

Candidate Statement for Brian Eichhorn

Hi there. My name is Brian Eichhorn and I would like the opportunity to represent the Midwest on the board for the BJCP. When I'm not working as a Claims Analyst, I'm usually either brewing beer (and mead), judging beer (and mead) or drinking beer (and mead). I have been brewing since 2007 and judged in my first competition in March 2010 and tested for the first time August of that year. I am presently a Master judge and active lead grader, as well as an Exam Administrator on an annual basis.

I reside in Chicago Illinois, in the middle of a great bastion of homebrew clubs and competitions. With this centralized location, I have been able to judge at competitions all over the Midwest and as the Midwest Rep, I would make it a point to judge at least one competition in each state of the region to get out and get live feedback and to learn more about the judging cultures of each end of the region. I find it very important to judge with as many people as possible as I am always learning something, be it new references for different off flavors or new techniques for brewing beer or making mead. I judge in 10+ competitions/year at this point. I think it is important to get out and judge a lot to stay fresh. I also believe that there is a fair amount of work that still needs to be done in terms of judging as well.

In judging so often, I see some judges with great promise that just need some help to really get the hang of it. I think we as judges need to use our rank as a way of mentoring rather than overruling. Encouraging new judges is important; just because you're ranked higher doesn't inherently mean you know more. New judges need to be reinforced; though biases should also be minimized.

The other side is that there are many good, experience judges that do not produce great scoresheets. Continuing education is something that should be reinforced, along with reinforcing expectations for all judges and self-policing. This needs to occur more regularly. As the Midwest representative, I would be willing to take a proactive approach in this regard and accept any feedback, as well as complaints, to help improve this.

Additionally, the promotion of beer literacy is very important to me. It's right there in our mission statement and I think we need to do more to reinforce that. Drinking commercial beer is important on some level for judges. We need to get exposure to new ingredients and new styles as this helps make it easier to judge those examples when they show up in competitions.

With that being said, I would like to take the opportunity to really thank all of the great judges and friends that I have met over the years. And to those that I have not yet met, I look forward to judging with you soon!

