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PATTERSON'S BEVERAGE *Journal*

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Actor John Corbett entertains L.A. bartenders (left to right) Amanda Wicklas, Chi; Rose Rollins, Spider Club; Jen Bueno, Jones Hollywood; Neala Cohn, Monroe's and Susann Olsson, Concorde.



Start Talking Dirty

Dirty Sue Puts An End to
Martini's Filthy Past

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Wine & Liquor Depot, Van Nuys

Though the Van Nuys-based Wine & Liquor Depot boasts the San Fernando Valley's largest selection of wine and spirits and best prices, there are other reasons why the 50+ year-old retailer, nestled in an unassuming residential area, continues to thrive. Thanks in part to the thoughtful management of co-owners and brothers Mark and Michael Meister, (at the helm since 1980) Wine & Liquor Depot has carved a few unique niches beyond the generous general selection.

"Currently, we are known for having the world's largest selection of Single Malt Scotches with (an average of) 600 in stock, and we've also honed a reputation for our selection of tequilas," notes Meister. "Because our customers are savvy and stay up on all the major food and wine consumer magazines and have access to networks like the Food Channel, they teach us a lot about the different things that are on the markets. Sometimes a referral from them will prompt us to attend a tasting event or sample a new product to experience what is making it so talked-about. If the product we like that we've learned about is available in this market, we will do our best to get it."

The Meisters' style of tuning into customer wants has earned them the prestigious 2003 Best of L.A. Award from Los Angeles Magazine for

their 250 varieties-strong tequila selection and a clientele that ranges from general area consumers, to serious wine aficionados to caterers and event planners. Although the Depot is a nicely sized property, the set-up and service still has the pleasant intimacy of a friendly neighborhood store while the selection of premium brands lends a little bit of boutique flair.

Meister adds an extra personal touch by recommending some of his personal favorites to customers. "Lagavulin and Glendronach are outstanding single malt scotches, and the Tres Generaciones is great everyday tequila," he says. "We like red wines because of their versatility in pairing with a variety of foods, and St. Clement cabernet exemplifies a good wine of this kind."

- Elyse Glickman



■ Mark Meister

MIXOLOGIST OF THE MONTH

Keith Marshall

Monsoon Café,
Santa Monica



Monsoon Café, a mainstay on Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade, has carved its niche on this competitive street of

dreams with a highly creative, diverse menu of food, along with a sassy Martini menu that adds to the restaurant's color and fun. Bar Manager Keith Marshall says that when a new cocktail is developed for Monsoon, it needs to be refreshing and memorable enough to work on its own or pair harmoniously with such a diverse collection of dishes with flavors evoking China, Thailand, Korea, Japan, Indonesia and Bali as well as the ever-popular sushi and appetizers that keep a very loyal local clientele coming back again and again.

When one thinks of sweet and sour mix, margaritas will also often come to mind. However, Marshall has been able to translate Finest Call's Sweet & Sour into something balanced and flavorful that works seamlessly with Monsoon's distinctive food selection—and noteworthy live entertainment. On the surface, The Grape NeHi delivers the nostalgic vibe of the classic soft drink. When it hits the tongue, it's equal part sweet, sour, refreshing and well bodied.

Notes Marshall, "The Grape NeHi is a great way to start a meal; with a sweet start, some sour notes, and a dry clean finish. We make it with the Finest Call Sweet & Sour, Ketel One Vodka, Chambord, soda for fizz and lemons muddled with vodka and sugar. Muddling, which is big in the Pacific Northwest's hottest club, is a big secret to what makes the Grape NeHi and others stand out. Finest Call is another, since unlike other brands we've tried, it has a nice, well-rounded consistency and full flavor that will really make the drink stand on its own."

There's no denying Los Angeles is a hotbed of activity for the Asian-Fusion genre restaurants, innovative sushi bars and Asian-themed clubs. Therefore, it's only natural that a bar infused with a well-chosen selection of sakes and soju (or "shochu," Japanese vodka distilled with rice) will not only pique the clientele's already existing curiosity about all things eastern, but inspire beverage buyers and bartenders to explore the best of the Far East via the best brands on the market and creative ways of spinning them into cocktails and pairing them with food. Tried and true establishments like Seabar and White Lotus and the just-opening Blow Fish are perfect locales to explore how adventurous ambiance, food preparation and a premium sake selection go together seamlessly.

Although elaborate planning went into **Blow Fish's** opening (including several test dinners), Bar Manager Steven McCormick says that building a great sake menu boils down to a few simple principles. "It's a matter of looking at overall flavor, compatibility with food and having a selection that will appeal to both newcomers and experienced sake drinkers," he says. "Among other things, we look at how the components of water, rice and brewing techniques are employed in a sake's creation. Sake is still up-and-coming, so we want our people to be informed so we can in turn help customers make a great choice."

Helping McCormick set the stage for sake success is Ethan Maytum, regional sales manager for Merrick Ridge and Pacific International Liquor. In addition to serving as the liaison between the best sake purveyors and some of L.A.'s most popular restaurants, (Asian and otherwise—White Lotus, The Little Door, and Le Petit Four among many others), he structures educational seminars for his client's bar staff. The information-packed session includes historical and cultural origins, physical characteristics that make sake different from other spirits, heating sake properly, distinguishing between Jun-Mai, Gin-Jo and Dai-Gin-Jo sakes (which is determined by how much rice grains are polished, which in turn, leads to different levels of refinement and complexity), the basics of taste and what makes certain Dai-Gin-Jo sakes premium. "It's amazing to see how sales of cold sake have gone up," says Maytum as he prepared our special tasting. "Restaurant sales were up 43% between 2002 and 2003 and are expected to increase this year by 53%. Just as Japanese cuisine is all about subtlety of flavors, so is experiencing the best sakes."

Mu Junmai Daiginjo, the "it" brand that's become increasingly hard-to-find thanks to Tiger Wood's unwavering enthusiasm,

FOR GOODNESS "SAKE"

By Elyse Glickman

award-winning **Alakey Premium Shochu** is a smooth and refreshing alternative straight up or mixed into a cocktail. Its subtleties are harmonious with fruit juices and other sweet spirits.

While **White Lotus** is equipped with a liquor buyer, head sushi chef Brian Ueno is called upon regularly to lend his expertise to selecting sake and shochu. Though American-born, Brian learned about sake and shochu's fine points though his Nagasaki-bred father and grandfather. "When I visited Japan growing up, we would go to the sake bar owned by my grandfather. It was there where I learned all about the subtleties, flavors, colors and body inherent in different types of sake as well as quite a bit of life philosophy," he recalls.

Armed with one of Brian's consistently good spicy tuna rolls, we set out to try Brian's selections, including some that were currently very much in demand. **The Wakatake "Onikoroshi,"** with a +4 rating was nicely sweet, with notes of peach and melon and a smooth finish that would work well with simple sashimi. Brian's personal



deserves its reputation as one of the elite names in sake thanks to its balanced, dry-but-gentle anise-and-fruit notes which enables it to pair well with pretty much everything served on the evening's special tasting menu, especially their "Enlightened" salmon. The fragrant and full-bodied **Kurobin Junmai** (also known as "Black Bottle"), though heartier, is also a versatile, go-with-anything choice. **Hatsumago Junmai** ("First Grandchild," translated), which should be a winner among those normally seeking a good Chardonnay, has a nose of tropical fruits and apricots and went beautifully with "The Punch" (a sublime filet mignon-based dish). For true connoisseurs, Blow Fish offers the **Okunomatsu** sparkling sake. As its price suggests (\$200/bottle), its rarity and refinement make it a true indulgence. For vodka lovers, the international,

■ If the artistry of the packaging doesn't grab you, the taste will! Blow Fish Bar Manager Steven McCormick and Merrick Ridge's Ethan Maytum hope to blow clients away with such premium selections as Kurobin Junmai, Okunomatsu and Hatsumago Junmai.



■ Sushi Chef Brian Ueno presents a selection of White Lotus' best sellers and some personal favorites, including Awamori Shochu, Mu, Wakatake "Onikoroshi," Otokoyama Daiginjo and Moriko Daiginjo.

favorite, Harushika Extra Dry (with an appropriate +10 rating) was bracing and punchy enough to work well with hearty beef dishes. The +2 Ichinokura reminded me of a good chardonnay with its mild taste and clean, spare notes. Though the Nigori sakes here are also considered good for sipping and pairing with desserts, they also believe variety is the spice of life. The Ozeki Nigori had a full-bodied consistency and a very fruity-and-floral, liqueur-like flavor, while the Hitorimusume Nigori was mellow and dry. Brian points out that among women, Mu and Moriko were popular, while men gravitated toward Wakatake and Suishin, another variety in the Junmai category.

For George Pitsironis, the Beverage Manager of Seabar and Asia de Cuba, sake is a natural match up with the California lifestyle with the emphasis on exotic flavors, healthy recipes and innovative food presentation styles. While some of his expertise stems from formal training at the UCLA Vintage Program and membership with the Court of Master Sommeliers, a lot of his choices stem from personal experience investigating the wonders of sake on his own.

People on the West Coast are more into sushi and Asian cooking's healthiness factor," Pitsironis says. "There is also the influence of the entertainment industry and the warmer weather. This is why for many, cold sake is a great alternative to wine. Just like wine, there are different varieties with their own complexities, flavors and body, and individuals can have fun learning about what they like and what matches up with what. There are two ways you can go when pairing sake with food—going for a sake with flavors com-



■ George Pitsironis, Beverage Manager of Asia de Cuba and Sea Bar, presents a sampling of his fashionable sake selection.

plimenting your food, or for a more bold experience, selecting one that has contrasting qualities."

Seabar/Asia de Cuba has about a dozen, mostly higher-end cold sakes available for the diners' delectation, and Pitsironis takes the time to personally educate the staff so they understand the nuances of the individual sakes in order to key into the personal tastes of clients and help them make a choice that will enhance the overall experience. He also offers all the sake selections by the glass so newcomers to sake can experiment before making a commitment to a larger bottle.

During our dining experience, we adapted Pitsironis' "compare and contrast" approach with sake and food pairings. The Lobster Roll worked nicely with the **Rika Suimei Junmai Ginjyo's** refreshing, herbaceous notes or contrasted with **Koi-No-Kawa Junmai Ginjyo**. The **Yumeakari Junmai Ginjyo's** citrusy sensibility offset the richness of a fried soft shell crab spider roll, while Wakatake Ginjyo's nutty taste complimented the breeding. Salmon sashimi can work nicely either with the aforementioned **Yumeakari Junmai Ginjyo** or the richer orchard fruit flavors of **Koi-No-Kawa Junmai Ginjyo**.

Although wines are still a fine dining mainstay, Asian restaurants on the cutting edge have revealed sake to be a "clear" alternative, and a refreshing bracing one at that. As sake flows into the mainstream, it will be interesting to see how expanding audiences will integrate and make it their own, just as they had with sushi and other exotic foods a decade ago.

Not Your Average "Cosmo" Girls

By Elyse Glickman

In a colorful, fast-paced and often competitive city like Los Angeles, any night is a good night for a "girls' night out"—and especially now that temperatures are climbing and the allure of going out for drinks is increasingly tempting.

It is also comforting to know that some of L.A.'s newer hotspots in town have designed their drink menus and appetizer selections with fun-loving and adventurous women in mind. In our case, Sandi just landed some great acting gigs and Laura's recent round of home renovations were a great success. Of course, this called for a celebration. Where to go? Based on the buzz, **Luna Park** and **Koi** were two destinations that could both live up to the challenge of providing us the right place and mood for a much-deserved break from everyday life.



■ **Martha Madison**, manager of Luna Park L.A., takes pride in how her restaurant's creative cocktails readily splice sassiness and sophistication together.

Luna Park, with its roots, vibe and aesthetic firmly planted in San Francisco, strives to bring their brand of originality, value and fun to the women of L.A. "We keep the prices of our food and drinks reasonable, because we know that appeals to women from all walks of life," notes Martha Madison, the Luna Park L.A. manager who also handles most of the liquor buys. "However, we know that to keep them coming in on a regular basis, we need to keep our drinks fun and interesting. It is also important that a sense of whimsy provides a balance for our sophisticated setting so women will feel comfortable coming here on a regular basis. We like to get creative with such touches as plastic garnishes in colorful animal shapes and Dr. Pepper-flavored Jelly Bellies served with our newest specialty, 'Like a Pepper, Too.'"

The aforementioned "Pepper" spices up the cocktail menu with a 'do-it-yourself' vibe—original recipe Dr. Pepper in a classic bottle flanked with sidecars of **Absolut Vanilla**, organic vanilla syrup and a handful of those Jelly Bellies. Madison says their hottest seller is the house Mojito, which converges **Castillo Silver Rum** with fresh mint and lime. The staff favorite, meanwhile, is the gorgeous Icebreaker, prepared with **Bonny Doon Vin de Glacier** (Premium Ice Wine), a splash of **Ciroc** grape-infused vodka, and a colorful bouquet of frozen grapes. The standby Margarita, with a **Hornitos Tequila** base gets a nice, girly touch with a dash of **Cointreau**, while the brandy liqueur of the moment—**Hpnotiq**—is reinvented as **Hpnotiq Lemonade**, which gets an added kick from **Absolut Citron** and fresh lemon.

In contrast to Luna Park's relaxed sophistication, the sleek



■ It's Koi bartender Aaron Colbert's mission to help the single gal find life after basic cosmos. Colbert shows off such delights as the **Hpnotiq Martini**, the **Red Wine Margarita**, **SakeTini**, **Koi Yellow**...and (let's not forget) the "Sex in the Pool."

Koi is a "scene" in the truest sense of the word. General Manager Jorge Pultera, who handles the liquor buying, also is responsible for hiring innovative (and seriously cute) bartenders like Aaron Colbert who strive to help women find life after the basic Cosmo. "Koi is great for upscale, single people, especially those in fast-track lifestyles like the entertainment and advertising fields," observes the stylish Colbert. "Everything has to work together, from the ambiance to great food to great cocktail alternatives that will suit a variety of tastes. We came up with a **Red Wine Margarita**, which brings together **Patron Silver Tequila**, **Coppola Merlot**, orange juice and cranberry. As I know women dig sweet things, I also put together our **Sex in the Pool**, a very pretty drink that gets its ambiance from **Ketel One Citron**, **Triple Sec**, **Blue Curaçao** and grenadine."

Across the way from us, our sexy twenty-something friends continued to Cosmo it up. But then again, a good destination bar restaurant always knows there is nothing a woman enjoys more than freedom of choice.



■ The Girls... Editor-at-Large Elyse Glickman, Sandi Margolis and Laura Messian are not coy about what their favorite Koi cocktails are.

Monsoon Café: A Flood of Flavor

Although the eight year-old Monsoon Café is located in the heart of one of Santa Monica's most popular tourist areas, the management will proudly tell you that at least 80 percent of their clientele are loyal locals, while visitors who find Monsoon through personal referrals make up the balance. In a competitive market where Pan-Asian concepts come and (often) go, Monsoon has gone the distance thanks to its tight conceptualization. The ambiance is exotic, open and sweeping. The live entertainment is superb and features top local names in comedy, Latin music and R & B. The Pacific Rim-spanning menu isn't just creative but represents dishes from China, Thailand, Bali, India, Vietnam, Japan and Indonesia beautifully. And to top it all off, this Santa Monica hotspot has garnered a reputation

for its multi-dimensional Martini Bar, with accolades from publications like "Thirsty" and "Shecky's Bar, Club and Lounge Guide"

According to bar manager Keith Marshall, to keep things interesting and interactive, patrons are offered the opportunity to come up with their own cocktail descriptions for their favorite potions to potentially replace the pithy items existing on the Martini menu. If Team Monsoon finds the patron's wit

intoxicating, he or she wins dinner for two and the honor of seeing his/her name and cocktail description posted on a future edition of the menu. However, to keep those creative juices flowing all around, Marshall says without hesitation that Young's Market and their rep Chad Wiltgen are instrumental components to their recipe for success. With Chad's input and direction, Monsoon proudly offers Bombay Sapphire, Bombay Dry Gin, Türi Vodka, The Macallan and Glenmorangie single malt scotches, Jack Daniels, Dewar's White Label, Herradura Tequila and Red Bull.

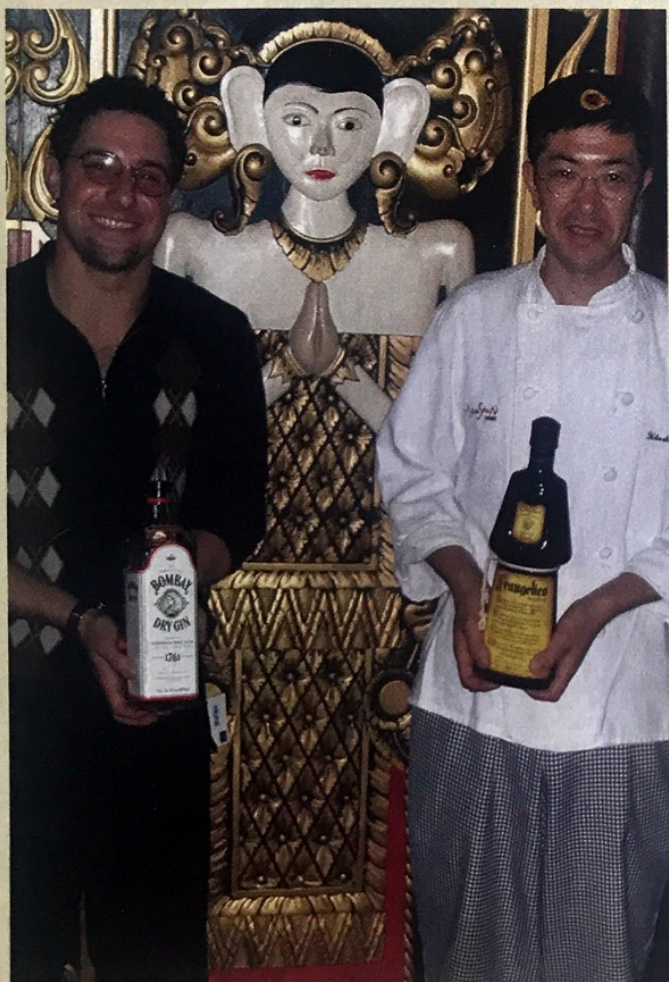
"Chad, who has been with us since 2002, has been on the ball and very much there for us and our success," says Marshall. "Whether it's keeping us stocked in products we go through in large volume, or helping us attain a more challenging special order, he's so good at keeping us up to date on the things that will continue to make our drink menu stand out and work harmoniously with the eclectic mix of flavors on our menu. He introduced us to Hpnotiq and Türi, as well as Chateau Mont Redon's Chateauneuf du Pape."

The strength of Monsoon's martinis is that they are either great on their own or pair well with the interesting mix of Asian flavors in such signature dishes and favorites like Indonesian Shrimp Randang, Tuna/Crab Eggrolls, Wonton Tuna Deckers, cinnamon-y Duck Potstickers, Organic Tofu and Seaweed Salad and occasional specials like the Napoleon Chilean Sea Bass prepared with yellow peach, baby bok choy and sweet plum sauce.

-Elyse Glickman



The Basics of Exotics: Some of the Young's Market products that provide the backbone for Monsoon's many signature cocktails including Grape NeHi, Pineapple Crush, Dragonfly and Mobay.



Bar Manager Keith Marshall, Chef Hitoshi Hakamata and Young's Market join forces to keep Monsoon's mix of flavors bright, exciting and innovative.

Young's *Superwell*®

Typhoon

3221 Donald Douglas Loop South, Santa Monica

The Winds of Change at Typhoon

Although Typhoon, the thirteen year-old Santa Monica institution, is as sleek and sophisticated as any "of-the-moment" place, the warmth and energy of management and staff makes it just as open and welcoming as your favorite neighborhood café. Adding to this warmth is Corporate Manager Dan Thomas, who seats you as if you were a long-lost college friend and beams with pride when detailing how the menu was refined and updated to stay up with the times and please the customer. One secret? Pairing the enormous menu down to the selections that are confirmed to bring customers back again and again. Another? Chef Suphatira "Eid" Kortrakul, who may hail from Thailand (and makes a mean Pad Thai), but effortlessly hits the mark on many dishes covering much of the Asian continent as well as other items evocative of New England, albeit with an Asian flair.

While signature dishes (corn-meal coated Whole Catfish, Fresh Maine Lobster with a sublime miso cocoanut sauce, Kal-Bi Korean Beef, Mongolian Beef, Szechuan Ma-La Dumplings and Chinese Shrimp Shu-Mai) keep 'em coming back and more unconventional items (Taiwanese stir-fried Crickets, Manchurian Ants and White Sea Worms) inspire curiosity, owner Brian Vidor and manager Thomas understand balance keeps the tides smooth even during tumultuous times in the restaurant business. Young's Market, in turn, is part of the umbrella that not only covers them in an ever-changing business climate, but ensures the bar has all the "supplies" their casual but upscale crowd demands.

"Business men and groups coming in for lunch meetings constitute a major part of our clientele," notes Thomas. "We count on Young's Market to stock us with things we know they are going to request, things that will compliment our food and our presentation and even add a little extra excitement to a few of our cocktails if somebody requests they be made with premium ingredients. Young's has seen to it that we've always got the best on hand, including Ketel One, Bacardi Light and Dark Rums, Bushmill's, Chivas Regal, Glenlivet 18 and 12 year-old scotches, Bombay Sapphire gin and Herradura tequila. Even if the mood is casual, our commitment to food and presentation is taken seriously, as is how we stock our bar area." - Elyse Glickman

THE *Superwell*® Is Exclusive With Young's Market Company
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A Few More Excuses to Celebrate

By Elyse Glickman

In Los Angeles, any night is the right night to go out. However, as the deadline for this issue coincided with my birthday, these particular nights on the town made for the perfect excuse to indulge in some of my favorite things—liqueurs from **Alizé** and **Remy Red**. However, with temperatures soaring into the '90s and summer headed our way, I was really interested in seeing how these rich concoctions could be lightened up and chilled.

Jeremy Findel, Director of Operations for **The Belmont** and **The Spanish Kitchen**, two very different but equally popular places with those young, beautiful and single, believes understanding your bar patron is a must, right down to how their tastes may vary by season and by the restaurant. "The Spanish Kitchen is designed to bring people together and generate high energy with its wide open space," Findel notes. "Mexican food is tailor made for a group atmosphere. And instead of having a 'happy hour,' we instead hold a 'Hora del Amigo'—an 'hour of friends.'"

Adds Eric Clark, who works double duty as Spanish Kitchen's General Manager and Beverage Director, "The Spanish Kitchen has earned honors from Citysearch as having the best Margaritas in L.A. for a reason. Because women often prefer lighter foods and drinks, especially in the summer, we offer margaritas with **Remy Red**, **Alizé Gold Passion** and **Alizé Red Passion**. These margaritas compliment lighter things like our Ensalada de Aguacate (avocado) y Papaya, richer items like our cocoa crepes filled with lobster and the fourteen varieties of enchiladas we offer on Enchilada Mondays."

After an indulgent afternoon party with manicures and massages, friend Laura Messian and I finished the day of record-

breaking heat on a cool note with the Roja Pasion de Amor Margarita (Red Passion Alizé, Sauza Tequila and Cointreau) and the Pasion Preciosa Margarita (Gold Passion Alizé, Sauza Tequila and Cointreau), both graced with light sugared rims. As Jeffrey promised, these astonishingly light variations on margaritas washed down their fantastic, jalapeno-spiked guacamole, enchiladas and decadent Capriotada (bread pudding) beautifully.

A few blocks up the way, **The Belmont**, is quickly shifting in reputation from a best kept secret for a girls' getaway to an L.A. nightlife mainstay. As Laura, music industry executive Monica Wild and I were ordering their decadent macaroni and cheese and tuna tartare appetizers, we could not help but notice a group of energetic twenty-something professional women who by the looks of things clearly made The Belmont their second home. Said group spokesperson J.C. Cortez, "I told all my friends about happy hour here because it's the perfect place to enjoy some serious catching up and quality girl talk. Better still, pretty much all of their drink menu, and not just well drinks are offered for half price."

According to Belmont Manager Gary Weddle, the homemade rum and vodka infusions are considered cool choices as summer approaches. However, bartender Peter Abbey notes that sweet liqueur drinks will always appeal to women who regard cocktails as an end-of-the-week reward. With **Remy Red**, Abbey created a refreshing raspberry martini with grenadine and

a few other things he likes to keep a secret. His best-selling liqueur creation is his **Godiva** White Chocolate Martini.

Notes Weddle, "The Belmont is all about the vibe, about attracting quality people who like good conversations and have a great sense of humor. Ideally, life here is all about hugs and handshakes."



■ Editor at Large Elyse Glickman and friend Laura Messian chill out with Clark's cool Alizé creations and the restaurant's kicky guacamole.



■ Belmont Bartender Peter Abbey is known for his panache with classic drinks and infused rums and vodkas, but gets lots of requests for his Remy Red Raspberry Martini and Godiva White Chocolate Martini.

Cypress Brightens Up

The creative team of talented Australian veteran winemaker Philip Shaw of Rosemount fame, his son Daniel Shaw (red winemaker for J.Lohr) and J. Lohr winemaker Jeff Meier, have embarked on a new winemaking direction for the Cypress label.



Irrespective of maturity, each varietal is harvested at the peak of bright fruit flavor. Fermentation and aging take place in stainless steel for superior fruit intensity.

The wines are sealed with the modern Stelvin closure to ensure that these bright fruit flavors and aromas remain untainted in every bottle.

The Cypress 2003 Chardonnay (Sacramento Delta and Monterey Arroyo Seco regions) is light and certainly bright. Its fruit forward essences of pears, nectarine and pineapple make it a delightful salad wine and a summer sipper.

Cypress 2002 Shiraz blends a small amount of Petite Sirah and Zinfandel to create an intense bouquet of deep blue and blackberry fruit with the hint of black pepper common to Shiraz. Grown mostly in Paso Robles, the wine shows structure and approachability.

If you like blueberries, then Cypress 2002 Merlot (primarily Paso Robles fruit) offers up exquisite hints of this charming aroma along with violets and black cherry.

All retail for a suggested price of \$10. (Wine Warehouse)

Crafted For the Carb-Conscious

The first lower carbohydrate wine created for carb counters is introduced by Brown-Forman wines.

The names One.6 Chardonnay and One.9 Merlot communicate the respective carb count, making it easy for consumers to keep track.

The California wines are a result of careful grape selection, dry fermentation and specific blending to maximize flavor and produce a consistent low-carb count. (Young's Market)



"2" Cool!—Coke Goes Carb-Conscious

Although Diet Coke has been a smash hit for many years, for some people, there really isn't "nothing like the real thing..." In these carb-conscious times, however, there is still an overwhelming desire to find an alternative. Coca-Cola hopes that its latest offspring, "C2," will fit the bill with a formula that's "half the carbs, half the calories and all the great taste." And what better venue to premiere C2 than at the MTV Movie Awards Silver Spoons event in Hollywood, with a guest list that included a mix of alt-rock heroes, fashion forward icons and acting talent from mainstream and independent films?

C2's cheery red tent stood out as a focal point at the Americana-themed event, and featured a few bells and whistles that quite literally turned C2's introduction into a real product "launch."

Once the can is in hand, there was a moment of truth. Would the experience be the classic All-American taste enjoyed for generations or an 80s "New Coke" flashback? We are pleased to report C2 tastes the way Coke is meant to taste, minus some caloric and carb baggage. Rock on!



■ Ticket to Ride: Sean Kanan, star of "Bold and the Beautiful" and several independent films, and rising star Lisa Foiles ("All That," "Malcolm in the Middle") take the new C2 for a spin.

Just as L.A. is a company town in certain respects, so is San Juan. Stroll into any fine

hotel, restaurants or dance club and you stand a good chance of being greeted by a bat. The Bacardi Bat, to be exact. He graces the cocktail menus, uniforms, bar area posters, and of course, a significant number of bottles on the bar.

This bat, who makes himself at home at establishments and retailers throughout California and Nevada, was designated in 1862 by Amalia Bacardi, wife of founder Don Facundo Bacardi Massó, at the original distillery in Santiago de Cuba. As legend has it, a flock of bats surged from the rafters when she opened a door inside the emerging distillery. Because the bat is regarded in many Latin cultures as a symbol of prosperity and good luck, she took it as a very good sign. Six generations later, Bacardi is still family-owned, yet positioned firmly as a leading purveyor of rum. Today it has 500 employees on-site and 6,800 worldwide, as well as distilleries, bottlers and other facilities dotting the globe. In addition to the family of rums, which includes Bacardi 1873 (the only product not available in the continental United States), they also own Martini & Rossi, Dewars Scotch and Bombay Gin.

LOCAL HISTORY

Casa Bacardi in neighboring Cataño isn't just a factory tour, but a showcase for local history, the best of old and new distillery technology and the company's innovative beverage marketing. Though the company store and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe/Félix Candela-designed tasting pavilion are the first things visitors see, the heart and soul of the experience rests in the Visitor's Center, opened on April 23, 2003. The \$7 million, 17,000 square-foot edifice is outfitted with great historical recreations (the original Cuba distillery, their private Prohibition-era nightclub, the office used by first and second generation Bacardi fam-

READY TO RUM-BA

ROAD TRIP: CASA BACARDI, CATAÑO, PUERTO RICO

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

ily members authenticated with beautifully preserved business documents and rosters), guided recorded tour devices and a wall of classic print and television advertising campaigns.

For technology buffs, the more industrial rooms also aim to please. With the kind of colorful, user-friendly displays found in a big city science museum, the various steps of their distilling and recycling processes are explicitly depicted. A couple doors down, displays featuring the full line of Bacardi's products will remind one of a parent showing off his children's sports trophies. The tour guides also specifically point out the company's ongoing commitments to the community and environment. Among Casa Bacardi's other fine points is a rooftop observation deck with vistas of Old San Juan on one side and an impressive view of the distillery's expansive facilities on the other.



BACARDI UNIVERSITY

The Visitors' Center also has all bases of knowledge covered for trade and industry visitors to the complex. While general audiences learn about Bacardi's time-honored traditions, the back of the edifice is home to "Bacardi University." For the past few years, the little campus has hosted local college groups (offering classes in subject areas like chemistry, marketing, merchandising and bartending) and high school groups (responsible liquor use and deterring teen drinking). As of May 2004, the concept opens itself up to buyers, beverage managers, restaurateurs and other professionals who want to learn practical aspects of Bacardi's history, manufacturing techniques and how to best utilize their products in their establishments back home. For more information on classes and enrollment, call 787-788-0400 or go to www.bacardi.com.

HERE'S TO YOU, BACARDI!

Imagine L.A.'s Skybar with a laid-back vibe, insanely cool roofless "waterfall" elevators and beachfront view, and you've got The **Water Club's** rooftop bar in San Juan's hopping Isla Verde district. Their most popular drink is the ever-reliable Cosmopolitan, but with Bacardi Light replacing traditional vodka.

If fun, flirty fruity drinks inspire you, head to the **Yerba Buena**. While it features one of the better mojitos in town, it is so tempting to order up one of their frothy delights to pair with such zesty appetizers as *barriquitos* (pumpkin fritters), *bolitas* (cheese fritters), and *pastelillos de carne* (meat turnovers). San Francisco-based writer Jack Boulware and I just had to make a second trip back to enjoy their **Brisas del Malecón** (Bacardi Light, Island Oasis Papaya and the Yerba Buena herb) and **Bestito** (Bacardi Light, Island Oasis Pina Colada, Banana Liqueur and coconut flakes). Perfecto!

The **Parrot Club**, located in Old San Juan, has libations that work great with their vibrant menu. What to order with their exceptional ceviches, flavorful pork dishes and much-loved red snapper special? Their **Parrot Passion**, a sunny, frozen mix of fresh orange and passion fruit juices, Bacardi Limón and Triple Sec.

Though the **Mojito** is billed as Puerto Rico's national drink, we discovered it comes in as many different forms as there are restaurants. However, the bartender holding court at Casa Bacardi's recreated private 1930's Havana Club served up a great, basic recipe:

- Muddle half a lime with 4 teaspoons of cane sugar and 12 sprigs of fresh mint in a Collins glass,
- Add a tablespoon of warm water to bring out the flavors and stir.
- Remove the crushed lime
- Add two drops of bitters, ice, and 1 1/2 ounces of Bacardi Carta Blanca (light/dry rum)
- Fill with soda water while stirring and garnish with a mint sprig and a slice of lime.



ROADTRIP

RUM 101

Thanks to William Ramos, tour guide and lead Bacardi P.R. officer, we had the opportunity to experience a real taste of Bacardi University. On this particular day, our course of study was becoming a "Rum Sommelier" to readily distinguish differences between five of Bacardi's best-selling products in order to stock, mix and market them most effectively.

Though the 11:00 a.m. class is not exactly happy hour (especially when you consider that it was 7:00 a.m. in Los Angeles), Ramos told us early morning was the best time to sample since our taste buds had not been altered and we were better able to detect impurities. Like wine tasting, there were several criteria used in evaluation: color, nose (scent), thickness of "teardrops" (viscosity), taste and finish. Ramos also explained the difference between "agualerdiente" and "redestilado" --- filtration techniques and how they affected the flavor of the different rums.

The first of the five we tried was worldwide favorite **Bacardi Light** (40% alcohol). The fast, thin teardrops running in the glass suggested it would be an excellent mixer. Likewise, its "nose" was a fruity and ester-y (floral) aroma with some woody notes from charcoal aging that suggest vanilla, oak and almond which further renders it a great alternative to vodka since the flavors blend nicely with fruit juices and other cocktail components. Next up was **Bacardi Gold**, aged for two years, with a nuttier and woodsier nose, flavors that hit the middle of the tongue and a peppery, drier finish. However, its mild body makes it just as versatile as the first on its own or for cocktails.

Bacardi Reserva, aged three years, has a heartier body and a nose where vanilla and dried fruits (apricot, orange peel, dried plum) dominate. It hits the tongue warm and mellow before finishing with a pepper-y bite. Ramos mentioned this was best served alone or used in cooking and made a great sauté for shrimp or steak. **Bacardi Select** could be the most "tropical," with its "banana ester" nose, medium body and taste that starts woody and gets fruitier, and a warm finish. Ramos points out that this Bacardi is ideal for pina coladas, punches, daiquiris and Manhattans. The **Bacardi 8 Años**, one of the company's top-of-the-line products, could very well be a nice alternative to cognac. Its body is medium-to-heavy (slow flowing teardrops, Ramos points out), and the nose is spice first, then almonds, vanilla, apricot and nutmeg on a background of oak. The best way to serve it? With a small orange peel garnish and a fine cigar.

Julian Lennon's Hitting the Right Notes At Blowfish

Though Julian Lennon enjoyed several successes on the pop charts during the 80s, it turns out that the buzz surrounding his restaurant, **Blowfish—Sushi To Die For**, is what's really music to his ears. Though the restaurant opened earlier this spring (and was covered in our Sake feature in the May 2004 issue), the mid-May party celebrated many things... the 40th birthdays of his and fellow partner Jason Teplitsky, the restaurant's official "grand opening" and his long-awaited return to L.A. where he was reunited with friends like actress/Screen Actor's Guild president Melissa Gilbert, Judd Nelson, Natasha Gregson Wagner and Josh Todd of Buckcherry.

Though he says he leaves the wine and sake purchases "to the pros," he is dedicated to making sure the overall bar presentation flows with his vision for the restaurant. Over the course of the evening, the admitted sweet tooth shared **Kishu Japanese Plum Wine**, **Veuve Clicquot Champagne** and a seductive array of Blowfish's signature cocktails with guests. (Karen—since Patterson's all about the brands, if we can come up with two or three other brands of liquor or spirits he shared with his friends and colleagues that night, that would please Meridith, my editor, quite a bit)

"I always had an interest in food, and I had plans to go to culinary school (before I was approached by the music industry)," Lennon confided with great warmth and candor just a couple of hours before the party. "Although music was the focus for a while, being on tour exposed me to a lot of different styles of restaurants, cuisines, wine and beverages. As it turned out, I learned an awful lot about the restaurant business, and realized that food and music come from the



■ Julian Lennon celebrates his 40th birthday and the quick ascendance of his West Hollywood hot spot Blow Fish with Kishu Japanese Plum Wine. Here he is pictured with Elena Shenkar, his fellow owner/partner.

same places and both celebrate life. The ideal dining experience should be sensory Zen, whimsy and sexiness rolled into one."

Many may be surprised to learn that Lennon is not new to the restaurant business, as he has brought name and attention to detail and quality to the destination Red in Majorca, Spain. However, he insists that he's more interested in building his reputation in fine dining slowly and with intent rather than going for the quick ascent "up the charts."

"I am in the process of creating something with staying power, not a another celebrity vehicle, because I love food so much," Lennon says. "In a way, the process has been like writing a song, finding the right ingredients to come up with something wonderful. And just as a good song becomes a hit, it's delightful instant gratification when the mix of food, wines, ambiance and service brings smiles to people's faces." -
Elyse Glickman

SUMMER ON THE ROCKS

Making a big noise with vodka cocktails, as served at SoCal's most iconic rock bars and summer happenings

By Elyse Glickman

THOUGH THE SUNSET STRIP HAS GONE UPTOWN AND UPSCALE THANKS TO STRETCHES LIKE SUNSET PLAZA, WITH THEIR FASHION-ABLE CAFES AND EURO-CHIC PATRONS, ROCK HISTORY IS STILL ALIVE, WELL AND STILL UNFOLDING JUST A FEW BLOCKS WEST OF THE SPIFFY CORRIDOR AT LOCALES LIKE THE RAINBOW, THE ROXY AND THE WHISKY.

The spirit also rocks on at other clubs throughout Southern California and at special events and openings where musicians and other creative types sometimes get the opportunity to show off their other talents. Vodka, like a rock musician, is a spirit that can be all things to all audiences, can readily change with the times and fashion, and mixes well with the crowds, so we only thought it was fitting to check out some rocking hotspots and see where vodka fits—be it in a classic form or in a more progressive mode.

Over and Beyond The Rainbow...

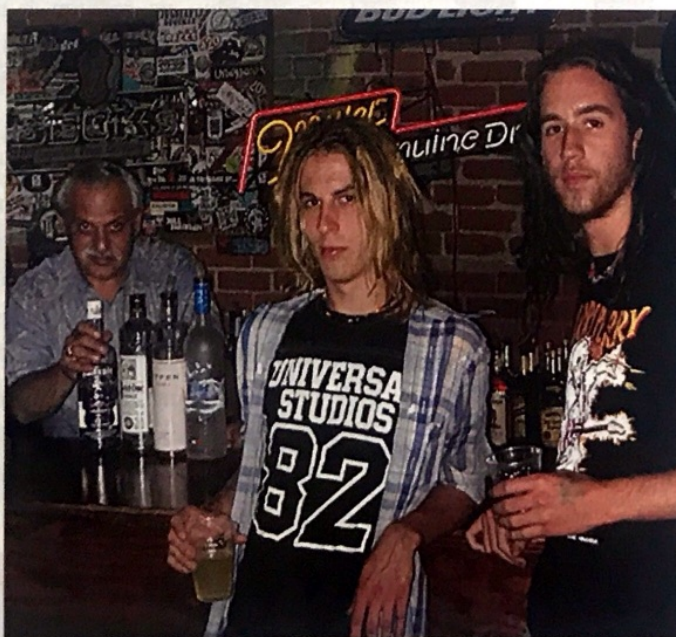
When it comes to music clubs, there is no doubt that the 35 year-old Rainbow Bar & Grill and nearly 40 year-old Whisky A Go-Go stand as the cornerstone of the Sunset Strip's rock community. While the simple, no-frills The Whisky is the starting point for many rock groups (i.e. The Doors), The Rainbow (which is arguably the west coast's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in its own right, evidenced by an awe-inspiring and growing collection of memorabilia and photos) is the quintessential meeting place for both established rock stars and up-and-comers.

Though the bars at The Rainbow have everything any rocker could ever want, according to its president Mikeal A. Maglieri and ten-year veteran bartender Maria Purdue, vodka is the most requested spirit with both neighborhood regulars as well as some of the more famous clientele. However, the ways in which vodka is served up are as diverse as the musicians taking their place at the bar. With a boldness any rocker would be proud of, Maria prepared some of the Rainbow's greatest hits, which like the musicians themselves, have inspired many stories:

***The Classic Apple Martini:** Guitarist Phil



■ Rainbow Bar & Grill President Mikeal A. Maglieri and mixologist Maria Purdue make it their business to rock the worlds of a loyal, diverse clientele with a variety of vodka classics and specialties.



■ The Whisky's Greg Kevorkian (who also serves as Office Manager) sets up the bar for the evening's rock showcase while musicians Danny Pritchett (right) and Scott Struhs of the up-and-coming band Diminished, kick back after their sound check.

Sasson's favorite blends Ketel One, Apple Pucker and a squeeze of lime.

***The Citron Lemon Drop,** a favorite of Velvet Revolver/Guns 'n Roses member Gilby Clark, mixes Absolut Citron, raw sugar and fresh lemon slices.

***Maria's take on the Bloody Mary,** a favorite of Gilby's bandmate/80s guitar legend Slash, is Absolut Citron, Bloody Mary mix, Tabasco, Worcester Sauce, squeezes of lemon and lime, celery salt and other seasonings.

***Lemmy,** lead vocalist for pioneering metal band Mötörhead and one of the most regular of the Rainbow's regulars, digs the **Mandrin Kamikaze**, which Maria fashions with either Absolut Mandrin or Smirnoff Oranj, lime juice and an orange twist.

***Maria says that rockers with a sweet tooth enjoy her "Electric Lemonade,"** with Absolut Citron, Blue Curaçao and 7UP.

Says Maglieri, "While Tequila was it a few years ago at The Whisky and The Rainbow, Vodka is the hands-down favorite at both of our establishments. At the Rainbow, people often like the cocktails while at The Whisky many people prefer their vodka like their rock and roll—straight-ahead and simple. The fact is that there is no spirit more versatile. We do very well with Ketel One and

ROCKIN' VODKA

SUMMER ON THE ROCKS

really like Smirnoff's assortment of flavors, especially given that women clientele love Cosmos and Appletini's.

Going in Style...

At the opening of Gallery 1988, actress/rocker Taryn Manning (of the band Boomkat) launched her designer clothing line (Born Unicorn) with her business partner amid the edgy backdrop provided by photographers participating in "Killer Dreamer: A Photo Show."

To rev up the mood, Armadale Vodka, a smooth two-grain (barley and wheat) spirit from Scotland, was served up in traditional forms (Cosmos and apple-tinis) and more modern ways (with Red Bull or one of the many flavors of Virgin cola) as models danced on platforms showing off Manning's updated early 80s aesthetic.



■ Taryn Manning (holding Armadale Vodka) and friends rock to the beat of retro-chic fashion.

Store-way to Heaven...

When the mercury rises, the jackets, wallets, hearts and minds of fashion-conscious Angelinos open. This is perhaps the reason why so many unique stores open or host special charity shopping nights, not only with cutting edge designer labels, but also with cocktails made from the trendiest spirits and liquors around. In the Studio City, Ehlan on Ventura Boulevard kicked off the summer with a fundraiser for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation with



■ Actor Raphael Sbarge and bartender David Crisman toast the great taste of Alameda, CA-based Hangar One Vodka, the perfect compliment for warm summer nights.

premium Hangar 1 "Mandarin Blossom" Vodka, served up by bartender David Crisman and enjoyed by such celebrity guests as actor Raphael Sbarge (best known for his work on "The Guardian" television series), who is also a co-owner of the new Sugar Babies, providing stylish alternatives for "Rocker Moms, Not Soccer Moms" and their lucky offspring. Hangar 1's other exotic flavors include intense Kaffir Lime and "Buddha's Hand" Citron (one of the oldest citrus fruits in existence, originating in China).

A Passage to India

Tantra brings East Indian Spice and British Sophistication to Silver Lake

Although the funky boutiques and hipster bars helped Silver Lake re-emerge as one of L.A.'s "it" neighborhoods, **Tantra** just may be the establishment that shows where the neighborhood is headed as it continues its upscale climb. Conceived and owned by Navraj Singh and son R.J., Tantra is a balance of substance and style. On the "style" front, designer Sat Garg implements the elegant silks, lighting fixtures and cushions which give the space a traditional touch along with modern contrasts of flat screen televisions projecting classic Bollywood movies. Chef Vineet Bhatia, meanwhile, gives the establishment its substance with a menu that draws upon his experience at London destination restaurant Zaika, which in turn is carried out by Executive Chef Sanjay Kumar.

The overall result is a restaurant that presents an alternative to what most are familiar with when it comes to Indian dining. Their vest pocket-sized menu is packed with everything from the familiar (chicken Tikka, lamb curry "Rogan Josh," black and yellow lentil dishes, Saag Paneer spinach with cheese) to their own clever reworkings of Indian favorites (samosa with mango and cheese, spinach and tofu or even chocolate, cheese and mango ice cream, tandoori smoked eggplant, catfish masala, sweet and sour potato salad). The drink menu follows suit with a beguiling mix of cocktails. With so many exotic flavors and spices in one place, Navraj and R.J. Singh know that a well-stocked bar is an essential finishing touch that will crown the entire experience.

Without hesitation, Navraj Singh will tell you that Young's Market rep, Mike Miller, is somebody who is a "privilege to work with." R.J. adds, "He could sell us anything, but he spends a lot of



■ Navraj and R.J. Singh work closely with Young's Market to ensure their SuperWell will be as lively and enchanting as their food menu and vibrant ambiance.

quality time with us and Sanjay to make sure that we are buying and using things in ways that will compliment the different kinds of flavors in our food as well as allow our bar staff to be as creative with the cocktail menu as we are with the food and the décor." Then, with great inspiration, Navraj rattles off some of the products that make their SuperWell all the more so: Ketel One and Ketel One vodka, Wyborowa Vodka, Glenlivet, Jamison, Chambord and the rums of Bacardi.

"We approach the restaurant with the Indian custom of making everybody feel as if they have come home," says Navraj. "Though we have had people like Demi Moore and K.D. Lang dine with us, we not only make it a practice to protect their privacy but make all the other guests feel like they are celebrities in their own right." R.J. then provides an example: "We have a signature, off-the-menu cocktail called the Tantrini, with vodka and Finest Call mango purée. By personally offering that to guests, we are making them feel good and opening the door for them to come home to us time and again."

— Elyse Glickman



■ Remy Martin, Finlandia, Turi, Ketel One, Herradura and Chambord make Tantra's drink menu and well among one of the most imaginative in artsy Silver Lake.

WHAT'S SHAKIN'

CARPE DIEM, BABY!

In a sea of sleekly packaged, health-minded non-alcoholic teas, waters and infusions, Carpe Diem has been quietly but confidently making its way into an increasingly competitive marketplace over the past three months. In Southern California, the fermented (but non-alcoholic) herbal soft drinks are currently available at boutiques and better gourmet food shops.



■ To Life! Carpe Diem beverages are introduced to guests of the MOR cosmetics launch in Studio City.

Produced by the Austria-based Stock Vital GMBH & Co., owned by Red Bull founder Dietrich Mateschitz, and quaintly packaged in graceful, antique-y brown bottles and labels, the three varieties of Carpe Diem evoke the flavor and body of fine alcoholic beverages but impart definitive and desirable health benefits. Kefir, which derives from the Caucasus plant and elderberry juice, has the look and flavor of a fruit-forward cabernet while providing the body with anti-oxidants and bolstering the body's natural defenses. Ginkgo, a blend of

green tea, dextrose and Ginkgo extracts, resembles a cider and is intended to improve mental performance, concentration and memory. Kombucha, which combines an herbal tea blend and sucrose fermented with lactobacilli found in Kombucha mushrooms and has the hue of a fine Belgian raspberry beer and a subtle berry-like taste, boosts the immune system and metabolism. — *Elyse Glickman*