



# THE DMC GUIDE TO UNPACKING AND STEWARDING



The Drunk Monk Challenge (DMC) is an annual homebrew competition hosted by the suburban Chicago homebrew club Urban Knaves of Grain (UKG). It was first held in 1999 and quickly became one of the largest locally run homebrew competitions in the United States. It is a qualifying event for the Masters Championship of Amateur Brewing (MCAB) and a leg of the Midwest Homebrewer of the Year. Over the years the DMC has earned the reputation of being a well-organized and smooth running competition; besides being a great deal of fun. While there is a core group of people with years of competition experience who help out every year, it is important to bring in new people to keep the DMC viable for the future.

Homebrew competitions come in all sizes and are organized and run in a variety of ways. Years of practice and input from a number of people has developed into the system that is being used to organize and run the Drunk Monk Challenge. Unlike many homebrew competitions where there is an organizer or two that do the majority of the organizational work, the DMC has an organizer and a committee to complete the various tasks. While the cast of characters changes over time, there are enough experienced people involved in any given year to guide the process, creating more experienced organizers.

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes for a competition to be of high quality and to run smoothly and efficiently. These myriad tasks are not the focus of this guide. Instead, the purpose is to help volunteers understand the various responsibilities and tasks that must be completed during the unpacking process prior to the competition and stewarding at the competition. Gaining an understanding of the responsibilities and process BEFORE stepping in to help out ultimately leads to greater productivity and fewer frustrations for experienced and novice volunteers.

### **Unpacking**

The materials used during the unpacking process are provided by the UKG, but box cutters are limited. Sharing of box cutters slows down the unpacking process so it is a good idea for volunteers to bring along their own tool for cutting if they have something available. Materials used for the unpacking process include:

- Box cutters and/or pocket knives
- Bottle labels
- Pens
- Large markers
- 58 case boxes
- Approximately 230 six-pack carriers
- 29 pieces of two different colors of paper (58 total) (This may change as the number of BJCP categories change.)
- Packing tape and tape guns

On unpacking day, the unpacking area is crudely set up into three areas. The unpacking area will consist of pallets of wrapped entries and at least one work table. The labeling area will be a few tables set end

to end and chairs for the labelers. The final area is the sorting area, consisting of two case boxes for each BJCP category and the Menace of the Monetary (MOM). Two different colors of paper are taped to the front of each box, separating first and final round entries. Alternatively, a large "1" or "2" (or "A" and "B") could be hand written on a front corner of each case, but bright paper is easier to spot in a hurry. Also on each case, written in large numbers are the category numbers and MOM. The pairs of cases, filled with six pack carriers, are arranged on the floor in numerical order, each with the same color case in front of the second colored case.

The assembled group of volunteers is separated into four smaller groups, each with a specific function. These groups include unpackers, movers, labelers, and sorters.

Unpackers – Members of this group are responsible for opening packages of entries, moving them and any payment/paperwork on to the next group, and disposing of packing materials. It is important to open packages carefully to prevent breakage and possible injury when breakage occurs during transport. Only one individual should open and unwrap entries from a single brewer. All entries from a single brewer should be move on to the next station as a unit, keeping the bottles in pairs by style.

As entries are unwrapped, all bottles should be checked for damage and ensure that each has a brewer label secured to the bottle. If a bottle comes without a label, look through the packing materials before discarding the trash. Any broken bottles, missing or wet labels, or other concerns with entries should be brought to the attention of the lead labeler.

Movers – This small group is responsible for moving the entries from the unpacking area to the labelers, keeping entries from a single brewer together and with their appropriate partner. Once labeled with entry numbers and completely processed, members of this group then move the entries, in pairs, down to the sorters, checking to make sure the entry numbers and category/subcategories match.

Labelers – Members of this group work with pairs of entries at a time. Each pair must be checked to make sure that the brewer and style information is the same. Then the style number and sub-category letter are hand-written on pre-printed entry number labels. One of these labels is then affixed to the cap and another to the neck of both bottles, wiping the bottles dry if needed. The brewer information label is removed from ONE of the two bottles of that entry and an entry number label with the same entry number is affixed to the upper right hand corner of the brewer label. The bottles for that entry can then be moved forward to be collected by the movers and placed in six -pack carriers at the sorters' station. One labeler should be responsible for labeling all entries of a single brewer. Entry numbers should be assigned in a numerical fashion. This is especially important when brewers have multiple entries. Should an entry only have one bottle, this should be noted on the label retained by the labeler and the sorters informed of the status of that entry.

Accuracy and legibility are critical. Labelers should double check to make sure that they are labeling a matched pair of beers AND one of the labels with the same number. The correct category number and letter should be written on the pre-printed labels in a legible manner so that they can be accurately categorized in the case boxes. It should also be noted that entries for the MOM category will also include a normal BJCP category and sub-category name in addition to the brewer's designation of the

MOM category. Accurately locating the MOM designation on these entries is critical. The category and subcategory are hand-written onto a special purple MOM label and the label affixed to the neck and cap of the special entry.

Sorters – This very small group, usually two people, is responsible for taking the labeled bottles and placing them in the appropriate case by category, noted on the entry label. Prior to placing entries in case boxes, it is important to double check that the entry numbers and category/sub-categories of a pair of bottles match. Then the bottles can be placed in the appropriate category cases, one in the front box and the second bottle in the back box. It is helpful to place bottles in the same space in both cases, filling the left half first, from front to back. This allows for easier consolidation of cases and labeling later on. When boxes are filled in this manner, both boxes in a category should look identical to each other. If they do not, the sorter will know that an error has occurred and can work on correcting the problem before the process has gone too far. In the case of a single bottle entry, the single bottle should be placed in the front box and the same spot left empty in the back box. This entry will be judged in the first round, but will be ineligible to move on to the best of show round.

When all of the packages have been unpacked and all entries labeled and placed into their appropriate cases, consolidation of cases can take place as needed. This is accomplished by combining smaller categories with other small categories within a case box and marking the additional category (or categories) number(s) of the front of the case. It is critical to combine the second cases of beers in the same manner as the first and marking them as well. During this consolidation process, meads and ciders should be kept in separate cases from beers as they are judged at different times and in different settings. Once consolidation is complete, cases can be closed and stacked in the cooler, with second round boxes on the bottom or further back in the cooler.

### **Competition Day**

The DMC is run over two days. The first round of Meads and Ciders are judged on Friday evening at an alternate site. This judging session is run in a similar manner as the main competition, but on a much smaller scale. The main competition includes the judging of all first round beers, Best of Show (BOS) for both meads/ciders and beer, as well as MOM entries, is completed at the main site on Saturday. The competition tends to be in the 400-550 entry range so a number of judge and steward volunteers are needed to complete the necessary tasks efficiently, resulting in a successful and enjoyable competition for everyone.

Typically, the competition organizers and stewards arrive at the site an hour before judging is to begin. Although judging tables are generally in place when staff arrives, a number of tasks need to be completed in a short period of time before judging can begin. The registrar and an assistant check in walk-in entries as they arrive. This includes affixing neck and cap entry number labels to each bottle in the same manner as was done during the unpacking process. At the same time, a continental breakfast is set up, butcher paper is cut to fit/cover each of the long rows of judging tables, pitchers are filled with ice and water, bread is cut and put into containers, and baskets are filled with at least four pencils, one stapler, an extra box of staples, a bottle opener, a calculator, and a flashlight. Once the tables are

covered, they may be set with the baskets of supplies and dump buckets (one per judge team when possible), stacks of cups for every judge team, style guidelines (one per judge), a stack of beer score sheets adequate for the number of entries to be judged that session (one per team), and a stack of cover sheets. As cover sheets are in limited supply, it is helpful to count out and provide an exact number of cover sheets each judge team will need (one per entry judged) when time permits. Making the best use of the space and keeping teams judging the same category together, table tents noting the style to be judged are placed on the judging tables.

While all of this is occurring in the judging room, the head steward and an assistant pull the cases of entries to be judged during the morning session from the cooler and transport them to the judging room. With the assistance of other stewards, the entries are then broken down into flights, using the six-pack carriers and flight sheets provided. If any entries are not found in the appropriately labeled case boxes, stewards should check in the stash of walk-in entries that arrived that morning prior to checking with the registrar or judge coordinator on the status of that entry. Once a flight has been pulled and all entries are in place, the flight sheet can be placed inside the six-pack carrier with the bottles and the whole flight set aside until it is time to begin judging. The crew should keep working on organizing flights until all of the morning flights have been filled.

As it gets closer to starting time, the pitchers of ice water and containers of bread can be placed on the judging tables, one of each per judge team. Preparations for the calibration round should also begin. Typically this means pouring a couple of ounces of beer from the bottles or pitchers provided into plastic judging glasses. These glasses are carried on trays and set in front of each judge in the room. Once all the judges have a glass of the calibration beer, they can begin judging. This gives the stewards a few minutes to deliver all of the morning flights of beers to the appropriate judge teams, matching the category beer name and/or number to the corresponding table tent on the judging tables.

As the judges finish judging the calibration beer, stewards should move throughout the room collecting completed calibration sheets and turning them in to the designated person who determines the high and low scores given and the average score of all the judges. Judging of the competition beers can then begin. A steward or two may be assigned to set up tables for the Mead/Cider and Beer BOS and MOM as well as lay out the raffle prizes for display. At least until this task is finished, this would be in lieu of the "typical" steward duties.

When there are as many stewards as there are categories being judged at any given time, stewards are assigned or can choose a single category of beer to work with during a session. Frequently, however, this is not the case and stewards may have to work with more than one category which may add up to quite a number of judge teams. In either case, the steward is responsible for keeping adequate water in the pitcher and bread in the bread basket; clearing away the used cups when the judges are done with them on an ongoing basis; replenishing the stockpile of score sheets as needed; and getting answers to any questions that the judges may have. Should the judges want to have the second bottle of an entry brought to the table, the head steward should be notified for resolution. In addition, the judges may also choose to have the stewards fill out the cover sheets or staple the paperwork together.

For larger categories when more than one judge team is judging entries from any given category, a mini best of show round must occur. In these situations, judges may have the steward recap and set aside two or three entries that they would like to move forward to the mini BOS. It is critical for the steward to keep track of those bottles, preventing them from getting dumped with the other bottles.

Once judging of a category is completed, the steward should begin the clean-up process for the judging area. This includes dumping all the used glasses into the dump bucket, returning opened bottles to the six-pack carriers and removing them and the dump bucket from the table and taking them to dumping station. All score sheets should be stacked with the top three entries on the top, placed in the folded table tent for that category, and given to the head steward. Supplies from the table should be returned to their baskets and style guidelines and unused score sheets neatly stacked. Bread baskets should be emptied and placed back at the bread station for refilling later. Water pitchers should also be removed and taken to the water station to be refilled. If the paper table covering is in good shape, i.e no spills or writing in marker, it can remain in place and reused for the afternoon session. If the paper needs to be replaced, everything on the table will need to be removed temporarily. When a steward has cleared his/her own judging area(s), he/she should pitch in and help other stewards with their areas until all the areas are cleared.

The DMC provides lunch for judges and stewards. Lunch separates the morning and afternoon judging sessions. Stewards typically are allowed to go to the front of the line and get their food first since they have to prepare the room again for the start of the afternoon session. If there are teams still in the process of judging when lunch is served, those stewards should remain with their teams until they are finished or can be relieved by a steward who is done eating. About a half hour prior to the scheduled start of the afternoon session, all stewards should return to the judging room to prepare the room and the flights of beers in the same manner as in the morning.

As the end of the afternoon session draws to a close, the activity level increases for everyone. Tables and entries need to be prepared for Mead/Cider BOS, Beer BOS, and the MOM judging. The BOS rounds do not need special paperwork, but cups, style guidelines, pencils, bread, and water all need to be in place. The MOM table(s) needs the same set up as a normal round of judging, but the score sheets are different. At the same time, the normal clean up must continue to occur in the main judging room as noted earlier. Final teardown of the room also takes place and requires assistance from both judges and stewards, as tables are collapsed, chairs are stacked, and all UKG property is picked up, rinsed, stacked, and stowed. For everything to continue to move forward on time, it is critical that stewards are aware of all the tasks that need to be done and pitch in where they can in addition to their assigned tasks and/or when their tasks have been completed.

Once the main judging area has been cleared and vacated and the BOS/MOM judging are in progress, the stewards' day is almost over and they can enjoy the raffle that is held every year. It is helpful if the stewards check in as the final judging winds down, however, since clean up needs to occur from that process as well. Pitching in at the end speeds up the clean up and gets everyone out the door and on with their evening more quickly.