

# Selecting the Right Yeast Strain

By Erik Fowler, White Labs

Selecting and sourcing ingredients is one of the most important action items prior to opening a brewery. In this post, we will dive into a few of the top considerations when it comes to selecting the real workhorse of brewing, yeast!

From flavor production to behavioral attributes such as flocculation, attenuation, and alcohol tolerance it can be difficult to navigate between 100's of commercially available strains to create the perfect beer. How do you choose the best yeast strains to work with from house strains to making specialty beers and in addition to considering managing multiple strains in the brewery?

## Working Backwards

First, you must set the parameters for the beer. What style are you planning on brewing and what yeast strain is best suited for that style/beer? Determining things like desired alcohol content (starting gravity), fermentation temperature and time, malt or hop forward, and how the yeast strain may accentuate or diminish that character will help narrow the search.

Have a target prior to brewing and selected ingredients to hit the target.

## The Importance of Strain Performance

Predictability and reliability are crucial in a professional brewing setting. Your customers will come to expect consistency in your beers and you must have a process and ingredients to replicate the same quality time and time again. Fortunately, most yeast strains used in brewing has been domesticated over hundreds of years in brewing settings to provide just that.

Some things to consider when looking at strain performance are:

- Reliable growth and fermentation
- Short lag phase, normal yield
- Suited for wort medium and conditions (pH, sugars, nutrients, temperature)
- High attenuation
- Desired flocculation
- Desired flavor and aroma production (the most important!)

## Selecting the Right Yeast Strain (page 2)

### Managing Multiple Strains

A hobbyist brewer has the luxury of resources. The economy of scale makes it difficult (don't read as impossible) to work with different yeast strains for each brand you make, which is why most breweries have a "house" strain. A house strain usually ferments multiple brands in a brewery line-up and may give the beers a similar character. This can be a positive or a negative depending on your model.

When creating a line-up of seasonal and core brands it's best to consider the resources each beer will take and how it fits into your overall production schedule and material sourcing. If you plan on reusing yeast for multiple generations/batches keep scheduling in mind to minimize storage time between batches. From harvest to repitch, you'll ideally want to keep storage for less than 72 hours.

### Thinking Ahead

Take your time when planning your brewery and the beers you plan to make. Select yeast strains that fit into your schedule and provide consistency throughout multiple styles. At White Labs, we're always happy to help brewers select the perfect strain for the perfect beer. Please reach out with any inquiries to ensure you're set-up with the strain that best fits your beer and operations.



*Contributing Author*

**Erik Fowler**

**Education & Brewery Experience Manager, White Labs**

*Erik has been with White Labs since 2014. Before coming to White Labs, he worked for: a prominent regional brewery, a nano-brewery, and several beer and wine focused retail outlets. He has led education classes on yeast handling, sensory techniques and QC. Erik holds his Cicerone® certification as well as a certificate in the Business of Craft Beer from San Diego State University. His objective is to use his knowledge and experience to make fermentation education informative, accessible and interesting.*