

CIDER, COCKTAILS, SPIRITS

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Drink Up: Meet the Mastermind Behind the Roundhouse's Beverage Program

By Kristen Oliveri · On December 21, 2016

The Roundhouse hotel in charming, historic Beacon, New York has quickly become the talk of the town as the go-to boutique hotel for city-goers seeking respite from the chaotic nature of the Big Apple, as well as a treasured oasis for locals who now flock to this unique property—waterfall included—for curated tasting menus and culinary experiences.



Tim Buzinski, the creative beverage manager for the hotel, joined Chef Terrence Brennan's team to enhance its overall offering and is now at the helm of their beverage program. Buzinski is the co-founder/proprietor, along with his wife Mei Ying So, of Artisan Wine Shop in Beacon, which was established in 2006. His experience in the beverage community runs deep. After graduating from The Culinary Institute of America with a degree in culinary arts, Buzinski pursued his love of wine, working with both large and small operations in all tiers: retail, importing and distributing.

Today, he is working side by side with Chef Brennan to create food and beverage pairings seemingly made in heaven. Swig Contributor Kristen Oliveri sits down with Buzinski to discuss his background, his cocktail philosophy and how their cocktail program is making its mark at the Roundhouse.

Q: What is your beverage philosophy? How do you apply it to what you do at the Roundhouse?

A: From the beverage perspective, we've taken our cues from Chef Brennan's "Whole Farm Cuisine" approach. We focused primarily on local producers, looking to the established wineries including Whitecliff Vineyards, Millbrook Vineyards, Benmarl Winery and Clinton Vineyards who have historically continued to offer quality wines grown locally. Serving well-made wines that pair well with our food offerings is our ultimate goal. Beyond local wines, we sought out producers who focus on sustainability, looking to the West Coast and Europe to create a broader list.

Q: How important is it to you to carry local wines, beers, spirits and so on?

A: I've always been a strong supporter of local producers and have been working with many of them over the past ten years. It's been exciting to be a part of this still-developing wine region. The wine program gave me the opportunity to further showcase their work. Along the same lines, our Bar Manager David Garrett connected with local beer and spirit producers, including Denning's Point Distillery and Sloop Brewing.

Q: What are some interesting local producers that you've come across recently in your pursuits?

A: Some of my recent discoveries include Tousey Winery, who's Chardonnay we pour by the glass; we also often recommend their Pinot Noir. Their wines are classically styled and not only drink well on their own, but they mingle happily with the food on the plate. In addition, Hudson-Chatham Winery has been a new discovery. They work mainly with hybrid grapes and have managed to create wines that are amazing on the table. They have the acidity and delicate tannins that work well when paired with food.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to make a spectacular food and wine pairing?

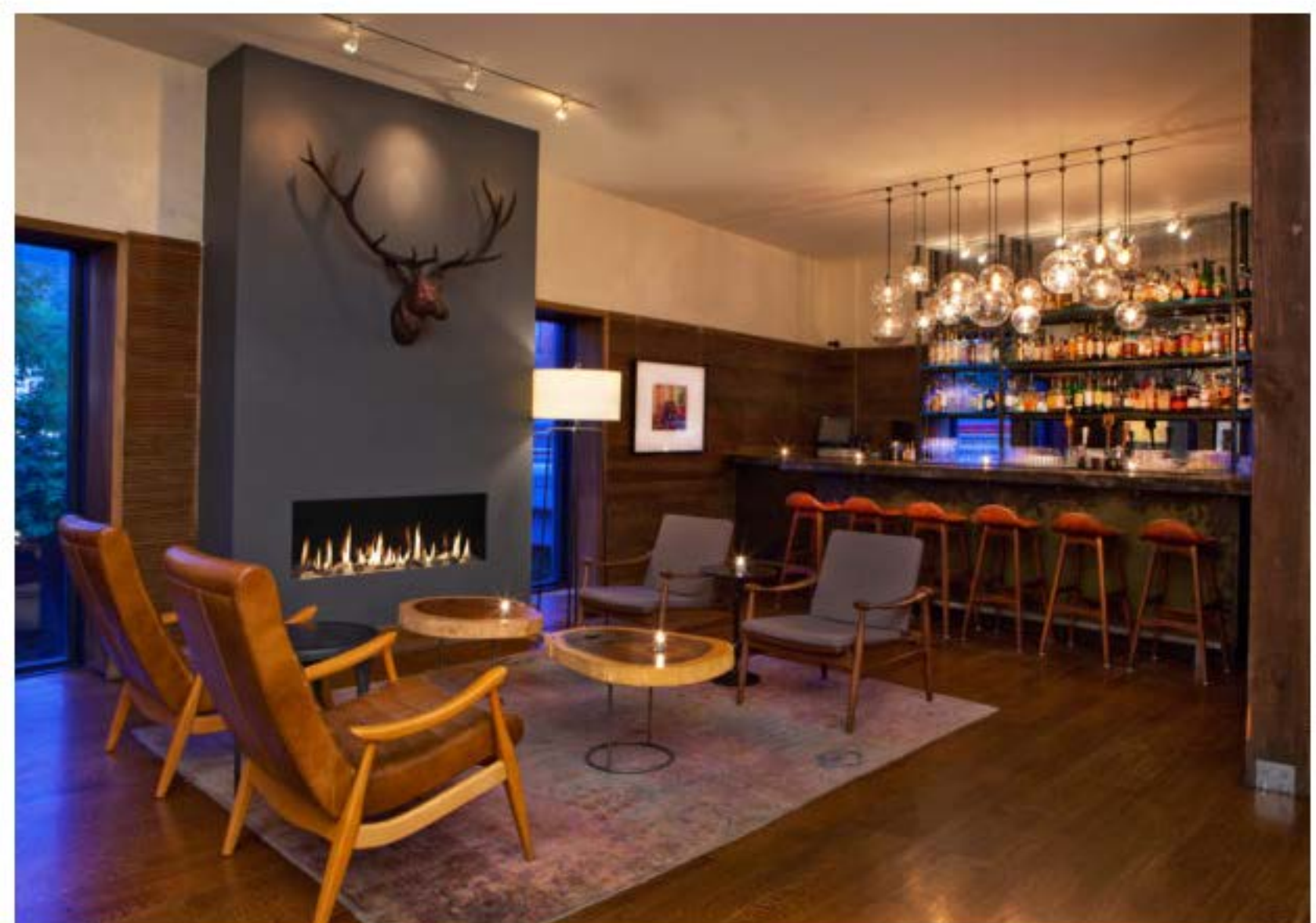
A: A spectacular pairing is one in which new flavors are unlocked and created, changing both the wine and the food; neither the wine nor food tastes the same without the other. Often, from the wine perspective, I look to match the weight and texture with those same elements of the dish, then find the key flavors in both that will either align or contrast.

Q: What are your feelings on the cider movement and how do you work that into pairings?

A: The reemergence of cider has been fantastic. It was something that Chef Brennan and I both value and wanted to feature even before we discussed the list. Historically, cider was such an important part of our region's heritage, so it's exciting to share such a wide selection with our guests. Cider is amazingly versatile in part because it offers the acidity of a white wine but also the tannin structure of some reds. It works extremely well with much of our menu, particularly in the Nose to Tail section; cider is also an exceptional partner to our farmstead cheese plate.

Q: What type of programming do you do for guests looking to have a unique beverage experience?

A: The most important thing I do is have conversations with guests to get a feel for the type of wines they are comfortable and familiar with, and what they may be willing to try that evening. I may end up offering a wine that they may not have heard about but it still falls well within their comfort zone. If they feel adventurous, I've put a nice selection of the off-the-beaten path wines together that may be a bit challenging to categorize but are delicious nonetheless. In terms of programming, to highlight the unique dining experience our Nose to Tail dishes offer, on weeknights in the lounge we often suggest specific wines and ciders that will take the dining experience to another level.



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