

SHANKEN NEWS *Daily*

Dave Phinney's Savage & Cooke Sets Up Shop On Mare Island

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Dave Phinney, creator of The Prisoner and Orin Swift among other prominent wine brands, is set to open Savage & Cooke distillery and hospitality center on California's Mare Island in May. Savage & Cooke launched operations in May of last year with Ayate Tequila (featuring a Reposado at \$65 and Anejo at \$95) and expanded in September with the five-year-old Second Glance American Whiskey (\$38) and the four-year-old Burning Chair Bourbon (\$55).

The Mare Island peninsula, located in Vallejo at Napa's southernmost tip, has the virtue of being accessible both from the California wine country and by ferry from San Francisco. The area is the seat of what was once the largest U.S. naval base West of the Mississippi.

"We're exceeding all of our sales and market expectations thus far and are looking forward to our first full selling year in 2018," says Lauren Blanchard, general manager at Savage & Cook. "We're currently in 24 markets and have plans to expand to 30 total markets by spring. The goal is to grow at a responsible pace, as Dave is still very much involved with Orin Swift Cellars, so his time is split between these projects." Phinney sold Orin Swift to E.&J. Gallo for a rumored \$100 million in 2016, but remains in charge of winemaking.

Jordan Via, master distiller of Breckenridge Distillery in Colorado, will serve as Savage & Cooke's master whiskey distiller, and Rosendo Ramirez distills the company's Tequila in Guanajuato, Mexico. Both Savage & Cooke's Tequila and whiskies are finished in Phinney's wine barrels before bottling. Phinney's distillery will be able to produce around 40,000 cases a year when it opens and can be expanded as the brand grows. The grains and water needed for future whiskies will come from Phinney's properties in Yolo County and Alexander Valley.

"The tasting room will offer visitors a unique experience on Mare Island with tastings of our core products, tours led by our master distiller, and rare tastings of our reserves which are only available onsite—including a 12-year-old Bourbon and 10-year-old American Whiskey," says Blanchard. The distillery is just the beginning for Phinney on Mare Island—the entrepreneur has purchased seven buildings there and is also planning a winery, a bar and an artisan gunsmith.

Savage & Cooke and Phinney's other investments are part of a larger commercial and hospitality push on Mare Island by investors eager to take advantage of the island's San Francisco-adjacent location and ferry accessibility. Joe Wagner's Copper Cane is looking to move its main production facility to Mare Island by 2021.

Given Phinney's brand-building success in the wine world, the new spirits operation is likely to attract plenty of interest. In addition to Orin Swift, he also created The Prisoner wine label, which he sold in 2010 to Huneus Vintners for a reported \$40 million. Huneus then sold The Prisoner to Constellation Brands in 2016 for \$285 million. —*Shane English*