PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, October 2026 — For immediate release

BRUSSELS BEER CHALLENGE 2026 · 15th EDITION

A Mirror of Brewing Trends

Lager on the rise, tripel in retreat, alcohol-free booming and new countries vying for the podium: the 1,745 beers entered paint a new portrait of the global beer scene.

1,745	420	49	+33%	+72%
beers	breweries	countries (record)	lagers	alcohol-free

From 27 to 30 October, Roeselare hosts the fifteenth edition of the Brussels Beer Challenge. With 1,745 beers (+2.6%) from 420 breweries (+9%) in 49 countries, the competition is growing again after several years of stagnation. And behind the figures, a picture emerges of beer turning the volume down... to reach a wider audience.

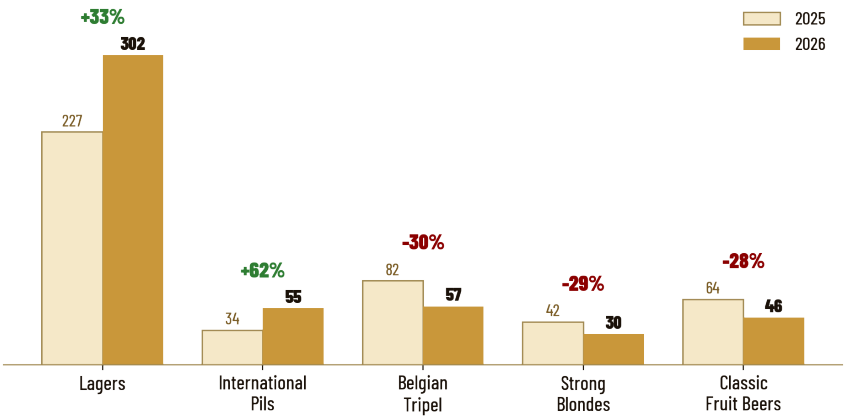
THE RETURN OF THE LAGER

Almost forgotten behind the wave of IPAs and pastry stouts, lager, still what most of the world drinks, is making a strong comeback. Entries rose from 227 to 302, up 33%. International pils jumped from 34 to 55 beers, while German- and Italian-style pils, as well as light lagers, also gained ground.

Less spectacular than a beer brewed with three fruits and aged in two kinds of wood? Perhaps. But a good pils remains a demanding discipline: without bold additions, there is nowhere to hide. Brewers are once again focusing on balance, drinkability and accessibility.

TRIPEL SHARES THE STAGE

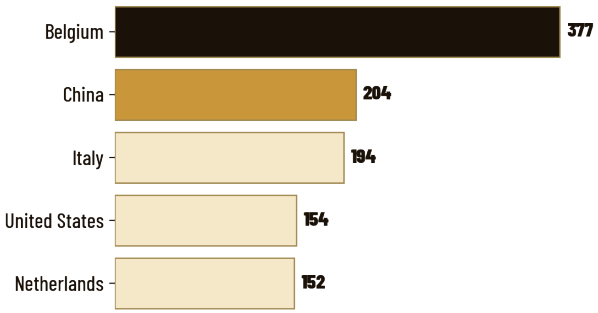
Belgian tripel fell from 82 to 57 entries (–30%), and strong blondes from 42 to 30. Tripel nonetheless remains, tied with New England IPA, the most represented style in the competition. Average ABV slipped from 6.2% to 5.8%, and the number of beers at 8% or above fell from 363 to 317: the days when stronger automatically meant better are fading.



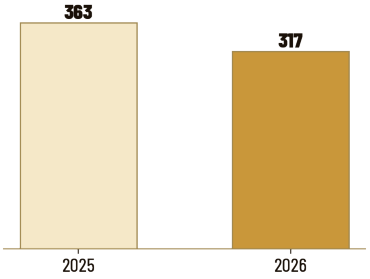
Number of entries by style · 2025 vs 2026

CHINA TAKES SECOND PLACE

With 49 participating countries, the competition beats its 2018 record of 45. Belgium remains in the lead with 377 beers, but China now ranks second with 204 entries (+24), ahead of Italy (194), the United States (154) and the Netherlands (152). Anyone who still associates China only with mass-produced industrial lager has missed a few recent chapters. Brazil added 35 entries, Spain tripled its participation, and Mexico and Colombia are following suit. The Americas now account for 20% of entries (16.5% in 2025), Europe for 65%.



Top 5 countries · entries in 2026



Beers at 8% ABV and above

FRUIT BEERS GET A NEW LOOK

93 fruit beers are competing, compared with 91 last year. But this apparent stability hides a real shift. Classic fruit beers fell from 64 to 46 and traditional fruit lambics from 12 to 7, while alcohol-free and low-alcohol versions are emerging. A notable newcomer is Catharina Sour, a tart style born in Brazil. It has its own category for the first time and immediately drew seven entries. Citrus fruits now lead ahead of cherries and raspberries: kriek is gaining international company.

NABLAB: ALCOHOL-FREE TAKES ITS PLACE

No- and low-alcohol beers total 151 entries, up 72%. For the first time, they have their own family of categories, NABLAB (*No- and Low-Alcohol Beers*), ranging from alcohol-free IPAs to fruit beers. Breweries are now taking this segment very seriously, and the judges will assess it on its merits.

> *"Entries are a valuable barometer: they show what brewers around the world want to champion. This year, they are talking about balance, drinkability and openness. Beer is no longer trying to hit harder; it is trying to speak to more people."*
>
> Thomas Costenoble, Competition Director

RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT

Monday 16 November 2026 at 10 a.m., in the presence of the brewers, at the Horeca Expo trade show in Ghent.

ABOUT THE BRUSSELS BEER CHALLENGE

Founded in 2012 by the Belgian company BeComev, the Brussels Beer Challenge is one of the most respected beer competitions in the world. An international panel of sommeliers, brewers, specialist

journalists and professional judges blind-tastes beers from breweries of all sizes, in categories covering the full range of styles. *Entries reflect the choices of participating breweries, not the global beer market as a whole.*

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