

## Pre-mixed Drinks

# Pre-mixed drinks challenge

## Hamish Smith reports on the results of the prestigious annual DI competition

**T**he pre-mixed drinks category, for so long the ugly duckling of the drinks world, has spread its wings and flown. This year the Pre-mixed Drinks Challenge revealed a real breakthrough – tasty and authentic classic cocktails delivered in an easy-serve format. The biggest compliment the judging panel could pay to this new band of products was that we wouldn't have complained had they been served to us in a cocktail bar.

And our judging panel has seen the inside of a few of those.

This year it comprised Ann Jones of the Waitrose's wines, beers & spirits buying team, Manchester Drinks' director Richard Benjamin, Andrew Murray Watson, head of corporate for Mission (PR to Oddbins), and DI deputy editor Hamish Smith.

So, stand up the Handmade Cocktail Co, count your medals and take a bow. The new Maverick Drinks-owned range took four golds for its Gin Martini, Old Fashioned, Negroni and Manhattan,

joining long-time category innovator Funkin, with its new Brazilian mix, Finest Call for its bloody good Bloody Mary mix and another gold-standard newcomer in Pontoon's Tommy Margarita.

Convenience will always be at this category's heart and with that comes an element of compromise among consumers, but it's good to see brands are not using this as an excuse and standards are marching skywards.

That's seven golds in all, 12 silvers and 16 bronzes. In a way judges felt the products that failed offered a glimpse into the category's darker days and showed just how far the class of 2014 has come.

Perhaps the biggest test for these classically inspired cocktails will be the market into which they are thrust. Are pre-mixed consumers ready for yesteryear classics at higher prices, or will the most outrageously coloured and sweetened products continue to be the draw?

They say the market ultimately decides – let's hope it's maturing at the same speed as the category.

### Gold

- Bloody Mary Mixer** Finest Call  
Good colour, great tomato and spice character
- Funkin Brazilian** Funkin  
Fresh, tropical fruit flavours, tangy
- Gin Martini 2013** Handmade Cocktail Co  
Juniper-led aroma, floral botanicals, quality spirit
- Manhattan Cocktail** Handmade Cocktail Co  
Good colour, texture, flavour. Sweet/sour balance.
- Negroni Cocktail** Handmade Cocktail Co  
Great mouth-feel and sweet marmalade finish
- Old Fashioned Cocktail** Handmade Cocktail Co  
Good aroma, slightly sweet but balanced
- Tommy's** Pontoon  
Strong tequila/agave flavour, refreshing and tart

### Silver

- Vesper Cocktail 2013** Handmade Cocktail Co
- Rob Roy Cocktail 2013** Handmade Cocktail Co
- Martinez Cocktail 2013** Handmade Cocktail Co
- Hanky Panky Cocktail 2013** Handmade Cocktail Co
- Widow's Kiss** Pontoon
- Strawberry Daiquiri** Mixtender
- Margarita Mixer** Finest Call
- Funkin Pina Colada** Funkin
- Funkin Hollywood** Funkin
- Gloworm Drinks** Boost Drinks
- Greenall's Gin & Pink Grapefruit** G&J Greenall
- Woody's** Woody's

### Bronze

- Bloom & Fentimans** G&J Greenall
- Greenall's Gin & Diet Tonic** G&J Greenall
- Greenall's Gin & Tonic** G&J Greenall
- Greenall's Gin Fizz** G&J Greenall
- World's Best Cocktail** Handmade Cocktail Co
- Vikingfjord Mojito** Vikingfjord
- Kiss Mix Cosmopolitan** Kiss Mix
- Lojito Pomegranate** Outrageous Cocktails
- Lojito Raspberry** Outrageous Cocktails
- Lojito Strawberry** Outrageous Cocktails
- Mixed Fruit Twist** Asda Twist
- Raspberry & Vanilla** Asda Twist
- Tropical Twist** Asda Twist
- Greenall Gin Sin** G&J Greenall
- WKD Brazilian** WKD

