

Brewing and Prepping for a Brew Fest

Mick Spencer, 8-27-2019

Carbonation

For brew fests, I recommend carbonating to about 2.5 volumes, regardless of style. The reason is that if you're sharing a jockey box and CO₂ manifold with other beers, they can all be reasonably balanced by the same serving pressure and line length, without excessive foaming.

Managing Unwanted Haze from Hop/Yeast/Trub Particulates

In addition to all the usual techniques to prevent unwanted haze (cold crashing or extended time before racking, finings etc.), special care should be used for brew fest beers. This is because whatever sediment is on the bottom of the keg *will be stirred up* into suspension when the keg is transported. The following tips can help manage this issue.

- Plan ahead and ensure that your kegged beer can be stationary for *at least a week*, at a cold temperature, before the event. It can be carbonating during this time, but don't disturb the keg. This will help ensure that particulates drop out of suspension.
- Just before transporting the keg, use a picnic tap to draw off a pint or so of the beer. This will remove a large portion of any particulates that have settled to the bottom of the keg. When the keg is subsequently moved, there will be less junk to be roused into suspension.

Managing Sulfur-y Aroma

Some yeast strains are prone to producing excess hydrogen sulfide, causing a "rotten egg" aroma. This can also result from a lack of nutrients for the yeast. With time, this usually clears up, either in the fermenter or in the packaged beer. My usual advice for this issue is to simply wait. But with a special event beer, you may run out of time. In that case, the answer is copper.

- Straighten a 25" piece of 3/8" OD copper refrigeration coil and sanitize it.
- Slowly stir the beer for about two minutes and smell, repeating if needed.

If doing this the morning of the event, be sure to pour off that first pint of sludgy beer before stirring.