

THE SAN FRANCISCO WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION JUDGES 1,106 ENTRIES – A NEW RECORD.

San Francisco, California, March 2011.The **San Francisco World Spirits Competition** held its prestigious judging on March 18th, 19th, and 20th at the Hotel Nikko in downtown San Francisco. In this, the 11th year, 1,106 premium spirits were submitted from 61 countries, making it a record-breaking year, up 8% from last year. The San Francisco competition is the oldest, largest, and most recognized spirits competition in the United States. 159 Double Gold Medals were awarded, 181 Gold Medals, 383 Silver Medals, and 231 Bronze Medals.

Thirty-three prominent spirits experts convened for the judging including a dozen industry professionals who were participating in the competition for the first time. Tony Abou-Ganim, the “Modern Mixologist”, and the competition’s Director of Judging, said, “Speaking of the new judges, the weekend brought together some of the finest spirits palates working in the industry today. I feel honored that I could once again be a part of this wonderful event.” This new group of industry leaders is directly responsible for purchasing over \$100,000,000 worth of spirits each year while the journalist members reach more than a million trade and consumer readers each month.

Anthony Dias Blue, The San Francisco World Spirits Competition’s Founder and Executive Director, implemented a new format this year by extending the event to three days. Friday and Saturday were devoted to full days of judging 82 classification categories of spirits. Sunday was devoted entirely to the tasting of those spirits that had been awarded a Sweeps Double Gold and had been selected for inclusion in the Sweepstakes Round. Ninety-two Double Gold spirits vied for top awards in the Sweepstakes and were evaluated by all 33 judges.

Vodka submissions, with 240 entries, were up 7%, while one of the largest increases was from gin producers, up by 61%, from 36 gins to 58. Straight rye producers submitted more than twice the product over last year and the mescal category went from 14 entries in 2010 to 27 entered this year. The bourbon categories showed a large gain as well, up 36%. Small artisanal distillers were represented this year by more entries than ever before.

Taking top honors, *The Tasting Panel Magazine* “Distillery of the Year” went to Del Maguey of Mexico, a Mescal producer, and “Importer of the Year” went to Gemini Spirits & Wine, out of Chicago, who won a plethora of top awards. This year Mr. Blue gave the “Director’s Award” to Pernod Ricard for excellence and consistency of quality of its products.

“Best in Show - Unaged White Spirit” (and “Best Gin”) was claimed by Sloane’s Gin from the Netherlands (\$40) and is imported by Ice Cap Spirits of Manhasset, New York while “Best in Show - Aged White Spirit” (and “Best Mescal”) went to Sinai Reposado Mescal from Oaxaca, Mexico (\$39), imported by Nolasco Spirits of Santa Rosa, California. “Best in Show – Whiskey” (besides “Best Rye”) was awarded to Thomas H. Handy’s Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, (\$70), from Buffalo Trace Distillery. Cognac Ferrand’s Landy Cognac XO (“Best Cognac”) captured the overall “Best in Show – Brandy” award (\$109) and is imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons of White Plains, NY. The “Best in Show Liqueur / Other Spirit” was given to Mozart Distillerie GmbH for the Mozart Dry Chocolate Spirit, (\$42), from Salzburg, Austria.

“This year’s vibrant and talented judging panel,” Blue explained, “were able to skillfully pinpoint emerging trends in the exciting spirits arena. Mescal, gin, rye, bourbon and brandy – especially pisco - are exploding in popularity.”

In addition to the premium awards, the top ranking spirit in each category was awarded a “Best” title. In the White Spirits other category winners included “Best Vodka” won by Alberta Distillers’ Pure Vodka from Canada (\$18); “Best Flavored Vodka” went to Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion Vodka from Finland and imported by Brown-Forman from Louisville, Kentucky (\$19); “Best White Rum” went to Tøz for their White Gold Rum from St. Lucia Distillers in St. Lucia (\$26); “Best Extra-Aged Rum “ to Pusser’s 15 Year Old Rum, British Virgin Isles and imported by Shaw Ross International Importers out of Miramar, Florida. “Best Shōchū” was awarded to Kai Vodka LLC for their Young Coconut Shōchū ,Vietnam (\$25); and “Best Cachaça” was given to Leblon Cachaça, Minas Gerais, Brazil (\$30). Best in the Tequila section were “Best Silver Tequila” to Espolon Blanco Tequila, Jalisco, Mexico, imported by Skyy Spirits, San Francisco (\$25); “Best Reposado Tequila to Excellia, Los Altos de Jalisco, Mexico (\$65), from Euro Wine Gate Spirits & Wine and imported by Domaine Select from New York, NY; “Best Añejo Tequila was El Tesoro Añejo Tequila from La Alteña Distillery, Jalisco, Mexico (\$60) and imported by Beam Global Spirits & Wine, Deerfield, Illinois; while “Best Extra-Aged Añejo Tequila” and the top honor of “Best Tequila” overall was given to Don Julio Extra-Aged Añejo Tequila Real, Jalisco, Mexico (\$350), and imported by Diageo North America, New York.

The Whisky and Whiskies categories included George T. Stagg Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey winning the “Best Bourbon” category, from Buffalo Trace Distillery, Frankfort, Kentucky, (\$70); “Best Irish Whiskey” was Michael Collins 10 Year Old Single Malt Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$39), imported by Sidney Frank of New Rochelle, New York; “Best Blended Scotch” went to Kingdom 17 Year Old Scotch (\$49), Scotland, entered by The Hiscot Company, Ltd., Seoul, Korea; “Best Single Malt Whisky” was Caol Ila Single Malt Scotch, The Distillers Edition, from Islay, Scotland (\$69), A Diageo North America import, New York. Suntory International Corporation was awarded “Best Other Whisky” for The Yamazaki Single Malt Whisky, Aged 18 Years, Yamazaki, Japan (\$120).

Under the Brandy group the “Best Armagnac” was won by Chateau de LaBaude Armagnac 1981, France (\$160) imported by Baron Francois, New York, NY; “Best Calvados” went to Christian Drouin Calvados Pays d’Auge 1990, France (\$160), imported by Preiss Imports, Ramona, California; and “Best Pisco” was given to ORO Pisco Italia Mosto Verde, Bodegas Vinas de Oro, Peru, (\$46), imported by ClearGrape LLC, San Francisco.

The top Liqueurs and Other Spirits awards included “Best Fruit Liqueur” won by Ventura Orangetcello Blood Orange Liqueur, from Ventura, California (\$17); “Best Herbal / Botanical Liqueur” was awarded to Luxardo Sambuca, Italy (\$27), imported by Preiss Imports, Ramona, California and Mozart Distillerie GmbH took the “Best Cream Liqueur” award for its Gold Chocolate Cream Liqueur, Salzburg, Austria (\$28).

Additional results can be found at www.sfspiritscomp.com. Pictures of the competition will be available at www.lehmannphotography.com .

2011 San Francisco World Spirits Competition judges included: **Anthony Dias Blue - Executive Director San Francisco World Spirits Competition** and San Francisco International Wine Competition, President, Blue Lifestyle, Editor-in-Chief, *The Tasting Panel Magazine*, Los Angeles; **Director of Judging San Francisco World**

Spirits Competition -**Tony Abou-Ganim** - Master Mixologist, The Modern Mixologist, Las Vegas; **Bridget Albert** - Mixologist, Southern Wine & Spirits, Chicago; **Stephen Beal** - Master of Whisky, Consultant & Educator, San Francisco; **Kent Bearden** - Master Mixologist, MGM Grand, Las Vegas; **Julio Bermejo** - Tequila Master/Spirits Buyer, Tommy's Mexican Restaurant, San Francisco; **Mark Bowery** - Wine & Spirits Consultant, Mark Bowery Consulting, Mendocino; **Joseph Brooke** - Mixologist, Director of Spirits, The Edison, Los Angeles; **Derek Brown** - Co-owner / Mixologist, The Passenger and Columbia Room, Washington, D.C.; **Jerry Cooper** - Proprietor, Swirl on Castro, San Francisco; **Aidan Demarest** - Beverage Manager, Spare Room, Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, Los Angeles; **H. Joseph Ehrmann** - Proprietor, Elixir, San Francisco; **Ziggy Eschliman** - The Wine Gal and Countess of Cocktails, Wine Country Radio, Santa Rosa; **Michael Feil** - GM / Wine & Spirits Buyer, Westchester Country Club, Rye; **David Grapshi** - Tequila National Sales Manager, Sazerac / Gemini, Walnut Creek; **Thomas "Mac" Gregory** – Director of Food & Beverage, Starwood Hotels – Franchise for North America Division, Scottsdale; **Kim Haasarud** - Founder, Liquid Architecture, Phoenix; **Richard Carleton Hacker** - Spirits Journalist, *Robb Report*; *The Tasting Panel Magazine*, Los Angeles; **Steven Izzo** - Beverage Director, Waterbar, San Francisco; **Misty Kalkofen** - Mixologist, Drink, Boston; **Geoff Kleinman** - Editor, DrinkSpirits.com, Portland; **Francesco Lafranconi** - Southern Wine & Spirits, Natl. Dir. of Mixology and Spirits Education, Las Vegas; **Drew Levinson** - Beverage Development, Wirtz Beverage Nevada, Las Vegas; **Jordan Mackay** -Wine & Spirits Editor, *7x7 Magazine*, San Francisco; **David Mahoney** - Wine & Spirits Writer, Minneapolis; **Meridith May** - Publisher & Executive Editor, *The Tasting Panel Magazine*, Los Angeles; **Tim McDonald** - President, Wine Spoken Here, Napa; **Jeffrey Morgenthaler** - Bar Manager/Founder, Clyde Common/RepealDay.org, Portland; **Nick Passmore** - Artisanal Editor, *Four Seasons Magazine*; Wine Columnist, *Bloomberg Businessweek*; **Jim Romdall** - Manager and Mixologist, Vessel, Seattle; **Audrey Saunders** - Co-owner / Mixologist, Le Pegu Club, New York; **Trudy Thomas** - Director of Beverage, JW Marriott Camelback Inn, Scottsdale; **Kevin M. Vogt**, MS - Wine & Spirits Director, Emeril's Restaurants, Las Vegas