

JUDGING BEER

A primer for new beer judges

STEPS TO PREPARE YOURSELF

- Relax, this isn't rocket surgery
- Eat a good meal before judging but avoid spicy and/or heavily spiced foods
- Avoid perfumes and colognes
- Refrain from smoking before judging
- Brush your teeth and floss - this also makes your dentist happy
- If you know the style of beer/cider/mead you will be judging, review the BJCP Style Guide

EVALUATING BEER

- Provide feedback to the brewer on how well their beer represents the style
- Help the brewer understand how to improve their beer
 - Note off flavors
 - Areas where flavors, aromas, carbonation, mouthfeel, etc. can be improved
- Tell the brewer what you liked about their beer
- Don't assume processes
 - You don't know how the beer was produced
- Be fair in your comments
- Write as much as you can
- Don't be a smart-ass

THE SCORESHEET

- 50 total points are available to the beer
- Five characteristics are evaluated
 - Aroma - 12 points
 - Appearance - 3 points
 - Flavor - 20 points
 - Mouthfeel - 5 points
 - Overall Impression - 10 points
- Scoresheet Help
 - Descriptor Definitions
 - Scoring Guide is available at the bottom - paper version
 - Each characteristic lists what you should comment on in your evaluation

JUDGING STEPS

- Prepare the score sheet
 - Paper score sheets - fill out the top portion carefully entering the entry ID and style
 - Digital score sheets - double check entry ID and style
- Inspect the bottle
 - Note fill level, clarity, sediment and other signs of problems
- Pour the beer
 - Generate a good head
 - Be careful to not disturb sediment - Hefeweizens excluded
- Smell the beer
 - Swirl and warm the beer with your other hand over the top of the cup
 - Sniff several times for initial impressions and record them
 - Don't assign a score yet

JUDGING STEPS - CONTINUED

- Visually inspect the beer
 - Examine beer color, beer clarity, head retention, head color and texture
 - Record observations and assign a score
- Smell the beer again
 - Note changes and record from the initial impressions
 - Don't assign a score yet
- Taste the beer
 - Move the beer around your whole mouth, swallow and exhale through your nose
 - Record your impressions
 - Don't assign a score yet
- Evaluate mouthfeel
 - Record your observations and assign a score

JUDGING STEPS - CONTINUED

- Record your overall impression of the beer
 - Relax
 - Smell the beer again
 - Taste the beer again
 - Consider where the beer belongs in the score range
 - Assign scores to the Aroma and Flavor sections
 - Use the Overall section to adjust to your final score
 - Comment on what you found right with beer and ways for the brewer to improve their beer
- Check any descriptor definitions that apply
- Discuss the beer and your evaluations with the other judge(s)
 - Adjust scores within 5-7 points
- Complete the Stylistic Accuracy, Technical Merit and Intangibles scales

SCORING GUIDANCE

- Outstanding (45-40) – Definite second round contender
 - World class example of the style – you'd pay for this beer
- Excellent (38-44) – Possible second round contender
 - These are beers that closely match the style guide – you'll finish the beer
- Very Good (30-37) – Might make the next round but likely won't place
 - Good representation of the style with minor flaws – you'd probably finish the beer
- Good (21-29) – Help the brewer improve their beer
 - Good representation of the style, but with significant flaws – you might finish the beer
- Fair (14-20) – Lowest I'd score a beer
 - Misses the mark on style, has significant flaws – you won't finish this beer
- Problematic (13 or lower) – BLECH
 - Significant flaws, undrinkable – you'll wish you didn't have to drink any of this

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

- Be Considerate
 - When evaluating a particularly bad beer, refrain from making loud comments. Remember the brewer may be judging beers at the next table.
 - Avoid derogatory comments or attempts to be funny in your written evaluation of the beer.
- Be Yourself
 - Write your impressions of the beer's attributes the best that you can.
 - If you can't taste or smell something that the other judge can, don't write it down. We each have different levels of sensitivity to compounds in beer.
- **BE SAFE!**
 - **If you find that you have over indulged during a session, get a ride home.**

MORE RESOURCES

- BJCP Style Guides - [BJCP Style Guidelines – Beer Judge Certification Program](#)
- BJCP Score Sheet - [SCP_BeerScoreSheet.pdf \(bjcp.org\)](#)
- BJCP Judge Instructions - [SCP_JudgeInstructions.pdf \(bjcp.org\)](#)
- BJCP Beer Faults - [Beer_faults.pdf \(bjcp.org\)](#)
- BJCP Special Ingredients Descriptions - [Special Ingredients Descriptions – Beer Judge Certification Program \(bjcp.org\)](#)

CHARACTERISTICS - AROMA

- Malt characteristics
 - Grainy, Toasty, Nutty, Biscuit, Wheaty/Doughy, Bready, Caramel, Toffee, Melanoidin, Chocolate, Coffee, Roasty, Burnt
- Hop characteristics
 - Citrus, Floral, Fruity, Herbal, Earthy, Woody, Grassy, Spicy, Perfumy, Resiny, Piney, Stale/Cheesy
- Ester characteristics
 - Fruity, Tropical, Vanilla, Apple, Pear, Sulphur, Earthy, Spicy, Cherry, Berry, Dark Fruits (Prune, Raisin), Horse Blanket, Barnyard, Banana, Clove
- Other Aromatics

CHARACTERISTICS - APPEARANCE

- Color characteristics
 - Pale, Straw, Golden, Amber, Brown, Black
 - Each of the above have ranges from light to dark
- Clarity characteristics
 - Brilliantly Clear, Clear, Cloudy, Hazy
- Head characteristics
 - Full, Medium, Low
 - Head retention, short, long lasting
 - Colors range from white to tan
 - Density of the head - fine bubbles, coarse bubbles

CHARACTERISTICS - FLAVOR

- Malt characteristics
 - Grainy, Toasty, Nutty, Biscuit, Wheaty/Doughy, Bready, Caramel, Toffee, Melanoidin, Chocolate, Coffee, Roasty, Burnt
 - Malt flavors can be complex
- Hop characteristics
 - Citrus, Floral, Fruity, Herbal, Earthy, Woody, Grassy, Spicy, Perfumy, Resiny, Piney, Stale/Cheesy
 - Bitterness level - High, Medium, Low
 - Flavor of Hops - High, Medium, Low
- Fermentation characteristics
 - Includes flavors from the esters and alcohol
- Balance
 - Malt focused, Balanced, or Hop focused
- Finish/Aftertaste
 - Malty, Bitter, Dry, Semi-sweet, Sweet

CHARACTERISTICS - MOUTHFEEL

- Body
 - Full, Medium, Light, Thin
- Carbonation
 - Effervescent, Full, Medium, Low, Flat
- Warmth – if present
 - Range of warmth
- Creaminess
 - Smoothness or Creaminess of the beer depends on carbonation and body
- Astringency – if present
 - Drying or puckering feeling in your mouth

CHARACTERISTICS - OVERALL

- This is where you tell the brewer what you liked about the beer
- Give suggestions on what would make the beer better or match the style better
 - Note flaws or off-flavors that impacted your scoring of the beer