

Making Mead

By: Pierre de Montereau

Making Mead is an ancient art pass thru the ages of converting honey in to alcohol by fermentation. There are many different types of Meads including the following:

- **Traditional Mead** - made with honey, water and yeast
- **Sack mead** - a sweeter mead, with more honey
- **Melomel** - mead made with fruit or fruit juice
- **Metheglin** - mead made with spices and extracts
- **Pyment** - mead made with both honey and grapes

And the list goes on. It is typically clear with a slight gold tint, with an alcohol content of between 7-21%. Until the late middle ages both mead and sparkling mead were highly popular beverages, especially in northern regions of Europe, where wine grapes could not easily be grown. It was produced by organized industry during the 15th-century, controlled as with other trades by guilds. As the importance of honey was displaced by less expensive sugars in the late Middle Ages, mead was gradually displaced by less costly beers and ales and to a lesser degree by imported wines. Mead then became a drink of the socially lower classes.

Equipment:

- primary fermenter (a glass carboy)
- secondary fermenter (a second glass carboy)
- Stopper and air-lock
- siphon hose
- bottles
- corks
- stoneware or enamel pot (to boil in.. DO NOT use metal, it leaches into the mead and can ruin the flavour)
- wooden spoon (for the same reason as above)

Ingredients:

Honey:

Honey Type - Choose your honey according to your tastes. I recommend starting out with a clover honey, orange blossom honey or a nice wildflower honey. All are easy to get, and hard to mess up. As you grow your mead skills, try out more exotic honeys. I highly recommend going to a honey supplier and tasting the various honeys to find out what you like.

Honey Amount - The amount of honey you use is what will help determine how sweet your mead is. Here is a list of the approximate amounts of honey/gallon of mead.

- ◇ Dry meads use from 2.5-3 pounds of honey per gallon of must.
- ◇ Sweet meads will need from 3-5 pounds of honey per gallon.
- ◇ Sack meads will need from more than 5 pounds of honey per gallon.

Honey Process – there is different ways to process the honey before fermenting begin. One method which the Starleaf Gate Brewing and Vintning Guild use is to simmer the honey with water. Then remove the scum off on the top of the simmering mixture. The scum is a light white liquid.

Water:

Use the best water available. Different location of water will affect the mead because of proteins and nutrients.

Yeast:

There are many kinds of yeasts including Beer Yeast, Wine Yeast, Mead Yeast and Champagne Yeast. It will affect the Mead from dry to sweet and so on. Most local Wine and Beer Supplier have some of the yeast like Beer and Wine. Mead Yeast is hard to fine in local places.

Other items:

There are other items including Fruits, Spices, Nutrients, Acids and Tannins. Some of the Fruits has Acid including Oranges, Lemons and Limes. If you want to use Nutrients, use Raisins and Strong Tea is good for Tannins. This is a natural way of getting Good Mead. Other ways that are process is powdered grape skins for Tannin, 'acid blend' for Acid and Yeast Nutrient.

Strawberry Mead (1 Gallon Batch)

Ingredients	Quantities
Honey	2 ¼ kg (5 lb)
Strawberries	600 g (1 ¼ lb)
Grated Ginger Root	¼ oz
Wine Yeast	1 pkg

Method:

Bring the water and honey to a simmer and skim the scum off the top using a wooden spoon until it is fairly clear (the honey water should look like golden water). Cool the liquid and then put it into the primary carboys, Add crush Strawberries, Grated Ginger Root, Water and Yeast. Follow the instruction on the Yeast package before putting into the primary carboys. After about 9 days, transfer to the Secondary Carboy before the strawberry gets bleached. Ferment for 3 months in Secondary Carboy. Rack and wait for 3 months more then bottle the mead.

Note: Sterilizing everything before you start. You want to do this to kill off wild yeasts and other microorganisms that can spoil your developing mead, and you want to give the yeast the best chance to do it's thing.

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