

MEAD DAY 2010

Mead Day is Saturday, August 7, 2010

This recipe is a basic traditional mead recipe to which you can add fruit to make Melomel-style mead. The basic recipe is followed by 5 different fruit suggestions with the recommended quantities to add to the recipe. It is left entirely up to each meadmaker to decide which, if any, fruit will be added to the mead.

Traditional Mead with Fruit (a.k.a. Melomel)

Makes 5 gallons (19 L).

O.G. = ~1.126

F.G = ~1.030-1.045

Equipment Needed

- 5-gallon (19 L) stockpot
- Spoon
- Wort chiller
- Thermometer
- Hydrometer
- Funnel with strainer
- Glass carboy, or appropriate fermentation bucket
- Bung with hole for fermentation lock, or lid with grommited hole for fermentation lock
- Fermentation lock
- Sanitizer: Iodophor, or bleach, or StarSAN, or One-Step, etc.

Ingredients

- 15 lb (6.8 kg) honey
- 4 tsp (20 g) yeast nutrient
- 1½ tsp (7.5 g) yeast energizer
- ½ tsp (2.5 g) Irish moss (or other clarifying agent)
- 2 packages of Wyeast 4184 Sweet Mead yeast, or White Labs 720 Sweet Mead yeast, or your yeast of choice (If you would rather make a yeast starter, use one package of yeast in the yeast starter described in the **Procedure** below.)

- 3 gallons (11.3 L) pre-boiled and cooled water

Fruit Additions

If you are unsure of the affect fruit will have on your mead, remember to err on the lighter side since it is easy to add more fruit, but very hard to remove it once it is in the mead. The weighted mesh bag in each of the fruit additions below can be accomplished by placing sterilized marbles in the bag with the fruit. I highly recommend the use of mesh bags for fruit additions, since it prevents fruit from being picked up in the racking cane, and reduces the amount of mead lost in the fruit. It also makes your cleanup much easier.

The amount of fruit used should be balanced against how dry or sweet you would like your mead to end up. For dry mead, use less fruit. Be aware that fruit additions can also overpower a delicate honey.

1. **Cherries** – Using sweet cherries, you can add 7 to 10 pounds (3.2 to 4.5 kg) of pitted cherries directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary fermenter. Using sour cherries, add 6 to 9 pounds (2.7 to 4.1 kg) of pitted fruit. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the cherries.
2. **Blueberries** – You can add 7 to 10 pounds (3.2 to 4.5 kg) of blueberries directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary fermenter. Using fresh blueberries is great, but blueberry character in mead can be enhanced when the berries have been frozen and thawed before adding to the must. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the blueberries.
3. **Melons** – Because varieties of melon are distinctly different in strength of flavor and aroma, you may need to adjust the amount used in your mead. Use 6 to 9 pounds (2.7 to 4.1 kg) of cubed melon directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary. Sample your mead regularly to determine if enough melon character is present, or if it is time to transfer off the fruit. If more melon character is needed, you can add 1 pound (454 g) of fruit and continue to monitor the mead for the melon character you would like.
4. **Currants** – Add 5 to 7 pounds (2.3 to 3.2 kg) directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary. Using fresh currants is great, but the currant character in the mead is enhanced when the fruit has been frozen and thawed before adding to the must. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the currants. (Be careful; currants stain very easily.)

5. **Plums** – Use 7 to 9 pounds (3.2 to 4.1 g) of pitted and halved plums with the skin still on the fruit (for the tannins) added directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary. Using fresh plums is great, but plum character in the mead is enhanced when the plums have been frozen and thawed before adding to the must. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the plums.

Procedure

A couple of days before you make the mead, make a yeast starter. Sterilize a ½ gallon bottle (a.k.a. growler), an appropriate stopper with a hole, a funnel, and a fermentation lock. Boil 6 cups (1.42 L) of water with ¼ teaspoon (1.25 g) yeast energizer, ¼ teaspoon (1.25 g) yeast nutrient, and 1 tablespoon (15 g) light dry malt extract (LDME). Boil for 5 to 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and add 1 cup (236 mL) honey. Cool the mixture to room temperature and pour the solution into the sterilized bottle. Add the yeast, cap the bottle and shake the mixture vigorously for a minute or two. When aeration is complete, attach the stopper and the fermentation lock with liquid in it.

On the day you are making the mead, set the honey containers in a sink with hot water to soften the honey.

Clean and sanitize the funnel and strainer, carboy/bucket, stopper or lid with hole, and fermentation lock.

Put the Irish moss in a cup with a small amount of water to hydrate it.

Boil 2 gallons (7.6 L) of water in the stockpot for 10 minutes (you can add your wort chiller, spoon, and thermometer during the boil to sterilize them). Turn off the heat and allow the water to cool to approximately 160 °F (71 °C). Stir in the honey, and then re-apply heat to get it to 160 °F (71 °C) again. Add 1 tsp (5 g) yeast nutrient and ½ tsp (2.5 g) hydrated Irish moss and hold at 160 °F (71 °C) for 20 minutes.

After 20 minutes, use your wort chiller and/or a sink with cold ice water to quickly cool the must to ~65 to 70 °F (18 to 21 °C). When cooled, pour the must into the sanitized fermentation vessel (glass carboy or bucket). Add the pre-boiled and cooled water to the fermenter to bring the volume up to 5 gallons (19 L) and shake the fermenter to mix up the must. Take an original gravity reading with your hydrometer. If the must is 65 to 70 °F (18 to 21 °C), pitch the yeast and aerate well. Attach the fermentation lock and add liquid to the lock; cheap vodka works well, because it's sterile and won't taint the mead if it comes in contact with it.

Yeast Nutrient Schedule (Optional)

If you have 4 or 5 inches (10 or 13 cm) of space above the liquid in the fermenter, you can safely add yeast nutrients to the must per this schedule. If you have little room between the liquid and the top of the fermenter, you may want to place the fermenter in the bathtub before adding any nutrients (otherwise it can be somewhat messy).

After 24 hours, add 1 tsp (5 g) yeast nutrient and ½ tsp (2.5 g) yeast energizer. Use the sterilized end of your long spoon or a wine degasser to stir the must. Stir gently at first, and after a bit, stir enough to rouse the yeast, but not so vigorously as to cause bubbles.

After 48 hours, add 1 tsp (5 g) yeast nutrient and ½ tsp (2.5 g) yeast energizer. Stir the must gently and then enough to rouse the yeast, but not so vigorously as to cause bubbles.

After 72 hours, add 1 tsp (5 g) yeast nutrient and ½ tsp (2.5 g) yeast energizer. Stir the must gently and then enough to rouse the yeast, but not so vigorously as to cause bubbles.

Fermentation

Allow the mead to ferment for about 6 weeks. When the activity in the fermentation lock has slowed to one bubble every 30 seconds or more or if the mead has clarified, take a specific gravity reading and transfer the mead to the secondary fermenter with your choice of the 5 fruit additions. We recommend using a bucket for the secondary with the fruit addition. Be sure to monitor the fruit character of the mead periodically (weekly or monthly should be good enough). Feel free to adjust the fruit amounts to your own taste. When the mead has acquired enough fruit character, transfer the mead into another fermenter and allow it to bulk age for a few months. When the mead has cleared and airlock activity has slowed to about one bubble per minute, it is time to bottle. Take a specific gravity reading at this time.

Bottling

If the gravity reading is close to the expected reading (1.030-1.045), there will be a lot of residual sugar in the mead. If you like how it tastes, you may want to use a stabilizer such as potassium sorbate to stop any further fermentation. To do this, add 2½ teaspoons (12.5 g) of potassium sorbate to the mead and gently stir it in. Wait a day or two before bottling the mead. If you prefer not to use potassium sorbate, you can slow further fermentation by refrigerating the mead. Be aware that inadequately refrigerated sweet meads can become carbonated over time.

Be sure to celebrate Mead Day 2012 by opening a bottle of your 2011 Mead Day Melomel!