

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Cristina Diezhandino – Luxury Woman to Watch 2018

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Cristina Diezhandino is managing director of Diageo Reserve

By STAFF REPORTS

Cristina Diezhandino

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What do you most like about your job?

I am lucky to be working with amazing and award-winning brands, including Johnnie Walker, the world's number one selling Scotch whisky; Zacapa, the world's number one super deluxe rum; and Don Julio, the world's number two super premium Tequila.

We've also got other great brands such as Ciroc and Ketel One Vodka, Singleton, Talisker and Lagavulin Single Malts.

And I love the stories behind each one of them: how they came about, the personalities of their founders and how those traits of ingenuity and entrepreneurship have been kept for generations until they have reached their current expression.

I very much enjoy nurturing the knowledge that has been perfected over the decades, if not centuries, and connecting these products to our world today through culturally diverse and hugely talented teams from all over the globe.

I love connecting luxury spirits with people through hospitality. More and more people around the world enjoy fine drinks at home or in bar and restaurants, prepared by skilled bartenders. Luxury gifts make beautiful gifts and help celebrate special moments and occasions, big or small, all over the world.

What is the biggest challenge in your job?

We have a large business and many outstanding brands that are truly global.

As a result, we constantly identify opportunities for our business in different geographies, with different taste profiles and at different price levels.

Being decisive is critical, as is having the determination, interest and dedication to see those decisions move from ideas through to execution, bringing the same level of excitement and creativity in the strategy as in the activation.

What is your work priority for 2018?

At Diageo, we say we walk "on the shoulder of giants" because our brands were built by founders like John Walker, Charles Tanqueray, James Buchanan or Justerini & Brooks - people with vision and passion for their brands.

I work with an incredible group of people, and my priority in 2018 is to nurture this, creating the most talented team who care as much about our brands as one of their founders.

My team excels at looking to create the future of our business, and I want to encourage this even more, grounded in the principle of making the everyday more special, that luxury experiences should be available, accessible and aspirational to all.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

I'm proud of connecting our brands with people in a meaningful way. One that is fun, allows for discovery, and provides a special touch, while also remaining true to the heritage of each brand.

For me, this includes the likes of Ciroc's experiences in the summer hotspots at Ibiza and Mykonos, or the Johnnie Walker experience in the Monaco Formula 1 race.

It includes our World Class bartenders delivering exceptional cocktails at London Cocktail Week, or our work on Zacapa's "Art of Slow" campaign and the relationships we have created with great chefs across the world. It includes the Lagavulin 1991 Cask which we auctioned to celebrate the distillery's 200th anniversary and helped fundraise in support of local charities on the gorgeous island of Islay.

Each brand expresses itself and connects in ways that are true to where it comes from, how it is made, who makes it and what it stands for and I'm proud of the fact that our luxury brands are constantly looking to achieve that, in every touch point with people.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2018?

Our industry is evolving at a rapid pace. The more traditional view of luxury described as "having" is moving toward "being" or "feeling."

The value of showcasing and collecting is still very relevant in luxury, but I also think that the value of experience and emotion has gained significance.

My business has been on this journey for several years and I now see luxury drinks closer to the mindset of luxury food and gastronomy.

People are caring more than ever about how a particular drink was made, where it comes from, how it is served, how the creative process delivers the most amazing flavors.

We can go further in sharing and learning about this fascinating world with a growing community of people who want to connect through these common interests: from expert writers, to gastronomers and bartenders to people who are curious about enjoying a delicious drink and want to know more about it.

In today's world, we have more means than ever for people to do just this.