Entry Guidance for Brewers and Judges

The World Beer Cup® Style Guidelines define the expected sensory and technical parameters for each competition category. Entrants use these descriptions to select which category best fits their entry, and judges use the same criteria to evaluate beers within that category. Selecting the correct category ensures your entry is judged fairly against other entries of similar style, ingredients, and intent.

Misplacing an entry in the wrong category, especially when it includes specialty ingredients or processes, can result in disqualification (which we want to avoid). To assist, here is practical direction for entrants navigating overlapping or complex style families.

The intent of this section is not to restrict creativity, but to preserve fairness and clarity in judging. While creative and experimental entries are encouraged, producers must enter them with an understanding of how their entry will ultimately be evaluated under the selected style guideline.

When in doubt, review the style definitions carefully or reach out for clarification before entering your beer.

1. How to Select the Correct Category

Step 1: Identify the Base Style

Start by identifying your beer or cider's foundational character, the underlying traditional style that defines its appearance, balance, and fermentation profile. If your beer fits neatly within an existing classic style (e.g., German-Style Pilsner, Belgian-Style Witbier), that's your category.

Step 2: Determine Whether Additional Ingredients or Processes Apply

If your beer includes additional flavoring or ingredients (fruit, spices, chocolate, coffee, nuts, honey, etc.), wood or barrel-aging, mixed fermentation, etc. – review whether these are allowed or expected within that base style:

- If the addition is traditional and within the listed parameters (e.g., orange peel and coriander in Belgian-Style Witbier), stay in that base style.
- If your addition goes beyond what is traditional and/or defined in the guideline (e.g., a Pilsener aged in bourbon barrels or a Kölsch with coconut), instead choose a specialty-style category which allows for that.

Step 3: Match to the Dominant Character

Choose the category that best reflects the beer's primary sensory impression. Examples:

• A chocolate stout with chili peppers should be entered as Chili Beer, because the presence of chili pepper "heat" is the determining factor.

• A pale ale with fruit and coffee might belong in Experimental Beer (rather than strictly "Fruit Beer" or "Coffee Beer") if no single specialty addition dominates.

• A 12% Imperial Stout aged with lactose, chocolate and maple syrup should be entered into a Wood- or Barrel-Aged Dessert Beer category, not Wood- or Barrel-Aged Strong Stout category.

Step 4: Confirm Technical Ranges

Before entering your beers, double-check key parameters such as ABV, IBU, color, and gravity against the defined range for that style. Entries that fall noticeably outside these ranges may be disqualified during judging.

2. Common Misentries and How to Avoid Them

Scenario	Common Mistake	Correct Approach
Chocolate Mole Porter	Entered as Chocolate Beer	Must be entered as Chili Beer — any chili-derived heat or spice requires this category.
Raspberry Coffee Blonde Ale	Entered as Fruit Beer	Should be entered in Multi-Adjunct Beer category, since multiple distinct additions are used and beer does not fit cleanly into Coffee Beer or Fruit Beer categories.
Fruited IPA entered in non-IPA category	Entered as Fruit Beer	Belongs in Specialty IPA, as and IPA-style beer that doesn't adhere to a traditional guideline goes into "Specialty IPA"
Barrel-aged Kölsch	Entered as German-Style Kölsch	Should be Wood- or Barrel-Aged Beer due to added aging character.
Non-Alcohol beer	Entered into standard category	Enter into appropriate Non-Alcohol category (Hoppy for Hoppy Beers, Standard for Classic ales & lagers, Specialty for anything else)

3. Tips to Ensure Proper Entry

• When in doubt, search keywords (e.g., “chili,” “fruit,” “barrel”) in these guidelines to see where each term appears.

• Submit the entry where its dominant trait(s) are expected by the guideline

• Avoid overexplaining ingredients in judging notes unless requested; judges will focus on expected category traits.

• Mixed-ingredient beers (fruit and spice, coffee and chocolate, etc.) generally belong in Experimental or mixed-style categories, unless one flavor characteristic clearly dominates.

• Do not rely on what you call your beer (“stout,” “pale,” “lager”) alone. **Judges never see the name of your beer, so instead, utilize the judging information to your advantage.**

• To maintain the integrity of the competition, staff cannot guide entrants on where to categorize those beers, but if you need clarification on a style category, consult the competition management team early.

4. Notes for Judges

Judges should evaluate each entry within the context of its declared category and description, not personal expectations. If a beer appears to belong in another style and was inappropriately entered, the entry must still be judged according to the guidelines for the declared category with a detailed assessment that relays why the beer is out of specification for that category.