**ASCOT AWARDS 2021**

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY/

CHARITABLE PROGRAM –

**TOM OF FINLAND ORGANIC VODKA –**

*“Make a statement without saying a word”*

# THE ORGANIC VODKA

Named for the eponymous artist who created the gay male “leather” iconography we take for granted today, [Tom of Finland Organic Vodka](https://www.tomoffinlandvodka.com/the-vodka) is produced by Helsinki-based One Eyed Spirits and distilled at [Lignell & Piispanen](https://www.lignellpiispanen.com/) -- the oldest family run distillery in central Finland’s Lakeland area. Made from 95% wheat and 5% rye, with water from the surrounding Arctic region, the vodka is certified organic by the EU and does not have any added sugar.

It started with a postage stamp. In 2014, the Finnish Post Office released stamps featuring Tom of Finland’s iconic homoerotic art. The image captured the imagination of the One Eyed Spirits team, who believed the Tom of Finland story, values, and history would lend themselves to an outstanding spirit brand. Their instincts proved correct: media coverage has included [Forbes](https://www.forbes.com/sites/alywalansky/2020/06/14/fathers-day-gift-guide-the-best-gifts-for-vodka-martini-lovers/?sh=653b11ff19ec), [Cosmopolitan](https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/a32884325/lgbtq-brands-to-support/), and [LGBTQ Nation](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2020/05/tom-finland-100-today-heres-can-celebrate-home/), and accolades for the vodka itself include gold medals from spirits competitions worldwide. Tom of Finland Organic Vodka is sold in 10 European countries, and arrived in the U.S. in 2019; it is already sold in 25 states, available online to be shipped to all 50 states, and retails for $34.99/750mL. Last year it was named one of Wine Enthusiast’s [Top 100 Spirits of 2020](https://253qv1sx4ey389p9wtpp9sj0-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Wine_Enthusiast_Top_100_Spirits_2020.pdf) and [10 Best Vodkas of 2020](https://www.winemag.com/2020/12/16/best-vodkas-2020/).

# THE ARTIST, TOM OF FINLAND: A CREATOR OF GAY CULTURE

One look at the label draws you right in: a sexy man peers over his shoulder at you with the slightest hint of a smile. This is the work of Finnish-born artist Touko Laaksonen (1920-1991), widely known as Tom of Finland, who in the 1950s dreamed and drew the template for what is today masculine gay culture. Many people think the man on the bottle is Freddie Mercury; in fact, it is an image of Kake -- Tom’s leading ongoing character in his panel stories – whose look inspired Freddie, The Village People, and Judas Priest front-man Rob Halford, among countless other artists.

# “Tom of Finland is one of the five most influential artists of the 20th century. As an artist he was superb, as an influence he was transcendent.”

 *- Harvey S. Shipley Miller, The Judith Rothschild Foundation*

“I want to show that gays can feel happy together – that they have a right to be happy together.” *- Tom of Finland*

“The mention of Tom of Finland produces smiles. He is the man we all wish we could be and the kind of man all women wish they could meet. Tom of Finland is the embodiment of all things favorable in life. His work is part of the fabric of Western culture.” *- Durk Dehner, Tom of Finland Foundation*

*Photo: Philip Stuart*

# TOM OF FINLAND FOUNDATION

In 1984, the non-profit [Tom of Finland Foundation](https://www.tomoffinland.org/) was established by Tom of Finland with his friend Durk Dehner. By then Tom had been recognized worldwide as the master of homoerotic art, and the Foundation’s original purpose was to preserve his vast catalog of work. Several years later, the scope widened to offer a safe haven for all erotic art in response to rampant discrimination against art that portrayed sexual behavior or generated a sexual response.

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Today, the Foundation’s headquarters are at Tom House, the bungalow in Los Angeles’ Echo Park neighborhood where Tom lived his truest years of personal expressive freedom. The Foundation continues to educate the public, support the LGBTQ+ community, and extol the virtues and cultural merits of erotic art to promote healthy, tolerant attitudes about sexuality.

# THE PARTNERSHIP

Tom of Finland Foundation licensed the use of the image and name to Tom of Finland Organic Vodka, which in turn donates a full 5% of sales back to the Foundation every year.

The Vodka’s Mission: To leverage Tom of Finland Organic Vodka to educate the public about Tom of Finland – the man, the artist and his legacy – as well as raise funds for Tom of Finland Foundation.

The Vodka’s Objectives:

* Encourage people from all walks of life to be who they most truly and deeply are, and to be happy on their own terms
* Leverage the societal trends toward liberation, freedom of expression, and self-actualization
* Encourage joyful, iconic, and daring qualities and outlooks
* Be an affordable luxury for enlightened, liberal consumers who care about the arts, organic food & drink, and/or LGBTQ+ culture

Since the product’s launch, this partnership has generated $60,000 for Tom of Finland Foundation.

# THE CELEBRATION

Tom of Finland Organic Vodka is the centerpiece at social events hosted by the Foundation, not only bringing life to the party but also raising funds and providing a sense of community. The annual Tom’s Bar promotes and exhibits erotic art in an immensely popular party setting, and one-off events have included a Prague screening of the film *Tom of Finland* (2017, Karukoski); a Japanese rooftop party and solo exhibition; and a notoriously decadent party in conjunction with the New York Art Book Fair.

In 2020, Tom would have turned 100 years old. His legacy continues to inspire art lovers, fashion designers, artists, musicians, and lovers of life worldwide, due in part to the ongoing partnership between Tom of Finland Foundation and Tom of Finland Organic Vodka.