

# Wine & Spirits

SPIRITS NEWS

## Best of the Year Spirits

by [Alissa Bica](#) • October 4, 2023

photos by Nick Sansone

This year, our Los Angeles panels of bartenders and mixologists assessed more than 100 spirits, blind to producer and price. As spirits editor, I ran the panels and, later, chose these 14 bottlings as standouts within their categories.

Taste and structure were big factors, but these spirits also elicited strong emotional responses. Each brings something new to the table, whether a sense of place or an unexpected juxtaposition of flavors. Each leaves an impression that keeps the mind turning for hours after the last taste.

### BEST LIQUEUR

#### Distilleria dell'Alpe Liquore Kapriol



In 1948, Feruccio di Bernard established Distilleria dell'Alpe in the Cansiglio forest of the Carnic Alps, and patented Kapriol, a *Distillato del Bosco* or “distillate of the forest,” whose history dates to the Middle Ages as an herbal remedy for a variety of ailments. In 2002, the Maschio family, grappa producers from nearby Conegliano, bought the distillery and revived Kapriol. ***This may have been the most surprising spirit in our tastings this year. Most of our panelists had never heard of it, and it quickly became a new favorite. Kapriol tastes like the lovechild of gin and crème de menthe. This is a gin-lover’s liqueur, strongly featuring juniper berries; the body is more viscous, however, and slightly sweet, with pine needle and peppermint adding to its juniper flavors.*** It’s something you can sip after dinner, a hipper, crisper version of schnapps or sambuca. It would also make a great ice-cream topper.

### BEST VERMOUTH

#### Elena Laz19 Vermouth di Torino Superiore



Elena Penna and Luca Currado Vietti both come from families that have been involved in the local tradition of Vermouth di Torino—Penna through hospitality and Currado Vietti through winemaking. They launched this project to revive that tradition in Italy’s Langhe hills. ***The base wine for the Laz19 Superiore is one-third Barolo Lazzarito and two-thirds arneis. They use only locally sourced, hand-harvested citrus and herbs, which they macerate in alcohol, then add to the wine base. The quality of the raw materials is apparent in this complex vermouth, its lasting flavors a mystery to contemplate but perhaps never solve.*** That’s tied up in a deep, savory and brooding aromatized wine full of clove, nutmeg and cinnamon tree-bark spice. Yet, even with these darker flavors, it manages to feel bright with undercurrents of red berries and rhubarb; an intriguing contradiction, like Christmas in July.