

Don't Laugh at my Fermenter

By Tom Hennessy, Colorado Boy Brewing

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

We have had hundreds of students go through our immersion course that have resulted in at least 130 breweries around the world. 99% of the students have become good friends too. If you are ever at a brewery though and you see a Letina Tank used as a fermentation vessel, you can be pretty sure the owner may be an alum.

A little background: When I needed to replace the beast fermenters at Colorado Boy in Ridgway, I didn't have much room to work with. The brewhouse including fermentation is only 10x15. I kept looking at these wine tanks that were sold by St. Pats of Texas. They were enclosed and had a jacket, but no insulation. Also at 1000 liters, a little small for a 7 BBL tank, or so I was thinking. There also was no insulation layer. Ah, but the size, only 32 inches in diameter. I could have two plus room to squeeze in another smaller one for a hot liquor tank, leaving room underneath for a mill.

I spoke with the guy at St. Pats who said they were wine tanks and wouldn't work in a brewery. He was a rude asshole to me, so of course I bought two! Well, now I have about ten years' experience with these tanks and they are great. In fact, they work so well that Letina now changed the jackets on them to work better for beer. Before I did this Letina never thought about breweries, so I am still waiting for my thank you check from them.



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OK, the downsides first.

- At 265 gallons, anything over a 13 plato and you need to reduce how much you brew. I can brew a full 7 BBL's of our Irish, but our IPA needs to be 6 BBL and I add fermcap to help keep everything in the tank rather than all over the floor.
- They don't hold pressure, so for transfer you need to use a pump.
- The cone is shallow so yeast harvest off the bottom is a challenge

The upside.

- Two people can carry them
- They are pretty and the welds are first class
- They only cost \$3,400 each, about half the price of a conical

First I use a high floc English ale yeast as my house yeast. When I am done with my diacetyl rest, I chill to 50. The lets the yeast floc out but not get packed at the bottom. Then I can harvest off the bottom like I do for our conicals. After I harvest, I crash it the rest of the way. At that point I could also just dry hop in the tank as well.

There is a swell large clamp down lid at the top that makes this easy, and a racking arm near the bottom for transfer.

I have also found the tanks excellent for lagers. As bottom fermenters there is not the headspace concerns like ales. Because they are small and inexpensive, I am not using up expensive stainless real estate by lagering in the tank.

If you are thinking of expanding, this may be a good option for you. If you are opening on a limited budget this could make a difference. By the way, most of our GABF medals came from beers made with these tanks. You won't short-change yourself.

Just send a note to Letina and tell them Tom Hennessy is waiting for his check. And if you like this newsletter, do me a favor and pass it along to any beer friends you have.



Contributing Author

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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.