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Save the environment
while you sip vodka



Spark up your 4th of July
Cocktail recipes for your
Independence Day

**MEDIA
PLANET**

June 2011

VODKA APPRECIATION

SAVOR THE SPIRIT

THREE
TIPS
FOR CHOOSING
YOUR VODKA

**Modern Mixologist
Tony Abou Ganim**
cultivates your personal
vodka palate

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TIM TURNER STUDIOS; TEASERS: (LEFT) MIDDLE WEST SPIRITS (RIGHT) NICHE IMPORT



A TOAST TO EXCEPTIONAL TASTE

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GREY GOOSE
World's Best Tasting Vodka

VODKA 40% ALC. BY VOL. - DISTILLED FROM GRAIN.

CHALLENGES

Today **Vodka is the dominant white spirit** in the United States, helped along by its versatility as a mixer.



America's most popular spirit

In America, vodka is the behemoth of distilled spirits, accounting for almost 850 million dollars in volume, or roughly a third of all domestic spirits sales. The good news is that vodka sales in the U.S. are solid, with roughly 5.5 percent growth as a category in the last 12 months. The bad news is that vodka is not as hot as it was a decade ago. Confirmation of this fact can be found in the red-hot world of craft cocktails, where talented and trend-setting mixologists rarely mention vodka cocktails with the same enthusiasm as their gin, rye, and rum creations, if at all. Vodka has gone mainstream and therein lies its challenge: to be relevant, to be interesting. It is after all supposed to be a colorless, tasteless, neutral spirit—not exactly a passion inspiring defini-

tion or identity.

So what is new and exciting in the vodka world? A few notable trends:

■ **Localism.** There's a craft distilling revolution going on in the U.S. with small distilleries popping up in every state. Craft distillers tend to sell predominantly in their local markets and vodka, being an unaged quick-to-market product, is an important part of their business plan and cash flow while they wait for their brown spirits to mature. Many craft distillers are part of the culinary locavore movement and some of their vodkas have interesting characteristics derived from local ingredients.

■ **Globalism.** The success of vodka in America has inspired both traditional and nontraditional "me too" vodka producers

"Vodka has gone mainstream and therein lies its challenge: to be relevant, to be interesting."



Jerald O'Kennard
Director, The Beverage Testing Institute

from around the world to try to break into our huge market with varying levels of success and quality, but always interesting yarns.

■ **Exoticism.** Inspired by the traditional flavored vodka styles of Eastern Europe, today's vodka marketers are going way beyond citrus and berries to push the flavor envelope in creative-verging-on-tongue-in-cheek ways. Bacon, smoked salmon, whipped cream, devil's food cake, or "dude" flavored vodka anyone?

■ **Value.** There's nothing like a Great Recession to make you ask why you are spending \$30 or more on vodka. Thankfully a number of high quality, low-priced brands provide great value and taste.

Jerald O'Kennard is the Director of the Beverage Testing Institute. For more vodka information and reviews go to: www.tastings.com/spirits/vodka.html.



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**Dedicated to Gena and Edward
Grinblat. Na Zdorovye**



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93 points

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A TOAST TO EXCEPTIONAL TASTE

GREY GOOSE® vodka is crafted from the finest ingredients from France - soft winter wheat and spring water naturally filtered through Grande Champagne limestone. From field to bottle, the entire process of creating GREY GOOSE® vodka is overseen by the Maître de Chai, a master distiller trained in the centuries-old spirits making traditions of the Cognac region. Every sip is a celebration of uncompromising standards and exceptional taste.

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GREY GOOSE
World's Best Tasting Vodka

Sip Responsibly.

NEWS



QUESTION & ANSWER



Nick Mautone
Brand Ambassador,
Grey Goose®

Given the vast and ever-evolving variety of Vodka brands, how does Grey Goose Vodka maintain its status as one of the world's most sought after spirits?

It's simple: superior, natural ingredients, an exclusive production process, and a combination of personal touch and tradition.

Grey Goose vodka is made in France, home to the legend who first created the spirit and continues to play a major role in its production: Grey Goose Maître de Chai, François Thibault.

There, François selects the very best natural ingredients—soft winter wheat and pure spring water—before beginning the production process.

This wheat is the same used to make world-famous French bread and pastries, and the water is sourced from deep beneath the limestone hills of the Grande Champagne region of Cognac, so deep in fact that it remains naturally pure, untouched by the outside world.

To capture its full flavor, the entire wheat grain is milled into the exact grade of flour required for the fermentation process, which is followed by an exclusive, five-step distillation and then ultimately blended with pure spring water.

Under François's supervision, a hand-picked panel is entrusted with tasting every batch of Grey Goose before it is finally bottled, conducting more than 550 quality control checks along the way.

As the Grey Goose Master Mixologist, I have creative freedom to develop a robust range of cocktail recipes that showcase the spirit's impressive versatility and flavor profile. However, no matter how it's served—the deep-rooted, genuinely superior quality always speaks for itself.

AMERICA'S TOP SPIRIT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, DELIGHT

Question: Why is vodka the most popular white spirit in the U.S.?

Answer: Vodka's versatility allows it to be a great mixer, or a refreshment served on the rocks.

Whether straight up or mixed into a classic cocktail like the Moscow Mule, vodka has been a favorite of sippers around the globe for centuries.

A "neat" start

While its true country of origin is disputed, vodka production can be traced back to the 14th century throughout Eastern Europe and Russia. Ingredients like lemon peel, sugar, clove and pepper created the first flavored vodkas.

According to the Beverage Testing Institute, the process of distilling was introduced in the 15th century, leading the way for the vodka consumers know today. Traditionally, vodka is consumed "neat"—served ice cold, on its own.

Traditional vodka production

FACTS

Did you know?

The name vodka comes from the Russian word for water: voda.

Vodka's popularity in Poland and Russia is due to the fact that highly purified spirit would not freeze as easily as other spirits during

According to the BTI, vodka begins with a mash, typically of grains like rye or wheat. Vegetables such as potatoes as well as molasses have also been used. The simple sugars within the mash are fermented and distilled. Repeated distillation can increase the proof.

Ryan Lang, head distiller at Ohio-based Middle West Spirits, says, depending on the size of the batch desired, vodka can be produced in eight to ten days, allowing one day for the mash period, three to seven for fermentation, one for distillation and one for filtering.

The final product—a clear, tasteless and odorless liquid—is classified by the United States government as a neutral spirit. Vodka is then classified as well or standard, premium and ultra premium, which can effect the pricing.

Heading west

Originally brought over by immigrants, vodka gained popularity in the U.S. after World War II, with its

transport in the long freezing winters.

The first popular vodka-based cocktail in the United States was called the "Moscow Mule" and was a combination of vodka and ginger ale.

Source: Beverage Testing Institute

importation from Europe and Russia, Lang says.

"Production in the states until that point was primarily for dark spirits and remained that way for a while," he says. "What drove the migration to vodka sales taking over dark spirit sales in the 70s was the popularity factor and the ability of vodka to be used in so many applications or cocktails."

According to the BTI, the Heublein Company purchased the rights to the Smirnoff brand following the repeal of National Prohibition in 1933. The company emphasized vodka "neutrality" in its marketing campaigns, saying Smirnoff vodka "leaves you breathless."

Vodka today

The spirit's versatility has led to its dominance of the market, Lang says. Vodkas infused with flavorings as diverse as bubblegum and cucumber can be found on store shelves, while microdistillers are creating boutique varieties using traditional production methods, to preserve the taste of the grain and move away from the neutral flavor profile.

"Over the decades since the war, vodka quickly rose to prominence as the most widely sold spirit in the U.S.," he says. "And that trend will continue for a very long time."



PETRA CANAN

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TIP

2

CONSIDER
THE CARBON
FOOTPRINT

Organic vodkas and sustainable practices

Today's consumer is making more eco-friendly choices with what they eat and, more recently, what they drink, with the rise of organic vodkas.

Two unique processes

Sherri Zielinski, a representative for Earth Friendly Distilleries, says it is important for consumers to know the difference between organic and sustainable vodkas.

The ingredients for organic vodka come from non-chemically treated land. According to Oregon Tilth, a non-profit certifying organization, a product is certified organic by the USDA if 95 percent of its ingredients are organic. One hundred percent organic products use organic processing aids and no non-organic ingredients.

The goal of sustainable vodka is to leave the smallest carbon footprint possible at the end of production. And distillers can use locally grown ingredients or recycled packaging.

What to look for

The Organic Trade Association reported the U.S. organic industry grew eight percent in 2010, reaching \$28.6 billion.

"It is just about us caring more about what we put into our bodies," says Patricia Richards, property mixologist at the Wynn Las Vegas and Encore. "I don't see it going anywhere anytime soon."

Richards, who strives to always be environmentally mindful, says customers are willing to pay a higher price for cocktails at the all organic Eastside Lounge.

Zielinski recommends re-



Patricia Richards
Property mixologist, Wynn Las Vegas
and Encore

"It is just about us caring more about what we put into our bodies."

searching brands carefully, looking at the type of grain used, the distillation process and the product packaging.

"Make sure that what they are promising they are actually delivering on," she says.

What to expect

The type of ingredients—whether they are organic or otherwise—do not affect the taste of final product.

"There was a stigma at one point that if something was organic, it didn't taste very good, and I think that stigma has changed," Zielinski says. "Just because you're green doesn't mean you don't taste good, too."

Richards says looks for great natural flavors, finding vodkas made with wheat to be creamier and those from corn, sweeter.

"Just have that pride in what you make," she says. "I would prefer, that with food and beverage, the trend would be to go back to a simpler way."

PETRA CANAN

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BEST-FLAVORED VODKA

2010 SAN FRANCISCO
WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION



Please Drink Responsibly. ©2011 Rain Organics Flavored Vodka, 35% ALC/VOL (70 Proof). Distilled from organic grain and bottled by Sazerac Co., Frankfort KY. Certified Organic by ICO, LLC.

VODKA'S VERSATILITY
1. Fermented mash in the pot being agitated.
2. A pallet of wheat sitting near the mash tank and fermentation vessels.

PHOTO: MIDDLE WEST SPIRITS

INSIGHT

WHAT'S IN
A NUMBER?

Ratings demystified

The Beverage Testing Institute is the pioneer of spirits reviews in the U.S., launching America's first international spirits competition in 1994 and first to use the 100-point scale to rate vodkas and other spirits. Our proprietary system utilizes a one-to-four point scale to rate vodkas in our blind tastings:

1. Not recommended
2. Of sound commercial quality
3. Shows style and character
4. Highest quality

Products scoring two 4's from our small tasting panel of three judges move on to a merit round that uses a different scale to verify if it belongs in the 90-to-100 point range. We then use a statistical algorithm based on the mode to assign the 100-point scale scores that fall within quality bands similar to the five star system:

- 96-100 - Superlative
- 90-95 - Exceptional
- 85-89 - Highly Recommended
- 80-84 - Recommended
- less than 80 - Not Recommended

We've found that our system produces very consistent repeatable results, which are critical when judging formula-based products like spirits. It's also important not to taste more than 15-20 full proof spirits in a day because palate fatigue sets in and makes product differentiation and description almost impossible.

JERALD O'KENNARD

Star mixologist reveals his vodka obsession

After rising to the forefront of the bartending industry over the past thirty-one years of professionally honing his craft, renowned mixologist Tony Abou Ganim has experimented and fused countless renditions and combinations of liquors both famous and obscure. But only one spirit has seized his attention so deeply to inspire him to author an entire book on the subject. "I was tired of people saying that all vodkas taste the same and the way that vodka had been perceived in the mixology world," recalls Ganim. "I don't think we've developed a true appreciation for the distiller's art of vodka. It's one of the oldest distilled spirits and as traditional as milk and cookies in eastern Europe, but it didn't really exist in the U.S. on any significant level until after the repeal of prohibition and its uptake was slow-going at first."

Elevating mixology

But as the art of mixology has been elevated in recent years in the eyes



SHAKE IT. Tony Abou Ganim puts his passion and skills to the test, creating one of his signature cocktails.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TIM TURNER STUDIOS

of the culinary community, so has drinkers' sensitivity to the finer qualities of its ingredients. According to Ganim, "in the past, the bar was looked at as the waiting room for the restaurant, but now the diner considers the cocktail experience as the first meal, and that sets the tone for the rest of the evening." The complex nuances of vodka are now entering the dining spotlight, as experts such as Ganim testify to the powerful subtleties

of the spirit. "When I teach spirits in a class," he shares, "I always start with vodka because once you can taste the differences in vodka, you can taste the differences in any drink. People need to take a more open view of it." He recommends buying a variety of vodkas and hosting a blind tasting with friends, similar to wine-tastings, exploring distinct aspects of each vodka, including its character (robust? rowdy?), raw ingredients

(spicy? eucalyptus? dill? start anise?), texture in the mouth (rich? creamy?), structure (thin? thick? acidic?), potential method of drink (straight-up naked? with a twist? alongside a savory dish?), finish on the palette (long? short?), etc. Ganim led similar tastings when he bartended at the Petrossian in the Bellagio where he would "offer vodka flights alongside caviar dishes so people could try it out—and the response was impressive."

Ganim's upcoming book solely focused on vodka will serve as a companion to his published best-seller "The Modern Mixologist" and profile roughly sixty straight vodkas, each with its own photo and background description, as well as tasting notes provided by himself and his three star mixologist co-authors Steve Olson, Dale DeGroff, and Bridget Albert. When the book is released in the second half of 2012, Ganim believes it will inspire casual drinkers and liquid connoisseurs alike "to enjoy vodka on its own and appreciate it for what's in the bottle."

MAX FRIEND

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RECIPES

Spark up your Fourth of July! Industry insiders share their favorite cocktail recipes, so you can share your mixology skills at this year’s Fourth of July celebrations and all summer long!



Daniel Undhammar
Brand Ambassador, ZU Vodka

Bison Republic
2 oz ZU
0.5 oz St-Germain
0.5 oz Crème Yvette
1.5 oz grapefruit juice
Dash of lime juice
Dash of simple syrup

- 1. Add juices, simple syrup, St. Germain and ZU into a shaker.
- 2. Fill with ice.
- 3. Shake well, strain into a chilled coupe and add Creme Yvette.
- 4. Garnish with lemon peel.



Sarah Lanzen
Brand Ambassador, Glacier

Glacier Apple-tini
1 part Glacier Potato Vodka
1 part Schöнауier apple liqueur

1. Shake well over ice and strain into martini glass.
2. Garnish with an apple slice.

A very refreshing martini, but includes an all-American, gluten-free potato vodka with an all-natural (no additives or artificial coloring) apple liqueur made from real apples and fine grain spirits.



Nick Mautone
Brand Ambassador, Grey Goose

Le Citron Summer's Peak
1 1/2 parts Grey Goose Le Citron Flavored Vodka
1 part goji berry juice
1/2 part agave nectar
1/2 part fresh lemon juice
2 parts tonic water

- 1. In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, add first four ingredients.
- 2. Shake vigorously until the outside of the shaker is frosted and beaded with sweat.
- 3. Strain into a glass filled with fresh ice. Top with Q Tonic water, stir gently and garnish with fresh mint.

Mautone suggests a naturally sweetened tonic such as Q Water, containing 60 percent fewer calories than regular tonic.



Bella Coley
Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Distillery

Alaska Twisted Rhubarb Lemonade
1.5 oz Alaska Distillery Rhubarb Vodka
3 oz Simple Lemonade (or any other brand sweet lemonade)
0.5 oz Simple syrup
Sugar
Twist of lemon

- 1. Twist a little lemon into your dipping sugar to make a twisted lemon edge. Run the rim of your glass through the 'lemon twisted sugar'.
- 2. Over ice mix the pristine pure ingredients of the Alaska Distillery Rhubarb Vodka with 3 oz of your favorite crisp lemonade.
- 3. Pour in just a touch of simple syrup and a twist of lemon garnishing the edge with lemon for a perfectly chilled treat.

Alaska Distillery
Premium Spirits



Alaska Distillery would like to introduce our company and our line of premium Alaskan made spirits. We craft our spirits in small batches using the finest ingredients and the purest water that Alaska has to offer.

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