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American Whiskey Wows St. Petersburg

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ATO ACTIVITY REPORT

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Report Highlights:

On July 13 for the first time ever in St. Petersburg the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) and the Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) St. Petersburg hosted «Whiskey – American Classics» a tasting and educational event at the Consul General’s residence. The event attracted over one hundred and twenty (120) professionals from the trade and hospitality industry. The American whiskey tasting was broadly covered by on-line media specializing in food and drinks and by the HRI industry. *Restoranoved*, the food and drinks magazine, is publishing a 2,600 words article about the American Whiskey promotion, interviews with tasting participants, and materials from the event. The joint advertising value of media coverage is around \$6,000. And as a result of the event at least one Russian importer is examining the possibility of bringing new brands of American whiskey into Russia.

General Information:

Background:

DISCUS members' products include the full spectrum of distilled spirits, including Bourbon, Tennessee Whiskey, vodka, gin, rum, brandy, cordials and liqueurs. Russia has been identified as one of the top developing markets for U.S. distilled spirits. Russia is already a \$200 million imported whiskey market of which \$48 million is from the U.S. and demand for American whiskeys is growing. Sales of US whiskey in Russia increased from \$12.2 million in 2004 to \$48 million in 2009. But targeted marketing efforts are needed to raise adult consumers' awareness about the uniqueness of these products. DISCUS has held several promotions in Moscow over the past few years. In 2010, DISCUS management approached ATO St. Petersburg and proposed conducting a broad American Whiskey presentation in St. Petersburg, the main entry point for imported foods and second largest city in Russia. ATO secured the Consul General's residence for the event, and coordinated the entire event from the Russia side.

Event Description:

On July 13 the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) and Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) St. Petersburg held the first-ever whiskey tasting, "Whiskey – American classics" at the Consul General's residence. The event reached key HRI and retail contacts to promote U.S. spirits, primarily American whiskeys (Bourbons and Tennessee Whiskeys), and generated interest among key media in these products.

The event attracted over 120 beverage buyers for large retail outlets, spirit distributors, purchasing managers for the hotels, nightclubs, bars, and media (primarily lifestyle editors, food and beverage alcohol-related trade press and on-line editions).

Sheila Gwaltney, Consul General of the United States of America opened the event. She highlighted the unique history of American whiskey that stretches back to colonial times and today remains among America's national symbols.



Sheila Gwaltney, the Consul General greets Seminar participants.

Bill Samuels, Master Distiller and current president of Maker's Mark Bourbon, started the seminar with the presentation of the American Whiskey history, and special technology features of American whiskey. Then, he led the audience through the tasting of classic whiskey brands created by DISCUS members. Under the leadership of the top expert the event guests were able to evaluate in the professional way the unique features of the product.



Bill Samuel makes the presentation

The presentation was extended by the master-class of Aleksey Shaposhnikov, Vice-president of the St. Petersburg Bartender's Association and twice a winner in the Russian Bartender Championship. Aleksey showcased how whiskey may be served straight, over ice, and introduced three cocktails with unique characters based on American whiskey – bright and remarkable Manhattan, flavorful and sunny Summer Pleasure and refreshing Sour Tai. Participants were able to sample the cocktails, whose recipes were included in the handouts.

“American whiskey is ideal for cocktail mixing. A large number of the cocktails based on this spirit are

already classics and are a part of the menu of many places from high-end restaurants to ordinary cafes and bars. Using American whiskey as a base in cocktails is making this drink popular and loved by many people not only in the United States, but also in Russia” - mentioned Aleksey Shaposhnikov at the event.



Aleksey Shaposhnikov presents a mixology session



Cocktails and photoop.



Participants

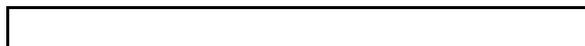
The event lasted one hour longer than planned. The guests had the opinion that American Whiskey presentation has special atmosphere, which added popularity of American whiskey and encouraged to develop business and interpersonal relations.

«It was thrilling to introduce American Whiskey into the St. Petersburg market,» said Bill Samuels. «I was humbled by how well received and well supported we were by the Consulate and the attendees. I wish we were as well received by the Kentucky General Assembly.»

After the seminar, more alcohol market players – representatives of import companies, distributors, managers and chef-bartenders of St. Petersburg restaurants and bars - joined the seminar participants for the reception.



Sheila Gwaltney, U.S. Consul General, and Frank Coleman, DISCUS Senior Vice President open the reception.





Guests at the opening ceremony

Two bars were open to the guests where the leading bartenders from the Bartenders Association of St. Petersburg served seven different American whiskeys and cocktails. An American Whiskey display close by enabled the guests to match the brand and distiller's name with the drinks they liked. A special menu was developed for the reception to pair with the whiskey and cocktails.



Bill Samuels, Makers Marks and Grigoriy Babaraika, St. Petersburg Bartender Association President at the bar.





Picture gallery for the American Whiskey Tasting: <http://rkmarketing.ru/cheers/>.

Achievements and lessons learned:

The event attracted over 120 wholesalers, journalists, and professionals from the trade and hospitality industries. DISCUS representatives and ATO staff had an opportunity to exchange information and engage with the Russian guests who had many questions.

Bill Samuels, president of Maker's Mark Bourbon, and Frank Coleman, DISCUS Senior Vice President were interviewed during the event by Restoranoved, the monthly food and drinks magazine. These interviews resulted in 2,600 words article, with readership of 10,000 and media value of \$4,000.

Key contacts among the industry were made during the event. For example, the Commercial Director of the M-Ekspedit Co., requested a list of the American distillers potentially interested in developing exports to Russia. The company is considering starting imports of new whisky brands to Russia for the United States.

The following recommendations from guests offer suggestions for U.S. industry and ATO Russia:

- DISCUS should take a cue from its Scottish and Irish competitors, who organize such events at least several times a year in St. Petersburg, and increase its market presence
- DISCUS should include introduce Russian distributors in future events.

Media coverage

For the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States one of key goals was to attract media attention. The event attracted 8 mass media representatives including one of the leading St. Petersburg dailies, Delovoy Petersburg, several lifestyle magazines, and online editions specializing in food and beverage. The American whiskey tasting was broadly covered in the on-line media (24 publications). Over 30,000 viewers read the on-line publications about the event and American whiskey. *Restoranoved*, the food and drinks magazine with 10,000 copies distribution is releasing an article about American whiskey and the promotion in the St. Petersburg, including interviews with event participants.

Below are links to several on-line publications resulting from the “Whiskey – American Classics” event.

Restoranoved magazine, everything about food service for consumers:

<http://www.restop.ru/bbpubl.php?numn=713>

Restoclub, informational resource on St. Petersburg

restaurants: <http://www.restoclub.ru/user/18386/blog/28660/>

HORECA, HRI Informational portal

<http://www.horeca.ru//news/market/11002>

Clubparadize, International Association of Night Clubs and Entertaining Centers

http://www.clubparadise.ru/user_news.php?user_id=-2&id=1231

Delinform.ru, On-line magazine for retail and HRI industries:

<http://delinform.ru/news.php?numn=10567>

Horeca-Spb, SPB Foodservice Association site

www.horeca-spb.org/partner_news/whiskey