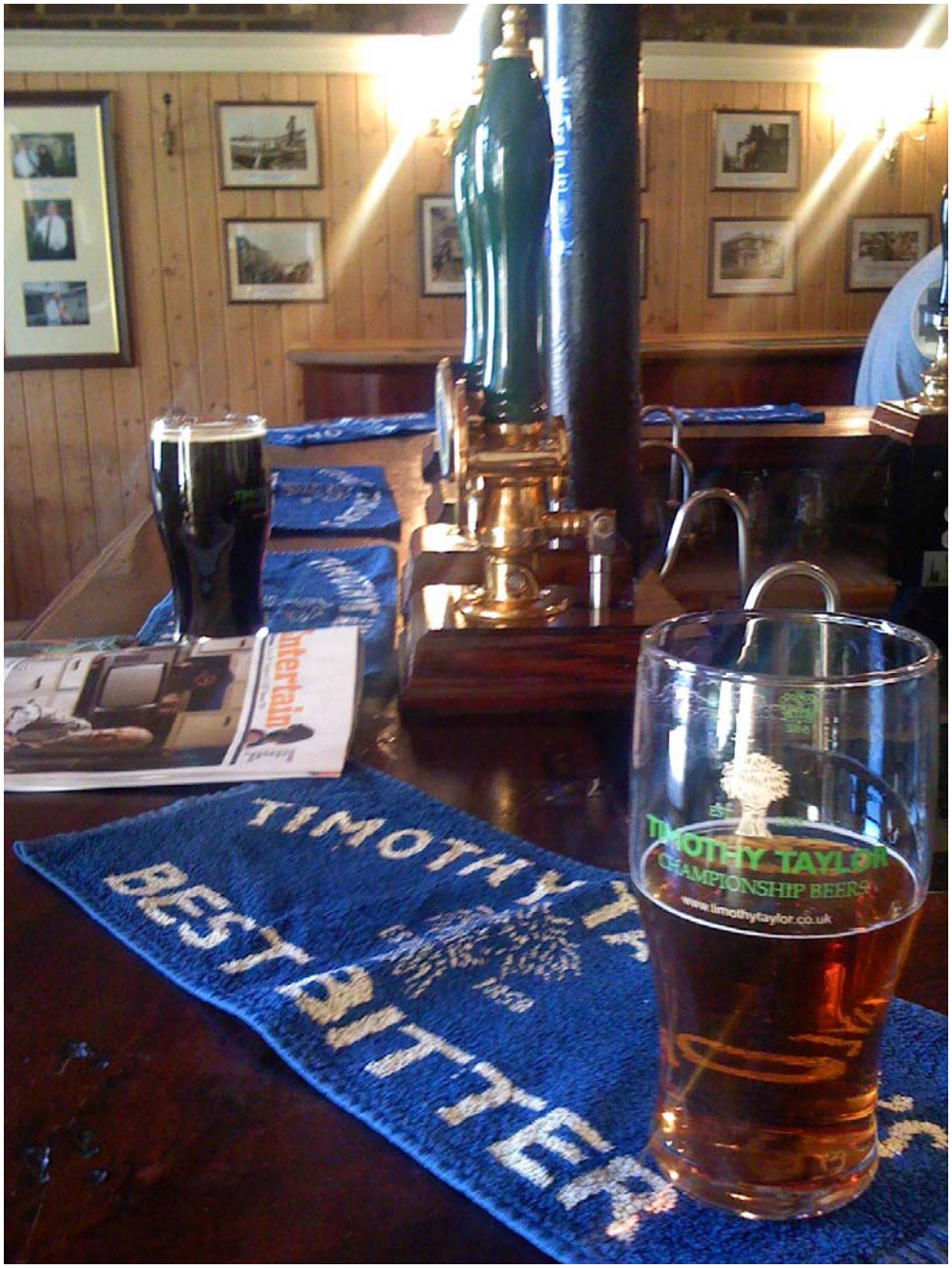

Cellarmanship

Skills and Techniques for Serving Cask Conditioned Beer

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Observations on cask beer in the USA

- A newfound appreciation of cask-conditioned beer.
- Cask festivals all over the country.
- Much more common feature at brewpubs and beer bars (Rattle ‘n Hum, NYC, 4 casks; ChurchKey in DC, 5; Mad Fox in Falls Church, VA will have 6!).

On the other hand…

- Cask-conditioned beer has been the “next great thing” in the USA for at least 20 years, but logistics have always been underappreciated.
- Myths still abound:
  - Cask beer is served at room temperature
  - Cask beer is unfiltered, so it’s supposed to be cloudy.
  - Cask beer has little/no carbonation.
  - Cask beer is *NOT A STYLE!*
- Consumer - and professional - knowledge is lacking.
- Homebrewers have led the cask beer movement in this country. Let’s keep it going, but…let’s GET IT RIGHT!

Basic assumptions

- The presence of handpumps (“beer engines”) or firkins is no guarantee that authentic cask beer is being served. In many places, cask beer is still a decorative gimmick.
- Live yeast in the cask is the defining characteristic. If it’s not there, it’s not cask-conditioned beer, it’s just beer in a cask.
- Authentic cask-conditioned beer completes its secondary fermentation in the cask. Period.

Kegs vs Cask vs Bottles

- Don’t confuse keg and cask.
- Shape of cask serves a valuable purpose.
- Cornelius keg is a great substitute, but is less optimal for gravity dispense.
- We all use bottles - think of a cask as a large bottle or can, but with a twist.
- With bottle conditioning, we take care to pour clear beer off the yeast sediment.


23"
23-3/8"
13-7/8"
9"
9-1/4"
16-1/8"
11-1/8"
16-1/8"
Home Brew
Sixth Barrel
Quarter Barrel
Slim Quarter
Half Barrel

Cask racking

Cellarmanship

- Cask-conditioned beer is served with no added pressure. Ideal dispense methods are:
  - Gravity
  - Beer engine
- Use of beer engine/gravity and cask entail *cellarmanship*.
- Most beer leaves the brewery in kegged form, making dispense *relatively* simple.
- Cask beer leaves the brewery unfinished. Casks must be managed by the pub owner/staff. Poor cellarmanship leads to a bad consumer experience of cask-conditioned beer.

Cellarmanship: Goals

"To promote the most beauty in each cask of beer by developing the most interesting range of sound aromas and flavors; by nurturing wherever possible high levels of natural carbonation consistent with each beer style and, moreover, by serving each beer in a manner and at a temperature that enhances its aroma and flavor profile and creates an appropriate mouthfeel." – Mark Dorber, The White Horse at Parsons Green (London SW6)

Cellarmanship: Maturation

- Usually the forgotten step.
- Aging in cellar allows for: developing carbonation; dry out effects of priming addition; enables optimum effects from dry hopping.
- It’s a marathon, not a sprint.
- Adjust for style, typically based on gravity/strength.
  - Low-gravity dark milds, 4-5 days after racking
  - Standard bitters, around 4% ABV, 2 weeks
  - Strong bitters, 3-4 weeks
  - Old ales, months; barley wines may be fine even after a year!

Cask maturation

Cellarmanship: Stillaging

- Roll each cask vigorously prior to stillaging to evenly re-mix finings and yeast.
- Stabilize cask with chocks, auto-tilt, cradle, etc.
- Make sure cask is level, with shive pointed straight to ceiling and keystone at 6 o’clock.
- Avoid forward or backward tilt so slurry (yeast, finings, hop) stays in belly of cask and won’t clog tap or slosh.

Fixed Stillage (Young's Brewery Test cellar)

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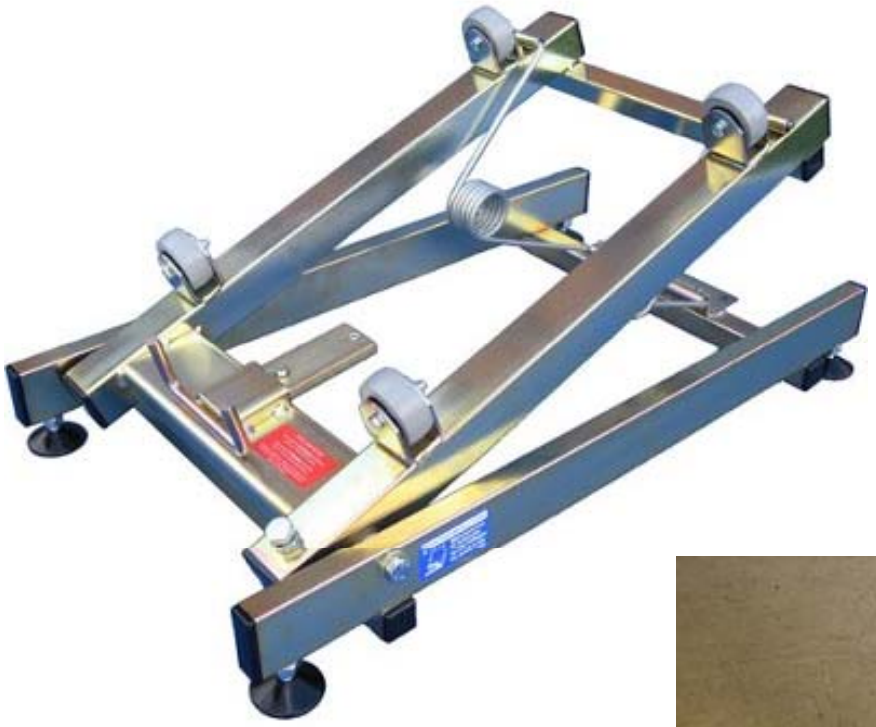


GREAT DIVIDE


ROCK
YORK


Gaithersburg
Hoppopotamus
Imperial IPA blended
with 3 Yr Old Oak Aged
Barleywine
9.00%

Cellarmanship: Conditioning

- GOAL: Reduce CO2, to get good finings action, and build carbonation level as appropriate for style.
- Wait at least 2 hours after stillaging to let beer settle.
- Get cask down to cellar temperature (52-55 F).
- Vent cask by “soft spiling” – hammer a porous peg into the shive tut.
- Monitor soft spile. Initially, there may be no fobbing, but some beers are slow starters.
- Change the soft peg frequently if it gets blocked with yeast or hops.

Cellarmanship: Conditioning

- Do not over vent!
- General rule for soft pegging? There is no rule.
- Hard peg (non porous) the cask when it takes 3-10 seconds for beer to fob through the soft peg after wiping it.
- Dropping bright/clarity improved by increase in cellar temperature (to 58-60F) for 8-12 hours. Beers can take from 4 hours to 4-5 days to drop bright, depending on style, yeast used, etc. (48-72 hours is fairly common)
- Chill back down to 52-54F to aid carbonation. Again, depends on yeast strain.

Cellarmanship: Tapping

- When should you tap? It's really up to you.
- Tap venting. Tap when you begin soft pegging.
- Tap after soft pegging is complete.
  - Make sure cask is hard-pegged (beer will get agitated and gush through soft peg)
  - Allow beer to settle before serving. Pounding the tap in shakes things up!
  - Don't be a wimp. Drive the tap straight and true and don't worry about a bath. If you worry about it, it *will* happen.

Cellarmanship: Dispense

- Always remove hard spile (or soft) *slowly and gradually*.
- Whether by gravity or beer engine, corny keg or cask, do not excessively chill. 50-55F is fine. The lower end is often preferred for paler bitter, but you still must monitor yeast strain.
- If possible, insulate beer lines and beer engine cylinders.
- Should empty cask in 24-48 hours, unless a cask breather is used. It's not just oxidation and infection you worry about, it's *carbonation*.
- Ask the cask drains, tilt forward about 3" when the cask is approximately half full.
- Don't always opt for a sparkler on your beer engine. For most pale ales, one should not be necessary. Fine for milds, porters, and stouts.


FESTIVAL

Cellarmanship: Tips & Tricks

- Put dry hops in muslin bags.
- Use a hop filter (built into gravity tap or in hose connection for beer line to engine/pump).
- Learn how to change a leaky tap or broken keystone.
  - Hard-spile cask
  - Have a bucket, replacement keystones or taps, corks, and mallet ready.
  - Don’t panic! You won’t lose much beer.

Cellarmanship: Cask Cooling

Priming

- Cask beer typically has lower carbonation (1.0 – 1.5 volumes of CO2), but should *still accurately reflect style.*
- Can prime just like homebrew bottles - using corn or cane sugar. Commerical brewers often prime with fresh yeast or krausen.
- Can also get by without priming if you rack before reaching terminal gravity and are willing to wait longer for carbonation to develop.

Priming at the Brewery

Finings

- Not required. Many commercial US beers are not fined.
- Isinglass, gelatin, are most common, but are not vegan. Biofine Clear is a vegan-friendly product that can be added to secondary.
- Auxilliary finings (added at end of boil), like Irish Moss, Whirlfloc, etc., work well.

Cellarmanship: Record Keeping

- Good to know racking date, whether primings and finings were used.
- Track length of time and activity for soft spiling.
- Evaluate clarity and condition on 1-10 scale.
- Note that almost every cask - even from the same brewery - can behave differently. Remember what you've learned, but treat every one as unique - and with respect.

Credits, Thanks, References

- Thomas Cizauskas, http://www.caskaleusa.com/
- Alex Hall, http://www.cask-ale.co.uk/us/index.html
- *Cellarmanship*, Patrick O'Neill, CAMRA Books, 2005