

# Food Code Fact Sheet #21

What you should know about the Code

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FOODSAFETY

## Growler Refilling

### OAR 333-150-0000, CHAPTER 4-603.17

(A) Except as specified in ¶¶ (B) and (C) of this section, returned empty containers intended for cleaning and refilling with food shall be cleaned and refilled in a regulated food processing plant. <sup>P</sup>

(B) A food-specific container for beverages may be refilled at a food establishment if:

(1) The design of the container and of the rinsing equipment and the nature of the beverage, when considered together, allow effective cleaning at home or in the food establishment;

(2) Facilities for rinsing before refilling returned containers with fresh, hot water that is under pressure and not recirculated are provided as part of the dispensing system;

(3) The consumer-owned container returned to the food establishment for refilling is refilled for sale or service only to the same consumer; and

(4) The container is refilled by:

(a) An employee of the food establishment, or

(b) The owner of the container if the beverage system includes a contamination-free transfer process that cannot be bypassed by the container owner.

(C) Consumer-owned containers that are not food-specific may be filled at a water vending machine or system.

### PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS:

The refilling of consumer-owned beverage containers introduces the possibility of contamination of the filling equipment or product by improperly cleaned containers or the improper operation of the equipment. To prevent this contamination and possible health hazards to the consumer, the refilling of consumer-owned containers is limited to beverages that are not potentially hazardous foods. Equipment must be designed to prevent the contamination of the equipment and means must be provided to clean the containers at the facility.

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



**Only accept clean growlers  
and rinse before refilling**

- 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.

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