

COMMON HOMEBREW CLEANING MISTAKES

Home brewing is awesome; not only do you get to feel like a mad scientist, you get to enjoy some pretty delicious fruits of your labour as well. It has also become the distraction of choice for many that are forced to spend more time at home. What better time to pick up a new hobby (or rekindle your old one) than being stuck in the house for the unforeseeable future? This is why I have teamed up with Five Star to create a list of ten common cleaning mistakes that every homebrewer should remember. Whether you're new to home brewing or just want to keep your skills sharp, this list covers it all.

1. Not Cleaning Enough

Ask any professional brewer what they spend most of their time doing throughout a brew day and their answer will always be the same. No, it's not recipe development, searching for the best hop profile, or even brewing itself. It's cleaning. It's always cleaning. There's one simple reason for this; because it works. No matter what the size of your equipment or how advanced you are with home brewing, cleaning should always be your top priority.

If you were given one tool that can guarantee your precious homebrew batch doesn't spoil, you would use it, right? Well, taking the time to clean properly can be that guarantee. The more malt, hops, or adjuncts you brew with, the more "dirt" (protein and mineral build-up) your batch produces. There are also so many small parts, hoses, and gaskets involved with brewing; this makes a lot of opportunities for that dirt to hold on to something and ruin your next batch. It's time-consuming but not complicated. So just suck it up and clean it all.

2. Using "All-in-One" Products

Cleaning and sanitizing are two separate processes; each with their own important purpose and methods. These separate processes require separate products, it's that easy. Cleaning removes any dirt and residue that has built up on your equipment, plus it keeps it looking shiny and rust-free. For a cleaner that is straightforward, effective and safe on your equipment as well as your skin; I recommend [Powder Brewery Wash \(PBW\)](#).

What cleaning will not do is fight all of the leftover bacteria, wild yeast, or any other microbes that could be hanging out where only a microscope can see. That's where sanitizer comes in. No matter how much scrubbing or soaking you do, it will all be pointless without good sanitation practices. Those organisms mentioned earlier will be waiting in the shadows to mess with your brew if you don't stop them. For a flavourless and environmentally friendly sanitizer that penetrates all the cracks and crevices of your equipment, go with [Star San](#). Not a fan of the foam? No problem, try out [Saniclean](#) instead.

3. Using Products Not Designed for Beer

Food gets caked onto your pots and pans after cooking a big meal; you soak them in the sink with some dish soap and voila, everything comes clean with minimal effort. That means dish soap should be able to get your homebrew equipment clean too, right? Well, not quite. Brewing beer is a delicate process and off-flavours are easy to come by; this isn't the same as your Grandma's chili recipe. Five Star has immersed themselves in the craft beer industry since 1980, paying attention to every detail along the way. Don't trust cleaners and sanitizers that don't have your best beer in mind.

4. Taking Shortcuts

Homebrewing is an investment; time, money, and the space in your garage; not to mention the endless hours you will surely spend coming up with your own recipes. Why would you go through all of that effort to not take it seriously and cut corners? If you finish a batch and think there's not enough residue left behind to justify a simple rinse instead of a thorough cleaning before sanitizing; we are here to tell you that you are wrong. The processes are there to protect your beer so you don't waste your time brewing it. Don't set yourself up for failure and, again, just clean it all.

5. Not Using the Correct Dilutions and Measurements

True or False? When it comes to cleaning, more is always merrier! So. Much. False. We have been developing products specifically for brewing for a long time. Our full line of cleaners and sanitizers have been formulated for precise dilutions to bring you the best result. If these aren't followed, you could be left with an unwanted residue or a product that doesn't clean as thoroughly. This really goes for all chemicals that require dilutions. Trust us and follow the recommended measurements.

6. Not Storing Chemicals Properly

Brewing is fun, no doubt about it. Whether you enjoy the planning that goes into it, the process of making it, or just the final product. But, let's be real, when it comes to cleaning, we are talking about chemicals (I mean, it is Five Star *Chemicals* after all). And while our chemicals are safe for your skin, that doesn't mean you can brush your teeth with them. Always wear eye protection and use your common sense. Cleaning products should be stored with a tightly sealed cap and in a cool dark place that is not accessible to animals or small children.

7. Not Understanding Why It's So Important

There are two main contaminants that can affect your beer; bacteria and wild yeast. And we aren't talking about the fun kind that makes delicious sours either. Bacteria and yeast can cause spoiling, unwanted flavours, or even food poisoning if you aren't careful. What's even worse? These babies thrive in warm, moist, and protein-rich environments; a.k.a. any home brewing set up. Want to know how to easily prevent these bugs from growing in your beer and potentially making you sick? I'll give you one guess...

8. Not Prepping

When you're brewing, things happen fast. One minute you're trying to stop the kettle from boiling over and the next, you're supposed to be ready to transfer into a fermenter. Being prepared with everything cleaned, sanitized, and ready to go can help things run smoothly through the process and allow you to really enjoy the experience. Don't risk the chance of feeling rushed and overwhelmed.

9. Not Sanitizing Bottles

Bottles are expensive, go into any homebrew shop and you may be set back more than you bargained for to buy them new. This is why it has become a perfectly acceptable practice to reuse the bottles you already have saved. However, reused beer bottles can often go overlooked for sanitizing. Throwing them through the dishwasher or letting them soak in dish soap is not enough. Remember those contaminants we talked about earlier? They can be hiding in bottles too. Just as you clean and sanitize your equipment it's equally as important to do the same with your bottles, new or used.

10. Not Asking Questions

While the process is generally straightforward, brewing can be complicated. There are a lot of steps, parts, and things to remember. There's also an endless amount of content on the internet that can be staggering to sort through. It is always ok to reach out and ask questions.