

Cicerone® Certification Program

US Certified Beer Server Syllabus

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This syllabus outlines the knowledge required of those preparing for the Certified Beer Server exam in the United States. While this list is comprehensive in its scope of content, further study beyond the syllabus is necessary to fully understand each topic. The content tested on the Certified Beer Server exam is a subset of the information presented within the Master Cicerone® Syllabus, and individual syllabi for all four levels of the program may be found on the cicerone.org website.

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Full Syllabus

I. Keeping and Serving Beer

A. Purchasing and accepting beer

1. The three-tier system in the United States and the reasons for its existence
 - a. By law, alcoholic beverages sold in the United States must move through the three-tier system. The three tiers are Brewers/Importers, Wholesalers (also known as Distributors), and Retailers
 - i. Brewers and importers sell to wholesalers
 - ii. Wholesalers sell to both on- and off-premises retailers
 - iii. On- and off-premises retailers sell to consumers
 - b. Some states have granted exceptions to the three-tier system. Common exceptions include:
 - i. Brewpubs that both brew and retail to consumers
 - ii. Breweries that brew and sell directly to retailers or consumers

B. Serving alcohol

1. Alcohol's effects
 - a. Absorption and elimination
 - b. Physical and behavioral indicators
2. Responsible serving practices
 - a. Provide accurate ABV information to consumers
 - b. Adjust serving size based on ABV

C. Beer storage

1. Beer is best consumed fresh
 - a. When beer is released from the brewery, it is ready to drink
 - b. A very few strong or intensely flavored beers may age in ways that make them interesting to drink months or years later if properly cellared
2. Freshness can be preserved and enhanced by wholesaler and retailer actions
 - a. Rotate inventory
 - i. Ensure that beer is consumed in the order of dating
 - ii. Remove out of date products from service inventory
 - iii. When beers lack an expiration date:
 - Non-pasteurized draft beer about 45-60 days (refrigerated)
 - Pasteurized draft beer about 90-120 days (refrigerated)
 - Bottled beer:
 - If kept refrigerated, can be good for up to six months
 - When not refrigerated or if subjected to other stresses, may be noticeably off after three months
 - Taste aged product against fresh product to determine deterioration
 - iv. Train staff to encourage/sell/promote all beers offered
 - b. Store beer properly
 - i. Refrigerated storage is best for all beers at all times. Required for draft beer and many craft beers
 - ii. Non-refrigerated storage accelerates aging and development of off flavors

- With time, all beers will develop signs of oxidation (papery, wet cardboard flavors)
 - iii. Bottled beers are subject to skunking
 - Caused by sunlight and fluorescent light
 - Most noticeable in the aroma of the beer
 - Brown glass blocks 98% of the wavelengths of light that cause skunking, and therefore offers superior protection to clear and green glass
 - Green glass blocks 20% of the wavelengths that cause skunking
 - Clear glass offers no protection against skunking
 - Skunking may be evident after a few minutes of light exposure
 - Cans, ceramic bottles, and bottles in closed case boxes that completely shield beer from light give maximum protection from skunking
 - c. Serve beer properly
 - i. Draft beer must be served using CO₂ or a CO₂-nitrogen mix at the proper pressure setting.
 - ii. Compressed air should never be used instead of CO₂ or a CO₂-nitrogen mix in a draft dispense system
 - iii. A party pump limits the flavor stability of the beer to **less than one day** because oxygen is put in contact with the beer
- D. Draft systems
1. Key elements
 - a. Keg
 - b. Coupler
 - c. FOB (Foam-on-beer) detector
 - d. Faucet
 2. Draft system operation
 - a. Standard temperature of 38 °F (3 °C)
 - b. All kegs should be in the cooler for 24 hours prior to service to prevent foaming
 - c. Gas pressure applied to keg should only be set or adjusted by a draft-trained professional
 3. Basic troubleshooting
 - a. Beer has been in cooler for 24 hours
 - b. Coupler is properly engaged
 - c. No kinks or pinches in hose from coupler to wall
 - d. FOB, if present, properly set for service
 - e. If beer is still pouring badly, contact a draft-trained professional for assistance
 4. Draft system maintenance
 - a. Draft systems need to be cleaned to prevent development of off flavors in beer and to ensure proper operation of the draft system
 - b. Cleaning required every 14 days
 - c. Due to hazardous nature of cleaning solutions, never attempt to pour beer prior to full completion of draft system cleaning

E. Beer glassware

1. Select appropriate glassware
 - a. Size
 - i. Based on style and alcohol content (stronger beers, smaller glass)
 - ii. Provide room for an appropriately sized head
 - b. Shape
 - i. Cultural and historical traditions connect certain glasses to specific styles
 - c. Brand
 - i. Branded glasses matched to beer
2. Use beer clean glassware
 - a. Glass cleaning procedure – three-sink method
 - i. Empty glass into open drain
 - ii. Wash with non-petroleum based (sudsless) soap and brush
 - iii. Rinse in cold water, heel in, heel out
 - iv. Rinse in sanitizer, heel in, heel out
 - v. Dry inverted on rack so air circulates inside
 - vi. Rinse with cold water immediately before dispense
 - b. Glass cleaning procedure – glass washing machine
 - i. Use machine dedicated to beer glassware ONLY (do not clean dishes or glassware with food or dairy residue)
 - ii. Use correct detergent and sanitizer—check concentrations daily or follow detergent and sanitizer supplier recommendations
 - iii. Water temperature should range between 130 and 140 °F (54-60 °C). High temperature machines designed to operate at 180 °F (82 °C) may be used in place of chemical sanitizers (though local health departments may have additional requirements)
 - iv. Maintain washer to assure proper water flow through each nozzle and washer arm
 - v. Regularly service machine following manufacturer’s guidelines to ensure proper operation
 - c. Checking glass for “beer clean”
 - i. Without beer
 - Sheeting (wet glass, empty, water should sheet off of glass evenly; formation of droplets or webbing indicates not beer clean)
 - Salt test (wet glass, sprinkle salt throughout; places where salt does not adhere are not beer clean)
 - ii. With beer
 - Head size, shape, retention
 - Bubbles clinging to sides of glass (in liquid beer) indicate **not** beer clean
 - During consumption, lace will cling to the side of a beer clean glass following each sip
 - d. Preparation to serve
 - i. Glass temperature
 - Room temperature and chilled glasses are acceptable

- Frozen/frosted glasses are not recommended: causes foaming, makes beer too cold, frozen water or sanitizer may be present
 - ii. Cold water rinse of glass before filling
 - Removes residual sanitizer
 - Cools glasses that may be warm from washing
 - Aids ideal head formation and retention
- F. Serving bottled beer
1. Prepare for service
 - a. Bottle-conditioned beer should be stored upright prior to service
 - b. If possible, store beer at ideal serving temperature as dictated by style, otherwise store all beer under refrigeration (43 °F/6 °C or less)
 2. Examine bottle
 - a. Look for white flakes (snow-like) which can indicate old, unstable beer. Do not serve beer in this condition
 - b. Look for a thin ring of gunk at liquid level in neck—generally indicative of a bad bottle if present. Do not serve beer in this condition
 - c. Check for yeast on bottom of bottle
 - i. Retain yeast in bottle unless:
 - Consumer requests yeast to be poured
 - Style (e.g., Weissbier) is traditionally poured with yeast
 - ii. To pour yeast, rouse by swirling, rolling, or inverting
 3. Opening bottle: twist-off, pry-off, cork, combo
 - a. Twist-off caps
 - i. Twist off by hand
 - ii. Napkin may be used to aid grip and protect hand
 - b. Pry-off caps
 - i. Prefer openers with a bar or other lift area at least ¼ inch (0.5 cm) wide to prevent possibility of breaking the bottle during opening
 - ii. Lift in one motion
 - c. Mushroom cork
 - i. Remove wire cage by untwisting the tab
 - ii. Remove cork by hand—napkin may aid grip
 - iii. Be gentle so as not to disturb sediment and make beer volatile
 - iv. Practice cork safety—keep bottle pointed away from consumer at all times
 - d. Cap plus cork: corkscrew will be required after removing cap
 - e. Present the cork (always) or the cap of a rare, unusual or new beer, to the consumer
 - f. Check bottle lip: do not serve beer from bottles with broken/damaged lips
 - g. Also examine bottle lip for rust, dried beer, or yeast that could affect flavor or appearance of beer
 4. Pouring bottled beer
 - a. Filtered beer
 - i. Beers bottled without yeast or other sediment—the entire contents of the bottle can be poured into the glass
 - ii. Hold glass at 45-degree angle, pour down the side until glass is half full
 - iii. Gently tilt glass upright and pour down the middle to create approximately

one inch (2.5 cm) of foam head on the beer as the pour finishes. Weizens and Belgian ales traditionally have two to four inches (5-10 cm) of head

- b. Unfiltered beers
 - i. Some beers are packaged with yeast in the bottle or completely unfiltered
 - ii. Unfiltered beer should still be poured using the method described above in section I.F.4.a
 - iii. In most cases, yeast should be retained in the bottle. Be prepared to stop pouring when the yeast moves toward the top of the bottle
 - iv. When in doubt about pouring yeast, ask the consumer their preference

G. Serving draft beer

- 1. Pouring a beer
 - a. Hold glass at 45-degree angle, one inch (2.5 cm) below the tap faucet
 - b. Grip faucet handle near the base, pull forward to the fully open position to start the flow of beer—when a faucet is only open partially, beer will pour foamy
 - c. Pour down the side until glass is half full
 - d. While continuing to pour gently tilt glass upright and pour down the middle to create appropriate amount of head on the beer as the pour finishes
 - e. Close faucet as foam cap reaches the top of the glass to prevent beer waste
 - f. **Never** put faucet in contact with the glass or allow it to become immersed in beer in the glass
- 2. Pouring nitro beer
 - a. Hold glass at 45-degree angle, one inch (2.5 cm) below the faucet. Do not allow faucet to come in contact with the glass or its contents during dispense
 - b. Pull tap handle forward to the fully open position to start the flow of beer
 - c. Pour down the side until glass is three-quarters full
 - d. Settle for 1-2 minutes, then pour down the middle to create appropriate amount of head on the beer as the pour finishes
- 3. Changing a keg (same product)
 - a. Kegs must be chilled to draft system operating temperature (generally 38 °F/3 °C) before tapping and serving—general guideline is 24 hours in cooler before serving
 - b. On common American and import Sankey kegs: grip keg coupler handle, pull out and raise to the “up” or “off” position to disengage. Turn the coupler a quarter turn (90 degrees) counterclockwise to unseat. Lift off of the keg
 - c. Seat the coupler on a new keg. Turn clockwise a quarter turn (90 degrees) to lock the coupler in place, then lower the coupler handle to the “down” or “on” position to engage
 - d. In long-draw systems that use them, the foam-on-beer (FOB) detector for the keg needs to be reset after a keg change. This is usually done by venting the FOB mechanism to release foam and gas from the chamber

II. Beer Styles

- A. Understanding beer styles
 - 1. The historical development of beer styles
 - a. First driven by available ingredients, equipment, and water
 - b. Shaped by technology, taxes and regulations, culture, consumer appeal, etc.

B. Style parameters

1. Knowledge requirements

- a. For each style listed in the syllabus candidates should possess:
 - i. Qualitative knowledge of perceived bitterness using the following descriptors: low, moderate, pronounced, assertive, or highly assertive¹
 - ii. Qualitative knowledge of color using the following descriptors: straw, gold, amber, brown, or black
 - iii. Qualitative knowledge of alcohol content using the following descriptors²: lower, normal, elevated, high, or very high³

2. Quantitative parameters of beer character

- a. Alcohol content
 - i. By volume
 - ii. By weight
- b. International Bitterness Units
- c. SRM Color

3. Qualitative parameters of beer character

- a. Aroma
- b. Flavor
- c. Aftertaste
- d. Mouthfeel
- e. Perceived bitterness
- f. Appearance

C. History, characteristics, and flavor attributes of styles by region⁴

1. Belgium and France

- a. Lambic beers
 - i. Gueuze (PB – Low; C – Straw to gold; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - ii. Fruit Lambic (Kriek, Framboise, etc.) (PB – Low; C – Varies with fruit; ABV – Normal to elevated)
- b. Flanders ales
 - i. Flanders Red Ale (PB – Low; C – Red-brown; ABV – Normal to elevated)
- c. Trappist and abbey ales
 - i. Belgian Dubbel (PB – Low; C – Light amber to dark amber; ABV – Elevated)
 - ii. Belgian Tripel (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to gold; ABV – High)
- d. Pale Belgian beers
 - i. Belgian Blond Ale (PB – Low; C – Light gold to gold; ABV – Elevated)
 - ii. Belgian Golden Strong Ale (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to gold; ABV – High to very high)

¹ Test questions will reference IBUs as cataloged by the 2015 BJCP guidelines in addition to perceived bitterness levels as presented in the Certified Beer Server Syllabus

² Alcohol level descriptors correspond to the following ABV ranges: Lower – <4.5%; Normal – 4.5-6.0%; Elevated – 6.1-7.5%; High – 7.6-10.0%; Very high – >10.0%

³ Test questions will reference ABV values as cataloged by the 2015 BJCP guidelines in addition to alcohol level descriptors as presented in the Certified Beer Server Syllabus

⁴ Key for style descriptors: PB – Perceived Bitterness; C – Color; ABV – Alcohol level

- e. Unique beers
 - i. Saison (PB – Moderate; C – Light gold to amber; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - ii. Witbier (PB – Low; C – Straw to light gold, made white by haze; ABV – Normal)
- 2. Britain and Ireland
 - a. England
 - i. Pale ales
 - Best Bitter (PB – Pronounced; C – Gold to amber; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - English IPA (PB – Assertive; C – Gold to amber; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - ii. Dark ales
 - British Brown Ale (PB – Moderate; C – Amber to brown; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - Sweet Stout (PB – Low to moderate; C – Dark brown to black; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - Oatmeal Stout (PB – Moderate; C – Brown to black; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - b. Scotland
 - i. Wee Heavy (PB – Low; C – Amber to brown; ABV – Elevated to high)
 - c. Ireland
 - i. Irish Stout (PB – Pronounced; C – Brown to black; ABV – Lower to normal)
- 3. Germany, Czech Republic, and Austria
 - a. Lagers
 - i. Pale
 - German Pils (PB – Pronounced; C – Straw to light gold; ABV – Normal)
 - Munich Helles (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to light gold; ABV – Normal)
 - Czech Premium Pale Lager (PB – Pronounced; C – Straw to Gold; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - ii. Amber or dark
 - Märzen (PB – Moderate; C – Gold to dark amber; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - iii. Bocks
 - Helles Bock (PB – Moderate; C – Gold to light amber; ABV – Elevated)
 - Doppelbock (PB – Low; C – Gold to brown; ABV – Elevated to high)
 - b. Ales
 - i. Wheat beers
 - Weissbier (PB – Low; C – Straw to gold; ABV – Normal)
 - Berliner Weisse (PB – Low; C – Straw; ABV – Lower)
 - Gose (PB – Low; C – Straw to light gold; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - ii. Rhine Valley ales

- Kölsch (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to light gold; ABV – Normal)
- 4. United States
 - a. Pale lagers
 - i. American Light Lager (PB – Low; C – Straw; ABV – Lower)
 - b. Pale ales
 - i. American Wheat Beer (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to gold; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - ii. American Blonde Ale (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to gold; ABV – Lower to normal)
 - iii. American Pale Ale (PB – Pronounced; C – Light gold to light amber; ABV – Normal)
 - iv. American Amber Ale (PB – Pronounced; C – Light amber to dark amber; ABV – Normal)
 - c. IPAs
 - i. American IPA (PB – Assertive; C – Gold to amber; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - ii. Double IPA (PB – Highly assertive; C – Gold to dark amber; ABV – High)
 - d. Dark ales
 - i. American Brown Ale (PB – Moderate; C – Dark amber to black; ABV – Normal)
 - ii. American Porter (PB – Pronounced; C – Brown to black; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - iii. American Stout (PB – Assertive; C – Dark brown to black; ABV – Normal to elevated)
 - iv. Imperial Stout (PB – Pronounced; C – Dark brown to black; ABV – High to very high)
 - e. Strong ales
 - i. American Barleywine (PB – Pronounced; C – Light amber to light brown; ABV – High to very high)
 - f. Historic styles
 - i. California Common (PB – Pronounced; C – Light amber to amber; ABV – Normal)
- 5. Other regions
 - a. International
 - i. International Pale Lager (PB – Moderate; C – Straw to gold; ABV – Normal)

III. Beer Flavor and Evaluation

- A. Taste and flavor
 - 1. How we perceive flavor
 - a. Aroma
 - b. Taste
 - i. Established
 - Sweet
 - Salty

- Sour
 - Bitter
 - Umami
 - ii. Emerging
 - Fat
 - c. Mouthfeel
 - i. Body
 - ii. Carbonation
 - 2. Beer evaluation
 - a. Components of evaluation
 - i. Appearance
 - ii. Aroma
 - iii. Taste
 - iv. Mouthfeel
 - v. Aftertaste
 - b. Key evaluation techniques
 - i. Aroma techniques
 - Distant Sniff: Swirl beer while holding glass six to eight inches (15-20 cm) away from nose and take one to two short sniffs
 - Short Sniff: Swirl beer; bring glass to nose and take one to two short sniffs
 - Long Sniff: Swirl beer; bring glass to nose and take one long sniff
 - Covered Sniff: Cover glass with hand; swirl beer for three to five seconds; bring glass to nose, remove hand, and sniff
 - ii. Use consistent background to assess color and clarity
 - iii. Beer should reach all parts of tongue during tasting
 - iv. Flavor perception continues after swallowing
- B. Identify normal flavors of beer and their source
 - 1. Malt and grain flavors
 - a. Pale beer: Uncooked flour, bread dough
 - b. Golden beer: White bread, wheat bread, water cracker
 - c. Light amber beer: Bread crust, biscuit, graham cracker
 - d. Amber beer: Toast, caramel, pie crust
 - e. Brown beer: Nutty, toffee, chocolate, dark/dried fruit
 - f. Black beer: Roast, burnt, coffee
 - 2. Hops
 - a. Bitterness, flavor and aroma effects
 - b. Traditional regional hop traits
 - i. American: Piney, citrus, resinous, tropical fruit, catty
 - ii. English: Earthy, herbal, woody
 - iii. German/Czech: Floral, perfumy, peppery, minty
 - 3. Fermentation flavors
 - a. Ale versus lager flavors (See Ingredients section IV.A.3.a)
 - b. Weizen yeast flavor
 - c. Other yeast and bacteria can contribute to beer flavor

- C. Off-flavor knowledge
 - 1. Oxidation
 - a. Papery/wet cardboard
 - b. Waxy/lipstick
 - 2. Lightstruck/skunky
 - 3. Dirty draft lines
 - a. Buttery
 - b. Vinegar

IV. Beer Ingredients and Brewing Processes

- A. Ingredients
 - 1. Grains
 - a. Malt
 - i. Malt is produced by sprouting and drying cereal grain such as barley or wheat
 - ii. Different shades and flavors of malt are produced by variations in kilning
 - b. Unmalted grains such as corn or rice are sometimes used
 - 2. Hops
 - a. Hop character in beer
 - i. Depending on use, hops can contribute bitterness, flavor, and/or aroma
 - ii. Aroma and flavor vary with variety
 - b. Basic anatomy of hop plant and cone
 - c. Major growing regions
 - i. Germany
 - ii. Czech Republic
 - iii. Britain
 - iv. United States
 - Yakima Valley, Washington
 - Oregon, Idaho
 - v. Australia and New Zealand
 - 3. Yeast
 - a. Taxonomy
 - i. Ale yeast
 - *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*
 - Generally produce esters in levels which give fruity flavors to finished beers
 - Some possess a phenolic off-flavor gene (POF+) which results in production of phenolic flavors such as clove, nutmeg, white pepper
 - ii. Lager yeast
 - *Saccharomyces pastorianus* also known as *Saccharomyces carlsbergensis*
 - Generally do not produce esters or phenols in appreciable quantities, resulting in a focus on malt and hop character
 - b. Other yeast and bacteria can contribute to beer flavor
 - 4. Water
 - a. Water makes up 90+% of the weight of beer

- b. All water contains traces of minerals
 - i. Many are essential to beer production
 - ii. Several have desirable flavor impact
- c. Modern brewers adjust water chemistry to fit the requirements of the beer they brew

V. Pairing Beer with Food

No single model perfectly explains all the dynamics of beer and food pairing. Candidates at this level should understand that beer and food work well together, but do not need to possess knowledge of specific beer and food interactions.