

Hawaii Coffee Association Crowns Grand Champion of Hawaiian Coffee

At 15th Annual Conference on Big Island

By Chris Manfredi, HCA, 07/18/2010

- Keauhou Bay, Hawaii

The Hawaii Coffee Association crowned its second statewide Grand Champion of Hawaiian Coffee last evening at its 15th Annual Conference and Trade Show at the Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa located on Kona's Gold Coast.

Rusty's Hawaiian 100% Ka'u Coffee received top honors along with coffees entered from each growing origin. Awards were given to the top scoring entry from each district. The top ten overall rankings were recognized at the annual banquet.

Lorie Obra of Rusty's Hawaiian accepted the coveted HCA award presented by Sandra Lee Kunimoto, Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture. Earning a 91.1 score, Obra said, "This is for the legacy of my late husband, Rusty". "It is dream of mine, of his, for Ka'u to be up there with the elite coffees of the world. This is not just a victory for Rusty's, this is victory for all of Ka'u, for the HCA and all of Hawaii" Earlier this month, Obra was recognized for her industry contributions with the 2010 Outstanding Producer Award by the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe.

"This is good for our industry," said HCA president Tom Greenwell. "This will make us all work harder, which will raise the bar for Hawaiian coffee." "What Ka'u is doing is an example, a bright spot," said Kunimoto.

Kona's District winner is Kuaiwi Farm. Una Greenway, operator of the 5 acre organic farm said, "I attribute the quality of our coffee to our micro-climate, organic practices, hard work and attention to detail that my husband Leon Rosner gives to every step in the production."

The District Champion hailing from Maui is Kupa'a Farm who also placed second in the overall competition with a 89.65 score.

Puna's District Champion is Manny's Brew Coffee Farm.

Hamakua's District Champion is Hawaiian White Mountain.

Oahu's District Champion is Manoa Valley Farms.

MoLoa'a Bay Coffee earned District Champion from Kauai.

Molokai's district Champion is Coffees of Hawaii.

Five coffees from Kona, three others from Ka'u and one from Maui rounded out the top ten finishers.

The top ten coffees were cupped through a 5-round elimination process by a diverse panel of expert cuppers using standardized procedures. To ensure integrity, the samples were blind cupped and no panel member is from Hawaii. "It was extremely difficult to rank the top ten", said panel member Paul Thornton of Coffee Bean International located in Portland, Oregon. "All are exceptionally good coffees." "We started with 67 coffees, systematically narrowed the field to 27, then 15, then 10. The top scorers were cupped several times. It is apparent that Hawaii producers are taking this competition very seriously and are employing a variety of processing methods", said fellow panelist Shawn Hamilton of Java City Roasters of Sacramento.

"These are really, really good scores", said fellow cupper Warren Muller, Jr. of InterAmerican Coffee of Pleasant Hill, California.

Coffee cupping is a combination of art and science where coffees are evaluated and scored based on subtle characteristics including, flavor, aroma, "mouth-feel", acidity, sweetness and aftertaste. HCA members re-elected Greenwell as president at their annual member meeting. The conference also featured an industry trade show, distinguished guest speakers, growers' reports presented by representatives of Hawaiian coffee growing origins from across the state, and a keynote speech given by Lieutenant Governor Duke Aiona.

The Hawaii Coffee Association's mission is to represent all sectors of the Hawaii coffee industry, including growers, millers, wholesalers, roasters and retailers. The HCA's primary objective is to increase awareness and consumption of Hawaiian coffees. A major component of HCA's work is the continuing education of members and consumers. This annual conference has continued to grow each year and has gained increased international attention.