

14<sup>th</sup> Edition

**HORECA<sup>ME</sup>**

**KUWAIT**

**2026**

**Barista**

**PARTICIPANT MANUAL**

**HORECA**  
*Barista*  
COMPETITION  **KUWAIT**

**19/21 JAN**

**11 AM - 9 PM**

**KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FAIR - HALL 8**

AN EVENT BY

  
**Leaders Group**  
ليدز جروب للإستشارات والتطوير  
Leaders Group for Consulting & Development

**Hospitality**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Participant,  
We are thrilled to welcome you to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Barista Competition, taking place during HORECA Kuwait 2026, the annual meeting place for the hospitality and foodservice industries.

This manual provides you with all the information you will need regarding the event.

Good luck to you all.



**Nabila M. Al Anjari**  
**General Manager**

*Leaders Group for Consulting & Development*  
**HORECA Kuwait**

14<sup>th</sup> Edition



# BARISTA PARTICIPANT MANUAL

## JURY MEMBERS

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# BARISTA PARTICIPANT MANUAL

## SPONSORS

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

- The organizers reserve the right to remove, change or add to the rules and regulations.
- The organizers reserve all rights to the recipes used and photographs taken during the event.
- The organizers are not responsible for any damage or loss of exhibited items, equipment, utensils or personal belongings of the competitors.
- Competitors who are not present at the appointed time and place of the competition will be considered as no-shows.
- Any cancellation after 5th of January 2026 will not be refundable.
- During the competition participants must wear their badges on the side where their number is written. No name or establishment logo must be visible to the judges.
- Typed recipes without any name or establishment logo must be distributed to the judges before the competition.
- All participants must be present at the competition in their uniforms with no establishment logos visible.
- Every establishment will receive a helper's badge depending on the participation number. Helpers must go outside the competition area once the competition begins.
- Participants must show their personal ID and badge otherwise, enter the competition area.
- Competitors who arrive on the wrong day will not have them judged, please refer to the final schedule for your competition date. In case of any doubt, do not hesitate to contact the Organizers.
- Participants who arrive before the scheduled time cannot enter the back area or use the fridges and other equipment.

## COMPETITION SCHEDULE

The schedule will be sent 7 days prior to the event.

Your staff, delegation, and supporters are welcome at the exhibition.

To attend, they must be from the field of hospitality and are required to register online:

**How does the pre-registration system work for HORECA 2026 - KUWAIT?**

We invite you to log on to [www.horecakuwait.com](http://www.horecakuwait.com) to get your online badge.

## PRODUCTS & INGREDIENTS

- It is a must to use the sponsors' products in your recipe when needed.
- It is forbidden to promote competitors' products during the competition.
- List of available products will be shared with you.

## P.S: COACHING

Instructions or 'coaching' may not be provided to a competitor during the time of his or her competition and may result in a penalty of disqualification. The organizer encourages audience participation and enthusiastic fan support that does not interfere with competition.

**Please note:** coaches, supporters, friends, or family members are not allowed on stage while the competition is in progress, otherwise the competitor is subject to disqualification by the presiding head judge.

## DISQUALIFICATION

Competitors may not change, adjust, or replace any element, setting, or component of the espresso machine or provided sponsor grinder(s) except for requesting the change of temperature setting as allowed by the rules. Any changes or adjustments made may be grounds for disqualification (e.g., portafilters, filter baskets, pressure, steam wand tips, burrs, etc.). Any damage

to the competition equipment due to misuse or abuse is grounds for disqualification.

## TECHNICAL ISSUES

**A.** Competitors may raise their hand and declare a “technical time out” in the event that they believe there is a technical problem with any of the following equipment provided:

**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 audio-visual equipment (such as the competitor’s music or microphone)

Preparation or competition time will be paused by the stage manager (during preparation time) or for the head judge (during competition time). The official timekeeper will make note of time when “technical time out” is called. It is the competitor’s responsibility to ensure the timekeeper is aware of making note of “technical time out” being called.

**B.** If the event 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.

**C.** If the technical problem cannot be solved in a timely manner, the event manager/head judge will make the decision whether or not the competitor should wait to continue his/her performance or stop the performance and start again at a reallocated time.

**D.** If a competitor must stop his/her competition time, the competitor, along with the head judge and event manager, will reschedule the competitor to compete in full again later.

**E.** If it is determined that the technical issue is due to competitor error or the competitor’s personal equipment, the head judge may determine that no additional time will be given to the competitor, and the preparation or competition time will resume without time being credited.

**F.** No time credit will be issued for technical issues caused by improper use; therefore, it is the responsibility of all competitors to understand and follow the correct use of all competition equipment.

**G.** A technical time out for inconsistency or variation between group heads requiring adjustment may only be declared during preparation time.

## COMPETITION SUMMARY

**A.** The Barista competitor's performances will be evaluated by three types of judges: sensory, technical, and head.

**a.** Round one and Final Round of the competition will be run with four sensory judges, two technical judges, and one head judge.

**B.** Competitors will serve one beverage from all three categories of drinks (espresso, milk beverage, signature drink) to each of the four sensory judges, for a total of twelve drinks, during a period of fifteen minutes. The head judge may drink from any beverage served to the sensory judges.

**C.** The competitor decides the order in which the drink categories are served; however, any category of drinks must be completed (e.g. all four single espressos are served) before a competitor may serve another category of drink, otherwise he/she will be disqualified. Preparation and service of signature beverage elements are allowed at any time during the competition time.

**D.** Within each category (espresso, milk beverage and signature drink), drinks may be served in any combination to judges (i.e. one at a time, two at a time, or all three simultaneously). Sensory judges will begin evaluating his/her drink as soon as it is served.

**E.** All four drinks within each category must be prepared using the same coffee; however, the coffee used may change between categories. The 4 drinks of each category must contain the same ingredients and follow the same recipe as each other.

Deliberately preparing and serving varied drinks within a category will result in a score of zero in "taste experience" for those drinks that deviate in recipe from the beverage that is served first.

**F.** Competitors may produce as many drinks as they choose during the competition; however, only drinks served to the sensory judges will be evaluated.

**G.** Food may be served but will not be consumed during any course.

**H.** Head judges cannot be served. Nothing consumable (e.g., water, beverages, etc.) will be consumed or evaluated by the head judge.

I. A meeting before we start the competition on the first day will take place, for all the participants with the judges. The competitor that doesn't come to the meeting is considered disqualified.

## COMPETITION PROCEDURE

- A. The competition space will consist of a stage.
- B. Each competitor will be assigned a start time.
- C. Each competitor will be given 44 minutes at their assigned station, made up of the following segments:
  - A. 7 minutes Table Set Time
  - B. 15 minutes Preparation Time
  - C. 15 minutes Competition/Performance Time
  - D. 7 minutes Clean-Up Time
- D. The competition will consist of two rounds: round one (all competitors) and final round with the highest scoring points.
- E. At the conclusion of the first round, there will be a ceremony where finalists are announced, and all competitors will be acknowledged. All competitors are required to attend this ceremony.



## BEVERAGE DEFINITIONS

### Espresso

- A. Espresso is a beverage (around 1 fl. oz. / 30 ml) made from ground coffee, poured from 1 side of a double portafilter in 1 continuous extraction.
- B. Coffee is the accumulation of roasted product of the seed of the fruit of a plant of the genus Coffea.
- C. Coffee may not have any additives, flavorings, colorings, perfumes, aromatic substances, liquids, powders, etc. of any kind added at any point between the time the coffee is picked (as cherry) to when it is extracted into beverage.
- D. Substances utilized during growing, cultivation, and primary processing of the coffee are permitted (fertilizers, etc.)
- E. Whole bean coffee may be a blend, single-region, single-country, single-farm, etc.
- F. All judges must be served a full espresso. If the shot does not comply with the espresso definition, then taste and/or tactile scores will reflect the

resulting sensory experience. Espresso may be prepared with various amounts of coffee.

- G. Espresso will be brewed at a temperature between 90.5-96 degrees Celsius (195-205 degrees Fahrenheit). Individual group heads may be set to different temperatures within this range. However, each beverage course should be served at a consistent temperature. Competition Bodies are required to use only one temperature across group heads
- H. The espresso machine brewing pressure will be set between 8.5 and 9.5 bar.
- I. Extraction times between two pairs of espresso extractions must be within a three second variance, otherwise a “no” will be given for “extraction time.” A 20-30 second extraction time is recommended, but not mandatory.
- J. Crema should be present when espresso is served, with no break in coverage.
- K. Espresso must be served in a vessel from which judges must be able to drink as required without any functional detriment to their ability to score accurately; this includes but is not exclusive to: vessel being too hot, unable to hold and drink from vessel safely, judges unable to execute espresso evaluation protocol. Otherwise, a “no” will be given for “functional and correct espresso vessel used.”
  
- L. Espresso must be served to the judges with an appropriate spoon, napkin and unflavored water, otherwise the competitor will receive a reduced score in “attention to detail.” if the cup is not functional or not all appropriate items are served.
- M. Nothing other than ground coffee and water may be placed in the portafilters, otherwise the espresso will receive zero points on all scores available on the technical and sensory score sheets in the espresso category.

## Milk Beverage

- A. A milk beverage is a combination of a single shot of espresso and steamed milk that should produce a harmonious balance of rich, sweet milk and espresso and is less than 240ml in volume.
- B. Each of the 4 milk beverages must contain a minimum of 1 espresso shot. If the shot does not comply with the espresso definition, then taste scores will

reflect the resulting sensory experience. Espresso may be prepared with various amounts of coffee.

- C. All commercially available unflavored milks can be used. Plain (sweetened or unsweetened) plant-based milks and animal milks can be used. No human milk will be accepted, or the competitor will receive 0 points on all scores available on the technical and sensory score sheets in the milk beverage category.
- D. Milk beverages may be served with latte art or with a central circle of white milk. Latte art expression may take any pattern the competitor chooses.
- E. Milk beverages must be served in a vessel from which judges must be able to drink as required without any functional detriment to their ability to score accurately; this includes but is not exclusive to vessel being too hot, unable to hold and drink from vessel safely. Otherwise, a “no” will be given for “functional vessel used.” If there is a functional detriment to a judges’ ability to score, the “Attention to Details” score will be impacted.
- F. Additional toppings, including but not limited to sugar, spices or powdered flavorings are not allowed. If used, the competitor will receive zero points in the “taste experience” category.
  
- G. Milk beverages must be served to the judges with a napkin and unflavored water, otherwise the competitor will receive a reduced score in “attention to detail.”
- H. Nothing other than ground coffee and water may be placed in the portafilters, otherwise the milk beverage will receive zero points on all scores available on the technical and sensory score sheets in the milk beverage category.

## Signature Beverage

- A. The signature beverage demonstrates a competitor’s creativity and skill to create an appealing and individual espresso focused beverage.
- B. The signature beverage should be a liquid beverage; the judges must be able to drink it.
- C. Each of the 4 signature beverages must contain a minimum of one espresso shot, otherwise the competitor will receive a score of 0 for “taste experience”

on the sensory score sheets in the signature beverage category for that corresponding beverage.

- D. Espresso used in the signature beverage must be prepared during the competitor's performance time, otherwise the signature beverage will receive a score of 0 for "taste experience" on the sensory score sheets in the signature beverage category.
- E. The flavor of the espresso must be present in the signature beverage, producing a balanced drink with the other ingredients.
- F. The signature beverage may be served at any consumable temperature.
- G. Any ingredients may be used in the signature beverage preparation except alcohol, alcohol extracts or by-products, or controlled or illegal substances. If these substances are found in the beverage, competitors will receive 0 points in all categories available on the sensory score sheets in the signature beverage category.
- H. All ingredients must be disclosed upon request. Competitors must bring the original packaging of all ingredients used in the signature beverage for inspection by judges to verify ingredients. If the competitor does not provide original packaging when asked, the signature beverage will receive 0 in all categories available on the sensory score sheets in the signature beverage.
- I. Signature beverage ingredients should be prepared and assembled on-site during the competition time. The preparation of a signature beverage is captured in the "well explained, introduced, and prepared" category on the sensory score sheet. Preparation in advance of the competition time is necessary for certain ingredients (i.e. a 24-hour infusion) and is accepted.
- J. Nothing other than ground coffee and water may be placed in the portafilters, otherwise the signature beverage will receive zero points in all categories available on the technical and sensory score sheets in the signature beverage category.

## OVERVIEW OF THE COMPETITION AREA

### 1. Espresso Machine

Competitors may only use the espresso machine supplied by the organizers. No other machines.

Espresso machines may be used on stage. The espresso machine provided has a fixed technical configuration for the pump pressure (between 8.5 and 9.5 bars)

and cannot be altered by the competitors. The machine temperature can be set at any temperature between 90.5 - 96 degrees Celsius (195 - 205 degrees Fahrenheit).

## 2. No Liquids or Ingredients on Machine

No liquids or ingredients of any kind may be placed or poured on top of the espresso machine (i.e. 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 receive zero points for the Station Management category

## 3. Automatic Grinder

Grinders that are provided on-site have a fixed technical configuration including the hopper and cannot be opened/altered internally by the competitors. Competitors may bring their own grinder with them.

**4. Machine Table** (for espresso machine, grinder and blender) L: 1.80m W: 0.90m H: 0.90m

**5. Work Table** (for trays, glassware and additional accessories) L: 1.80m W: 0.60m H: 0.90m; Presentation

**6. Judges' Table** L: 2.39m W: 0.60m H: 1m

## 7. Blender

## 8. Knockbox

# OVERVIEW OF THE COMPETITION AREA

## 9. Additional Electrical Equipment

In addition to the grinder(s) provided, competitors may use up to two additional pieces of electrical equipment during their performance. Competitors must notify the organizer prior to the day of the competition of any electrical equipment they are bringing (i.e. hot plate, hand mixer, etc.), otherwise the competitor is at risk of their equipment not being allowed in their performance.

## 10. Recommended Equipment & Supplies

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

- Coffee
- Additional electrical equipment (maximum two items)
- Tamper

- Shot glasses
- Steaming pitchers
- Milk
- Cups and saucers as needed
- Spoons
- Any specific utensils required
- All equipment/accessories required for the “Signature Beverage”
- Napkins
- Water glasses (for four sensory judges)
- Water (for four sensory judges)
- Bar towels/clean cloths (for practice and the competition)
- Cleaning supplies (counter brush, grinder brush, etc.)
- Tray(s) (for serving drinks to the judges)
- All accessories for the judges’ presentation table
- Waiter’s cart

## PREPARATION AREA

A back area is available and equipped with the below:

- Stainless steel table
- Fridge for the ingredients
- Freezer
- Sink
- Espresso Machine
- Automatic Grinder

***Make sure to keep all your ingredients in the fridge and freezer of the back area before the competition starts.***

***PS: only one hour before the competition you can use the back area.***

## PREPARATION/COMPETITION/CLEAN UP TIME

### PREPARATION TIME (ONLY 15 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE COMPETITION)

#### 1. Begin Preparation Time

Each competitor will have 15 minutes of preparation time. Competition and preparation timekeepers are optional at the discretion of the Stage Manager provided that 1 independent method of timekeeping is available. Once the competitor has arrived at their assigned station and agreed that the station is set to their specifications, the official preparation timekeeper will ask the competitor if they are ready to begin. The competitor must press the start button on the remote control attached to the clock to begin their 15 minutes of preparation time before touching anything at their station.

#### 2. Cart

Competitors are responsible for the loading and unloading of supplies on the waiter's cart. The preparation timekeeper will remove the cart off stage at the end of the competitor's preparation time. The waiter's cart is not allowed on stage during the performance. Please note that if items are left on the cart after the competitor's preparation time has concluded, the competitor may not retrieve those items until their performance is underway

#### 3. Judges' Presentation Table

The judges' presentation table can be set during the competitor's preparation time, including the serving of water. If a competitor does not wish to pre-set the judges' presentation table during their preparation, they can set the table at the start of their competition/performance time.

#### 4. Practice Shots

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

#### 5. Pre-Heated Cups

Cups can be preheated during the competitor's preparation time. However, no water may be present in cups at the start of the competitor's competition time otherwise 0 points will be awarded in "Station management". Liquids or ingredients must not be placed on top of the machine otherwise 0 points will be awarded in "Station management".

## COMPETITION TIME

### • Competition Music

Competitors may bring their own music on a CD or USB drive. Music may not contain profanity, otherwise the competitor's score on "Presentation: professionalism" may be penalized on all sensory scoresheets. Competitors must mark their music clearly with their name. It is the competitor's responsibility to give the Stage Manager or Audio-Visual staff their music prior to the start of the competition. It is also the competitor's responsibility to retrieve the music from the Stage Manager or Audio-Visual staff after the competition. Media that are not retrieved will be discarded after the competition.

### • Microphone and Master of Ceremonies

Competitors are required to wear a wireless microphone during their performances; however, the microphone will only be on during the performance time. In the Final round, the Master of Ceremonies (emcee) will introduce the competitor to the audience.

### • Begin Competition Time

**A.** The Master of Ceremonies will ask the competitor if they are ready to begin. Before introducing themselves to the judges, the competitor must start the official clock by pressing the button located on the remote control or by using a method instructed by the Stage Manager. The designated timekeeper will begin a stopwatch the moment the competitor starts the official clock timer, to begin their 15 minutes of competition/performance time.

**B.** Tracking time elapsed during the 15-minute competition/performance time is the responsibility of the competitor, though they may ask for a time check at any point. The competition timekeeper will give the competitor a 10- minute, 5- minute, 3-minute, 1-minute, and 30-second warning during their 15 minutes of competition time. The timekeeper is required to vocalize these warnings in real-time and may interrupt a competitor while they are speaking.

**C.** If the clock malfunctions for any reason, competitors may not stop their performance. 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.

- **Competitor Introduction**

At the start of the competitor's performance, they will introduce themselves to the 4 sensory judges and the head judge. The 4 sensory judges and head judge will be behind the judges' presentation table. The technical judge will stand towards 1 side of the station or behind the station and will take reasonable care to not interfere with the competitor.

- **Serve Required Beverages**

**A.** All drinks must be served at the judges' presentation table(s). Drinks not served at the judges' presentation table(s) will receive a score of 0 in Taste Balance and Accuracy of Flavor Descriptors (where applicable).

**B.** Competitors are required to serve and/or provide unflavored water to the 4 sensory judges for each beverage course. Competitors can serve unflavored water to the judges at the start of the performance time or when the first set of drinks are served. Water glasses should be filled as needed throughout the presentation.

- **Station Perimeters**

Competitors may only utilize the work area provided by the organizers: the machine table and presentation tables. 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, otherwise the competitor will receive 0 points in the "Station management/Clean working area at end" section. The only allowed exceptions to the rule are a free-standing knockbox; and steps or platforms as necessary for baristas to fully access the espresso machine & presentation tables. These allowed additions must be provided by the competitor and are the sole responsibility of the competitor

- **End Competition Time**

**A.** Competition time will be stopped when a competitor raises their hand and says "time". It is the competitor's responsibility to call "time" clearly to allow the time to be recorded accurately.

**B.** Only the time recorded by the head judge or official timekeeper will be used for scoring purposes.

**C.** The competitor may choose to end their performance at any time. For example, 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.

**D.** Competitors are allowed up to 15 minutes for completion of their performance without penalty. There is no penalty or additional incentive to complete a performance in less than 15 minutes.

- **Communication after the Competition Time**

Competitors may not talk to the judges once their performance has ended. Any communication provided to judges after the completion of a presentation will not be considered for scoring evaluation. Competitors may continue to talk to the Master of Ceremonies after the competition time has ended; however, the judges will not consider conversation or information given after the competition time.

- **Time Penalties**

If the competitor has not finished his/her preparation or presentation during the allotted 15 minute period, he/she is allowed to proceed until the preparation or presentation is completed.

One point shall be deducted for every second, over 15 minutes from the competitor's total score up to a maximum penalty of 60 points (one minute). Any competitor whose preparation or performance period exceeds 16 minutes will be disqualified.

- **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 at the direction of the head judge. Runners will remove cups, saucers and spoons used in the previous beverage course. If a competitor has special instructions for the runner, they will need to explain these instructions to the runner, head judge, and the stage manager before the start of their competition time, otherwise the standard of cups, saucers and spoons will be removed. If instructions were not given to the head judge and the stage manager and if the wares the competitor wants onstage were removed by the runner, retrieval of the wares is allowed. The runner will make every reasonable effort to avoid impeding the competitor, but it is the competitor's responsibility to navigate their station successfully.

- **Forgotten Accessories**

If a competitor has forgotten any of his/her equipment and/or accessories during his/her preparation time, the competitor may exit the stage to retrieve the missing items; however, his/her preparation time will not be paused.

If a competitor has forgotten any of his/her equipment and/or accessories during his/her competition time, he/she must inform the head judge that they have forgotten an item(s) off stage and then retrieve the missing item(s) himself/herself. The competition time will not be paused.

Nothing may be delivered by the runners, supporters, team members or the audience, otherwise the competitor is subject to disqualification by the presiding head judge.

## **CLEAN-UP TIME**

Once a competitor has completed his/her performance, he/she should begin cleaning up the station. A station runner will bring the waiters' cart back out on stage for the competitor to load his/her supplies on. If a competitor has brought his/her 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.

## **VERY IMPORTANT**

- **Bring all needed small utensils such as cups as well as other materials needed to serve your drinks.**
- **A typed recipe and detailed list of ingredients in English must be displayed on site before the start of the competition.**
- **Our sponsors' products must be used where applicable. You are not permitted to use other brands. The sponsored list of products will be shared with you shortly.**

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The judges are looking for a champion who:

- A.** Has a mastery of technical skills, craftsmanship, communication skills and service skills and is passionate about the barista profession.
- B.** Has a broad understanding of coffee knowledge beyond the twelve drinks being served in the competition.
- C.** Prepares and serves high quality beverages.
- D.** May serve as a role model and a source of inspiration for others.

### Competition Area

A technical judge will be present during Round One and Final Round of the Barista Competition. The technical judge will evaluate the competition area for cleanliness at the beginning and end of the performance/competition time. In the absence of a technical judge, the head judge will evaluate the cleanliness at the end of the performance/competition time.

### Taste Evaluation

Points will be awarded for the taste of each individual drink (i.e. espresso, milk beverage, and the signature beverage).

Consideration will be given to raw materials used and style of the beverage. Competitors should strive for a harmonious balance of sweetness, acidity and bitterness. Competitors are advised to explain verbally to the judges why they chose their particular coffee, the basic roast profile, the espresso constituent structure, the major taste elements, the ingredients used in the signature beverage and the philosophy behind the drinks served.

### Beverage Presentation

Points will be awarded based on the visual presentation of the drinks including cups, glasses and accessories. This includes elements such as cleanliness of cups and saucers (no spills or drips on cups), consistency of methodology, creativity, and style of presentation.

### Technical Skills

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

## TECHNICAL EVALUATION PROCEDURE

A technical judge will be present in Round One of the Barista Competition. Station Management and Clean working area at end will be captured by the head judge. The following is an explanation of the technical scoresheet.

### EVALUATION SCALE

The evaluation scale is the same for both technical and sensory judges. there are four types of scores:

- Yes/No
- Numeric Scores (Accuracy): 0-3
- Numeric Scores (Impression): 0-3
- Numeric Scores (Experience): 0-6

### Yes/No Score

The competitor receives one point for a score of Yes on this item, and zero point for a score of No.

### Numeric Scores (Accuracy)

- 0 None to evaluate
- 1 Not very accurate (acceptable/average)
- 2 Somewhat accurate (good/very good)
- 3 Very accurate (excellent/extraordinary)

Available scores range from 0 to 3. Half-points are not permissible. Judges should score as follows: A score of 0 indicates that nothing was available to score in this category (e.g., no descriptors were named). A score of 1 indicates that the elements in this category were incorrect or not very accurate (acceptable/average). A score of 2 indicates that elements in this category were somewhat accurate (good/very good). A score of 3 indicates that elements in this category were mostly or all accurate. Certain scores are weighted and multiplied by 2 or 4. Scores of 0 require the approval of the head judge

## Numeric Scores (Impression)

- 0 None to evaluate
- 1 Not very accurate (acceptable/average)
- 2 Somewhat accurate (good/very good)
- 3 Very accurate (excellent/extraordinary)

Available scores range from 0 to 3. Half-points are not permissible. Judges should score as follows: A score of 0 indicates that nothing was available to score in this category. A score of 1 indicates that the elements in this category made a low or average impression (acceptable/ average). A score of 2 indicates that elements in this category made a good or mixed impression (good/very good). A score of 3 indicates that elements in this category made a high impression (excellent/extraordinary). Certain scores are weighted by 2. Scores of 0 require the approval of the head judge.

## Numeric Scores (Experience)

- Unacceptable = 0
- Acceptable = 1
- Average = 2
- Good = 3
- Very Good = 4 Excellent = 5
- Extraordinary = 6

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

## Evaluation Criteria

Some score sheet criteria is evaluated on a scale of zero to six, with zero being the lowest score and six being the highest. It is acceptable to use half point increments between 1.0 and 6.0, which are recorded using a decimal point, not a fraction. (For example, 1.5, 2.5, 3.5.) The lowest score with value is one. A score of 0.5 may not be used. A score of zero is used when certain criteria is deemed totally unacceptable. Scores of zero and six require the approval of the head judge.

## TECHNICAL SCORE SHEET – PART I

Clean working area at start-up/clean cloths

**A.** The cleanliness and organization of the competitor’s work station (work table, prep table, top of machine) will be evaluated on a scale from one to six. If the area is deemed messy, a score of one will be recorded.

**B.** The judges will assess the competitor’s ability to organize the working area in a practical and efficient way.

**C.** Over preparation should be marked down (i.e. milk in the pitchers, pre-poured water in the water glasses, etc.)

**D.** A minimum of three clean cloths should be available when the performance time starts. The cloths must be clean and have a designated purpose (i.e. one for the steam wand, one for drying/cleaning baskets, one for bar clean up. A towel on the competitor’s apron/person for one of these uses is included in this count).

**E.** The cups should be warming. The cups should be placed on top of the espresso machine, unless the competitor is using his/her own device to warm the cups. There should be no water in the cups at the start of the competitor’s 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 zero for “station

**F.** management/clean working area at end” on the technical score sheet.

**G.** Competitors may have pucks (used coffee grounds) in the portafilters at the start of his/her competition time. This will not count against “clean working area at start-up/clean cloths.”

## TECHNICAL SKILLS ESPRESSO – PART II 0 to 6

Please note the technical skills standards are the same for all three beverages.

### **Flushes the group head**

Flushing of the group head must occur in the time after removal of the portafilter and prior to each extraction. If the group head was flushed prior to the extraction of the served beverages, the judge will mark “Yes.”

### **Dry/clean filter basket before dosing**

If the filter basket is completely dry and clean prior to the served beverages, the judge will mark “Yes.”

### **Acceptable spill/waste when dosing/grinding**

Spill/waste is ground coffee left unused during the competition/performance time that may be found in the espresso grinder’s dosing chamber, in the knock box, on the counter, in the trash, on the floor or elsewhere. Waste created in the process of preparing beverages that are not served to judges does not count towards a competitor’s total waste evaluation. Spill/waste of up to five grams of unused coffee per beverage category is considered acceptable. In order to earn a score of excellent (five) or higher, the waste must not exceed one gram of unused coffee per beverage category. Wasting more than five grams of coffee per beverage category is unacceptable and will result in zero points. A reasonable amount of coffee purged is not included in waste.

All coffee used for drinks must be ground during the competitor’s 15 minutes’ competition time.

### **Consistent and effective dosing and tamping**

The competitor must demonstrate a consistent method for dosing and tamping. The competitor should evenly distribute the coffee grounds, and a levelled tamping of adequate pressure is expected. Cultural differences are taken into consideration.

### **Cleans portafilters (before insert)**

The competitor must clean the basket rim and side flanges of the portafilter before inserting it into the machine. If done, the judge will mark “yes.”

### **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.”

### **Extraction time (within a three second variance)**

Judges will time all shots extracted and determine whether shot extraction times are within a three second variance. If the extraction time is within a three second variance of each other within each drinks category, the judge will mark “yes.” Extraction time begins when the competitor activates the machine’s brew cycle. Shot times for shots that are not served will not be included in this score.

## **TECHNICAL SKILLS MILK BEVERAGE – PART III 0 to 6**

### **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 both inside and on the outside.

### **Purges the steam wand before steaming**

The competitor should purge the steam wand before inserting it into the milk pitcher.

### **Cleans the steam wand after steaming**

The steam wand should be cleaned with a dedicated steam wand towel.

### **Purges the steam wand after steaming**

The competitor should purge the steam wand after steaming the milk.

### **Acceptable milk waste at end**

The pitcher should be more or less empty after the milk beverages have been prepared. Acceptable waste is no more than 90ml/3 oz in total.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS SIGNATURE BEVERAGE – PART IV

### Station management/Clean working area at end

**A.** Technical judge will evaluate the competitor's overall workflow and use of tools, equipment and accessories. In the absence of a technical judge, the head judge will evaluate the Station management and cleanliness at the end of the performance/competition time.

**B.** The competitor should display an understanding of 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. Competitors should be grinding coffee for each shot or set of shots.

**D.** The competitor should try to achieve extraction times within a three second variance and shot volume of 25-35ml (30ml +/-5ml).

**E.** The technical judge will evaluate the competitor's work-flow throughout the presentation, including: the organization and placement of tools, cups and accessories; the competitor's movement and flow in and around the work station; the cleanliness and maintenance of the station (equipment, counters, towels, pitchers); the management of coffee and ingredients (milk, signature beverage ingredients). In the absence of a technical judge, the head judge will evaluate the Station management and cleanliness at the end of the performance/competition time.

**F.** Liquids or ingredients must not be placed on top of the machine; otherwise zero will be awarded in "station management/ clean working area at end."

**G.** The cleanliness of the area is evaluated. If a spill occurs, the competitor should have it cleaned up by the end of his/her performance time. Cleaning while working (i.e. removing spent grounds or wiping tables) will improve the competitor's score, as will cleaning the station before he/ she ends his/her performance time. All wares and tools (i.e. tampers, cups, trays, pitchers) are included in this evaluation including items on the espresso machine and work tables. Spent pucks (used coffee grounds) are allowed to be in the portafilters at the end of the performance and are not part of this score.

### Clean portafilter spouts/Avoided placing spouts in doser chamber

**A.** 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.

**B.** During distributing and leveling of coffee grounds, the competitor should not place portafilter spouts directly over the dosing chamber. (This could allow water to contaminate the dosing chamber.)

**C.** If the competitor has clean portafilter spouts before each extraction and does not place the portafilter spouts over the dosing chamber, the judge will mark “yes.”

### General hygiene throughout presentation

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.”

### Examples of unacceptable practices include:

- Touching hands to face, mouth, etc. and then using the hands for beverage preparation.
- Touching the floor and then using the hands for beverage preparation.

### Proper usage of cloths

The judges will evaluate the correct and sanitary usage of the competitor’s cloths. The competitor should use one for the steam wand, one for cleaning the filter basket and one for the workstation.

Examples of unacceptable practices are:

- Using a non-dedicated cloth to clean a steam wand (using it for some other purpose other than using it to clean a steam wand.)
- Anything that is not sanitary or food safe with a cloth such as: touching it to face, mouth, etc.
- Using a cloth once it has touched the floor or dropped.

## SENSORY EVALUATION PROCEDURE

### ESPRESSO EVALUATION – PART I

Espressos will be evaluated using the following protocol by all sensory judges. Sensory judges will complete all steps of the evaluation before recording scores. Sensory judges will stir the espresso THREE times with a spoon (moving the spoon front to back) to mix the flavors within the shot, then immediately taste. Sensory judges will take at least two complete sips to fully evaluate the espresso. Judges will not taste the espresso off the spoon. Competitors may override the evaluation protocol by giving the judges specific alternative instructions on how they want the espresso evaluated. As long as the instructions are reasonable, the judges should follow all instructions given by the competitor.

#### 1. Crema

Judges will visually evaluate the appearance of the crema for presence in the vessel. To score a “yes” the crema must stretch across the entire surface of the espresso and not have any holes or broken spots.

#### 2. Accuracy of Taste Descriptors

Judges will listen to the taste (flavor and aftertaste) descriptions and explanations given by the competitor and compare those with the beverage served. The overall taste profile of the beverage served should support specialty coffee. Any flavor or aftertaste descriptors given by the competitor for their espresso will be taken into consideration under this score. This score is based on how accurately these descriptors match the flavor and aftertaste of the espresso. Taste descriptors must be given or a score of 0 will be received in this category.

#### 3. Accuracy of Tactile Descriptors

The judges will listen to the tactile descriptions and explanations given by the competitor and compare those with the thickness and texture of the beverage served. The judges will score how accurately the given description matches the tactile sensation of their espresso. If the experience matches the description, but the tactile experience score is low, high marks cannot be given. If no descriptors are provided, the competitor will receive a 0 for this score.

## 4. Taste Experience

The taste experience of the espresso is evaluated to determine the quality of the beverage. Judges will evaluate the components of the overall taste experience of the espresso across both the espresso's flavor and aftertaste to determine their quality, how well they fit together, and how well they complement each other. "Flavor" is defined as the combined perception of basic tastes (including sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami) and aromatic qualities. "Aftertaste" is defined as the combined sensation of basic tastes and aromatic qualities that remain after coffee has left the mouth (either by swallowing or spitting). Both the taste components of the extraction and the coffee itself are evaluated. If one or more of the taste components detracts from the flavor experience of the espresso (e.g., sour, acrid) the aftertaste of the espresso (e.g., "bitter"), lower marks are given. If the taste component contributes positively to the overall taste experience, higher marks are given. If the espresso is unbalanced (lacking in a certain taste component in a way that detracts from the overall positive experience or if a taste component is overpowering the beverage), the experience score is reduced.

**Note: Accuracy of taste description is not taken into consideration for this score.**

## 5. Tactile Experience

The quality of the tactile experience, or mouthfeel, is evaluated. Judges will evaluate the tactile sensation of coffee in the mouth, based on the thickness and texture of the espresso served. The espresso should have a tactile experience that correlates to the preparation, method of extraction, and coffee used in the espresso. "Thickness" relates to the perceived weight or viscosity of the espresso, from thin to thick. Texture is defined as the perceived sensation of grittiness to smoothness (e.g., "watery," "tea-like," "velvety"). The quality of thickness and texture is based upon the tactile feeling of the espresso in the mouth. Both a light and heavy weight can receive high scores relative to the texture quality in the mouth. If the weight and/or texture detracts from the espresso experience (e.g., "watery," "rough," or "dusty"), lower marks are given. If the perception of weight and texture contribute positively to the experience of the espresso, higher marks are given. The tactile experience that is present after the coffee has left the mouth will be taken into consideration in the Tactile Experience (e.g., astringent, or silky).

## Functional and Correct Espresso Vessel Used

Espresso must be served in the vessel it is intended to be visually evaluated and drunk from. It must be a 60-90ml vessel from which judges must be able to drink as required without any functional detriment to their ability to score accurately; this includes but is not exclusive to: vessel being too hot, unable to hold and drink from vessel safely, judges unable to execute espresso evaluation protocol. Otherwise a “no” will be given for “functional and correct espresso cup used.”

## MILK BEVERAGE EVALUATION – PART II

Milk beverages will be evaluated using the following protocol by all sensory judges. It is important that sensory judges follow this protocol consistently. Sensory judges will complete all steps of the evaluation before recording scores. Sensory judges will first evaluate the appearance of the milk beverage. Next, they will take an initial sip from anywhere on the rim of the cup. After the initial sip, the sensory judges will revisit the milk beverage for at least one additional sip from an undisturbed location on the rim of the cup. Competitors may override the evaluation protocol by giving the judges specific alternative instructions on how they want the milk beverage evaluated. As long as the instructions are reasonable, the judges should follow all instructions given by the competitor.

### 1 Visual

Judges will evaluate the appearance of the milk beverage to determine its visual score. On the surface, the milk beverage should have a color combination of milk and coffee, with good color contrast definition, symmetrical design and a smooth and possibly glossy/glass-like sheen. (Note: It is not acceptable for milk beverages to be topped with any additional spices and/or powders. Doing so will result in a zero score in the “taste experience” category).

### 2 Accuracy of Taste Descriptors

Judges will listen to the taste (flavor and aftertaste) descriptions and explanations given by the competitor and compare those with the beverage served. This score is based on how accurately these descriptors match the taste experience of the milk beverage. Taste descriptors must be given or a score of 0 will be received in this category.

### 3 Taste Experience

The milk beverage is a beverage consisting of 1 espresso and steamed milk served at a temperature that is immediately consumable. The texture and temperature of the beverage, and the taste of the coffee and milk will be included in the taste experience evaluation. The milk beverage should have a harmonious balance of the sweetness of the milk and its espresso base. The taste profile (flavor and aftertaste) of the beverage served should support specialty coffee, with a balance created by the addition of milk.

#### Functional Vessel Used

Milk beverages must be served in a vessel from which judges must be able to drink as required without any functional detriment to their ability to score accurately; this includes but is not exclusive to vessel being too hot, unable to hold and drink from vessel safely. Otherwise, a “no” will be given for “functional vessel used.”

#### SIGNATURE BEVERAGE EVALUATION – PART III

Signature beverage evaluations vary due to the variety of options presented by the competitor. Sensory judges will complete all steps of the evaluation before recording scores.

#### Well Explained, Introduced, and Prepared

The competitor must explain their signature beverage to the judges. To achieve a high score, the explanation should include factual points such as the ingredients, preparation method, and the flavors and/or aromas the judges will experience. The description should include the coffee used and the connection between the coffee and the other ingredients. When scoring this component, the judges will also take into consideration the consistency between the signature beverages’ final presentation once served (similar volumes and general presentation). A high score in this category cannot be awarded if the competitor does not serve all or most of the prepared signature beverage. Acceptable waste is no more than 20ml in total.

Sensory judges will listen to the explanation of ingredients, preparation method, and use of coffee given by the competitor and take notes. The competitor must explain to the sensory judges how to drink the beverage (smell, stir, sip, etc.).

The sensory judges will listen and follow drinking instructions to the best of their ability. If no information or instructions are given, judges will individually choose how to evaluate the signature beverage. In every case, judges should take a minimum of 2 sips of the signature beverage. Judges will evaluate the signature beverage based on competitors' provided explanations or other observations during the 15-minute presentation only. Any explanation given by the competitor after the completion of the presentation time will not be considered by the judges.

## Taste Experience

Judges will evaluate the signature beverage on how well the taste components of the espresso and other ingredients fit together and complement each other in the total experience of the signature beverage. Signature beverages that present a flavor profile that mimics or matches the espresso's flavor may not receive high scores. Signature beverages that create new flavor experiences may receive higher scores. If one or more of the taste components detracts from the experience of the beverage (e.g., "sour," "acid"), lower marks are given. If the taste component contributes positively to the beverage experience, higher marks are given.

If the beverage is unbalanced (i.e., lacking in a certain component that detracts from the overall positive experience or if a component is overpowering the beverage), the taste experience score is reduced. Note: Accuracy of description is not taken into consideration in this score.

## Accuracy of Taste Descriptors

Judges will listen to the taste descriptions and explanations given by the competitor and compare those with the beverage served. This score is based on how accurately these descriptors match the taste (flavor and aftertaste) of the signature beverage. Taste descriptors must be given or a score of 0 will be received in this category.

## BARISTA EVALUATION – PART IV

### Presentation: Professionalism

Professionalism is evaluated by the observed qualities relevant to the barista profession including technique, preparation and the wider understanding of coffee beyond the preparation of the twelve drinks served. Wider coffee knowledge includes the process of coffee cultivation, roasting and preparation from seed to cup as well as an implicit understanding of the correct use of the

equipment, good customer service skills (i.e. politeness, accuracy, attentiveness, eye contact, etc.) and the ability to manage workflow and time. Judges will look for a strong correlation between what is explained and what is delivered.

The competitor must demonstrate that he or she is a coffee professional who has command over their presentation and coffee.

### **Attention to Detail/All Accessories Available**

All accessories should be readily available, and the working area should be well and purposefully organized. Everything should have its own place and purpose. Judges should look for the competitor to have back-up cups and accessories in case of mistakes or spills. Refilling of judges' water glasses also demonstrates attention to detail. The espresso and the milk beverage must be served with a spoon, napkin, and unflavored water. The competitor will receive a reduced score if the cups used are not functional or not all appropriate items are served. If the competitor instructs the judges to drink the espresso and/or the milk beverage without the use of a spoon, they must be served with a napkin and unflavored water.

### **Appropriate Apparel**

At a minimum, the competitor must look clean, be cleanly dressed and wear a clean apron. If okay, the judge will mark "yes." The lack of an apron or presence of inappropriate apparel (such as sandals or excessively torn or stained clothing) will result in a "no" in "appropriate apparel."

### **Coffee Knowledge & proper use of equipment and space**

This category includes evaluating the observed qualities relevant to the barista profession, such as technique, preparation, and demonstrating the wider understanding of coffee beyond the preparation of the 12 drinks served. Wider coffee knowledge includes the process of coffee cultivation, roasting and preparation from seed to cup as well as an implicit understanding of the correct use of the equipment. Judges will look for a strong correlation between what is explained and what is delivered. The competitor must demonstrate that they are a coffee professional who has command over their presentation and coffee.

## JUDGES' TOTAL IMPRESSION – PART V

The judges' total impression score captures two primary areas:

A. The “total impression” score is the overall composite impression of the taste scores (i.e. did the combination of the three courses of drinks create an experience that was stronger in delivery than if just one course had been served on its own?).

B. The judges must consider and assign points towards the passion and inspiration that the barista has displayed during their routine. They must consider (allowing for cultural and personality differences) points such as natural, clear and concise communication, display of enthusiasm and dedication toward specialty coffee, and an ability to act as a role model for the barista profession/ industry (i.e. If in a cafe/ restaurant environment, would this barista have inspired me about specialty coffee?) If the judges feel that this has been achieved, they should award high scores.

## SCOREKEEPING

### Official Scorekeeping

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

### Competitor's Total Score

In Round One, the competitor's total score will be tallied by adding the sum of the technical scoresheet and all 4 sensory scoresheets, then deducting any time penalty. Please note the head judge's scoresheet does not count towards the competitor's total score in Round One. In the Final Rounds, the competitor's total score will be tallied by adding the sum of the 4 sensory scoresheets, the Station Management and Clean Working Area at End scores from the Head Judge scores sheet, then deducting any time penalty.

### Tie Scores

If there is a tie between 2 or more competitors, the official scorekeepers will total all the competitors involved sensory espresso scores (Part I from all 4 sensory scoresheets). The competitor with the highest sensory espresso score will win the tie and place above any other competitor with the same total competition score.

If the tied competitors have the same sensory espresso score, then the higher placement will be awarded to the competitor with the higher total sensory milk beverage score (Part II from all four sensory scoresheets).

If the tied competitors have the same sensory espresso and milk beverage scores, then the higher placement will be awarded to the competitor with the higher “Total impression” score (Part V from all four sensory scoresheets).

## DEBRIEFING

Following the competition, competitors will have an opportunity to review their scoresheets with the judges. The judges will discuss the details during the competition meeting.

### AWARDS



The participant with the highest score will be awarded first place followed by the second and third place winners. All three winners will be awarded gifts.

### CONTACT US

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# Application Form

## 1. COMPANY DETAILS

Name of establishment:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Person in charge:	Position:
Mobile number:	Email:

## 2. COMPETITION PARTICIPATION INFORMATION

By signing the present application i the undersigned do hereby agree to participate in the Kuwait Barista Competition 2026, observe the rules and regulations for the exposition and abide by the decisions of the jury

**Last minute cancellation as of January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 will not be refunded.**

**Participation fees: KD/60/- each participant.**

Participant Full Name	Occupation	Mobile	Instagram Account	E-mail	PRICE In KD

- Please send us a picture of all chefs participating with their names on the back of the picture
- Diplomas will be given only to person named on application submitted before the show
- Name on diplomas will be printed exactly as submitted on application, please type clearly the names in capital letters and verify spelling
- Please send us the CID of all the participants
- No application will be considered valid unless accompanied by the appropriate payment.
- All deadlines must be respected in order to issue the participants badges and invitation cards.

## 3. PAYMENT METHOD

- Bank Transfer to:  
**Leaders Group for Consulting & Development Company.**  
**Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Head Office, State of Kuwait.**  
**Account No: 011010926128**  
**IBAN: KW61KFHO00000000000011010926128**  
**SWIFT Code: KFHOKWKW**

Signature & Company stamp

(A person duly authorized must sign this application)





## Recipe Form

Participant's Code:

### INGREDIENTS

### RECIPE

Signature:

Date:



AN EVENT BY



Horeca-Kuwait



horecakuwait



Horeca Kuwait



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