

Makes You Stop & Think . . .

reported by Brian Smith

I found this on a homebrew forum I'm a regular at.

"My buddy and I have been brewing for a while now. We started making extract kits a couple years ago, then switched to all-grain batches about 8 months ago. We bought a full gravity brew system and have been brewing pretty much every other week since then.

A couple weeks ago we had to dump a batch of an IPA we brewed because it came out sour. We had gotten a little careless and didn't taste the beer at every stage that we could. We assumed we had picked up an infection somewhere, so we washed and sanitized all of our equipment and moved on.

The next batch was a pretty simple Pale Ale. We have a base recipe that we tweak a little bit each time we brew. It's a great way to sample different hop varieties, but it's a beer that we have brewed a dozen of times without an issue. We taste this batch at every stage and it's fine. We let it condition for a couple weeks in the bottle. Tasting day comes and we are shocked to find that the beer comes out sour and flat. What the hell? We sanitize all of the equipment again, and buy a new siphon and replace our plastic primary fermenters just in case.

Our next batch was 10 gallons of a porter recipe we had not done before. Now, you are probably wondering why you would do a 10 gallon batch of a style of beer you had never worked with before, when you obviously have a major issue with your brewing process. You would be correct in thinking that.

Our process is on point for this brew. We document every step this beer takes. We split the 10 gallons into two brand new primary fermenters. We use our brand new siphon to

move those two batches into two meticulously cleaned and sanitized secondary fermenters. We sample the beer at every stage and find no issues with it.

Bottling day comes yesterday and we are both optimistic that we have eliminated any issues. We sample it before siphoning it into our bottling bucket and priming sugar mixture, no issues at all. We proceed to fill 130 bottles of non-sour porter. Just to be safe, we sample the last half-bottle that isn't going to get capped. It's sour . . . brutally sour.

My buddy and I are dumbfounded at this point. I would like to think that we are both fairly intelligent people, but we just can't figure out what went wrong here. We've checked everything.

As I sit there, wondering how much I will be able to get from selling all this homebrewing equipment, I notice the bag of priming sugar. It's the only thing we haven't checked. I taste a small sample of it and find that it carries the overwhelming taste of sour patch kids. Or sour skittles. Or the crushing reality that our process was not the issue and that we had been sold a three pound bag citric acid instead of priming sugar.

I find this situation equal parts infuriating and hilarious. Always taste-test your ingredients I guess."