YOUR NEXT BREW:  
WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

So your beer is bottled and, while it matures, you’re anxiously watching the calendar, waiting for Tasting Day to roll around. Congratulations – you are now officially a home brewer!

MAKING LIFE EASIER

By now you’ve probably worked out that cleaning and sterilizing the bottles is the biggest (and least fun!) part of the brewing process. One way to make this easier is to get a large plastic tub (such as the 90 litre oval washing tub from Plasticland for about R100) and some caustic soda (available from hardware stores & most supermarkets). Fill the tub with warm water and add caustic soda as follows:

- Lightly soiled bottles: use ± 20g Caustic Soda to each 1 litre of water in the tub (ie. if your tub is 90 litres, it will probably have about 80 litres of water in when ‘filled’, so use about 160g caustic soda)
- Heavily soiled bottles: use ± 40g Caustic Soda to each 1 litre of water in the tub (ie. if your tub is 90 litres, it will have about 80 litres of water in when ‘filled’, so use about 320g caustic soda)

NB: always add caustic soda crystals to the water, never the other way around.

[Make sure to wear gloves and goggles, because it's nasty stuff. If you should get some on your skin, wash it off immediately (you'll know it's off when your hands don't feel soapy anymore). As with any chemical, use in a well ventilated area.]

Soak your bottles overnight. This will get rid of just about anything in and on the bottles, including most labels. The next day rinse your bottles (which by now should be squeaky clean) with clean tap water to remove any caustic soda residue, and your bottles will be ready to be sterilized (no bottle brushes or scrubbing needed!).

A bottle rinser is a great help in sterilizing your bottles (and saves on water too!). Fill the rinser's basin about halfway with sterilizer solution and toss your crown seals in so they can get sterilized as well. Put a bottle onto the bottle washer's nozzle and press down. Sterilizer solution will squirt into the bottle and coat the inside entirely. Two or three squirts are sufficient for each bottle.

To make the sterilizer solution: put 2 teaspoons “No Rinse Sterilizer” into 1 litre of water; mix well and pour into the bottle rinser. (Don’t try to mix sterilizer & water in the rinser, as the powder will get trapped inside the washing mechanism.)

A bottle draining tree is also very helpful. The Brew for Africa bottle draining tree holds 80 bottles (both dummies and quarts) so you can let the sterilizer solution drain from the bottles without any bottles falling over, which makes life a lot easier!

Note: quantities given above for caustic soda and sterilizer are a guide only. Use more (or less) as your needs require.

YOUR NEXT BATCH

In order to brew your next straight kit brew, you will need:

- 1 beer kit of your choice
- The associated brew blend (1kg)
- 1 packet of beer finings
- Brewer’s Detergent (available in 60g packets for 1 brew; or 250ml bottles – enough for 4 brews)
- No-Rinse Sterilizer (available in 60g packets for 1 brew; or 250ml bottles – enough for 4 brews)
- Carbonation drops (you probably have some left from your first batch, depends on the bottles you’ve used)
- Optional: crown seals (but you will most likely have more than enough over from your first brew!)

You also might want to play a little with your next batch. The best and easiest way to improve on your beer is to replace the standard yeast supplied with the beer kit with a more specialized yeast, depending on the beer style you want to brew: an English ale yeast, an American ale yeast, a German wheat beer yeast, a Belgian ale yeast, etc. Some yeasts give your beer a more fruity flavour, while others are dryer in profile. Feel free to ask us for advice!

Once you have one or two brews under your belt, you may want to change the brew blend for liquid malt extract (LME) and some noble flavouring hops, such as Saaz, East Kent Goldings, Fuggles, Hallertauer Mittelfrüh, or our own South African Southern Promise. We can suggest the proper hop for the beer you would like to brew. This will take your kit beer to a whole new level! (See RECIPE PACKS & individual recipes on “Downloads” section for examples of how to do this).

For even more fun to be had, see the page "Beyond Kit Brewing" on our website (it's in the menu under "How To Brew", or go straight to http://www.brewforafrica.co.za/tech_beyond.html).

Also make sure to have a look at our Frequently Asked Questions (also under "How To Brew" on our website, or go straight to http://www.brewforafrica.co.za/tech_beyond.html) for more information.

Have fun, and cheers!

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