

# Mapping the trends in beer

**Jeff Evans** analyses the results of the International Beer Challenge to gain an insight into the category's direction of travel. See this year's results on the next page

**T**he International Beer Challenge provides a rare opportunity to assess the state of the beer market. By scrutinising the entries submitted by brewers and distributors, we can make a basic analysis of the latest trends in the industry and

figure out beer's broad direction of travel. This year, we saw breweries from more than 30 countries taking part - not just from brewing heartlands such as the UK, Germany, Belgium, the US and the Czech Republic, but also from emerging beer nations such as Bolivia, Paraguay, South Korea, Taiwan and Mongolia - so we are well placed to study beer developments across the world.

There is a caveat, of course. Any conclusions we draw cannot be set in stone - we're only looking at beers that have been entered in the competition, after all. But, considering that breweries generally only enter beers that they particularly want to promote, or believe will do well commercially, this survey does allow us to see how breweries themselves picture the market and perhaps how they would like it to develop.

## PINPOINTING PATTERNS

I've been running this analysis of entries for a few years now and, while there are no dramatically different findings from year to year, over time a pattern does develop and become reinforced. We're seeing that again this year. All the trends that have come to light through recent competitions are still valid, it seems. For instance, low and no-alcohol beers are still well in vogue, this year accounting for just under 11% of all entries, just a touch lower than in 2022, and New World hops and fruit as flavourings are clearly still dominating the thoughts of

brewers and their marketing colleagues. US or southern hemisphere-style IPAs this year comprised just over 11% of entries, rising from 9.5% last time around, while fruit beers rose from 4% last year to more than 7% this year. Lagers remain equally buoyant, adding another 2% to last year's figure to now account for 23% of all entries - nearly doubling the 12% figure seen just seven years ago.

As with the positives, so with the negatives, and traditional British beer styles, in particular, continue to struggle. Stouts (excluding imperials stouts) have dipped from a low 3% of all entries to 2.5%, while British-style pale ales have fallen from last year's meagre 3.2% representation to just 2.6%.

However, there is some consolation to be found in the list of beers that claimed gold medals this year. Nearly 19% of all the British-style pale ales entered were awarded gold, which indicates that the quality has certainly picked up even if the numbers remain in decline. Other styles that fared well in terms of medals include wheat beers (all styles, including Belgian witbiers and German weizenbiers) and bocks, both of which can boast a 25% gold-winning percentage. Then there is quadrupel - the highly-potent Trappist/abbey ale style - which really blew the judges away, with half of all entries picking up our highest medal.

Finally, a word about our trophies, our annual awards for the very best of the gold medal beers, which reveal that, as far as quality is concerned, both the traditional and the innovative can excel. Winners this year range from a classic witbier and a British brown ale to a coffee stout and this year's Supreme Champion Beer, the remarkable 110 Minutos - a Scotch ale laced with smoked malt from Kross in Chile.

"New World hops and fruit as flavourings are clearly dominating the thoughts of brewers"



## Supreme Champion

**SUPREME CHAMPION & TROPHY - BEST ALE ABOVE 5%**

**Kross 110 Minutos, Cervecería Kross**

"As a team, we have won a number of awards over time, but this one is very special to us. Being selected from more than 600 entries of excellent quality in so many styles and leaving behind many breweries we admire and take inspiration from, is very humbling. Winning this recognition as a South American brewery with our interpretation of a traditional British style in its homeland, is simply magnificent. It feels like scoring the winning goal as the underdog in the big final, in front of a completely packed Wembley Stadium - unforgettable. We are thankful that the tasting panel honoured our permanent strive for quality this way and we are extremely proud to be the first brewery to put Chilean craft beer on the map in this prestigious competition."

Asbjorn Gerlach, co-founder,  
Cervecería Kross

## Supreme Champion Brewer



**Hoegaarden®**

**SUPREME CHAMPION BREWER & BREWER OF THE YEAR EUROPE**

**AB-Inbev Hoegaarden**



"As the full Hoegaarden brewery team, we are extremely proud of our awesome Hoegaarden beer, brewed with premium ingredients and with a lot of passion. Our beer is the result of hard work and dedication, and the Brewer of the Year Europe award and Supreme Champion Brewer award provide us this extra recognition for our constant focus to deliver to our consumers the best quality beers every day."

Bart Simonet, Hoegaarden brewery manager

**BREWER OF THE YEAR ASIA**

**Urbrew China Craft Beer Co**

**BREWER OF THE YEAR NORTH AMERICA**

**Athletic Brewing Company**

**BREWER OF THE YEAR SOUTH AMERICA**

**Cervejaria Denker**

**BREWER OF THE YEAR UK**

**Glen Affric Brewery**

**GLENN PAYNE RISING STAR AWARD**

**Round Corner Brewing**

**HIGHLY COMMENDED BREWER OF THE YEAR AUSTRALASIA**

**Coles Liquor**

**UK DISTRIBUTOR OF THE YEAR**

**Branded Drinks**

**UK RETAILER OF THE YEAR**

**Marks & Spencer**

**FOR A FULL LIST OF MEDAL WINNERS, VISIT  
[INTERNATIONALBEERCHALLENGE.COM](http://INTERNATIONALBEERCHALLENGE.COM)**

## Taste Awards



### BEST LAGER UP TO 5%

**Gunmetal,**  
Round Corner Brewing



### BEST FLAVOURED BEER

**BA Breakfast Stout,**  
Glen Affric Brewery



### BEST SPECIALITY BEER

**Queensway Stout,**  
Glen Affric Brewery



### BEST LAGER ABOVE 5%

**Swinckels Superior  
Pilsner, Swinkels  
Family Brewers**



### BEST NO OR LOW ALCOHOL BEER

**Amstel Radler 0.0%,  
Heineken Nederland**



### BEST ALE UP TO 5%

**Lewes Castle Brown  
Ale, Harvey's Brewery**



### BEST STOUT OR PORTER

**Denker Imperial Stout,**  
Cervejaria Denker



### BEST WHEAT BEER

**Hoegaarden White,**  
AB-Inbev Hoegaarden



## Design & Packaging Awards

### TROPHY/SUPREME CHAMPION

**Outland, Badger Brewery**

### GOLD

**Headless Laud, WPA Pinfold**

### GOLD

**Belhaven Discovery Range, Belhaven Brewery**

### GOLD

**Hopical Storm, Timothy Taylor & Co**

### SILVER

**Biere Brut Methode Originale Gôde, Brasserie  
Gôde**

### SILVER

**Core Range, Hackney Church Brew Co**

### SILVER

**Falcon Collection, Okell's Brewery**

### SILVER

**Elizabethan Ale, Harvey's Brewery**

### BRONZE

**Kjubist Blue, Brasserie Kjubist**

### BRONZE

**Czech Mates, Thornbridge Brewery**