

The Newbee Guide to Making Mead - Chapter 1: What is Mead?

Contributed by
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There is no better place to start than with an explanation of what Mead is. Basically, it is nothing more than Honey, water, and yeast. This mixture (known as a Must) is allowed to ferment until the yeast has converted the sugars into alcohol, at which point it is called Mead. Since the processes, yeasts, and equipment are mostly the same as those used in wine making, Mead is sometimes called Honey Wine, but this is a misnomer since the base ingredient is honey, making it unique and therefore requiring a different name. A Pastrami sandwich is just meat between two slices of bread, but you would not call it a hamburger.

There are various ways of changing the flavor, strength, or body of a Mead to meet your individual preference. By adjusting the amount of honey or the type of yeast used, you can make the Mead sweet, semi-sweet or dry. The different varieties of honey available (see Appendix 1) will also change the flavor and aroma, as will the yeast strain.

It is possible to create different flavors by adding ingredients such as fruit or spices into the Must, or by putting them into the Mead when fermentation has stopped. The variety of ingredients you can add is as vast as the imagination itself, restricted only by common sense (we shall not discuss the Beef Jerky Mead of GotMead legend) and availability.

Don't be dissuaded from trying something though, even if it has not been used before. Follow your own taste buds and give it a go. You may be surprised by the result.

When you start to add additional ingredients, the name changes although it is still Mead. The following are the main styles of Mead and the ingredients used to make them:

- Mead - made with honey, water and yeast

- Sack Mead - a sweeter Mead, with more honey

- Melomel - with fruit or fruit juice

- Metheglin - with spices and extracts

- Acerglyn - with maple syrup

- Morat - with mulberries

- Pyment - with both honey and grapes

- Hippocras - with honey, grapes, and spices

- Cyser - honey and apples or apple cider (apple juice in Europe) Can also be made with peach, cherry or pear cider

- Braggot - honey and malt, sort of a Mead-beer

- Oxymel - Mead mixed with wine vinegar

- Rhodomel - honey with Attar, a rose petal distillate, or rose petals

- Capsicumel - honey with chile peppers

- Omphacomel - Mead and Verjuice, the juice of unripe grapes

- T'ej - with honey, water and hops. It is the national drink of Ethiopia, and has a unique taste Once you have decided what Mead you would like to make, you must select the honey variety and any additional ingredients you will be using.

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