

Despite Covid, 800 Food & Beverage producers invest in taste

Covid or no Covid, over 800 food and drink producers from around the world show their focus on taste by submitting their products to the 2020 blind test by the International Taste Institute's prestigious Chefs and Sommeliers. 1510 products receive the well-known Superior Taste Award.

Brussels, Belgium, June 2nd, 2020: As each year, the prestigious jury of Chefs and Sommeliers of the International Taste Institute has evaluated the taste of food and drink products registered for the Superior Taste Award certification. The results of the tests have just been released by the Taste Institute.

This year, 1510 products were certified: the names of the products awarded and of their respective producer are posted on the International Taste Institute's website <https://www.taste-institute.com>.

The awards for the certified products are distributed as follows:

1 Star ("very good taste", or a score between 70 and 80 %):	430 awarded
2 Stars ("notable taste", or a score between 80 and 90%):	755 awarded
3 Stars ("Remarkable taste", or a score over 90%):	325 awarded



Some producers are standing out in their focus on taste and register the same products on a regular basis. Two special awards recognize such products that keep an exceptional taste over the time: the Crystal Taste Award (3 stars for 3 consecutive years), and the Diamond Taste Award (3 stars, 7 times over 10 years). This year **35 products were awarded the Crystal Taste Award** and **16 products received the exclusive Diamond Taste Award**. These remarkable products come from all over the world. All the products certified passed a rigorous sensory evaluation by reputed Chefs and Sommeliers from different European Culinary Associations according to a blind tasting methodology. Each drink or food

product is attributed a taste score and depending on the results, it may receive the well-known “Superior Taste Award” certification.

Why are quality conscious producers constantly challenging themselves on the taste of their products? *“Producers know that consumers expect tasty products, and they want to deliver on this ...”* said **Eric de Spoelberch, Managing Director of the International Taste Institute**, *“...there is so much choice for the consumer that producers need to be in a mindset of constant product improvement, whether for new products or for their existing products”*. And indeed, in a 2019 survey by the International Food Information Council Foundation, 86% of consumers stated taste as their primary reason for buying a product, far ahead of the next criteria, price with 68%, or healthfulness with 62%.

During the Covid crisis, producers played a vital role as they have had to continue food and drink production despite very difficult circumstances. Despite the workload, they were numerous to continue focusing on taste, as shown by the high participation to the 2020 Superior Taste Award evaluation. *“Quality is very important for us and taste is a key aspect of quality. The evaluation helps us validate that our products are tasty and of the highest quality. After all, consumers will not buy a product again if they didn't enjoy it the first time. We producers have to earn the trust of consumers on a daily basis and this certification shows that we take taste seriously...”* commented **Andre Woldt, Category Development Manager Global Cider - Heineken International**, who registered products this year again.

Stijn Roelandt – Sous-Chef at Hof van Cleve, 3 Michelin stars - explains how he and his colleagues perform the evaluations for the International Taste Institute: *“It's a strict process. The products are blind tasted; this means that the samples are anonymized: we do not see the packaging and do not know the brand name nor the producers' name; we don't even know from which country it comes. This forces us to be completely objective as we do the sensory analysis. Only truly good products are certified”*.

To conclude, the jury and the staff of the International Taste Institute address their warm congratulations to all the food and drink producers with awarded products in 2020.

About the International Taste Institute:

The International Taste Institute, founded in 2005 and based in Brussels, Belgium, evaluates and certifies the taste of food and drink from all over the world. Its jury is composed of over 200 renowned Chefs and Sommeliers from 15 European culinary or sommeliers associations. Over the years, more than 16'000 products were certified by the Taste Institute's jury which includes prestigious chefs and sommeliers such as Ferran Centelles (Head Sommelier at El Bulli Foundation), Manuel Jimenez (Best Sommelier of Spain 2017), Alain Nonnet (2 Michelin stars for 36 years), Gaetano Raguni (Winner of Italy Bocuse d'Or 2017), Alan Coxon (British Ambassador for Food/Drink and BBC TV Chef presenter), or Cristina Figueira (1 Michelin Star)...

The Taste Institute's performs objective sensory evaluation: its jury follows a rigorous blind tasting methodology in which product samples are anonymized to avoid any bias in the scoring. In addition to the scoring of the various sensory analysis criteria, the jury provides comments and eventually suggestions for further product improvement, or food pairing suggestions.

Names of awarded products & companies are available on <https://www.taste-institute.com>.
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