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» ABLE BC INDUSTRY UPDATE

by Jeff Guignard

On behalf of **ABLE BC's** Board of Directors and staff, I hope you all enjoyed a safe and relaxing holiday season—however you chose to celebrate. I also wanted to convey our best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2021, which I think we all know is going to be another unusual year.

There's no denying 2020 was difficult and painful, particularly for our beleaguered hospitality industry. After witnessing the devastating impacts COVID-19 had on your businesses, families, friends, as well as our society and economy at large, I'm sure we were all relieved to kick 2020 to the curb.

Of course, it wouldn't have been 2020 without one final complicated surprise. Like you, I was shocked, disappointed, and deeply frustrated by the sudden Public Health Order banning New Year's liquor sales past 8 pm—which was issued without any industry consultation. This was more than a last-minute scheduling nightmare; it was a fundamental shock that led to cancelled reservations, wasted product, and lost revenue. By not giving industry time to adapt, we suffered significant financial harm. As you likely saw, I articulated our anger quite bluntly in television, radio, and print media. I have been similarly blunt in direct discussions with Provincial Health Officer **Dr. Bonnie Henry**, as well as with senior political leaders in government.

Yet even amid the insane challenges of 2020, I witnessed tremendous moments of kindness, courage, and grace. Time and again, I watched members fight harder for your businesses, your workers, and your communities. In the nearly seven years that you have trusted me with this role, I have never been prouder to represent you and BC's liquor retail and hospitality industries. Your hope and resilience amid the ocean of challenges we're crossing together have kept me inspired and focused every day to keep working on your behalf.

As we settle into what is already promising to be another long year, rest assured ABLE BC is not going anywhere. We will keep fighting for you and your businesses until you're once again on your feet. We'll keep having your back as we work to enhance government financial supports, improve liquor and cannabis policies, and help you access the resources you need.

Hope for Better Days Ahead

They say in every crisis lies opportunity. At least when it comes to liquor policy, that's proven to be true.

There was some good news to end 2020, beginning with the introduction of a long-overdue cap on food delivery fees from third-party providers like **Uber** and **Skip the Dishes**. Capping delivery fees at 15% and all other fees at not more than 5 % has meant many pubs and restaurants can now keep more revenue from hard-fought delivery sales.

Government has also committed to making permanent many of the temporary permissions ABLE BC secured during the pandemic, such as wholesale pricing for hospitality licensees, the ability to sell alcohol with take-out or delivery meals, and the expedited patio approval process that most municipalities implemented last summer.

For our retail members, we are closer than ever to securing an extension of the moratorium on new liquor retail licenses, which is set to expire in July 2022. As you may recall, in October 2020, Attorney General **David Eby** told attendees at our fifth annual (and first ever virtual) **BC Liquor Conference** that government will "not [be] expanding liquor retail locations in the province," and is agreeable to an extension of at least five and up to 10 years. We are working behind the scenes right now to see that commitment realized.

Of course, our most important challenge remains our industry's continued solvency. While we were successful in amending the criteria for BC's Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant to ensure more of you could gain access to these urgently needed funds, I know too many gaps remain. We will continue pushing with a broad coalition of hospitality, tourism, and accommodation industry association partners to push for these needed changes.

As always, thank you for your continued membership and please don't hesitate to drop me a line at jeff@ablebc.ca if you have any questions or concerns.

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MAXIMIZING PROFITABILITY FOR PUBS & BARS

BY DAVID HOPKINS

The pub and bar industry has been hard hit since March 2020, when COVID brought extensive shutdowns around the world. Since then, operations have been faced with all kinds of challenges related to the pandemic environment:

- Capacity restrictions
- Sanitization procedures
- Guest caution over dining out
- Altered hours of operation
- Impacted supply chains
- Staff challenges

All of these aspects make it incredibly challenging to survive in an industry that is challenging to begin with. So, what is your Post-COVID profit model? How are you going to make it to the other side?

Here are four aspects of restaurant and bar success that have always been important, and their importance now has either pivoted and/or increased with the new environment we are in.

1. Guest Needs

The guest experience is still as important as ever, but what guests are looking for has changed. We used to always refer to the three pillars of success: Quality, Service, and Atmosphere. Now, however, Health and Safety have become the fourth and most important pillar for operations. Guests want to feel safe when they are in your establishment. To help

deliver this expectation to the guest, you must be professional, polished, and prepared in your approach to every aspect of what you do.

2. Guest Experience

Pub success starts with the Value Proposition you are offering to the guest. Value Proposition is the difference between what your guest is getting vs. what they are paying. The magnitude of that difference—the size of that Value Proposition—is what drives all guest repeat traffic, as well as word-of-mouth advertising. Your staff delivers the majority of guest experience, so it is imperative that you take this opportunity to elevate your guest experience and

train your team to deliver at a 10 out of 10 level. Because of government support programs (the wage subsidy), we are in a unique time where the government is paying for you to train your staff (upwards of 50% to 75% of their wages). What an excellent opportunity to elevate your game! Also, don't understaff to save labour costs—the government is subsidizing those wages. Put an extra host on or an extra cook. Instead of it costing you \$15.00/hour, now it might only be costing you \$5.00/hour (after subsidy). This is an incredible time to ensure that you are delivering a 10 out of 10 experience, and when you do that, it also affords you the right to increase prices.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU TAKE
THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ELEVATE
YOUR GUEST EXPERIENCE.

3. Menu

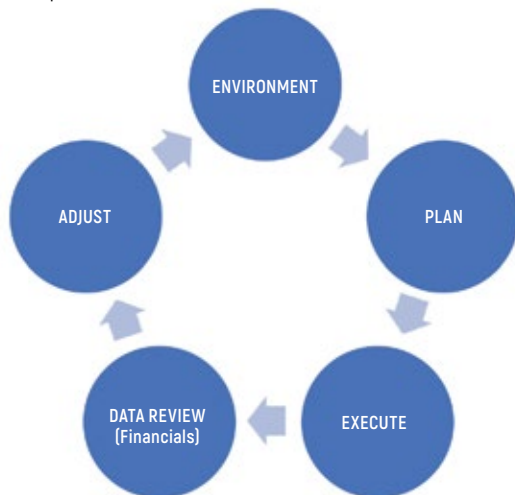
Your menu offering is vital in any environment. Now is the time to do three important things with your menu: streamline it for efficiency; engineer it properly to maximize your profits; and innovate to offer new potential revenue sources. Streamlining your menu will allow you to run more efficiently for labour, more safely for your staff environment, and make it easier for your team to deliver the 10 out of 10. With potential shutdowns, start-ups, and new staff, a streamlined menu's training and execution become much more manageable. Engineering a menu the proper way is always essential to maximizing profitability—obviously, now, ensuring menu profits are maximized is of crucial importance—your survival depends on it.

Innovation can also help generate new revenue and profit centers. Perhaps you are now offering takeout where you didn't before or home meal kits, or even grocery and liquor items for home delivery. Also, revenue initiatives that didn't make sense pre-COVID (because labour to do it was too costly) may make sense now, again, due to the government wage subsidy. Perhaps opening for lunch was never profitable before, but now, with 75% of your wages being covered by the government, it can add to the contribution margin.

It is also, in many environments, time to increase your menu pricing. Believe it or not, many markets are now in a situation of over-demand. Because of government-imposed capacity restrictions (generally around 50%), there aren't enough seats to service the demand (even a reduced demand). In addition, most consumers are dining out with a mandate to support small businesses and are not surprised by a price increase. And believe it or not, a 17% price increase will offset a guest traffic decrease of 40% for a typical restaurant operation.

4. Financials

Regular, detailed, and accurate financial reporting has always been necessary for a successful business operation. This is because of the feedback loop:



Your financials, like the example on page 8, give you the information related to profitability and whether your action plans are doing what they are supposed to. You then make adjustments to your plans based on the financial results.

In normal times, the environment doesn't change, which makes this whole process easier. Now, however, the environment is constantly changing, sometimes even week to week. This makes it that much more important to have regular and detailed financial statements to review. You need to know how your initiatives are working and be ready to pivot quickly if they aren't or if the environment changes.

The good news is that there is light at the end of the tunnel. And while the road has been incredibly challenging, it has also brought about some industry change that will be beneficial in the long run (e.g., liquor wholesale pricing).



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	PRE-COVID MONTH		EFFECT OF CAPACITY REDUCTION		EFFECT OF WAGE/RENT SUBSIDY		EFFECT OF LIQUOR WHOLESALE		EFFECT OF 13% PRICE INCREASE	
<div>REVENUE SALES</div>										
Food	60,000	40.0%	36,000	40.0%	36,000	40.0%	36,000	40.0%	40,680	40.0%
Minerals	12,000	8.0%	7,200	8.0%	7,200	8.0%	7,200	8.0%	8,136	8.0%
Liquor	24,000	16.0%	14,400	16.0%	14,400	16.0%	14,400	16.0%	16,272	16.0%
Wine	9,000	6.0%	5,400	6.0%	5,400	6.0%	5,400	6.0%	6,102	6.0%
Beer	45,000	30.0%	27,000	30.0%	27,000	30.0%	27,000	30.0%	30,510	30.0%
	\$ 150,000	100.0%	\$ 90,000	100.0%	\$ 90,000	100.0%	\$ 90,000	100.0%	\$ 101,700	100.0%
<div>PRODUCT COST</div>										
Food	20,400	34.0%	12,240	34.0%	12,240	34.0%	12,240	34.0%	12,240	30.1%
Minerals	3,600	30.0%	2,160	30.0%	2,160	30.0%	2,160	30.0%	2,160	26.5%
Liquor	4,560	19.0%	2,736	19.0%	2,736	19.0%	2,052	14.3%	2,052	12.6%
Wine	3,240	36.0%	1,944	36.0%	1,944	36.0%	1,458	27.0%	1,458	23.9%
Beer	15,300	34.0%	9,180	34.0%	9,180	34.0%	6,885	25.5%	6,885	22.6%
	\$ 47,100	31.4%	\$ 28,260	31.4%	\$ 28,260	31.4%	\$ 24,795	27.6%	\$ 24,795	24.4%
<div>WAGES</div>										
FOH Mgmt Labour	8,750	5.8%	8,750	9.7%	8,750	9.7%	8,750	9.7%	8,750	8.6%
FOH Hourly Labour	14,000	9.3%	10,400	11.6%	10,400	11.6%	10,400	11.6%	10,400	10.2%
BOH Mgmt Labour	5,000	3.3%	5,000	5.6%	5,000	5.6%	5,000	5.6%	5,000	4.9%
BOH Hourly Labour	11,600	7.7%	8,960	10.0%	8,960	10.0%	8,960	10.0%	8,960	8.8%
Benefits (CPP, EI, Vac)	5,903	3.9%	4,635	5.2%	4,635	5.2%	4,635	5.2%	4,635	4.6%
Govt Wage Subsidy	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	(10,595)	-11.8%	(10,595)	-11.8%	(10,595)	-10.4%
Staff Meals	1,968	1.3%	1,656	1.8%	1,656	1.8%	1,656	1.8%	1,656	1.6%
	\$ 47,220	31.5%	\$ 39,401	43.8%	\$ 28,806	32.0%	\$ 28,806	32.0%	\$ 28,806	28.3%
<div>TOTAL COST OF SALES</div>										
	\$ 94,320	62.9%	\$ 67,661	75.2%	\$ 57,066	63.4%	\$ 53,601	59.6%	\$ 53,601	52.7%
<div>GROSS MARGIN</div>										
	\$ 55,680	37.1%	\$ 22,339	24.8%	\$ 32,934	36.6%	\$ 36,399	40.4%	\$ 48,099	47.3%
<div>OPERATION EXPENSE</div>										
	\$ 15,000	10.0%	\$ 12,600	14.0%	\$ 12,600	14.0%	\$ 12,600	14.0%	\$ 12,700	12.5%
PROMOTIONAL EXPENSE	\$ 4,600	3.1%	\$ 3,760	4.2%	\$ 3,760	4.2%	\$ 3,760	4.2%	\$ 3,924	3.9%
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 2,500	1.7%	\$ 1,900	2.1%	\$ 1,900	2.1%	\$ 1,900	2.1%	\$ 2,017	2.0%
FIXED EXPENSES	\$ 15,500	10.3%	\$ 15,500	17.2%	\$ 11,000	12.2%	\$ 11,000	12.2%	\$ 11,000	10.8%
<div>NET CASHFLOW</div>										
	\$ 18,080	12.1%	\$ (11,421)	-12.7%	\$ 3,674	4.1%	\$ 7,139	7.9%	\$ 18,459	18.1%

All-in-all, provided that restaurants are allowed to operate and are not in lockdown, a properly executed action plan can make for a successful outcome for your pub or bar operation. Every operation is different, and you need to figure out what your post-COVID profit model will be, but here is an example of what a successful

outcome could look like. Shown above is an income statement with pre-COVID on the left and with full implementation and adjustments on the right. This model includes:

- A 40% reduction in guest traffic
- Benefits of the federal government rent and wage subsidy (at approx. 32% for this model)

- The benefit of wholesale liquor pricing
- A 13% increase in pricing across the board **P**

David Hopkins, President of The Fifteen Group, is a hospitality financial expert specializing in menu engineering and systems and procedures to increase profitability.



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» LDB UPDATE

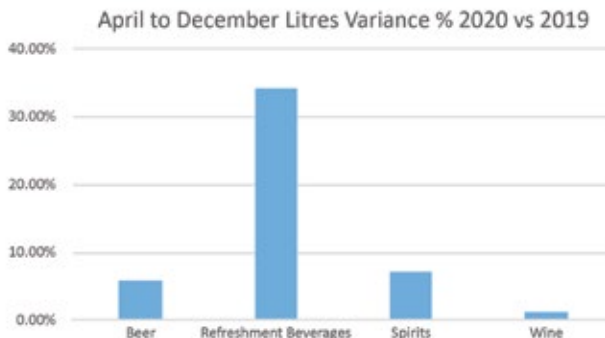
by BC Liquor Distribution Branch

It's been nearly a year since our part of the world was changed forever by the COVID-19 pandemic. But there are positive signs pointing to a slow return and better days in 2021, as everyone works together to recover and rebuild.

Our customers, manufacturers, and suppliers have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and some are struggling to survive until it's safe enough to resume the activities previously taken for granted: gathering for celebrations; going out for dinner with people beyond those in our bubble; taking a weekend getaway; and visiting wineries, distilleries, and cideries to sample their unique products.

At the beginning of the pandemic, like many others in the industry, the **BC Liquor Distribution Branch** (LDB) Wholesale Operations had to quickly shift gears and adapt to changing demand. While British Columbians were continuing to purchase liquor, many were no longer consuming it at their favourite pub or eatery, but were looking for online and other shopping options that would allow them to stay home as much as possible.

After the initial pandemic stock-piling and record-breaking wholesale liquor sales through the LDB Distribution Centres last March and April, volume remained steady for the rest of the year. LDB Distribution Centres also expect to exceed the 2019/2020 record of nearly 21 million cases shipped as they are nearing 23 million cases shipped for 2020/2021. Between April and December, all categories saw an increase in sales volume over the previous year with the largest increase led by refreshment beverage.



"We are proud of our team's tireless efforts to manage heavy volume and maintain excellent customer service, while adapting to the evolving environment and keeping each other safe," shares **Sairose Fisher**, Executive Director of LDB's Liquor Wholesale Operations. "Putting the health and safety of our people—employees, customers, suppliers, and industry partners—first and foremost, will always be the LDB's top priority."

With more people shopping at liquor stores to enjoy beverages at home, the **Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch** (LCRB) and LDB extended hours for Licensee Retail Stores (LRS) and Rural Agency Stores (RAS). In this way they could better support physical distancing and serve vulnerable groups, such as seniors, in a safe manner.


To support the impacted hospitality sector, the LDB rolled out a number of government support initiatives, such as the temporary hospitality pricing model, allowing hospitality licensees to purchase alcohol at wholesale prices. Wholesale customers also took advantage of temporary policy changes that allowed hospitality establishments, which had temporarily closed, to sell inventory to LRSs and other hospitality licensees—all with the goal of remaining solvent.

At the same time, the LDB Wholesale Customer Centre (WCC) managed hundreds of registrations for the Hospitality Product Catalogue, allowing users to access wholesale prices and take advantage of enhanced and interactive online resources specifically designed for their businesses.

Even with all the COVID-19 challenges and extra safety measures, LDB Liquor Wholesale Operations continued to improve on its customer service key performance indicators (KPI) in 2020 by consistently delivering customer orders in full and on-time, and achieving fill rate targets of 95 %.

Accordingly, call volume at the WCC was down by 22 % from April to December 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. As in the previous year, the WCC extended its hours for the busy holiday season to provide additional customer support. Call volume dropped by 18 % this holiday season compared to 2019 and the WCC team was successful in achieving same day responses to emails vs. the KPI of two business days.

Always striving for continuous improvement of its customer service levels, LDB Liquor Wholesale Operations recently conducted its Wholesale Customer Satisfaction survey. Customers were asked for feedback on their customer service experiences over the past 12 months, as well as their expectations and suggestions for how LDB Wholesale Operations can serve them better. The LDB Liquor Wholesale Operations team thanks everyone who completed the survey last month and looks forward to reviewing the results.

"We will continue to support our industry partners and customers, as we recognize the importance of helping those most impacted by the pandemic to rebuild together," explains Fisher. "We remain optimistic about the months ahead. We have a number of initiatives we're working on for the LDB centenary in 2021 to continue to improve customer service and strengthen industry partnerships. We look forward to sharing more soon." 

The BC Liquor Distribution Branch was established in 1921 and is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2021. Through its wholesale and retail lines of business, the LDB raises over \$1 billion each year to support public services.





LIQUOR RETAIL TRENDS & CONSUMER INSIGHTS

BY REBECCA HARDIN

Private liquor stores, wine stores, and big box liquor retailers were luckier than most liquor related businesses in 2020. Essential service status, increased alcohol consumption amongst Canadians, and changes in buying habits (because of the pandemic), saw liquor store sales skyrocket. According to research conducted by **Nanos** on behalf of the **Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction**¹, “25% of Canadians aged 35-45 are drinking more while at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.” Study respondents cited stress, boredom, and the lack of a regular schedule as reasons for consuming more alcohol. Another reason is how quickly the off-premise industry (both on the supply side and sales side) was able to pivot, tailoring their operations to the new reality.

Trends and Silver Linings

Increased Customer Count and Off-premise Liquor Sales –

BC government liquor stores saw customer counts increase by 0.5% from 36.8 million in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018 to 37 million the following fiscal year. **BC Liquor Distribution Branch** cites competitive pricing, improved product selection, and the public stockpiling their personal liquor supply during stay-at-home orders for the increase.

51% of Canadians are cooking at home more often and are electing to purchase higher-end and locally produced products according to the **Labatt** presentation at ABLE BC’s 2020 BC Liquor Conference. The average retail transaction per customer visit increased by 2% from \$36.57 to \$37.29².

Private liquor retailers were the winners though, because of their abilities to quickly pivot. According to **University of Victoria’s Canadian**

Institute for Substance Use Research, private liquor stores saw per capita consumption rise by 18.5% from March to July 2020 with a sales peak in April, which then remained steadily above average³. The researchers suggest that the addition of home delivery services, expanded operating hours, and third-party delivery (not available for government-operated stores) were the main reasons for the dramatic increase in liquor sales at private stores. Private liquor stores now account for approximately 47% of the total volume of alcohol sold in BC.

**PRIVATE LIQUOR STORES SAW
PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION
RISE BY 18.5% FROM MARCH
TO JULY 2020.**

Refreshment Beverage Sales Growing at 19.5% Annually –

In BC, refreshment beverages (coolers, cider) are growing at a rate of 19.5% annually. Sales volumes nearly doubled during COVID if you compare Q2 and Q3 of 2019 to the same quarters in 2020. This is no surprise as sales for this category of beverage have been exploding for several years, robbing market share from other categories⁴.

Boxed Wine Sales Increasing – During the March 2020 lockdown, sales of cask wines (bag-in-box wines) surged. The **Arterra Wines Canada** presentation from the BC Liquor Conference predicted a 40% sales increase post pandemic on 3/4L box wine. In BC, cask wine sales increased by over 140%⁵ and the Ontario Liquor Control Board⁶ reported a 77% increase in cask wine sales. While cask wine sales have tapered from the panicked, bulk buying of the early days of the pandemic, they are still a hot commodity. During the pandemic, consumers seem to love their convenience and long shelf life. Cask wines are often sold in 3-litre boxes and will preserve wine up to a month after opening. Bottled wine remains preserved for a day or two after opening and is usually sold in 750 ml bottles. Glass is also a better vector for virus

transmission compared to cardboard. As cask wine quality improves and higher-quality cask product SKUs become available, it's quite likely that sales will continue to increase.

More Consumers Buying Local – At the BC Liquor Conference, Arterra Wines Canada also clearly outlined a consumer focus on “buying local” with 78% of Canadians choosing Canadian brands/products as a direct result of the pandemic. The majority of Canadian consumers are intentionally supporting their community's businesses with the full knowledge that doing so helps keep the business afloat and people employed during the pandemic. Buying local also dovetails nicely with COVID-19 travel restrictions. Local brewers, distillers, and private liquor stores may continue to benefit.⁷⁸

Increased Sales for Premium and Craft Spirits – Between 2015 and 2019, sales of premium spirits and aperitifs grew by about 15% per year. According to **Canadian Packaging**, millennials are driving the “quality over quantity trend”. 32% of all spirits sold are purchased by millennials though they comprise just 29% of the liquor consuming population. Though COVID-19 resulted in reduced sales in bars and restaurants, the interest in premium and craft spirits and cocktails is expected to continue its upward trajectory⁹.

The New Reality After COVID-19

When the coronavirus is brought under control and some of society's pre-COVID normalcy returns, rampant liquor sales increases will plateau, and some old consumer habits may return. A lot, however, will change. Some pandemic safety measures will remain with us: social distancing, reduced seating capacity in bars and restaurants, curtailed hours of operation, more off-premise and less on-premise services, to name a few. Many people will continue eating and drinking in, using liquor store delivery services, and supporting local manufacturers and local private liquor stores.

The pandemic has changed our world for the foreseeable future. Overnight, it has changed our personal, work, and shopping behaviours. The statistics show that licensees were forced to quickly pivot, and adapt their long lived habits of conducting business to successfully carry on. This once-in-a-century event has taught us many things, including how unprepared we were. Now we are. **P**

Rebecca Hardin, lead advisor of Thrive Liquor & Cannabis Advisors specializes in regulatory licensing and retail operations. www.thriveadvisors.ca

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BY ANY MEASURE

Three Moves the BC Government Made to Help Pubs Survive—What Worked and What's Next

BY JOANNE SASVARI

It's hard to believe, but almost a year has gone by since March 17, 2020, when the province declared a public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The taps were turned off on St. Paddy's Day celebrations, and the way things are going, the green beer is unlikely to flow this year, either.

This has been a uniquely difficult year for the hospitality industry. That it hasn't been a total disaster can be attributed to a series of temporary government measures regarding the sale of alcohol in BC—measures that will likely become permanent and, as a result, create real structural change in an industry that badly needs it.

"It takes a pandemic to crystallize things," says **Mark Hicken**, the chair of the **Business Technical Advisory Panel** (Liquor Policy) that, in 2018, submitted a set of recommendations for modernizing the industry. When the pandemic hit, a group of stakeholders including ABLE BC pressed the provincial government to enact the most urgent of the recommendations. That the government did so "very quickly, much more quickly than usual" has helped prevent the kind of large-scale restaurant closures other places have seen. "I think these changes have been helpful no matter

what," Hicken says. "But whether they are enough is another question. It really does depend on your business model. There have been really unfortunate effects on businesses that are targeted at socializing rather than food."

In other words: BC's pubs.

"Typically pubs are recession-proof, but when you have something that affects your ability to socialize, that's a bullseye on our

business," says **Grant Olson**, co-owner and general manager of Victoria's **Strathcona Hotel**, which comprises an LRS as well as several venues including the **Sticky Wicket** pub. "Every step along the way has been, wow, the impact on our business has been so significant. We're all just trying to hang in there. It's really quite something."

Despite the damage COVID-19 has wreaked on pubs, including his own, **Paul Hadfield**, owner of **Spinnaker's Gastro Pub** in Esquimalt, says, "This is a really cool opportunity for us to fix a bunch of things that are wrong in hospitality."

**THIS IS A REALLY COOL
OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO FIX
A BUNCH OF THINGS THAT
ARE WRONG IN HOSPITALITY.**

Hadfield was part of the group of industry representatives who helped draw up the recommendations for reopening last June, which included now-familiar rules about spacing, barriers, hand sanitizers, and limiting tables to six people and the original restriction of a maximum occupancy of 50%. Since then, pubs and restaurants have become adept at the pivot, adjusting each time the Public Health Officer issues a new order, whether it is restricting people to socialize only with their own households or cutting alcohol service off at 10 p.m.

Privately, though, many licensees fumed when they had to close early and watch customers walk over to a liquor store to continue the party at home. And they were infuriated when the government announced an 8 p.m. last call for New Year's Eve just a day before the festivities.

Although private retailers aren't hurting the same way—in fact, Olson says, small-town and suburban stores “might be doing better than normal because if there's any late-night action at all, people will be going to their LRS to pick something up”—some still feel threatened by licensees selling alcohol with takeout orders, and wonder when they'd see the changes they'd been asking for, such as being able to sell directly to licensees.

Meanwhile, these are the temporary measures that have helped save the industry and are likely to become permanent.

1. Adding Liquor to Takeout Orders

With limited hours and seating, many restaurants, bars, and pubs turned to takeout and the province threw them a lifeline when it allowed them to sell alcohol with a meal. “They've all got significant stocks of alcohol at their businesses and it was felt the ability to sell it with takeout meals was a logical thing to do,” Hicken says. In addition to offering bottles of wine, beer, and spirits to go, some establishments mastered the art of the cocktail kit, too.

2. Expanding Service Areas

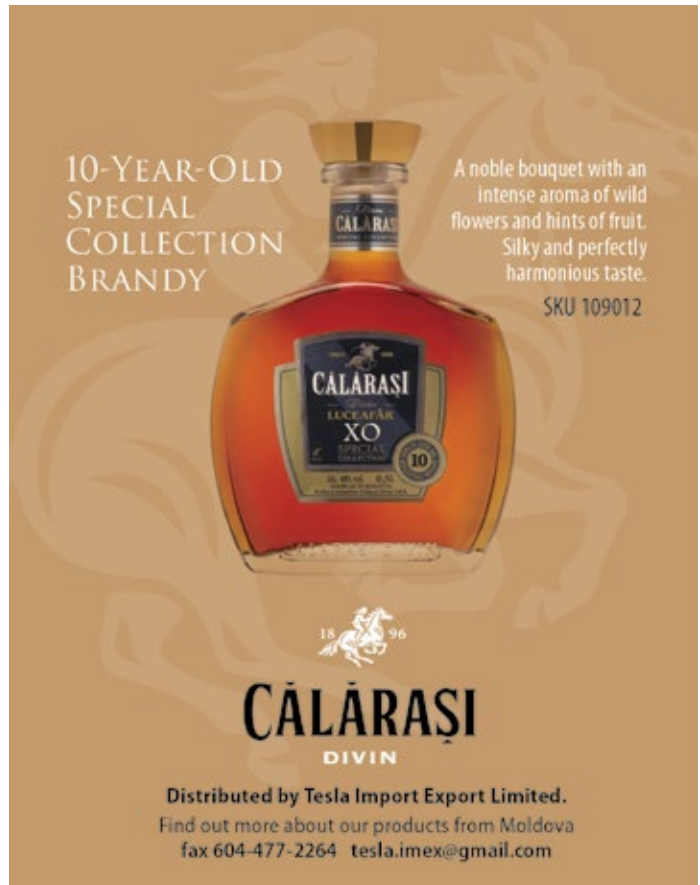
“There was also a pretty swift change to allow expansion of service areas,” Hicken notes. What he calls “European-style service areas,” mainly patios that take up part of a sidewalk, alley or street, became legal and trendy last summer, without any of the social chaos the naysayers predicted. “It's better for everybody, obviously, because if you're outside, it's safer. That was a very significant change, and a big win.” Making this change permanent would create some exciting opportunities, says Hadfield, an architect by training: “By making them permanent, we can spend some money. They could really enhance the streetscape and we could make them really interesting.”

3. Allowing Wholesale Pricing

After years of asking for a wholesale price on alcohol, the hospitality industry finally got a discount of about 20%, and it might be here to stay. “That one is very close to my heart,” Hicken says. “It was one of the major recommendations of the BTAP report. That's a major structural change that was long overdue. Unfortunately, it was the dire straits of the hospitality industry that necessitated that. It's one of the most important structural changes in the hospitality industry and in my mind needs to continue.”

“The wholesale pricing has certainly helped,” Olson says. “We're kind of passing on that saving to the customer. We're just trying to stay open, to be honest. And the pricing helps a little bit.” Hadfield, who calls the lack of wholesale pricing “an inappropriate form of taxation,” says, “The fact that the government is saying ‘make this permanent’ I see as a whole new opportunity that wasn't there before the last election.”

In **Mike Farnsworth's**, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, mandate letter, **Premier John Horgan** urged him to “Help BC



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restaurants and hospitality businesses through COVID-19 and beyond by delivering a temporary cap on food delivery app fees and making permanent urgent actions our government took in the spring: authorizing the expansion of service areas, allowing restaurants and pubs to purchase alcohol at wholesale cost, and allowing liquor delivery with takeout.”

With a majority government and a united group of stakeholders working together, the time has never been better to fix “a lot of things that are systemically wrong with how we manage liquor in this province,” Hadfield says. “I am optimistic, absolutely. This time last year I was much less optimistic than I am today. The whole pandemic thing gives us an opportunity to rethink everything.”

Still, not every BTAP recommendation was accepted, and private retailers were largely left out, especially when it comes to selling directly to licensees. That would be a huge help to businesses like The Strath Liquor Store, which is in the doubly frustrating position of not being able to sell even to its own venues. “I hope that one day we can shop from our own liquor store. It would make life easier if we were working with just one set of inventory,” explains Olson.

In other words, there is still work to be done.

“The liquor regulatory rules, they are getting better, but we still have a long way to go before we can say they are really modern regulations,” Hicken says. “We have a long way to go to bring things up to global standards.” **P**

Barley Wines & Russian Imperial Stouts

Every winter, many breweries release big, strong beers that complement the darkest days of the year well: barley wines and imperial stouts that often hit double digits in terms of alcohol by volume. Some of these beers also spend extra time conditioning in barrels before they are bottled, which adds oak and vanilla character, along with additional booziness from the previous occupants of those barrels, most commonly bourbon. They are delicious sippers, which are ideally shared, and their rich flavours go well with desserts or strong cheeses.

These big, boozy beers age well, too, so beer geeks are known to buy several bottles of each vintage, tasting them periodically to see how they mature, or building up collections in order to be able to host vertical tastings in years to come. Many breweries dip the bottles in wax to encourage cellaring as well.

The English barley wine tradition dates back to the 1700s when brewers brewed it as a substitute for wine because of conflicts between England and wine-producing countries like France and Spain. It was brewed to be over 10% ABV and then laid down in barrels for a year or more to mellow its character. At that time in England, most ales were aged in barrels. It was not until the advent of mechanized refrigeration in the late 1800s that breweries began using fermentation tanks and conditioning vessels made of steel, and beer stopped spending at least some time in wood.

Russian Imperial Stouts were originally brewed as “extra stout porters” for the imperial court of **Czarina Catherine the Great** in St. Petersburg, who purportedly loved this dark, strong, and hoppy version of British porter. The style of beer became very popular both in Russia and back in England—London brewery **Barclay Perkins’** Imperial Brown Stout was brewed continuously for more than 200 years into the 1950s.

The term “imperial” was used initially because it was produced for Catherine the Great and her court, but since then it

has come to mean “extra strong” and is often attached to other beer styles, such as Imperial IPA. These days, an imperial stout usually tops 9% ABV, with many also reaching into the 10% to 11% range. Contemporary craft breweries like to condition imperial stouts in used bourbon barrels, augmenting the chocolatey, roasty, coffee character of the beer with vanilla, caramel and oak flavours. It’s a delicious combination, but the added bourbon often pushes the alcohol content close to 12% ABV or even higher!

One of the leading producers of these styles in BC is Victoria’s **Driftwood Brewery**, which has produced its Singularity Russian Imperial Stout and Old Cellar Dweller Barley Wine annually since 2011. Singularity sits in Woodford Reserve double-oaked bourbon barrels for about six weeks, just long enough to gather as much bourbon character as possible without too much tannin from the oak. Old Cellar Dweller is a deceptively quaffable beer for its heft with a surprising hop character—some might even call it an Imperial IPA. Both taste great fresh, but they also do well with cellaring.

Howe Sound Brewing in Squamish has also been making these big winter beers annually for a long time. Its Woolly Bugger Barley Wine (11% ABV) is the reigning champion in the Strong Ale category at the BC Beer Awards. It pours a deep mahogany colour and offers a complex malt character with hints of treacle, toffee, plums, and raisins. Howe Sound also produces Melle Meo Honey Wheat Wine (10% ABV), which placed second behind Woolly Bugger at the 2019 BC Beer Awards, the last time those awards were given out.

Howe Sound’s imperial stouts, Pothole Filler (9% ABV) and Megadestroyer Licorice Stout (10% ABV), are now packaged in 473-ml cans, which I applaud since that is a much more reasonable quantity for one person to consume. This reflects a bigger movement occurring south of the border where high-ABV beers are often packaged in squat cans that hold about 250ml (8.4-oz).

And in a bit of a reversal, **Trading Post Brewing’s** Russian Imperial Stout is named “Sessionable” because it is “only” 8.5% ABV. **P**

LOOK FOR THESE OTHER OPTIONS FROM BC BREWERIES

Barley Wines

Foamers’ Folly Brewing Ghost Train
Oak-Aged Barleywine
Sooke Brewing Barleywine
Persephone Brewing Barleywine

Russian Imperial Stouts

Andina Brewing Monarca Russian
Imperial Stout
Backcountry Brewing We’re All Fine Here,
Thank You. How Are You?
Bomber Brewing Russian Imperial Stout
Cannery Brewing Kindling Imperial Stout
Dead Frog Brewery Commander
Russian Imperial Stout
Moody Ales Russian Imperial Stout
Parallel 49 Brewing Russian
Imperial Stout
Strange Fellows Brewing Boris
Twin Sails Brewing Str8 Flexin
Whitetooth Brewing Truth, Dare,
Consequence Nordic Imperial Stout





by Jacquie Maynard

Ever since he was a teenager, **Randy Doncaster**, co-owner of the **Cat & Fiddle Sports Bar** in Port Coquitlam, has wanted to own a bar. "It was something I've always wanted to do," he says. "There's such a good atmosphere, and it's a great way to meet people. I just love every aspect of what I do."

After putting in time at college and working every job from manning the door to washing dishes, it only reaffirmed to Doncaster that this was his purpose. Soon, he and his brother were in business with a small pub on the waterfront in Nanaimo, called **Miller's Landing Pub**. "Right then, we had the opportunity, and we just had to make it happen," he says.

And, they did. The brothers' 18-hour days paid off, because not long after, customers were lining up around the block six nights per week. "People had the opportunity to go other places, but we made this awesome atmosphere," Doncaster explains. "We were personable with customers."

As their success grew, the brothers received offers to purchase the business, and began looking for new ventures. That's when they came across the Cat & Fiddle Sports Bar, and ended up trading pubs with the owner.

That was in 1989, and since then, the bar has grown from 125 seats to 600, including a few new patios, and the kitchen has expanded in three different directions to accommodate the flourishing business. According to Doncaster, COVID-19 restrictions have slowed down business in the bar quite a bit, however, the new patios were a hit during the summer, and take-out and delivery remain incredibly popular.

Poco Brothers Brewing

Pandemic or not, the end of 2020 saw the fruition of an idea over three years in the making. Since they sell so much beer at the Cat & Fiddle, they decided to brew their own.

It started with a brewmaster in Kelowna and a few unique recipes, and once **Poco Brothers** beer started gaining momentum, it only made sense to build their own brewery. Over a year later, **Poco Brothers Brewing** has a brand new facility and an award-winning, world-class brewmaster ready to start brewing craft beer as soon as the final bits of paperwork are signed.



"There's a reason we have been successful and keep expanding over the last 30 years, especially in these times. You have to be innovative and keep on top of it," he says. "People don't want to see the same old bar, they want to see something new. We are proud of what we've got, it's unique."

Family Vibe

Whatever the endeavour, the most important thing to the Doncasters is giving back, whether it's to the staff who keeps things running or the customers who support them. He estimates that in the more than 30 years they've been in business, the Cat & Fiddle has given back nearly \$2.4 million between sponsorships, fundraising, and other events. Classic cars and motorcycles are popular in the area, so the most memorable events this year involved a Toy Run and a Halloween car show where local kids could safely trick-or-treat and see some cool cars in the process. "I can sleep at night because I don't screw anyone over and I give back," states Doncaster.

What's his other secret to success? Once you get good staff, treat them like gold.

He must practice what he preaches, because he has 41 staff members who have been under his employ for more than 20 years. He says that one night manager started when he was 14, nearly 30 years ago. In an industry with such a high turnover rate, they must be doing something right.

"My staff is part of my family," he says. "That way it's not about money, it's just about the friendship and family you built along the way."

While the past 30 years certainly haven't been easy, it's clear that the Doncasters' efforts to build a welcoming atmosphere and engage with the community have been paying off.

"It's been a good struggle. Not everything has been 100%, but it's been positive in general," Doncaster says. "I find, at the end of the day, if you're a good person, and try to give a great product, and be proud of who you are, and treat people properly, it comes back to you in full." P



WHAT'S YOUR BAR STOCKING IN 2021?

by Restaurants Canada

Last year may have thrown the entire foodservice industry for a loop, but what doesn't hurt us makes us stronger. At least that's the idea for most in the hospitality arena who are rising up against the challenge of yet another wave of lockdowns.

Bars and pubs are built on their ability to provide great hospitality and experiences—everything from location, design and guest interaction, to music and even lighting. But, toss in a pandemic leaving patrons stuck at home for months on end and bars have faced the ultimate curveball.

So, how do bars retain the clients they had before quarantine? Better yet, what can they do or use to attract new guests and turn them into loyal followers in 2021? This is one of many questions to be answered at the upcoming RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE. Bars need to switch up their menus in more ways than one – from how they market to flipping their core business—in order to drive revenue now and well into the future.

Here are a few ways your bar experience will change in 2021:

Pour-and-go

In an era where takeout food and delivery options are a requirement, it's no wonder grab-and-go and take-away kits have made their appearance onto the bar scene. Many businesses have already started to experiment with alcohol takeout options in 2020. As we enter a new year, make way for a procession of cocktail kits, bottled cocktails and off-premise sales, transforming the role of the mixologist from guest-facing cocktail creator to assembly-line executor at your virtual doorstep, according to RC Show Bar & Beverage Curators **Christina Veira** and **Evelyn Chick**.

Some bars have even started to offer virtual cocktail-making lessons to keep them connected with patrons, something that has sparked yet another trend along the same vein.

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Elevated Cocktails

Another thing 2020 taught us is that it is all about quality vs. quantity. A seemingly endless quarantine at home has resulted in a very educated alcohol consumer who has been able to stay home, experiment with wine, beer and liquor, as well as participate in online happy hours and virtual cocktail classes that are available at everyone's fingertips.

"People have essentially become the beverage directors of their own house," says Veira and Chick.

As newly educated customers begin to return to bars in 2021, you can expect them to come with mature tastebuds and a thirst for premium spirits, unique and better quality ingredients, bitters and infusions, and a willingness to pay for elevated experiences. It is time to get creative and start reaching for the top shelf.

"A margarita special with bar lime and too much sugar may not cut it anymore," adds Veira and Chick.

Low-to-no Alcohol Offerings

This may seem counterintuitive given the rise in alcohol consumption this past year, but 2020 confirmed the popularity and interest in non-alcoholic offerings. Dry January is spilling into February and so on, but the biggest shift is in consumer palettes becoming far more advanced compared to the early-arrival of zero-proof vermouths. Pandemic-proofing your bar is no easy task, but stocking up on a wide variety of low- and non-alcohol options will definitely help meet the needs of drinkers of all kinds.

Ethical Practices

This past year has also brought to light consumer thirst for ethical and socially conscious practices from the brands, pubs, and bars they support. Putting their social media accounts, wallets, and stomachs where their mouth is, consumers are demanding that bars prioritize ethical product sourcing, as well as address racism, sexism, and other workplace inequalities behind the bar. Those that do will be the ones that patrons flock to in 2021 and beyond.

Subscription Services

A number of bars, wine agents, and breweries have shifted away from a model of click-on-demand to one where they provide subscriptions. Similar to what food providers like **Good Food** have done with produce and meal-kit deliveries, these services pull from the preferences of their clients and put together delicious boxes on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis.

"Now, you know you can get six sommelier selected wines to your door every month to pair with your dinners or a weekly cocktail for your end-of-week relaxation. While they usually involve an aspect of mystery, you know the quality will be there as well as the consistency of service," adds Veira and Chick.

Touchless Technology

This year may be the year we also say goodbye to bulky menus thanks to the pandemic, and hello to a whole new world of "touchless" cocktail ordering with the simple tap of your smartphone. This new shift in how we order may also be what brings bartenders and customers closer together in 2021. Yes, you can expect to witness creative ways, such as AR and holograms to showcase "what's on the menu," but as an added bonus if you're cocktail curious, this may finally be your year. Instead of ordering the same old products, avoid the menu altogether and try relying on your barkeep's expertise. You may just find your new favourite or a forgotten classic.

This topic and much more solution-based food and beverage content can be found at the upcoming RC Show ONLINE LIVE taking place virtually February 28 to March 3, 2021. With the theme of "Feeding the Recovery" in mind, the RC Show aims to unite the industry by inviting chefs, baristas, bartenders, sommeliers, foodservice operators, distributors, brokers, retailers and buyers to join forces and Rebuild, Reinvent and Reconnect the industry like never before. **P**

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Photo Courtesy of the Gillnetter Pub

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

How Pubs Are Making the Best Out of their Patio Spaces

BY CATHERINE DUNWOODY

As the BC government allowed pubs to expand their outdoor spaces, albeit in an altered way, some pubs rose to the challenge with a certain positivity and effort that is commendable and creative.

"We had permission to open our patio up all summer and it was fantastic," says **Leisa Popove**, General Manager of the **Gillnetter Pub** in Port Coquitlam. Referring to the pub's back patio that faces the river, she says, "We were able to have five tables that could sit the maximum of six people allowed. They were spaced nicely in the open air and served us well." The patio has an automatic awning that retracts, windows that lift, and doors that slide open, so over the winter months it stays enclosed and becomes a smaller, but still usable, area. "The view is one of the big draws here, and we opted out of putting up a tent this winter," Leisa says, as it would block that view.

"We now have eight tables outside, four could seat four people, and one table by the fireplace sits six. We have more plexiglass barriers outside now that we did not require in the summer, because of it being in open air at the time."

Were there any challenges with customers complying with the patio rules? "People want to move, even after they're seated, they still want

to move their chairs," laughs Leisa. "So, we walk around with a stick to measure six feet apart, and we are pretty diligent. We want to do our best so we can stay open. Now our issue is the new restrictions. [There's] nothing we can do about people that do not follow rules, but most people do."

For some customers, pre-COVID times, sitting on an outdoor patio in the chillier months would be a non-starter, but Leisa tells us "many

people prefer being outside vs. sitting indoors. It feels safer, and they are not breathing recirculated air. People were waiting in the parking lot to sit outside on the patio at the end of November and early December on nice days."

In support of those local food suppliers who are also struggling, Popove says the Gillnetter plans to include more of them on their

menus this year. "We really appreciate our local community supporting us. Everyone has to do their part," she says.

For **Aly Sunderji**, owner of **Samz Pubs** in Surrey and Port Coquitlam, the challenge with his patios was working with the new government dictated hours. Both locations have patios that are open year round, with "retractable awnings, good heating, and good lighting," he says, but "the biggest change we made over the past several

THE PATIO REOPENED IN NOVEMBER AS A BEAUTIFUL WINTER BEER GARDEN

Photo Courtesy of Bimini's Beer Hall

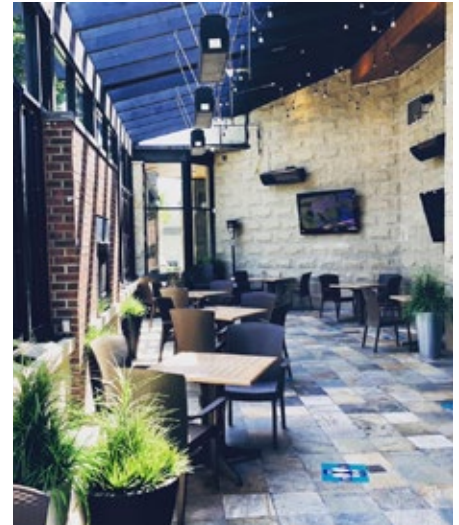


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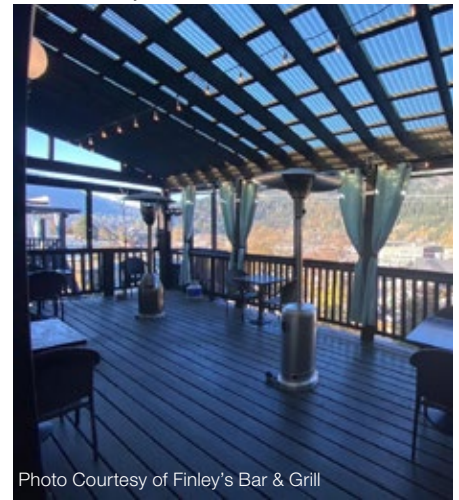


Photo Courtesy of Finley's Bar & Grill

months is that the patios need to be ready for seating when we open every morning at 11 a.m.” Patios are now operated as offering seating anytime, not just when the weather allows or as overflow when the indoor capacity has been met. To put it into context, he says “our patio open days used to be Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night. As the pub filled up, we opened up the patio, [for] maybe one lunch, or a group booking... of course now we don't have group bookings anymore, so the patio is open until 10 p.m., every day. Our seating capacity is reduced inside and out.” Since Samz Pubs' patios have solid walls, they have not expanded their patios as they are already in enclosed spaces.

Finley's Bar & Grill in Nelson is considered by many to have one of the best patios in Nelson, with its 180-degree views of Kootenay Lake. Owner **Tanya Finley** is President of the Nelson Chamber of Commerce and sits on the board of economic development as well. “It does seem that our Premier will make some sort of permanent allowance for outdoor patio spacing,” she says. “During this time, we are removing tables to allow for physical distancing and hygiene requirements, so there are fewer seats at the table on patios for sure. But it is helping things to be successful in the sense [that] if you have five seats inside you may be able to put five extra tables outside.”

To further illustrate the issue Tanya says, “We usually have 60 on our patio and are down to about 12. Considerably smaller. With the regulations changing, we did not adapt our front patio to a bigger size during the summer, since we already had the allowance for the outdoor seating. With two patios already in place, one in front and one in back, Finley made the decision to close the front one rather than winterize

it, based on regulations regarding safety, snow removal, etc. “We didn't see the interest in it. It would have been a waste of money, and not worth it,” she says. If the regulations stay the same, “this spring we plan to build something bigger and better out back for sure,” she notes. Tanya is also hopeful that they'll be allowed to have live music back on the patio later this year.

Bimini's Beer Hall is practically a Vancouver institution. Based in Kitsilano, the owners had planned a renovation prior to the pandemic only to have those plans halted. Paul Stoilen, long-time operating partner of Donnelly Group, explains what happened after that: “We knew we would resume the renos when the time was right, and we applied for a patio licence on the sidewalk in front of Bimini on West 4th. We got approval for a 20-seat patio there, and in back we applied for a 25-person capacity patio, facing the lane but on private property.” Bimini built a heated tent in that area with picnic tables and plexiglass dividers and reopened in November as “a beautiful winter beer garden” he says. Unfortunately, this outdoor space has not been used much, “because we created it for overflow, and have not had the overflow thus far because of restrictions,” Stoilen says. “We built it hoping and anxiously waiting for the crowds to come when [it is] safe to use it. We are prepared, it's a unique experience.” Meantime, the front patio has seating for 18, meaning three tables of six safely spaced, but without plexiglass barriers, and not enclosed because the sidewalk is public property. “We really hope these outdoor patio licences are here to stay and just bring us more aligned with other cities around the world.” **P**

Wholesale Sales - July - September 2020

	Litres	increase/decrease over previous quarter	increase/decrease over previous year
Beer - BC Commercial	38,920,408	- 0.9%	+ 1.7%
Beer - BC Micro Brew	8,393,151	+ 21.6%	+ 3.8%
Beer - BC Regional	13,316,866	+ 7.0%	- 3.0%
Beer - Import	10,477,011	+ 10.6%	- 7.3%
Cider - Domestic & Import	5,709,057	+ 6.0%	+ 1.8%
Coolers	23,237,487	+ 11.5%	+ 53.3%
Gin	553,286	- 2.4%	+ 4.8%
Rum	940,503	- 0.1%	+ 4.6%
Tequila	361,058	+ 9.2%	+ 8.2%
Vodka	2,586,956	- 1.4%	+ 8.2%
Whiskey	1,737,889	- 8.1%	- 1.8%
Wine - BC	11,592,650	+ 3.4%	+ 3.1%
Wine - Canadian	271,536	- 10.7%	+ 62.1%
Wine - USA	1,708,167	- 7.4%	+ 4.5%
Wine Total	20,820,410	+ 1.9%	+ 3.2%

Hospitality Sales - July - September 2020

	Litres	increase/decrease over previous quarter	increase/decrease over previous year
Beer - BC Commercial	3,668,288	+ 127.7%	- 38.9%
Beer - BC Micro Brew	2,006,374	+ 137.8%	- 34.2%
Beer - BC Regional	2,100,505	+ 116.1%	- 41.0%
Beer - Import	1,165,119	+ 137.5%	- 47.3%
Cider - Domestic & Import	428,762	+ 141.1%	- 37.9%
Coolers	383,588	+ 90.2%	- 13.0%
Gin	50,080	+ 185.1%	- 45.3%
Rum	62,745	+ 127.6%	- 34.7%
Tequila	76,839	+ 162.2%	- 27.2%
Vodka	178,366	+ 149.7%	- 37.5%
Whiskey	71,051	+ 148.1%	- 47.4%
Wine - BC	884,396	+ 147.9%	- 46.8%
Wine - Canadian	19,834	+ 48.2%	- 40.0%
Wine - USA	96,248	+ 141.4%	- 42.5%
Wine Total	1,497,621	+ 151.2%	- 44.4%

Summer sales of local craft beer from microbreweries were strong last summer, once again eating away at big commercial breweries' market share. Coolers continue their growth pattern over summer up a whopping 53.3% in retail from last summer! Expect even more new coolers to hit your shelves this spring and summer, so stock up.

Tequila is another hot commodity these days, in both retail and hospitality. See the Spirit Spotlight in this issue to read more about this popular spirit.

Not surprisingly, on-premise sales, although greatly improved from the previous quarter, when pubs and restaurants were shut down, are still significantly down from last year.

» BC HOSPITALITY FOUNDATION

Spread the Word! BCHF Scholarships Open, #HospitalityHustle Expanding

The BC Hospitality Foundation (BCHF) is pleased to announce that our 2021 scholarships are now open for applications on our website. We also hope EVERYONE will join our FREE and FUN #HospitalityHustle (taking place now until May 30th), which promotes the health and wellbeing of hospitality workers across our province through participation in physical activity. Please help us spread the word about both these opportunities!

While the BCHF's primary mission is assisting hospitality workers facing financial crisis due to an extraordinary health condition, we also love helping foster the development of future leaders in our industry. This year we will again administer a scholarship program for individuals in hospitality-related programs. The 2021 scholarships, and application deadlines, are as follows:

- **Culinary** – In partnership with the Chefs' Table Society of BC, applications open until March 31, 2021
- **Greg King Scholarship** – Awarded to a student in culinary arts at PICA, applications open until April 30, 2021
- **Chef Nik Lim Scholarship** – Awarded to a student in culinary arts in BC, applications open until March 31, 2021
- **Sommelier** – Awarded annually to students increasing their wine knowledge, applications open until March 31, 2021
- **BC WISE** – For future winemakers, viticulturalists, and wine business executives, applications open until March 31, 2021
- **Industry** – Open to children of individuals who work in the BC hospitality industry, applications open all year
- **Hospitality** – Nominated and selected by the deans of several BC post-secondary institutions, nominations open until March 31, 2021
- **Special Event** – Sponsored by BC Event Management and administered by BCIT
- **Food Beverage & Hospitality - Sponsored by Lulu Spritz** - Applicants must be currently enrolled in a food, beverage or hospitality-related program, applications open until March 31, 2021


Visit www.bchospitalityfoundation.com to apply. Thank you to our generous scholarship sponsors for making these opportunities possible!


In other news, last year's #HospitalityHustle was such a smashing success that the BCHF decided to extend the initiative indefinitely. The goal of the program is to help motivate people to get physically active in order to stay physically and mentally strong, at the same time as we stay connected with our community during these trying times. If you aren't already involved, now is a great time to start! It's easy, just:

- Set a goal for physical activity, such as walking or cycling a certain distance, or dancing in your living room for an hour. The form of exercise doesn't matter, just get moving!
- Start training for your goal.
- Share your training experiences and your final activity on social media. Make it fun!
- Challenge a friend anywhere in BC to join the event, or create a team and challenge others to do the same.


We hope you'll join in the fun as we get our hustle on for good health! It's a great way to show support for our colleagues who:

- are struggling or have lost their livelihoods;
- continue working hard to keep hospitality in BC moving forward;
- are providing a takeout option for those who are socially isolating and/or need a night off; and
- raise awareness for the BCHF.


The finish line is May 30th and will include a virtual dance party! Please get involved, and spread the word. Thank you! 



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Dessert Wines - Sugar and Spice

Dessert wines are like a goodnight kiss. It's a great way to finish any evening. And it's a chance to get that one last sale, raise the average check considerably, and enhance your guests' dining experience.

Think about it, a plated dessert might sell for \$20.00. There's labour and cost of goods, so your margin might be \$10.00. Add a 2 oz. glass of port or sauternes for \$18.00 (some go for a lot more) with almost no labour and a percentage cost of 40% and it contributes \$10.80. Just for knowing your stuff, making the suggestion, and pouring some liquid out of a bottle into a glass. It's definitely worth a go.

However, it takes some effort. Dessert sales are considered by most as an option. Sugar, carbs, fat: all the things we love but need to be talked into. And what is better to accompany your plated dessert than a dessert wine? They encourage people to linger, enjoy conversation, and relax after a meal. For retail environments, it's an easy way for home entertainers to add some elegance to the meal occasion.

Dessert wines usually involve harvest or production methods meant to retain natural sugars. This could involve stopping the fermentation process by adding alcohol or sulphur to kill the yeast before all the sugar can be converted to alcohol (port style), concentrating sugars through drying methods (passito style), allowing benevolent moulds (*botrytis cinerea*) to raisinate the grapes

before harvest (sauternes), filtering out the yeast and chilling the partially fermented must (asti style), allowing the grapes to remain on the vine after a normal harvest date so they wither (late harvest), and waiting until winter sets in and the temperature drops so the water in the grape freezes and can be separated as part of must preparation for fermentation (icewine). Production methods can combine these techniques as well.

Dessert wines come in all types and styles: still and sparkling, white, rose, and red (even a tawny hue), low alcohol (5% ABV) and high alcohol (up to 20% ABV).

Dessert Wine Styles

Port – stop fermented, sweet, red (for the most part, although there are a few white ports available), and strong (typically 20% ABV). Tawny ports enjoy significant barrel aging regimes to get the colour via oxidation. This technique is employed around the world, but is mainly associated with the Douro Valley in Portugal. Chocolate, dried fruits, and nuts are classic accompaniments.

Mutage – a stop ferment method popular in the old world. Mutage creates sweet wines with less alcohol than port styles. Reds include Banyuls and Maury. Famous white examples include Muscat de Beaumes de Venise, Rivesaltes, and Frontignan.



Late Harvest – achieved by the raisinating of grapes on the vine by wind and evaporation. Great examples made with Sauvignon Blanc from Chile are available at superior value. Ideal for entry level pours.

Icewine – for the naturally produced varieties it's one word. Otherwise scientific methods like cyro-extraction can be employed. Late harvest fruit is picked after freezing on the vine (-8°C is a start) and processed quickly to enable the removal of frozen water crystals for the must before fermentation. High acid varieties like Riesling from cool climates (Canada and Germany are consistent sources) make the best examples.

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Botrytis Affected – moist conditions encourage the development of a grey rot that reduces water content and concentrates sugars. Wines take on a unique “orange marmalade” nuance. Tokaji from Hungary and Sauternes are classics.

Passito Style – grapes are harvested as normal and dried. Wine made from the intensely sweet grape must contain more sugar than the yeast can ferment out. The wines are around 13 - 15 % ABV. Recioto della Valpolicella comes to mind. These wines can have additional barrel age to add oxidative complexity like Italy’s Vin Santos and the famous Rutherglen Muscats of Victoria, Australia.

Asti Style – partially fermented must is interrupted by chilling, sulphur addition, and/or filtering to yield a lower alcohol wine. Asti is often sparkling and quite delicious. It’s a great alternative to traditional, more cloying sweet dessert wines. Moscato d’Asti is often a revelation to guests. Try it with a lemon tart. Superb!

Back Blended or Sussreseve – unfermented must is reserved and added back into fermented wine to increase the sugar content. Some German sweet wines are achieved this way as is the intensely sweet Pedro Ximenez of Spain. In France, a sweet liqueur d’expédition is added at the final bottling stage to increase sugar content for “doux” champagnes.

Important Things to Consider

Glassware – Dessert wines are often offered in smaller glasses so the portion size still presents value to your guests. The average serving is two ounces, so ensure appropriate glassware is available and staff knows which to use and how much to serve. I recall ordering a glass of port to finish my meal and it arrived as a 6-ounce pour in the same glass that I had just finished drinking Bordeaux out of during dinner.

Upon quizzing my server he replied, “It’s a red wine right? That’s our glassware and portion size for a glass of red wine.” There was no profit for the house on that transaction.

Service Temperature – Serve white dessert wines cold (6 - 8° C) to allow acid to balance the higher sugar levels. The less sweet the dessert wine, the warmer it can be served (up to 10 - 12° C).

Serve reds at room temperature, which should not exceed 18° C. Reds (dessert or otherwise) should be cool to the touch. Some reds are aged in barrels and the resulting oxidation causes them to drop colour and become a tawny colour. Tawnys are often served a touch cooler than full-on red dessert wines.

Food Pairing – If dessert wines are meant to accompany food, it’s important that the wine be as sweet, or sweeter, than the food. Sweet food tends to strip the sweetness out of wine and make the wine seem overly tart or acidic, so sugar levels need to be adequate.

The myriad of types and styles means there is probably a dessert wine just right for your offerings. Staff must be knowledgeable of food pairings and appropriate service attributes. Sales props like pairing suggestions on the dessert list, separate menus, displays, and trolleys can be employed. Your average check will be increased and guest satisfaction will be enhanced.

Your guests will appreciate the opportunity to complement their visit by indulging in a treat not often experienced at home. That sounds like a sweet ending to me. P

Tim Ellison is a Certified Sommelier and Chef de Cuisine that has enjoyed almost 50 years working in the hospitality industry and is currently Director of Sales at the prestigious Vancouver Club. He can be reached at timellison@telus.net.

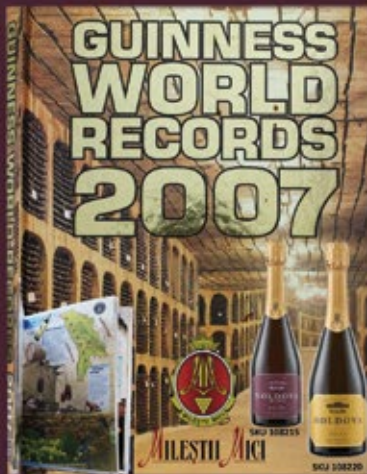
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Two bottles of beer are displayed against a background of a Belgian town at night. The bottle on the left is Westmalle Tripel, and the bottle on the right is St. Bernardus Abt 12. To the right of the bottles, the following information is provided:

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Looking Forward to 2021

The public health emergency related to COVID-19 created many challenges for all individuals, families, businesses, and communities in BC throughout 2020.

We understand the significant ramifications the pandemic has had on BC's hospitality industry from an economic perspective and we acknowledge the resilience and hard work of our licensees during 2020.

Over the past tumultuous year, the **Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB)** has worked across government and consulted with our **Business Technical Advisory Panel (BTAP)** partners to introduce several temporary measures to provide support to businesses. We appreciate the immense response of both BTAP members and industry, and the collaborative and innovative work achieved with government to bring forward timely solutions.

Most notably, the LCRB worked closely with local governments and Indigenous nations across the province to allow food primary, liquor primary, and manufacturing licensees to temporarily expand their liquor service areas. We quickly developed and implemented an expedited process through our online licensing portal to efficiently approve Temporary Expanded Service Area Authorization applications in a very tight timeframe.

Allowing licensees to expand their service areas has helped licensees decrease the density of patrons in their establishments and continue to serve patrons while complying with the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) Orders and guidelines—ensuring the health of the economy and helping to prevent more loss.

This was in addition to many other temporary measures introduced this year to support the hospitality industry in maintaining their operations during the pandemic, such as allowing liquor primary and food primary licensees to sell and deliver packaged liquor of all types to patrons, with the purchase of a meal, as well as allowing breweries, wineries, and distilleries to use their establishments to manufacture and sell or donate alcohol-based sanitizers. These temporary policies, along with others, increased opportunities for industry to continue to generate revenue while supporting the PHO Orders for physical distancing and ensuring the ongoing production of essential health and safety products.

This year also brought a provincial election and with it a new Cabinet and changes to the structure of Government and the Public

Service. One of those changes included moving the LCRB to the purview of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG). This means cannabis and liquor policy, licensing, and enforcement are now within the mandate of PSSG instead of the Ministry of Attorney General.

And, as stated in the new mandate letter for PSSG, Government is committed to continuing to support restaurants and hospitality businesses by making certain temporary measures permanent, including the expansion of service areas, allowing restaurants and pubs to purchase alcohol at wholesale cost, and allowing packaged liquor to be sold for take-away and delivery service.

Looking forward, and as this new year begins, the LCRB will continue to support our licensees as we progress through this pandemic, while continuing to focus on our commitment to modernizing the liquor industry for the benefit of both businesses and consumers.

Many of you will have noticed the LCRB's recently updated website. Our new website format is designed to improve our service delivery and client support and responds directly to our licensees' needs as they navigate their way through the licensing process.

We also continue to focus on our commitment to improve business operations through the Liquor Modernization Project—allowing licensees to apply for, renew, or make changes to their licences online through the licensing portal. This has been a tremendous change, which we hope will assist in rebuilding and strengthening the hospitality and restaurant industry as we progress through this crisis.

As we announced earlier this year, the LCRB successfully moved Catering, Wine Stores, Manufacturer, Licensee Retail Stores, and UBrew/UVin licence types online. We are now preparing to move Food Primary, Liquor Primary, and Agent licensing online in early 2021. As always, you can find more information on the project's progression on the LCRB's website, as well as a complete list of the licence types that are currently available through the online licensing portal.

The LCRB is committed to continuing to do all we can to support British Columbians through this challenging time and into this new year. Thank you again for your patience and the tremendous effort you have shown in responding to this pandemic.

Everyone at the LCRB wishes you a happy and healthy 2021. **P**

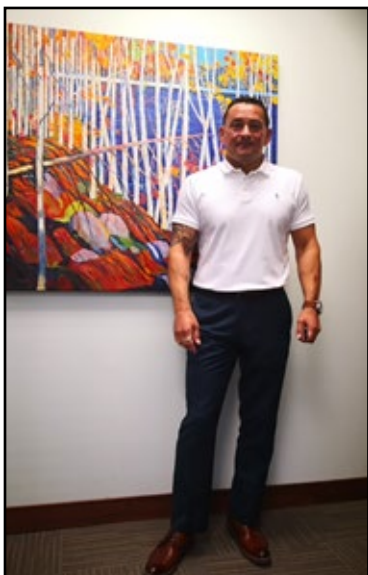
Mary Sue Maloughney is Assistant Deputy Minister and General Manager, Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRESIDENT:

Troy Bilodeau

President of Berezan Hospitality Group

by Rebecca Dumais



Hospitality is widely understood, and universally welcomed, whether it's under the guise of a person, a pub, or a corporation, and in this case, **Troy Bilodeau. The Berezan Hospitality Group** (BHG) is as apropos as can be as a family-run business that provides experiences for guests or customers through its various streams: ski resorts, gaming and casinos, liquor stores, accommodations and a pub that will happily pour you any of its 100 types of craft beer.

Troy will have been with BHG for 18 years as of May 2021; he oversees overall operations

of 15 hospitality locations, including 10 LRSs in BC, one hostel (Urban Hostel, Big White), two community gaming centres (Chances Castlegar & Chances Salmon Arm), and Jump360 in Kamloops. He also offers consulting for Sasquatch Mountain Resort. Delving right into the beverage industry, he helps research and create spirits, too. "I help develop Berezan Products: Berezanski Vodka, Rye on the Rocks, Simply Vodka, Simply Iced Teas, Fear the Beer, and Canadian Maple Tequila. I also sit on the Board of Directors for BCGIA," he says.

Troy admits to being an early riser—usually around 4:30am. Why at such an early hour? He says he loves an early start to the day. "A healthy meal and lots of water is another way I kick off my day. When I arrive to work, I browse the news and prioritize the many emails I receive daily. I make it a personal priority to respond to all my emails within 24 hours. The one thing I love about my job is that every day is very unique!"


Every day is different and "resembles an open discussion," Troy says. Assuring customer service and developing the team are daily tasks. Among other things, he'll be responding to emails at one point, and participating in virtual meetings and conference calls with different groups, suppliers, and project leads the next. "I'm [also] responsible for overseeing and coordinating my team's progress on the various projects."

As someone who's heavily involved in charting progress and hitting targets on various projects, Troy hosts daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings with different businesses. "The head office team meets every Tuesday to discuss our priorities for the week, then meets as needed throughout the week to check progress. I also meet with smaller groups of the team throughout the week to troubleshoot any issues. Finally, I create

a list of priorities for the following week: marketing, sales, logistics, growth, etc. Overall, our hospitality operations are too diverse to be classified under any particular functional area of management."

Part of Troy's week includes coaching for employees on several models: Berezan Core Values, Strong Systems, Be a Role Model, Have Fun, Smile / Bleeding Edge / Live, Use the Five I's. "I also find working out during the week keeps your mind fresh. It's also essential to spend quality time with family!" he exclaims. Mentoring is also greatly important. "I try to mentor the team by teaching our culture and leading by example. Our goal is to have the team demonstrate honesty, integrity, respect, and stewardship responsibility."

The current pandemic has affected businesses worldwide and has seeped into the foundations of local businesses. "We all have felt the stress from this pandemic," Troy states. "It's been a trying year with our gaming locations remaining closed for over ten months; other places are open with 50 % or less occupancy. Our customers and team have all felt the burden of frequently changing rules and regulations, but have risen to the challenge."

Continually implementing and revising policies and procedures is something Troy is keenly involved in to help keep customers and team members safe. "The company has made some big investments, such as Electric ULV Fogger, Portable, Ultra-Low Atomizer Disinfection Sprayers for all locations, and the sites are fogged regularly. We're continually evolving and considering new ways to keep our staff and patrons both safe and healthy." 

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» ABLE BC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by Danielle Leroux

There's no denying 2020 was difficult and painful, particularly for the hospitality industry. Since the start of the pandemic, ABLE BC has been fighting for you and your businesses. Rest assured, we're not going anywhere.

Here are some things we've done to help:

- **COVID-19 email updates:** sent weekly to get you the information you need to know, including new regulations and policy changes.
- **Tools and resources to support your business:** signage templates, best practice guides, FAQs, and complimentary webinars. Find them at ABLEBC.ca.
- **Making temporary policies permanent:** secured commitments from government to make several temporary liquor policy permissions permanent, including:
 - o Wholesale pricing for hospitality customers;
 - o Allowing liquor and food primaries to sell alcohol with takeaway and delivery meals;
 - o Extended liquor store hours; and
 - o Expedited patio application process
- **Fees capped for food delivery services:** government listened to the needs of our industry and enacted a 15% cap on food delivery fees with a 5% fee cap on additional fees, effective December 27, 2020.
- **Grant program accessible to more businesses:** government clearly heard our concerns about the Small and Medium-Sized Business Recovery Grant Program and responded with positive changes. In addition to changing the required minimum revenue drop of 50% to a drop of 30%, the new criteria reduce the previous three-year operation requirement to 18 months and include businesses closed by public health orders.
- **Amend public orders:** ABLE BC has worked with the Provincial Health Officer to amend public orders, including removing the 50% capacity

limit, removing the 1.2 m height requirement for physical barriers, clarifying self-serve lotto terminals are allowed, and successfully keeping our industry open for dine-in/drink-in service.

- **Finding urgent insurance solutions** for nightclubs and other members removed from the Hospitality Insurance Program.
- **Essential service:** successfully got liquor stores and cannabis stores defined as essential services in BC.
- **Funding programs:** we have submitted your concerns about funding programs to the provincial and federal government, expressed the urgent need for liquidity and rent support in the liquor industry, and supported you in applying for programs.
- **And more:** please refer to our weekly email updates and our COVID-19 Advocacy Report at ABLEBC.ca for more information.

Membership dues directly support the work we do to help your businesses survive. If you are not yet a member, we would greatly appreciate your support. Details on how to join can be found below.

Take Advantage of Savings

In addition to supporting our advocacy work, ABLE BC members get access to exclusive benefits and discounts. By using our benefit programs, you can more than **cover the cost of your annual membership**. Programs include:

- Western Financial Group Hospitality Insurance Program: innovative commercial insurance solutions tailored to the unique needs of the hospitality industry
- Western Financial Group Employee Benefits: financial efficiency and long-term rate stability on comprehensive life, health, and dental plans
- Foodbuy: keep your vendors and existing rebates and let Foodbuy fill any rebate gaps. Receive monthly

itemized rebate cheques and reports.

- VI Banking ATM: day-to-day agreement with no fixed-term commitment and high profit. You keep 100% of the surcharge and set the amount.
- BDL Beer Bottle Return Program: sign up your liquor store and receive a full refund on beer bottles and cans plus handling fee.
- BC Ale Trail: leverage your marketing dollars and partner with the BC Ale Trail. Be one of 75 curated liquor store listings and connect with new customers.
- Wines of BC Explorer: get a discounted subscription to list your liquor store in the app, highlight your store, and reach new customers.

To learn more and sign up for a program, please contact Danielle at danielle@ablebc.ca.

Join ABLE BC

During this crisis, your businesses have been dramatically impacted—the association has been too. Our success is tied to your success.

If you're not already a member and want to support the work we're doing to help our industry survive, we would appreciate your membership now more than ever.

Sign-up for a membership online at ABLEBC.ca or contact Danielle for more information at danielle@ablebc.ca.

New Members

ABLE BC welcomes the following new members:

Blackwood Apparel
Freebird Beer Wine and Spirits
Major League 2 Taphouse and Sports Pub
Modern Hygienics
Quarterway Pub and LRS
Roy's Towne Pub
Tesla Import Export Ltd.
The Heid Out Restaurant and Brewhouse & Fisher Peak Brewing Co. P

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WHAT'S COMING?

by Deb Froehlick

Wine

French Ambush Chardonnay is expressive on the nose, with dominating notes of white flower and fresh fruits like pear and lemon. On the palate, fresh, well-balanced, with lemon, grapefruit, and a touch of softening pear. A pleasant, lengthy finish. Release mid-February 2021, 750ml \$17.65 whsl +106650

Mionetto Prestige Prosecco Rose is an extra dry Millesimato sparkling wine, from glera and pinot noir grapes, has an evocative pink peach blossom colour that announces a fruity bouquet with evident notes of little red fruits and grapefruit. Release February 2021, 750ml \$14.79 whsl +72168

La Noble Cabernet Sauvignon is sourced from high, cool, sloping vineyards in Mediterranean France. The red clay and limestone soils yield an exceptionally well-balanced and harmonious wine, free of oak, with black fruit flavours and mineral touches. Released January 2021, 750ml \$16.99 whsl +87853

RTD

Boldr Vodka Soda Black Cherry is a burst of tart cherry with a subtle hint of toasted almond that ends with a refreshing finish. This vodka soda packs an abundant flavour punch and is only 110 calories. Release April 2021, 6x355ml \$9.65 whsl +45388

Boldr Vodka Soda Peach is flavour packed and infused with natural flavours of fresh white peach. Juicy and slightly sweet with a thirst-quenching finish, perfect for any occasion and only 110 calories. Release April 2021, 6x355ml \$9.65 whsl +45471

BASK Hard Sparkling Tea Variety Pack has 0g sugar/serving, 100 calories, 4% ABV and is gluten free. This variety pack contains: Green Tea Peach, White Tea Passion Fruit & Black Tea Goji Blackberry flavours. Release April 2021, 12x355ml Slim Cans \$21.31 whsl +45132

Orange'sicle Vodka Soda is a naturally flavoured, sugar-free orange creamsicle vodka soda. It is the creamy-citrus popsicle flavour you remember from your childhood, without any of the sugar. Release February 2021, 6x355ml \$10.08 whsl +48135

Dos Locos Seltzer Orange, Mango and Pineapple is seltzer made with real tequila. It has a lightly sweetened, tropical drink with a slight tequila "kick". Release May 2021, 4x300ml \$7.59 whsl +88787

Spirits

Halewood Whitley Neill Pink Grapefruit is inspired by the citrus groves of Spain, and infused with Iberian Pink Grapefruit. On the palate this gin has a delicate sweetness with citrusy notes that give way to a balanced grapefruit burst. Release February 2021, 6x750ml \$35.71 whsl +88380

Villa One Silver is an Ultra-Premium, 100% agave tequila founded by John Varvatos and Nick Jonas, together with Master Distiller Arturo Fuentes. Inspiration for the brand was drawn from a 2018 Mexican holiday. Release March 2021, 6x750ml \$54.59 whsl +44928

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SPIRIT SPOTLIGHT

TEQUILA

Mexico's Favourite Spirit
is Shaking Up the Market

by Joanne Sasvari

Back in the day, everyone had a tequila story, and it was often not a happy one. But a lot has changed since the days of cheap, poorly made mixtos, when the only way to really enjoy tequila was to knock it back as quickly as possible.

These days, tequila is one of the world's fastest growing spirits in terms of sales. Although it still comprises a small part of the global market compared to vodka and whisky, the Tequila Market Report notes that global sales have been rising by about 4 % each year since 2014, and expects that trend to continue at least until 2026. In the US, **Nielsen** reports that off-premise sales of tequila increased by 54.9 % from 2019 to 2020, and **The IWSR** drinks market analysis company reports that US tequila sales grew by 8.3 % in volume in 2019 alone.

Here in BC, net sales of tequila and mezcal increased from \$12,953,678 in the third quarter of 2019 to \$15,918,692 a year later, according to the **Liquor Distribution Branch**. That's a lot of shots. So what is it about Mexico's most popular spirit that we love so much?

Tequila is a type of mezcal, Mexico's traditional spirit. Both are made from the agave plant, a succulent with spiky leaves and a starchy heart called the "piña," which is cooked, fermented, and distilled. Mezcal is made from up to 50 different varieties of agave, most of them wild-grown, their piñas roasted in wood-fired pits that infuse the spirit with a complex smoky taste. Tequila is made only from one type of agave, the farmed Weber blue agave, which is steamed in autoclaves for a clean, grassy flavour.

Mezcal is usually enjoyed unaged and unadulterated. Tequila, on the other hand, comes in a wide range of styles and age statements.

Unaged tequila is called blanco, silver or plata, and many connoisseurs consider its bright peppery notes the most authentic expression. Softer, rounder reposado or "rested" tequila is aged in oak barrels for two to 12 months. Añejo is aged in oak for one to three years, extra añejo for three or more years, the wood imbuing it with richly spiced notes. Gold tequila is sometimes a blend of unaged and aged tequila, but more often an unaged spirit with added colouring. Curado is a new-ish category with natural fruit flavouring added. And mixto? It's made from as little as 51 % agave mixed with cane or corn spirit.

Unaged and reposado tequilas are popular in cocktails such as the Margarita and Paloma; mezcal and aged tequila are usually sipped neat or mixed in spirit-forward drinks like the Old Fashioned.

Traditionally, tequila was enjoyed at Cinco de Mayo parties and Mexican resort vacations. But these days, it's an anytime spirit, with several factors driving its popularity.

There is, first of all, the explosion of cocktail culture and a growing trend to home bartending that has only increased with the pandemic and stay-at-home orders. Consumers who haven't invested in their home bars are buying ready-to-drink canned cocktails to enjoy at home.

Celebrity endorsements have also had a big impact. George Clooney famously co-founded Casamigas in 2013 and sold it to Diageo in 2017 for more than \$700 million, inspiring other tequila-preneurs such as Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Nick Jonas, Rita Ora, Michael Jordan, Toby Keith and Justin Timberlake—and, of course, their fans.

But the biggest factor has likely been the premiumization of the category. Where tequila used to be cheap hooch, now it is more often than not an elegant, well-crafted spirit at an equally luxe price. Afficionados are reaching for artisanal tequilas that are expressive of terroir, use different cask finishes or crafted according to traditional methods, like crushing piñas with a stone called a tahona and cooking them in brick ovens rather than autoclaves.

This artisanal approach especially appeals to two types of younger consumer: the hip, farm-to-table gourmand who enjoys the handcrafted nature of tequila; and the wellness-focused person who prefers tequila because it is low in sugar and calories, but more flavourful than vodka.

It's that flavour—which ranges from the bright, citrusy and peppery notes of blanco to the lush baking spices and dried fruit of añejo to the smoky chili and chocolate of mezcal—that ultimately makes tequila such an exciting and appealing spirit.

Tequila is complex, versatile and delicious. Is it any wonder we want more? **P**



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