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Nations best bartenders to face off in the ultimate Averna cocktail competition.

After hours of reviewing and deliberating top Averna cocktails over a three-week period, judges named Debbi Peek of the Drawing Room at Le Passage in Chicago, Damon Dyer of Death & Company and Don Lee of PDT from New York, and Jeffrey Hollinger of Absinthe Brasserie& Bar and Thomas R. Waugh of Alembic Bar in San Francisco, as finalists in the contest for the 'HAVE Averna Cocktail Competition!' Each drink was delicious and creative, utilizing Averna Amaro as its base ingredient. The five finalists will compete in the ultimate challenge in Sicily at the Averna distillery for the best new Averna-based cocktail this

September.

The Southeast Regional Cocktail Competition took place at Casa Tua, 1700 James Avenue, Miami Beach, on Monday, April 28th, from 3:30-6:30 p.m. Judges for the event were DSWE founder and CEO Paolo Domeneghetti, Jennifer Suskin, publisher of DiningOut Miami, mixologist Angelo Viera, and Bob Drinon, President of Premier Beverage. Peek's "Anima Bella" received top scores in Miami, with a memorable, beautiful garnish that pleased the audience and judges.

The Northeast Regional Cocktail Competition took place at Devin Tavern, 363 Greenwich Street, New York City, Monday, April 21th, from 4-7 p.m. Judges for the event were Paolo Domeneghetti, founder of Tales of the Cocktail Anne Tuennerman, Lowell Supran of Empire Merchants NY, and Tad Carducci, Co-founder of Tippling Bros., LLC. Dyer's "Tuesdays with Mole" and Lee's "La Cola Nostra" were impressive and original cocktails that were highlighted by the expert techniques of each mixologist.

The Western Regional Cocktail Competition took place at Cantina, 580 Sutter Street, San Francisco, Monday, April 14th, from 6-10 p.m. In place

of Jeff Hollinger, Jackie Patterson was on hand to make his drink. Judges for the event were Cantina owner and renowned mixologist Duggan McDonnell, Domaine Select founder and CEO Paolo Domeneghetti, editor of Imbibe Magazine Karen Foley, and Young's Market executive Joe Petraglia. Hollinger's "Midnight in Sicily" and Waugh's "Hierba Buena" were delicious and innovative with Averna at the very heart of both drinks.

"I am extremely pleased to see how great this contest turned out and the buzz and excitement that the contestants had in support of Averna and each other," said Paolo Domeneghetti. "We are eager to add the each of these imaginative and lively drinks to our cocktail repertoire."

The cocktail competition ran from January 1st through March 31st with entry forms available on the newly launched Averna USA website (www.avernausa.com). All entries were divided into three geographical regions: Northeast, Southeast/Midwest and West. A judging panel of leading spirits experts selected 10 semifinalists from each region to move on to the regional semifinals scheduled in San Francisco, New York and Miami respectively. A total of five semifinalists were selected from the three regional competitions (two each from the San Francisco and New York competitions, one from the Miami competition) and will win a trip to Sicily to compete in the finals at the Averna distillery this fall. The grand prize winner will receive a \$1,500 American Express gift card.

About Averna

Averna (), Italy's favorite Amaro and the first licensed spirit in Sicily, is distilled from an all-natural blend of herbs, dried flowers, spices and licorice. The recipe for Averna is a closely guarded secret of Fratelli Averna S.p.A., a fourth-generation family-run company based in Caltanissetta, Sicily. Traditionally a soothing after-dinner drink, or digestivo, known for its distinctively delicious bitter sweet taste profile, Averna is now being discovered by bartenders and cocktail lovers as a versatile mixer for a variety of drink recipes.