



# Draught Beer Basics: Four Keys to Excellent Beer Service

Beer tastes best when handled, stored and dispensed correctly, according to these four steps:

- First, store kegs upright and cold, between 34-38 degrees F at least 24-hours before tapping.
- Second, dispense draught beer through a perfectly balanced and properly maintained system.
- Third, use properly washed “beer-clean” glasses.
- Fourth, pour properly to deliver a handsome and inviting glass of draught beer.

## Temperature is key to pouring a perfect draught beer

Research has shown that beer kegs take three to four times as long to chill as they do to warm up (ref). For example, if a keg is delivered to a bar on a non-refrigerated truck at 50 degrees F, it would take twenty-five hours of refrigerated storage for the keg to return to the recommended 38 degrees F. If a keg is tapped when it is warm, it will pour foamy. As a best practice, we suggest that retailers not tap kegs the day they are received. Under normal circumstances, operators benefit from tapping fresh full kegs the day after they are received, allowing for enough time for them to chill to the proper dispensing temperature, 34-38 degrees F.

## Balance and Maintenance

A balanced draught beer system holds carbonation and pours liquid beer (not foam!) at a rate of two ounces per second. Practicing accepted cleaning protocols every two weeks (see Draught Beer Quality recommendations) ensures system cleanliness and the quality of beer dispensed from keg to glass.

## A perfect beer glass is beer-clean, aroma free and never frozen.

### Beer-Clean Glassware: No Soil No Oil

On-premise retailers clean all glassware between uses but even a glass that has just been cleaned may not be “beer-clean.” A beer-clean glass is not only free of visible soil and marks but also free of foam-degrading residues, like soap, grease or fat. A beer clean glass forms a proper foam head, allows lacing during consumption and never shows patches of bubbles stuck to the side of the glass in the liquid beer.

Avoid washing beer glasses with food dishes in a dishwasher as they get a thin coating of fats and oils that destroy foam. Specific directions on hand-cleaning, automatic machine operations, and testing for beer cleanliness are outlined at [www.draughtquality.org](http://www.draughtquality.org).

### Aroma-Free Glasses

Local health guidelines typically require sanitizer as the final step in most glass cleaning systems. But when it comes time to fill, the glass should not smell like sanitizer. Air-drying glasses upside down is preferred. Drying beer glasses on towels is not recommended as they leave lint, can impart chemical aromas and transmit germs.

### Rinsing & Chilling Glasses

Optimal beer glass preparation calls for pre-wetting with chilled, filtered water immediately before filling. This rinse removes residual sanitizer, chills the glass and promotes head formation. Frozen glasses result in ice crystals that cause foaming problems during filling. If you chill your beer glasses, be sure to avoid frosting.

---

## Pouring Draught Beer

A properly poured beer should be topped with a 1-inch collar of foam. With proper technique you can achieve this attractive presentation both quickly and with little or no waste.

1. Hold the glass at a 45-degree angle about two inches below the spout so that beer will initially flow down the side of the glass.
2. Grip tap handle at its base, open the faucet quickly and completely so beer flows freely.
3. As the glass fills, gradually tilt it upright so that you finish pouring straight down the middle of the glass to build the foam head.
4. Close faucet quickly to avoid wasteful overflow.

When pouring beer, avoid these mistakes:

1. Never touch the glass with the faucet.
2. Never touch the beer or foam with the faucet.
3. Never open the faucet part way.

Everyone wins with a perfectly poured glass of draught beer: customers are satisfied, retailers maximize efficiency and profits, breweries and distributors are confident their beer is presented the way they intended. For more detail on pouring draught beer, visit [www.draughtquality.org](http://www.draughtquality.org).



---

For more information on draught system cleaning or other components of a draught beer system, visit the Brewers Association's Draught Beer Quality Manual at: [www.draughtquality.org](http://www.draughtquality.org)