



2026 AMERICAN CRAFT SPIRITS COMPETITION

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The American Craft Spirits Association (ACSA)—the nation's only 501(c)(6) trade group dedicated to representing U.S. craft spirits producers—invites entries for the 12th annual American Craft Spirits Competition.

COMPETITION JUDGES

The competition judging will take place in a non-public event on January 27 & 28, 2026 at Cotton & Reed in Washington, D.C.

- **Judging Chairs:** Colton Weinstein (Liba Spirits) and Jeff Wuslich (Cardinal Spirits)
- **Judges:** Each judging panel will include distinguished professionals representing a wide range of expertise across the spirits industry. To ensure impartiality, no judge with a vested interest in a specific category will be assigned to evaluate entries for that category.

MEDALISTS ANNOUNCEMENT

Category medalists will be announced at an awards ceremony during the 2026 American Craft Spirits Convention & Expo on April 17 & 18 in Sacramento, California.

Because medalists are revealed live at our Spirits Awards event, we warmly encourage you to join us at the convention and be part of the celebration. Learn more and register at: americancraftspirits.org/convention.

CATEGORIES

The categories of Brandy, Gin, Rum, Specialty Spirits, Ready to Drink Cocktails (RTDs), Vodka, and Whiskey (including Bourbon) will be judged.

Innovation Award: To celebrate true creativity and craftsmanship, ACSA has expanded its award structure. Alongside the Best of Class honors, we are proud to present the Innovation Award, designed specifically to highlight and reward exceptional originality. We recognize that some of the most remarkable spirits push boundaries and defy traditional flavor profiles within their categories. If you've created a spirit that feels like an 'outlier,' rest assured—it still deserves recognition.



SUBMISSION INFORMATION

- While membership in ACSA *is not* a prerequisite for entering the competition, to enter your spirits you must be *eligible* for voting membership as defined by ACSA.¹ ACSA membership does provide a significant discount on entry fees.
- ALL products must have a valid COLA from TTB. We reserve the right to request a copy of your COLA should there be a question as to an individual submission. Each spirit must have received formal approval for the “fanciful name” with a corresponding COLA by the date of judging or that spirit will be ineligible for evaluation.
- You must identify whether your spirit is: Made from Scratch (Craft-Distilled): Spirit fermented, distilled, aged, and bottled entirely in-house, with no third-party spirits added or blended at any stage. Or Third Party Distilled (Craft-Produced): Spirit distilled in-house and blended with third-party spirits, or entirely sourced from third-party spirits and bottled.
- The Judging Chairs reserve the right to reclassify a submitted spirit based on its professional judgment.

ENTRY FEES & DEADLINES

Entry Type	Dates	Fee
ACSA Member	Aug 20 - Sept 18, 2025	\$275 per entry
ACSA Non-Member	Aug 20 - Sept 18, 2025	\$375 per entry
ACSA Member	Sept 19 - Jan. 12, 2026	\$300 per entry
ACSA Non-Member	Sept 19 - Jan. 12, 2026	\$400 per entry

PAYMENT & ENTRY

Payment can be made by credit or debit card at time of registration of spirits on ACSA's website: americancraftspirits.org/programs/judging/.

¹ To be eligible for ACSA membership as a voting member (as opposed to an affiliate member) you MUST be a craft distiller holding a valid DSP, produce fewer than 750,000 proof gallons removed from bond, subscribe to ACSA's Code of Ethics, and no more than 50% of the DSP is owned (directly or indirectly) by a producer of distilled spirits whose combined annual production of distilled spirits from all sources exceeds 750,000 proof gallons removed from bond.



DEADLINES

- **September 15, 2025:** Entry shipments may begin
- **January 12, 2026:** Last day for registration
- **January 20, 2026:** Entry receiving deadline

*****ANY ENTRIES RECEIVED ON-SITE AFTER THE RECEIVING DEADLINE ARE NOT GUARANTEED ENTRY INTO THE COMPETITION *****

SHIPPING & PACKAGING INSTRUCTIONS

Failure to follow these instructions may disqualify your entry.

- Send two 750 ml bottles (or the equivalent) of each spirit entered.
- For RTD submissions, send eight 12 oz cans/bottles (or the equivalent volume) for each product entered.
- The outside of the box should be labeled with: "For Sample and Lab Use Only"
- Use a rubber band to attach a copy of the SPIRIT ENTRY PACKING SLIP to each bottle entered. This will ensure that we inventory your entry accurately.
- **DO NOT USE STYROFOAM PEANUTS OR TAPE PACKAGING SLIPS TO BOTTLES** when shipping your spirits, as they can damage the bottle label.

DELIVERY ADDRESS

Cotton & Reed
1330 5th St NE
Washington, DC 20002



DISCLAIMER

All products submitted will be considered property of the American Craft Spirits Association. The Judging Board retains the right not to award a medal, if, in its professional consensus, no medal is deserved in a specific category.

Neither ACSA nor Cotton & Reed will accept responsibility for entries damaged, late or lost in shipment.

Please note: No refunds will be issued for shipping-related issues.

Once registration is complete, all entries are final. We are unable to offer exceptions for delays, damages, or errors that occur during the shipping process.

CONTACT US

ACSA Director of Meetings & Events

Stephanie Sadri, stephanie@americancraftspirits.org (720) 312-0350

ACSA 2026 Competition Chairs

Colton Weinstein, colton@libaspirits.com (607) 351-5404

Jeff Wuslich, jeff@cardinalspirits.com (812) 202-6789