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Exclusive: Top Spirits And Wine Wholesalers On Pace For Hard-Earned Growth In 2014, Reports Impact

The Citadelle Gin Reserve Solera 2013 coming soon in the U.S. market

Impact's exclusive report on the U.S. market's top 10 spirits and wine distributors reveals that nearly all of the middle tier's key players are on pace for revenue growth in 2014, but achieving it won't be easy. Five years after the country suffered one of its worst economic downturns in decades, the on-premise channel continues to struggle across much of the U.S. And in markets where that business has recovered, momentum has been lost over the past year, as the upscale casual chains that are so crucial to the success of the spirits and wine trade have endured declines both in traffic and the average ticket.

With overall market conditions tough and both spirits and wine growth slowing in the U.S. market in 2013, 2014 is shaping up to be a challenging year for the leading spirits and wine distributors. "Things really seem to be tightening," says Richard Leventhal, president of New Jersey's Fedway Associates, the U.S. market's 10th largest distributor. "Given the way things are going, it looks like suppliers may hold the line on prices instead of increasing them."

Still, nine of the top 10 U.S. spirits and wine distributors are on pace for revenue growth in 2014—even as one of the harshest winters in recent history has hampered the drinks business across much of the Midwest and East Coast in the first quarter of the year—and they're projecting aggregate growth of around 5% (compared to 2013's 8% rise). They're achieving this solid progress via a potent mix of organic growth and new business—both in existing markets and new territory.

News Briefs:

• **Cognac Ferrand is debuting the Citadelle Gin Reserve Solera 2013 to the U.S. market this month. The French company's latest release from its gin range is aged in three different casks for between two and five months and is then poured into a main solera vat before being bottled to achieve solera aging, the first gin to be produced in this method, according to the company. The casks used are ex-Cognac, ex-Pineau des Charente and American oak casks. The 44%-abv Citadelle Gin Solera Vintage 2013 is available nationwide in the U.S. for a suggested retail price of \$34.99 a 750-ml. Cognac Ferrand proprietor Alexandre Gabriel first released aged Citadelle Gin Reserve Limited Edition in 2008.**

• **Ste. Michelle's Washington state-based Snoqualmie Winery has unveiled a package redesign. Currently available nationwide, Snoqualmie's new bottles, which are made with lightweight, sustainable materials, use 25% less glass than a traditional wine bottle and require less fuel to transport. Their labels, meanwhile, are printed using 100% post-consumer waste materials and feature an updated, more contemporary design. Concurrent with the packaging change, Snoqualmie Winery has simplified its lineup, renaming its "Naked" range to "ECO" and color coding each tier to create better differentiation. Snoqualmie, which recently relocated its production facility to Paterson, Washington, claims to be the state's largest certified organic vineyard.**