

Innovation and Storytelling

An Interview with Roy Danis, President and Chief Executive Officer, Conecuh Brands LLC

EDITORS' NOTE Roy Danis started his career with the Seagram Co., spending 17 years with increasing responsibilities in sales and marketing. After Seagram, he went on to assume executive management roles at Diageo, Pernod Ricard, W.J. Deutsch, Jose Cuervo and, more recently, served as Managing Director of Campari America. He has a track record of success in building high performance teams, creating new products and developing innovative packaging. He has worked on some of the most iconic brands in the industry from Chivas Regal, Crown Royal, Martell Cognac to Jameson and Wild Turkey, to name a few. Additionally, he has managed numerous celebrity partnerships over the years, including Matthew McConaughey & Wild Turkey and currently Rita Ora & Prospero Tequila. Danis holds a BS from Cornell University and an MBA from Boston College.



Roy Danis

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 2014, Conecuh Brands (conecuhbrands.com) owns and manages a portfolio of premium spirits that all have one thing in common – they're built around an authentic story, rich with intrigue, charisma, and layers of unique flavors. Conecuh is a creative incubator that strives to develop breakthrough, premium brands in a range of robust categories. Everything the company designs, from flavor profiles to packaging, is interesting, artisanal, exceptional, and award-winning.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Conecuh Brands and made you feel it was the right fit?

The ownership group at Conecuh approached me because they wanted to transform the company into a creative incubator of super-premium spirits brands. At that time, we only had one offering, Clyde May's Whiskey, so I was excited to bring a more entrepreneurial and innovative spirit to the company. Backed by a private investment group, who stressed patience and long-term brand building, it was an easy choice for me.

Will you highlight the history of Conecuh Brands and how the company has evolved?

We acquired the trademark to the Clyde May's name back in 2014. Clyde was a

moonshiner from Alabama who made his whiskey in the "Conecuh Ridge," a rural area in Southern Alabama, so "Conecuh" was always in our DNA. When I joined the company and started to develop additional brands, a sense of place, craft, and high quality was always going to be the character of our portfolio. It felt natural to keep "Conecuh" in our company name. We now compete in the Super Premium Bourbon, Tequila, and Irish Whiskey space in all 50 states and about a dozen countries.

Will you provide an overview of the portfolio and how the brands are positioned in the market?

Our flagship brand is Clyde May's Bourbon Whiskey – which is the official state spirit of Alabama, the official whiskey of Talladega Speedway, the official whiskey of the new UBS Arena in New York and the New York Islanders NHL hockey team. Prospero is our Ultra-Premium Tequila brand. We partnered with Rita Ora and Stella Anguiano to launch Prospero Tequila in 2019. It remains one of the few distilleries still owned and operated by a Mexican family, as well as one of the only distilleries run by a woman.

Lastly, we are "restoring the legend" of McConnell's Irish Whisky from Belfast. This is a Super Premium priced Irish Whiskey, originally launched in 1776. In fact, we have evidence of the brand in the U.S. as far back as 1905. The brand shut down in the 1930s after U.S. prohibition hurt sales and several distillery fires destroyed their production facility. We relaunched the brand in 2020, after being dormant for about 90 years.

How do you define the Conecuh Brands difference and what sets the brands apart in their categories?

Our brands stand out in the most robust categories because they are built around an authentic story with exceptional packaging and award-winning taste. We eat, sleep and, yes, drink the "4-P's" (pricing, programming, packaging, product) every day.

How important is it for Conecuh Brands to maintain an entrepreneurial spirit and to keep innovation at the forefront of the company culture?

Innovation is a key driver for our company. Whether we're exploring new brands to add to





Roy Danis with a selection of Conecuh's brands

You have worked with some of the leading companies in the spirits industry during your career. What has made the industry so special for you?

Over my more than 40-year career, this industry has brought me so much joy. This journey has taken me all over the world, building some of the most iconic brands, and most importantly, this industry has brought so many incredible people into my life. What's not to love.

What are your priorities for Conecuh Brands as you look to the future?

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on driving growth across our portfolio, and expanding our national and global footprint, both on and off premise. If we can do that, and at the same time provide a great return for our shareholders, our distributor and our retail partners, then all is good in the world. ●



our portfolio or growing our current portfolio with innovation activity, we believe in what we're doing and are 100 percent committed to innovation. For example, in the last six years, Conecuh has launched 36 new innovations, and every innovation is still contributing to our business. No other spirits company has this track record of success.

How is technology impacting the way Conecuh Brands operates and the spirits industry more broadly?

Technology continues to play a pivotal role in our company and in the industry. Of course, e-commerce has become a major factor in the way consumers now purchase spirits. We're looking to strengthen our portfolio's presence with our own e-commerce platform, allowing a more streamlined approach to better understand and reach our consumers.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Conecuh Brands?

We have a strong portfolio of brands that have enjoyed tremendous growth in the hottest categories, but there is a lot of runway left for each of them. As a company, we're eight years into this effort, and we've seen a lot of success thus far with our current portfolio. We believe it's time for us to continue to grow by expanding our portfolio in new categories that align with our corporate strategy.