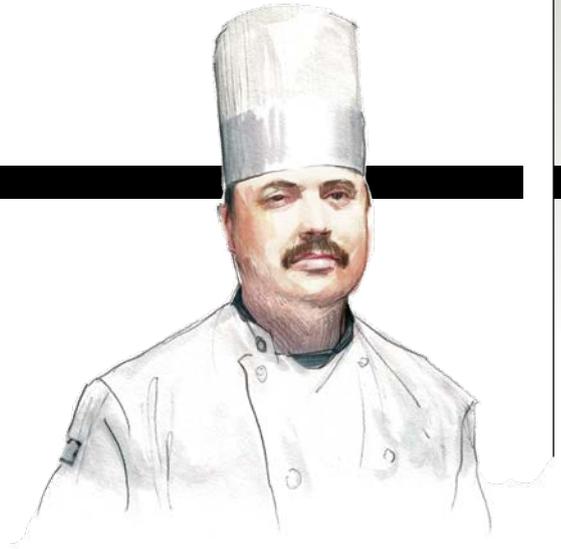


# Small beer?

Associate FCSI member **John Reed** looks at why the industry should better understand the value of craft beer



**T**he boom in craft beers has led operators down the path of maximising the potential profit of draft beer. They are jumping onboard and increasing the number of tap handles along the bar. A basic domestic keg can provide several hundred dollars' profit if the dispensing system is well designed and service staff are following due diligence.

Brewers spend a lot of time designing beers with a certain flavor, aroma, alcohol content, mouth-feel and carbonation level. They take pride in the glass in which it is poured and even the temperature of the brew when served.

For many years, large-scale brewers and dispensing specialists, such as Micro Matic, Lancer, Perlick and many others, understood the needs of the beer world. They lived in the world of American adjunct lagers where a standard direct draw system with three tap handles maintained at 38°F (2°C) was adequate for most restaurants.

Today, with the number of lines and variety of craft beers, which are highly influenced by their surroundings, beer system designers and manufacturers have to consider multi-temperature coolers, glycol chillers, nitrogen generators, multi-gas blending systems and large stretches of insulated barrier tubing. Craft brewers also pay homage to old school “cellarmanship” and cask-conditioned ales. Now we are faced with having to accommodate barrels of beer that need to be cooled, not chilled, and pulled from the barrel to the glass through a beer engine.

For the FCSI consultant, we need to understand what the operators' beer programmes are. It is no longer just a general beverage programme. Certified Beer Professionals, such as Certified Cicerones, are being employed by the restaurant and hospitality community. These professionals understand the needs of a particular beer and it is their job to serve it as the brewer intended.

Kegged draft beer is always at its very best the day it went into the barrel. A well-designed system will keep that perfect pour as long as possible without affecting quality.

## Arts and crafts

Our responsibility as designers is to understand the new basics of craft beer and how to maintain this highly cash-heavy investment. Some craft beer sixth barrels, which hold about five gallons, cost in excess of \$400 and we need to get the highest possible return every time the tap handle is pulled.

These new craft beers need:

- at least 24 hours undisturbed, refrigerated rest at a particular temperature range before serving;
- to be pushed through an unobstructed system of lines and hardware with the right ratio of blended gas at a calculated PSI unique to its carbonation level;
- a clean environment where the beer dispensing home is caustic cleaned every two weeks and given an acid bath spa treatment every two months;

- to be served in a “beer” clean glass that best suits its style;
- to be served slightly warmer than other beers; and
- protection from such enemies as temperature, light and exposure to air.

Kegs, lines and beer taps need to be cleaned and maintained. Service agents need easy access to couplers, waste-saving Foam On Beer (FOBs) detectors, gas lines, jumper lines and system connections. Space needs to be determined and found for additional beer system components outside of the cooler. How do we know what to design? Here are some of the basic questions we need to reconsider:

- How many lines do you need to maintain?
- Will you be having an extensive beer glass and service programme?
- How many nitro taps will you be considering?
- Are decorative beer handles a key design element? Do you have enough space to make them an effective marketing tool?
- How often do you think you are turning a keg and who do you see doing that task?

Think about this the next time you get a craft beer that tastes different. Is it really a bad beer or a “pourly” designed system affecting its quality? ■

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