

Exploring the Unknown
by
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True Story: A relatively small brewer decided to purchase a full truckload of stainless ½ barrels in “AS-IS” condition from a known very large brewer. Payment of course was in advance ... after all, ‘a large brewer must be a respectable brewer’. Not long afterwards, it was discovered that the entire load of approximately 850 kegs consisted of ‘leaker’ kegs which had been placed in the seller’s ‘to be repaired’ inventory. The seller, content with ‘keeping his end of the bargain’, when confronted by the buyer with the problem, politely reiterated their sales policy of ‘As-Is’, and would not exchange them.

So which of the two, buyer or seller, should get the first bullet? Obviously the buyer didn’t ask enough questions, obtain a detailed written purchase agreement with some warranty language, and take the time to look at what he was purchasing. All used kegs are different! On the other hand the seller should certainly have included the word ‘Usable’ in his sales description. Right ?....

Wrong! How could any keg seller possibly know your basis for usability unless you tell him?

Ok then, if a seller guarantees ‘No Leakers’... Are they good ones to purchase? Here we go again ! If this is the only bit of evidence regarding the usefulness of given kegs, then certainly, the answer should be a resounding ‘NO’. Remarkably, the word “USABLE”, for many, becomes the sole basis for purchasing vessels which must house a brewer’s final product. You know.. the brew that he bravely stakes his good name and reputation on, and the same one that can greet a customer with a kindly ‘Hello’, or in a blink of an eye . . can kiss him ‘Goodbye’.

Let’s consider for a moment what you’re up against when you purchase ‘UNKNOWN’ kegs.

- a) First of all, keep in mind that the seller is going to sell you his worst kegs first. Wouldn’t you?
- b) The larger the brewer, the less likely that he will sort kegs specifically to your liking. Therefore you will take what he gives you, and sort away the undesirables yourself. Two questions immediately come to mind 1) What do you consider desirable?, and 2) Why wouldn’t you buy those in the first place?
- c) All kegs are not created equal. . . unless the seller bought all of his kegs at one time and you happen to know where and when. But if he’s like the vast majority of brewers, he bought a few now, a few later, and then ‘inherited a few others along the way. So what.. you might ask ?
- d) Different manufacturers in different countries, use different methods, in different vintage years, to create different design kegs, with different valves for different markets ! I think the key word here is different, wouldn’t you say? This could mean that pile of similar looking straight-sided kegs may have the following hidden surprises for you:
 - 1) Previous owner’s names deeply embossed in upper and/or lower skirts.
 - 2) Foreign (non-owned kegs) that the seller has no right to sell to you
 - 2) Kegs which may be 5 piece construction rather than more modern deep drawn type
 - 3) Valves which may be unusable with current American tap couplers.