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June 2024, Vol 15, No 11

Happy Waves in Wine Glass



Dialogue

John Barker, Director General, OIV

M. Chapoutier

An Indian Toast to French Wines

Spotlight

Varchasvi Shankar

Vinod Giri Takes Charge of BAI



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Political Heatwaves and Hopes



As temperatures soar across India, the political climate has been equally intense. The relentless summer sun mirrored the fervour and excitement of the election campaigns. Now, the cacophony has faded, the dust has settled, and campaigners have retreated to the comfort of their air-conditioned rooms, awaiting the outcome of their two-month endeavour. With exit polls largely predicting a clear victory for the BJP, June 6th is poised to see the return of Modi and his team to lead the country for another five years.

Amidst these political developments, the Indian alcohol industry harbours significant expectations from the new government. The sector, characterised by rapid growth and immense potential, eagerly anticipates progressive policies that can further its success. However, whether the upcoming monsoon session budget will bring any major announcements remains to be seen.

On the global front, there is a worrying story developing. The simmering trade tensions between China and the European Union have escalated, with China hinting at potential counter measures targeting key European wine exports in response to the EU's ongoing anti-subsidy investigations into Chinese companies.

This move threatens the \$800 million wine trade between the EU and China, affecting major exporters like France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal among others. Earlier this year, China also launched an anti-subsidy investigation into the EU brandy, thereby jeopardising a \$1.56 billion spirits trade, which is

reminiscent of China's 2014 threat to probe EU wines during a solar panel dispute.

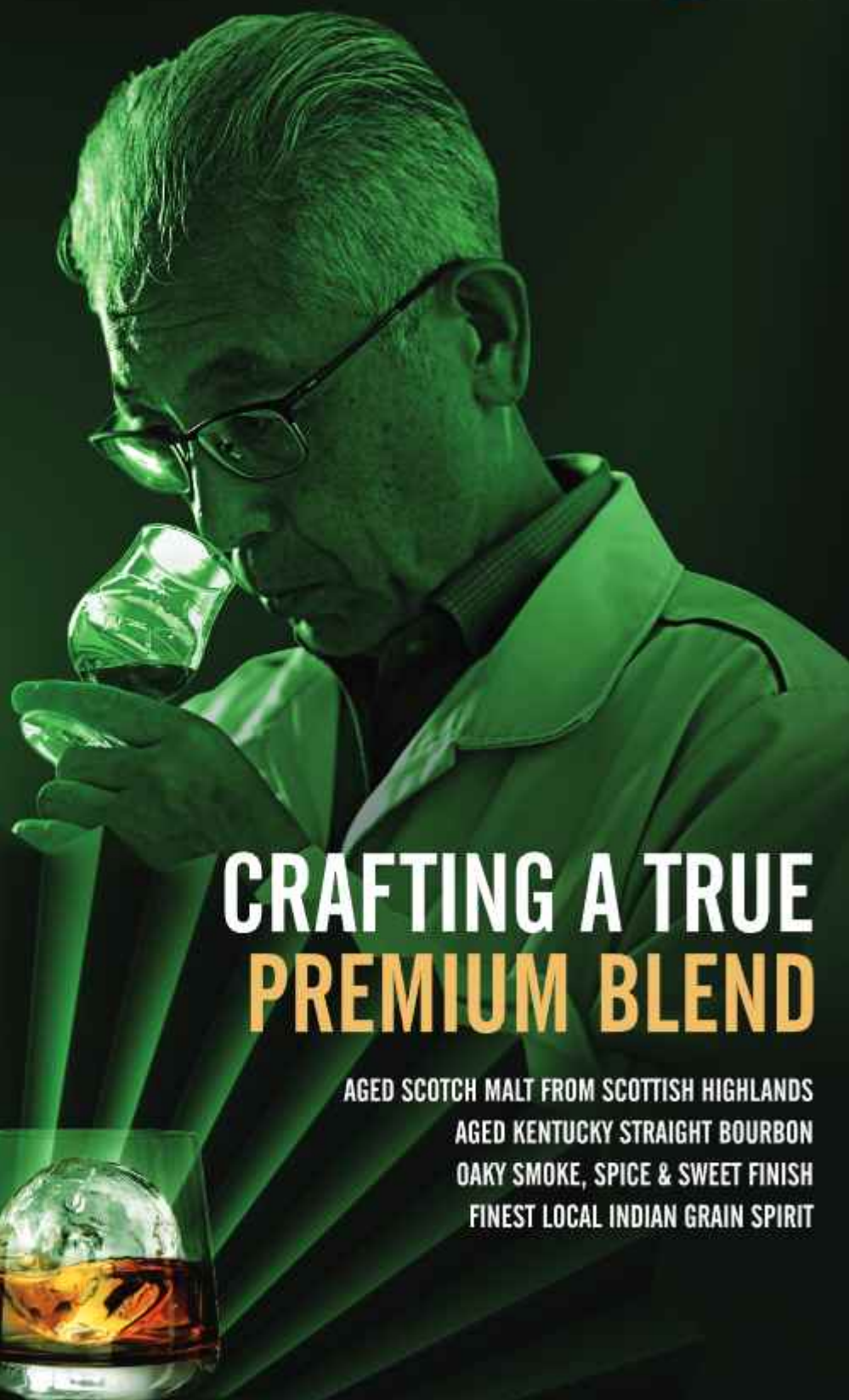
Amidst all these topsy turvy happenings in home and the world, the wine market in India is going through an impressive growth phase, not only due to evolving consumer preferences and higher disposable income, but also due to the greater availability of domestic and imported wines, which are providing our discerning wine consumers with a wide array of choices. According to Statista, the wine market in India is expected to show a volume growth, at home of 15.4 percent in 2025. Premiumisation in offerings is also a new trend in the Indian wine business, which has been induced by our evolved consumer choices.

In this issue's Cover Story, we have attempted to cover the challenges, opportunities and trends in India's wine business through a cross-section of informed industry perspectives, which we are sure would enrich our readers.

As usual, besides the in-depth Cover Story, we have an impressive bouquet of editorial offerings to cater to your industry requirements and interests. Get to know Varchas Whiskey through its Founder; read the insightful interview with the new DG of OIV, John Barker and learn a thing or two about M. Chapoutier wines from Edouard Payot; get a sense of the arrival of Giraffe restaurant from the UK in India and get ready to click for your favourite tippie. You can find them between the covers.

As the nation awaits the results, the alcohol industry looks forward to a future where conducive policies help it to thrive in the dynamic Indian market.

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Editor-in-Chief

Bishan Kumar
bishan@spiritz.in

Editor

Shalini Kumar
shalini@spiritz.in

Senior Associate Editor

Swarnendu Biswas

Consulting Editor

Huned Contractor

Consulting Editor

Sarang Kumar

Senior Sub-Editor

Vikal Samdaryia

Editor-Designing & Creative

Preeti Saxena

Graphic Designer

Ayl

Photo Editor

Preeti S

Digital Content Creator

Mukesh Chandra Katochwal

Marketing & Business Development

Deputy General Manager

Kritagya Rautal

Manager

Taufiq Fathier

Admin, Accounts & Customer Affairs

Manager

Manju Joshi

Senior Assistant

Kishore Dhawan

Transport Incharge

Sumit Sharma

Delhi Office

Corporate & Editorial
Blue Ink Media Pvt Ltd
B-10, First Floor, Acharya Niketan
Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110091
Office Ph:+91-8375948446

Jaipur

Vinod Bhardwaj
6/276, Malviya Nagar Jaipur
+91-9785007763

International Bureau

New York Bureau

Dharmvir Gehlaut
103-65, 104 Street, Apt#BSMT,
Ozone Park, NY-11417
(917) 843-5898
gehlautdh@gmail.com

London

Sai Karthik Madabhushi

Canada

Shivika Shankar

34 Cover Story

Happy Waves in Wine Glass!

The wine industry in India is teeming with potential, yet it often finds itself hindered by not-so-friendly policies. While the evolution of retail channels and the trend towards premiumisation are promising for the sector, the restrictive regulations imposed on wine entrepreneurs in many states need reform. To truly capitalise on India's wine potential, a shift towards more favourable policies is essential. In this context, Maharashtra and Karnataka stand out with their wine-friendly regulations, offering a blueprint for other states to follow. Encouragingly, some states are beginning to acknowledge the benefits of locally produced wines.



26 Dialogue



No-alcohol & Organic Wines Gaining Popularity

With the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) celebrating its 100th anniversary, its new Director General, John Barker takes time out for an interaction with Bishan Kumar to focus on the role being played by the organisation in promoting wine culture across the globe. Challenges of climate change, the need for sustainability and India's potential in the wine sector were some of the important issues being discussed upon. He also informed that OIV is currently developing a framework of production standards for partially or totally de-alcoholised products.

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Spotlight



Telling a Story through Varchas Whiskey

When Varchasvi Shankar, Founder, Shankar Distillers, first went to the US, he was driven by an urge to make his entrepreneurship dream come true. And he made it so! After many years of experience that taught him the art of global business, he turned toward the sector of alcoholic beverages because he saw it as an opportunity to tell a story, in fact, many interesting stories. Varchasvi speaks to Shalini Kumar to unveil narratives around his venture in alcobev business.

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Brewers Association of India Constituted

United Breweries, AB-InBev and Carlsberg have jointly announced the launch of Brewers Association of India ('BAI'), a new industry body focused on growing the beer category in India, and driving innovation, moderation, and sustainability in the Indian beer market. Headquartered in Delhi, BAI is headed by Vinod Giri, who assumed office on 1st June 2024.



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Focus



UPDA Bets Big on Maize

Maize is slated to be the next big raw material for ethanol production and distilleries. Recognising the value of maize, the UP Distillers' Association (UPDA) has been taking giant steps in promoting maize cultivation across the state while also collaborating with American organisations to collaborate on the latest technologies, as informed by Rajneesh Agarwal, Secretary General, UP Distillers' Association.

Wine Conversation

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An Indian Toast to French Wines

On his visit to India, Edouard Payot, Export Director – Africa, the Middle East, Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific as well as Global Travel Retail Director, M. Chapoutier, discusses the potential that the brand holds in the promotion of their wines in India.



Magic Moments sold more than 6 mn cases



In the fiscal year 2024, Radico Khaitan Limited's Magic Moments Vodka soared past expectations, selling over 6 million cases, amounting to sales worth Rs 1000 crores. This marks a remarkable growth for Magic Moments Vodka as compared to its previous fiscal year's sales of 5.2 million cases. The brand reports an impressive 25 percent sales value growth as compared to the previous year.

Magic Moments Vodka presents an extensive array of products spanning across the semi-premium and premium vodka categories, including Magic Moments Remix, Verve, and Dazzle. Furthermore, the brand features a selection of ready-to-drink vodka-based cocktails.

Adding to its spirits lineup, Magic Moments made waves with its recent launch of Pink Vodka, and the Holi Hai Edition towards the end of the financial year and the response from consumers has been exceptional.

Speyside Capital opens its office in India

Speyside Capital, a Scotland-based asset management company has opened its new office in Mumbai's Central Business District as it makes a move to make Scotch Whisky cask ownership easily accessible.

This strategic move underscores the company's move to tap India's ongoing economic growth and burgeoning whisky market, while opening doors to make Scotch Whisky cask ownership easily accessible.

Speyside Capital has recently collaborated with The Quorum Club Association. With an expansive \$40 billion USD Indian whiskey market, Speyside Capital aims to develop the country's premier Scotch single malt whisky club by offering exclusive whisky cask ownership opportunities to connoisseurs.



Tanqueray N° Ten rated the best gin of 2024

Tanqueray N° Ten, crafted by Diageo, has secured the top spot in the esteemed Beverage Testing Institute's 2024 rankings with a stellar 98/100 score. It is named as the Best Gin of 2024 by the Beverage Testing Institute.

Awarded the only platinum medal at the rankings, it reaffirms its position as the epitome of gin craftsmanship. With captivating aromas of candied orange zest, cinnamon, and tonka bean, and a palate boasting chamomile tea notes with a citrusy juniper kick, all perfectly balanced at 47.3 percent ABV, Tanqueray N° TEN stands as a beacon of gin excellence.



Haryana Cabinet approves new excise policy

The Haryana Cabinet gave its approval to the excise policy for the 2024-25 fiscal after receiving approval from the Election Commission on the matter, the state government said in a statement. The new excise policy has been approved for one year, commencing from 12th June.

Under the approved excise policy, a slight increase in the excise duty on IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) and country liquor has been proposed. The government of Haryana mandated that the minimum retail sale prices of imported liquor brands will be fixed by the department to streamline the business and e-auction for allotment of retail liquor vends.

Jaisalmer Indian Craft Gin leads

Jaisalmer Indian Craft Gin leads the luxury craft gin space in India with about 50 percent market share, said Radico Khaitan Ltd. The gin has garnered acclaim for its exquisite taste and luxurious experience. Of the 11 botanicals used in the distillation, seven have been sourced from all four corners of India.

Recently, Jaisalmer Indian Craft Gin has been awarded a prestigious gold medal by The Fifty Best, a renowned US-based awards platform and digital guide to wines and spirits with top-rated listings. It also got Double Gold at Barleycorn Awards 2023, Gold at San Francisco Award 2023, and at London Spirit Competition 2024.





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ABD's IPO expected in June



Allied Blenders & Distillers (ABD) is set to go for a massive Rs. 1500 crore IPO. With an 8.2 percent market share, the company has a widespread distribution network across India.

The proceeds from the IPO are primarily aimed to be used for repayment of outstanding borrowings. According to the draft papers, Allied Blenders & Distillers is looking to raise Rs. 1,500 crore through a mix of fresh shares and OFS. The upcoming IPO is worth noting because 35 percent of shares are reserved for retail investors.

The company had received final observation from the capital markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to raise Rs 1500 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The company had resubmitted its IPO papers with SEBI on 15th January 2024.

ABCL acquires a brewery in Odisha

American Brew Crafts Pvt Ltd (ABCL) has acquired Odisha-based Denzong Brewery. ABCL intends to invest upwards of Rs. 80 crore for the acquisition and renovation of the brewery. The brewery has a capacity to produce 2 lakh cases of beer per month. This will augment the owned capacity installation for the company to 8 lakh cases per month.



This strategic move marks a significant milestone for ABCL and facilitates the expansion of its footprint in east & north-east India. With this acquisition, ABCL will now operate three state-of-the-art breweries equipped with the latest German technology, located in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha.

It is raining awards with Malhar



The Malhar range of craft gins from John Distilleries Ltd. (JDL) is winning accolades in the global arena. At the 2024 San Francisco World Spirits Competition USA, Malhar Citrus Indian Craft Gin was awarded the gold medal, while the Malhar Classic Dry Indian Craft Gin bagged the bronze medal.

This was followed by two awards won at the American Distilling Institute's 2024 International Spirits Competition where Malhar Classic Dry Indian Craft Gin won the silver medal and the Malhar Citrus Indian Craft Gin bagged the bronze.

Similarly, JDL's Malhar Citrus Gin has also been adjudged winner in the 'Blind Tasting category' in the UK's prestigious The Gin Guide Awards 2024.

Two golds for Varchas Premium Spirits

Varchas Premium Spirits has achieved a remarkable feat at the prestigious 2024 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, securing two gold medals for their flagship bourbons – Varchas Straight Bourbon Whiskey, and Varchas Reserve 102, Straight Bourbon Whiskey.

This recognition signifies their position as a top-tier producer of exceptional bourbons crafted with meticulous attention to detail and a dedication to excellence.

At the competition, their Varchas Straight Rye finished in a Port Wine Cask secured a silver medal at the competition, while their Varchas Straight Rye Whiskey maintained its winning streak for the third consecutive year at the competition, receiving another silver medal.



SOM appoints Roy Sourav Kumar as VP - Sales, East



SOM Distilleries and Breweries Ltd has appointed Roy Sourav Kumar as Vice President - Sales, East. Kumar brings over two decades of extensive experience in sales and marketing within prominent FMCG and alcoholic beverage companies such as Cadbury's, ITC, Heineken (UB Ltd), and ABD.

Kumar will oversee the sales strategy and operations in the eastern India region including Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and the North-eastern states, and will cover sales in CSD and para military, with a focus on driving growth and maximising market opportunities.

Sula's Q4 net profit falls



Sula Vineyards Ltd. reported a 4.85 percent decline in consolidated net profit to reach Rs 13.55 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024. It had accounted a consolidated net profit of Rs 14.24 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

Sula's consolidated revenue from operations during the quarter under review stood at Rs 131.7 crore as against Rs 120 crore in the corresponding year-ago period. For the fiscal ended on 31st March 2024, the consolidated net profit was Rs 93.31 crore as against Rs 84.05 crore in the previous fiscal. For FY24, Sula's consolidated revenue from operations was Rs 608.65 crore as compared to Rs 553.47 crore in FY23.

"Our premiumisation efforts have succeeded in raising our Elite and Premium wine share to an all-time high of 75.1 percent in Q4, up from 71.7 percent a year ago," Rajeev Samant, Sula's CEO said. He added, "Our wine tourism revenues grew in double digits, for the fifth quarter in a row. Wine tourism is a top priority and we are expanding fast."

Net profit of JIL rises

Jagatjit Industries Limited (JIL) has announced its FY 2023-24 annual results. The company reported a 22 percent increase in revenue from operations which reached Rs 708.16 crore for the FY2023-24 fiscal as compared to Rs 582.02 crore in the previous fiscal. The company's net profit increased by 13 percent to reach Rs 9.71 crore for FY 2023-24 as compared to Rs 8.61 crores in the previous fiscal.

Jagatjit's core focus is to revive their presence across diverse regions like Assam, Kerala, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh that will prove to be a milestone and contribute to expanding the company's growth boundaries.

Commenting on the results, Roshini Sanah Jaiswal, Promoter & Executive Director at Jagatjit Industries Limited said, "As Jagatjit Industries paved the way for growth and continues to set new benchmarks with a profitable year, we are already geared up and aiming to double our profits by the next financial year."



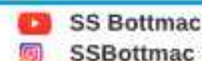
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Radico's Q4 profit increases



Radico Khaitan Ltd has reported a 26.43 percent increase in its consolidated net profit in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal, which ended 31st March 2024. It reached Rs 53.91 crore during the Q4 2023-24.

The company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 42.64 crore in the same quarter of the fiscal year 2022-23, the company said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue of Radico Khaitan from operations during the quarter under review (Q4 2023-24) stood at Rs 3,894.64 crore as against Rs 3,375.36 crore in the corresponding year-ago period.

For the fiscal ended on 31st March 2024, consolidated net profit of Radico was Rs 262.17 crore, up from Rs 220.35 crore in the previous fiscal.

On the company's performance in the fiscal 2023-24, Radico Khaitan's Chairman and Managing Director Lalit Khaitan said, "FY2024 has been a year of consolidation for Radico Khaitan. During the year, we delivered strong operational performance despite a difficult macroeconomic environment."

Tilaknagar Industries' net profit surges in Q4

Tilaknagar Industries Limited has reported a 20.9 percent increase in its net profit (excluding exceptional items) at Rs 39.5 crore in the quarter ended March 2024 as against Rs 32.7 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

The company recorded a rise in revenue to Rs 358.8 crore in the January-March 2024 quarter as against Rs 357.4 crore in the same period a year ago.

The company's Earnings Before Interest Tax Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) improved by 10.9 percent to reach Rs 48.2 crore in the quarter under review as against Rs 43.5 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. Tilaknagar Industries' EBITDA margin improved by 128 basis points (bps), standing at 13.4 percent in the quarter ended March 2024 as against 12.2 percent in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

As on 31st March 2024, the company's gross and net debt stood at Rs. 119 crore and Rs 74 crore, respectively. In FY24, Tilaknagar Industries reduced its gross debt by more than Rs 130 crore. The company aims to be net-debt free over the course of FY25.

On the company's financial performance in the fiscal 23-24, Amit Dahanukar, Chairman and Managing Director, Tilaknagar Industries, said, "FY24 was the second consecutive year in which we were India's fastest growing IMFL company of scale. This has been possible due to a clear strategic drive of focusing on brandy category, seeding and meeting need gaps across premium price points in brandy through a combination of well thought out marketing strategies and product launches."



UB's net profit soars in Q4



United Breweries Ltd. reported an impressive jump in net profit in Q4 2024 as compared to the same period of a year earlier to reach Rs 80.15 crore for the January-March period of 2023-24. The company's net profit for the full fiscal year, which ended on 31st March 2024 rose by an impressive 33 percent to reach Rs 412.59 crore as compared to Rs 308.10 crore in the previous fiscal.

UB's Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBIDTA) for the quarter was at Rs 142.9 crore. EBITDA margins have improved by 370 bps YoY to 6.7 percent. Total income of United Breweries rose 10.49 percent to reach Rs 18,453.27 crore in FY24 as compared to Rs 16,700.52 crore in the previous fiscal, the company stated.

"Despite some inflationary softening as seen from Q2, volatility will remain. We remain optimistic about the long-term growth potential of the industry, driven by increasing disposable income, favourable demographics & premiumisation," the company added.

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Serena Williams joins tequila brand



NBA legend Michael Jordan added his friends to the list of co-owners for his Cincoro Tequila brand which include tennis champion Serena Williams and others. Cincoro Tequila is raising funds from athlete investors as it prepares to enter several international markets. In 2019, Jordan launched Cincoro Tequila with four other former NBA stars.

Apart from Serena, Cincoro Tequila's new co-owner members include MLB Hall of Famer Derek Jeter, professional golf champions Dustin Johnson and Keegan Bradley, and DraftKings Inc. Co-founders Jason Robins, Matt Kalish and Paul Liberman, among other prominent investors.

Heineken invests to reopen closed pubs

Multinational beer giant Heineken has announced a £39m investment in its UK pubs, with plans to reopen 62 closed pubs. This initiative is from the company's Star Pubs and Bars division that operates 2,400 outlets across the UK, and is expected to generate more than 1,000 new jobs.



The investment will facilitate renovations at more than 600 pubs across the country, approximately a quarter of the Star chain. The company is working to restore the number of its operational outlets to pre-pandemic levels.

Vodka from agave

Texas-based Round 2 Spirits released its inaugural vodka, crafted from Mexican blue weber agave. It is named Weber Ranch 1902 Vodka. The vodka's name pays homage to blue weber agave, and French botanist Frédéric Albert Constantin Weber, who was the first to identify the plant in 1902 during an expedition to Mexico.



The vodka is made from hand-harvested Blue Weber agave, from Jalisco, Mexico, where it is first distilled and then taken to the company's Weber Range distillery in Muenster, Texas, for a second distillation – in a proprietary copper pot and column stills where it is filtered and bottled at 40 percent ABV. It's MRP is \$27.99 per 750ml bottle.

Special prize to Bodegas Matarromera



Bodegas Familiares Matarromera has been awarded the Surcos 2024 Special Prize, awarded each year by Castilla y León Televisión.

The genuine recognition honours the dedication of these prestigious wineries for their commitment to the countryside, their deep roots in the land of Castilla y León, as well as the creation of value.

The award represents a tribute to his entire family's tireless dedication to the earth and continued commitment to excellence, innovation and sustainability.

US's spirits sales drop 2.7 percent

Spirits sales in the US fell by 2.7 percent in the 12 months to March 2024 as rising prices impacted consumer spending, as per a study by SipSource which covers wine and spirits distributor sales for hundreds of thousands of on-trade and off-trade accounts in the US.



The latest quarterly report noted that the spirits sales in the US fell by 5.2 percent from January to March 2024, while wine sales in the US during the same period slipped further by 10.9 percent.

Despite the price of spirits away from home rising by 5 percent in March compared to at-home prices rising only by 1.4 percent, SipSource said the category's sales in the on-trade have continued to show resilience.

The analyst said spirits growth in the US is being led by pre-mixed cocktails, which soared by 24.6 percent. SipSource expects spirits sales in the US to improve in 2024 but are unlikely to get back to the growth rates seen in 2022.

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SMOKING IS DIFFERENT

Gabriel Boudier introduces turmeric liqueur

French producer Gabriel Boudier has launched a turmeric-flavoured liqueur, created by the 2023 winner of the brand's Wizard Award Competition. Created by Xander Driver, a bartender from Leicester, the liqueur took the top prize last year and has now been added to the Gabriel Boudier range.



The latest creation joins the ranks of previous winning recipes from the competition, including Kaffir Lime Leaf (Samuel Bolton), Mustard Liqueur (Maria Vieira) and Nori Seaweed Liqueur (Matthew Cusworth).

Bacardí cuts presence in Russia



Bacardí, the only large-scale international drinks firm still operating in Russia, is cutting its presence with a sharp reduction of its local range in the country.

The firm has almost completely suspended the supplies of some of its flagship brands, including Bacardí rum, Grey Goose vodka, Bombay Sapphire gin and other drinks.

This has been recently confirmed by representatives of some leading Russian retail chains, with their stocks of Bacardí drinks almost completely exhausted.

BrewDog reaches Thailand

BrewDog, a multinational brewery and pub chain, has announced that it would open its first bar in Thailand, as part of its ongoing international expansion drive. The brewery is partnering with Atalanta Hospitality on the new venture in Thailand.



Its new venture in Thailand's capital of Bangkok is part of BrewDog's expansion plans across Asia. BrewDog operates over 100 bars and hotels globally, and last year announced plans to open another 200 venues in key markets, over the next seven years.

Glen Moray's Rioja casks influence whiskies



Illinois state housed Glen Moray distillery has introduced two limited edition, small batch expressions, which explore the influence of Rioja wine casks on whisky.

Glen Moray 2015 Rioja Matured and Glen Moray 2012 Peated Rioja Finish were processed from the distillery's earliest experiments with Spanish wine casks. Aged for eight years entirely in Rioja casks, Glen Moray 2015 Rioja Matured is offered at a cask strength of 59.8 percent ABV.

Glen Moray 2012 Peated Rioja Finish is an 11-year-old expression made with lightly peated barley and finished in wine casks. The whisky is bottled at 58.8 percent ABV.

China may impose retaliatory tariffs on EU wines

China may target the European Union wine industry exports in response to the ongoing EU's anti-subsidy investigations into Chinese companies, according to an update by a Chinese state-affiliated social media account.

China's move to hit European wines would jeopardise the US\$800 million wine trade between the EU and China. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal are the key EU wine exporters to China.

Earlier this year, China launched an anti-subsidy investigation into EU's brandy, which can adversely impact a US\$1.56 billion spirits trade. This follows a similar pattern to 2014 when China threatened to probe EU wines during a dispute over solar panels.





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Desi Daru names cocktail contest jury



British-Indian vodka brand Desi Daru has announced a panel of juries for its inaugural cocktail competition titled Desi Daru Culture Colliders. The competition, open to bartenders of all level across the UK, aims to celebrate cultural diversity and artistic expression in mixology.

The jury panel includes Mohit Singh, Founder of Desi Daru; Melita Kiely, Editor of The Spirits Business; Tobias Gorn, Co-founder and senior partner of International Drinks Specialists; and Sukhinder Singh, Co-founder of Specialty Drinks, The Whisky Exchange and Elixir Distillers.

A collaborative gin

Suntory Global Spirits-owned Sipsmith has launched a limited edition gin, created in collaboration with the winner of its inaugural cocktail competition. Bartender Sam Wilkes Green was named the winner of Sipsmith’s inaugural UK cocktail competition, Cygnus, last year.



Wilkes Green collaborated with Sipsmith’s distillers on the creation of a gin based on his winner cocktail recipe named Dear Low Dykes.

There are only 260 bottles of Dear Low Dykes Gin, which carries an aroma of ‘warming spiciness complemented by bright citrus notes, leading to a palate of juniper, pepper spice, and herbaceous bay, with a finish of lingering sweetness and warmth’.

Appointments

Nik Jhangiani to join Diageo as CFO

Diageo announced that Nik Jhangiani will join the company as Chief Financial Officer (CFO).



He will be taking up the position and joining Diageo’s Board and Executive Committee in autumn 2024.

Lavanya Chandrashekar will step down from the Executive Committee and Board at the same time after three years as CFO and six years with the company, and will return to the US.

Nik is currently the CFO at Coca-Cola Europacific Partners. He has more than 30 years of finance experience and had roles in the UK, Europe, India, Africa and the US, including 20 years as CFO.

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Drink Responsibly

Hendrick's Gin Perfumery



Hendrick's Gin and its owner William Grant & Sons has partnered with Gebr. Heinemann and Schiphol Airport to introduce the Hendrick's Gin Perfumery to a new travel retail location: Amsterdam Schiphol.

The 25 sq m high-profile pop-up is located at the airport's recently renovated Lounge 2 Central Promo Point – a prime position which is surrounded by passenger flows. The activation is running from 1st-31st May and will be supported by an impactful media campaign throughout the airport.

This curious activation brings the iconic 'Eau de Cucumber' scented cocktail garnish to Amsterdam, following successful introductions at Frankfurt Airport and Paris Charles de Gaulle. It is designed to offer adult passengers a delightfully peculiar and refreshing experience, while spotlighting the award-winning Scottish Hendrick's Gin hero ingredient: the cucumber.

The Dalmore Cask Curation for Dubai Duty Free



In partnership with Dubai Duty Free, Whyte & Mackay has unveiled one of the rare sets of The Dalmore Cask Curation Sherry Edition for duty free shoppers in the Middle East region.

Featuring three exceptional age statement whiskies, a 26 Year Old, a 28 Year Old and a 43 Year Old, each finished in González Byass casks, the Sherry Edition is presented in a bespoke, hand-crafted and leather-finished case. Only 20 sets of The Dalmore Cask Curation Sherry Edition were made available in travel retail worldwide.

Dubai Duty Free invited shoppers to enter a ballot to determine which customer would get the chance to own the collection.

Diageo GTR joins The Trinity Forum 2024

Diageo Global Travel has signed as Platinum Partner for this year's The Trinity Forum, which is set to take place during 5th-6th November in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The Trinity Forum is said to be the world's most influential airport commercial revenues conference.

The forum is owned by The Moodie Davitt Report and co-organised with Airports Council International (ACI) World and ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East. The Trinity Forum 2024 is being hosted by IPP Travel Retail.



Pernod unveils The Glenlivet Caskmakers

Pernod Ricard Global Travel Retail has launched The Glenlivet Caskmakers. Unveiled in the 200th year of The Glenlivet, the Caskmakers are exclusively available in travel retail stores from May, supported by a global campaign across Asia Pacific, the Middle East, India, Europe and the Americas.

The whisky is created through a novel process, which sees two casks, one ex-Spanish sherry and one freshly charred European oak, deconstructed and rebuilt, combining alternating staves. Three such casks have been created by The Glenlivet and master coopers in Jerez, Spain, in a move which the brand says underlines its dedication to innovation and flavour.

Two new rare whiskies from Bowmore

Suntory Global Spirits has unveiled two rare additions to the Bowmore Single Malt Scotch Whisky Timeless Series. The whiskies are named The Bowmore Timeless 33-Year-Old – a GTR exclusive, and the Bowmore Timeless 29-Year-Old, which is available only for domestic markets.

Both are limited-edition expressions, with just 3,000 bottles of each being available. They follow Bowmore Timeless 31-Year-Old – also a global travel retail exclusive, which was introduced in 2021.

These expressions are launched in collaboration with award-winning pianist, singer and composer, Hania Rani, who was captivated by the remarkable spirit of Bowmore's home of Islay and was inspired to write 'The Boat'.



8 RARE NOTES *ONE EXQUISITE TASTE*

ALL NEW
PACK

8
PM
PREMIUM
BLACK
WHISKY

A BLEND OF

SCOTCH & INDIAN
GRAIN SPIRITS



Noida Intl Airport awards concessions for retail



Noida International Airport (NIA) has awarded the concession for retail and duty-free to a consortium of Heinemann Asia Pacific and BWC Forwarders Private Limited. This includes the concession for duty-free, to be operated by Heinemann, as well as master concessions for domestic retail and international duty-paid retail, to be operated by BWC Forwarders.

The new airport is expected to be opened on 30th September 2024. The international duty-free outlet at the airport will offer a wide selection of premium brands. Some of the curated categories will include premium liquors, tobacco, confectionery, perfumes, cosmetics, fragrances, and exquisite chocolates.

Dewar's Double Double reveals 21 YO in GTR

Dewar's Double Double 21 Year Old Stone Toasted launches this year with a travel retail exclusive Discovery Pack of two expressions which are to feature exclusively with China Duty Free Group.



The Discovery Pack includes two 75cl whisky expressions bottled at 46 percent ABV, with natural colour and no chill-filtration; the 21 YO with magma, using American Oak and French Oak casks. With a RRP of US\$440, the Discovery Pack will roll out to other travel retail locations in Asia Pacific, India and the Middle East and the Americas in the near future.

Pernod's first GTR outlet in NZ



Pernod Ricard Global Travel Retail has opened the first ever wine & spirits shop-in-shop in partnership with Lagardère, at Auckland International Airport in New Zealand.

The 62 sq m space features the spirits giant's signature modular design, with interchangeable furniture, which allows Pernod Ricard to shift the focus to any part of its portfolio. The launch layout puts a spotlight on Jameson, while similar displays for Malty Gin and Chivas are expected in the next year.

Dream Folks joins FAB event

Indian airport services aggregator DreamFolks has extended its support to the Airport FAB + Hospitality Conference and Awards 2024 as a Silver Partner.



The conference, hosted by Ontario International Airport, will bring together senior executives from airports, food & beverage concessionaires, hospitality service providers, as well as other business partners from around the world.

Founded by Chairperson and Managing Director Liberatha Kallat, Gurugram-headquartered DreamFolks provides consumers with access to airport-related services including lounges via a technology-driven platform. Kallat is among the line-up of FAB event speakers; she is part of a panel discussing at the conference.

Ian Macleod's Boutique at Edinburgh Airport



Ian Macleod Distillers has opened its first airport boutique for Edinburgh Gin at Edinburgh Airport, covering 20sqm in the World Duty Free store.

The boutique reflects the design of Edinburgh Gin's new distillery and visitor centre at The Arches, near Waverley Station, opening this autumn. Features include stone walls, arched wall bays, and black panelled cladding.

This new boutique aims to boost Edinburgh Gin's presence at the airport, complementing the brand's signature bar at Plaza Premium's airside executive lounge, which opened in 2022.

Bacardi GTR appoints new Marketing Director



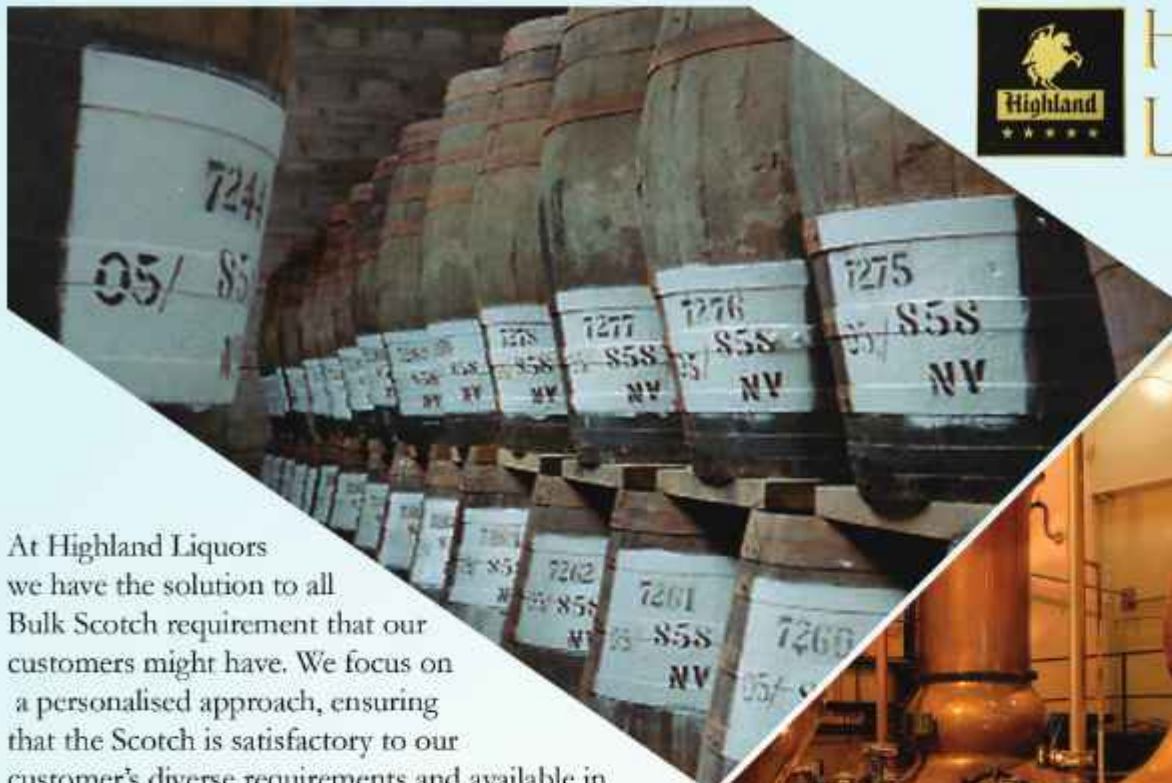
Bacardi Global Travel Retail has appointed Darragh Ryan as its Marketing Director. Based in London, Darragh will

lead Bacardi's marketing strategy across the company's travel retail, which is a strategic brand-building channel for the company's premium portfolio.

Darragh most recently served as Marketing Director for Bacardi in India and previously led the company's whisky portfolio across Africa, Middle East and Asia (AMEA) Region.



HIGHLAND LIQUORS

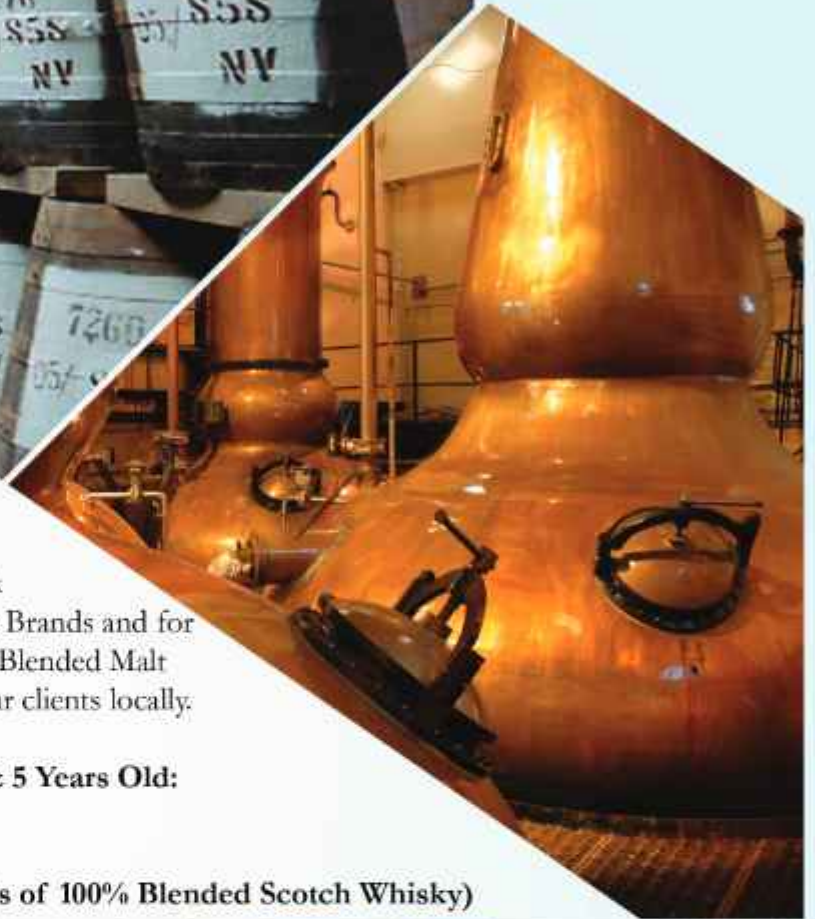


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Haryana increases liquor quotas, duties



Gopal Joshi

Haryana has introduced several significant changes in its 2024-25 excise policy, aiming to optimise state revenues while maintaining minimal competition for retail liquor licenses and affordable alcobev prices for consumers in the state.

The new excise policy of Haryana has increased excise duty on IMFL by Rs. 33.75 per case for economy to semi-premium segments, and on country liquor by Rs. 4-5 per proof liter. It changes the BIO/IFL assessment fee from Rs. 75 per proof liter to Rs. 100 per bulk liter, raises the maximum basic quota for country liquor by 50 lakh proof liters, and maintains 2400 retail liquor outlets (same as the last fiscal). Excise duties on domestic beer have risen by Rs. 5-10 per bulk liter. A significant update involves shifting BIO spirits assessment to bulk liters, raising costs by Rs. 375-400 per case, and introducing a QR code-based track & trace system.

2023 -24		2024 -25		Difference
1051 to 1200 Rs.135/-	Rs.911.25	1051 to 1200 Rs.140/-	Rs.945.00	Increased by Rs. 33.75/- per c/s
1201 to 1400 Rs.140/-	Rs.945.25	1201 to 1400 Rs.145/-	Rs.978.75	Increased by Rs. 33.75/- per c/s
1401 to 1600 Rs.145/-	Rs.978.75	1401 to 1600 Rs.150/-	Rs.1012.50	Increased by Rs. 33.75/- per c/s
1601 to 2500 Rs.150/-	Rs.1012.50	1601 to 2500 Rs.155/-	Rs.1046.25	Increased by Rs. 33.75/- per c/s
2501 to 3500 Rs.155/-	Rs.1046.25	2501 to 3500 Rs.160/-	Rs.1080.00	Increased by Rs. 33.75/- per c/s
3501 to 5000 Rs.185/-	Rs.1248.75	3501 to 5000 Rs.185/-	Rs.1248.75	Same
5001 to 7000 Rs.200/-	Rs.1350.00	5001 to 7000 Rs.200/-	Rs.1350.00	Same
Above 7001 Rs.185/-	Rs.1248.75	Above 7001 Rs.185/-	Rs.1248.75	Same

A Comparison: 2023-24 Vs 2024 -25

Some changes in the provisions are as follows:

Country Liquor:

- Maximum basic quota: Increased by 50 lakh PL
- Excise duty: Increased by Rs.4/PL on 50-degree and Rs.5/PL on 65-degree proof.
- VAT: No change.

IMFL

- Excise legends on the label: No change
- Maximum basic quota: No change (700 lakh PL)
- Excise Duty (civil supply): EDP range Rs. 1051 – 3500 per case: increased by Rs. 33.75 per case; EDP range Rs. 3501 & above: No change
- Excise Duty (Defense supply): No change. To remain at Rs.405 per PL
- Import Duty: No change. To remain as Rs.24 per PL
- Export Duty: No change. To remain as Rs. 01 per PL
- Franchise Fee: No change. To remain as Rs. 07 lakh each brand registration fee + Rs.22 per PL for sales in Haryana, Rs.10 per PL for export.
- VAT: No change
- Brand & Label Registration Fee: No change. To remain as Rs. 05 lakh per brand on whisky, Rs. 2.25 lakh for rum, Rs. 1.25 lakh for gin & vodka, Rs. 1.50 lakh for RTD.
- Bottling fee: For supply within the state of Haryana: No change.
For supply outside the state of Haryana: Reduced by Rs.01 – 1.50 per PL.

REGULATORY WATCH

Domestic Beer

•Brand & label registration fee: No change. To remain at Rs. 03 lakh per brand.

•Excise Duty (glass bottle):
Super mild beer (up to 3.5 percent v/v): No change
mild beer (3.5 percent v/v to 5.5 percent v/v): Increased to Rs. 45 per BL from Rs. 40 per BL
Strong beer (>5.5 percent v/v): Increased to Rs.55 per BL from Rs. 50 per BL

•Excise Duty (canned beer):
Super Mild beer (up to 3.5 percent v/v): No change
Mild beer (3.5 percent v/v to 5.5 percent v/v): Increased to Rs. 55 per BL from Rs. 50 per BL
Strong beer (>5.5 percent v/v): Increased to Rs.65 per BL from Rs. 60 per BL

2023 -24		2024 -25		Difference
Super Mild Beer - Rs. 30 PBL - Rs. 234.00 per case		Super Mild Beer - Rs. 30 PBL - Rs. 234.00 per case		Same
Mild Beer - Rs.40 PBL - Rs. 312.00 per case		Mild Beer - Rs.45 PBL - Rs. 351.00 per case		Increased by Rs. 39/- per c/s
Strong Beer - Rs.50 PBL - Rs. 390.00 per case		Strong Beer - Rs.55 PBL - Rs. 429.00 per case		Increased by Rs. 39/- per c/s
Can Super Mild - Rs.40 PBL - Rs.480.00 per case		Can Super Mild - Rs.40 PBL - Rs.480.00 per case		Same
Can Mild - Rs.50 PBL - Rs.600.00 per case		Can Mild - Rs.55 PBL - Rs.660.00 per case		Increased by Rs. 60/- per c/s
Can Strong - Rs. 60 PBL - Rs 720.00 per case		Can Strong - Rs. 65 PBL - Rs 780.00 per case		Increased by Rs. 60/- per c/s
Draught - Rs.40 PBL		Draught - Rs.50 PBL		Change

•Excise Duty (draught/microbrewery beer): Increased to Rs. 50 per BL from Rs.40 per BL
•VAT: No change
•Import Duty: Increased to Rs.13 per BL from Rs.12 per BL
•Franchise Fee: No change

Particulars	BIO (Bottled in Origin)		Variance
	2023 -24	2024 -25	
1 Basic Quota for L2BF Wholesale License Fee (L-1BF)	12 lakh cases	12 lakh cases	No change
2 L-1BF Minimum Quota for L-1BF Lic (up to 16 Lic.)	4,00 Crore cases	4,00 Crore cases	No change
3 Brand Label Registration Fee per Brand	Rs.15,000	Rs. 15,000	No change
5 Assessment Fee L-1BF (Spirits)	Rs. 75 per Proof Ltr.	Rs. 100 per Bulk Ltr.	Changed from PL to BL Will impact with an increase of Rs. 390-Rs 400 per case
6 Assessment Fee L-1BF (Wine)	Rs. 75 per BL	Rs. 85 per BL	Increased by Rs. 90 per case
7 Assessment Fee L-1BF (Beer)	Rs. 50 per BL	Rs. 65 per BL	500 ml cans' price increased by Rs. 180 per case
8 VAT on IFL/BIO	3% + 5% SC	3% + 5% SC	No change

Bottled in Origin: BIO / IFL

A major change in BIO/IFL policy is a change in the assessment fee of BIO high proof spirits. The formula for calculating the assessment fee has been changed from earlier Proof Liter to Bulk Liter.,

Wholesale License Fee

Except in the two higher sales slabs in L-1 license meant for the wholesale of IMFL to retail, no other license fee has been increased. ₹



Brewers Association of India Constituted



Association of India marks a significant milestone in India's beer sector. Through this, the world's best-known beer companies intend to pool in their expertise, resources and passion for brewing to enhance overall experience for consumers and drive the role of low-alcohol beverages in advocating moderate drinking habits.

Commenting on the launch of BAI, Justin Kissinger, President and CEO of the World Brewing Alliance, said,

BAI is a great platform to align India with the international consensus of moderate and responsible drinking and I am very excited to be part of this journey."

Kartikeya Sharma, President -AB InBev India, said, "The Brewers Association of India is a testament to our shared commitment to elevate India's beer industry. There are many barriers to the growth of India's beer category, including inequitable taxation, accessibility, and the ease of doing business."

The new association is set to be the unified voice of the Indian beer industry as AB-InBev, Carlsberg and United Breweries, together account for around 85 percent of the beer sales in India. These companies also have significant investments in India with Carlsberg operating seven breweries, United Breweries operating 19 breweries and AB-InBev India operating 10 breweries across India.

Nilesh Patel, MD, Carlsberg India, said, "Through the Brewers Association of India, the industry expects to bring best global practices and further strengthen the sector."

Vivek Gupta, Managing Director and CEO of United Breweries Limited said, "We will focus on making beer more affordable, accessible, and available nationwide. Together, the beer industry can help shape policies promoting responsible choices for consumers around moderate alcohol beverages, a robust taxation and regulatory framework and promoting investments for socio-economic benefits." 

United Breweries, AB-InBev and Carlsberg have jointly announced the launch of Brewers Association of India ('BAI'), a new industry body focused on growing the beer category in India, and driving innovation, moderation, and sustainability in the Indian beer market. Headquartered in Delhi, BAI is headed by Vinod Giri, who assumed office on 1st June 2024.

BAI is being established in partnership with the World Brewing Alliance (WBA), the global industry body consisting of brewers and brewing trade associations from Australia, Canada, the UK, the USA, Europe, Japan, Korea, Latin America, Brazil, New Zealand, Nigeria and now India.

The setting up of Brewers



**BREWERS ASSOCIATION
OF INDIA**

Member of World Brewing Alliance

"Brewers Association of India will be a vital part of promoting moderate drinking, promoting our industry, and promoting a product that is enjoyed by all across the country."

Speaking on his new role, Vinod Giri, the Director General of the Brewers Association of India, said, "I have spent over a decade with the beer industry in India and abroad, so it is homecoming for me. Governments all over the world actively shape regulatory policies to guide consumers toward low-alcohol beverages such as beer.



+100 years globally and 10+ years in India



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With the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) celebrating its 100th anniversary, its new **Director General, John Barker** takes time out for an interaction with **Bishan Kumar** to focus on the role being played by the organisation in promoting wine culture across the globe. Challenge of climate change, the need for sustainability and India's potential in the wine sector were some of the important issues being discussed upon. He also informed that OIV is currently developing a framework of production standards for partially or totally de-alcoholised products.

“No-alcohol & organic wines
gaining popularity”

Congratulations on OIV's centennial milestone! Do throw some light on the measures being undertaken by OIV to address climate change and evolving consumer preferences. Additionally, how do member states of OIV intend to navigate environmental and geopolitical challenges?

First, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to Spiritz magazine on behalf of OIV, the international scientific and technical reference organisation for the vine and wine sector.

The 100th anniversary of the OIV is indeed a milestone! It is a chance to reflect on a century of achievements but also to renew our focus on the future. From just eight member countries in 1924, the OIV has grown to include 50 member countries and 18n observers from across the vine and wine sector – including India who joined in 2011.

We currently represent 75 percent of the global vineyard surface area, 87 percent of world's wine production and 71 percent of world's wine consumption. We will welcome China as our 51st member in November this year. Further, this year we have sought to bring the world of vine and wine together to consider the challenges and opportunities ahead.

A meeting of ministers and officials from 29 countries was held in Italy in April, and a full ministerial conference will be held in France, in October of this year. At the same time, we will hold the 45th World Congress of Vine and Wine and inaugurate our new headquarters in Dijon, France.

These meetings will also provide the occasion for the launch of our new Strategic Plan for 2025-2029. This will focus on the works of the OIV on certain key issues facing the sector, such as sustainability and climate change, innovation, wine and society, the consumers of tomorrow, and international trade. Through this new Strategic Plan, the OIV will provide recommendations, guidance and information to support its members and the wine sector to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The latest findings from OIV highlight a decrease in global wine consumption juxtaposed with increased trade value, which could be largely attributed to inflationary pressures. Could you shed light on the primary drivers behind this consumption decline and inflationary trends? Furthermore, what strategies are OIV proposing to counter this setback ?

While recent events such as the Corona virus-triggered pandemic, international conflicts and high inflation have caused short-term fluctuations in the market, the longer-term trends are driven by the changing preferences of



John Barker, DG OIV

John Barker assumed his role as DG of the OIV for a five-year term, on 1st January 2024. A New Zealander, John Barker is a legal expert with more than 25 years' experience in the vine and wine sector with a long history with the OIV, having held the offices as the President and Vice-President of the OIV Law and Economy Commission.

a new generation of consumers in increasingly diverse international markets. For example, red wine consumption has fallen, while sparkling wine and rosé are performing strongly.

Consumers are now more strongly interested in health and well-being, as well as environmental and social credentials, than ever before. Products such as no or low-alcohol wines and organic wines are gaining in popularity. We are also seeing regulatory pressure on wine producers as a result of increased concern about alcohol abuse, and the industry itself strongly supports moderate consumption. The OIV's key role in this area is to gather global data and provide analyses to help the sector understand the evolution of the market, and this will be a subject of focus for our next Strategic Plan.

How does climate change impact traditional grape-growing regions?

The impact of climate change on the vine and wine sector and the importance of sustainability are preminent themes in the OIV work programme that we have been working on for many years. Climate change presents challenges across many aspects of grape growing and wine production – from the biology of the grapevine, to the risk of extreme weather, pests and diseases, to the flavour profile of the wine, to the preferences of consumers.

This has been very apparent in the 2023 global wine grape production volume, which was the lowest since 1961.

This was due to droughts, floods and other extreme weather events in both the northern and southern hemispheres. Sustainability is a key responsibility for

producers, and increasingly an expectation from consumers and sellers of wine. The OIV has a number of works currently underway in this area, including a draft resolution regarding the definition of resilience for the vitivini cultural sector, technical documents about carbon footprint, water footprint, eco-cellar, viticultural practices in arid climates, and the strategies of conserving nature and biodiversity in the vine-growing areas.

There is a growing sentiment that the global wine industry lacks adequate representation on global platforms. Does OIV perceive itself as the authoritative voice of the wine sector?

The OIV is an intergovernmental organisation – meaning its members are governments rather than the private sector. That is why it is sometimes called ‘the UN of vine and wine’. Our mandate is strictly scientific and technical. We operate on the consensus of all our members. These factors define our role on the world stage. When our members make a consensus-based decision, that is certainly authoritative because it has the backing of 50 countries representing the majority of global wine production.

We promote and communicate the works of the OIV to member and non-member countries, other international

OIV’s Strategic Plan 2020-2024

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan for OIV and its key objectives are guided by the various challenges that the international vitivini cultural sector is facing and also by a desire to integrate the 2030 perspectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), elaborated under the aegis of the United Nations, into the organisation’s work.



The plan includes the following focus areas:

Promote environmentally friendly vitiviculture with focus on climate change, environmental performance and conservation of natural resources.

1. Promote economic activity according to principles of sustainable development and of market growth and globalisation.
2. Contribute to social development through vitiviculture.
3. Pursue the development of a harmonised regulatory environment.
4. Facilitate the digital evolution of the wine sector through adaptation, transition and harmonisation.

Consolidate the role of the OIV as a global scientific, technical and cultural reference organisation through international cooperation, specialisation centre and communication.

organisations and the sector. Sometimes our efforts may not be evident to everyone in the sector because of the level at which we operate. But the OIV is always there providing an authoritative and objective viewpoint issues that affect the vine and wine sector at an international level.

Is there any guideline from OIV on communicating with their potential consumers with the required details given



that there are many boutique producers of wine who are producing high-quality wines but are not able to showcase their brands on the global platforms due to limited resources?

The OIV has standards specifically related to labelling, and we have some collective expertise works on subjects pertaining to consumption. However, we do not make recommendations specifically on commercial matters such as marketing.

How do you perceive the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and India, as well as ongoing negotiations with the EU and other nations? Moreover, what role does OIV play in fostering a favourable regulatory and tax environment for wines globally?

We cannot comment on negotiations between countries and tax questions are outside our scientific and technical mandate. We foster a global regulatory framework that is conducive to trade by developing standards and guidance such as the International Code of Oenological Practices, the Compendium of International Methods of Must and Wine Analysis, the International Oenological Codex and the International Standard for the Labelling of Wines.

Is OIV communicating with the Indian government on the reduction of high custom duty and what has been the latter's response so far?

As I mentioned before, it is not part of the OIV's mandate to discuss tax policies. From my point of view, the development of the Indian wine market should go hand-in-hand with the development of its local wine production.

Wine is a value-added product that is an important vector for rural development, tourism and the promotion of regional identities, and so it holds great potential for India. I know that India has a long history of wine production, although like many other countries it suffered from the phylloxera blight in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The re-emergence of Indian wine production is very promising, and we also recognise that India is a strong producer of table grapes and raisins, which are also within our mandate.

Most of the spirits manufacturers are eyeing India as a market with huge potential because of the large population and growing disposable incomes. Are you also working on a strategy to build a wine culture in India?

We would love to see wine production and wine



consumption grow and flourish in India! We don't have strategies that deal specifically with individual countries. However, I would like to emphasise that we are currently developing a framework of production standards for partially or totally de-alcoholised products. This framework should foster new products and open new perspectives for non-alcoholised beverage drinkers while discovering the wine culture.

Building upon the legacy of your predecessor, Pau Roca, which issues take precedence on your agenda?

In addition to the strategic objectives mentioned above, and taking inspiration from the ambitions of Ex. Director General, Pau Roca, I have made it a priority to make sure that OIV as an organisation has the right structures, processes and scale to face the next 100 years. One element that is very important for the OIV is to have an inclusive organisation that brings together all parts of the global economy, which is why it is essential for us to have the perspectives and interests of India represented in our organisation.

We are also delighted that China has now deposited its official membership request, which will come into effect on November 14, according to our rules. As the country with the third-largest vineyard surface area and the eighth-largest wine consumer, China is a key player in the global wine and wine sector.

We will also continue to work to grow our membership so that the sector can work together to progress the interests that all countries share in common like climate change and sustainability. \$

Happy Waves in Wine Glass!

The wine industry in India is teeming with potential, yet it often finds itself hindered by not-so-friendly policies. While the evolution of retail channels and the trend towards premiumisation are promising for the sector, the restrictive regulations imposed on wine entrepreneurs in many states need reform. To truly capitalise on India's wine potential, a shift towards more favourable policies is essential. In this context, Maharashtra and Karnataka stand out with their wine-friendly regulations, offering a blueprint for other states to follow. Encouragingly, some states are beginning to acknowledge the benefits of locally produced wines.

Discussions with industry stakeholders reveal a burgeoning culture of wine tourism in India, which holds significant promise for increasing wine awareness and demystifying it among Indian consumers. This growing interest in wine tourism could be a key driver in expanding the market and fostering a deeper appreciation for wine.

Moreover, it is encouraging to see that wines made from fruits other than grapes are being incorporated into the wine policies of some states. This development is expected to boost not only India's wine production and consumption but also wine exports, while simultaneously providing a significant uplift to the agricultural sector.

According to an industry expert, non-alcoholic wines are gaining popularity among younger demographics. In response to this rising demand, it is anticipated that a diverse range of non-alcoholic wines will soon flood the market, catering to the preferences of the younger generation.

With continued efforts towards policy reform and embracing of new market trends, the Indian wine business appears to be on the path to flourishing growth. §





Sparkling

Watermelon Basil Martini



Ingredients:

- 2 oz Asio Vodka
- 1 oz fresh watermelon juice (blended and strained)
- 1/2 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/4 oz simple syrup (or to taste)
- 5-6 fresh basil leaves
- Club soda
- Garnish: Basil sprig and watermelon wedge

Instructions:

- Muddle the basil leaves in a shaker.
- Add Asio Vodka, watermelon juice, lime juice, and simple syrup.
- Fill the shaker with ice and shake vigorously for 15 seconds.
- Strain into a chilled martini glass.
- Top with club soda to desired level of fizz.
- Garnish with a basil sprig and a watermelon wedge.

Why it's unique:

Watermelon Twist: Fresh watermelon juice adds a natural sweetness and vibrant color, making it a refreshing alternative to traditional citrus fruits.

Sparkling Touch: Club soda creates a delightful fizz, perfect for a hot summer day.

Basil Boost: Muddled basil leaves infuse the drink with a subtle peppery flavor that complements the watermelon and vodka perfectly.

Asio Advantage: Asio Vodka's smooth and clean profile allows the watermelon and basil flavors to shine through, creating a well-balanced and refreshing drink.

Millennials

Leading the Charge



The wine consumption in India is undergoing a fascinating transformation. Wine is shedding its image as a hard liquor alternative and becoming a mainstream beverage, perceived as healthier and socially acceptable. The growth is fuelled by desire for exploration and diversity among consumers, says **Kartik Mohindra, Chief Marketing Officer, Pernod Ricard India.**

The millennial generation, a powerful demographic with increasing spending power, and especially women, are leading the charge. They prioritise quality over quantity and are more adventurous in their choices.

"The trend towards premiumisation is another key factor, with consumers willing to invest in better quality wines. Additionally, the health-conscious crowd is driving the rise of no and low-alcohol options that offer the taste of wine without the full alcohol content. The expansion of specialty retailers further fuels this growth by offering convenient access to a wider range of wines," Kartik elaborates.

Traditional & Trendy

According to Kartik, while traditional varietals like Chardonnay, Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon remain popular, reflecting the growing sophistication of Indian wine enthusiasts, especially the millennials among them, there are exciting new trends emerging.

Consumers are now experimenting with Tempranillo, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. "Sparkling wines and rosé too are becoming increasingly popular among young urban consumers," he adds.

Recognising the growing interest in non-alcoholic options, Pernod Ricard India has recently introduced Jacob's Creek Unvined, a range of refreshing and elegant alcohol-free

wines with less than 0.5 percent alcohol. This caters to wine lovers seeking an alternative to enjoy during special occasions and is conveniently available through e-commerce platforms like Blinkit and Amazon.

Taking the Initiative

With leading brands in each category, Pernod Ricard holds one of the most dynamic and premium portfolios in the industry. And India being one of its fastest growing business sectors in the global context, it is committed to the 'Make and Innovate in India' initiative, which is reflected in its sales portfolio within the country, which comprises over 90 percent of domestically produced brands.

"With six overseas manufacturing locations including Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Nigeria and Cameroon, and a global footprint in 50+ countries, Seagram's whiskies are being exported to 33 countries across the world," the CMO reveals.

With over 30 years of rich legacy and operations in India, the company operates through its distillery in Nashik in Maharashtra apart from 24 bottling sites across the country.

"Pernod Ricard India's wines portfolio, in particular, encompasses Jacob's Creek, Campo Viejo, Brancott Estate and St Hugo. Jacob's Creek has a rich heritage dating back to 1847, with the wines showcasing the unique terroir of Australia's most esteemed wine regions, offering a diverse selection to suit every palate – blending traditional craftsmanship with modern techniques," explains Kartik.

Campo Viejo epitomises the vibrant spirit and rich flavours of Spain's La Rioja region, with the wines artfully combining traditional winemaking practices with innovation and passion. Established in 1973, Brancott Estate's winery is situated in New Zealand, crafting exceptional wines that express the distinct terroir of Marlborough and capture the region's crisp and vibrant flavours in every bottle. Additionally, St Hugo – its most recent launch in India – is where the perfect balance of power and elegance comes into play, honouring the legacy of South Australia's Barossa winemaking legend, Hugo Gramp.

Shifting Trends

Kartik thinks that in the Indian context, with premiumisation and evolving consumer palates, white wines have started to gain appeal. "Indian consumers are appreciating the versatility of white wines especially with a variety of local cuisines.



Sparkling Wine is also gaining traction in India," he asserts while adding that the increasing popularity of white wines globally can be attributed to several factors, including changing weather patterns, changing consumer preferences and rise in demand of sparkling wines.

Another new trend in India's wine industry is the rise in home consumption.

With increasing availability and affordability of quality wines, more individuals are opting to enjoy wine in the comfort of their homes, fostering intimate gatherings and culinary experiences.

"There is also a growing appreciation for diverse wine experiences beyond the traditional. As more individuals embrace experimentation, ways of consumption such as mulled wine and sangria become beloved choices for cosy gatherings and festive occasions, adding flavour to the cultural tapestry of wine consumption," Kartik elaborates.

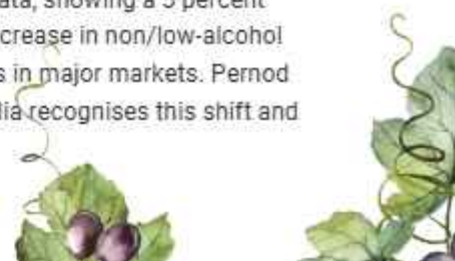
Another notable trend, he says, is that the health-conscious crowd is

driving the rise of no and low-alcohol options that offer the taste of wine without the full alcohol content. The expansion of specialty retailers further fuels this growth by offering convenient access to a wider range of wines.

Pernod Ricard India recognises this trend and offers a diverse selection of white wines to cater to this market requirement. "From Campo Viejo Blanco to Jacob's Creek range of Chardonnay and Riesling, and Brancott Estate Sauvignon Blanc, our portfolio caters to the evolving preferences of Indian wine drinkers venturing deep," Kartik points out.

Millennials and younger demographics are driving a wave of change in the Indian wine market. They crave quality and diverse experiences, leading them to explore beyond traditional wines. Non-alcoholic options are finding favour with this generation.

"This global trend is reflected in IWSR data, showing a 5 percent volume increase in non/low-alcohol beverages in major markets. Pernod Ricard India recognises this shift and



caters to these evolving preferences. We offer a range of four non-alcoholic wines under the Jacob's Creek brand – Unvined Shiraz and Riesling – providing quality options for those seeking a wine experience without the alcohol," he explains further.

Packaging and Storing

Pernod Ricard India's growing connection with Indian consumers is also reflected through the company's focus on packaging. In 2022, it announced the removal of permanent mono cartons across its brands as part of its sustainability initiatives.

"This move reflects our commitment to reducing environmental impact while maintaining product quality. We are dedicated to responsible business practices and are embracing eco-friendly practices and eliminating unnecessary packaging materials. This also includes water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction," Kartik informs.

Storage of wines is another issue of critical importance. "Wine is perishable and requires care. At Pernod Ricard India we strive to deliver the best possible wine drinking experience to our consumers. Our wines are imported and stored in a temperature-controlled environment to ensure we deliver the right quality and drinking experience to our consumers," Kartik discloses.



Boost through Wine Tourism

Awareness is the key when it comes to consuming wine. To that end, producers like Pernod Ricard India have been offering wine experiences with wine tourism, which is rapidly becoming a catalyst for a more sophisticated wine culture in India.

With wineries opening their doors to visitors for tours and tastings, these immersive experiences provide a platform for education and appreciation. Wine clubs and enthusiast groups are also flourishing, fostering a sense of community and offering avenues for deeper exploration of the world of wine.

"By participating in vineyard tours, tastings, and food pairings, wine lovers gain valuable knowledge about grape varieties, production methods, and regional influences (terroir). This not only elevates their enjoyment of wine but also fuels a growing appreciation for the nuances of different wines. As wine tourism flourishes in India, it fosters a sense of connection to India's burgeoning wine industry, contributing to the development of a vibrant and knowledgeable wine culture within the country," Kartik observes.

Making a Difference

In the meantime, another boost in India's wine culture has been through the modernisation of retail channels. CMO of Pernod Ricard India believes that the rise of modern retail channels is helping in further delivering a more sophisticated wine-buying experience. These channels offer greater convenience, freedom and variety compared to traditional retail options in a temperature-controlled environment. Also, this translates to an increase in the volume and diversity of wines available to consumers.

Modern retailers curate a selection that includes premium and international brands, often with knowledgeable staff to guide customers. This focus on variety and expertise creates a more sophisticated wine-buying experience. With greater volume and variety on offer, wine consumers are experiencing a wider range of wines, leading to more discerning preferences.

Innovative Exercise

At Pernod Ricard, innovation is at the heart of winemaking. "We have been pushing boundaries in wine innovation to deliver elevated wine drinking experience for our consumers and Jacob's Creek Double Barrel is one such example. It is unique, premium red wine, matured first in traditionally toasted wine barrels, and then finished in aged whisk(e)y barrels," explains Kartik.

"Each Jacob's Creek Double Barrel varietal is matched to a certain kind of whisk(e)y barrel: Scotch barrels for the Shiraz and Irish barrels for the Cabernet Sauvignon. This unique double-barrel technique imparts additional layers of complexity, beautifully integrated tannins, and an incredibly smooth mouth-feel," he adds further. §



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Kavinder Singh
+91-9818228222
kavindersingh@bottmac.in
sales@bottmac.in

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Premium is the Benchmark



With an increasing number of well-travelled youngsters now shifting their alcoholic beverage preferences to wine, this segment of the industry is witnessing a notable uptick in its production, distribution and retail through modernised stores. As **Uma Chigurupati, Director, KRSMA Estates Pvt. Ltd.** points out, there is great potential for Indian wines in the years to come.

Taking note of the evolution in the world of wines, a company like KRSMA Estates has focused its marketing strategy on educating its customers and patrons about wine and its varieties. "Despite the growing interest in wines, there is a deficit in understanding the liquid, how terroir or geography affects the wine's output, the varietals, the food pairings, things to know and take care of, etc. We have therefore taken it upon ourselves to democratise the wine experience and demystify the world of wines and make it approachable," says Uma Chigurupati.

With a presence in the Indian wine market since 2011, KRSMA has its boutique winery based out of Koppal, near Hampi in Karnataka. It has its signature Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc available in Bengaluru and Telangana.

In the Indian wine segment, one thing is clear – premiumisation is what is holding sway. There is a reason for that. With many Indian consumers now being avid globetrotters, they are becoming more discerning in their preference for wines. As with other product categories in India, imported wines are favoured over domestic wines. But



KRSMA has undertaken to reverse the trend.

"Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc are still the largest sold varieties in India. Recent Chilean and Argentinian wines have made Malbec a sought-after variety but the old favourites closely guard the mantle," points out Uma.

Rosy Hues and Healthy Cues

Red wine rules the roost when it comes to India. Uma informs that around 49 percent of all wines sold in India are red. More than white, wine connoisseurs say that rosé is gaining popularity. According to the wine entrepreneur, not only are the imports of wine to India seeing more rosé brands, even domestic wine players like Sula are focusing on this segment of wines.

"Globally (including India), wine has gained acceptance over the years owing to the health benefits it extends and for being the cleanest alcoholic beverage among the available alternatives. Compared to whisky or white liquor, wine has only 12-14 percent alcohol. Again, unlike other forms of hard liquor, we

encourage pairing our wine with food which makes it more acceptable and palatable," Uma explains.

KRSMA is a classical wine brand. "We have stayed true to the ethos of making a world-class wine," Uma states. Given these particulars, the company has set its target on a slightly mature audience who have evolved in their appreciation of fine wine either through their travel or through

sheer exposure. Meanwhile, younger audiences are getting drawn to this category more than ever.

Wine Tourism Matters

"Wine tourism is a phenomenon that has recently picked up steam in India. Brands like Sula and Fratelli have set up hospitality divisions to extract from this trend. It is a way forward as it opens up a whole new way of experiencing wines; not only in their prime environment but also in a manner that demystifies the liquid and makes it so much more approachable," Uma observes.

According to Uma, when consumers interact with wine growers and understand the journey cycle from fruit to wine and the effort that goes behind making a great wine, they become more accepting of the fact that premium wines do come at a cost.

Retail Makes the Difference

Consumers are heavily tilting towards stores that offer experience and have a great assortment of liquor across



Are Imported Wines Better ?

Uma informs that imported wines, especially the ones from Australia, have had a sizable play in the last 15+ years. The duty slabs on Australian wines have come down owing to their effective lobbying. But there is a need to understand the journey cycle of wines, from Australia to India.

"A wine that is priced at Rs 400 (or AUD 8) in Australia, gets priced at Rs 1,600 in India owing to import duties, ocean freight, local freight, importer margin, channel margins, etc. So, just because we have an affordable imported wine from Australia at Rs 1,600 doesn't mean it has to be a great wine," reasons Uma.

For that matter, most wines under Rs 2,000 aren't significantly aged either. Unfortunately, that is a fad we as Indians suffer from and that's the battle KRSMA has been fighting. Uma feels Indian wines are equally good and worth their price as imported ones.





categories. Wine being an experiential liquid definitely finds a higher traction in modern experiential stores.

Needless to say, these modern outlets have a better collection too, on an average, which spoils the customer silly by choice. "Private operators bring in the much-needed experience that is missing from traditional retail or government-run stores. In the case

of KRSMA, almost 70-80 percent of our retail sales comes from modernised stores," informs Uma.

Wine retailing also includes the way wine is packaged or bottled. Unlike the west where wine consumption is high and wines are available in tetra packs, kegs and pouches, innovation in wine packaging in India is limited to wine

in cans.

As the category is still nascent, packing formats would require sizable capital expenditure which may not generate the much-needed return on investment. While 250 ml cans and 375 ml bottles have made the wine category more accessible, it certainly hasn't built a case for itself that would

see an industry-wide adoption.

Take a Bow, Karnataka

Uma views that when it comes to the matter of which state in India is more favourably tilted to wine distribution and sales, it is Karnataka.

KRSMA Estates' home state has a very conducive wine policy. "The state has always been very supportive of its brands," Uma says. Karnataka is the only state with an active Wine Board that supports its local wine manufacturing and bottling companies wholeheartedly and represents them in wine related events and exhibitions throughout the country.

With a presence in the Indian wine market since 2011, KRSMA has its boutique winery based out of Koppal, near Hampi in Karnataka. It has its signature Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc available in Bengaluru and Telangana. **S**

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Premium Wines

Set the Popularity Bar



While it may still take some time for wine culture in India to mature, there is a definite inclination across the younger generation to sample a variety of wines, especially from the premium category. Here, while red wine is taking the lead, pricing is also playing a crucial factor, as **Sumit Jaiswal, Vice President (Marketing and Export Import) of Grover Zampa Vineyards**, reveals.

Does colour matter? It does. When it comes to wine, at present, consumers have a strong preference for red wines followed by white and sparkling wines. And when we speak about Indian wines, we can definitely see a trend in people drinking more and more premium wines produced in India.

As far as the grape varieties from India are concerned, people still prefer Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc, among others. As industry experts point out, consumers now prefer wines which have a better balance of fruit and oak and fewer wines that are too oaky.

There is more: the price. As Gen Z and late millennials enter the cohort of wine consumers as relatively inexperienced individuals, price is likely to be the key consideration in their choice. It is within this milieu that Grover Zampa Vineyards has always been ahead of the curve. Sumit Jaiswal informs that the company has set many trends in the wine market by being much ahead of the competition. "We were the first to launch reserve wine in India as La Reserve in 1998," he adds.

Taking this trend much further, it has introduced a number of wines in the premium and super-premium range over a period of time like VA Reserve Collection. It also has

introduced a super-premium dessert wine, Grover Vendanges Tardives. In terms of imported wine, due to the



recent free trade agreement between India and Australia, many high-quality Australian wines have become much more reasonably priced than wines from other wine-making countries. Meanwhile, red wine dominates the wine consumption in the country and therefore contributes to the majority of wine produce in the country.

In Tune with Preferences

In the context of evolving trends, the low or no-alcohol beverages are at the tip of the iceberg in India. But, as per Sumit's point of view, while they are gradually making inroads into people's repertoire of drinks, there is still a long way to go, and he foresees this trend taking off in at least seven years to a decade in India.

However, the wine tourism in India has taken off during the last few years. "We are equipped with world-class infrastructure to provide consumers with a memorable experience, which includes guided tours, different wine tasting packages, and a gastronomic restaurant for those who want to indulge in culinary experiences," Sumit discloses.

Another evolving trend in India's wine business is the modernisation of retail landscape. The company will be upgrading its Nashik winery to enhance visitors' experience. Here,



a question that arises is whether modernisation attempts in retail have enhanced the popularity of wine in India? As Sumit opines, the modern retail channel gives consumers complete freedom to select wines based on looks and feel, price, and many other factors, which sometimes is not possible in traditional retail.

Modern liquor retail stores have many more SKUs available for various alcoholic beverage categories. Some traditional format stores, which have been around for quite some time and have a good reputation, sometimes sell as much as modern retail store, but this is changing in favour of modern retail as consumers have the

right to choose.

Stately Matters

When it comes to wine distribution and sales, Maharashtra and Karnataka have more conducive policies as most of the wineries and vineyards are located there, and they have taken a conscious decision to recognise that wine is an agricultural produce. Grapes are dependent upon the vagaries of nature, and grape farmers are prone to risks like any other agricultural produce. "Globally, most countries recognise the above reasons and tax wine lower than beer and spirits, and I think all other states should learn and implement the same," Sumit points out.

Wine also has several health benefits when consumed in moderation, which is another reason for local governments to consider the same. Additionally, in many countries where wine is produced, it is generally consumed along with food from the region or the country, and doing the same can enhance the sale of their wine and contribute to revenues. It also attracts a lot of inbound tourists if the states decide to have conducive wine policies.



The FTA Impact

Sumit observes that the fruition of the ongoing free trade agreement (FTA) discussions will provide healthy competition only to those domestic wines in India, which are priced at the top end of the super-premium spectrum. Indians have now started respecting the culture of home-grown craft beverages, and they are knowledgeable enough to evaluate high-quality domestically produced beverages against the best from around the world, at a given price. However, this will only benefit our wine consumers as domestic producers will have to make better and better wines to compete with international wines, which will become more affordable.



Wine Market

Defined by Evolving Choices



Even as wine consumption in India posts strong growth, its demand is influenced by the preference for low-alcohol beverages and the increasing awareness about imported brands. Consumers, especially the youth, prefer wine with the tag of a healthier choice, says **Amit Goel, Director, Rad Elan Distributors Pvt. Ltd.**

In India, as industry veterans point out, there is a growing interest in international wines, particularly among urban consumers. Varietals like Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir are gaining popularity. In terms of regions, wines from Napa Valley, Bordeaux and Tuscany are the ones in favour in the Indian wine market. There is also a reported increase in white wine production to meet the growing demand from consumers, a trend that reflects changing tastes and preferences, with more people opting for lighter and fresher options.

This of course presents an opportunity for wineries in the country to cater to this demand and diversify their offerings to capture a larger market share in India's evolving wine landscape. One such company that has taken note of this shift in preferences is Rad Elan Distributors (P) Limited. It has expanded its selection to include a diverse range of varietals and regions, thus ensuring that its wine portfolio resonates with these evolving consumers' preferences. "Our marketing strategies focus on highlighting the quality and uniqueness of each wine,



COVER STORY

catering to the discerning tastes of Indian consumers," informs Amit Goel.

A Wide Selection

Rad Elan Distributors was founded in 2007 and is engaged in the distribution of imported liquor throughout India. The company has an unrivalled selection of world-class wines and premium spirits with more than 15 years' experience in cultivating unmatched relationships, utilising innovative strategies and working with the industry's best. It has been working with vineyards across renowned brands like Camas Vineyard in France, Chateau Lacoste Garzec Bordeaux in France, Ville Alegre Vineyard in Chile, and Duckhorn Vineyard in Napa Valley as well as Grimaldi Barolo Vigna San Biagio in Italy.

The wine labels include Duckhorn wines from Napa Valley and Decoy from California, Grimaldi Barolo from Piedmont region, Camas from Languedoc, Seniorita from Villa Alegre and Seniorita Shiraz from South Australia along with Seniorita Riesling from Moselle, Germany. "Our market share in India is around 10-15 percent because most of the Indian wine market is covered by commercial brands like Jacob Greek and Carlo Rossi," Amit reveals. The popularity of these wines is shaped by the millennial and younger demographics



in India who are indicating a preference for low or no-alcohol beverages.

Changing Lifestyle Preferences

This shift reflects a broader trend towards a healthier lifestyle and mindful consumption. "Our company is adopting by expanding our range to include more low-alcohol options and innovative alternatives to cater to these evolving preferences and purchasing behaviours," Amit shares. In this context of evolving choices, one

trend that is taking big strides is wine experiences and wine tourism, which are turning out to be instrumental in enhancing the culture of wine consumption in India. They offer opportunities for education, exploration and appreciation of wine, ultimately fostering a deeper connection with

the beverage.

Meanwhile, the modernisation of retail channels in India has played a significant role in boosting wine sales by increasing accessibility and the visibility of products.



Changing face of Retail

In modernised retail channels, there is often a broader selection of wines, including both domestic and international varieties; catering to

diverse consumers' preferences. In contrast, retail stores that are still government-run and operate in traditional formats may offer limited choices and slower adoption of new trends. The volume and varieties of wines sold are typically higher through modernised retail channels, as compared to the traditional ones. Playing an equally important role is the innovation in packaging of wine with lighter bottles and eco-friendly materials. "Additionally, there's a rise in alternative packaging like cans and pouches, catering to on-the-go consumers and for reducing environmental impact," Amit points out. **₹**

States of Choice

In India, states like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi have more friendly policies for imported wine businesses. These states have well-established wine markets with a relatively higher demand for imported wines due to factors such as cosmopolitan population, higher disposable income and a growing culture of wine consumption. Additionally, these states often have more streamlined importation processes and distribution networks, making it easier for imported wine businesses to enter and operate in these markets.



Grappling with Potential and Challenges



Even though the consumer trend in India is slowly shifting towards drinking wine, there is also another side of the story. Far too many instances of Indian wine makers are closing down operations. This may seem ironical and contrarian in nature but the fact cannot be ignored. **Ashwin Rodrigues, Secretary, Wine Growers Association of India and Founder and Winemaker of Good Drop Wine Cellars**, explains that three out of four small wineries are either shut down or are in a sick state. Large projects have also bit the dust. But that is not to say that the wine industry does not have potential in India. As Ashwin Rodrigues puts it, "The opportunities are limitless if the industry manages to remove the obstacles."

Sula has shown the way by not only being profitable but creating wealth for its investors by listing on the stock exchange. To put it simply, they have made money from wine in India and that, given the scenario, is a powerful statement, thinks Ashwin.

Meanwhile, the primary reason for failure can be attributed to over-regulation and their complexities. "To add to it, wine is a difficult and delicate beverage to produce and our hot climate doesn't do us any favours, and it's often seen that quality of wine is not up to the mark with smaller

wine players in India. Here's where WineGAI is stepping in," explains Ashwin.

Tackling Taxation and Regulations

The Indian wine industry grapples with high entry costs to a market like high label registration charges, high taxation and inconsistent state policies. Given that, WineGAI has established contact and built rapport with excise departments of over 15 states. In a short time, it has brought about a meaningful change in excise policies.

In Delhi, WineGAI was instrumental in bringing down the label registration fees to Rs 5,000 before the policy reverted to the old one. In Rajasthan, it successfully lobbied for the elimination of additional excise duty and brought Indian wines at par with imported ones.

"In Uttar Pradesh we successfully lobbied for the introduction of wine in beer wholesale licences, for permission of sale of wine in can and against imposition of higher tariffs on fortified wine (which is a curse to the Indian wine industry). In Delhi, we organised a wine training



workshop for the four corporations that run liquor retail stores to enable them to stock and sell Indian wines with confidence. In February this year we organised a wine standards and labelling requirements workshop in collaboration with FSSAI Mumbai, the first of its kind," elaborates Ashwin.

In Maharashtra, it has successfully brought about changes in licences such as FLW2 'wine only' retail licence for Rs 9,300, E2 wine bar-cum-retail licence and wine festival temporary one-day licence for Rs 3,500. WineGAI has appealed to bring fruit wines and meads at par with grape wines in all respects, and to reduce the tariff barriers on out-of-state wines.

In Telangana, Rajasthan and Odisha, it has requested the reduction in demurrage charges at corporation depots. "In addition to this, as part of WineGAI's strategy to grow the industry, we have offered to hold 'Fruit Wine Symposiums' where we educate and empower entrepreneurs to set up wineries in that state so as to benefit industry and farmers. We held one such symposium in Uttar Pradesh which was a huge success. Thanks to the event, today there are wineries opening up in the state, he celebrates."

WineGAI on the Forefront

WineGAI is seeking to reform and streamline regulations. It has been actively engaging with the excise departments of 15 states over the past year. "We encourage states to formulate their own friendly wine-producing policies and offer entrepreneurs free technical consultancy to set up wineries," Ashwin informs. Thanks to such efforts, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala have introduced wine-friendly policies.

From the quality viewpoint, WineGAI has two programmes – a monthly viti-winemaker meet where it shares information and help learn from each other, and second, a mentorship programme where upcoming wineries are mentored by established ones.

Wine Growers Association of India was established with the purpose of giving a voice to wine producers who had active brands in the market as compared to bulk wine producers. There was huge untapped potential to drive the growth of the industry and someone was needed to bring together all the stakeholders such as government authorities and agencies, research bodies and wine marketing professionals to work towards the sustainable development and growth of the industry.

"The authorities have been open-minded and helpful, or at the very least, did hear us out. We understand that change does not happen overnight. It's a process that begins with rapport-building. With persistence, perseverance and singularity of purpose we are confident that reforms will happen over time," Ashwin avers.

Efforts for Raising the Quality

WineGAI would like to tackle headlong the main issues that the industry is facing. The first is raising the quality benchmark and improving the quality of Indian wines to global standards. Towards this, it has initiated research and development projects, wine technology meet-ups,



and a mentorship programme. More are in the pipeline. From a regulatory viewpoint, its efforts are on to reform, streamline and harmonise rules and regulations across states.

Along with marketing, WineGAI will be commencing a certification programme, wines of India programme, wine festivals and also develop a strong social media presence. They will also have a few social responsibility programmes in the offing such as a 'drink responsibly' campaign.'

Consumer Preferences

Indians are still drinking mainly red wine, while the consumption of whites and rosé is still much smaller. Sparkling's consumption is growing. The awareness levels is also low and wine is still complicated in the consumers' minds and most are not confident when either picking up a bottle at a retail outlet or ordering wine at a restaurant.

"What's refreshing is the surge in meads and fruit wines, which are approachable and a lot easier to understand. They might just hold the key to the future of the industry," he observes.

"In the western world, wine is anywhere between 25 to 33 percent of the alcobev pie. In India it is less than 1 percent. This is both a challenge as well as an opportunity.



Impact of India-Australia FTA

Ashwin says that for the first time, India and Australia have agreed to collaborate in the wine sector, and this has the potential to transform the Indian wine industry. An Australian delegation made a visit to India for two weeks in early May 2024 and toured Mumbai, Nashik, Pune and Delhi with the sole objective of helping the Indian wine industry. Areas of potential collaboration were identified such as research in wine grapes and winemaking, and setting up a research laboratory.

The focus of the delegation was also on bringing together Indian and Australian universities to offer wine courses, importing of wine grape varieties, and streamlining regulation, among others.

Together with the team of WineGAI, they visited the office of Maharashtra Excise Department, four Nashik wineries, the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, Gargi Wine Educational Institute at Nashik, National Research Centre for Grapes in Pune, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in New Delhi, and the FSSAI in New Delhi along with holding dialogues with the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Food Processing.



A challenge because for an industry to grow, barriers to trade must go, and investment needs to come in.

An opportunity because of the huge potential for growth, with India being a young and exploratory alcobev market," Ashwin explains.

The challenge is to grow the Indian wine industry in the face of stiff competition from imported wines and other alcoholic beverages such as gin, whisky, etc. "If we do get our act together, the potential is huge. We have the ingredients to be a world-

class producer of wines," Ashwin states.

The Geographical Advantage

India has certain geographical pockets that are most ideal for wine production. Trials on wine grapes are being conducted in Bareilly in UP, in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana. Apart from that, there are many regions growing indigenous or hybrid varieties of grapes which may be suitable for wine making such as Srinagar, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh and Cumbum Valley in Tamil Nadu.

What is needed is to empower the local entrepreneurs with knowledge, training, infrastructure and finance. WineGAI can play the role of advisor to state governments and be the catalyst in the establishment and sustainable growth of these regions. §



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Favourable Policies Needed



It is the opinion of many in the wine industry that policymaking for wine makers in terms of production and distribution must be brought under the fold of the central government so that there is parity across the country. In the current situation, while some states like Karnataka and Maharashtra have turned out policies that have created opportunities for wine makers, there are many other states that are lagging behind and losing the chance to generate revenue from wine, points out **Abhay Kewadkar, the Founder of Tetrad Global Beverages Pvt. Ltd.**

The Indian wine market is set for exponential growth, driven by favourable duty and tax regimes in certain states and the reduction in customs duty on imported wines. However, high initial investment and operational costs, along with economic uncertainty, continue to deter young entrepreneurs from entering India's wine business. The dominance of large corporations also makes competition difficult for

new entrants. In such a scenario, Indian wineries are also facing challenges due to inconsistent state policies, high taxation and market perception issues.

Taking the Lead

Abhay is of the firm opinion that harmonising tax and regulatory frameworks requires centralised policy-making, industry collaboration and policy advocacy. "States like Maharashtra and Karnataka can serve

as models for implementing wine-friendly policies, and pilot programmes in select states could demonstrate the benefits of a harmonised approach," he says.

Now, wines made from other fruits are included in the wine policies of states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and some states in North-east India, which do not have significant grape cultivation, explains the wine entrepreneur. Potential solutions include

COVER STORY

further policy harmonisation, marketing efforts to improve perceptions and infrastructure development. What also needs to be taken into account are consumer preferences that are shifting towards wine, especially among urban and younger demographics, with growing interest in carbonated wines as an alternative to beer.

"The revenue generation is still niche but growing, and future growth prospects are positive, driven by lifestyle changes and regulatory improvements," Abhay states.

According to him, the Indian Wine Association (IWA) can support wine manufacturers by advocating for favourable policies, promoting Indian wines domestically and internationally, facilitating research on viticulture and winemaking, and providing education and training programs for the industry.

As for example, the India-Australia Free Trade Agreement that has reduced customs duties on wines from Australia from 150 percent to 95 percent for

wines priced above 5USD and up to 15USD, and a similar reduction for wines above 15USD. This will increase competition for Indian wineries but also provide opportunities for collaboration and market expansion.

"In India, imported wines are often perceived as superior due to historical reputation, brand recognition and taste preferences. However, the reduction in customs duties on premium wines will open up the market, providing consumers with more affordable choices and potentially altering perceptions of Indian wine quality," asserts Abhay.

Challenges & Potential

Other than the regulatory and taxation issues, market access difficulties and quality perception challenges and climate change affect grape quality and yields. According to Abhay, adaptation strategies include researching climate-resilient grape varieties and investing in sustainable practices.



Abhay says that some unexplored wine regions such as North-east India, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and parts of eastern India like Bihar and Odisha, show potential for wine production. These areas have favourable climates and unique terroirs that could diversify and enhance India's wine offerings. 🍷

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Tale of Fruit Wines

from North-east India



In the verdant hills and valleys of North-east India, where the air is crisp and the landscapes lush, a delightful revolution has been quietly fermenting. No, it's not just the tea leaves brewing—it's the rise of fruit wines, a quirky and delicious addition to the region's culinary landscape.



Prof. Madhumita Barooah

If you are strolling through the hilly trails and meandering green tapestry of Arunachal Pradesh or cascading ribbons of crystal-clear waterfalls of Meghalaya or through the maze of festivals in Nagaland, your nostrils will be greeted by the heady aroma of ripe pineapples, luscious kiwis, ruby-red cherry, velvety plums and exotic passion fruit.

But wait, there is more than just fruit salad in store in north-east India! Enter the realm of fruit wines—the delightful concoctions that transform humble fruits into liquid poetry. For “Wine is bottled poetry” as Robert Louis Stevenson would have us say.

Indigenous Art

Long before the advent of modern breweries and distilleries, indigenous communities in north-east India had already mastered the art of brewing their own concoctions from locally available ingredients. Fermented beverages often made from rice, millet or wild fruits, hold deep cultural significance and have played a central role in north-east's religious rituals, social gatherings, and everyday life. As time marched on and kingdoms rose and fell, the tradition of brewing and imbibing alcoholic beverages continued to thrive.

Communities in north-east India put their own unique spin on the art

of fermentation, with recipes passed down through generations and closely guarded secrets whispered from one brewer to the next. During the colonial era, the landscape of alcoholic beverages in north-east India underwent a transformation and fast forward to the present day, you



would be pleasantly surprised to see their fruit wines carving out their own niche in the region's diversified gastronomic scene.

Entrepreneurial Spirits

A plethora of indigenous fruits like jackfruit, black cherry, crab apples plum, prune, passion fruit coupled with introduced cultivation of grapes, dragon fruit and kiwis that abound the region have prompted the engineer turned entrepreneur Tage Rita to craft beautiful wines.

Rita's winery Naara-Aaba, located in the Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, produces wine from the abundantly grown kiwi fruit. In fact, the first ever pure Kiwi wine in India was launched by Naara-Aaba. Her winery has received recognition for producing high-quality fruit wines, helping to put Arunachal Pradesh on the wine tourism map.

Lovi Achumi, a dynamic young entrepreneur from Nagaland, brings out a range of fruit wines under the brand name, 'Tsuipu Beverage'. She specialises in wines made from local and exotic fruits. Her wines are fully organic and special in that they are



Lovi Achumi and her team at Tsuipu Beverage

blended with pure wild honey, which not only enhances the flavour and aroma of her wines but also confers unique layers of sensual tastes due to fermentation by wild yeasts.

Tsuipu Beverage currently produces eight flavours of wine including gooseberry, passion fruit, wild cherry, peach, and crab apple.

Lovi's treasure trove of finely created beverages includes unique

meads produced from black honey and cliff honey, which are found deep in the jungles of Nagaland. A common thread binding these two and many such entrepreneurs stems from their desire to utilise the indigenous and other recently introduced fruits for value added products and bridge the gap between the farmers and the market to create a sustainable business model that could provide employment to the local community.

Policy shifts for winemaking & heritage brews

- The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Draft Rules, 2022 allows for the production, sale, transportation and consumption of grape wine manufactured from fresh grapes grown in Mizoram and produced in licensed winery in Mizoram.
- In September 2020, the Government of Meghalaya amended the Meghalaya Excise Rules (Assam Excise Rules 1945) through a notification dated 29th September 2020 (No. ERTS (E)7/2020/52), to legalise the production and sale of homemade wines under license to provide a legal avenue for local winemakers to carry out winemaking as a commercial venture.
- The Government of Assam notified new rules amending the Assam Excise Rules, 2016, to legalise the production and sale of traditional brews as Heritage Brews.



Impediments

But of course, there is no journey without its bumps on the road, and the world of fruit wines is no exception either. Many of the states in north-east India, like Mizoram and Nagaland, are dry states with strict regulations or having an altogether prohibition on alcohol.

Production challenges, market dynamics, and regulatory hurdles can sometimes throw a curveball, testing the resilience and creativity of those involved. Yet, it's precisely these challenges that add a layer of complexity to the narrative, making each sip of fruit wine from the north-



east a testament to perseverance and passion.

State Initiatives

Several state governments of north-east India have amended their excise laws to boost fruit wine production and create an opportunity for wine tourism. The amended excise policies in the north-eastern states of India reflect a delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and promoting economic development.

By supporting traditional practices and encouraging commercial production, these policies aim to provide an impetus to the horticulture sector and enhance the cultural and economic landscape of the region.

Recently, in September 2023, the Government of Meghalaya launched the Northeast Fruit Wine Incubation Center (NEFWIC) with an aim to support and Recently, in September 2023, the Government of Meghalaya launched the Northeast Fruit Wine Incubation Center (NEFWIC) with an aim to support and Eastern Council, has been holding the industry as



Shillong Wine Festival
Photo credits - Mrinalinee Khanikar

transformative force for ushering the local economy.

Organisation like the Forever Young Sports Club with the support of Meghalaya Tourism, Meghalaya Farmers' (Empowerment) Commission and North Eastern Council, has been holding the Shillong Wine Festival each year

since 2002 to provide a platform for the winemakers of this region to showcase their delectable fruit wines.

Visitors to the festival, which draws tourists from all over, are treated to a delightful sensory experience that highlights the unique flavours and vibrant culture of north-east India.

So, the next time you find yourself in the lush embrace of north-east India, take a moment to raise a glass to the humble fruit wines of the region, which are quietly making waves in the culinary landscape of India.

Whether you are savouring the sweet tang of a pineapple wine or the zesty kick of a passion fruit blend from north-east India, you are not just sipping wines that tell a story of the lush landscapes from which they were made but also a true story of perfect blend of taste and tradition. A heady amalgamation indeed. **§**

Madhumita Barooah is a Professor and a Researcher, working on traditional alcoholic beverages at the Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat.





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With an ever-increasing percentage of globe-trotters from India realising the value and experience of having wine, wine makers from other nations are taking India on a serious note. One of them is M. Chapoutier of France. **Edouard Payot, Export Director-Africa, the Middle East, Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific /Global Travel Retail Director, M. Chapoutier**, discusses with **Shalini Kumar** the potential that the brand holds in the promotion of their wines in India.



An Indian Toast to FRENCH WINES

Even if it may not be apparent as of now, India's domestic market is slated to play a pivotal role in the future as far as India's wine consumption goes. Those in the wine business opine that the wine consumption in India could increase to one bottle per person every day, which makes 1.4 billion bottles on a daily basis. This can be pinned to the evolving culture which is expected to make wine popular over the coming years. No wonder then that Edouard Payot is pretty optimistic about how their wine business will evolve in India.

In India, the company offers both red and white from its portfolio – Marius Blanc, Marius Rouge, Bila Haut and then the Belleruche Cotes Du Rhone range; super premium wines like La Bernardine, Chateaneuf du Pape and Les Meysonniers Crozes-Hermitage.

Edouard has been to Mumbai, Delhi, Rajasthan, Bangalore and Pune to promote The Marius range is currently available in 15 states across India. "The focus for us will be to be a part of the luxury properties and premium retail segment across all the key cities in India," he observes.

On the Indian Turf

In India, Edouard feels that demand for wines will certainly increase given

The Chapoutier Story



Members of the Chapoutier family have been working in the Rhône Valley since 1808. Their ancestor, Polydor Chapoutier, was the first to buy vines there; making a shift from being a simple grape grower to making and trading his own wine under the eponymous brand name.

The pioneering family started its operations in Victoria (Australia) in 1997 and produced its second wine label called Tournon. Their first venture outside of the Rhone (but within France) was in the Roussillon region. After this, Michel Chapoutier went into crafting a smaller range reflecting the full potential of the terroirs and let the soil express their true character. One such label, named Marius, is also distributed in India.

more varieties to the market. The change is palpable and Edouard has witnessed it personally over the past 10 years while he has been visiting India. "It's a very dynamic, evolving market all the time and in the long-term I see a very bright future for India's wine industry," he says.

So far, Edouard has organised several trade activations, tastings and trainings and is encouraged by the positive feedback. He is looking forward to the Marius wines gaining good traction in the Indian market. As of now, the brand has been in the market for six years already and is gaining recognition for not only its quality and taste but also for the fact that its winery is organic and sustainable.

This is turning into a major sales pitch for now as well for the future. Another important factor is that the company is known for its family values that aligns well with the Indian sentiments about the family.

Facing Challenges

Just like many other alcoholic beverage producers are trying to sell their products in the Indian market, Edouard admits that the country throws up unique impediments. Here the cost of entry and compliance with local requirements like FSSAI, special labels, label registration, etc. is quite high. In many places, the company can send only 12 bottles and the procedure is done with but in India, the team has to be patient and remain invested for the long-term.

There is also the education part – for making more and more people aware about the M. Chapoutier brand. Ideally, Edouard would like Indians travelling to France to visit the winery in Rhone Valley and discover the many wines it has to offer. **§**

that Indian food is delicious and from that springs the possibility of many pairings. The company has been actively working on this premise with Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, VBev, to introduce



M. Chapoutier Becoming Popular in India



Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, VBev

Who else would know more about the presence and acceptance of M. Chapoutier brand in India than Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, VBev? Sumedh has been a partner in the long-term exercise of promoting the Marius range for six years now.

Sharing insights into the availability of the number of labels and distribution strategy of M. Chapoutier wines in India, he says that it is among the leading brands in their portfolio. "We currently offer seven wines from their portfolio, covering Rhone Valley and Languedoc-Roussillon regions of France. These wines are available across all the key markets in India," he informs.

These wines' rising popularity in India has been

due to focused distribution across the duty-free and premium trade and retail channels.. "We promote these wines through permissible digital as well as on ground activations," Sumedh avers.

Sumedh went on to explain that education, visibility and product trials have been the core pillars in their strategy to take the brand forward. A part of this strategy is to make Indian consumers aware about the kinds of wines that pair well with Indian cuisine.

The Rhone and Cotes du Roussillon regions offer wines with key grape varieties like Syrah, Grenache Red, Vermentino and Grenache Blanc. These grapes have a great affinity towards the Indian cuisine. Les Meysonniers Crozes Hermitage, Belleruche Cotes du Rhone Rouge, Belleruche Cotes du Rhone Blanc, and Marius Blanc are some of Sumedh's personal picks for Indian cuisine pairing.

It also helps that M. Chapoutier has been recognised as the 'Most Admired French Wine Brand' by Drinks International, five times during the last decade. Meanwhile, Sumedh admits that wine is still at its nascent stage in India but offers a potential of strong double-digit growth in the coming decade.

"We are also a wine producing country now. However, there is huge disparity in the per capita consumption between spirits and wine. Such a differential does not exist in any other wine producing country. Hence, I believe this drinking pattern will find a better balance during the coming years," he hopes.



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Telling a story **through Varchas Whiskey**



When **Varchasvi Shankar, Founder, Shankar Distillers**, first went to the US, he was driven by an urge to make his entrepreneurship dream come true. And he made it so! After many years of experience that taught him the art of global business, he turned toward the sector of alcoholic beverages because he saw it as an opportunity to tell a story, in fact, many interesting stories. The result has been a company that offers a wide range of products, especially whisky, that resonate with the consumers' need for interesting narratives and experiences.

Shalini Kumar

For generations now, everyone has been fascinated by stories, whether narrated around a bonfire in the wild, projected on silver screens, told to children at bedtimes or, as in the present times, tied up with consumer products. And so Varchasvi Shankar entered into the fascinating world of alcoholic beverages driven by the need to tell a story – his story!

"Our brand is about storytelling. My story is about coming to America and becoming a successful entrepreneur by being one of the first Indian-Americans to establish and own a distillery, launching products with a super-premium look, feel and consumer experience and becoming the first craft distillery to bring a bourbon to India," he says.

Triggered by Passion

Whiskey has always been a passion of Varchasvi. When he went to the US, he would see the great whiskey brands that had amazing tradition and heritage built into their stories. Also, he wanted to establish something that he could bring back to India and share with fellow countrymen.

In the early 2000s, he started working on this passion and purchased a few barrels of whiskey to pursue the beginning of his dream. By 2020, he was ready to start the business and launch a brand that would be the backbone of his whiskey business - Shankar Distillers and Varchas Premium Spirits.

With the development of Shankar Distillers and the Varchas Whiskey brand, Varchasvi wanted to create a mix of east and west cultures. He was born in the historic city of Mysore. The success of South India came from many wars won by the rulers of Mysore. His own business success as an immigrant to the US came from astonishing opportunities that he found in coming to America and fighting his

Sir Viv Richards as Global Brand Ambassador

It is probably the first craft whiskey brand that has a cricket legend as its Global Brand Ambassador. This year, the company has signed Sir Vivian Richards, one of the greatest batsmen, philanthropist and a great human being, to be its brand ambassador and share what he calls his 'Varchas Moments' i.e. his record-breaking accomplishments during 1974- 1991.

This partnership, Varchasvi feels, will help the brand to stand out "There is a craze about cricket the world over and Sir Vivian Richards' narratives will capture widespread audience attention and create an emotional connection. This will enable the brand to tap into new demographics and markets," he says.

own "wars" in business. As such, he wanted to create something that would encompass these historical stories and his dream.

The story is therefore present in every aspect of the brand, from bottle packaging to being the first craft distillery to bring bourbon to India.

Making it Unique

Varchasvi's American brand brings stories together through intriguing packaging, starting with the unique logo of the double-headed eagle, a warrior symbol from the kings of Mysore kingdom and a collectible metallic American eagle stopper, symbolising his success in America.

For the India market it has made some minor adjustments to include the American eagle in the label. There are

other things that sets it apart from the other players. For one thing, it is a craft distillery.

"We don't process our whiskey in large batches. Our whiskey is either bottled in small batches of 1-3 barrels or single barrel projects. This provides for variation in flavours and finishes," Varchasvi informs. Further, their whiskey is made with water from the Great Lakes, the largest freshwater source in the world. This gives their whiskey a smooth, clean taste.

On Expansion Mode

The Varchas brand has been expanding vigorously each year in the US. It is now available across 10 states and will be in 14 states by the end of 2024. It is also initiating global expansion into Canada, Japan and the UK for 2024.

In India, it has a presence in Karnataka, Delhi and Goa. There are plans for continuing expansion through Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad.

In the current US market, the company offers 11 variations of premium whiskey and in India, it offers four variants. They are Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Straight Rye Whiskey, Detroit Reserve American Blended Whiskey and Indus Gold, American Blended Whiskey.

In the near future, the company will launch three tequila brands (Tequila Blanco, Tequila Reposado and Tequila Anejo), and vodka and gin labels. §



THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS LIGHT OR MILD ALCOHOL

In the realm of alcohol consumption, myths and misconceptions often prevail, leading to potentially harmful behaviours and misguided policies. **Nita Kapoor, CEO of International Spirits & Wines Association of India (ISWAI)**, sheds light on some of these misconceptions and their implications for public health and policy.



There is a general myth and misperception among many consumers that distilled spirits are 'stronger' (and therefore more intoxicating) than beer or wine regardless of the quantity consumed. Nita Kapoor clarifies that the alcohol in all beverages containing alcohol is the same with the same effects on the body. The key lies not in the type of drink, but in practicing moderation. Understanding the alcohol content and serving sizes of different beverages is crucial for responsible consumption.

However, Nita points out that some government policies perpetuate this misperception, favouring beer or wine over distilled spirits. For instance, she highlights policies in states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh that provide preferential treatment or impose restrictions based on beverage type. "Such policies send misleading messages about the relative safety of

different alcohol types," she points out.

A common misconception, she says, is that beer, wine, or RTDs (Ready-to-Drink) contain less alcohol than distilled spirits due to their lower alcohol by volume (ABV). Kapoor clarifies that while the ABV may be lower, standard serving sizes contain the same amount of alcohol. This underscores the importance of understanding serving sizes and alcohol content, rather than fixating on beverage type.

Over 30 countries have moderate or low-risk drinking guidelines. Such guidelines make no distinction between alcohol consumed as beer, wine, or spirits; rather they reference standard serving of alcohol or standard units. Standard serving sizes vary between different countries, but the most typical standard serving is defined as 10g of alcohol.

Using the 10g definition of a standard serve, a 99ml glass of wine at 13 percent ABV, a 30ml measure of

spirits at 42.8 percent ABV, or a 257ml glass of beer at 5 percent ABV all contain the same amount of alcohol.

To address these misconceptions, the ISWAI CEO advocates for guidelines that recognise alcohol as alcohol, irrespective of its form. She emphasises the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks that ensure and promote responsible drinking practices.

Debunking myths surrounding alcohol consumption is essential for informed decision making and promoting public health. By understanding the truth about beer, wine, and spirits, individuals can make responsible choices, while policymakers can implement evidence-based policies that prioritise public well-being.

ISWAI, as the apex body of the premium alcohol sector, actively promotes progressive policies and the principle of 'drink less, drink better.'



Source : FSSAI

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Just Click for Your Favourite Tipple

Buying an alcoholic beverage from a store has its own stumbling blocks such as a limited display and stock of brands, the ignorance of the retail staff about brand features, strict operational timings, and so on. To circumvent all such limitations, **Angad Singh, the Co-founder and CEO of Sip Direct (Ontap Direct Private Limited)**, has set up an online platform that users can access to. Here they can choose their favourite brands and pay through licensed modes for the products to be delivered at home. The response to Sip Direct, naturally, has been very positive.

At the time of its inception, Sip Direct was merely an idea to digitise the value chain for beverages.

Though still on paper, the founders believed it was a powerful idea, and one whose time had come. At its core, the premise was to help alcoholic beverages benefit from digitisation, much like their peers in the fast-moving consumer goods sector.

Alcohol beverage delivery in West Bengal was the key aspect of the company's B2C endeavours. And in just a year, it has scaled up to a prominent position among its peers. "We hope to get closer to the market leaders soon, and are working in parallel on solutions for other stakeholders as well, especially retailers and the brands," says Angad Singh.

The Indian beverage industry is significantly large with the alcoholic beverages component of the industry

alone estimated at close to USD 60 billion – an aggregate of millions of transactions across the country with a less-than-ideal purchase experience in many cases. For 300+ million online shoppers, they can typically discover and engage with their favourite brands in almost all categories except beverages. Enter Sip Direct. This is where Sahil

Sharma and Angad Singh worked with a professional team to identify friction points and areas of improvement in the purchase journey. The idea was to build robust digital solutions that can enhance the customer's experience.

Finding the Niche

Sip Direct began with an in-depth feasibility study that revealed the reason why there are very few players in this space –



Dealing with Regulatory Frameworks

The prevailing policy frameworks have successfully governed the alcoholic beverage ecosystem for years, and have been duly enforced across the board. With the introduction of digital channels, the applicability as well as efficacy of the frameworks may need to be reinterpreted.

This is where it is important to engage with the regulators and ensure necessary steps are taken to ensure compliance in spirit. Age verification is one such parameter. In a physical premise, store employees are empowered to verify age and refuse any transaction where the age may be circumspet. Sip Direct goes a step further and enforces digital age-verification for each user through a mobile scan of a government ID and a real-time selfie to match the user's image.

A second such guideline is around fulfilment locations, which are tightly governed by state borders and restrictions around delivery to special areas of education, health and religious significance. These are managed via simple yet effective digital controls on the platform. Regulators also have a major concern around potential adulteration or counterfeit of licensed products.

Sip Direct has addressed that by introducing tamper-proof bags for all enabled deliveries to ensure what leaves the licensed premises is what reaches the consumer. Also, for sensitivity around pricing of the beverages, Sip Direct leans on the MRP for display and only licensed retailers are authorised to modify the price in line with any excise notifications.

regulatory constraints, resistance to change, among other potential impediments were there. Sip Direct evaluated the path of least resistance and set about building a minimum viable product to launch limited scale pilots. Iterative feedback was obtained from regulators, retailers, brands and end consumers to improve on the product and this evolved into a business model for the long haul. What helped was the team of a healthy mix of seasoned and early-stage professionals and the insights of the early-stage investors and mentors.

"By design, Sip Direct is different for different stakeholders in the value chain. It addresses gaps by offering a comprehensive platform that enhances customer experience at every step of the purchasing journey. From enabling seamless discovery of nearly a thousand SKUs through intuitive browsing and filtering to providing detailed product information in a standardised format, the company ensures informed decision-making," elaborates Angad. Its round-the-

clock accessibility eliminates the constraints of traditional store hours, offering convenience and flexibility. Customers can bypass queues, utilise various payment methods and complete transactions from the

comfort of their homes through Sip Direct.

"Sip Direct also resolves the challenge of acquiring mixers alongside alcoholic beverages, offering a range of products in one platform. It accommodates bulk orders and provides additional support such as cocktail and mocktail

recipes, guidance on glassware selection, and access to professional bartenders or mixologists for personalised assistance," avers Angad. All these aims to revolutionise the Indian beverage industry by seamlessly integrating digital solutions and enhancing the customer experience. "For the brands, Sip Direct provides a much-needed digital channel to showcase their brand stories to interested and age-verified consumers, thereby removing the dependency on store employees to introduce their brand to consumers and respond to their queries," the CEO points out.

The platform can also enable licensed retailers to get more insights about their local markets, consumer preferences and access to digital solutions for planning and forecasting. They also provide access to aggregated demand from consumers in their hyper-locality along with a way to leverage their width of products. And, the regulators get an opportunity to access relevant insights about consumption trends in their regions, along with enhanced

transparency on account of a digital footprint. "The feedback for each of these customer sets has been quite positive. This is reflected in our steady growth in terms of order volumes, retailer on-boarding, new customers acquired, and more," Angad points out.

Power of Digitalisation

Digitalisation helps in many ways. Contrary to a physical store, customers can access up to a 1,000 SKUs along with detailed product information for quick reference. It's accessible round-the-clock and offers the convenience of not leaving the comfort of your home to make a purchase. A major friction point for beverage consumers in multiple locations is the inability to buy mixers from the licensed outlet.

On Sip Direct, you access alcohol, mixers, barware and more at the same place. It also helps place bulk orders for a party while also offering

interesting recipes for making cocktails and mocktails. Moreover, multiple individuals can add their preferred products to the same shared cart to make parties a breeze.

Challenges to Counter

It is still early days for digital commerce of beverages in India, but multiple state governments are proactively evaluating the contours of digitisation and are aspiring to evolve in sync with digital India. "We have the precedent from more evolved economies such as the US, which follow a similar state-driven three-tier distribution structure for beverages. Over the last decade or so, digital commerce in alcohol has been proliferating and we may not be far behind. In China, the UK, Singapore, and other regions too, e-commerce in beverages has been around for a good number of years and is quite successful," Angad states. Their journey, however, will have to face

some typical hurdles.

For one, there is some resistance among stakeholders to change. Digitisation is one element that challenges status quo and warrants reconditioning of stakeholders. Sip Direct is therefore engaging in conversations with regulators to work out clear and transparent agreements while building trust in the platform.

Product availability is another challenge. There is a high degree of unpredictability in availability of stocks across outlets – including fast-moving mass-market items. Stocks are sometimes in short supply, and are sold faster than anticipated in other scenarios. And there are other multiple risks such as price changes, potential breakages, orders from outside service areas, absence of chilled beer, address change requests, etc. "We are building our mitigation strategy for multiple such risks and we hope to get even better as we grow," Angad asserts. **S**

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Kombucha market set for robust growth



The global kombucha market, valued at USD 2.59 billion in 2021, is on a trajectory of significant expansion, projected to soar to USD 9.62 billion by 2030.

This growth, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.7 percent from 2023 to 2030, is highlighted in a comprehensive report titled 'Kombucha Market Size, Share, Growth Analysis, By Type (Traditional Kombucha and Flavored Kombucha), By Flavor (Berry and Citrus), By Distribution Channel (Offline and Online) - Industry Forecast 2024-2031.'

Kombucha, a fermented tea beverage made by combining sweetened tea with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY), has gained immense popularity due to its purported health benefits. This tangy, slightly sweet drink is believed to enhance digestion and boost immune function, making it a favoured alternative to sugary sodas and other beverages.

Market Dynamics and Regional Insights

The report underscores North America and Europe as the dominant markets, collectively holding a 40% share of the global kombucha market. Within Europe, Germany leads in kombucha consumption. These

regions are anticipated to maintain their dominance in the coming years. Meanwhile, the Asia-Pacific region is poised for substantial growth, driven by increasing consumer interest in health-conscious beverages.

China emerges as a significant player within Asia-Pacific, attributed to its growing consumer base seeking healthier drink options. India, Japan, and Australia are also expected to contribute to the market's growth due to rising disposable incomes and heightened awareness of kombucha's health benefits.

Drivers of Growth

A key factor driving the global kombucha market's expansion is the increasing consumer awareness regarding the drink's health benefits. Kombucha is rich in probiotics, antioxidants, and organic acids, which collectively promote digestive health and bolster the immune system. This growing health consciousness among consumers is fueling demand across various demographics.

Challenges Ahead

Despite the positive outlook, the kombucha market faces certain

challenges. The availability of essential raw materials such as tea leaves, sugar, and SCOBY cultures remains a limiting factor. Additionally, the fermentation process required to produce kombucha is both complex and time-consuming, potentially restricting production capacities and impacting market growth.

Future Prospects

The report suggests that while North America and Europe will continue to be Kombucha key markets, significant opportunities exist in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in China, India, Japan, and Australia. The increasing disposable incomes and a growing shift towards health and wellness trends in these countries are likely to drive further market expansion.

In summary, the global kombucha market is set for robust growth, with substantial opportunities and challenges ahead. The increasing consumer preference for health-oriented beverages and the expanding awareness of kombucha's benefits are key factors propelling this market forward, promising a vibrant future for this fermented tea beverage. 

Maize is slated to be the next big raw material for ethanol production and distilleries. Recognising the value of maize, the UP Distillers' Association (UPDA) has been taking giant steps in promoting maize cultivation across the state while also collaborating with American organisations to collaborate on the latest technologies, as informed by **Rajneesh Agarwal, Secretary General, UP Distillers' Association.**



UPDA Bets Big on Maize

In the recent years, the UP Distillers' Association has emerged as a leading industry association, having initiated proactive steps on maize emerging as a vital crop or feedstock for ethanol production. A landmark step has been the signing of a MoU with the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and discussions at an advanced stage with the Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR). The prime objective is to undertake large-scale evaluation of newly developed hybrid maize varieties which promise higher ethanol recovery and improved protein quality with lower Aflatoxins in distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS).

"Moving forward, maize shall play a nuclear role in further growth of UP and India to achieve the ambitious E-20 blending target," says Rajneesh Agarwal.

Maize at the Forefront

In 2023-24 ethanol tender, there is a target of producing over 30 percent i.e. about 198 crore litres from maize feedstock alone, which translates into a requirement of 5 million MT of maize. Given the time-bound importance, certain UPDA members have already proceeded on fast-track with sowing in their respective catchment areas, procuring the best of seeds available from both public and private organisations. As of now, not

only does India have limited produce of maize but its quality upliftment requires a paradigm shift.

The Ministry of Agriculture has recently advised state governments to plan and promote cultivation of maize in areas around 50-100 km of distilleries through special projects under the Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and public-private partnership for Integrated Agriculture Value Chain Development (PPPIAVCD) scheme. "The UP government is at the forefront of this campaign and has initiated all-round steps on maize production, allocating a budget for the same," Rajneesh Agarwal states. The UPDA has extended its support and cooperation for the robust

government programme.

It has been decided to together develop a roadmap to take this

Promoting UP's Liquor Business

The UP Distillers' Association (UPDA), since 1983, is an apex state body representing the distillery segment of UP. It has been rendering advocacy role on policy and regulatory matters, garnering official recognition from numerous state and central government bodies.

As an active participant in the UP-liquor growth story, UPDA stands tall with unwavering dedication to quality and innovation with national & international collaborations.



campaign forward involving all the stakeholders, namely, farmer-producer organisations, seed

makers, sowing and harvesting machine manufacturers as well as all the others concerned in developing this full ecosystem.

The UP government has allocated Rs 30 crore to take maize production to the next level. The key areas to work on include efforts to increase crop intensity, develop high-yielding varieties, and undertake crop diversification with special incentives and subsidies for machinery, in maize cultivation.

It also includes harvesting, providing incentives to farmers in UP's catchment areas, replicating the encouraging model prevalent in Gujarat, technology infusion initiatives, developing a dedicated online market like e-NAM for maize growers to ensure better pricing and allow for direct contact among farmers and industries. The efforts extend beyond national borders as UPDA's leadership team had the privilege of attending the Global Ethanol Summit in Washington, in October 2023 organised by the US Grains Council (USGC), a premier

body under the US Department of Agriculture.

Fostering International Collaborations

USA is a global leader in the production of corn and ethanol. Given the importance of maize as a potential future feedstock in India, USGC has agreed to partner with the UPDA on a corn programme. To foster collaboration and innovation in the ethanol sector, a groundbreaking MoU was signed between the UPDA and the USGC in New Delhi, on 23rd April 2024.

"The future vision of this understanding is to take a deep-dive into the Indian agrarian space and ecosystem to establish innovative farming and logistical practices derived from the latest US and other global technologies for integration of higher ethanol blends into the ecosystem," points out Rajneesh Agarwal. The collaboration will provide for training for maximisation of ethanol co-products and leveraging of the digital platforms. 8

Dosh

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HELPING CRAFT A Perfect Gin

In the realm of artisanal spirits, the pursuit of a perfect gin is an intricate amalgamation of precision, expertise, and craftsmanship. At the heart of this delicate process lies the copper pot still, an essential apparatus whose quality and design significantly influence the final product. Leading the charge in providing distilleries in India with these critical tools is **Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd.**, a name synonymous with excellence in copper pot still manufacturing.



Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd. has garnered a reputation for producing copper pot stills that are both a nod to centuries-old craftsmanship and a testament to modern innovation. The journey of crafting these quintessential distillation tools begins with the selection of fine materials.

The company meticulously sources premium-grade copper, renowned for its superior heat conductivity and resistance to corrosion. This ensures that each of their pot still not only operates efficiently but also imparts a unique, refined flavour profile to the gin.

Engineering & Fabrication

The design and engineering teams at Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd. use significant expertise into crafting pot stills, specifically tailored for gin production. Every detail, from the shape and size of the still to the precise placement of the condenser is engineered to optimise the infusion and extraction of botanical flavours.

The fabrication process at

Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd. is a harmonious blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology. Skilled artisans use both age-old techniques and state-of-the-art machinery to meticulously construct each component. Whether it is the boiler, condenser, or reflux column, every part is made to exacting standards to ensure flawless functionality.

Quality & Customisation

Before a copper pot still leaves the manufacturing facility of Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd, it undergoes stringent quality assurance processes. Each still is subject to rigorous pressure tests, leak checks, and weld

inspections to guarantee it meets the highest standards of performance and safety.

Recognising that every distillery has unique requirements, Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd. offers customisation options. This bespoke approach allows distilleries to tailor their equipment to their specific needs, ensuring optimal outcomes in their gin production endeavours.

After passing quality checks, the pot stills at Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd. are carefully packaged to ensure safe transit and are promptly delivered to distilleries around the world. This commitment to timely delivery facilitates distilleries to commence or continue their gin crafting without delay.

Rattan Industrial India Pvt. Ltd.'s copper pot stills are more than just equipment; they are the culmination of dedication to quality, precision, and they facilitate the fine art of gin crafting. Distilleries equipped with these pot stills are well on their way to creating exceptional gins, thereby setting new standards in the world of artisanal spirits. **\$**



Karan Singh Anand, Marketing Head

Water stewardship is a shared commitment



Hina emphasised that the cross-learning emanating from the plenaries would prompt all stakeholders to evaluate the importance of transparent water management approaches with clear accountability and performance indicators. By integrating purpose with profitability, industry can demonstrate that business success and environmental sustainability can go hand in hand, she opined.

Highlighting her company's initiatives in water conservation, she shared that "At Diageo India, preserving water for life is integral to our 10-year 'Society 2030: Spirit of Progress' ESG action plan that sits at the heart of our business strategy. From fostering collaborative initiatives to overachieving replenishment targets, we strive to set a holistic example of responsible water management, inspiring collective action."

The conference deliberated on pertinent issues, challenges specific to water use efficiency and sustainability in the food & beverage sector and showcased opportunities to improve productivity by leveraging cutting edge innovation & technology, adopting standards and collaborative actions for sustainable water management in the sector.

Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director, FSSAI, Government of India, pointed out that labelling was a critical aspect for packaged drinking water and its compliance continued to be challenging. She emphasised that adherence to labelling requirements and corrective measures to ensure compliance is of paramount importance.

The conference was addressed by distinguished speakers including the Member Secretary, Central Ground Water Authority, Government of India, Thakur Brahmanand Singh; Executive Director FSSAI, Inoshi Sharma; Chairman – Core group on New & Cutting-Edge technologies, CII National Committee on Water & President, Ion Exchange (India) Limited, Ajay Popat; CEO & Executive Director, CII Triveni Water Institute, Dr Kapil Kumar Narula.

The conference was attended by more than 150 delegates with representation from both central & state governments, food processing, beverage & distillery companies, technology & solution providers, research and academia, consultants and sector specific associations. §

Water stewardship is a shared commitment towards securing our future, voiced Hina Nagarajan, the conference's Chairperson and Managing Director & CEO, Diageo India at a conference held by CII Water Institute. She made the inaugural address at the CII Conference on Water Stewardship in the Food & Beverage Sector 2024, organised by CII's Centre of Excellence on Water - CII Water Institute and CII Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence (FACE).

On the significance of the conference, Diageo India's head mentioned that this conference would go a long way in driving large scale collective action. The deliberations focused on the need for integrating water risk considerations into the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategies of F&B companies, she added.



Lee McLean leads a delegation to India

A high-profile delegation of Australian Grape and Wine (Australia's national association of wine producers) recently came to India to continue the conversation and engagement with the stakeholders of the Indian wine sector. During this visit, Lee McLean, CEO, Australian Grape and Wine, along with a group of Australian wine industry luminaries, held meetings with different wine companies, vineyards and other stakeholders.

In connection with their visit, Austrade and Australian Grape and Wine organised an interactive evening of reception dinner to celebrate the strengthening of ties



between the Indian and Australian wine industries. The reception was held at the official residence of Catherine Gallagher, Minister Commercial, Head of Austrade -South Asia, housed in Australian High Commission, New Delhi. The reception dinner was attended by a select number of importers, trade body heads, sommeliers and trade media.

The aim of the delegation's visit was to further efforts with the Indian wine industry to build their capability/regulatory knowhow, demonstrate continued engagement with India


and continued focusing on market diversification.

In the event, Lee McLean expressed his enthusiasm over India and Australia's growing wine ties. "It is wonderful to be here, the second time. Australia and India are friends in many ways and that friendship is not only growing but becoming deeper and stronger as time

passes. We are seeing so much in the way of educational links, cultural links, business to business links that are starting to emerge and that is a really positive thing to see. In the wine sector we would like to think we are doing our bit towards that relationship as well," he asserted.

"We are looking at opportunities

for collaboration on research, on innovation, on things like marketing, and even education as well, to make sure that we are helping each other out," he added further.

Catherine Gallagher also expressed her happiness over the continued and positive engagements between the wine sector of both countries. 



ALL SEASONS

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A night for the creators for happy memories

On the sweltering evening of May 21st, the bartending community gathered at Dakotta, Sector 32, Gurgaon, for the second edition of the Spiritz Bartenders' Bash. This vibrant event, a collaboration between Spiritz Magazine and Diageo Bar Academy, brought together a multitude of bartenders from Delhi-NCR and neighbouring states, thereby transforming the night into a grand celebration.

Diageo and The Singleton's Brand Ambassador, Prashant Rawalia, conducted a masterclass with The Singleton—a delectably smooth, award-winning single malt Scotch whisky. He guided the attending bartenders through a sensory journey, encouraging them to nose, sip, taste, and savour the exquisite single malt, crafted to be enjoyed from the very first sip. Adding a playful twist, he introduced a quiz centered around Diageo's brands and their rich histories. Four teams competed fiercely for bottles



BARTENDERS BASH



of The Singleton and other Diageo's brands, their passion and enthusiasm infusing the contest with spirited fun.

The Spiritz Bartenders' Bash is a tribute to the broader bartending community, providing a platform for revelry and camaraderie. With representatives from Diageo sales team, Diageo Bar Academy and The Singleton present, the event underscored the importance of continual learning and innovation in the ever-evolving field of bartending.

The atmosphere at Dakotta was electric as attendees mingled, shared stories, and celebrated their mutual love for mixology and the art of bartending, while enjoying exquisite drinks and delectable food. As night descended, the bartenders took to the dance floor, grooving till midnight. The bar, skillfully managed by talented bartenders, kept the drinks flowing and the energy high.

It was a night that fittingly honoured the masters behind the bar who craft joyous memories for us!



Komos enters the Indian market

Luxury tequila brand Komos has announced its debut in the Indian market, marking a significant milestone for connoisseurs of fine spirits across the country with its key markets being Delhi, Haryana, Mumbai, Goa, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and a few others.



Crafted from meticulously hand-selected, perfectly ripe agave, Komos offers four exquisite expressions - Añejo Cristalino, Reposado Rosa, Añejo Reserva, and Extra Añejo. Originally launched in the US in 2020, Komos now extends its reach to India with Chason Beverages spearheading its marketing and distribution efforts. Komos is available in India at select premium on-trade outlets, including in renowned establishments like The Claridges Hotel, Ophelia, Cozy Box, Dirty Good and many others.

Stranger & Sons introduces Aer Gin

Stranger & Sons has unveiled Aer Gin, a bespoke creation made exclusively for Four Seasons Hotel in Mumbai. This gin boasts a fusion of tamarind, kokum, and mangosteen, delivering a one-of-a-kind flavour journey.



'Mumbai's coastal charm' is the inspiration behind the gin and the beverage is named after rooftop bar AER at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai.

Bottled at 42.8 percent ABV and available solely at the hotel's rooftop bar, AER, the gin embodies the spirit of inventive mixology and the essence of Mumbai's vibrant coastal culture.

Mehra Wines introduces premium liquors

Mehra Wines Private Limited (MWPL) has introduced a range of premium alcoholic beverages called Cambridge Dry Gin, Truffle Gin, Watenshi Gin and Thunder Vodka to the Indian market.



These brands are available at select outlets across Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Chandigarh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Mumbai.

El Cristiano Tequila launch

Mehra Wines Pvt. Ltd. has launched El Cristiano Tequila in the premium Indian spirits market, expanding its portfolio. Being hailed as the world's most delicious tequila, El Cristiano offers harmony and balance with the notes from the cooked Agave and is free of any artificial sweetener, colour, flavour and additive.



The process of making this ultra-premium tequila starts with the selection of the Blue Weber Agave fields in the Highlands of Jalisco (Los Altos de Jalisco). The product is available in India, in Delhi, Gurgaon, Chandigarh, UP, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Mumbai, Pune, Goa, and Bengaluru.

Jimmy's introduces new range

Jimmy's has unveiled a new range of low sugar sparkling mixers & other drinks.



The range includes Tonic Water (Original Indian & Elderflower), Soda Water, Mint Mojito, and Ginger Ale. Renowned for their vibrant bottles, Jimmy's is shaking up the beverage scene once again with their sparkling lineup; bottled in blue glass bottles adorned with colourful labels.

The new range is crafted with perfection and premium ingredients. From enhancing gin and tonic to adding a refreshing twist to Mojito, Jimmy's Blue Sparkling Range offers endless possibilities for crafting impeccable cocktails.

Rahul Mishra, Hoegaarden bring 'Summer in a Glass'



Renowned designer Rahul Mishra and the iconic Belgian brand Hoegaarden has unveiled 'Summer in a Glass', a limited-edition sipping collection, blending craft alcohol and haute couture. Launched on World Cocktail Day, on 13th May, the collaboration celebrates European summer romance.

The collection draws inspiration from Hoegaarden Gin's three flavours: Parisian Romance, Belgian Original, and Mediterranean Summer.

Rahul's vision seamlessly integrates with Hoegaarden's heritage; crafting a treasure trove of bar collectibles. Alongside, signature Hoegaarden cocktail serves, capturing the essence of summer, will be available at select bars in Mumbai, Goa, and Bengaluru, culminating on World Gin Day on June 8th.

LAUNCH PAD

Paul John's single cask for GTR

Paul John Whisky of JDL has introduced its exclusive partnership with Avolta Duty Free to unveil an exclusive single cask release for global travellers at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.

Bottled exclusively for global travel retail, the brand is available at the T2 Duty Free. The cask is dedicated to the city of Bengaluru and the packaging has been thoughtfully designed, capturing the glorious spring blossoms of the Garden City.

Crafted in the tropical coast of Goa, this exotic single-cask Unpeated Madeira expression with only 228 bottles is a non-age statement (NAS) single-cask release, which is priced at 300 USD per bottle.



Agave spirits from Maya Pistola

Maya Pistola Agavepura has launched Añejo and Extra Añejo variants in Mumbai.

These variants showcase the brand's commitment to quality and authenticity. Each expression is meticulously aged, imparting rich flavours and complexities that discerning palates will appreciate.

Añejo has an oaky nose of cocoa and dried figs, with a subtle smoky background. Extra Añejo comes in at 48 percent ABV, making it spirit-heavy and robust, and offering a velvety palate with a complex and elongated mouth feel.



Green Apple flavoured brandy by TI

Tilaknagar Industries Limited has unveiled a new flavour innovation under its Flandy (premium flavoured brandy) range. Mansion House Flandy has now been launched in an all-new Green Apple flavour in the state of Telangana, to begin with.

According to Amit Dahanukar, CMD of Tilaknagar Industries, the launch of the all-new Green Apple flavour is a testimony to Flandy's strong performance and is in line with company's plans to further enhance its premium brandy portfolio while strengthening our regional foothold.

TI has seen very encouraging response to its Flandy range in the state, facilitating the company's move to become the fourth-largest IMFL player and the third-largest IMFL Prestige & Above player in Telangana, in FY24.



Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila debuts in India

Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila has debuted in India, exclusively distributed by Berry Beverages and imported by Berry Beverages and Zoup Beverages. Known for its smooth taste and sustainable practices, 818 Tequila is now available in the Delhi-NCR region, with plans for further expansion across India.

818 Tequila will be available for retail as well as at some of the most exclusive hotels and restaurants across Delhi-NCR. It will also be expanding to Mumbai, Goa, Karnataka, and Telangana over the next few months. The Blanco variation is priced at Rs. 7170 in Delhi, the Reposado variation is priced at Rs. 8160 in Delhi, and the Añejo variation is priced at Rs. 12,760 in Delhi. A bottle of the ultra-premium Eight Reserve is priced at Rs. 27,390 in Delhi.



Save The Date

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— Le Méridien Gurgaon —

Across the Oceans on Long Legs



The UK-based Boparan Restaurant Group (BRG) is bringing the famous UK restaurant chain Giraffe to the Indian market. With a steadfast commitment to offering a dining experience that celebrates flavours from around the world, Giraffe has become a beloved destination for food enthusiasts across the United Kingdom. And now, **BRG's CEO Satnam Leihal** is keen on Indian food connoisseurs to try Giraffe's unique culinary choices.

Bishan Kumar

If India is famous across the world for its art, cultural diversity, stunning landscapes and vibrant cities, it also attracts attention for its amazing culinary delights with its rich tapestry of flavours and cooking techniques. And on the other side, the increasingly globe-trotting population are now demanding international cuisine on Indian turf. So, both ways considered, this makes for an ideal opportunity for Boparan Restaurant Group (BRG), which has been a trailblazer in the rich tapestry of the United Kingdom's culinary scene, to introduce a brand like Giraffe with its globally inspired menu to Indian consumers.

Satnam says that from the vibrant energy of bustling city streets to the quaint charm of countryside hideaways, each BRG restaurant brand offers a unique journey through flavours and atmospheres. So, whether one is craving the bold and fiery spices

of Indian cuisine, the comforting embrace of traditional British fare, or the exotic allure of Pan-Asian flavours, BRG has a culinary destination tailored to fulfil your diverse gastronomic desire. BRG's brands include an American-style eatery named Slim Chickens, the burger restaurant chain, Gourmet Burger Kitchen (GBK), an Italian restaurant chain, Carluccio's, an Italian-inspired cafe chain- Caffe Carluccio's, Giraffe, retro-themed American diner, Ed's Easy Diner, Indian restaurants- Cinnamon Club, Cinnamon Bazaar, Cinnamon Kitchen- and a chain of seafood restaurants named FishWorks.

Global and Local

Giraffe, which is stepping on Indian soil, has several USPs. One of the key highlights of dining at a Giraffe restaurant is its diverse and globally-inspired menu. "We offer a wide range of culinary delights, including



popular international dishes as well as locally inspired creations. Each dish is carefully crafted using the finest ingredients and authentic cooking techniques," affirms Satnam. "Now, Giraffe finds itself well-positioned to

cater to the discerning tastes of Indian diners and to offer them a unique and memorable dining experience, something that will set it apart from other restaurants in the country," adds the dynamic CEO.

India Beckons

BRG sees an exciting opportunity for Giraffe in India due to several compelling factors. India's vibrant dining scene, coupled with a growing consumer interest in international cuisine, makes it an ideal market for expansion of the Giraffe brand. They have identified key cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru for the big launch. "These cities were chosen based on various factors, including their cosmopolitan nature, thriving food culture and high footfall areas," Satnam explains. BRG will establish its presence in India through franchise partnerships.

This is being done through a strategic collaboration with FranGlobal, the international business extension of Asia's leading franchising solutions firm, Franchise India Holdings Limited (FIHL).

While the primary focus of Giraffe in India remains on delivering a world-class dining experience, its projected capital expenditure for the Indian operations will vary depending on several factors, including location, size and the scale of each restaurant of the chain. Known for creating a vibrant and inviting atmosphere that is

Standing Tall

At the helm of this culinary empire are the visionary leaders of BRG, Founding Chairman, Ranjit Singh Boparan and CEO, Satnam Leihal, whose passion for gastronomic excellence and unwavering dedication to hospitality have propelled the company to the forefront of the UK's hospitality industry. With their guidance, BRG has not only set new benchmarks for culinary brilliance but has also redefined the very essence of amazing and unique experiences in dining.

Satnam has had over two decades of experience at Morrison's (UK) where he honed his expertise in retail operations, collaboration and strategy. At BRG, he has expanded the company's presence and diversified its portfolio; offering a wide range of culinary concepts and dining experiences.

Starting his journey at BRG by spearheading FMCG and retail initiatives as the Commercial Director at Boparan Holdings Limited, Satnam has played a crucial role in enhancing the company's presence in the food and beverage retail market.



ideal for guests of all ages, the Giraffe outlets in India are being designed to be warm, welcoming and family-friendly with stylish and comfortable décor.

The Culinary Choice

Giraffe will offer a diverse menu in India, featuring a variety of cuisines from around the world. "While our culinary offerings will be tailored to local preferences, and will utilise local produce, we are committed to preserving the authenticity of each

dish. Our menu will include popular international dishes as well as locally inspired creations to cater to the diverse tastes of our guests," Satnam says.

The inclusion of alcoholic beverages in Giraffe's offerings in India will be a significant aspect of the dining experience. The brand believes that offering a selection of carefully curated wines, beers and cocktails enhances the overall dining experience, which can perfectly complement its diverse menu. \$



In the bustling streets of Mumbai, where the aroma of spices and sizzling pans is a symphony to the senses, a new culinary star has emerged. **Avatara**, the celebrated vegetarian restaurant that has won the coveted Michelin star (a first for an Indian vegetarian restaurant) in Dubai, has now unveiled its Mumbai outpost, promising a culinary experience that transcends borders and tantalises the palates.



Suprio Bose

Avatara of Taste and Flavours

Nestled in the heart of Mumbai, Chef Rahul Rana's brainchild has found its rightful home in Juhu Tara road, helmed by the very talented Chef Sarfaraz Ahmed and supported quite ably by Chef Sanket. As you step into the restaurant, you are immediately enveloped by an ambience that exudes sophistication and warmth. The minimalist décor, with its clean lines, soft sea blue walls and understated elegance,



Chef Sanket Joshi, Head Chef | Avatara

sets the stage for an epicurean adventure. The open kitchen where the dishes are plated adds to this elegance and adds further to the diner's experience. Here, diners are not just passive guests but active participants in the culinary process; witnessing first-hand the artistry that goes into crafting each dish. And what dishes they are! From the first bite to the last, every morsel at the Avatara come across as a revelation, a testament to Chef Rahul

Rana's culinary vision and the skill of his proteges. Be it the way he has married bitter to *mango sambhar gelato* or *moringa chokha* with *sattu kachori* inspires awe. Each dish here is a clever version of the traditional classic.

Taking a cue from the Vedas, the menu focuses on the elements highlighted in our ancient texts and weaves a magical culinary story around it. The menu thus starts off with Naivedhya wherein diners are served Panchamrit with *mishra* and *makkhan malai* to kick-start the meal and then moves along through 13 more courses; engaging the sensory nerves in an enthralling fashion.

Wines & More...

But what truly sets Avatara apart is its ingenious wine pairing. The restaurant boasts of an expansive



wine cellar, curated with meticulous care to complement the diverse flavours of its 14-course tasting menu.

Whether you are a seasoned oenophile or a novice wine enthusiast, the selection at Avatara is sure to delight and surprise. From crisp, aromatic whites to bold, robust reds, each wine at the restaurant is carefully chosen to enhance the nuances of the accompanying dishes, creating a harmonious



symphony of flavours on the palate. Labels like Chateau Angelus rub their shoulders with Chablis Hamelin in a magical list that is sure to tantalise your palate.

Under the expert guidance of Prateek, the in-house sommelier, diners are taken on a journey through the vineyards of the world; exploring new varietals and rediscovering old favourites with each course.

From the delicate notes of Chateau la Mascaronne to the earthy complexity of Parusso Dolcetto, every sip here is a revelation, enhancing the flavours of the food and elevating the dining experience to new heights. There is something to suit varied pockets on this wine list. Labels ranging from Rs.3500 to all the way to Rs.2,70,000 find their place on this list, which reads like the who's who of the fine wine world!

A Culinary Adventure

As you dine at the Avatara, you can't help but marvel this seamless synergy between



food and wine, with each element complementing and enhancing the other in a perfect union of taste and texture. It is a testament to Chef Rahul Rana's culinary prowess and his unwavering commitment to excellence.

This is further accentuated with the fact that ubiquitous ingredients like paneer and mushroom are absent and uncommon ingredients like bitter melon, okra, moringa, parsnip and *alu vadi* find their due in the menu.

In a city known for its culinary diversity, Avatara stands out as a shining beacon of vegetarian

gastroonomy, a testament

to the power of innovation and creativity

in the kitchen. With

its impeccable

service, exquisite

cuisine, and

unparalleled

wine pairing,

it is no

wonder

if Avatara

quickly

become the talk

of the town in Mumbai.

So, if you are looking for a dining experience in Mumbai that transcends the ordinary and transports you to a world of culinary bliss, look no further than Avatara, and don't miss out their lovely wine pairing. I am sure this will

re-define vegetarian

gastroonomy for you! 5

Barsys 360 for home cocktail makers

Barsys, a cocktail crafting technology brand, has announced the launch of its latest innovation in home bartending, the Barsys 360, in India. The Barsys 360, an at-home mixology system, is expected to upgrade the way Indian consumers create and enjoy cocktails in the comfort of their homes.



The Barsys 360 is now available for pre-order and the first batch ships in June. Meanwhile, the Barsys App that serves as a dynamic marketplace for cocktail enthusiasts too will be launched in India soon. The app is a one-stop solution where top alcohol brands and consumers can connect across geographies.

Hyatt Centric brand arrives in Kolkata

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has opened Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata, marking the exciting expansion of the Hyatt Centric brand into the City of Joy. Debuting in association with Mukti



Projects Limited, the hotel amalgamates the rich culture of Ballygunge with a true lifestyle hospitality experience.

Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata is serving as a stylish option for guests to unwind. The property boasts 93 contemporary rooms and suites, offering a comfortable place to recharge after a day of exploration.

This hotel is the seventh Hyatt Centric hotel in India, joining branded properties in New Delhi, Goa, Mumbai, Dehradun, Bengaluru and Chandigarh.

IHCL to open new hotel in UP

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has announced the signing of a hotel in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh. The greenfield project will be branded as a Gateway hotel. With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 24 hotels in Uttar Pradesh under the Taj, SeleQtions, Vivanta, and Ginger brands, including 11 under development.



Gateway Sarnath is poised to become the city's largest hotel, and will be offering 160 well-appointed rooms with over 6,500 square feet of a spacious banquet hall complemented by meeting rooms. The hotel is expected to be an ideal choice for social as well as corporate events.

Excellent placement from IHM Ranchi

The Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Ranchi conducted the graduation ceremony on May 3rd for its three-year undergraduate program affiliated with the National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT), Noida, at the institute's auditorium.



In this ceremony, all 52 students of the Batch 2021-24 of the B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration program were provided appointment letters and certificates of completion during the placement drive organised by various hotels and service sectors, domestically and internationally.

Aditya Vikram Bajaj was the Student of the Year 2024 and was honoured with a gold medal and a cash prize of Rs. 11,000.

THSC hosts Track 2 of IndiaSkills 2024

Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) has successfully orchestrated Track 2 of the IndiaSkills 2024 hospitality competitions from 27th April to 1st May 2024 in Delhi, at different venues. The events pulsated with energy, uniting talent from across the nation in celebration of skill and passion.

Collaborating with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Council (NSDC), THSC set the stage for an unforgettable showcase of hospitality excellence.

A group of 194 skilled individuals stepped into the spotlight. Through a grueling assessment process, eight finalists emerged. These finalists competed across five major hospitality skill areas from bakery to cooking, restaurant services to hotel reception, and patisserie & confectionery to embody the diverse tapestry of skills in the hospitality industry.



DIL, PVR INOX forms strategic partnership

Devyani International Limited (DIL), one of the quick service restaurant (QSR) operators in India, and PVR INOX Limited, a premium cinema exhibitor in India, have



extended their association and announced a strategic partnership to jointly establish a company in India for the purpose of development and operation of food courts within shopping malls in India.

This partnership expects to further consolidate DIL's position in the food courts business in India and empower DIL & PVR INOX to reach a wider audience and expand their market presence.

Indulge at The Grill Room

The Lalit New Delhi has revamped The Grill Room, thereby bringing back yesteryear's iconic restaurant with its flavoursome menu. Its classy dishes are paired with new age wines. The Grill Room that was shut during pandemic was famous for its food, white glove service, and charming décor.



The new menu at The Grill Room includes premium steaks, alongside master Chef-recommended dishes such as New Zealand Lamb Chops, Pan-Seared Sea Bream, and Slow-Cooked Lamb Shank, Goat Cheese Tart, Cheese Empanada, and Asparagus Risotto among other delights.

To elevate the dining experience further, the restaurant's French sommelier, Charles Don Adieu, has thoughtfully paired each dish with the perfect wine, ensuring a harmonious blend of flavours and textures.

Delhi's first railway coach restaurant opens at NDRS

Capital Diner, the first-of-its-kind restaurant housed within a refurbished railway coach, is set to redefine dining experiences at the New Delhi Railway Station (NDRS). Strategically located at the station's entrance, Capital Diner promises to offer travellers and locals alike a unique blend of history, ambience, and exquisite cuisine. It serves as an ideal spot for travellers seeking a quick yet delicious meal before or after their journey. Additionally, local residents and office-goers can enjoy the convenience of dining in a unique setting without having to venture far from the city's hub.

The use of a retired Indian Railways coach car as the core structure pays homage to the romantic legacy of train travel, creating an intriguing and authentic setting. Inside, a modern minimal bohemian ambience blends contemporary and classic design elements, with cool beige LED lighting strips adding a luxurious, star-lit glow.

The menu is a delightful journey through diverse culinary traditions, offering a range of delectable dishes that cater to all tastes.



Bunny Bar in Bengaluru

Jay Jay & Kwaliti Restaurants Pvt. Ltd. have launched Bunny Bar in south Bengaluru. Spanning 14,000 square feet, Bunny Bar aims to elevate the nightlife experience in south Bengaluru. Inspired



by nature, its modern interiors blend rich colours, gold accents, and lush greenery with over 10,000 plants.

This bar offers a classic highball experience, inviting guests into a chic yet bustling atmosphere. With 18 beers on tap and an eccentric cocktail menu featuring locally sourced ingredients, house-made syrups, and classic cocktails with a twist, Bunny Bar promises an unforgettable experience.

Fast & Up releases Reload RTD

Fast&Up, an active nutrition brand, has launched its latest product - Fast&Up Reload Ready-to-Drink. The new beverage is ideal for athletes, fitness enthusiasts, and anyone leading an active lifestyle.



Fast&Up Reload Ready-to-Drink features a scientifically balanced formula containing five essential electrolytes: sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and chloride.

These vital nutrients help replenish electrolytes lost through sweat, ensuring optimal fluid and electrolyte balance.

Unlike other energy drinks in the market, this new drink contains no caffeine, no artificial flavour and colour. It also contains added Vitamin B12 & C which helps reduce muscle soreness and tiredness.

Namaskara Meals unveils Gurgaon debut

Namaskara, an entrant in the Indian street food market, has officially inaugurated its operations in Gurgaon with six locations. With its motto "The day begins," Namaskara



aims to transform the way office goers perceive their daily meals by offering delicious, wholesome, and hygienic options at economical prices.

Namaskara also offers catering services for corporate events. It has the capacity to serve over 15,000 individuals daily.

The Brook to debut in July

The award-winning team behind Sidecar and Cocktails & Dreams Speakeasy are back at it – this time with a new muse and a concept that celebrates the joy of doing nothing. The bar is inspired by Lord Tennyson's classic poem named 'The Brook'.



With a setting evoking the feeling of a mountain hideaway, The Brook will translate staples from the Himalayan kitchen in a refreshing new narrative by the pit-master and Founder of Bhumi Farms – Gautam Nijhawan. They will be paired with cocktails created by Yangdup Lama, celebrating the bounty and techniques of the region, along with a *thou cha* (tea program) and freshly roasted coffee. The Brook is set to launch in July 2024.

Appointments

Shrikant joins Park Hyatt Hyderabad

Park Hyatt Hyderabad has named Shrikant Wakharkar as its new General Manager and Area Vice President.

Shrikant carries over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, having previously served as the GM of Hyatt Regency Delhi and Area Vice President of Hyatt Hotels North India from 2022. His extensive background includes leadership roles at renowned brands such as Taj, IHG, Starwood, and Marriott Hotels.



Shweta Jain joins The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts

Shweta Jain has joined The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts as the Chief Marketing and Sales Officer. Before joining The Leela Group, she was the Chief Business Development Officer: Luxury Reserve and Craft – India and South Asia at Diageo.



Shweta is also a member of Board of Directors with Nao Spirits and Beverages Pvt. Ltd. Prior to Diageo, Shweta, an alumnus of Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, was the Head of Marketing at William Grant & Sons. Jain has also worked in companies like ShopsClues, Pernod Ricard India, Ogilvy, McCann Worldgroup, Gillette India, Rediffusion DY&R.

Promotions at Radisson Hotel Sector 29 Gurugram

Radisson Hotel Sector 29 Gurugram has promoted Parul Trehan to the position of Learning and Development Manager, and Bhupendra Tomar to the position of Food and Beverage Manager, which were effective from 1st April 2024.

Parul has refined her skills with prestigious brands such as The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts and Oberoi Hotels and Resorts. She joined Radisson in 2023 and eventually made the shift into learning and development.

Bhupendra joined Radisson Hotel Group in 2014. He was formerly connected to prestigious brands like Hilton and The Leela.



Glen Dsouza joins Hyatt Centric's K'kata

Glen Dsouza has been appointed as the General Manager at Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata. With over 18 years of seasoned expertise in the vibrant hospitality and service industry, Glen brings strong leadership skills and a wealth of expertise in diverse domain of hospitality business.



Glen's journey in hospitality began at Marriott International. Later he worked with Fairfield by Marriott, Goa, Anjuna, and as Director of Rooms at renowned establishments like Marriott Resort & Spa, Goa, and Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad. He also worked in Hong Kong, Doha, and Abu Dhabi.

Rachita Sood joins as GM, Novotel Mumbai Int'l Airport

Novotel Mumbai International Airport has appointed Rachita Sood as General Manager. Rachita, formerly Director of Operations at Sofitel BKC, brings over two decades experience. She has been associated with some of the biggest international brands in hospitality across India.



In her new role, Rachita will spearhead the overall development of the hotel's operations vertical and oversee the planning and implementation of strategies along with guest relations.

Valor Hospitality appoints new RCD

Valor Hospitality Partners has appointed Souhad Saeed El Hariri as Regional Commercial Director (RCD) for the Middle East, CIS, and Indian Ocean regions.



El Hariri carries rich experience in sales and marketing, business development, strategic planning, partnership cultivation, and revenue enhancement. Souhad transitions to Valor Hospitality Partners from her most recent position as Marketing Director at Be A Greek Travel Experiences, where she led transformative initiatives which propelled the company's commercial achievements.

Manish Bedi joins The Leela Ambience Gurugram

The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences has appointed Manish Bedi as the Director of Food & Beverage.



He carries an impressive experience spanning over two decades. An alumnus of the prestigious Robert Gordon University of Scotland, Manish worked with different Shangri-La properties in Bengaluru, Dubai, Shanghai, Abu Dhabi, and New Delhi, and also with the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Neelabh Sahay joins Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach

Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach has appointed Neelabh Sahay as Director of Operations. In his new role, Neelabh will be overseeing the overall operations of the hotel and developing and implementing operational strategies to secure market positioning of the hotel.



Prior to joining Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, Neelabh was associated with Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences as the Director of Food & Beverage.

An IHM Pusa alumnus with over 18 years of experience in his field, Neelabh has been credited with organising many successful initiatives and was honoured with 'Food & Beverage Person of the Year' in The Accor South Asia Hotel Awards for 2024.

Minor Hotels names Lokesh Kumar as VP

Minor Hotels, with a portfolio of 540 hotels and resorts in 56 countries, has announced the appointment of Lokesh Kumar as Vice President of Development for the Middle East.



In his new role, Kumar will oversee the development strategies and management of assets across Minor Hotels' portfolio of hotels, including the Anantara, Avani, NH Hotels, NH Collection, Oaks, and Tivoli brands.

Lokesh brings over 23 years of strategic business leadership experience and a proven track record in managing owner and key government relationships while executing strategic public-private partnerships to maximise revenues and optimise costs.



Brett Lee to promote Australian avocados in India

Avocados Australia Limited, the representative of the Australian avocado industry, has made an eagerly awaited entrance into the dynamic Indian market, accompanied by the renowned former cricketer Brett Lee as their Brand Ambassador. Embarking on a multi-city tour across India, this initiative signifies a momentous juncture for both Australian avocados and the burgeoning Indian fresh fruit market. Celebrated for their exceptional quality and myriad health benefits, Australian avocados promise to tantalise Indian palates with a fusion of flavour, texture, and nutrition. This collaboration seeks to introduce a premium and health-conscious option for Indian households, encouraging the integration of avocados into daily meals and snacks.

The launch event, held at the Australian High Commission in Delhi, witnessed the presence of Australia's Deputy High Commissioner to India,

Nick McCaffrey, who lauded the introduction of Australian avocados into the Indian market as a promising alliance between the two nations. He said that it symbolises the strengthening of bilateral ties and

underscores the potential for further cooperation in the agricultural sector. John Tyas, CEO of Avocados Australia, emphasised the strategic importance of the Indian market

and outlined a comprehensive approach to bolster the visibility of Australian avocados in India. With a commitment to export, quality, and service, Avocados Australia aims to carve a niche in India's market. Leveraging Brett Lee's influence as the Brand Ambassador, they anticipate Australian avocados becoming a household favourite, enriching meals and stimulating culinary innovation.

Acknowledging the lack of awareness among Indian consumers regarding the health benefits and culinary versatility of avocados, John Tyas highlighted the initiative to educate consumers on these aspects, including optimal fruit ripening and handling techniques.

Brett Lee, the Australian cricket icon, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership, underscoring his dedication to promoting health and nutrition. His deep connection with India's rich culture amplifies his commitment to championing the exceptional taste, quality, and adaptability of Australian avocados, both domestically and internationally.

At the launch event, Celebrity Chef Sabyasachi Gorai showcased a diverse array of delectable dishes incorporating Australian avocados, further accentuating their culinary appeal. The Australian avocado industry is experiencing rapid growth, with production expected to soar in the coming



years. Increased exports will be critical for the future viability of the Australian avocado industry. \$



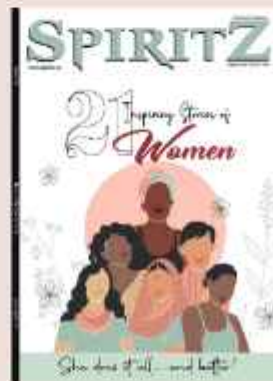


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