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Hanna Lee Communications’ John Barleycorn Awards Application for BERTOUX Brandy

Situation: Launching a New Brandy from California

Hanna Lee Communications, Inc. was approached to launch a new brandy from California, BERTOUX. The spirit is a new blend by Jeff Bell of PDT and Legacy Records, together with Thomas Pastuszak, a noted sommelier who is The NoMad’s Executive Wine Director. The brand has zero awareness or brand equity. Moreover, the reputation of California brandy is generally value-driven, bottom-shelf offerings, rather than something elevated.

The brainchild of Jeff Menashe, an accomplished wine and spirits entrepreneur, BERTOUX Brandy has been blended specifically to shine in cocktails. It seeks to restore the brandy category to its prominence that it enjoyed as a foundational spirit of the first Golden Age of the Cocktail back in the 19th century, before it fell from favor. In essence, BERTOUX Brandy is seeking to change the order of cocktail culture.

Objectives

- Successfully launch BERTOUX Brandy in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco
- Build a community of top bartender advocates in each market to serve as third-party endorsers and developers of cocktail applications
- Create a dialogue around American brandy and its exciting revival as a craft cocktail ingredient, rather than something to be sipped
- Foster an engaged digital community on Instagram via @bertouxbrandy to showcase bartender advocates and serve as a focal point for brandy’s arrival in the mixological scene

A Three-Tiered, Strategic Integrated Marketing Campaign

To get the word out about BERTOUX Brandy, Hanna Lee Communications executed a three-tiered, strategic integrated marketing campaign that seamlessly brought together bartender relations, media relations and social media.

First, BERTOUX Brandy needed “street cred” among craft bartenders. We leveraged the star power of Jeff Bell and Thomas Pastuszak and identified trendsetting bartenders in New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. They, in turn, provided the credibility and on-premise placements that were necessary for reaching out to the media. Second, with this in place, we embarked on a strategic media relations campaign that told the BERTOUX story and put it in the

context of reviving brandy's key role in cocktails. Third, to leverage the heightened awareness of BERTOUX Brandy in the media and among key bartenders, we also created a digital community on Instagram via @bertouxbrandy. It serves as a platform for our bartender advocates and their cocktail creations and as a means to focus on the bartending community's attention on American brandy and its mixological relevance.

1. **Tier One: Bartender Relations**

A spirit that was created for bartenders by a bartender and a sommelier, bartender relations is a critical component of BERTOUX Brandy's outreach. Using the star power of Jeff Bell and Thomas Pastuszak as a calling card, Hanna Lee Communications identified top bartenders who are trendsetters and tastemakers in key markets.

By placing the spirit in the hands of these notables, the agency created and identified genuine fans of the brand that we then leveraged for third-party endorsements, as well as reimagined classic cocktails and next-generation brandy cocktail creations. These luminary bartenders included:

BERTOUX Brandy's bartender fans include: Jillian Vose (The Dead Rabbit), Masahiro Urushido (Katana Kitten), Meaghan Dorman (Dear Irving & Raines Law Room), Aidan Bowie (The Aviary), Dev Johnson (Employees Only), Brian Bartels (Bar Sardine), Nicholas Bennett (Danny Meyer's Cedric's at The Shed), Matthew Belanger (Death & Co), Christine Wiseman (Broken Shaker), Aaron Polsky (Harvard & Stone), Yael Vengroff (The Spare Room), Richard Hargreave (Majordomo), Daniel Zacharczuk (Bibo Ergo Sum), Josh Harris (The Bon Vivants), Kevin Diedrich (Pacific Cocktail Haven), Devon Tarby (Proprietors LLC) and others.

Some of their innovative brandy cocktail creations include a *Pimm's Cup* (Katana Kitten) variation, a Creamsicle-inspired Tiki drink (Harvard & Stone), a reimagined *Grasshopper* (Majordomo), as well as a cross between a *Garibaldi* and a *Negroni* (Bibo Ergo Sum).

Moreover, we communicated the fact that BERTOUX Brandy can be the foundation of cocktails throughout the year, thereby liberating brandy from the proverbial snifter and placing it back in the mixing glass, where it belongs. Its seasonal applications include:

- Spring: Fragrant, floral aromatics are excellent for *Highballs*
- Summer: Bright citrus notes shine in Sour-style drinks, like the *Sidecar*
- Autumn: Deep layers of apple and orchard fruit provide weight for *Manhattans*
- Winter: Hints of dried and preserved fruits excel in *Old-Fashioneds*

2. **Tier Two: Media Relations**

Leveraging the media's spotlight is also crucial in telling BERTOUX Brandy's story and driving awareness. The stories focused on the product launch, but also the return of American brandy as a relevant and timely cocktail ingredient. We leveraged our BERTOUX Brandy bartender advocates as interview subjects, as well as their pioneering brandy cocktail recipes.

As a result of Hanna Lee Communications' focused media relations campaign, the liquid has been celebrated in stories in 87 gatekeeping media outlets that together generated more than 800 million media impressions, including:

The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Food & Wine, Fortune, Forbes, Bloomberg, Cosmopolitan, PUNCH, PureWow, Entrepreneur, Men's Health, Sports Illustrated, SFGate, Market Watch, The Manual, VinePair, DuJour, Us Weekly, Liquor.com, Bartender at Large, Bit By a Fox, Cheers, Imbibe, Beverage Media, Neat Pour and others.

3. Tier Three: Social Media

Hanna Lee Communications also led BERTOUX Brandy's social media efforts to create a strong digital community via @bertouxbrandy on Instagram. In a span of only six months, @bertouxbrandy attracted more than 1,400 craft bartender fans across the nation and abroad who sustain double-digit levels of engagement. It is a platform for showcasing innovative cocktail creations by leading craft bartender fans and a means of reframing the conversation around brandy and its role in elevating cocktails.

The excitement on social media has been reinforced by a groundbreaking video posted on Licensed To Distill's Instagram platform, @licensedtodistill. Produced by Jabin Troth and shot with a GoPro, it captured Jeff Bell making a Sidecar cocktail at PDT. Because of the GoPro's small size and ability to be placed directly on Jeff Bell, the video includes never-seen-before perspectives from the bartender's point of view, as well as a shot from within the ice well. To date, it has been viewed about 300,000 times.

In addition, the agency was instrumental in identifying 120 top social media influencers. A bespoke package was created, including a handwritten note from Jeff Bell, as well as product sample. Many influencers posted in laudatory terms on Instagram about receiving the package, thereby amplifying the buzz.

Results

- Successfully launched BERTOUX Brandy in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco in 87 articles in top-tier media generating more than 800 million media impressions
- Cultivate a community of close to two dozen top bartender advocates on both coasts who serve as third-party endorsers of BERTOUX Brandy and developers of cocktail applications
- Created a dialogue around American brandy and its exciting revival as a craft cocktail ingredient, rather than something to be sipped from a snifter
- Fostered a vibrant digital community of 2,122 craft bartenders on Instagram via @bertouxbrandy with consistently double-digit levels of engagement

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