

# Mastering the BJCP Exam

## A BJCP Exam

## Prep Lecture

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# BJCP Exam goals

- 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

# What is the BJCP?

★ 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.

# Goals of the Exam:

- ✦ Provides a common method for testing beer and brewing knowledge and the ability to judge beers in a competition setting
- ✦ Provides structured feedback to prospective judges to allow for further study and growth
- ✦ Provides 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 (communication skills)!

# BJCP Exam Format: Overview

## Three hour, closed book exam

- ✦ Written Portion worth 70% of total score
  - ✦ True / False, Fill in and 9 Essay questions
- ✦ Tasting Portion worth 30% of total score
  - ✦ Judge 4 beers as in competition, but no references. *Beers may be homebrew, commercial, blended, doctored, or mis-categorized*

# Exam Format is Always the Same!

- ✱ A fill in the blanks question about
  - ✱ Primary purpose of the BJCP
  - ✱ Judge levels and requirements (table)
- ✱ T/F section on judge procedures
- ✱ An all-grain recipe
- ✱ A “beer characteristics” troubleshooting question
- ✱ A “three cities” beer styles question
- ✱ An ingredients question
- ✱ A troubleshooting question
- ✱ Four 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



## Part 2: Judging Process & Ethics

For the following 15 questions circle the "T" if the statement is true or circle the "F" if the statement is false. Each question is worth one third of a point or, in total, the 15 questions are worth 5 of the 100 points possible on the essay portion.

1. T F When your flight has finished, it is OK to visit other flights still in progress to see how beers you have entered are faring.
2. T F The head judge at the table has sole responsibility for completing the Cover Sheets for beers in each flight.
3. T F It is a good idea to take a decongestant prior to a judging event to increase your sensitivity to the aromas of beer.
4. T F If possible, there should be at least one BJCP-ranked judge in every flight.
5. T F Complete judging of one entry before moving on to the next entry.
6. T F When you suspect an entry has been placed in the wrong flight based on the style being judged, you should consult with the judge director or competition organizer.
7. T F Pour each entry in a manner that gives it its optimum appearance, keeping in mind that some entries may be over- or under-carbonated.
8. T F After discussing the initial scores, judges should adjust their final scores to be within seven points.
9. T F If judges require more "samples" than one bottle to judge a flight, the "head" judge should ask the steward to request a second bottle from the cellar master.
10. T F If an individual has knowledge of entries and entrants they may not serve as a judge.
11. T F You should use the "Overall Impression" section of the score sheet to comment on how much you enjoyed the entry or provide suggestions for how to improve the beer.
12. T F You should write your full name and judging rank on each score sheet.
13. T F If a beer is a "gusher" or has an unpleasant aroma upon opening, a judge may assign a courtesy score of 13 without tasting and commenting on the characteristics of the beer.
14. T F It is not necessary to offer any feedback for improvement if you score a beer above 40.
15. T F Judges' comments must not include derogatory, rude, and/or snide comments.

# How to prepare

- ★ Review Study Guide and recommended materials
- ★ Understand Exam format
- ★ Practice sample questions; time yourself
- ★ Attend Class!!!!
- ★ 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

# 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 or hedonistic 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%)

- ✦ Partial credit given, no bonus points for exceptional answers. Answer what you know!!
- ✦ Points given for giving required info (see the chart)
- ✦ 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%)

# Example Question

**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  $\text{Ca}^{++}$  and  $\text{SO}_4^{--}$ ; 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

- ★ 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

[WWW.BJCP.ORG](http://WWW.BJCP.ORG)

[Larryh@ironhillbrewery.com](mailto:Larryh@ironhillbrewery.com)

[www.keystonehombrew.com](http://www.keystonehombrew.com)