A growler is a refillable container or vessel into which tap beer is poured and transported home for consumption. Growlers are typically glass or metal containers and hold up to 64oz of beer, wine, hard cider or Kombucha.

With the increased popularity of growler refilling there is an increased risk of cross-contamination. Since growlers are taken to the consumer’s home, there is no guarantee they have been properly cleaned before being returned for refilling.

The Food Sanitation Rules require a “contamination-free” transfer process for beverages, so growlers should be refilled without any contact between the tap and the vessel.

Most growlers are filled via a growler fill tube which allows the beer to be filled from the bottom of the container to lessen the foam and expedite the filling process. Since the use of fill tubes can allow for contaminants from one vessel to be transferred to the next, they must be changed or washed, rinsed and sanitized between each use.

After filling, the exterior of filled growlers should be wiped down with a wiping cloth that has been stored in sanitizer solution.

Recommendations:
- Focus on proper hand washing after handling a customer container
- If utilizing fill tubes, have many spare tubes (enough for your busiest time) available for use
- Continue to rotate clean sanitized tubes for each refill
- If rinsing customer growlers, dedicate a sink for this purpose only (not a handwashing sink)
- Avoid contacting clean glassware and equipment with returned growlers while handling and filling
- For consumer self-service operations, a rinse sink must be installed (cold water acceptable) and the operator must guarantee a contamination free process during refilling.

Only accept clean growlers and rinse before refilling

Thank you to Deschutes County Environmental Health for their significant contribution to this fact sheet.

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