

Important information for all VicBrew 2016 entrants, judges and stewards.

1. Entries will be online only.
2. Closing date for entries will be 20 August, three weeks before VicBrew 2016, which is tentatively set for 10-11 September 2016.
3. New bottle size limits will be strictly enforced (max. 90 mm diameter, max 300 mm height including cap)

Background

The running of VicBrew 2015 was a challenge. The hugely increased number of entries, combined with limited available manpower stretched the limits of the systems that have been used for previous competitions. This caused quite a few issues and a lot of problem solving on-the-fly during the Competition. Everybody involved deserves credit for pulling together and making it work despite those challenges.

In order to address these issues and in anticipation of increasing entries in ensuing years, robust discussion has been had within the organising committee and some changes made to the way VicBrew will be run for 2016. These are designed to enable us to cope with 600+ entries and make the competition run more smoothly for all involved – entrants, judges, stewards, and the organising committee. All of these changes will be subject to review after VicBrew 2016.

Changes affecting entrants

1. Entries will be online only. There will be no provision or allowance for paper entries of any kind. Offline entries make up about 30% of all entries, but take 3-4 people several days to collect entries from all the drop-off points and collate the information associated with them. An online-only system will free up a considerable number of hours and reduce the number of registration errors. It will also provide us with full details about entry numbers in each category as soon as entries close, which will allow us to better plan the competition and finalise the judging roster much earlier. We are working on a re-vamped online system with better stability and functionality, which will be up and running for VicBrew 2016. We expect that entrants without computer access will be able to ask a friend to assist with entering.

2. Entries will close 3 weeks before the competition instead of 2 weeks to allow us to better deal with the expected increased number of entries, to improve planning, and to reduce stress for all involved.

3. Bottle size limits will be strictly enforced. The *absolute maximum* dimensions are:

Diameter - 90mm.

Height - including cap or cork 300mm.

Minimum volume requirements remain unchanged.

These values are determined by the dimensions of the crates we have available, as there will be no flexibility to deal with over-size bottles. Do not enter anything that's "Just a couple of mm over", it will not fit and will be disqualified.

Changes affecting judges and stewards:

Because of the large number of entries in many categories, it is no longer feasible for the same set of two to three judges to judge every beer in a category. For example, at VicBrew 2015 half of the 20 categories had more beers than could be judged in a single day. Thus we really needed 20 to 30 judges able to judge both days, but many judges were only available for one day. This led to a shortage of judges for some categories but other judges who we couldn't use or who were under-utilised.

The judging system will be changed to better deal with this:

1. All large categories will be split into flights (group of about 12 beers) with each flight judged by a different judging panel. The scores from the panels will be compared directly against each other and used to determine the winning beers. There will be no scaling to account for potential differences between the judging panels. This is effectively the system we use to determine Champion Beer, which is selected as the highest scoring beer across all categories. In some competitions, additional judging of the best of the flights is done (often called a mini-BOS, e.g. www.bjcp.org/docs/MiniBOS.pdf), but this requires an additional bottle from all entrants and this is considered impractical at our current venue. We realise that this system is not perfect but consider that it is better than the system we've been using with some judges having to evaluate 30+ beers in the one day, sometimes very strong and very bitter, with consequent consistency issues.
2. Where necessary, VicBrew will adopt a queued judging system. This system is explained at www.bjcp.org/docs/Queued_Judging_judges.pdf. It still uses several sets of judging panels, but instead of having a pre-determined list of beers for each panel, as each panel finishes judging a beer, they are served the next beer off the master list for the whole category. This means that only one steward is required for the category and it simplifies the serving procedure.
3. Where necessary, some entries may be pre-judged before the main competition. This will allow us to make more efficient use of judge availability and space.

Provisional date for 2016: