

Mix masters

Twenty world class bartenders lined up for the finals of the 16th annual Drinks International Cocktail Challenge. Here are the winning creations

The 2009 Distil spirits fair in London provided the backdrop for the 16th annual Drinks International Cocktail Challenge, with 20 finalists from all over the world – including the UK, US, France and Finland.

Bartenders had to keep their cool and explain techniques and ingredients to an audience and a panel of five judges.

The judges were key industry figures: spirits expert Ian Wisniewski; Julian Shaw, from consultancy the Gorgeous Group; bar trainer Leanne Davidson; Nick Wykes from ipbartenders; and Andrea Horsfield from the Training School.

They all praised the finalists for enhancing spirit flavours and showing originality with garnish and presentation.

Tension built throughout the morning, until, finally, the winner of the largest category – white spirits – was announced. Jim Wrigley took the gong for his Santa Teresa Claro rum cocktail Illumination.

Next up were the liqueurs mixologists and best in category went to Ludovic Miazga for his Noilly Cassis, made using Noilly Prat. Ludo had to hot-foot it back to France so missed his winning photo opportunity. But luckily, we snapped him in action.

The brown spirits mixologists added a bit of flair to proceedings with both Scott Gemmell, from anCnoc, and Nick Ravenhall, of Auchentoshen, insisting the crowd tried their spirits neat first.

Gemmell emerged as the brown spirit champ with his Blackhill Breakfast, featuring grapefruit and ginger marmalade.

But there could only be one overall winner and White Spirits category leader Jim Wrigley was crowned the 2009 champion.

Judges praised Wrigley's cocktail for its originality, balance, taste and presentation.

His touch of magic came in his elegant presentation – to get the look and aroma just right, Wrigley twisted the oils from a grapefruit zest on to a pink rose petal. The rose petal was then floated on the surface of the drink.

Illumination

50ml Santa Teresa Claro
12.5ml Rhum Orange
12.5ml Francoli Pinot Nero grappa
2 drops of grapefruit bitters

Method

Add all ingredients to a hoshizaki ice-filled mixing glass. Stir briskly for 30 seconds. Fine strain into a 5.5oz martini glass.



Jim Wrigley



Scott Gemmell



Ludovic Miazga

Blackhill Breakfast

50ml anCnoc
35ml pink grapefruit juice
10ml Luxardo Limoncello
15ml Patron Citronge
Orange liqueur
2-3 bar spoons grapefruit and ginger marmalade

Method

Add 15ml boiling water to the marmalade. Shake ingredients and double strain into chilled glass.



Noilly Cassis

70ml Noilly Prat Dry
20ml Crème de cassis
Briottet
Soda water top

Method

Pour Noilly Prat and crème de cassis into a rocks glass, fill with cubed ice, stir gently for five seconds, squeeze over peel of the lemon and use as garnish.





Top judges assess the competition. Above: Cocktail legend Angus Winchester. Left: Timothy Stones mixes a Beefeater 24 Marteanez. Commended cocktails, clockwise from top right: Auchentoshan; Finlandia Grapefruit Fusion; Wyborowa Polish Fling; Wyborowa Thyme Vesper; Tanqueray Basilicum; Hendrick's Aperitivo Singaloro

