

4 April 2025

## More of Australia's best spirits to shine in expanded competition

Australian distillers are invited to showcase their finest creations, with entries now open for the prestigious Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards supported by King Street.

Judging will commence in July, with newly appointed Chief Judge Dave Withers leading a diverse panel of industry experts to assess entries across whisky, gin, vodka, rum/cane spirit and more.

As the Master Distiller for Australia's most highly awarded distillery, Archie Rose Distilling Co, since 2016, Mr Withers brings a wealth of experience. He has been recognised as Gin Distiller of the Year at the Icons of Gin Awards and has twice been awarded Master Distiller of the Year at the Spirits Business Awards.

Mr Withers was a judge at last year's inaugural Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards and said he was honoured to be back in a new role.

"To be Chief Judge means a lot to me - I understand the amount of work that producers put into each and every bottle of spirit, so to be entrusted with reviewing these spirits alongside my fellow judges is something I take seriously and am excited about," he said.

New this year is an Alternative Spirit class, for any distilled spirit that doesn't fit into existing classes, such as agave, schnapps, absinthe, bitters, vermouth and unaged whisky.

"One of the amazing opportunities we have in making spirits in Australia are flexible definitions and legislation that supports innovation," Mr Withers said.

"This new category really allows producers to put those fabulous but hard to define products up for judging.

"I have judged similar categories before and they can be really inspirational - distillers have so much creativity and this is a category that supports that freedom of expression."

Now in its second year, the Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards continues to establish itself as a premier competition for Australian spirits.

Royal Queensland Distilled Spirits Advisory Group member Sarah Andrew said the competition would continue to set a high standard of judging.



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“By bringing together both technical and stylistic judges from across the country, distillers can be reassured that judging covers all aspects of a spirit through to quality assessment,” she said.

“Where appropriate, detailed feedback is provided to enable distillers to address any particular area of production or simply keep producing their highly awarded spirit.”

Entries close Friday 6 June 2025. Distillers can enter now at [www.rqa.com.au/competitions/distilled-spirits-awards/](http://www.rqa.com.au/competitions/distilled-spirits-awards/)

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