

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The American Craft Spirits Association (ACSA) announced the winners of its Fifth Annual Judging of Craft Spirits, who were honored during the awards dinner at the ACSA Craft Distillers Convention and Vendor Trade Show. This year's show was attended by close to 1,000 spirits producers and suppliers in the City of 446 Bridges, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Winners were hand-selected among more than 500 entrants from 38 states and the District of Columbia in six main categories. Maggie Campbell of Privateer Rum emceed this year's event, having served as the Judging Chair. The 2018 Best in Class distinctions, the highest honor in each of the six judging categories, were awarded by ACSA Board of Directors to a mix of both established, award-winning distilleries and younger newcomers. The six categories include whiskey, gin, rum, vodka and grain spirits, brandy and specialty spirits.

ACSA conducts its professional judging program in accordance with a series of detailed protocols. ACSA works rigorously to develop and fine-tune its methodology in order to ensure it continues to be one of the most valuable judging competitions in the industry.

Prior to the tasting panels, judges participated in a palate calibration seminar led by Campbell, to bring a more narrowed focus to the tasting approach. This calibration seminar helped to ensure that scores across all judges and panels fell close to one another.

ACSA uses a scoring card that generates meaningful, detailed feedback for entrants. Spirits are scored on appearance, aroma intensity, aroma complexity, palate concentration, palate complexity, body, character and nature of alcohol, texture, and finish. Finally, each judge is asked if they would pour the spirit for a peer.

The scoring of spirits was based on a 100-point system, with spirits judged on the overall, cohesive impression of the spirit. Spirits were then assigned a medal based on the average score determined by the following benchmarks: 70-79 = Bronze; 80-89 = Silver; 90-100 = Gold.

The top awarded spirits were then judged a final time in consideration of a Best in Class / Best in Show distinction. The judging chairs collected votes from each panel member for their favorite spirits. If the results were conclusive on the first vote, the results were then recorded. If the results were inconclusive, the judges used a ranked scoring, allowing three points for first place, two points for second place and one point for third place. The spirit that received the highest score in each category was then named Best in Class.

Here are the top winners:

Best in Show:

Arizona Craft Beverage's Elgin Distillery, Regalo de Vida Rum, Arizona

Best in Class Whiskey:

Still 630 – 5 Year RallyPoint, Single Barrel Straight Rye Whiskey, Missouri

Best in Class Gin:

Pittsburgh Distilling Company, Wigle Organic Ginever, Pittsburgh

Best in Class Rum:

Arizona Craft Beverage's Elgin Distillery, Regalo de Vida Rum, Arizona

Best in Class Vodka & Grain Spirits:

Fainting Goat Spirits, Tiny Cat Vodka, Greensboro, North Carolina

Best in Class Brandy:

Huber's Starlight Distillery, Starlight Distillery Reserve Brandy, Indiana

Best in Class Specialty Spirits:

Distilled Specialty Spirits: Tattersall Distilling, Tattersall Bitter Orange Liqueur, Minnesota

About the Distillery Trail:

DistilleryTrail.com provides insights for the Spirits and Distillery Business. We provide a comprehensive list of Farm Distillery, Craft Distillery and Established Distilleries Tours in our easy-to-use Distillery Directory. We also offer a Suppliers Directory to help distilleries find the products and services needed to operate a modern distillery.

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