



THE HONEY DEUCE INDEX, SALES SPIKE 23% YEAR-OVER-YEAR

How a \$23 Tennis Cocktail Built a \$12.8 Million Annual Revenue Stream

US Open · USTA · Grey Goose · Event Brand Strategy

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 556,782 | \$12.8M | \$23 / drink |
| Drinks Sold — 2024 | Revenue — 2024 | Current Price (2024) |

1 Honey Deuce sold every 1.5 seconds during the tournament

01 · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The US Open's signature cocktail — the Honey Deuce — is one of the most commercially successful single-venue beverages in global sport. What began in 2005 as a practical solution to a high-volume mixing challenge has evolved into a \$12.8 million annual revenue stream, a Grey Goose brand equity engine, and a textbook case study in event-driven pricing power.

This report analyses the cocktail's origin, volume trajectory, price escalation relative to inflation, its structural role within the USTA's \$560 million revenue ecosystem, and the broader lessons for brand operators, venue managers, and discretionary investors watching the intersection of sports, hospitality, and premium spirits.

| Metric | Data Point |
|---------------------|---|
| Cocktail name | Grey Goose Honey Deuce (formerly "Honeydews") |
| Invented | 2005, by restaurateur Nick Matone during US Open prep |
| Recipe | Grey Goose vodka · fresh lemonade · Chambord raspberry liqueur · 3 honeydew melon balls |
| 2024 units sold | 556,782 (a record; up 23.5% YoY, more than doubled since 2017) |
| 2024 revenue | \$12.8 million (~2% of total US Open revenue) |
| Current price | \$23 (sixth price hike since 2012; +64% vs +37% CPI) |
| Sponsorship partner | Grey Goose (Bacardi-owned) — official vodka partner since ~2007; deal extended 2023 for five more years |
| Honeydew melon used | 1.67 million melon balls served at 2024 tournament |

"More than one Honey Deuce was sold for every two people who attended the US Open in 2024."

02 · ORIGIN STORY: BORN FROM A MELON SCOOP

The Honey Deuce did not emerge from a marketing lab or a cocktail consultancy brief. Its origin is decidedly more improvised. In 2005, restaurateur **Nick Matone** was tasked by the USTA with a deceptively difficult problem: design a single signature cocktail that could be produced in the hundreds of thousands over a two-week tournament by staff of varying skill levels, in conditions that leave little margin for complex preparation.

The epiphany came during dessert preparation. Matone was scooping spheres of honeydew melon when he noticed the balls bore a striking resemblance to tennis balls. From that observation came the drink's defining garnish — three honeydew melon balls skewered in a plastic flute glass — and its name: "**Honeydews.**" The choice was more than aesthetic. The spherical garnish standardised production, gave every drink a photogenic identity, and created a visual hook that proved wildly effective in an era of early social media.

Recipe Architecture

The Honey Deuce is built for scale. Each component serves a dual purpose — flavour profile and operational efficiency:

| Ingredient | Role | Operational Advantage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Grey Goose Vodka | Base spirit — neutral, premium | Pre-batched; poured in fixed measure |
| Fresh Lemonade | Citrus backbone; sweetness balance | Mass-produced on-site at consistent ratio |
| Chambord Raspberry Liqueur | Colour, sweetness, berry note | Single-measure pour; no mixing required |
| 3 Honeydew Melon Balls | Signature garnish — visual identity | Pre-scooped in bulk; skewered in advance |
| Collectible Plastic Flute | Brand vessel; souvenir driver | Single-use; doubles as merchandise |

03 · VOLUME TRAJECTORY: MORE THAN DOUBLED IN SEVEN YEARS

The growth arc of Honey Deuce sales is remarkable by any benchmark in food & beverage at live events. From a baseline of around 200,000 units annually in the mid-2010s, annual volumes have surpassed 556,000 — driven by growing tournament attendance, social media virality, and deliberate USTA/Grey Goose marketing investment.

| Year | Units Sold | Price/Drink | Est. Revenue |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 2012 | ~175,000 (est.) | \$14 | ~\$2.5M |
| 2017 | 201,000 | \$18 (est.) | ~\$3.6M |
| 2022 | ~400,000 (est.) | \$22 | ~\$8.8M |
| 2023 | ~451,000 (est.) | \$23 | ~\$10.4M |
| 2024 | 556,782 ▲ record | \$23 | \$12.8M ▲ record |

Key volume drivers behind the 2017–2024 doubling include **record tournament attendance** (832,640 for the main draw in 2024, plus >1 million including Fan Week), **Grey Goose off-site distribution** (canned Honey Deuces offered via home delivery in New York and Chicago during the tournament from 2024), and **influencer amplification** through social media — particularly TikTok and Instagram — that has converted the collectible flute glass into a must-have selfie prop.

The 2024 figure of 1.67 million honeydew melon balls carved and skewered over two weeks implies a preparation and logistics operation of considerable scale. At three balls per drink, that equates to roughly **119,000 balls scooped per day** on average — a volume requiring dedicated kitchen teams running continuous prep shifts throughout the tournament.

"One Honey Deuce is sold every 1.5 seconds during the US Open — a throughput rate that rivals many dedicated bar concepts."

04 · THE HONEY DEUCE PRICE INDEX: PREMIUM PRICING POWER

Perhaps the most commercially instructive dimension of the Honey Deuce story is its pricing trajectory. Since 2012, the drink has seen **six price increases**, rising from \$14 to \$23 — a **64% cumulative increase** that significantly outpaces the US Consumer Price Index, which rose approximately 37% over the same period.

| Year | HD Price | CPI-Equivalent | HD Premium | Notes |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 2012 | \$14.00 | \$14.00 | — | Baseline |
| 2015 | \$16.00 (est.) | \$14.80 | +8% | 2nd price hike |
| 2018 | \$18.00 (est.) | \$15.60 | +15% | Pre-COVID era |
| 2022 | \$22.00 | \$17.90 | +23% | Post-COVID inflation |
| 2024 | \$23.00 | \$19.20 | +20% | Sixth hike; demand inelastic |

The CPI-equivalent column above illustrates what the Honey Deuce would cost if it had tracked headline inflation only. At \$19.20 under that scenario, the current \$23 price represents a **roughly 20% structural premium above inflation-parity** — and critically, **demand has not visibly softened**. Volume hit a new record in 2024 even as the price rose to its highest-ever level.

This dynamic — price elasticity below 1.0 in a captive-audience venue — is a well-documented phenomenon in premium sport and entertainment economics. Attendees at major events demonstrate a materially higher **willingness to pay** (WTP) ceiling, driven by: the one-off occasion nature of the purchase, the social signalling value of visible consumption, the FOMO dynamic around tournament-exclusive products, and the souvenir utility of the collectible flute glass.

"Honey Deuce pricing has outpaced CPI by 27 percentage points since 2012. Demand has responded with record volumes — a near-perfect demonstration of brand-driven inelasticity."

For brand strategists and event operators, this pricing history encodes a clear principle: **a product with genuine identity, scarcity (venue-exclusivity), and social currency can sustain pricing premiums that generic concessions cannot**. The Honey Deuce is not competing with a \$12 beer at the gate; it is competing with the idea of attending the US Open without one.

05 · REVENUE IN CONTEXT: \$12.8M WITHIN A \$560M ECOSYSTEM

The US Open generated an estimated **\$560 million in total revenue in 2024**, placing it among the most commercially productive sporting events on the global calendar. Within that ecosystem, the Honey Deuce's \$12.8 million in beverage revenue represents approximately **2.3% of total event revenue** — a meaningful single-SKU contribution from a drink that takes under 30 seconds to prepare.

US Open 2024 Revenue Breakdown (Estimates)

| Revenue Stream | Estimated Amount | % of Total |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Ticket Sales | \$185M+ (2023 actuals) | ~33% |
| Sponsorship Revenue | \$118.2M (2024 est.) | ~21% |
| Broadcast Rights (ESPN) | \$75M annually | ~13% |
| Corporate Hospitality | \$71M+ (2023 actuals) | ~13% |
| F&B (Honey Deuce component) | \$12.8M | ~2.3% |
| F&B (Total — est.) | ~\$75–90M (est.) | ~14–16% |
| Total Revenue (est.) | ~\$560M | 100% |

Prize money context: The 2024 US Open paid out a record total prize pool of \$75 million. Both the men's and women's singles champions — Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka — each received **\$3.6 million**, for a combined champion payout of \$7.2 million. The Honey Deuce's \$12.8 million in revenue thus **comfortably exceeds the combined prize earnings of both singles champions** by approximately \$5.6 million. The viral claim that "the Honey Deuce covers prize money for both champions" is directionally accurate but understates the margin.

The USTA's broader financial health has improved dramatically post-COVID. The organisation reported **nearly \$278 million in profit** over the post-pandemic period, with the 2024 tournament delivering record outcomes across all four primary revenue lines. The Honey Deuce, while a small percentage of total revenue, is structurally important as a high-margin, brand-reinforcing product with no inventory risk (perishable ingredients are ordered against confirmed attendance projections).

"At \$12.8M, the Honey Deuce generates more revenue than the combined prize payouts to both the men's and women's singles champions. It is not a cocktail. It is a profit centre."

06 · GREY GOOSE PARTNERSHIP: 19 YEARS, 360° ACTIVATION

Grey Goose (owned by Bacardi) has been the official vodka sponsor of the US Open since approximately 2006-07 — a partnership now entering its **nineteenth year**. In 2023, the USTA and Grey Goose extended the arrangement for a further five years, cementing the brand's position through at least 2028. The deal is widely regarded as one of the most effective sports-beverage sponsorships in the industry.

The sponsorship operates as a **360-degree marketing platform** rather than a simple naming rights arrangement. Grey Goose activates across four distinct channels simultaneously:

| Activation Channel | Description |
|-----------------------|---|
| In-Venue | Exclusive cocktail pour at all USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center outlets; branded glassware; dedicated Honey Deuce bar stations |
| Media Buy | Grey Goose purchases advertising inventory with ESPN during US Open broadcast window, amplifying reach beyond the 832,000+ on-site attendees to national TV audience |
| Social / Influencer | Invitation programme brings influencers to the brand suite at the tournament; organic social driven by fans sharing the collectible flute glass; TikTok and Instagram amplification |
| OOH & Experiential | Times Square billboard featuring the cocktail; "Last Serve" pop-up bar at Grand Central Station reaching 700,000 daily commuters during tournament fortnight |
| Athlete Partnership | 2024 saw Grey Goose's first-ever signed player: Frances Tiafoe (ranked #20 world); shifts the brand into athlete culture and extends reach to younger demographics |
| Off-Site Distribution | Canned Honey Deuces launched for home delivery in New York and Chicago during the 2024 tournament — extending the product beyond the Flushing Meadows gates |

The partnership's international expansion is worth noting. In January 2025, Grey Goose announced a **parallel sponsorship of the Australian Open**, introducing a signature cocktail called the "Lemon Ace" — a direct replication of the Honey Deuce playbook in a new market. This confirms that the USTA/Grey Goose model is now being actively exported as a template for premium cocktail sponsorship at Grand Slam events globally.

Why This Partnership Works

The success of the Grey Goose/Honey Deuce partnership rests on a structural alignment of incentives that is rare in sports sponsorship:

- USTA receives guaranteed sponsorship revenue, a scalable high-margin beverage product, and a social-media marketing asset it did not have to build.
- Grey Goose converts tournament attendance of 1M+ people into a captive brand trial event, generates \$12.8M in direct product revenue, and earns earned media worth multiples of the sponsorship fee.
- Fans receive a product that is genuinely enjoyable, visually distinctive, and occasions-appropriate — creating authentic advocacy rather than forced brand messaging.
- Bacardi gains annual proof-of-concept for the model, which it can now roll out to the Australian Open and potentially other premium sporting events.

07 · THE SIGNATURE COCKTAIL PLAYBOOK: LESSONS FOR OPERATORS & INVESTORS

The Honey Deuce is not merely a viral drink story — it is a **replicable commercial model** with clear structural inputs and measurable outputs. For brand operators, hospitality executives, and consumer discretionary investors, the model encodes several durable lessons.

Lesson 1: Operational Design Precedes Revenue

The cocktail's creation was driven by operational necessity — how to serve hundreds of thousands of drinks efficiently — not by a desire to create a cultural phenomenon. The scalable recipe (pre-batchable, fixed measures, pre-prepped garnish) was the enabling condition for all downstream revenue. **Complexity is the enemy of volume.** The Honey Deuce's simplicity is a feature, not a limitation.

Lesson 2: Visual Identity Is a Marketing Asset

The three honeydew melon balls are not merely garnish — they are a **visual signature** that makes every drink a shareable social media post. In the pre-smartphone era of 2005 this was incidental; by 2024 it is the cocktail's most powerful marketing mechanism. Every fan who photographs their Honey Deuce in the stands generates organic brand content for both USTA and Grey Goose. The collectible plastic flute amplifies this further: it is a souvenir that carries both brands home.

Lesson 3: Venue Exclusivity Creates Pricing Power

The Honey Deuce is not available outside the US Open gates (beyond the experimental canned delivery in 2024). This **artificial scarcity** is central to its pricing power. Consumers cannot price-compare; the reference point is not a Grey Goose cocktail at a bar, but the experience of the US Open itself. The drink's price is anchored to the occasion, not the ingredient cost. This is why six price hikes have not dented demand.

Lesson 4: Merchandise Extensions Multiply the Asset

USTA now sells Honey Deuce merchandise throughout the tournament grounds — glassware, apparel, and branded accessories. This converts a beverage product into a **lifestyle brand extension** and creates incremental revenue from attendees who may not purchase the drink but wish to participate in its cultural moment. The merchandise line also extends the brand's shelf life beyond the two-week tournament window.

Lesson 5: The Model Is Exportable

Grey Goose's 2025 Australian Open debut with the "Lemon Ace" demonstrates that the model is not US-specific. **Any premium sporting event with a defined audience character, venue exclusivity, and a partnership-minded sponsor can replicate the architecture.** The key variables are: a simple, distinctive recipe; a visual differentiator; a captive premium audience; and a brand partner with distribution strength and marketing budget. Tennis, given its affluent demographic profile ("culturally leaned in, stylish, looking for elevated experiences" per Grey Goose's own characterisation), is a particularly fertile category.

Investment & Sector Implications

| Stakeholder | Implication |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Premium Spirits (Bacardi/Grey Goose) | Sponsorship-as-distribution model delivers direct revenue + brand trial at premium events. Watch for further Grand Slam and major event expansions following Australian Open precedent. |
| USTA / Live Event Operators | Signature beverage strategy is a high-margin revenue lever underutilised at most events. The Honey Deuce generates ~2.3% of US Open revenue from one SKU — an exceptional yield for a single food & beverage line item. |
| Consumer Discretionary (Hospitality) | Event-exclusive pricing power is structurally superior to generic F&B. Demand inelasticity at premium events argues for premium pricing strategies at new venue developments. |
| Sports & Media Rights Investors | Beverage sponsorship value is underwritten by in-venue revenue share. Events with captive premium audiences (tennis, golf, F1, equestrian) command higher per-unit beverage economics than mass-market sports. |
| Advertising & Agency Sector | The Honey Deuce demonstrates that experiential + earned media can outperform traditional paid reach at a fraction of the equivalent CPM. BBDO-style event-led campaigns warrant reappraisal in media mix modelling. |

08 · RISKS & CONSIDERATIONS

The Honey Deuce model is not without structural vulnerabilities that operators and investors should consider:

| Risk Factor | Assessment |
|------------------------------|---|
| Supply chain dependency | Honeydew melon supply is seasonal and weather-sensitive. A poor harvest season or supply disruption during August-September could affect availability or unit economics. Grey Goose and USTA have not disclosed contingency arrangements. |
| Price ceiling risk | The drink has now exceeded inflation parity by 27pp since 2012. Continued above-inflation pricing risks perception of gouging — particularly given heightened media attention on event food & beverage pricing post-pandemic. |
| Sponsorship concentration | The model is structurally dependent on Grey Goose's continued commitment. Should Bacardi restructure its US Open investment (e.g., if a competing vodka brand outbids at renewal), the Honey Deuce identity could be disrupted. |
| Wellness & moderation trends | Long-term secular decline in alcohol consumption, particularly among younger demographics, presents a multi-year headwind. Grey Goose has not yet disclosed a non-alcoholic Honey Deuce variant. |
| Replication by competitors | The Australian Open "Lemon Ace" and growing awareness of the signature cocktail playbook means the moat is narrowing. First-mover advantage is significant but not permanent — especially as the Grey Goose playbook is now public. |

09 - CONVICTION SCORECARD

K2 Capital evaluates the Honey Deuce model across five dimensions relevant to event economics and brand partnership strategy:

| Dimension | Score | Max | Commentary |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----|--|
| Revenue Scalability | 9.0 | 10 | Volume more than doubled in 7 years with no structural ceiling in sight |
| Pricing Power | 9.5 | 10 | Six hikes; +64% vs +37% CPI; zero demand destruction |
| Brand Architecture | 9.0 | 10 | Visual identity, scarcity, merchandise, earned social media — textbook execution |
| Partnership Alignment | 8.5 | 10 | 19-year relationship; 5-year extension; mutual incentive alignment |
| Replicability / Export Potential | 8.0 | 10 | Australian Open precedent set; applicable to golf, F1, |

| | | | |
|----------------|------------|----|---|
| | | | equestrian, premium festivals |
| OVERALL | 8.8 | 10 | Best-in-class event beverage monetisation model |

"The Honey Deuce is the clearest example in sport of a single product converting occasion-driven consumption into a durable, premium-priced, brand-reinforcing revenue engine. Score: 8.8 / 10."

Sources: Sportico, Front Office Sports, CNN Business, CNBC, NBC News, Marketing Brew, Grey Goose / USTA official statements, GlobalData, CBS News, NBC New York. All financial figures are estimates or reported data from cited publications. This report is for informational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice.