Because cask beer relays on a natural process for clarification rather than filtration it is important to have careful control of the brewing and fermenting stages as well as maintaining excellent microbiology.

**To be ready for racking a beer must have:**

* Between 2 and 3 degrees SG of fermentable residue
* A homogenous yeast count between 1 and 3 x 106 cells/ ml
* Be at a suitable temperature to give a controlled secondary fermentation

**Method of operation**

Ideally, check the attenuation limit of each brew by fully fermenting a sample of wort with yeast

Allow beer to ferment out and check PG

Normally the PG will be 2 ± 1 degrees SG above the attenuation limit (AL)

Typical CO2 levels at the end of primary fermentation are less than 2.0 g/hl (less than 1.0 volume of CO2).

If PG - AL is too low (less then 2 degrees SG), then primings may be added to increase extract.

Skim off surplus yeast and cool vessel to 8 deg C

Add auxiliary finings to the fermenter at required rate (usually between ½ and 1 pt/brl).

Run off any surplus sludge from the bottom of the vessel before transferring the whole contents to a racking back.

Check the yeast count which should be between 1 and 3 million cells/ml

Rack the beer into clean casks and dry hop as required.

Roll the casks to ensure full mixing and store at cool (circa 8 -10 deg C) for 3 to 4 days.

If the cask is producing significant levels of secondary condition (CO2), then vent the excess through a soft peg the evening before fining.

The day of dispatch fine the casks at the required rate (usually between 2 and 4 pints/UK brl (163.5 litres))

The casks should be dispatched immediately after fining and should be stillaged immediately on receipt by the pub.

Correctly handled the beer in cask should have dropped bright and be ready for dispense within 24 hours after secondary fermentation has completed.

Fresh beer is best beer, so to ensure that your customers receive the perfect pint, there are minimum sales targets you must aim for.

Beer deteriorates quickly when in use, which means that a cask should be sold within three days of connection and a keg within five days of connection.

This means that at least 2 casks or kegs of each brand should be sold per week. If this cannot be achieved, then you should use smaller casks or kegs.

14 days shelf life will normally be available on delivery:

Aim to start using a delivery after maximum 3 days and finish that delivery within a further 8 days. To carry stock in excess of this creates a risk to quality.

The best before date can only be guaranteed if beer is stored at the correct temperature throughout the year, which is 12 deg C.

Immediately after delivery, when the cask has been set in the final position for dispense, the cask should be vented for 3 – 6 hours to vent off excess pressure, usually by replacing the hard insert in the “shive” (inserted at the end of fill), with a soft peg. This is the conditioning / settling period. The soft peg is cut from wood “with the grain” so that gas can vent through the vertical “pores”.

Once the cask has “settled”, i.e. is not generating more CO2, the cask should be hard spiled to reseal the cask. This maintains the condition of the beer by preventing any gas loss (or air ingress). In this case, the wooden peg is cut “across the grain” so that there are no pores or openings.

The soft spile should be replaced during periods of dispense, or if regular dispense occurs, the soft spile should be loosened to prevent a slight vacuum developing and lifting the sediment due to CO2 bubble evolution.