

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRITS CHALLENGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paso Robles Wows, Clare Valley Shines, London Dry Holds Court at 2024 San Diego Competition

San Diego, Calif. (February 18, 2024) - The 42nd Annual San Diego Wine & Spirits Challenge, held January 26-27 in San Diego, was once again a celebration of the best the beverage world has to offer. Chief Wine Judge Michael Franz, editor of WineReviewOnline.com, and Chief Spirits Judge Maurice diMarino, beverage director of Cohn Restaurant Group, led 18 judges through the two-day double-blind tasting overseen by Competition Director Rich Cook.

Paso Robles walked away with top wine honors. J. Lohr Vineyards & Winery's gorgeous 2021 Cuveé St. E scored a competition high of 97 points for the Domestic Wine of the Year award. Michael Franz remarked, "Wines of this caliber from California routinely ring up with three-digit prices these days, so to see a wine of such prodigious quality offered for \$50 is a pleasant surprise." Neighboring Eberle Winery, with another impressive lineup, nosed out J. Lohr for the Domestic Wine of the Year prize by a single medal difference.

Wakefield (known as Taylors in its Australian homeland) was named Import Winery of the Year and also walked away with the Import Wine of the Year prize, with its 2020 St. Andrews Shiraz from Clare Valley scoring big atop a field of remarkable Wakefield offerings.

Rodney Strong was named Wine Company of the Year, succeeding with several brands across price points ranging from \$10 to \$70 and delivering consistent quality and genuine value in each tier.

The competition saw a record-number of spirits entries this year with both domestic and international producers shining. Highclere Castle of England took Spirits of the Year accolades for their London Dry Gin. Courvoisier Cognac captured the Distillery of the Year award thanks to a very strong set of Cognacs at every age designation. Other top performers include a spectacular Raicilla from Huaraches de Oro, the always fine and budget-friendly Silver Tequila from Familia Camarena, and whiskies from Pinhook Bourbon, Uncle Nearest and Garrison Brothers.

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The growing Ready-to-Drink (RTD) category saw the Tia Linda brand score Best RTD Cocktail with its Margarita de Spicy Jalapeño canned cocktail.

San Diego International Wine & Spirits Challenge (founded in 1982 as the San Diego Wine Competition) is one of the most respected competitions of its kind. The competition combines the talents of winemakers, sommeliers, wine and spirits journalists, and other industry professionals on its judging panels and attracts entries from across the globe. The competition is part of the Challenge Series of international wine and spirits competitions founded by Robert Whitley that includes Winemaker Challenge, Distillers Challenge, Critics Challenge and Sommelier Challenge.

See the complete list of award winners at www.SanDiegoWineChallenge.com

A recap of the top awards follows:

DIRECTORS AWARDS – WINE

Wine of the Year, Domestic

J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines 2021 Cuvée ST. E Paso Robles \$50.00
Platinum 97 points

Wine of the Year, Import

Wakefield 2020 St Andrews Shiraz Clare Valley \$80.00
Platinum 96 points

Winery of the Year, Domestic

Eberle Winery
Paso Robles, California

Winery of the Year, Import

Wakefield/Taylor's
Clare Valley, Australia

Wine Company of the Year

Rodney Strong
Sonoma County, California

Best of Show Sparkling Wine

Caposaldo NV Prosecco Prosecco DOC \$15.99
Platinum 95 points

Best of Show White Wine

Navarro Vineyards 2022 Pinot Gris Anderson Valley \$25.00
Platinum 96 points

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Best of Show Rosé Wine

Miramonte Winery 2021 Rose Temecula Valley \$27.00
Platinum 94 points

Best of Show Red Wine

J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines 2021 Cuvée ST. E Paso Robles \$50.00
Platinum 97 points

Best of Show Dessert Wine

Barboursville Vineyards 2019 Paxxito Virginia \$40.00
Platinum 95 points

DIRECTORS AWARDS - SPIRITS

Spirit of the Year

Highclere Castle Spirits London Dry Gin England \$39.99
Platinum 97 points

Distillery of the Year

Courvoisier Cognac
France

Best Vodka

Col Bleu Vodka Col Bleu Vodka USA \$34.99
Gold 92 points

Best Gin

Highclere Castle Spirits London Dry Gin England \$39.99
Platinum 97 points

Best Agave Spirit

Huaraches de plata Raicilla lote #4 Mexico \$23.00
Platinum 96 points

Best Tequila - Blanco

Familia Camarena Tequila Silver Mexico \$17.00
Platinum 94 points

Best Tequila - Reposado

E. Cuarenta Tequila Reposado Mexico \$55.00
Gold 93 points

Best Tequila - Añejo

Cierto Tequila Reserve Collection Añejo Mexico \$189.00
Gold 92 points
and
Familia Camarena Tequila Añejo Mexico \$29.99
Gold 92 points

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Best Tequila - Extra Añejo

Cierto Tequila Private Collection Extra Añejo Mexico \$279.00
Gold 91 points

Best Rum

Papa's Pilar Rum Rye Whiskey Barrel Finished Rum USA \$49.99
Gold 92 points

Best Rye Whiskey

Pinhook Bourbon Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey Rye Munny, 2022 Release USA \$37.99
Platinum 94 points

Best Whiskey Under 50% ABV

Uncle Nearest 1884 Small Batch Whiskey USA \$49.99
Platinum 94 points

Best Whiskey Over 50% ABV

Garrison Brothers Balmorhea Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey 2023 Release USA \$179.99
Platinum 96 points

Best Cognac

Tycoon Cognac VSOP France \$70.00
Platinum 96 points

Best Liqueur

Vincenzi Espresso Coffee Liqueur Italy \$24.00
Gold 91 points

Best Seltzer

High Noon Sun Sips Lime Tequila Seltzer Mexico \$2.75
Gold 93 points

Best Ready to Drink Cocktail

Tia Linda's Margarita de Spicy Jalapeño USA \$4.00
Platinum 94 points

See the full list of award-winning wine and spirits at www.SanDiegoWineChallenge.com

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