

SCANDINAVIAN BREWERS' REVIEW

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Head Consultant:
Senior Account Manager Niels Hass

Editorial board:
Tuen-media as
Balticagade 12D
DK-8000 Aarhus C
www.tuen.dk
Tel.: +45 8621 3000
E-mail: sbr@tuen.dk

Editor-in-chief:
Andres Tue Moller

Sub-editor:
Louise Karlsen

Proofreader:
Joel Southern

Design:
Jakob GuldbRANDT

Technical editor:
Anders Kissmeyer
E-mail: anders@kissmeyer.dk

National contact persons:
Roger Løe (NO)
E-mail: roger.loe@ringnes.no

Saara Pöyri (FI)
E-mail: saara.poyri@sff.fi

Uwe Leibfacher (SE)
E-mail: leibfacher.uwe@telia.com



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THE 34TH GREAT AMERICAN BEER FESTIVAL® 2015, DENVER, COLORADO

BY FINN BJØRN KNUDSEN. E-MAIL: FINN@KNUDSENBEVERAGECONSULTING.COM

From our loyal U.S. correspondent, Finn Bjørn Knudsen, we yet again this year have a report on the recent Great American Beer Festival®, which takes place every year in Denver, Colorado – practically in Finn's back yard!

Wow, once again the beer lovers could enjoy a very successful and much bigger annual Great American Beer Festival in Denver, and, once again, this year exceeded last year's event, so the GABF event keeps on growing year after year, with this being the largest ever!! Having been a judge since the start of GABF more than 25 years ago, it is really amazing how this has grown. Below, some facts:

The 2015 Great American Beer Festival (GABF) competition awarded 275 medals to some of the best commercial breweries in the United States, plus three GABF Pro-Am medals to teams of amateur brewers paired with professional brewers.

Presented by the Brewers Association, the GABF is the largest commercial beer competition in the world and a symbol of brewing excellence. In its 34th year, the 2015 competition surpassed all previous participation records, exceeding last year's record-setting competition.

Award-winning brewers received prestigious gold, silver and bronze medals in 92 beer categories covering 145 different beer styles (including all subcategories), establishing the best examples of each style in the country. Winners were chosen from 6,647 competition entries (20 percent more than in

2014) from 1,552 breweries hailing from the 50 states plus Washington, D.C.

You might be interested in the award criteria guidelines:



* Gold: A world-class beer that accurately exemplifies the style, displaying proper balance of taste, aroma and appearance.



* Silver: An excellent beer that may vary slightly from style parameters while maintaining close adherence to the style and displaying excellent taste, aroma and appearance.



* Bronze: A fine example of the style that may vary slightly from style parameters and/or have minor deviations in taste, aroma or appearance.

This year's GABF competition saw its biggest panel of judges ever, with 242 beer experts from 15 countries, including the U.S., and 155 competition volunteers. The panel also evaluated 91 Pro-Am entries.



Award ceremony



Brian Gillespie and Josh Cody at the Dostal Alley Booth

This year, the Boulder-based Brewers Association, which operates the annual event, added 90,000 square feet of space in the Colorado Convention Center – a 31 percent increase, which allowed 11,000 more attendees into its four sessions, bringing the total to 60,000 people at the festival, which ran from Sept. 24-26, with judges working full days Wednesday through Friday. You could really feel the additional space, which allowed the attendees to roam around more freely.

GABF 2015 featured 750 breweries pouring about 3,800 different beers, but also spawned lots of simultaneous events around it. Visit Denver tracked 200 events registered this year for its Denver Beer Fest, which includes special tapplings, dinners and any other beer-themed fun during the eight days leading up to and



Photo © Brewers Association

*Medal photos © Brewers Association



including the GABF. There were 150 last year. Your editor and writer enjoyed an evening together at the Brew Night Show with Marty Jones at the historic Lannie's Clocktower Cabaret.

Last year, the GABF generated \$21.5 million in economic impact for Denver, and the 2015 number will surely be much higher. The numbers reflect the fact that many downtown hotels were running at 90%+ occupancy or higher during the weekend, so the GABF suddenly starts ranking with other major annual convention center events as one of the most beneficial to the city. BA officials have commissioned a third-party studying the 2015 GABF economic impact for Denver.

Brewers Association leaders decided to add floor space and tickets for this 2015 event because demand was so great in previous years that all of the tickets were gobbled up in less than 30 minutes. Even some brewers got shut out from pouring their beer on the festival floor. This year, with the expanded capacity, it still took just 77 minutes to sell out, but every brewer that applied for space by the deadline received it according to Brewers Association.



Technical Editor Anders is ready to order some beer



Photo © Brewers Association

Please visit the GABF 2015 website for more specific information and, for a list of winners, visit www.greatamericanfestival.com/the-competition/winners

I recommend that you consider participating in the 2016 GABF event, and please find more details on their website www.greatamericanbeerfestival.com.

Also do not forget to sign up for and join us at the World Beer Cup and Craft Brewers Convention in Philadelphia May 3-8, 2016. Last year in Portland, more than 14,000 brewing industry professionals attended this popular conference. Please visit www.craftbrewersconference.com and www.worldbeercup.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Finn Bjørn Knudsen, M.Sc. – Ch.E. (KP) lives in Evergreen, Colorado, USA, where he, for quite a few years, has run his own firm, Knudsen Beverage Consulting. Finn started his career on his home turf of Denmark with the Tuborg Breweries. But, at a relatively young age, he moved to the US and Canada, where his corporate career really took off working for Molson. He then returned to Denmark to work in the Carlsberg Group and went on to hold a long-time post as Technical Director of Coors Brewing in Golden, Colorado, before working as Technical Director for Procordia Beverages/Pripps in Stockholm, Sweden. Finn finally returned to the US, where he started his consulting company in 1993.