

It's LiV By A Nose

LiV Vodka is selected in a blind taste test partly because of its unique aromatic characteristics.

East Hampton, NY – Three judges selected from the local East Hampton foodie community took 30 minutes to smell and taste six different vodkas during a blind taste test hosted by Hamptons Wines & Liquors. On October 3rd, a rainy Saturday, the judges concluded that the taste test was more challenging than they expected. The differences between the vodkas were more pronounced in their aromatic character than taste, which was done at room temperature in an attempt to enhance the flavor.



In the end, it was Michael Howell, National Director of Marketing for the Hampton Classic Horse Show, freelance writer and WLIU 88.3 FM contributing producer, who brought the most accolades to the local favorite, LiV Vodka. “My favorite vodka is number three and my guess is that it’s LiV. I can tell by the nose,” Howell offered at the end of the tasting when all judges revealed their favorites.

The other judges, Laura Donnelly, Food Editor of East Hampton Star and host of "Something's Cookin' with Laura Donnelly" on WLIU, along with Lucas Cowart, part-time bartender at Fresno, took copious notes and tasted the vodkas several times before reaching their own conclusions. As one local reporter who was covering the event noted, “They are all taking this very seriously.” One judge even requested a private huddle between the judges, which was denied.

The judges were not shy about describing their impressions. Some of the vodkas were categorized as ‘sissy vodkas’, also known as ‘chick vodkas’ by those who prefer to be less disparaging when describing vodkas that are best mixed with orange juice. Howell expressed his preference, “I like to feel it in my mouth and savor it.” Coward prefers a smooth vodka that doesn’t linger or have a bite. Donnelly prefers “a 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.” (See recipe for The Howeller below.)

LiV Vodka, who conducted the taste test while being careful to give equal opportunity to all participating vodkas, was pleased to hear Cowart’s experience with the local community. “People are always eager to try a wine or spirit made locally, and often gravitate towards them when making a selection.” That is good news for LiV Vodka, which is artisanally distilled by Long Island Spirits on the North Fork of Long Island. In addition to being local, they are a green business that has taken several steps to reduce their carbon footprint. For example, they use local Long Island potatoes to minimize the travel time between the farms and the distillery. They return the potato by-products back to the farmers for use as fertilizer to reduce waste. And during the crafting of LiV Vodka, the artisans practice smart water conservation.

The vodkas included in the taste test were: LiV Vodka, our local favorite made from potato, Grey Goose and Ketel One, both made from wheat, Chopin, another potato vodka, Cîroc, derived from grapes, and

Belvedere, distilled from rye. Each bottle was carefully wrapped in white cloth that was secured with twine and fitted with a generic liquor spout so the vodkas could be poured at the judge's table without revealing their identity. Donnelly and Cowart picked number four, the secret number located on the bottom of the Grey Goose bottle. Cowart picked LiV as his second favorite. Donnelly thought that 'number 3' has a grape aroma.

The event included several observers who were invited to take their own, unofficial, blind taste test while listening to the judges. Howell was generous to share a personal experience he had with vodka when he was a graduate student and a translator during the '76 Munich Olympics. "I was younger than the others and a little nervous, so someone offered me a glass of "water" with ice. I swigged it back and let's just say the rest is history. It definitely took the edge off." Donnelly helped to end the official activities of the tasting when offering her experience of the day, "What a perfect way to spend a rainy day."

The Howeller by Michael Howell

Slice a whole Jalapeño and place on 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.

About Long Island Spirits

Long Island Spirits (www.lispirits.com), a local crafts distillery located in the heart of North Fork's wine country, manufactures LiV Vodka from hand-selected Long Island potatoes using custom crafted copper stills. These artisan distillers employ a time intensive and costly hands-on approach to manufacturing that includes removing the lower quality heads and tails leaving only the best, the heart. The result is a bright, silky smooth texture with hints of banana, citrus, strawberry, vanilla, and anise followed by an incredibly elegant clean finish.

LiV Vodka is the 2009 winner for Best in Class in the NY Spirits Award and was awarded the very prestigious score of "92" from Anthony Dias Blue of Tasting Panel Magazine.

About Hamptons Wines & Liquors

Hamptons Wines & Liquors (www.hamptonswines.com) is a new liquor store in East Hampton, located between Goldberg's Bagel and Peconic Beverage. Its interior design is a modern minimalist style that allows for easy browsing of its impressive collection of wines and spirits from around the world. Hamptons Wines produces a weekly tasting series that is scheduled to continue through the 2009 holiday season.

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