

Draught Beer Quality for Retailers Q&A

Q: Is it still as important to clean lines every two weeks even in the slow season when we don't sell as much beer?

A: Absolutely. It could be argued that it is even more important as the beer (and growing bacteria) is not being flushed through a system as frequently.

Q: What is the root cause of the decrease in revenue due to lack of line cleaning?

A: Loss of revenue can be directly tied to loss of repeat sales related to quality issues. If your beer tastes bad, people won't buy as much.

A: The study does not make a definitive determination as to why regular cleaning leads to more sales. The study simply shows it as a fact. Of course, the assumption is that consumers are more likely to buy fresher and cleaner beer.

Q: Where can I find out the line cleaning laws in Ohio? Meaning, can I clean my own lines or do I have to hire the job out?

A: In Ohio, distributors are not allowed to clean draught lines, which leaves that responsibility to the retailer, who can either do it themselves or hire a 3rd party to perform the work for them. For further details on Ohio state liquor laws, you can consult Ohio liquor control at <http://www.com.ohio.gov/liqr/>

Q: Why should you never serve beer in frozen glasses?

A: Frozen glasses typically chill beer to a temperature where experiencing the full range of aromas and flavors. They also contain ice crystals which provide nucleation points for carbonation, which causes beer to foam when it hits the glass.

Q: With brass out of the question, how do plastic faucets compare to stainless? I would imagine they still have a higher chance of organic matter build up and bacteria?

A: Plastic, like brass, is a porous material that gives microorganisms more of a foothold to grow. Stainless steel is not nearly as porous and will not get as dirty.

Q: Is there a difference in cleaning once a week versus every two weeks?

A: According to the David Quain study that was done in the UK, sales jump up by nearly 2% when moving from a 2 week cycle to a weekly cycle.

Q: What is the advantage of using a draught cleaning service (that you have to pay for) vs. an irregular "free" wholesaler cleaning?

A: Both can work great. When a distributor provides free line cleaning, they will more often than not listen to your requests and do what you ask. Don't be afraid to demand very specific protocols to be followed.

Q: What are your thoughts on Turbo Taps?

A: They are designed for extremely high-volume systems that are specifically engineered to pour at very high flow rates. Their use on a standard draught system does not provide any additional benefit and has the major drawback of being unsanitary, as it is dunked in every beer that is poured.

Q: Is serving from a brite tank any better than serving from a keg?

A: Both can work great if the carbonation balance is maintained in the vessel.

Q: If there is improper setup or improper correlation of temperatures/CO2 levels causing excess foaming of the beer, is there a way to determine how much beer is being wasted?

A: Tracking sales per keg can give you the numbers you need to determine how much beer is being wasted.

Q: I clean the lines every two weeks and every other week I clean the taps. Is it necessary to clean taps every two weeks? Are cleaning the taps included in the frequency of cleaning the lines?

A: The faucets should be disassembled and scrubbed clean at every bi-weekly cleaning. At the same time, keg couplers should also be scrubbed clean, although their disassembly is only necessary on a quarterly basis.

Q: How do you respectfully approach an account with obviously dirty draught lines as people are easily offended?

A: Diplomacy is the key in dealing with retailers on sensitive topics. Each person is different, although they are typically very responsive if you can present solutions along with the problems that will end up making them more money.

Q: The economic analysis appears to ignore labor costs- why? We build that into our per ounce cost of beer (and facility allocation, utilities, etc.).

A: There are any number of factors that can be included in a cost analysis. We provide the framework to doing a basic analysis which should allow you to add in whatever other costs you like.

A: Case study 4 shows the value of the beer being drained per line cleaning to be \$1.50. Case study 2 shows the cost of cleaning to be \$10 per line. This leaves \$8.50 per line as the labor fee charged by the line cleaning company. Additionally, the Wisconsin study does factor in labor costs as well as the cost of the cleaning materials.

Q: What should FOB cleaning frequency be?

A: FOBs should be disassembled and cleaned on a quarterly basis.

Q: Do you see more states requiring frequent line cleaning in the on premise like Pennsylvania?

A: Most of the movement toward increasing line cleaning frequency is occurring in the industry itself. State mandates are not common.

Q: I'm curious why we believe that dirty lines are more concerning to customers than dirty glassware. They never see the lines, but they certainly see the glassware!

A: Customer perception is hard to predict. One of our main objectives is to raise awareness of all draught quality issues, including glassware and dirty beer lines.

Q: Is it recommended to spritz a glass with water to remove any debris, or would this be unnecessary if your glasses are beer clean?

A: A fresh water rinse right before rinses out any lint or debris that might be in the glass and prepares the glass for pouring, allowing for a better pour every time.

Q: What is your suggestion for maintaining beer line cleanliness with strongly flavored beers and/or wild/sour beers containing wild yeast and bacteria? Do those beers require more frequent cleanings?

A: Strongly flavored beers should be followed up with a rigorous, by-the-book line cleaning. Fruit beers or root beer can sometimes taint a line, causing issues and should be approached with caution in systems where changing individual lines is not economically feasible.

Q: What is the best growler fill system?

A: Counter-pressure fillers with a pre-evacuation step provide the lowest oxygen fill with the least amount of carbonation lost. Safety with glass containers can be an issue with these, however.

Q: I am looking to purchase a recirculating system for line cleaning. Are there differences between pumps/products to consider when looking for the right system for my needs?

A: There are many different pumps that can clean different amounts and length of lines. Consult with your equipment supplier to ensure you are getting the right pump for your needs.

Q: It's very easy to calculate the additional costs incurred by an account by following the recommended cleaning schedule, but how can you persuade or convince an owner/manager that this will actually increase their sales?

A: The two studies presented in the Power Hour show increased sales in accounts that clean their lines on a bi-weekly basis compared to those that do not.

Q: What is the maximum amount of lines recommended to loop when using an electric recirculating cleaning pump?

A: There are many different pumps that can clean different amounts and length of lines. Consult with your equipment supplier to ensure you are getting the right pump for your needs.

Q: Is there a single online site that has the brewery/brand recommended flow rate for their beer?

A: The flow rate for a standard draught system is around 1 gallon per minute, regardless of beer style or brand.

Q: Can the 2 week line cleaning regimen change to a longer period due to the efficiency of the recirculation pump?

A: Lines should be cleaned every 2 weeks regardless.

Q: Any experience using ozonated water for cleaning and sanitizing draft lines?

A: Ozonated water is not addressed in the Draught Beer Quality Manual. Generally ozone is good for sanitizing but not for cleaning, and would be unable to dissolve proteins or biofilms. It has also been shown that ozone has an adverse effect (cracking) on materials that are similar to those used in draught systems.

Q: Do you recommend a specific cleaner for line cleaning? Tap cleaning?

A: We recommend a solution of Potassium Hydroxide or Sodium Hydroxide mixed in a 2-3% solution. There are many brands available.

Q: What solution type do you recommend? Acid-alkaline?

A: Alkaline cleaner should be used every 2 weeks and acid cleaner on a quarterly basis.

Q: Are there any big breakthroughs tech-wise that you guys see helping cleaners do a more efficient job on the horizon?

A: No. There is no current substitute for the line cleaning regimen we recommend in the Draught Beer Quality Manual

Q: Is there any data to support diacetyl or acetic levels in lines or poured beers in 1-2 week line cleanings versus 3, 4, 6 week cleanings?

A: Not specifically to those particular bacteria, although it is clear that the longer the span between cleanings, the more biological matter builds up, generally speaking.

Q: If you serve other items such as coffee, is there any special cleaning involved or is it just best to have separate lines?

A: Cleaning protocol following beverages other than beer should be referred to the manufacturers of the given beverages.

Q: Do you have advice on vinyl vs. silicone tubing?

A:

Q: Should you spray the faucet with sanitizer every night before close?

A: Rinsing the faucet with water is recommended on a nightly basis.

Q: Can you recommend a manufacturer for SS faucets?

A: There are many manufacturers of stainless steel. We, as a group, do not endorse any specific manufacturers.

Q: I don't recirculate my chemicals, I push with CO₂, but I use a color changing caustic to tell when it's clean. Do you think it would be more cost effective in the long run to get a pump?

A: Yes.

Q: I currently have brass parts in my faucets. What all needs to be changed to stainless? Just the plunger and fob or do I need to replace the entire faucet?

A: The entire faucet.