



**ROYAL
QUEENSLAND
AWARDS**
SHOWCASING AUSTRALIA'S BEST



MEDIA RELEASE

10 November 2025

Rum's the word as distillers invited to enter national competition

Australian distillers are being called on to showcase the spirits they've poured their passion into, with entries now open for the 2026 Royal Queensland Awards (RQA) Distilled Spirits Competition supported by King Street.

Next year's competition will see the introduction of a Feature Spirit category, placing rum in the spotlight to celebrate its deep roots in Queensland's history.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the Royal Queensland Show (Ekka) in 2026 - where many award-winning RQA entries are showcased each year - an Experimental Rum class is also being introduced.

This new class encourages distillers to push boundaries by experimenting with alternative ageing, infusion and production techniques, showcasing innovation and helping to define the future of Australian rum for the next 150 years.

Chief Judge Dave Withers said the timing couldn't be better for rum to take centre stage.

"Queensland is in many ways the spiritual home of rum, so it feels natural to highlight the category at the Royal Queensland Awards," he said.

"The rising tide of high-quality rum producers means there's a wealth of outstanding products on the market, and this competition is a fantastic platform to celebrate the best out there.

"The changing consumer sentiment around high-quality rum has also pushed the spirit into the limelight in recent years, making now the ideal time to introduce the Feature Spirit category."

Mr Withers said that while rum would be front and centre, he was also looking forward to seeing the creativity in the liqueurs.

"There's been a real increase in the number of high-quality liqueurs on the market, and I'm excited to see producers getting more serious about this category and entering imaginative and well-crafted products."

Now in its third year, the RQA Distilled Spirits Competition continues to provide a vital benchmarking opportunity for the nation's distillers.



**ROYAL
QUEENSLAND
AWARDS**
SHOWCASING AUSTRALIA'S BEST



MEDIA RELEASE

“As a producer, you pour so much into the creation of a liquid it can sometimes be difficult to step back and see exactly what has been created,” Mr Withers said.

“The competition provides an opportunity for an expert panel to offer feedback on what works well and what could be refined - and those judging panel notes are something we really focus on at the RQA.”

Judging will take place from Monday 9 February 2026, with the winners announced at a combined awards presentation with the RQA Beer Competition on Thursday 26 February 2026.

Entries close Friday 16 January 2026. To enter please [click here](#).

Don't forget to follow us on social media [@royalqueenslandawards](#)

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Nicole Clifton
Media & Communications Advisor
Ph: 0417 451 775
Email: nclifton@rna.org.au