Weber’s Craft Beer Label Idea Book

A Label Isn’t Just A Label. It’s Your Brand!
A label provides many functions for brands.

In the craft beverage industry (wine, beer and spirits), the label serves as the primary communicator of your brand’s story. With new craft brewers appearing every day and over 20,000 beers now available, the competition to get your brand noticed is fierce.

How will you use your label design to make your brand stand apart?

- Are you looking to have a clean, sleek label or a bold, in-your-face design?
- Are you trying to reflect a refined style or attitude?
- Do you want a style that looks handcrafted?

All of these things can be achieved with the right label design. If you’re planning to sell your product at a premium price, make sure it looks worth that premium price. Taking our decades of label knowledge and what we’ve learned from our premium beverage customers, we’ve put together a guide to labeling your craft beverages.

In this guidebook you’ll learn:

- The benefits of pressure-sensitive labels
- The types of labels a craft brewer uses
- Label materials that work best for beer bottles & cans of all sizes
- Craft beer label design tips
- Labeling equipment options for your bottles, cans, and cartons
Why use pressure-sensitive labels?

Pressure-sensitive labels are similar to stickers, meaning, you remove the label from the liner and apply it to another surface. Labels have a facesheet, pre-applied adhesive and a liner. One of the main alternatives to pressure-sensitive labels is a cut-and-stack glue applied label. There are several reasons why we recommend pressure-sensitive over this messy alternative.

✅ They’re clean to apply!

Pressure-sensitive label materials come with the adhesive already attached to the label. This means you do not have to add messy glue that clogs your machines and adds to labeling down-time maintenance.

✅ They’re Durable

Film labels or labels with a lamination can withstand harsh treatment, wet environments and water immersion better than regular paper labels.

✅ You have Application Options

Pressure-sensitive labeling systems are available for any brewing operation from table-top to 24/7 operations.
Prime Labels

Two of the most important components to your packaging are the bottle or can containing your beverage and the label that goes on it. The labels that you apply to the bottles or cans are considered the primary product (prime) label.

This is what sells your beer to new customers. Many times you are judged by the appearance of your label artwork, how well it is applied, and how long it lasts.

Carton Labels

Once you start distributing your product in larger quantities, you’ll need blank carton labels for identification or addressing.

Many people use a thermal-transfer printer to imprint a product identifier, case count, and production information, such as a lot number. You can also add the prime label to the box for quick identification of the contents.
Label Material Types

You have lots of options from economical to premium.

**Standard Label Materials**

There are several factors to consider when selecting a material for craft beer labels. Key questions to address are cost, how it works with the bottle/can, label application method, compatibility with the label artwork, and whether it goes well with the brand.

**White Paper Labels**

White paper is a typical material used for cold beverage labeling. Paired with an acrylic adhesive, this option performs well in a cold frigid environment. The white face stock makes a great canvas for the label design. However, it does not hold up well in ice buckets or overly damp storage. But it is the most economical, so it might be a good option for some breweries.

**Clear Film Labels**

Clear film materials offer more durability, performance and flexibility for beverage designs. Clear labels are the best way to achieve the “no-label look”, blending the label into the container while the design pops off the bottle.

It’s important to use high-quality, straight-walled bottles to keep air bubbles from forming when applying the labels.
Your label should reflect your company’s mission and attitude.

**Standard Label Materials (con’t)**

**White Film Labels**
White film materials have the same durability and performance as the clear film, but the material offers a bright white canvas for supporting a colorful design when you want to achieve color contrast between the label and the bottle/contents.

Film labels, clear or white, are moisture resistant, so your labels won’t get wrinkled or damaged after spending time in an ice filled cooler or bucket.

**Metallic Silver Paper Material**
Metallized label material is an outstanding premium option and consumers are drawn to the unique look of this material. By using negative spaces to allow the metalized material to show through, the label design can take on dimension and spatial effects.

Colors are also enhanced by adding tints and thin layers over the silver thus adding an expensive, up-scale look to your label. The reflective qualities built into the material really make the design pop off the label.
Label Material Types

An extraordinary spirit or brew requires an extraordinary label.

**Premium Label Materials**

**Estate and Vellum Papers**
The Estate #8 paper is a premium label material that is commonly used in the wine industry. The texture has a natural matte look and feel which lends itself well to craft beer designs also.

The vellum papers come in black and white for super-premium look. There are also sparkling and felt textures for uniquely elegant looks. These are ideal for glass bottles but might not be the best material for cans.

These heavyweight papers have a premium texture and invite prospective customers to pick up and handle your product. The papers reflect a more up-scale, natural texture including wood grain, rough cloth-like papers and old world vellum.

**Wood Papers**
Yep. Actual wood labels are available and they are just amazing. Though these labels are typically found on wine bottles, they are natural for beer applications. Consider this for a barrel-aged stout or organic/natural-flavored beers! They come in birch (light) or cherry (dark).
Overlaminates
An overlaminate film, either glossy or matte finish, adds a layer of protection against abrasion and moisture while also improving the label’s appearance.

A glossy overlam can give your product and graphics more “pop” while a matte overlaminate can add texture and a premium feel.

Varnishes
By adding either a gloss or matte varnish to your label, you can create illusions of depth and shape. A matte varnish on a gloss label material, masked out in certain areas of the design, can emphasize parts of the image (like the eyes on a face shining against a matte skin texture).

Sometimes varnishes are used to create a simple texture using lines or shapes in the background to add a subtle pattern to the can or bottle.
Shelf impact is an important aspect of selling your products in stores. Labels play a big role for craft beers since consumers might not be familiar with the product, which increases their reliance on attractive packaging to make a purchase decision.

When creating your craft beverage labels, design attractive or distinctive labels that stand out. Think about the use of bold colors, fun designs, and easy-to-read wording.

Take into account the style and type of beer for creating labels. Is it a lager or an ale? Additionally, your label should make clear what type of beer is in the bottle – IPA, Porter, Stout, Amber? Come up with a catchy, easy-to-remember name, and be sure your label includes both the name and style of beer if it is not obvious in the brand itself.
If you are creating labels for more than one beer under one brand, you’ll want to make sure the labels are different for each type of beer, but cohesive in the branding. Similar imagery, colors, fonts and label materials are examples of elements that will help your branding to remain consistent.

Before you begin to design your packaging keep in mind your target customer. What will speak to them? What images will attract them and tell your brand’s story?

**Educate**
Much like wine consumers, craft beer consumers care about flavor detail. Use your label as a vehicle to educate your customers on the ingredients you used or even recommend food pairings.

**Impress and entertain**
Some of the most recognizable and eye-catching labels are the ones that take risks in their design. Clever names and imagery can make your bottle or can stand out.
Design Tips

Plan ahead as a lot of thinking goes into a successful label design.

☐ Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to order your new product labels. If it’s your first time working with a label company you may need to go through a credit application process.

☐ When looking for a label company that can do your labels, don’t judge by price alone. Make sure they have good quality control, that they can deliver your order on time, and that they have the latest equipment to do a high-quality job printing your labels.

☐ Take extra time in the artwork proofing process to make sure the labels turn out exactly like you envisioned. At Weber, we offer a Digital Press Proof option. This means you can get a sample printed straight from the HP Indigo digital label press using the materials and colors you’ve selected. A WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) label. You can see and test exactly what your label will look like.
TTB Breakdown
What a Malt Beverage label tells you.

**Brand Name**
The brand name is used to identify and market the malt beverage. It must not be misleading about the age, identity, origin or other characteristics of the product.

**Health Warning Statement**
By law, this statement is required on all alcohol beverages containing 0.5% or more alcohol by volume.

**Alcohol Content**
This is an optional statement of alcohol content in percent of volume. Must appear on flavored malt beverages and some states require the alcohol statement.

**Class Designation**
The brand label of a beverage must contain the class designation of the product. Examples include beer, ale and lager. Ale, stout and porter are classes that must be fermented at a comparatively higher temp.

**Net Contents**
The net contents of a malt beverage must be stated in English units of measure (e.g. pints, fluid ounces).

**Name and Address**
The name and address of the bottler or imported must appear on the brand label.

More information at the [TTB web site](http://www.ttb.gov).
Labeling Options

Simple to Sophisticated

Label Applicators from Weber

Depending on where you are on the brewery growth scale will probably determine the type of labeler you need.

Start-Ups and Small Breweries

The easiest choice for a small brewer with a limited budget is something like the Bottle-Matic labeling system. Hand-fed, it can label 20-30 cans or bottles per minute. The labels are distributed via powered rollers that apply the labels perfectly every time. A foot-switch is included and the Bottle-Matic is also available in a front-back label version.

If you are labeling tapered bottles or containers with protruding edges, you can get special rollers cut to handle the complexity of your container.
Small to Mid-Sized Breweries

If you are putting out a more consistent volume of bottles and cans, you should look into the PackSize ELF-50 Tabletop wrap-around label applicator.

Made from stainless steel and anodized aluminum, the ELF-50 can be automatically fed to handle up to 32 feet of product per minute (approximately 150 12 oz. bottles/minute).

Thanks to the user-friendly operating interface, changing to different labeling applications for various product sizes and types can be done simply and quickly.

The ELF-50’s standard “one-button-teach” product and label sensors can be effortlessly adjusted for various labeling applications. And, with the manual position setting, your labels are placed accurately on the product, each and every time.

More information about the ELF-50
Mid-Sized to Large Breweries

Fast production speeds require some serious labeling power. The Packleader PL-501 wrap-around label applicator can handle fast brewing production lines at up to 72 feet per minute.

The PL-501 can be used as stand-alone unit or as a part of an integrated production line with filling, capping, and induction sealing machines. Other devices such as a printer and a turn-table for feeding and collecting are also available, increasing its functionality.

Designed with a DIY mindset, with a personalized technology controlling system, an adjustable hand wheel and operator friendly accessories, and flexibility in product choices, this rigid stainless steel machine provides high stability while being simple to maintain and operate. It’s your perfect production partner and your best choice in long term investments.

More information about the PL-501
Once your brewery gets to a certain size you will probably want to start date or lot coding your products. Traceability and freshness matter in the craft beer industry and the best way to mark your cans and bottles is with a reliable continuous ink jet system.

The BestCode Next Series of CIJ printers allows you to get the information on your product without breaking the bank. Coding at over 600 feet per minute, the BestCode systems can handle your production and help you keep organized.

A large, 10.4” Color Touch Display is employed to allow easy visual of all operating information. Operating functions are large, intuitive icon based buttons, making full use of color for status indicators.

External fill fluid addition allows on-the-fly Ink and Solvent filling without opening enclosure. All in all, an easy-to-use, cost-effective ink jet system.
Want to improve your craft beer packaging?

Weber’s Craft Beer Starter Kit has information about labels, ink jet coding and labeling systems that can help your brand grow.

Get Your Free Craft Beer Starter Kit

Weber® Packaging Solutions
www.weberpackaging.com