

The Naturals

This year's Second Annual **Anthony Dias Blue Up-and-Comers Awards** showcase the West's hottest on-premise talent

November 8 may come and go—the night when THE TASTING PANEL honors the Second Annual Anthony Dias Blue Up-and-Comers—but the following group of mix maestros, wine service stars and beer and bar meisters will be noted as the leaders in their respective categories for a long time to come.

Best Bartender: **Albert Trummer** Fraîche, Los Angeles

Bar Chef – *n.* One who uses only the finest ingredients to complement alcohol, resulting in culinary cocktail creations that are equivalent to a fine dining experience.

Albert Trummer—New York's original bar chef—has redefined the American cocktail experience. A native of Austria's Styria region, Albert has used his European culinary training to create a totally new style of cocktail: a culinary cocktail, on par with a fine food preparation.

Albert uses fresh fruits instead of liqueurs, creating drinks that complement a meal, and even continue it where the food leaves off. His peers consider his creations every bit as innovative, individual and seasonal as the creations of the restaurant's executive chef, whom Trummer views from the bar as his equal.

Albert's cocktail creations have been consumed at leading dining destinations around the world: Danube, Town at the Chambers Hotel, Sixty Thompson Hotel and Trummer Home at Greenport in New York; Red Bull's Hangar-7 in Salzburg, Austria; David Bouley's Evolution in the Ritz-Carlton, South Beach; and currently at Fraîche in Los Angeles.



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Best Wine Buyer/Sommelier: Maurice DiMarino

Island Prime Restaurant, San Diego

Since he was 16 years old, Maurice has worked in San Diego's hospitality industry, from the front to the back of the house. It was not until he moved to San Francisco in 1994 that he became a serious entrepreneur, opening several restaurants,

including Lou's Pier 47, Foreign Cinema, Alma and Chez Spencer. Maurice worked closely with sommeliers who helped spark his interest in and love of wine. A free spirit, Maurice has traveled to Europe, Canada, Central and South America, Southeast Asia and Australia, building an understanding of the globe's wine and food cultures.

Maurice married and decided to move back to San Diego where he returned to a then-budding restaurant industry. He jumped at the opportunity to open Deborah Scott's new restaurant, Island Prime. At Island Prime Maurice has put together a list that exemplifies the world of wine and all its diversity.



Best Bar Program: Cedd Moses

Seven Grand, Los Angeles

Cedd Moses, founder and head of 213 Ventures, is known for his business acumen and socially responsible investing. He worked as a professional money manager for 12 years, shifting gears in 2001 to focus

on real estate development, converting downtown L.A.'s empty or underutilized classic office buildings into mixed-use developments featuring residential lofts, creative office spaces and retail. His ongoing passion for hospitality and the underground music subculture also led him to focus on building nightlife downtown, resulting in 213 Ventures.

Cedd Moses serves as Chairman of the Arts, Culture and Hospitality Committee for the Central City Association of Downtown Los Angeles. His father is world-renowned abstract artist Edward Moses.

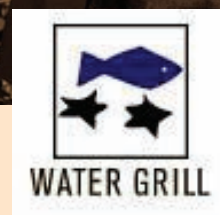
Opened in spring of 2007, Seven Grand features one of the largest selections of whiskeys in the West, a unique-to-downtown, state-of-the-art draft beer delivery system, live music, pool tables and two smoking patios.



Best Wine Buyer/ Sommelier: Cara Bertone

Water Grill, Los Angeles

After earning an Associates Degree in Psychology at Daytona Beach Community College, Cara moved to Dallas, Texas. While focusing on a Finance Degree at the Business School of the University of North Texas, she stumbled into a server position at a restaurant that would change her life.



"I drove through L.A. on my way back to Dallas and while staying with a friend saw a position at the famed Water Grill that I could not turn down," Bertone told THE TASTING PANEL. She has been in Los Angeles since, currently acting as the Wine Director/Sommelier of Water Grill. She has been named one of the top five sommeliers in *Los Angeles* magazine in 2006 and has had the honor of participating in multiple charity events over the past three years.



**Best Restaurant Wine Program:
Danielle Price**

Wynn Las Vegas

At 32 years old, Danielle Price is the Director of Wine for Wynn Las Vegas, overseeing one of the largest wine programs in the world. Price is responsible for creating all wine lists throughout the property, hiring the sommeliers, training the staff for each restaurant, and developing and maintaining the onsite wine storage facilities, and back-end systems and procedures at Wynn Las Vegas.

After graduating summa cum laude from SUNY Albany, Price returned home to New York and took a position as Executive Assistant to the President at Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group (now Fourth Wall Restaurants). Surrounded by connoisseurs of great food and wine, and determined to turn her hobby into a serious career, she immediately let it be known her goal was to focus on wine.

Proving to be a valuable asset, Price ascended the company at lightning speed. Within a year she had convinced the company to create a

corporate wine department and she was soon thereafter running it. Price served as Wine Director at Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group through seven years of growth and managed the wine program at all of the Group's restaurants.

Now, at Wynn Las Vegas, working alongside master chefs creating world-class cuisine, her vision and expertise will shape wine lists in eighteen dining outlets, in the resort's many nightclubs and bars, on menus for special events and banquets, as well as for room service. Drawing upon considerable knowledge and experience gained over the years, Price will help create cellars that are thoughtful, diverse and complex. In addition,

Price will train and manage a team of fifteen sommeliers—all wine lovers with whom she can share her life's passion.

**Claudio Villani For Bartolotta
Restaurant at Wynn Las Vegas**



Claudio Villani began his wine career in Florence, Italy, while studying at a hotel and restaurant school. He eventually obtained a Professional Sommelier Diploma

and worked for more than a decade as sommelier in exclusive Relais & Chateaux and other luxury hotels in Italy and in the States.

More recently, Villani was the founding manager and Wine Director for the highly regarded Incanto in San Francisco and voted "2003 Best Wine Director" by *San Francisco* magazine. He is now the Wine Manager for Bartolotta Ristorante di Mare at Wynn Las Vegas.



**Best Bartender:
Scott Beattie**

Cyrus, Healdsburg, CA

Scott, a third-generation San Franciscan, began tending bar while studying toward his English degree at the University of California, Berkeley. He's worked at such popular establishments as Perry's on Union Street, the Blue Light, and perennial standout Postrio.

From 2001 through 2005, Beattie manned the celebrated Cellar Bar at Pat Kuleto's Martini House in St. Helena and it was during this time that he established relationships with a number of local micro-distilleries. With the opening of Cyrus in 2005, Beattie made the move over to Healdsburg and got the go ahead from co-owners Nick Peyton and Douglas Keane to shape the spirits and cocktail program as he saw fit.

As the mixologist at Cyrus, Beattie stocks the bar with hand-crafted, small-production liquors, with special attention given to spirits born in the Bay Area. He has created an American regional cocktail menu that changes with the seasons.

The serving philosophy of the affable 31-year-old is to "get a reaction from people, wowing them with a different twist on an old favorite." And he adds, "When they're in my bar, I don't want them thinking about life's problems."



THE OPIUM GROUP

Best Bar Program: **Frank Tucker**

Managing Director,
The Opium Group, Las Vegas

Prior to joining The Opium Group, Tucker was the Assistant Director of Operations for Pure Management Group, which is comprised of high-volume nightclubs and lounges as well as eclectic restaurants and fun dining concepts. Tucker oversaw the day-to-day operations of the current Las Vegas concepts and was the primary operations director for Pure Management Group's new nightclub in the Bahamas. He was responsible for design plan reviews, menu development and financial forecasts for all prospective projects. Prior to joining Pure Management Group, Tucker was the Director of Nightclub Operations for Wynn Las Vegas.

A veteran of the United States Air Force, Tucker was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. While serving in the Armed Forces, Tucker received several individual military awards and was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation Award. He was also nominated by the Governor of Connecticut and confirmed by the State Senate to serve on the Judicial Review Council.



Best Bar Program: **Michelle Magidow**

Licorous, Seattle

Michelle Magidow and Tim Johnstone co-own and run Licorous in Seattle's Capitol Hill. Michelle is a former caterer and cook whose first liquid love was wine from France. In



Seattle, she was cooking and serving at locally and nationally-recognized restaurants such as Harvest Vine and Salumi. Tim splits his sipping allegiance between wine and bourbon, but both have long been interested in pairing the flavors of drinks with the foods they're eating. As they collaborated with their friend and partner, chef John Sundstrom of Lark, they found inspiration in the season by infusing liquors from vodka to tequila with herbs, roots and fruit at its ripest. Michelle oversees the infusion of spirits, while Tim tends to finesse the ingredients in their seasonal cocktails with a scientist's preciseness.

Best Restaurant Wine Program: **Jim Rollston**

Cyrus, Healdsburg, CA

Jim Rollston has followed his passion for wine to the vineyards of France, then back to the wineries of California and the dining rooms of Sonoma County's finest restaurants. Jim worked in winemaking with Domaine Thierry Allemand in Cornas, France, and Joseph Swan Vineyards and Roshambo in Sonoma County. But after participating in quality Bay Area restaurants such as Rivoli in Berkeley, the opportunity to connect people with fine and unique wines from all over the world proved irresistible. Jim traded the winery cellar for the elegant country dining room of the Farmhouse Inn in Forestville to be the Wine Director from 2002 till 2005. After helping garner rave reviews from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and many other publications, Jim was excited to join the sommelier team at the new luxury destination restaurant in Healdsburg, Cyrus, owned by the Maitre d'/Chef team of Nick Peyton and Douglas Keane.

Best Wine Bar: **Jesse Hufstader**

Bricco, Seattle

Jesse Hufstader grew up in Seattle but it wasn't until his seven-year stint in New York City's restaurant scene that he discovered his passion for wine. Although he has no formal training, he worked his way up from bartender to co-writing the wine list at Barrio and Assistant Wine Director



at both Marseille (where he cultivated his love of French wine) and Inoteca (where he cultivated his love of Italian wine). Upon his arrival back in Seattle in 2005, Jesse took on a position at the Harvest Vine (where, thanks to close friend and wine director Fernando Moreno Castillo, he cultivated his love of Spanish wine). In August of 2006 Jesse took over the position of Wine Director at Bricco della Regina Anna, where he continues to explore the world of wine.

Best Bar Program: **Gina Milano**

Bambuddha Lounge, San Francisco

Gina Milano grew up in New Orleans and moved to San Francisco where she made a name for herself as a bartender par excellence. Within a few years, *SF Weekly* declared of Milano, "If you have never had a drink poured from her talented hands you obviously do not have a social life."



One of Gina's most successful concepts to date is Bambuddha Lounge, which she opened in 2003. Bambuddha blends San Francisco swank with Far East sanctuary.

"When designing Bambuddha," Milano recounts, "I wanted to create a space that appealed to all demographics, a space that was comfortable, enchanting and made people feel transported to a different locale. I wanted it to feel like a Thai resort. And we were the first place in town to do beds, to give it that inviting, sexy feel."

Milano is an active member of many civic organizations and dedicates much of her time and energy to charitable interests. She is chair of the TNDC Celebrity Pool Toss, which raises more than \$250,000 each year for the after-school program for children.

In October 2007, Todd Traina and Gina Milano orchestrated the return of a San Francisco icon, Le Club, a reservation-only drinking and dining destination with a private-club ambiance.

Best Restaurant Wine Program:
Josh Loeb

Rustic Canyon Wine Bar,
Los Angeles

Josh Loeb's Rustic Canyon Wine Bar & Seasonal Kitchen is a concept that developed from a series of private dinners held inside a beautiful treehouse



Best Beer List:
Zan Sterling
Zeitgeist,
San Francisco

Through a series of interesting events, Zan Sterling, who has a Degree in Fine Arts from UCSC, found herself at the helm of Zeitgeist Bar and Grill over 9 years ago, after tending bar at the hip San Francisco spot for three years. When she took over as General Manager, it had a staff of eight, including Sterling. Zeitgeist now has a staff of 40 and sales have increased over tenfold. Sterling believes the growth is due to a strong sense of place and community.

Sterling has focused the beer, liquor and food programs on local pro-

ducers, long before this trend came into vogue. While carrying some interesting foreign brews to add depth to the selection, Sterling has never carried any of the major American brands, believing that there should be a place for the little guys (and gals) at the table—and for Zeitgeist that means a long picnic table. Her customers must believe it, too, since there's a line down the block most days and nights.

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Best Beer List:
Leo Stanton &
David Lackman

Library Alehouse, Santa Monica

Leo Stanton has been in the food and beverage business for over 30 years. "I came out to California in 1980 just as the microbrew movement was really starting to get popular," he told THE TASTING PANEL. "At the same time California's wine industry was getting great notoriety, especially from France. I was in heaven."

Stanton enjoys trying new and exciting beers and introducing the Library Alehouse clientele to the latest brews.



Best Wine Bar:
Ken Mills
Wine Steals, San Diego

Ken Mills began life traveling the world as the son of a geologist working for a large oil and gas company. He was born in Malta and traveled throughout Asia, Europe and the Middle East before moving to California to attend college. While at SDSU Ken began working at Hornblower Cruises and Events, eventually becoming the Food and Beverage Manager. His 12-year tenure at Hornblower ended when Ken and his wife Wendy started Elite Real Estate, which is still in existence today. With a strong desire to return to the food and beverage industry, Ken and Wendy drew on their experiences in Europe to create and build the concept of Wine Steals.

Wine Steals is currently working on opening a third location in San Diego and plan to expand the concept beyond San Diego in the next three years.



fresh ginger. The Tractor Room's extensive selection of bourbon, scotch, and wines are a perfect match for the restaurant's game meat cuisine and its swank speakeasy ambiance.

years. After leaving Rocca he chose to set out on his own endeavor.

Now a year old, Vinum Populi has grown into a prosperous wine lounge that encourages people to try all styles and prices of wine in an effort to find what best suits each individual palate. Here Miguel embraces a simple philosophy: "Wine is inclusive, not exclusive, and is as varied as the people that consume it." He can be found nightly offering a rotating selection of 48 wines by the ounce in this lounge that truly lives up to its name: "Wine for the People." ■■



Says Morse, "I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to work with such a stellar establishment. The Tractor Room has

given me a catapult into the industry that has been challenging, educational and galactic."

Best Bartender:
Brett Morse
The Tractor Room, San Diego

Brett Morse is the Bartender and Specialty Cocktail Trainer at The Tractor Room in San Diego. In November of 2003, Brett made the transition to The Tractor Room, and it is here that his full potential as a bartender has been tapped. The Tractor Room's impressive cocktail program, designed by owner Johnny Rivera, boasts "honest, vintage-inspired" drinks along with numerous creative innovations. Morse has a wide selection of fresh and unique produce to work with, including kumquats, figs, sage and

Best Wine Bar:
Miguel Garza
Vinum Populi, Los Angeles

Miguel Garza's 17-year stint in the restaurant industry spans the front of the house to the back. His love of wine has grown dramatically from those first sips of cooking sherry he consumed as a 14 year-old dishwasher. His embrace of the culture of food and wine led him to Rocca restaurant, where he operated as General Manager and Wine Steward for three

