

The 2023 Trophy Spirits Show winners announced

Investec's Trophy Spirits Show which is now in its fifth iteration, saw a significant uptick in the number of entries submitted across all classes. This is perhaps an indication that the industry has largely recovered from the impact of lockdowns and that there is a new vitality amongst producers and distributors.



Nabulo Phewane from KVV with trophies for Best Distilled Gin and Best Gin of Show for Imagin Classic. Source: Supplied.

There were 145 entries received this year (compared with 128 entries in 2022) from 25 producers and distributors comprising 72 brands spread through 15 categories. In terms of total entries, the whisk(e)y classes saw the greatest number (39), mainly from Scotland, though there were also submissions from South Africa and Ireland. These included malt whiskies, grain whiskies, pot-still whiskeys and blended whiskies.

Broad representation

The gin classes saw a fair spread of entries across all three categories – London Dry, Distilled and Flavoured Gin. Brandy was well represented with pot-still submissions from the Cape and France (Cognac). Unsurprisingly, given the worldwide surge in interest in tequila/agave and rum, there were more entries than before in these classes. In addition, the show saw a broad representation of vodkas, aperitifs, and cream liqueurs.

The annual battle between France and South Africa for the top brandy crown was wrested from the Cape by Martell though with a fair sprinkling of gold medals in the pot-still brandy class, South Africa's legendary aged brandies were very much in the running.

The attrition which thinned out the craft gin producers following the Covid-related lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 seems to be over, with 31 gins entered and gold medals in both the London Dry and Distilled Gin classes.



The Trophy Wine Show winners revealed for 2022

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As always there was wide and substantial representation from the world of whisk(e)y, with gold medal and trophy winning entries in the malt, Irish pot-still and blended Scotch categories. Unsurprisingly some of the biggest names in the world of whisky were represented on the winners' podium.

As in previous years, entries came in from producers in places as far afield as the USA, England, Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, The Netherlands, Sri Lanka, the sun-washed islands of the Caribbean, the highlands of Scotland, the deserts of Mexico, the villages of Cognac and pretty much everywhere in between. Included among these exotics were at least fifty different brandies, liqueurs, whiskies and gins from the Cape and Gauteng.

Specialists

There was an equally broad representation of international judges. Back at the tasting benches were George Harper, (whisky) and Jérôme Royer (brandy) while Jon Gray, a UK-based gin expert joined the Trophy Spirits Show panel for the first time. These international specialists shared their expertise with local judges and associates (all graduates of the spirits judging academy run by Michael Fridjhon on behalf of the Trophy Spirits Show).

The South African judges were Andy Watt, Dave Gunns, Dr Mare-Loe Prinsloo, Kurt Schlechter, Carla Weightman and Pieter Carter.

The associate judges were Jason McEvoy, Sean Gunns and Anriënka Vlok. Show convenor Michael Fridjhon was Chairman of the Judges.

There were 145 submissions across 15 classes. 39 Whiskies, 31 gins, 19 brandies and cognacs, with vodkas, tequilas, rums, aperitifs, fruit spirits and liqueurs totalling a further 56 entries. And at the end of the day there were 10 gold medals, 37 silvers, 39 bronzes and a mere 10 trophies.

Cumesh Moodliar, head of Investec private Banking SA comments: "Investec recognises the out of the ordinary, so it is our honour for us to be the headline sponsor for The Trophy Wine and Spirits Show. We're excited to host our clients for bespoke tastings and events."

The Trophy and Gold medal winners:

Trophy Winners

- Trophy for Best Cognac, Vinolok Trophy for Best Premium Spirit and Investec Trophy for Best Brandy of Show: Martell XO Cognac
- Investec Trophy for Best Distilled Gin and Riedel Trophy for Best Gin of Show: Imagin Classic Gin
- Investec Trophy for Best Malt Whisky and Investec Trophy for Best Whisky of Show: Aberlour Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky 18 Years Old – Double Sherry Cask Finish
- Investec Trophy for Best London Gin: Gordon's Special London Dry Gin
- Investec Trophy for Best Blended Whisky: Johnnie Walker Blended Scotch Whisky Aged 18 Years
- Investec Trophy for Best Single Pot Still Whisk(e)y: Redbreast Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey Aged 12 Years
- Trophy for Best Pot-distilled Brandy: Van Ryn's Single Potstill Brandy Aged 12 Years

- Trophy for Best Grain Whisky: Bain's Cape Mountain Single Grain Whisky
- Trophy for Best Rum of Show: Red Heart Original Imported Rum
- Trophy for Best Tequila of Show: Del Maguey Single Village Mezcal Chichicapa

Gold Medal Winners

- Aberlour A'Bunadh Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky
- Balblair Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky – Aged 15 years
- Ballantine's Blended Scotch Whisky – American Barrel aged 7 years
- Beefeater London Dry Gin
- Bisquit & Dubouché Cognac V.S.
- Del Maguey Las Milpas (Tequila/Mezcal)
- Johnnie Walker Blue Label Blended Scotch Whisky
- Johnnie Walker Green Label Blended Malt Scotch Whisky 15 Years
- The Glenlivet Single Malt Scotch Whisky 15 Year Old
- The Singleton Single Malt Scotch Whisky 15 Year Old

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