



QCL BREWING SCIENCE



CDR BEERLAB

Testing Low/No Alcohol Beers

The Low and No Alcohol sector continues to see strong growth with off-trade sales up 40% (Kantar, 2020). Despite increases in people drinking alcoholic beer at home due to the pandemic, more consumers, particularly those in the 18-24 age group, are turning to low and no alcohol options.

The market is dominated by beers produced by the large multi-national brewing companies with Heineken 0.0% now the biggest alcohol free beer brand in the UK. However, more and more smaller craft beer producers are adding low and no alcohol options to their range, capitalizing on the strong growth of this sector.

Brewing techniques vary and accurately measuring your alcohol content at this low range is complicated by the fact that traditional gravity calculations don't work effectively for low and no alcohol beers. Therefore breweries need a fast, reliable and accurate method on hand to give them this information.

The BeerLab has been in use across the UK for over 5 years and has proven itself to be a valuable tool for brewery QC. With this study we set out to demonstrate the accuracy of the BeerLab when operating in the low and no ABV range. We selected 10 low and no alcohol beers from a range of breweries covering the very large, multinational breweries and smaller, UK craft brewers.



Samples were tested in the QCL laboratory with the BeerLab and reference analysis was performed by Campden BRI. The table below compares ABV results from the BeerLab and Campden BRI with the values on the label.

Brewery Type	Label	BeerLab	Campden BRI
Multi National	<0.05	<0.1	0.0
UK Craft	0.5	0.28	0.25
UK Craft	<0.5	0.8	0.89
UK Craft	0.5	0.73	0.82
UK Craft	<0.5	0.63	0.64
Multi National	0.0	<0.1	0.01
Multi National	0.3	0.35	0.34
UK Craft	0.0	<0.1	0.01
UK Craft	0.5	0.89	1.03
UK Craft	0.0	0.38	0.38

The BeerLab results show very close agreement with the reference method across the range of samples. It is notable from these results that many of the beers have a higher ABV than the packaging suggests.

This study demonstrates that the BeerLab is a reliable and accurate instrument for the measurement of ABV for low and no alcohol beers. With a relatively low cost the BeerLab and BeerLab Junior are a viable option to brewers of all sizes looking to bring in a QC programme.

In addition to ABV, the BeerLab and BeerLab Junior offer a wide range of analyses covering the most important parameters for beer and water chemistry. The BeerLab is sold in the UK by QCL who have been supporting brewing quality control for over 40 years.

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