

2015 SAN FRANCISCO WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION RESULTS

15TH ANNIVERSARY MARKS LARGEST COMPETITION YET

The San Francisco World Spirits Competition hosted its 15th annual competition March 19-22nd at the elegant Hotel Nikko in downtown San Francisco. Continuing its tradition of record-breaking entries annually, this year the number of submissions totaled 1580 (up 7% from the year before) from 41 states, 66 countries covering 90 classifications. Many categories of spirits experienced a marked increase this year most notably Gin (nearly triple the entries in 3 years), Bourbon, Rye Whiskey and Single Malt Scotch. Always a harbinger of trends in the marketplace, the competition is considered to be the rite of passage for top quality spirits as it has 41 of the world's top professional palates serving as judges.

The competition has mirrored, and spurred, the spirits industry's explosive growth over the last 15 years. The inaugural 2000 World Spirits Competition welcomed 12 judges and 292 entries in 59 categories. "We have always been a bellwether for trends in spirits consumption and growth. Our caliber of judges, our international reputation and professional organization of the competition helps the marketplace be assured of tremendous quality control and opportunities," says competition director and spirits guru Anthony Dias Blue. "Over the last 15 years as we've witnessed this explosive growth in spirits, we also note that the further sub-categorization of aging and types of spirits is proliferating. We are in an exciting time in the beverage business."

In addition to ace palates, glassware is as paramount to the high performance outcome of competition as the liquid it holds. For the first time in its 15-year run, the competition featured exclusively the [NEAT glass](#). The new industry standard for spirits tasting, with a patented design, NEAT glasses are scientifically engineered with a compressed lip and flared rim to enhance the judging experience. "We have rigorously tested the NEAT Glass in comparative tastings with other spirits glasses," says Blue. "It is the only glass that eliminates alcohol burn while enhancing aroma. It showcases all the nuance and complexity that the spirit's producer intended."

Top Awards

Leading winners from the sweepstakes included **Best in Show Un-Aged White Spirit** went to **Kappa Pisco (\$35), Elqui Valley, Chile** out of 603 submissions. **Best in Show Aged White Spirit** was awarded to **Parce 12 Year Old Rum (\$60)** from **Columbia** out of 169 submissions. **Best in Show Whisky** went to **Craigellachie Single Malt Aged 23 Years (\$297)** from **Speyside, Scotland** out of 497 whisky submissions (last year there were 297.) **Best in Show Brandy** was awarded to **Gautier Tradition Rare Cognac (\$165)** from **Charente, France** out of 118 brandy submissions and finally **Best in Show Liqueur** went to **Croizet Liqueur d'Orange au Cognac (\$179)** out of 154 entries. Other highlights included **Best Gin**, which went to **Master's Dry Gin (\$39), Barcelona, Spain** out of 134 entries, **Best Bourbon** which went to Kentucky's **Knob Creek 9 Year Old Small Batch Bourbon (\$31)** out of 95 Bourbons, **Best Tequila** went to **Villa Lobos Reposado Tequila (\$47)** from **Jalisco, Mexico** and **Best Vodka** went to **Colorado's Woody Creek Single Potato Vodka (\$32)** out of 168 entries.

Awarded annually, this year's **Tasting Panel Magazine Distillery of the Year** went to **Kavalan Distillery of Taiwan** by winning 4 Double Golds and two Silvers for their Single Malt Whiskies submissions. **Importer of the Year** went to **Diageo North America**, and the **Director's Award of Excellence** went to **Beam Suntory Inc.**, headquartered in Deerfield, IL for its excellent portfolio of spirits. Additionally, in the Packaging Competition this year there were 22 Double Gold medals awarded, the most ever. There were 143 entries presided over by 3 judges.

A complete list of awards categorically will be posted to the San Francisco World Spirits Competition website on April 6th, please visit <http://sfspiritscomp.com/> at that time for more information.

Judges

Forty-one international judges gathered this year with several notable judges returning to the roster, including noted spirits writer and author David Wondrich, double degree Doug Frost, MS, MW, leading NYC based mixologist Julie Reiner and writer Sean Ludford. Tony Abou-Ganim, aka the Modern Mixologist has directed the judging now for his 6th year and says of the event, "I continue to be flattered and humbled to be a part of a competition with some of the best palates in the world. I look forward to it all year and it is a great way for an established or unknown spirit to gain credibility in this business. The winners feel the impact of the competition's results in significant ways and use the results to help build both their sales and reputations globally." For more information about the judges, please visit <http://sfspiritscomp.com/about/judges>.

About the Competition

Founded in the new millennium year of 2000 by noted wine & spirits critic and competition director Anthony Dias Blue, the San Francisco World Spirits Competition has gained a reputation as the leading gauge for spirits trends and top quality products in the country. Noted journalists, distillers, beverage directors, mixologists, restaurateurs, Master Sommeliers, hoteliers, consultants, educators comprise the august body of judges. The continued growth of entries (more than 100 this year) annually points to an undeniable love affair with distillate products in the United States.

For interviews, images and media information, please contact Kimberly Charles at Charles Communications Associates at press@charlescomm.com or 415/701-9463 ext.101. Please also like our page at San Francisco World Spirits Competition on Facebook, and follow the competition on Twitter and Instagram at #SFWSC.

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