



# GROWLER REFILLING

## *Guidance for Best Management Practices*

### **What is a Growler?**

A Growler is a refillable container or vessel into which beverages are dispensed for transport for off-premise consumption. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century fresh beer from the local pub was carried home by means of pails or “Growlers” which got their name from the rumbling sound made as CO<sub>2</sub> gas escaped through the lid. Today, Growlers are typically glass or metal containers and hold up to 64oz of liquid. Items dispensed and sold in this manner include beer, wine, hard cider, kombucha, and soda.

### **Purpose**

Growler refilling brings an increased risk of cross-contamination. Since Growlers are most often owned by the consumer, there is no guarantee regarding their cleanliness. (There is less concern with new Growlers or those that have been properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized at the licensed facility).

The Georgia Department of Agriculture’s Retail Food Sales 40-7-1-.10 (16) requires a “*contamination-free*” transfer process for beverages. Therefore, Growlers should be refilled without any contact between the tap and the vessel to ensure no cross-contamination. However, most Growlers are filled via a section of clear tubing connected to the tap called a growler fill tube. This allows the beer to be filled from the bottom up to lessen the foam and expedite the filling process. Since the use of fill tubes can allow for contaminants from one vessel to be transferred to the next, they must be changed or cleaned between each use. The Georgia Department of Agriculture’s General Rules requires that equipment (fill tubes) be washed, rinsed and sanitized 40-7-1-.21 by means of either a mechanical or manual ware washing process. In addition, the fill tubes must be completely air-dried prior to the next use.

### **Key Points**

- Focus on proper hand washing after handling a reused customer container.
- When utilizing fill tubes, have enough spare tubes for your busiest time and store them in a clean and protected manner. (Recommend having twice as many fill tubes as taps).
- It is critical to ensure that a clean sanitized fill tube is used each time a growler is refilled.
- When rinsing before refilling Growlers, dedicate a conveniently located sink for this purpose only. Hand wash sinks cannot be used to rinse out Growlers.
- Inverted glass chillers may only be used to rinse out a Growler if a brand-new Growler is being filled or if a reused growler has first been washed/rinsed/sanitized. Otherwise, these units can become contaminated and transfer pathogens to clean glasses or the next Growler.
- It is common practice to allow quite a bit of the beer foam to flow out of the top of the Growler at the end of the filling process, just prior to applying the cap. This serves to evacuate air from the bottle and helps preserve the quality of the beer. The exterior of filled Growlers should either be rinsed under potable water and then dipped in sanitizer solution and wiped off with a clean towel or wiped down with a wiping cloth that is being stored in sanitizer solution.