

Ultraviolet light sanitizes steel kegs

One entrepreneur in Oakland, Calif., is experimenting with a totally different approach to barrel cleaning.

Alex Farren, founder of BlueMorph LLC, has developed and patented a way to sanitize stainless steel barrels and kegs with an intense ultraviolet light. Farren, who holds a bachelor's degree in biochemistry and a master's in toxicology from McGill University in Canada, is ready to release the keg system commercially and is close to unveiling a larger ultraviolet system for wine tanks.

His inspiration for a better way to sanitize winemaking equipment came while working at a Healdsburg, Calif., winery. His goal is to help winemakers use less water and caustic chemicals. Ultraviolet is not that effective for barrels, he says, as light can't penetrate into the pores.



BlueMorph's ultraviolet system is designed to sanitize stainless steel kegs and drums.

For that, Farren is looking into what he calls the “fascinating technology” of atmospheric pulled plasma, or non-thermal atmospheric plasma. Such systems shoot plasma (essentially energized gas) out through a nozzle with compressed air. De-

pending on the gas—be it oxygen, hydrogen or argon—plasma can be used in a variety of functions. The technology already is used in aviation, solar energy and other fields primarily for how plasma can change the properties of a surface.

In the medical field, some companies already are using plasma to sterilize surgical equipment. Farren says the plasma contains highly reactive molecules that are effective at cleaning and sanitizing surfaces. “The beauty of it is it's very potent at killing germs,” he says.

So far, Farren is in the preliminary stages of discussing a prototype barrel system with plasma manufacturers, but he's optimistic because plasma could be effective on the wood surface and leaves no toxic residue.

A.A.