

Mini-BOS Guidelines

Mini-BOS stands for *mini-Best of Show*, and is a technique for reconciling the placement of entries within a multi-flight category. It is called a “mini-BOS” because it uses BOS-style judging (i.e., judges pick winners without rescoring) and is only used for a single judging category, not the whole competition (hence, the “mini”).

Competitions frequently use the mini-BOS in conjunction with queued judging. This technique is a very important part of the AHA NHC first and second round judging, as well as judging in larger competitions with categories that cannot be judged in a single flight. It allows winners to be chosen despite the fact that a single panel of judges did not evaluate all the entries.

In a 3-bottle competition (such as the AHA NHC second round), the first bottle is used for the initial judging, the second bottle is used for mini-BOS, and the third bottle is reserved for BOS. In a 1-bottle competition (such as the AHA NHC first round) or a 2-bottle competition (most competitions with a traditional BOS), the first bottle must be used for both the primary judging and the mini-BOS. It is very important that judges reserve enough of the entry so that it can be judged again. Quick recapping and cold storage will also help preserve the entry.

Within the initial judging flights, the teams of judges choose their best entries. They may decide to send up to three entries (depending on quality) to the mini-BOS round. If there are a large number of flights in the category, judges should not send borderline entries. Some competitions may direct judges to always send a specific number of entries, or to not send entries that do not score at a minimum level (typically 30). Judges should follow competition organizer directions. Judges or stewards should mark the Flight Summary sheet and Cover Sheet indicating that entries advanced to the mini-BOS round.

Two or three judges typically are used in the mini-BOS round. These judges are usually the highest ranking or most experienced judges, and often are chosen from different flights. It is not necessary to choose one judge from every participating flight, particularly if a partial bottle is being used for mini-BOS. It is much more preferable that only two judges participate and get a good pour, than to have more judges and have a stingy or cloudy pour.

Within a mini-BOS round, the judges choose the top entries as directed by the competition director (typically, this means choosing the first, second, and third place winners). The mini-BOS judges are told the entry number and style, but not prior scores. Some competitions choose to re-label the bottles to disguise the identity of the entry so that judges will have a harder time using knowledge from the initial round of judging. This can be logistically difficult to manage, but may help ensure blind judging.

The judges evaluate the entries anew without regard to (or knowledge of) any score assigned in the initial judging round. Judges should NOT simply use initial scores to assign places without re-judging. Mini-BOS beers are ranked but not scored, although some competitions will direct the judges to subsequently assign scores to the winning entries so that they align with the places awarded. This is not a requirement, however. The key task of the mini-BOS panel is simply to select the winning entries for the category. The designated winners typically receive category medals, and the top entry is typically advanced to the BOS round.

Mini-BOS Frequently Asked Questions

Q: My beer got a high score. How come it didn't win?

A: Judges don't see the initial score, and are picking the best entries on the table at that moment. Different judges have different perceptions, and entries can degrade over time.

Q: Why don't judges just pick winners based on their scores?

A: Judging beer still has some subjectivity to it, especially in the assignment of scores. Two judges on one flight might be score beers higher or lower than judges in another flight, even if they were judging the same entry. So when multiple flights are needed to judge a large number of entries in a given ribbon category, there needs to be a means of selecting the top entries over-all from the top entries in each flight. Scores only can be directly compared when the same set of judges are scoring the entries.

Q: I led my flight in judging. Why wasn't I allowed to judge mini-BOS?

A: Not all lead judges are required. Sometimes the entries are limited (e.g., if the bottle was previously used), and sometimes there are already three judges that have been seated. The highest ranking judges should be used, and they should judge the beers independently of their prior scores and rankings.

Q: I judged mini-BOS. How come I didn't get an extra half point for judging?

A: Mini-BOS is not considered another judging session; it is a continuation of the existing session. No additional judging points are awarded for mini-BOS.

Q: My beers were evaluated again. How come I didn't get another set of scoresheets?

A: Mini-BOS does not use scoresheets; it uses BOS-style judging where the entries are tasted and winners are selected without writing new sheets. It would be time-prohibitive to use additional sheets in judging mini-BOS.

Q: How come the average score on my scoresheets doesn't match the score on the cover sheet?

A: If your beer was judged higher by mini-BOS judges, it may have beat beers that were initially scored higher. Some competitions do not allow for higher scoring beers to be ranked lower, so the judges were likely instructed to use an "assigned score" on the cover sheet. This is simply a score given the entry that matches its final ranking.

Q: I didn't medal. How do I know if my entry was considered in the mini-BOS round?

A: The judges or steward should have checked the "This beer advanced to a mini-BOS round" checkbox on the cover sheet. Sometimes they forget to do this, but in large competitions, they should be instructed to do so. Organizers can sometimes double-check the Flight Summary Sheets to see if judges advanced the entry, but it's much easier to mark it on the cover sheet.