

Euphoric entrepreneur: New ASU grad wins \$100K in pitch competition

Beverage made with rare honey from Nepal wins at Inferno Cup; pitch competition brings together students from universities statewide

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News
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Logan Milano had an amazing week. Days after he graduated from Arizona State University, he won \$100,000 to fund his startup venture, Amryth.

Milano was the winner of the Inferno Invitational Startup Cup pitch competition on Thursday, beating seven other ventures. Amryth, a company that sells a canned beverage of the same name, was launched last year.

Milano, who graduated with a degree in finance from the W. P. Carey School of Business, got the idea for his venture during an internship with an investment firm.

“I saw that alcohol sales were trending downward and people were looking for more holistic ingredients,” he said. He started researching “euphoric” beverages, which have no alcohol but aim to provide a gentle buzz.

Then he acquired some “mad honey,” a rare and psychoactive honey produced by large bees in Nepal and harvested off cliff sides by Indigenous tribes.

“I started making drinks out of my house and had people come over and try it. Everybody was asking me for more and I had people reaching out, asking if they could try it too, and I kind of leaned into it from there after realizing it was a big hit,” he said.

He described the feeling after drinking Amryth as a combination of relaxation and focus, with no side effects or hangover. Besides the honey, the drink includes green tea extract and lavender, with no alcohol, THC or added sugar.

The Inferno Invitational Startup Cup gathered entrepreneurial teams from ASU, Northern Arizona University, the University of Arizona, Grand Canyon University and Phoenix College. Each team gave a five-minute pitch to the judges and then answered questions for five minutes.

The event, held at [SkySong, the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center](#), was sponsored by the [J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute](#) at ASU. The \$100,000 in funding was provided through the ASU eSeed Challenge and the Prescott Student Venture Fund.

The other ASU competitor was Johnathan Lok, a PhD student in robotics and autonomous systems. His startup, [ClearCast](#), is a network for first responders that coordinates autonomous drones to search, locate and assist missing people.

NAU students Jaya Wartson and Rowan Brandenburg won the \$2,500 Audience Spark Award for their venture [Fude Dude](#), an app that chooses a local restaurant based on the user's preferences.

The making of a supply chain

Milano's venture involved setting up an international supply chain himself. When he saw how popular his demos were, he hopped on a plane to Nepal, hired a translator and met with villagers who collect the honey.

"I got food poisoning. I got stung by the biggest bees in the world," he said.

"But I have some good relationships with the villagers. We were eating the honey in the village together."

Then he drove nine hours to Katmandu to set up the supply chain.

"It took a lot of iteration with batches failing, but over time I built up cold-chain logistics to control this and other variables to establish a replicable process to bring it to the United States," he said.

Milano said the \$100,000 funding comes at a good time for Amryth. Earlier this month, he manufactured 26,000 cans and had already sold 20% of that by the day of the Inferno Cup.

"I'm realizing I need to put the next order in now in order to not sell out and continue growing," he told the judges.

He sells [Amryth](#) on his website for \$40 for a four-pack, with discounts for bundling. He hopes to sell to major retailers within the next year.

Milano said the villagers in Nepal are excited by the venture.

"I'm paying them more than anybody else to secure the most potent stuff because I'm selling it to such a large market. I'm putting a lot of money into their communities, and they're really happy about that," he said.

Eyes on the prize

The \$100,000 prize is “life changing,” according to last year’s winner. The Inferno Cup event included a video talk from Sandul Gangodagamage, a computer science major at ASU and founder of [Legion Platforms](#), a multiplayer gaming platform that can be accessed with slow internet speeds.

“If I were to cover all of our achievements over the past one year, it would take too much time, so I’ll sum it up in three. The key milestones were doubling our user base, building and releasing 40 new games, and expanding our games in 20 new territories and countries across the world, which is a big achievement. And that’s all possible because I won the Inferno Cup last year,” he said.

This year’s other student ventures were:

Caleb Manzar, GCU: [Vinylsensation](#), a lighting system for record turntables that syncs to the music

Ahlten Sencan, NAU: Peak, a task-management app for neurodiverse students

Brook Quinzi, Jane Hall, Gavin Tepas and Steven Raizer, UA: Barricade Blinds, a window covering for schools and institutions that drops down and blocks bullets

Safiya Tarazi and Kian Sadat, UA: [Ampira](#), a hearing device that collects cochlear data and connects to a telehealth platform

Julie Hampton, Phoenix College: My Borgo, a digital platform for crowdfunding to buy real estate in Italy

One of the competition judges was Gregg Brewster, an ASU alum, member of the Arizona Board of Regents and recent retiree from a career in health care performance. He told the teams to keep refining their startups.

“Focus on this wonderful program and don’t think you’re a Grand Canyon away,” he said.

“Some of you are right there to get your model funded and moving forward.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Logan Milano (left), winner of the Inferno Invitational Startup Cup, poses with Joy Griffen, faculty director of venture development for the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, on Thursday, May 14, at Skysong, the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center. Milano was awarded \$100,000 for his startup venture Amryth, which makes a "relaxation and focus" drink from a rare honey in Nepal. Photo by Quinton Kendall/ASU Knowledge Enterprise

Gallery



Attendees gather at the start of the Inferno Invitational Startup Cup held May 14 at ASU Skysong. The pitch competition included entrepreneurial teams from ASU, Northern Arizona University, the University of Arizona, Grand Canyon University and Phoenix College.



Johnathan Lok, a PhD student in robotics and autonomous systems, explains his startup, ClearCast, during the Invitational Startup Cup pitch competition held May 14 at ASU Skysong. ClearCast is a network for first responders that coordinates autonomous drones to search, locate and assist missing people.



New ASU graduate Logan Milano explains his startup venture, Amryth, to the judges during the Inferno Invitational Startup Cup. Milano took home the top prize of \$100,000 to help fund his venture.



Friends of Inferno Invitational Startup Cup winner Logan Milano celebrate his victory during the event held May 14 at ASU Skysong.