

Bespoke Canners Ltd.



Our Mission

The last twenty years have seen a rebirth in British brewing with literally hundreds of newly founded craft breweries producing a fantastic variety of stunning ales. The choice has never been wider and the quality has never been higher.

If you are a brewer, then let's start by offering you Bespoke Canners congratulations for the part you played in that revolution.

But whilst the brewing industry reinvented itself, pubs have fared less well, with the Guardian reporting in August 2014 that closures were running at 31 per week. So if all that wonderful craft beer is chasing fewer pubs, where does the successful brewer sell it?

The answer of course is as packaged beer through retail outlets, and traditionally this has meant bottles. Many craft brewers operate small bottling lines, and the attractions are obvious, the format is traditional, and the entry stakes are low – as long as the volumes are small.

Meanwhile the craft beer scene in the US, which has always been a few years ahead of ours, has embraced canning as a preferable format. Cans offer a number of advantages to both the consumer and the brewer. But until now, there was no easy way to can beer at a craft scale and to the right quality.

Our mission then is to bring canning to the craft brewer, enabling you to offer the consumer the choice they demand at a cost and quality that will enhance your business. You can focus on making the best beers – whilst we will package them for you to quality standards that just cannot be matched elsewhere.

Where are we?

We are based in a purpose designed Food Grade facility in Wrexham enjoying excellent transport links, so we are a viable partner for breweries across England, and all of Wales. We even have customers in Scotland who choose us because they have such a strong belief in our quality.

Our operations are targeted at small Craft Brewers and Cider makers, and we have designed our facilities to operate at the kind of speeds and volumes that suit the craft market.

We are a registered Duty Suspended Warehouse and Trade Facility, so we can manage the legal aspects of the packing operations painlessly, and we have expert quality systems that ensure everything we do is to the highest possible standard.



What do we do?

Canning of beers and ciders, and soft drinks!

The details for the standard 330 ml can are as follows:

Quality assurance

It all starts when you ship your product to us. Most of our customers use food grade IBCs, which hold up to 1000l of beer, although we can also work with collapsible IBCs, stainless steel transit tanks casks, kegs, Pallecons and Tankers.

Once your beer or cider is received our QA systems kick in and we take samples to monitor the microbiological and chemical quality of the product to ensure that we understand what finishing operations are required before we progress to canning.

Chilling

As a minimum these finishing operations including deep chilling down to 1-2 °C so that carbonation levels can be managed through the canning process, more often though, we also need to filter the beer to remove yeast, hop fragments and so on.

Filtration

Some craft brewers prefer the natural presence of yeast so we can filter or not as you prefer. When we do filter, our capability extends to cold sterile filtration – the industry normally defines this as 0.45 micron – but we can go lower in exceptional circumstances.

Where you already have filtration built into your processes, we recommend that you filter first – that way the yield achieved at our premises is higher and there is less risk of sediments lifting during transit making turnaround faster.

Carbonation

We can also carbonate – this is an absolute requirement where the beer or cider has been shipped in IBCs as these are not pressure capable containers. If you prefer to ship in casks or kegs, and manage the carbonation level yourself, then we can also accommodate that.

Our maximum carbonation level is around 3.3 -3.5 volumes CO₂ – high enough for virtually all beers and ciders, and most soft drinks. Most of our customers prefer a lower carbonation level, aiming to give a drinking quality similar to draught beer served in a pub.

There are some things we can not do though: We cannot can ciders “flat” because the cans would feel soft and squashy – and our experience is that consumers reject this. Nor can we offer a “nitro” carbonation process, and for this reason widgets are not part of our offering.

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The Canning process

Obviously this is the heart of what we do, and we have invested a great deal of money and expertise in this operation:

Digitally printed pressure sensitive labels are applied to empty cans. Choose from silver or black cans – white cans to be available soon. More on this later on.



Durability advice

All our cans are inkjet coded on the base with the “Best Before” date. Ultimately you own the responsibility for setting this date but we can advise and so we employ a food scientist to help get these kind of details right. The date will depend on whether you opt for sterile filtration and the properties of the product you have supplied. It can however be up to 12 months after the date of filling. As a craft brewer exploring a new market this gives you enough time to find the right retail route without worrying about expiry.

Hygiene management

Every single can is then individually sanitised using sterilising solutions similar to those you probably use in your own brewery. We believe it is essential to sterilise the container otherwise all the effort you have put into producing a great beer and we have put into safe and hygienic filtration and carbonation will be undermined.

Filling and seaming

Cans are then filled with beer/cider at 1°C to retain the carbonation and the quality of the product. Filling at these low and carefully controlled temperatures is absolutely essential if quality is to be consistent, and it's one of the reasons that we believe that canning is best done in fixed premises.

We then exclusively use the double seam CDL lid T double seam option ensuring optimal product integrity.

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Legal compliance

After filling the cans are passed across an automatic check-weighing system to ensure compliance with average weight legislation. Our QA system ensures that your cans are legal whilst avoiding the high give away and poor yield that you may have seen elsewhere. Records to prove compliance are of course available to our customers.

Secondary packaging

After check-weighing we pass every can through a custom built dryer. We do this to prevent stress corrosion around the pull tab. This is something that can happen a few months into the shelf life of the beer if the can was shrink wrapped when cold creating a condensation risk. Managing this risk is another reason to choose a fixed base canner.

Cans are generally packed into shrink-wrap trays of 24. Some retailers require 16 packs for weight reasons, and we can of course accommodate this. Going smaller still, we can offer a 4/6 pack can carrier solution, even a “variety pack” approach putting up to four/six of your beers in a single carrier to give the consumer a chance to try a selection of your products.

Finally, products are then palletised onto standard pallets ready for collection or delivery.





Label origination

The label is your first chance to communicate with the customer, get it wrong and it is also your last chance, so the quality of the design of the label is absolutely vital.

Bespoke Canners have an established relationship with a couple of label manufacturers, and they can help you use your existing branding to create labels optimised for cans. If you already have the artwork or use your own design studios then all you need to do is pass the artwork to our label printers. Labels made this way are included in the price. If you ask our label manufacturer to develop artwork then some additional costs will result – we generally just put you in touch and then you will be billed by them for the additional works.

Some clients prefer digitally printed cans to self-adhesive labels. We can do this but you should be aware that the minimum order quantity is in the region of 90-100,000 cans per product. We would always advise potential customers to see how good our standard labels can be – you might change your mind about digitally printed cans!

We also recommend that customers put the design and commitment to labels at the top of their to-do list – perhaps even before you brew the beer. Labels can take up to 3 weeks from approval of proofs depending on what the label manufacturer can schedule- however average appears to be 10-14 days from approval.

Bespoke Cannery Ltd.



Other things you should know about us

Our minimum run is around 1000 litres, and our maximum is infinity!!!

Lead time – based on average label timescales is around 2-4 weeks from final approval of label. We need around 7-12 days to chill the beer/cider and complete any other required processes prior to filling.

We can offer pasteurisation for products, but this should be considered with regard to any possible physical changes that the product may undergo. We can advise on this in conjunction with our Food Science Consultant.

Yields – dependent on the processes required, but we would target between 90-96%

Legal compliance with Customs and Excise requires us to reconcile the weight of beer and the volume, so we measure the specific gravity of every products and provide you with the data to remain above board. We use a special calculator to ensure compliance. This normally accounts for around 0.5% of the material conversion.

Our Quality management systems and controls are designed to be SALSA compliant and our stated intention is to seek SALSA accreditation in 2016 and BRC accreditation in 2017. As part of this process we use an independent Food Science consultancy to advise and audit us.

Pricing depends on volume and the processes required to achieve the final product specification you require.

Robin Hale

robin@bespokecannery.com

07712 702005

Bespoke Cannery

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