

Why Cicerone?

Anyone can call themselves an expert on beer. But when consumers want great beer they need help from a server who really knows beer flavors, styles and brands. They also want to buy from a place that understands proper storage and serving so the beer they drink will be of the highest quality. Too often great beer is harmed by improper service practices.

In the wine world, the word "sommelier" designates those with proven expertise in selecting, acquiring and serving fine wine. Lately some beer servers have adopted the title "beer sommelier" to tie into the credibility of the wine world. But anyone can call themselves a beer sommelier regardless of knowledge or experience. And while some will be highly skilled, the only way to demonstrate that objectively is through independent testing of knowledge and tasting ability. The Cicerone Certification Program offers that independent assessment and certification so that industry professionals—as well as consumers—can be sure of the knowledge and skills possessed by current and prospective beer servers.

What is a Cicerone?

The word Cicerone (pronounced sis-uh-rohn) has been chosen to designate those with proven expertise in selecting, acquiring and serving today's wide range of beers. The titles "Certified Cicerone(tm)" and "Master Cicerone(tm)" are protected certification trademarks. Only those who have passed the requisite test of knowledge and tasting skill can call themselves a Cicerone.

What is the origin of the word "Cicerone"?

Cicerone is an English word referring to "one who conducts visitors and sightseers to museums and explains matters of archaeological, antiquarian, historic or artistic interest." For beer, a Cicerone will possess the knowledge and skills to guide those interested in beer culture, including its historic and artistic aspects. "Cicerone" now designates a person with demonstrated expertise in beer who can guide consumers to enjoyable and high-quality experiences with great beer.

What is a sommelier?

The word "sommelier" designates an expert wine steward. Twenty or thirty years ago when beer was much simpler, those whose primary expertise was wine could fairly claim to know a great deal about beer. But today the world of beer is just as diverse and complicated as wine. As a result, developing true expertise in beer takes years of focused study and requires constant attention to stay on top of new brands and special beers. While it is certainly possible for someone to be expert in both wine and beer, the only way to prove that is by examination and certification in both fields. Only those with the title "Certified Cicerone" or "Master Cicerone" have demonstrated their expertise in selecting and serving fine beer.

How is a Cicerone different from a Beer Sommelier?

The Certified Cicerone(tm) and Master Cicerone(tm) are tested and proven experts in beer while "beer sommelier" is a self-designation that can be adopted by anyone. Because there are no criteria for the title of beer sommelier and because those who use the title have not subjected their knowledge and skills to an independent examination, consumers and employers can't be sure just what a non-certified beer server knows or how they treat and serve the beer.