

The Monthly Mash

Volume 1.5

Member Owned, Industry Driven



ACSA Mission:

To elevate and advocate for the community of craft spirits producers.

February was a busy month for the American Craft Spirits Association. March is no exception. The Board of director elections are open and we encourage all of our voting members to have their voices heard. Vote now! New friends were made and old friendships reacquainted in Nashville during our 2017 ACSA Distillers Convention and Vendor Trade Show last month. See the highlights below. Look for a survey to further help us with the Craft Spirits Data Project and learn more about a few of our current board members in a Q & A below.

From the Desk of Margie A.S. Lehrman, Executive Director

Just a year ago, I assumed the role of ACSA's Executive Director. Together we've grown in understanding our expanding craft spirits industry.

From in-person meetings such as our convention, to monthly distance learning in the form of webinars, to walking the halls of Congress to fight for the reduction of the FET, to representing you at industry conferences, to strategic planning with the board, to release of the first comprehensive economic study of the craft spirits industry, to speaking with you via phone or email, and to working through a redesign of a soon-to-be-released website, we've made progress. Together.

We cannot stop and rest on our laurels – there is still

much to be done.

A new board will be helping to create a shared vision. Have you voted? Confer with your colleagues in your distillery before casting your ballot as there is one vote per business (your DSP). Elections close on March 17th! If you haven't received your ballot, and you're a voting member in good standing, let us know. We'll resend immediately. The slate of candidates can be found below.

Calling all distilleries to participate in the annual data collection for the Craft Spirits Data Project. Look for an email this week from our partners, Park Street and The IWSR. Your responses, reported in the aggregate, will allow us to again analyze the strength of our industry. The Craft Spirits Data Project has been one of our largest crowning achievements to date, as it is the first truly comprehensive, statically sound data study that represents the many tiers of our industry, and we are thrilled to be able to continue this focus.

The Cornbelt is on fire! Check out the medalists for Best of Show and Best of Class from our 2017 Craft Spirits Judging, with the majority producing in the heartland states. Learn more about another opportunity to introduce your products to a panel of Chicago's finest mixologists and industry experts in the Heartland Spirits Fest taking place in May.

Let's continue to pool our efforts to support growth and foster unstoppable energy within our industry!

Cheers,

Margie



ACSA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

BALLOT CLOSES ON FRIDAY, MARCH 17TH

Vote Now!

18 hard-working, eager, and passionate members of distilleries are vying for the 5 vacant Board positions. ACSA is 100% member-owned, which means that YOU decide who leads the organization. Cast your ballot (one vote for each DSP) for any 5 of the following members:

East

James Montero, Dogfish Head Distilling, DE

Jason Barrett, Black Button Distilling, NY

Scott Maitland, Top of the Hill Distillery, NC

Scott Blackwell, High Wire Distilling, SC

Marlene Steiner, Virginia Distillery Co., VA

Central & Mountain

Phil Brandon, Rock Town Distillery, AR
Stephen Gould, Golden Moon Distillery, CO
Jay DiPrizio, Chicago Distilling Company, IL
Chris Montana, Du Nord Craft Spirits, MN
Courtney McKee, Headframe Spirits, MT
Ryan Montgomery, Montgomery Distillery, MT
Colin Keegan, Santa Fe Spirits, NM
Colton Weinstein, Corsair Distillery, TN
Mark McDavid, Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling, TX
Renee Bemis, Driftless Glen Distillery, WI
Amber Pollock, Backwards Distilling Company, WY

Pacific

Jake Holshue, Rogue Spirits, OR
Kirby Lallas-Lewis, OOLA Distillery, WA

THE CRAFT SPIRITS DATA PROJECT



Last year, ACSA combined efforts with Park Street and the IWSR to collect, analyze, and report on economic data for our craft spirits community. With a media briefing in NYC, we provided solid data about job growth, in-state versus out-of-state sales, and bottom line contribution to the US economy. That data will be updated with a newly released survey, expected to drop on all craft spirits producers within the next week. PLEASE check your email inbox and complete the survey. It is imperative that our community come together and respond to allow us to further report on the success of the growth of the craft spirits producers in the U.S. We will again collaborate with our industry partners to secure updates from the wholesale and retail tier.

2017 ACSA Convention Recap



Over 1000 members of the craft spirits community descended on the Music City for the ACSA Distillers Convention and the Vendor Trade Show. Things kicked off with the WSET Master Series Class hosted at the Corsair Distillery. Attendees spent a jam-packed two days in the classroom before sitting for the exam for certification. Before the convention officially started, we also co-hosted The Tennessee Toast, a craft spirits showcase and silent auction with the Tennessee Guild. Multiple distilleries poured samples of their spirits in Nashville's The Bell Tower.

Ted Townsend, COO of the Tennessee Department of Economic Community Development officially welcomed ACSA to the state, acknowledging the economic contribution distilleries offer while a proclamation was read from Mayor Megan Barry, also extending a hearty welcome.



ACSA's keynote speaker, Ken Grossman shared his journey with Sierra Nevada and encouraged distillers to work hard and follow their dream. With more than 125 vendors sharing their latest product or service, attendees began to explore the multiple halls. The education sessions began soon afterward, with presenters split between three tracks: Marketing/Finance, Technical/Distilling, and Safety, Compliance, and Growth. The education sessions continued over the two days with 29 presentations and close to 60 speakers. The awards dinner, the hallmark of the convention, was sponsored by the RNDC, and attracted over 500 guests. During the awards, more than 130 distilleries were recognized for quality craft products. The awards dinner also marked the inaugural ACSA Achievement Award, which was given to Harry Kohlmann, Ph.D., of Park Street Imports in Miami, FL. The Board of Directors selected Kohlmann for displaying an untiring effort and unwavering dedication to helping promote the craft spirits industry. In particular, Kohlmann's gift of over 1,000 pro-bono hours to the Craft Spirits Data Project reflects a constant commitment to helping the craft spirits producer. A tasting of all of the entrants in the Judging Competition capped off the first day of the convention.



The second day of the convention began with a full-service Bloody Mary bar to welcome attendees back into the Vendor Hall. The education sessions continued through the afternoon followed by a "Last Call Reception," an opportunity for members to officially meet the nominees for the board seats. Nearly all the nominees took the stage to provide reasons for why he/she is running and how he/she would contribute. Attendees turned in their Bingo Cards after chatting with several of the exhibitors. Congratulations to the following winners: Chase Leshner, [Chronicles Distilling](#) (WY); Seth Bauer, [Nelson's Green Brier Distillery](#) (TN); Josh Gardner, [Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling](#) (TX); Cassandra Sunell, [Headframe Spirits](#) (MT); Allan Hall, [Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling](#) (TX); Amber Pollock, [Backwards Distilling Company](#) (WY); Scott Emery, [Barr Hill by Caledonia Spirits](#) (VT); Rebecca Ponder, [Glencoe Distillery LLC](#) (NM); Katie Yurashak, [Headframe Spirits](#) (MT); Sabrina Holland, [Headframe Spirits](#) (MT); Chas Marsh, [Jackson Hole Still Works](#) (WY). A final party at BB Kings closed off the convention, with local craft spirits and live music entertaining all.

The presentations will be made available electronically to all registered convention attendees. Stay tuned for additional information on how to obtain access.

Finally, Pittsburgh was announced as the March 2018 Convention site.



2017 Spirits Judging Results



This past Spirits Competition, held in collaboration with Artisan Spirits Magazine, saw a record number of entries across 39 states. The competition welcomed a talented and diverse group of judges, which included retailers, educators, and journalists. The judges provided tasting notes and detailed critiques, which are being sent to all distilleries that participated in the competition.

Ultimately, the judges awarded 308 awards in gold, silver, and bronze along with 6 Best in Class Distinctions. The

big winner of the night was Long Road Distillers (MI), whose Long Road Aquavit took top honors.

Find a full list of winners [here](#) and meet all of our talented judges [here](#).

Heartlands Spirits Fest

Corn – it starts as a seed and, with any luck, can take an incredible journey to advance its pedigree to a key ingredient in WHISKEY. ACSA will be sanctioning a Whiskey Competition, combined with the Heartland Spirits Fest on May 17th in Chicago at the CH Distillery. Working with the Corn Growers Associations across multiple heartland states, ACSA will help host this event, offering a platform to recognize great whiskey being produced by our craft distillers in the heartlands.

For more information, go to info@hearlandspiritsfest.com. Also look for updates at www.americancraftspirits.org.

A Q&A with Your ACSA Board



We asked three of our Board members to answer a few questions about how they started their distilling career, their favorite moments from the convention, and what they've been working on. Read below to find responses from Tom Jensen of [New Liberty Distillery](#) (PA); Chip Tate, President and Head Distiller of [Tate & Co. Distillery](#) (TX); Mark Shilling, Co-founder of [Revolution Spirits](#) (TX).

Do you have an undergraduate degree and if so, how did you select it? Does it have any application to your work in the distillery today?

TJ: "I have an undergraduate degree in Finance from the University of Notre Dame and a MBA in Marketing from the University of Chicago. I managed a bar at college and enjoyed the people so much that I decided to make the industry my career. I have now been in the liquor industry for over 30 years so the combination of schooling and experience really helps with the distillery as I look after sales, marketing and finance and leave the distilling to our master distiller."

CT: "I have an undergraduate degree in philosophy from William & Mary but also did work in theoretical physics. I also have a Masters of Divinity and Masters of Education. Selection of those degrees had more to do with getting a good liberal education than specific vocational goals, honestly. That said, I still believe that learning how to write and think clearly and analyze problems through that kind of liberal education has served me well in my career as a distiller."

MS: "This is a great question. My undergraduate degree is in Political Science and History but I started out as an Environmental Design student (that's what we called Architecture at Texas A&M.) The reason I mention that is because the single greatest impact on my work at the distillery (as well as my work as a lobbyist) comes directly from that experience, where we focused on creative problem solving. Conceptual Blockbusting by James Adams was an important text in helping me learn how to actively look for better ways to solve challenges. I try to go back and review it every few years and often recommend it to



friends."

What are your highlights from the ACSA Convention in Nashville?

TJ: " The highlights of the convention for me were as follows:

- Ken Grossman's wonderful story of going from brewing in hand-made pots to building the first platinum LEED certified brewery was an inspiration to every craft distiller in the room.
- The outstanding support and enthusiasm from our vendors despite the convention spreading over multiple floors and many nooks and crannies!
- The quality and amount of information provided by the many speakers was of great value to our member distillers.
- The amazing growth in the convention over the past few years really demonstrating the need for a unified voice representing the independent craft distiller community."

CT: "For me, the highlight of the conference was having great opportunities to talk and discuss industry issues with colleagues who I get to see too rarely. The talks were also very helpful. "

MS: "For me, the greatest part of the convention is catching up with old friends and making new friends. The network of distillers around the country that we've created through ACSA has been indescribably invaluable, and I feel like we've created such a helpful, supportive and inclusive community of people who understand that we all benefit by working together for the good of our industry. I thought this year's convention was a great step forward for ACSA and I really enjoyed the breakouts. They get better and better every year. And I also thought the trade show was much improved. I always enjoy wandering around and checking out the booths, and I every year I serendipitously find something that Revolution Spirits just can't live without."



What are a few updates on the ethics side? The board passed a few measures on ethics, can you elaborate on those?

TJ: " We built on the strong code of ethics from the prior year by creating guidelines for our member companies to follow in the areas of [advertising](#) and [social media](#). We take social responsibility very seriously at ACSA, and we needed to make sure that our members have a place to turn to in order to ensure their actions in these areas meet the high standards that we hold ourselves to. We also created a process by which consumers or companies can notify us if they feel a member company has made a mistake. We have outlined [how we will deal with complaints](#) in a fair manner and on a timely basis. We are making these new guidelines and complaint process available on our website and will continue to build more policy

to serve our member companies as we move forward in 2017. "

What are your expectations for the new website for ACSA? How will an updated site help with the organization?

CT: "The new website is going to be a tremendously helpful new tool for ASCA, I think. Since the new platform is database-driven, it will allow our staff to update and add resources with much greater ease. The educational capabilities of the new site will also allow use to build a broader, more searchable and deeper store of resources for the craft distilling community."

What are a few updates on the legislative side, what has the legislative team been working on?

MS: "Well, as I think most everyone knows, the legislative committee has been super focused on the Federal Excise Tax (FET) reduction. In some form or another, we've been working on it for about six years now, and we've made tremendous progress. I know six years seems like forever, but in 'congressional' time I'd say we are slightly ahead of expectations, and we have all of the right things coming together at the right time to get this done. Having Jim Hyland on the team and on the ground in DC everyday has really pushed ACSA into a leadership role on the issue and we've got huge momentum

right now, but we've got to keep the pressure on.

We will also be working on the TTB rewrite of the labeling requirements for distilled spirits, and the members should expect to see and hear more on that once TTB releases the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. We are planning a member survey around it, but the TTB release has been delayed and it does not know when the proposal will be released."

Welcome Newest Voting and Affiliate Members!

ACSA extends a warm welcome to a few of our newest members:

- [Arent Fox LLP \(DC\)](#)
- [Bottle Logic Spirits \(CA\)](#)
- [Briggs of Burton, Inc. \(NY\)](#)
- [Arizona Craft Beverage \(AZ\)](#)
- [Imperial Packaging Corp \(IL\)](#)
- [Kelvin Cooperage \(KY\)](#)
- [Laird & Company \(NJ\)](#)
- [Leverage Legal Group LLC \(NM\)](#)
- [Marble City Still Works \(TN\)](#)
- [Mason Dixon Distillery \(PA\)](#)
- [MASPACK PACKAGING USA \(CA\)](#)
- [Matchbook Distilling \(NY\)](#)
- [Shea Shine Products, LLC \(MA\)](#)
- [Simple Man Distillery \(GA\)](#)
- [Solid Light, Inc \(KY\)](#)
- [Spirits Investment Partners \(IL\)](#)
- [Shelta Cavern Spirits \(AL\)](#)
- [Sugarlands Distilling Company, LLC \(TN\)](#)
- [Traverse City Whiskey Company, LLC \(MI\)](#)
- [The Family Jones \(CO\)](#)
- [Top of the Hill Distillery \(NC\)](#)
- [Two Doors Distilling, Co. \(NC\)](#)
- [Walnut Grove Farms \(KY\)](#)

Find out more about becoming a member [here](#).

Regional Focus: Grand Rapids Michigan



Just a two and a half hour drive from Detroit, and just east of Lake Michigan, sits Grand Rapids. The Midwestern city, like many others, was historically known for its manufacturing, and in Grand Rapids' case: furniture manufacturing. But the Furniture City has since developed an impressive culinary scene with stellar restaurants and a robust drinking scene. Grand Rapids is certainly a popular beer destination, with breweries like Founders, New Holland, Grand Rapids Brewing Co., and Bell's Brewery all in the area. Likewise, craft distilling has made inroads in Grand Rapids and many of the best gastropubs offer fantastic cocktail programs.

Long Road Distillers has produced some world-class spirits, including Long Road Aquavit, the "Best in Show" Winner from ACSA's Spirit Competition. Long Road, Grand Rapids' first craft distillery, makes use of locally-sourced ingredients to craft distinctly Michigan products. The distillery has transformed an old warehouse into a cozy watering hole. New Holland has also been creating spirits alongside their beer. The New Holland Knickerbocker Gin, Freshwater Michigan Rum, Clockwork Orange, and Zeppelin Blends all received awards at the 2017 ACSA Spirit Competition. Nestled in Grand Rapids' North Quarter is Gray Skies Distillery, a grain to glass distillery whose Barrel Finished Hopped Gin received a bronze medal.

Grand Rapids' restaurants have also incorporated local identity into delicious food and drinks. Terra, a farm to table joint in Eastown, features a beer and cocktail program with local breweries and distilleries and celebrates the area's agricultural heritage. Brewery Vivant has brought Belgian and French fare into the local cuisine, making the European gastropub a staple in the Midwestern city. The restaurant resides in an old funeral chapel preserving the history of the building but adding a contemporary flare.

Did You Know?

- The TTB has issued over 2215 DSPs! Find the full list [here](#).
- The TTB has released their annual report. Find it [here](#).
- "When the English tried to replicate Dutch genever to create what eventually would come to be known as gin, they missed the mark significantly. They didn't have an actual recipe; they only knew that it had juniper in it. But when the Brits made theirs, they overdid it with the juniper to the point where it was the dominant flavor. Genever contains far less juniper and often is undetectable in that spirit."
- Cocktail bars are going sustainable. Read about the closed-loop cocktail and way to make cocktail programs more eco-friendly [here](#).

Survey

What do you look for in Spirits Judging Competitions?

[Let us know!](#)

Social Media

Do you have a new spirit release, an upcoming event, or some news to drop?

Follow our social media channels and [Tweet at us \(@craftspiritsus\)](#) or post to our [Facebook Page](#) and we'll be sure to share it! Make sure to use the hashtags #ACSA and #CraftSpirits!

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