



# 2026 Entry Handbook



The purpose of the California Craft Spirits Competition (CCSC) is to help promote the craft distillers that are producing the finest quality artisan spirits inside and outside of California and to give participating distillers valuable feedback on the quality and process of their spirits. This competition is produced and managed by the California Mid-State Fair. <https://centralcoastwinecomp.com/craft-spirits/>

Lead Organization - California Mid-State Fair  
Chief Judge – Tim McDonald, Napa, CA

## GENERAL RULES

1. Open to commercially licensed spirits producers in California with valid DSP permit and/or distributors. All spirits must be entered with permission of the brand owners. All spirits must conform to federal TTB and state ABC regulations and standards of identity and be currently produced in commercial quantities.
2. The competition also offers a separate division with all the same rules, regulations and schedule to producers outside of California. Entrants must designate California or outside California (Invitational) at time of registration. This Invitational will have a separate set of awards from the California division.
3. All entries must be submitted with a current APPROVED COLA registration. Categories that are not recognized by the TTB or not in approved TTB size formats will be automatically removed from the competition.
4. Each entry to consist of (2) 750ml or (2) 375ml of each spirit to be entered.
5. Do not ship the spirits without copies of the necessary COLAs from TTB.  
DSP- Distilled Spirits Plants  
COLA- Certificate of Label Approval
6. All entries must be registered through the official online registration: <http://cmsfs.fairmanager.com> and must reach the Fair office on or before the entry closing.
7. After an entry is submitted, the entry fee will not be refunded.
8. The judge's decision is final and determines all awards.
9. The same spirit (although marketed under different labels) may not be entered in more than one category. However, a distillery may submit multiple entries in the same category.
10. Classes may be consolidated or divided if entries warrant. Spirits will be judged in the division/class in which they were entered. The coordinator may transfer an entry if it is determined to be more appropriate in another class.
11. Any spirit delivered by mail, freight, or express must be prepaid. No entry will be accepted for which carrier charges have not been prepaid. All entries become the property of the competition.
12. The CCSC, management and staff are not responsible for errors in entries. No producer shall be entitled to an award for which has been disallowed on the basis of the producer's error.
13. Distilleries/ Entries found in violation of rules or ethical practices will forfeit awards and other privileges deemed appropriate by the California Craft Spirits Competition Management and the Chief Judge.
14. Spirits entered must be available for commercial sale.
15. **Please identify in large legible letters, the name of the distillery on the outside of each case. The outside of each case is also to be labeled CCSC. No spirits will be accepted for which carrier charges have not been prepaid. Attach Packing List to outside of case highlighting specific entries inside.**
16. This competition will adhere to the State Rules of the California Department of Food & Agriculture Fairs & Expositions Branch. [State Rules for California Fairs](#)

**Distilleries that participate in the California Craft Spirits Competitions are eligible to be part of Get Crafty. Sign up now during registration to participate in the annual Get Crafty Mixology Contest and Tasting, at the California Mid-State Fair. Mixologist, restaurants and/or bars will partner with a participating spirit to create the cocktail of their choice. These creative cocktails will then be featured in the two-hour tasting. There is NO entry fee for the entry into Get Crafty.**

**EARLY BIRD ONLINE REGISTRATION TILL SUNDAY, MAY 17**

**ENTRY FEE: \$80 PER SPIRIT**

**LAST CALL ONLINE REGISTRATION ENDS TUESDAY, MAY 26**

**ENTRY FEE: \$90 PER SPIRIT**

Enter on-line at <https://cmsfs.fairwire.com/> Entry fees are non-refundable.

**PHYSICAL SPIRIT ENTRIES RECEIVED: WEDNESDAY, MAY 27 – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3**

Questions: [exhibits@midstatefair.com](mailto:exhibits@midstatefair.com)

**Division 2002 - California - Spirits Made in California**

**Division 2003 - Invitational - Spirits Made Outside of California**

**Classes**

1. Bourbon
2. Corn Whiskey
3. Flavored Whiskey
4. Hopped Whiskey
5. Rye Whiskey
6. Single Malt Whiskey
7. Smoked Whiskey
8. Wheat Whiskey
9. Whiskey Blends
10. Whiskey Mixed grains/Other Base
11. White Whiskey
12. Flavored Moonshine
13. Moonshine (Bourbon Mash)
14. Moonshine (Corn Mash)
15. Moonshine (Other Mash)
16. Sugarshine
17. Flavored Vodka
18. Vodka (unflavored)
19. Aged Agave Spirits
20. Aged Rum
21. Flavored Rum
22. Overproof Rum
23. Spiced Rum
24. Unaged Rum
25. Navy-Style Rum
26. Fruit Liqueurs
27. Coffee Liqueurs
28. Cream Liqueurs
29. Herbal/Botanical/Spiced Liqueurs
30. Nut Liqueurs
31. Other Liqueurs
32. Aged Grape Brandy
33. Aged Fruit Brandy
34. Applejack
35. Armagnac
36. Calvados
37. Cognac
38. Other Brandy
39. Unaged Grape Brandy
40. Unaged Fruit Brandy
41. Aged Gin (Barrel)
42. Classic Gin
43. Compound Gin
44. Contemporary Gin (including New Western & American Dry)
45. Cordial gin
46. Genever
47. Old Tom Gin
48. Absinthe
49. Aquavit
50. Bier Schnapps
51. Fortified Wine
52. Vermouth
53. Amaro
54. Barrel-Aged Cocktails
55. Bitters (digestif and aperitif)
56. Tinctures (non-potable bitters, aromatic bitters, citrus bitters, exotic bitters, fruit/vegetable)
57. Schnapps
58. Misc. Spirits
59. Served in a Can – Spirit Based
60. Served in a Can - Malt Based

## MEDALS (AWARDS)

Several judges for the wine competition will be those of the spirits competition. The Judges shall award all medals. Spirits will be considered for Gold, Silver and Bronze medals in their respective classes as well as “Best of Class” and “Best of Show.” “Best of Class” awards will be awarded to one spirit from among the gold medal winners in each class to spirits of exceptional merit. The decisions set forth by the Judges will be final. All Double Gold medal spirits will be scored on a point system. Winners will receive both a point score and medal.

**Best of Show** is awarded to one wine recognized to possess special characteristics of the highest quality.

**Best Brown, Liqueur and White Spirit** awarded from the Best of Class winners.

**Best of Class** is awarded to wines that exhibit the highest quality in their respective categories. Best of Class spirits will receive a “descriptive on the merits of the spirit” from the judging panel to be used by the Fair and producer for publicity purposes.

**Gold Medal** is awarded to a spirit that demonstrates its type and/or varietal character, balance, structure, and complexities to the highest standards.

**Silver Medal** is awarded to a spirit reflecting the correct distribution of balance and character of its type or variety; a spirit deemed to be well crafted and of excellent quality.

**Bronze Medal** is awarded to a spirit that is true to its type or variety; a spirit deemed to be well crafted and of good quality.

**Sweepstakes Award** is awarded to the distillery with the highest placing spirits in the competition. To be eligible a distillery must enter a minimum of two spirits. The distillery will receive a special award as the "Distillery of the year" for CCSC.

2026 – Could be You!

## Food & Beverage Packaging Competition

The Food & Packaging Competition evaluates the creativity, style, graphic design, and overall effectiveness of the packaging design of the entry. Entries will be judged based off the execution and impact of the design on the product.

Entry in this competition is automatic by entry into the California Craft Spirits Competition and requires no additional fee or entry information.

## California Craft Spirits Competition Entry Checklist

- Complete the online registration. <https://cmsfs.fairwire.com/>  
Be sure to provide individuals name, title, and phone number to be contacted in case there are any questions, errors, or shipping problems.
- Early Bird Online Entry Registration Due by Sunday, May 17 \$80 per Entry
- Last Call Online Entry Registration Due by Tuesday, May 26 \$90 per Entry  
Entry fees are non-refundable.
- Physical Entries will be accepted between Wednesday, May 27 and Wednesday, June 3 -  
NO Saturday or Sunday Delivery

Judging – June 9 – 11, 2026

### Deliveries/Shipping: No Saturday or Sunday Delivery

CCSC – Paso Robles Event Center  
2198 Riverside Ave  
Paso Robles, CA 93446

**Be sure to include (2) 750ml or (2) 375ml bottles of each spirit entry.  
Make sure to attach Packing List to outside of case highlighting the specific entries inside.**

For questions, please contact:  
California Mid-State Fair  
[exhibits@midstatefair.com](mailto:exhibits@midstatefair.com)

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