

Brewing Competitions for Beginners



June University Session 77

Taught by Lord Brian Crawford, Royal Brewer

Overview:

The Basics:

What you will need:

Bare Minimum:

- 12 ounces of each entry, with the container clearly labeled
- List of ingredients for each entry

Highly Encouraged:

- Each entry in a bottle of size and style appropriate to type (see presentation below).
- Documentation including, recipe, processes, and references (see documentation and authenticity bellow).

Competition Process:

Before:

- Details such as time, place, categories being judged, number of entries per person, etc. should be announced prior to the event.
- Have all necessary materials prepared in advance e.g. type documentation, prepare labels
- Taste test your entry before the competition.

During:

Sign In:

- Be sure to sign in ahead of the deadline, also make note if you need to fill out separate forms for each entry or if a blanket form is being used.
- If unsure what category an entry fits in (e.g. braggots) ask judges or place in category in which it will do best.

Judging:

- Judging time should be made known to you when you sign in.
- Often you will be asked to be present for judging to answer questions.
- Typically there are three judges, but there can be more.
- Judges will often collaborate to reach a consensus for a score rather than average three separate scores.

After:

- Be sure to pick up your entries and score sheets.
- If you've done well, the judges may ask if you'd like to have your entry offered to high table.

Etiquette:

- Courtesy is a pillar of the Society, always be polite, whether you are judge, entrant, or onlooker
- Please do not ask for samples of others entries during judging, this applies double if you aren't an entrant yourself. After judging often entries are shared, but this is at the discretion of the entrant who owns the bottle
- If there are a large number of entries, please hold extensive questions to the end, often the judges have a deadline in order to report the results to court. Don't be surprised if they need to move quickly from one entry to another.

The Scoring System:

- The Atlantian Brewer's Guild uses a rubric to help ensure fairness in judging.
- Judge's personal preferences are set aside and entries judged on their own merit.
- The rubric is a living document and is subject to change.
- Currently the rubric has 9 categories that total to 100 possible points.

Categories:

Documentation:

- You should always have at least an ingredients list for food safety reasons.
- Include the process followed, including any measurements taken (e.g. Specific Gravity).
- If using a period recipe include a copy and describe how and why changes were made
- Site all of your sources.

Authenticity:

- Info for this often comes from documentation, without it judges will be hard pressed to give a good score.
- Don't give up on this even if using a modern recipe, citing sources showing period style can bring score up significantly.

Presentation:

- Bottling conventions for Atlantian competitions:
 - Beer: Brown 12oz brown beer bottle with crown cap filled to ~1" below cap.
 - Wine/Mead: 750 ml clear wine bottle with cork filled to ~1" below cork.
 - Cordials: Same as wine/mead, or nice presentation bottle with cork.
- Proper bottle and fill aren't purely cosmetic, they insure proper preservation of the contents.
- Period containers for presentation are great, need to be food grade.
- Labels are easy and can add the extra "wow" for a 10.

Appearance:

- Covers how the beverage itself looks.
- Generally looking for good color, clarity, color consistent with style, lack of sediment
- May also cover type specific aspects of appearance, e.g. head

Aroma/Bouquet:

- Ideally, all ingredients used should be detectable in the aroma.
- Should be free of "funky" smells.
- Should be typical of type (e.g. a stout should smell like a stout).
- Good documentation helps the judges know what to look for.

Alcohol Balance:

- Ideally, should be exemplary of the type.
- Shouldn't have a burn or overpower flavor elements
- Having specific gravity in the documentation is a big help.

Body/Sugar Balance:

- Ideally should be typical to type and should compliment the taste.
- Judged using mouth feel and "legs"
- Certain types (cordials, desert wines) are expected to be thicker.

Taste/Flavor Profile:

- Ideally should be consistent with the style and be complex.
- All ingredients should be detectable in the flavor.
- Score is based on standards for style, not judge preferences.

Overall Impression:

- Judges have the most flexibility with this category
- Place to reward a beverage where all elements compliment or that has an extra "wow"
- Based largely on drink-ability and pleasantness.

Judging Guidelines For Atlantian Brewers' Guild

Documentation:

- 10 pts – Ingredients, Recipe/Process, Citations & Historical Notes, Photocopy of Original Sources
- 9 pts – Ingredients, Recipe/Process, Citations & Historical Notes, No Photocopy of Original Sources
- 8 pts – Ingredients, Recipe/Process, Citations
- 5 pts – Ingredients, Recipe/Process
- 1 pt – Ingredients only
- 0 pts – Nothing

Authenticity

- 15 pts – Period recipe given, and followed exactly, liberties taken only where 'logical'
- 12 pts – Period recipe(s) given, modified extensively
- 8 pts – Modern recipe, evidence of period style presented with citations given
- 4 pts – Modern recipe, evidence of period style presented without citations given
- 0 pts – Recipe from a modern source, no historical relationship given

Presentation:

- 10 pts – Period container or extra 'wow' in presentation (label/bottle/etc)
- 9 pts – Appropriate bottle to type, appropriately sealed, proper fill for style
- 8 pts – Appropriate bottle/seal, fill incorrect (or Grolsch bottle)
- 5 pts – Inappropriate bottle or seal
- 2 pts – Completely modern apparatus (Keg)
- 0 pts – plastic jug with duct tape

Appearance:

- 10 max ...points should be deducted on a 1 to 3 point basis on varying aspects, such as: Color, Head Retention, Carbonation, Clarity, absence of 'floaters'
- 1 for a slight issue in that category, -2 for a major issue, -3 for completely wrong

Aroma/Bouquet:

- 10 pts – Wonderful bouquet to type, everything you expect, bonus aspects as well
- 9 pts – A plain bouquet. Nothing wrong, but nothing impressive either.
- 8 pts – Something 'off'; however, inability to detect exactly what
- 7 pts – One distinct off odor
- 4 pts – Two distinct off odors; lack of correct bouquet elements
- 1 pt – Multiple distinct off odors; no correct bouquet elements
- 0 pts – Completely rank

Alcohol Balance:

- 10 pts – Perfect to type
- 8 pts – Balance slightly off, hot or low
- 5 pts – Balance noticeably off, very hot, or not there at all
- 0 pts – Balance completely gone. To one, undesired, extreme

Body/Sugar Balance:

- 10 pts – Perfect to type and taste
- 8 pts – Slight imbalance, but not enough to adversely affect enjoyment of beverage
- 5 pts – Imbalanced to the point of affecting enjoyment
- 0 pts – Maple syrup or water consistency

Taste/Flavor Profile:

- 10 pts – Decently complex, no off flavors, flavors you expect, pleasant
- 9 pts – Nothing wrong, flavors you expect, but no complexity
- 8 pts – Something ‘slightly off’, but so small that you cannot place it
- 5 pts – A distinct off-flavor that is very noticeable
- 0 pts – Unable to be consumed

Overall Impression:

(NOTE: While these scores may be more flexible due to judges’ discretion, this category should always be scored with the judge putting aside their own preferences in drink, and judging the drink independent of their own likes/dislikes)

- 15 pts – An amazing beverage, everything right, nothing wrong, fit for King/Queen
- 12 pts – A solid beverage, quite enjoyable, would ‘buy it if available’
- 8 pts – A decent beverage. Potable.
- 4 pts – Beverage needs work before it would be drunk
- 0 pts – Beverage is unable to be consumed