



BEER GROWLERS



Have Your Customers Asked You About Growlers?

If you have customers who are craft beer lovers, you might want to consider selling growlers.

Growlers are typically 64-ounce jugs, many times made from dark brown glass, with handles on them. State law allows establishments with Class B liquor licenses to fill growlers with draught beer, seal the tops and sell them for off-premise consumption.

Why are growler sales taking off? For one thing, beer connoisseurs tend to prefer draught beer over bottled beer, and growlers allow them to take draught beer home with them. Also, there are beers brewed at local breweries and brew pubs that are not sold in bottles. These beers may be found on tap at local bars and restaurants, and the growler allows

them to be enjoyed at home.

The business owners are driving growler sales, too. Growlers have a better profit margin than bottled beer, and they bring in customers who are willing to pay for a premium product. They also generate return customers. Establishments can sell their own growlers with their own branding, and refill them for a lower price.

For a business that already has craft beers on tap, the cost of getting started is minimal. The biggest expense is the growlers themselves, which can cost as low as \$5 each, with your branding on them. You also need a way to seal them and a way to clean them. The seals can be as simple as caps that cost a few cents each and shrink-wrap seals that cost even less.

Some grocery stores are filling growlers, as well. Those that are selling growlers have been able to obtain Class B liquor licenses, although grocery stores typically have Class A licenses. Class A licenses only allow sales for off-premise consumption, in the original sealed containers. So, the vast majority of grocery stores cannot legally sell growlers.

One final consideration, to make sure your growler sales would be legal, check with your city, village or town clerk to be sure that local ordinances allow it. Milwaukee, Madison and various other cities have modified their ordinances in recent years, to clarify that growlers would not be considered “open containers.” **WR**



Filling and Cleaning Requirements

Here's a quick overview of state requirements for growler filling and cleaning. When filling growlers, you need to always make sure that there is an air gap between the bottle and the beer tap.

When customers come in to have their growler refilled, you will need to rinse it with hot water. If you are going to allow exchange returnables, then the growlers will need to be washed, rinsed and sanitized under an approved plan and additional license.

Questions about growlers or other alcohol regulations? Call WRA Hotline Team member Pete Hanson at 800-589-3211.