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MAINE DISTILLERIES ANNOUNCES TWENTY BARTENDERS SELECTED TO COMPETE AT FEBRUARY 28TH "2ND ANNUAL COLD RIVER BARTENDERS BASH"

Freeport, ME – Partners at Freeport-based Maine Distilleries (www.mainedistilleries.com and www.facebook.com/mainedistilleries), creator of award-winning Cold River spirits, today announced results of their two-month promotion leading up to their "2nd Annual Cold River Bartenders Bash." Due to several ties, twenty bartenders (five more than the 15 originally planned) have earned slots to compete at the high-profile mixology competition to take place Monday, February 28th from 5:00 – 8:30 pm at Portland's Ocean Gateway. Easy point-and-click tickets are available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/142950>.

The two-month contest leading up to the actual Bash competition on February 28th has created a considerable amount of friendly competition in its own right. Bob Harkins, Managing Partner at Maine Distilleries, explains: "This past fall, we invited 30 Maine bartenders from some of our most visible spirits accounts in the state to create their own specialty cocktail featuring our Cold River Classic Vodka, Cold River Blueberry Vodka, or our new Cold River Gin," he said. "The bartenders and restaurants with the most popular Cold River cocktails during December and January would then earn competition slots for our big Cold River Bartenders Bash later this month.

"Even we were surprised by the amount of enthusiasm and competition we've seen among bartenders over these past two months," Harkins added. "We're really grateful for all the interest and support we've seen. That support makes all the difference, and our Bartenders Bash is our way of spotlighting and thanking these truly talented Maine mixologists for believing in our Maine-made product in the first place."

The 20 restaurant and hotel bartenders who have earned competition slots at the Cold River Bartenders Bash are:

- James Ferguson from 50 Local
- Josh Caron from 555
- Zeus Hannah Suzette from Azure Café
- Carly Lowell of Clementine Restaurant
- Cindy Doxsey from District Grill
- Megan Schroeter from East Ender
- Benantonio Forgione from Eastland Park Hotel
- John Myers from Fish Bones American Grill
- Evan Walsh from The Frog & Turtle
- Barry McEvoy from Grace
- Sarah Mason from The Great Lost Bear
- Eddie Costales of Havana South
- Roxanne Dragon of Hugo's
- Bobby Hoye from Gritty McDuff's Freeport
- The team of Nathaniel Meiklejohn and Jess Joseph from Local 188
- Leah Chamberlin of Old Port Sea Grill
- Spencer Albee from Sonny's
- The team of Ben Bragdon, Mike Barris and Simone Burdet from The Portland Regency
- The team of Scott Doherty and Guy Streitburger of Vignola
- Steve Lovenguth of Walter's

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The 20 bartenders will compete to create “The Ultimate Cold River Cocktail” at the February 28th event, and will vie for 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-place cash prizes. Winners will be selected at the event based on “People’s Choice” ballots cast by guests. To liven the competition even more, another 10 well-known Maine bartenders will cast their own votes in a separate “Experts’ Choice” category. Invited expert judges hail from Back Street Bistro, Caiola’s, Figa, Foreside Tavern, Fuel, Henry and Marty Restaurant, The Hilton Garden Inn, Nosh Kitchen Bar, Solo Bistro and The Salt Exchange.

The 2nd Annual Cold River Bartenders Bash: Additional Details

Tickets (\$35) for the 2nd Annual Cold River Bartenders Bash are selling quickly, but space does remain. Tickets are available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/142950> . (This is a 21+ event.)

Along with the event’s top-notch cocktail samples, guests will enjoy a gourmet menu created by Aurora Provisions, featuring upscale Maine potato-themed fare to complement Cold River’s potato-based spirits. Selections will include Maine Charcuterie and Pâté; Potato Latkes with Beet Relish and Cold River Vodka Crème Fraiche; Maine Shrimp Hushpuppies with Tabasco Remoulade; and Ham, Gruyere, Potato and Cornflake Balls with Spicy Mustard Sauce.

The Bash, to be emceed by restaurant veteran and *Maine* magazine contributor Joe Ricchio, will feature live classic blues and rock tunes throughout the evening by the Ken Grimsley Band.

The event is sponsored by *Maine* magazine, the Maine Restaurant Association, the Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Bureau, Maine Beverage Company, Bow Street Distributors, RSVP Discount Beverage and Better Bread Company.

The Bash’s sole beneficiary will be Share Our Strength Maine’s “Cooking Matters to Maine” nutrition education program, which features the talents of numerous Maine chefs and nutritionists. The program benefits hundreds of families throughout Maine by teaching healthy cooking techniques and how to stretch their grocery store dollars.

About Maine Distilleries, LLC (www.mainedistilleries.com)

Founded in 2005, Maine Distilleries, located in Freeport, Maine, is the brainchild of four talented Maine entrepreneurs: Donnie Thibodeau, who owns Green Thumb Farms in Fryeburg, ME; his brother, Lee Thibodeau, a neurosurgeon in Portland, ME; Bob Harkins, a former Sunday River ski executive from Paris, ME; and Chris Dowe, Head Distiller, from New Gloucester, ME. Known for their distinct nose and satin-smooth finish, the company’s gluten-free vodkas and gin are hand-crafted and batch-distilled in a copper pot still, using water from Maine’s Cold River Aquifer and farm-fresh Maine potatoes.

Maine Distilleries, which produces solely Cold River Vodka, Cold River Blueberry Vodka, and Cold River Gin, is the only “ground-to-glass” distillery in the nation, where the company controls every aspect of production from the planting of the potatoes to final bottling. The company’s award-winning Classic and Blueberry Vodkas currently are available at major markets, restaurants, and fine spirits retailers in 26 states, the District of Columbia, western Canada and London. Cold River Gin launched in August 2010 with a presence in seven northeast and southeast states, and the District of Columbia.

*For more information, visit www.mainedistilleries.com or call (207) 865-4828.
To schedule an interview with Bob Harkins, Director of Sales and Marketing at Maine Distilleries,
or Head Distiller Chris Dowe, contact Jen Beltz at (207) 699-5502 or jen@frontburnerpr.com.*

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