

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## **2026 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WINE & SPIRITS COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Acquiesce Winery and Rhum Barbancourt Estate Take Top Honors**

\*\*\*

**Best Woman Winemaker and Best Woman Distiller Also Named**

May 26, 2026 — Winners have been announced in the 19th annual Women's International Wine & Spirits Competition (IWWSC). The competition, which took place recently in Santa Rosa, Calif., was founded on the premise that the majority of wine purchased for home consumption is bought by women. The IWWSC judging panels consist entirely of professional women in the wine and spirits industries — winemakers, distillers, marketers, buyers, sommeliers, educators and journalists.

This year, [Acquiesce Wines](#)' 2025 Sirens white wine blend and [Rhum Barbancourt](#) Estate Reserve rum took top honors. Sirens is a Rhone-style blend of Grenache Gris, Grenache Blanc and Grenache Noir equally. Judges awarded it 98 points and were wowed by its palate of "Dried apricots, lemon chiffon and white peach."

Founded in Haiti in 1862, Rhum Barbancourt remains a family-owned enterprise. Today, Delphine Gardère continues long-held traditions while bringing a more contemporary vision to the enterprise, establishing the Rhum Barbancourt name internationally. The 15-year-old Estate Reserve received 98 points and was described by judges as "An exquisite expression of refinement...A remarkably smooth and sophisticated rum."

"As always, the International Women's Wine & Spirits Competition shined a spotlight on hundreds of deserving products," says Debra Del Fiorentino, owner of Wine Competitions Management & Production, which organizes and presents IWWSC. "Entry is open to all

winemakers and distillers, regardless of gender, but we do add an extra spotlight for the top woman in each category. In an industry that has traditionally been perceived as a 'men's club,' it's important to highlight the roles women are playing to push the industry forward."

This year's Best Woman Winemaker is Stephanie Trotter-Zacharia, co-owner and winemaker for [Trotter 1/16 Wines](#), an ultra-limited, handcrafted Napa Valley brand that focuses on Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and proprietary blends.

"This award means so much because my path was not polished or traditional," she says. "I came from a big family, learned the value of grit early, and found my way into wine through hard work and love for the craft. Trotter 1/16 has always been personal — it reflects where I came from, the vineyards I believe in, and the people who have supported this journey.

"The women who are submitting wines [to this competition] are trailblazers in a once male-dominated industry and have amazing talents," Trotter-Zacharia continues. "And the women on the judging panels are equally accomplished. [They] all really have their fingers on the pulse of consumers — but most especially women consumers. Because of this, the accolades I receive in this competition give me the greatest satisfaction."

Turning to spirits, Del Fiorentino says, "This is only our seventh year including spirits in this competition, and I'm pleased with the category's growth since then. We continue to add entry volume and product quality every year, and our judges appreciate being exposed to new releases and companies."

This year, Kaylin Pulley at [Weldon Mills Distillery](#) in North Carolina was named Best Woman Distiller. "I came across the International Women's Spirits Competition and, as a female distiller, it immediately caught my attention," she says. "I appreciated that the judging panel was made up entirely of women, and I felt it was a great opportunity to be a part of something that highlights and celebrates women in the industry."

She continues, "Receiving this award is an incredible honor. I'm deeply grateful for the recognition, but also for the support and guidance I've received along the way from the people who helped shape me as a distiller. To receive this recognition alongside so many talented women in the industry makes it even more meaningful."

A list of Sweepstakes contenders in both wine and spirits categories follows this press release.

\*\*\*

### **About Wine Competitions Management & Production**

[Wine Competitions Management & Productions](#) (WCMP) produces more than a dozen wine, cider and spirits competitions annually, each carefully designed to appeal to a niche market based on regionality or style of judging. Judges are internationally renowned and respected experts.

\*\*\*

## 2025 International Women's Wine Competition Winners

### **Best of the Best, Best White Wine**

Acquiesce Winery & Vineyards 2025 Sirens (BOC, GG, 98 pts.)

Judges: Delicate and expressive, with notes of dried apricot, lemon chiffon, and ripe white peach.

### **Best Red Wine**

Hinman Vineyards 2024 Tior Reserve Pinot Noir (BOC, GG, 99)

Judges: Rich and layered with dark cherry, cocoa, and pomegranate. Floral hints of hibiscus and warm nutmeg weave through a round, full palate with beautifully integrated oak.

### **Best Sparkling Wine**

Breathless Wines Brut NV (BOC, GG, 97)

Judges: Inviting aromas of fresh bread dough and lemon curd give way to bright white cherry and crisp apple on the palate — elegant, lively, and refreshing.

### **Best Rosé Wine**

Folded Hills 2024 2025 Lilly Rosé (BOC, GG, 99)

Judges: Beautifully balanced and utterly captivating. The judges said it best — "sunshine in a bottle" and "a topless beach in Nice." Pure joy in every sip.

### **Best Port Wine**

Alamitos Vineyards 2020 Umunhum Touriga Porto (BOC, GG, 97)

Judges: Velvety and stylish with an irresistible charm. Lush chocolate raspberry is complemented by delicate notes of honey in a very polished and well-crafted Port.

### **Best Woman Winemaker**

Stephanie Trotter-Zacharia, Trotter 1/16 Wines

\*\*\*

## 2025 International Women's Spirits Competition Winners

### **Best of the Best, Best Rum**

Rhum Barbancourt 15-year-old Estate Reserve (BOC, GG, 98 pts.)

Judges: An exquisite expression of refinement. Caramelized white pear opens elegantly into cognac-like complexity with marzipan and vanilla bean, carried on a silky, sweet barrel foundation. Lush notes of caramel, orange peel and nutmeg unfold alongside fresh coconut and

the pure indulgence of pineapple upside-down cake. A remarkably smooth and sophisticated rum.

### **Best Gin**

Revelton Distilling Company American Gin (BOC, GG, 97)

Judges: Pristine and beautifully composed. Fresh cucumber and grassy herbal notes lead to a spirit of exceptional clarity. An extraordinary balance of botanicals and fresh herbs with a clean, lingering finish. Truly outstanding.

### **Best Gin (Flavored/Infused)**

Revelton Distilling Company Mulberry Gin (BOC, GG, 96)

Judges: Vibrant and captivating with notes of hibiscus that dance beautifully between sweet and savory. Lush blackberry jam mingles with a tantalizing hint of raspberry for a truly memorable finish.

### **Best Tequila**

Dia De La Sirena Reposado Tequila (BOC, GG, 94)

Judges: Warm and welcoming with beautiful vanilla bean and caramel at the forefront. Gentle baking spices and well-integrated oak give way to a lovely natural sweetness. Notes of eggnog and quince round out a thoroughly satisfying finish.

### **Best Whiskey**

Weldon Mills Distillery Norman's 53 Single Barrel Bourbon Whiskey (BOC, GG, 99)

Judges: A masterfully crafted whiskey of depth and distinction. Classic caramel and vanilla are elevated by brownie brittle and rich cocoa nibs. Bold yet supremely balanced — all the power of an iron fist wrapped in a velvet glove — with the indulgent warmth of old-fashioned chocolate cake on the finish.

### **Best Ready to Drink (RTD)**

2 Towns Ciderhouse Craftwell Top Shelf Spicy Mango Margarita (BOC, GG, 95)

Judges: A vibrant and playful expression with a welcoming hint of spice, exotic lychee and crisp green mango. Refreshing and perfectly composed.

### **Best Woman Distiller**

Kaylin Pulley, Weldon Mills Distillery

*For a full list of Gold and Double Gold medal winners, visit [www.winecompetitions.com/2025-international-women-s-re](http://www.winecompetitions.com/2025-international-women-s-re)*

—END —