

# Oak Barrels, Ltd.

## Your New Barrel

Keep your barrel shrink-wrapped, out of direct sunlight in a cool (55° – 60°) and optimally humid (65% - 75%) area until ready to use.

## Barrel Prep

Begin by rinsing out the barrel to remove any charred bits and pieces of wood that might have shaken loose in shipping. Using a rubber mallet, carefully tap in the spigot (just until snug). Fill the barrel with water. It is normal for the barrel to drip until the wood has swelled. Once the dripping stops, keep the water in the barrel for an additional 24 hours to hydrate the staves. Empty and rinse again. Fill to the top with your favorite spirit. Using a twist, push and turn action secure the bung/cork snugly in place.

## Aging

The length of time your spirits age and mellow in the barrel depends on personal taste. Small barrels will begin imparting oak flavor quickly – check every two to three weeks for taste and top off what has been lost to the angels' share. When pleased with your results, pour into your favorite decanter or bottle and enjoy. (Read more about this on the back.)

## Storing your Empty Barrel After Initial Use

*Ideally, your barrel would always be filled.* Used barrels require no special preparation beyond a simple water rinse, if desired, *when transferring out and in immediately.* If used barrels are to be stored empty, rinse them several times with clean water, and drain thoroughly. Remove the spigot and bung to promote air flow and store out of sunlight and in a cool (55° – 60°) and optimally humid (65% - 75%) area.

An alternative is to fill and store barrels with a sulfur-citric holding solution (see below instructions). This holding solution promotes sanitation and keeps the barrels swelled and smelling sweet however ... it will strip some of the oaks flavors. For your safety and the safety of your family, always follow manufacturers' guidelines and instructions for the proper use of chemicals.

1. Wash the barrel out immediately. Flush it until the flushed water runs clear.
2. Return the barrel to its stand and fill it with water. Add sulphite crystals and citric acid to the water in the following proportions:

Barrel	Sulphite Crystals	Citric Acid	Water
20 L Oak Barrel	3 tsp	2 tsp	5 gallons
10 L Oak Barrel	1 ½ tsp	1 tsp	2 ½ gallons
5 L Oak Barrel	¾ tsp	½ tsp	1 ¼ gallon
2 L Oak Barrel	¾ tsp	¼ tsp	2 quarts
1 L Oak Barrel	¼ tsp	1/8 tsp	1 quart

3. Top up the barrel with holding solution once a month to replace lost solution. To protect the bung area from drying out and to protect it from organism growth, rotate the barrel 45° in either direction every time you top up to keep the bung area soaked. (Take care – this holding solution will etch a concrete floor – rinse the floor with water to prevent this.)
4. Drain and replace the solution every 3 months.
5. Drain the barrel and rinse thoroughly with water before using.

## Reusing and Cleaning Your Barrel

When you are ready to use your barrel again, the barrel may need to be re-swelled and sanitized. This should always be done when aging wine.

1. Fill the barrel with a solution of BaroKleen and Hot water mixed using the following proportions. Leave for 24 to 48 hours.

Barrel	BaroKleen	Hot Water
20 L Oak Barrel	1 lb (450g)	5 gallons
10 L Oak Barrel	½ lb (240g)	2 ½ gallons
5 L Oak Barrel	¼ lb (120g)	1 ¼ gallon
2 L Oak Barrel	1/8 lb (60g)	2 quarts
1 L Oak Barrel	1 ounce (30g)	1 quart

2. Drain the barrel and flush with clean water until the flushed water runs clear.
3. Mix the following solution and pour this mixture into the barrel. Close the barrel and roll it around so that the sulphite solution touches the entire interior. This will neutralize any alkali remaining in the barrel.

Barrel	Sulphite Crystals	Citric Acid	Warm Water
20 L Oak Barrel	8 oz (240g)	1 oz (30g)	1 gallon
10 L Oak Barrel	4 oz (120g)	½ oz (15g)	2 quarts
1, 2 or 5 L Oak Barrel	2 oz (60g)	¼ oz (8g)	1 quart

4. Drain the sulphite solution and thoroughly rinse/flush the barrel with water.
5. Fill with wine or spirits of choice.

We love to hear from you – for more information or answers to questions, please either email us at [info@oakbarrelsltd.com](mailto:info@oakbarrelsltd.com) or leave a voice mail at 888-926-2555 – we *will* return your call.

More Information on Back ...

### **The Rule of Thumb for Aging in Smaller Barrels**

Using a smaller sized barrel changes the amount of surface area or the amount of wood barrel in contact with the contents. This larger ratio of wood to liquor has a direct impact on the flavor and length of the aging process and is the very reason that aging in a smaller barrel is much faster. For example, liquor can be aged out in four to six months when aging in a 20 L barrel versus years and years using the standard large 53-59 gallon barrel.

The *rule of thumb* for aging in smaller barrels:

- 20 L Oak Barrel – four to six months
- 10 L Oak Barrel – two to four months
- 5 L Oak Barrel – four to six weeks
- 2 L Oak barrel – two to four weeks
- 1 L Oak Barrel – one to two weeks

Check your barrels and their contents every couple of weeks – top off when necessary.

### **Temperature and Humidity**

Temperature also impacts the aging process due to the amount of oxidation that occurs at different temperatures. Higher temperatures accelerate this process while lower temperatures result in slower oxidation. Ideally there would be great variations between night and day temperatures. These fluctuations in temperature, along with changes in barometric pressure, have been shown to actually force the whiskey, wine or ale in and out of the wood, resulting in maximum flavor and character.

Oxygen enters a barrel when water or alcohol is lost due to evaporation – often called the “angels share”. In an environment with 100% relative humidity, very little water evaporates and so most of the loss is alcohol – a useful trick if one has a liquor or wine with very high proof. Most beverages are topped up from other barrels or bottles to prevent significant oxidation. *With small barrels, it's recommended to top off the barrel every one or two weeks.*

In a nutshell ...

- Low Humidity – primarily water lost resulting in higher alcohol content
  - ✓ Dry air and higher temperatures will result in more water being lost (alcohol content goes up)
- High Humidity – primarily alcohol lost resulting in losing the alcoholic strength of the product
  - ✓ When stored at 60% relative humidity or higher – primarily alcohol loss
  - ✓ Humid atmospheres with moderate temperatures will lead to more alcohol than water evaporating

### **Additional Information**

- As the barrels are a wood product, they are subject to the wood drying and shrinking. Oak Barrels, Ltd. offers no guarantee against shrinkage.
- In order for the spigot to flow freely, please remember to remove the bung/cork before you open the spigot ... pour from the spigot ... then close the spigot and finally ... replace the bung/cork.
- To keep your barrels performing and looking their best, please keep them stored in a protected area away from the elements and optimally in a cool and relatively humid area.
- Barrels with painted black steel hoops are particularly susceptible to moisture. A little care goes a long way. Prevent excessive staining and rust by keeping the exterior of the barrel dry.
- Avoid water stains by using a funnel to carefully fill your new barrel.
- Sandpaper will generally remove any stains or marks on the barrel.
- As the barrels are handcrafted, liquid volume is approximate.
- You should be able to reuse your barrel from 3-5 times ... remember that each aging will take longer than the previous one.
- Please do not nail or put screws into the hoops or staves as doing so will compromise the oak and might cause damage that is not covered by our return policy.
- If you want to age a different type of spirit than was initially aged in it, we recommend you use a new barrel.
- For your safety, if using chemicals to clean/sanitize your barrels, please follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper use.

Enjoy your barrel and have fun!

Once again, thank you for your purchase. Please come back again soon.

Oak Barrels, Ltd.  
[www.oakbarrelsltd.com](http://www.oakbarrelsltd.com)