

THE  
tastingpanel  
MAGAZINE

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RISING  
to the  
OCCASION

*Mezzacorona*

INTRODUCES ITS NEW  
SPARKLING ROSÉ, AN ITALIAN  
GLACIAL BUBBLY DESTINED FOR  
YOUR NEXT CELEBRATION





### Shafer 2014 Hillside Select Cabernet

#### Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley

(\$295) In 1973, at age 48, John Shafer moved his family from Chicago to Napa Valley. At the base of the Palisades in the Stags Leap District, he discovered the property he'd dreamed of: The hillside, with its thin, volcanic soils, would serve as the sort of vineyard site he knew had been prized in the Mediterranean for centuries. In 1978, he produced the first Shafer Vineyards wine, a Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from his original block of hillside vines. That debut expression was released in 1981 to high praise, setting a benchmark for future Shafer Hillside Cabernets like this one. John passed away in March, and this revered wine serves as a tribute to his vision. Upright and statuesque, it delivers broad strokes of blackberry cream and teeth-grabbing, ripe tannins. Mocha, espresso, earth, and slate release their energy, surging with texture and flavor. **98**



## SPIRITS



### John Barr Blended Scotch Whisky,

Scotland (\$25) Sassafras cream, nougat, and apricot perfume this 80-proof marriage of single malt and grain whiskies from the Speyside and Highland regions. The approachable palate is slightly peaty, with notes of baker's chocolate, brown bread, and honeyed tobacco. **92**

WHYTE & MACKAY



### Hera The Dog Vodka, USA

(\$28) We love that \$1 of every bottle sold goes to dog rescue groups, a cause close to the hearts of us dog lovers here at the magazine. Crafted from 100% organic wheat and distilled seven times, this 80-proof, non-GMO spirit is filtered through walnut-husk carbon. Aromas sing soprano notes of peaches, yellow flowers, and vanilla. The palate entry is peppered but creamy, a glass door that keeps opening, eventually leading to a warm finish. **92**

PENNINGTON DISTILLING CO.



### Grand Marnier Cuvée Louis-Alexandre,

France (\$70) This VSOP Cognac-based liqueur from Grand Marnier's Cuvée Collection is a tribute to the originator of the spirit, Louis-Alexandre Marnier Lapostolle.

Clocking in at 80 proof with Liqueur D'Orange blended in, it combines selected eaux-de-vie with highly aromatic bitter oranges and sweet hints of peach. The sensuous liquid glides across the palate as a dollop of heat lingers on the tongue. Mandarin orange and tangerine notes surge forth, leaving behind an earthy, butterscotch-tinged finish. **94**

CAMPARI USA



### Mozart Dark Chocolate Liqueur, Austria

(\$27) Anyone who craves the aromas and flavors of dark chocolate will find love at first taste with this richly textured 34-proof liqueur, which could be easily compared to a melted chocolate bar. Its sweetness is tempered with a hint of roasted coffee bean that gives it serious perfume and character. We rarely offer up a recipe to show a brand's versatility in this review section, but we were enamored by a modern-day mixologist's orchestration that would have made this product's namesake proud. We give the liqueur and the quaff a rousing round of applause—and a score of **95**.

NICHE WINE & SPIRITS



### Chocolate Old Fashioned

- ▶ ½ oz. Mozart Dark Chocolate Liqueur
- ▶ 1 oz. bourbon
- ▶ 1 piece cube sugar
- ▶ 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- ▶ 1 splash soda or water

Combine ingredients and garnish with a half-slice of orange, a half-slice of lemon, and a cherry.



### Mr. Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, Australia

(\$40) A blend of air-roasted, single-origin Arabica coffees and wheat vodka, this bittersweet 50-proof liqueur is certainly designed for coffee lovers. Its distinct aromas are fresh-roast clean and so inviting that you'll nose the glass three times before taking your first sip. The palate traverses paths both sweet and edgy, and the sublime dark-roast flavors possess just the right amount of sugar. This is a barista's—and a bartender's—playground. **93**



### Tamnavulin Double Cask Scotch Whisky, Speyside, Scotland

(\$40) On the nose, peach tart arises with a hint of sesame seed. Mellow flavors of dried peach, salted caramel, and biscuit glide across the palate. This 80-proof spirit matured in American oak with a Sherry-cask finish. **91** ■■

WHYTE & MACKAY

## Award of Excellence



### J.J. Pfister Distilling Company London Dry Capitol Gin,

USA (\$30) After emigrating from Switzerland to San Francisco in 1869 to start a knitting company, John Jacob Pfister had made a name for himself by the early 20th century for his sporting wear. Today, an exciting new distillery in Sacramento, California, also carries his name. (The knitting-machine icon is proudly placed on the bottle in copper to represent a copper still.) Organic rye from the Sacramento Valley is used as a base for the spirit, which exudes aromas of lavender, tangerine, and spearmint with an echo of juniper. The palate is blissful: soft and silky, with candied violet opening to lemongrass and exotic spices. Fennel root creates a creaminess on the palate. The finish is long and leaves a sweetness on the tongue. **97**

