



# 2023 United States Latte Art Preliminaries Official Rules and Regulations

Pending approval by the U.S. Competitions Committee of the U.S. Chapter

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# 1. Conditions of Participation

## 1.1. Organization

The U.S. Coffee Championships ("USCC") is a program of the Specialty Coffee Association ("SCA") U.S. Chapter.

## 1.2. Rights

All intellectual property related to all 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.

## 1.3. Conditions of Participation

### Qualification for U.S. Coffee Championships

#### 1.3.1 Qualifications

- A. Registration will be open on a first come, first served basis.
- B. If registration sells out 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. The participant(s) will be selected from the waitlist based on the chronological order of their registration. This waitlist will be maintained until 2 weeks prior to the competition.
- C. All Competitors are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the USCC.
- D. Any dispute relevant to the qualifications or eligibility of a competitor will be reviewed and resolved by the U.S. Competitions Committee.
- E. The 2023 U.S. Latte Art Championships winner will advance to the World Latte Art Championship.

#### 1.3.2. Age Requirement

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

#### 1.3.3 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.

#### 1.3.4. Competitor Registration and Fees

- A. Registration links for the Competition can be found at [www.uscoffeechampionships.org](http://www.uscoffeechampionships.org). Competitors must register and pay any registration fee via the internet. Space is limited, and competitors will be admitted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- B. Once an entry form has been received, a confirmation letter will be sent to the competitor via email.
- C. Competitors who qualify to compete at the U.S. Coffee Championships through the Preliminaries will receive an invitation and registration information via email following the conclusion of both Preliminaries.



- D. Competitor registration is not complete until the competitor has paid for their registration fee and filled out the registration form.
- E. Competitor registration belongs to the competitor listed on the registration form.
- F. All registrations are non-refundable and non-transferable.

### **1.3.5. 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.

## **1.4. Conflicts of Interest**

### **1.4.1. Judging**

It is not possible to compete and judge in the same competition, in the same season. Competitors from the Preliminaries may not judge in the same competition at USCC or WCC, even if they do not advance. Additionally, competitors may not judge at any World Coffee Events (WCE) sanctioned competition (world, national, regional) in any country, prior to the conclusion of that season.

### **1.4.2. Calibration Baristas**

Competitors are allowed to be a calibration barista if they are not competing in that same competition year, for that championship. Additionally, a competitor is allowed to be a calibration barista at the World Championships in the same competition year, if they have not qualified for the World Championships at their sanctioned Competition Body championships.

### **1.4.3. Other Conflicts of Interest**

Judges and competitors are encouraged to let their head judges or the U.S. Competitions Committee know of any potential conflicts of interest at the soonest opportunity, and prior to the commencement of any competitions by competitor, judges, and/or event organizer. Failure to declare a potential conflict in advance of the competition could result in disqualification. Questions regarding conflicts of interest or clarification of the above policy should be directed to [uscompetitions@sca.coffee](mailto:uscompetitions@sca.coffee).

## **1.5. Enforcement of Rules and Regulations**

If a competitor violates 1 or more of these Rules & Regulations, they may be automatically disqualified from the competition, except when the Rules designate a specific enforcement or consequence. If a judge or competition organizer causes the violation of 1 or more of these Rules, a competitor may submit an appeal, according to the process detailed in the [15. Competitor Protest and Appeals](#) section.



### 1.5.1. COVID-19 Addendums

All Rules & Regulations are subject to change based on local and venue health and safety requirements or guidelines. USCC will share any Rules & Regulations changes via email ahead of the competition. These changes may include, but are not limited to changes to table sizes or layouts; material of provided vessels or cups; limits on coaches or helpers in the competitor preparation and practice rooms; mask or glove mandates; schedule changes for sanitization; etc.

## 1.6. Application

### 1.6.1. Competitor Registration Form

Competitors must complete the USCC Competitor Registration Form online at <https://uscoffeechampionships.org/latte-art-competition> no less than 6 weeks prior to the USCC Event. This form includes a space to upload a scanned copy of the required valid passport or other accepted credentials (as described in Section 1.3.4 “Nationality”). Approved Competition Body Champions will receive confirmation by email in approximately 2 weeks after receipt of all required registration documentation.

### 1.6.2. Competitor Questions

All competitors are personally responsible for reading and understanding current USLAC Rules & Regulations and scoresheets, without exception. All USLAC documents are available at <https://uscoffeechampionships.org/latte-art-competition>. Competitors are encouraged to ask questions prior to arriving at the competition. If any competitor is unclear as to the intent of any of the rules and regulations it is their responsibility to clarify that position with the US Latte Art Competition Committee by contacting [uscompetitions@sca.coffee](mailto:uscompetitions@sca.coffee). Competitors will also have the opportunity to ask questions during the official Competitors Meeting held onsite prior to the start of the competition.

### 1.6.3. Terms & Conditions

Competitors and the United States Latte Art Champion are visible spokespeople of the United States Latte Art Championship event and role models of the specialty coffee industry, and as such must:

- A. Permit United States Coffee Championships, its stakeholders, agents and representatives to use the competitor’s name, image or likeness in any format without charge for any business purpose, including but not limited to marketing promotion.
- B. Read and abide by the Competitor Code of Conduct document found on the [USCC website](#).
- C. Read and abide by the Champion Code of Conduct document found on the [USCC website](#).

## 2.0 2023 U.S. COFFEECHAMPS LATTE ART PRELIMINARIES

### 2.1 PARTICIPATION

#### 2.1.1 Qualification

- a. U.S. CoffeeChamps Latte Art Preliminaries (“Preliminaries”)
  - i. Each of the Preliminaries will be open to up to 18 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 4** 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 4** 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 4** 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 up to 24 competitors. Baristas may compete at either competition regardless of company or geographic location. Competitors may only register to compete in 1 Latte Art Qualifying Competition.
  - ii. The **Top 4** competitors from each of the Preliminaries will be awarded a reserved spot at one of the U.S. CoffeeChamps Qualifying Competitions.
  - iii. All remaining spots will be available for Open Registration.
  - iv. 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.
  - v. **At their conclusions, the top 6 competitors from each of the 2 Qualifying Competitions will be invited to receive a “bye” to bypass the Round One of the USLAC and automatically advance to the Semi-Finals Round.**
  - vi. **The next 12 highest scoring latte artists** (i.e., ranks 7 through 18) from each Qualifying Competition will advance to **USLAC** and start in Round One.
  - vii. **The single highest scoring competitor from each Qualifying Competition will be given a travel and accommodations stipend to United States Latte Art Championship plus free registration.**
  - viii. All Competitors and Judges are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the Qualifying Competitions.
  - ix. Competitors may only compete once in each competition within the season at the Qualifying level. For example, if a competitor competes in the first USLAC Qualifying Competition, that same competitor may not compete in the second USLAC Qualifying Competition. They may, however, compete in another competition (i.e., Barista, Cup Tasters, or Roaster) at the second Qualifying Competition.
- c. United States Latte Art Championship (“USLAC”)
- i. The positions to compete at the USLAC will be guaranteed until an invited competitor turns down their spot or fails to register for USLAC within the designated registration window. Any unclaimed position(s) will be offered to the next highest scoring latte artist(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 3 weeks prior to USLAC.
  - ii. All Competitors must compete in 1 of the 2023 Qualifying Competitions to be eligible to compete in the 2023 USBC.
  - iii. All Competitors and Judges are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session and the Competitor Meeting in order to participate at the USBC.
- d. Any dispute relevant to the qualifications or eligibility of a competitor will be reviewed and resolved by the U.S. Competitions Committees Chair.

### 3. The Competition



### 3.1. Competition Summary

The preliminary competition consists of one round. There will be no elimination rounds. The competitor will present 1 set of matching free-pour lattes in two identical 10oz latte cups.

### 3.2. Stage Presentation

- A. Competitors are required to provide exactly 1 printed photograph of the free-pour latte pattern. The photo should clearly show the pattern to be attempted (artistic representations of the pattern and pictures on electronic devices will not be accepted). Failure to produce an acceptable picture will lead to a “0” score in the “Two Identical Patterns Matching the Presented Picture” section.
- B. Each drink will be judged against the presented picture. Both drinks should match the picture presented and will be scored based on how identical each set of drinks is to the picture presented. If the picture presented and the drinks poured do not match at all then the competitor will receive “0” for the whole drink category on the Visual Scoresheet.
- C. Etching on the “free-pour” lattes will result in a “0” score being given for the whole drink category on the Visual Scoresheet.
- D. Competitors are not expected to give an extensive verbal presentation to the judges and/or audience, however a verbal presentation is acceptable. Hospitality skills will still be considered and scored when serving the judges.
- E. There will be a panel of 3 scoring judges: 2 visual judges and 1 technical judge. They will be led by 1 head judge. A non-scoring shadow judge may be present.
- F. Competitors must use the grinders and machines provided for the competition. It will not be permissible to use your own. The grinders will be set to an approximate setting, but it is up to the barista to fine-tune this setting to their personal requirements within the 5 minutes preparation time. For more information regarding machine and grinder requirements, please refer to [Machinery, Accessories, and Raw Materials](#).

#### 3.2.1 Single Round - Free Pour Latte Art

- A. Each competitor will be given 12 minutes at their assigned station, made up of the following segments:
  - i. 5 minutes Preparation Time,
  - ii. 7 minutes Competition/Performance Time.
- B. Competitors are required to present a high definition print of a of a pattern and present two drinks to the judges to replicate the pattern shown on the aforementioned print. For the USLAC preliminaries, the competitor will be presenting:

TWO 10oz matching free-pour lattes in 1 set

### 3.3. Use of Provided Milk and Coffee

Competitors are required to use the coffee and milk provided by the Venue Host. Competitors must take fresh milk bottles with them on stage. They may not prepare milk offstage. Competitors can prepare their milk from the fresh milk bottles during preparation time.



### 3.4 Additional Equipment

Competitors are encouraged to minimize the equipment they use for their performance. No tablecloths, napkins, or decorations are required for the judges' table. Trays for carrying the drinks and menu card are permissible.

### 3.5 Provided Equipment and Supplies

Venue host will be responsible in providing each competitor's stage station with the following equipment:

- Based off of list we provide to hosts
- Espresso machine
- Grinder
- Knock Box
- Milk
- Coffee
- Trash Can
- ...etc

### 3.6 Recommended Equipment and Supplies

Competitors who choose to bring additional necessary supplies for their presentation should make allowances for breakage during travel and/or during competition. Competitors are responsible for and in charge of their own equipment and accessories while at the competition. The USLAC, volunteers, and event staff are not responsible for the safety of items left in the competitors' preparation room or competition area.

The list of supplies the competitor may bring include the following:

- Tamper
- Shot glasses
- Steaming pitchers
- Bar towels/ clean cloths (for practice and competition)
- Cleaning supplies (counter brush, grinder brush, etc.)
- Tray(s) (for serving drinks to judges)

## 3.7. Beverage Definitions

### 3.7.1. Beverage Definitions

- A. Competitors may choose to use either a single espresso, double espresso, or ristretto for each latte.
- B. Extraction times must be a minimum of 20 seconds for lattes.
- C. Beverages must be made of coffee and milk only.
- D. Coffee and milk will be provided by the Venue Host. Competitors are not permitted to use their own. Failure to do so will result in a 0 visual and technical score for that drink.



### 3.7.2 Stage Performance – Free Pour Latte Art

- A. Competitors are allowed to use any traditional style 10oz latte cup with a handle, brought by the competitor or provided by the Venue Host. The Venue Host is expected to provide additional 10oz latte cups for competitors to use. However, both cups presented to the judges should be physically identical.
- B. No etching or surface decoration are allowed on the free-pour latte and will result in a “0” for all visual scores for that drink.
- C. Competitors are required to provide exactly 1 printed photograph of the free-pour latte pattern. The photo should clearly show the pattern to be attempted (artistic representations of the pattern and pictures on electronic devices will not be accepted). Failure to produce an acceptable picture will lead to a “0” score in the “Two Identical Patterns Matching the Presented Picture” section.

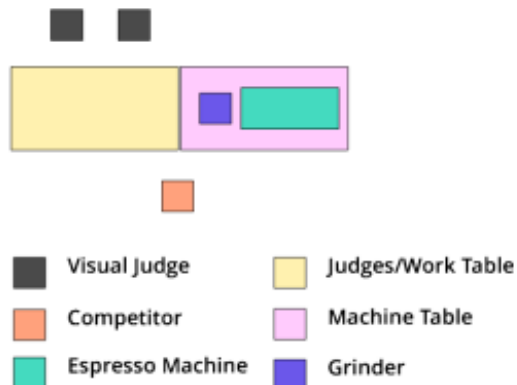
## 4. Competition Overview

### 4.1. Competition Stage Area

- A. The competition space will consist of 1-2 station areas. Audiences can view from outside the stage area, or through images projected via overhead camera. The stage area should be set up so that the competitor is able to work unhindered by spectators and photographers etc., although still allowing good vision for them.
- B. Each competitor will be assigned a start time and station number.
- C. At the conclusion of the competition there will be a ceremony where the finalists are announced.

### 4.2. Station Layout

- A. Individual stations will be organized as shown below, however the stations may be placed in a way that will best suit the space and constraints of the competition venue keeping in mind the ease of use, the route from the competitor’s preparation area to the stations, the vantage points for the spectators, and any camera positions that may be present.
- B. Competitors may make minor placement adjustments to the grinder (e.g., back-to-front movement) but the grinder must remain on the machine table to the left of the espresso machine.





## 5. Machinery, Accessories, and Raw Materials

### 5.1. Espresso Machine

Competitors must use the espresso machine supplied by the Venue Host. The Venue Host-provided espresso machine has a fixed technical configuration and cannot be altered by the competitors. The espresso machine will be calibrated to the following specifications: the temperature will be set between 90.5-96 degrees Celsius (195-205 degrees Fahrenheit), and the coffee boiler pump pressure set between 8.5 and 9.5 bars (atmospheres). Steam boiler pressure between 1.4-1.6 bars

#### 5.1.1. No Liquids or Ingredients on Machine

No liquids or ingredients of any kind can be placed or poured on top of the espresso machine (e.g., no water in cups, no pouring or mixing liquids or ingredients, no warming ingredients). If a competitor places or pours liquid or ingredients on top of the machine they will be disqualified. Additionally, competitors will also receive a score of "0" under the "Performance" section for both "Workspace Organized and Clean at Start and End" and "[Overall Impression](#)". [For more information, please refer to sections 14.4.1 and 14.4.2.](#)

#### 5.1.2. Disqualification for Alterations or Damage to Equipment

Except for usage of the external controls, competitors may not change, adjust, or alter any component of the competition grinders. Competitors may not change, adjust or replace any element, setting, or component of the espresso machine. Any changes or adjustments made may be grounds for disqualification (e.g., the portafilters, insert baskets, temperature, pressure, steam wand tips, etc.). Any damage to the competition equipment due to misuse or abuse is grounds for disqualification at the discretion of the presiding head judge.

### 5.2. Grinder

Competitors must use the grinder provided by the Venue Host during their performance.

### 5.3. Milk

Competitors are required to use Venue Host-provided milk during their performance. Provided milk will be homogenized whole milk. Venue Host must strive to provide fresh milk, and milk (milk sponsor, if any) information should be provided to competitors ahead of time. Competitors must take fresh milk bottles with them on stage. They cannot prepare milk offstage. Competitors can prepare their milk from the fresh milk bottles provided by Venue Host during their 5 minutes preparation time.

### 5.4. Coffee

Competitors are required to use Venue Host provided coffee during their performance. Venue Host must take steps to ensure that the sponsored coffee is suitable to present excellence in latte art. This includes (but is not limited to) coffee being between 14 and 20 days off roast and medium to medium-dark roasted coffee (Agtron 40 to 60 ground on 'gourmet scale'). Espresso must be able to hold dry foam and flat white style wet foam.

### 5.5. Additional Equipment



Competitors are encouraged to minimize the equipment they use for their performance. No tablecloths, napkins or decorations are required for the judges' table. Trays for carrying the drinks and a menu card are permissible.

Non-required decoration may cause competitors to lose points in the "Professional Performance" section of the visual scoresheet, at the head judge's discretion.

## 5.6. Provided Equipment and Supplies

Each competitor's stage station will be equipped with the following:

- Machine table (For espresso machine and grinder)
- Worktable
- Judging Area
- Espresso machine
- Grinder
- Knock box
- Milk
- Coffee
- 10oz Latte Cups for practice and performance time
- Trash can

## 5.7. Recommended Equipment and Supplies

Competitors are required to bring all additional necessary supplies for their presentation. Competitors should make allowances for breakage during travel and/or during the competition. Competitors are responsible for and in charge of their own equipment and accessories while at the competition. The USLAC, Venue Host, volunteers, and event staff are not responsible for the safety of items left in the competitors' preparation room or competition area.

The list of supplies the competitor may bring include the following:

- Tamper
- Shot glasses
- Steaming pitchers
- Saucers (Not required)
- Spoons (Not required)
- Any specific utensils required
- Bar towels/clean cloths (for practice and the competition)



- Cleaning supplies (counter brush, grinder brush, etc.)
- Waiter's Cart

## 6. Competitor Instructions Prior to Preparation Time

### 6.1. Competitor Orientation Meeting

Prior to the start of the USLAC Event, a mandatory Competitor Orientation Meeting (Online Learning Session, aka OLS) will take place, either online or in person. Meeting details will be emailed to competitors ahead of the event. This meeting is **mandatory** for all competitors. During this meeting the Presiding Head Judge and Stage Manager will make announcements, explain the competition flow, cover the competition schedule, and share images of the stage and backstage areas. This will be an opportunity for competitors to ask questions and/or voice concerns to the Event Manager. If a competitor does not attend the orientation meeting and has not made advance plans with the USCC organizer to address their absence, they are subject to disqualification by the presiding head judges.

### 6.2. Preparation/Practice Room

There will be a staging area designated as the competitors' preparation/practice room. This area will be reserved for the competitors, coaches, volunteers, and any USLAC officials. USLAC judges, press/media, competitor's family members, and supporters may not be present in this area without consent from the USCC. Competitors will be able to store their equipment, accessories, ingredients, etc., in this room. This room will also include a dishwashing station for competitors to use to wash glasses and barware. Competitors are responsible for cleaning their own dishes and glassware and keeping track of these items. Runners and event staff are not responsible for breakage or loss of dishes or competitor items.

#### 6.2.1. Practice Time

1. The preparation/practice room will have espresso machines and grinders identical to the competition equipment on stage.
2. Each competitor will have 30 minutes of scheduled practice time. Practice times will be scheduled based on competition time (i.e., the first scheduled competitors will have the earliest scheduled practice times).
3. Competitors will be emailed a practice schedule prior to arriving to the USLAC Preliminaries. The USLAC does not guarantee access to practice space outside of the assigned practice time slot. If a competitor misses their scheduled practice time, no additional practice time will be provided. If unforeseen events prevent the competitor from attending their scheduled practice time it is the competitor's responsibility to contact the event manager or stage manager as soon as possible.

### 6.3. Competition Music

Venue Host shall reserve the right to provide and play music during competitors' routines. Under such circumstances, competitors may not supply or select their own music.

### 6.4. Be on Time



Competitors should be in the preparation/practice room a minimum of 30 minutes prior to their scheduled 5 minutes of Preparation Time. Any competitor who is not onsite at the start of their 5 minutes of preparation time may be disqualified.

If the schedule is delayed, the competitor should still be prepared at their scheduled time.

## 6.5. Station Set-up

The Venue Host will be responsible for ensuring that each competitor's station is set as the competitor has requested prior to their preparation time. It is the responsibility of the competitor to check and ensure the station is set and clean before preparation time. If not acceptably clean, the competitor may ask the head runner for re-cleaning of specific areas.

## 6.6. Supporters/Assistants Not Allowed on Stage

No person(s) other than the competitor, the competitors' interpreter, and USLAC volunteers and officials may be on stage during the competitor's preparation, performance, and clean-up time. [For additional information, please refer to section 9.1 "Obstructions" and section 11.2.i "Disqualification".](#)

# 7. Preparation Time

## 7.1. Begin Preparation Time

The purpose of the preparation time is to set up the station and prepare the area for competition.

Each competitor will have 5 minutes of preparation time. Once the prior competitor begins their competition time, the next scheduled competitor may begin their 5-minute preparation time upon advice from the Host Stage Manager and/or the preparation timer.

Once the competitor has arrived at their assigned station and agreed the station is set to their specifications, the official preparation timekeeper will ask the competitor if they are ready to begin. Before the competitor is allowed to touch anything at their station, the competitor must raise their hand and call "time" to begin their 5 minutes of preparation time. The designated official preparation timekeeper will begin a stopwatch the moment the competitor presses the start button on the remote control.

Competitors must take fresh milk bottles with them on stage. They cannot prepare milk offstage. Competitors can prepare their milk from the fresh milk bottles during preparation time.



## 7.2. Judges' Presentation Table

Tablecloths, water, napkins, and decoration are not required and will not result in a higher score but may result in points lost for hospitality at the discretion of the head judge, depending on the severity of the infringement. This rule is designed to help competitors by preventing them purchasing and transporting unnecessary equipment.

## 7.3. Practice Shots

Competitors are encouraged to dial in their coffees to their liking and are allowed and encouraged to pull practice shots during their preparation time. "Pucks" (also known as "cakes") are allowed to be left in the portafilters at the start of the competitor's competition time.

## 7.4. Pre-Heated Cups

Cups can be preheated during the competitor's preparation time. However, no water or liquids can be present in cups at the start of the competitor's competition time. At no point can there be cups with liquid in them on top of the espresso machine. [Please refer to rule 14.4.E for details.](#)

## 7.5. End of Preparation Time

Competitors will not be allowed to exceed the 5 minutes of preparation time. During their 5 minutes of preparation time, the timekeeper will give the competitor a 3-minute, 1-minute, and 30-second warning. At 5 minutes, the official preparation timekeeper will call "time" and tell the competitor to step away from the station.

# 8. Competition Time

## 8.1. Introduction by the Master of Ceremonies

Once the 5-minute preparation time has elapsed and the judges are ready, the Master of Ceremonies will introduce the competitor.

### 8.1.1. Interpreter

Competitors may bring their own interpreter. When speaking to the competitor, the interpreter is only allowed to translate what the emcee has said. When a competitor speaks, the interpreter is only allowed to translate exactly what the competitor has said. No additional competition time will be allotted for the use of an interpreter. It is the competitor and coach's responsibility to read the Interpreters Best Practice document that is available from <https://uscoffeechampionships.org/latte-art-competition>.



## 8.2. Begin Competition Time

The Master of Ceremonies will inform the competitor to start competition time. Before the competitor begins their introductions to the judges, the competitor must put their hand in the air and call “time” to begin their competition performance time. The designated competition timekeeper will begin a stopwatch the moment the competitor calls “time”.

Tracking time elapsed during the competition performance time is the responsibility of the competitor, though they may ask the timekeeper for a time check at any point.

The competition timekeeper will give the competitor a 5-minute, 3-minute, 1-minute, and 30-second remaining warning during their 7 minutes of competition time.

The timekeeper is required to give these warnings as they happen and may be given to the competitor while they are speaking.

Please note: If the clock has malfunctioned for any reason, competitors may not stop their time. In the case that the clock has malfunctioned, the timekeeper’s time is the official time for the competition. The competitor will receive the same warnings noted above.

## 8.3. Serve Required Beverages

All drinks must be served at the judges’ presentation table within the designated scoring area.

## 8.4. Runners Clear the Served Drinks

After each set of drinks has been served to and evaluated by the judges, a runner will clear the drinks from the judges’ presentation table upon the head judge’s signal.

If a competitor has special instructions for the runner, they will need to explain these instructions to the Stage Manager and the runner before the start of their competition time. The runner will make every effort to avoid impeding the competitor, but it is the competitor’s responsibility to navigate their station successfully.

## 8.5. Station Perimeters

Competitors may only utilize the work area provided by the Venue Host: the machine table, worktable, and presentation table. The introduction of any other furniture and/or equipment that is placed directly on or over the competition area floor (e.g., a stand, table, dumbwaiter, bench, etc.) will result in automatic disqualification.

Competitors may not utilize any space under any competition tables for storage. The only exception to this is the allowance of a free-standing knock box.

## 8.6. End Competition Time

It is the competitor’s responsibility to call “time” clearly to allow the time to be recorded accurately.

Competition time will be stopped when a competitor raises their hand and says “time”. The competitor may choose to end their performance at any time. Competitors can stop the clock once their final drink is placed on the presentation table to be served



to the judges or may choose to go back to their station to clean before stopping the clock. Only the time recorded by the competition timekeeper or head judge will be used for scoring purposes.

Competitors will not be penalized or rewarded for finishing early.

## 8.7. Communication After the Competition Time

Competitors should not continue to talk to the judges once their competition time has ended. Any conversation after the competitor's competition time will not count towards their total score. Competitors may continue to talk to the Master of Ceremonies after the competition time has ended; however, the judges will not consider any conversation or explanation given after the competition time.

## 8.8. Overtime Penalties

- A. During Stage Presentations, if the competitor has not finished their presentation during the allotted 7-minute period, they are allowed to proceed until the presentation is completed.
- B. For every second a competitor goes over the allotted 7-minute competition time, they will lose 1 point.
- C. Any competitor whose performance period exceeds 10 minutes in the Stage Performance will be disqualified.

## 8.9. Coaching

Instructions or 'coaching' may not be provided to a competitor during their competition time under penalty of disqualification. USCC encourages audience participation and enthusiastic fan support that does not interfere with the competition. Coaches, supporters, friends, or family members are not allowed on stage or to interfere with the competition while it is in progress, otherwise the competitor is subject to disqualification by the stage manager or presiding head judge. Please refer to section 8.1 "Obstruction".

As discussed in the ["Forgotten Accessories" section \(9.2\)](#) below, no persons other than the competitor may retrieve forgotten accessories or equipment for the competitor. Delivery/retrieval of forgotten items by any person other than the competitor will result in disqualification.

## 9. Technical Issues

During the preparation and/or competition time, if a competitor feels there is a technical problem with:

- A. The espresso machine (including power, steam pressure, control system malfunction, lack of water or drain malfunction).
- B. The grinder.



- C. Any additional electrical equipment (excluding the competition clock).
- D. The AV equipment (such as the microphone).

Then the competitor should raise their hand to call a “technical time out” and ask for the stage manager (during preparation time) or for the head judge (during competition time), and the time will be stopped. The official timekeeper will make note of time when “technical time out” is called. It is the head judge’s responsibility to ensure the timekeeper is aware of making note of “technical time out” being called.

- A. If the stage manager/head judge agrees there is a technical problem that can be easily resolved, they will decide the appropriate amount of time for the competitor to be credited. Once the technician has fixed the problem, the competitor’s time will resume.
- B. If the technical problem cannot be resolved in a timely manner, the stage manager/head judge will make the decision on whether the competitor should wait to continue their performance or stop the performance and start again at a reallocated time.
- C. If a competitor must stop their competition time, the competitor along with the head judge and stage manager will reschedule the competitor to compete in full again later.
- D. If it is determined that the technical issue is due to competitor error or the competitor’s personal equipment, the head judge will determine if no additional time will be given to the competitor, and the preparation or competition time will resume without time being credited.
- E. Unfamiliarity with competition equipment is not grounds for a technical timeout.
- F. Inconsistency or variation between group heads requiring adjustment is only grounds for technical timeout during preparation time.

## 9.1. Obstructions

- A. If any individual, such as volunteers, judges, audience members, or photographers are of an obvious hindrance to a competitor, then the competitor will be given additional time. The head judge is responsible for overseeing this and will decide how much additional time will be credited.
- B. If individuals (such as photographers or cameramen) make physical contact with a competitor, the competitor can call a timeout. The head judge has final discretion on whether the time out is deemed necessary.

## 9.2. Forgotten Accessories

- A. If a competitor has forgotten some of their equipment and/or accessories during their preparation time, the competitor may exit the stage to retrieve the missing items; however, the preparation time will not be stopped.
- B. If a competitor has forgotten some of their equipment and/or accessories during their competition time, they must inform the head judge that they have forgotten an item(s) offstage and then retrieve the missing item(s) themselves with no assistance. The competition time will not be stopped.
- C. Nothing may be delivered by the runners, supporters, team members, or the audience.





- D. Delivery/retrieval of forgotten items by any person(s) other than the competitor may result in disqualification.

## 10. Clean-up Time

Once a competitor has finished their competition time, they will begin cleaning up the station. If a competitor brought their own electrical equipment, the station runner can help the competitor remove these items from the station. Competitors are expected to remove all their personal equipment and supplies and thoroughly wipe down their station. The judges do not evaluate the clean-up time.

## 11. Post-Competition: Scorekeeping, Disqualification, Debriefing

### 11.1. Scorekeeping

#### 11.1.1. USLAC Official Scorekeeping

The USLAC official scorekeepers are responsible for adding all scores and for keeping all scores confidential.

#### 11.1.2. Competitors' Total Score

The competitor's total score of Stage Presentation will be tallied by adding the total of the technical scoresheet and the 2 visual scoresheets, and any time penalty subtracted from the total.

The head judge scoresheet does not count towards the competitor's total score.

#### 11.1.3. Tie Scores

If there is a tie between 2 or more competitors in any round, the competitor with the higher combined visual judges scores will be ranked higher.

If there is still a tie between 2 or more competitors, the competitor with the higher total "Overall Appealing Impression" score will be ranked higher.

### 11.2. Disqualification

- A. If a competitor violates 1 or more of the Rules & Regulations outlined in this document, they may be automatically disqualified from the competition, except when the Rules designate a specific enforcement or consequence.
- B. All Competitors are required to attend 1 Online Learning Session in order to participate at the USCC. If a competitor does not attend the orientation meeting and has not made advance plans with the USCC organizer to address their absence, they are subject to disqualification by the presiding head judges.
- C. Failure to declare a potential conflict in advance of the competition could result in disqualification. Questions regarding conflicts of interest or clarification of the above policy should be directed to [uscompetitions@sca.coffee](mailto:uscompetitions@sca.coffee).
- D. Competitors may not change, adjust or replace any element, setting, or component of the espresso machine. Any changes or adjustments made may be grounds for disqualification (e.g., the portafilters, insert baskets, temperature, pressure,



steam wand tips, etc.). Any damage to the competition equipment due to misuse or abuse is grounds for disqualification at the discretion of the presiding head judge.

- E. Be on time. Any competitor who is not onsite at the start of their 5 minutes of preparation time may be disqualified. If the schedule is delayed, the competitor should still be prepared at their scheduled time.
- F. No liquids or ingredients of any kind can be placed or poured on top of the espresso machine (e.g., no water in cups, no pouring or mixing liquids or ingredients, no warming ingredients). If a competitor places or pours liquid or ingredients on top of the machine they will be disqualified.
- G. Competitors may only utilize the work area provided by the USLAC: the machine table, worktable, and presentation table. The introduction of any other furniture and/or equipment that is placed directly on or over the competition area floor (e.g., a stand, table, dumbwaiter, bench, etc.) will result in automatic disqualification.
- H. As discussed in the “Forgotten Accessories” section above, no persons other than the competitor may retrieve forgotten accessories or equipment for the competitor. Delivery/retrieval of forgotten items by any person other than the competitor will result in disqualification.
- I. Any competitor whose performance period exceeds 10 minutes in the Stage Performance will be disqualified.
- J. Instructions or ‘coaching’ may not be provided to a competitor during their competition time under penalty of disqualification. USCC encourages audience participation and enthusiastic fan support that does not interfere with the competition. Coaches, supporters, friends, or family members are not allowed on stage or to interfere with the competition while it is in progress, otherwise the competitor is subject to disqualification by the stage manager or presiding head judge.

### **11.3. Debriefing**

Following the competition, competitors will have an opportunity to review their scoresheets with the judges by the schedule announced by the event organizer, this may be in person or online. Competitors will not be allowed to keep their original scoresheets before the USCC event manager scans the copy of the scoresheets. Competitors may be provided with a digital copy of their scoresheets after the competition is concluded.

## **12. Judging Criteria**

### **12.1. Competition Area**

The technical judge will evaluate the competition area for cleanliness at the beginning and end of the performance/competition time.

### **12.2. Beverage Presentation**

Points will be awarded by visual judges based on the visual presentation of the drinks.

### **12.3. Technical Skills**

Points will be awarded based on the competitor’s technical knowledge and skill operating the espresso machine and grinder.



## 12.4. Performance

Points will be awarded based on the judges' overall impression of the competitor, their skills, and personal and beverage presentation.

## 13. Evaluation Scale

There are 2 types of scoring:

Yes/No

Numeric Scores: 0-6

The evaluation scales are the same for technical and visual judges.

Yes=1 No=0

Unacceptable = 0

Acceptable = 1

Average = 2

Good = 3

Very Good = 4

Excellent = 5

Extraordinary = 6

### 13.1.1. Yes/No Score

The competitor receives 1 point for a score of "Yes" on this item, and 0 points for a score of "No".

### 13.1.2. Numeric Scores

Available scores range from 0 to 6. Half-points are permissible in the range from 1 to 6. Judges are encouraged to use the full range of scores. Low numbers indicate a poorer performance and higher indicates a better performance. Certain scores are weighted and multiplied by 2 or 4.

## 14. Technical Evaluation Procedure

The following is an explanation of the technical scoresheet. Each competitor will be evaluated by 1 technical judge.

### 14.1. Technical Evaluation – Espresso



The technical skills standards are the same for all beverages in the competition.

#### **14.1.1. Flushes the Group Head**

The flushing of the group head must occur prior to each extraction (either after removal of the portafilter from the group or just before re-insertion). If the group head was flushed prior to the extraction of the served beverages, the judge will mark "Yes".

#### **14.1.2. Dry/Clean Filter Basket before Dosing**

If the filter basket was dried and cleaned prior to the served beverages, the judge will mark "Yes".

#### **14.1.3. Acceptable Spill/Waste When Dosing/Grinding**

Spill/waste is ground coffee that was not used during the competition/performance time (e.g., spill/waste can be found in the dosing chamber, in the knock box, on the counter, in the trash, on the floor, etc.). Waste that is created by beverages that are not served does not count towards a competitor's total waste. Acceptable spill/waste is up to 5 grams of unused coffee per beverage category. In order to earn a score of "1", the waste should not exceed 5 grams of unused coffee per beverage category.

#### **14.1.4. Consistent Dosing/Tamping**

The competitor should be demonstrating a consistent method for dosing and tamping for all the competitor's drinks. The competitor should evenly distribute the coffee grounds, followed by leveled tamping of adequate pressure. Cultural differences should be taken into consideration.

#### **14.1.5. Cleans Portafilters (Before Inserting)**

The competitor should clean basket rim and side flanges of portafilter before insert into the machine. If clean, the judge will mark "Yes".

#### **14.1.6. Insert and Immediate Brew**

The competitor should start the extraction immediately after inserting the portafilter into the machine without any delay, if done the judge will mark "Yes".

#### **14.1.7. Extraction Time**

Technical judges will time all shots extracted and determine whether shot extraction times are within a 3.0-second variance. If the extraction time is within a 3.0-second variance of each other for the competitor's drinks the judge will mark "Yes" under each drink category, and vice versa. Extraction time begins when the competitor activates the machine's pump. Shot times for shots that are not served are not included in this score. Extraction times must be a minimum of 20 seconds for lattes. If the extraction times are outside/under the times stated, a "0" will be given in this area.

## **14.2. Technical Evaluation – Milk Frothing**

#### **14.2.1. Empty/Clean Pitcher at Start**

The competitor should pour cold, fresh milk into a clean pitcher, which must not have been filled during the preparation time. The pitcher should be clean on both inside and on the outside. If completed, the judge will mark "Yes".



#### **14.2.2. Purges Steam Wand before Steaming**

The competitor should purge the steam wand before inserting it into the milk pitcher. If completed, the judge will mark “Yes”.

#### **14.2.3. Cleans the Steam Wand after Steaming**

The steam wand should be cleaned with a dedicated bar towel. If completed, the judge will mark “Yes”.

#### **14.2.4. Purges the Steam Wand after Steaming**

The competitor should purge the steam wand after steaming the milk. If completed, the judge will mark “Yes”.

#### **14.2.5. Clean Pitcher/Acceptable Milk Waste at End**

Acceptable waste is no more than 90ml/3oz in total per each drink category. If under 90ml/ 3oz remains in the pitcher, the judge will mark “Yes”.

### **14.3. General Hygiene Throughout Presentation**

#### **14.3.1 Hygiene**

A: The judge will determine this score based on the competitor’s sanitary practices throughout their entire presentation. If proper hygiene is used for the entire presentation, the judge will mark “Yes”.

B: Examples of unacceptable practices include:

- Touching hands to face, mouth, etc. and then using the hands for beverage preparation.
- Touching the floor then using hands for beverage preparation.
- Fingers and thumb touching the rim during preparation and/or presentation to judges.

#### **14.3.2. Proper usage of cloths**

When the competitor’s presentation time begins, the competitor must have a minimum of 3 cloths, and each should have a purpose. The judges must evaluate the usage of these cloths. The competitor should use 1 for the steam wand, 1 for cleaning the filter basket and 1 for the workstation. Competitor will receive low score if they:

- Use a non-dedicated cloth to clean a steam wand (using it for some other purpose other than using it to clean a steam wand.)
- Do something that is not sanitary or food safe with a cloth (e.g., touching it to the face or mouth, etc.)
- Use a cloth once it has touched the floor.

### **14.4. Performance**

#### **14.4.1. Workspace Organized and Clean at Start and End**

- A. The cleanliness and organization of the competitor’s workstation (worktable, prep table, top of the machine) will be evaluated on a scale between 0 and 6. If the area is messy, a 0 score will be given.
- B. It is permissible to have a small amount of coffee grounds around the grinder.
- C. The working area should be organized in a practical and efficient manner.



- D. The competitor should have a minimum of 3 clean cloths available when the performance time starts. The cloths should have a purpose (e.g., 1 for the steam wand, 1 for drying/cleaning baskets, 1 for bar clean up. A towel on the competitor's apron/person is included in this count).
- E. There should be no water in the cups at the start of, during or the end of the competition time. If there is any water in the cups on top of the espresso machine at any time, the competitor will receive a score of "0" on the technical scoresheets in addition to the competitor being disqualified in accordance with rule 4.1.1.
- F. Competitors may have pucks in the portafilters at the start of their competition time. This will not count against "clean area at start up".
- G. The working area should be clean at the end of the competitor's competition time. It is permissible to have a small amount of coffee grounds around the grinder.
- H. If an accident should occur (e.g., a competitor spills 1 of the drinks), the competitor should have it cleaned up by the end of their performance time.
- I. Cleaning while working (removing spent grounds, wiping tables) will help the competitor's score.
- J. All wares and tools (e.g., tampers, cups, trays, pitchers, etc.) are included in this evaluation including items on the espresso machine and worktables.
- K. Spent pucks are allowed to be in the portafilters at the end of performance and are not part of this score.

#### **14.4.2. Overall Impression**

The Overall Impression of the competitor's technical performance will be evaluated on a scale between 0 and 6. Elements to be considered include:

- A. The competitor's overall workflow and use of tools, equipment and accessories.
- B. The competitor's ability to understand the correct use and operation of the espresso machine.
- C. The competitor should display an understanding of the correct use and operation of the grinder – including the management of coffee in and through the grinder. The competitor should have adjusted the grind during their preparation time. Competitors should grind coffee for each shot or set of shots.
- D. The competitor is trying to achieve extraction times within a 3 second variance and shot volume of 25-35 ml (30 ml +/- 5 ml). Extraction times must be a minimum of 20 seconds for lattes.
- E. The technical judge is responsible for inspecting the competitors understanding of the grinder and consistency of dosing and tamping skills. Judges must look for levelness of tamp, indications of channeling or holes, and consistency of tamping.
- F. The technical judge will evaluate the competitor's workflow throughout the presentation, including the organization and placement of tools, cups and accessories; the competitor's movement and flow in and around the workstation; the cleanliness and maintenance of the station (equipment, counters, towels, pitchers); and management of coffee and milk.
- G. In the case that any liquid or ingredients are placed on top of the machine, a "0" will be given in this category in addition to the competitor being disqualified in accordance to rule 4.1.1
- H. The competitor keeps the portafilter spouts clean and avoids placing spouts in dosing chamber
- I. The competitor needs to remove any water or grounds on the portafilter spouts by cleaning the spouts. Rinsing, using a towel, and wiping with fingers are all acceptable methods for achieving clean spouts.



- J. The competitor should display an understanding of the correct use and operation of the steam wand in creating the required quality of textured milk.

## 15. Visual Evaluation Procedure

The following is an explanation of the visual scoresheet.

### 15.1. Stage Performance

Patterns will be evaluated using the following criteria by all visual judges. It is important that visual judges follow these criteria consistently.

#### 15.1.1. Two Identical Patterns Matching the Presented Picture

Judges will assess the similarity of the 2 presented patterns to the presented picture. Because competitors are demonstrating their skill in replicating an intended pattern, this is the only category where judges will review both presented patterns, and not just the pattern specifically presented to them.

6 points will only be awarded to 2 patterns that are identical to the presented picture, whatever the quality of the design in the presented picture (this section is marking the similarities rather than the quality of the pattern itself). 2.5 points will be awarded if 1 pattern was identical to the presented picture and the other bore no resemblance to the picture at all. 0 points will be awarded if both drinks bore no resemblance to the picture at all.

#### 15.1.2. Visual Foam Quality

Judges should visually assess the quality of the foam on the beverage for a bubble-free, smooth, glossy rich consistency. Judges will only evaluate the 1 cup presented to them in this section.

#### 15.1.3. Contrast between Ingredients

Judges will review only the drink presented to them. High points will be awarded to patterns demonstrating sharp contrast between the surface of the beverage and the white milk foam. Unintentional mixing/blurring of the contrast will reduce this score.

Judges should consider areas of mixed crema and milk foam that are intentionally created by the competitor as a requirement of the desired pattern.

#### 15.1.4. Harmony, Size, and Position of Pattern

Judges will only review the pattern presented to them. Competitors should align the pattern with the cup handle at 3 o'clock.

Judges will review the size and position of the pattern and its relation to the cup. If the pattern involves several elements, the judges will review their position and balance.

#### 15.1.5. Successfully Achieved Level of Difficulty

Judges will review only the pattern presented to them. High scores will be awarded to difficult patterns successfully achieved. If a competitor attempts a difficult pattern but fails to represent that pattern in the presented drink, then a low score should be expected.



### **15.1.6. Overall Appealing Impression**

Judges will only review the drink presented to them. Judges should review the look of the drink in its totality based on its personal impact on them. Judges will consider the creativity of the pattern. Highest points will be given for presenting a design that pushes the boundaries in latte art skills and techniques. Judges are looking to recognize fundamental latte art skills such as free-pouring and give higher points when these skills are taken to new levels. To score this section it may be worth considering how a customer, rather than a coffee professional, may score the presented pattern.

### **15.1.7. Professional Performance**

The competitor's performance will be scored based on the service skills, flair, and style they display in the production of the drinks.

General hygiene throughout the entire presentation and hospitality skills will also be taken into account.

Professionalism is evaluated by observed qualities relevant to the barista profession including technique, preparation, correct use of the equipment, good customer service skills, and the ability to manage workflow and time. The competitor must demonstrate they are a coffee professional who has command over their performance and their latte art.

### **15.1.8 Verbal Presentation**

Multiple competitors may be competing at the same time and will not have microphones and their own music; it is therefore not expected for them to give a detailed verbal presentation.

## **16. Appeals at the United States Latte Art Championship**

### **16.1. Judge Related Issues**

Most scorekeeping questions will be answered during competitor debrief. If a competitor objects to the scores given by 1 or more judges, the competitor can meet with their head judge during the competitor debriefing to explain their protest. If the head judge is unavailable, the competitor may discuss with the Judge Operations Lead onsite. If the issue is not solved, the competitor may protest in writing to USCC (see Appeals below). This will be reviewed by judge leadership and the USCC Competition Committee. They will make a decision on-site and a representative of the USCC Competition Committee will inform the competitor of the decision.

In the unlikely event that the head judge or any other USLAC personnel discovers or suspects potential dishonest behavior by a USLAC judge during a competitor's evaluation, then the following will apply:

- The head judge will request the return of all applicable scoresheets from the official scorekeeper.
- The head judge will meet with the USLAC judge(s), US Staff, and USCC Competition Committee Chair(s) to evaluate the situation.
- The USCC Staff and USCC Competition Committee Chair(s) will then rule upon the matter in a closed meeting.
- If the matter of dishonesty is extensive, the USCC Competition Committee Chair(s) has the power to rule that the USLAC judge will be excluded from judging in any future USLAC sanctioned competitions.

### **16.2. Competitor Related Issues**





If a competitor has an issue or protest to make regarding the USLAC during the competition, the competitor should contact the USCC event organizer. The event organizer will then determine whether the issue can be resolved on-site at the USLAC, or whether the issue will require a written appeal following the USLAC.

If the USLAC event organizer decides that the issue and/or protest can be solved on-site at the USLAC, the USLAC event organizer will contact the involved party or parties to ensure fair representation. The competitor's issue and/or protest will be discussed, and a decision will be made jointly, on-site by the USLAC event organizer and the designated onsite representative of the USLAC Judge Operations Lead. The USLAC event organizer will inform the competitor of the decision.

### **16.3. APPEAL LETTER**

- A. If any protest described above cannot be resolved onsite or the competitor wishes to appeal a decision made by the Competitions Manager onsite, the Competitions Manager will ask the competitor to submit their appeal in writing (which may be by email or hard copy) to the 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 Competitions Manager within 24 hours after the subject incident.

### **16.4. APPEAL DECISION**

- A. The final resolution will be delivered within 30 days of receipt. The USCC Competition Strategic Committee will 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 Competitions Manager
- B. The Competitions Manager shall operate under the purview of the Specialty Coffee Association management and U.S. Competition Committee.

