

MINI-MASH



Some brewers would like to try their hand at making a beer using the traditional grain mashing technique but are put-off by the technical complexity, the high cost of the equipment & the need to put aside the best part of a day to do it.

Here's an easy way to do it that requires no specialised equipment & takes very little of your time.

The Mini-mash

Mashing is the traditional brewing process of making beer using malted grain as the starting point. Mashing converts the starches in malted grain into the fermentable sugars called malt.

Home brewers usually do not do this because it is technically tricky & very time consuming. The alternative method used by most home brewers is called malt extract brewing. In this method, the mashing process has already been done by professionals to produce malt ready for brewing. This malt is available in the form of "malt extract" which has had most of its water removed to reduce volume & make packaging easier.

If you use the right combination of mashed grains, your beer will probably have a little more "grain" flavour than a similar recipe using malt extract. However, it is an interesting fact that if you mash a small proportion of the malt content of your ingredients, you will still get a relatively large proportion of the taste of a full mash.

The "mini-mash" technique provides a way of doing this without doing a full scale mash. It saves you an enormous amount of time (many hours) & lots of "mucking around".

Ingredients

A mini-mash enables you to introduce malted grain to your favourite recipe. All you need to do is replace 700g of fermentable sugars (malt extract, dextrose etc) with 1kg of grain. Use pilsner, pale, lager, Munich or wheat malt grains. You can do this with any recipe including any canned beer kit.

In addition to this, some recipes specify other grains. Some of these can also be put through the mini-mash process. Please take note of the following:

- Rolled oats, flaked barley & flaked maize can all go directly into the mini-mash.
- Maize or corn grits, polenta, pearl barley & plain rice can go into the mini-mash process but **MUST BE PRE-COOKED** beforehand (see below).

Crystal grains have been pre-mashed during the malting process & **DO NOT NEED TO BE MASHED**. These include amber, caramunich, carapils & crystal grains.

Equipment

Your equipment needs are very basic.

- You will need a thermos flask or an insulated food/drink container. A plastic "cooler" flask of about 4 to 8 litres with a wide neck is ideal & cheap. They are available where camping equipment is sold.
- You will also need an accurate thermometer.



Method

Pre-cooking stage

This applies only if you are using maize or corn grits, polenta, pearl barley or plain rice.

1. Wash the grains or grits thoroughly with clean water.
2. Place them in a cooking pot with plenty of water.
3. Boil gently, stirring occasionally until the grain has gelatinized. At this point, the mixture will be semi-clear & gluey. It is now ready for mashing.

Mashing Stage

Important note

For the mini-mash to work, you must make sure that whatever grain you are mashing, it will need to include some pale malted barley. If the recipe does not include this ingredient, you must add it and, of the total grain in the mash, at least 20% should be pale malted barley. Doing so will not spoil the recipe.

1. Heat the mashing water to 70°C in a large pot using an accurate thermometer to get the temperature right. **DO NOT GO OVER 70°C**. If possible, use up to 4 litres per kg of material to be mashed, otherwise, use as much as you can.
2. Add the cracked grain & any other adjuncts to be mashed to the hot water & stir.
3. Heat gently to bring the temperature back to 70°C, stirring frequently.
4. At the same time, pre-heat the thermos flask with hot water.
5. When the mash mixture has reached the required temperature, empty the thermos flask & transfer the mash mixture to it. Seal the flask & allow it to stand for at least two hours. You are now "mashing" your grain.
6. Pour the mash mixture through a fine strainer rinsing the grain several times with hot water. You might find it useful to line the strainer with muslin. Pour gently so you do not disturb the collected grain in the strainer because the grain itself will assist in the filtering action.
7. The first liquor that comes through will be cloudy so you should pour it through the collected grain again to clear it. Repeat several times if necessary to obtain clear liquor.
8. Finally, gently sprinkle hot water (about 80°C) over the collected grain to rinse all the dissolved sugars out of the grain. A litre of hot water should be enough to do this. This is called "sparging".
9. The filtered liquor can now be added to the rest of the wort.

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