

KEG CLEANING

Here is a check list of tasks followed when the kegs are returned. Note that your cleaning techniques may vary, but the desired result is the same -- sanitary kegs.

- Unload kegs.
- Inspect, looking for:
 - other breweries' kegs
 - bent necks
 - bent lugs
 - damaged or missing locking rings
 - damaged chimes or keg body
 - tap protectors left on the valve.
- Sort the kegs according to size.
- Wash exterior to remove filth and labeling (like old state tax documentation).
- De-ullage partially full kegs. (Necessary even if using an automated system.)
- Prerinse to remove the bulk of the soil load.
- Wash with caustic to clean both the keg walls and the inside and outside of the valve stem.
- Wash with an acid solution to both neutralize the caustic and to remove beerstone.
- Sanitize the keg with chemical or steam. Steam is preferable because not only does it do a better job of sterilizing crevices that might be hard to reach with chemical solutions, but it also removes most of the air from the keg (if using a Sankey-style keg).
- Before filling, the keg should be purged with CO₂ and pressurized.

Keg Cleaning QC for the Brewer

Here is a basic keg cleaning and filling QC outline:

Physical

- Examine keg interiors regularly (pull three from every run)
- Check beer carbonation
- Check dissolved oxygen levels
- Check air, water, CO₂, and steam pressures

Chemical

- Titrate chemical cleaners and sanitizers as needed, at least daily prior to start up. Many systems will dilute the chemicals with rinse water and need to be replenished consistently. Automated chemical monitoring and dosing is a really good option for such systems!

Biological

- Swab keg interiors
- Swab keg cleaning and filling heads
- Plate out beer and/or water samples

Sensory

- Taste beer regularly
- Watch the cleaning and filling process
- Listen to the cleaning and filling process

Storing Kegs - Kegs should be stored clean. As soon as dirty kegs return from the trade, de-ullage them and rinse until the water runs clear. Old beer left in a keg will only become more difficult to rinse out as it crusts onto the stem and inside keg walls. This is especially true of unfiltered beer. Unwashed kegs lead to an unsanitary storage facility, and can even damage the valve gaskets and welded seams if the pressure from rotting beer builds up too high.

More notes specific to this facility: