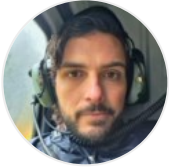


North Vancouver distillery wins award for best rye whisky in Canada



[Nick Laba](#)

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1 / 2 Distillery partner and general manager James Lester signs a bottle of Sons of Vancouver's Realms of Rye Release No. 01 'Citrus & Botanicals.' It won Rye Whisky of the Year at the 2025 Canadian Whisky Awards. | Sons of Vancouver

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A North Vancouver distillery continues to stand out among the best whisky makers in the country.

Sons of Vancouver received high marks for several of its releases at the 2025 Canadian Whisky Awards, held in Victoria on Jan. 16.

Topping that list is Realms of Rye Release No. 01 'Citrus & Botanicals,' which was named Rye Whisky of the Year.

Sons of Vancouver also won Best Cask Strength Whisky for its Whisky #10 'Palm Trees and a Tropical Storm' Heavy Rum Cask Rye, and Best Whisky Aged 8 Years or Under for Whisky #8 'Homemade Upside Down Apricot Cake' Amaretto Cask Whisky.

Recognizing its Realms of Rye series, the distillery took home the Award of Excellence in Product Innovation.

Gold medals went to 'Citrus & Botanicals' as well as Realms of Rye Release No. 02 'Dark Fruit & Cacao.'

Whisky #8 'Homemade Upside Down Apricot Cake' Amaretto Cask Whisky, and Whisky #10 'Palm Trees and a Tropical Storm' Heavy Rum Cask Rye also won gold.

Sons of Vancouver won silvers for Whisky #9 'Rolling Hills in the Morning Mist' Islay Cask Rye, Whisky #11 'Sipping Sherry at the Jazz Club' PX Sherry Cask Single Malt Whisky, and Whisky #12 'Last Call at the Dive Bar' Peated Cask Single Malt Whisky.

James Lester, distillery partner and general manager, said the favourite at Sons of Vancouver was 'Dark Fruit & Cacao.'

"Sometimes you think you know it so well, and you can never count on that," he said. "It's always a surprise."

Sons of Vancouver certainly didn't count on winning [Whisky of the Year](#) at the event in 2023, when it became the first microdistillery to win the top award. That's precipitated steady success for the business since then, with each of their batches selling out within minutes or days of release.

It also validated the approach at Sons of Vancouver of taking 100-per-cent rye whisky into uncharted territory.

'In Canada, rye whisky has been put into a box'

That's exactly what they've done with Realms of Rye, a six-part series exploring parts of the flavour wheel that rye whisky doesn't typically fit into, Lester said.

"In Canada, rye whisky has been put into a box," he said. "When you're explaining it to someone, often words like baking spices come up.

"Now with single malt, and more specifically single malt in Scotland, it's such a wide, diverse category, and there's so many different flavours under the single malt banner," Lester explained.

Rye isn't known for being as diverse, but the folks at Sons of Vancouver think it should be.

"So our first release, batch No. 1, that was blended to be quite citrusy and very, like we say, 'Citrus & Botanicals,'" he said. "Lots of citrus, black tea, cardamom, things like that."

Next, 'Dark Fruit & Cacao' went into the realm of cherries and chocolate.

But Sons of Vancouver does this through distillation techniques and blending, using new oak or former bourbon barrels, Lester said.

"There's no cask finishing, no barrel buckery," he said. "We like to blend our whisky following those rules."

From the way Lester's fruity whiskies fly off the shelves, he knows that people in North Van and British Columbia enjoy them. But the Canadian Whisky Awards bring perspective on a national scale.

"And that recognition is very much appreciated," he said.

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