

SCHWARTZ ORCHARDS RECLAIMS TOP HONORS AT THE 2016 ILLINOIS SWEET CIDER CONTESTS

Dr. Elizabeth Wahle, Cider Contest Coordinator
UI Extension Educator

The Illinois State Horticulture Society sponsored its 27th annual Illinois and National Sweet Cider Contests and the 14th annual National Hard Cider Contest, held in conjunction with the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism and Organic Conference on January 7th in Springfield, Illinois. Tom Schwartz of Schwartz Orchards, located at Centralia, IL, produced the No.1 overall rated cider at this year's contest, repeating his 2014 and 2008 wins in both the National and Illinois contests. Tom pressed his winning cider for this year's contests with a bladder press using Jonathan and Fuji apples.

Second Place Illinois Cider and 2nd Place National Cider went to Joe Ringhausen of Ringhausen Orchards in Fieldon, IL. Trevor Grissom of Grissom's Lost Creek Orchard in Greenup, IL won Third Place Illinois Cider. Tom Roney of Tuttle Orchards won 3rd Place National Cider. Midwest Cider of Merit 1st Runner-up was awarded to Raoul Bergersen of Valley Orchards in Winnebago, IL. Pat Curran of Curran's Orchard in Rockford, IL was awarded the Midwest Cider of Merit 2nd Runner-up and the Midwest Cider of Merit 3rd Runner-up went to Craig Tanner of Tanner's Orchard in Speer, IL.

Grissom's Lost Creek Orchard of Greenup, IL claimed the Champion Hard Cider award, making this their 5th time taking top honors in this category. Trevor Grissom produced his winning hard cider for this year's contest with a combination of GoldRush, Golden Delicious, Gala and Jonagold apples.

Judges evaluated the cider entries using a 25- point rating scale for cider quality characteristics. The judges conducted "blind" evaluations where only a randomly chosen sample number identified each cider entry. The Illinois State Horticultural Society (ISHS) has annually conducted the sweet cider contest since the contest started in 1990. The sweet cider contest presents awards in three different categories: National, Illinois and Midwest Cider of Merit. National awards are open to all US producers, and Illinois awards are open to all Illinois producers. The Midwest Cider of Merit awards are open to Illinois producers, plus producers from other adjoining states that do not place in the National or Illinois categories. Hard cider entries were each individually awarded points based on characteristics like clarity, color, bouquet, balance of alcohol, acidity, sweetness, sugar/acid balance, body, flavor, astringency and bitterness, any off-flavors, and the overall quality.

The ISHS gratefully acknowledges the dedication and hard work of our judging team. Thank you! Most importantly, thanks are extended to all who entered the contest this year. Start planning now for the next contest in 2017.

A summary of more contest notes is outlined below.

National Awards	Firm	Address	Cultivar Blend
First Place	Tom Schwartz Orchard	Centralia, IL	Jonathan and Fuji,
Second Place	Joe Ringhausen Orchards	Fieldon, IL	Jonathan, Golden Delicious, Red Delicious and Firm Gold
Third Place	Tuttle Orchards	Greenfield, IN	Golden Delicious, Cameo, Red Delicious, Enterprise, GoldRush, Jonathan and Idared
Illinois Awards			
First Place	Tom Schwartz Orchard	Centralia, IL	see above
Second Place	Joe Ringhausen Orchards	Fieldon, IL	see above
Third Place	Grissom's Lost Creek Orchard	Greenup, IL	Gala, Golden Delicious, Melrose, Jonathan, Idared and Jonagold
Midwest Cider of Merit			
First Runner-up	Valley Orchard	Winnebago, IL	Cameo, SunCrisp, Jonathan, Braeburn, Golden Delicious and Winesap
Second Runner-up	Curran's Orchard	Rockford, IL	Jonathan, Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, Empire, Northern Spy and Honeycrisp
Third Runner-up	Tanners Orchard	Speer, IL	Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, Jonathan and Corail
Hard Cider			
Champion	Grissom's Lost Creek Orchard	Greenup, IL	GoldRush, Golden Delicious, Gala and Jonagold