



OFFICIAL COMPETITION GUIDE

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2025

Welcome to the 4th Annual California Cannabis Awards!

The California Cannabis Awards are proud to return to the California State Fair for the 4th annual celebration of the best cannabis producers and products in the Golden State. This year, in response to feedback from industry allies and partners, we will be introducing Bronze medals, in addition to Gold and Silver, and will be celebrating over 150 winners. Using a combination of scientific testing and expert human judging evaluation components, this year's competition will also designate new sub-category awards for popular product types including blunts, hash, and chocolates. The breadth of award categories in the competition highlights the best of a wide array of cannabis products, a direct reflection of the innovation and diversity of California's cannabis industry.

For the full duration of the State Fair, in addition to the competition, we will be continuing the history-making effort to host onsite sales and consumption of cannabis. Hosting an immersive, educational event celebrating cannabis at an institution such as the California State Fair, is emblematic of an important step in the movement to normalize and destigmatize cannabis. For over 170 years, the California State Fair has recognized the excellence of California's finest agricultural industries. The inclusion of cannabis in the roster of recognized agricultural industries represents a newfound acceptance and celebration of California's rich legacy of cannabis cultivation and the cannabis growers large and small across the state that produce it.

We encourage all California-licensed cannabis farmers and product producers to enter the competition and join us in celebrating the best cannabis products out there. We look forward to seeing our cannabis community at the fair as we create an educational experience connecting brands directly to cannabis consumers and canna-curious alike.

Lastly, a sincere thank you to our partners at the California State Fair and our trusted third-party competition evaluators at SC Labs and Budist who help make this event possible.

James Leitz & Dustin Moore

Fair Play Ventures, LLC



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The California Cannabis Awards at the California State Fair

About

The 2025 California Cannabis Awards at the California State Fair will be a 4th annual statewide celebration including an educational exhibit and onsite cannabis sales and consumption. The cannabis exhibit will run the duration of the California State Fair from July 11-27, 2025. Open to all fairgoers (21+).

Educational Exhibit

The Educational Exhibit, curated by Fair Play Ventures, is comprised of educational displays celebrating the agricultural and cultural heritage of California cannabis, as well as the societal impact the plant has had on the State over the decades. The Educational Exhibit will showcase the Award Winners, sponsors and partners alongside eye-catching creative highlighting the award winners and products. The exhibit is brought to life by booths and activations hosted by cannabis industry brands, associations, and government partners.

Cannabis Sales & Consumption

In 2025, the California Cannabis Awards will build upon last year's historical first in bringing *cannabis sales and consumption* to the fairgrounds footprint. The California State Fair continues to lead the nation in showcasing the California cannabis industry, its history, culture and craft farmers through a unique blend of educational exhibits, experiential activations, and commerce.

Award-winning cannabis flower and products will be sold through a centralized sales desk within the Cannabis Exhibit and are allowed for consumption within designated areas.

Sponsorship Opportunities

2025 Sponsorship Opportunities are available with Premier, Official, and Affiliate tier level opportunities for brand positioning and exposure to a diverse, canna-curious audience. Sponsorships provide access to exhibition packages, custom brand activations, inclusion in publicity campaigns, and placement opportunities throughout the California Cannabis Awards at the California State Fair.

For sponsorship related inquiries, please reach out to info@calcannabisawards.com for information.

Competition Highlights

Quick Facts

The 4th Annual California Cannabis Awards is a first-of-its-kind, state-sanctioned cannabis competition and fairgrounds experience. Celebrating California's rich agricultural history, cannabis has joined the State Fair roster of coveted annual competitions, alongside wine, cheese, olive oil and craft beer.

The 2025 Awards competition continues to celebrate California's cannabis industry with an expanded format:

- The competition is ***open to all licensed California cultivators and brands.***
- There are ***9 Award Categories***
- Awarding ***29 Chemotypes and Product Types***
- ***150+ Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals***
- ***9 Golden Bear "Best of California" Trophies*** issued by the California State Fair
- The Flower Awards format is ***rooted in quantifiable, science-based criteria*** with testing certified by a third-party, trusted laboratory testing partner, SC Labs.
- Organizers have partnered with Budist and the *Budist Evaluation Method* that utilizes a ***100-point rating scale*** to evaluate all Product Categories and determine the Golden Bear winners for all Flower Categories.
- Award ***winners will be announced in June 2025*** and celebrated during the California State Fair, July 11 – 27, 2025

Key Dates

March 1, 2025

Submission Window Opens

May 4, 2025

Submission Window Closes

July 1, 2025

Gold, Silver, and Bronze Announcements

July 12, 2025

California State Fair Award Celebration

Contact Information

Official Website: www.calcannabisawards.com

Official Email: info@calcannabisawards.com

Award Category Overview

Using both science-based testing and expert judging evaluation components, awards are given across the below cannabis product categories and subcategories, with an overall “Best of California” Golden Bear Trophy for each of the nine categories.

FLOWER CATEGORIES

Each Flower category will use scientific testing to award Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals based on cannabinoid and terpene expression. Cannabinoids awarded include CBDA, CBGa, and Total Cannabinoids. Terpenes awarded include Caryophyllene, Limonene, Myrcene, Ocimene, Pinene, and Terpinolene, as well as Co-Dominant and Total Terpenes. A "Unique" award may be designated for any rare terpenes and cannabinoids revealed during testing.

- ★ **INDOOR:** For cannabis grown in a permanent structure using at least 25 watts of artificial light per square foot
- ★ **MIXED-LIGHT:** For cannabis grown in a greenhouse, hoop house, glasshouse, or similar structure
- ★ **OUTDOOR:** For cannabis grown outside without using any artificial lighting or light deprivation techniques on mature plants

PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Each Product category will use expert human judging panels to award Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals by product type subcategory.

- ★ **BEVERAGES** Ready-to-Drink Beverages, Beverage Enhancers & Mixers (Combined)
- ★ **CARTRIDGES** Solvent – Terpenes Added
Solvent – Live Resin / No Added Terpenes
Solventless
- ★ **CONCENTRATES** Solvent
Solventless – Hash
Solventless – Rosin
- ★ **EDIBLES** Baked Goods
Candies
Chocolates
- ★ **PRE-ROLLS** Blunts
Infused – Solvent
Infused – Solventless
Non-Infused
- ★ **WELLNESS** Tablets / Capsules
Tinctures
Topicals

Entrance Fees

1st Product or Cultivar	\$400
2nd Product or Cultivar	\$375
3rd Product or Cultivar	\$350
4 th + Product or Cultivar	\$325

The Competition Team

ORGANIZERS

The California Cannabis Awards is produced in partnership with Cal Expo and Fair Play Ventures, LLC. Fair Play Ventures is an exciting partnership between Cultivar Events, creators and producers of the 2022/2023 competition and exhibit, and Embarc, one of California's leading cannabis retailers and cannabis event specialists.

PARTNERS

Embarc, Official Retail Partner

The California Cannabis Awards proudly welcomes Embarc as our returning strategic marketing and official retail partner. In 2024, Embarc joined us in making history by bringing onsite cannabis retail sales and consumption to the California State Fair. Embarc operates a fleet of cannabis dispensaries across California and has set the gold-standard for cannabis sales and consumption programs inside other large-scale events like "Grasslands" inside Outside Lands. For more information, visit www.goembarc.com

Expert Human Judging, Budist

Budist is the industry's first social review platform for cannabis products and brands. The Budist community is led by a diverse group of cannabis critics, or "Budists", which includes certified Ganjiers, cup judges, subject matter experts, and connoisseurs. The *Budist Evaluation Method*, a 100-point rating scale, will be used to evaluate all Flower Gold Medalists and determine the Golden Bear winners for Sun Grown, Mixed Light and Indoor Categories. Budist will also judge all other Categories and Product Types to determine Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals and Golden Bear winners by Category.

For more information, visit www.budist.com

Trusted Laboratory Partner, SC Labs

The California Cannabis Awards' flower categories will be scored objectively through science-based analysis performed and certified by SC Labs, one of California's premier cannabis testing labs. SC Labs will provide all entrants with the required Terpene and Cannabinoid testing required and furnish a PhytoFacts® chemometric report that will identify the unique compounds of the submission to determine the Gold, Silver and Bronze medal winners.

For more information, visit www.sclabs.com

Competition Perks

Why Enter the Competition

Beyond the accolades, entering the awards competition is to participate in something greater: the social progress of cannabis, an unparalleled consumer education opportunity, a recognition of the innovation, diversity, and excellence of California's cannabis community.

Award Winners Benefits & Support

In addition to honoring the esteemed cultivators and manufacturers and the work that goes into producing the best cannabis products California has to offer, award winners will benefit from full-scale publicity, marketing, and retail opportunities.

- ★ **Publicity Campaign:** A publicity campaign including press releases, media advisories and social content promoting the winners will last from pre-launch through the duration of the fair.
- ★ **Marketing Tools:** In addition to unique PR and publicity opportunities, winners will be the recipients of official award seal digital assets, along with logo usage rights, to digitally market California State Fair Cannabis Award designation on all award-winning product packaging.¹
- ★ **Medals & Trophies:** Winning submissions will receive award-winning designations, represented by product seals (stickers) and medals; Gold, Silver, Bronze, and the coveted Golden Bear trophies for the "Best of California" winners.
- ★ **Onsite State Fair Retail Opportunities:** All award-winning products will be considered for inclusion of onsite sales at the cannabis dispensary during the California State Fair. Considerations include product and shelf availability, as well as limitations to serving sizes sold at the event.
- ★ **Statewide Retail Opportunities:** Golden Bear winners will be welcomed into the inventory assortment and sold at select Embarc dispensary locations across California for a limited time, where Golden Bear winners will enjoy featured displays. Please note, this retail opportunity is dependent upon the timely availability and product quantities of the specific Golden Bear-winning product.
- ★ **Brand Exposure:** Award winners will get the one-of-a-kind brand exposure through media coverage, partnership coverage, physical displays, including an award winner dossier feature wall, seen by thousands of fairgoers, expanded retail opportunities, the industry-attended awards ceremony, and more.
- ★ **Forever a Winner:** The award represents an evergreen achievement, and all California State Fair Cannabis Award winners will be recorded as historical winners on the official site.
- ★ **Fee Waivers:** The Best of California Golden Bear winners will receive complimentary entry fee waiver for the 2026 competition.

¹ Award seals may be affixed only to packaging of State Fair award-winning cannabis cultivars. Only official State Fair award seals are authorized to designate California State Fair award winners.

Competition Details

Awards Description

GOLD, SILVER, AND BRONZE AWARDS

Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded across all Flower and Product categories, as listed in Award Category Overview.

For Flower Categories, Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded to competition entrants whose submission achieves the top, second, and third highest terpene or cannabinoid expression as indicated by the scientific testing completed by a trusted third-party scientific testing partner. The terpenes tested for awards include Caryophyllene, Limonene, Myrcene, Ocimene, Pinene, and Terpinolene, as well as additional awards for Co-Dominant and Total Terpenes. Cannabinoid awards include CBDa, CBGa, and Total Cannabinoids.

A “Unique” Gold medal award and designation may be given to an entrant whose product possesses rare terpenes and cannabinoids revealed during testing and exist outside the current terpene and cannabinoid awards categories.

For Product Categories, Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded for each product category using an expert panel of human judges and a proprietary, blind 100-point testing methodology.

GOLDEN BEAR “BEST OF CALIFORNIA” AWARDS

A Golden Bear Award, a coveted and historical prize given by the California State Fair across industries, will be awarded for each Flower and Product award category. In the Flower Categories, all Gold, Silver and Bronze medalists per chemotype will qualify for the subjective judging panel that will determine the Golden Bear winners. For the other Product Categories, only the Gold medalists will be immediately qualified and considered for the Golden Bear designation, determined by an expert human judging process.

Testing and Evaluation Methods

SCIENCE-FIRST EVALUATION

All entrants must provide a valid Certificate of Analysis (COA) from a California-licensed cannabis testing laboratory to participate. The entrance fee for the competition includes third-party laboratory testing.

To maintain parity and uniformity, all Flower Category submissions must be tested by the same laboratory, using the same methods and technology for cannabinoid and terpene testing. SC Labs clients who have obtained their COA and requisite testing will not undergo additional testing as the results of that test will be used for the competition.

SC Labs will test each cultivar for chemometric data and report results using the innovative cannabinoid and terpene reporting platform PhytoFacts. This easy-to-understand report characterizes the chemical profile of cannabis through intuitive data visualizations. These

visualizations identify the chemical profile, dominant and proportional cannabinoids and terpenes, sensory attributes, and potential entourage effects of the submitted sample. PhytoFacts allows for accurate sorting of samples into major chemometric families and subcategories that highlight similar sensory and physiological properties. Each entry will be tested for moisture content, water activity, pesticide residues, microbiological contaminants, heavy metals, as well as mycotoxins, and any entry that exceeds limitations established by the State of California will be disqualified from the competition.

Incentives for SC Labs current and new clients are available including:

- For the Outdoor Flower Category, submissions which obtained their COA and the proper testing from SC Labs between December 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025, may be eligible.
- All other SC Labs client flower submissions are subject to a retroactive January 1 to February 28, 2025, test allowance.

Please contact your SC Labs representative for inquiries related to submitting through the customer service portal and eligibility for use of a retroactive test.

EXPERT HUMAN JUDGING

The California Cannabis Awards has identified specific product categories for rating and evaluation by the Budist community, which includes certified Ganjiers, cup judges, subject matter experts, and connoisseurs.

The Product award categories and Golden Bear evaluations will be powered by Budist. Product samples will be allocated to a panel of cannabis judges, chosen based on qualifications and areas of expertise, for assessment and scoring. Budists will use a 100-point rating system to objectively evaluate each entry based on attributes such as Aroma, Flavor, Appearance and Effect. Each of these attributes are assigned point values based on factors such as complexity, intensity, and efficacy, and the total points are averaged to yield the final rating. Judges are required to follow a standardized methodology to ensure that their ratings are fair, honest, and based on their professional assessment of each entry. This 100-point system is on par with internationally-recognized rating systems used by many specialty goods industries, including wine, beer, chocolate and coffee. This approach will be applied to each Product category to determine Gold, Silver, and Bronze medalists. The gold medalists of each product type within each of the Flower and Product categories will compete for a coveted Golden Bear trophy.

Entering the Competition

REGISTERING

All entrants must register on the Official Competition Registration portal located online at cannabisawards.com/competition/

The Submission Window will be open from March 1 - May 4, 2025.

The online registration process will require a valid California cannabis license, Metrc Batch Number, and a valid COA from any California-licensed cannabis testing laboratory.

PRODUCT SUBMISSION

10 units of shelf-ready product for each submission are required for entrance into the competition. These samples will be used in the competition for scientific testing components, evaluation by the expert human judging panel, high-resolution photography for marketing purposes, and evaluation for a Golden Bear for all Gold Medal placements.

Once the online registration portion is complete, all entrants will receive an email with product drop off instructions.

Rules & Regulations

Enforcement of Rules & Regulations:

The entry requirements, as printed herein, will be strictly enforced. Any entries found not to comply with the entry requirements will be rejected. Any entry form found to contain untrue information may result in disqualification from all awards and may also bar the entrant from entering the California Cannabis Awards competition in the future.

1. Advertising

- a. The California State Fair reserves the right to revoke an award or disqualify an entrant from this and future competitions for any misleading advertising or information connected to the California Cannabis Awards or for violating any of the following rules:
 - i. Award seals may be affixed only to packaging of State Fair award-winning cannabis products. Only official State Fair award seals are authorized to designate California State Fair award winners.
 - ii. No awards designation representation or labeling will be made that is misleading or deceptive to the trade or the consuming public.
 - iii. No representation will be made that states, implies, or permits the inference that a product is identical to an award winner unless this is the case.

2. Confidentiality & Privacy Provisions

- a. By entering the competition, entrants agree that Certificate of Analyses and PhytoFacts report(s) will be shared with Competition Team and the California State Fair.

3. Disqualifications

- a. Any failure of DCC regulations would result in disqualification. This may include but is not limited to contamination issues that involve pesticides (herbicides and fungicides), solvents, heavy metals, microbiological contaminants, mycotoxins, and foreign material.
 - i. Entrants will be notified of a failed sample. If your batch fails for compliance, an SC Labs representative will hold a call to review and discuss remediation options. Entrants will have the opportunity for remediation, and resubmission before final results are tabulated. No re-submissions will be allowed after May 4, 2025. However, late submissions that have not been tested or failed prior to May 4, 2025 can participate in a Remediation Window from May 5-11, 2025. In the event of disqualification, an entrant must pay for a new COA for re-submission but entry fees for the Awards will be applied to the new sample submitted.
- b. Entrants will be disqualified for misrepresentation of award category, including light source.

4. Entry Limitations

- a. Entrants must be able to provide a valid and current California cultivation or manufacturing license.
- b. There are no limits on the number of individual samples/cultivars that may be submitted.
- c. No entrant will be allowed to submit more than one sample from a particular cultivar from a particular grow unless the samples are from a separate vintage/grow cycle.
- d. Registration / testing payments must be received in order for test results to be released and to be eligible to participate in the competition.

5. General Rules

- a. California State Fair General Rules are subject to any action that may cause revision or curtailment at any time before each competition or judging. Upon submission of online entry and signature on detailed receipt if applicable, the exhibitor acknowledges that they have read and understood these rules and all others of the competition in which they enter and are further responsible for viewing, reading and understanding all revisions or curtailments on the State Fair's website before the competition. Exhibitors may request an additional copy of the most current rules by contacting the entry office:
email: entryoffice@calexpo.com.
- b. Awards Organizers may require that any cannabis receiving an award be reviewed and qualified by representatives of the Organizing Committee who shall verify that all entry requirements have been met.
- c. The testing standards of the competition written herein are subject to change as the State of California's cannabis testing and/or pesticide regulations evolve.
- d. Award Organizers reserve the right to combine award sub-categories.
- e. No entrant or representative may disparage awards of other cannabis entrants to the trade or public.
- f. Flower award categories are not determined by cultivation license size type or mixed light tier license status.