



Brussels Beer Challenge

HOW TO BECOME A JUDGE AT BRUSSELS BEER CHALLENGE

There is a big difference between drinking a beer and tasting a beer professionally. While drinking a beer, the focus is on quenching thirst and enjoyment. Whether a person enjoys a particular beer is a matter of personal taste and circumstances. In a busy noisy pub together with friends at the bar, it basically matters less which beer one drinks. The social interaction takes precedence over the quality and taste of the beer. In a specialised beer pub, one goes in search of a specific beer with a particular flavour. Enjoying the beer is paramount.

While professionally tasting a beer, it comes down to describing the beer objectively without personal value judgements. This requires, knowledge, training and experience.

Off course, beer tasting is fun. Even beer judging is fun, but it's a real serious job conducted by qualified professionals.



ABOUT THE BRUSSELS BEER CHALLENGE

The Brussels Beer Challenge, the first professional beer competition in Belgium, was created by BeComev (Beer Communications & Events) under the leadership of Luc De Raedemaeker and Thomas Costenoble in 2012 in response to the growing interest in beer culture.

The first edition of the Brussels Beer Challenge took place in 2012 at La Bourse in Brussels. Since then, the event has moved regularly and expanded to become one of the world's most important and prestigious competitions.

The Brussels Beer Challenge offers a unique opportunity for brewers from across the globe to compete with the finest Belgian beers.

PASSION STATEMENT BRUSSELS BEER CHALLENGE

- 1.To facilitate the promotion and advancement of good quality beers.
- 2.To encourage production, promote sensible drinking and contribute to the expansion of the culture of beer as an important part of our civilization.
- 3.To create public awareness and present to the public the typical features of beers produced around the world, and act as a showcase for the latest beer trends.
- 4.To help consumers select the finest beers by creating a quality endorsement/hallmark to assist them in making educated choices in a confusing marketplace.
- 5.To educate the consumer about the quality and diversity of beer styles and breweries around the world.

HEDONIC vs PROFESSIONAL JUDGING

Nobody is interested if you like or dislike a beer at the judging table. Your opinion doesn't matter. Even the fact if a beer brings you 'joy/pleasure' (hedonism is the Greek word for pursuit of joy/pleasure) doesn't matter.

Beer judging is about being objective and neutral and judge each beer against his technical quality and style. This is also the main reason that beers are tasted in a blind way during professional competitions.

The personal skills and experience of a judge obtained by education, travel, reading, studying, tasting beers, ... are off course a big asset and added value.

HEDONIC JUDGING	PROFESSIONAL JUDGING
Subjective	Objective
Biased	Neutral/open-minded
Emotional	Impassive

TECHNICAL QUALITIES

Each professional judge should be able to detect the most common off flavours (see below) in beer. However not all (wo)men are created equal and even the most experienced judges have blind spots. This is when a person has difficulties detecting a specific flavour. Everybody has different sensitivity levels or thresholds to certain substances. It's important to know your weak spots and tandem with your co-judges to overcome this issue. This is the main reason why beer judging is teamwork.

Also, not all beers are created equal. Some substances are considered as an off flavour in a certain beer style where the same substance is an asset in another beer style. 4-vinylguaiacol is wanted in certain Belgian ales but is absolute an off flavour in pilsner.

OFF FLAVOUR	DESCRIPTION
Acetaldehyde	Green apple
Acetobacter	Vinegary
Butyric acid	Baby vomit
Diacetyl	Butter
Dimethyl sulfide/DMS	Canned corn, cooked vegetables
Light struck	Shunk
Mercaptan	Rotten vegetables
Metallic	Metal, blood
Oxidation	Paper, cardboard
Phenolic	Spicy
Sulfur	Rotten eggs, burnt matches

STYLE GUIDELINES

Beer styles are defined by set characteristics including flavour profile, colour, alcohol by volume, as well as any special techniques and ingredients used. Guidelines are used to accurately judge a beer.

The most famous beer style guidelines are the guidelines published by the '[Beer Judge Certification Program](#)' and by '[Brewers Association](#)'.

The Brussels Beer Challenge uses his own style guidelines based on international standards and reviewed by subject matter experts and brewers.

The BBC style guidelines are benchmarked every year against:

- BJCP style guidelines
- BA style guidelines
- European Beer Star style guidelines

JUDGING ENVIRONMENT, PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

The judging panels are seated in a well aired, well lit and quiet hall where entry is prohibited to any person not directly involved with the judging sessions. Where possible the temperature is kept between 18°C and 22°C. Smoking and eating is not allowed. Perfume, aftershave and strong deodorant are banned.

The use of private phones, tablets or laptops is not allowed during the tasting sessions.

Each beer in competition is blind tasted by a minimum of 4 beer experts.

Beers in competition are evaluated according to their ability to meet the BBC style guideline criteria.

The Beers are served to the judges in a homogenous successive set of samples. These series are examined in a rational order decided upon by the organizing committee

To assist to the judging process each judge has the following available:

- Crackers
- Fresh water

Each judge table panel functions under the authority of a chairman appointed by the BBC, who is responsible for the smooth flowing of the tasting, checks the quality of beers served and the filling out of the score sheets and eventual attribution of points.



A BBC tasting glass is used by each judge

All judges use the same evaluation form provided by the Brussels Beer Challenge.

TASTING SHEET				
CONTEST	DATE	JURY	TASTER	TASTER NUMBER
CATEGORY			FLIGHT NUMBER	SAMPLE



CHARACTERISTICS		
APPEARANCE	Colour Clarity Foam Foam stability	<input type="checkbox"/> Straw <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow <input type="checkbox"/> Gold <input type="checkbox"/> Amber <input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/> Brown <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Cloudy <input type="checkbox"/> Opaque <input type="checkbox"/> Clear <input type="checkbox"/> Brilliant <input type="checkbox"/> Coarse <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Fine <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Collapsing <input type="checkbox"/> Ring <input type="checkbox"/> Thin Layer <input type="checkbox"/> Thick layer
	COMMENTS	
AROMAS	Malt Hops Yeast Others	<input type="checkbox"/> Grainy <input type="checkbox"/> Bready <input type="checkbox"/> Caramel <input type="checkbox"/> Roast <input type="checkbox"/> Spicy <input type="checkbox"/> Herbal <input type="checkbox"/> Fruity <input type="checkbox"/> Citrus <input type="checkbox"/> Floral <input type="checkbox"/> Resiny <input type="checkbox"/> Woody <input type="checkbox"/> Estery <input type="checkbox"/> Phenolic <input type="checkbox"/> Sulphury
	COMMENTS	
FLAVOUR & BODY	General characteristics Mouthfeel Carbonation Aftertaste	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweet <input type="checkbox"/> Bitter <input type="checkbox"/> Sour <input type="checkbox"/> Salty <input type="checkbox"/> Umami <input type="checkbox"/> Astringent <input type="checkbox"/> Mouth watering <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Coating <input type="checkbox"/> Cloying <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Lively <input type="checkbox"/> Same as taste <input type="checkbox"/> New flavours <input type="checkbox"/> Short <input type="checkbox"/> Long
	COMMENTS	
TECHNICAL QUALITY	Major faults Balance Drinkability	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
	COMMENTS	
CATEGORY	Appropriate for category	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough <input type="checkbox"/> Too much
	COMMENTS	
FEEDBACK FOR THE BREWERS		
		SCORE
		/50

45 - 50 = Outstanding: World-class example of category. | **38 - 44 = Excellent:** Exemplifies category well, requires minor fine-tuning. | **30 - 37 = Very good:** Generally within category parameters, some minor flaws. | **21 - 29 = Good:** Misses the mark on category and/or minor flaws. | **14 - 20 = Fair:** Off flavours/aromas or major category deficiencies. | **00 - 13 = Problematic:** Major off flavours and aromas dominate. Hard to drink.

© Becomev

DISTRIBUTION OF AWARDS

Judges are responsible to distribute (or not) awards to the beers that have received the highest scores.

- A **gold medal** is a world class beer that accurately exemplifies the specified style, displaying the proper balance of taste, aroma and appearance.
- A **silver medal** is an excellent beer that may vary slightly from style parameters while maintaining close adherence to the style and displaying excellent taste, aroma, and appearance.
- A **bronze medal** is a beer with no faults, displaying clear quality features and definite balance.

PERSONAL COURTESY DURING JUDGING

It's very important how you behave as a person/judge during judging.

- No smoking during or before judging
- No parfum or aftershave
- No loud conversation during judging
- No use of phones or laptops during judging
- No criticism of the beers
- Leave your ego out home
- Be helpful to newbies and less experienced judges
- Be a team player

JUDGE SELECTION & APPLICATION

The BBC team will select judges from a list of internationally recognized press consultants, industry suppliers and writers. These individuals have been selected on the basis of:

1. Industry and peer recognition
2. Knowledge of beer styles and the brewing process; flavor perception
3. Sensory training and prior judging or beer evaluation experience
4. Judging demeanor

You can apply by sending your extended CV (in English) and five references to Luc de Raedemaeker @ luc.deraedemaeker@becomev.com