



BARFLY

STEEPED IN HISTORY

The Halekulani Legacy Collection features spirits dated to milestones in the hotel's rich past

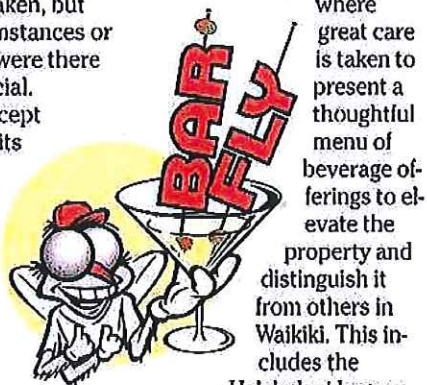
By Jason Genegabus
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The most memorable experiences in life always come with a great story. It's not always about the activity being undertaken, but rather the circumstances or the people who were there that make it special.

The same concept exists in the spirits world. Some people drink just to get drunk, while others understand how to enjoy alcohol responsibly and instead seek meaningful ways to connect their drinks with the environment they're in, the mood that's been set and the people they're drinking alongside in order

to create lasting memories.

At the Halekulani, hotel staff have spent nearly a century perfecting the quintessential Hawaii vacation experience. It even extends to the cocktail program,



where great care is taken to present a thoughtful menu of beverage offerings to elevate the property and distinguish it from others in Waikiki. This includes the

Halekulani Legacy Collection, an exclusive series of liquor hand-picked by Halekulani wine manager and lead sommelier Kevin Toyama.

"I think too often we get caught up in what's Tweetable, what's hip, what's new," he said. "We're not trying to be overly trendy at the Halekulani. We want to stay true to the classics, as that's what the culture of spirits and bartending is about."

Two years ago, Halekulani chief operating officer Peter Shaindlin asked Toyama to update the Legacy Collection with a lineup that was

impressive in terms of the bottles featured and was closely related to the hotel and its rich history.

"He asked me to look into this, in terms of spirits that are older but relate to certain hallmarks at the Halekulani," Toyama explained. "Armagnac has always been one of the more underestimated of the brown spirits."

For the uninitiated, Armagnac is a type of brandy. Distilled from wine made with grapes grown in Gascony region of southwestern France, its history traces back to the 10th century. For generations the spirit has existed quietly in the shadow of cognac; while both are made from wine, the terroir of the grapes used in each affects the overall flavor profile, as do differences in distillation methods.

Cognac is made using pot stills and distilled multiple times, while Armagnac is passed just once through a continuous still, resulting in a spirit that contains more impurities. It's those impurities that add different layers of flavor to the spirit along with the amount of time it spends maturing in French oak casks, which also affect the flavor and color of the

finished product.

As it sits in a barrel, Armagnac tends to get more assertive as it gets older and alcohol evaporates. You only need a small amount in a glass to experience the intense aromas; a few drops on the tongue are all that's needed to unlock the flavors for your palate.

"Armagnac is an acquired taste. Its similarities to cognac are there, but really it's about the region and the soil," said Toyama. "It doesn't have the roundness and richness and sweetness that cognac can have. There's a lot of Armagnac out there just sort of aging quietly without too many people paying attention. It's more of a connoisseur's beverage."

Toyama began making moves earlier this year to acquire a number of historically significant bottles. Working off Shaindlin's directive, he searched for specific vintages that could be tied into the Halekulani's rich history. It took about three months to source the liquor, followed by another two months of working with a local distributor to have the



bottles shipped to Hawaii.

Toyama's efforts were successful, as the Legacy Collection now boasts three bottles of Armagnac Casterade that were aged for 31, 73 and 83 years, respectively. Casterade is the oldest Armagnac producer in France, founded in 1832 and now in the sixth generation of family ownership. Also featured are bottles of Armagnac Goudoulin from 1917 and 1926. Along with the Armagnac, Toyama added bottles of C. Drouin Calvados, an apple brandy distilled in the Normandy region of France, from 1959 and 1983, plus a bottle of Madeira cask-aged wine from Portugal's D'Oliveira winery. Every bottle was produced at a point in time when something important was happening at the Halekulani (see info box).

"You can taste your way through them progressively," said Toyama. "But I think it's not about, dare I say, gluttony, where you want to try all of them in one sitting. It's about savoring and appreciating each one for what it is.

"For me, I'd want to start with the Armagnacs first. I'd go to the Casterade, the 1930 and the 1940 Armagnac, before heading to the Calvados. But every person is different. Every spirit is different. Every vintage is different. You've got to appreciate it for what it is.

"I don't think you should have too many expectations when it comes to drinking spirits. Put yourself out there and just enjoy the moment. Don't expect it to be anything else than what it is."

THE HALEKULANI LEGACY COLLECTION

The spirits and the stories behind them (prices listed per 1.5-ounce serving):

- >> **D'Oliveira "Malvasia" Madeira, 1907 (\$185):** Honolulu businessman Robert Lewers leases a house in Waikiki to journalist Edward Irwin, who creates the Hau Tree Hotel.
- >> **Armagnac Goudoulin "Vieil," 1917 (\$425):** Clifford and Juliet Kimball take over Irwin's lease and change the hotel's name to Halekulani.
- >> **Armagnac Goudoulin "Vieil," 1926 (\$375):** Waikiki resident Arthur Brown's home is purchased by the Halekulani and becomes House Without a Key.
- >> **Armagnac Casterade, 1930; aged 83 years in barrel (\$295):** Halekulani purchases beachfront Waikiki property Gray's by the Sea Inn and incorporates it into the hotel.
- >> **Armagnac Casterade, 1940; aged 73 years in barrel (\$265):** Mary Webb weds Richard Kimball, son of the Halekulani's original owners.
- >> **Drouin Calvados, 1959 (\$110):** The Halekulani is now located on American soil as Hawaii becomes the 50th state.
- >> **Armagnac Casterade, 1981; aged 31 years in barrel (\$25):** The Mitsui Fudosan Corp. purchases the Halekulani.
- >> **Drouin Calvados, 1983 (\$42):** Following two years of renovations, the Halekulani reopens to the public.

LEWERS LOUNGE

2199 Kalia Road
923-2311, halekulani.com/dining/lewers-lounge-bar

Open: 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. daily

Note: Evening attire required (dress shirt, slacks and covered shoes for men; no T-shirts, shorts or beachwear for ladies)

Jason Genegabus tracks the local bar and drink scenes in "Barfly" every Friday in TGIF; read his blog at inthemix.staradvertiserblogs.com.



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Halekulani wine manager and lead sommelier Kevin Toyama pours a taste from one of the bottles featured in the Halekulani Legacy Collection.