



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



Our first IBA President in 1951 reflected on the impact a world bartender association could have on the bar community. We are inspired by his words that ring true even today.

"Well, the IBA founding is done. In this historical moment for barmen-activities we are happy to see around the table barmen from seven countries. If only we will not be too pretentious, the future generations will, with the help of the Associations, have grounds for positive technical satisfactions and professional prestige and better possibilities for mutual friendship and help."

James Billy Tarling
Torquay 24th February 1951

A. Description, general rules

1. The IBA World Cocktail Championship (WCC) is an opportunity for competitors to meet other bartenders from all over the world and compete in one of our two independent competitions.
2. The level of professional knowledge and skills that a bartender has will be checked and evaluated in the Classic competition of the World Cocktail Championship (WCC). This competition will award the title of **IBA Cocktail of the Year** in each of the six cocktail categories.
3. The winner will become the **WORLD BARTENDER OF THE YEAR**.
4. The second competition is our World Cocktail Championship (WCC) Flair. This competition will focus on the best entertainment and best flair bartending skills. The winner will become the **WORLD FLAIR BARTENDER OF THE YEAR**.
5. The International Bartenders Association (IBA) World Cocktail Championship (WCC) is organised by the host country and the IBA Executive Board in accordance with the WCC competition rules and regulations.
6. The IBA will create a random five-year calendar specifying the WCC Competition assigned to each country. The countries involved are informed in advance of the category that each association will participate in.
7. Each national association will be paired with one (sometimes two) IBA Associate Member(s). The two contestants (Classic Competition and Flairtending Competition) from one Association will be paired with one (or two) Associate Member(s). Pairing is done by way of an official draw. The results of the draw are announced by the IBA Board.
8. Each association will submit one recipe per competitor entered in the WCC Classic and WCC Flair. Participation in the WCC Flair is not compulsory.
9. No competitor may compete at the WCC more than three times in any five-year period. The IBA encourages new talent to gain experience and knowledge by participating at least twice in any five-year period. This rule was established on 1 January 2017.
10. A competitor may only compete in one competition of the IBA World Cocktail Championships per year.
11. National guild presidents should not enter the competition area without invitation by the WCC Chairperson(s).
12. Competitors must present themselves in their guild uniform or in their national uniform. The uniform and bar tools must not carry any commercial branding or logos. If they do not comply with this rule, they could be penalised.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



B. Scenario

1. **The World Cocktail Championship (WCC) Classic** consists of four levels:
2. The competitors from all IBA Guilds will be divided into the six categories.
3. **WCC Classic Preliminary Round** (IBA Members) – consists of six different Cocktail Category Competitions. Each national association member of the IBA will be randomly allocated to one cocktail category and have the opportunity for their selected bartender to showcase skills and present a cocktail.
The top two (2) scoring competitors from each Cocktail Category will move to the next level.
4. **WCC Classic Quarter-Final** (12 Participants) – consists of two (2) different challenges that all participants must complete.
 - Knowledge test
 - Amazing Mixologist RaceThe top six (6) scoring competitors will move to the next level.
5. **WCC Classic Semi-Final** (6 participants) – consists of a Technology Bar Challenge.
The top three (3) scoring competitors will move to the next level.
6. **WCC Classic Super Final** (3 participants) – consists of the preparation and presentation of an original cocktail.

C. Recipe - Submission - Approval

1. Each guild president shall submit the recipe for only one competitor; it must be an original cocktail creation.
2. Recipes for the **World Cocktail Championship (WCC) Classic** must be submitted by the closing date announced by the IBA Board.
3. Recipes must be submitted on the official **World Cocktail Championship (WCC) Classic** entry form. A **portrait photo** (not an 'action shot') of the competitor must be attached as a separate file: "full-colour, high-resolution and at least 1MB in size".
4. If a homemade ingredient is used, a completed Homemade Ingredient Form must be submitted together with the recipe, including the alcohol content, when relevant, and the Brix value.
5. Along with the recipe for the WCC Classic Preliminary Round, all competitors must also submit the recipe form for the WCC Super Final.
6. It is the responsibility of each national President to ensure the recipe complies with these rules.
7. Recipes submitted on time with no mistakes will be awarded +3 points on the Preliminary Round score.
8. All recipes submitted will remain the property of the IBA and IBA Associate Members.

D. Online Classes and Briefings

1. Online classes will be organised and scheduled prior to the WCC. Short briefings will be organised on site at the competition venue by the IBA Vice-President, WCC Sub-Committee Chairs and IBA Mentors to help overcome language barriers.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



2. Briefings and online classes are not forums for debating or challenging the rules.
3. Only competitors are allowed to participate in the briefings.
4. The aim of the online classes is to explain and prepare competitors for the knowledge test component of the competition.
5. The purpose of the briefings is to clarify all rules to the competitors. The judges are there to explain the rules.
6. A draw will determine the running order of the competitors.
7. Competitors must come prepared with any questions they wish to raise and be at the correct location on time (5 minutes before briefing time).

E. Basic Rules for Cocktail Preparation

1. All products in the recipe must be selected from the WCC Product List.
2. The World Cocktail Championship (WCC) Classic Sub-Committee will not be responsible for spirits, liqueurs, syrups, garnishes and/or bar equipment unavailable during the competition.
3. The Host Country will provide a basic list of all fruits, herbs and vegetables available during the event.
4. All garnish ingredients are the competitor's responsibility and expense. If a listed product is unavailable, any substitution is subject to the sole discretion and approval of the WCC Classic Sub-Committee.
5. The Host Country will supply ice and crushed ice. No homemade ice.
6. Recipes may not contain more than seven (7) cl of alcohol in any cocktail (except for two dashes of bitters), which may be used in addition to the seven (7) cl.
7. Minimum volume of the cocktail is seven (7) cl.
8. Recipes must contain at least 1.5 cl of the Associate Members' drawn product, except in the Before Dinner Competition. In this competition a sweet product may not exceed 1 cl.
9. If a country has drawn two or three products, the competitor may limit the quantity of each drawn product to one (1) cl.
10. Recipes must be expressed in centilitres (cl), millilitres (ml), dashes (d) for liquids and in grams (g) for any solid product. A bar spoon will not be accepted as a measure.
11. Measuring glasses, jiggers or free pouring are allowed.
12. Cocktails must not contain more than six (6) ingredients.
13. One homemade ingredient per cocktail is allowed and can be used in any cocktail recipe. The assigned sponsor products as the base cannot be replaced but can be used as an additional product for producing homemade ingredients.
14. A maximum of two (2) cl of homemade ingredient per cocktail/glass is allowed.
15. The homemade ingredient must be described in a separate form provided during registration. Its primary goal is to improve the flavour and balance of the cocktail. See K for complete explanations.
16. No non-sponsored alcoholic beverages, syrups or purées are allowed.
17. No artificial ingredients or colourants are allowed.

18. No open flame is permitted on stage - special preparation methods may be used only after approval of the WCC Classic Sub-Committee.
19. Competitors are responsible for supplying their own fruit. If a specific fruit juice from the WCC Official Product List is not available, then the competitors will be allowed to purchase fruit and make fresh juice backstage on the day of the competition, immediately prior to preparing the garnish. The Back-Office Judge will assess the competitor's wastage practices and how fruit and other ingredients are disposed of or utilised. For example, the use of citrus zest should be linked to the use of juice from the same citrus fruit in the recipe.
20. Only pasteurised dairy products are permitted.
21. Airs, foams and spherification are allowed in all competitions. All ingredients used to make airs/foams must be prepared on stage and follow the maximum six-ingredient rule. All ingredients and techniques must be explained in detail on the Entry Form.
22. Stones or frozen food items, alone or in ice, will not be allowed.
23. The methods for preparing cocktails are the following: build (directly in glass), stir (mixing glass), muddle, shake, blend, throw or any combination of these.
24. Competitors must use their own bar utensils. No bar tools will be supplied by the IBA or the host country. The host country will supply basic containers/carafes for the pouring of juices. Competitors are advised to bring everything they need and not to rely on the host country.
25. Cocktail names containing rude, shocking, sexual or racist words, references to narcotics, or references to physical diseases or disabilities are prohibited.

F. Back-Office Practices, Decorations and Garnishes

a. Wastage practice policy and Back-Office Practice

In the back-office area, the competitor will prepare their mise-en-place, bar utensils / equipment / fresh juices /... before going to the Decoration and Garnish table.

A WCC Back-Office Judge will assess cleaning standards and wastage practices, including the efficient use of fruit, vegetables and any other products, as well as the homemade ingredient sample.

b. Definition of a Cocktail Decoration

A cocktail decoration is meant to beautify a drink with no impact on flavour or cocktail ingredients. It must be an edible food product (fruit peel, fruit, vegetable, root, herb) used to complement and enhance the visual presentation of the drink, and not to alter the flavour.

A decoration is placed on or around the glass.

c. Definition of a Cocktail Garnish

A cocktail garnish is made up of an edible food product (fruit peel, fruit, vegetable, herb, root, but not a liquid) used to complement the flavour of a mixed drink. It can do this visually, aromatically, or by influencing the cocktail's taste. A garnish should not be the



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



dominant taste of the mixed drink but instead offer a contrasting or complementary flavour to the recipe.

A cocktail garnish will be placed inside the glass/drink and/or used to provide aroma.

G. Garnishes & Decorations Rules

1. Neither the decoration nor the garnish shall be counted as an ingredient. They are in addition to the six permitted ingredients.
2. Decorations must consist of 100% natural edible food products excluding the pick or clip.
3. Flowers, plants and other botanical products may only be used if they are clearly labelled as edible on their original packaging.
4. Judges are encouraged to take a bite out of any part of the decoration.
5. If the decoration comes into contact with the liquid of the cocktail, no penalty will be incurred.
6. Wood/metal/plastic picks or clips may be used to assist in building the decoration but may not be the focus of the decoration. Large or multiple manufactured items may not overpower the visuals of the natural components of the decoration.
7. Decorations and garnishes must be prepared (cut up) in the backstage area at the garnish table during the garnish preparation time (15 minutes), prior to going on stage.
8. No pre-assembled or pre-prepared garnishes will be allowed. Dehydrated fruits and vegetables are allowed.
9. Once the 15-minute preparation time has expired, competitors must stop and raise their hands. No further adjustments may be made to the garnish or decoration.
10. Placing the garnish/decoration on the glassware prior to preparing the cocktail is not allowed.
11. Rims and Crustas must be prepared on the competition stage. A full rim on a glass is considered an ingredient of the cocktail.
12. The use of a "side-garnish" and cocktails served on small plates or trays next to the cocktail glass will not be considered and will not earn additional points.
13. Only the cocktail glasses will be taken to the tasting judges' panel and presented to the public.
14. All garnishes and decoration ingredients must be listed on the recipe entry form.
15. Straws will be used only in the tasting room by tasting judges, not in cocktail glasses on stage.
16. The garnish must be firmly secured to the glass so that the cocktail can be safely transferred to the tasting jury.

H. Glassware

1. Competitors may not use their own glassware.
2. Glassware will be provided by the IBA (APPENDICES).
3. Competitors must use the glassware stated in the recipe submission document.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



I. Scenario of Competition

All competitors will receive their ingredient bottles and/or barbacks from the storekeepers on the competition stage. Competitors must not enter the competition area before their allotted time.

1. The use of freshly squeezed juices or similar preparations must be declared prior to the competition and prepared in the back-office area under supervision. Competitors will start with a one-minute speech to share the inspiration/story behind the cocktail. It shows how well competitors engage with the audience. Each speech will be judged by the Personal Presentation Judge for clarity and confidence, not on the competitor's English-language proficiency.
2. No translator is permitted as English is the official language of the IBA. A competitor who does not speak English should be able to memorise a short speech in English to share on stage.
3. Competitors will have two minutes to set up for the competition and ensure they have all required ingredients, tools and supplies, polished glassware, checked ice, a dump bucket, bottles, etc.
4. The mise-en-place must reflect the competitor's natural pouring style, whether left- or right-handed. Bottle labels must be visible to the audience at all times.
5. When pouring the finished cocktail into glasses, competitors should partly fill the glass and then move on to the next glass, following their natural handling style and using a maximum of three (3) movements per drink. Glasses must be filled identically in terms of content, volume and level, both before topping in the Sparkling and Long Drink categories and at the end of the routine in all six (6) categories. Good posture and professional body language are encouraged. Bending the back and shoulders towards the glass while pouring will be penalised.
6. Competitors must prepare five identical cocktail portions. Four for Tasting Judges and one for the Presentation Area.
7. Competitors are not allowed to taste their cocktails on stage.
8. The competitors will stop the clock by raising the completed cocktail and presenting it to the audience.
9. Competitors will be judged on hygiene, efficiency, and professionalism when preparing the cocktail.
10. In the event of unexpected accidents during the preparation or transportation of the cocktails (through no fault of the competitor) to the Tasting Jury, the WCC Classic Sub-Committee will resolve the matter with the Jury. The competitor will not be penalised.
11. The technical judges enter their scores on the scoring sheet. Points are deducted based on the Technical Judges' observations. The remaining points will be the final score for the technical performance.
12. If competitors do not prepare cocktails as stated in the recipe (wrong/missing ingredient), the technical judges will inform the IBA VP Classic. Penalty points will be deducted by Technical Judges, and their decisions are final.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



J. Time and Penalties

1. Garnish and decoration preparation will be limited to **fifteen (15) minutes**. When the fifteen (15) minutes have expired, the competitors must stop and raise their hands.
2. If competitors change the recipe or garnish in any way, or fail to follow the original recipe/presentation, 40 penalty points will be deducted from the score awarded by each technical judge.
3. If competitors fail to make all five cocktails, the competitors will only receive the scores from the judges who receive a cocktail. Competitors will be penalised for not preparing all the cocktails required.
4. Competitors will have seven (7) minutes to prepare their signature cocktails. Competitors exceeding this time limit will be penalised by the Technical Judges: 10 points will be deducted for every 10 seconds beyond the seven (7)-minute preparation time, up to a maximum of one (1) additional minute.
5. After eight (8) minutes, all work must stop and competitors must present their cocktails as they are, even if they are not finished.
6. The one-minute introduction speech will not be considered as part of the seven minutes allowed to mix the cocktail.
7. Competitors will be told when the seven-minute period starts and instructed to begin mixing their cocktail.
8. Discretionary Penalty: Any unauthorised entry into the competition area by national guild presidents or representatives may result in a discretionary penalty or disqualification of the competitor from the same guild.

K. Homemade ingredient

1. Only one (1) homemade ingredient is permitted to be used in each WCC cocktail recipe.
2. A maximum of four (4) ingredients combined will be allowed for the homemade ingredient.
3. The technical sheet (APPENDICES) is mandatory, and it must report the Brix value and alcohol content, if applicable.
4. The maximum quantity of homemade ingredient is two (2) cl. For a Before Dinner Cocktail, a maximum of one (1) cl applies if a sugar solution is used.
5. The homemade ingredient must be labelled professionally according to H&S regulations with the following:
 - Ingredients,
 - Preparation instructions,
 - Alcohol content, if applicable
 - Brix value approved by back-office coordinators.
6. Homemade ingredients may only contain alcoholic and/or non-alcoholic beverages (mixers, juices and syrups) from the WCC Product List.
7. Homemade ingredients must be bottled in anonymous containers and must not be identifiable as originating from any non-partner product.

8. The submission of the homemade ingredient must be approved by the WCC Registrations Sub-Committee.
9. WCC competitors must provide 50% of the quantity of homemade ingredient required for the cocktail to allow the Back-Office Coordinators to taste and assess it.
10. A sample of the homemade ingredient must be given to the Back-Office Coordinator during the briefing on the day before the WCC competition. It will be stored to verify that it has been properly prepared and that no fermentation or chemical alteration occurs.
11. The homemade ingredient used in the competition must conform to the submitted specification. Any alteration in appearance or flavour will result in the ingredient being rejected.

L. WCC Level I – Categories Round

a. Before Dinner Cocktail Category - *Campari Bitter*

Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. A drink designed to stimulate the appetite. An aperitif is dry rather than sweet (e.g., champagne, pastis, sherry, vermouth, Americano, Dry Martini and Negroni). Judges will favour drier and/or more bitter cocktails rather than sweet cocktails when scoring on taste.
2. Before Dinner Cocktails must not contain more than 1 cl of sweetened products.
3. The following products are classified as sweet products: cordials/liqueurs, sweet fortified wines, Pedro Ximenez/cream Sherry, Port, sweet sparkling wines, red vermouth, dessert wines and sweet fruit juices.
4. Dry Marsala, dry sherry, bitter aperitif and dry Vermouth are permitted and are not considered sweetened products.
5. Total volume of the cocktail will be between a minimum of seven (7) cl and a maximum of twelve (12) cl.

b. Long Drink Cocktail Category - *Cutty Sark*

Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. A Long Drink is served in a tall glass: it may be refreshing, sweet, sour, or tropical, and is served in a large-volume glass provided by IBA Associate Members.
2. Total volume of the cocktail will be between a minimum of twelve (12) cl and a maximum of twenty-five (25) cl.

c. Coffee Cocktail Category - *Luxardo espresso liqueur*

Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. Coffee cocktails must contain a minimum of two and a half (2.5) cl of Luxardo coffee liqueur.
2. If coffee is included in the recipe, it will be prepared in the back office using an espresso machine during the garnish preparation time.
3. Only pasteurised dairy products are permitted.
4. Homemade ingredients are authorised. Coffee should remain the dominant flavour.

5. Total volume of the cocktail will be between a minimum of seven (7) cl and a maximum of thirty (30) cl.
6. The serving vessel must comply with the IBA sponsor list.
7. Coffee cocktails must primarily evoke the aroma and taste of coffee, ensuring that its essence remains the dominant sensory experience.
8. Coffee cocktails should seamlessly integrate coffee with complementary aromatic components - such as spirits, liqueurs, syrups, dairy, or spices - to create a refined and innovative drinking experience.
9. Cocktails may be served either cold or warm, allowing for versatility in presentation and enjoyment.

d. After Dinner Cocktail Category - Amaro del capo or Cinzano vermouth - One or the other
Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. After Dinner cocktails are sophisticated, flavourful drinks designed to be enjoyed after a meal.
2. These cocktails often incorporate ingredients such as cream, liqueurs, coffee, chocolate, or aged spirits, creating a smooth and indulgent experience.
3. The flavour profile is typically sweet, rich, and well-balanced, complementing the conclusion of a dining experience.
4. The texture may range from velvety and creamy to bold and spirit-forward, depending on the ingredients used.
5. While traditionally served in short-drink glasses, these cocktails are crafted to provide a lingering, satisfying finish to a meal, making them an essential category in cocktail competitions focused on technique, creativity, and flavour harmony.

e. Sparkling Cocktail Category - Barline Syrups

Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. Sparkling cocktails must contain a minimum of 7 cl of sparkling wine.
2. Alcohol added to sparkling wine must not exceed 5 cl.

f. Tea Cocktail Category - Suntory

Refer to the WCC sponsor list to identify mandatory products.

1. Tea must appear in the recipe as a direct ingredient.
2. Any brand of tea except Dilmah Tea may be used.
3. Tea cocktails must contain a minimum of two and a half (2.5) cl of tea infusion and at least two and a half (2.5) cl of an alcoholic beverage.
4. Tea will be prepared in the back office during the garnish preparation time using either hot infusion or cold infusion.
5. Only pasteurised dairy products are permitted.
6. Homemade ingredients are authorised. Tea should remain the dominant flavour.
7. Total volume of the cocktail will be between a minimum of seven (7) cl and a maximum of thirty (30) cl.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



8. The serving vessel must comply with the IBA sponsor list.
9. Tea cocktails must primarily express the aroma and flavour of tea, ensuring it remains the dominant sensory element.
10. Tea cocktails should harmoniously integrate tea with complementary aromatic components such as spirits, liqueurs, syrups, dairy products, herbs, or spices to create a refined and innovative drinking experience.
11. Cocktails may be served either cold or warm, allowing versatility in presentation and consumption.

M. Sequences

a. WCC Preliminary Round

Six (6) categories

The top two (2) competitors in each category will proceed to the Quarter-Final.

b. WCC Quarter-Final - *Knowledge test & Amazing Mixologist Race*

All 12 Quarter-Finalists start this round with 0 points.

The top six (6) competitors in the Quarter-Final will proceed to the Semi-Final.

1. Knowledge test

The multiple-choice questionnaire will be based on the IBA Academy Manual, the IBA Cocktail Book or any official specifications for the various AOCs and DOs for spirits.

Questions will relate to:

- Spirit facts
- Spirit history facts
- IBA History
- Glassware identification
- Units of measurement
- Social Responsibility
- Any other pertinent matter related to the bar industry

2. Amazing Mixologist Race

Treasure hunt in Macau

c. WCC Semi-Final - *Technology Bar Challenge*

All 6 Semi-Finalists start this round with 0 points.

The top three (3) competitors in the Semi-Final will proceed to the Super Final for the “IBA World Bartender of the Year” award.

d. WCC Super Final - *Monin & Fenjiu*

1. All three (3) Super Finalists start this final round with 0 points.
2. This award will be presented to the bartender with the best technique, best performance and best-tasting cocktail in the Super Final.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



3. The competitors will be judged on complexity, communication, creativity, cocktail taste and technical skills by a panel of four judges.
4. A full briefing on the Super Final will be provided on the day.
5. The drawing of lots will determine the sequence of competitors.
6. Competitors will prepare five cocktails, four for the judges and one for the photo area.
7. During the seven-minute performance the judges will ask questions in English and engage the competitors in conversation about the cocktail, their philosophy, inspiration or story (all in front of the audience). Competitors will be equipped with a headset microphone.
8. Competitors exceeding the seven-minute time limit will be penalised.
9. If there is a tie, the overall impression will break the tie. If the tie remains, the highest tasting score will be the deciding factor. If the tie remains, the Semi-Final scores will be considered.

N. Classic Cocktail Competition Awards & Prizes

Awards presented during the Super Final event:

1. IBA Cocktails of the Year by Category

The best cocktail in each category will be announced as an IBA Cocktail of the Year. The competitors who created the winning recipes will receive the awards (Long Drink Cocktail of the Year, After Dinner Cocktail of the Year etc.)

2. Cocktail Art Award

The cocktail with the best design (best-looking drink) of the Preliminary Round will receive the award.

3. Best Technical Skills

The most efficient competitor in the Preliminary Round will receive the award.

4. Best Knowledge Skills

The competitor with the highest knowledge-test score in the Quarter-Final will receive the award.

5. Amazing Mixologist Race Trophy

The competitor with the highest score in the Amazing Mixologist Race in the Quarter-Final will receive the award.

6. Best Technology Skills

The competitor with the highest score in the Technology Bar Challenge in the Semi-Final will receive the award.



2026 WORLD COCKTAIL CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIC RULES



7. Best Presentation Skills

The competitor with the highest presentation speech score in the Preliminary Round will receive the award.

8. World Bartender of the Year

The competitor with the highest score in the Super Final will be awarded the title:

World Bartender of the Year

The runner-up and the third-placed competitor in the Super Final will also receive awards.

The winner will be invited to attend the following year's IBA World Cocktail Championship as a guest of the IBA, with travel and accommodation included for the winner only.

The prize is non-transferable and there is no cash alternative.

9. Eagle Reward Prize

The competitor under the age of 24 with the highest combined tasting and technical score in either the WCC Classic and Flair competition will receive the award.

Competitors' dates of birth must be provided upon recipe submission.

10. Best Team Award

The national team with the highest combined Preliminary Round score of its Classic and Flair Bartenders will receive the award.

To ensure equal weighting, Flair scores are multiplied by 1.1041, calculated as:

Total Classic points ÷ Total Flair points

11. Best Guild Award

The association with the highest level of participation in IBA activities throughout the year, including competitions, Elite Bartenders courses and any other IBA events will receive the award.

12. Biggest Delegation Award

The association with the highest number of delegates in attendance will receive the award.