

# Go Brew Yourself!

Go on any brewery tour these days and they'll try to stump you by asking to name the four ingredients of beer. If you slept through Beer 101, it's barley, hops, yeast and water. But that's just the basics and the law according to the German Reinheitsgebot (Beer Purity Law of 1516). Today American breweries are pushing the boundaries with ingredients in beer and so can you. Brewing is easy — if an ancient Mesopotamian can make it, so can you!

The first step in your brewing adventure is getting the equipment and supplies. Fortunately, there are a few stores in the area and online that can help you. My two local go-to shops are Blackstone Valley Brewing Supplies (403 Park Ave, Woonsocket) and Craft Brew Supplies (1133 Main St, Wyoming). The owners and patrons of these stores are more than willing to teach you and there are no stupid questions or crazy ideas. Homebrewing is very approachable and inclusive with a great community around it. You shouldn't feel intimidated just because you are new.

Since you are starting out you will need some equipment. A basic list is: 1. Large 3 gallon stockpot, 2. Food-grade 6-gallon bucket with air-tight lid, 3. Large stirring instrument to use while boiling, 4. Hydrometer for measuring ABV, 5. Airlock that allows CO2 to escape but allows nothing in, 6. Tubing and stoppers (while fermenting it is critical to keep the beer air-tight), 7. Oven mitts, 8. Sanitizer (Star-san is one of my favorites, but there are many types at the homebrew shops), 9. Racking crane, used to move beer from one vessel to another, 10. Thermometer.

There are kits with most of this equipment already included that range from \$60 to \$100. All you need to bring is oven mitts and a large pot.

Pop Quiz! What are the four ... oh never mind. At the store, you will need to buy yeast, malt extract and hops. Most shops will sell you kits for a style of beer and will make custom kits for you. The yeast comes in dry or liquid forms but must be kept cold, so make sure you toss it in the fridge. Yeast converts the sugars from the malt into ethanol and CO2. The malt extract is the product of barley grain that has started the malting process to produce starches, which is then concentrated and turned into a syrup or dried powder. Those starches are converted to edible sugars while boiling, so this is where we get things like color, body and ABV. Finally, we have hops, which are the flowers of a plant in the same family as cannabis. There are no psychedelic properties to hops, but they add different aromas as well as tastes to the beer. If you've ever had an IPA that was super bitter, it was because the ratio of hops to malt was very high. Last but not least, we have water. Water is the most abundant ingredient and the rule of thumb is if you taste it in your water you will taste it in your beer. If your water is slightly chlorinated or dirty, get spring water; You'll need at least 5 or 6 gallons for most batches.

On to brew day! Good brewing is about cleanliness. If something is not cleaned and sanitized, it could make the whole batch go bad. Make sure everything that touches the beer post-boil is sanitized. The actual brewing process is simple. Start by adding 2 gallons of water to your pot and bring it to a boil. Stir in the malt, and make sure you keep stirring to avoid burnination. Never cover the pot after this stage; it will boil over and you will be cleaning your stove FOR HOURS. Adding the malt will stop the boil; wait till it re-establishes and start a 1 hour timer. The recipe for your kit has a hop schedule, which tells you what hop, how much and when to add it. Don't worry if you're not exact, there's some wiggle room.

Once your hour is complete, turn off the burner. Fill your sink with cold water and put the pot in it. Once the wort (non-fermented beer) is in the 60-80F range, you can add it to your sanitized bucket. Add enough water to the bucket to reach 5 gallons and pitch the yeast. Now, wait 7 to 10 days. Check with your hydrometer every day. When the number stops changing, the fermentation is done! Add priming sugar and bottle, then wait another 2 weeks and you'll have a finished beer! Cheers!