

Great American Beer Festival® Beer & Cider Style Guideline Updates for 2026

New Style Additions:

- **Rice Lager:** New category addition
- **Hop Water:** you read that right. All entrants will be asked to provide information on stabilization method used for safety purposes. See guideline for more info.
- **Craft Malt Category:** a one-time category highlighting the character of craft-malts. See guideline for more info.
- **Specialty Beer Category:** 2 new style categories added as subcategories of the Specialty Beer category
 - Multi-Adjunct Beer: beers featuring multiple distinct adjuncts that do not fit into other categories.
 - Hybrid/Crossover Beer: beers featuring a blend of two traditional styles such as American Belgo (Belgian Blonde + IPA), Czech Dark Lager + NZ IPA, etc.

Style Reclassifications:

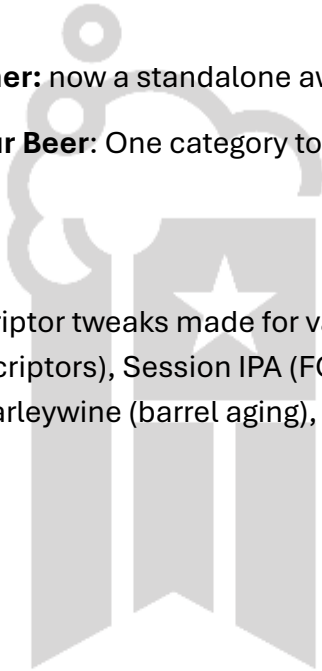
- **American Belgo-Style Ale:** removed as the new “Hybrid/Crossover Beer” category is an appropriate home for these entries.
- **American-Style Pale Ale:** Now 2 subcategories, American-Style pale Ale & American-Style ESB
- **American-Style or Export Stout:** category grouping of American Stout or Export Stout.
- **American-Style Sour/Fruited Sour Ale:** one category featuring both fruited and non-fruited versions
- **American-Style Wheat Wine:** has been recategorized from “Other Strong Beer” to the Barley Wine category.
- **Belgian-Style Abbey Ale:** containing Belgian Blonde, Dubbel and Other Abbey Ale
- **Belgian-Style or Spontaneous Sour Ale:** new category grouping containing Lambic, Gueuze, Contemporary Belgian-Style Spontaneous Ale, Oud Bruin/Oud Red Ale, Other Belgian-Style Sour, & Wild Beer subcategories.

- **Berliner Weisse:** 2 subcategories, traditional & specialty (allowing for fruit additions, etc.)
- **Dessert or Pastry Beer:** Changed name from "Dessert or Pastry Stout" to "Dessert or Pastry Beer" to allow include wider variety of base styles (barleywine, imperial porter, etc.) rather than simply stouts. Includes 2 subcategories, one for unaged versions and one for wood/barrel aged versions
- **English-Style Pale Ale:** category grouping of Ordinary Bitter, Special or Best Bitter, English Summer Ale, English Pale Ale
- **English-Style ESB or IPA:** category grouping of English Extra Special Bitter and English IPA
- **European-Style Amber Ale:** new category grouping containing German-Style Altbier, French-style Biere de Garde, Belgian-Style Speciale Belge.
- **German-Style Strong Beer:** new category grouping containing Doppelbock, Eisbock, Weizenbock subcategories.
- **German-Style Wheat Beers:** category grouping of Hefeweizen, Kristal Weizen, Bersteinfarbenes weizen, Dunkel weizen.
- **Gose:** 2 subcategories, traditional & contemporary (allowing for fruit additions, etc.)
- **Gluten-Free Categories:** Gluten-Free beers now have 3 category options, Classic Ale or Lager, Hoppy, or Specialty. Some or all of these may be collapsed depending on entry counts.
- **Mexican-Style Light Lager:** now a standalone award category
- **New Zealand Pale Ale:** now a standalone award category
- **Porter or Stout:** category grouping of Brown Porter & Irish Dry Stout
- **Saison:** contains both traditional and specialty subcategories
- **Session Beer:** now includes German-Style Leichtes Weizen & English Mild Ale (Pale & Dark)
- **Specialty India Pale Ale:** previously "Experimental" IPA, this is now the "Specialty IPA" category to align more with historical submissions. This is the home for any non-standard IPA-style beer and also has an "American Black Ale" subcategory.
- **Strong British Ale or Aged Beer:** a new category grouping consisting of Scotch Ale (peated & unpeated), Old Ale, Strong Ale, Aged Beer.

- **Sweet Stout or Cream Stout:** now a grouping of Sweet/Cream Stout & Oatmeal Stout subcategories.
- **Pumpkin/Squash or Pumpkin Spice Beer Category:** Previous subcategories rolled into one to simplify things for both entrants and judges
- **Weissbier category grouping:** South-German Style Hefeweizen, Kristal Weizen & Bernsteinfarbenes weizen are now grouped together in the South-German-Style Weissbier category
- **West Coast-Style Pilsener:** now a standalone award category
- **Wood & Barrel Aged Sour Beer:** One category to house fruited and non-fruited versions.

Style Guideline Updates

- Slight parameter or descriptor tweaks made for various categories, including NZ Pale Ale/NZ IPA (hop descriptors), Session IPA (FG), Contemporary American Lager & Pils (Hop character), Barleywine (barrel aging), British IPA (malt)



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