



# TAP HANDLES:

**CATEGORY:** Restaurants, Bars, Craft Breweries, Wineries, Brew Pubs

**PERSPECTIVE:** Material, Design, Color, Marketing, Premiumization



For decades, breweries, brew pubs, taverns and restaurants have been benefitting from the continued evolution of the tap handle. Sitting down at the bar of your local “watering hole” and scanning the serving area for the newest selection of tap beers has become a favorite past time for thirsty customers everywhere. But tapping a “cold one” into a frosty mug is no longer reserved for just the barley and hops industry. In recent years there has been a rise of both wine and spirits made available on tap. As a result, understanding the benefits of a well-designed tap handle is integral to the ongoing success of your brand.



Selecting the material that your tap handle will be made from is an important first decision. Options range from wood, resin, metal and ceramic, each bringing its own set of pros and cons. Resin may be less expensive to fabricate, but prone to chips and cracks. Metal withstands the test of time, but it will likely make a dent in your finances. Wood can be elegantly carved into a variety of designs, but ceramic provides durability on par with the finest designed stoneware. Understand the effects of consistent use and be aware of potential replacements due to chipping, cracking and further breakdown.



Customers have approximately 10 seconds to select from the line-up of beers on tap as they approach the bar. The longer the list of options, the more essential the design of the tap handle becomes. A uniquely shaped tap handle, while interesting and eye-catching, may not always be the most appropriate. The more intricate the design, the more confused the customer may be. It’s important for a tap handle to stand out in a crowded market, but not at the expense of customer uncertainty. Stick to the basics and keep things simple. A three or four-sided tap handle, one that clearly identifies the brand and style of beer – seasonal, lager, stout or pilsner – makes it easy for the customer to see, understand and select.

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Bigger isn't always better. Tap handles that are too large may come across as gaudy and may not accurately represent the brand being sold. Most bars allow for three-inch center tap handles. Tap handles that exceed this size prohibit the placement of additional handles on either side and may be passed over for brands that are more accommodating. It's also important to ensure that the handle doesn't extend beyond 10-12 inches in height. Anything more and it becomes a burden for the bartender, while placing an unnecessary strain on the tap system. Keep the size of the tap handle at eye level with the customer and make it easy for the owner of the establishment to operate.



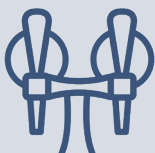
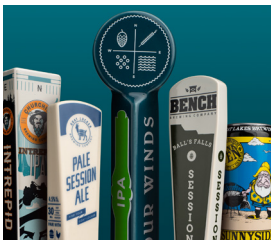
Know your colors and know the environment. While an all-black tap handle may be appealing when inspected under normal lighting conditions, it's fair to say that most bars, craft breweries and wineries don't generally offer those same lighting conditions to their customers. Darker colored tap handles, when placed in a darker room, may be inadvertently overlooked. Work with colors that engage the customer, as well as lettering and branding that jumps out and grabs their attention. Contrast is incredibly important in the overall design of a tap handle and shouldn't be neglected.



Interchangeability is key. The more universal a tap handle is – the easier it is for the bar owner to update – the longer it will stay front and center. Some of the latest tap handle designs have incorporated chalkboard material, stickers and toppers. These options ensure that the tap handle keeps its position, even when a brand offers a new recipe or seasonal update. Beer names are quickly and easily exchanged with replaceable stickers, written in chalk or altered with a removeable tap handle topper.



Guests of a bar, craft brewery or winery are looking for a premium experience. Rewarding them can be as simple as pouring a quality beverage into a high-end serving glass, tapped using an engaging, interesting and eye-catching handle. It's the experience that's provided to the customer that is inevitably promoted by word of mouth, and has the power to turn new customers into loyal fans. Attract attention, turn heads and pour them the experience they deserve.



Contact a Boelter Beverage associate to learn more about Tap Handles and how they may positively affect your business.

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