

# **A GUIDEBOOK TO THE MOST TRANSPARENT AND FAIREST COFFEE BREWING THROWDOWN**

**by Hendri Kurniawan**

*dedicated to all the losers out there who became my biggest inspiration*

## **A LITTLE BIT OF BACKGROUND**

My name is Hendri Kurniawan, and I wrote this guidebook to help organisers around the world to run Tarung Tiga, a coffee brewing throwdown I created.

I've been organising and judging coffee competitions for more than 15 years, from locals to regionals to nationals and to the world. From throwdowns to formal ones, from barista, manual brew, latte art, coffee roasting to coffee cocktail competition, I can say I pretty much have done and seen it all.

I have met a lot of people during the competitions, and I found out the worst ones are those who didn't win and got sore, angry, and blame or even slander the judges, and you know who is the worst of the worst? Yes, angry coaches.

The most common one is, instead of having a self-reflection and learning from the results, the sore losers question the judge's competence on how the judges got calibrated and on how the judges evaluate; they will tell the judges that they use high-quality and expensive coffee and question why the score is not as they expected.

So basically, there are trust issues between competitors and the judges, and these are what I found:

### **1. New judges**

I have encountered a lot of losers who tell me they were not happy with the new judges as they lack experience, and my answer to them is always the same: everyone has their first times, and if you're not allowing new judges to gain experience, you will have no judge in the future; no one can judge forever; it's just a part of regeneration.

## 2. Non-famous judges

For throwdown organisers or some competitors, they will find it is not interesting if the competition lacks famous judges, as for them, famous means experienced and attractive; and to invite famous judges, they come with rate cards and riders, so for a small organiser of a throwdown style, it's quite hard to get competitors and sponsors if there is no famous judge.

## 3. Inside deals

Long ago there was a time when I was approached, tangled, and asked by the loser's coach how much I got paid to help someone win in a competition; and recently there was a time I was even made famous on social media for the same issue in one of the countries I was involved in.

All those came from the sore losers, and I know very well, if they win, it doesn't matter how low the scores were, mark my word, they will come and thank the judges, fellow competitors, sponsors, and audiences.

In 2016 I started to hold a license to organise and host a national coffee brewing throwdown as part of the world competition they have, but then after a couple of times more, I decided to stop holding the national license.

I found out their competition format is very fun and attractive, but it's lacking fairness.

So in one of the worlds they had, my national champion won the first round; he won over 2 other competitors, and he advanced to the second and then to the semifinal round.

In the semifinal, because of their weird competition frame, there were only 2 competitors in the group, so to make it a panel of 3, they did the wild card draw for all the losers in the previous round; they got one.

That wild card then won that semifinal round over my national champion and another national champion in the group, and then in the end the wild card won the final and was crowned as the world champion.

I believe it is fun but not a fair system; it's a throwdown, and it should be a knockout with no second chance. This is where luck became the key.

So I was thinking about how I could have a coffee competition for my event that is fair, transparent, and free of conflict so that the loser will have no one to blame but themselves.

Then sometimes in 2020, it came to my mind: why don't they judge their coffee themselves? Then just like that, Tarung Tiga was created but still kept in my mind until 2022.

## **TARUNG TIGA (BATTLE OF THREE BREWERS)**

Tarung Tiga, or we can call it Battle of Three Brewers in English, is the most transparent, fairest, and conflict-free coffee brewing throwdown ever created, where the competitors will showcase their coffee brewing techniques and skills as well as judge their own brew against the other two competitors in a panel of three.

### **YOU BREW, YOU JUDGE**

The basic concept is very simple yet challenging and fun: you brew, then you judge yourself to prove you are better than the others.

#### **1. COMPETITORS**

Those who can become participants to take part in Tarung Tiga are modern humans (*Homo sapiens*), regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, and groups without age restrictions with their respective responsibilities for the risk that may occur; for underage participants, it is recommended to be accompanied and supervised by adults in addition to being funded to register.

For the terms and conditions for becoming participants in regional and national competitions in countries other than Indonesia, we leave it to the local organiser whether only citizens, permanent residents, or temporary residents, and not illegal residents, are allowed to compete in accordance with local laws.

#### **2. JUDGES**

The competitor will also become the judge, and they cannot say no.

The judging formats are as follows:

1. The competitors will judge their own brew during their competition session.
  2. Or, a group of competitors will judge the brew of a different group, i.e., Group 1 will be judged by Group 2 and so on; it could be in order or randomly.
- #### **3. COMPETITION FORMAT**

The ideal framework of the competition is a multiple of three; hence, the name is Tarung Tiga.

There will be a panel of three competitors in a group, where they prepare, brew, and judge the coffee they have brewed during competition time; if one competitor is absent, the organiser, with their mighty unquestionable power, will appoint someone else to be the third judge regardless of their willingness and availability; they could be one from the organiser, from the competitors, or even a non-coffee person from the audience as a representation of the market.

In each round, the 3 competitors will face each other, and right after finishing the brewing, they will be asked to step away from the stage without tasting the coffee.

After that, the organiser will then shuffle the position of the brewing vessel without being seen by the competitors.

Once it's done, the competitors will be asked to return to the stage, and they can start tasting and choosing the best brew.

The coffee with the most choices will be the winner, and the winner will advance to the next round to compete against 2 winners from 2 other groups, except in the final round, which of course there is no next round.

#### **4. NUMBER OF COMPETITORS**

The ideal number of competitors in Tarung Tiga is 81 competitors.

1. To make the competition work, a minimum of 27 competitors is required, where they will be divided into 9 groups. The winner of each group will move forward to the next round until the final round (FINAL THREE).
2. The next number of competitors required, should it be more than 27 competitors registering, is 81 to make the competition frameworks.
3. The next number of competitors required, should it be more than 81 competitors registering, is 243 to make the competition frameworks; therefore, it is recommended to divide into three regionals with 81 competitors each.
4. Competition can be done with only 9 competitors, but then it is only good for the competitors, not so much for the organiser and sponsors, unless it's for exhibition purposes only.
5. In the situation where the number of 81 is not reached but more than 27 people register, then the number that must be sought is 54 people so that in the first round the competition format will adapt to 2 competitors in 1 group where during the judging time there will be a third judge appointed by the mighty organiser (read RR 3) so that after the first round is over there will be 27 competitors who will compete in the next round with the actual Tarung Tiga format.
6. If the organiser has prayed and tried hard but still does not reach 54 competitors, then registration must be closed to 27 competitors only. What a shame.
7. When the number of registrants is between 27 and 54, the organiser can do a drawing to kick out some of the registrants, and all fees **MUST** be refunded to the paid registrants who are not lucky enough to join the competition.

(drawing: competition bracket 81)

(drawing: competition bracket 54)

#### **5. REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND WORLD COMPETITION**

My dream from the beginning was that one day Tarung Tiga could become a world competition where it would always be held in Indonesia to bring coffee people from around the world so they can enjoy our coffee culture as well as the natural beauty of Indonesia.

In its first year, Tarung Tiga immediately became a national competition with 81 participants. Over time, Tarung Tiga has had regional competitions and is expected to increase in the future.

### 1. Regional Competition

The number of regional competitions must be a multiple of 3, for example, 3, 9, or 27, to a maximum of 81 regionals so that later the number of 81 participants will be reached in the national competition.

If there are 3 regionals, then the top 27 participants will enter the national competition.

(diagram)

If there are 9 regionals, then the top 9 participants will enter the national competition.

(diagram)

If there are 27 regionals, then the top 3 participants will enter the national competition.

(diagram)

If there are 81 regionals, then the top 1 participant as the regional champion will enter the national competition.

(diagram)

### 2. National and/or World Competition

The ideal number of competitors for national/world is 81 participants with a minimum of 27 or, if necessary, 54 with the adaptive format applied (RR 4.5).

Tarung Tiga Indonesia could be a national competition or a world competition until the quota of 81 national competitions worldwide is fulfilled.

As the owner of the competition, I reserve the right to combine the number of participants by adding the national champions from other countries to compete in Tarung Tiga Indonesia. For example, if in the year of competition there are 9 licensed national competitions, the Tarung Tiga Indonesia will limit to only 72 Indonesian participants to make it 81.

## 6. COMPETITION LAYOUT

The Tarung Tiga Indonesia competition table has been specially and uniquely designed, besides being ergonomic, practical, creative, and inspiring.

(picture: brewing mode)

(picture: judging mode)

For competitions in places other than Tarung Tiga Indonesia, I give the right to the local organiser to determine the shape of the competition table and the layout of the competition area as long as it can create a comfortable and safe environment in accordance with the available facilities; just save your money and run the competition at its best, but please, make it beautiful still.

## **7. ORGANISER**

The organiser will be appointed by me and/or my team as the owner of Tarung Tiga according to the agreements made, and the organiser must fulfil their obligations to us as the owner of Tarung Tiga, to the sponsors, and to the participants, as well as commit to making the event a success.

We'll discuss the local organiser's rights separately on another document to keep things between us only.

## **8. COMPETITION VENUE**

The venue for Tarung Tiga Indonesia will always be held at our annual Jakarta Coffee Week event, with the location to be announced in due course.

For other competitions, I give the right to the local organiser to choose freely as long as it can create a comfortable and safe environment in accordance with the available facilities and applicable laws.

## **9. SPONSORS**

This is the most important part of any event; always remember this one: happy sponsors mean happy events.

I give the right to the local organiser to find and get the sponsor's deal, and the local organiser is obliged to fulfil their commitment to the sponsor they get. Please deliver all the promises made in such a fair and square condition.

If there is any dispute between the local organiser and the sponsors, it will be resolved through mutual consensus, and I, as the owner of Tarung Tiga, bear no responsibility or obligation to take part in the issue; however, both parties will be reviewed for future references.

For Tarung Tiga Indonesia, I reserve the right and obligation to find and get the sponsors and make closed agreements with them; and if there are national or world-level agreements, then the regional and/or national organisers are obliged to follow the agreement.

## **10. REGISTRATION FEE**

Competitors need a ticket to compete in Tarung Tiga Indonesia, and the ticket will be available to purchase through the appointed online marketplace, where the price of the ticket will be determined later.

I give the right to the local organiser to determine the ticket price and the sales method; however, I reserve the right to give suggestions to the organiser, and the good part is they will keep the money for themselves, but then again, they will use the money to fund the event, ha ha.

Regional competitors or national champions who successfully qualify to compete in Tarung Tiga Indonesia do not need to buy the ticket again; I repeat, do not need to buy again; and if the local organiser tells you otherwise, their license will be revoked.

## **11. CHAMPION**

In the FINAL THREE, the coffee that is chosen by the majority of three brewers/judges will absolutely be crowned as the champion, then the second most chosen will be the first loser, while the least chosen (or even none, duh) will be the one no one will talk about.

## **12. RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Think about a competition as a party where the host already set some ground rules for the guests, and you, as the guest, can opt to come and follow the rules and regulations, or you can opt to not join the party because you don't want to abide by the rules.

Tarung Tiga is my party; please come if you agree to follow the rules and regulations, or you can find another party somewhere else, for Tarung Tiga is not the only competition in the world, but sure as hell nothing comes close.

And please take note that this rule and regulation is a living one; it will always be growing and updated from time to time, especially when the competitors manage to find loopholes, and thank you for that.

### **12.1. GENERAL INFO**

1. All registrants **MUST** bring and show a valid ID and the ticket during re-registration at the appointed venue at the allocated time.
2. Registrants will receive a tag after the re-registration.
3. Registrants will pick their own match number randomly.
4. Re-registration cannot be represented, and all registrants **MUST** come at the specified time or will be disqualified if they do not personally attend and re-register.

5. Registrants are required and must agree to be one of the judges, whether within the group or for the other group, and must make themselves ready anytime needed with prior notice.

## 12.2. PREPARATION TIME

1. Once the GROUP enters the stage, the brewers will have 5 (five) minutes of preparation time where they can heat up the water, adjust the grind size, and wet the paper filter.
2. When the countdown time has reached 00:00:00, all brewers must cease whatever they were doing and be ready to start the competition.
3. If the brewer passes even 1 second of the allotted time, they will be disqualified with no mercy.

## 12.3 COMPETITION TIME

1. Competition time is an ABSOLUTE 8 (eight) minutes, split into 2 parts.
2. The time started when the MC said so.
3. Part 1: The first 4 minutes, all brewers can evaluate, sort, and grind the coffee, making sure the paper filter is wet if needed and not clogged, making sure the kettles work; or you can even spend time talking to each other about everything in life, and most importantly, you can cheer and joke around among you. Let's have fun; this is what makes Tarung Tiga differ from the others.
4. Part 2, the second 4 minutes, all brewers can brew the coffee. Yes, you only have 4 minutes to brew, and don't complain as every competitor gets the same amount of time.
5. Brewers can brew as much coffee as they want, but only the legitimate cup according to the rules and regulations will be accepted and judged.
6. There will be no overtime; once the countdown timer has reached 00:00:00, all brewers must cease whatever they were doing and then step aside to the allocated position; failing to do so is deemed a DQ (disqualification) without mercy, and all complaints will be respectfully ignored.
7. The organiser then will check the brewed coffees to see if they are legitimate or not by measuring the volume/weight to be at least at a minimum of 200 mL/grams.
8. Any visual cues will be eliminated, like bubbles and ground coffees. Yeah, we know what you did last season.

## 12.4. JUDGING TIME

1. After stepping out from the stage to the allocated place, all brewers/competitors will be asked to come back to the stage and get ready for evaluation.
2. MC will direct the evaluation/tasting start time.
3. For the sake of time efficiency, the evaluation/tasting time is only 2 minutes, or 120 seconds, where brewers/judges can, of course, taste all the coffee on stage. That should be enough time if you're a good taster.
4. MC will direct the evaluation/tasting end time.

5. When the evaluation/tasting has elapsed and it's time to judge, to avoid tricky movement and jumped/delayed pointing, all brewers/judges must lift their hands that hold the cupping spoon high enough, but not too much.
6. On the count of three, all competitors/judges must point simultaneously to the cup they taste as the best. Seriously, don't try to remember which one is yours; just choose the best cup on the table; don't ruin the fairness.
7. The winner of each round is the competitor's coffee that is chosen the most by the competitors/judges in the group and has the right to advance to the next round, except for the final round, which has no next round.
8. In the event of a draw where each cup is selected by each competitor/judge, the fourth judge will come into play and make the decision.

## 12.5. TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

1. Brewing devices used must be the same/identical for all brewers, be it the brand, the material, or the size, with the exception of colours, whether it is sponsored or not.
2. Filter papers will be provided by the organiser, but competitors may opt to use their own except when a sponsorship deal is occurring.
3. Grinders will be provided by the organiser, but competitors may opt to use their own except when a sponsorship deal is occurring.
4. Water kettles will be provided by the organiser, but competitors may opt to use their own except when a sponsorship deal is occurring.
5. Scales will be provided by the organiser, but competitors may opt to use their own except when a sponsorship deal is occurring.
6. Violations of these regulations are deemed disqualifying with no mercy; I reserve the right to make the sponsors happy in my own way, for without them you won't even be competing.

## 12.6. COFFEE VESSELS/CUPS/BOWLS

1. The vessels/cups/bowls used will be provided by the organiser, whether it is (finger-crossed) sponsored or not.
2. The vessels/cups/bowls used will be the same/identical in form, size, material, and colour.
3. The colour of the vessels/cups/bowl will be chosen in the best way possible to hide or cover the colour of the brewed coffee; yeah, some of you tried to read the colour before.
4. The vessels/cups/bowls will have a matching code (▲■●) at the bottom for each competitor.

## 12.7. WATER

1. Official water will be provided by the organiser and is mandatory for all competitors to use the same water provided, whether it is sponsored or not.
2. The organiser will announce the official water to be used no later than a week before the competition, whether it is sponsored or not.

3. Water temperature for brewing the coffee must be in between 92°C and 96°C. We found out some competitors in the past brewed the coffee with a big gap of temperature from the other two so they could tell which one was theirs and choose it themselves, so yeah, this is the latest temperature regulation that must be followed. We'll keep an eye on you.

## 12.8. COFFEE

1. Official sponsored coffee will be provided by the organiser and is mandatory for all competitors to use the same coffee provided. In the event we find out that you cheat and swap the coffee with your own, yes, it happened before. Not only will you be disqualified, but you will also be banned for life in the future, and we will put you on the hall of shame.
2. The sponsor will roast the coffee in a way the age of roasted coffee will be at the optimum when the competition takes place.
3. The sponsor will roast the coffee with the same profile on the same day; if multiple batches occur due to roasting machine capacity, the sponsor roaster will blend all the coffee batches before the coffee is packaged into designated sizes, 100 grams for practice and 50 grams for competition.
4. The sponsor and/or the organiser will send out the practice coffee, 100 grams each in a sealed bag, to every confirmed registrant no later than three days before the competition.
5. The sponsor and/or the organiser bear no responsibilities for the delay of shipment due to the forwarder's or courier's issue.
6. Should the registrants need more coffee for practice, the organiser will advise them to contact the sponsor and buy from them directly, as it is the benefit of becoming a sponsor for Tarung Tiga.
7. A sealed bag of 50 grams of competition coffee will be given to all competitors upon entering the stage for every round; any leftover will be kept by the organiser.
8. All coffee must be ground during the absolute 8 minutes of competition time only; failing to do so is deemed a DQ (disqualification), meaning you cannot grind the coffee before the competition starts, kapish?
9. Eligible brewed coffee volume to judge is 200 mL minimum; less than that is disqualified with no mercy.

## 13. SIDE COACHING

Side coaching is alright for Tarung Tiga as long as they don't help deliver forgotten items and/or enter the competition stage, but to be honest, it's kind of useless. But we suggest the coaches yell or cheer instead to the competitors, but no foul language is allowed on and off stage; it's deemed for getting kicked out of the venue.

## 14. DISQUALIFICATION

I am known to love disqualifying competitors for their ignorance, and many times because of stupidity, regarding the rules and regulations. As mentioned earlier, this is my party, and you must abide by the rules and regulations I set.

I want to have a safe, comfortable, and respectful competition environment where we all can just have fun. There will be winners and there will be losers; just don't be a sore one. If you lose, it's on you; don't blame others.

So RESPECT is the main focus of Tarung Tiga. Let's be respectful to each other, to the competition, to the volunteers, to the staff, and to the sponsors.

If you are found to be disrespectful, you will not just be disqualified, but I will make sure that you will be banned for life in any Tarung Tiga competitions, and your name will be immortalised in the hall of shame.

## **15. APPEAL**

In this competition an appeal is useless; they will not be listened to and for sure will be ignored; just move on and compete another day.

*Jakarta, 19 January 2025*

## GENERAL REGULATION

1. Participants will get 100 g of coffee beans for practice and 50 g of coffee beans for each the next round if you pass, and coffee will be given when the competition starts.
2. Participants are allowed to make preparations in the area provided and will given 5 (five) minutes to prepare.
3. Things that are permitted during preparation are heating the water, wetting the filter paper, looking for the right grind size.
4. Every participant MUST use the coffee and water provided by the committee.
5. After finishing brewing, participants are asked to sit on chairs that have been prepared on the side.  
stage, the committee will pour as many brewing results into cupping bowls as possible 200 ml, then participants will be called again to approach the judging table and judge immediately. If the brewing yield is less than 200 ml, then that participant

will be disqualified.

6. Participants MUST grind coffee during the match if the coffee has already been ground.

Before the match starts, the participant will be disqualified.

7. Participants are not allowed to taste coffee that has been brewed before.

judging time.

8. Coffee that has been tasted by the judges must be thrown away immediately, not the participants.

allowed to take it back.

9. Participants are required to comply with the health and hygiene protocols they wish to present.

to the jury

## JUDGING

1. Each participant who competes will be the judge in their own round of competition.

2. The coffee brew that will be assessed is 200 ml in a cupping bowl.

already has its own code for each participant

3. After the participants and judges have tasted the coffee served, the MC will count

Step back, and simultaneously, on the count of three, the judges will point to the container.

(cupping bowl), which is considered the best.

4. After judging, the MC will appoint the container with the most votes and

Announce the name of the winner of the round.

5. If there are 3 (three) judges pointing to 3 (three) different glasses, then this will be enforced.

The 4th (fourth) jury will be determined by the committee to determine the winner.

6. The jury has the right not to try the results of the participant's brew if the participant is found

who carry out actions outside hygiene and health standards. The committee will

Decide whether the round is valid or not.