

KANE'S BEVERAGE WEEK

The Alcohol Beverage Executive's Newsletter

Volume 39, No. 4 • Copyright 2025 Whitaker & Company, Publishers, Inc. • January 25 2025

RNDC Secures New Financing

Republic National Distributing Co. (RNDC) which recently agreed to sell several markets to Reyes Beverage Group took another step toward stabilizing its business, securing an agreement with its lenders to provide significant additional financing. Terms weren't disclosed.

The company said the new capital will help support the Company's operations as RNDC continues to align its organizational structure, operational capabilities, and portfolio focus to ensure executional excellence.

The news comes about 10 days after RNDC retained Lazard to explore its options amid plunging alcohol sales.

"We are pleased to have the continued support from our lending partners as we deliver against our priorities and pursue opportunities that strengthen our business and our role in the industry," said Marc Sachs, President/CEO of RNDC. "We are committed to ensuring our business remains a strong, profitable, and valuable partner to all we serve, including our suppliers and customers. We are grateful for the patience and cooperation of our suppliers, the trust our customers place in us every day, and the dedication of our associates who deliver in the marketplace."

At the time RNDC retained Lazard, Debtwire, an ION Analytics publication, reported three different unnamed sources said bankruptcy was one of the potential alternatives for the company. Presumptively, the additional financing plus the sale of several markets to Reyes eliminates that possibility, at least for the moment.

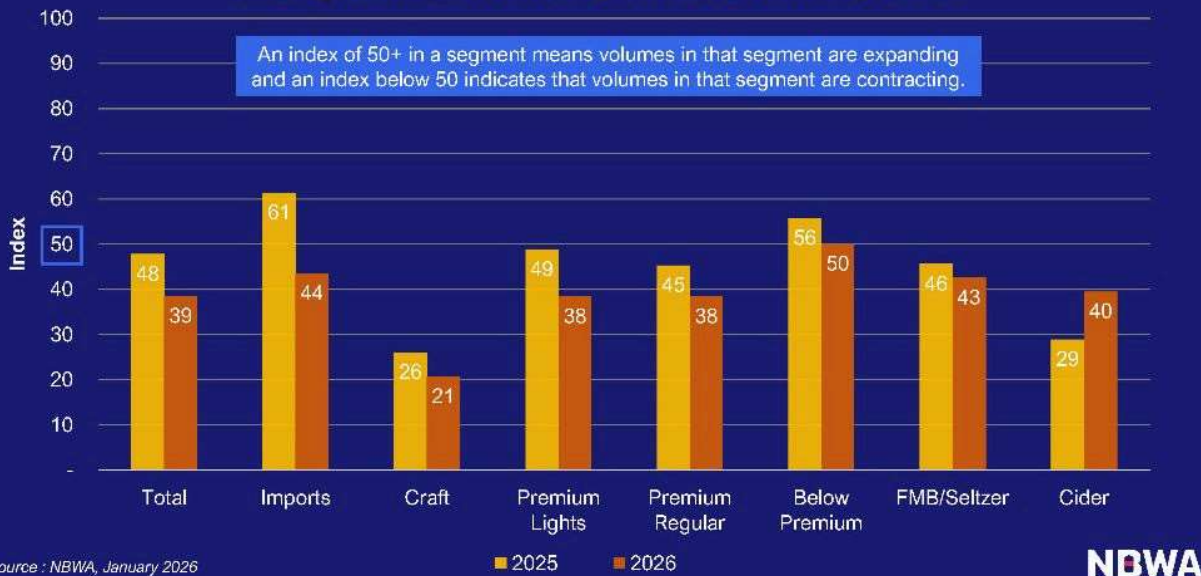
Beer Purchasers Index Surges in January

National Beer Wholesalers Association's Beer Purchasers' Index hit its highest level in January since July 2025, posting a 14-point jump since December.

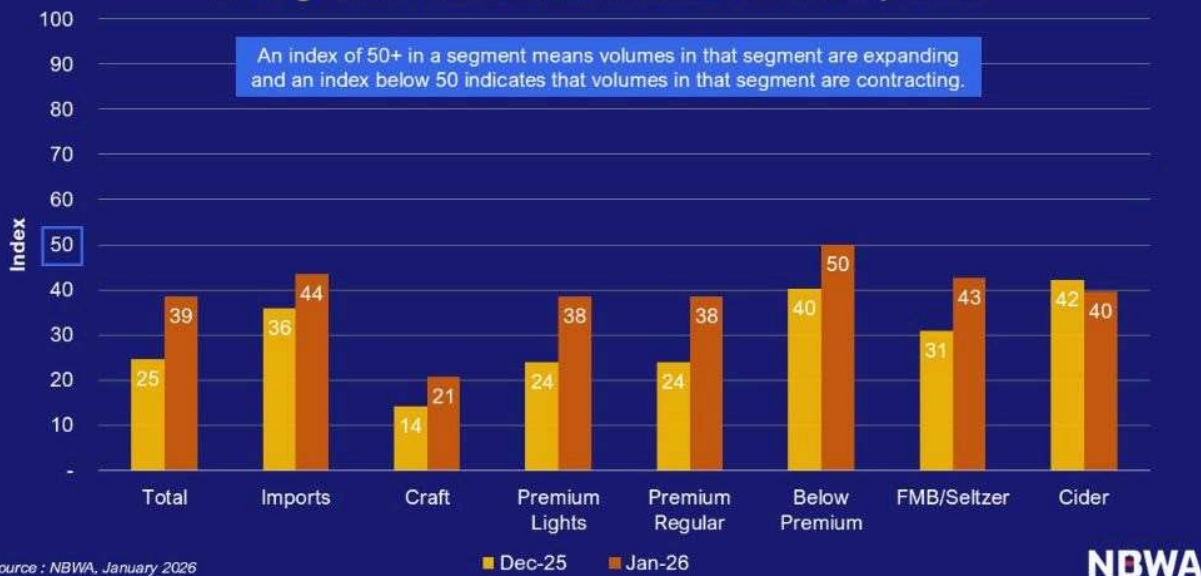
All segments except Cider posted higher month-over-month readings, led by the first Below Premium reading of 50 in over a year.

The combination of index readings for at-risk inventory (45) and BPI (39) moves the industry from contractionary to cautionary positioning to start the new year.

NBWA Beer Purchasers' Index All Segments for January 2025 vs January 2026



NBWA Beer Purchasers' Index All Segments for December 2025 vs January 2026



Looking across the segments for January:

The imports index at 44 is 17-points lower than January 2025 and eight points higher than December 2025.

The craft index at 21 is five points lower than January 2025 and seven points higher than December 2025.

The premium lights index at 38 is 11-points lower than January 2025 and 14-points higher than December 2025.

The premium regular index at 38 is seven points lower than January 2025 and 14-points higher than December 2025.

The below premium index at 50 is six points lower than January 2025 and 10-points higher than December 2025.

The FMB/seltzer index at 43 is three points lower than January 2025 and 12-points higher than December 2025.

The cider segment at 42 is 11-points higher than January 2025 and two points lower than December 2025.

NBWA's Beer Purchasers' Index is the only forward-looking indicator for distributors to measure expected beer demand. The index surveys beer distributors' purchases across different segments and compares them to previous years. A reading greater than 50 indicates the segment is expanding, while a reading below 50 indicates the segment is contracting.

Note to Trump's Vaccine Head: Alcoholism and Polio Aren't the Same

The head of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, is equating polio, measles and similar transmittable diseases with alcoholism.

Dr. Kirk Milhoan, chair of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and a pediatric cardiologist, said on the podcast "Why Should I Trust You" that he had "concerns' some children might die or be paralyzed as a result of a choice not to vaccinate. But, he said, "I also am saddened when people die of alcoholic diseases."

The two diseases are not the same. A person with measles is a risk to their entire community because it's "a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing," the Centers for Disease Control says. Polio "spreads through contact with the poop or sneeze/cough droplets of an infected person, even if they don't have visible symptoms."

In other words, measles and polio are both diseases that you can get through contact with another person. You can't "catch" alcoholism by being around an alcoholic who sneezes not via their poop.

Milhoan's concern is about individual choice. In his view, one should not be forced to receive the polio or measles vaccine to go to school. It should be an individual choice. To make his point, he grabs an extreme example of a high school pupil who was denied graduation because she had not had all her childhood vaccines. She was 17-1/2 years old. In two months, she would be 18, and she would not be required to be vaccinated. This is a libertarian view, in which the government has no right to require any action by an individual – even if the action would benefit society at large.

The public health view is 180 degrees opposite. It values protecting the group over concern about the individual.

Both views have their merits. But one thing should be clear: It is simply wrong to compare communicable diseases such as polio and measles to noncommunicable diseases such as alcoholism or bipolar disorder.

What A-B is Doing for Super Bowl LX

Michelob ULTRA, Budweiser and Bud Light will unveil all-new commercials during the broadcast of Super Bowl LX on February 8.

As the Official Beer Sponsor of the NFL for over 20 years, Anheuser-Busch activates its iconic portfolio of brands on a global scale, fueling game-day traditions and showing up for fans during the sporting events that matter most to them. That includes investing more in Super Bowl LX than any other company as the game's #1 advertiser across all categories.

Kyle Norrington, Chief Commercial Officer at Anheuser-Busch, said: "We're now in a one-of-a-kind year for sports and entertainment in America, and we're primed to kickstart our plans at Super Bowl. As one of the most prolific advertisers in Super Bowl history, our new spots will provide fans with the first look at what they can expect throughout this extraordinary year as our portfolio of brands show up to celebrate unparalleled events including the World Cup, the Winter Olympics, America's 250th birthday and Budweiser's 150th anniversary. You can count on us to continue investing in the moments that celebrate beer, sports, and epic milestones."

New Creative Work

For 20+ years, Michelob ULTRA, America's #1 top-selling and fastest-growing beer[^], has been synonymous with championing an active lifestyle and encouraging social athletes to give it their all – whether it's their first time on the slopes or they're competing for Olympic gold.

This February, sporting worlds will collide to provide fans with the ultimate live sports viewing moment; the Super Bowl and the Winter Olympic Games. As the Official Beer Sponsor of Team USA and a staple for watching football, Super Bowl LX is the perfect stage for Michelob ULTRA to bring these two iconic moments together with a commercial about America's competitive spirit.

Super Bowl LX is a key part of the [brand's full-scale campaign](#) in support of the Winter Olympic Games which includes new Team USA-branded packaging for fans to enjoy as they cheers to the home team.

This year, Budweiser is returning to the Super Bowl with a spot that honors its longstanding – and ongoing – legacy in American culture. To celebrate the brand's milestone 150th anniversary and America's 250th birthday, Budweiser will deliver an empowering, heartfelt national commercial that captures how its beer is not only made in America; it's made of America.

As part of its larger "Made of America" campaign, Budweiser is also releasing the limited-edition Heritage Can Series pack featuring four unique designs representing different eras of the brand's history. Ready in time for Super Bowl LX, these Heritage Cans are available wherever Budweiser is sold. Fans can collect all four to get excited for what's to come in the next 150 years.

Bud Light returns to the Super Bowl stage, showcasing the brand's iconic humor and celebrity partners who display their willingness to do anything for the clean, crisp taste of Bud Light. Celebrating the brand's passion points of sports and music, the official beer sponsor of the NFL will debut new creative that celebrates the universal fixture of any great Super Bowl LX party: the keg.

All three commercials will appear through national media campaigns inclusive of the general market, Spanish language and streaming broadcasts, pre- and post-game activations, integrations at retail and out-of-home placements both in San Francisco and key markets around the country.

Activating in San Francisco

Anheuser-Busch's Super Bowl impact will also extend beyond the broadcast, bringing multiple brands directly to fans with events that will enhance the Super Bowl weekend experience in San Francisco.

On Friday, Feb. 6, "Bud Light Presents Post Malone & Buddies" will see the global superstar back on Bud Light's stage for his second-consecutive Super Bowl performance, as the Official Beer Sponsor of the NFL continues providing 21+ fans with bucket list experiences.

Michelob ULTRA Unveils Olympians in New Super Bowl LX Teaser

Michelob ULTRA, America's #1 top-selling and fastest growing beer brand, debuted a teaser that combines two of the biggest cultural moments in sports – the Super Bowl and the Olympic Winter Games. In this teaser, titled "The Jump," fans can see a novice skier named Greg, quickly coming down the

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In this teaser, titled "[The Jump](#)," fans can see a novice skier named Greg, quickly coming down the slopes while Olympic medalist Chloe Kim and Olympian and Stanley Cup champion T. J. Oshie watch in awe and say, "*there's only one man taught him that*," alluding to a mysterious fourth character.

This action-packed spot was directed by *Top Gun: Maverick* and *F1* filmmaker and action movie aficionado, Joseph Kosinski, as a continuation of a robust campaign that celebrates Team USA and the spirit of friendly competition.

Advertising

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U.S. Withdraws from WHO

The United States' completed its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the U.S. Department of State said.

The agencies said the withdrawal wasn't because of WHO's anti-alcohol propaganda but because of the organization's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic that arose out of Wuhan, China, its failure to adopt urgently needed reforms, and its inability to demonstrate independence from the inappropriate political influence of WHO member states.

WHO delayed declaring a global public health emergency and a pandemic during the early stages of COVID-19, costing the world critical weeks as the virus spread. During that period, WHO leadership echoed and praised China's response despite evidence of early underreporting, suppression of information and delays in confirming human-to-human transmission. The organization also downplayed asymptomatic transmission risks and failed to promptly acknowledge airborne spread.

After the pandemic, the WHO did not adopt meaningful reforms to address political influence, governance weaknesses or poor coordination, HHS said, reinforcing concerns that politics took priority over rapid, independent public health action and eroding global trust.

Its report evaluating the possible origins of COVID-19 rejected the possibility that scientists created the virus, even though China refused to provide genetic sequences from individuals infected early in the pandemic and information on the Wuhan laboratories' activities and biosafety conditions.

In a joint statement, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Secretary of State Marco Rubio said:

"Like many international organizations, the WHO abandoned its core mission and acted repeatedly against the interests of the United States. Although the United States was a founding member and the WHO's largest financial contributor, the organization pursued a politicized, bureaucratic agenda driven by nations hostile to American interests.

"In doing so, the WHO obstructed the timely and accurate sharing of critical information that could have saved American lives and then concealed those failures under the pretext of acting "in the interest of public health."

"Even on our way out of the organization, the WHO tarnished and trashed everything that America has done for it. The WHO refuses to hand over the American flag that hung in front of it, arguing it has not approved our withdrawal and, in fact, claims that we owe it compensation. From our days as its primary founder, primary financial backer, and primary champion until now, our final day, the insults to America continue.

"Going forward, U.S. engagement with the WHO will be limited strictly to effectuate our withdrawal and to safeguard the health and safety of the American people. All U.S. funding for, and staffing of, WHO initiatives has ceased.

The U.S. is the world's leading force in protecting public health, saving lives, and responding rapidly to infectious disease outbreaks, HHS said. Going forward, the U.S. government will continue its global health leadership through existing and new engagements directly with other countries, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based entities.

U.S.-led efforts will prioritize emergency response, biosecurity coordination, and health innovation to protect America first while delivering benefits to partners around the world.

Economy

\$100K-\$150K Households Living Paycheck to Paycheck Doubled in 12 Months

Among households earning \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually, the share living paycheck-to-paycheck by necessity has doubled in the last twelve months, from under 10% in early 2025 to 24% by December 2025, according to PYMNTS, a consultancy focused on the digital economy, payments and AI. That, as much as

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That, as much as anything, explains all the talk about affordability. It may also explain why in addition to health concerns, alcohol issues, etc., bev/al sales have been lagging.

Iowa Bill Seeks to Overturn Citizens United

A proposed amendment to the Iowa State Constitution would ban corporations from financially contributing or otherwise participating in election and ballot issue activities, with language specifying this does not stop businesses from being able to manufacture, operate or sell election equipment.

This proposal is specifically a means to combat the impacts of the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which struck down limits on how much money a corporation can directly spend in support of a political campaign.

Many critics of the decision have said *Citizens United* has given corporations and wealthy individuals the ability to fund elections without their identities publicized, as political action committees and candidates accept contributions from [“dark money” groups](#) — often 501(c)(4) social welfare groups or 501(c)(6) trade associations — which do not have to publicly release information about their donors.

Wahls, who is running for Iowa's U.S. Senate seat in 2026, said in the 16 years since the *Citizens United* decision, “the floodgates opened, and it became easier for corporate interests and anonymous groups to spend unlimited amounts to influence our elections, often without voters even knowing who is behind it.”

He said the court decision has allowed special interests to set political agendas while the issues impacting most Iowans go unaddressed.

Exactly how the amendment would work, if adopted, isn't clear, since Federal constitutional protections are applied to the states under the U.S. Constitution's 24th Amendment. – Reporting by Iowa Capital Dispatch."

No Clear Evidence Cannabis-Based Medicines Relieve Chronic Nerve Pain

There is no clear evidence that cannabis-based medicines provide pain relief for chronic neuropathic pain, an updated Cochrane review finds.

Chronic neuropathic pain is caused by nerve damage. Existing medications help only a minority of patients, driving interest in alternatives, such as cannabis-based medicines. These can include herbal cannabis or isolated ingredients of the cannabis plant such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) by inhalation, mouth sprays, tablets, creams, and patches placed on the skin.

Researchers reviewed 21 clinical trials involving more than 2,100 adults, comparing cannabis-based medicines with placebo over periods of two to 26 weeks.

Cannabis-based medicines were grouped into three types: products which contain mostly THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis; products which contain mostly cannabidiol (CBD), a non-intoxicating compound; and balanced THC/CBD products, which contain similar amounts of both.

The review found no high-quality evidence that cannabis-based medicines reduce neuropathic pain more than placebo across the three types of medicines. While some small improvements were reported by patients using products with both THC and CBD, these changes were not large enough to be considered clinically meaningful.

Reporting of adverse events was not consistent across the included trials, so certainty around side-effects was low to very low across all types of cannabis-based medicines. Products containing THC were associated with increases in symptoms such as dizziness and drowsiness, with a potential increase in the number of people withdrawing from trials due to side effects.

“We need larger, well-designed studies with a treatment duration of at least 12 weeks that include people with comorbid physical illnesses and mental health conditions to fully understand the benefits and harms of cannabis-based medicines,” said Winfried Häuser, clinician and lead author, from Technische Universität München and Medical Center Pain Medicine and Mental Health Saarbrücken. “At present, the quality of most of the trials is too poor to draw firm conclusions.”

The authors conclude that the evidence remains weak and uncertain, underscoring the need for higher-quality research before cannabis-based medicines can be recommended for chronic neuropathic pain.

Champagne Shipments Eased 2% in 2024

In 2025, Champagne shipments account for 266 million bottles, a slight decline of just under 2% compared to 2024 (271.4 million), the Comité Champagne said. Exports indicate a very slight decline to nearly 152 million bottles (compared to 153.2 million in 2024); confirming the resilience and major importance

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Exports indicate a very slight decline to nearly 152 million bottles (compared to 153.2 million in 2024); confirming the resilience and major importance of international markets, and Champagne's global appeal.

The French market represents around 114 million bottles in 2025. Despite a moderate decline compared to the previous year (118.2 million in 2024), it is still the reference market for Champagne and therefore remains an absolute priority for the industry.

"The French market is a showcase for our appellation, and we must strengthen it. We have all the assets we need – excellent wines, unique expertise and collective strength – to consolidate this position and promote Champagne," explains Maxime Toubart, president of the Syndicat Général des Vignerons and co-president of the Comité Champagne.

"With a strong appellation and coordinated actions, we will continue to bring joy to all those around the world who have a passion for fine wines, dreams, celebrations and a zest for life,' comments David Chatillon, President of the Union des Maisons de Champagne and Co-President of the Comité Champagne.

Paso Robles Wine Month to Launch Nationally May 2026

Launching in May 2026, Paso Robles Wine Month (PRWM) is a new national initiative celebrating the wines, culture and community of Paso Robles Wine Country. Led by the Paso Robles CAB Collective (PRCC) in collaboration with the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance and Travel Paso, and supported by Bay Cities

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Led by the [Paso Robles CAB Collective](#) (PRCC) in collaboration with the [Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance](#) and [Travel Paso](#), supported by [Bay Cities Packaging](#) and [Tastry](#), the program brings together wineries, grocery chains, independent retailers and chefs to drive awareness, trial and sales across on- and off-premise channels while supporting regional tourism.

The initiative launches as the global wine industry faces ongoing headwinds, even as Paso Robles continues to outperform to Nielsen data comparing 2025 to 2023 (52 weeks ending Dec. 27, 2025), Paso Robles premium Cabernet Sauvignon more than 50% of the region's planted acreage, posted a 3% increase in sales. Recent Circana data also shows that three Cabernets at every price tier are Paso Robles-appellated wines and members of the PRCC.

"Paso Robles Wine Month is about meeting today's wine consumers where they are," said Rhonda Motil, vice president J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines and PRCC marketing committee chair. "The initiative celebrates the quality and diversity of wine in a way that is accessible and food-driven, while giving wineries, retailers and restaurants a strong platform to connect with audiences."

Paso Robles Wine Month reflects how younger audiences are reshaping wine culture. These consumers favor casual occasions, value authenticity and sustainability, and increasingly discover and share wine through food and social media.

Through a partnership with Tastry, an AI-powered taste science platform that helps shoppers discover wines aligned with their preferences before opening the bottle.

Don Julio 1942's Bottle for Year of the Horse

Tequila Don Julio 1942 honors Lunar New Year with the release of the limited-edition Year of the Horse bottle, a symbol of legacy and new beginnings. Featuring the same luxuriously smooth, award-winning tequila made with 100% Blue Weber Agave, the Tequila Don Julio 1942 Year of the Horse Edition bottle

Indiana's Coach Cignetti Gets Free Beer for Life After National Championship Win

After leading Indiana University's Hoosiers football team to its first national championship, head coach Curt Cignetti said he would be sipping on Upland Brewing beer. Upland decided he should have access to some Hoosier Lagers whenever he wanted. Cignetti led the Hoosiers to an astounding season, his second

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Cignetti led the Hoosiers to an astounding season, his second at Indiana. The school, which had the losingest college football program in the country, on Monday became the only school to go 16-0 in 1894. It won the Big Ten Championship, the Rose Bowl, Peach Bowl and the National Championship on Monday night, defeating University of Miami Hurricanes 27-21,

"Coach Cignetti and his staff have ignited IU Football and brought so much joy and energy to Bloomington and the State of Indiana," Upland said. "We are excited to continue providing beer for the Hoosiers to celebrate the national championship, and we will be sending plenty of Hoosier Gameday Lager to the coaches and staff."

"We are also announcing a lifetime supply of Upland beer for Coach Cig as a thank you for the comments. That was pretty unreal to watch in real time."

Indiana University Athletics and Upland Brewery have been working together for several years. Hoosier Gameday Lager proceeds go toward "student scholarships through IU Licensing and T

Sweepstakes

1800 Tequila, Knicks Sweeps Offers Pickup Game at Madison Square Garden

1800 Tequila and the New York Knicks have joined to offer fans a chance to play a pickup game on the court at Madison Square Garden. It's open to residents of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut who live within 100 miles of MSG, and ends at 11:

1800 Tequila and the New York Knicks have joined to offer fans a chance to play a pickup game on the court at Madison Square Garden. It's open to residents of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut who live within 100 miles of MSG, and ends at 11:59 p.m. on March 6. Entry and info at nba.com/knicks/sweepstakes-and-promotions.

Champagne Telmont Official Champagne of Sail Team

[Champagne Telmont](#) announced a two-year partnership as the Official Champagne of the [Emirates Great Britain SailGP Team](#) for the 2026 and 2027 seasons. The partnership officially kicked off at the opening event of the [Rolex SailGP 2026 Season Championship](#) on Jan. 17 in Perth, Australia—where Emirates GBR took the win.

The partnership aligns with Telmont's sustainability platform and brings together two leaders united by performance, innovation, and sustainability. SailGP is widely recognized as one of the most technologically advanced and environmentally ambitious global sports competitions, racing high-speed F50 foiling catamarans across five continents.

Gordon Creek Vineyards Names Charles Comm Agency of Record

[Charles Communications Associates](#) has been retained by [Garden Creek Vineyards](#), a premier family-owned wine estate in Alexander Valley, Sonoma County, to lead its public relations and marketing communications efforts. The appointment comes as the boutique winery prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2026, marking a quarter-century of winemaking excellence under the stewardship of second generation vintners, Justin and Karin Warnelius-Miller.

Founded in 2003 by industry leader Kimberly Noelle Charles, Charles Communications Associates is a boutique marketing firm specializing in family-owned wineries, sustainability storytelling, and strategic media relations.

Bev/Al Stocks Rise Despite Trump's Latest Tariff Threats

Wh We Can Play the Tariff Game, Too

In a related development, calls are growing for the European Union to use its "trade Bazooka" against the U.S. if President Trump follows through with his threat to impose additional tariffs if Denmark does not sell Greenland to the U.S.

Existing legislation says "economic coercion exists when a third country "applies or threatens to apply measures affecting trade or investment in order to prevent or obtain the cessation, modification or termination of a particular act by the European Union or a member state."

The EU's "trade bazooka," officially the Anticoercion Initiative, allows the EU to shut off access to the single market representing 500 million consumers. It limits trade licenses and public procurement for American services, the European market would be closed.

Trump Gets Sovereignty Over Bases in Greenland. French Wine Imports Safe--For Now

The secretary-general of NATO negotiated a deal President Trump didn't know he could have: Military bases in Greenland as sovereign territory of the United States – without invading or buying the island. It's the same arrangement the United Kingdom has with Malta. After flip-flopping on Greenland, he said the threat of tariffs – anywhere from 10% on all goods from Denmark to 200% on French wine – was off while his aides and Europeans negotiated.

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After flip-flopping on Greenland, he said in a social media post he wouldn't use tariffs to try to wrest control of the Danish territory. He said he doesn't take that to the bank. In a social media post he said the threat of tariffs – anywhere from 10% on all goods from Denmark to 200% on French wine – was off while his aides and Europeans negotiated.

So, that deal is as unstable as nearly everything in Trump's second term.

Announcement of the deal was just one of the staggering events of Wednesday. The only normal thing, it seemed, was the U.S. Wine Trade Alliance (UAWTA) that 200% tariffs on French wine risked imperiling an American industry already reeling from widespread layoffs and contraction, the U.S. Wine Trade Alliance (USWTA) said.

Wine Tariffs

America's wine import and distribution ecosystem is already shrinking, USWTA said. Since early 2025, major U.S. distributors and importers have collectively laid off many thousands of American workers, citing declining volumes, higher carrying costs, existing tariffs, and prolonged market uncertainty. These layoffs have affected sales teams, logistics and transportation roles, portfolio managers, warehouse staff, and administrative employees across multiple states.

During the 2019–2021 tariff period, economic analysis submitted to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) found that every \$1.00 of damage imposed on European wine exporters resulted in approximately \$4.52 of collateral damage within the United States, borne almost entirely by American companies and workers.

Even as a threat, a 200% tariff would freeze commerce, accelerate layoffs and punish Americans that have no role in geopoliticsUSWTA said.

“Tariffs don’t hit foreign producers—they hit businesses like mine,” said Harry Root, owner of Grassroots Distribution in South Carolina. “When costs suddenly spike or inventory becomes uncertain, small distributors are forced to pull back immediately. That means fewer purchases, fewer sales routes, and staff cuts. A 200% tariff would be catastrophic for small, independent distributors and the communities we serve.”

Trump 'Blows Up' Liberal Democratic Order

In an extraordinary speech to the World Economic Forum, Trump said, in the words of [The New York Times](#) the United States was done offering its markets and its military protection to European allies he derided as freeloaders. And he vowed to advance his trade war. He characterized tariffs as the price of admission to a land of 300 million consumers.

“The United States is keeping the whole world afloat,” Trump said. “Everybody took advantage of the United States.”

Arista Winery Closes

Arista Winery, Healdsburg, Calif., is closing down production after the 2024 vintage.

To Your Continued Success,
KANE’S BEVERAGE WEEK

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel', is displayed within a light gray rectangular box.

JOEL WHITAKER, Editor

Thanks for reading!