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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sommelier Judges Find Greatness Across the Price Spectrum; Record Number of Platinum-Winning Wines

San Diego, Calif. (October 11, 2023) - The 16th Annual Sommelier Challenge Wine & Spirits Competition, held September 22-23 in San Diego, proved once again that blind tastings can be great equalizers. This year's panel of sommelier judges awarded over 700 medals, selecting a record-setting 86 wines, priced from \$6.99 to \$275.00, as worthy of the competition's top award – Platinum.

At the upper end of the scale, the **2019 Miguel Caratachea Cabernet Sauvignon "Venerable Vines"** from Napa Valley took **Domestic Wine of the Year** with a score of 98 points (\$275.00). **Wakefield/Taylor's 2019 Shiraz "The Pioneer"** from Clare Valley, Australia (also 98 points, \$200) nabbed **Import Wine of the Year** accolades.

As any good sommelier will tell you, one of the fun parts of the job is being able to recommend great wines that won't break the bank. The **2022 Navarro Vineyards Pinot Gris** from Anderson Valley fits the bill, taking **Best of Show White Wine** and at the modest price of \$22.00.

Top awards in the spirits judging followed suit, with winners running the price gamut. **Spirit of the Year** honors went to **Kavo Greek Island Asimi Rum** (yes, Greek Rum!) at \$28.99. Other class winners included **New Amsterdam No. 525 Vodka (Best Vodka)** at \$15.00 and **Cierto Tequila Reserve Collection Extra Añejo (Best Tequila)** at \$289.00.

Sommelier Challenge International Wine & Spirits Competition attracts entries from across the globe. This unique and prestigious tasting is 100% judged in a double-blind format by certified sommeliers – some of the most respected palates in the industry. Partial sponsors of the event are WineReviewOnline.com, with over 1.2 million visitors, and SpiritsReviewOnline.com, where Platinum award winners receive full reviews in the weeks following the competition. Sommelier Challenge was founded in 2007 by wine writer Robert Whitley and is part of the Challenge Series of international wine and spirits competitions that includes San Diego Int'l Wine & Spirits

Challenge (formerly San Diego Wine Competition), Winemaker Challenge, Distillers Challenge, and Critics Challenge.

For a complete list of Sommelier Challenge award winners, go to SommelierChallenge.com. A recap of the top awards follows:

DIRECTORS AWARDS – WINE

Wine of the Year, Domestic

Miguel Caratachea 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon Venerable Vines
Napa Valley \$295.00 Platinum 98 points

Wine of the Year, Import

Wakefield 2019 The Pioneer Shiraz
Clare Valley \$200.00 Platinum 98 points

Winery of the Year, Domestic

King Estate
Willamette Valley, Oregon

Winery of the Year, Import

Wakefield/Taylor's
Clare Valley, Australia

Wine Company of the Year

Delicato
Napa, California

Importer of the Year

Palm Bay International
Boca Raton, Florida

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Best of Show Sparkling Wine

Bottega NV White Gold
Venezia DOC \$33.32 Platinum 94 points
and
La Marca 2021 Prosecco Rosé
Prosecco DOC \$19.99 Platinum 94 points

Best of Show White Wine

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

Best Best of Show Rosé

Eberle 2022 Cotes-du-Robles Rosé
Paso Robles \$30.00 Platinum 95 points

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Best of Show Red Wine

Miguel Caratachea 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon Venerable Vines
Napa Valley \$295.00 Platinum 98 points
and
Wakefield 2019 The Pioneer Shiraz
Clare Valley \$200.00 Platinum 98 points

Best of Show Dessert Wine

Bottega NV Petalo Moscato Spumante Il Vino dell'Amore
Italy \$21.99 Platinum 94 points
and
New Clairvaux Vineyard NV Vino Dolce Dessert Wine Vina
California \$25.00 Platinum 94 points

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Best Albariño

New Clairvaux Vineyard 2022 Albariño St. James Block
Tehama County \$19.00 Gold 91 points

Best Barbera

Coyote Canyon 2021 Barbera
Horse Heaven Hills \$36.00 Platinum 94 points
and
Vienza at Europa Village 2019 Reserve Barbera
Temecula Valley \$79.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Blended Red

New Clairvaux Vineyard 2019 Abbot's Reserve Paul Mark Schwan
California \$45.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Bordeaux

Merveille de Vignes 2022 Bordeaux Red Blend
Bordeaux AOC \$17.99 Gold 93 points

Best Bordeaux Style Blend

Ledson 2019 Bellissimo Estate Vineyard
Sonoma Valley \$94.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Boxed Wine

Black Box 2021 Merlot
California \$19.99 Gold 92 points

Best Cabernet Franc

PALAZZO WINE 2019 Cabernet Franc Reserve
Napa Valley \$115.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Cabernet Sauvignon

Miguel Caratachea 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon Venerable Vines
Napa Valley \$295.00 Platinum 98 points

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Best Chardonnay

Wakefield 2022 St Andrews Chardonnay
Clare Valley \$40.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Chenin Blanc

Prevailing Winds 2022 Chenin Blanc
WO Stellenbosch \$14.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Chianti

Casamarta 2020 Chianti Classico D.O.C.G.
Chianti Classico DOCG \$24.99 Gold 93 points

Best Fruit/Grape Blend

Barefoot Fruitscato NV Lemonade
\$6.99 Gold 92 points

Best Grenache

Miramonte Winery 2019 Garnacha
Temecula Valley \$40.00 Gold 91 points

Best Hybrid Wine

JOLO Winery & Vineyards 2022 Golden Hallows
North Carolina \$28.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Italian Blend

Avanguardia 2015 PREMIATO
Sierra Foothills \$28.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Malbec

Chacewater 2020 Krev
Lake County \$35.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Merlot

Rodney Strong Vineyards 2021 Merlot
Sonoma County \$23.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Muscat

Barefoot NV Moscato
California \$6.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Nebbiolo

Barboursville Vineyards 2020 Nebbiolo Reserve
Virginia \$35.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Nero d'Avola

MandraRossa 2021 Nero d'Avola
Sicilia DOC \$14.99 Platinum 94 points

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Best Petit Verdot

Mountain Terraces Winery & Vineyards 2018 Petit Verdot
Moon Mountain District \$160.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Petite Sirah

Dandelion Vineyards 2021 Midnight Rainbow of McLaren Vale Petite Sirah
McLaren Vale \$120.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Pinot Grigio

Barefoot NV Pinot Grigio
American \$6.99 Gold 90 points
and
Beringer Main & Vine NV Pinot Grigio
South Eastern Australia \$6.99 Gold 90 points

Best Pinot Gris

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

Best Pinot Noir

Halleck Vineyard 2019 Pinot Noir Three Sons Cuvee
Russian River Valley \$55.00 Platinum 96 points

Best Port

New Clairvaux Vineyard NV Vino Dolce Dessert Wine Vina
California \$25.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Prosecco Rosé

La Marca 2021 Prosecco Rosé
Prosecco DOC \$19.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Red Rhone Blend

Dandelion Vineyards 2022 Menagerie of the Barossa Grenache Shiraz Mataro
Barossa \$30.00 Platinum 94 points
and
Global Trails 2021 Cotes du Rhone MRS
Côtes du Rhône AOP \$14.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Riesling

Schloss Vollrads 2021 Riesling Kabinett
Rheingau \$34.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Rosé

Eberle 2022 Cotes-du-Robles Rosé
Paso Robles \$30.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Sagrantino

Poggio Leano 202 Sagrantino Sandia Creek
Temecula Valley \$74.00 Platinum 95 points

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Best Sauvignon Blanc

Sacred Hill 2022 Sauvignon Blanc
Marlborough \$18.99 Platinum 95 points

Best Shiraz

Wakefield 2019 The Pioneer Shiraz
Clare Valley \$200.00 Platinum 98 points

Best Spirits Barrel Aged Wine

Cooper & Thief 2021 Pinot Noir Brandy Barrel Aged
California \$29.99 Gold 92 points
and
Cooper & Thief 2021 Red Blend Bourbon Barrel Aged
California \$29.99 Gold 92 points
and
Durant & Booth 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon Bourbon Barrel Aged
Napa Valley \$28.00 Gold 92 points

Best Spritzer

Barefoot Spritzer NV Summer Red - can
No Appellation \$2.00 Gold 93 points

Best Super Tuscan Style

Falkner Winery 2021 Amante Special Selection
Temecula Valley \$80.00 Gold 93 points

Best Syrah

Chacewater 2020 Syrah Limited Edition
Sierra Foothills \$30.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Tempranillo

El Bochorno 2021 Tempranillo
Spain \$13.99 Platinum 94 points
and
Finca del Marquesado 2022 Tempranillo
Rioja DOPa \$19.99 Platinum 94 points

Best White Blend

La Vieille Ferme 2022 Blanc
Vin de France \$11.99 Platinum 94 points
and
Miramonte Winery 2021 Opulente Blanc
California \$36.00 Platinum 94 points

Best White Rhone Blend

New Clairvaux Vineyard NV White Table Wine Vina Ranch
California \$18.00 Platinum 94 points

Best Zinfandel

Nichelini Family Winery 2021 Zinfandel Reserve
Napa Valley \$58.00 Platinum 95 points

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DIRECTORS AWARDS – SPIRITS

Spirit of the Year

Kavo Greek Island Rum
Asimi Rum Greece \$28.99 Platinum 97 points

Spirits Company of the Year

Spirit of Gallo
USA

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Best Bourbon

Weldon Mills Distillery
"The All Malt Bourbon Whiskey, 2022 Release, Batch #19" USA \$109.15 Gold 93 points

Best Bourbon, High Proof

O'Shaughnessy Distilling Co.
"Keeper's Heart Whiskey Irish + Bourbon, Cask Strength" Ireland/USA \$49.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Cognac

Earl Stevens Selections
Tycoon Cognac VS France \$45.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Gin

Earl Stevens Selections
Kuiper Belt Atmospheric Dry Gin USA \$40.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Liqueur

Vincenzi
Bicerin Chocolate Peppermint Liqueur di Torino Italy \$24.99 Platinum 94 points

Best Rum

Kavo Greek Island Rum
Asimi Rum Greece \$28.99 Platinum 97 points

Best Rye

Uncle Nearest
"Rye Uncut/Unfiltered Straight Whiskey, Blend No. 005" USA \$149.00 Gold 93 points

Best Seltzer

High Noon
Tequila Seltzer Grapefruit Mexico \$2.75 Gold 92 points

Best Tequila

Cierto Tequila
"Reserve Collection, Extra Añejo" Mexico \$289.00 Gold 92 points

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Best Tequila, Flavored

Sabrosa

Lavender Lime Tequila Mexico \$30.95 Gold 93 points

Best Vodka

New Amsterdam

No. 525 Vodka USA \$15.00 Platinum 95 points

Best Whiskey, Blended

O'Shaughnessy Distilling Co.

Keeper's Heart Whiskey Irish + Bourbon Ireland/USA \$34.99 Gold 93 points

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