

BEVERAGE AUTHORITY

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THE BIG PICTURE Spirits' Rising Stars

Eric Schmidt is the Manager of Information for M2Media360 and the Beverage Information Group (B.I.G.), who in addition to publishing *Cheers*, *Beverage Dynamics* and *Stateways* trade magazines, compile statistical compendiums covering every aspect of the beverage alcohol industry.



Centered and self-effacing, Schmidt turns crimson at mere mention of his prominence within the beverage industry. Humility notwithstanding, Schmidt is the undisputed dean of industry statistics. His lightning fast recall makes him a veritable walking database of case depletions and quantifiable beverage trends. Were he to spill everything he knows about the on- and off-premise industries in the U.S. to our enemies, we'd all be in trouble.

Among the many reams of charts, scales, indexes and pie charts Schmidt produces and B.I.G. publishes, detailing beverage sales for 2009, is a fascinating analysis dubbed, *Spirits' Rising Stars*. It tracks the brands that have largest increases in case depletions from one year to the next. To be considered for recognition, a brand must be less than 5-years old and have experienced significant growth in sales.

At the head of the pack is *New Amsterdam Gin* from E. & J. Gallo. Its sales leapt from 100,000 9-liter cases in 2007 to

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Mixology Events in the News

Tales of the Cocktail

July 8th - 12th in New Orleans, Louisiana

Tales of the Cocktail is the largest and most prestigious cocktail-oriented event in the world. The annual festival is a celebration of culture and cuisine that pays tribute to the extraordinary life and times of the American cocktail. Now in its 7th year, the five-day event will bring together the best and brightest of the international drinks community—award-winning mixologists, authors, writers, bartenders, chefs and cocktailian gurus.

Tales of the Cocktail will be held in New Orleans on July 8th-12th. The schedule of events includes a series of spirited dinners, demonstrations, tastings, competitions, seminars, book signings, tours and parties, all of which will be accompanied by flights of the breathtaking cocktails. Last year, more than 16,000 people poured into the historic French Quarter to attend the Tales of the Cocktail.

This year's roster of participants reads like a Who's Who of mixology, including such celebrated folks as:

- Gary Regan, mixologist, author, journalist and celebrated drinks writer
- Ted Allen, Emmy Award winner and star of "Chopped"
- Kevin Brauch, host of "The Thirsty Traveler"
- Dale DeGroff, author, celebrated mixologist, a.k.a. "King Cocktail"
- Tony Abou-Ganim, celebrated mixologist, a.k.a. The Modern Mixologist
- Audrey Saunders, mixologist, owner/operator of The Pegu Club, New York
- Charlotte Voisey, award-winning mixologist and Hendrick's Gin brand ambassador
- Julie Reiner, co-owner and creative director of the Flatiron Lounge, New York

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PRODUCT PROFILE by Robert Plotkin

Adult Sno-Cones Beat the Heat

Ingenuity in the drinks business is huge. Particularly now when people are finding the going a little harder, creativity and innovation really helps to break up the week. No better example than the craze stirred by Midori's promotional launch of Sno-Cones, a cool and enjoyable way of enjoying summer fun in the sun.

Sno-Cones are a new twist on an old-school treat. Take a rounded scoop of flaked ice, plop it into the rather

groovy looking Midori Sno-Cone cup, pour a jigger of the good stuff over the ice and you've created a lip-smacking slice of retro-heaven. Not many drinks will provoke more smiles than *Midori Sno-Cones*.

At a recent event I learned firsthand what a blast these adult snow cones can be. Manning the Sno-cone by Midori Machine, I began serving the frosty delights laced with Midori. The guests at the soiree were clearly enjoying the drinks and the summer afternoon.

That's when inspiration struck. I grabbed a mixing glass, poured in some vodka, orange juice and a healthy dose of Midori, shook the contents vigorously and strained the cocktail directly on top of a half dozen waiting Sno-Cones. Less than

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Notable New Releases

Beefeater 24—New to the top-shelf is super-premium Beefeater 24. Two years in development, the new blend of 12 hand-selected botanicals includes grapefruit peels and rare Japanese and Chinese teas. It's bolder than its predecessor yet unmistakably from the famed London distiller. Beefeater 24 is juniper-forward with delectable citrus and spicy notes. It has a marvelously satiny, medium-weight body and a lingering, palate-warming finish. (Pernod-Ricard)

Xanté—One of the more irresistible products to cross our shores in quite some time is Xanté, a sensual liqueur from Europe made with sweet Belgian pears and a sophisticated blend of well-aged cognacs. The brandies came from select distillers and were aged in a minimum of 4 years in Limousine oak. When chilled the elegant liqueur makes an ideal aperitif or luscious addition to cocktails. It has a voluptuous body, an enticing bouquet and a long-lasting, fruit-laced finish. Be prepared to be wowed. (Kindred Spirits)



Señor Frog's 100% Agave Tequila—More than 3 million Americans a year frequent a Señor Frog's restaurant and cantina in Mexico and the Caribbean. It ensures a warm stateside reception for recently released Señor Frog's 100% Agave Tequila. Finally available in the U.S. are the Señor Frog's Plata—dry, aromatic with a cocoa-laced finish—and 4-month Reposado, which is light-bodied with a warm, vanilla and caramel finish. After the first sip you'll be asking yourself, "What took them so long?" (Batrachian Spirits)

Van Gogh Açai-Blueberry Vodka—In addition to being amazingly delicious, Van Gogh Açai-Blueberry Vodka may well be the healthiest spirit on the market. It's steeped with antioxidant-rich fresh blueberries and açai berries from the Amazon rainforest. They imbue the lavender-tinted vodka with a lush, medium-weight body and a slightly sweet, citrus and berry bouquet. The generous palate delivers a boatload of long-lasting flavors that are best described as luscious. There's a little slice of paradise in every drop. (Van Gogh Imports)



Maestro Dobel Diamond Tequila—Among the most innovative products making its American debut is ultra-premium Maestro Dobel Diamond Tequila. It's a blend of barrel-aged tequilas filtered to remove any trace color and impurities. The crystal clear result is highly aromatic with all of the depth and complexity of an añejo tempered by the glorious simplicity of a blanco. Its suggested retail price is \$74.99. (Proximo Spirits)

SKYY Infusions All Natural Raspberry—is a mixologist's dream come true, an unpretentious, skillfully produced spirit made for contemporary cocktails and capable of boosting a drink's flavor rating without adding unwanted sweetness. It's crafted by steeping SKYY Vodka with freshly pressed red raspberries. The infusion is filtered for clarity and bottled at 70-proof so there's no alcohol burn. Like the other equally brilliant infusions now in the SKYY portfolio, this one is chaffing at the bit to have some fun. (SKYY Spirits)



10Cane Rum—is made from the first pressing of sugar cane on the island of Trinidad. The fermented juice is distilled in alembic stills and aged in French oak barrels for 6 months. The rum has a yellow gold hue and a bouquet of herbal and warm pastry aromas. Its body is supple and textured. The entry is soft and semisweet, but by mid-palate the rum begins offering up tantalizing flavors of vanilla, spice and cocoa. The finish is long, delectable. (Möet-Hennessy)

Cold River Vodka—Handcrafted Cold River Vodka from Freeport, Maine is a sensational pot-distilled spirit made from locally grown potatoes and underground spring water. It's a flavor-imbued vodka with a delightful dash of sweetness on the finish. As good as it is, Cold River Blueberry Vodka is bound to grab the headlines. The soul-satisfying vodka is an 80-proof homage to Mother Nature with a voluminous bouquet and a finish like the holy chorus of blueberries. Great stuff. (Maine Distilleries)



Scorpion Reserva Añejo Mezcal—Only the courageous get to enjoy Scorpion Reserva Añejo Mezcal. The 100% agave mezcal is pot-distilled and matured in American oak for a minimum of 5 years. It has the look of old bourbon and a captivating bouquet of vanilla, black cherries and baking spices. It bathes the palate with the semisweet flavors of maple, caramel, vanilla and a lingering dose of smoke on the finish. As for the FDA approved scorpion inside the bottle, it's a harmless observer. (Caballeros Inc.)

Melon Balls in the Limelight



Midori was an immediate hit when introduced in the U.S. in the early 1980s. The emerald green liqueur quickly became a backbar fixture in part because of such drinks as the *Midori Margarita*, *Alien Secretion*, *Sex On The Beach*, and most notably, the *Melon Ball*, which burst into the mainstream like an act of Congress.

The drink is the simple combination of Midori and orange juice. Add in a shot of vodka and the Melon Ball transforms into a *Midori Driver*. Substitute the vodka for a measure of succulent SKYY Infusions Pineapple to create the *Modern Melon Ball*.

But there's no reason to stop there. For example, the *Italian Melon Ball* is an irresistibly delicious cocktail made with muddled cantaloupe, agave syrup, Midori, Limoncello and lemon sour mix. Equally enticing is the summertime staple, *Nassau Melon Sorbet*, a blended variation of the Melon Ball featuring Midori, light rum, orange juice and 2 scoops of lemon sorbet. It's a marvelous way to while away a summer afternoon by the pool.

The Melon Ball has launched innumerable spin-offs, which is testimony of its tremendous popular appeal. Great stuff. —RP ♦

Classic Melon Ball

Highball glass, ice
Build in glass
1 ¼ oz. Midori
Fill with orange juice

Midori Driver

Highball glass, ice
Build in glass
¾ oz. Midori
¾ oz. Vodka
Fill with orange juice

Melon Ball Martini

Cocktail glass, chilled
Pour into an iced mixing glass
2 oz. SKYY Infusions Pineapple
¾ oz. Midori
¾ oz. orange juice
¾ oz. lemon sour mix
Shake contents and strain
Garnish with an orange slice

Tropical Melon

Cocktail glass, chilled
Rim glass with shredded coconut
Pour into an iced mixing glass
1 oz. Midori
1 oz. Premium Coconut Rum
1 ¼ oz. orange juice
1 ¼ oz. pineapple juice
Shake contents and strain



Nassau Melon Sorbet

House specialty glass, chilled
Combine in an empty blender canister
1 ½ oz. Midori
1 ½ oz. Premium Light Rum
½ oz. grenadine
1 oz. orange juice
2 scoops lemon sorbet
Blend thoroughly
Garnish with an orange slice

Italian Melon Ball

Double rocks glass, ice
Combine in an empty mixing glass
Clementine orange, quartered
3-4 pieces cantaloupe, inch-cubes
¾ oz. agave syrup
1 oz. lemon sour mix
Muddle contents and add ice
1 oz. Midori
1 oz. Limoncello
Shake contents vigorously and double strain
Top with sparkling mineral water
Garnish with a lemon slice

Modern Melon Ball

Highball glass, ice
Build in glass
1 oz. Midori
½ oz. SKYY Infusions Pineapple
Fill with orange juice

...Pour any of these over shaved ice and you have yourself a perfect Midori Sno-Cone...

PRODUCT PROFILE *continued from page 1*

a moment later, spontaneous applause erupted and cheers rang out as scores of guests hoisted their Sno-Cone cups high in the air saluting my efforts.

Well, that didn't actually happen, but it could have because those frosty libations—which the assembled dubbed *Melon Snow Balls*—were delicious. After that the creative floodgates were thrown wide open.

The natural follow-up was a dandy drink called the *Margarita Sno-Cone*. We prepared it on the fly using equal parts of Midori and tequila with a splash of

lemon sour mix. The shaken result was a refreshing, great tasting Sno-Cone appropriate even for a formal occasion.

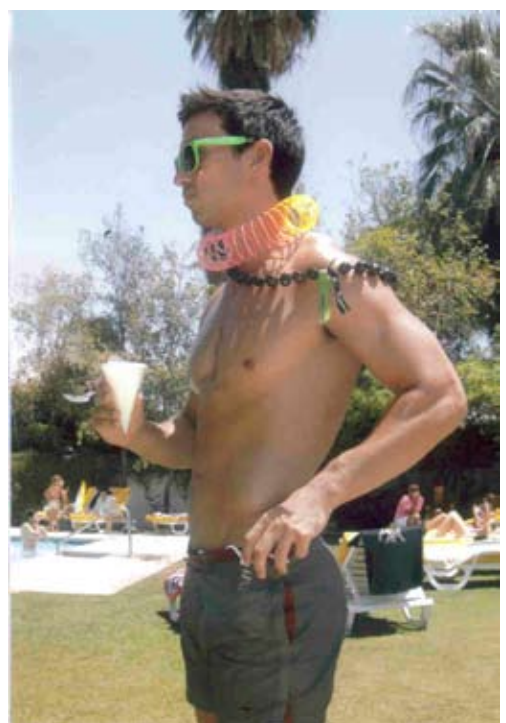
Another favorite featured Midori, SKYY Infusions Pineapple and some pineapple juice. Although not christened with a name that afternoon, the drink was heartily received by the poolside partiers. The final hit of the day was the *Daiquiri Sno-Cone*, which we made with Midori, Coconut Rum and lime sour mix.

As the event wound down, I had an opportunity to slurp one last Sno-Cone. I accepted it with thanks and was struck by its straightforward appeal. It smelled and looked marvelous, tasted like honeydew melon and proved remarkably easy to drink. It was the *Midori Sno-Cone*, which proves again that the best version of anything is often the original. ♦



Sno-coneByMidori.com

Midori Sno-Cone Pool Party



On May 15th Midori launched its ultra-popular Sno-Cone promotion with a celebrity studded pool party in Palm Springs. The well-attended event was hosted by Ali Landry and featured a live performance by '80s sensation Tiffany. Fun in the sun with Midori—people love it. ♦

- Francesco Lafranconi, mixologist and international cocktail authority
- Adam Seger, noted bar chef, sommelier, general manager of Nacional 27, Chicago
- Jack Robertiello, author, journalist, consultant and former editor of Cheers
- David Wondrich, celebrated mixologist, author and drinks historian
- Georg Riedel, 10th generation glassmaker and president of Riedel Crystal
- Donna Hood Crecca, editorial director of Nightclub & Bar Magazine
- Jim Meehan, drinks author, trade writer, PDT, New York
- Ted Haigh, author and cocktail historian, a.k.a. “Dr. Cocktail”

- Simon Ford, mixologist, Plymouth Gin brand Ambassador
- Jared Brown and Anistatia Miller — directors of the Exposition Universelle des Vins et Spiritueux (EUVS)



Tales of the Cocktail is hosted by the non-profit New Orleans Culinary and Cultural Preservation Society. Its mission is to preserve the rich history of the restaurants and bars of New Orleans and the unique culture of dining and drinking famous to the city, while educating locals, visitors, and the hospitality industry about this culinary heritage.

Founder Ann Rogers Tuennerman has created one of the most spirited, thoroughly enjoyable gigs in the country.



Tales is a “can’t miss” event hosted by the coolest city in North America. A grateful and parched nation thanks you, Ann, you’re the mint in our Mojito.

For more information on Tales of the Cocktail, visit the website at TalesoftheCocktail.com or call 504-948-0511. Tickets for all events are now on sale. ♦

BAR TRIVIA

Liqueur—Can You Identify These Backbar Celebrities?



- ANSWERS**
- A. St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur
 - B. ZEN Green Tea Liqueur
 - C. Starbuck's Coffee Liqueur
 - D. Patron Citrónge Orange Liqueur
 - E. Jägermeister
 - F. Tequila Rose Strawberry Cream Liqueur
 - G. Dekuyper Sour Apple Pucker
 - H. PAMPA Pomegranate Liqueur
 - I. Kahila Coffee Liqueur
 - J. HPNOTIQ Liqueur
 - K. X-RATED Fusion Liqueur
 - L. Grand Marnier
 - M. GranGala Triple Orange Liqueur
 - N. Celtic Crossing Liqueur
 - O. Amaretto Cream Liqueur
 - P. Limonçé Liqueur
 - Q. Cointreau
 - R. Frangelico Hazelnut Liqueur
 - S. Agavero Licor de Tequila
 - T. Clemen Créole Shrub Liqueur
 - U. Chambord
 - V. Midori Melon Liqueur
 - W. Baileys Original Irish Cream Liqueur
 - X. Stock Maraschino Liqueur

Aidan Demarest's Los Angeles



Recently I spent an evening in downtown Los Angeles at The Edison, an ultra-cool lounge located in the basement of a long defunct generating plant. Causal elegance and a killer cocktail repertoire have made the subterranean haunt one of the hottest venues in town. At the helm is Aidan Demarest, beverage director, actor and judge at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition. I spoke with him about life behind bars in LA.

Q: *What prompted you to become a bartender?*

A: I've always loved people and liquor so the job seemed perfect. Probably the worst gig I've had was at a bar that featured only 5 mixed drinks. I worked the Long Island Iced Tea station and poured thousands of the damnable things every night. Even now I can make 30 Long Islands at a time-perfect pour.

Q: *What's the most popular cocktail at the Edison?*

A: It's called the Mistress (made with

vodka, lemon sour, pomegranate and Champagne).

Q: *What's your favorite cocktail to serve?*

A: The Enlightenment, which is prepared with Woodford Reserve, pomegranate and Edison Light Beer. It's simple and covers all the bases.

Q: *Where is your favorite place to go dancing?*

A: Weddings, really! It's way more fun to dance with people who rarely do.

Q: *What songs are on the recently played list on your iPod?*

A: The Black Eyed Peas, Ludacris, Billie Holiday, Kid Cudi, Flo Rida and Soulja Boy. Hells yeah, I'm deep-street...bangin' up the Volvo wagon and dropping the kids at school in Toluca Lake.

Q: *Who makes the best burgers in town?*

A: Hamburger Hamlet on Sunset's old school burger—guaranteed!

Q: *What TV show do you overhear people talking about the most?*

A: Lost...no contest.

Q: *What's your drink of choice?*

A: Tequila.

Q: *What brand of clothing is the most popular at the Edison?*

A: It's between Brooks Bros and probably some kind of Affliction gear. That's what I love about Edison, it attracts a broad cross-section of humanity.

Q: *What is the weirdest/oddest drink someone has requested you prepare?*

A: Easy, vodka, Red Bull and protein powder they brought in a baggie.

Q: *What was the most creative thing someone has pulled to get out of paying for a drink?*

A: A guy told me Aidan Demarest would pick up the check, "We're business partners."

Q: *What famous person would you most like to share a drink with?*

A: Douglas Fairbanks, although he'd probably insist having his own drink.

Q: *What advice do you pass on to rookie bartenders?*

A: Learn the basics of improvisation, because every moment behind a bar requires you to switch gears. Gain as much knowledge as you can. Even at stupid bars, smart people make more money. Stay current and keep your sense of humor.

Q: *What's the best pick-up line you've heard that actually worked?*

A: "You remind me of my wife." ♦

BIG PICTURE continued from page 1

450,000 in 2008, which earned it top honors. At the same time it was awarded two gold medals at the *San Francisco World Spirits Competition*. There must be a connection between the two.

The 2nd place 2009 Rising Star of spirits was **Sobieski Vodka** (Imperial Brands). It's produced by the Polish firm of Groupe Belvedere S.A. The vodka is quadruple distilled in column stills from golden Dankowski rye and soft spring water. Sales of Sobieski increased from 50,000 cases in '07 to 255,000, mirroring its successful track record elsewhere. Sobieski is the bestselling premium vodka in Poland and currently ranked the 7th largest premium vodka brand in the world.

Another world-class vodka brand snagged the honor of being spirit's 3rd Rising Star—**Russian Standard Vodka** (Russian Standard

USA). The bestselling premium vodka in Russia is meeting with similar success here in the States. Its sales jumped 88.9 percent from 9,000 cases in 2006 to 85,000 in 2008. Made in St. Petersburg, Russian Standard Vodka is distilled from winter wheat and glacial waters drawn from nearby Lake Lagoda.

Other Rising Stars enjoying explosive growth include **Sweet Carolina Sweet Tea** (White Rock Distilleries) that debuted in 2008 with 29,000 cases sold, **Lucid Absinthe**, whose sales rose from 5,000 to 25,000 cases and **Zodiac Vodka**. It's sales tripled to 18,000 cases.

Congratulations to everyone associated with these exceptional spirits. You can read about the other Rising Stars at CheersOnline.com. ♦

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