

Sous Vide Technique for Bars

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What is Sous-Vide & How Does it Relate to the Use of Immersion Circulators?

The French Sous-vide translates to “under-vacuum”. When strictly interpreted, something is sealed in a container while under vacuum. The container is most often a heat-sealed plastic bag and the vacuum is usually a commercial vacuum chamber/sealer. At this time, the item’s condition can be referred to as reduced oxygen packaging (ROP), a technique that when done correctly is safe and can significantly extend shelf-life, though when done incorrectly, can promote an environment for dangerous anaerobic bacterial growth, thus those practicing ROP are subject to strong legal scrutiny in nearly every circumstance.

Once an item subjected to ROP, it is often (not always) heated in a water bath using an immersion circulator for a precise amount of time, at a precise temperature. An immersion circulator produces a warm water bath that is constantly moving to ensure a homogenous temperature. It can be thought of like a convection oven that utilizes water instead of air. This technique allows for great overall control, eliminates evaporation, and promotes concentration of flavor. While technically a misnomer to refer to the use of an immersion circulator as “sous-vide”, most of the time, most of the principles still apply. In lieu of very expensive vacuum chambers and specialty bags, one may use ziplock-style bags to achieve the same or similar result, at a fraction of the price.

Solubility

- In a bar, there are four primary solvents:
 - Water
 - Alcohol
 - Acid
 - Fat
- Balance between time and temperature, in conjunction with one or more of the above solvents will determine the result of any exercise in solubility
- By bearing in mind an ingredients solubility with any given solvent, one might extract or avoid particular flavors/compounds within the ingredient.

Common Applications for Sous-Vide in Bars

- Using an immersion circulator to execute sous-vide style preparations is one way to ensure safe, efficient, and consistent technique is applied behind the bar, where flammable and volatile compounds are the norm.
 - Should one wish to produce a high-concentration infusion of chocolate in whiskey, an immersion circulator is ideal because it allows one to heat a form of chocolate to a point behind the melting temperature of cocoa butter (sometimes over 90F/40C), with alcohol (which becomes increasingly flammable at elevated temperature), without using open flame and while avoiding evaporation (if a sealed bag is utilized).
 - If water-based infusions are desired, the use of an immersion circulator can help to avoid the degradation of delicate ingredients while promoting the rapid extraction of volatile compounds. Basil or mint extractions are two common examples.

Do's & Don'ts of Sous-Vide

- Generally, do not place alcoholic solutions into a water bath that is over 78C or you risk boiling the ethanol and potentially causing a spill, or explosion (when in a sealed container).
- Never seal ingredients that could potentially promote anaerobic bacterial growth in an oxygen-deprived environment (ex: garlic).
- Always use fresh water in a circulator on a use by use basis.

Green-Tea Infused “Vodka” (40% ABV) – Yield 2L

75 g	Japanese Green Tea Leaf (not powder or bags)
850 ml	Everclear
1175 ml	Water

Steep tea with Everclear for 15 minutes in an immersion circulator set to 78C. Strain well through fine mesh, cool, and combine with water. Store at room temperature in a cool, dark environment.

Crème de Cacao

500 g	Toasted Cocoa Nibs
750 mL	Brandy
600 g	Demerara Sugar

Combine toasted cocoa nibs with brandy in sealed bag and place in a circulator set to 78C. Steep for 1 hour then strain the warm brandy into a bowl that contains the sugar. Blend/whisk well to combine until smooth. NOTE: This must be done while the brandy is still warm.

Best Sous Vide to Purchase for the Bar?

[Breville Joule - \\$159](#)

Other Resources for Sous-Vide & Technique!

- [Sous-Vide Magazine](#)
- [Imbibe](#)
- [Alcohol Professor](#)
- [Liquor.com](#)

Let's Keep in Touch!

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