

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Voluntary Public

Date: 10/8/2015

GAIN Report Number: BU1532

Bulgaria

Post: Sofia

Spirits of America Promotion in Sofia

Report Categories:

CSSF Activity Report

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Report Highlights:

FAS Sofia, in cooperation with all six Bulgarian importers of U.S. whiskey, organized the “Spirits of America” whiskey promotion which was held at one of the most popular clubs in Bulgaria – [Sofia Live Club](#). U.S. Embassy’s Deputy Chief of Mission Martina Strong joined other U.S. diplomats, Bulgarian businessmen, journalists and show business celebrities in the unique opportunity to taste some of the world’s famous American whiskey brands.

General Information:

1. Market Constraints and Opportunities:

Constraints:

- Moderate awareness of the high quality and diversification of the U.S. whiskey on the Bulgarian market.
- Although not very big, the Bulgarian spirits market is extremely competitive. There is a huge choice of other quality whiskeys imported from Scotland, Ireland and Canada.
- Strong promotional efforts and activities from the European competitors.
- Limited purchasing power of the average Bulgarian customer.

Opportunities:

- The event created positive perception and good image for the U.S. whiskey by educating the buyers, retailers, restaurant and hotel managers and owners about the history and the high quality and diversified tastes of the whiskeys.
- The importers are now well known and are able to establish trade contacts with retailers, distributors and traders in order to increase the U.S. whiskey sales.
- Generated widespread publicity. The media including professional and lifestyle magazines, online media, newspapers, and bloggers widely reported this promotional event.
- Enhance FAS' good image as a strong advocate of the U.S. agriculture in Bulgaria as well as a reliable partner to the importers of U.S. agricultural products.

2. Expected Results and Desired Outcomes:

The event was attended by different types of targeted audiences, including distributors, retailers, hotels and restaurants owners, specialized media, professionals, local show business celebrities and Embassy representatives. This helped the importers to establish contacts with potential customers and increased their awareness of U.S. whiskeys currently present on the Bulgarian market.

3. Actual results and Outcomes:

- The event was held at the Sofia Live Club which is located in downtown Sofia and is one of the most popular clubs in Bulgaria. The unique audio system and the LED screen created relaxed and fancy atmosphere and gave the guests the opportunity to enjoy the quality of the presented whiskeys.
- About 200 industry guests, celebrities and journalists tasted all the available U.S. whiskey brands in Bulgaria.
- All 6 importers of U.S. whiskey in Bulgaria participated by presenting 13 brands and several sub-brands such as Jim Beam Family, Maker's Mark, Knob Creek, Old Grand Dad, Booker's, Baker's, Basil Hayden's, Jack Daniel's Family, Woodford Reserve, Four Roses, Bulleit, Hudson Family, and Wild Turkey.
- Master of Ceremony (MC) was the most famous TV celebrity in Bulgaria, the TV and radio journalist and anchorman of the most popular TV shows in the country Niki Kunchev. With his charismatic personality, professional attitude, and well-structured presentation the MC fully engaged the attention of the audience and was able to easily present to the guests lots of

information about U.S. whiskeys.



MC Niki Kunchev opening the promotional event and among the guests

- The Embassy’s Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Martina Strong officially opened the event and in her speech she said that *“like champagne is associated with France, beer is associated with Germany and sake is associated with Japan, whiskey is associated with America.”* She also talked about the wide variety and high quality of the U.S. whiskeys and expressed her satisfaction that the American whiskey is going through a true Renaissance not only in the United States but also in Bulgaria. Finally she wished the audience to enjoy the famous drink, but to enjoy it responsibly.
- After her speech the DCM invited the President of the Bulgarian Association of Producers, Importers, and Traders of Spirits Drinks Ralica Scorcheva to greet the audience. In her speech she said whiskey is among the 26 most recognizable words, expressed appreciation of the spirits industry for the continuous support received from FAS Sofia and for this particular event, and also reminded the audience to enjoy the presented brands responsibly.



Left: DCM Martina Strong; Right: Ralica Scorcheva delivering opening remarks

- After the official opening the MC invited the DCM to make a tour to the stalls. They stopped at each one and had a discussion with selected representatives of each company who presented interesting information about the brands. The guests were able to hear the discussions, which were brilliantly moderated by the MC and provided more interesting pieces of information.



DCM making a tour at the stalls

- The big number of promoted brands gave the guests an opportunity to see and taste the wide

variety of U.S. whiskeys. The main attractions were the originally decorated Maker's Mark stand where the guests had the opportunity to hand-make their own unique self-decorated Maker's Mark logo glasses as well as the Four Roses stall where the guests were able to take pictures with actors dressed as gangsters from 1920's Prohibition. Each company had interesting presentation and attractive stall decoration.



Left: DCM self-decorating Maker's Mark logo glass; Right: Four Roses stall

- The “cherry on the cake” was the educational module, which was presented in a very cheerful, enjoyable, and easy to digest format. The best U.S. whiskey experts from each company met at the stage where the MC moderated a light educational discussion among them. The MC skillfully controlled the topics and the mood and attracted the audience’s attention by including curious statements and by using other interesting attention drawing techniques. The experts “measured strengths” by providing answers to questions about whiskey aging, interesting legends, stories and curious facts the distilleries are proud of, distinguishing characteristics, and many other colorful, but still very informative, facts about each distillery and brand.



Whiskey experts' discussion

- The event was covered by respected leading specialized and lifestyle magazines ([Standard](#) daily, [Agrozona](#) magazine, [The Experts](#), Telegraph daily) describing the high quality of the event and the promoted whiskeys. Agrozona magazine will publish a much broader article about the event and the American whiskeys in the November's printed edition. The media coverage will help to build and broadly advertise the positive image of the U.S. whiskey.
- The Public Affairs Office posted information about the event on the Embassy [Facebook](#) page. The post received more than 120 likes within hours.



Embassy Facebook post

- Sofia Live Club is famous with its unique sound system and one of a kind for the country hi-tech LED screen. After the opening a traditional American music, Jazz, Soul and Blue Grass music sounded and added to the overall cheerful and relaxed atmosphere. During the entire evening advertising movies for the brands were shown on the LED screen.
- The importers prepared brochures and handouts about the brands they represent as well as had designated persons to explain the whiskeys and provide more information about them to the guests.



Maxxium and Pernod Ricard experts talking about their brands



The success team, left to right: Ralica Scorcheva – President of Spirits Association, Mila Boshnakova – FAS Ag Specialist; DCM Martina Strong; Alexander Todorov – FAS Marketing Assistant; Niki Kunchev - MC

4. Importers and presented brands:

Importer	Brands
Maxxium Bulgaria	Jim Beam ; Maker's Mark ; Knob Creek ; Old Grand Dad ; Booker's ; Baker's ; Basil Hayden's
Brown-Forman Bulgaria	Jack Daniel's ; Woodford Reserve
Avendi	Bulleit
Transimport	Hudson

Pernod Ricard Bulgaria	Four Roses
Selected Brands	Wild Turkey

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End of Report