

CBC Online Seminar Q&A

A Practical Approach to Refillable Kegs - Quality, Safety, and Maintenance

Q: What procedures do you recommend for washing stainless steel kegs by hand?

A: Avoiding it at all costs! These kegs are designed for CIP (clean in place) and if what you mean by “hand” is that you are removing the spear in order to clean the keg, that really isn't a good option. The circlips need to be replaced every time, which adds to the expense, and constant removal will prematurely wear the groove that holds the circlip secure in the neck. It is also more difficult to clean the spear itself when the valves are not open, with cleaning solution flowing through them

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Q: Is there a key to determine which color corresponds with each year?

A: Yes, email me at sbradt@micro-matic.com or check [here](#).

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Q: What is the recommended weight of a properly filled 1/2 and 1/6 keg?

A: This can be determined by calculating the weight of the liquid and adding it to the tare weight of the keg. If you want to be precise about it, it will weigh about $8.33 \times \text{SG}$ lbs per gallon at 4°C, SG representing the Terminal Gravity of your beer expressed as Specific Gravity. So a ½ bbl with a TG of 1.008 (~ 2P) will weigh $15.5 * 8.33 * 1.08 = 130.15$ lbs + the weight of the keg.

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Q: When tilting the keg for filling, which direction should the filling head be pointed to help determine the appropriate angle?

A: The direction of the tilt should not make a difference, only the degree of tilt.

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Q: Can head space prevent keg deformation in the case of a keg freezing?

A: To a degree, yes. It will provide some protection from partial freezing, but a full frozen keg is probably going to fail no matter what.

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Q: What does wetting the o-rings when installing spears accomplish?

A: The water acts as a lubricant, preventing friction and tearing of the rubber seals and also reducing the pressure required to compress the o-ring for installation of the double circlip.

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Q: What issues might arise from filling via the 20-30-degree tilt?

A: The only issue I am aware of is that this puts the keg as a higher risk of tipping over, resulting in injury or damage. You should make sure that the keg is supported in such a way as to keep it secure as the center of gravity changes during filling.

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Q: Every time we wash our kegs, before we put them on the semi-automatic washer, we open the spear and spray with water to remove hops and yeast from the keg. Do you recommend that or are we reducing life of the spear?

A: I always discourage pulling spears as part of a routine cleaning process as this can increase wear on the keg neck (probably more than on the spear), it increases the risk of accident, and it will require a new double circlip for every cleaning cycle. Perhaps a better solution would be to find a way to prevent so much hop matter from getting into the keg in the first place?

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Q: Where do we get the 740-053 tool?

A: Contact me. We are careful only to sell to customers, such as yourself, who own kegs and have the necessary training to work safely with these tools.

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Q: Do you offer a discount code for us small brewers?

A: No, we do not, however there are price breaks based on volume and we do not have minimum order quantities, so you can order just what you need at the time.

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Q: How do you verify the cleaning effectivity?

A: Random removal of a few spears on a regular (weekly or monthly) basis is a good well to see if your kegs are getting cleaned properly. It is also possible to check for proper sanitation by adding a small volume of sterile was to the keg (with the spear installed, using aseptic techniques), swirling it around and then plating the sample in your lab.

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Q: Is it recommended to leave sanitizer (Iodophor, etc.) in the well under the keg cap after filling with beer, or blow it out and leave the well empty?

A: No, it is not. Eventually that sanitizer will break down and start to grow stuff that will not look pleasant when you customer takes the cap off. A better practice is to blow the sanitizer

out and if desired, spray a light mist of alcohol into the neck before covering with a vented keg cap. Having a vented cap is important to allow the valve to dry out.

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Q: Does MicroMatic offer onsite training for breweries?

A: Yes we do! I, and my western colleague Jon Graber, can offer training onsite for your brewery or for your local guilds. Send a message to beerpacking@micro-matic.com for more information and scheduling. We will be glad to discuss what we can do once it is safe to travel again as well as how we can offer training remotely via phone or video conferencing.