

retailer profile

Sherry-Lehmann's new space on the northeast corner of Park and 59th Street is a plus when it comes to drawing more foot traffic.



SHERRY-LEHMANN ON THE MOVE

Iconic wine store, Sherry-Lehmann, has moved to a new location, but that is just the beginning. While known primarily for their dedication to customer service, they now also look forward to building excitement around new wine education programs and events.

By Pameladevi Govinda ■ Photographs by James Petrozello



Michael Aaron, chairman of Sherry-Lehmann



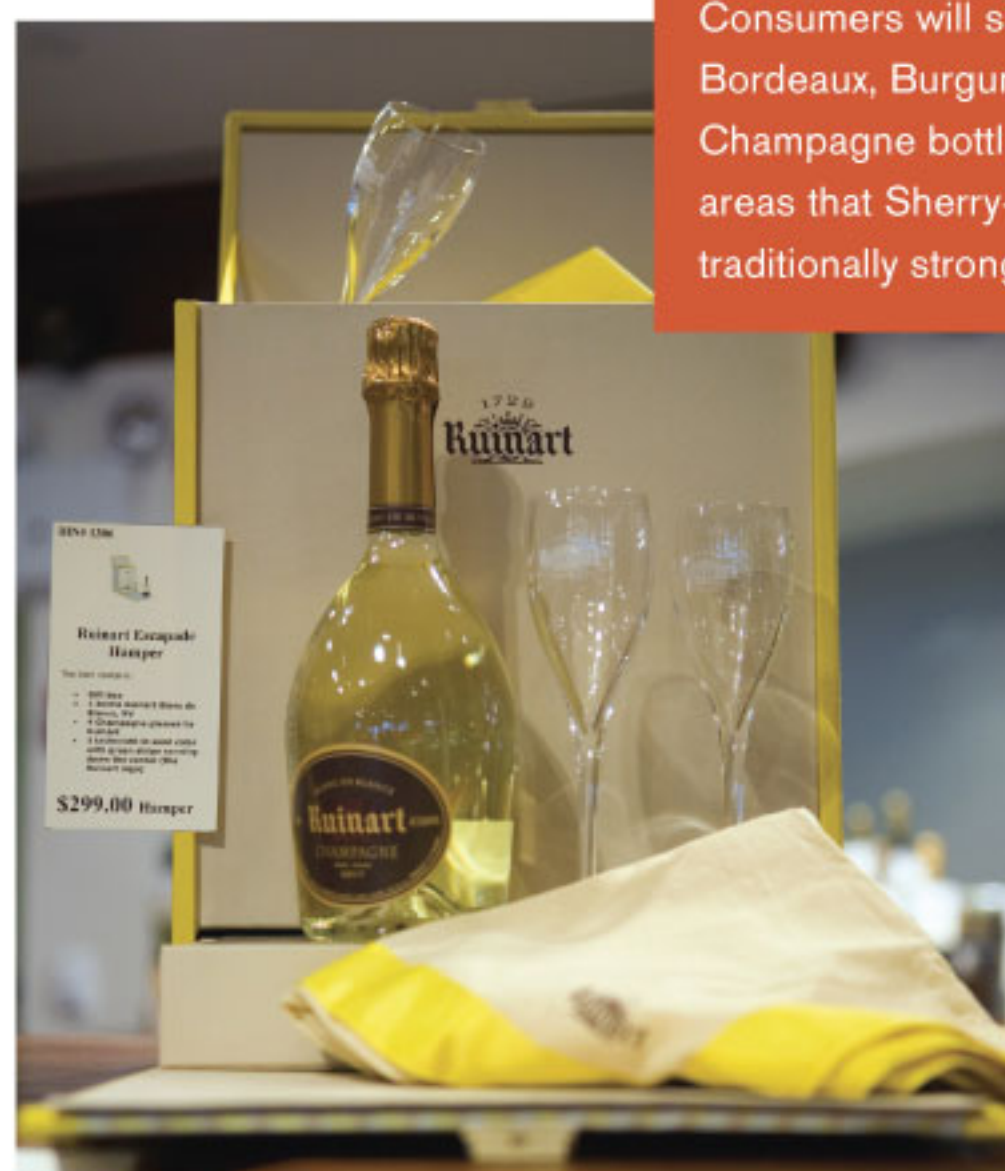
The new store spans over 9,500 square feet. It resembles the old Madison Avenue space; a lot of the wood paneling, antiques and old barrels were transferred over.

Founded in 1934 by Jack Aaron, Sherry-Lehmann has been going strong for seventy-three years. Once known as Sherry Wines and Spirits, the store has moved its venue several times but Sherry-Lehmann's longest home was the historic brownstone on Madison Avenue. The old Madison Avenue location was outfitted in classic wood paneling designed by the architect for the 21 Club, for which it bears a strong resemblance, and was adorned with antiques and old barrels. It soon became a Manhattan landmark. Over the years, Sherry-Lehmann built a strong reputation as a purveyor of fine wines and spirits, specializing in Bordeaux Futures, and they expanded Internet and phone order sales to serve a very demanding, wine-curious public.

To many loyal customers, the move of what seemed a permanent city fixture may be a tad traumatic, but the time has come for Sherry-Lehmann to move on. As executive vice president Chris Adams explains, they quite literally outgrew their previous home. "The new space is bigger in so many ways. Sherry-Lehmann was at its previous location since 1948 and as business has grown we found that we needed more room to display merchandise. We also needed a bigger back room for our staff," says Adams. "Plus there is no question about it: this is an incredible space overlooking Park Avenue."

The new digs on the northeast corner of Park and 59th street will be spread over three floors and carry a very similar look and feeling to the old store. Michael Aaron, chairman of Sherry-Lehmann, and Jack Aaron's son, offers: "The new store spans over 9,500 square feet, encompassing three floors. The biggest challenge was to have the new store resemble the Madison Avenue space. We transferred a lot of the wood paneling, antiques and old barrels. So many new liquor stores are just about cold cement floors, shelving and bottles. We want our space to continue to offer atmosphere."

To execute the Sherry-Lehmann signature look, Michael Aaron hired design company GRID2, whose past clients include Cartier, Kenneth Cole and Borders. In addition to the extra retail space, the new location will feature a vast cellar and storage



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area, as well as an upstairs room for classes and events. Continuing to collaborate with Kevin Zraly, they will offer master wine classes and they plan on expanding into educational sessions that are catered towards all wine enthusiasts. Adams notes, "People have so much desire to learn more about wine today."

A corner store is always a plus when it comes to drawing more foot traffic and the owners and managers anticipate luring nearby Bloomingdale's shoppers. In fact, the block is a shoppers' haven, which can only be good for store sales.

Thinking Outside the Box

Beyond walk-in sales, Sherry-Lehmann's ever expanding online and phone business,



The Sherry-Lehmann team, from left to right: Shyda Gilmer, Chris Adams, Michael Yurch and Michael Aaron



which covers about seventy percent of their sales, will be housed in roomier quarters giving the staff more breathing space to better serve customers.

Concentrating on the logistics of the move was no easy feat and they have yet to figure out all the new directions they can take in terms of events, new displays and promotions. Expect to see more offerings like the ongoing Champagne and caviar suggestions in conjunction with Caviar Russe, and in-store tastings will continue to be prominent. Adams explains, "We've been focused so much on being a service driven store that we've only just begun developing ideas, like the Zraly classes, outside our core business. I expect that we'll have a slew of exciting new projects once we get settled."

When it comes to inventory, consumers will see more Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne bottles on display, areas that Sherry-Lehmann is traditionally strong in, as well as wine from up and coming regions like Spain, South Africa and New Zealand.

Aaron is optimistic about the changes and the new chapter for Sherry-Lehmann. He enthuses, "We are looking towards a bright new future. We are investing millions of dollars into the store because it is so important to have a pleasant environment for our customers." ■