

In A Blind Taste Test Local LiV Vodka Holds Its Own

by Douglas Harrington | [1 Comment](#)



All the attendees, judges included, went home with a bottle of LiV Vodka. *Photos by Douglas Harrington*

East Hampton - At an exclusive vodka tasting held at Hamptons Wines & Liquors on Pantigo Road in East Hampton, Long Island Vodka (LiV), an East End craft distillery, beat out several major international names in the industry. Yes, the potato rules again!

About a dozen attendees gathered to witness three local judges put the half-dozen vodkas to the taste test including **Michael Howell**, former National Director of Marketing for the Hampton Classic Horse Show, freelance writer and WLIU 88.3 FM contributing producer. Joining Howell at the judges table were **Laura Donnelly**, Food Editor of *East Hampton Star* and host of "Something's Cookin' with Laura Donnelly" on WLIU, and **Lucas Cowart**, part-time bartender at Fresno.

The vodkas in competition were LiV Vodka and Chopin, both made from potatoes, Grey

Goose and Ketel One, both made from wheat, Cîroc, derived from grapes, and Belvedere which is a rye distilled vodka. The test was a blind tasting, with all six bottles carefully concealed under rolled napkins with matching pourers. Attendees were also offered the opportunity of participating in the tasting as observers without votes in the competition.



The judges included Michael Howell, Laura Donnelly and Lucas Cowart, who all took their responsibility very seriously.

All the judges took their duties very seriously, pausing between sips, cleansing their palettes with spring water and melon slices and offering commentary throughout the tasting. Superlatives and derogatory comments ranged from "sissy or chick vodka" and "tasteless" to "smooth" and "lingering." Howell at one point commented, "I like to feel it in my mouth and savor it." Cowart noted that he "prefers smooth vodka that doesn't linger or have a bite." Donnelly described her preference as, "Good, smooth, fairly tasteless vodka that has been distilled several times by artisans, because I'm not going to mix it with fruit juices. I would have a Howeller." (She was referring to a local, favorite cocktail created by her fellow judge, Howell, and whose recipe can be found at the conclusion of this article).

Although Howell himself did pick LiV as best in show, the local potato vodka was edged out by Grey Goose with two first place votes. I say edged out because Cowart picked LiV as his second choice. The slightest change in opinion and our local favorite would have taken the tasting.



Although not voting, attendees participated in the LiV Vodka tasting at Hamptons Wines & Liquors in East Hampton.

Kudos to LiV, an artisan distillery in our own backyard that not only produces an excellent product and creates jobs in the East End, but does so while observing green business protocols such as using local Long Island potatoes to minimize the travel time between the farms and the distillery, while returning the potato by-products back to the farmers for use as fertilizer to reduce waste. Furthermore, during the crafting of LiV Vodka, the artisans practice smart water conservation.

It was a fine autumn afternoon of great vodka and great conversation that was hosted expertly by Hamptons Wines & Liquors. As always, think global but buy local.

For more information about LiV Vodka go to www.lispirits.com and about Hamptons Wines & Liquors go to www.hamptonswines.com.

The Howeller

Slice a whole Jalapeño and place on the edge of a chilled traditional martini glass. Seed and de-vein a second Jalapeño. Rough chop and place in a tall glass, muddle the pepper until the mixture ceases to crackle. Put muddled pepper in a traditional Boston cocktail shaker and fill with ice, and pour in appropriate amount of LiV Vodka. Shake vigorously for a minimum of 30 seconds and pour into the chilled martini glass already garnished with the pepper.