Should the number of liquor licenses in Pa. be public information? A Cambria County lawmaker thinks so. So he’s suing the state

Pennsylvania Capital-Star
By Mark OKeefe
October 1, 2019
Terry Mutchler thought Pennsylvania had made considerable progress since she became the first director of the state’s Office of Open Records in 2008.

Now, however, she’s not so sure.

“I thought we had come a long way, but maybe we haven’t,” Mutchler, who served as director for seven years, said in an interview for this column.

The case that has Mutchler wondering about the state’s progress on open records involves a right-to-know request by state Rep. Frank Burns, a Democrat who represents parts of Cambria and Somerset counties.

A senior member of the House Liquor Control Committee, Burns wanted to know the number of restaurant liquor licenses available in each county throughout Pennsylvania.

Burns said he was trying to get the information so he could learn more about legislation (HB1644) sponsored by Rep. Matthew D. Dowling, R-Fayette, which would significantly increase the number of restaurant liquor licenses in the state. The bill is now before the Liquor Control Committee.

Burns told me he was just trying to do his job.

“How could any elected official make an informed vote on this bill without knowing the number of restaurant licenses the LCB (Liquor Control Board) has to auction?” Burns asked. “We didn’t want to flood the market with additional licenses, hurting small business owners. The public didn’t elect us to guess when making decisions that affect them.”

Burns said he was stunned when the liquor board turned down his request so he took the matter to the Office of Open Records which ruled in his favor.

However, the liquor control board still refused to give up the information, appealing the ruling to the state Commonwealth Court.

Shawn Kelly, a spokesman for the board, defended the agencies’ decision to keep the records confidential.

“To preserve the short- and long-term value of licenses, we’ll refrain from commenting on the remaining pool of licenses that may be auctioned. We believe the information sought by Representative Burns is proprietary and trade secret, and that releasing it will have significant impact on the market.

“As such, we believe defending our position is responsible both to Pennsylvania taxpayers that benefit from our operations and to license holders looking to preserve the value of their licenses,” said Kelly in a statement released to the media.

The statement infuriated Burns.

“I thought I was making a simple request and now they’re talking about trade secrets and proprietary interests. It’s
like we’re dealing with a Wall Street company instead of a state agency,” he fumed.

Forced to pay an attorney on his own, Burns hired Mutchler to handle his case before Commonwealth Court.

“I can think of no one better qualified than Terry Mutchler to take up this fight for transparent state government,” Burns said. “She is synonymous with Pennsylvania open records.

“I know firsthand that Terry has the passion to do what’s right and the legal know-how to handle my case effectively,” Burns said. “I was hoping the LCB would see the light and this wouldn’t go to court. But since they chose this route, I’ve hired the best person that I could possibly find. Unlike the LCB, I won’t be paying my attorney using taxpayer dollars.”

Mutchler credited Burns for continuing the fight for open records without using taxpayers money.

“Frank Burns should be commended for paying his legal fees out of his own pocket,” said Mutchler. “What he’s doing is far different from the LCB which is using taxpayers to fight a case I can’t see them winning.

“We’re not talking about something on the cutting edge here,” said Mutchler. “This is crystal clear. This is one of the most basic public records. Taxpayers should definitely be entitled know the number of liquor licenses in every county.

Mutchler also credited the Office of Open Records for thoroughly researching the LCB issue before ruling against the agency.

“I thought the OOR did a great job in dismantling the legal arguments raised by the LCB,” added Mutchler. “It was very well researched and written.”

Mutchler said she’s hoping to sit down with some of the more experienced lawyers at the LCB and try to reach a settlement before the case goes to Commonwealth Court, costing taxpayers even more money.

However, Sean refused to comment on whether the LCB would be willing to meet with Mutchler to work out a settlement.

“The statement speaks for itself, and we’ll have no further comment,” said Kelly.

Last week, Burns asked Gov. Tom Wolf to file a “friend of the court” brief in support of his legal battle.

“As someone who shares my belief in transparent government, I hope you also share my belief that an agency that works for, and is paid by, state taxpayers should not be keeping ‘trade secrets,’” said Burns.

Burns maintained that Wolf is in a “strong position to reason with the LCB,” since the governor recently appointed Mary Isenhour, his former chief of staff and senior campaign adviser, as a paid member of the agency’s governing board.

“As someone who has made transparent government a priority since day one of your administration, I believe your expertise in this area and status as a champion of transparency would be invaluable in this fight,” Burns concluded.

Wolf’s office couldn’t be reached for comment.

NC: Charlotte Talks: NC Breweries, Distillers Toast New Laws

WFAE
By Chris Miller
September 30, 2019

Craft brewers and distillers have seen explosive growth in North Carolina, and new state laws could accelerate that. A conversation at Divine Barrel Brewing in NoDa with leaders in the state's beer-brewing and alcohol-distilling industries.

The new laws are wide-ranging, from allowing distillers to sell mixed drinks on-site to customers, to letting dogs - even cats! - back into breweries.

For beer brewers, such as Charlotte's The Olde Mecklenburg Brewery and NoDa Brewing Company, the legislation also ended a feud with the state's wholesalers over breweries' control of distribution.

Today, Gov. Cooper signed the Craft Beer Distribution and Modernization Act, which lifts the distribution cap for craft breweries, allowing these businesses to grow and thrive.

Distillers had reason to cheer the laws, which, among other things, removed a cap on the number of bottles they could sell to a customer. Previously, distillers could only sell five bottles per year to a customer.

With these new measures in place, what’s ahead for these industries?

GUESTS

Pete Barger, co-owner, Southern Distilling Company; president of the Distillers Association of North Carolina
Todd Ford, co-owner, NoDa Brewing Company Ryan Self, director of sales, The Olde Mecklenburg Brewery
FL: Using a 150-year-old law, Miami lawyer sues over a once notorious spice in a popular gin

The Morning Call
By David Ovalle, Miami Herald
September 30, 2019

MIAMI Bombay Sapphire, one of the world's most recognizable gins, is distilled with something called "grains of paradise," an ancient spice grown in the tropics of West Africa that gives the liquor warm and peppery overtones.

The gin-and-spice combo, however, may be illegal in Florida. On paper anyway.

It turns out that selling liquor infused with grains of paradise is a third-degree felony under an obscure law passed over 150 years ago during an era when some people believed the spice was a poisonous drug that could morph drinkers into suicidal madmen.

No one is going to jail over selling the spiced gin. But that hasn't stopped a South Florida businessman from filing a class-action lawsuit against Bacardi USA, the company that owns the Bombay brand, and Winn-Dixie Supermarkets, which sells the liquor.

The lawsuit, newly filed in South Florida federal court, alleges that the companies are knowingly selling an "adulterated" liquor in what amounts to "deceptive and unfair trade practices." The spice, according to the lawsuit, is known for its "warming and digestive characteristics," and has been used in traditional medicine to end unwanted pregnancies and erectile dysfunction.

"People are consuming it unaware of its potential side effects," said Miami attorney Roniel Rodriguez, who represents the plaintiff, Urri Marrache.

In a statement to the Miami Herald, Bacardi defended the safety of the gin, saying it complies with "all relevant environment, health and safety laws and regulations."

The company pointed out that Bombay's label has long listed grains of paradise, along with nine other "botanicals": almonds, juniper berries and lemon peel, among others. "Although based on a 1761 recipe, Bombay Sapphire has never made a secret of its 10 botanicals. They are each proudly named and beautifully illustrated on the sides of the distinctive blue bottle," the company said.

If you've never head of grains of paradise, you're not alone.

In West Africa, it's common in cooking, but isn't well-known in the United States, even though it's completely legal to own and use in cuisine. The spice, which is related to ginger, can be purchased online or at specialty stores. One online retailer, the Spice House, calls grains of paradise "sweet-spicy but buttery, with a hint of lavender and juniper."

The grains of paradise spice has increased in popularity as consumers become more health conscious.

It's featured in dietary supplements such as Metaburn, by Arizona-based Plexus Worldwide, which claims it promotes weight loss and increased metabolism.

Michael Hartman, the company's director of research and development, said Plexus Worldwide is planning clinical research to gauge the positive effects of grains of paradise. The proposed test has been registered with the federal government, with George Mason University signed on to help.

Hartman said the company believes grains of paradise is completely safe.

"It's something that is part of the food supply in parts of the world," Hartman said.

So why exactly did some people of the past century believe grains of paradise was harmful?

It stems from England in the 1700s, when the government began encouraging people to distill their own spirits as a way to raise tax revenue. That lead to a boom in shoddy home distilleries, which used poor quality, rotting grains and dirty water from the River Thames, said Olivier Ward, a British gin expert and consultant.

The distillers watered down the gin to stretch the product, but added dangerous substances such as turpentine, plus benign spices such as cayenne pepper and, yes, grains of paradise to "mask the awful distilling and make more money," Ward said.

During the so-called Gin Craze, drinkers began dropping dead or going mad after binging on the relatively new and often dangerous liquor. "The Gin Craze was very similar to the crack epidemic," Ward said.

In an effort to make alcohol safer, King George III responded by banning an array of substances, including grains of paradise, from the production of liquor. People began to think of the spice as dangerous. Throughout the 1800s, pub keepers in England were regularly charged and fined for infusing their beer with grains of paradise. Newspaper articles called the spice "vile," "poisonous" and "exceedingly intoxicating."
The ban was eventually lifted, but the idea that grains of paradise was harmful persisted across the Atlantic Ocean.

The roots of the ban in Florida stem from the Civil War, when the Union blockade led to a shortage of liquor. As they had in England the century prior, sellers watered down liquor with sulfuric acid (known then as vitriol), lead acetate, and acid distilled from laurel leaves.

After the war, lawmakers saw banning grains of paradise from liquor as a public health issue. Florida passed its law on "adulteration of liquor" on Aug. 6, 1868, proclaiming anyone who used grains of paradise "or any other substance, which is poisonous" can be punished by up to three years in prison.

Florida was not alone.

Newspaper archives from across the United States chronicle alarming nuggets about grains of paradise. The Sacramento Bee, in 1873, cited a science journal saying the spice was among "murderous substitutes" being added to beer "with a vast amount of evil."

In 1905, Kentucky's Lexington Herald ran a story entitled: "Adulterated Drinks Cause Crime Wave," penned by a "chemist" who purported to have experienced effects first hand. Grains of paradise added to whiskey or rum, he said, causes a man to get "so happy" that he gives away his money, then is wracked by "violent reaction and despair."

"Grains of Paradise leave behind a trail of suicides," he wrote.

Ward, the writer and liquor consultant who runs the Gin Foundry company, said those fears are misplaced.

Nowadays, he said, gin makers don't just stir it in before bottling to give the liquor bite, like in the olden days. Instead, gins like Bombay include grains of paradise into the distillation process.

"About 10% of the gins made in the world have it as a botanical. It's well-known, well-reported and something used for many years," Ward said. "It gives gin a certain botanical heat. It's similar to pepper, it's just a bit rootier and nuttier."

The lawyer who filed the claim against the liquor company, Rodriguez, says the lawsuit is not about getting money or publicity, but rather public safety.

He and Marrache began researching grains of paradise after they were drinking Bombay, and noticed the spice described on the bottle. Rodriguez said he was surprised to learn that Florida outlaws its use in liquor.

The lawyer acknowledges there are no studies that he's found that show a negative health effect of grains of paradise. But he says there needs to be more research done. For now, he advocates warning labels be put on bottles of Bombay.

"It's important for consumers to know that there are ingredients that may have adverse effects, like spices or nuts," Rodriguez said. "If Bombay would remove the grains of paradise from the gin right now, I would drop the lawsuit."

FL: Groundbreaking anti-hazing law takes effect Tuesday

News 12
By Chuck Weber
September 30, 2019

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CBS12) — Among new state laws taking effect on Tuesday, is one targeting fraternity hazing. The new measure is named after a South Florida student who died of alcohol poisoning.

Florida already had an anti-hazing law on the books. But the new one goes further, potentially holding more people accountable, and at the same time, providing protections for those who call for help.

"You know you send your child away, it's the last thing you're thinking of," said Tom Coffey, of Lighthouse Point in Broward County, speaking last year with his wife, Sandra, about their late son, Andrew.

The Florida State student died in November 2017, after drinking a bottle of 101 proof bourbon in a fraternity initiation ritual.

It wasn’t until the following morning a fellow pledge called 911 reporting Andrew unresponsive.

"His lips are purple, his body is extremely stiff,” the pledge is heard saying in the recording. “I can’t wake him up and I honestly don’t feel a pulse."

“There were an estimated 100 people at that party,” said Mr. Coffey. “Nobody picked up the phone,” Mrs. Coffey continued.

“99 of them didn’t help my son — Andrew died in a room full of people that just didn’t care,” Mr. Coffey added.

But now there’s Andrew’s Law. This year state lawmakers passed the legislation and Governor DeSantis signed it.

The new measure gives prosecutors the ability to charge fraternity and sorority members who may not have been present for hazing but planned it.
And, what’s also unique about the new law — the first to see a hazing victim in medical need, call 911, and remain until help arrives, can avoid criminal charges. Same for someone who administers medical aid.

“If we keep his spirit alive, then he’s not dead,” said Mr. Coffey.

Washington, DC: DC is tops for craft beer industry pay
WTOP
By Jeff Clabaugh
September 30, 2019

Craft beer is big business, and those working in the industry are paid well. D.C. ranks behind only New Jersey for what it pays.

The nonprofit Brewers Association’s annual economic impact report said the average wage for those employed by the craft beer industry in the District is $68,469. It is $84,830 in New Jersey.

Average craft beer industry pay in Virginia is $45,367, and in Maryland it is $48,864.

Craft Brewers employed about 1,500 people in the District, 6,800 in Maryland and 13,300 in Virginia in 2018.

The overall economic impact of the craft beer industry nationwide in 2018 was $79.1 billion, according to the Brewers Association. That includes breweries, wholesalers and retailers, as well as non-beer products like food and merchandise that brewpub restaurants and brewery taprooms sell.

The overall economic impact in D.C. in 2018 was an estimated $213.3 million, $889.3 million in Maryland and $1.71 billion in Virginia, Brewers Association data shows.

"With a strong presence across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, craft breweries are a vibrant and flourishing economic force at the local, state and national level," said Bart Watson, chief economist for the Brewers Association.

Breweries and brewpubs directly employed more than 150,000 people in the U.S. in 2018.

As of 2018, there were 13 craft brewers in the District registered with the Brewers Association, 94 in Maryland and 236 in Virginia.

Virginia ranks 18th in the nation for barrels of craft beer produced each year, the equivalent of 1.8 gallons for every adult resident. Top states for craft brewers per capita are Vermont, Montana, Maine, Oregon and Colorado.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS
Canada: Worrying rise in alcohol-related harm among women, CAMH says
CTV News
By Solarina Ho
September 30, 2019

TORONTO -- Health experts are calling for tighter alcohol regulations amid a worrying rise in alcohol-related short and long-term harm, especially among women.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Canada’s largest teaching hospital of its kind, issued a new alcohol policy framework on Monday outlining the changing trends that show how easier access to alcohol, along with targeted advertising, is both narrowing the gap between men and women who drink, and increasing the overall negative health ramifications.

"We always think of alcohol as an individual choice, and really a lot of what’s in the framework is showing that there are a lot of societal influences on alcohol like marketing, and that it’s important to think about all of those factors," said CAMH Chief of Addictions Dr. Leslie Buckley.

Women are at particular risk from drinking, Dr. Buckley says, not only because of differences in size and weight. Even at the same weight, the blood-alcohol level from drinking will be higher in women, for example. More importantly, because women process alcohol differently than men, women develop alcohol-related diseases faster than men.

"Most of the data is really focused on the general population. This whole lens that we’re taking -- the gender lens -- is really interesting in that it might push us to look more specifically at women and men differently," said Buckley.

In addition, research consistently shows a strong correlation between alcohol and sexual violence. CAMH pointed to research that found that some 59 per cent of women in university had experienced sexual assault, with at least half of the situations involved drinking by the perpetrator, the victim, or both.

"Attention needs to be paid to developing policies to improve how alcohol-related sexual aggression is prevented and managed, and to change social norms about the acceptability of these behaviours," said Buckley.

CAMH’s own research showed that at least 50 per cent of young women experienced sexual aggression,
including sexual harassment or unwanted sexual touching, in a single evening out at a bar or club.

Advertising geared towards women has also evolved over the last two decades, with some experts calling it the “pinking” of the alcohol industry - using brand names, logos, and designs that appeal more to women.

Women represent a growth area for the industry, said Buckley, and more work is needed to highlight the problem of alcohol advertising targeted at women.

The report also detailed the billion dollar financial burden on the healthcare and penal system as a result of the harmful consequences.

Alcohol is the cause of death for nearly 15,000 deaths in Canada every year, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, with more people hospitalized in Canada because of alcohol -- excluding hospitalizations indirectly caused by drinking, such as drunk driving – than heart attacks.

That trend has accelerated at an “alarming” rate especially among women and young adults, according to an extensive study published in July by the Canadian Medical Association Journal that tracked data over a 14-year period involving more than 15 million people in Ontario.

Meanwhile, research has also shown that tighter regulatory controls around price, availability, and marketing of alcoholic beverages (including sponsorships), as well as a higher alcohol tax, are cheap, yet highly effective ways to mitigate the dangers around drinking.

But regulation around alcohol has gradually loosened over the last two decades instead, and has in fact accelerated in the last five years. Early evidence shows that the more recent expansions have already resulted in more hospitalizations, according to the 2019 study.

Alcohol plays a major role in more than 200 diseases and injury conditions according to the CAMH report, including anxiety, depression and memory problems. Liver diseases, brain damage, stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers are just some of the major long-term damage caused by excessive drinking.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer also classifies alcohol as a Group 1 carcinogen, with studies showing that even moderate drinking can increase the risk for certain types of cancer. The CAMH report noted that newer studies have shown that the benefits of alcohol have also been overstated.

The CAMH framework also cited international research that showed privatization resulted in more locations selling alcohol per capita (stores and drinking establishments), cheaper prices, longer sale hours, fewer ID checks - factors that are strongly linked to more excessive drinking, hospitalizations, deaths, impaired driving (causing injuries and death), assaults, and accidents. Provincial and national studies in Canada back up these findings.

With the Ontario government on track to sell alcohol in convenience stores, CAMH is recommending giving municipalities the capacity to opt out, similar to what it did cannabis retail stores.

"There is strong evidence to suggest that if implemented, this will lead to an increase in consumption and harm," the report said.

The last time CAMH issued its alcohol policy framework was in 2013.

"Our role is to provide information for decision makers like politicians to help them understand what’s happening on the ground in terms of number and provide ideas and recommendations," said Buckley.

CAMH’s recommendations include:

- A moratorium on privatization
- Increasing pricing minimums and eventually closing related loopholes
- Maintaining or increasing the price of alcohol, and automatically adjusted for inflation
- Limit sale hours and per-capita store density
- Implement advertising restrictions, including quantity, placement, product labelling and packaging
- Lower the blood alcohol limit to 0.05 per cent
- Better access to treatment and programs, etc.
- Work/partner with licenced establishments, such as bars and clubs, to educate and enforce procedures that would reduce the risk of violence and sexual assault
- Have the province invest more money in education, prevention, treatment, monitoring, and research, using for example, a percentage derived from alcohol sales
Russia: Russian alcohol consumption down 40% since 2003 – WHO
Reputation for heavy drinking on the slide since Putin measures including curbs on alcohol sales
The Guardian
By Agence France-Presse in Moscow
October 1, 2019

Russia may still have a reputation as a nation of heavy drinkers, but a report by the World Health Organization shows alcohol consumption has dropped by 43% since 2003.

The WHO put the decrease down to a series of measures brought in under the sport-loving president, Vladimir Putin, including restrictions on alcohol sales and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

“The Russian Federation has long been considered one of the heaviest-drinking countries in the world,” the report, published on Tuesday, says, adding that alcohol was a major contributor to a spike in the number of deaths in the 1990s. “However, in recent years these trends have been reversed,” it says.

The study shows a 43% drop in alcohol consumption per capita from 2003 to 2016, driven by a steep decline in the consumption of bootleg booze.

The authors said this trend was a factor in increased life expectancies in Russia, which reached a historic peak in 2018, at 78 years for women and 68 years for men. In the early 1990s, male life expectancy was just 57 years.

The last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, led an anti-alcohol campaign with partial prohibition, which brought down consumption from the mid-1980s until 1990. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, alcohol consumption exploded, continuing to rise until the start of the 2000s.

Under Putin, Russia has introduced measures including a ban on shops selling any alcohol after 11pm, increases in the minimum retail price of spirits and an advertising blackout.

Earlier WHO figures showed Russian adults drink less alcohol on average than their French and German counterparts.

Moscow has also launched a drive against smoking, last week announcing a ban on lighting up, even on private balconies.

Tobacco use plummeted by more than a fifth between 2009 and 2016, down to 30% of Russians, according to the most recent Global Adult Tobacco Survey.

Saipan: Bill allowing minors to serve alcohol passes Senate
Saipan Tribune
By Erwin Encinares
October 1, 2019

The Senate was one vote shy of unanimously supporting a bill that would allow minors, or individuals who are aged below 21, to serve alcoholic beverages as a job.

In their session last Sept. 27, 2019, on Capital Hill, the Senate voted 8-1 to pass Rep. Joel Camacho’s (R-Saipan) House Bill 21-48, a bill that seeks to allow employers to hire individuals who are at least 18 years old to serve alcoholic beverages.

Current law sets the age of consent for alcohol at 21. H.B. 21-48 seeks to go around this prohibition by allowing those below 21 years old to be employed as waitstaff and be allowed to serve alcoholic drinks. The proposed law, however, would not allow them to mix the drinks.

Sen. Vinson Sablan (Ind-Saipan) voted against the measure.

“As I understand and acknowledge our workforce needs, which is what the bill is aimed to address, I felt I needed to stay consistent as I have advocated in the past [in] working with youth groups on the topic of minors and alcohol use,” he told Saipan Tribune in an interview. “In this particular case, I believe our hospitality industry and the individuals they employ are diverse enough to complement the needs of different establishments in the CNMI.”

In the purpose section of the bill, Camacho said the intent of the bill is to remove “hiring bias” when it comes to certain employment positions.

“I believe many of our young individuals as well as adults have a choice to be responsible,” he told Saipan Tribune, responding to a question of whether his legislation would prematurely introduce alcohol to individuals less than 21 years of age.

“This bill’s main intent is to remove the potential hiring bias that acts as a barrier that would help many young individuals attain meaningful employment and gain valuable work experience as they save up to go to college or other life endeavors,” he said.

Camacho shared a similar comment when the legislation first passed the House in a July 12, 2019 House session.

“I believe this is a good way to transition our people into the workforce in this 10-year transition period that was afforded to us by U.S. Congress,” he had said, referring to
the law that extended the CNMI’s foreign worker program, CW, by 10 years.

The CW-1 program is the main visa used by foreign temporary workers in the CNMI.

*Saipan is the largest island of the Northern Mariana Islands, a commonwealth of the United States in the western Pacific Ocean.

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

Binge-drinking from adolescence could have long-term effects on the cardiovascular system

News Medical and Life Sciences
Reviewed by Kate Anderton, B.Sc. (Editor)
September 30, 2019

Moderate drinking has been linked to a lower risk of coronary heart disease in several studies. However, the relationship between alcohol and heart disease remains controversial and is challenging to assess. Most available data are from prospective (forward-looking) studies of people in middle age or older, in whom alcohol intake was assessed at the time of study entry. As such, the studies do not consider the amount and pattern of alcohol consumed in younger life, which could also be relevant for heart health. A new analysis of data from the Western New York Health Study, published in the journal Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research, explores the impact of lifetime drinking trajectories ─with consideration of alcohol intake from adolescence onward ─ on the risk of experiencing a (non-fatal) heart attack.

Researchers from California, New York and Vietnam analyzed data from twelve hundred people who had been discharged from hospital following a heart attack (‘cases’) and almost three thousand healthy people of matching age and sex (‘controls’). All cases and controls had completed a physical exam and an interview covering known cardiovascular risk factors and had provided a detailed lifetime drinking history, with various strategies used to help participants accurately recall past drinking patterns and occasions involving alcohol.

Using statistical modeling, the research team was able to identify two distinct lifetime drinking trajectories ─‘early peak’ and ‘stable’ ─among participants who reported drinking regularly either currently or in the past. The ‘early peak’ trajectory was characterized by an earlier onset of drinking, with less frequent but more intensive drinking episodes and more frequent drunkenness; individuals with this trajectory more often reduced their alcohol intake or quit drinking by middle age. Compared to the stable lifetime drinking trajectory, the early peak trajectory was associated with a significantly higher risk of heart attack among former drinkers and among current female (but not male) drinkers. Risk of heart attack was also higher among men who never drank regularly compared to former drinkers with stable lifetime drinking trajectories.

This is the first time that drinking trajectories covering the whole lifespan have been studied in relation to the risk of non-fatal heart attack. The researchers suggest that binge-drinking during adolescence and early adulthood could have long-term effects on the cardiovascular system, increasing the risk of heart attack in later life. Given that binge-drinkers often cut down or quit drinking by middle age, previous findings of a higher cardiovascular risk among abstainers may be attributable to unassessed harmful early drinking patterns, rather than to any protective effect of moderate drinking in middle age. This does not explain the current finding that the risk of heart attack was higher in men who never drank regularly than in those who once did, and additional research is needed to investigate whether the relatively few men who never drank regularly differ from those who did in some as yet unrecognized way that might influence their risk. Further studies are also needed to determine how racial and ethnic differences in lifetime drinking trajectories may influence cardiovascular risks, as the population in this study was predominantly white.

Source: Research Society on Alcoholism

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Drink NY Craft aims to help small brewers navigate business issues

NYup
By Don Cazentre
September 30, 2019

The craft beer business continues to grow in New York state, even if a few brewers occasionally hit some bumps on the road.

But with the number of breweries surging past 450 across the state, there is increased competition, especially for brewers trying to get their beer on store shelves and bar taps. And the big global corporate brewing giants -- like Anheuser-Busch Inbev, Constellation and Heineken -- continue to ramp up their pressure by trying to boost sales and drive down prices.
Drink New York Craft is a Central New York start-up business that hopes to help smaller local brewers meet the pressures by providing a “one stop shopping” resource center for such things as ingredient purchasing, packaging, distribution, storage, sales and marketing.

The idea is that small brewers can save time and money by sharing these services.

Initially conceived late last year, Drink NY Craft is now seeking investors to help it get off the ground. The for-profit business needs about $1.5 million to get started, said CEO Bob Menikheim, one of two partners in the start-up.

Menikheim and Chad Meigs, Drink NY Craft’s chief operating officer, are meeting this week with Centerstate CEO, the Central New York regional economic development agency. They’re hoping Centerstate can help line up investors.

Drink NY Craft also has also won a $178,000 grant from the state’s Regional Economic Development program, and will receive some tax breaks through the state’s Start Up New York program.

“This can be an important project to help a growing industry in our region stay competitive,” Menikheim said. “And because we have operated in Upstate New York with local suppliers, we can help drive that business up too -- the farmers, the processors and so forth. That’s a win-win for business across the state.”

‘Getting squeezed’

While it’s still true that brewery openings in New York far outpace closings, there are challenges, Menikheim said.

“The bloom is off the rose,” he said. Menikheim said. “A lot of brewers got into this because they want to brew beer, not worry about all the hassles that go along with the business. And those hassles are growing.”

Both Menikheim and Meigs have direct experience with the Central New York beer industry.

Menikheim and his family own and operate two breweries, the Seneca St. Brewpub in Manlius and Erie Canal Brewing Co. in Canastota. Meigs is founder of The Bineyard in Cazenovia, which processes hops for growers and supplies brewers around the state.

They see the benefits of having small brewers join to make volume ingredient purchases, for example. Or of centralizing access to a canning line or a distribution and sales network. (Drink NY Craft has a state wholesaler’s license for distribution).

Recent cases show that the most severe pressure on the craft beer business is happening to brewers that have grown large enough to depend on regional or statewide distribution. Mid-sized companies like Empire Brewery in Cazenovia, CB Craft Brewers south of Rochester and Ithaca Beer Co. have had financial setbacks.

But smaller brewers are feeling it too, Menikheim said. The vast majority of new brewers in New York sell most of their beer directly from their tasting rooms, without needing distribution through a third party.

“But that model is getting squeezed, too,” he said. "Many of these brewers have to work other jobs to make a living."

The competition, Menikheim said, goes beyond other small brewers. He cites recent purchases of craft breweries across the nation by A-B Inbev, Constellation and others. Those purchased breweries face an easier path to getting deals with distributors and finding space on store shelves.

“The shelves aren’t getting bigger," Menikheim said. "The way to make it work for small brewers is to reduce their costs and make them more efficient. That’s where we come in."

Small local brewers are already a tight-knit group, often coming together for what are known in the industry as collaboration brews. One recent example gathered the resources of 15 different Onondaga County breweries.

Since Menikheim and Meigs both operate businesses in Madison County, they are scouting locations there for Drink NY Craft. They may rent smaller space before securing the larger space needed for warehouse storage, packaging lines and more. Canastota or a similar location in the middle of the state and near the Thruway would be ideal, Menikheim said.

The concept could also be applied to makers of hard cider or distilled spirits, he said. Both of those are also growing industries in Upstate New York.

“We’d like to start in Central New York and eventually provide services across the state,” he said. “It’s a model than can work for a lot of smaller operators."

Avoid this common beer labeling error in your next COLA application

Craft Brewing Business
By Chris Crowell
September 30, 2019
The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) says one of the most common problems that triggers a COLA application to be sent back for correction is errors in the mandatory health warning statement. This includes little stuff like punctuation and formatting problems. The TTB says the following health warning statement must appear on all alcohol beverages for sale or distribution in the United States that contain 0.5 percent or more alcohol by volume:

“GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the Surgeon General, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems.”

Some tips

• The words “GOVERNMENT WARNING” must appear in capital letters and in bold type.
• Don’t omit or change any punctuation marks (periods, commas, colon, parentheses).
• You may not include health warnings specifically related to alcohol consumption that are required by a foreign government.

See the regulations in 27 CFR part 16 for the full rules about how to meet the health warning statement labeling requirements and speed your label approval process.

DAILY NEWS

State control is supposed to be a dead hand on the tiller. But is it really?

Wine-Searcher
By Don Kavanagh
October 1, 2019

If there's one thing a journalist hates to admit, it is that he or she is wrong – but it has to be done.

Mea maxima culpa; I wrote a story that was published here last week, checking on how our Moët Index was faring, with a special emphasis on the United States market. I got one very important point wrong, due to a data glitch, and ended up traducing the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board by accusing them of charging an average price of $98, against a national average of $58.

Where we went wrong (and for "we", I mean "I", of course) was that the Pennsylvania result was skewed by the inclusion of bottles of the much more expensive vintage version of Moët in the calculations. We were alerted to the mistake by some loyal residents of that fine state, who took issue with our findings, as well as a slightly panicked representative of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board.

We've fixed the story now to reflect the actual figure of $47 and I have given myself the mandatory flogging as punishment for my failings.

However, as I was going through the revised data, I thought it might be fun to see how prices compared in Pennsylvania – a state where all alcohol is sold via state-owned stores – with the rest of the country. The received wisdom is that state control of anything is a Bad Thing. Capitalism teaches us that a competitive free-market will produce a much better outcome for the consumer. That's how economics works, right?

Well, it's maybe not that simple. A couple of things skew the figures – wine taxes and economies of scale. As a control state, Pennsylvania effectively has no state wine tax, as it would effectively be paying any such tax to itself. Other states' wine taxes vary from California’s and Texas's 20 cents per gallon to Kentucky's $3.26 a gallon. Some states add other taxes, too, such as Arkansas, which also levies a case tax.

Economy of scale means that the PLCB can also get better purchasing deals, given it is servicing a market of 12.8 million people, a figure that would rank it as the world's 75th largest population if it was a separate country – larger than Belgium, Israel and almost three times larger than New Zealand. That's a lot of buying power.

And by and large, those factors work in the state's favor. We ran the 25 most searched-for wines so far this year through our database to work out the average US price of each and the Pennsylvania price and there are some very interesting results.

Take Dom Pérignon, for example. The most searched-for Champagne on Wine-Searcher currently is a reasonable illustration, given it was a Champagne price that sparked this entire article in the first place. Dom is different, of course, being much more expensive, but it does have the advantage of always being a vintage wine, therefore eliminating any possible data glitches.

As you can see from the graph, far from being the most expensive, Pennsylvania comes in lowest in price, with an average price so far this year of $164 against a national average of $196, a 16 percent saving. Michigan tops the list with an average price of $235, followed by California ($225), and South Dakota and Hawaii tied at $220.
Looking at the broader range of wines, there are some definite trends emerging. For the seven US wines in the top 25, prices are 3 percent higher than the national average. This figure itself is influenced by three wines in particular – Caymus Vineyards Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon is 16 percent ahead of the national average ($225 against $194); Joseph Phelps Insignia is 12 percent ahead ($275 to $245); and Opus One, which is 9 percent more expensive than the national average, at $437.50 to $400. However, Screaming Eagle Cabernet is 10 percent cheaper than the national average, at $3379.50.

The overseas wines in the top 25 fare better in Pennsylvania, however. The 18 wines, mostly from France, come in on average 9 percent cheaper than the rest of the US, with the standout being Château Lafite Rothschild – at $800 a bottle, it is 31 percent cheaper than the national average price of $1161. Actually, Château Latour is even more spectacular at $700 – 47 percent cheaper than the national average of $1314.50, but it has had only one offer this year.

Other standout performers are Château Lynch-Bages, 18 percent cheaper than nationally at $180 a bottle; Léoville-Las-Cases is 16 percent cheaper at $245; and Sassicaia is also 16 percent cheaper, at $250 against a national average of $296.

In total, the average variation between Pennsylvania prices and US prices is 6 percent in favor of the Keystone State.

There are certainly counter-arguments to be made in favor of removing wine sales from state control, but the figures suggest that Pennsylvanians won’t be making them any time soon – it looks like they’ve never had it so good.

Can low carb beer help your waistline?

Cutting back on carbs but still want to drink? Low carb beer might be the answer. - by Rhys McKay

Better Homes
October 1, 2019

Whether it’s at home or at a bar, there’s just something so refreshing about drinking an ice-cold beer after a long day. But drinking beer on a diet isn’t a good idea, especially if you’re trying to lose weight. Luckily, low carb beer is an option if you’re trying to lay off the carbs. But is it as healthy as it claims?

How many carbs are in beer?

A regular beer has about 1.4 grams of carbohydrates per 100ml – if you add it up to one bottle, that’s equivalent to about seven slices of bread! Each brand of beer does have varying amounts of carbohydrates and it also depends on how they’ve been made. If the beer is darker and has a more dense foam, that means that it has a heavy amount of carbs in it.

Brands that make craft beers usually have more carbs in their beer too, especially if they have added flavours. And because of these added flavours, they tend to have more sugar than regular beer. You should also pay attention to how much sugar is in your beer. Certain beers like black beer have around 15 to 17 grams of carbohydrates because of the added sugars in it. Some flavoured beers even have almost 30 grams of carbs in them per serving!

What is low carb beer?

In order to cut down on carbs and still enjoy a few drinks at the bar, health-conscious people are starting to look to low carb beers (aka keto beer) as an alternative. But what’s in it that makes it healthier than your standard drinks? Essentially, they’re lighter options that your regular pint, having only 0.9 grams of carbs on average.

Low carb beer vs low calorie beer

The difference between low carb and low calorie can be explained better in the context of diets: if you’re on a low carb diet, it means you’re significantly cutting down the carbohydrates. A low calorie diet on the other hand is more focused on lessening the amount of food you take in general, meaning you can eat whatever you want as long as it’s in moderation.

Low calorie beer in Australia is pretty hard to find but they do exist! It’s important to remember that low calorie beer isn’t exactly low in carbs. If you compare a 330ml bottle of Peroni Nastro Azzurro to a 330ml bottle of Corona Extra, they almost have the same amount of carbs even if the Peroni has more calories.

Does low carb beer live up to the hype?

Drinking beer without the guilt sounds great, but in reality, low carb beer just doesn’t work the way it’s advertised. While there are many low carb alcohol drinks that sound like better alternatives than standard beer (like Pure Blonde, one of the most popular low carb beers in Australia), it still won’t stop your body from putting on the extra pounds. In order to help your diet, the best low-carb beer is actually the one with the lowest alcohol percentage.

It’s not the carbs, it’s the alcohol

What really affects your metabolism and overall weight loss journey is the alcohol in beer, not the carbs. When you’ve had too much to drink, your body’s metabolism
slows down and it directs all its energy toward dealing with the effects of alcohol.

Surprisingly, most beers already have low amounts of carbohydrates in them. Alison McAleese, a dietitian and a Campaign Manager at LiveLighter, says:

“At the end of the day it’s the alcohol in beer, not the carbohydrates, that does the damage to your waistline and puts you at greater risks of serious health problems, including cancer. To avoid weight gain and reduce these risks, choose lower alcohol beer and cut back.”

Best alternatives to beer

Just because you’re trying to lose weight doesn’t mean you can’t unwind with a few drinks every now and then. In fact, drinking the right amount of alcohol may be good for you! While it may slow down your metabolism, it also has wonderful health benefits like lowering the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes — as long as you make sure you’re drinking the proper amount.

If you love beer and drink it often, make sure that you get light beer brands. Light beer in Australia isn’t about the calories but the alcohol percentage, which is around 2.5% on average. But, if you’re conscious about beer calories, then drinks like wine and spirits are good alternatives to consider.

Does beer make you fat?

Regardless of the number of carbs or calories in your beer, the most important thing to look at is alcohol percentage: the lower the alcohol content, the fewer inches on your waistline.

Millennials find it harder to disconnect from work, study reveals

HR Dive
By Valerie Bolden-Barrett
September 30, 2019

Dive Brief:

• Employees are struggling to leave work at work — especially millennials, a SimplyHired survey found. The results showed that while baby boomers could leave work behind them when "off the clock," the younger generation admitted to being unable to stop thinking about work. SimplyHired attributed the cause to mobile technology and, specifically, to the constant intake of emails.

• SimplyHired said that although millennials may be the greatest advocates for work-life balance, they’re less able than other generations to act on the notion. Survey results showed that while 58% of baby boomers said that transitioning from work to home at day’s end wasn't difficult, just 36.2% of millennials said they felt the same. Millennials also were the most likely to describe making the transition from work to home as "somewhat difficult."

• Survey results also showed that employees with the highest job satisfaction and those with the highest stress levels both dealt with the inability to disconnect from work by turning off notifications, which SimplyHired said can reduce stress and boost productivity. The job board added that putting in extra work hours can increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes, alcohol consumption, depression, heart disease, stroke and even cancer.

Dive Insight:

There’s no question that technology has blurred the line between work and personal time. The digital tools designed to make people more productive also distract them and make them less able to disconnect from work. A GoTo study released in June found that the 2,000 office employees polled are "toggling between work and personal topics on any one of the hundreds of apps and devices they use." Given the health, productivity and morale problems that result from employees being unable to "turn off" from work, employers can step in to mitigate the problem by encouraging workers to take time off, disconnect from work and minimize office distractions.

Some experts believe that more thoughtful adoption of workforce tools by employers could help rein in the over-connected problem. Mike May, senior director of the workforce dimensions technology partner program at Kronos, told HR Dive in an email that HR should work with IT and operations for collaboration tools to be useful. "How many applications are employees switching between in a given day and how much time are they spending in each application?" said May. "Can any of these applications be integrated on the back-end so that the employee only has one intuitive front-end interface to learn? It's frustrating for an employee when they feel like they need to 're-learn' an application every time they use it because it is only accessed once or twice a week."

But even if employers decided to make disconnecting from work during off times a company policy, employees in a Robert Half Technology survey said managers wouldn’t abide by such policies. For such policies to work, company culture should enable people to take time off without guilt — and enable managers to grant time off in ways that don’t hurt the team.
"Right to disconnect" policies have been under consideration due to a concern about workers' health. New York City considered a bill that would prohibit private employers from requiring workers to check and answer email and other communications beyond work hours. However, there's uncertainty over whether such legislation could coincide with current laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, which mandates that employees be paid for every hour they work.

Public Health Impact of Juuling — Policy Research Shows Disheartening Results

The Cornell Daily Sun
By Chenab Khakh
September 30, 2019

While the biological explanations of recent vape related deaths and illnesses are still weakly understood, the social impact of Juul and e-cigarettes is clear.

On Sept. 27, the Center for Disease Control and Prevent reported that vaping THC, a compound commonly found in marijuana, is related to 805 cases of lung illnesses and at least 12 deaths reported as a result of vaping e-cigarettes.

A study covering over 500 patients reported 77 percent using THC products in addition to nicotine, whereas only 16 percent of patients only vaped nicotine, and 36 percent vaped only THC products.

The CDC’s findings suggest that THC products play a role in the outbreak. While a pattern in the vaping cases has been found, there is still no clear cause and no single product behind what is making people sick. Regardless, the CDC strongly suggests stopping e-cigarette use, especially those containing THC.

On Sept 28, it was reported that vaping products create an unhealthy byproduct in addition to the nicotine and/or THC present in e-cigarettes, which may be linked to the illnesses and deaths. This byproduct was found to be a mixture of heavy metals that are strongly linked to cancer, lung disease and gastrointestinal disorders.

According to this study, whether it is vaping nicotine, nicotine and THC, or THC alone, vaping in it of itself clearly poses negative health risks.

A compounding issue is the unfavorable marketing techniques used by many of the vape product companies. A joint review by the Departments of Pediatrics at the Icahn School of Medicine and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia demonstrated that e-cigarette products are marketed with an emphasis on how adolescents can use them surreptitiously despite the age restrictions and regulations.

This is particularly alarming to doctors, health care professionals, and public health policymakers because teens who use e-cigarettes are just more likely to go on to use combusted tobacco or real cigarettes, a veritable health concern.

In addition, studies conducted in high schools across the nation are finding that bans on e-cigarettes only work to a certain extent. Doctors and public health officials are worried that students are not understanding the harmful side effects of nicotine, let alone understanding the risk of Juuls and E-cigarettes on their growing bodies and minds.

In fact, a recent study published in BMJ’s Tobacco Control suggests that while many young people know about Juuls, they are not aware of its potential harms as an e-cigarette nor are some aware that Juul pods even contain nicotine.

“Throughout my young life, I had educational pieces about the dangers of cigarettes from school and from my parents,” Cole Johnston ’20 said. “A lack of universal literacy and common knowledge has made me feel less wary of e-cigarettes and their negative effects.”

While e-cigarettes have followed the business suit of big tobacco, studies show that stronger regulations such as bans and prohibitions for e-cigarettes for today’s youth vaping crisis may not be ideal.

Dr. Michael Pesko, a health economist and assistant professor of healthcare policy at Weill Cornell Medicine, found that “age restrictions for purchasing were not associated with changes in adolescent smokeless tobacco use, cigar use, or marijuana use.”

Pesko suggests that tobacco products should be regulated proportionate to their risks and e-cigarette evidence suggests they’re less risky products, so it would be a "mistake" to impose the same regulations for tobacco on e-cigarettes.

“I find this a very interesting public health issue because you have a large population of young people addicted to nicotine from using Juuls and little alternative for rehabilitation. In some states, where using nicotine products is illegal under 21, finding nicotine cessation products like nicotine patches is very difficult,” said Debbie Nyakaru ’20.

While this is an epidemic facing the nation, Cornellians and New York State seem to be ahead of the curve. Juul sales are down this semester, significantly, The Sun recently reported.
Furthermore, alcohol and drug awareness posters from Cornell Health have been bolstered to include Juuls. The hashtag ‘2skuuled2juul’ is printed all across campus with the goal to teach young people the truth behind vaping in addition to ‘no vaping’ signs on library and café tables to emphasize smoking bans.

The hard truth is that the implications of the chemicals inside this attractive piece of technology are unknown, but as research continues, studies are likely to show that these products are quite harmful in the long-run.

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