

CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR

JUDGING FORM – GUIDANCE NOTES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These notes are intended to assist people judging pubs for the POTY competition by explaining what the various criteria shown on the Judging Form actually mean.
- 1.2 Judging something like a pub can never be an exact science but hopefully these notes will help make clearer what you should be looking for. There is also a brief summary of relevant CAMRA policies; one of POTY's main purposes is to support and promote those policies.

2. GUIDANCE NOTES

- 2.1 Quality of Beer etc This obviously has to be the most important single factor in judging a pub for a CAMRA award; if it doesn't sell excellent quality beer etc, then we should not want to be associated with it. Please note that the pub doesn't need to sell a wide range of beers to score highly. A pub selling a couple of ales in tip-top condition is infinitely preferable to one selling seven or eight of variable quality. Also the fact that a pub is a tied house mustn't be held against it in any way.
- 2.2 Atmosphere/Style/Décor This is partly about the "feel" of the interior – is it a nice place to be? It's also about the extent to which the most has been made of the actual building. Is the décor appropriate to the type of pub it is? Does the style show respect for the building? Factors like imagination, taste and restraint all come into play. Pubs certainly don't have to be picture-postcard, unspoilt rural gems to score highly here. Estate pubs, modern city centre bars, back street boozers – all can be excellent in their own terms. It's the clichéd approach, the lack of imagination, the identikit and the formulaic that we want to get away from.
- 2.3 Service and Welcome Pretty self-evident this one. Is the service prompt, efficient and friendly? Do you get full measure or at least a top up without having to ask? Does the person serving you seem to regard you as a human being rather than just a source of revenue?

- 2.4 Clientele Mix A good pub is one where anyone can go in and feel comfortable, whoever they are. If a pub, intentionally or unintentionally, operates in such a way as to exclude some sectors of the community then that counts against it for this competition. That's not to say that pubs which target a particular type of clientele cannot be excellent in their own right – but a CAMRA Pub of the Year does need to be inclusive, not exclusive. So look out for whether the pub attracts a good cross section of people and age groups. Is there anything about the pub which might cause discomfort (physical or otherwise) to certain groups?
- 2.5) Sympathy With CAMRA Aims Relevant CAMRA policies on pubs are summarised in the next section and a POTY candidate would be expected to conform with those policies. On a more general note, does the pub espouse and promote our values? Is cask beer given a positive push here? Is information offered about the ales sold? Does the pub try to stimulate interest in the sorts of issues we're concerned about?
- 2.6 Good Value This is about value for money, but in the widest sense of the term i.e. not just how cheap the ale is. The questions to ask revolve around – having made the effort to come here, having devoted some of my valuable time to the journey, having spent my hard-earned dosh, how good a pub experience have I had? In other words it's a bit of a catch-all and also acknowledges that it's not always easy to pin point exactly why a pub seems so good, but somehow it all comes together and the whole thing works.
- 2.7 Comments You don't have to complete this section but if there are any points or issues to which you want to draw attention this is the place to do it. In particular if you have marked a pub low on one or more criteria, it would be helpful if you could explain why. You might also wish to jot down "mitigating factors" e.g. you visited the pub on a quiet lunchtime and therefore didn't see it at its liveliest.

3. RELEVANT CAMRA POLICIES

- 3.1 For a comprehensive schedule of CAMRA policies, refer to the regularly-issued Internal and External Policy Documents. If a POTY candidate offends national policy to the extent that it would not be eligible for inclusion in the Good Beer Guide, then it must automatically be excluded from the competition. Positive support of CAMRA policy will clearly count in its favour.
- 3.2 Pubs should be considered as important centres of community life and places for informal social drinking.
- 3.3 We oppose entry restrictions on grounds of dress, shape, size, gender, sexuality, colour, ethnic origin or religion.

- 3.4 Where practicable access should be possible for people with disabilities, who should be treated with care and consideration.
- 3.5 We are concerned at the damaging effect of unnecessarily noisy electronic amusement machines.
- 3.6 Price lists should be prominently displayed, as should opening hours.
- 3.7 We support the introduction of full-pint legislation (and would therefore expect POTY candidates to give full measure).
- 3.8 Beers should not be served through a tight sparkler if not brewed to be dispensed in that way.
- 3.9 We deplore pubs advertising beers as “house brands” when they aren’t produced by or exclusively for that pub.
- 3.10 We oppose the selling of non-traditional beer or cider using handpumps (real or fake).
- 3.11 We will expose pubs guilty of over-pricing.
- 3.12 We will promote both mild and real draught cider and perry.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Judging a pub, especially if you can only make one visit, isn’t an easy task. Ideally you’d want to go there on several occasions at different times of the week but this isn’t always possible. If you can choose a time when the pub could be expected to be reasonably busy, this is always best.
- 4.2 Try to spread your scores. Don’t be afraid of marking low if you feel the pub hasn’t performed in a particular area. There’s a natural temptation to “crowd” scores at the top end which results in all the pubs you judge receiving very similar totals.
- 4.3 If there is a chance to talk to the licensee try to grab it – though don’t of course say what you’re doing!
- 4.4 Finally pub-judging is usually great fun, especially when you find yourself in a belting pub you haven’t been to before. ENJOY!