

WORLD CLASS™
C O M P E T I T I O N

JAPAN'S MICHITO KANEKO PROCLAIMED WORLD'S BEST BARTENDER

Cape Town, South Africa, September 5: Michito Kaneko from Japan was crowned world's best bartender at the gala final award of the Diageo Reserve WORLD CLASS Bartender of the Year 2015 held in Cape Town's City Hall on Friday.

Michito was selected the best of the best from among the original 54 contenders, after four days of challenges presided over by leading authorities in the world of fine drinking and experiential cocktail culture.

"When I heard my name, I couldn't believe what I was hearing – I was in total shock," said Michito after the announcement. "I'm very happy to have won. This is definitely a turning point in my life. I can't wait to tell my wife and family. But I must remember that even though I am the WORLD CLASS champion, I must stay humble and true to myself and what I love."

Michito was inspired to quit his job as a construction worker to become a bartender 13 years ago after tasting cocktails in the most famous bar in his home region of Nara, Japan. Three years ago he opened his own bar in Nara – The Lamp Bar – where he is the manager and sole bartender.


In the final "Cape Town Shakedown" challenge held at the city's V&A Waterfront, the final six bartenders had to create a pop-up bar to reflect their personality and bartending style.

Michito looked to his own name for inspiration. Michito means "Man on the Road", so he incorporated the iconic Striding Man of Johnnie Walker into his bar's theme – "The Travelling Bar Man". The installation was covered in maps and treasure chests, and Michito took visitors on a journey from Scotland to France to Japan with his creations.

"Michito produced some wonderful performances throughout this year's WORLD CLASS. As a bartending personality he was the personification of Japanese hospitality with an engaging spark of gentle humour and whimsy. His cocktails across all the challenges were subtle, harmonious, and impeccably calibrated. He is a complete professional and produced a sustained level of excellence throughout the competition," said Spike Marchant, WORLD CLASS judge and global brand ambassador.

As WORLD CLASS Bartender of the Year, Michito will become an overnight celebrity and have the opportunity to travel the world as a global brand ambassador for WORLD CLASS. In addition, as part of a recently announced partnership between luxury resort group One&Only and Diageo Reserve, Michito also wins a trip to the One&Only Palmilla resort in Los Cabos, Mexico.





During the gala ceremony, the top performers from each of the five first round challenges were also honoured – Jurgen Nobels of Belgium earned top scores in the “Against the Clock” pressure test; Kenneth Bandivas of the Philippines took the judges on a journey of flavour during “Around the World”; Tyson Buhler of the USA delivered a perfect pair of cocktails in “Night and Day”; Filip Navratil of Slovakia dominated in the “Street Food Jam”; while champion Michito served up a trio of masterpieces in the “Future, Retro, Disco” challenge.

Israel’s Ariel Leizgold, who was among the top six finalists, also delivered a standout performance during the “Cape Town Shakedown” where he created a ‘secret garden’ that was a “sensory joy and a cocktail paradise”, according to the judges.

“The talent on display this year has surpassed our already high expectations. It was almost impossible to predict who the top six would be because the level of skill was consistent across all competitors – exceptionally high,” said Spike Marchant. “But what else would you expect when you have the best bartenders in the world under one roof? It was the toughest competition we’ve ever had the honour of judging.”

Johanna Dalley, Global Director for World Class said: “Since its inception, WORLD CLASS has been passionate about giving the best bartenders in the world the global spotlight they richly deserve – these are incredibly talented professionals whose skill is on a par with the world’s best chefs but who also deal directly with the public on a nightly basis, have the flexibility to create great drinks that to the exact specification of each and every one of their guests, be part sommelier, part maître d’, part host, part alchemist, part entertainer and part confidant.

In elevating the craft of bartending, Diageo Reserve WORLD CLASS has become a leader in setting trends and standards for fine drinking experiences in the best establishments worldwide.

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Notes to Editor:

List of the best bartender from each of the five first round challenges:

Against the Clock - Jurgen Nobels (Belgium)

This challenge put the bartenders under immense pressure and only the very best were able to pull it off with style and panache. Jurgen combined a quirky genius with great drinks and made a pressure-cooker round look deceptively easy. His range of ten cocktails encompassed a sensational





goat's milk Bloody Mary twist called a "Mèèèèry" (his spelling to emulate the sound of a goal) to a brilliant Boulevardier variant.

Around the World - Kenneth Bandivas (Philippines)

Bartenders were asked to tell the story of their homeland and South Africa through cocktails. Kenneth took the judges on a journey of flavour from the Philippines with the exotic taste of Bittermelon and Palawan fruit to Cape Town with a deftly made Marula and Zacapa cocktail.

Night and Day - Tyson Buhler (USA)

Tyson Buhler hails from one of the great cocktail bars of the world and he showed his exceptional skills with flavour producing the outstanding Café Brulot Celeste using Don Julio 1942 and Camer-onbridge Estate cocktails with Tanqueray No TEN. He showcased the spirit's character perfectly and produced a bravura display of underrated cocktail mastery.

Retro, Disco, Future - Michito Kaneko (Japan)

Michito Kaneko went time travelling in this challenge, starting in the past with The Judge a Bulleit and Tanqueray No TEN cocktail, through Disco and his Tiny Bouquet masterpiece and then completed the journey in the future with his Ciroc experience combining sauternes wine and his secret 'sunshine' spray.


Street Food Jam - Filip Navratil (Slovakia)


This was one of the most demanding food-matching challenges WORLD CLASS has ever staged. Snook, stinky bokum, kudu, boerewors and chakalaka, Malay prawns were the mystery South African dishes confronting our bartenders. Only Filip managed to tackle the intensity of the dishes with cocktails that paired beautifully and demonstrated his ability to master extremely tricky food and drink combinations.

Cape Town Shakedown - Ariel Leizgold (Israel)

Without a doubt this was the toughest test of all. Twenty-four hours to open your own pop-up bar at the end of the world's most intense cocktail competition against a field of six extraordinarily talented bartenders. The winner of this challenge had to master design, ambience, a range of three cocktails and produce an environment that was compelling, characterful and professional. Ariel was exceptionally impressive and created a "secret garden" that was a sensory joy and a cocktail paradise.

Full list of participating countries: Morocco, Ireland, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Mexico, Colombia, Lebanon, Kenya, Hong Kong, Italy, Germany, Austria, Brazil, Poland, Greece, Canada, Czech Republic, Japan, Great Britain, Indian Ocean, Russia, Costa Rica, New Zealand, India, Turkey, Philippines, Slovakia, Panama, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Taiwan, Singapore, United States, Australia, Vietnam, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Malaysia, Thailand, The





Netherlands, Israel, Indonesia, France, Romania, Peru, South Africa, as well as Cruise Ship and Luxury Yacht categories.

For Media queries please contact:

Global Contacts:

Alexandre Rodrigues

Global Head of Public Relations for World Class and Diageo Reserve Brands

alexandre.rodrigues@diageo.com

+31 (0) 6 233 69087/ +31 (0) 208 90 2463

Megan Drury

C.S.A on behalf of Diageo

megan@csa.global

+27 21 433 0347/ +27 72 242 2875

About Diageo

Diageo is a global leader in beverage alcohol with an outstanding collection of brands across spirits, beer and wine categories. These brands include Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, J&B, Buchanan's and Windsor whiskies, Smirnoff, Cîroc and Ketel One vodkas, Captain Morgan, Baileys, Don Julio, Tanqueray and Guinness.

Diageo is a global company, and our products are sold in more than 180 countries around the world. The company is listed on both the London Stock Exchange (DGE) and the New York Stock Exchange (DEO). For more information about Diageo, our people, our brands, and performance, visit us at www.diageo.com. Visit Diageo's global responsible drinking resource, www.DRINKIQ.com, for information, initiatives, and ways to share best practice.

About Diageo Reserve

Diageo Reserve represents the luxury division of Diageo, a multi-award winning portfolio of fine spirits rich in heritage, craftsmanship and innovation.

The World Class Collection of brands includes: Cîroc vodka, Tanqueray No. TEN and Tanqueray London Dry gins, Johnnie Walker Blue Label, Platinum Label and Gold Label Reserve Scotch Whiskies, Tequila Don Julio, Zacapa rum, Ketel One vodka, Haig Club single grain Scotch Whisky, Bulleit Bourbon, Talisker, Mortlach and Singleton single malt Scotch Whiskies.


Diageo Reserve promotes responsible drinking.


Celebrating life, every day, everywhere.

About Diageo Reserve World Class™

DIAGEO RESERVE WORLD CLASS™ is transforming fine drinking experiences and cocktail culture around the world and in the home. The industry's largest, most credible investment in the luxury on trade, it discovers the next generation of bartending talent who set the latest mixology trends and bring these to the best bars worldwide.

At the core is an outstanding, global training programme and internationally recognised platform that elevates the craft of the bartender and builds careers in the industry culminating in an annual





luxury landmark week where the DIAGEO RESERVE WORLD CLASS™ Bartender of the Year is announced. Launched in 2009, over 20,000 bartenders have been inspired and educated in the craft of mixology using the finest spirits in the DIAGEO RESERVE collection.

A partnership and collaboration with gurus, media, partners and owners, DIAGEO RESERVE WORLD CLASS™ is widely recognised as a mark of sophistication and distinction of international fine drinking culture by bartenders and customers alike

