

Sazerac educates consumers on bourbon basics

By **Jas Ryat** on March, 9 2018 | Spirits & Tobacco



Southern Comfort Black, the newest 80 proof addition to the Southern Comfort line-up, will be front and centre during the Summit of the Americas show in March

Sazerac, a company that may best be known as “America’s first cocktail,” now boasts many brands under its umbrella. The American-owned group has geared up to educate consumers about American bourbon and how it translates to the premium craft trend that is taking place globally.

Americas Duty Free spoke to Ken Chapman, Regional Sales Manager Caribbean/Latin America & Global Duty Free at Sazerac, about the company’s plan to capture travelers’ attention with unique products at the right price.

“We want people to enjoy great savings on our brands like Paddy Irish Whiskey, or grab an extra bottle of Fireball Whiskey to gift to someone when they arrive at their final destination. 50% of travel

retail is purchased for just that, a gift for that special someone, friend or family member,” explains Chapman.

The main push for the brand this year is fueled by the launch of Southern Comfort Black. The newest 80 proof addition to the Southern Comfort line-up will be launched in the travel retail market before it hits the Latin American domestic market. Chapman explains the importance of customers interacting with Southern Comfort Black in airports and borders shops. “It will give customers a chance to taste a new American whiskey from an iconic brand that has been around for over 100 years” he says. The launch is set for February for the US duty free stores and will expand to Europe, Asia and Latin America over the next six months.



Fireball Whiskey, one of the many brands represented by Sazerac, has quickly become a cult favorite amongst

travelers

Greater Expectations

The demand for bourbon has grown in the duty free market, and Sazerac is feeling the ripple effect of the whiskey wave. Sazerac has seen its retail shelf space expand from single facings to multiple facings in recent years. The Latin American market has seen major success with Fireball Whisky expanding into multiple duty free locations such as Argentina and Brazil. The brand has really gained traction in the duty free arena, resulting in customers wanting to save money on their inbound duty free purchases or for a gifting opportunity.

Sazerac has also taken on the valuable task of educating consumers, as the company believes a customer that understands the product is more likely to purchase it. The firm has invested heavily in a bourbon education program available to duty free customers on Royal Caribbean ships called the Bourbon Excursion. “It’s a chance for a customer to learn about the bourbon-making process and the different types of bourbons out there. We want customers to understand the difference between a

Scotch, Tennessee Whiskey or a Kentucky bourbon. With our multiple tasting opportunities and education classes, our market share will grow itself,” enthuses Chapman.

Kevin Richards, senior marketing director, whiskeys and speciality brands, also touches upon the loyal fan base that Southern Comfort has developed over the years. Sazerac continues to engage with these consumers to rejuvenate the brand with elements such as improved packaging and enhanced merchandising. Richards explains: “Younger consumers are increasingly travel-oriented, and we want to ensure the right mix of products for our new and loyal consumers.”

He continues: “It has been critical that we re-establish a sense of place and authenticity, it is a vital part of the Southern Comfort story. The ‘Spirit of New Orleans’ campaign captures the soul and vibrancy of our hometown, New Orleans. We feel the spirit of this city will resonate with new whiskey drinkers, offering a compelling point of difference, and we are investing heavily in transporting our story and New Orleans via digital channels. “

Buffalo Trace Distillery

Although Sazerac is still challenged with allocation issues, it is offsetting this by focusing heavily on its distilling warehousing operations, most notably at its Buffalo Trace Distillery in Kentucky, where the Distillery is planning to spend US\$1.2 billion in expansion work over the next 10 years.



PLATE 7.



FERMENTING ROOM AT O.F.C. DISTILLERY.

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Buffalo Trace Distillery recently discovered remnants of the original 1869 distillery upon renovating to create a new event space

Buffalo Trace Distillery recently began renovating an old building on property to add additional meeting and event space. However, the renovation literally hit a brick wall. Meredith Moody, Marketing Services Director, explains how further investigation led to the uncovering foundations of previous buildings. This process slowly continued, and eventually a partial brick wall dating back to 1869 was found and then a second partial wall dating back to 1873 was uncovered. The company then uncovered the original whiskey fermenters from Col. Taylor's distillery dating back to the 19th century.

"We obviously changed our plans for meeting and event space on this lower level, and decided to completely uncover the entire area," says Moody. "We called in our historian we've worked with in the past and also partnered with a local bourbon archaeologist, Nicholas Laracuente. Nick verified it was, in fact, the remnants of the original 1869 distillery, plus the distillery that replaced that one in 1873 that was later destroyed by lightning in 1882, as well as the 1883 distillery that replaced the previous one. With the completion of the site excavation, we have developed the E.H. Taylor Tour, called 'Bourbon Pompeii'," explains Moody. The tour is named after E. H. Taylor, the man who revolutionized the bourbon industry.

The Bourbon Pompeii tour, which opened in August 2017, has become a big draw for visiting tourists. "We have been growing visits consistently for the past 18 years, but most dramatically in the past seven. It took us 15 years to get to 100,000 visitors, but only three to get to 200,000. We are growing by word of mouth and our tour guides and visitor centre staff provide an excellent experience for all of our visitors," comments Moody.

Moody concludes: "The discovery of Bourbon Pompeii brought in a whole new level of interest for our tours, those interested not just in bourbon production, but in the history of this National Historic Landmark. The site allows a sense of what it was like in the 1800s. This whole experience helps make an organic connection to our bourbon education objective."

