



BrewMonitor® at Western Red Brewing

Real-Time Fermentation Monitoring Boosts Solo Brewing Operation With Improved Yeast Management, Plus Major Time and Cost Savings

A Commitment to Quality and Customer Experience

As their website says, Western Red’s mission is “to brew and serve the best craft beers ever made in the Pacific Northwest.” From their single location in Poulsbo, Washington, they make sure that customers receive some of the most well-crafted beers in the Pacific Northwest.

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Western Red started in 2018 with a 7000 square foot building in Poulsbo, Washington, including an 1100 square foot taproom. With COVID changing the landscape this year, Western Red has added canning to their distribution and has grown production substantially year over year; production is expected to be up to 800 barrels by the end of 2020. They offer a wide variety of beer, including IPAs, specialty lagers, and a selection of dark beers, among others.

The Challenge: Efficiency and Quality Control for Solo Brewery Operations

Head brewer, business owner, and “everything else,” Denver Smyth is truly a one-man band when it comes to producing Western Red’s beer. “I do everything related to the brewing, except canning day, and then I get every volunteer I can find to help out!” He loves making beer and loves understanding



Benefits

- ✓ Remote fermentation monitoring allows you to check fermentation status from anywhere. No more weekend sampling.
- ✓ Continuous sampling and reporting eliminates manual sampling, saving much time and labor.
- ✓ Real-time fermentation monitoring offers continuous visibility into yeast vitality, eliminating guesswork for extremely accurate yeast collection timing.
- ✓ Real-time monitoring helps a solo brewer’s overall capabilities and efficiency, saving up to 2 days of tank time per batch, potentially saving up to \$20,000 per year.



When you start getting maxed on production, one or two days of additional tank time can be a lot. At the end of the year this adds up to an additional full turn in a tank. And that’s a huge deal, really. That’s probably the biggest production bonus that I’ve seen. If BrewMonitor can help me push an extra batch per year from a tank, that’s a thousand gallons of beer, which is about \$20,000, wholesale. That’s a big number for us.

- Denver Smyth, Founder/Head Brewer



BREWMONITOR® SYSTEM



the data behind the beer, but consolidating his efforts, improving processes and saving time wherever possible are the biggest challenges he faces. He has almost always needed to be in the brewery 7 days per week. He explained, “I live 30 minutes from my brewery, and almost without fail, I’ve had to go in every Saturday and Sunday to take samples, do gravity readings, and track progress. It always added a lot to my week.”

Also, Denver has never had the benefit of his own lab, and this presents challenges when it comes to good yeast management. He said, “My yeast has always been just textbook: You collect it for so many days. You pitch. You go 6 to 10 generations, depending on my yeast strain, and then you throw it away because I’ve never had a good way to actually check yeast viability and yeast health.”

The Solution: How Real-Time Fermentation Monitoring is Helping Western Red

Denver started using BrewMonitor in 2020 and is very excited about the improvements it has brought to his operations—first and foremost, how much time it saves him. He said, “My favorite thing is when I pitch a yeast on Friday night, I can leave and I don’t have to come in on Saturday if I don’t want to, because now I can see exactly what’s happening. No more Saturday and Sunday gravity readings! BrewMonitor really has saved me a ton of time. Now it’s pretty rare that I run to the brewery on a Saturday or Sunday at all, so that’s my favorite thing.”

It saves him critical time during the work week as well. He said, “Because I do everything, I think it’s probably helped

me more than somebody who has five or six guys on the brew floor, because it’s freeing me up to do a lot of other things around the brewery. For example, I do an occasional delivery here and there when I have time so I can free up my salesman, and I recently built a new shelf system. I do multiple things every day, and I no longer have to worry about those daily gravity readings. It’s saving me a ton of time.”

BrewMonitor has also provided some key lab functions for Denver’s management process, by giving him continuous insight into yeast vitality. He said, “With the BrewMonitor System I’m starting to really pinpoint—for all my beers—the best time to collect yeast. I can see exactly when the yeast is going dormant. I can tell just by the activity, and I can really capture that right down to the hour. Based on the data, I can also predict the optimal time for dry hopping in an IPA. It’s really helpful.”

BrewMonitor also provides a lot of the critical data he needs without adding huge equipment costs. He commented, “The data collection is letting me see really what’s going on, so much more than just looking at ‘bubbles in a bucket.’ Some of this knowledge I already had, I just haven’t had \$30,000 to spend on it on fancy lab equipment. BrewMonitor is really taking my brewing abilities WAY up.”

Lastly, as a solo operator, Denver points out the sheer cost savings he is anticipating for his business. He remarked, “It’s helping me shave a couple of days off of tanks because I’ve been able to see exactly when it was time to crash, as well as do other things a little better. When you start getting maxed on production, one or two days of additional tank time can be a lot. At the end of the year this adds up to an additional full turn in a tank. And that’s a huge deal, really. That’s probably the biggest production bonus that I’ve seen. If BrewMonitor can help me push an extra batch per year from a tank, that’s a thousand gallons of beer, which is about \$20,000, wholesale. That’s a big number for us.”