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WSWA's 2023 Access LIVE Brings Together Thought Leaders for Future-Focused Premier Alcohol Industry Event

WASHINGTON, D.C., 04/25/2023 – Earlier this month, the premier beverage alcohol industry event returned to Orlando for the first time since 2019. Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA)'s Access LIVE brought wine and spirits producers, distributors, retailers, and industry partners together for a best-in-class, future-focused event.

“It was great to bring the entire beverage alcohol ecosystem together, in-person, to celebrate our achievements and look towards the future,” said WSWA President and CEO Francis Creighton. “Access LIVE redefined what an industry convention can be, as evidenced by the broad range of attendees, exhibitors, thought leaders and others. Access LIVE is the new standard-bearer for industry gatherings.”

WSWA Chairman Tom Cole opened the event by calling upon colleagues across the industry to support WSWA's new position regarding federal [legalization and regulation of adult-use cannabis](#). Cole used his opening remarks as a rally cry, urging colleagues to apply lessons learned in the safest, most diverse, and most competitive alcohol marketplace in the world to the emerging cannabis sector.

The diversity of the current U.S. alcohol marketplace was on display in the exhibit hall where over 300 brands were showcased including minority and women-owned brands highlighted in the Women of the Vine and Spirits (WOTVS) Alley, as well as emerging brands in the Innovation Pavilion and Access Craft Alley. WSWA's Access Craft initiative opened applications for the 2023 Advisory Council from the show floor and [launched Volume 02 of the WSWA Access Craft Distribution Playbook](#). The Playbook has already been downloaded by thousands of industry professionals and Volume 02 features three new chapters that include best practices and tips shared by experts. Members of the Access Craft Advisory Council also awarded WSWA Access Craft's 2023 Hot! New! Now! Award to [Cantadrink](#), a new ready-to-drink cocktail based on the traditional recipe of a Jalisco cantarito.

Other attendees were honored as recipients of prestigious awards that spanned all three tiers of the alcohol supply chain. Award recipients included:

- Jackson Family Wines, Supplier Sustainability Award
- Ben Weiner, Retailer Community Service Award
- Alan Dreeben, Industry Icon Award
- Ed Callison Jr., Lifetime Achievement Award
- Dr. John Mariani Jr., Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. Award
- Wholesaler Movers & Shakers
 - Julie Milroy, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits
 - Jessica Partington, Winebow
 - Rissa Lawrence, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits
 - Jeremy Kruidenier, Wine & Spirits Distributors of Illinois
 - Cheryl Durzy, Liberation Distribution, Inc. (LibDib)
 - Eric Faber, Cutting Edge Selections
 - Kevin Roberts, Breakthru Beverage Group
 - Jenn Engel, Republic National Distributing
 - Troy Clarke, Martignetti Companies

Access LIVE was a star-studded event. Movie star, entrepreneur, and activist Jason Momoa was joined by his business partner Blaine Halvorson, to open the first day with a keynote discussion moderated by Kris Van Cleave of *CBS News* to launch their new sustainably focused brand Meili Vodka. Food Network star and owner of Irvine's Spirits, Chef Robert Irvine, discussed his new book *Overcoming Impossible* and joined a panel of wholesaler experts to crown the 2023 Brand Battle Champion, [Sunshine Punch](#). Grammy award-winning artist Nelly headlined Ovation LIVE, the closing night event, launching his new brand [MoShine](#), and Food Network's Guy Fieri joined attendees at the reception to pour his brand Santo Tequilas. Other celebrity attendees included Christie Brinkley for Bellissima Prosecco, Lisa Barlow for Vida Tequila, Annika Sörenstam for Fizzy Beez, and Joseph Gannascoli for Rocavaka Vodka.

Exhibiting attendees had exclusive opportunities to create content and explore brand building at the Hub. Brands could book one-on-one sessions with wholesaler advisors to discuss business challenges like moving into new markets, digital media strategies, and packaging. Brands booked appointments with professional product photographers and videographers to create unique and engaging digital content for social media and ad campaigns. The Hub, whose activations were free for all attendees, hosted nearly 200 appointments over 48-hours.

WSWA's 2024 Access LIVE will be in Las Vegas from January 29 – February 1. Registration to book premium exhibit spaces will open soon. If you are interested in sponsoring Access LIVE, email registrations@wswa.org.