

BREWING WATER by Charles Sule
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New Orleans has pretty good water for brewing beer. You can make good ales and lagers with water right from the tap. Our water is on the hard side but remains moderate. No gypsum is needed for any style, including pale ales. Even with our good water, you can still tailor it to a particular style and improve your beer.

For lager beers, a softer water is more desirable. The best thing an active homebrewer can get to improve his water is a Reverse Osmosis water filtering system. These systems will run between \$150 and \$300 depending on the size of the unit. I paid about \$130 for a unit from Sam's. It has three pre-filters, one RO filter, and a final chlorine filter. The water comes out great. I like the taste of the filtered water better than the bottled water I was getting delivered before. I have since stopped the deliveries and fill my own bottles for the cooler.

I use 15 gallons of RO filtered water to make 10 gallons of beer. It takes me about 2 or 3 days to collect this much water. You can do it faster with a bigger unit or by buying a larger holding tank for the filtered water. I have found my lagers are much better with the softer water. They are smoother, maltier, and have a more mellow bitterness (not too harsh). It is also easier to adjust the pH of the mash and sparge water with the filtered water.

If you don't want to buy a RO unit, you can buy the water for \$1 for 5 gallons at Polar water depots. I have seen several of them around town. There is one on the corner of Morrison Rd. and Crowder in New Orleans East. This water is RO filtered and very convenient.

For ales and darker lagers, you will probably want a harder water. More like plain old tap water. For these beers, I would recommend

just filtering the sediment and chlorine from the water. You can buy a cartridge filter from Wal-Mart that will do the job for less than \$20 bucks. I sometimes mix RO filtered water and filtered tap water to get different levels of hardness for different beers.

There is really no reason to add any mineral salts to your brewing water. The water has adequate hardness for ales and dark beers. I would avoid gypsum. If you are adjusting your pH with gypsum, switch over to lactic or phosphoric acid.

I must admit that unfiltered New Orleans tap water will make fine beers all by itself. Filtered water will help you brew that perfect beer you have been working for!!! Give RO filtered water a shot next time you make a pilsner or helles. Find one of those Polar water depots in your area. For just a few bucks you can use totally clean soft water.

Good luck and keep on brewin'.