

Bottling Home Brew the Easy Way

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By Frosty

You have waited a long time for this day to come. You have cleaned and brewed and pitched and racked and waited and waited and whatever else your particular home brew recipe called for you to do. Fermentation is complete - it is time to bottle. This is a very exciting time, to be sure, but it is no time to rush. Take your time and follow these steps and you will be sure to have a successful session.

The very first step, as always, is to clean and sanitize all of your tools, bottles, caps, and buckets. (See article [Key to Successful Brewing: Keep it Clean! \(Part 2\)](#) for a refresher on this topic.) Bottling your home brew is another one of those process steps that provides many opportunities to contaminate your tenderly nurtured brew. For the purposes of this article we will assume that everything is clean and dry and ready to go.

Add one US pint of water to a small sauce pan and mix in your five ounce package of priming sugar. Stir the mix until all the sugar is dissolved and then boil the solution for five minutes. While the sugar boils, you can place all of your bottle caps (I prepare one for each bottle and an additional four or five as backups in case of capping problems) into another small sauce pan, cover them with clean water and boil them for at least five minutes. When the priming solution has finished boiling pour it into the bottling container.

Once you have the sugar in place you can rack your fermented beer into the bottling container using the siphon tube to mix everything together as the bucket fills. (Please refer to article [Racking Your Home Brew Without Wracking Your Nerves](#) for a complete discussion on the art of racking liquids.) As the fermentor empties do your best to transfer as little sludge as possible. I have found that I can focus on the siphon process best if I have a willing assistant handy to gently tip the fermentor for me.

Bottling night at my house has always been a family activity. It may sound strange but it works out this way - I will be sitting on the floor running the actual bottle filling process while my wife feeds me empties and hands the full bottles to my oldest son, Aaron. Aaron then (rather expertly) caps the bottle with the capping tool and then hands that bottle to my youngest son Nathan. It's Nate's job to put the bottles into the boxes that I use to store/age my well crafted (soon to be bubbly) brew. Maybe not something you want your kid's Sunday School teacher to hear about - but it can be a lot of fun.

Really we have covered everything you need to know - but before I finish up I'd like to spend a little time going into some more detail on the process of actually filling the bottles. You will be using what I call (and probably everyone else calls) a bottling valve. This essential item is a lot like the siphoning wand that you used in the racking process. The big difference is that instead of pulling the liquid in to it as the siphon wand does - the bottling valve (when activated) allows your primed wort to flow into the bottle. Activating the valve is a simple matter of sticking the valve (wand) into the bottle - all the way down - and pressing it against the bottom of the bottle. You then let the bottle fill all the way to the top. When the bottle is completely full you simply need to remove the valve and cap the bottle. This method assures that you get a uniform amount of home brew into each bottle while leaving the correct amount of space between the beer and the cap.

The big question beginners have about bottling is simply, "How do I get the wort to the bottling valve?". Good question. There are two slightly different methods that you can choose to accomplish this task. The method you pick will probably be based on the type of bottling container you have. There are (surprise, surprise) two different types of bottling container. The first type is a plastic food grade bucket with a hole drilled in the side (at the bottom) into which a spigot like apparatus has been installed. Using this is pretty easy - you just attach the bottling valve to the spigot using a short length of tubing and you are on your way. Gravity rocks!!! The drawback to this method is that you must be especially careful to be sure the spigot has been properly sanitized since every last drop of your precious home brew is going to pass through it. The second method is a little easier on the sanitation side but a little trickier on the delivery side. With this process you attach your bottling valve to length of plastic tubing and get a siphon going from the bottling bucket to the valve. (To initiate this siphon I use the method described in article [Racking Your Home Brew Without Wracking Your Nerves](#)) Obviously, you want to place the bottling container with all the wort in it in a position that is higher than your bottling work area (which is why I always bottle on the floor). The drawback to this approach is that it usually requires an extra hand to handle the siphon in the bottling container.

When you have all of your home brew in neatly capped bottles you must again go into "Wait" mode. To me, this is the toughest part of brewing beer at home. Those neat rows of bottles practically cry out to be opened! Be patient, Grasshopper, be patient.