

Getting rid of that “homebrew Taste”

Ever have someone say “Oh *no!* Thank you!” on being offered a glass of your tasty amber fluid? That person very likely has had some bad experiences drinking homebrew. So, how to make homebrew that tastes of beer and not “homebrew”?

Get rid of sucrose!

A kilo of sucrose (table sugar, caster sugar etc) added to a can of beer concentrate makes for a terrible ‘beer’ with a sugar twang you could cut with an axe. Even using it for priming should be avoided. Where you *have* to use sugar then use dextrose.

Get rid of sugar as much as possible

A high-sugar beer will be dry, bland, thin and unable to hold a head. Instead of sugar use malt in dried, liquid or grain form. Beers are made from malt, plain and simple. Only crap beers are made mostly from sugar! Liquid malt is better than the dried stuff which must be cut with sugar (dextrose!) to get full attenuation. Liquid amber malt extract gives a richer flavor than light.

Use proper yeast!

I think a large part of the ‘homebrew taste’ is yeast: not enough yeast pitched into the wort at the start and yet too much yeast present in the final beer. Insufficient aeration also causes fermentation problems and off-tastes. See *Yeast and fermentation management* for more information about aeration.

Insufficient yeast means a slow start to the ferment which gives the bacteria always present in our homebrew worts time to breed up and put sour off-tastes into the beer. It also means the yeast takes long time to ferment the wort fully and in hot weather that means a vegemite taste in your beer. Yuck!

A glass of yeast-hazy beer looks disgusting and does not taste much better! The beer in the bottle may look clear when you take it from the fridge but then you open the bottle, *psssstt* and the everescence picks up the yeast and mixes it throughout the beer. You end up pouring glasses of mud, no way to impress family or friends!

You will really improve the flavor of your beers by using proper yeast (liquid offers much more choice but a good dry yeast is also fine) *stored in a fridge until use.*

Make sure the temperature of the ferment is right, 17–18°C for ales, 8–12°C for lagers. An ale fermented at temperatures of 25°C or warmer will contain fusels and other undesirable compounds from the hot ferment that will make the beer have unpleasant off-tastes.

A fridge is by far the best place to ferment in during summer, winter is really the time you should do most of your brewing. A ‘100 can cooler’ obtained from Target etc, with three 3L bottles of frozen water changed at least twice a day is not as good but workable. By racking your beer into a ‘cube’ and putting that in a (working) fridge for two weeks will drop out lots of yeast so that pouring out glasses of sparkling clear beer is not just possible but easy.

Use better water!

Adelaide tap water is the joke of the nation! Filtering does not remove much of its horrible taste or high sodium content—you need rain- spring or RO filtered- water. At worst, run tap water out into a bucket the night before, add a crushed campden tablet and let the bucket of water stand overnight to remove the high chlorine level. Rainwater does have a higher bacterial count than tap water so be sure to pitch an adequate amount of fresh yeast! Do not use water from a water softener.