

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 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.