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2024 Aotearoa Barista Champion Max Cui receiving his trophy from 2023 Champion Honoka Kawashima. Image: Andrew Turner of ATPPhoto.

Emma McDougall reflects on the NZSCA's achievements over the past year and the power of collaboration.

2024 was a year of milestones, innovation, and collaboration that strengthened our community and showcased our collective passion on a global stage. From launching the Regionals and progressing energy reports to hosting our Championship events, we've proven the power of coming together.

Our accomplishments reached new heights. In April, Han Jong Lee competed at the World Cup Tasters Championship in Chicago, United States, earning an outstanding third place with a flawless performance – a feat of true skill and precision. In May, Honoka Kawashima represented us at the World Barista Championships, achieving an incredible fourth-place finish. Her performance inspired us all, showing the world the talent, dedication, and passion that define our small but mighty community.

In August, we crowned new Cup Taster's Champion Dove Chen, a two-time NZ Barista Champion, and Bryan Rejayya, our Latte Art Champion. Both Hamiltonians will proudly represent Aotearoa in the worlds in Geneva in 2025. October brought the Aotearoa Barista Champs, in which Max Cui took the top spot after an impressive second-

place finish in the Wellington Regionals. The calibre of talent on stage was exceptional, and every competitor did themselves and their companies proud.

These successes serve as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when we dream big and work together. They also highlight the importance of engagement, collaboration, and participation. Whether you've always dreamed of competing or simply want to be part of this vibrant community, now is the perfect time to get involved. From entering competitions to supporting events, your contributions matter and make a real difference.

If you're considering standing for the board, this is your chance to shape the future of our community. By stepping into a leadership role, you can help drive key initiatives, make strategic decisions, and champion the mission we all share. Or perhaps you know someone whose impact deserves to be celebrated—a community legend whose contributions have left a lasting imprint. Now is the time to nominate them for a Recognition Award and shine a spotlight on their achievements at the AGM in Hastings in May.

We also want to extend a heartfelt

thank you to everyone who made 2024 so remarkable. To our members, competitors, sponsors, and supporters: your energy, creativity, and dedication made every success possible. Every event, every gathering, and every moment of connection was enriched by your contributions.

Looking ahead, 2025 is shaping up to be an exciting year filled with opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together. We're proud to have created a calendar of events designed to engage, inspire, and expand our community. Whether you're a competitor aiming to showcase your skills, a coffee enthusiast wanting to get involved, or someone ready to step into a leadership role, we can't wait to see what you'll bring to the presentation or judges' table.

Let's raise a cup (maybe a brewer's cup) to a fantastic year ahead – one filled with bold brews, shared passions, and deeper connections to what's in your cup and the hands that brought it to you. ☐



For more information on the New Zealand Specialty Coffee Association, or to join, visit nzscsca.org