

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Is it legal?** Absolutely! It is 100% legal to brew your own beer, wine or cider at home. You can enjoy your own brew and share it with friends and family. It is however 100% illegal to sell your brew without a liquor license.

**How do I ensure my brew doesn't get infected?** To avoid infection you need to be very diligent when it comes to cleaning and sterilizing. Always use the recommended concentration and method and remove the tap from your fermenter every now and again to make sure it is getting cleaned properly. Some things to be careful of include:

Be careful when cleaning your fermenter that you don't scratch the plastic as it will create a breeding ground for bacteria.

Don't use scouring pads or other harsh brushes.

Add the yeast to your wort as soon as possible so alter the amount of hot and cold water you use when making up the brew so that the temperature is right first off and you don't need to wait.

Bottle the beer as soon as it has stopped fermenting but make sure that it has stopped fermenting before you bottle.

Insufficient temperature control.

Avoid opening the lid of the fermenter so that you don't introduce air.

**What is the difference between priming sugar and carbonation drops?** Both are used to carbonate your beer. They both work the same way, but for many people carbonation drops are a more convenient alternative to priming sugars.

**How do I measure the alcohol percentage of my beer?** If you want to know the alcohol percentage of your beer, take an SG reading using your hydrometer before fermenting (original gravity (OG)) (see reading SG below) and then another after the beer is ready to be bottled, (Final Gravity (FG)). To calculate the percentage of beer, simply put your OG and FG into the following equation:

$$ABV = (OG-FG) \times 131$$

i.e.

$$ABV = (1.056-1.014) \times 131$$

$$ABV = .042 \times 131 = 5.502\%$$



**How do I adjust the alcohol level of my brew?** If desired, you can reduce the alcohol content of your beer by reducing the amount of sugar you add into the fermenter. The following is a rough guide of the approximate % alcohol with varying amounts of sugar.

Kgs of Malt Extract	250 gms Sugar	500gms Sugar	750 gms Sugar	1000 gms Sugar
1.7	2.8	3.3	3.9	4.4
1.6	2.6	3.2	3.7	4.2
1.5	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.1

**How do I use a hydrometer?** Simply fill sample jar with beer from the tap. Put the hydrometer into jar and spin it to remove any air bubbles. Blow gently on top of the beer to remove any foam then read number on the hydrometer which lines up with the top of the beer. Rinse the hydrometer in water and discard the beer - do not add it back to the fermenter as this could infect the brew. If you wish to check that your hydrometer reading is correct you can check it in water at 20 degrees, it should read 1000.

**My brew is not fermenting. What's wrong?** The most common cause of slow fermentation is lower than recommended fermentation temperature. It is important to keep your brew above the minimum recommended temperature especially in winter; you can use a heating pad or heating belt to help keep the temperature up. If the brew becomes infected that can also cause a slow fermentation. If you notice a sour or off smell and a white film on the surface of the brew then you may have an infected brew.

**Why is my beer flat?** There are a few possibilities, first check that the bottles have been stored above 18°C for at least a week. If not move them to a warmer place and wait another week to see if that improves things, but be careful not to let the bottles get too hot as that could kill off the yeast. Other possible causes include:

Too little sugar added to the bottles.

Leaving the brew in the fermenter too long after the completion of fermentation.

Not enough yeast in the bottle due to filtering or excessive use of finings.

Faulty crown seals.

**The airlock has stopped bubbling before 7 days is up. Is something wrong?** No sometimes fermentation can finish in as little as a few days, this is more likely at higher temperatures. Do not exceed recommended temperatures as fast beer will come at the expense of taste. Some yeasts will ferment at different speeds at different temperatures.



**There is a layer of sediment at the bottom of each of my bottles. Have I done something wrong?** No this is normal. What you are seeing is natural yeast sediment which has settled to the bottom of the bottle while clearing.

**How long after bottling can I drink my beer?** Letting the beer condition in the bottle for at least two weeks is preferable, but carbonation in the bottle usually takes place within seven days. Stronger beers need more time to develop and will usually taste better after more time in the bottle. Lagers also need a couple more weeks to fully develop their flavours.

**My brew enhancer or brewing sugar is hard. Is this still okay to use?** Yes it is still fine. Due to the fact that the enhancers get imported from New Zealand and the containers reach temperatures of over 25°C they might get harder. This does not affect the quality of the product. Just dissolve the enhancer in 2L of warm water before adding it to your brew.

*If you have any more questions, please feel free to email [info@thebootlegger.co.za](mailto:info@thebootlegger.co.za) and we will always try and help where we can.*

