

Brewer interview questions

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What to expect

Brewer interviews mix hands-on process knowledge with food safety and quality checks, since a single missed step in sanitation or recipe measurement can cost an entire batch. Panels usually include a head brewer or production manager who will probe both your technical grounding and how you handle pressure when something goes wrong mid-ferment.

- **Process knowledge:** Questions asking you to walk through a brewing stage or procedure step by step, testing whether you understand the sequence and the reasoning behind it.
- **Food safety and compliance:** Questions on hygiene, sanitisation and record-keeping, since breweries operate under food safety programs and excise requirements.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about problem-solving, teamwork or handling mistakes, usually answered using a STAR structure.
- **Scenario and troubleshooting:** Hypothetical production problems, such as a stuck fermentation or an equipment fault, testing judgement under time pressure.
- **Technical and data analysis:** Questions on reading and acting on lab results such as gravity, pH or alcohol content.

Most interviews open with a brief background discussion, move into a technical walkthrough of your brewing process knowledge, then shift to behavioural and scenario questions to see how you handle real production issues. Food safety and compliance questions are often woven throughout rather than kept separate, and the interview usually closes with a chance for you to ask about the brewery's equipment, batch sizes and shift patterns.

1. Walk me through how you'd manage a batch from mashing through to the start of fermentation.

Why they ask

This checks whether you understand the full brewing sequence and where quality checks need to happen, not just the end result.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a step-by-step walkthrough in the order the process actually happens, naming the equipment and checks at each stage.

Example answer

"I'd start by confirming the recipe and weighing out the malt bill, then mill and mash in at the target temperature, holding it for the specified rest to convert starches to fermentable sugars. Once I check the mash has hit the right gravity, I'd laut and boil the wort, adding hops on schedule, then cool it and pitch the yeast into the fermenter at the correct temperature. I'd take an initial gravity reading straight away so I have a baseline to track fermentation progress against."

2. Tell me about a time you identified a problem with a batch and how you resolved it.

Why they ask

Brewers need to catch issues early using their senses and instruments, and panels want evidence you act on what you find rather than letting a batch run its course.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result, being specific about what data or observation tipped you off.

Example answer

"During a routine check I noticed a fermenting batch's temperature was drifting above the range set for that yeast strain. My task was to bring it back under control before off-flavours developed. I adjusted the glycol cooling settings and increased monitoring frequency over the next day. The batch came back within spec and went on to pass quality testing before packaging."

3. How do you clean and sanitise equipment between batches, and why does that matter?

Why they ask

Contamination from poor sanitation is one of the biggest risks in brewing, so interviewers want to hear a methodical answer, not a vague one.

How to structure your answer

Explain the sequence of cleaning steps and tie each one back to the food safety outcome it protects.

Example answer

"I always clean before I sanitise, since sanitiser can't work properly on equipment that's still got residue on it. I'll rinse the vessel, apply the cleaning agent to break down organic material, rinse again, then apply a sanitiser and let it sit for the required contact time before draining. Skipping any of those steps risks introducing wild yeast or bacteria that can spoil an entire batch, so I follow the same sequence every time regardless of how tight the schedule is."

4. A fermentation tank's temperature starts fluctuating outside the target range partway through a ferment. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and whether you know which variables matter most to protect the batch.

How to structure your answer

Work through it as a decision under pressure: what you'd check first, what options you have, and how you'd decide between them given the risk to the batch.

Example answer

"First I'd check whether it's a sensor fault or an actual temperature swing, since I don't want to make changes based on a faulty reading. If it's real, I'd check the glycol system and cooling jacket for a mechanical issue. Depending on how far off target it is, I'd either make a small adjustment and monitor closely, or flag it to the head brewer if it looks like it could affect flavour development. I'd rather raise it early than let a small drift turn into a batch I have to write off."

5. How do you use hydrometer and pH readings to decide whether a batch is on track?

Why they ask

This checks your technical grounding in reading instruments and translating numbers into a production decision.

How to structure your answer

Explain your method and the reasoning behind the readings, connecting the data to the decision you'd make.

Example answer

"I take a gravity reading at the start of fermentation as my baseline, then track it daily to see how quickly the yeast is working through the sugars. If gravity stalls above where I'd expect for that recipe, I'll check pH and temperature to work out whether the yeast has stressed out or stopped early, and decide whether it needs a temperature adjustment or a yeast addition to finish out."

6. How do you keep batch records, and why does accurate documentation matter in this role?

Why they ask

Breweries need traceable records for quality control and for excise and food safety compliance, so this checks your habits around documentation.

How to structure your answer

Describe your record-keeping routine and link it to the compliance and quality reasons it exists.

Example answer

"I log ingredient quantities, timings and readings for every batch as I go, rather than trying to remember details later. Accurate records mean that if a batch does have an issue, we can trace it back to a specific step or ingredient lot, and they're also what we'd rely on if we needed to show compliance with food safety or excise requirements."