

# Bantam Bottles Appealing Space Savers

But Not All are Considered "Samples"

By Chuck Norris



Blossom sample at almost 6 inches tall. I would put the height limit on sample bottles at about 6 inches.

Adding to the confusion on samples are the many terms being used by sellers on eBay, collectors, and authors of numerous bottle books to describe a bottle. Even as I write this article, I feel confident that someone might not agree with me, but here goes anyway:

First, my favorite: Doing a search on eBay for "sample" will normally yield one or

Are you running low on shelf space, but still want more bottles? Or are you looking for a new category to collect, maybe something in the "go-with" category to tie to the bottles you already have. Consider collecting samples bottles. They take up only a fraction of the space that their full size counterparts do, are relatively inexpensive and normally dead ringers in color, shape and even labels as the normal sized bottles the various companies were trying to promote.

What is a sample bottle? In basic terms, it was a bottled product, identified as a sample, either in the embossing on the bottle, on the box (if it had one), or on the label. It was not sold, but was given to a loyal customer or as a promotion to a potentially new customer. When you see a bottle that is not embossed with the word sample, or free sample, and it doesn't have a label or box, how do you know if it was a sample bottle? Start with the size of the bottle. Samples, referred to as "give-aways," by some, were always smaller than the product being sold by the same company. Sometimes, the size of the sample bottle was determined by the recommended dosage (medicine) on the full-size product. One example: "a wine glass of the product before bedtime." That would require a larger bottle for one dose than a product that required "one teaspoonful, in a cup of hot water." Looking at my collection, I see an embossed sample hood, just over 2 inches tall, and a embossed Heather

more hits for a bottle listed as a sample because it is embossed "this bottle not to be sold." Definitely not a sample, the bottle is over 6 inches tall, a full size product, normally beer or soda, and the bottle may not have been for sale, but I guarantee the contents were being sold. The bottler just wanted his bottle back for reuse to another customer.

Miniature Bottle: The Miniature Bottle Collectors Association defines this as a bottle under 6 inches tall. After looking at the web site, they don't seem to limit their bottles to glass, age or product. So a 6-inch, 1890s sample whiskey, medicine, or condiment could be considered a



miniature bottle to many people. But, a 2-inch-tall pill bottle, or a 3-inch-tall perfume bottle, although miniatures by definition, are not samples



**Trial Size Bottle:** If not a true sample, it's really close to being one; but is normally larger in volume than a sample bottle, but smaller than the company's normal-sized products. It was a marketing gimmick; selling a small amount of their product, describing what was in the bottle, or on the label, box, etc., hoping you liked it and would buy a full-sized bottle of their product. One of my favorite trial bottles is the "Try Me." The embossed "Try Me," with an embossed horizontal line below it, was a half-pint liquor bottle that was purchased by the customer. He was allowed to consume it down to the line for free; if he didn't like it, he could return it (half full) for a full refund of what he paid. This practice didn't seem to work out too well for the retailers for all the reasons you and I can think of. Did they top off the half returned bottle and sell it to the next guy? Did the customer drink the whole bottle, refill it half-way up with something else and then return it?

**Nips and Minis:** Miniature size nips normally conjure up a picture in my mind of stoneware figural meant to hold liquor. It may have been a give-away (or not), but I don't really consider them as samples. The term mini is short for some collectors for mini-jug, motto jug, or scratch jug. I am sure that most of these were give aways, or samples of the companies' wares. I'll let the mini jug collectors elaborate on them.

**Complimentary:** Another name for "free sample." I have seen this embossed only on a few bottles that qualified as miniatures, and all were machine-made.

**Druggist Bottles:** This is just another example of a small bottle that is often mistaken for a free sample. Druggists would normally order their bottles empty and in bulk. They would order them by size, ranging from 1 ounce to maybe a quart. They could get them embossed with their name, address, etc., or unembossed. Either way, they normally affixed a paper label to the bottle identifying what was in the bottle and dosing instructions, frequency, etc. I don't consider any prescription drug bottle, regardless of size, as a sample.

So, after all this, can we be 100% sure a bottle was a sample? Yes, if it is embossed and or labeled as such. Also, by using the above, one can rule out a lot of bottles as not samples. So, that just leaves us with the majority of the samples, those that did not say that they were samples, but are considered samples by myself and other collectors. Sometimes even the same company identified some of its samples and did not others.



I have been an avid bottle collector for 40 years and find beauty in all mold-blown bottles. My current pursuit is for sample American liquor and bitters bottles. I hope to add to my collection by buying or trading. { I usually have between 50 and 100 duplicates) I always love talking with collectors with similar interests, exchanging information, etc. Hope to hear from you!

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