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How to Brew Beer at Home

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Introduction:

If you can boil water, you can brew your own beer. Well, you also have to be able to clean up after yourself, but you can worry about that later. This page will give you an overview of the brewing process, as well as equipment suggestions and other tips.

Boiling your beer

1. Soak the two cans of malt extract syrup in hot water for at least twenty minutes. This makes the syrup easy to pour. While they soak, bring 1 1/2 gallons of water to boil in your brewkettle.
2. Remove the kettle from the heat, add the malt extract to the water, stir until it's all dissolved and return the kettle to the burner.
3. Boil the mixture, called wort ("wurt"), for at least 30 minutes (watch out for boilovers!). Stir occasionally if you want. 5 or 10 minutes before you are finished boiling, add the hop pellets. These hops will give your brew a nice hop aroma.

Sanitizing

1. While you are boiling your beer, sanitize your primary fermenter with a solution of 1 ounce bleach to 1 gallon of water. Sponge all the surfaces of your fermenter with the sanitizing solution and rinse well with hot water. From now on, everything that comes in contact with your beer *must* be sanitized -- either with a clean sponge, or by soaking it in a bleach solution. This is very important. In fact, it's one of the secrets to making good beer.
2. Fill your fermenter with 3 gallons of fresh cold water, and cover with the sanitized lid.

Cooling and Pitching

1. When you are finished boiling, carefully pour all the wort into your water-filled fermenter. It's boiling hot, so be careful! Put the lid on tightly.
2. When the wort has cooled to near room temperature, follow the instructions on the yeast packet for rehydrating the yeast, open the lid and pour yeast into the wort. (This is called "pitching" the yeast.) Work quickly, so that the wort is exposed to air as briefly as possible. There is no need to stir. Cover again, and attach your fermentation lock. Add water to half-fill the airlock.

Fermenting

1. Fermentation should start within 24 hours, but it could take longer. A sure sign of fermentation is the bubbling of carbon dioxide throughout the fermentation lock. The bubbling should be rapid and vigorous for a couple of days then gradually slow down. Keep the beer at room temperature, away from light, and in a place where children and animals will not disturb it. Fourteen days after fermentation has begun, you're ready to bottle.

Bottling

1. Sanitize your bottles by soaking them in a solution of 1 to 2 ounces of bleach to 5 gallons of water. Or you can fill each bottle with the same solution. Let them soak for at least 45 minutes. Rinse each bottle with hot tap water. Make sure the bottles don't have any gunk in them.
2. Sanitize your bottling bucket, siphon hose, racking cane, bottle filler, and anything else that's going to come into contact with your beer with the bleach solution like the one you used on your fermenter. Sanitize your bottle caps with either vodka or a very dilute bleach solution.
3. Dissolve 3/4 cup of corn sugar (4 ounces dry weight) in a cup of water. Boil for 10 minutes.
4. Put your fermenter on the counter and your bottling bucket on the floor. Pour the sugar solution into the bottling bucket. Siphon beer from the fermenter into your bottling bucket. Do this carefully, without splashing or agitating the beer and leave the sediment in the bottom of the fermenter behind. (This is called "racking".) Don't expose your beer to the outside air longer than you have to and make sure all surfaces the beer comes in contact with are sanitized.
5. Put the bottling bucket on the counter, hook up the racking cane, siphon hose, and bottle filler, then begin filling up your bottles. Bottling can be messy, so have some paper towels or rags handy. Newspaper or a shallow backing pan can be used to catch spills. Cap each bottle.

Aging and Testing

1. You're done! Store your bottles in a cool, dark place. Wait at least two weeks (if you can), uncap the bottle and pour into a nice, clean mug or glass, leaving the sediment in the bottle. The sediment won't harm you, but it can change the flavor and appearance of the beer.
2. Taste the fruits of your hobby. Congratulations! You're a homebrewer! We hope you learn to love this hobby as much as we do!

Suggested Equipment

Brewkettle - Use an enamel-coated or stainless steel pot that holds at least 3 gallons. It's for boiling your wort, (pronounced "wurt") which is what beer is called before it is fermented.

Primary Fermenter - A food-grade container, usually a white plastic bucket with a lid, that holds at least six gallons.

Bottling Bucket - This should hold at least five gallons. It can be the same type fermenter as your primary fermenter.

Siphon Hose - This is usually clear, food-grade plastic tubing. You'll need about six feet. This is for transferring your beer from one container to another.

Racking Cane - A stiff piece of plastic tubing about 2 feet long, often with a curve on one end. It connects your siphon hose and is used when transferring your beer from one container to another. It makes siphoning easy and efficient.

Fermentation Lock - It's also called an airlock and it keeps your beer from being exposed to outside air while letting carbon dioxide escape from your fermenter. It should fit in a hole in the lid of your primary fermenter.

Bottles - These should be made of brown glass. Don't use the twist-off variety. You'll need about 50 12-ounce bottles or the same volume in whatever size bottles you use.

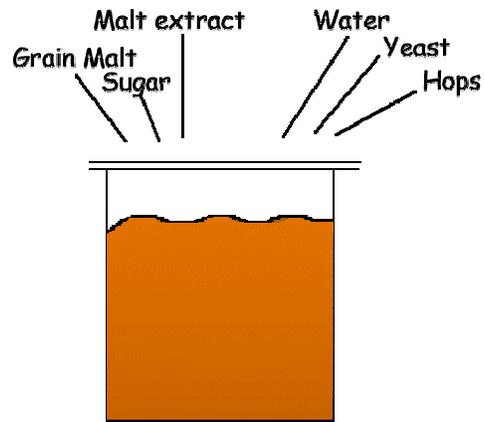
Bottle Capper - Numerous styles of this device are available, any one of which will work for capping your bottles of homebrew.

Bottle Caps - These must be new... you'll need about 50.

Bottle Filler - This is a clever device that will really speed up your bottling process.

Basic Brewing Flowchart

1 Fermentation

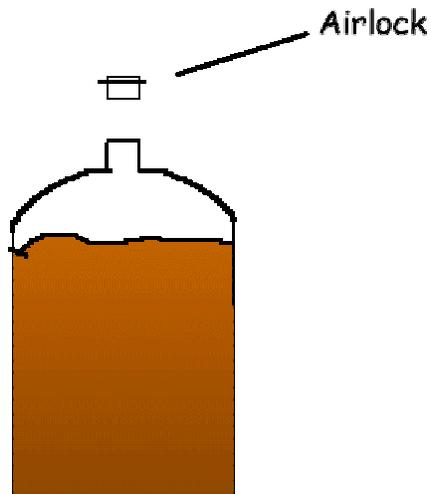


TIME: 3 Days
TEMPERATURE: 65-75F

SIPHON



2 Clarification



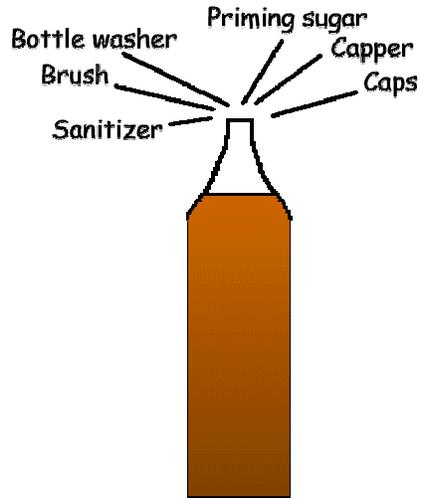
TIME: 7-11 Days
TEMPERATURE: 65-75F

SIPHON



3

Bottling/Priming



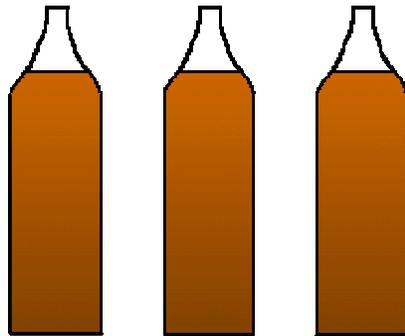
TIME: 10-14 Days

TEMPERATURE: 65-75F



4

Aging



TIME: 21 Days

TEMPERATURE: 45-65F