modern
Distillery Age

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Distilled Spirits Council: Ninth Straight Year of Record Spirits Sales, Market Share Gains

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American Whiskey Exports Take Hit from Tariffs

The Distilled Spirits Council reported at its annual economic briefing that 2018 marked the ninth straight year of record spirits sales and volumes, reflecting continued market share gains.

Supplier sales were up over 5.1%, rising $1.3 billion to a total of $27.5 billion, while volumes rose 2.2% to 231 million cases, up 5.0 million cases from the prior year.

In 2018, spirits gained market share versus beer and wine with sales rising seven-tenths of a point to 37.4% of the total beverage alcohol market. It's the ninth straight year of market share gains overall, where each point of market share is worth $740 million in supplier sales revenue.

"These robust results show adult consumers are continuing to favor spirits over beer and wine, particularly among Millennials," said Distilled Spirits Council President and CEO Chris Swonger. "The spirits sector is benefiting from Millennials, who demand diverse and authentic experiences and desire innovative and higher-end products."

New Data: Tariffs Curtail Rapid Export Growth

On a down note, new data show the negative impact retaliatory tariffs are having on U.S. whiskey exports, which had been a bright spot for distillers, small and large alike.

"For the first time, data can demonstrate the negative impact of retaliatory tariffs on what had been a booming export growth story," said Council Senior Vice President for International Affairs Christine LoCascio.

While it was another record year for total U.S. spirits exports, reaching almost $1.7 billion through November, the retaliatory tariffs had a measurable

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As 'Dry January' Increasingly Extends Year-Round, Opportunities Broaden for Beverage Alcohol Producers

Special to Modern Distillery Age by the IWSR, www.theiwsr.com

"Dry January" has ended, but new research suggests the movement is the start of a wider health and wellness trend that's gaining traction across the world, providing new opportunities for the global beverage alcohol industry, according to the IWSR.

As consumers increasingly look for ways to reduce their alcohol intake, a comprehensive new study just released by the IWSR offers an in-depth analysis of the growing low-alcohol and no-alcohol categories. The *IWSR Global Opportunities in Low- and No-Alcohol* report examines market sizing by volume, key players in the industry, on-trade analysis, product innovation and important consumer trends.

"The 'Dry January' movement isn't new, but one of the reasons we've heard so much more about it this year is the broader trend that points to consumers' increased interest in physical and mental health," said Mark Meek, IWSR's CEO. "And that's creating an interesting shift in consumer preference for low- and no-alcohol beverages, outside of soft drinks. For leading producers of beverage alcohol, this obviously presents considerable opportunity to develop new products, claim their share of the category and ultimately grow revenue."

The IWSR study indicates that at present, the low- and no-alcohol sector is poorly served, with few clear category leaders. Though forecasted to grow significantly, overall the current marketplace for low- and no- alcohol products is still small in most parts of the world. In the U.K., for instance, low/no alcohol brands represent only 1.3% of the country's total beverage alcohol market. In the U.S., that number is even smaller, at 0.5%. Nonetheless, research indicates that consumers are actively looking to reduce their alcohol consumption, and they universally support the notion of low/no alcohol beverages if they can find products that meet their taste expectations.

Most bars and restaurants around the world that were surveyed by the IWSR for this forward-looking study offered non-alcohol beer, while non-alcoholic wine was notably absent. (Non-alcohol beer is growing

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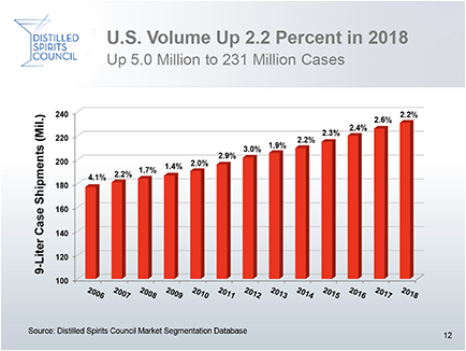
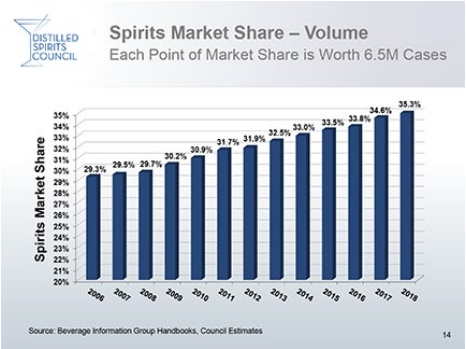
impact on American whiskey exports, particularly to the E.U., the largest market at $675 million (Jan-Jun: $363 million; Jul-Nov: $312 million).

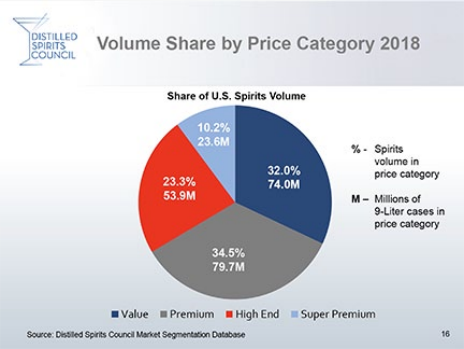


In fact, American whiskey exports to the E.U. for the first half of the year were growing at a brisk 33% but took a sharp downturn following the imposition of tariffs, declining -8.7% compared to the same period in 2017 (July-Nov.).

Globally, during the first six months of 2018, U.S. exports of American whiskeys were growing at 28% (Jan-Jun: $595 million). Following the imposition of the retaliatory tariffs, these exports decreased -8.2% (Jul-Nov: $526 million) compared to the same period in 2017 (July-Nov.).

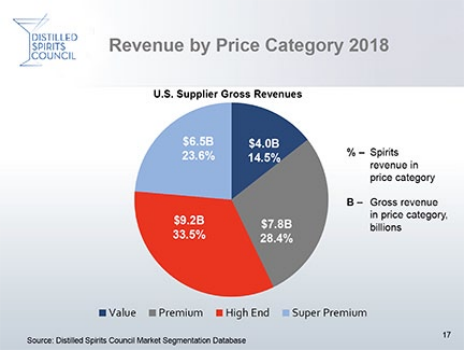


"We strongly encourage the Administration and our trading partners in the E.U., Canada and Mexico to quickly resolve these harmful tariffs that are undercutting economic growth in this sector and adversely affecting American workers," Swonger added.



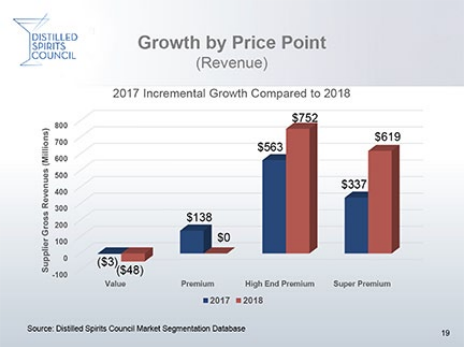
U.S. Growth Drivers: High-End and Super Premium Spirits

Council Chief Economist David Ozgo pointed to the strongest growth in high-end premium and super premium products across most categories. The revenue for those price points increased 8.9% and 10.5%, respectively, and by 8.0% and 7.5% for volume.

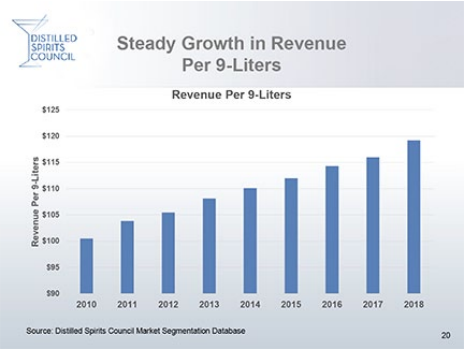


Key category drivers of sales growth included American Whiskey, up 6.6% or $224 million to $3.6 billion; Tequila, up 10.2% or $279 million to $3.0 billion; Cognac, up 14.2% or $250 million to $1.8 billion; and Irish Whiskey, up 12.0% or $108 million to $1.0 billion.

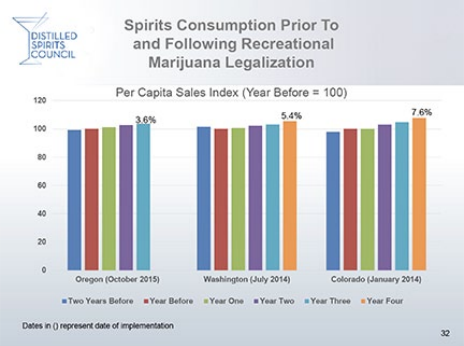
Ozgo also noted the return to growth of Single Malt Scotch, up 9.4% or $72 million to $843 million; the sales strength of super premium Gin, up 15.6%; and super premium Rum, up 28.5%.



Vodka, the sector's largest category and representing one-third of all volume, had another solid year with volumes up 1.6% and revenues up 2.9% to $6.4 billion. Vodka sales were paced by high-end premium products with revenue growth of more than 11.4% to $2.6 billion.



"Growth was concentrated in the higher priced categories, allowing the industry to enjoy significant revenue growth while also picking up drinking occasions from other beverages," said Ozgo. "The continued excitement surrounding super premium American whiskeys is creating a halo effect for the entire whiskey category."



Marketplace Modernizations Improve Consumer Access to Spirits

Other key drivers of growth include marketplace modernizations that improved

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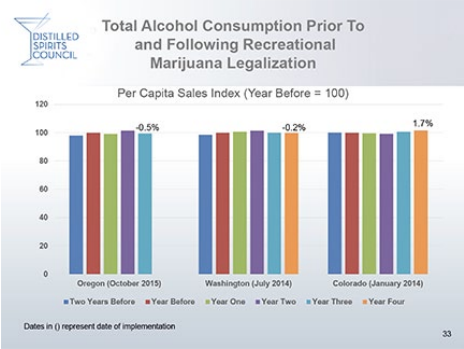
consumer access to distilled spirits, including two more Sunday sales victories in Indiana and Tennessee in 2018. Since 2002, 20 states — representing 86 million adult consumers — have passed Sunday sales legislation for distilled spirits, bringing the total to 42 states across the country that have ended these dated Blue Laws.



Another key driver of industry growth, and the growth of super premium products in particular, has been the passage of consumer sampling laws. The Council has focused on this effort to allow adult consumers to taste products before they purchase, driving the premiumization trend. Since 2002, 25 states have enacted laws allowing retail tastings for spirits, permitting 132 million adult consumers to sample premium spirits. In total, 46 states allow spirits tastings, also leveling the playing field with wine tastings.

Additionally, since 2007, Texas wet/dry elections have increased access to spirits products for up 2.8 million people for off-premise and 6.2 million on-premise.

Also, tax threats were defeated in 19 states in 2018, saving the sector over a half a billion dollars. Importantly, the first federal excise tax cut since the Civil War, which passed in 2017, has launched a wave of investment among distillers large and small enabling them to invest in new facilities and equipment, create jobs and boost local tourism.

For 2019, extending or making permanent the Craft Beverage Moderation and Tax Reform Act will be a top priority for the entire alcohol industry — beer, wine and spirits. The bipartisan bill, S. 362, was introduced in the Senate last week.

Important Social Responsibility Progress

"Underage drinking is at historic lows as the country continues to make progress on social responsibility," said Swonger, who also serves as the CEO of Responsibility.org, a foundation funded by distillers to lead the fight in eliminating drunk driving and underage drinking and promote responsible decision-making regarding beverage alcohol. "The entire spirits industry is dedicated to promoting moderate and responsible alcohol consumption among adults."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities as a percent of total vehicle traffic fatalities is at its lowest level since 1982.

"The distilled spirits sector has been an important contributor to this progress through the evidence-based underage drinking programs of Responsibility.org, and the support for strict enforcement of existing laws and comprehensive anti-drunk driving legislation," Swonger concluded.

The full presentations are available here:

2018 Annual Economic Briefing Presentation

2018 Supporting Category Tables

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Modern Distillery Age

203-971-8710
gregg@distilleryage.com
www.distilleryage.com

EDITORIAL STAFF

Publisher/Editor: Gregg Glaser
Contributing Editor: Peter V. K. Reid
Contributing Editor: Michael Anstendig
Copy Editor: Roberts Blackwood

ADVERTISING

adsales@distilleryage.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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MAILING ADDRESS

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rapidly, at the same time that low-alcohol beer volumes are declining.) Bartender attitudes towards low- and no-alcohol products varies widely by market as well. In most all markets, IWSR research shows that the off-trade channel (beer/wine/spirits retailers) offers significantly more selection of low- and no-alcohol products than bars and restaurants.

Specific market trends in low/no alcohol include:

United States

Though 52% of U.S. consumers surveyed in the IWSR study report that they're trying to reduce their alcohol intake, over 70% of people say they have not yet considered drinking low- or no-alcohol beverages. Low and no-alcohol products currently account for only 0.5% of the total U.S. beverage alcohol market in the U.S., however, a recent influx of investment by key beverage alcohol companies is anticipated to draw in a new generation of consumers and contribute to the forecasted rapid growth of the category (while growth in most alcohol categories remains moderate, and alcoholic beer is in decline.)

The largest category gainer in the low/no sector in the U.S. will be ready-to-drink products at (+38.8% CAGR 2018 to 2022). That's followed by wine at +17.7%, and spirits at +7.1%. Low/no alcohol beer, which currently accounts for the lion share of the low/no alcohol beverage market in the U.S., is predicted to grow +5.6%.

United Kingdom

Looking back ten years ago, it was virtually impossible to find non-alcoholic beer in the U.K.'s ubiquitous pubs or supermarkets. That has changed considerably. In fact, 2019 saw the emergence of the first non-alcoholic beer dispensing mechanism in London bars. Low/no alcohol products are forecasted to show healthy growth in the U.K., led by spirits (+81.1% CAGR 2018 to 2022) and ready-to-drink products (+44.3%). Cider in the U.K. is expected to grow by +13%, with low/no alcohol wine up +6.6% and beer up +4.9%.

According to the IWSR survey, 65% of the heaviest U.K. alcohol consumers (25 to 34-year-olds) are trying or have tried to cut back on their alcohol intake. The study also shows that 61% of consumers indicated they have not considered drinking low/no alcohol products — much potential remains to convert those drinkers (especially as the number of products increases and availability widens.)

Spain

Spain is one of Europe's largest and most well-established low/no alcohol drinks markets, particularly in the beer and mixed drinks segments. IWSR survey results show that 95% of Spanish consumers are trying to reduce their alcohol intake, and 80% of people have or would consider low/no alcohol products. Consumption of low/no alcohol is normalized in the country, with widespread coverage within both the on- and off-trade. This trend has been driven by several cultural factors, including the introduction of stricter drink driving laws and a broader wellness and health conscience cultural shift.

At least 50% of bars and 60% of restaurants surveyed in Spain have low- or no-alcohol beverages, many with branded cocktails on their menus.

IWSR analysis predicts that low/no alcohol spirits in Spain will grow by +36.8% (CAGR 2018-2022), wine will increase +19.8% and beer +6.7%.

Australia

Alcohol consumption is widespread in Australia, but the youngest age group has a fairly high proportion of non-drinkers. Mindful drinking is a discernable trend in Australia, with over half of consumers surveyed indicating they have or would consider drinking low/no alcohol products, spurring a small but burgeoning low/no alcohol industry in the country.

Non-alcohol beer commands the largest share of the low- and no-alcohol market in Australia but is expected to decline very slightly by -0.1% (CAGR 2018-2022). Low/no alcohol spirits are predicted to grow +28.6%, albeit from a very small base.

Germany

While total beverage alcohol consumption in Germany has been in decline recently, and is expected to remain stagnant, the low- and no-alcohol category is showing growth. Germany is a significant market for dedicated low/no alcohol products, particularly non-alcoholic beer, with 60% of consumers surveyed reporting that they have, or would consider drinking low/no alcohol products.

One of the factors contributing to growth and awareness of low/no alcohol products are the "Alkoholfrei" (alcohol-free) searchable databases in all the major beverage e-commerce platforms in the country. There are also platforms entirely dedicated to alcohol-free solutions.

Low- and no-alcohol spirits are predicted to grow by +14.4% to 2022 in Germany. Ready-to-drink low/no products are forecasted to increase by +13.3%, and cider will be up +11.4%. Wine (particularly driven by low/no-alcohol sparkling products) will show growth of +4% in the country, and beer at +1.6%.

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Koch El Mezcal Goes with Chopin Imports

Koch El Mezcal has signed with Chopin Imports as its exclusive marketing company in the U.S. Chopin Imports will manage the entire Koch portfolio, which is divided into ranges corresponding to the categories of "mezcal artisanal" and "mezcal ancestral."

Initially, Koch will focus on six core agaves: Espadin, Arroqueno, Tepestate, Tobala, Barril, an Ensamble blend and a Karwinski blend.

Other magueys that will be available include Coyote, Lumbre, Madrecuishe, Mexicano, Tobasiche, Jabali and Cuishe.

Ancestral-style products will include Coyote, Castilla, Barril and Tobala.

Prices will range from $40 to $250 for a 750-ml bottle.

MGP Ingredients Partners with RNDC in Kentucky

MGP Ingredients has partnered with Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC) in Kentucky to support the continued growth of their proprietary spirits brands: TILL American Wheat Vodka, George Remus Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Remus Repeal Reserve Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Rossville Union Straight Rye Whiskey and Eight & Sand Blended Bourbon Whiskey. All brands are wholly-owned by MGP, with operations in Atchison, Kansas and Lawrenceburg, Ind.

"We are proud to partner with RNDC to build awareness and sales of our spirits portfolio and support our growing brand presence in Kentucky," said Andrew Mansinne, Vice President of Brands, MGP Ingredients. "Kentucky has helped drive national appreciation for craft spirits, especially in the bourbon and whiskey categories. We look forward to working with the market experts at RNDC to reach whiskey lovers through premier educational events such as the upcoming Bourbon Classic."

For the second year, George Remus is a sponsor of the Bourbon Classic (February 20-23) in Louisville, which includes interactive tastings and workshops and the Bourbon Classic Cocktail & Culinary Challenge. A 2018 winner for Best Pairing, George Remus Bourbon will compete for the 2019 Best Classic and Contemporary small plates and bourbon cocktail pairing.

The spirits include: TILL American Wheat Vodka (40% ABV, ~$19 for a 750-ml bottle), George Remus Straight Bourbon Whiskey (47%, ~$40), Series II of Remus Repeal Reserve (50%, ~$85), Rossville Union Straight Rye Whiskey (56.3%, ~$40), Rossville Union Barrel Proof Straight Rye Whiskey (47%, ~$70), Eight & Sand Blended Bourbon Whiskey (44%, ~$30).

All MGP brands are available in Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin and Montana.

Nominations Open for WSET & IWSC 'Future 50' Awards

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC) have partnered in celebration of their 50th anniversaries for "The Future 50," a new initiative that will recognize the next generation of top spirits and wine professionals.

"The Future 50" awards will identify 50 of the global industry's up-and-coming talent from all areas of the trade at a range of levels. From those working in product development, design and distribution to marketing, journalism, hospitality and everything in between, WSET and IWSC are calling on professionals across the industry to nominate themselves or impressive colleagues for the awards. Nominees must be under 40 years of age and can be working in any profession as long as they prove direct contribution to the industry.

The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges including Joe Fattorini (*The Wine Show*), Stephanie Macleod (Master Blender, Dewar's), Christine Parkinson (Group Head of Wine, Hakkasan), Richard Paterson (Master Blender, Whyte & MacKay), Xavier Rousset MS (restaurateur), Ian Harris (CEO WSET) and Allen Gibbons (CEO IWSC). The main judging panel will be supported by a global regional advisory panel covering 17 countries and including Debra Meiburg MW (Hong Kong), Ian Dai (China), James Tidwell MS (USA) and Pedro Ballesteros MW (Spain).

Judges will assess nominees based on their achievements in the drinks industry in the last three years in a range of areas including, but not limited to, career, academia, social responsibility and innovation.

The final "Future 50" will be announced in November 2019 ahead of IWSC's annual awards banquet.

"Both WSET and IWSC have reputations as the international benchmark for excellence in our fields," said WSET Chief Executive, Ian Harris. "As 2019 marks 50 years of success for each of our organizations, it offers the perfect opportunity to emphasize the importance of developing new talent through education and awards to secure an equally prosperous future for the industry. At WSET, we are delighted to be looking to the future and showcasing the next generation of talent in the wines and spirits industry through our joint 'Future 50' project."

"The IWSC and WSET are both founded in 50 years of heritage and unparalleled industry expertise," added IWSC Chief Executive, Allen Gibbons, "but the 'Future 50' is as much about looking ahead as it is about looking backwards. As we set our sights on the next 50 years, it's important to identify and recognize the key players who are going to be setting the trends for decades to come. 'The Future 50' is our way of demonstrating support for those who will be driving forward the top quality standards that have been set across the industry — from brands, to products, to venues — and ensuring that the drinks world continues to innovate and advance."

Nominations are open until March 14 at http://bit.ly/Future50Awards.

Registration Open for TTB 2019 Trade Practice Seminars

From TTB:

Have you ever wondered why we keep mentioning inducement when we're talking about trade practices? Are you concerned that you may be operating in violation of the tied-house rules? Should you be? What exactly are consignment sales anyway?

Come learn all this and more as we present half-day Trade Practice Seminars geared towards alcohol beverage industry members or their representatives.

To register, click *here* and follow the instructions on the registration page. Registration will close when we reach capacity, or one week prior to the seminar, whichever comes first. Space will be limited, so be sure to register soon.

NABCA December 2018 Control State Results

During 2018, nine-liter case spirits sales in the Control States grew at 2.8%, up from 2017's 2.5% and mirroring 2016's 2.8%. Shelf dollars grew at 5.8%, improving upon 2017's 4.8% and 2016's 5.0%.

2018's volumetric growth, 2.8%, duplicates the Control States' long-term trend of 2.8%. 2018's growth rate was the first during the past six years that didn't lag its long-term trend. 2018's growth is consistent with a short-term cycle that suggests 2019's volumetric growth may be comparable to, or slightly better than, those reported during recent years, and 2019's dollar growth may be influenced by the same cycle.

Tequila's 9.0% annual nine-liter case growth rate, following 2017's 9.5% and 2017's 8.4%, is noteworthy. However, again during 2018, Irish Whiskey's 13.8% growth, down from 2017's 14.2%, outpaced all other categories. The Control States reported the following growth rates for the spirits categories: Brandy/Cognac 0.9% (vs 4.4% for 2017), Canadian Whiskey 2.0% (vs 2.2% for 2017), Cocktails 6.1% (vs 4.3% for 2017), Cordials 1.1% (vs 0.1% for 2017), Domestic Whiskey 5.2% (vs 4.3% for 2017), Gin -0.4% (vs -0.8% for 2017), Irish Whiskey 13.8% (vs 14.2% for 2017), Rum 0.3% (vs 0.0% for 2017), Scotch -0.2% (vs 0.0% for 2017), Tequila 9.0% (vs 9.5% for 2017) and Vodka 2.5% (vs 1.9% for 2017).

During 2018, the NorthWest Control States (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Wyoming) grew volumes at 3.9% (vs 2.7% during 2017), the Southern Control States (Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia) reported 3.9% (vs 2.3% during 2017), the Northeast Control States (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont) reported 2.4% (vs 2.6% during 2017) and the Central Control States (Iowa, Montgomery County Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia) reported growth of 1.9% (vs 2.5% during 2017). The four regions grew shelf dollars at the following rates: NorthWest at 6.3% (vs 4.4% during 2017), Southern at 6.7% (vs 4.3% during 2017), Northeast at 5.2% (vs 5.2% during 2017) and Central at 5.1% (vs 5.1% during 2017).

End-of-December Results

During December, nine-liter Control States spirits case sales grew 3.2% over same period sales last year. Alabama(4.7%), Iowa(8.9%), Idaho(5.0%), Michigan(3.5%), Montana(6.9%), North Carolina(6.8%), New Hampshire(6.7%), Oregon(3.9%), Pennsylvania(-1.4%) and Wyoming(9.2%) reported monthly growth rates for December exceeding their 12-month trends. The growth rates for Montgomery County Maryland(-3.8%), Maine(0.6%), Mississippi(-0.9%), Ohio(4.4%), Utah(0.4%), Virginia(2.6%), Vermont(-0.4%) and West Virginia(-5.5%) fell short of matching their 12-month trends. Control State rolling 12-month volume growth, 2.8%, was up smartly from November's reported 2.1%. Spirits volumes have grown 2.8% year-to-date compared to 2.5% a year ago.

Control State spirits shelf dollars were up 6.2% during December while trending at 5.8% during the past 12 months. Iowa (12.1%), Idaho (7.5%), Michigan (6.6%), Montana (9.9%), North Carolina (10.7%), New Hampshire (13.6%), Ohio (8.5%), Oregon (6.4%), Virginia (5.9%) and Wyoming (12.9%) reported growth rates exceeding their 12-month trends. Alabama (6.2%), Montgomery County Maryland (-4.6%), Maine (2.9%), Mississippi (-0.2%), Pennsylvania (0.3%), Utah (1.9%), Vermont (1.3%) and West Virginia (-1.4%) grew shelf dollars at rates below their 12-month trends. Shelf dollars in the Control States are up 5.8% year-to-date compared to 4.8% last year.

December's shelf dollar total for spirits is noteworthy: monthly shelf dollars in the Control States exceeded $1 billion for the first time. The total came close during 2017's December, within $5 million, before that milestone was eclipsed this past December by nearly $60 million.

Price/Mix for December is 3.0%, lagging November's 3.6%.

Irish Whiskey, with 1% share of the nine-liter case Control States spirits market, was December's fastest growing category with 12.9% reported and a 12-month trend of 13.8%. Vodka, with 35% share, grew during the same periods at 2.8% and 2.5%, respectively. Brandy/Cognac (3.6%), Canadian Whiskey (2.4%), Cordials (1.3%), Domestic Whiskey (5.3%), Scotch (0.4%), Tequila (12.1%) and Vodka (2.8%) grew at rates above their 12-month trends, while Cocktails (3.6%), Gin (-0.5%), Irish Whiskey (12.9%), and Rum (0.1%) grew at rates below theirs.

Hacking Whiskey

Aaron Goldfarb has written *Hacking Whiskey* (Dovetail Press, 264 pages, hardcover, $20).

Goldfarb writes: "Whiskey purists, avert your eyes. *Hacking Whiskey* is an extraordinary collection of hacks and experiments that is going to change everything you thought you knew about the brown spirit. From amateur blending and finishing (adding commercial whiskey to tiny, 'seasoned' barrels) onto more complex endeavors like smoking, infusions, fat-washes and even 'wasting' your whiskey — all in good fun, of course."

Goldfarb is a whiskey geek and reporter at large for publications such as *Esquire, PUNCH, VinePair* and *WhiskyAdvocate*.

PR%F Awards & PR%F Design Distinction Awards - Liquor/ Spirits Competition

The PR%F Awards presented by *Food & Beverage Magazine* (www.proofawards.com) are open for the international and domestic alcohol and liquor brand awards competition set for June 16-18 in Las Vegas.

The PR%F Design Distinctions will award the most creative and effective labels, point-of-sale and packaging. All winning brands will receive a medal and a marketing package.

The judging process will be double-blind for the preliminary rounds (bronze, silver, gold, double-gold, Century) to the final sweepstakes round, which determines Best of Show winners in each main category. All 100-point perfect scoring brands will be awarded the #Century Distinction (#C%).

Tippy Cow Rum Cream

Tippy Cow Rum Cream has introduced a new look for its line of what it calls "nostalgic flavors," which include Orange Cream, Chocolate Shake, Vanilla Soft Serve and Shamrock Mint (all 14% ABV).

Tippy Cow Rum Cream is blended with Caribbean rum and Wisconsin dairy cream. A 750-ml bottle of each sells for about $18 (50-ml bottles are also available), and Tippy Cow Rum Cream is available nationally.

Crown Royal Peach Flavored Whisky

Diageo's Crown Royal Distillery in Canada has released Crown Royal Peach Flavored Whisky (35% ABV). A 750-ml bottle sells for about $25.

Jameson Bow Street 18 Years Cask Strength

In August, Jameson in Ireland will release its second batch of Jameson Bow Street 18 Years Cask Strength (55.1% ABV), the only cask strength Jameson to be available globally. It was finished in Dublin's only live Maturation House in the Jameson Distillery Bow Street.

The whiskey first aged 18 years in a collection of bourbon and sherry casks as a blend of pot still and grain Irish whiskeys, which were married together and re-casked in first-fill ex-bourbon American oak barrels for a final six to 12 months. It was bottled with no chill filtration and will be available in 20 markets for about $270 for a 750-ml bottle.

To support the release, Jameson has partnered with craft Dublin cheesemonger, Loose Canon, to create a whiskey and cheese matching with the Jameson 18 family this St. Patrick's Day.

Eight & Sand Blended Bourbon

MGP Ingredients in Indiana has released Eight & Sand Blended Bourbon Whiskey (44% ABV), a blend of bourbons and whiskies inspired by the American railroad. A 750-ml bottle sells for about $30.

Eight & Sand refers to the eighth (and fastest) notch on a locomotive's throttle, and the sand used on the wheels to prevent slipping. To wish a train crew an "Eight & Sand" is akin to "smooth sailing."

Gator Bite Flavored Rum Liqueurs

Stoli Group has released Gator Bite, a range of flavored rum liqueurs in Satsuma and coffee flavors with the slogan: "Don't Fight the Bite." The new line comes from the success of Bayou Rum's Satsuma liqueur, which will be discontinued and become the Gator Bite brand. The liqueurs will be produced at the Louisiana Spirits distillery in Lacassine, La.

Gator Bite is a blend of Bayou Rum infused with either Satsuma oranges or black coffee.

At the TFWA World Exhibition and Conference in Cannes in October, Stoli Group announced the rebrand of Bayou Rum, along with the introduction of Single Barrel Batch 001 and XO Mardi Gras Edition. Fully owned and operated by Stoli Group's affiliate, SPI Group, as of June 2018, the Louisiana Spirits distillery is putting the finishing touches on a $6 million expansion that includes a barrel library, tasting area and event space.

Gator Bite will first be released in Florida with a national rollout following.

Satsuma (30% ABV) and Coffee (26%) are available in both 750-ml (~$17) and one-liter (~$20) bottles.

Kavalan Gin

Kavalan Distillery from Taiwan has released Kavalan Gin (40% ABV), made with a blend of six botanicals including kumquat peel, dried star fruit and red guava.

The gin is double charcoal-filtered and triple-distilled in traditional copper stills and is made from the same malted barley spirit as Kavalan Whisky.

This is the first in a new series of Kavalan Exquisite Gins for global release. A 750-ml bottle sells for about $90.

Mike Atkins – EVP of Retail, Q Mixers

Q Mixers of Brooklyn, N.Y., has appointed Mike Atkins as Executive Vice President of Retail. He joins Q Mixers after 27 years at Nestlé Waters, leading overall supermarket sales for brands such as Perrier, San Pellegrino, Poland Springs and Arrowhead. Atkins will oversee all of Q Mixers' sales at retail, a channel in which growth is accelerating.

Mike Atkins

Atkins joins a leadership team that includes senior talent from spirits and beer to bottled water with both on-premise and off-premise expertise, including Ted Roman, most recently of William Grant; Amy Donahue of VOSS; Shelley Turner of Stoli; Ashlee Lowery of Boston Beer; Ian Pilarski of Fairway Market; Sara Carroll of Lotus Foods; Scott Miller of Fiji Water; and Jaron Berkhemer of Campari America.

John Esposito – Board Chairman, Gem&Bolt Mezcal + Damiana

Gem&Bolt Mezcal + Damiana from Oaxaca, Mexico, has named John Esposito as its Chairman of the Board.

John Esposito

Esposito has 40 years of experience in the spirits business most recently as CEO of High West Distillery. He was also President of Stoli Group USA, CEO of Bacardí USA & North America, CEO of Moët Hennessy and CEO and President of Premier Beverage of Florida (now Breakthru Beverage Florida).

Modern Distillery Age Tasting Panel

In this week's tasting panel, we have notes on three gins and a single malt Scotch.

All spirits are tasted blind. The panelists know only the style and ABV. The notes are a distillation of the panelists' comments. The panelists vary with each panel but often include: Tom Jensen (Millstone Spirits), Dave Schmier (Independent Spirits Expo), David Talbot (Ultimate Beverage Challenge), John Henry (El Buho Mezcal), John Heffernan (Senior Master of Whisky), Renzo Kian-Kubota (Harry's Wine & Liquor Market), Olie Berlic (spirits & wine sales), Frank Whitman (food & drinks writer), Linda Kavanagh (MaxEx PR), Paul Zocco (Zok's Homebrewing & Winemaking Supplies), Ernie Adamo (spirits lover), Steve DeFrank (spirits lover), Dave Sokoloff (spirits lover), Phil Simpson (Asbury Park Distilling), Thomas Henry Strenk (drinks writer), Melissa Dowling (Editor of *Cheers*), Kyle Swartz (Managing Editor of *Beverage Dynamics, Cheers* & *StateWays*), Michael Anstendig (*Modern Distillery Age*) and Gregg Glaser (Publisher/Editor of *Modern Distillery Age*).

Chamomile-Flavored Guild Gin, 44%

Watershed Distillery, Columbus, Ohio, ~$28

a corn & apple-based spirit pot distilled with traditional botanicals along with rose petal & nutmeg; after distillation, chamomile flowers are macerated in the spirit

A hint of yellow color and an aroma of apple sweetness, juniper and nutmeg. Lots of bright spices in the taste plus sweetness, perfume and alcohol warmth. A medium and slick body. Finishes with spices, pine, herbs, some herbal bitterness and alcohol warmth; a lovely balance.

Four Peel Gin, 44%

Watershed Distillery, Columbus, Ohio, ~$27

distilled from corn & fruit; botanicals include juniper berries, citrus peel, cassia, Jamaica pepper & coriander

Clear with an aroma of pine, juniper, citrus perfume and white pepper. Spicy in the taste with lots of juniper plus pepper, citrus and alcohol warmth; clean and well balanced. A medium and smooth body. A lingering finish with lots of spiciness and menthol.

Bourbon Barrel Aged Gin, 44%

Watershed Distillery, Columbus, Ohio, ~$38

distilled from corn & fruit; botanicals include juniper berries, citrus peel, cassia, Jamaica pepper & coriander

Light amber with an aroma of juniper, vanilla and cinnamon; "An elegant Fireball," someone said. In the taste are juniper, cinnamon and a lovely spicy burn. A medium body. A long finish with spices, pine, bitter herbs and alcohol warmth.

Arran 10 Year Old, 46%

Isle of Arran Distillers, Lochranza, Scotland, ~$75

Imported by Castle Brands; aged in bourbon & sherry barrels

Light amber with an aroma of minerals, sea air and nuttiness. In the taste are malt sweetness, salt, sea air, minerals and alcohol warmth. A full body. Finishes with salt, sea air, malt sweetness and alcohol warmth.

The *Modern Distillery Age Tasting Panel* meets once or twice a month. Samples are sent by distillers and importers and are tasted blind. Samples can be sent to:
Modern Distillery Age
228 Silvermine Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06850

Tasting Events & Competitions