

BA Collab Hour Q&A: Draught Beer To-Go: Best Practices for Growlers and Crowler® Cans

Q: Is rinsing Crowler® cans with water sufficient, or is a sanitizing step recommended?

A: [53m 31s] Charles: Based on the way that they're shipped, rinsing is probably going to be enough. When you start sanitizing before you fill, you can get into a slippery situation. What if you don't get all that sanitizer out once you're done? You'll have to rinse it anyways. So, as Neil mentioned, it's very important to just keep them covered. When they come in a pallet, they'll be layered with slip sheets on them, which will keep dust out of them. They were clean when they were put on the pallet, so rinsing is just fine. Not to mention the time involved in sanitizing, etc. is probably not beneficial to your customer because it just adds to the whole fill process time.

-

Q: What were your findings concerning oxidation and shelf life for Crowlers?

A: [54m 9s] Neil: I don't have a ton of detail to share. These were some quick studies where Crowlers were filled with different amounts of purge time, and then compared to both fresh samples and also by a sensory panel at different intervals of time to see how it held up. In one instance, the Crowlers were measured for DO and TPO. To a certain extent, these were small studies done with a brewery sensory panel, which is not enough to be put into a published paper or be considered an official scientific study. But the results were such that they supported the things that we already assume anyway – that purging does make a difference and that a longer purge is an improvement over a shorter purge. When you purge, you end up with lower oxygen in the package. Those things were clear. The thing that was maybe a little surprising was how long some of these Crowlers lasted. Again, this is nothing official, but in one them, we did see a decline in the overall score from the sensory panel as they approached seven days, but the beer was still considered in the range of "acceptable."

-

Q: Do you have any further comments on filling with a tube vs. something like a beer gun?

A: [57m 50s] Charles: I've never actually used a beer gun. I'm not totally sure how that would work in a commercial situation. My first thought on it, is that with a beer gun, changing products would be difficult. I have seen people set up ball locks and change the fill device off of that, but then you'll be running different beer through it and would have to switch the device out. So, I think it would be cumbersome for commercial use.

Neil: Yeah, I'm pretty much in line with Charlie. I don't have any experience with a beer gun. If you're using some type of additional device between your draught system and the container you're filling, keeping it clean and allowing for switchover between beers is going to be a concern. I would guess it would be a little cumbersome as well.

Kaylyn: I've used beer guns before to manually fill bottles and one thing that comes to mind for me is that if you're a taproom that wants to pre-fill some packages to give to consumers to go, then that could be an option. But, then again, your shelf life is significantly reduced on those, so you'd want to make sure that you sell those right away.

Neil: Since you mentioned that, I would like to mention that if you are pre-filling containers, don't fill anymore than you can sell in a single day. If you have containers that you filled yesterday, you're already putting your customers and yourself at a disadvantage. You've got to make sure that you're not overstocking because they have such a short shelf-life to begin with.

-

Q: Where can we get all of the Brewers Association verbiage to educate consumers on draught beer quality?

A: [61m 28s] Neil: All of that lives on the BA website. Go to the Resource Hub here: <https://www.brewersassociation.org/resource-hub/draught-beer/>. You can also search for more specific topics in there. That's where you'll find both the Draught Beer Quality Manual and Draught Beer Quality for Retailers, as well as the growler tag template.

-

Q: Should we weigh the filled Crowler to assure they are filled all the way without too much foam?

A: [62m 52s] Charles: I don't think it's a bad idea to weigh it. That's how kegs coming off a line are checked. One thing, though, is if you're going to try to top it off because it is a low fill, you're going to have some issues. That's because you'd be opening it back up and putting beer on top of it. I've found that especially with the tubes that if you shut off before you're done filling and then try to fill again, you're going to get an air gap that fills inside that tube and then you'll be pushing air into the system as well as making turbulence. So, I think weighing would be a good idea for consistency, but I think you'd have to put a scale underneath your container on the tap.

-

Q: Can you remind folks about the BA OSHA Susan Harwood Grant Survey on draught beer safety?

A: [64m 23s] Kaylyn: Yes, this is a selfish plug, but it's a really great training program that will be coming online next year. The Brewers Association was recently awarded some funds to put together a safety training specifically for draught line cleaning and there's a survey that we just released to get a little bit of a better understanding on what the state of knowledge is on safety around draught here. Complete the survey here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BA_Draught_Safety

-

Q: Are Crowlers safe to take on planes in checked luggage?

A: *Answer to be added soon.*

-

Q: How big of a difference in shelf life will you have if you have a mobile canning line come and do a bunch of cans at once?

A: *Answer to be added soon.*

-

Q: As a Cicerone, I like to try and compare lots of beer styles, but if you compare more than one or two, that's too much beer to finish them all. What alternatives are there besides a Carbonator Cap and Mr. Beer brown plastic bottle? Ideally, it would be an 8oz. to 12oz. bottle for the Carbonator Cap.

A: *Answer to be added soon.*

-

Q: That safety issue with plastic caps, is that just on glass growlers? What about SS growlers?

A: *Answer to be added soon.*

-

Q: Since we didn't filter our beers, after counterpressure filling our crowlers, we stored them warm for 3 days to allow the remaining yeast to convert any acetaldehyde created during filling by O2 exposure back to ethanol. Worked great! We easily get 90 days of cold storage. The Crowlers are sold to customers and liquor stores. Any thoughts?

A: *Answer to be added soon.*