

Mastering the BJCP Exam

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Agenda

- Goals of the BJCP Exam
- BJCP Exam Format
- How to Prepare for the Exam
- Mastering the Written and Tasting Sections
- How the BJCP Exam is Graded
- Surviving the Exam Day
- Resources

BJCP Goals

Stated BJCP Purpose:

- Promote Beer Literacy
- Promote the Appreciation of Real Beer
- Recognize Beer Tasting and Evaluation Skills

Alternate Definition:

The BJCP is not a homebrew or other type of club. It also is not a publishing house. It has no paid staff. The BJCP performs the following tasks:

- Certifies judges: develops tests, administer tests, certifies to the world that you know how to judge beer.
- Tracks judge experience growth by using a point system. Provides updated information to judges.
- Develops style guidelines: the common language of beer evaluation.
- Sanctions competitions: assures those who enter that their beers will be judged fairly and competently in a proven, standardized manner. Develops score sheets and competition rules.

BJCP Exam Goals

- Provide a common method for testing beer and brewing knowledge and the ability to judge beers in a competition setting
- Provide structured feedback to prospective judges to allow for further study and growth
- Provide legitimacy to the BJCP rank system

To Do Well on the Exam, you must have:

- Good practical judging skills
- Sound knowledge of beer styles and brewing processes
- The ability to prove it!

BJCP Exam Format: Overview

- Three hour, closed book exam
- Ten essay questions, worth 70% of total score
- Four exam beers, worth 30% of total score
- Written Portion
 - ◆ One question on BJCP and basic brewing skills
 - ◆ Four technical questions
 - ◆ Five beer style questions
- Tasting Portion
 - ◆ Judge beers as in competition, but no references
 - ◆ Beers may be homebrew, commercial, blended, doctored, or mis-categorized

BJCP Exam Format: Specifics

- **Q1 is always the same:**
 - (a) In one page or less, describe the purpose of the BJCP and outline the judging levels and their requirements.
 - (b) *Short answer only—no more than one sentence for each*—What are five primary reasons for boiling wort and how does the brewer achieve these objectives?
- **Q3 is always an all-grain recipe**
- **Q5 is always a “beer characteristics” troubleshooting question**
- **Q6 is always a “three cities” beer styles question**
- **Q7 is always an ingredients question**
- **Q9 is always a troubleshooting question**
- **The other four questions are always beer style questions: differentiate beers, describe a family of beers, discuss flavor and aroma characteristics, identify a set of beers based on a common ingredient, technique or country**

How to Prepare for the Exam

“Knowledge is Power” – Sir Francis Bacon

- Review Study Guide and recommended materials
- Understand Exam format
- Practice sample questions; time yourself
- Consider forming a study group
- Get practical judging experience, particularly with BJCP judges (gain scoring calibration)

Strategies for Completing the Exam

- Written
 - ◆ Read and understand the question
 - ◆ Identify key requested elements
 - ◆ Prioritize facts
 - ◆ Present information
- Tasting
 - ◆ Understand the style
 - ◆ Evaluate the beer
 - ◆ Complete the score sheet

Mastering the Written Section (1)

- Understand Beer Style Question Formats:
 - ◆ Describe and differentiate <style family, two related style families, or a list of styles>.
 - ◆ Describe and differentiate <three or four> <members of a style family, beers from a certain country, beers with a common ingredient, beers with a common brewing style>.
 - ◆ Identify, describe and give commercial examples of a major beer style commonly associated with: <list of three cities>
 - ◆ Describe and differentiate the flavor and aroma characteristics of the following beer styles: <list of three beers>

Mastering the Written Section (2)

- Know how to formulate all-grain recipes
 - ◆ Plan ahead. Assume 5 gallon batches. Calculate quantities (e.g. 10 lbs grain = 1.054 OG, 1 AAU = 3.5 IBUs)
 - ◆ Use proper ingredients and techniques (historical accuracy with the style)
 - ◆ Keep the recipes simple, and within midpoints of style definitions
- Understand troubleshooting common brewing faults
 - ◆ Know causes, controls, relationship to certain styles
- Understand each phase of the brewing process
 - ◆ Know why each step is done, and how it can be controlled
- Understand the main ingredients in beer
 - ◆ Know how ingredients affect the finished product
 - ◆ Know why different ingredients would be selected

Common Mistakes: Written

- Not answering all aspects of the question. Incomplete. Non-responsive.
- Answering a different question than that which was asked. Providing detail that doesn't contribute to your score. Providing irrelevant information.
- Failing to differentiate styles when asked.
- Not providing commercial examples or style parameters.
- Writing too much on certain answers and not enough on others (time management?).
- Providing weak or minimal answers. Failing to demonstrate depth of knowledge.

Mastering the Tasting Section

- Three main steps:
 - ◆ Identify and quantify your perceptions (if unsure, say so); be thorough in identifying each component of flavor, aroma, etc.
 - ◆ Assess how well they fit style requirements. Identify stylistic (recipe) and process (brewing) faults. Make value judgments.
 - ◆ Provide suggestions to the brewer on any identified faults. Avoid making too many assumptions (e.g. all-grain brewer). Provide conditional suggestions, if possible.
- Write out full and complete score sheets. Try to avoid leaving excessive whitespace. Write legibly.
- Use clear, descriptive language. Don't use vague words like "good" or "nice" to describe beer characteristics (e.g. "good color").
- Make sure your scores add up correctly.

Common Mistakes: Tasting

- Using vague, imprecise language
- Making too many assumptions about the beers
- Not understanding the styles
- Not providing feedback when faults are identified
- Not fully assessing the beers
- Leaving several blank lines
- Scoring not aligned with comments

How the Exam is Graded

- Written (70%)
 - ◆ Each question is worth 10 points
 - ◆ Partial credit given, no bonus points for exceptional answers
 - ◆ Omitting required information results in mandatory deductions
 - ◆ Scores given on each question align to judging ranks
 - ◆ Weak or incomplete answers score lower
- Tasting (30%)
 - ◆ Scoring Accuracy (20%), 9/20 is lowest score, though.
 - ◆ Perception Comments (20%)
 - ◆ Descriptive Ability (20%)
 - ◆ Feedback (20%)
 - ◆ Completeness/Communication (20%)
 - ◆ Scores also align with judging ranks

Example Answers

Tip: Make Every Word Count!

Q: Discuss the following brewing techniques. How do they affect the beer? (a) adding gypsum, (b) fining, (c) krauesening.

A1: a. Adding gypsum (popular brewing salt addition). Serves to adjust the PH of the water used to brew with. Proper PH should be between 5.2 - 5.7. Brewing salts can be used to mimic traditional brewing waters with gypsum - one can "burtonize" the water to simulate that of Burton-on-Trent good for English Pale Ales, as it accentuates the hops, bitterness and flavor.
b. Fining - using additives (fish guts) one can clear their beer. Finings are most well known with English Bitters. Cask conditioned ales are fined i.e. cleared during stillage prior to serving. The result is a beautiful (clear) beer upon dispense.
c. Krauesening - the act of adding young beer to mature beer to carbonate the finished product. When your beer has finished fermenting one can add krauesen of young not fully fermented beer to the main beer. The result is a renewed fermentation that can serve to carbonate the beer and/or bottle condition it.

158 words, Score: 7/10

A2: a. adding gypsum accomplishes 2 things: increasing Ca^{++} and SO_4^{--} ; Calcium will help yeast metabolism in proper levels, and also allows the wort to acidify. It is also critical to proper enzyme function. Sulfate lends a soft edge to hop bitterness by affecting alpha-acid extraction and creating a synergistic perception effect.
b. Finish is the addition of kettle finings (Irish moss) to coagulate proteins to clarify beer. It may also be carried out post-fermentation (Isinglass, Bentonite, Polyclar) to help precipitate tannins and/or proteins that may cause haze, or even flavor instability.
c. Krauesening is the addition of a portion of actively fermenting wort to a wort that has finished fermenting. It is used chiefly as a means of providing "natural" carbonation. It also reduces residual diacetyl and may contribute acetaldehyde ("green" beer character) in the finished beer.

138 words, Score: 10/10

Tips on Surviving the Exam Day

“Fear is the Mind Killer” – Dune

- Time is of the essence. Don't go overboard on any one question. Bring a watch. Keep track of time.
- Focus on the main points in your answers. You can't write as much as you know, so prioritize.
- Outline answers (bullets), use tables, use short phrases.
- Write legibly. Don't irritate the graders.
- Be comfortable. Get plenty of rest. Wear comfortable clothes. Prepare yourself for tasting (don't eat a heavy, spicy, or oily breakfast; brush your teeth). If noise bothers you, consider bringing earplugs.
- Bring a comfortable pen. You'll get hand cramps.
- Answer easy questions first. Write them out quickly and move on.
- Cram if necessary. If you cram anything, cram commercial examples and style parameters. Write down your crammed data on scratch paper first; you will forget it quickly. Better: know it cold.

Resources

- BJCP Web Site: <http://www.bjcp.org>
- BJCP Study Guide
- BJCP Style Guide
- Beer Styles: Any Michael Jackson book, AHA Style Guide series, Roger Protz books, old Brewing Techniques articles, Zymurgy articles
- Technical: Noonan's New Brewing Lager Beer, Korzonas' Homebrewing Vol 1, Dave Miller's Homebrewing Guide, Palmer's How to Brew, Fix's Principles of Brewing Science
- Recipe Formulation: Daniels' Designing Great Beers
- BJCP or AHA sanctioned competitions