



 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 (1<sup>st</sup> floor).*

#### Monday, May 5

8 AM      **Registration and Refreshments**  
*Atrium (1<sup>st</sup> floor)*

**Welcome Napa Valley Breakfast**  
*Atrium (1<sup>st</sup> 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)

*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 (1<sup>st</sup> 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 beverage pairings, gain insights into flavor synergy, and discuss the products shaping the market. Beyond tasting, this interactive experience fosters meaningful networking and*

**\*\* SUBJECT TO CHANGES \*\***

*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 to create unforgettable customer experiences.*

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

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- 5 PM      **Blind Tasting Silent Disco Reception**  
*Chuck Williams Culinary Arts Museum (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)*  
*Dive into an unforgettable sensory journey at this one-of-a-kind reception. Using silent disco headphones, participants will engage in a blind 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 (1<sup>st</sup> 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)  
Speakers:      **Luisa Beck** (Director – Talent Acquisition, Jackson Family Wines)

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**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 (1<sup>st</sup> 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](#).*