

BECOMING A BETTER BEER JUDGE

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You know what's cool?

The beer community thrives on helping each other.

What other industry is like that?

How are judges part of this?

Judges help other make better beer through our scoresheets and feedback.

Sad state of things...

Aroma (as appropriate for style)

12 9

Comment on malt, hops, esters, and other aromatics

Slight malt flavor

Mouthfeel (as appropriate for style)

2 / 5

Comment on body, carbonation, warmth, creaminess, astringency, and other palate sensations

Poor

Overall Impression

4 / 10

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

Not a drinkable beer. Not
sure how to tell you
what to improve. Work
on how you brew from top
to bottom

What if...

- ...we all were able to fill out scoresheets as we would want to receive them?
- If we don't, then what's the point?
- Why be the "bad judge"?

What if...

Aroma (as appropriate for style)

4 / 12

Comment on malt, hops, esters, and other aromatics

Initial vegetal pineapple flesh aroma, followed by sweet graininess. Smells like the outside skin of the pineapple skin. Something smells rotted / vegetal. No hop aroma. No coconut.

Appearance (as appropriate for style)

1 / 3

Comment on color, clarity, and head (retention, color, and texture)

Hazy, light yellow beer. Pours w/ a thin wispy head that disappears immediately.

What if...

Flavor (as appropriate for style)

7 /20

Comment on malt, hops, fermentation characteristics, balance, finish/aftertaste, and other flavor characteristics

Initially sweet, pineapple-like, but missing all the acid of pineapples. Mod low musty flavor. Taste is acceptable, but the finish crescendos into this off-putting, stale, musty, rotten vegetable aftertaste. No coconut, unless it's the rotten note in the aftertaste.

What if...

Overall Impression

3 /10

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

Base beer is lost or not well done

Pineapple is oddly sweet & has

none of the typical acids. Coconut

is non-existent and the aftertaste

is off-putting. Try starting w/ making

a proper base beer & then mess w/

the fruit & spice.

Total

17 /50

How do we get there?

Don't give the entrant an opportunity to doubt your feedback

- Assumptions can quickly undermine your efforts

Make yourself understood

- Common problems

How do we get there?

Deliberately improving your:

- Descriptive Ability
- Perception
- Feedback

Improving Descriptive Ability

Going from primary to tertiary descriptors

1. Malty
2. Low grainy maltiness
3. Mod. low grainy malt character with a hint of honey

Improving Descriptive Ability

Going from primary to tertiary

1. Roasty
2. Mod. high roastiness and coffee
3. Mod. high roast w/ mod. low coffee followed by hint of chocolate

Improving Descriptive Ability

Increase your vocabulary!

Increasing your beer lexicon

Really, really think about what you are tasting or smelling

In eating, drinking, cooking, or really anything

Improving Descriptive Ability

- Deliberately drink & read about the beverage
- Write about what you're drinking

Improving Descriptive Ability

Describe everything – even what isn't there

Weissbier with plenty of banana, but no clove

- Say that there's no clove!

Use the helper words at the top of each section

Improving Perception

When taste is subjective, how can you be confident you are “right”?

- Judge with others
- Work on noticing things beyond the initial whiff

Improving Perception

Bad beers are not a 'pass' for not evaluating it

These are the beers that need our help the most!

Overall Impression

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

3 /10

Infected.

Watch sanitation!

Improving Perception

Try new styles, ingredients, & techniques

- Brew styles you aren't familiar with
- Brew with new ingredients
- Try new techniques
- Pay attention when you are cooking
- Branch out to other beverages

Improving Perception

Fairbrother: making 60 varietal traditional meads to learn them

Schramm quote, "You owe it to the people you're going to be judging"

Improving Feedback

Michael Wilcox sums it up well in the Cider & Perry Terminology & Troubleshooting article

- “Where we go wrong is when we start thinking we know exactly what the entrant did and start assuming...”
- “If you write down what you experience without making assumptions or guessing, it is valid and useful to an entrant.”

Exam vs Competition Feedback

- **Exam** feedback is where you “strut your judge feathers”
- **Competition** feedback doesn't need to impress the entrant, but does need to be helpful

Better Competition Feedback

- Make NO assumptions
- ANY assumption could be wrong
- Don't "short-circuit" your thought process

Better Competition Feedback

Overall Impression

6 /10

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

Good start that could use a few tweaks. Mixed ferm. only really presents as the hay-like character, which doesn't really help the beer. So either love it or really go for it. Fruits could also increase to balance better w/ sourness. Also up carb.

Total

32 /50

Better Competition Feedback

Overall Impression

7 /10

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

Really great example of what this style can be. Peach is a bit overripe in the nose, but is less over-ripe in flavor. Hay character, while appropriate in the style, could stand to be a touch lower for balance's sake. Finish is so dry its almost funny - try and back off the total drying sensation for better balance.

Total

38 /50

What if?

Overall Impression

6 /10

Comment on overall drinking pleasure associated with entry, give suggestions for improvement

Good start on this beer w/ a few areas for improvement. Chocolate seems to dominate and leaves roast character diminished - should find a better balance. Green apple in nose may indicate acetaldehyde - find source and correct.

What if, in the end...

- ...our scoresheets were reflective of the helpful beer community?
- Better scoresheets... beer... competition
- Pushing the entire beer community to a better place with better beer

Questions?

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This presentation is an extension of the Beer Judging Exam Training Course that will be debuting soon on the BJCP website.