

Dry Hopping.

What does it mean?

When you decide to try your hand at dry hopping a beer, probably a lovely IPA, and you read “Dry Hop 7 days” or even “Dry hop 3 days”, “Dry hop 5 days” etc, what are they trying to tell you to do?

In a beer recipe, “Dry hop 7 days” refers to the amount of time that the hops should be left in the fermented beer before they are removed or the beer is racked into another vessel. It’s the job of the brewer to determine the right time to add the hops, ideally after fermentation has slowed down.

Carry on reading so that you have a full understanding of the process you’re about to start.

What does dry hopping do?

It really comes down to how hops are used in modern brewing. The two best ways to use hops are to give your beer a bitter taste and to add that ‘hoppy’ aroma.

When you add hops during your boil, depending on when you add them, you’ll release alpha acids into your wort. This helps the brewer to balance the sweeter flavour from the grains.

However, even when you add hops a few minutes before flameout, the aromatic oils which give the beer that distinct aroma can be lost through evaporation. Hence the reason for dry hopping for more aroma rather than ‘wet’ hopping. By adding hops to the fermented beer, when it’s much cooler, you get more bang for your buck on the aroma front.

In addition to giving the beer a really fantastic flavour the hops also provide a preservative function. This is why English IPA was famously dry-hopped to be sent out from Britain to troops in India.

When should you add the hops when it says “dry hop 7 days”?

It's understandable that the term "dry hop X days" can be confusing. The number of days refers to how long you leave the hops in with the beer and not on which day you add them.

This means that the beer, which is being fermented by the yeast, needs to finish that first activity, more or less, before you try to dry hop it.

The ideal time to start dry hopping is just as fermentation begins to slow. You can generally see the right moment if you check to see when the krausen begins to drop back down and/or when your airlock activity slows.

This can be best seen if you are fermenting your beer in a clear carboy or FerMonster rather than a fermenting bucket.

In most cases, you'll be able to start dry hopping your beer 3-5 days after you pitched your wort. Depending on the temperature, how viable your yeast was or whether you used a yeast starter or not really determines how quickly the beer ferments. Just look for the signs and make a judgment call.

Why do you have to wait for fermentation to stop?

When dealing with late addition hops the heat from the boil can actually evaporate much of the aromatic oils away, dry hopping on an actively fermenting beer is similar. But in this case it's not the steam but the carbon dioxide which works against the aroma of the hops.

There is also more of a risk of infection from the hops themselves when you introduce them into the beer too early, but not as much as you may think.

Do you need to sanitize the hops?

What's the number one rule of [brewing beer](#)? You don't let anything that's not been sanitized touch your wort or beer, right? Well, this isn't really the case with hops.

Due to the chemical makeup of the hop flower itself, you have very little to fear from adding hops to your beer when dry hopping. In fact, you're more likely to infect your beer with whatever you use to add the hops to your beer.

Should you dry hop in the primary or secondary vessel?

Dry hopping in the primary fermenter.

you can certainly dry hop in the primary but you really need to choose the right moment to do it. If you dry hop when there is a lot of CO2 production or

the yeast hasn't flocculated and dropped into the trub, you could actually rob yourself of much of the aromatic flavours you've been hoping for.

One way to overcome this risk is just to up the amount of hops that you would normally use, or have been instructed to use, if the original recipe called for a secondary fermenter.

Dry hopping in the secondary fermenter

Dry hopping in a secondary fermenter is perhaps more desirable just because you don't have any of the excess CO₂ you may have in the primary. Also, there is even less risk of bacterial infection once the pH. level has lowered and there is more alcohol present. You also get all the other benefits of using a secondary vessel, such as a clearer beer.

Two cleaner ways to dry hop

If you aren't planning to dry hop with hops pellets and just let them sink to the bottom of your fermenter, you can try some other methods while dry hopping with whole leaf hops.

Hops bag

You can put your hops into a muslin hops bag which will allow the beer to circulate around the hops without them getting separated on the surface of the beer. When you want to remove the hops, you just need to take the entire bag out without all the green mess everywhere.

Depth charge

You can go one step further and use the FerMonster version of the hops bag, which is basically a mesh cylinder. If you have a FerMonster then you might want to pair it with the custom-designed FerMonster Mesh Strainer which is even more user-friendly than a basic hops bag.

How to remove the hops?

Removing the hops really depends on how you added the dry hops in the first place.

If you are using pellets, you probably just need to pour them in loose and then rack the beer while leaving a bit of clearance between the siphon tube and the top of the trub layer.

If you add whole leaf hops, you can put them in a muslin bag to keep them all together. If possible, tie some previously sanitized fishing line around the mouth of the bag so you can pull it out later.

However, be aware that the hops will expand as they take in liquid which can be problematic if you are using a narrow neck fermenter. In this case, the best option is really to leave the hops in there until you have transferred the beer. Then you can give it a good shake and pull the bags out when they are a little less saturated. If you are using the Mesh Strainer along with your FerMonster fermenter then it's as easy as pulling the entire filter out, hops and all.

How much hops to use when dry hopping?

This is really up to you as homebrewing is all about experimentation. If you are dry hopping in the primary fermenter then you may expect the same amount of hops to be a little less effective than if used at any other time.

Other confusing instructions on beer recipes

So, it's not only the "Dry hop 7 days" which might throw you on a beer recipe, there are other things too.

What does "Willamette (40 mins)" mean? This basically tells you how far along the total brew schedule, (which is 60 minutes), you need to add hops before you turn the heat off. So, in this case the Willamette hops would go in after 20 minutes of boiling the wort and would be boiled for a further 40 minutes.



FerMonster with a Mesh Strainer attached.