

After dinner delights

Preparing cocktails for discerning palates was a serious business

The finals of the highly-regarded Drinks International Cocktail Challenge were held at the inaugural Distil exhibition in London in May. DI's editor Felicity Murray has all the lowdown on this year's worthy winners

It was a challenge for the mixologists taking part, but their professionalism shone through. They created perfect cocktails in a packed auditorium, away from the familiarity of their own bars and in front of an esteemed panel of judges.

Throughout the day, the Ambassadors Suite in the Distil exhibition hall in London's ExCel was filled with visitors and brand-owners.

In this competition, the cocktail is being judged, not the person mixing it. The recipes are entered by the base spirit brand-owner and mixed accordingly by Drinks International's choice of independent bartenders.

This year, the qualifying round was mixed by the team at Perfectserve, headed by Ed McAvoy at The Training School – and a shortlist drawn up by the judges (see DI May issue). The shortlisted entrants were then asked to supply their own bartenders to mix and present their cocktails at the finals, where the scoring was done by a fresh panel of judges.

A trophy, a gold and a silver medal was awarded in each category (White Spirits, Brown Spirits, Liqueurs & Specialities), as well as a number of Highly Commended accreditations.

From a record entry of over 70 cocktails, 32

qualified for the finals. The classification this year was After Dinner; perhaps as was to be expected, the Brown Spirits category proved to be the hottest, with the largest number of entries and cocktails scoring the highest marks.

The category Trophy winners were: in the Brown Spirits category – Tyger Tyger, a Santa Teresa Claro rum-based cocktail mixed by Jim Wrigley; White Spirits – Entente Cordiale, a Beefeater Gin-based cocktail mixed by Dan Warner; and in Liqueurs & Specialities – Walders Great Godfather, based on Walders Creamy

Liqueur and created by Adam Dolman.

These three trophy-winning cocktails go forward to be mixed in a grand final to find the Drinks International Cocktail Champion for 2008, to be held at the Drinks International Bartenders Challenge at The Hide Bar in Bermondsey Street, London SE1, on July 2.

The Cocktail Champion and the other two category trophy winners will be presented with their awards at the International Spirits Challenge Awards Dinner on September 30 at prestigious London hotel, Claridge's. "

The judges



Andrea Horsfield
managing director
The Training
School

Tom Candham
editor Class
magazine

Andy Pearson
Intoxicology

Steve Manktelow
operations
manager Ignite
group

Issie Knolles
TV presenter

Giuseppe Gallo
manager Purple
Bar

The trophy-winning recipes

Brown Spirits

Tyger Tyger

50ml Santa Teresa Claro
10ml Giffard Vanille du Madagascar
10ml Giffard Abricot du Rousillon
Spray Angostura Bitters
20ml cranberry juice

Method: Rest a balloon glass on its side in a rocks glass near-full of hot water. The balloon should just touch the water. Add the Santa Teresa Claro. Ignite with a lighter. Turn the balloon slowly while adding the liqueurs, then spray with bitters (carefully, as these will ignite). Pour the flaming liquid slowly into a fresh balloon containing the cranberry juice and star anise garnish. Spray and then rub the rim with a pink grapefruit twist. Leave glass to cool before imbibing.

Liqueurs & Specialities

Walders Great Godfather

30ml Walders Creamy Liqueur
20ml Amaretto
10ml Scotch whisky

Method: Shake all the ingredients and strain into a rocks glass filled with cubed ice. No garnish required.

White Spirits

Entente Cordiale

35ml Beefeater Gin
20ml Cherry Herring
20ml Calvados
10ml Noilly Ambre
10ml Benedictine

Method: Stir all the ingredients with ice and strain into an ice-filled, old-fashioned glass. Garnish with an orange twist and a cherry.

Tyger Tyger was a hot entrant, in every sense



Walders Great Godfather needed no garnish



Entente Cordiale made the best of its gin base



The judging panel weighed up all the contenders carefully



The winners

White Spirits

Trophy – Entente Cordiale, using Beefeater gin

Gold – The Jaffa's Eight Cake, using Elements 8 Platinum rum

Silver – Quintessence using Whitley Neill gin

Bronze – Finlandia Kaamos Martini, using Finlandia vodka

Highly Commended – Specially For Good Men, using Parliament vodka

Commended – Tanqueray Big Berry, using Tanqueray gin



Brown Spirits

Trophy – Tyger Tyger, using Santa Teresa Claro rum

Gold – Fallen Leaf, using Santa Teresa 1796 rum

Silver – Bourbon Street, using Four Roses Bourbon

Bronze – Lime and Pear Panya, using Mekhong whisky

Highly Commended – Ballantine's Blazer, using Ballantine's 12 YO whisky; Highland Marquee, using AnCnoc Highland malt whisky; Smokey Monkey, using Monkey Shoulder whisky; White Velvet Stocking, using Chivas Regal 12 YO whisky; Red Label Soho, using Johnnie Walker Gold Label whisky; Rusty Noc, using AnCnoc Highland malt whisky; Antiguan Pie, using English Harbour rum

Commended – Milk & Honey, using Johnnie Walker Gold Label whisky; Ballantine's Spiced, using Ballantine's Finest whisky; Cazadores Pineapple & Cinnamon, using Cazadores Reposado tequila



Liqueurs & Specialities

Trophy – Walders Great Godfather, using Walders Creamy Liqueur

Gold – Noilly Poire et Chocolat, using Noilly Prat Dry vermouth

Silver – Dreadlock Holiday, using Volare Banana

Bronze – Dolce Amaro, using Amaro Averna bitters

Highly Commended – Mangolympic, using Wenneker Mango; Go Figure, using Santa Teresa Selecto; Spicy Choc, using Mozart Black

Commended – Grand Walders Cocktail, using Walders Creamy Liqueur; Austrian Lime, using Mozart White; Intercontinental, using Amaro Averna; The Last Word, using Chartreuse; The Ultimate Irish Coffee, using Irish Mist whiskey

