selection of beer styles at a local shop. This is no longer the case. Beer retailers in Alberta now have an enormous number of brews with a wide variety of styles and categories to offer their customers. Let's delve into some time-tested classic pairing options as well as some newer and more off-the-wall pairings to present to consumers looking for the perfect beer to accompany their meal.

To begin, it's incredibly important to be mindful of the core concepts surrounding food and beverage pairing. This is commonly referred to as "The 3 C's": complement, contrast, and cut. We'll look into each one briefly.

Complementary Pairings

When we want to complement a dish, the goal is to meld similar flavours in both the food and the drink. This is where most people go astray. While certain flavours in a beer such as fruitiness or bitterness will accentuate those same flavours in a dish, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. "Like with like" can become disastrous when those flavours eventually contrast. Instead, look to recommend complementary flavours that are subtle, either in the beer or the food, or both.

For example, if you pair a rich chocolaty stout with a similarly rich and chocolaty dessert, be



conscious of the fact that too much sweetness on either end will be overwhelming and not have the desired effect of a complementary pairing. For a very rich and sweet chocolate dessert, choose a stout that is on the drier side with hints of chocolate and caramel, as opposed to a full-on dessert stout. Inversely, if the dessert has some chocolate flavour but isn't aggressively sweet, a very milky, sweet dessert stout will be just what the customer needs.

Herbaceous characteristics of both dishes and foods can be complemented as well. Belgian wits, farmhouse ales, and old-world style IPAs all have herbaceous and spicy characteristics that can accompany a dish that incorporates these same spicy notes. This concept applies equally to other complementary flavours that you might be looking for when recommending the appropriate beer to a customer, such as fruity, tart, bitter, etc.

Contrasting Pairings

With contrasting pairings, the idea is to suggest beers with flavours that oppose those found in the dish. Ideally, this works to accentuate those tastes and aromas in both. This approach can be very risky, so I can't stress enough the importance of having knowledgeable staff that is intimately familiar with the beers on the shelf. Here it's possible to pair sweet with sour or briny with malty.

For example, wheat beers tend to play well with seafood as a rule. Fish tacos and American hefeweizen are a favourite pairing of mine. The very subtle fruity notes of the beer contrast with the briny character of the fish to create a harmony that's greater than the sum of its parts.

Creating contrasting pairings offers a great opportunity to recommend sour beers to your customers. A light, tart, fruity, and bubbly sour beer can be a great contrast to something that is also fruity but very sweet. Jams and compotes and other fruity foods that have concentrated sweetness can be offset by both the acidity and the carbonation in a fruity sour beer.

When customers come in and are planning a rich red meat dish, a contrasting pairing can



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be just the thing they're after. Recommend a rich, dark beer in this instance. The sweeter, malty flavours can perfectly offset wild game meats or the salt and fat of a steak, roast, or shank.

their meal if it's especially rich. Likewise, don't recommend a heavy or full-bodied brew that might overpower a lighter dish.

CREATING CONTRASTING PAIRINGS OFFERS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO RECOMMEND SOUR BEERS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS.

Pairings that Cut

Beers can be used to wipe the palate clean and refresh it between bites. Customers looking for pairing options for rich, heavy dishes might enjoy beers with high carbonation or bitterness to cleanse the palate as they happily indulge. Belgian ales are a solid go-to in this category as many of them are highly carbonated. This is another case where sour beers work well. Recommend Old World-style sours whose complexity elevates the dish, but where the acidity also serves to cut through the richness of fatty and decadent meats. This means that beer can easily replace wine as a suitable pairing choice for many assertive and complex cheeses.

An Extra Tip

It's important to try to match the body and strength of the beer to the dish being served. When recommending a beer to your customer, be careful not to offer them a beer that's too thin and light to pair with

Enhancing the Experience

Now that we've covered the essentials of pairing flavours of beer and food, let's discuss another major factor: experience. Many customers looking for just the right bottle (or six pack) are planning something special. This might be an anniversary, birthday, or other important event. This is a great opportunity to sell higher-end options. While it's still important to sell them a beer that would be a good fit for the food they're planning to eat, it's probably more important to consider the context. Suggest beers that have a story behind them or have considerable effort involved in the brewing process. As retailers, our goal should be to give customers the best experience possible by providing them with a product that ultimately enhances their experience. This might be an evening they won't soon forget. It deserves a beer of that calibre. Barrel-aged imperial stouts, Belgian geuzes, barleywines etc. fit this role. These special bottles can be sipped and savoured amongst friends and loved ones long after the meal is done as conversation drifts into the night. 🍷

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SECURE YOUR DATA

PROTECT YOUR CUSTOMERS & YOUR BUSINESS

by Mark Glenning

There's no mistaking that we are gradually becoming a cashless society. Even though hard currency will be around for a while yet, there are ways to make convenient purchases without it, from the old-but-evolving credit card to using cutting-edge technology such as your cell phone. We trust these methods to be secure, but criminals still find a way to scam money and steal important information. How can you keep data safe for you and your customers?

How Can Data Be Stolen?

The Better Business Bureau now considers online scams to be the riskiest form of fraud for consumers, and this is apparent when you look at the variety of ways that consumers can be ripped off.

For example, there's the tech support con. The scammer may send an email, install malware that generates alarming pop-up messages, or make a cold call and pretend to be from a well-known company like Apple or Microsoft. Using lots of smooth talk and technical terms, they'll ask for remote access to your computer, and change its settings leaving you wide open for a data breach.

Another popular way to cheat consumers is the fake website scam. Criminals will set up a web page that looks exactly like a legitimate one—a bank, for example—and direct people to it with spam emails, with the aim of harvesting their data. They can be very convincing, but a little digging around can reveal their true intent. Check the domain name, as a fraudulent site will reference a high profile brand but won't be the official web page. Browsing the site can be effective too. Does it offer contact details or a shipping and returns policy? Are there lots of spelling and grammar mistakes in the web copy? This may indicate that it's been hastily built for a quick profit, and should set off alarm bells.



What is "Skimming"?

Credit and debit card skimming is one of the most popular methods of stealing data. Victims are often completely unaware of the crime until they come across fraudulent charges on their

accounts, or find that money has been taken from an account even though their cards never left their sight. How could this happen?

Crooks use a small electronic device, piggybacked on to a payment machine or

ATM to steal information from a card in an otherwise legitimate transaction. When the card is swiped through a skimmer, it reads the magnetic strip and extracts its information, including the card number, the expiration date, and the holder's full name and address.

Of course, a thief would need a few undisturbed moments to install such a device, which is why they're often placed on gas stations and ATMs. Be sure that your payment machine is not easily accessible to customers if an employee isn't at the counter. Sometimes, they're even accompanied by a tiny camera that films the unsuspecting card owner entering their PIN.

Shockingly, skimming rings are known to recruit retail and restaurant workers. As you hand over your credit card to pay, the employee may walk away with the card, and this provides the perfect opportunity to steal your information using a handheld device.

Once the data is harvested, it is transferred to a cloned card that can be used for in-store purchases, or sold to the highest bidder over the Internet.



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Spotting a Skimmer

The bad news is that unless you're specifically looking for a skimmer, you may not notice anything out of the ordinary. They're crafted to blend seamlessly to the machine they're attached to. However, if you make sure to familiarize yourself with the look and feel of the devices on your premises, you may spot the following:

A reader that protrudes from the panel – If you notice a card reader that sticks out from the rest of the machine, it may be a skimmer device.

CREDIT AND DEBIT CARD SKIMMING IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR METHODS OF STEALING DATA.

Parts of the card reader are loose – Any card reader should be securely affixed, and moving parts are a sign that the machine has been tampered with.

A thicker keypad than normal – This is a sign that a fake keypad may have been placed on top of the real one with the purpose of stealing your PIN. If the keys seem hard to press, cancel the transaction.

Naturally, you should treat any inquiries or complaints about information theft occurring on your retail premises with the utmost concern, and carry out a thorough check of both your payment hardware and computer systems.

How Can You Prevent Online Shopping Fraud?

If a fraudulent transaction has taken place, customers are usually protected, but merchants are not. This means that if you're a victim, you can lose the product you're selling as well as the payment itself. Naturally, as a merchant you want to minimize this risk. There are many precautions you can take to help prevent online fraud and protect your customer's data:

Process card information manually – If your merchant services are set up to automatically process credit cards, consider changing this. You'll have the chance to check the details of the order and verify any aspects of it that raise suspicion.

Verify addresses – With an Address Verification System (AVS), you can add an extra layer to your security. It confirms the cardholder's billing address, postal code, and phone number with the bank that issued the card. It's not quite perfect; AVS matches don't confirm that a purchase is legitimate as fraudsters may have the correct data, but it certainly makes things more difficult for them.

Check Card Verification Value (CVV) details – The CVV is the number printed on the signature strip on the back of the card, and you can ask customers to provide this when ordering online. Again, if the number is incorrect it doesn't necessarily mean that fraud is occurring (the customer may have simply entered the wrong information) but it's a sign that you should investigate before allowing the purchase.



Check the IP address of the purchaser – If your suspicions are raised, you can check the IP (Internet Protocol) address to see if it's legitimate. The IP address is a unique string of numbers that identifies each computer, and you can see if its location matches that of the customer's home. It sounds very technical, but your merchant host may have provided simple tools you can use to do this.

IF A FRAUDULENT TRANSACTION HAS TAKEN PLACE, CUSTOMERS ARE USUALLY PROTECTED, BUT MERCHANTS ARE NOT.

Contact your merchant provider and issuing bank – You can verify your customer's details with a phone call, and the customer's bank may even make a courtesy call to the customer to verify the purchase.

Call your customer – Sometimes this is the simplest way to verify a purchase and the most effective. Not only can you confirm details, but also you're providing a great customer service. Your customers will be pleased that you're acting to keep their data secure.

Locking Down Your Customer's Information

Your business depends on the trust you build with customers, and violating that trust can have a disastrous effect. You could lose the confidence of your clients and thereby lose sales, suffer fraud losses, lose your ability to accept payment cards, or even find yourself being hit with a fine or other legal costs.

Although card readers can be compromised, they're not the only part of the payment system you should review. Other vulnerabilities include:

- POS systems
- Store networks and wireless access routers
- Credit and debit card data storage and transmission
- Online payment apps and shopping carts

A good starting point to protect these is to make sure that you have a high-grade network and email protection that does a good job of filtering out spam, malware and other dangerous files.

Next, take a close look at the computer systems you're using. Are your operating systems and applications the latest versions? Many criminals exploit software that has not been patched with security fixes, and rely upon you being negligent in keeping your system up-to-date.

Sometimes, a current operating system still isn't enough to repel attempts to steal your data. You can install software that will protect your web gateway, and block exploit kits—think of these as the digital version of lock-picking tools—from infecting your system. You should also consider deleting any software that does not have a direct application to your business; it's an unnecessary security risk.

Take the time to keep abreast of the latest data security threats, and ensure your employees are aware of them also. You owe it to yourself, your business, and most importantly, to your customers. ■



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Beer Notes

BECOME A CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL

by Kirk Bodnar

When people learn that I work in the beer industry, they often ask something like this: "Since you are a beer expert, does that mean you are a professional beer drinker?" My response always involves a bit of a laugh and an explanation that no, unfortunately I'm not (as cool as that job would be), although my work does involve drinking beer from time to time—or perhaps more accurately, evaluating beer. Although calling me an expert may be a bit of a stretch, I am always happy to say that I have been able to acquire a considerable amount of my knowledge by earning certification through two organizations: the Cicerone Certification Program, and the Beer Judge Certification Program.

For people working in the food and beverage industry who are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of beer, one of the best programs is the Cicerone Certification Program. For years (perhaps centuries) the wine world has trained sommeliers, but the beer world didn't see a true need for that sort of expertise. Now with the mega-popularization of craft beer and beer in general, the cicerone program has filled that niche and has created a highly respected and industry-recognized certification program that covers production, service, beer styles, and even beer and food pairing. A certified cicerone



is essentially equivalent to a sommelier, but for beer rather than wine.


The Cicerone Certification Program consists of four levels of certification. It allows individuals to start off with the basics, focusing on proper beer service and basic beer knowledge. Once the person successfully passes an online exam, they have achieved the first level and are a Certified Beer Server. The program builds in intensity through three more levels of certification until the top level, Master Cicerone, where

potential candidates are faced with a multi-day exam involving written, oral, and hands-on demonstrations of expert knowledge. This includes possessing an encyclopedic knowledge of the history and evolution of all classical and modern beer styles and the ability to identify subtle off-flavours as well as the knowledge of design, construction, and maintenance of a commercial beer draught system, just to list some examples. It is not surprising that like Master Sommeliers in the wine world there are a limited number of Master Cicerones as well.



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Another highly respected organization that also provides certification for beer expertise, although with a slightly different focus, is the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP). The BJCP is the premier organization in terms of both certifying individuals to judge beer as well as creating the guidelines, regulations and processes for judging beer in general. The vast majority of beer competitions in the world judge beer against the beer style guidelines that have been developed by the BJCP. These style guidelines are widely considered as the authoritative source for defining beer style characteristics. They provide very detailed information about the various flavours, aromas, and other characteristics that are acceptable as well as inappropriate in a particular style of beer. In fact, other organizations, including the Cicerone Certification Program, use the style guidelines developed by the BJCP as the official source for the definition of beer styles.

To ensure that individuals truly understand and are able to apply the often nuanced aspects of the BJCP style guidelines when evaluating beer, the BJCP also offers a

very comprehensive program for certifying beer judges. To become a BJCP judge, candidates must write an online exam and complete a tasting/beer evaluation exam where they must judge multiple beers, providing accurate feedback which correctly identifies various components in the beers, including potential off-flavours and an explanation of why those off-flavours occurred based on assumed issues in the brewing process. Essentially the judges need to possess the ability to identify subtle problems in the beer, and tell the brewer why the off flavours occurred. Clearly this requires a detailed knowledge of the brewing process.

BJCP exams are normally hosted through local home brewing clubs, as most home brewing competitions are sanctioned BJCP events and follow BJCP guidelines. To achieve the highest levels of certification, candidates must gain experience points by judging BJCP-sanctioned competitions and also write another comprehensive written exam. Similar to the top Cicerone certifications, there are not too many Master or Grand Master BJCP judges

around, as the exam performance and experience points required are very high. These top-level certifications are true indicators of beer knowledge mastery.

For information on the Cicerone Certification Program or the Beer Judge Certification Program, go to www.cicerone.org or www.bjcp.org. There you can find more details about the organizations, the levels and exams as well as resources for preparing for the exams. You can also find the official BJCP Style Guidelines, which are essential for anyone hoping to learn about the many beer styles out there today. The Cicerone Certification Program also offers group packages for businesses that see value in having multiple employees gain expert knowledge through the Cicerone program—a highly-recommended decision for any food and beverage-based business. In any case, let beer education become a part of your company's culture. Knowledgeable staff leads to knowledgeable customers—and that can only be positive for the industry.



Alberta Liquor Industry Conference 2018
September 19 -20 at the Westin Edmonton
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Rocky Mountain Wine, Spirits & Beer

by Mark Glenning



Wine is a serious business. Just tasting is a challenge; it involves the proper environment, concentration, a good memory, and a colourful imagination. Rocky Mountain Wine, Spirits & Beer has made it its mission to make wine and other liquor products more accessible through learning and fun, and it's succeeding.

Like any good origin story, Rocky Mountain's began years ago; 20, to be precise. After attending trade shows in eastern Canada, three beer brand reps from Ontario came up with the idea that they could stage similar events in Calgary. The Rocky Mountain Wine & Food Festival proved to be a hit straight off the bat, and the first event drew more than 1,000 guests and 30 booths. It grew from strength to strength, doubling the number of booths in the second year, and hitting 120 by its fourth.

According to Michael MacDougall, owner of Rocky Mountain, the store is a direct result of the festival, and the ideal way to realize his

dream of making a closer connection between the customer and the product. It wasn't an overnight decision, as Michael recounts. "It was on the back-burner and there were a couple of hurdles we had to overcome. For instance, on the festival side, we were burned by a show supplier and realized that there was only one way to control our costs going forward, which was to buy the show supplies ourselves. That is quite a cost, including tables and carpets and drapes for a venue that's 100,000 sq. ft. Another show came up along the way in 2007 and we now do a show in Calgary called Winefest. We were able to purchase the Calgary show and launch the Edmonton show at the same time. So that had to be paid for."



There was also the issue of finding a suitable location for the Rocky Mountain store. In Alberta, there are municipal bylaws that prevent retailers having a store within 300m of another. This difficulty is compounded by landlords who naturally know the value of their properties, and this added up to a lot of lost bids over the years. As Michael points out, "If you have a chance to have a chain store instead of an independent, that's what the landlord would select."

In time, he found a store that wanted to get out of its lease and a landlord who wanted to get more out of the existing space. In the summer of last year, Rocky Mountain Wines, Spirits and Beer opened its doors for business.

"The Most Beautiful Store I've Ever Been In"

One thing that Rocky Mountain is noted for is just how pretty it is. Form and function have been brought together to create a welcoming, stylish retail space, but Michael and his team can't take all of the credit. He explains, "We were able to secure a really up-and-coming architectural firm here called FRANK Architecture & Interiors. They've done a lot of restaurants and we liked their style. They had never designed a liquor store, but we had a pretty strong concept, and they were able to guide us through the process."

So, what features were a requirement of the store? Michael elaborates, "We met a lot of people in retail and they were really gracious in spending their time with us, answering questions. We went to a lot of liquor stores to measure shelving and build up an image of our space. We had a clear idea of a Bordeaux-style store where you could stack 14 bottles, so you end up managing your whole inventory on the floor. When you get down to two bottles, you know that you have to order a case to fill that space.

"We double-stacked our shelves and even dropped the kick-plates underneath to try and make sure the shelving units weren't too high. One tip we got from a retailer was to get wire shelves, not wood shelves. The reason is that they don't get dusty, meaning that there's a lot less cleaning to do.

"We had a wine maker out of California that came to our store and she said, 'I'm not sure what this counts for, but it's the most beautiful store I've ever been in.' It counts because it supports the idea we had."

Does Humour Belong in Liquor Stores?

Having a store that looks great is only part of the total package. Your staff's knowledge about products and the level of service they provide is the core of the customer experience, and this is where Michael thinks that Rocky Mountain Wine, Spirits & Beer excels, especially if that

customer is a newcomer to wine. He is keen to make it accessible, and understands that although some customers don't know much about wine, they know what they like, and that's a gateway to expanding their knowledge. Michael breaks it down, explaining, "When we know what they like then we can direct them from there and recommend different wines to them. We try and bring that level of comfort to the consumer. If they're comfortable, they're more interested in spending time in your store and learning, and are open to trying different things.

**"FORM AND FUNCTION HAVE
BEEN BROUGHT TOGETHER
TO CREATE A WELCOMING,
STYLISH RETAIL SPACE."**



We make sure that we provide a fun, no-pressure way to gain knowledge about the product. If they're relaxed, they'll learn a ton of stuff."

This educational element is underscored by an obvious sense of humour. Wine notes tend to be quite serious, but the Rocky Mountain team knows that their customers like to be entertained. Their descriptions and tasting notes are legitimate, but as Michael puts it, very often there's something "cheeky" in there that customers really pick up on.

A Holistic View of Business

One of the overarching aims of the festivals, the store, and Michael's new online venture, Virtual Vino, is to form some real connective tissue between his customers and his suppliers. He states that a lot of his agents are small mom-and-pop operations that have a real love of the industry, and it's Rocky Mountain's duty to make his customers a part of this, and in turn, help wine businesses in the province to grow.

For now, Michael's energy is focused on consolidating the store's success so far, and growing Virtual Vino. The website has been operational for barely six months, but the responses have been positive. Michael admits that they've been "very, very lucky" that people who have made purchases have rated their wine choices highly, and have enjoyed what Rocky Mountain has offered them.

It's still the early days for the store, but even so, it's proven to be a big hit with consumers. Are there any plans for more locations? Michael laughs it off, saying, "The store opened in June 2017. It only took me 16 years. No-one can accuse me of being a fast mover!" ■



BUYING STRATEGIES

FRESH IDEAS TO BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE

by Rebecca Hardin

Managers need to be diligent in driving change within their retail stores to stay competitive in a demanding market. Creating and implementing new buying strategies is a mandatory and ongoing commitment to see positive change. However, developing fresh ideas can be difficult for some people.

Often managers feel they have exhausted all avenues, and struggle to find new and creative ideas to implement. Well, look no further! Below are a few proven tips and tricks regarding buying strategies that most retailers already know about. Why are we writing this article then you ask? Well, we have expanded on these already implemented ideas to show you examples of ways you can enhance your bottom line by making small changes. Heck! Don't drive yourself crazy by always looking for brand new ideas, expand and adapt what you already know.

Retailers have seen great long-term success after implementing simple ideas that will drive costs down and revenues up. Alberta is an extremely competitive market when compared to other provinces, so owners must continually find fresh, innovative ideas to enhance their business.

Business Relationships

While cultivating business relationships is a very old way of doing business, it's still very much a "must do". Continue to create and build on partnerships with vendors. They have a unique perspective on your business model. They are not on-site every day, but they understand your consumer. They are also a fantastic resource when you're in need of new and fresh ideas. Liquor vendors have access to detailed industry trend information including new and innovative store display ideas for retailing liquor products. They can tell you what's hot in their category and what's coming to market. Take advantage of this information and adapt it to your needs.

Focus on liquor trends. Continually strive to be one of the first retailers to carry the latest and greatest SKU. You will not only see your revenue go up, you will see new customer traffic in the store over time as clients learn about your ever-changing and trending product mix. According to the 2018 Winter issue of *Liquor Retailer*, 63% of Albertans decide to shop in a store based on its selection/variety. If you have the space, create a designated area for trending SKUs.

Contracts

Review your contracts and service providers annually. Often owners forget about their mobility accounts, Internet, WiFi usage, even credit card transaction fees. I had one owner pay for a dedicated fax line for 5 years after he had switched to online ordering! I guess you set

them up and forget about them right? Wrong! Technology changes quickly and so do those rates.

It never hurts to shop around annually to ensure you are getting the most bang for your buck. A simple phone call to your provider usually works. Just ask, "Can you help me save on my monthly bill?" More often, than not, the answer is yes. The odds are you have been a loyal customer and they are willing to offer some great ideas and incentives to retain your business. Don't leave money on the table just because you didn't ask.

CONTINUALLY STRIVE TO BE ONE OF THE FIRST RETAILERS TO CARRY THE LATEST AND GREATEST SKU.

Buying on LTOs

For some of you, the idea of buying on LTOs could go into the bulk buying category; however, there is a new, innovative way some retailers have taken advantage of up-and-coming price changes. POS terminals are so powerful now

that POS providers are integrated with Liquor Connect to track what price changes are upcoming and receive real time information. This helps purchasers decide on SKU top-ups and non-orders.

As a simplified example, let's say that a liquor store sells one case of a certain vodka a week. Par levels are kept at two facings to reduce out-of-stock possibilities. The store's POS terminal advises the purchaser to wait a week to reorder because that same vodka is going on sale at \$2 off per bottle. They can defer their purchase by one week, dip into their par levels and capture

additional profit when they replenish. Some purchasers may decide to buy even more, based on forecast sales (bridge buying) or commit to buying large quantities, which leads us directly into bulk buying. This innovative ordering has created a micro bridge-buy directly contributing to the bottom line.

Be forewarned that LTOs are first-come-first-served at Liquor Connect, so make sure your POS has the capability of tracking the real time inventory with Connect to avoid out-of-stocks.

Bulk Buying

Bulk buying is purchasing larger quantities than usual, for a lower than usual unit price. This pretty much sums it up. Most retailers have a very solid understanding of this when working with their agents who allocate product to them based on quantity commitments.

The new innovative approach is to apply this model of purchasing to other circumstances outside of liquor purchases. It can even be taken a step further to combine purchasing power amongst competitors! Consider your synergies or partnership between your business and other store owners. Often one-off or small business owners have very good relationships with other liquor retailers. Even though they are competitors, a joint bulk purchase of dry goods (e.g. bags, 6-pack crates, plastics, etc.) can really save some money. Retailers looking to make a large bulk purchase can source

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items locally or from overseas. When partnered with additional locations, shipping costs and large volume purchases can be made to bring costs down dramatically.

Go Green

Not looking to bulk purchase on bags? Go green! Stop using bags all together and encourage consumers to bring their own. Apply some dollars to marketing your green initiative so your green commitment is well communicated and apply a slight upcharge for those who still need a bag. Offer free boxes to guests with multi-bottle purchases—this will reduce the recycling that goes out the back door. Win-win!

You will see your supplies/paper expenses dramatically decline. To take it a

step farther, could your location consider going paperless? Could receipts be emailed rather than printed? An easy first step to implementation is to ask the consumer if they require a receipt prior to printing.

**TRACK WHAT PRICE CHANGES ARE UPCOMING AND RECEIVE
REAL TIME INFORMATION.**

There are so many ways to expand or revise your current in-house strategies. Create a dialogue within your team and implement a few simple buying strategies that will significantly impact your store and your bottom line. ■



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Liquor & Cannabis Licensing | Retail Consulting

by Marina Lecian

Uine

Fleur Moelleux is a soft, sweet white wine from Bordeaux, France. 100% Semillon, this off-dry white has fruity and floral aromas. The palate is loaded with stone fruit and honeysuckle flavours. 750ml \$10.99 whsl +801656

Princess Rosé This dry rosé has a brilliant colour. It is very aromatic with intense red fruit aromas and citrus. In the mouth, its freshness with a moderate acidity and bright fruits show a great balance. 750ml \$10.99
whsl +804517

Baron de Ley Rosado has a bright, cherry-pink colour with violet hues. It has a fragrant nose in which red-berry fruit, especially raspberries and strawberries come to the fore. On the palate, the wine is round and full of flavour, with a fresh, fruity finish. 750ml \$12.00 whsl +802454

Shin Premium Yuzu Wine uses fresh premium yuzu fruit, which is a rare hybrid citrus fruit popular in Japan for centuries and has been historically cultivated as an herbal remedy. The wine's aroma and flavour offer a rare and complex blend of lime, lemon, grapefruit, and mandarin orange with tangy acidity. 720ml \$25.52 whsl +801668

Thr3 Monkeys Red 100% Tempranillo, it has a medium-dry, soft and yet fruity taste with lots of dark tasty berries. 750ml \$9.99 whsl +801715

Wooden Winery Barn Door Red Blend 2015 has a unique bottle that looks like it's made of wood. This North Coast California red blend has notes of bright blue and red fruits, interwoven with oak notes and texture. The richness of merlot fruit with the structure and body of Cabernet Sauvignon combine for a long finish. 750ml \$29.97 whsl 804328

Perisecco Sparkling Peach Mango is delightfully effervescent with rich notes of ripe mango and the balanced flavours of ripe summer peaches accented with notes of lemon jam and rhubarb. 750ml \$9.75
whsl +804652

Spirits

Xfour Summer Pack includes two award-winning vodkas available in one package. Xfour Bremner's Blueberry Infused Vodka made from BC hand-crafted vodka and combined with 1/3 lb. of fresh, organic blueberries. Xfour Percy's Old Fashioned Lemonade Infused Vodka made from fresh squeezed lemons and hand-crafted vodka balanced with honey from the Fraser Valley and fresh lemon zest. 375ml x 2 bottles \$25.87 whsl +802904

Yamazakura Fine Blended Whisky is a blend of four malt and grain whiskeys aged in bourbon casks. This rich and complex whisky has a sweet and delicate aroma of elderflower, malt, and caramel. The palate has notes of pear, vanilla, and citrus. 700ml \$49.73 whsl +801641

RTD

Pulpoloco Sangria is a ready-to-drink red wine Sangria from Spain in an easy-to-serve 250ml tetra pack shaped like a can. This cartocan is an eco-friendly paper carton that folds down flat when empty but feels like a can in your hand. Pulpoloco Sangria is light-bodied, fruity, refreshing, and 100% natural. 250ml \$3.10 whsl +801917

Other

Barnet POS is announcing their **Cloud-Based POS system** designed for liquor stores. The system operates as a best of breed hybrid solution allowing the front-of-house POS to operate in a secure desktop architecture, while harnessing the power of the Internet to allow you to run your back office system anywhere, in real time, on your laptop, tablet or smart phone. The cloud-based subscription approach offers an affordable monthly investment designed to improve all aspects of your liquor store operations, and increase profits. www.barnetbc.com

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SELLING AS MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION

INVESTING IN YOUR STAFF IS KEY

by Laura Starr

The term “upsell” carries a double entendre of implied meanings. To some, it infers profits; to others, it’s a greedy and offensive sales tactic. Your experience with upselling will bias your sentiment towards it; nonetheless, both associations carry some level of truth. The trouble lies with how upselling is handled: are you upselling solely for profit, or are you upselling to enhance your customers’ experience? Fortunately, these two concepts are not mutually exclusive; the catch 22 is that you have to shift your focus away from profits, and towards your customer. Elevate their experience, and you will gain their trust and loyalty, leading to referrals and repeat business.

What does it look like to elevate a customer experience in a liquor store? As a private market, Alberta has no shortage of product in the world of liquor and wine. Liquor stores’ selections are abundant and ever-changing. With such freedom, however, comes responsibility. You and your staff must be able to navigate and converse about these products with ease and expertise.

Who are you Putting in Front of Your Customers?

Staff knowledge is absolutely critical to engaging with customers in a meaningful way. If you walk into a liquor store looking for a bottle of red wine to go with your duck, and the staff member auto-points to an \$80 bottle of Pinot Noir with no explanation, you’ll be underwhelmed to say the least, if not offended or embarrassed if you hadn’t wanted to spend over \$30. Alternatively, were you to walk in with the same question, and the staff member enquires about your personal taste, what you are serving with the duck as well as your price point, suddenly your engagement is piqued. From there the conversation could lead to a dialogue about whether this \$30 village-level Burgundy might fall flat against the tomatoes and olives in the dish, but here is a stellar \$42 Chianti that could be a bold alternative. Wine amateurs and savvy pros alike will be impressed as they feel heard and engaged, and that impression will draw them back.

Spirits are no different. Having confidence navigating a conversation around single malt, single grain, and single barrel whiskey is a necessity when some chain stores host a wall of hundreds of different brands and styles, and allows you to accurately lead the customer to the right purchase. Clarifying the differences between Tanqueray London Dry, Tanqueray Ten, and Tanqueray Special Dry, and their respective production methods, profiles, and qualities, will empower the customer to understand where their money is going and appreciate what they are getting in return. If you want your customers to feel comfortable spending more money, your staff must be able to justify why product X is pricier than its counterpart.

Create Staff Experts

Investing in staff is a hugely underutilized business strategy, both for enhancing customer experience, and for staff retention. It is easy to place the responsibility on your staff



to learn on their own accord, time, and money, or to only hire employees who have credentials on their resume. But if you want to put the right experience in front of your customers, this is your chance to acknowledge the power you have, as an employer, to customize your own staff experts. If you take the time to know your staff, discover what motivates them, and empower them with your trust and investment, you will regain control of the boat, and navigate your sales in any direction you want.

There are many ways to invest in and educate your employees. Depending on the scope of your business and the staff you have on hand, you can get creative with your methods, or

individualize them for each employee. The key is holding your employees accountable. If you offer to pay for an employee's WSET Diploma, a 2-year course that costs \$10,000, this should align with a time commitment from the employee to your business (should they leave before 2 years, the course would need to be paid back, etc.). If you choose to reward an employee with a Napa Valley weekend wine tour, have the employee share what they learned with other staff upon their return. Host product seminars regularly (most liquor brands have ambassadors or reps who will gladly host for you) and incentivize your staff to put this knowledge into action on the floor.

Education Options

So where do you educate your staff, and which courses should you use? Proper classroom education is important for building a foundation. The Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) courses offer relevant textbook content on wine and spirit production around the world, in addition to building on tasting techniques, and classes include tasting through thoughtfully selected and classic expressions of wines and spirits from around the world. That said, there is huge merit in the tangible experience of being on-site in a winery or distillery with the proprietors themselves, so don't be afraid to complement classroom education with trips. Talk to your reps, and perhaps offer a trip to the Okanagan Valley as a prize for employees with top sales.

Note that in 2019, the WSET is splitting Wine and Spirits apart, to allow for deeper content exploration in the world of spirits (an excellent improvement). So these courses are bound to change over the next few months, as course divisions occur. Courses range from WSET 1, a fundamentals course on basic level wine knowledge, to Diplomas, French Wine Scholars, and courses on the Business of Wine. Visit finevintageltd.com to see a full list of courses available in Calgary and Edmonton.

Successful upselling manifests naturally when your staff engages in meaningful dialogue with your customers. You can know every customer buying trend and hard-selling technique in the world, but it will all fall flat under an employee who doesn't know the product. ■

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MARCH 2018 TO MAY 2018

		% change
142,490.71	→ Beer*	0.04
109,952.35	→ Wine	0.13
70,193.47	→ Coolers	13.52
19,394.10	→ Cider	18.99
2,388.14	→ Gin	11.49
12,009.06	→ Rum	-2.76
22,367.21	→ Vodka	3.81
17,787.83	→ Whisky	5.58
6,770.01	→ Liqueur	1.57
1,536.21	→ Tequila	11.25

BRITISH COLUMBIA CIDER

by Emily Ritchie



In a sea of a thousand cideries spanning North America, a small but determined group from BC are taking the market by storm, and attracting the attention of discerning consumers. Close to three dozen BC cideries now operate, up from a handful just five years ago. This growth reflects a similar trend in the rest of North America, where 90% of the continent's cideries have emerged within the last five years. Despite the relatively small number of BC cideries, they take home a disproportionate number of awards and accolades. Local cidery favourites such as Sea Cider, Broken Ladder, and Merridale have all won gold medals and Best in Show awards at recent national and international competitions, including the Portland International Cider Cup, the North American Cidercraft Awards, and the Dan Berger International Wine and Cider Competition. How have BC's cideries been able to stand out in this growing North American market?

In part, we can thank our European forebearers, who planted apple orchards and brought the tradition of fine cider to BC when they set out to firmly establish an agricultural

industry. Beginning in the 1850s, European pioneers began staking out farmland on BC's coasts, then moved inland to the Okanagan as agriculture became viable in the valley with the introduction of irrigation. Apple orchards were some of the earliest signs of European agriculture, as pioneers established farms to feed trading posts and growing New World communities. BC was well suited to growing apples, which responded well to BC's climate and rich earth, both on the West Coast and the Okanagan Valley. Apples were also easy to store—in the root cellar or as cider—for trade and consumption. Nowadays, the Okanagan is home to most of BC's apple orchards, but orchards a century old can still be found on prime agricultural land around BC's coastal communities.

BC has some of the finest apple growing land on the continent, and where there are apples, there is cider. BC's pioneering cidemakers had a high standard to meet, as fickle ex-pats used to European cider weren't satisfied with low quality alternatives. BC's early cidemakers used techniques refined in Europe over the

centuries, and their passion and skill were handed down to each new generation of farmers and cidemakers.

Thankfully, unlike other regions in North America, BC's tradition of fine cidemaking didn't end with Prohibition. While many cider orchards elsewhere were cut down during Prohibition, BC's Prohibition Era, from 1917 to 1921, was relatively short-lived. BC's apple orchards were spared the axe, and cidemaking was not as disrupted in BC as it was elsewhere on the continent.

Still other factors, such as urbanization and industrialization, doomed cidemaking in other regions of North America. BC was spared much of this influence thanks to careful urban planning to avoid taking over limited agricultural land. The protection of agricultural land was enshrined in legislation in the 1970s with the formation of BC's Agricultural Land Reserve and policies discouraging the conversion of farmland to other uses. Today, apple orchards in BC are still protected from development.

With a long tradition of apple growing, British Columbians continue to demand high quality cider and the "real deal". That "real deal" has meant that BC cideries continue to use BC apples, not juice or concentrate trucked from a thousand miles away. Because most of BC's cideries are using BC apples—including heritage varieties and vintage cider varieties—it is no surprise that BC's cider styles reflect the high quality of our fruit. The renaissance of the BC cider industry began with the earthy phenolic styles produced from estate-grown English cider varieties grown at Merridale and Sea Cider then branched into the dry, yet fruit-forward styles produced by Broken Ladder and others, an expression of BC's long history of growing some of the tastiest apples on the planet.

BC cidemakers have long respected the connection between orchard and glass, and a vibrant, award-winning industry has been built on the partnership between orchardists and cidemakers. When you drink BC cider you are drinking BC apples. It's no wonder BC produces award-winning cider, and the rest of the world is taking note. ■

Emily Ritchie is the Executive Director of the Northwest Cider Association, a local trade association supporting cidemakers in BC, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

New ALSA Members

ALSA welcomes the following new members:

Hicks Fine Wines, St Albert

Liquor Plex, Calgary

Liquor XS, Edmonton

Olympia Liquor, High River

Olympia Liquor Jackson Port, Calgary

Small Town Spirits, New Sarepta

Spirits Hops & Grapes, Three Hills

Super Value Liquor, Edmonton

Super Value Liquor, Edmonton

Super Value Liquor, Sherwood Park

Super Value Liquor, Wetaskiwin

Whole Cellars, Calgary

Wine and Beyond at Sage Hill, Calgary

Awards

2018 Canadian Artisan Spirit Competition

Canada's largest and most successful artisan spirit festival is pleased to announce the following 2018 winners from Alberta:

Aged Gin	Gold – Park Distillery Barrel Aged Gin, Park Distillery		Silver – Wild Life Distillery Vodka, Wild Life Distillery	
Gin	Gold – Gin Twenty-One, RAW Distillery		Liqueur	Gold – Double Double, Rig Hand Distillery
	Silver – Park Distillery Alpine Dry Gin, Park Distillery			
	Bronze – Badland Seaberry Gin, Strathcona Spirits Distillery		Rum	Bronze – Brum, Rig Hand Distillery
	Bronze – Wild Life Distillery Gin, Wild Life Distillery			
		White Spirits	Best in Class – Unaged Rye-Port Finish, RAW Distillery	
Infused Vodka	Bronze – Park Distillery Vanilla Vodka, Park Distillery		Bronze – Park Distillery Glacier Rye, Park Distillery	
	Bronze – Park Distillery Chili Vodka, Park Distillery			
		Young Whisky	Silver – Border Crossing Rye Spirit, Hansen Distillery	
Vodka	Silver – Park Distillery Classic Vodka, Park Distillery		Silver – Ring of Fire Rye Spirit, Hansen Distillery	

2018 Canadian Brewing Awards

The Canadian Brewing Awards is Canada's national competition for judging the quality of Canadian manufactured beer and a Canadian Brewing Award medal is a widely recognized symbol of Canadian Brewing excellence. Congratulations to the following winners:

Brewery of the Year	Dageraad Brewing
Gold – Porter	Coalbanks Cold Press Porter, Coulee Brew Co.
Gold – North American Amber Lager	Red Coat Trail Ale, Coulee Brew Co.
Silver – Brown Ale	Open Road Brown Ale, Troubled Monk Brewery
Silver – North American-style Blonde or Golden Ale	Village Blonde Ale, Village Brewery
Silver – North American-style Wheat Beer	Ploughman Hopped Wheat Ale, Common Crown Brewing Co.
Silver – American-style Imperial IPA	The Forgetful Brewer, Outcast Brewing
Bronze – Belgian-style Strong Ale	Wolf in Monk's Clothing Belgian Dark Strong, Norseman Brewing Co.
Bronze – Smoked Beer	Hell's Basement Smoked Stout, Hell's Basement Brewery Inc.

2018 Canadian International Beer Awards

The Canadian International Beer Awards have grown to become one of the most distinguished beer judging competitions in the world. Alberta Beer Festivals is proud to award gold, silver, and bronze certifications to the best beers in their respective categories. Alberta award winners include:

Best of Canada	Gold – New England-style Pale Ale, Blindman Brewing
	Bronze – Last Post Brown Ale, Origin Malting & Brewing
Best of Alberta	Gold – New England-style Pale Ale, Blindman Brewing
	Silver – Last Post Brown Ale, Origin Malting & Brewing
	Bronze – Rumpelstoutskin, Outcast Brewing
Best in Show	Silver – New England-style Pale Ale, Blindman Brewing

For a complete list of winners go to www.albertabeerfestivals.com/events-services/canadian-international-beer-awards/2018-canadian-international-beer-awards/

Calgary International Beerfest 2018 People's Choice Award

Best Brewery	Gold – Cold Garden Beverage Co.
	Silver – Fat Unicorn Brewery
	Bronze – Freehold Brewing

World Beer Cup

Presented by the Brewers Association at the Craft Brewers Conference in Nashville, the competition featured 8,234 beers from 2,515 breweries representing 66 countries. Among the 101 style categories, Canadian breweries were honoured with 14 of the 302 medals that were awarded, including the following:

American-Belgo-Style Ale	Silver – Juxtapose, Four Winds Brewing
Belgian-Style Flanders Oud Bruin or Oud Red Ale	Bronze – Flanders Sour Ale, Rebellion Brewing
Belgian-Style Tripel	Silver – 33 Acres of Euphoria, 33 Acres Brewing
Coffee Beer	Bronze – Breakfast of Champions Coffee Lager, Riot Brewing
English-Style Mild Ale	Gold – Working Class Hero Dark Mild, Riot Brewing
	Bronze – Black Tusk Ale, Whistler Brewing
Extra Special Bitter	Gold – Old Jalopy Pale Ale, Powell Brewery
French & Belgian-Style Saison	Silver – Bord du Lac, Amsterdam Brewing
Leipzig-Style Gose or Contemporary Gose	Gold – Corvus Lingonberry Lime Gose, Ravens Brewing
Ordinary or Special Bitter	Silver – Kirke, Corsaire Microbrasserie
Rye Beer	Silver – Ryes Against the Machine, Hell's Basement Brewery
Scotch Ale	Gold – Scotch Ale Wee Heavy, Microbrasserie Gainsbourg
Smoke Beer	Silver – Smoke & Mirrors Imperial Smoked Ale, Coal Harbour Brewing
Wood and Barrel-Aged Strong Beer	Silver – Scarlet, Steamworks Brewing

The full list of winners is available at <https://www.worldbeercup.org/winners/award-winners/>.

2018 San Francisco World Spirit Competition

Highlights from Best of Class winners include:

Best Gin	Batch Industrial Strength Gin, Batch Brew Ltd.
Best Vodka	Neft Vodka, Neft Vodka
Best Tequila	Cazcanes Blanco Tequila, Cazcanes Tequila
Best Straight Bourbon	Bulleit Barrel Strength Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Bulleit Distilling Co.
Best Extra-Aged Rum, 5 Years and Older	Plantation Jamaica 2002 Vintage Rum, Plantation Rum

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WINE REPORT

by Tim Ellison

Off the Beaten Path: The Search for the Next Big Thing

Everyone wants something different. In wine, this is especially so. People want to be the one to discover the latest thing and share it with their friends. It's looking for those value up-and-comers. There's nothing like being in on the ground floor of the next big thing. Picpoul—oh yeah—I was into that five years ago. Try this Falanghina! There seems to be a cool factor about being the first to discover food and beverage fads or trends that go along with the current fascination with—careful photo documentation of, and the public sharing via various platforms—of every morsel we put in our mouths.

If you are looking to offer something unique to your customers that may have a compelling value proposition, then consider areas that are off the beaten path. There aren't any great deals in Napa or Burgundy since a ready market is willing to pay top dollar for their entire production. Regions looking to create a buzz often do so by "hitting above their weight" and offering superior value in either quantity (e.g. BIB) or quality. Price is often competitive. I can remember Lindeman's selling 1L bottles of Hunter Valley Semillon under screw cap in the 1980s for \$4.95. The next year a cork finished 750ml of the same wine cost \$5.10. Now quality Hunter Semillon can run \$75.00+. The Aussies were penetrating the market and then crept up the price. The same thing happened in California, Oregon, Washington, New Zealand, and Chile. Now the trend continues in both Argentina and South Africa. The wines get noticed because they are great value for money, demand picks up, the price increases, and people want to know what's next.

The good news is that wine grapes can ripen properly between 30 and 50 degrees of latitude north and south. There is a lot of arable land between those borders and much of it is under vine now or has been in the past. But there are still a few areas still working hard to make a name for themselves. You can take advantage of the value some of these areas offer. There are also some regions in the Old World being

re-discovered that can offer surprising value and quality too!

South America - So what's next? There's a place that fascinates me lately offering amazing wines that aren't necessarily cheap, but when you consider value for money offer unreal value. The country is Uruguay, which is located in South America on the Atlantic between Argentina to the west and Brazil to the north. Uruguay has two strikes against it. Coastal influence means a lot of rain and associated disease pressure, making growing challenging. And then, of all things, they chose Tannat as a national grape. But after careful soil testing, strategic vineyard location and varietal siting, channelling ocean breezes to keep moisture at bay, and a fortune made in the telecommunications industry backing everything up, a new player has emerged and is positioning to put Uruguay on the map single-handedly. Check out Bodega Garzon. The Albarino is outstanding and their reds are some of the best I have tasted with a range including Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Single Vineyard Tannats that are drinking well now. They are powerful, lush, grippy, and calling out for grilled beef or roasted root vegetables.

Brazil has over 600 wineries and you see some delicious bubble from that country. I have had the occasional quality red or white wine but they are still few and far between in this market.

Croatia - Another source of high quality wines for about half of what they are worth is Croatia. Stina Winery has rejuvenated a centuries-old growing site on the island of Brac (famous for its white stone or stina) and is showing the world what grapes like Posip (white) and Plavac Mali (red) are capable of. They sport artsy labels, trophy 180 gram+ bottles, quality foils and cork. No expense was spared in the winemaking here either, and it shows in the glass. These are polished and expansive wines that show care and craft.

China - A real up-and-comer that will be both a new entry and a major player in just a couple

of decades is, of course, Mainland China. China is the second biggest grape grower in the world behind Spain. There is a lot of national pride fueling a desire to create wines on par with the world's best. I have tasted some that are well on their way to competing with the finest wines on the planet to some that are pretty rural and rugged (and not in that cute first world millennial "natural" wine way).

Tasmania and Australia - The bubble industry in Tasmania—the small island south of Victoria, Australia—is really starting to create some new interest in the offerings from down under. Jansz and Josef Chromy are a couple of good producers you see around from time to time. And while we are down under, the oldest wine region in Australia is attracting attention again. Look for fresh and crisp fruit forward and lightly oaked Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs from Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula and mid-weight, elegant Shiraz from Heathcote, all in Victoria. Sometimes it takes the old dogs to teach the kids a new trick or two. Watch for more classics from this region to capture people's imaginations like Semillon and the "stickies" – Rutherglen Muscats.

Other Countries - Other places to watch are countries like Israel, Georgia, Greece, and Mexico. Look for an increasing level of quality coming out of South Africa especially the regions of Franschhoek, Walker Bay, Eglin, and Elim. Watch for states other than the west coast regulars to start becoming the centre of conversation when it comes to US wines. States like Arizona, Virginia, Texas, and New York are working hard to figure out what they do best, getting it right, and letting the world know.

Talk to your rep and take a look off the beaten path to find some new and exciting wines from these up-and-coming places to excite your customers.

Liquor Tastings

Whether it's the frosty malt of an Alberta beer or the smoothness of an Alberta whiskey, consumers now have expanded options when it comes to liquor tastings. The Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission (AGLC) has conducted its first review of the liquor tasting policy in two decades. The review included an evaluation of existing policy and consultations with industry associations.

Thanks to the feedback received, the AGLC has now better defined what a liquor tasting is. A liquor tasting is an activity that allows patrons the opportunity to taste featured liquor products. Class A, B, C, D and E liquor licensees are permitted to conduct tastings provided minors are not provided liquor, no one is being served a product to the point of intoxication, and tasting records are provided to the AGLC upon request.

A 2018 addition to the serving requirements is that servers must have their ProServe certification. Should employees need to obtain or update their certification, they can do so through the AGLC SMART Training website.

What's needed when documenting tasting records? The name of the liquor products tasted, the quantity served and the licensee's cost for the products, dates and times of the tasting, fee to patrons, and an itemized list of staffing, educational and food costs.

Updates have also been made to the policy reflecting how much the licensee can serve customers for each tasting. The largest allowable amount of beer that can be served remains four ounces. Increasing to four ounces are ciders and refreshment beverages such as coolers and premixed drinks (up from two ounces). Wine has also increased, with the allowable serving limit now at two ounces and spirits and liqueurs will remain at 1/2 ounce.

Following the recent changes, Class D licensees can now conduct their own liquor tastings without a liquor agency present. But now on the menu for Class D licensees are appetizer-sized food portions. Establishments can allow customers to pair their serving with food. Should they incur any costs associated with items such as the liquor products being tasted, appetizer-sized food portions being served, or education and staffing costs, licensees are now able to charge a fee to the patron.

Staffing costs have also been updated, moving to \$25 an hour. Previously it was \$20.

Liquor agencies are now able to provide an unfinished product from a previous tasting at a different location, should the licensee give the okay to do so.

A Class D licensee may conduct a free tasting on behalf of an agency if the two sides have a written Buy/Sell Agreement that is signed before the tasting begins. That agreement must specify the date, time and location of the tasting, identify the liquor product that will be offered along with the quantity and the licensee's cost, and identify staffing costs specific to the tasting. In this case, the agency



representing the product may not be involved in the tasting.

The licensee may be reimbursed by the liquor agency for costs incurred during the tasting. Those costs must be associated with items such as staffing and the cost of the product being tasted. Licensees are not allowed to increase costs to create a profit.

These improvements have been met with positive feedback from the Canadian Vintners Association, Spirits Canada, and the Alberta Liquor Store Association, who all provided input into the policy.

To learn more about the new additions and changes to the liquor tasting policy, visit aglc.ca.

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SPIRIT *Spotlight*

by Mark Glenning, recipes courtesy of Sabine Dhaliwal

Low-Proof Cocktails

Consumers are more health conscious than they have been ever before. People are searching out low-proof cocktails that don't lose their flavour with the alcohol.

The challenge that bartenders face when creating a low-ABV drink is bringing depth and a full flavour without resorting to fruit juices or spirits high in alcohol content. This is where vermouth and other modifiers are important; the former is able to carry flavour wonderfully, which brings body—but not alcohol—to the cocktail.

If anyone is an expert on low-ABV cocktails, it's Sabine Dhaliwal. Bar Manager at UVA Wine & Cocktail Bar, she's a Certified Spirit Specialist and has attained level three qualifications with the Wine and Spirit Education Trust. She's been an avid supporter of low- and zero-proof cocktails for a long time, and sees an increasing awareness about health as one of the reasons driving their surge in popularity.

She says, "I think striving to live a more balanced lifestyle could be a factor... We also see a lot of out-of-town visitors at UVA and when people travel to new cities they likely want to visit as many spots as possible within a short timeframe. Ordering an Old Fashioned or Manhattan at every bar and restaurant you visit could make for a very short evening, or an unpleasant morning after!"

The origin of low-alcohol cocktails has its roots in the craft movement. Consumer knowledge is always growing, and with that, there's a demand for higher quality products. The drinks industry is responding to the challenge admirably, and many pubs are responding to the sober trend. It's all part of giving customers options, and that includes choices for those who do not want to drink a lot. Bartenders are getting past an obligation to vodkas, rums, whiskeys, and other high proof spirits. Instead, Dhaliwal says, they're embracing a new class of drinks. "I want to provide a full range of options to all our guests at UVA Wine & Cocktail Bar, and the increase in European imports of amaros, vermouths, and sherries has given bartenders many more options to be creative. The power of social media is a big player; just because a cocktail has low or no alcohol content doesn't mean it has to be boring or lackluster. They are just like standard cocktails, as they're beautiful, colourful, and come in all shapes, sizes, and types of glassware.

Low-proof drinks are here to stay. Don't expect them to take over completely, though. Reflecting on what the industry can expect, Dhaliwal says, "There will always be a demand for full strength cocktails. However, guests now expect to have many different options available. And bartenders are having a lot of fun with this new category of drinks. It keeps us on our toes, and that's fun and truly exciting."

PETALS & PANSIES

Frothy and fragrant in its appeal, this low-proof cocktail from UVA Bar Manager Sabine Dhaliwal is the ideal way to usher in the new season. Fruity flavours of passionfruit, grapefruit, and citrus are combined with jasmine green tea and dry fino sherry for a refreshing springtime sipper.

Ingredients

Egg white
1.50 oz fino sherry
0.50 oz passionfruit puree
0.50 oz jasmine green tea syrup
0.75 oz grapefruit juice
1.00 oz lemon juice
2 dashes Lem-Marrakech



Method

- Combine all ingredients into a cocktail tin, add ice, and hard shake vigorously for 7-10 seconds.
- Pour over fresh ice cubes.
- Garnish with dry rose petals.

BRIGHT EYES

This tall, refreshing cocktail delivers a sweet and fruity mix of grapefruit, peach tea, and cherry bitters, and finishes with a spicy kick courtesy of the ginger beer. With just 1.5 oz of fino sherry, this low-proof libation will ensure you remain bright-eyed throughout the night.

Ingredients

1.5 oz fino sherry
0.75 oz grapefruit juice
0.75 oz peach tea syrup
0.75 oz lemon juice
2 dashes Bittered Sling cherry bitters



Method

- Combine all ingredients (except ginger beer) into a cocktail tin, add ice, and hard shake vigorously for 7-10 seconds.
- Pour over fresh ice and top with ginger beer.
- Garnish with dehydrated lemon.

straightshots! 🍺

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