



2024 U.S. Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition Official Rules and Regulations

Written and approved by the U.S. Competitions Committee
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1.0 ORGANIZATION

The U.S. Cup Tasters Championship (“USCTC”) is a program of the U.S. Chapter of the Specialty Coffee Association (“SCA US”) and the U.S. Coffee Championships (“USCC”).

2.0 RIGHTS

All intellectual property related to all U.S. Coffee Championships (“USCC”) competitions, including these Official Rules and Regulations and the format of the competition, are the property of the Specialty Coffee Association U.S. Chapter. No part of this document may be used or reproduced without the expressed permission of the Specialty Coffee Association.

3.0 2024 COFFEECHAMPS CUP TASTERS QUALIFYING COMPETITION

3.1 PARTICIPATION

3.1.1 Qualification

- a. U.S. CoffeeChamps Cup Tasters Preliminaries (“Preliminaries”)
 - i. Each of the Preliminaries will be open to up to 24 competitors. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis, and is created by the Preliminaries Host. A competitor may register for any of the Preliminaries, regardless of where they live.
 - ii. The Top 3 competitors from each of the Preliminaries will be awarded a reserved spot at one of the U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions. Competitors may choose at which Qualifying Competition they would like to compete during registration. These spots are only reserved, registration costs are not covered, unless otherwise noted by the Host. Competitors who do not place in the Top 3 may register for a Qualifying Competition via the Open Registration spots. Qualifying Competitions dates/locations are TBD.
 - iii. Competitors may compete at as many of the Preliminaries as they wish. Competitors will only be awarded 1 spot at the Qualifying Competitions. If a competitor places in the top 3 at more than 1 of the Preliminaries, then their spot will be given to the next person in ranking order.
 - iv. For the Preliminaries, no waitlist will be maintained, if a Top 3 competitor passes on their reserved spot at the Qualifying Competitions the spot will be released back to Open Registration.
 - v. All Competitors and Judges are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the Preliminaries.

b. U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions (“Qualifying Competitions”)

- i. The Qualifying Competitions are open to the 72 competitors who register. There will be 36 competitors at each of the 2 competitions, held at separate times and places, or 72 competitors at 1 competition. Tasters may compete at either competition regardless of company or geographic location. Competitors may only register to compete in 1 Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition.
- ii. The Top 3 competitors from each of the Preliminaries will be awarded a reserved spot at one of the U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions.
- iii. Remaining spots will be available for Open Registration and Lottery.
- iv. At their conclusions, the Top 3 competitors from each of the 2 Qualifying Competitions, or the top 6 competitors, should there be one single competition, will be invited to receive a “bye” to bypass the First Round of the USCTC and automatically advance to the Quarter-Finals Round.
- v. The next 9 highest scoring Tasters (i.e., ranks 4 through 12) from each Qualifying Competition, or the next 18 highest scoring competitors, should there be one single qualifying competition, will advance to USCTC and start in the First Round.
- vi. For the Qualifying Competitions, a waitlist will be kept based on the chronological order of registration of each registrant who was not initially assigned a competition registration confirmation. The waitlist will be used to replace each confirmed competitor who cancels or cannot otherwise participate at the Qualifying Competition. The participant(s) will be selected from the waitlist based on the chronological order of their registration. This waitlist will be maintained until 3 weeks prior to the Qualifying Competition.
- vii. All Competitors are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the Qualifying Competitions.
- viii. Competitors may only compete once in each competition within the season at the Qualifying level. For example, if a competitor competes in the first Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition, that same competitor may not compete in the second Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition. They may, however, compete in another competition (i.e., Barista, Brewers Cup, Cup Tasters, Coffee in Good Spirits, Latte Art, or Roaster) at the second Qualifying Competition.

c. United States Cup Tasters Championships (“USCTC”)

- i. The positions to compete at the USCTC will be guaranteed until an invited competitor turns down their spot or fails to register for USCTC within the designated registration window. Any unclaimed position(s) will be offered to the next highest scoring competitor(s) from the Qualifying Competition in which the unclaimed position(s) came from. Positions will be offered in descending sequence until all positions are filled. This waitlist will be maintained until 2 weeks prior to USCTC.
- ii. All Competitors must compete in 1 of the 2024 Qualifying Competitions to be eligible to compete in the 2024 USCTC.
- iii. All Competitors are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the USCTC.

- d. Any dispute relevant to the qualifications or eligibility of a competitor will be reviewed and resolved by the U.S. Competitions Committee or the National Competitions Coordinator.

3.1.2 Age Requirement

Competitors and judges must be at least 18 years of age at the time of competing in any USCTC event.

3.1.3 Nationality

Competitors must hold a valid U.S. Passport, U.S. Green Card, or have 24 months of documented employment or scholastic curriculum in the United States of America.

3.1.4 Competitor Registration and Fees

- a. Registration links for the Qualifying Competitions can be found at uscoffeechampionships.org or requested from the National Competition Manager (uscompetitions@sca.coffee). Competitors must register and pay any registration fee to the SCA via the internet. Space is limited, and competitors will be admitted on a first-come, first-served basis. Once an entry form has been received, a confirmation letter will be sent to the competitor via email. Competitors who qualify to compete at the U.S. Coffee Championships through the Qualifying Competitions will receive an invitation and registration information via email following the Qualifying Competitions.
- b. Competitor registration is not complete until competitors have paid for their registration and filled out the registration form.
- c. Competitor registration belongs to the competitor listed on the registration form.
- d. All registrations are non-refundable and non-transferable.

3.1.5 Expenses

Competitors are fully responsible for any and all expenses personally incurred that are related to the competition including, but not limited to, travel, accommodations, and supplies needed for the competition. The USCC, SCA, the U.S. Chapter, or Hosts are not responsible or liable for any of the competitor's expenses. If a competitor cannot afford the aforementioned expenses, it is their responsibility to see that their company or other outside parties cover these expenses.

3.2 COMPETITOR QUESTIONS

- a. All competitors must thoroughly read and understand these Rules & Regulations without exception. All

documents may be downloaded from the competition website at www.uscoffeechampionships.org

- b. Competitors are encouraged to direct any questions to the National Competitions Coordinator prior to arriving at the competition. If any competitor is unclear as to the intent of any of the Rules and Regulations, it is the competitor's responsibility to clarify that position with the National Competitions Coordinator prior to the competitions by contacting uscompetitions@sca.coffee. Competitors will also have the opportunity to ask questions during the required Online Learning Session. Please see www.uscoffeechampionships.org for the dates/time of these Online Learning Sessions.

3.3 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Competitors and the winners of the U.S. Coffee Championships are representatives of the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), the U.S. Chapter, and United States Coffee Championships (USCC).

- i. Fully abide by the SCA's Code of Conduct, found here: sca.coffee/code-of-conduct
- ii. Upon entry into any USCC competition and in exchange for the opportunity to win, each competitor undertakes that they will:
 - 1. Permit the SCA, the U.S. Chapter, and USCC to use the competitor's name and image in any format without charge for the purpose of promotion of the SCA, the U.S. Chapter, USCC, or any USCC competition.
 - 2. Without limiting the generality of clause (i), the formats referred to in clause (a) may include: photographic, video, print, Internet, and any electronic media.
 - 3. With fulfilling these terms and conditions, actively work to uphold the good reputation of the SCA, the U.S. Chapter, USCC, and any USCC competition.
- iii. Upon entry into any USCC competition and in exchange for the opportunity to win, each competitor undertakes that, should they win or place in the top ranking positions, they will:
 - 1. For the Preliminaries, make themselves available to travel to compete in the CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions.
 - 2. For the Qualifying Competitions, make themselves available to travel to compete at the U.S. Coffee Championships.
 - 3. Include the name "Specialty Coffee Association U.S. Chapter", "SCA U.S. Chapter", "U.S. Coffee Championships", or "USCC" immediately before the name of the competition title (e.g., "U.S. Barista Championship", "U.S. Brewers Cup", "CoffeeChamps Coffee in Good Spirits Qualifying Competition", "U.S. CoffeeChamps Barista Preliminary", etc.) in each instance when the competition title is used.
 - 4. Without limiting the generality of clauses (i) or (ii), the instances referred to in clauses (i) and (ii) include mention verbally, in print or via any electronic medium.
 - 5. Promote the Specialty Coffee Association U.S. Chapter and U.S. Coffee Championships at

every opportunity without charge to the SCA.

6. Promote the relevant U.S. CoffeeChamps Preliminaries as the pathway to the U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions at every opportunity without charge to the SCA U.S. Chapter or USCC.
 7. Promote the relevant U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions as the pathway to the U.S. Coffee Championships at every opportunity without charge to the SCA U.S. Chapter or USCC.
- iv. Upon entry into any USCC competition and in exchange for the opportunity to win, each competitor undertakes that, should they win, they will:
1. Fully abide by the USCC Champion's Code of Conduct.
 2. Make themselves available to travel to represent the U.S. at the World Coffee Championships.

3.4 ENFORCEMENT OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

- a. The U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions will employ these Rules & Regulations throughout the competition.
- b. If a competitor violates one or more of the Rules & Regulations, they shall be automatically disqualified from the competition, except when the Rules designate a specific enforcement or consequence.
- c. If a judge or competition organizer causes the violation of one or more of these Rules, a competitor may submit an appeal, according to the process detailed in the section "Competitor Protest and Appeals."

4.0 COMPETITION SUMMARY

- a. The competition is organized as 6 triangulation tests. In each triangulation test, 3 cups of coffee are set up, two of which are identical. One is unique. The aim of the competition is for the participant to use their gustatory and olfactory senses to identify the odd cup out of the 3. Note that the competitors are tested on their ability to distinguish different coffees, not to identify their quality, origin, etc.
- b. During the Qualifying Competition, 6 triangulation tests are placed before each competitor. The coffees selected for all tests will be the same for all cuppers. The competitor who identifies the most "odd" cups from the sets will be declared the winner. In the case of a tie (i.e. when 2 or more competitors share the highest number of correctly identified triangulations) the competitor with the shortest completion time wins.
- c. All coffees should be roasted no longer than 14 days prior to the date of the competition. Coffees should be medium roasted to the same degree (between Agtron tile 55 and 70) and ground identically.
- d. Coffee should be prepared in a standard drip filter batch-brewer of a quality appropriate for the needs of the competition. The brewing temperature should be between 92-96 degrees Celsius (197.6-204.8 degrees Fahrenheit). The brewing cycle should be 4 to 6 minutes, and the temperature of the finished brew should be between 80-85 degrees Celsius (176.0 to 185.0 degrees Fahrenheit) and stored in an airtight or thermal urn. A. The USCC event organizer will decide if it is necessary to use filter or purified

water instead of tap water.

- e. The coffee may be prepared with a coffee to water ratio of approximately 60 grams per litre.
- f. Cups used for the triangulations must be between 125 ml to 250 ml (4.25fl oz to 8.5fl oz). The volume of coffee in each cup must be between 75 ml to 150 ml (2.5fl oz to 5.0fl oz).
- g. 6 sets will be placed in front of each competitor at the same time. The sets must be identical, but should not be placed in the same order for each competitor.
- h. The timekeeper will signal when competitors may begin triangulating. All competitors within each set will begin at the same time. The round is over when all competitors have stepped back from the table and signaled that they are finished by calling "time" OR after a maximum of 6 minutes, whichever occurs first. The timekeeper will signal when half the time has elapsed and each minute thereafter.
- i. Each competitor should stand clear of the table prior to the start of competing.
- j. Competitors must taste all 3 cups to determine the odd 1 out. Competitors who do not taste all 3 cups in a triangulation will have that triangulation disqualified from their total score and a 1 minute time penalty will be added to their End Competition Time.
- k. Competitors must identify the odd cup by pushing it over the line into a separate box from the other cups in the triangulation so that it is completely clear of its previous position.
- l. The winner is the competitor who correctly identifies the most odd cups. In the event of a tie, the competitor who completed the triangulations in the shortest amount of time will be declared the winner.
- m. In the event of a tie (i.e., 2 or more competitors share the highest number of correctly identified triangulations), the competitor who completed the triangulations in the shortest amount of time will be declared the winner.
- n. At no time is a competitor permitted to access the back of stage or coffee preparation space. Any competitor found breaching this rule can be disqualified at the discretion of the event organizers.
- o. Competitors must bring their own spoon for tasting the coffees. Competitors may bring their own water (1 container only), spit cup, or towel but these items must not be on the table during competition. Cupping spoons, spit cups, water cups, or towels are not provided by USCC
- p. A. Competitors spit cup must be held by competitors. There will be a bucket beneath the table should the competitor need to dump the contents of their spit cup.

5.0 COMPETITION PROCEDURE

- a. The competition space will consist of a stage with 3 competition tables, numbered 1, 2, and 3.
- b. Each Qualifying Competition will consist of one competition round.
- c. Each competitor will be given 6 minutes to assess the six triangulations.

- d. When cups are selected they should be pushed across the table. If competitors lift a cup off the table, or touches any of the cups it is determined to be their final selection and must be moved across the line into the separate box. Once the cup has been pushed over the line, the cup must not be moved again.
- e. At the conclusion of the Qualifying Competition there will be a ceremony where finalists are announced and all competitors will be acknowledged. All competitors are required to attend this ceremony. If a competitor cannot attend, they must notify the National Competitions Coordinator ahead of the competition via email.

6.0 COMPETITOR INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO COMPETITION TIME

6.1 ONLINE LEARNING SESSIONS

Prior to the Qualifying Competitions, an Online Learning Session will take place. Taking part in 1 of these sessions is mandatory for all competitors. Any important onsite information will be given to you via email before the competition. The National Competitions Coordinator, Stage Manager, Head Runner, and/or Head Judges will also be able to assist you with onsite event questions during the competition.

6.2 BE ON TIME

Competitors should be in the vicinity of the Cup Tasters stage a minimum of 30 minutes prior to their competition time. Any competitor who is not onsite at the start of their competition time may be disqualified.

7.0 COMPETITION TIME

7.1 INTRODUCTION BY THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Before the 6 minute competition time has started and the cups are ready, the Master of Ceremonies will introduce the competitor.

7.2 PRIOR TO COMPETITION TIME

All competitors must stand a minimum of 1 meter behind the competition table and not approach the table until their time has started.

7.3 BEGIN COMPETITION TIME

The Master of Ceremonies will ask the competitors if all cuppers are ready to begin. The designated table timekeeper will begin a stopwatch the moment the Master of Ceremonies calls start. Tracking time elapsed during the competition time is the responsibility of the competitor, though they may ask for a time check at any point.

7.4 DURING COMPETITION TIME

The designated competition timekeeper will begin a stopwatch the moment the master of ceremonies calls to start. Tracking time elapsed during the 6-minute competition time is the responsibility of the competitor, though they may ask for a time check at any point. The competition timekeeper will give the competitor a 3-minute, 2-minute, 1-minute, and 30-second warnings during the 6 minutes of competition time. The timekeeper is required to give these warnings as they occur.

7.5 END COMPETITION TIME

Competition time will be stopped when the competitor raises their hand and calls "time." The competitor must make a clear and audible signal to the official timekeeper and head judge. The maximum time frame for each competitor is 6 minutes.

8.0 SCOREKEEPING

8.1 USCTC OFFICIAL SCOREKEEPING

The Qualifying Competition and USCTC official scorekeepers are responsible for keeping all scores. Scores are also recorded on a whiteboard on stage or on a live screen.

8.2 TIED SCORES

- a. If the tied competitors have the same number of correct triangulations, the competitor who completed their triangulations in the shortest time will be declared the winner.
- b. In the case where 2 or more competitors have achieved a tied score in the same time, those competitors involved will be ranked in the same position.

8.3 SCORECARD

Recorded scores for USCTC may be tracked on a whiteboard or live screen on stage.

9.0 COMPETITOR PROTEST AND APPEALS

9.1 PROTEST

- a. If a competitor wishes to appeal a scoring decision or protest any other matter that arises during the competition which affects such competitor, the competitor shall address it to the National Competitions Coordinator. The National Competitions Coordinator will then determine whether the issue can be

resolved onsite at the competition, or whether the issue will require a written appeal following the competition.

- b. If the National Competitions Coordinator decides that the issue can be resolved onsite at the competition, the National Competitions Coordinator will discuss it with applicable judges or any other parties involved to enable a fair presentation of the issue. A decision will be made on-site by the National Competitions Coordinator, who shall inform the competitor of the decision at that time.
- c. Possible resolutions to a competitor protest or appeal may include (but are not limited to):
 - i. Disqualification of another competitor
 - ii. An opportunity for one or more competitors to perform the relevant competition service to supersede the prior scores,
 - iii. Another solution, as determined by the National Competitions Coordinator
- d. The National Competitions Coordinator shall operate under the purview of the Specialty Coffee Association management and Advisory Board.

9.2 APPEAL LETTER

- a. If any protest described above cannot be resolved onsite or the competitor wishes to appeal a decision made by the National Competitions Coordinator onsite, the National Competitions Coordinator will ask the competitor to submit their appeal in writing (which may be by email or hard copy) to the National Competitions Coordinator.
- b. The appeal letter must include the following:
 - i. competitor name
 - ii. date
 - iii. a clear and concise statement of the complaint
 - iv. date and time references (if applicable)
 - v. competitor's comments and requested resolution
 - vi. party/parties involved
 - vii. competitor's contact information
- c. Any written appeals, which do not include this information, will not be considered. Competitors must submit their written appeal to the National Competitions Coordinator within 24 hours after the subject incident.

9.3 APPEAL DECISION

- a. The National Competitions Coordinator will review written appeals within 30 days of receipt and contact the competitor in writing via email with the final decision.
 - i. Disqualification of another competitor
 - ii. An opportunity for one or more competitors to perform the relevant competition service to supersede the prior scores,
 - iii. Another solution, as determined by the National Competitions Coordinator
- b. The National Competitions Coordinator shall operate under the purview of the Specialty Coffee Association management and Advisory Board.