

# Making Mead - Using Simple Methods by Roger Patterson

Mead is very simple to make and can be done with the minimum of equipment. All that is needed other than what can be found in the kitchen is some kind of vessel for fermenting and storing. The obvious containers are demijohns, and these are readily available either new or at such places as car boot or jumble sales. Do sniff inside them to make sure they have not been used for something that might taint your precious liquid. I have some 10 gallon containers I bought at the Bee Auction at Brinsbury that were previously used for wine, and they are excellent. In general, the bigger the vessel the better.

There are few books on mead, probably because it is so simple to make, but there is quite a lot of information on the web. There are many other alcoholic drinks made with honey and these will be called something else such as cyser, metheglin, melomel, etc depending on what the other ingredients are. The commercially available "Mead" is usually not mead at all, but sickly sweet grape based wine with honey added. I once saw a definition for mead as "The result of fermentation between honey and water, in the presence of fruit acid". It really is that simple.

I use six ingredients:-

**Water.** Tap water is suitable, but if you have spring water then use it.

**Honey.** Literally anything will do and I have even used fermented honey, although in general the quality of mead reflects the quality of honey. If you are a winemaker and have a hydrometer then you can glean honey from cappings or any other similar source. Honey does have its own yeast and I prefer to kill these off. 3lb of honey to the gallon will make a medium mead, ½lb either side will make either dry or sweet, but experiment to suit your own taste.

**Yeast.** The serious mead makers will use Maury, Tokay, or Steinberg yeast, but I find the normal general purpose dried winemaking yeast quite satisfactory. I have also used Gervin No3.

**Nutrient.** There is little nitrogenous matter in honey so we need to introduce some to help the yeast work. Yeast nutrient is available from winemaking suppliers. Some use Marmite, although I never have.

**Tannin and Fruit Acid.** These can be bought from winemaking suppliers, but I use tea and lemon juice.

## **Method to make one gallon - multiply up for larger quantities.**

- Make up a "starter" to get the yeast active a few hours (6-12) before making the bulk. I half fill a honey or jam jar with water, add a couple of tsp's of honey and a tsp or sachet of yeast, stir it, and leave it covered over in a warm place. Too warm and it will bubble over.

- Put the honey in a pan with around 2 pints of water, bring to the boil, and simmer for a few minutes. This is to kill off the wild yeasts. There will be quite a scum on the top that I don't remove, although some do. The alternative is to use chemicals, which I never have.

- When it is cool pour into the fermenting vessel, add a tsp of nutrient, the juice of a lemon, half a cup of tea, and the yeast starter which should be working well. Then fill up to around 3-4 inches below the neck of the vessel with cold water. Put a piece of plastic over the neck and secure with an elastic band. An airlock can be used.

- Keep it in a fairly warm place, keeping an eye on it for a few days as the initial fermentation can be quite strong, causing it to overflow.

- When fermentation dies down a bit, top up with water.

- Allow to ferment until it starts to clear, then rack off. This may need to be done several times until there is no sediment left.

- Mead matures better in bulk so leave it until you need it, then bottle off. Maturation will take some time, a minimum of 12 months to be drinkable, but 2-5 years if well made is worth waiting for.

I have assumed the reader is familiar with normal winemaking practices.

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