

CASK CONDITIONING

OUR POLICY

Follow the process steps in the correct order and timings.

WHY WE DO IT

Fully conditioning cask ales gives customers consistently great tasting beer and gains maximum yields.

DO



- ✓ Order enough cask stock to allow for a full 3 day preparation.
- ✓ Check deliveries as they come off the lorry.
- ✓ Always adhere to correct manual handling and lifting techniques when moving a cask.
- ✓ Stillage all casks when space is available and start preparation.
- ✓ Check the cellar temperature is between 11-13°C daily.
- ✓ Record preparation and on sale dates by chalking the cask, or a cask conditioning card.
- ✓ Vigorously roll casks before stillaging if insufficient space to stillage on delivery.
- ✓ Have enough spare clean equipment in addition to equipment in use.
- ✓ Store clean equipment dry in sealable containers.
- ✓ Clean up any spillages in the cellar immediately after they have happened.
- ✓ Change dirty/wet spiles for new.
- ✓ Seal casks with hard/semi-porous spiles when fermentation has finished.
- ✓ Seal all empty casks using spiles for shives and corks for keystones immediately cask is empty.
- ✓ Clean areas where casks have been prepared immediately when empties have been removed.
- ✓ Clean autotilt stillages immediately when empty cask has been removed.
- ✓ Check cask ale on sale quality every day for C.A.T.
- ✓ Seal every cask when closed using a hard/semi-porous spile (if aspirators are not in use) and closing the cask tap.

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CONDITIONING PROCESS

TRADITIONAL STILLAGE

1: ROLLING

- ◆ If not done by the dray on delivery day, casks must be rolled immediately before stillaging to redistribute the sediment (finings and yeast) in the cask.

2: STILLAGE

- ◆ The casks must be stillaged perfectly level, shive and keystone perfectly aligned. On a traditional wooden stillage the front of the cask should be raised and supported by 2 chocks to level the cask and make it stable.
- ◆ Casks stillaged on autotilt stillages should be level when stillaged, indication the stillage is configured correctly for the size of cask.
- ◆ Casks not stillaged by the dray on delivery day **must** be rolled before stillaging.

3: VENT

- ◆ All Casks must be vented 2-4 hours after stillaging, if not then start again with rolling.
- ◆ Always thoroughly clean the shive with clean water before venting.
- ◆ Hard and soft spiles – drive a hard spile through the shive, carefully remove releasing any gas pressure, then replace with a soft spile in the shive finger tight.
- ◆ Semi porous spiles – drive the spile through the shive, carefully remove the spile releasing any gas pressure, then replace in the shive finger tight.

4: CONDITION

- ◆ Cask ales require a full 3 day preparation from venting, this preparation should be recorded.
- ◆ Hard and soft spiles – check the spiles ideally 3 times/day to see if they are wet or have froth or foam coming out, replace spiles with new if they are ever wet or soiled, when the soft spile is clean and dry, fermentation has completed and the cask should be sealed up with a new hard spile.
- ◆ Semi Porous spiles – remove the spiles ideally 3 times/day to see if gas is released from the cask, replace spiles with new if they are ever wet or soiled .
- ◆ When no gas is released and the spile is clean and dry, fermentation has completed and the cask should be sealed up with a new hard or semi porous spile.
- ◆ Fermentation may not be a full 3 days, so if for example fermentation has completed in less than this time, the cask still requires the full 3 days from venting to develop full flavour and aroma.

5: TAPPING

- ◆ The earliest to tap is 24 hours after first venting, but we prefer at the latest 24 hours before required.
- ◆ Make sure it is a clean tap, and thoroughly clean the keystone before tapping.
- ◆ If a closed tap is used make sure the spile is removed
- ◆ If a part open tap is used a hard or semi porous spile should be in the shive tight.

6: QUALITY CHECK & CONNECT FOR SALE

(At the earliest a full 3 days after venting.)

- ◆ Always remove the spile when taking beer out of a cask
- ◆ Check beer quality directly from the cask for
 - Clarity
 - Aroma
 - Taste.
- ◆ Flush the line with plenty of clean cold fresh water immediately before connecting to a new cask.
- ◆ Connect flushed line to new cask using a clean tap washer or hop filter.
- ◆ Pull beer through to the bar and sample again for C.A.T and check temperature.
- ◆ Seal the cask each night by closing the cask tap, and replacing the spile.
- ◆ Aspirators should be used if fitted, these will extend the 'on sale' life of the cask from 3 days to 6.
 - After the first pint has been taken from the cask,
 - Take a clean spigot and 'screw' tightly into the shive.
 - Take a clean 'cut down' non-return valve and place between gas pipe and spigot and tighten.
 - Turn gas supply onto spigot.
 - Seal the cask each night by closing the cask tap only when using aspirators.

7: TILTING

- ◆ If autotilt stillages are not used the cask must be tilted manually .
- ◆ Tilt just after closing at the end of the day when the cask is ideally 2/3rds full .
- ◆ **Never tilt if the cask is less than 1/2 full**
- ◆ Slide a wedge under the back of the cask so the back of the cask is higher than the front by 3-6".

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CONDITIONING PROCESS

VERTICAL EXTRACTION

1: ROLLING

- ◆ If not done by the dray on delivery day, cask should be rolled before stillaging to redistribute the sediment (finings and yeast) in the cask.

2: STILLAGE & TILT

- ◆ Place the cask in the position it will be prepared and sold.
- ◆ Raise the keystone side by 1/2" - 1" using 2 wedges under the base of the cask.
- ◆ Casks not stillaged by the dray on delivery day **must** be rolled before stillaging

3: VENT

- ◆ All Casks must be vented 2-4 hours after stillaging, if not then start again with rolling.
- ◆ Thoroughly clean the Keystone with clean water.
- ◆ Take a clean shank, vent tap open, no washers in the shank and the top blanked with a blank nut.
- ◆ Drive the shank into the keystone and let any gas go, then close the vent tap.

4: CONDITION

- ◆ Cask ales require a full 3 day preparation from venting, this preparation should be recorded.
- ◆ Check the vent tap ideally 3 times/day by opening the vent tap and listening – should you hear a hiss of gas this indicates the cask is fermenting, let the gas go then close the vent tap.
- ◆ Carry on this check ideally 3 times/day, when you do not hear a hiss of gas this indicates fermentation is complete, close the vent tap to seal the cask.
- ◆ Fermentation may not be a full 3 days, so if for example fermentation has completed in less than this time, the cask still requires the full 3 days from venting, to develop full flavour and aroma.

5: INSERT THE EXTRACTOR ROD

- ◆ The time to do this is 24 hours before the cask is required for sale.
- ◆ Make sure it is a clean rod and never touch with your hands any area of the rod that is likely to come in contact with the beer.
- ◆ Remove the blank nut then insert clean washers into the shank.
- ◆ Loosely insert a locking nut into the shank.
- ◆ The rod then goes through the shank all the way to the bottom, raise 1/2 to 1" and tighten the locking nut (this will hold the rod above the sediment in the cask).

6: CONNECT FOR SALE

(At the earliest a full 3 days after venting.)

- ◆ Always open the vent tap when taking beer out of a cask.
- ◆ The big disadvantage of vertical extraction is you cannot sample the beer quality directly out of the cask, this must be done at the bar.
- ◆ Flush the line with plenty of clean cold fresh water immediately before connecting to a new cask.
- ◆ Connect flushed line to new cask using a clean tap washer or hop filter.
- ◆ Ensure vent tap is open.
- ◆ Pull beer through to the bar and check beer quality for:
 - Clarity
 - Aroma
 - Taste
 - Temperature.
- ◆ Seal the cask each night by closing the vent tap.
- ◆ Aspirators should be used if fitted, these will extend the 'on sale' life of the cask from 3 days to 6.
 - Connect the aspirator gas line to the fitting on the vent tap
 - Turn gas supply on.

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