



## Leading National Consumer Brands Bring Their Best Activations to 2025 San Diego Food + Wine Festival

San Diego (December 17, 2025) — Last month, [San Diego Food + Wine](#) (November 7th to 9th) returned for its 21st year with a record 56 larger-than-life brand activations, securing strategic investment from major national brands. The Grand Weekend, a premier three-day bi-national food, wine, spirits, and cultural experience produced by [Fast Forward Events](#), has emerged as a world-class stage for brands, presenting a high-value environment to interact with an affluent audience by way of multi-day touchpoints, multicultural programming, and more. This year, category-defining consumer brands, including presenting sponsor *Southwest Airlines*, *Food & Wine From Europe*, *Tanqueray*, *Nestlé*, and *Luxardo*, leveraged the Festival as a platform to engage with 11,000 attendees via immersive, interactive, and multi-faceted activations.

*"At San Diego Food + Wine brands are tapping into more than 20 years of culinary credibility - which has resonated with attendees and brands alike," said San Diego Food + Wine Co-founder Michelle Metter. "Major national brands are strategically activating at the Festival (and returning, year after year) because their investment yields real, tangible marketing outcomes."*

From photo ops and aesthetic displays to interactive product sampling, SDFW 2025 played host to major brand activations at all three signature Grand Weekend events. Going beyond basic branding opportunities and sampling, these brand experiences generated organic shareable moments with lasting impact. Here's a look back at some of the Festival's stand-out brand activations:

### Southwest Airlines®

As the presenting sponsor of this year's SDFW tentpole event, the Grand Tasting, Southwest Airlines leveraged the Festival platform to amplify the increased availability of non-stop flights in and out of San Diego with the debut of the new Terminal 1. Guests savored Southwest's signature hospitality with a VIP Lounge experience that featured a fully-branded bar "serving" premium wine bags personalized onsite with a monogram. Plus, General Admission guests experienced a playful "Southwest Vineyard" photo op complete with a vineyard-inspired swing set backdrop.

### Food & Wine from Europe

Food & Wine from Europe offered guests a passport to lesser-known European wine regions, activating throughout SDFW's Grand Weekend. Touchpoints included a sold out consumer-facing wine seminar, "Europe Uncorked: Old World, New Discoveries," a masterclass on the continent's best-kept secrets, and at Grand Decant guests gathered around a super-sized round bar equipped with wireless headphones for an expert-led "silent wine seminar" on bubbles from Europe. The following day, at the Grand Tasting, Food & Wine from Europe maximized their footprint with a branded bar build-out, engaging General Admission guests with a wine and cheese pairing experience.

### Tanqueray X The Lion's Share

Grand Tasting guests bellied up at a Tanqueray-branded bar, and adjacent lounge/photo op, to enjoy the craveable pairing of two classic Tanqueray mini martini variations and decadent "dirty fries" topped with Boar Bacon, Truffle Gravy, and Parmesan from San Diego's industry-favorite The Lion's Share restaurant, with rising culinary star Executive Chef Dante Romero on-site.

### Luxardo

Luxardo interacted with guests throughout SDFW's Grand Weekend, popping-up with a branded photo-ready retro ice cream bike cart serving refreshing *Limoncello Spritz* and *Espresso Martinis* at both the Grand Decant and Grand Tasting. Plus, a special collaboration with *Catchher* liquor-infused ice cream at the Grand Tasting.

### Nestlé: Acqua Panna + S.Pellegrino + Sanpellegrino CIAO!

Nestlé whisked General Admission Grand Tasting guests to the City of Light with a Parisian-inspired activation featuring an introduction to the brand's new CIAO! flavored sparkling waters, floral décor, and a striking photo wall. The VIP experience featured prestige Acqua Panna and S.Pellegrino waters and El Faro Seafood caviar pairing experience, highlighting the subtle flavor nuances of each luxury water.

### Bagavagabonds "That's Cool" Sample Shoppe

Grand Tasting guests explored a collection of new and emerging brands at the *That's Cool! Sample Shoppe* multi-brand retail experience produced by Bagavagabonds. Uniquely blending retail and entertainment, guests sampled, sipped, and celebrated in an immersive setting designed for fun, connection and discovery. Interactive brand experiences included a coffee bar, flower market, customization stations, live entertainment, and more.

### Grind and Prosper Hospitality

San Diego-based Grind and Prosper Hospitality made a splash at the Grand Tasting activating seven buzzy restaurant concepts at a lively tropical-themed experience, "Tropic Like It's Hot." Interactive sampling experiences included a main bar with custom ice luge, a crab boil and live fire cooking. In-the-know Festival guests got access to a much talked about hidden speakeasy,

its entrance disguised by a porta potty door tucked between restaurant activations, for a tropical escape complete with Mai Tais and karaoke.

### Cohn Restaurant Group

Fan favorite festival-within-a-festival CohnChella returned to the Grand Tasting for another year with up-beat DJ sets and San Diego-based Cohn Restaurant Group restaurant and beverage activations. Highlights included a Tito's Handmade Vodka lounge and Cristalino and Caviar pairing, where guests rang a bell to receive a sample passed through a living, green wall.

### Brandt Beef

Sustainable beef industry pioneers Brandt Beef sizzled at the Grand Tasting with a super-sized western-themed culinary experience, anchored by acclaimed restaurants, premium BebeBemos Tequila bar and a high-energy DJ. Guests sampled creative dishes by *Cow by Bear*, *Ranch 45*, *Palmys Cafe*, *Jimmy's Famous* and *Flying Pig Pub and Kitchen*, each showcasing premium, all-natural Brandt beef.

### Chef Works

Chef Works, the world's largest culinary apparel provider, popped up ahead of the Grand Decant with an industry exclusive hospitality suite allowing San Diego chefs to try-on and shop apparel in person. Plus, the apparel manufacturer kicked-off the 2025 Festival as a presenting sponsor of the official industry night party, activating with live screen printing of a special edition SDFW logo, interactive product experience, and a gifting center exclusively for participating chefs.

Other brand partners who engaged festivalgoers with creative activations at SDFW in 2025 included Euhomy, Graza, Baja Board of Tourism, El Faro Seafood, Maker's Mark, SugarBee Apples, and Temecula, Paso Robles, and Lodi wine regions.

### ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL

The 21st Annual San Diego Food + Wine Festival is an international showcase of the world's premier wine and spirits producers, chefs and culinary personalities, and gourmet foods. Held November 2-9, 2025, the award-winning festival raises funds for culinary, oenology and hospitality scholarships and grants, and has awarded over \$700,000 to individuals and nonprofits through previous events. For more information, please visit [www.sandiegowineclassic.com](http://www.sandiegowineclassic.com) and [@sdfoodwine](https://twitter.com/sdfoodwine).

San Diego Food + Wine 2025 imagery can be found via Dropbox, linked [HERE](#).

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