

Brewing with Malted Red Sorghum

Sorghum is a naturally gluten free and environmentally friendly grain you can add to your recipes in full or in part.

In the US and Europe, sorghum is available from a variety of suppliers as either extract or malted grain. In Africa, malt is fairly readily available. In Rwanda, we brew with malted red sorghum, which is also used in a milled, powder form to make Ikigage, Rwandan traditional sorghum beer.



Flavor: Sorghum alone has a thin character compared to barley. To add body and mouthfeel, we use a small amount of barley grains, as well as honey, and high oil percentage hops. But you can brew with 100% sorghum to make a gluten free beer!

To make a neutral/ light bodied beer base, we brew with a majority sorghum as our base grain. We then add a small amount of speciality barley malts based on style.

Milling: If you are working with whole sorghum malt, we use the same setting as barley for our mill, but a slower speed.

Mashing: Saccharification of malted sorghum is at a higher temperature than barley. We do a 30 minute mash at 85C (185F) with sorghum only first, then add cold water to lower the temperature to 65C (149C). At that point we add any barley, and continue brewing as we would for a standard barley based mash.

Sorghum is naturally sour, so if you lower your mash temperatures, you will get a naturally sour beer (but watch your OG levels - as saccharification won't be complete at lower temps) A hybrid or blending process could be used to produce sour beers without additional bacteria or yeast.

Hops: A little hops go a LONG way in a sorghum based beer. In our experience, using primarily Saaz hops early for light bittering, and focusing more on aroma hops complements the lightness of a sorghum beer. We have recently tried Yakima Chief Hops Eukanot, Idaho 7, and Talus to great success with sorghum.

Brewers have been successful in making hoppy beers/ IPAs on a sorghum base. Adding fruit and honey to sorghum beers creates a nice balance also. Explore the possibilities with sorghum, and share what you find out!

Sorghum questions? Jessi@KwezaBrewery.com or contact us through our socials.