

# SHANKEN NEWS *Daily*

**Exclusive news and research for the wine, spirits and beer executive**

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## **Wine Spectator: A Wine Ponzi Scheme Targeted New York's Most Powerful Enophiles, Clients Allege**

For wine lovers and executives, the dinners were sorely tempting: dishes cooked by some of the world's top chefs (Daniel Boulud, Tom Colicchio, Daniel Humm), paired with some of the rarest wines in the world (Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Cheval-Blanc, Dom Pérignon) and featuring business-savvy speakers. Since 2013, the International Business & Wine Society (IB&WS) has offered members monthly dinners paired with lectures and chats with leading business minds.

Was it all an elaborate Ponzi scheme? The organization's founder, Omar Khan, stands accused of taking money from investors and wine retailers to make the dinners happen and pocketing it instead.

Last week, 13 disgruntled clients filed a suit against Khan in New York state court, alleging fraud, misrepresentation, unjust enrichment, and five other counts. They claim he owes them more than \$8.3 million. Several other lawsuits are pending against Khan, the IB&WS and his other company, Sensei International, including one from a Burgundy hotelier and another from a wine retailer in Putnam County, New York.

“I was a prosecutor for 11 years and have been a lawyer for 30 years and I’ve never seen such a brazen example of a con man taking advantage of decent hardworking people,” Robert Seiden of the Seiden Law Group, which is representing the 13 clients in the suit filed on Sept. 3, told Wine Spectator. “This guy is like a micro-Madoff. He engaged in a multi-year scheme to defraud people in return for entry into the global wine world.” [Wine Spectator has the full story.](#)

## **Report: Rémy Cointreau Set To Name Luxury Marketing Veteran Eric Vallat As CEO**

Rémy Cointreau is reportedly finalizing plans to name Eric Vallat to succeed Valerie Chapoulaud-Floquet as CEO, according to Bloomberg. Chapoulaud-Floquet said in July that she plans to step down by the end of the year.

Vallat, who previously served as CEO of Rémy Cointreau’s flagship Cognac brand, Rémy Martin, has most recently been head of fashion and accessories at luxury brands house Richemont. Richemont announced yesterday that Vallat would be leaving to pursue an outside opportunity. In his previous time at Rémy, Vallat reported to Chapoulaud-Floquet and managed the Rémy Martin and Louis XIII brands through a period of solid growth in the U.S. and China.

Rémy Cointreau’s total sales slipped 3% to €223.2 million (\$250.3m) on an organic basis in the three months through June, marking the first quarter of the company’s fiscal year. The company’s core House of Rémy Martin enjoyed an increase, however, with sales up 5.5% to €161.1 million (\$180.7m).

### **News Briefs:**

- Campari has released Cask Tales, a new expression of its flagship aperitif. The new entry features a base of classic Campari that’s finished in Bourbon barrels. Clocking in at 25% abv, Campari Cask Tales is now available on an extremely limited basis at a retail price of \$70 a 1-liter. Campari’s U.S. unit recently announced growth of 11% in its first half, with ongoing gains for such brands as Campari, Wild Turkey, Espolòn, Grand Marnier, and Aperol.

- Bardstown, Kentucky-based Lux Row Distillers has launched Double Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey. Commemorating the distillery’s grand opening in April of last year, the 118.4 proof edition is a blend of two barrels of 12-year-old Kentucky Straight Bourbon. Only 6,000 bottles were produced, each labeled to note the number and age statements of the barrels used and topped with a solid copper cork. It carries a suggested retail price of \$150 a 750-ml. and only will be available in Kentucky. Lux Row is part of the Luxco portfolio.

•Sonoma, California's Vintage Point has entered a sales and marketing partnership with Nashville, Tennessee's R.S. Lipman Company, bringing Lipman's portfolio of domestic and imported spirits and wines under the purview of Vintage Point. The agreement names Vintage Point as the national distributor for Lipman's brands, which include New Zealand's Lonely Cow Wines, the U.S.'s Heroes Vodka, Old Hickory Bourbon, and Hidden Jewel California Wines, plus Italy's Eros Spinozzi Selections. Vintage Point's portfolio also includes Gary Farrell Winery, Nine Hats, and Alejandro Bulgheroni, among others.

•Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC) has unveiled a new supplier portal within its eRNDC digital platform. Developed with RNDC partner LibDib, the initiative allows suppliers to manage their entire product portfolio across all markets, receive RNDC news and updates, and access sales and marketing materials, among other features. The wholesale giant initially launched eRNDC this summer as part of a push to digitally streamline its business.

•Flor de Caña has released a highly limited 30-year-old single barrel rum celebrating the family behind the historic brand. The 40% abv rum is called V Generaciones and is packaged in a custom black leather case packed with a replica of a turn of the 20th century Nicaraguan stamp, featuring the country's volcanic terrain. The bottle itself is topped with a stopper made from locally sourced volcanic rock. Flor de Caña V Generaciones is now available in extremely limited quantities—411 bottles worldwide—for a suggested price of \$1,200. The brand is part of the William Grant & Sons portfolio in the U.S.

•Los Angeles, California-based Revel Spirits has expanded into four new markets in the U.S. The company, which produces spirits from both steamed and roasted agave piñas, has partnered with Southern Glazer's to expand into Nevada; Breakthru to add Maryland and Washington, D.C.; and Fedway Associates for New Jersey. This expansion brings Revel Avila to seven markets in all, including New York.

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- Napa-based importer The Sorting Table has added Sassetti Livio Pertimali to its Italian stable. With 16 hectares (40 acres) of vineyards on the Montosoli hill north of Montalcino, Sassetti is known for Brunello di Montalcino and also has properties in Maremma and the Veneto. The Sorting Table will import three Brunello di Montalcino DOCG and Rosso wines from the third-generation Tuscany-based producer, as well as Montecucco DOC and Prosecco Superiore Valdobbiadene DOCG.

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