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## **NZ Spirits Awards reflects growing strength of local industry**

Aotearoa's premiere spirits awards - the 7th [New Zealand Spirits Awards](#), hosted by industry bodies, [Spirits New Zealand](#) and [Distilled Spirits Aotearoa](#), and proudly supported by Fever Tree and Liquorland - will be held on 15 August in Auckland.

But before that, more than 20 industry judges from across New Zealand and Australia have the mammoth task of judging more than 400 local and international spirits across eight spirits categories in Wellington on 16-18 July.

They will also have four exciting, new Trophy categories to judge: NZ Bartender of the Year; NZ Best Cocktail Bar; NZ Best Cocktail Menu and NZ Best Pairing Award - showcasing the classic Gin & Tonic.

David Hawk, DSA Board Member, says the new Trophy categories are all about celebrating and elevating Aotearoa's growing spirits industry and talent, whilst also connecting the industry and Kiwi consumer.

"Every year we look to fine tune the Awards to keep them current and relevant for the industry - the distilleries, bars, bartenders - and consumers. And these new Trophy categories, contextually, are where consumers are enjoying spirits."

He says whilst there is a current overall trend, suggesting Kiwis are drinking less alcohol, consumption of spirits within Aotearoa has been steadily growing for decades, and significantly growing year on year since 2021.

"As industry bodies and hosts of the Awards, consumer education is incredibly important to us - that includes responsible consumption. Whilst there may be a decrease in alcohol consumption, we're seeing more Kiwis enjoying spirits in moderation, much like an evening beer or wine after work. It's about quality over quantity," he says.

This year, the Awards has also established an associate judging programme with seven additional judges joining the process in Wellington for a half day to foster local industry knowledge and talent.

Rachael Thomson, co-founder and owner of Auckland's Thomson Whisky distillery, which took out one of the Awards' most coveted gongs - the NZ Innovation Award - in 2024 for its Mānuka Wood Smoked Single Malt, says the NZ Spirits Awards are a crucial advocate for Aotearoa's spirits industry.

"Winning five trophies in our national industry awards over the years has given us a very powerful talking point to international distributors as well as consumers - it's shorthand for the quality and recognition of our products," she says.

"In the last year, we've secured distribution in the UK and Europe as well as setting up a stock hub in Germany. We've also significantly built our brand in Australia. Having the NZ Spirits trophies in our pocket has given confidence and credibility to that process - that we're celebrated at home."

Top spirits in each category are recognised with bronze, silver and gold medals (announced 24 July). The best in each category are recognised with Trophies for Best New Zealand and Best Overall in each category (announced 15 August, but can be provided under embargo for media before Awards night).

**For more information, please visit [www.spiritsawardsnz.nz](http://www.spiritsawardsnz.nz). For media queries, please contact JoAnne Carr on 027 694 1506 or [joiecarr@gmail.com](mailto:joiecarr@gmail.com).**