



TASTE RADIO EPISODE 742

FROM APOTHECARY TO ICON. THE RISE OF FERNET-BRANCA IN AMERICA.

+ EDOARDO BRANCA, BRANCA USA



How did a 180-year-old Italian digestif become one of America's most beloved bar staples? Though Fernet-Branca has enjoyed a storied legacy in Europe since its creation in 1845, it remained a niche curiosity in the United States for much of its life. The intensely bitter, herbal liqueur was appreciated only by the most adventurous palates. Today, however, it's a fixture behind the bar from upscale cocktail lounges to neighborhood dive bars, most often knocked back in shot form and celebrated for its distinct flavor profile.

Who better to trace Fernet-Branca's unlikely rise than Edoardo Branca, managing director of Branca USA and a sixth-generation member of the family behind the brand?

We caught up with Edoardo at spirits industry trade show Bar Convent Brooklyn to talk about how Fernet-Branca earned its cult status in the U.S. He shared insights on the brand's roots, its journey from obscure digestif to bartender favorite, and how the company is carefully evolving to stay relevant in a fast-changing drinks culture. From navigating pricing pressures to expanding the Branca USA portfolio with modern, consumer-focused offerings, Edoardo explains how he is stewarding a legacy while embracing innovation.



0:25: Interview: Edoardo Branca, Managing Director, Branca USA – Edoardo talks about his journey from Milan (he's an Inter fan) to Southern California and ultimately to New York. He also discusses his current role in which he oversees U.S. operations and highlights the most personally rewarding aspect of his job. Edoardo explains how Fernet Branca became popular within the bartender community after gaining traction as a popular shot in 1990s San Francisco, the emotional resonance many have with their first Fernet experience and reflects on the global cultural differences in how it's consumed. He acknowledges generational shifts and concerns about declining alcohol consumption among younger drinkers, but expresses confidence that appreciation for spirits and bar culture will mature with age and experience. Edoardo also talks about the growing Branca portfolio, noting that lower-ABV products like Antica Formula vermouth align with growing health-conscious trends and also shares his philosophy on mergers and acquisitions.