



Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery, Part II The Most Affordable Brewery

By Tom Hennessy, Colorado Boy Brewing



Note: You can subscribe to Tom's blog, [The Affordable Brewery](#), [here](#).

I hope last week I didn't trash your dream of a large packaging brewery. If you have the funds, it is still a very viable option. I just have my own way of going about it.

Now, if your passion is to make a living brewing beer without too many hassles associated with either food or distribution, then a tasting room brewery is your answer.

I am defining a tasting room brewery as basically a brewery with, well, as tasting room. It's really that simple. However unlike a nano brewery, which in my book is similar but might just have a 1 to 3 BBL brewing system, a tasting room brewery has a brew set-up that is of sufficient size so you could do a limited amount of distribution.

EQUIPMENT

Kettle

In my mind if I were to open this type of brewery, my minimum equipment size would be a 7 BBL system. 10 BBL would even be nicer, but I find when shopping for used equipment there is a lot more 7 BBL stuff available. You might get lucky and find some good 10 BBL equipment, and if you do - great.

Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery (page 2)

With this size brewery, you can go direct fire using a 200k to 300k [burner](#). The kettle you buy most likely will already have one. It's a simple set up. However the gas flu vent that comes off the bottom needs to have a balancer on it. That way when the pipe gets hot, rather than drawing all the heat from the bottom of the kettle, it pulls in room air, and that makes the kettle very efficient.



Air Balancer

Mash Tun

There are many things you could use for a mash tun. A simple dairy tank with a copper pipe laid in the bottom with slits cut in the pipe would only run you about \$2,000. Or you could buy a real mash tun from a good manufacturer that is insulated and cost about \$12,000. Both are good, the real mash tun is better, but it depends on your budget.

Platform

I wouldn't get one. They give the brewer a great feeling of power, up there on the stainless steel stage, and it is a safe area to work on the mash and kettle, however it will set you back about 4 or 5K. I prefer to use that money on other things, so I would buy a [mobile step platform](#) for about \$500.

Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery

(page 3)

Hot Liquor Tank

You probably aren't going to be doing double batches in a small brewery, so this tank doesn't need a heat source. It just needs to temporarily hold hot water that is heated in the kettle. I cover the brewing process in my very famous excellent book, [Colorado Boy SOP](#). Here again you could use a dairy tank, or a nice non-jacketed [Letina](#) tank works well and looks great too.

Call me crazy - many people do - but I would put this tank on a stand so you could just gravity your hot liquor to your mash tun for sparge, rather than using a second pump. It works great.

Fermenters

Three jacketed Letinas, the Z-1000-C for \$3900 each From St. Pats of Texas are great. Two people can move them around because they are so light. They look good, and are only 32 inches in diameter, so they will fit anywhere. You can brew a full 7 BBL's in them if your plato is 13 degrees or less. If brewing a big beer you will want to brew 5 or 6 BBL's or the yeast will blow out the top. That's because they are 265 gallons and a conical is about 310 gallons.

Your other choice, which is a good one, is to find used conicals. They are the best for fermentation and harvesting yeast, but used they will set you back 5 or 6k each. The third choice is a jacketed horizontal dairy tank. That's about 2k, but you will want them in a separate room. Also, harvesting is a wee bit more difficult, but not impossible. I have brewed with them. By the way, all three of these choices work great and will make world class beers.

Serving Tanks

As you know by now I am a big fan of serving your beer at the bar right out of a serving tank, rather than a keg. You will always have some beer in kegs as you keg a tank off as it gets near the bottom, but using serving tanks will make your life so much easier. Again, make a big cooler so as you grow, you can add more serving tanks, which will give you more options at the tap. You can find these on [Probrewer.com](#) for about 3k.

Mill & Auger

Doing your own milling will save you about .06 per pound compared to pre-ground. There are used mills out there but I personally recommend [Forgeworks mill](#). Yes we helped invent it (I was looking for cheap alternatives to the expensive ones out there) but we don't get any kickbacks from Tom Bennett at Forgeworks, just to let you know. It is simple and rock solid.

Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery (page 4)

For the auger I have used a flex auger from Farmer Boy AG. I believe it was around \$1,000. Shoot me a note and I can send you our invoice which shows all the part numbers.

Here is a video I made a few years ago on an [install](#).

Extras

This is your heat exchanger, pump(s), carb stones, valves, etc. I typically buy most of these things new, and at this point [Glacier Tanks](#) seems to have the best price currently on the little things. [CPE Systems](#) is a good place to find pumps and heat exchangers.

LOCATION

I like warehouse locations as long as they are not too far off the beaten path. The key to your survival and happy life, is a thriving tasting room business, so you want a location that is convenient and easy to get to. An existing restaurant or bar would save a lot, but you also want high ceilings in case your beer becomes so fantastic that you need to expand your brewing system.

Also, a decent outdoor experience is a huge draw. If I were to build one of these things today and I lived in an urban area, I would make a nice dog park attached to the brewery. Or how about a bowling alley for your brewery, but keep some lanes so people can play. A movie theater would work well too. I like the idea of an airport hanger and the fuselage of a DC3 as the back bar where folks can sit in comfort sipping pints.

The point is to make your tasting room fun to attract customers, but also a good location so it's not too much of a hassle for them to get to you.

BUSINESS SYSTEM

I went through this last week with my piece on the [Packaging Brewery](#). This is *muy importante*! Really, you have to read through this and devote your life to it. My old Pizzeria, IL Vicino just celebrated its 30 year anniversary. My old partner and childhood best friend who still owns it shared with me how it's doing. In a word, great! It's still making lots of money, and you know why? Sure it's good, but mainly because it adheres to our business system, which monitors the establishment from the books, to the quality, to the repair and maintenance, to keeping it fresh.

If you want to be around in 10 years or 30, you have to have a business system: Plain and simple.

Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery (page 5)

SOME NUMBERS

Brewing Equipment				
Taproom Brewery				
Equipment	Quantity	Budget Ea.	Total Budget	
Brew Kettle	1	1200	12000	Forgeworks
Mash Tun	1	2000	2000	Dairy
Fermenter	3	3400	10200	Letina
Serving Tank	6	3000	18000	Used
Hot Liq.	1	2000	2000	Letina
Glycol Chiller	1	1900	1900	Foxx Equip.
Pump	1	2500	2500	CPE
Heat Exch.	1	4000	4000	CPE
Keg Sink	1	700	700	Home Depot
Grist Hydrator	1	650	650	Forgeworks
Auger	1	1000	1000	Farmer Boy
Mill	1	4800	4800	Forgeworks
O2 Infuser	1	350	350	GW Kent
Valves	50	53	2650	Glacier Tank
Clamps	75	6	450	Glacier Tank
CO2 Stones	6	100	600	GW Kent
Flow Meter	1	1150	1150	GW Kent
Tees	10	28	280	
Elbows	5	21	105	
Press Relief	6	179	1074	
TC/hose Brb	8	18	144	
TC/FPT	7	13	91	
TC/Beer nut	6	18	108	
TC/Blank	6	3.5	21	
Racking Arm	3	59	177	
TC/manifold	1	150	150	
Gaskets	100	0.5	50	
TC/Hose Lg.	12	15	180	
TC/Prs. Gge	1	83	83	
Spray Ball	3	89	267	
Hot Hose	18	12	216	
Trans Hose	24	4	96	
Sample Valves	1	45	45	
Kegs(used)	25	100	2500	Gopher Kegs
Total			70,537.00	

Rough Cost of Brewing Equipment

Types of Breweries: The Tasting Room Brewery (page 6)

Brewery	Cost	Other	Cost
Entire Package	76000	Merchandise Inventory	2500
Bar		Legal	1000
TV's	1000	Acct.	1000
Cabinet Work	0	License Fees	3000
3 Comp Sink (Bar)	600	Permits	1500
Hand Sink	100	Architect/Engineering*	25000
Reach in Cooler	2200		
Bar Glasses	1200	Plumbing*	60000
Mats	400	Electrical*	40000
Growlers	1700	Gen. Construction*	50000
Tasting Room		HVAC*	30000
Chairs	4000	Labor - Training	10000
Tables	2200	Salaries	
China	2000	Rents	30000
Cash Registers	2000	Signs	5000
Art/Decoration	10000		
		Rigging	2000
Office			
Desk	200		
Computer/printer	1600		
Music System	700	Total	\$ 369,600
Phone System	200		
Design Work	2500		

* Depending on location

Rough Cost to Build

CONCLUSION

Can you make money for this investment? The big factors are your rent and loan payments. Also how you run your brewery. If there is a bar and customers go up to the bar to get their beer and run a tab, then your labor is low. On the other hand you could have full service, which will increase your labor cost but also increase your sales.

I tell all our [students](#) this however, "Your first year is usually a heaven/hell thing. You are in heaven because you love what you do. But it can be hell because of staff turnover and just figuring out what you are doing". However every day there is an improvement, and this type of brewery is really the easiest to operate of the three we are covering. I am sure you will find plenty in what I just wrote to shoot holes through, but keep in mind, I'm not making this up. I've done it and it works.



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Tom Hennessy has opened seven breweries of his own and helped open over 100 more with his Colorado Boy Brewery Immersion Course. His video Frankenbrew, from 1995 has become a cult classic in the brewing world. His three brewing books include The Brewery Operations Manual, Colorado Boy SOP, and The Affordable Brewery. Tom lives, brews and writes in his mountain town of Ridgway, Colorado.