

THE WASHINGTON PANEL

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Masters of Whisk(e)y

Pernod Ricard
Is the Primary
Driver of Growth for
Irish Whiskey and
Single Malt Scotch



John Azevedo, District Manager for the Brigantine Family of Restaurants, at The Steakhouse at Azul La Jolla.

CREDIT: ROB BROWN

*****3-DIGIT 94611
DIANA GIL-OSORIO
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
THE RITZ-CARLTON
4395 PIEDMONT AVE APT 302
OAKLAND CA 94611-4781
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SOMMELIERS LEAD THE CHARGE THIS MONTH AS SEVERAL OF THE CITY'S TOP NAMES TAKE ON NEW ROLES WHILE OTHERS RETOOL THEIR WINE PROGRAMS AND LOOK FOR TALENT

Michael Ireland, formerly at Benu, is now Wine Director at the Michelin three-starred **Restaurant at Meadowood Resort**, as Rom Toulon, who spent five years achieving the coveted third star, pursues consulting projects. **Yoon Ha** has taken Ireland's place as dining room and beverage director at Benu. **Matthew Turner**, formerly Lead Sommelier at Michael Mina, has joined Joseph Humphrey and partner/front-of-house operator Khalid Lahlou's **Mosaque Restaurant Group** to open **Dixie** in the Presidio space that was once Pres a Vi. **Josiah**

San Fran Insider

by Deborah Parker Wong



Left to right: Christie Dufault, Borys Saciu, Jordan Mackay, Felicia McDonnell, Duggan McDonnell, Daniel Graham and Isabel Mize.



Mentor Award recipient John Burton.



MC Duggan McDonnell presents the Legends' Renegade Award to Lance Winters.

Baldvino steps up as Lead Sommelier at **Michael Mina**. RN74's **Dustin Wilson**, MS, relocated to New York and joined **Eleven Madison Park**, which leapt from one to three stars in Michelin's New York 2012 dining guide. Lastly, Wine Director **David Lynch** has restructured the wine program at **Quince** and is expanding his staff.

Are sommeliers in Northern California turning a deaf ear on their clientele with lists that exclude popular wine styles? One industry insider observed staff at popular waterfront destination touting Blaufränkisch to tourists looking for NorCal regional wines like Carneros Chardonnay. "Our goal is to make the guest happy," says Mina Group's **Raj Parr**, who advocates an approach that begins with flavors and takes into consideration style, price and food pairings. "There's a fine line between enhancing a guest's experience and overselling." At **Cavallo Point's Murray Circle**, a Bay-view destination in Sausalito, **Dan O'Brien** makes a point to keep the focus of his list regional with plenty of small-production labels and custom cuvées, such as Cultivar, that are unique to the property.

When San Francisco Cocktail Week presented its first annual Legends Awards in September, master of ceremonies **Duggan McDonnell** had some help from tablehopper.com's **Marcia Gagliardi** handing out the cocktail shaker awards to stalwarts of San Francisco's spirits community. Lifetime Achievement winner **Harry Denton** declared that he was emotional about winning and never once regretted a career choice that had given him plenty of opportunities to "get laid."

Writer **Jordan Mackay** graciously accepted for best Scribe, cigar-chewing St. George Spirits' **Lance Winters** lived up to his title as Renegade, a blushing **Jennifer Colliau** won as Trailblazer for her Small Hand Foods syrups and USBG founding member **John Burton** was awarded Mentor. Signature cocktails paired with dinner were produced by four different bartending teams, with **Marco Dionysos** and **Dominic Venegas** creating those at our table. When we meandered upstairs to Harry Denton's refreshed **Starlight Room** for an after-party courtesy of Rémy Cointreau, Brugal Rum won our final award of the night for best balanced cocktail. ■