

The best beers of the year: 285 beers have made it into the Finest Beer Selection 2026

Kundmüller Brewery and Stiegl Brewery have retained their titles as Breweries of the Year. Aventinus Eisbock (Schneider Weisse) has once again been named National Beer of the Year. The best international beer comes from Japan, from the Sakaikashi Brewery.

Neustadt/Weinstraße, 29 June 2026

Consistently high-quality beer across a wide range of styles. To have this recognised for a brewery by an independent, international panel of tasters is arguably one of the industry's most prestigious accolades. The Kundmüller Brewery from Viereth-Trunstadt in Franconia and the Stiegl Brewery from Salzburg were accordingly proud when, on the evening of 29 June 2026 in Neustadt an der Weinstraße, they were honoured as Breweries of the Year at the Finest Beer Selection 2026. Both breweries achieved the feat of defending their titles from the previous year and securing a place in the Finest Beer Selection 2026 with 15 beers each.

There was also a defending champion among the 'Beers of the Year 2026' – the highest-rated beers in the entire competition. The Aventinus Eisbock from Schneider Weisse in Kelheim achieved a world-class score and, with 98 points (on a 100-point scale), was once again crowned 'National Beer of the Year' following its 2025 victory. The Sakaikashi Brewery in Kaimachi, Japan, can also celebrate receiving the same top score. The 98 points awarded to its Barrel Aged United Stout earned it the title of 'International Beer of the Year'. Both beers were honoured with the 'Weyermann® Award' for the first time. Alongside Weyermann®, the companies Hopsteiner, Siemens, Krones, Ullrich Anlagenbau, Rastal and Winterhalter also played a key role in the success of the tasting format.

843 beers from 122 breweries around the world were entered this year. Ultimately, 285 beers were awarded a Finest Beer Score of 90 points or more by the international panel of experts during the three-day tasting session held at Doemens at the end of May, thereby securing their place in the Finest Beer Selection 2026.

Among the award-winning beers are also many beer-based mixed drinks, which were tasted at the Finest Beer Selection for the first time this year and made a successful debut, accounting for just under five per cent of the total entries. The highest score for a beer-based mixed drink – 94 points – was achieved by ‘Schützengarten Ginger Beer Alkoholfrei’ from the Schützengarten Brewery in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Noteworthy this year was the further increase in the number of non-alcoholic beers in the tasting. Just over ten per cent of the beers entered were in this category, reflecting the general trend in the national and international brewing industry. The top entry was the Störtebeker Wild Coast Ale Non-Alcoholic from the Störtebeker Braumanufaktur in Stralsund, which scored 96 points.

An overview of the special award winners:

National Brewery of the Year

Kundmüller Brewery, Viereth-Trunstadt

Just as they did last year, the master brewers led by managing directors Oswald and Roland Kundmüller have made their mark in the Finest Beer Selection 2026 with 15 beers. The team is particularly proud that these once again include a wide variety of special beer styles. The award-winning beers range from Kellerbier and Kräusen to light wheat beer and bock, right through to non-alcoholic Rauchbier. The Weiherer Doppelbock, rum-flavoured and matured in wooden barrels, achieved the highest Finest Beer Score among the Kundmüller beers with 96 points. www.brauerei-kundmueller.de

**International Brewery of the Year
Stiegl Brewery, Salzburg (Austria)**

The Stiegl Brewery in Salzburg boasts an even more diverse mix of beer styles, with 15 of its beers also making it into the Finest Beer Selection 2026. The team led by Stiegl's head brewmaster, Christian Pöpperl, more than impressed with an impressive range stretching from classic lager to wheat beer and sour red ale, right through to the experimental spiced IPA. Notably, the award-winning beers also include three beer-based mixed drinks, one of which is non-alcoholic. Meanwhile, the wood-cask-matured Wildshut Bio Sonnenkönig Barrique (vintage 2025) achieved the highest Finest Beer Score among the Stiegl beers, with 97 points. www.stiegl.at

**National Beer of the Year – Weyermann® Award
Aventinus Eisbock, Schneider Weisse (Kelheim)**

With an outstanding 98 out of a possible 100 points – and thus the highest Finest Beer Score in the entire competition – Schneider Weisse's Aventinus Eisbock has once again claimed the top spot, following on from its 2025 victory. The title 'National Beer of the Year', which from this year bears the addition 'Weyermann® Award', thus returns to Kelheim. "The Schneider Aventinus Eisbock glows a chestnut brown with a reddish sheen. The aroma is characterised by malt, raisins, figs and dried fruit, accompanied by vanilla, caramel and a hint of banana in the full-bodied finish," says Jens Luckart, Director of the Doemens Savour Academy, describing his sensory impressions. schneider-weisse.de

**International Beer of the Year – Weyermann® Award
Barrel Aged United Stout, Sakaikashi Brewery (Kaimachi, Japan)**

Founded in 2018, this Japanese microbrewery has already caused quite a stir with its speciality beers. One of its limited-edition specialities, the Barrel Aged United Stout, thoroughly impressed the jury at the Finest Beer Selection 2026 with a score of 98 points, thereby winning the Weyermann® Award for 'International Beer of the Year'. This full-bodied stout, with deep notes of coffee, cocoa and dark chocolate, was matured for seven months in original bourbon oak barrels, giving it a warming alcoholic note and distinctive vanilla and woody aromas. sakaikashibrewery.com

An overview of all the award-winning beers in the Finest Beer Selection 2026 can be found at www.finest-beer-selection.com.

Number of characters (including spaces): 5.901



The Winners of the Finest Beer Selection 2026 (Photo: Finest Beer Selection)



National Beer of the Year (Weyermann® Award): Aventinus Eisbock by Schneider Weisse (Photo: Finest Beer Selection)



International Beer of the Year (Weyermann® Award): Barrel Aged United Stout from Japan's Sakaikashi Brewery (Photo: Finest Beer Selection)



With 15 beers in the Finest Beer Selection: Kundmüller Brewery is named National Brewery of the Year (Photo: Finest Beer Selection)



International Brewery of the Year: The Austrian Stiegl Brewery in Salzburg has 15 beers entering the Finest Beer Selection 2026 (Photo: Finest Beer Selection)

ABOUT FINEST BEER SELECTION

With the Finest Beer Selection, the cooperation partners Doemens and Meininger Verlag have already impressed the industry at the premiere in 2023 and have been able to win over well-known partners such as Weyermann®, Hopsteiner, Krones, Siemens, Rastal, Ullrich Anlagenbau and Winterhalter. In contrast to conventional beer competitions, the new seal of quality is not a competition in which beers are compared with other beers and ranked. Instead, the tasting format is a sensory test of excellence and serves as a transparent guide to quality for all market participants - from breweries, retailers and the catering trade to consumers.

This is ensured by an easy-to-understand, transparent evaluation based on a 100-point system. In addition to this Finest Beer Score, each brewery also receives an aromatic description of the beer, the Finest Beer Profile, in the form of a Spiderweb diagram.

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