

BEST NEW PRODUCT AWARDS

A flavored whiskey and an approachable rosé spark interest



SKREWBALL

Skrewball Peanut Butter whiskey has seen exponential growth since husband-and-wife team Steven Yeng and Brittany Merrill Yeng launched the brand in San Diego in 2018. The short version of the whiskey's inception is that Steven, a restaurant and bar owner, came up with a peanut butter whiskey shot and Brittany, a chemist, helped him bottle it. Together, they created a brand, expanding beyond California when their product gained national distribution through the Underwood family's Infinium Spirits last year.

The 35% abv Skrewball (\$27 a 750-ml.) is vegan. "It's a natural shot item, but it's also very versatile," Infinium vice president of marketing Marcel Durand told MARKET WATCH sister publication Shanken News Daily earlier this year. "It can be enjoyed neat or on the rocks, and it makes a great complement to an Old Fashioned. People love it in desserts, over ice cream, or in a milkshake."

Skrewball's success comes at a time when U.S. whiskey consumers are increasingly gravitating toward flavored offerings. The flavored whiskey depleted 15,000 9-liter cases in its first six months alone—during which it was sold only in San Diego and Phoenix—and went on to reach approximately 162,000 cases in 2019, according to Impact Databank. For the 12 months ending August 2020, Skrewball reached roughly 500,000 cases.

Though Covid-19 has slowed its growth, Infinium believes the brand could potentially double in size this year. In fact, it appears Skrewball is on the fast track to 1 million cases, with Infinium president Daniel Walker predicting that this milestone will probably be met in 2021. "The numbers are building every month," he says. Walker adds that monthly volume growth of Skrewball is about to "accelerate significantly" because of its new sizes; this summer, Skrewball added 1-liter, 200-ml., and 375-ml. bottles to its lineup, which also includes the standard 750-ml. and 50-ml. options.



THE PALM BY WHISPERING ANGEL

The Palm by Whispering Angel rosé debuted in the on-premise in 2017 and officially launched at retail a year later. It's a sister product to Whispering Angel, a dry wine that's largely credited with sparking the rosé craze in the U.S. Last year, MARKET WATCH named Whispering Angel its Wine Brand of the Year.

Both Whispering Angel and The Palm were founded by Sacha Lichine at Château d'Esclans and are today owned by Moët Hennessy USA, with Whispering Angel accounting for about 90% of the d'Esclans volume. The Palm is a blend of Grenache, Cinsault, and Syrah selected from vineyards in the Côteaux d'Aix-en-Provence appellation. The rosé entices drinkers with its fresh aroma and crisp, fruity notes.

According to Shaw-Ross vice president and national fine wine director Paul Chevalier, The Palm by Whispering Angel (\$17 a 750-ml.) was created specifically to appeal to millennial and Gen Z consumers. With its pale pink hue, its colorful label with palm tree imagery, and its Stelvin screw cap, the wine is more approachable—and more accessibly priced—than other prestigious rosés on the market that might intimidate younger wine drinkers. If rosé is called the entry point into wine, The Palm can surely be called the entry point into rosé.

The Palm by Whispering Angel depleted an impressive 100,000 9-liter cases in 2019, and is expected to approach 200,00 cases this year—and earn Impact Hot Brand Honors—in just its third year on the market. The Palm's success comes at a promising time for rosé, which has certainly established itself as a stand-alone category that has expanded into numerous regions and styles.

Jessica Beebe