

# Beer prices could be on the rise due to CO<sub>2</sub> shortage and supply chain shortfalls, says expert

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Credit: Sam Dean for Virginia Tech

While the beer industry reports that they have enough supply for current operations, a CO<sub>2</sub> shortage could impact smaller and independent

breweries with higher prices, says a Virginia Tech beer expert.

"The beer industry supply chain is not efficient enough to absorb small changes, the [ripples](#) are being felt right now," says Herbert "Bruce" Bruce, an assistant professor in the Department of Food Science and Technology and co-creator of Fightin' Hokies Lager. "It's not clear if the CO<sub>2</sub> supply can support additional demand, at least in the short term. Most [breweries](#), especially regional and larger ones, will be able to meet current production schedules. Remember the aluminum shortage? We didn't run out of beer then and I think this will be similar."

There are some outcomes that Bruce expects from the CO<sub>2</sub> shortage. One of those, Bruce says, is potential production delays or higher prices as breweries, who already run on a tight margin, have to pay more for their supplies.

Breweries produce an excess of CO<sub>2</sub> during [fermentation](#) but need to blow off this CO<sub>2</sub>, especially early in the [fermentation process](#), when many off-flavors and odors are produced. Some breweries have the [equipment](#) to collect this CO<sub>2</sub>, filter and clean the gas, and store it for later uses, such as carbonating the beer after filtration and flushing tanks, cans and bottles in preparation for filling. Bruce does expect some breweries to make changes to reduced CO<sub>2</sub> usage and invest in this equipment due to the shortage.

"Some breweries will invest in CO<sub>2</sub> recovery equipment as a result of this shortage but many will just pay more for their ingredients," Bruce says. "This will hit the smaller independent breweries the hardest, especially those who bottle or can their beers where you need an external source of CO<sub>2</sub> to package the [beer](#)."

Provided by Virginia Tech

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