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MEDIA RELEASE

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That’s the spirit: Brock’s wine research centre adapts to serve a flourishing liquor industry

Answering the needs of Ontario’s boom in craft distillers, Brock University’s Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) has taken its grape and wine analytical services and continuing education courses, and adapted them for the liquor industry and consumers.

With Ontario easing some of its more rigid rules around liquor production, craft distilleries have been proliferating across the province, catering to consumers who are drawn to niche specialty products.

When Ontario’s Alcohol and Gaming Commission last year removed the minimum volume of 5,000 litres that distillers must produce each year in order to have a retail store, it opened a door for a new generation of entrepreneurs.

But while the new distillers may be deft at developing small-batch spirits, they lack the kind of services and product support that the big players have in-house. CCOVI, which has been providing research support and other services to grape growers and wineries for 20 years, sees the move to distillers as a natural evolution.

“Expanding our analytical services and educational offerings to the distilling industry further draws on the expertise already available in CCOVI,” said CCOVI Director Debbie Inglis. “The spirits industry is growing, and we’re in a position to provide services that support this growth and the jobs it creates.”

Services critical to distillers include ethanol and methanol monitoring in addition to other specialized analyses. Responding to these needs, the CCOVI Analytical Services laboratory now offers testing packages tailored to the spirits industry.

Some distillers are already taking advantage of CCOVI's analytical services. Craig Peters, who is Chief Vodka Officer at Oakville's Maverick Distillery, said the high cost of equipment inhibits the ability of small distillers to do all required testing in-house.

"CCOVI's lab is a terrific resource," said Peters. "The results we get are timely, reasonably priced and we're very pleased with the results every time."

Beyond lab services, CCOVI is also expanding its continuing education offerings to include Wine & Spirit Education Trust's (WSET) spirits courses to address the growing needs of this sector. These new courses start in August and offer a hands-on introduction to the world of spirits for consumers and for industry professionals looking to expand their knowledge.

CCOVI course instructor Elsa McDonald, who has a specialization in spirits, is the Director of Wine Education for Constellation Brands, an MW Candidate with the Institute of Masters of Wine and CAPS graduate. "She will be a valuable resource to add to our WSET team" says Barb Tatarnic, Manager of Continuing Education. "In terms of the program itself, we're very proud to offer an internationally recognized certification with a focus on spirits to the industry".

The WSET Level 1 award in spirits is a one-day course running Monday, Aug. 15 (go to the website for registration deadline), while the WSET Level 2 award in spirits will run in a condensed two-day format on Sept. 12 and 26. WSET Level 2 award in spirits will also be run on-line.

Registration deadline for the Level 1 course is Aug. 3. To register for the WSET courses, go to ccovi.ca/ce/courses

For more information:

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