Washington Beer Awards Fresh Hop Competition Rules for 2026

Washington Beer Awards Fresh Hop Competition Rules

1. **Eligibility & Pricing**
    a. **Brewery Eligibility**
        i. Brewers must own a licensed commercial brewery in the state of Washington to participate in the Washington Beer Awards. Beers submitted must have been brewed in and commercially available in the state of Washington. If a brewery is deemed to not meet this requirement or comply with any of the competition rules and still registers entries in the competition, they will be disqualified and may not be reimbursed any paid fees.
        ii. All beers entered must have been brewed in a facility located in Washington which has a Brewers Notice on file with the TTB (U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau).
    b. **Entry Pricing**
        i. $50 per entry.
2. **Entering Beers for WABA Judging**
    a. **Registration**
        i. The online registration period will be from September 8th through September 17th. All entries must be registered online.
        ii. The term "Fresh Hops" refers to freshly harvested hops (per the BA Guidelines: Such hops might be undried fresh or frozen cones or ground material, or, freshly kilned dried cones or pellets).
        iii. Beers submitted to the competition must be brewed with "fresh hops" as defined by the BA Guidelines. Other hops may be used in the beer but the primary flavor and/or aroma character of the hops MUST be from the current year's hop harvest.
        iv. Breweries may enter as many entries as desired.
            1. In order to manage competition size and preserve judging integrity, it may be necessary to reduce the maximum number of entries per brewery to a lower number. This number will be determined at the end of the online registration window. If it is necessary to reduce the maximum number of entries per brewery, breweries with entries in excess of the final maximum number of entries will be notified of the change. The order of registration of the brewery's beers will be used to select which final beers will be accepted into the competition. Consequently, breweries should enter beers in the order that they would like to ensure that they are judged.
        v. Beers entered in the competition will be evaluated in the "Fresh Hop Beer" category of the Brewers Association guidelines which describes some of the fresh hop characters which should be expected in the beers.

vi. Beers will be entered into the online registration tool leveraging the currently published Brewer's Association Style Guidelines as of July 1st of the competition year. The core award categories will be based on Fresh Hop Beer style category applied to other Brewer's Association Style Guidelines styles. The anticipated award categories are:
    1. Fresh Hop American-Style Pale Ale (base style must be American-Style Pale Ale)
    2. Fresh Hop Juicy or Hazy Pale Ale (base style must be Juicy or Hazy Pale Ale)
    3. Fresh Hop American-Style Strong Pale Ale (base style must be American-Style Strong Pale Ale)
    4. Fresh Hop Juicy or Hazy-Style Strong Pale Ale (base style must be Juicy or Hazy Strong Pale Ale)
    5. Fresh Hop American-Style India Pale Ale (base style must be American-Style India Pale Ale)
    6. Fresh Hop West Coast-Style India Pale Ale (base style must be West Coast-Style India Pale Ale)
    7. Fresh Hop Juicy or Hazy India Pale Ale (base style must be Juicy or Hazy India Pale Ale)
    8. Fresh Hop American-Style Imperial or Double India Pale Ale (base style must be American-Style Imperial or Double India Pale Ale)
    9. Fresh Hop Juicy or Hazy Imperial or Double India Pale Ale (base style must be Juicy or Hazy Imperial or Double India Pale Ale)
    10. Other Fresh Hop Beer (must be in a base style different from all of the above award category base styles)

vii. The competition organizers reserve the right to add or remove style categories and award categories in response to market needs or to ensure competition efficiency. The Guidelines being used for the competition year will be linked to on the Washington Beer Awards website. It is up to the brewer to enter their beer in the appropriate category and specify any subcategory as necessary.

viii. When entering the "Other Fresh Hop Beer" category, it is necessary for the brewer to specify the base style of the beer (before any "fresh hop" factors are included) in the "Specialty Information" section of the registration tool.

ix. Additional information is required with many categories noted in the Brewer's Association Style Guidelines. It is the responsibility of the entrants to properly complete this information in the "Specialty Information" section. Failure to do so may significantly compromise the entry's ability to be correctly judged. No information should be provided that identifies the brewery or name of the beer. The Washington Beer Awards reserves the right to edit the "Specialty Information" of any entry to ensure anonymity of the entrant and support smooth competition execution.

x. For all beers, the brewer may provide additional information in the "Specialty Information section" on the techniques employed to make the beer a fresh hop beer (including, but not limited to, hop varietals and hopping technique) and any other considerations necessary for judging.

xi. Entries may be altered using the online registration tool until the end of the registration period. At the end of the registration period, no modifications may be made to entries.

xii. Please note any pouring instructions using the available selections during registration. The registration tool will allow entrants to specify "normal pouring", "do not rouse – quiet pouring" or "rouse." If no pouring instructions are provided, "normal pouring" will be used.

xiii. Submission of any entries binds the brewery to adhere to the Washington Beer Awards name and logo usage policies.

xiv. During the brewery registration process, entrants must indicate that they agree to accept the standard agreement.

xv. **Please note that entries in and medals from the Washington Beer Awards Fresh Hop Competition do not count towards the Brewery of the Year Awards in the main competition.**

b. Confirmation of Entries

i. A minimum of 8 (eight) entries is required in a category for that category to be eligible to be judged independently. The competition organizers reserve the right to merge categories into hybrid "award categories" at their discretion to ensure that awards are provided in meaningful categories with enough entries to provide healthy competition. The entries will be judged according to the style category originally entered; however, placements will be awarded compared to the beers in the hybrid award category. Brewers with entries in the affected categories will be notified and given the option of accepting the category merger or withdrawing the entry.

ii. All entries will be considered confirmed immediately at the end of registration. Care should be taken to ensure that the entries submitted by the end of registration are the ones the brewers intend to submit. Due to timing, there will be no confirmation of entries prior to invoicing unless award categories are changed in which case the affected brewers will be contacted within two days of the end of registration.

c. Payment

i. Check payments made out to "Washington Beer Awards" must be received by October 7th. They must be mailed to:

Washington Beer Awards
PO Box 26398
Federal Way, WA 98093

d. Submitting beers

i. Entrants must provide at least six (6) 12-ounce containers, four (4) 22-ounce containers, **or the equivalent of at least 72 ounces for each entry in a minimum of four containers**. Acceptable package sizes must be between 10 and 32 ounces. **Entrants must send at least 4 containers of each beer being judged.** All entries must be bottled or canned.

ii. After the registration period and any required confirmation of entries, entrants will be e-mailed bottle labels to print out and label their entries. These bottle labels should be affixed to the bottles or cans using clear packing tape. Labels should be affixed below the shoulder of the bottle.

iii. All beers must be mailed or delivered to the published drop sites on the Washington Beer Awards website (www.wabeerawards.com)

iv. Beers must be received between September 25th and October 7th. **Late entries will not be accepted.** The only variations for the deadline will be due to entries broken during transit that are coordinated through the Washington Beer Awards. If entrants have any problems with shipping they should contact Peter Twigg (206-412-3664).

v. Please note that it is illegal to ship beer via the United States Postal Service. We recommend using UPS, FedEx, or delivering in person. For breweries distant from a drop location, we encourage entrants to coordinate a group delivery.

vi. Entrants should package entries well to avoid breakage during shipping. If entries break during shipping and replacements do not arrive prior to the deadline, the entries may not be judged. Sending replacements is the responsibility of the entrant, not the competition. Shipping containers and bottles will not be returned to the entrant.

vii. Recommendations for shipping entries:

1. Wrap each entry in bubble wrap (please use scotch tape to tape the wrapping closed, not packing tape).
2. Separate each bottle with cardboard.
3. Place each entry in a separate container (for example, a six-pack of one entry or 4 pack of 22 oz. entries). Make sure that every bottle from the same entry is in the same box. Do not ship bottles from a single entry in multiple boxes.
4. Use packaging materials to fill the rest of the box. Bubble wrap is preferred but if Styrofoam peanuts must be used, please put them in plastic bags first. Do not use shredded paper.
5. Wrap each entry box in a plastic bag in case of breakage. Place the entry boxes in a strong shipping box.

viii. Recommendations for dropping off entries:

1. Please check the operating hours of the drop location prior to delivering entries. Certain drop locations may only have certain dates or a limited

drop window. Check the "Entry Drop Off" section of the competition website for complete details (www.wabeerawards.com/drops).

2. Group bottles for each entry together, preferably in a line or a six pack inside of a box.
3. Entries must be delivered in a closable box. Free-standing bottles or six-packs will not be accepted.

e. Judging

i. All beers will be judged in accordance with the current Brewer's Association Style Guidelines published as of July 1st of the competition year with any modifications or additions made by the competition organizers prior to registration.

ii. Beers will be judged by a panel of judges in a blind format. A series of precautions will be taken to prevent judges from determining the origins of the entry. No information will be provided to judges that could tie the entry to a specific brewery. Judges will determine placements by the relative stylistic accuracy and technical merits of the beers presented to them.

iii. Judges will be selected on an invite-only basis based on judging skills and experience. When judges have any conflicts of interest in judging beers from any particular brewery (if they work for, used to work for, have ownership, or brewed as a free laborer for a brewery) they must inform the Washington Beer Awards of the conflict. They will not be allowed to judge in a category that the brewery(ies) has entered. Judges must recuse themselves if they discover that they are accidently assigned to judging a category that they entered.

f. Post competition

i. Awards will be presented at an Awards Ceremony following the competition. Details will be posted on the Washington Beer Awards website and sent to registered breweries. Awards will be mailed to entrants not able to attend the Awards Ceremony.

ii. Judge tasting notes from the competition will be mailed no later than the first business day after the Awards Ceremony. Awards not picked up at the Awards Ceremony will be mailed shortly following the ceremony to the brewery addresses specified in the registration process.

iii. All decisions from the Washington Beer Awards are final.

g. Use of Washington Beer Awards Logo

i. Reference to an award must include a mention of the category in which the award was received, must specify the type of award received (i.e., gold; silver; bronze) and must include a mention of the year it was received. If the award was received in a Special Award category, the title of the Special Award category must be referenced. In all cases, reference to an award must include the name of the beer and brewery exactly as entered in the Washington Beer Awards for the year in which the award was received.

ii. All of the above required items must be in a font size large enough to be read in the format in which they are presented. Use the artwork provided by the Washington Beer Awards and choose the highest resolution appropriate for the desired use.

iii. **Always use the ® when using the Washington Beer Awards logo**. It is a registered trademark of the Washington Beer Awards. When writing the words "Washington Beer Awards" or "WABA" an ® must be used after first mention.

iv. Promotions or any other mentions of the Washington Beer Awards **may not mention other brewing companies nor the name of any judge or judges serving as a part of the Washington Beer Awards judging or evaluation**.

v. By entering the competition, breweries agree to use the Washington Beer Awards mark only in pre-approved advertising/promotions (print/web, etc.) in compliance with the guidelines specified above. **This does not grant permission to use the WABA mark on any merchandise promoting the win (shirts, hats, glassware, etc.). Individual arrangements can be made for non-standard uses**.

vi. These rules do not waive any right to trademark or copyright material of the Washington Beer Awards. The Washington Beer Awards logo, copyright, or trademark material may be used only with written permission of the Washington Beer Awards.

vii. Failure of any brewing company, or of any person acting on a brewing company's behalf or at a brewing company's direction, to comply with these rules may result in suspension from participation in the Washington Beer Awards for a duration to be determined at the absolute discretion of the Washington Beer Awards organizers.