



Culinary Institute of America

PRESENTS

WINE & BEVERAGE SUMMIT

MAY 5-6, 2025
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

2025 CIA WINE & BEVERAGE SUMMIT

Business Savvy for the Wine Professional

May 5 – 6, 2025 | [The Culinary Institute of America at Copia](#)

SUMMIT PROGRAM SCHEDULE

*Unless otherwise indicated, all summit sessions will take place
in the Napa Valley Vintners Theater (1st floor).*

Monday, May 5

8 AM **Registration and Refreshments**
Atrium (1st floor)

Welcome Napa Valley Breakfast
Atrium (1st floor)

8:45 AM **Welcome Remarks**
Speaker: **Maryam Ahmed** (Consulting Program Director, Maryam + Company)

9 AM **General Session I**
Panel Discussion
Global Opportunities and Emerging Markets
Explore the emerging markets and global locations driving the beverage industry's growth. This session will examine consumer trends, untapped opportunities, and how to expand your reach to new and diverse audiences. Gain insights into where the industry is headed and how you can position yourself to succeed in these evolving spaces.
Moderator: **Maryam Ahmed** (Consulting Program Director, Maryam + Company)
Panelists: **Timothy Buzinski '97** (Assistant Professor - Wine Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)
 Larissa Dubose (Senior Director, Vino Volo - A Paradies Lagardère Company)

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Zach Geballe (Podcast Host, VinePair)

Megan Schmidt (Director of Sales, CA, Breakthru Beverage)

Sponsored by Breakthru Beverage

10:15 AM **Networking & Stretch Break**

10:30 AM **General Session II**

Panel Discussion

Techniques of Tasting with SOMM Journal

Exploring Tasting Techniques with a group of experts curated by SOMM Journal.

Introduction: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Strategic Initiatives, The Culinary Institute of America)

Moderator: **Lars Leicht** (VP of Education, The SOMM Journal)

Panelists: **Gillian Ballance** (Director of Wine Education, Treasure Wine Estates)

Aaron Fishleder (VP of Operations, Cakebread Cellars)

Jesse Fox (Winemaker, Sequoia Grove)

Jacob Gragg (Ca' del Bosco and Portfolio Fine Wine Specialist, Santa Margherita USA)

Chris Hanna (President, Hanna Winery & Vineyards)

Elizabeth Vianna (Winemaker & General Manager, Chimney Rock Winery)

Harry Wetzel IV (Director of Operations/Family Partner, Anderson Valley Vineyards)

Sponsored by SOMM Journal

11:45 AM **Networking & Stretch Break**

12 PM **General Session III**

Business Session

Speed Session – What Beverage Pros Can Learn from the Spirits Industry: Data, Innovation & Growth

Success in the beverage industry isn't just about great products – it's about smart strategy. In this Speed Session, Erica Duecy, co-founder of Business of Drinks, reveals how spirits brands leverage data, innovation, and consumer insights to drive growth. Through real-world case studies, attendees will learn how to apply these proven tactics to their own careers and companies – whether by strengthening product development skills, refining brand strategy, or staying ahead of market trends. Expand your perspective and gain a competitive edge by thinking beyond your immediate category.

Speakers: **Erica Duecy** (Co-Founder, Business of Drinks)

12:30 PM **Walk-Around Food & Beverage Tastings and Networking Lunch**

Atrium (1st floor)

Designed by the chef team at The Culinary Institute of America at Copia, this walk-around lunch features curated tasting stations inspired by the latest trends in the wine and beverage industry. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore food and

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beverage pairings, gain insights into flavor synergy, and discuss the products shaping the market. Beyond tasting, this interactive experience fosters meaningful networking and offers creative, take-home ideas for beverage professionals looking to expand their palates and industry connections.

1:30 PM

General Session IV

Speed Talks

Defining Winning Design & Summit Group Think Tank

Everyday is rooted in design, even when we don't always know it's there. Join three experts as they share successes and challenges in beverage menu design, event curation, and creating physical spaces. After the speed sessions, attendees will break into think tank groups to brainstorm ideas for more inclusive, effective design in the beverage industry. As a group, we'll gain actionable insights for crafting better menus, events, and hospitality spaces.

Speakers: **Christie Dufault M.A. Ed., CHE** (Professor - Wine & Beverage Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)
Reggie Leonard II (Co-Founder, Oenoverse)
Amy Racine (Beverage Director & Partner, JF Restaurants)

2:25 PM

Interactive Group Think Tank

Various Copia Locations

This interactive think tank invites summit attendees to work together to tackle real-world challenges and opportunities in beverage design. With insights from experts in menu creation, events and experiences, and physical space design, participants will collaborate in small groups to brainstorm innovative solutions. Together, we'll explore how to create inclusive, engaging, and profitable designs that elevate the guest experience and the beverage industry as a whole. This is your chance to shape the future of beverage spaces through creative problem-solving and collective innovation.

Facilitators: **Oniyx Acosta** (Founder and Director, Co-Fermented)
Tim Buzinski (Assistant Professor - Wine Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)
Christie Dufault M.A. Ed., CHE (Professor - Wine & Beverage Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)
Reggie Leonard II (Co-Founder, Oenoverse)
Amy Racine (Beverage Director & Partner, John Fraser Restaurants)
Erik Segelbaum, AS (Founder & Chief Vinnovation Officer, SOMLYAY - GoodSomm - SWIG Partners)

3:00 PM

Group Think Tank Report Out

3:45 PM

Networking & Stretch Break

4 PM

General Session V

Tasting Session

Immersive Sensory Tasting

In direct application of our prior session, Dr. Hoby Wedler leads this session where you'll explore sensory design through a fully immersive experience. Apply the principles of effective design and understand how sensory elements impact the way we experience beverages. This unique session will challenge your perceptions and enhance your ability

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to create unforgettable customer experiences.

Speaker: **Hoby Wedler** (Chief Executive Officer, Hoby & Co.)

5 PM

Savor and Sound Silent Disco Reception

Chuck Williams Culinary Arts Museum (2nd floor)

Dive into an unforgettable sensory journey at this one-of-a-kind reception. Using silent disco headphones, participants will engage in a tasting experience that explores the interplay of sound, taste, and perception. This interactive event offers a fun and thought provoking way to reflect on the sensory design principles explored during the summit. And not to mention, dance!

7 PM

Summit Concludes for the Day

Tuesday, May 6

8 AM

Breakfast

Atrium (1st floor)

8:45 AM

Morning Remarks

Speaker: **Maryam Ahmed** (Consulting Program Director, Maryam + Company)

9 AM

General Session VI

Business Session

Financial Fluency for Beverage Professionals

The numbers game is often one that beverage professionals learn on the job. Whether you're building a beverage program, managing a brand, or nurturing your own business, this session aims to elevate your business acumen that will empower you to make strategic financial decisions and drive sustainable growth.

Introduction: **Tim Buzinski** (Assistant Professor - Wine Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)

Speaker: **Erik Segelbaum, AS** (Founder & Chief Vinnovation Officer, SOMLYAY - GoodSomm - SWIG Partners)

10:15 AM

Networking & Stretch Break

10:30 AM

General Session VII

Business Session

Standing Out in a Crowd

In a competitive industry, how can you ensure you stand out from the rest? This session will offer strategies for showcasing your unique skills, whether you're job hunting, launching a business, or building your personal brand. Learn actionable tips for becoming the standout candidate and seizing opportunities in a crowded marketplace.

Introduction: **Jennifer Breckner** (Director of Programs and Special Projects, Strategic Initiatives, The Culinary Institute of America)

Moderator: **Gabriela Fernandez** (Director of Trade & Experiential Marketing, The Duckhorn Portfolio)

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Speakers: **Luisa Beck** (Director – Talent Acquisition, Jackson Family Wines)
Elise Cordell (Senior Brand Ambassador, Pernod Ricard)
Kachet Jackson Bell (Founder & Principal, The Kachet Life | KJB Collective)

Sponsored by Pernod Ricard

11:25 AM **Networking & Stretch Break**

11:35 AM **General Session VIII**

Business Session

Speed Session - Our CTA as Beverage Professionals

This inspiring final session ties together the insights and lessons from the summit, exploring what the beverage industry's trends mean for our future. Reflect on the role of beverage professionals in shaping the industry and walk away with a call to action as you return to your career. Prepare to re-enter the beverage world with renewed focus and purpose.

Speaker: **Theo Rutherford** (Director of Wine and Spirits Education, Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits)

12:05 PM **Closing Remarks & Farewell Toast**

Atrium (1st floor)

Raise your glasses one final time as we bid farewell with a toast.

Speaker: **Maryam Ahmed** (Consulting Program Director, Maryam + Company)
Christie Dufault M.A. Ed., CHE (Professor - Wine & Beverage Studies, The Culinary Institute of America)

12:30 PM **Summit Concludes**

Join us at the [RISE Climate & Wine Symposium](#) following the [CIA 2025 Wine & Beverage Summit](#).