Do you have a Star behind your bar?
Then be sure to submit a nomination for the 2026 Star Mixologist Award

IHLA, in partnership with Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of Illinois (SGWS), is searching for Illinois' top hotel bartenders. Showcase your hotel's standout mixologist by submitting an original cocktail recipe for a chance to compete for the 2026 Star Mixologist title.

Finalists will have the opportunity to showcase their cocktails during the 2026 Stars of the Industry Luncheon & Awards, taking place Thursday, December 10, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel, where the winner will be announced.

Nominations are open to all IHLA member hotel bartenders; hotels may submit more than one nomination, but each recipe must be unique. **Submissions are due Friday, October 16.**

To Enter:
Submit an original cocktail recipe to the IHLA Events Team by October 16. Each submission must include:

1. **Hotel & Bar Name**
2. **Mixologist Information**
    a. Name
    b. Role
    c. Headshot
    d. Bio
3. **Cocktail Name**
4. **Complete Ingredient List**
    a. Must feature a Proximo Spirits Co. spirit as the main ingredient
5. **Complete Cocktail Build**
    a. Step-by-step preparation instructions
    b. Glassware
    c. Garnish
    d. Any homemade syrup or garnish must include the complete recipe and preparation instructions
6. **Photo of the Cocktail**

Judging & Competition
The winning cocktail will demonstrate creativity while also considering profitability, adaptability, and the realities of hotel food and beverage operations.

Each submission will be reviewed by a panel of judges and scored in the following categories:

- Originality: 15 points
- Adaptability: 15 points
- Inspiration: 15 points
- Taste: 55 points

Each finalist will have the opportunity to present and prepare their cocktail for the panel of judges.

Finalists will have the opportunity to feature their cocktail during the Stars of the Industry Luncheon & Awards, where the 2026 Star Mixologist will be announced. Additional opportunities to showcase finalists' cocktails and recipes will be available in 2027.

If you have any questions, please contact the events team.