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PHOTO COURTESY OF LEGADO SPIRITS



From left, Hola Motuapuaka, Charmaine Magale, Christy Decelle and Yvette Rincon are the women behind Legado Spirits.

DRINK

Women of rye whiskey

Legado Spirits' four-woman team offers a female touch to brown liquors

BY DANIEL BARNES

When Charmaine Magale started touring distilleries in California, Oregon, Washington state and Canada as research before starting her own spirits company, she noticed that something important was missing.

"I felt this lack of presence of female energy in these distilleries," says Magale, one of the four female owners of Sacramento-based Legado Spirits, which launched its debut rye whiskey last September. "It's a very male-dominated industry."

With the goal of capitalizing on that divide and opening a fully female-owned distillery in Sacramento, Magale partnered with wife Yvette Rincon, local entrepreneur Christy Decelle and Hola Motuapuaka (CEO and owner of Myla'Cor Spirits) to create Legado Spirits.

The word "legado" is Spanish for "legacy," but while Magale and her partners hoped that a local craft distillery would be the start of theirs, the economic realities of the industry got in their way.

Spirits are surging in popularity, but for numerous reasons, craft distilleries have not grown in California at the same explosive rate as craft breweries. Distilleries must go through a punishing permitting process and cannot freely sell from their own tasting rooms. Another main roadblock is that it takes several years for a whiskey to fully mature. Rancho Cordova-based J.J. Pfister Distilling Company, which also opened last year, got around the problem by starting with fast-distilling spirits such as vodka and gin.

Instead of opening a full distillery, Legado decided to import "cask-strength" whiskey from Indiana, and then had it "curated to the female palate" by adding water, a process known as proofing.

"It's been a two-and-a-half-year journey for us to pick the right rye that we wanted to release," Magale says. "The way we proofed it down, it has less heat in it and it's a little bit more accommodating."

Through the first five months, the Legado legacy is one of success. Already available in local liquor stores and boutique markets such as Corti Brothers and Taylor's Market, Legado Whiskey will also be available in Raley's, Bel Air and Nob Hill throughout California, as well as Save Mart and Nugget locally, by the end of the month.

"It's humbling to see the number of people that have supported us, both men and women," Magale says. "We are really looking forward to what the next couple years will bring."

While the goal for 2019 is to continue to expand distribution, a distillery is still part of the long-term plan for Legado Spirits.

"The people we've talked to, they would just love to see a distillery tasting room open in the city," Magale says. "I think Sacramento would really back us up when the time is right."

For cocktail recipes and information on where to purchase Legado Spirits, visit rdmlegado.com.

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