

Yeast is the most important aspect of fermented beverages, like BEeeeeER!!! There are so many yeast strains being used to make different concoctions all over the world. Each has found its niche to make some type of alcoholic beverage for man. Beer yeast has evolved in this way for thousands of years. NO matter if you are brewing Ales or Lagers, yeast is a vital part of making quality beer.

Making a quality wort for your beer is pretty easy to master. Then you select the best hops you can find. Now you've cooled your wort and it's ready to pitch. STOP! Before you pitch that Wyeast smack pack into 5 or even 10 gallons of beer, think about all the effort that it took to get you to this point in the brew. Pitching the correct amounts of yeast for your batch size will make your beer sooo much better. It will even act as insurance for any small errors you may have made along the way. Bacteria and mildly hazy wort can be overcome by a good solid fermentation.

At the very least you should make a yeast starter. ¼ to ½ gallon for a 5 gallon batch of Ale (double for 10) or ½ to 1 gallon for a 5 gallon batch of Lager. This is still pretty small. The only way to pitch the proper amounts is to harvest yeast from a previous batch. Sometimes you can get some from a friend who is racking a fresh brew. Pitching 1 cup of past into a 5 gallon batch will really give you a nice fermentation. I usually consider my first batch, where I use a starter, as a big starter for the rest of my beers. Once I have a good quantity of yeast, then I start brewing.

It is not always easy or convenient to keep a strain going for too long. But you should try brewing 3 or 4 beers in a row (2 or 3 weeks apart). Harvest and pitch for each batch. This will give you a nice stock pile of excellent beer. It will even save you a few dollars by reusing the yeast. I have kept the same Munich #2308 strain going for over 1 year. It all started with one smack pack of Wyeast from BrewHaHa. It was pretty low maintenance. I only washed the yeast with distilled water a few times over this period. It's all in the timing. Each brew had to take place 2 to 4 weeks apart. If I was using an Ale yeast, I would have to brew even more often, like every 1 to 3 weeks. Using this schedule, I was able to keep the yeast healthy and strong. Every beer came out excellent. But there are alternatives to keeping a yeast going. You can, as I mentioned, get some from a friend. Talk to your fellow CCHers and see what they're brewing. See if you can get some yeast from them or help out another brewer from your most recent batch. The local breweries may also be able to help you out from time to time.

Well, you've probably got the point by now. Pitch quantity and quality. There are some new products

coming out by Wyeast that are supposed to be closer to proper pitching quantities. At this time I have not used them but I am interested!

There are many ale, lager, and specialty strains available from the yeast labs. They are all pretty good yeast strains. Each has its own preferences for environment and such. It takes some research to figure out what temp a particular strain performs best at. For the most part, ales like 60 – 70F and lagers like 40 – 55F. I prefer to brew lagers for a couple of reasons: I like a lager as my everyday beer and brewing lagers fits my schedule a little better (now that I have a new daughter, making a quick ale now and then is looking pretty good!! I have not had the time to brew lagers on a regular basis.) I do enjoy ales and I do brew them, just not as often as lagers.

My favorite lager yeast are #2308 Munich and #2124 Bohemian. I also like #2206 Bavarian. For ales, I like #1968 ESB and #1056 Chico Ale. I've tried almost all of them and all make good beers. It's just a matter of taste and picking out the characteristics that I like. I'm sure most of you have your favorite yeast strains already picked out.

There really isn't much more I can say about yeast. Keeping your pitching rates high is about the best advice I can give a brewer. The strain you use is up to your preferences. The only other advice falls more into fermentation practices than yeast – even though they are inseparable.

Keeping a steady temperature in the proper range is important. Pitching your yeast into wort that is at the proper temperature is also important. Also, a diacetyl rest is important for some lager strains.

In the next article I will cover wort cooling, fermentation, fining, and filtration. These topics will fit together nicely in one article. Until then, keep brewing and pitch large amounts of yeast!

Good luck and keep on brewin'.