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Diageo World Class Bartender of the Year Finals 2019

Bannie Kang from Singapore has been named the world's best bartender for 2019 at the Diageo World Class Bartender of the Year finals.

Thousands of bartenders from six continents competed before being whittled down through a series of national heats to a group of 53. They were invited to take part in a series of challenges over four days in the Netherlands and Scotland before Kang was named the winner.

Bannie Kang

At the Ketel One Distillery in Schiedam, Netherlands, the finalists were tasked with creating cocktails that had a positive environmental impact and a sense of community at their core. At the Talisker Distillery on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, they were presented with a "mystery box" of ingredients and bar tools and challenged to mix up a Talisker cocktail.

In Glasgow for the finals, finalists were required to create cocktails that respected, enhanced and complemented the single malt The Singleton, and to create a cocktail flight of three small drinks that explored the citrus heart of Tanqueray No. Ten, make a Johnnie Walker "highball in a can" and ace a final speed round where they were judged on the quality of their cocktail-making under immense time pressures.

As the winner, Kang will spend the next 12 months as a global ambassador for Diageo's Reserve brands, travelling the world and judging World Class national heats, inspiring 2020's hopefuls and crowning regional champions, completing guest shifts in the world's best bars and playing a role in Diageo's global partnership with IMG's Taste Festivals.

Since its beginnings in 2009, over 300,000 bartenders have been supported, trained and inspired by World Class. Kang is the eleventh bartender to enter its Hall of Fame.

The 12th annual Diageo World Class Bartender of the Year final will take place in Sydney, Australia.

U.S. Alcohol Trade Groups Call for End to Tariffs on E.U. Spirits & Wine

U.S. alcohol trade groups urged an end to tariffs on E.U. distilled spirits and wine following the U.S. decision to impose tariffs of 25% on imports of Scotch whisky, liqueurs and cordials, and also on wine from certain E.U. countries in connection with the WTO civil aviation subsidies dispute.

The U.S. action further ensnarls the distilled spirits industry in a trade dispute that began last year when the E.U. imposed a 25% retaliatory tariff on American whiskey in response to U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs. The E.U. is considering imposing more tariffs on additional U.S. spirits and could raise them against U.S. wine as part of a separate WTO civil aviation subsidies dispute.

Since the E.U.'s 25% retaliatory tariff on American whiskey was imposed last year, exports have declined 21%. Additionally, China is imposing a 54% retaliatory tariff on U.S. wine imports, which is contributing to a 57% decline in trade with China since the beginning of 2019.

These new tariffs on E.U. spirits and wine will have numerous unintended negative consequences on U.S. jobs, U.S. consumers and the many U.S. companies that include E.U. wine and spirits such as Scotch whisky and liqueurs and cordials in their portfolios.

According to an analysis by the Distilled Spirits Council, these U.S. retaliatory tariffs on Scotch whisky, liqueurs and cordials and wine could impact nearly $3.4 billion in imports and could lead to a loss of approximately 13,000 U.S. jobs, including truckers, farmers, bartenders and servers in the hospitality industry.

The U.S. and E.U. have a long history of tariff-free trade in distilled spirits dating back to 1994, when an agreement was reached to eliminate tariffs on the vast majority of distilled spirits.

"The decision to impose tariffs on imports of E.U. distilled spirits is a devastating blow to the U.S. spirits industry," said Chris Swonger, President and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. "While we recognize the U.S. and E.U. are trying to solve long standing trade disputes, distillers on both sides of the Atlantic have become collateral damage in matters that are completely unrelated to our industry. As the important holiday season approaches, we urgently

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