

# BCJP 2021 Guidelines Beer

## INTRODUCTION TO SPECIALTY-TYPE BEER

**Specialty-Type Beer** is a broad term referring to style Categories 28 through 34, and is in contrast to the **Classic Style** beers of Categories 1 through 27. The Classic Styles are complete, standalone descriptions, but Specialty-Type styles involve a transformation of a Base Style using either a process or by adding one or more **Specialty-Type Ingredients** (yeast/bacteria, smoke, wood, fruit, spice, grain, or sugar). Specialty-Type Beer style descriptions usually describe how the Specialty-Type Ingredients or processes modify the Base Style. When a **Base Style** for Specialty-Type Beers is required, either a Classic Style or a broad style family (e.g., IPA, Blond Ale, Stout) may be used. In general, Specialty-Type beers may not be used as a Base Style for other Specialty-Type beers unless the Entry Instructions for the style specifically allow it. A few Specialty-Type Beer styles do not require a Base Style to be declared – read the Entry Instructions section of each style description carefully. Consult the Provisional Styles page on the BJCP website for additions to the master list of styles. These Provisional Styles can be cited as a Base Style when entering a Specialty-Type Beer. The Style Entry Suggestions page on the BJCP website clarifies where to enter some Currently undefined styles. In general, when submitting a Specialty-Type Beer with a food-type ingredient, use the culinary rather than the botanical definition of ingredients. See the preamble in each style category for a detailed list of common ingredients. This introduction section is assumed to be incorporated into every Specialty-Type Beer style description. It describes in general how to enter and judge a Specialty-Type Beer. Specific Entry Instructions for each style are contained within individual style descriptions.

## Entering Specialty-Type Beers

Many brewers have questions about where to enter their specialty beers, and how best to describe them. Follow these suggestions for better results:

### Entry Instructions

Entering a Specialty-Type Beer in a competition requires more information than simply selecting the style. Examine the *Entry Instruction* section within the selected style description for the specific required information. Judges will expect this information, and they will not be able to judge our beer properly without it; your score will suffer if it is omitted. When deciding what optional information to supply, imagine yourself in the position of the judge. Give them pertinent information that will help them understand your beer and your intent. Avoid useless, irrelevant information that does not help the judge understand your beer. Do not use puffery or marketing-type descriptions. Refrain from using any information that could allow judges to determine your identity. Some competition software artificially limits the length of comments, so choose your words carefully.

### Base Style

Most Specialty-Type Beers require either a Base Style to be identified, or at least a description of the beer – check the style's *Entry Instructions* for requirements. If a Base Style is required, use one of the named styles from Categories 1 through 27, including beers from styles or categories with enumerated alternatives (like Historical Beer or Specialty IPA). Provisional Styles from the BJCP website and Local Styles from the Appendix may also be used as a Base Style. If the Entry Instructions say that a generic style family can be used, that means to state a broad style in the general sense – like IPA, Porter, or Stout. You are not required to pinpoint the specific type of Porter, for instance, but you should give a general description of the beer. Some beers that are designed to showcase a specialty ingredient have a fairly neutral base. Do not use Specialty-Type Beers as a Base Style in other Specialty-Type Beer styles unless the Entry Instructions for that style specifically allow it. Many Specialty-Type style categories have a 'Specialty' style that allows for certain other Specialty-Type Ingredients. Otherwise, the 34B Mixed-Style Beer style can be used.

### Specialty Ingredients

The more specific or lavish you describe your specialty ingredient, the more judges will look for that character. Taste your beer, then highlight those ingredients that are identifiable. If only one Specialty-Type ingredient was used, it should contribute a recognizable character to the beer. If you mention multiple ingredients, they do not all need to be individually identifiable but they should contribute to the overall sensory experience. If you mention an unusual ingredient, you may want to describe its character, or at least be sure that a web search on that name will produce a useful reference for the judge. Providing a search term is a good alternative. A generic or simple name of an ingredient is often best, unless your specific ingredient has an uncommon profile. If you use a combination of ingredients, such as spices, you can often refer to the blend by its common name (e.g., pumpkin pie spice, curry powder) rather than the individual spices. If you use an ingredient that is a potential allergen, always declare it as such even if it cannot be perceived. Example: "allergen: peanuts" – judges should not penalize a beer when a declared allergen cannot be detected.

### **Best Fit**

Placing a beer with a single Specialty-Type Ingredient and a Classic Base Style is obvious. Selecting the best style for a beer with a combination of Specialty-Type Ingredients takes some thought. When selecting a style in which to enter your Specialty-Type Beer, look for the *best fit* from the possible alternatives where the combination of ingredients is allowed. Select a style representing the dominant ingredient, or if the ingredients are equally balanced, select the first Specialty-Type style where it qualifies. Entering a beer in a Specialty-Type style is a signal to judges that your beer has certain identifiable elements. If you used an ingredient, but it cannot be perceived, then do not enter it in a style that requires the ingredient. If judges cannot detect it, they will believe it is absent and deduct points accordingly.

### **Judging Specialty-Type Beers**

*Judges should read and understand the directions given to entrants in the Entering Specialty-Type Beers section.* Overall balance and drinkability are the critical success factors for a Specialty-Type Beer. The entry should be a coherent fusion of the beer with the special ingredients, with neither overpowering the other. Special ingredients should complement and enhance the underlying beer, and the resulting product should be pleasant to drink. The beer should contain recognizable components meeting entry requirements for the style, bearing in mind that some beers may fit in multiple styles. Judges should be aware that a creative element exists in brewing these styles, and that strange-sounding combinations should not be prejudiced. Keep an open mind because some unusual flavor pairings can be surprisingly delicious. Unusual does not necessarily mean better, however. Taste should always be the final deciding factor, not perceived creativity, difficulty in brewing, or rarity of ingredients.

### **Overall Assessment**

Experienced judges will often first taste Specialty-Type Beers for overall drinking pleasure prior to assessing details. This quick assessment is designed to detect whether the combination works or doesn't. If the beer has flavor clashes, it won't be enjoyable regardless of its technical merit.

The old proverb about *not missing the forest for the trees* is quite applicable. Do not judge these styles as rigidly as Classic Styles, as you might miss the successful synergy of ingredients.

### **Base Style**

Judges should not be overly pedantic about seeking the full character of a specified Base Style beer. After all, the base beer does not usually contain the special ingredient, so the sensory character will not be the same as in the original beer. There can be interactions of flavor that produce additional sensory effects. Judges should also understand that the fermentation process can transform some ingredients (particularly those with fermentable sugars), and that the special ingredient character in the beer may not be perceived the same as the specialty ingredient itself. Therefore, judges should look for the overall agreeability and balance of the resulting combination, as long as the beer suggests both the Base Style and the Specialty-Type Ingredient or process.

### **Multiple Ingredients**

Judges do not need to taste every individual Specialty-Type Ingredient (such as spices) when multiple are declared. Often it is the resulting combination that contributes to a greater character, so allow for these ingredients to be used in varying intensities to produce a more pleasant tasting experience. Not every beer will fit a style perfectly. Some beers with multiple ingredients could be entered as several styles. Be lenient when evaluating these beers. Reward those beers that are well-made and are pleasant to drink rather than lecturing the entrant about where they should have entered it. If an entrant declares a potential allergen in the beer, do not deduct points if you cannot perceive it.

### **Balance Effects of Specialty-Type Ingredients**

The Specialty-Type Ingredient character should be pleasant and supportive, not artificial or inappropriately overpowering, taking into account that some ingredients have an inherently prominent character. Aroma hops, fermentation byproducts, and malt components of the underlying beer may not be as noticeable when additional ingredients are present, and they may also be intentionally subdued to allow the ingredient character to be perceived more clearly in the final presentation. Hop aroma may be absent or balanced with the added ingredients, depending on the style. The added ingredients should add an extra complexity to the beer, but not be so prominent as to unbalance the resulting presentation.

## **30. SPICED BEER**

*We use the common or culinary definitions of spices, herbs, and vegetables, not botanical or scientific ones. In general, spices are the dried seeds, seed pods, fruit, roots, bark, etc. of plants used for flavoring food. Herbs are leafy plants or parts of plants (leaves, flowers, petals, stalks) used for flavoring food. Vegetables are savory or less sweet edible plant products, used primarily for cooking or sometimes eating raw. Vegetables can include some botanical fruit. This category*

*explicitly includes all culinary spices, herbs, and vegetables, as well as nuts (or anything with 'nut' in the name, including coconut), chile peppers, coffee, chocolate, spruce tips, rose hips, hibiscus, fruit peels/zest (but not juice), rhubarb, and the like. It does not include culinary fruit or grains. Flavorful fermentable sugars and syrups (e.g., agave nectar, maple syrup, molasses, sorghum, treacle, honey) or sweeteners (e.g., lactose) can be included only in combination with other allowable ingredients, and should not have a dominant character. Any combination of allowable ingredients may also be entered. See Category 29 for a definition and examples of fruit. See the Introduction to Specialty-Type Beer section for additional comments, particularly on evaluating the balance of added ingredients with the base beer.*

### **30A. Spice, Herb, or Vegetable Beer**

*Often called Spice Beer, regardless of whether spices, herbs, or vegetables are used.*

**Overall Impression:** An appealing fusion of spices, herbs, or vegetables (SHVs) and beer, but still recognizable as beer. The SHV character should be evident but in balance with the beer, not so forward as to suggest an artificial product.

**Aroma:** Varies by base style. The SHV character should be noticeable in the aroma; however, some SHVs (e.g., ginger, cinnamon, rosemary) have stronger aromas and are more distinctive than others (e.g., most vegetables) – allow for a range of SHV character and intensity from subtle to aggressive. Hop aroma may be lower than in the base style to better show the SHV character. The SHVs should add an extra complexity, but not be so prominent as to unbalance the resulting presentation.

**Appearance:** Varies by base style and special ingredients. Lighter-colored beer may show distinctive ingredient colors, including in the head. Variable clarity, although haze is generally undesirable. Some ingredients may impact head retention.

**Flavor:** Varies by base style. As with aroma, distinctive SHV flavors should be noticeable, and may range in intensity from subtle to aggressive. Some SHVs are inherently bitter and may result in a beer more bitter than the declared base style. Bitterness, hop and malt flavors, alcohol content, and fermentation byproducts, such as esters, should be appropriate for the base style, but be harmonious and balanced with the distinctive SHV flavors present.

**Mouthfeel:** Varies by base style. SHVs may increase or decrease body. Some SHVs may add a bit of astringency, although a “raw” spice character is undesirable.

**Comments:** The description of the beer is critical for evaluation; judges should think more about the declared concept than trying to detect each individual ingredient. Balance, drinkability, and execution of the theme are the most important deciding factors. The SHVs should complement the original style and not overwhelm it. Base style attributes will be different after the addition of SHVs; do not expect the beer to taste identical to the unadulterated base style.

**Entry Instructions:** The entrant **must** specify the type of spices, herbs, or vegetables used, but individual ingredients do not need to be specified if a well-known spice blend is used (e.g., apple pie spice, curry powder, chili powder). Entrant **must** specify a description of the beer, identifying either a Base Style **or** the ingredients, specs, or target character of the beer. A general description of the special nature of the beer can cover all the required items.

**Vital Statistics:** OG, FG, IBUs, SRM, and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer.

**Commercial Examples:** Alesmith Speedway Stout, Elysian Avatar Jasmine IPA, Founders Breakfast Stout, Rogue Yellow Snow Pilsner, Traquair Jacobite Ale, Young’s Double Chocolate Stout

**Tags:** specialty-beer, spice

### **30B. Autumn Seasonal Beer**

*Autumn Seasonal Beers are beers that suggest cool weather and the autumn harvest season, and may include pumpkins, gourds, or other squashes, and associated spices.*

**Overall Impression:** A malty, spiced beer that often has a moderately rich body and slightly warming finish suggesting a good accompaniment for the cool fall season, and often evocative of harvest or Thanksgiving traditions.

**Aroma:** Malty, spicy, and balanced. A wide range is possible, as long as it evokes the harvest theme. The declared ingredients and concept set the expectation. Hops are often subtle. Alcohol is often present, but smooth and supportive. The components should be well-integrated, and create a coherent presentation. See Flavor section for spice, malt, sugar, and vegetable character.

**Appearance:** Medium amber to coppery-brown; lighter versions are more common. Clear, if not opaque. Well-formed, persistent, off-white to tan head. Some versions with squashes will take on an unusual hue for beer, with orange-like hints.

**Flavor:** Malty, spicy, and balanced. Allow for brewer creativity in meeting the theme objective. Warming or sweet spices common. Rich, toasty malty flavors are common, and may include caramel, toasted bread or pie crust, biscuit, or nut flavors. May include distinctive sugar flavors, like molasses, honey, or brown sugar. Flavor derived from squash-based

vegetables are often elusive, often only providing a richer sweetness. The special ingredients should be supportive and balanced, not overshadowing the base beer. Bitterness and hop flavor are usually restrained to not interfere with the special character. Usually finishes somewhat full and satisfying, occasionally with a light alcohol flavor. Roasted malt characteristics are typically absent.

**Mouthfeel:** Body is usually medium to full, and may be chewy. Moderately low to moderately high carbonation. Age character allowable. Warming alcohol allowable.

**Comments:** Using the sensory profile of products that suggest the harvest season, like pumpkin pie, apple pie, or candied yams, balanced with a supportive, often malty base beer. The description of the beer is critical for evaluation; judges should think more about the declared concept than trying to detect each individual ingredient. Balance, drinkability, and execution of the theme are the most important deciding factors.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Spices are required, and often include those evocative of the fall, harvest, or Thanksgiving season (e.g., allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, ginger) but any combination is possible and creativity is encouraged. Flavorful adjuncts are common (e.g., molasses, invert sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup). Squash-type or gourd-type vegetables (most frequently pumpkin) are often used.

**Entry Instructions:** The entrant **must** specify the type of spices, herbs, or vegetables used; individual ingredients do not need to be specified if a well-known blend of spices is used (e.g., pumpkin pie spice). Entrant **must** specify a description of the beer, identifying **either** a Base Style **or** the ingredients, specs, or target character of the beer. A general description of the special nature of the beer can cover all the required items.

**Vital Statistics:** OG, FG, IBUs, SRM, and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer. ABV is generally above 5%, and most examples are somewhat amber-copper in color.

**Commercial Examples:** Dogfish Head Punkin Ale, Elysian Punkuccino, Rogue Pumpkin Patch Ale, Schlafly Pumpkin Ale, UFO Pumpkin, Weyerbacher Imperial Pumpkin

**Tags:** specialty-beer, spice

### 30C. Winter Seasonal Beer

*Winter Seasonal Beers are beers that suggest cold weather and the Christmas holiday season, and may include holiday spices, specialty sugars, and other products that are reminiscent of the festive season.*

**Overall Impression:** A stronger, darker, spiced beer that often has a rich body and warming finish suggesting a good accompaniment for the cold winter season.

**Aroma:** Malty, spicy, fruity, and balanced. A wide range is possible, as long as it evokes the holiday theme. The declared ingredients and concept set the expectation. Fruit is often dark or dried in character. Hops are often subtle. Alcohol is often present, but smooth and supportive. Malty and sugary aromas tend to be greater in the balance, and support the spices. The components should be well-integrated, and create a coherent presentation. See Flavor section for spice, malt, sugar, and fruit character.

**Appearance:** Medium amber to very dark brown; darker versions are more common. Clear, if not opaque. Usually clear, although darker versions may be virtually opaque. Wellformed, persistent, off-white to tan head.

**Flavor:** Malty, spicy, fruity, and balanced. Allow for brewer creativity in meeting the theme objective. Warming or sweet spices common. Rich, sweet malty flavors are common, and may include caramel, toast, nutty, or chocolate flavors. May include dried fruit or dried fruit peel flavors such as raisin, plum, fig, cherry, orange peel, or lemon peel. May include distinctive sugar flavors, like molasses, honey, or brown sugar. The special ingredients should be supportive and balanced, not overshadowing the base beer. Bitterness and hop flavor are usually restrained to not interfere with special character. Usually finishes rather full and satisfying, often with a light alcohol flavor. Roasted malt characteristics are rare, and not usually stronger than chocolate.

**Mouthfeel:** Body is usually medium to full, often with a malty chewiness. Moderately low to moderately high carbonation. Age character allowable. Warming alcohol allowable.

**Comments:** Using the sensory profile of products that suggest the holiday season, such as Christmas cookies, gingerbread, English-type Christmas pudding, rum cakes, eggnog, evergreen trees, potpourri, or mulling spices, balanced with a supportive, often malty, warming, and darker base beer. The description of the beer is critical for evaluation; judges should think more about the declared concept than trying to detect each individual ingredient. Balance, drinkability, and execution of the theme are the most important deciding factors.

**History:** The winter holiday season is a traditional time when old friends get together, where beer of a somewhat higher alcohol content and richness is served. Many breweries offer seasonal products that may be darker, stronger, spiced, or otherwise more characterful than their year-round beers. Spiced versions are an American or Belgian tradition, since

English or German breweries traditionally do not use spices in their beer. Many American craft examples were inspired by Anchor Our Special Ale, first produced in 1975.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Spices are required, and often include those evocative of the Christmas season (e.g., allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, ginger) but any combination is possible and creativity is encouraged. Fruit peel (e.g., oranges, lemon) may be used, as may subtle additions of other fruits (often dried or dark fruit). Flavorful adjuncts are often used (e.g., molasses, treacle, invert sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup). Usually ales, although strong dark lagers exist.

**Entry Instructions:** The entrant **must** specify the type of spices, sugars, fruits, or additional fermentables used; individual ingredients do not need to be specified if a wellknown blend of spices is used (e.g., mulling spice). Entrant **must** specify a description of the beer, identifying **either** a Base Style **or** the ingredients, specs, or target character of the beer. A general description of the special nature of the beer can cover all the required items.

**Vital Statistics:** OG, FG, IBUs, SRM, and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer. ABV is generally above 6%, and most examples are somewhat dark in color.

**Commercial Examples:** Anchor Christmas Ale, Great Lakes Christmas Ale, Harpoon Winter Warmer, Rogue Santa's Private Reserve, Schlafly Christmas Ale, Troeg's The Mad Elf

**Tags:** specialty-beer, spice

### 30D. Specialty Spice Beer

*A **Specialty Spice Beer** is a 30A Spice, Herb, or Vegetable (SHV) Beer with some additional ingredients, such as fermentable sugars (e.g., honey, brown sugar, invert sugar, maple syrup), sweeteners (e.g., lactose), adjuncts, alternative grains, or other special ingredients added, or some additional process applied. 30B Autumn and 30C Winter Seasonal Beers already allow additional ingredients, and should not be used as a base in this style.*

**Overall Impression:** An appealing combination of spices, herbs, or vegetables (SHVs), sugars, and beer, but still recognizable as beer. The SHV and sugar character should both be evident but in balance with the beer, not so forward as to suggest an artificial product.

**Aroma:** Same as SHV Beer, except that some additional fermentables (e.g., honey, molasses) may add an aroma component. Whatever additional aroma component is present should be in balance with the SHV and the beer components, and be a pleasant combination.

**Appearance:** Same as Spice, Herb, or Vegetable Beer.

**Flavor:** Same as SHV Beer, except that some additional fermentables (e.g., honey, molasses) may add a flavor component. Whatever additional flavor component is present should be in balance with the SHV and the beer components, and be a pleasant combination. Added sugars should not have a raw, unfermented flavor. Some added sugars will have unfermentable elements that may provide a fuller and sweeter finish; fully fermentable sugars may thin out the finish.

**Mouthfeel:** Same as SHV Beer, although depending on the type of sugar added, could increase or decrease the body.

**Comments:** If the additional fermentables or processes do not add a distinguishable character to the beer, enter it as one of the other (non-Specialty) Spiced Beer styles and omit a description of the extra ingredients or processes.

**Entry Instructions:** The entrant **must** specify the type of SHVs used, but individual ingredients do not need to be specified if a well-known spice blend is used (e.g., apple pie spice, curry powder, chili powder). The entrant **must** specify the type of additional ingredient (per the introduction) or special process employed. Entrant **must** specify a description of the beer, identifying either a Base Style **or** the ingredients, specs, or target character of the beer. A general description of the special nature of the beer can cover all the required items.

**Vital Statistics:** OG, FG, IBUs, SRM, and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer.

**Commercial Examples:** New Belgium Honey Orange Tripel, Westbrook It's Tiki Time

**Tags:** specialty-beer, spice