
Smooth Hoperator gives fresh taste

DON TSE

A new device at Beer Revolution has the ability to give your beer a fresh new taste.

Dubbed the "Smooth Hoperator," the device allows instant dry hopping, a brewing technique where hops are added at some point after fermentation has begun. Dry hopping is almost always done in addition to the regular use of hops in the brewing kettle, where unfermented "beer" is boiled to allow certain biochemical reactions to occur. Generally speaking, hops added to the kettle create bitterness and some flavour and aroma, while dry hopping adds only flavour and aroma, without additional bitterness. Put simply, dry-hopped beers taste fresh.

Unfortunately, hop flavours and aromas are volatile. Also, the process of dry hopping adds oxygen to the beer, which promotes oxidation and off flavours. So, ironically, dry-hopped beers, which are intended to taste fresh, go stale sooner, since their delicate flavours quickly deteriorate.

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Smooth Hoperator is Beer Revolution's creative solution to that problem. Designed by Brewsters' brewer Mike Hallman and fine-tuned by brewmaster Rob Walsh and head brewer Luke Woolridge, the device sits in Beer Revolution's beer cooler. Beer flows out of a keg and through the Smooth Hoperator, which is stuffed with hops, before coming out the tap.

The beauty of instant dry hopping is not merely the ability to add fresh hop flavours to a beer without risk of going stale, it can also be educational, since the same beer could be served dry hopped with different hop varieties. This allows the consumer to learn about the different hop flavours.

And nothing says the Smooth Hoperator has to be filled with hops. "One of the great advantages of the Smooth Hoperator is its flexibility," says Hallman. "We don't have to make a decision on anything until it's about to go on tap." So, there are plans to pack the device full of coffee beans and a

vanilla pod and run a stout through it, or to use flower petals with a wheat beer.

While the idea of instant dry hopping is not new, the Smooth Hoperator is unique because it stays in the cooler, keeping any beer within the device itself at proper temperature. By contrast, most instant dry hopping devices merely push beer from the tap through the device, and then into the glass. Beer left in such a device gets warm, loses its carbonation and froths up. The Smooth Hoperator will only be used at Beer Revolution when it strikes their fancy — ask the staff if there are any dry-hopped offerings.

The idea for instant dry hopping is largely credited to Dogfish Head Brewing of Delaware, which invented a device called Randall the Enamel Animal in 2002. If you want to try instant dry hopping at home, they've made the Randall Jr. available for sale on their website (dogfish.com).

On Tap is a regular column brought to you by National which will look at draft options at bars and pubs across the city.