

Exam Overview and Strategy

BJCP

- The Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) is the world's largest amateur beer judging organization. We use a judging model that compares sensory perceptions to written style guidelines.
- BJCP was formed 26 years ago in order **“to promote beer literacy, the appreciation of real beer and to recognize beer tasting and evaluation skills”**. This is also the answer to the exam's first question. BJCP.com has a wealth of references including the organization's early history. It's definitely worth your effort to mouse around the site.

Class

- The class focuses on helping you prepare for the BJCP exam which is one way the organization recognizes beer tasting and evaluation skills.
- In and out of class you will collect and get comfortable with the knowledge and abilities that are needed for the exam. Knowledge is the style, ingredient and process information that the exam covers. Abilities are study methods and writing skills.
- This effort will help your beer appreciation and brewing skills too. Committing to take the exam is an especially good motivator to learn the material.
- During class, questions are OK anytime.
- There will be suggested reading and writing homework. I realize that some of you are relaxed and will be happy to learn by osmosis and others will be more task oriented than I was when I was in your shoes. Either way, that's OK. It's your hobby.
- If you choose to write practice answers to exam questions I'll grade all of them you email or physically bring in. I'll tell you what rank range (ARCNM) I think the answer earned and, briefly, how it might be improved.

Resources

- Basic references for the class have been identified in the pre class email traffic. How many of you brought them with you today, either as hard or soft copies?
- While you can pass the exam by studying just the three basic references, I encourage you to go beyond them to the online reading list on Carl Townsend's picobrewery.com site and books like the AHA Style Guide series.
- Advanced books like George Fix's and college texts like Lewis, De Clerck, Kunze and Briggs aren't required.
- If you do the suggested reading, try to do it before each class. The presentations will make more sense that way.
- Everyone has their own built in advantage. If you're young, your memory probably still works well, if you're inexperienced, you might be driven and enthusiastic and if you're experienced you may have knowledge that can serve as a base. Whatever you've got, make the most of it.

Demystifying the Exam

- The exam consists of 10 essay questions and the evaluation of four beers as though you were judging at a contest. It is closed book and three hours are allowed for completion.
- When your exam is graded, a composite score is produced that weights essay answers at 70% and scoresheets at 30%. This process gives just about equal credit for each of the 14 tasks.
- Each answer offers a defined amount of credit; extra credit isn't available. Because of this and the time limit, managing your time so that you write the best answer you can on every question is important for your grade to reflect your knowledge. I can't overemphasize this.

- 23 questions may be on the essay exam. They are in the *Study Guide* at various pages depending of the format of the document you're using.
- Essay exams will have 1 BJCP question, 3 Style questions, 1 Classic brewing cities question, 3 Technical questions, 1 all grain recipe and brewing process question and 1 Classic Example scoresheet.
- Knowledge of styles, ingredients and process are required to do well on the taste portion of the exam. We'll spend most of the second class on scoresheet mechanics. This will allow you plenty of time for practice before the exam.
- More than half the essay and most of the taste exam deals with beer styles. So, more than 50% of your study effort should be spent learning the styles.
- We'll cover the general territory of the exam questions in class and will taste most, but not quite all, of the 73 styles (1-19 except 16E plus 22A) that might be on the exam.
- Get organized as early in the process as you can - figure out what has to be done and manage your progress towards completion.
- Practice handwriting answers and scoresheets. The physical action helps your memory, conditions your writing muscles and prepares both parts of you for the exam. Try different writing instruments so you can find a comfortable one. Gel pens.
- One page essay answers can pass at the Recognized or Certified levels. 1 > 1 ½ pages are required for National or Master unless you can communicate really clearly.
- Formulate answers to the questions in your own words, which you're more likely to retain for the exam.
- I won't grade your exams. We never grade exams in our home area to prevent even the appearance of favoritism.
- For the next four months I encourage you to focus your study on the exam. There is a wealth of beer literature and other media available about beer. Your effort on the exam will be diluted if you try to absorb the off topic stuff.

Expectations

- In 26 years, 85% of all exam takers have passed with a grade of 60 or higher. In 2008, the last time Strand sponsored a class, everyone who took the class passed and their grade average was 10 points higher than the national average.
- Expect to succeed. If you attend the classes, do homework and write some practice scoresheets, you can pass the exam at the Recognized level which is 60. More effort and you can pass at 70, the Certified level. If you have a good memory or focused study practices and can produce answers that have depth of content National, at 80, can be achieved.
- The next step, Master is a tall one. 90, the Master level, requires either a big motor or a very focused effort. Few errors are allowed at this level and less than 2% of all exams grade this high.
- At the exam expect at least one question that you will feel unprepared for. Don't panic. Write what you know, leave some space and move on. If there's time available, come back to that answer.
- Also, expect you'll need to pee once. Same response. Don't panic.