

## HAWAII/PACIFIC ISLANDS SUPER REGIONAL YOUNG SOMMELIER COMPETITION

# A Toast to the Future



(Left) Young Sommelier competition contestants: David Castleberry, Jason Castle and winner Patrick Okubo.

(Right) Young Sommelier contestant Jason Castle, Young Sommelier winner Patrick Okubo, Judge/Master Sommelier Chuck Furuya, Young Sommelier contestant David Castleberry, Judge/Master Sommelier Roberto Viernes, Judge Mark Shishido and Echanson Provincial David Gochros.



By Judith Kellogg, *Hawaii/Pacific Islands Chargée de Presse Provinciale*

THE HAWAII/PACIFIC ISLANDS SUPER REGIONAL YOUNG Sommelier competition was held at the luxurious Halekulani Hotel on April 7. The beautiful backdrop of Waikiki Beach and the inviting blue ocean, framed by Diamond Head, provided a relaxing atmosphere for Chaîne members that was in stark contrast to the nervousness felt by the three finalists awaiting their results.

Echanson Provincial David Gochros seamlessly planned the competition, and Kevin Toyama, sommelier at the Halekulani, volunteered to do all the set up for the judging. Master Sommelier Chuck Furuya, Master Sommelier Roberto Viernes—a former National Young Sommelier silver-medal winner—and Mark Shishido, wine director at Alan Wong's Restaurant, were the distinguished judges.

The remaining three contestants had been selected from a group of seven semi-finalists. Before announcing the winner, Echanson Provincial Gochros talked with the young men about their future importance at the national and international levels. The contest can be a humbling, yet positive experience, for it reminds us that no matter how much we know about wine, we continually have more to learn. The nature of the competition

inspires participants to think creatively and nurtures an enthusiastic desire to improve. Just the honor of reaching this level should spur these gifted young people to strive for even greater goals.

After regional officers delivered their own accolades, we learned that the two runners-up were Jason Castle, formerly of Du Vin, and David Castleberry, from the Mauna Lani Resort. Winning first place was Patrick Okubo, general manager of Formaggio Wine Bar and Grill. He will go on to represent the Hawaii/Pacific Islands region at the national competition in Las Vegas. Following this excitement, our group enjoyed an elegant lunch at the hotel's restaurant, Orchids.

Mr. Okubo is a multi-faceted, ambitious young man with a bright future. He is musically talented—he was a member of the Hawaii State Youth Symphony in high school—as well as academically motivated—he is currently earning his master's degree in business, specializing in travel industry management. In addition, he plans to travel to Dallas to work on his Advanced Sommelier certification. We look to Patrick Okubo to make a significant mark in the wine world! 