



# 2023 U.S. Cup Tasters Preliminary Competition Official Rules and Regulations

Written and approved by the U.S. Competitions Working Group  
VERSION 2019.07.15

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### [1.0 ORGANIZATION](#)

### [2.0 RIGHTS](#)

### [3.0 2020 COFFEECHAMPS CUP TASTERS PRELIMINARY COMPETITION](#)

### [4.0 COMPETITION SUMMARY](#)

### [5.0 COMPETITION PROCEDURE](#)

### [6.0 COMPETITOR INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO COMPETITION TIME](#)

### [7.0 COMPETITION TIME](#)

### [8.0 SCOREKEEPING](#)

### [9.0 COMPETITOR PROTEST AND APPEALS](#)

#### **1.0 ORGANIZATION**

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

#### **2.0 RIGHTS**

- a. All intellectual property related to the U.S. Cup Tasters Championship, 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 U.S. Chapter.

#### **3.0 2020 COFFEECHAMPS CUP TASTERS PRELIMINARY 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 4 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 96 competitors who register. There will be 48 competitors at each of 2 competitions, held at separate times and places. 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. The Top 3 finalists from the 2019 USCTC will receive a reserved spot at 1 of the 2020 U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions.
  - iv. Remaining spots will be available for Open Registration.
  - v. At their conclusions, the Top 4 competitors from each of the 2 Qualifying Competitions will be invited to receive a “bye” to bypass the First Round of the USCTC and automatically advance to the Quarter-Finals Round.
  - vi. The single highest scoring competitor from each Qualifying Competition will be given a travel and accommodations stipend to USCTC plus free registration.
  - vii. The next 12 highest scoring Tasters (i.e., ranks 5 through 20) from each Qualifying Competition will advance to USCTC and start in the First Round.
  - viii. 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.
  - ix. All Competitors are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the Qualifying Competitions.
  - x. 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, 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 Brewer(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 2023 Qualifying Competitions to be eligible to compete in the 2023 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 Manager.

### 3.1.2 Age Requirement

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

### 3.1.3 Nationality

- a. 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 and fees will be determined by and paid to each U.S. CoffeeChamps Preliminaries Host.

### 3.1.5 Expenses

- a. 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 USCTC, Hosts, SCA, or Qualifying Competition 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 the Qualifying Competition Rules & Regulations and scoresheets without exception. All Cup Tasters documents may be downloaded from the competition website at [www.uscoffeechampionships.org](http://www.uscoffeechampionships.org)
- b. Competitors are encouraged direct any questions to the National Competitions Manager 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 Manager prior to the competitions by contacting [uscompetitions@sca.coffee](mailto:uscompetitions@sca.coffee) Competitors will also have the opportunity to ask questions during the required Online Learning Session. Please see [www.uscoffeechampionships.org](http://www.uscoffeechampionships.org) for the dates/time of these Online Learning Sessions.

## 3.3 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- a. Tasters qualifying for USCTC at Qualifying Competitions and the winner of the United States Cup Tasters Championship (USCTC) are representatives of the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) and United States Coffee Championships (USCC). b. Upon entry in the Cup Tasters Competition and in exchange for the opportunity to win, each competitor shall:
  - i. fully authorize the SCA to use the competitor's name and image in any format without charge for the purpose of promoting the SCA, USCTC, or the Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition.
  - ii. without limiting the generality of subsection (b)(i) of this paragraph, authorize the SCA to use any format, including but not limited to, photographic, video, print, Internet, or any electronic media.
  - iii. fully abide by the SCA's Code of Conduct, found here: [sca.coffee/code-of-conduct](http://sca.coffee/code-of-conduct)
- c. All competitors who successfully advance from the Qualifying Competition shall:
  - i. make themselves available to travel in the 2019 United States Cup Tasters Championship.
  - ii. include the name "Specialty Coffee Association" or "SCA" immediately before the name "Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition" or "United States Cup Tasters Championship" in each instance in which the name "Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition" or "United States Cup Tasters Championship" is mentioned.
  - iii. without limiting the aforementioned subsections include mention verbally, in print or via any electronic medium.
  - iv. promote the Specialty Coffee Association at every opportunity without charge to the SCA. v. promote the relevant Cup Tasters Qualifying Competition and CoffeeChamps as the pathway to the United States Cup Tasters Championship at every opportunity without charge to the SCA.

## 3.4 ENFORCEMENT OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

- a. The U.S. CoffeeChamps Cup Tasters 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.

## 4.0 COMPETITION SUMMARY

- a. The competition is organized as a number of triangulation tests. In each triangulation test, 3 cups of coffee are set up, 2 of which are identical. 1 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 Preliminaries, 5 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 airpot or thermal urn.
- 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. 5 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 5 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. 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.
- n. 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.

## 5.0 COMPETITION PROCEDURE

- a. The competition space will consist of a stage with 3 competition tables, numbered 1, 2, and 3. b. Each Preliminary will consist of 1 competition round.
- c. Competitor will be given 5 minutes to assess the 5 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 Preliminaries 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 tell the Host ahead of the competition via email.

## 6.0 COMPETITOR INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO COMPETITION TIME

### 6.1 ONLINE LEARNING SESSIONS

- a. Prior to the Preliminaries, an Online Learning Sessions 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 Host, 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

- a. 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

- a. Before the 5 minute competition time has started and the cups are ready, the Master of Ceremonies may introduce the competitors.

### 7.2 PRIOR TO COMPETITION TIME

- a. All competitors must stand a minimum of 3 feet behind the competition table and not approach the table until their time has started.

### 7.3 BEGIN COMPETITION TIME

- a. 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

- a. The table timekeeper will give the competitor a 3 minute, 2 minute, 1 minute, and 30 second warning during the 6 minutes of competition time. The timekeeper is required to give these warnings as they occur.

### 7.5 END COMPETITION TIME

- a. 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 is 5 minutes.

## 8.0 SCOREKEEPING

### 8.1 USCTC OFFICIAL SCOREKEEPING

- a. The official scorekeepers are responsible for keeping all scores.

### 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 ranked in the same position and, if applicable, both will proceed to the next round.

### 8.3 SCORECARD

- a. Recorded scores 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 Presiding Head Judge. The Presiding Head Judge will then determine whether the issue can be resolved on site at the competition, or whether the issue will require a written appeal following the competition.
- b. If the Presiding Head Judge decides that the issue can be resolved on site at the competition, the Presiding Head Judge 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 Presiding Head Judge 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 1 or more competitors to perform the relevant competition service to supersede the prior scores,
  - iii. Another solution, as determined by the National Competitions Manager
- d. The Presiding Head Judge and the National Competitions Manager 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 on site or the competitor wishes to appeal a decision made by the Presiding Head Judge on site, the Presiding Head Judge will ask the competitor to submit their appeal in writing (which may be by e mail or hard copy) to the National Competitions Manager.
- 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 Competition Manager within 24 hours after the subject incident.

## 9.3 APPEAL DECISION

- a. The National Competitions Manager 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 1 or more competitors to perform the relevant competition service to supersede the prior scores,
  - iii. Another solution, as determined by the National Competitions Manager
- b. The National Competitions Manager shall operate under the purview of the Specialty Coffee Association management and Advisory Board.