
Ins & Outs of Competing for Medals

— Panel: Jim Price, Allen Martin,
Matt Mead —
MeadCon -- August 23, 2022

Panel

- Jim Price: Competition organizer's perspective
- Allen Martin: 2021 AMMA Meadmaker of the Year, 2022 National Homebrew Competition, & many more
- Matt Mead: 2 Mazer Cups, 4 National Homebrew Competition medals, & many more

Competition Organizer's Perspective

Jim Price

Background: BJCP Certified beer judge, mead judge, cider judge, organizer for El Dorado County Fair brew competition (homebrew & commercial microbrew divisions -- all beer, mead, cider categories)

- A regular part of the Northern California brewing scene, grown from 23 entries in 2015 to around 150 entries annually since 2018
 - 66% of 2022 entries from out-of-county, spanning length of CA, occasionally out-of-state
 - More mead entries are most welcome !!
 - Timing (late January) is a chance for feedback before major competitions

First, Brew Great Mead

Use judges' comments to refine recipes & processes

- Enter same mead in multiple competitions to watch for patterns vs. individual judge perceptions
- If a judge's comment seems off-base, consider what could have given the judge the perception in the scoresheet
- Note, it is easy for judges to be more impressed by bold entries -- keep appreciating the subtleties of hydromels. (Judges, don't expect hydromels to be as bold as sack meads.)

Enter Correct Category

A mead (or other beverage) can be a great one, but not do well due to being in wrong category

Remember to include all information listed in BJCP guidelines. Default assumptions may not be right for your mead.

Competition organizer may be able to answer questions about where to enter

- Decision remains yours
- My own practice: If time allows, spot potential mis-entries and ask the entrants

Declare Ingredients So Judges Know What To Expect

Anecdotes:

- "El Mango Hefe"
- Undeclared honey -- maybe buckwheat?
- Orange blossom -- regional variation, quality of source
- "Wildflower"
 - Judges: Don't assume "wildflower" is clover

Declare pertinent ingredients, but maybe not ones that add complexity but can't be recognized (e.g., trace of cardamom in apple pie spice)

- Judges: Don't count off for saying just "apple pie spice", or assume that it's store-bought

Declare any potential allergens -- includes chocolate, wheat, lactose, etc., not just peanuts

Other Tips To Judges

If you volunteer to judge a competition but something interferes, let the organizer know

- An organizer can match judges' likes & dislikes (I do), and no-shows are disruptive