

2024 Monterey International Spirits Competition

Director's Platinum Tasting Notes

Garrison Brothers Texas Straight Bourbon Whiskey "Balmorhea" 2023 Release (\$180)

The Brothers are at it again with this, which like its namesake town is a cool oasis in a hot desert. There's a fine balance here between the sweet bourbon character and the oak spice – there's even a subtle little barrel tannin grip that extends the finish and keeps things on the spicy side. Count me as a fan... **97**

Griffo Scott Street Gin Batch 26 (\$32)

A fairly new player from Petaluma, California, brings us this spot on, London Dry styled gin, with forward juniper notes and dashes of coriander and pepper spice. It'll cocktail with versatility – try it in all your favorite tipples where juniper is desired. **95**

Lawrenceburg Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey One Cask, Barrel 6 (\$90)

At 61.55 ABV, you'll want to hit this with a little water to release its charms, which are considerable. The Mash Bill lists 70% corn, 21% Rye and 9% Malted Barley, and it's a winning combination. Perfectly fined tuned spice, wood tones, caramel and toffee, a dash of citrus are potent on the nose and linger long on the palate – sips straight if you dare, but a little water really opens this up. **99**

Rod & Hammer's Rye Whiskey Distiller's Reserve (\$80)

Here's a perfectly proofed Rye – one that let's all the grain character come out without being smothered by the heat. Bright spice and grain aromas translate to the palate with a viscous entry and a long, bright finish with no cloying character. Distilleries continue to pop up everywhere, and here's one that's doing it right. **95**

Royal Mash British Vodka Batch 24 (\$)

Potato Vodka might be considered the original, and is perhaps a testament to humankind's desire to make anesthetics out of anything... This product, however, shows great refinement without losing the pleasant funk that a real tater delivers. Viscous, bright and long, this will upgrade any cocktail where vodka is your go-to spirit, or just chill up a shot and sip. Tasty stuff! **94**

Weldon Mills Select Bourbon Whiskey Batch No. 22 (\$55)

Weldon Mills makes an array of North Carolina Bourbons, and this is one of their best. It carries rich wood tones, it's not overtly viscous thanks to a nice rye content, and it's got a long finish with spice, soft toffee and warming, complementary heat. Sip to your satisfaction, or jazz up your next Bourbon sour. **94**