

## Advanced Mead Making

There are 2 new concepts to introduce once you're feeling comfortable with the basic or show mead:

1. adding nitrogen; and
2. adding extra flavors.

### Advanced concept 1: using extra nitrogen to baby the yeast.

Honey diluted with water is pretty challenging for yeast to work in; it's acidic (yes, honey is acidic), and low nitrogen. There is a nutrient addition protocol called Staggered Nutrient Addition, where one adds nutrient "just in time". You'll want to google this, or get Ken Stamm's Compleat Mead Maker for more info. I follow an abbreviated version. I added ½ tsp Fermaid K at 36 hrs, and 72 hrs. I am actually seeing a more sustained ferment, and this method is praised for leading to finished mead earlier than happens with a show mead, so we'll see.

### Recipe for Mead Making using Extra Nitrogen.

Equipment and ingredients to get on hand:

- one half-gallon jar
- a fermenting lid with an airlock, google it, comes in a pack of 4,
- one packet of Lalvin D-47 yeast, of which you'll still just use about ¼
- introducing 1/2 tsp of Fermaid K
- 1.5 lbs or 1/2 quart of honey
- a half gallon of shower-hot water

Steps to mix ingredients:

- Heat 1/2 gallon of water to hot bath temp (90-100 degrees). Take a cup of that water and mix about a quarter packet of the yeast.
- Mix the honey into the hot water, then add the cup of water with the yeast. Pour into the half-gallon jar, and put on the fermentation airlock.
- 24-36 hours later, either take 1/4 cup water from the tap or from the half-gallon jar (if it's filled to the brim), and mix 1/2 tsp of Fermaid K into this liquid. Pour into fermentation vessel.
- 24-36 hours after that, repeat the addition of 1/2 tsp of Fermaid K.
- In a day or so, the airlock should indicate increased air pressure from carbon dioxide from fermentation. Then...Wait 2 months. Watch the mead clarify.
- After fermentation seems to have stopped, which will be 4-6 weeks later, rack the mead into a pot, using an auto-siphon to avoid the dead yeast at the bottom. Then rinse your jar, and put the mead back in. You may need to add 1/2 cup water or so to get the liquid level to within 1" of the top.
- Then wait another couple of months. Then, at about 5 months after you started, time to bottle. You'll need the auto-siphone, 2 wine bottles, and 2 corks.

## Advanced concept 2: Adding flavors to your mead

Unlike other wines, mead is a blank slate upon which we can perform flavor artistry. Here's a couple of ideas to "spice up" your mead - literally!

But first, some vocabulary. The **primary fermentation** occurs before you rack. Any flavor sources (such as a vanilla bean)\_added at this point will have the yeast working upon them. This may or may not result in a final flavor that resembles vanilla. It might still be good though!

The **secondary fermentation** is the term for the fermentation occurring after racking. Because there is less yeast action here, and more alcohol to extract flavors, this is where people traditionally add flavor-bearing ingredients.

A note about sweet vs dry fermented beverages: first, do not expect the prior recipes to make a sweet mead, or even a sweet-ish mead. If you want residual sugar, and hence a sweet taste, you have 2 options:

1. Add more than 1 part honey to 3 parts water, by 30% or so, when making the mead. So, for our half-gallon recipe, add 1/2 quart (4 cups) plus 1 cup of honey.
2. Add honey after the primary fermentation. This is called **back-sweetening**.

Each will sweeten the mead in slightly different ways. The half-gallon meadmaking allows for freedom to play without ending up with 20 bottles of mead from one experiment.

Use the recipe above as your backdrop.

**Back-Sweetened mead.** Add 1 cup honey during secondary fermentation. Do not combine with use of 5 cups of honey during primary fermentation. Preserves more of the honey essence when added at this step. Use 1 cup of honey, mix with 1 cup of must that has been heated to 80-90 degrees. Honey does not mix well with liquids at room temp. After a week, sample, repeat sweetening if desired with 1/2 cup honey and 1/2 cup must.

**Spicy mead.** Add during secondary fermentation. Use intact dried peppers, about as many as would fill 1/2 the space in a quart jar. You can do a mix or do one variety. Leave in for 2 days, then sample. Back sweeten at this time as well.

**Raspberry flavored mead.** Add 2 raspberry herbal tea bags, during secondary fermentation. Back-sweeten now if desired, and if you did not add an extra cup of honey in the primary fermentation. Remove tea bags after 1 week, or sample and leave longer if the flavor is too mild. Should work for any herbal tea flavor.

**Making a Melomel - primary style.** Any mead which also fermented mashed-up fruit is called a **melomel**. This is harder than adding dried ingredients, because the mashed fruit is bulky and can be pushed up against the top of the airlock, which is gross. Use slightly less honey here, like 3 cups instead

of 4. When you are starting your mead, add up to a pint jar of mashed fresh or frozen fruit, or grapes. Tomato is technically a fruit but is not recommended.

**Making a Melomel - secondary style.** If you add fruit during the secondary fermentation, the alcohol can bring out some stronger flavors. So, just after you rack the must, add about 1 jelly jar of mashed fresh or frozen fruit. Then let it ferment some more.