

CANADA BEER CUP JUDGING CATEGORIES

Note: Style descriptions including alcohol contents are provided as general guidelines only. Judges are expected to adjudicate as professionals and, as such, will be afforded a certain degree of latitude in their pronouncements.

Feature Category (1)

Canadian Style Beer

An ale, lager, or mixed fermentation beer possessed of a quality that makes it uniquely Canadian. Must be accompanied by an essay of no fewer than 100 words on what attribute or attributes qualify it for this category.

Pale to Amber Ales (8)

Amber/Irish Style Red Ale

Light amber to reddish-brown in colour. Defined by prominent malt character balanced by light to moderate hopping, with dry-hopping allowed. Caramelly or earthy with some fruitiness drying at least somewhat on the finish. Medium body. 4-7% ABV.

Cream/Golden Ale

Light to medium gold or light amber in colour. Moderate strength with low to moderate hop bitterness and subtle complexity in off-dry to moderately sweet malt profile. Light to medium body. 4-6% ABV.

Pale Lagered Ale/Kölsch Style Ale

Light gold in colour. Dry and aromatic, lightly fruity, with a very soft to moderate hoppiness and light to medium-light weight. Assertive New World hops are not appropriate. Body can be gently creamy, but should also be crisp and refreshing in character. 4.5-5.5% ABV.

North American Amber Ale

Amber in colour and dry to moderately sweet on the palate. Body should be light and can be cereally or grainy; adjunct grains often feature in the flavour profile. Fruitiness is low to mild. 4.5-6% ABV.

Belgian Style Blonde Ale

Light to deep gold in colour. Medium-strong ale with a sweetish, sometimes honeyed aroma, notably fruity and/or floral character, often manifested as stone fruit. Light to mild-moderate spiciness and a dry, warming finish. 6-7.5% ABV.

Belgian Style Tripel or Other Belgian Style Strong Golden Ale

Yellow to amber in colour with dense, compact foam. Aroma should be complex, with spicy and/or fruity notes, low hop character and dry to mild sweetness. Body should be fruity, possibly spicy, and dry with good attenuation. Hop character should be spicy or floral with moderate bitterness. Finish is dry and warming. 7.5-10.5% ABV.

Grisette/Farmhouse Ale

Light gold to light amber in colour. Body is light and refreshing, with low to moderate malt presence and mild to moderate hoppiness from Old World hops. Some wild yeast character and/or oak influence is permitted, even desired, but should integrate well with the other flavours. 3.5-5% ABV but may go slightly higher.

Saison/Bière De Garde

Light to deep gold, occasionally copper in colour. The aroma should have a pronounced peppery/spicy character, with light to moderate fruity notes. Restrained maltiness and sweetness, although the malt in a Bière De Garde may be more pronounced, with mild to moderate hoppiness from Old World hops. Brettanomyces may be present, although not abundant, and spices may be used, but must be in harmony with the other flavours. 4.5-7.5% ABV.

Pale Ale & IPA (8)

English Style Bitter/Best Bitter/ESB

Pale to medium amber or copper in colour. Any style of bitter featuring biscuity malt that shows some sweetness and fruitiness, balanced by moderate hoppiness. Generally bittersweet palate with a dry or off-dry finish. Generally 3.5-6.5% alcohol, but may range slightly higher or lower.

New World Pale Ale

Medium gold to copper or even brown in colour. Lightly malty body with defined hop bitterness resulting from the use of New World hops, especially those of US, Australian or New Zealand origin. Finish is dry and bitter. 4-6% ABV.

Old World Pale Ale

Gold to copper in colour. Light to moderate maltiness and gentle but notable hop character derived typically from UK hop varieties, but may contain German or Czech hops, as well. Medium bodied with a bitter finish. 4.5-6% ABV

IPA of 6% ABV or lower (Traditional)

India pale ale of any style seasoned with hops commonly in use prior to the 21st century, particularly those grown in the UK and US Pacific Northwest. Hop impact on aroma and flavour should be moderate to high and additional seasoning or flavouring is not allowed. Colours vary. Up to 6% ABV.

IPA of 6% ABV or lower (Contemporary)

India pale ale of any style seasoned with hops established since the start of the 21st century, especially those which show pronounced fruity aromas and flavours grown in the US, New Zealand, Australia, and parts of Europe. Hop impact on aroma should be moderate to high and on flavour should be mild to high. Additional seasoning or flavouring is permitted. Colours vary and cloudiness is acceptable. Up to 6% ABV.

IPA of 6.1% to 8% ABV (Traditional)

India pale ale of any style seasoned with hops commonly in use prior to the 21st century, particularly those grown in the UK and US Pacific Northwest. Hop impact on aroma and flavour should be moderate to high and additional seasoning or flavouring is not allowed. Colours vary. 6.1-8% ABV.

IPA of 6.1% to 8% ABV (Contemporary)

India pale ale of any style seasoned with hops established since the start of the 21st century, especially those which show pronounced fruity aromas and flavours grown in the US, New Zealand, Australia, and parts of Europe. Hop impact on aroma should be moderate to high and on flavour should be mild to high. Additional seasoning or flavouring is permitted. Colours vary and cloudiness is acceptable. 6.1-8% ABV.

IPA of 8.1% ABV or greater

Strong India pale ale of any style featuring any sort of hops. Hop impact on aroma and flavour should be moderate to high. Additional seasoning or flavouring is permitted. Colours vary and cloudiness is acceptable. 8.1% ABV and higher.

Dark Ales (8)

Mild Ale

Generally dark brown, although may also be amber in colour. Soft, malt-forward aroma with minimal hop character or pronounced fruitiness. Body is malt-forward, often with chocolate or caramel notes, and very low bitterness. Finish is usually off-dry to dry, but can also be mildly sweet. 3-4.5% ABV.

American Style Brown Ale

Amber to dark brown in colour. Aroma is usually a balance of roasted or chocolaty malt and moderately assertive hop. Flavour should likewise show a balance, although hops may be assertive. Finish should be dryly bitter. 4.5-6.5% ABV.

English Style Brown Ale/Scottish Style 60/- to 80/- Ale

Amber to dark brown in colour. Aroma is malt-forward and sometimes shows dark fruitiness alongside chocolate, mocha, or caramel notes. Hops are for balance only and should not assert themselves over the malty body. Finish should be off-dry to slightly sweet, although can also be very dry. 3.5-5.5% ABV.

English Style Old Ale/Scottish Style Wee Heavy/Scotch Ale

Deep amber to rich and dark brown in colour. Aromas are generally complex, fruity, and malt-forward, with Scottish/Scotch styles showing a richer maltiness and English Old Ale often presenting lighter malt and even mild to moderate hoppiness. Notes of oxidized malt are allowed in Old Ales. Body should be rich, often winey in the case of Old Ale and densely fruity or treacly in the Scotch Ale/Wee Heavy styles. Finish should be dry to off-dry and warming in all cases.

Barley Wine

Medium amber to dark brown in colour. Aroma should show great complexity, whether malt-forward in the British style or hop-forward in the American style. Body should likewise offer great depth with a multitude of flavour notes finishing dry to moderately sweet and very warming. 8-12% ABV, but can range higher or, in some British style examples, lower.

Belgian Style Dubbel

Medium to dark brown in colour. Very malt-dominated in both aroma and flavour with minimal hop presence. Caramel, chocolate, and deep fruitiness tend to define the flavours, with some yeasty spiciness permitted, and good attenuation a plus. Generally 6-8% ABV.

Other Belgian Style Dark Ale

Catch-all category for ales amber to dark brown in colour which do not fit the Dubbel category due to too-prominent hoppiness, spice additions, or some other reason. Broad range of flavours permitted, but some yeast character should be present in the form of spiciness or mild wild yeast influence. Less than 8% ABV.

Belgian Style Strong

Copper to very dark brown in colour. Strongly malt-forward in aroma and flavour, with hops used principally for drying rather than bittering. Must be rich and very complex. Spice and herb additions are allowed, but should be in balance with the malt character. 8% ABV and greater.

Altbier/Sticke (Strong) Altbier/Dark Lagered Ale

Amber to medium-dark brown in colour. Mild fruitiness on the nose with dry maltiness and mild hop character. Body should be dry, earthy, and quenching, even when stronger, and hop presence should be drying and unobtrusive. Dry, bitter to bittersweet finish. 4.5-6.5% ABV.

Pale Lagers (7)

Světlý Ležák/Czech Style Pale Lager

Yellow to gold in colour. Aroma is floral or herbal with no esters. Medium bodied with firm maltiness accented by moderate hop bitterness, with low levels of diacetyl acceptable. While the malt can be slightly sweet, the finish should be dry, bitter, and lingering. 4-5,5% ABV.

German or Continental Style Pilsner

Straw to light gold in colour. Moderately well-hopped, the aroma should have only a very low malt presence, with anything from faintly metallic to herbal or grassy hop notes. The body is light to medium weight with moderate to high hop bitterness from Old World varieties. Diacetyl is not acceptable. Finish is very dry. 4.5-5.5% ABV.

Dortmunder/Export Style Lager

Light to deep gold. Rich, toasted malt aroma with mild to moderate hop presence. Body is defined by firm maltiness with light to moderate hop bitterness from Old World varieties. Finish is very dry to just off-dry. 5-6% ABV.

Helles/Münchner

Light to medium gold in colour. Aroma should be equal parts malt and hop, with the latter notes coming from Old World varieties. Body has some malty sweetness, although without fruitiness, while the balancing hops should be equally drying and bittering and not overly so on either count. Finish should be dry to off-dry. 4.5%-5.5% ABV.

Adjunct-Driven or International Lager

Straw to light gold in colour. Aroma is sweet and grainy, while the body should be light and without great complexity from either malt or hops. Bitterness should be low. 4.5-5.5% ABV.

Hoppy Pilsener

Light to deep gold in colour. The body should be along the lines of a Světlý Ležák, German or Continental Pilsner, or Dortmunder, but with aggressive yet balanced hopping, employing either New or Old World varieties. Finish should be dry, bitter, and lingering. Generally 4.5-6.5% ABV, but can range beyond.

Light Lager (4.5% ABV or less)

Light to medium gold in colour, this category includes any lager fermented to be light in alcohol. May be hoppy or not, but should show good balance between its flavours and modest strength. Below 4.1% ABV.

Amber to Dark Lagers (7)

Oktoberfestbier/Märzen

Rich gold to amber in colour. Traditional Märzens will be darker with a toasty or sometimes earthy maltiness, while more modern interpretations, sometimes called Festbier or Oktoberfestbier, are lighter with a more honeyed malt character. Both are sweet but not cloying with mild bitterness. 5.5-6.5% ABV

Vienna Lager

Copper to amber in colour. Rich malt aroma with some light toasted but no roasted character and low hop aroma. Flavour is toasted grain and dry caramel, with only mild to low bitterness, generally from Old World hops. Finish should be dry or off-dry. 4.5-6% ABV.

North American Amber Lager

Light to deep amber in colour. Often but not necessarily adjunct-driven with a resulting graininess of aroma and flavour, although even if not should be light in body and mildly hopped, with only a slight caramelly or toffee-ish sweetness coming from the dark malts. 4.5-6% ABV

Bock (inc. Helles Bock)

Category includes all styles of medium strength bocks, so colour ranges from pale gold to quite deep brown. Darker bocks will have toasted malt flavours with caramel or sometimes spicy accents, but should be neither roasty or fruity. Pale bocks can have more floral-sweet-honey maltiness. Neither should have strong hop character. Typically 6-7.5% ABV, but can be stronger, especially in the Helles/Maibock style.

Doppelbock

Colour ranges from rich gold to deep brown. Aroma is defined by malt and alcohol, so should be sweet without being fruity, heady without being hot. Paler versions should have rich malt tempered by drying hop and alcohol notes, while darker versions should be the same but can include roasted, chocolate, or coffee flavours. Finish should be warming. Generally 7.5-12% ABV, but can range even higher still.

North American Style Dark Lager

Light to deep brown in colour. Essentially a darker version of the North American Amber Lager with more of a toasted or roasted character coming from the malt. Tends to sweetness with only mild bitterness. 4.5-6% ABV.

Dunkel/Tmavý Ležák/Cerné Ležák/Schwarzbier/Black Lager

Catch-all category for brown to black lager styles of mainly German and Czech origin. Hop character should be low to medium-low in both aroma and flavour, while malt aromas and flavours will vary according to the depth of colour. Sweetness should be minimal, though, and fruitiness should be negligible. Finish is dry to just off-dry. 4-6% ABV.

Wheat Beers (6)

Belgian Style Witbier/Bière Blanche

Pale straw to light gold in colour. Nose should speak to orange and/or coriander, since these ingredients are traditional, with wheat or lemony notes also common. The body is light spicy-fruity, often with peppery notes. Spices other than coriander seed and orange peel may be used, but their impact should not come at the expense of the traditional flavouring. Dry to just off-dry finish with lingering spiciness. 4%-5.5% ABV, although the category does allow for stronger versions.

German Style Hefeweizen/Kristalweizen

Straw to amber in colour and may appear hazy (Hefe-) or clear (Kristal-). The aroma is typically of banana and/or clove, although peppery spice can also feature. Body is light to medium-light with ample carbonation and banana/clove/peppery notes. Some caramel may show in darker versions, although toasted or roasted flavours are inappropriate. Finish is dry to off-dry. 4.5-5.8% ABV.

German Style Dunkelweizen & other Dark Wheat Beers

Amber to brown in colour. Similar to Hefeweizen, except with some darker malts used for a resulting caramel or toasted character, or even chocolate or mocha notes. Body should be fairly dry, though, as should be the finish. This category can also include dark versions of other wheat beer styles, identified as such. 4.5-5.9% ABV.

German Style Doppelweizenbock and other Strong Wheat Beers

Generally copper to dark brown in colour, but can range even further. Clove and banana aromas and flavours, supplemented by spicy, chocolaty notes. Finish should be warming and lingering. Category also allows for strong versions of other wheat beer styles, identified as such. 6% ABV and higher.

North American Style Wheat Beer

Pale gold to amber in colour. Basically any sort of light and not-too-hoppy ale made lighter through the addition of wheat to the grist. Aroma should be fresh and may be lightly spicy or citrusy and flavour should follow suit. Finish can be dry to lightly sweet. 4.5-5.5% ABV.

Hoppy Wheat Beer

General category for beers sometimes known as Hopfenweissbiers, but can include hop-forward versions of any wheat beer category, in which case the base style should be specified. Colour and flavour ranges widely, but should feature hops prominently. 4.5% ABV and higher.

Stout & Porter (6)

Porter/Robust Porter

Medium to very dark brown in colour. Aroma features chocolate, coffee, and/or mocha notes, with similar flavours in the body. Bitterness is balanced rather than dominant, and Robust examples can feature higher levels of alcohol, malt, and hops. 4-7% ABV

Strong/Baltic Porter

Sweet and strong, typically lager-fermented version of Porter. Dark amber to deep brown or black in colour. Rich malty sweetness defines the aroma and flavour, with toffee, nutty, liquorice, and other accent notes. Fruitness should be minimal or absent, and the finish may be sweet to off-dry. 6-9.5% ABV, but can range higher.

Stout

Dark brown to black in colour. Dry, roasted malt dominates the aroma and flavour, although some sweetness in the body is found in some examples. Hop bitterness can be assertive, but is most often kept low, with chocolate, coffee, and anise among the most common flavour notes. Finish should be dry. Oyster stouts should be identified as such and can show creamy or saline qualities. 4-5.5% ABV.

Sweet/Cream/Milk Stout

Dark brown to black in colour. Generally sweetened with lactose, although not necessarily so. Aroma is sweet and often chocolaty, with low to no hop aroma influence. Creamy chocolate or mocha often appears in the flavour, and the finish should dry out at least somewhat. Sweet espresso notes may also feature. 3.2-5% ABV.

Oatmeal Stout

Dark brown to black in colour. The addition of oats to the grist gives the beer a creamy mouthfeel and slight perception of sweetness. Bitterness should be low to moderate. 4.5-5.5% ABV.

Imperial Stout

Black in colour. Rich and potent take on the stout style. Hops can be balancing or assertive. Mouthfeel can be rich and round or sharp and oily. Flavour should be complex with notes derived from malt and hops and while mild to moderate sweetness is allowed, it is not necessarily expected. Finish should be dry to off-dry and warming. (Barrel-aged versions should be entered in the Specialty & Flavoured: Wood Influenced category.) 6.5% ABV and up.

Wild & Mixed Fermentation Beers (6)

Gose (Flavoured & Unflavoured)

Yellow to medium gold in colour, or the colour of the fruit used to flavour it. Tangy and often citrusy aroma, sometimes slightly spicy or fruity. Salt and coriander are traditional ingredients and may be apparent at low levels. Light, tangy palate, although aggressive sourness should not be present. Finish is dry. 3.5-5% ABV

Sour/Wild Ale (Flavoured, Unflavoured & Dry-Hopped)

Catch-all category for traditionally and kettle soured ales that do not fit in other categories. If flavoured, flavouring should be identified. Wide range of aromas and flavours, but acetic acid, if present at all, should be in only infinitesimally small amounts. Strength varies widely, but generally falls within 3.5-7% ABV.

Wild or Mixed Fermentation Beer with Fruit

Traditionally and kettle soured fruit beers of the styles often referred to as Kriek, Framboise, and so on. Fruitiness should be evident in aroma and flavour. Body should be tart and dry, with extremely little or no acetic acid present. Generally 4-8% ABV.

Berliner Weisse (Flavoured & Unflavoured)

Straw to light gold in colour. Tart and refreshing wheat beers low in bitterness and alcohol, and typically high in carbonation. Fruit, if present, should be in evidence. Funky or horsey aroma notes are permitted, but should be in balance with the character of the beer. 2.8-5% ABV

Flemish Style Red/Old Brown (Oud Bruit) Ale

Amber-red to deep brown in colour. Aroma should be tart with fruitiness derived from fermentation, as fruit additions are not appropriate in this style. Lactic tanginess is expected in the flavour, although acetic sourness should be minimal. Some oaky notes are allowable in barrel-conditioned or wood-aged versions, but should not dominate. Finish must be dry. 4.5-7% ABV

Spontaneously Fermented Beer (Straight or Blended)

Known in their home country of Belgium as Lambic and Gueuze beers. Straw to medium gold in colour. Should be winy in aroma and flavour with mild to moderate tartness and a high degree of flavour complexity. Acetic acid is not appropriate. 4.5-7.5% ABV.

Low Alcohol or Alcohol-Free Beer (2% ABV or lower) (5)

Low or No-Alcohol Ale

Ales of any style with less than 2.1% ABV.

Low or No-Alcohol Lager

Lagers of any style with less than 2.1% ABV.

Low or No-Alcohol Hoppy Ale or Lager

Hop-forward beers of any style with less than 2.1% ABV. Category includes IPAs.

Low or No-Alcohol Wheat Beer

Wheat beers of any style with less than 2.1% ABV. Category includes flavoured wheat beers.

Low or No-Alcohol Porter or Stout

Porters or Stouts of any style with less than 2.1% ABV.

Specialty & Flavoured (8)

Gluten-Free

Any beer in any style that contains less than 20 parts per million of gluten and is fermented at least in part from cereal grain. Colours, aromas, flavours, and strength should be appropriate to the style declared.

Heritage Beers

Catch-all category for historical beer styles that have recently been revived. May include Grodziskie, a light and lightly smoky wheat beer; Lichtenhainer, a lightly tart and lightly smoky beer that may or may not include wheat in the grist; and Pre-Prohibition Lager, a clean and bitter pale lager often featuring flavours of adjunct. Colour and strength should be appropriate to the style and the style must be identified and, if not one of the above, explained.

Experimental

Any beer that is the result of an experiment and does not fit within any other category. Submissions must be accompanied by an explanation as to why the beer is experimental.

Chocolate/Coffee/Maple/Honey

Any beer flavoured at some point during the brewing and fermenting process with chocolate, coffee, maple (in any form), or honey. Aroma and flavour are determined by the style chosen and the ingredient used, but should present the flavouring in harmony with the other ingredients. Colour and ABV ranges widely.

Fruit & Vegetable

Any beer flavoured at some point during the brewing and fermenting process with fruit or vegetables, other than ones clearly identified in other judged categories. Aroma and flavour are determined by the style chosen and the ingredient or ingredients used, but should present the flavouring in harmony with the other ingredients. Colour and ABV ranges widely.

Herb & Spice

Any beer flavoured at some point during the brewing and fermenting process with fruit or vegetables, other than ones clearly identified in other judged categories. Aroma and flavour are determined by the style chosen and the ingredient or ingredients used, but should present the flavouring in harmony with the other ingredients. Colour and ABV ranges widely.

Smoked Malt

Any style of beer made with at least some percentage of malt either malted over a wood or peat fire or smoked over wood or peat after malting. Aroma and retro-olfactory flavour of smokiness need to be present. Colour and strength will vary according to style.

Wood Influenced

Any style of beer that has been conditioned either in a wood barrel or over wood staves, including beers finished in barrels previously used for wine, spirits, cider, or other purposes. Colour, aromas, flavours, and strength vary widely.