

SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY BEER GROUP

FUTURE OF CASK

I have spent the last 30 years involved in cask beer, previously as a Director of Adnams Brewer and some 25 years ago created Cask Marque which accredited great pubs for the quality of their cask ale. We are the lead trainer in cellar management in the industry and have taken the role to champion the sector.

We work closely with SIBA and CAMRA and chair Cask Matters which includes regional brewers and retailers. The group produces the annual cask report and supports Cask Ale Week.

Cask is only available in pubs so it relies on the success of pubs for its future, hence the massive decline in sale due to the pandemic and pub closures.

Why is cask important?

- It is part of our heritage as very much a British product.
- It is a USP for the British pub as you cannot replicate it in the off trade.
- Over 70% of beer brewed by regional and small brewers is cask and therefore they are very dependent for their profitability on the category.
- It has a local identity and with the supply chain is an important local employer.
- American brewers define cask as the ultimate craft beer.

Post Covid

Cask is a fresh product with a 3 day shelf life when opened. It will experience real issues during this summer due to:

- Uncertainty of sales due to pub restrictions and therefore reluctance to stock a range.
- Lack of throughput will affect quality and rate of sale.
- Summer is more of a lager market as people want a cooler product.
- Lack of cellar expertise to handle the product successfully.

Issues the industry face

There has been a continued decline in sales over the last 4-5 years having been a growth sector as reflected in the increase in the number of breweries. Why the decline:

- Pub closures will clearly affect sales of cask.
- De-stocking by pubs that sold cask when in vogue where now there is not the demand in the outlet. This is not a bad thing as poor quality for cask due to lack of throughput will damage its reputation.
- The reinvention of keg beer as a craft premium product and therefore an alternative ale with flavour.
- It is the least profitable beer on the bar which does not encourage licensees to stock or promote.
- Lack of marketing spend by regional and local brewers compared with the national lager brewers.
- Short sell by date and needs good cellar management. Produces lower yields as has more wastage but sold as the cheapest beer on the bar!

Why should cask survive?

In today's market place it has all the attributes that the consumer values:

- Heritage
- Local
- Premium product
- Hand crafted by the brewer and the licensee
- Natural and fresh
- Not processed

What can we do to help grow sales:

- Continue to educate licensees and managers on cellar practices so they serve great beer.
- Make cask cool in ensuring that it is served at the correct temperature of 11-13C with the sector investing in dispense equipment.
- Ensuring the range on sales is appropriate for the throughputs and the season – light beers in summer, dark beers in winter and a range of ABV's.
- Encourage delivery of a quality product that can command a higher price.
- Trained bar staff with knowledge about beer

How are Cask Marque contributing to its success?

- We have taken cellar management training online through tutorials.
- Currently writing an e-learning programme for bar staff to make them "beer professionals".
- Re-launch our CaskFinder app which has been downloaded 300,000 times and is used 60,000 times per month to find Cask Marque pubs. We need to use the CaskFinder app and its ale trails to get people back into the pub.
- Continue with educational messages.
- Organise and promote Cask Ale Week (23 September – 3 October 2021)
- Look to make 2022 "The Year of Cask" with an industry campaign.

Summary

Cask is dependent on the success of the British pub. We must use the reopening of pubs to ensure we can deliver a great product for customers to enjoy. Let's get our product fit for purpose so that when we move into the Autumn the cask ale season we can, through marketing and Cask Ale Week, attract more customers into the sector and back into the pub.

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