Official Rules and Conditions of Participation

2027 EDITION · GSTAAD YACHT CLUB AT LE GRAND BELLEVUE, GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND

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Overview

The Black Pearl Awards are the only independent, chef-led competition dedicated solely to caviar. Every entry is tasted blind by a jury of Michelin-starred and Gault&Millau-recognised chefs and judged on taste alone. The competition takes place on 16 March 2027; the Gala Dinner on 15 March 2027.

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Key dates and fees

Pre-registration deadline	31 December 2026
Registration closes	15 February 2027
Sample shipping window	1 February – 1 March 2027
Gala Dinner	15 March 2027
Competition (blind tasting)	16 March 2027
Entry fee – pre-registration	CHF 500 for the first tin, CHF 200 for each additional tin
Standard entry fee	CHF 700 after 31 December 2026

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Eligibility

The Black Pearl Awards are open to every caviar sold under its own name: producers, caviar brands, private labels, importers and distributors. Brands and private labels compete on equal terms with producers. The award is issued to the brand name under which the caviar is sold.

- **CITES compliance:** every entry must carry a valid CITES code and be legally traded; the source farm must be CITES-registered.
- **Declared origin:** species, country of origin and source farm are declared at registration and kept confidential from the jury.
- **Sample integrity:** samples are shipped in compliance with cold-chain requirements and arrive sealed.
- **Packaging:** sealed tins, jars or containers of 100 g minimum.

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Scoring

Each juror scores every caviar independently on a 100-point grid dedicated exclusively to culinary quality. The final score is the weighted average of all jurors' scores.

Appearance	Colour correctness and natural tone; lustre and brightness; uniformity of egg size and shape
Grain and texture	Firmness and elasticity; clean pop; membrane integrity; creaminess and mouthfeel; absence of gu
Aroma	Fresh, clean marine aroma; complexity and elegance
Flavour	Balance of salt and fat; purity and typicity of species; complexity and depth; absence of off-flavours
Aftertaste	Length and persistence; clean, pleasant evolution
Processing quality and freshness	Optimal ripeness at harvest; precision of salting and handling; overall freshness

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Medals and awards

- A caviar must obtain a final score of at least **60/100** to be eligible for any award.
- In each category, **Gold** is awarded to the highest score, **Silver** to the second highest and **Bronze** to the third highest.
- **The Black Pearl Award – Master of Excellence** is awarded to the caviar with the best overall score of the edition.

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Competition categories

Each species is judged separately in two typologies: Fresh (unpasteurised) and Pasteurised. Categories with too few entries may be merged with the closest category; participants are informed before the tasting.

Beluga Excellence Award	Huso huso
Ossetra Distinction Award	Acipenser gueldenstaedtii, A. persicus
Siberian Elegance Award	Acipenser baerii
Sevruga Refinement Award	Acipenser stellatus
Kaluga Prestige Award	Huso dahuricus
Amur Character Award	Acipenser schrenckii
White Sturgeon Finesse Award	Acipenser transmontanus
Sterlet Rarity Award	Acipenser ruthenus

Hybrid Innovation Award is a category of its own, open to every sturgeon cross whatever the parent species (e.g. Kaluga × Amur, Beluga × Siberian). It is judged in Fresh and Pasteurised, with Gold, Silver and Bronze.

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Special distinctions

- **Green Pearl Award:** sustainability and responsible sturgeon farming.
- **Innovation & Design Award:** creativity, packaging and brand personality.
- **Rising Star Award:** producers and brands launched within the 7 years before the Awards.

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Tasting protocol

- Tins are opened in a separate room by the coordination team, out of sight of the jury.
- Each sample receives a code and is served anonymously, on porcelain, at the right temperature.
- No labels, brands, producers or origins are disclosed to the jury before scores are final.

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Registration, shipping and exclusions

- Entries are registered through the official registration form at theblackpearlawards.com. There is no limit to the number of entries.
- Samples are delivered to the Gstaad Yacht Club at Le Grand Bellevue, Gstaad, Switzerland, within the shipping window. Shipping is arranged by the participant, by own courier or through TBPA Logistic, Place du Grand-Mézel 2, 1204 Geneva, Switzerland.
- Excluded: products without valid CITES documentation; samples that fail cold-chain standards or arrive damaged or unsealed; entries submitted after the registration or shipping deadlines.

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Independence and governance

- Samples are anonymised by a coordination team that takes no part in the scoring.
- Organisers, partners and sponsors never take part in the judging.
- Jurors declare any link with a participant and abstain from scoring that entry.
- Scores are final. Every awarded caviar is published with its score.

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Use of awards

- Awarded caviars receive an official award seal and a Certificate of Excellence stating the award category and blind-tasting score.
- Holographic authentication stickers may be ordered for direct application on packaging.
- Awarded participants may use the official medal visuals on packaging, retail, horeca, press and social media, for the awarded product and edition only.

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Acceptance

By submitting a registration, participants confirm that they have read and fully accept these Official Rules and Conditions of Participation.