

ICGA Programme in Culinary Judging and Sensory Evaluation

Eight months and four levels with a detailed guide to Level One

Official article information

Article author ICGA — International Culinary & Gastronomy Arbitration	Article number 8291	 Scan to verify the article
Article code —	Protection number —	
Reference —		

ICGA Programme in Culinary Judging and Sensory Evaluation

A guide to the eight-month professional programme, its four stages, learning objectives and assessment, with a detailed introduction to Level One.

Programme purpose

A judge needs more than the ability to taste food. They must examine a dish, distinguish its characteristics, apply stated criteria and explain the score awarded. This programme develops sensory and analytical knowledge alongside ethical professional decision-making.

The ICGA pathway trains participants to move from impressions to justified assessment: what did they observe, what evidence supports it, which criterion applies and how does

the judgment relate to the dish and competition rules?

Who it is for

The programme is intended for chefs and hospitality professionals, competition supervisors and people developing tasting and assessment skills. Professional experience helps interpret technique and execution; sensory training adds a systematic way of examining products and recording observations.

Applicants' backgrounds are reviewed to identify preparatory needs. Participation does not automatically appoint someone as a competition judge. Actual assignments depend on the organiser's procedures and the requirements of the role.

Duration and structure

The programme runs for eight months across four successive levels, each lasting two months, within a plan comprising 96 training sessions. Detailed dates, timetables and intake requirements will be announced before enrolment.

These levels are stages within ICGA's programme. Their numbers do not represent national qualification framework levels or automatic equivalence with other providers' qualifications. Progress depends on meeting the stated learning and assessment requirements.

Level One Foundations of professional judging

This foundation establishes a shared assessment language. Participants examine judges' responsibilities and the limits of personal opinion, and practise separating personal preference from execution against defined criteria.

Topics include taste, aroma, texture, balance, visual presentation, hygienic handling during exercises and expectations that may affect judgment. Participants learn specific descriptions rather than general verdicts such as "good" or "bad".

Exercise: compare two similar samples, record differences independently and write observations linked to identifiable characteristics. **Output:** an initial assessment form connecting observation, criterion, score and explanation.

Level One topics in detail

Ethics and responsibilities: impartiality, respect for competitors, confidentiality where required, disclosure of conflicts of interest and adherence to the assessment rules.

Sensory vocabulary: distinguish taste, aroma and texture and describe intensity, balance and persistence using terms appropriate to the sample.

Visual reading: examine arrangement, proportion and clarity of presentation without reaching a final flavour judgment from appearance alone.

Expectations: revisit predictions after tasting and recognise possible influences including a dish's name, a chef's reputation and sample order.

Writing observations: describe the finding, identify the relevant criterion and explain its effect on assessment. "Acidity dominated the main ingredient and weakened the sample's balance" is a more informative training observation than "I did not like it".

Level Two Sensory analysis and calibration

This stage develops descriptive precision and assessment consistency through comparison, repetition and blind tasting where appropriate. Exercises address sample presentation conditions and the sources of differences between participants.

Participants develop a descriptive vocabulary, use intensity scales and compare results. Calibration builds a shared interpretation of criteria and reference points while each judge remains responsible for their observations.

Exercise: assess coded samples, repeat selected samples and examine consistency.

Output: a sensory record and report explaining differences and any revisions to judgments.

Level Three Applying judging criteria and managing sessions

Participants apply defined criteria to different cases and examine the competition's purpose and rules before scoring. Tasks include applying stated weights, documenting exceptions, addressing missing information and writing useful feedback.

Training covers sample sequence, panel communication, differences in scores and protecting individual assessment from dominant voices. It also distinguishes a technical observation from an organisational action taken under competition rules.

Exercise: simulate a panel using specified rules and a scoring sheet, with individual assessments before discussion. **Output:** an assessment portfolio containing scores, evidence and a short session report.

Level Four Integrated application and final project

Participants prepare an assessment plan for a defined case, specify criteria and weights, explain sample presentation, perform the assessment and discuss the results and decisions.

The project includes scope, scoring forms, observation evidence, interpretation and limitations. Discussion examines alternatives and how participants addressed ambiguous cases or differences within the panel.

Output: a professional project and final assessment demonstrating application and reasoning rather than terminology alone.

Training delivery

The programme combines teaching, dish and case analysis, tasting exercises, assessment-form review and panel simulations. Knowledge and analytical sessions can be delivered online, with sample requirements and practical evidence specified for each exercise.

Images and video support discussion of presentation and technique, but taste, aroma and texture require tasting the actual sample. Remote tasks are therefore designed around what can be demonstrated, with preparation and documentation instructions provided in advance.

Assessment and completion

Assessment considers conceptual understanding, sensory description, use of criteria, consistency, score justification and ethical conduct. Grading, attendance, assignments and reassessment requirements will be announced before enrolment.

Work is reviewed against clear criteria with developmental feedback. Attendance alone does not establish practical competence; achievement documentation reflects completed requirements and passed assessments.

Target competencies

The programme aims to develop precise descriptions, separation of preference from criteria, scoring-form use, explanation of grades, professional discussion, constructive feedback and systematic participation in a panel within the assigned role.

Judging experience develops through repeated practice, varied samples and review of decisions. The programme establishes a foundation for continued development after study.

Organiser and achievement documentation

The programme is offered within the ICGA pathway — International Culinary & Gastronomy Arbitration. The achievement document's name, issuer, scope and requirements will be stated in official enrolment information.

UK IPO trademark registration number: **UK00004350642**. This identifies trademark registration and is not presented as educational accreditation of the programme.

Enquiries and enrolment

For intake dates, schedules, participation requirements and enrolment information, contact WhatsApp directly: [009618180814](https://wa.me/009618180814).

Begin with Level One and build judgments on knowledge, observation and criteria.