

## How to Become a BJCP Judge by Mike Heniff (Grand Master II judge)

**About the BJCP:** the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) was started in 1985 as program to certify judges for homebrew competitions. Today the BJCP certifies and ranks beer judges through an examination and monitoring process, sanctions competitions, and provides educational resources for current and future judges. As of 2014, the BJCP recognizes over 4500 judges in its program.

The **purpose** of the Beer Judge Certification Program is to:

- Encourage knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the world's diverse beer, mead, and cider styles;
- Promote, recognize, and advance beer, mead, and cider tasting, evaluation, and communication skills; and
- Develop standardized tools, methods, and processes for the structured evaluation, ranking and feedback of beer, mead, and cider.

The BJCP **website** has a ton of great information about judging and is located at: [www.bjcp.org](http://www.bjcp.org)

The judge certification **process for new judges**:

- First, an on-line exam must be passed. The **BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination** consists of 200 multiple choice, true-false, and multiple answer questions with a time limit of 60 minutes. The key reference for the style-related questions is the BJCP Style Guidelines, and prospective judges are encouraged to become very familiar with this document before attempting the entrance exam. The cost of this exam is \$10 (refer to BJCP website for current cost) and registration is located at <http://bjcp.coursewebs.com/>.
  - References:
    - BJCP Style Guidelines: <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.php>
    - BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide: [www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP_Study_Guide.pdf)
- Second, a tasting exam must be passed. The **BJCP Beer Judging Examination** is closed book and requires the judging of six beers as if one were at a competition, with the scoresheets evaluated on the basis of scoring accuracy, perception, descriptive ability, feedback and completeness. Exams are held regularly across the US (and sporadically outside the US) but finding a seat in the exam can be difficult as the exam seats fill very fast. It is encouraged that you contact the exam administrator early to hold your seat. Oftentimes, there are last minute cancellations so keep in contact with the exam administrator of your desired time/place in case any last minute openings become available. The tasting exam costs \$40 for first new judges (refer to BJCP website for current cost). Scheduled tasting exams can be accessed at: <http://www.bjcp.org/exams.php>.
  - References:
    - BJCP Style Guidelines: <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.php>
    - BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide: [www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP_Study_Guide.pdf)
    - Additional references are recommended in the BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide

- Finally, to advance to ranks of National and higher, a written examination must be passed. The **BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination** is closed book and consists of two sections. The first section tests familiarity with the BJCP and the judging process, consists of 20 true/false questions about judging and the organization. On the second section there are five essay questions; there are two questions covering beer styles, one is a recipe question, and two questions covering brewing techniques, with the latter focusing on the relationship of ingredients and the brewing process to flavors in the finished beer. This exam is not given regularly; it is denoted as “written proficiency exam” on the BJCP exam schedule site. In 2014, the BJCP started holding quarterly national exams. If you want to sit for a quarterly national exam, it will have to be administrated by an exam grader (contact the BJCP if you need a recommendation for an administrator). The written exam costs \$15 (refer to BJCP website for current cost).
- Additional certifications for meads and ciders (in the near future) can be attained by existing BJCP judges by passing an individual mead or cider exam. These exams are denoted as such on the BJCP exam schedule site.
  - References: <http://www.bjcp.org/mead.php>

Oftentimes, local homebrew clubs or homebrew shops will hold exam study classes. Be sure to contact your local homebrew club or shop to see if/when they hold classes. If you want to study on your own, here are a few additional references to assist you:

- Off-flavor kits: off-flavor kits can be invaluable for learning how to perceive key off-flavors. The BJCP provided off-flavor kits at a cost via <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/kits.php>. Alternatively, an off-flavor kit can be purchased at Siebel Institute of Technology <http://www.siebelinstitute.com/products-a-books/sensory-training-kits> or from FlavorActiv <http://www.flavoractiv.com/craft/>. The BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide describes methods to create beer off-flavors with typical household items but is not as comprehensive or accurate as the kits from Siebel or FlavorActiv.
- Course outlines: a number of training course resources have been put online. A few examples include:
  - <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/examples.php> including [www.bjcp.org/cep/foambicep.pdf](http://www.bjcp.org/cep/foambicep.pdf)
  - <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/index.php>
  - <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/SensoryTraining.pdf>
  - <http://www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCPEXAMForDummies.pdf>
  - <http://www.beerjudgeschool.com/>
  - <http://www.betterbeerscores.com/>

Cheers and Best of Luck!

Officers of the Lone Star Circuit