









Robin Wilkey
 robin.wilkey@huffingtonpost.com
 Become a fan of this reporter

GET UPDATES FROM ROBIN

RSS EMAIL Like 4

Drink Like A Woman: Ladies Take The Booze Industry By Storm (PHOTOS)

Posted: 7/22/11 07:53 AM ET

Follow >  Beer,  Wine,  Brewers,  Distillers,  Female Brewers,  Female Winemakers,  Gin,  San Francisco
 Nightlife,  San Francisco Spirits,  Winemakers,  Women,  San Francisco News

In the tanks, barrels, and casks, it's always been a man's world. Until now.

Since the industrial revolution, the wine, beer and spirits industries have been almost completely dominated by men, save for a few brave ladies. But lately in San Francisco, it seems that the local brews and booze are being cooked up by a whole new demographic: young women -- many of them under 30.

And the Bay Area drinking scene is starting to take notice.

"It's always bugged me how male-dominated the industry has been," admitted Rich Higgins, brewmaster at Social Kitchen and Brewery. "But craft brewers are bringing beer back to its fresh, local roots, and gender divides are going out the window."

Rajat Parr, head of the wine program for Michael Mina's restaurant group and co-author of "Secrets of the Sommeliers," is welcoming the refreshing change of taste. Parr said that, in his experience, a woman's palette is different than a man's, and affects the character of the wine. "The spirit of the winemaker is always in the wine, for better or worse," said Parr. "In general, wines made by a female winemaker are more delicate and subtle, as opposed to the big, fruit-forward wines that a man might make."

A generalization, perhaps, but Parr is not alone in his analysis. Shauna Rosenblum, a 28-year-old winemaker and owner of [Rock Wall Wines](#), agrees. "A man's description of something that smells like strawberry would be 'strawberry,'" she said, "whereas I specify whether the flavor is a ripe strawberry, freshly made strawberry jam, strawberry Jolly Rancher, strawberry ChapStick -- just what kind of strawberry are we talkin' here?"

Rosenblum speaks from experience. The daughter of legacy winemaker Kent Rosenblum, she grew up surrounded by a male-dominated crew. "Growing up in the cellar at Rosenblum, the winemaking staff was all male, so when they started letting me sit in and do blends with them, it was fascinating how our palettes perceived flavors differently, and how we would describe them," she said. Rosenblum opened Rock Wall Wines in 2008 and just completed construction on a slick new tasting room that's drawing loads of attention.

At [No. 209 Gin](#), the gin distillery behind AT&T Park, CEO Nicole Nollette, 34, and marketing and sales VP Wendi Webster, 27, are reintroducing the city to the spirit, one tasting at a time. Webster credits her young age for her social media and marketing prowess. "I've been on Facebook since my university was invited to join in college," she said.

Focusing heavily on marketing and branding, Webster and Nollette have developed a "gin personality" system. "We talk to people about their experiences and taste preferences," explained Webster. The categories: the ginthusiast (a seasoned gin-lover), the ginlightened (a newcomer to the spirit), the ginskeptic (someone who's had a bad gin experience) and the ginnocent (a vodka-drinker). "People have ideas about gin that oftentimes aren't accurate," explained Webster. "Usually, they are drinking the wrong cocktail. So we choose cocktails specifically for their palettes."


Nollette and Webster just launched a series of monthly tasting tours at the distillery, usually before big ball games at the park. This week, they are in New Orleans participating for the first time in Tales of the Cocktail, widely considered the most important spirits event in the country.

At [Local Brewing Company](#), founders and brewmasters Regan Long, 33, and Sarah Fenson, 41, have noticed an increasingly high number of women attending their brewing workshops. "Lately, we've been pleasantly surprised to see that over 50 percent of the people in the room are women," said Long. "On the commercial end, folks are excited to see female brewers. It was only once that we were asked at an event 'Ok, so who does the brewing?'" she laughed.

Long and Fenson have been brewing beer together out of their flat for seven years and are currently raising funds for a brick and mortar brewery. Their speakeasy-style operation is known for its feminine, hyper-local brews like the floral Glen Park Pale and International Orange IPA. "We really love beer and wanted to tailor recipes to our tastes," Long said.

Check out the slideshow below for some of the city's best young, female brewers, winemakers and distillers. Know of someone who fits the bill? Let us know in the comments section. Cheers.

SHARE THIS STORY

 Like 128 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

41 37 10 0


 share  tweet  email 

Shauna Rosenblum (28), Rock Wall Wines

3 of 6



Shauna Rosenblum, owner and winemaker at Rock Wall Wines, makes some juice.

 comments(9)

