

# Making Herbal Beers & Meads

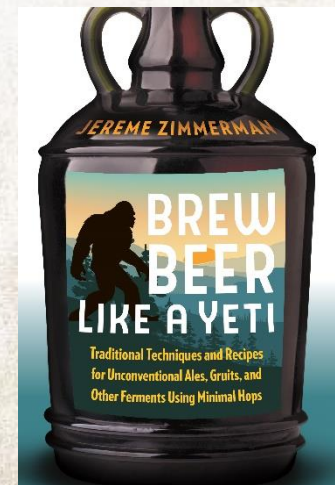
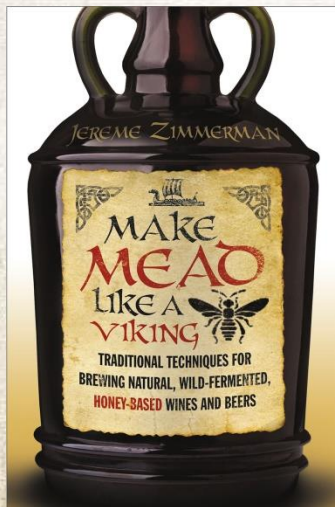
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# What is Mead?

## ...and Why Make it Like a Viking?

- Honey + water + yeast = MEAD!
- Honey is the primary fermentable
- Can be blended with other sugars
- Myriad flavoring possibilities
- A truly ancient beverage
- Odin gave us mead by stealing it from the giants of Jotunheim, turning into an eagle, regurgitating most of it into cauldrons for the gods and, for us humans, well...



# Ingredients for Mead & Types of Mead

- ☞ Mead can range from dry, to semi-sweet, to sweet
- ☞ Show / traditional mead: basic honey-water-yeast mead
- ☞ Fruit mead (melomel)
- ☞ Mead with herbs, spices & flowers (metheglin/metheglyn)
- ☞ Vegetables, mushrooms, peppers, etc.
- ☞ Grain-based meads (bragot / honey beer)



# Fermentation & Flavor Enhancers

- ☞ Honey, water and yeast need a bit of help
- ☞ Small amounts of tannins, acids and nutrients help achieve proper body and acid balance
- ☞ Tannins: buy in powdered form or use natural substances such as oak leaves, black tea or raisins
- ☞ Acids: powdered form or bits of citrus juice
- ☞ Nutrients: yeast need nutrition for a healthy fermentation and to avoid off flavors
- ☞ Purchase yeast nutrients such as Fermaid K (or O), or add high-nutrient ingredients such as fresh or dried fruit, bee pollen or “chunky” bits of the hive

# Core Concepts for Natural Mead Making

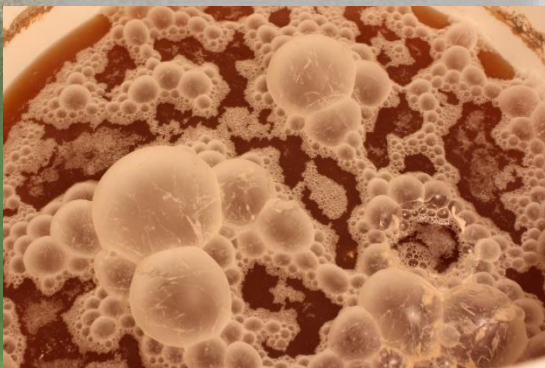
- 🍯 Use local, raw and unfiltered honey.
- 🍯 Make mead with low-to-no-heat to maximize its aroma, flavor and health benefits.
- 🍯 Make 1-gallon batches for quicker, easier ferments and to experiment with flavors.
- 🍯 Blueprint for semi-sweet starter mead:
  1. Blend 2.5-3 lbs. wildflower honey with 1 gal. spring water
  2. Drop in 10-12 organic raisins or ½ teaspoon yeast nutrient
  3. Squeeze in a pinch of lemon juice
  4. Add small amounts of herbs, spices, or a handful or fresh berries, and /or wild-foraged edibles
  5. Add yeast (see next slide)

# Yeast: An Incredibly Simple Complex Subject

The oldest domesticated living organism is not a horse or a chicken, nor is it corn or wheat. It is a wild single-celled, asexual creature capable of preserving food, making bread rise, and fermenting drinks. It is yeast.

—Amy Stewart, *The Drunken Botanist*

- ☞ Wild yeast is your friend, but so is commercial yeast
- ☞ Wine yeast: Lalvin D-47, Lalvin EC-1118, Lalvin K1-V1116, Red Star Premier Blanc Dry Champagne Yeast
- ☞ Bread yeast or ale / brewing yeast is acceptable for some meads



# Wild Yeast Wrangling



# Stirring a Wild Ferment





# Fermentation Vessels & Brewing Equipment



**Start with 1-gallon  
batches**



**Move up to 5-gallon  
batches**

# Racking & Filtering



# Bottling & Aging



# What is beer?



## ...and what *was* beer?

- Modern definition: a fermented alcoholic beverage made from malted grains, hops, water & yeast.
- Sugar + water + yeast + time = alcohol.
- Most modern beer gets its sugar from cereal grains (barley, wheat & rye).
- Historical beers:
  - Weren't always made from grain.
  - Could have honey, molasses, sorghum, or other fermentables along with or instead of sugars from malted grains such as barley, wheat or rye.
  - Made with various herbs and rarely with hops.
  - Historical peoples weren't that concerned with style definitions.
  - Nearly every home / farm brewed its own family beer recipe

# Brewing Beer From Sugar

- Ginger Coriander Ale
  - 8 oz fresh ginger root chopped
  - 1 oz dried coriander seed lightly crushed
  - 2 tablespoon dried orange peel granules
  - 1 pound organic sugar
  - Ale yeast or wild-fermented starter
  - 1 gallon spring water
  - Recipe available at <http://nittygritty.com>



# Brewing Beer From Extract

- Start with an extract kit.
- Or build your own kit.
  - Fermentation vessel(s) & airlock(s)
  - Brewing pot (stainless steel / 2-5 gals.)
  - Grain extract (or molasses, brown sugar, etc.)
  - Hops, herbs / spices, yeast, flavoring grains, etc.
  - Siphoning tube and/or funnel; thermometer & hydrometer
  - Yeast / good drinking water



# Brew Day, Part 1

- Relax. Have a beer. Don't stress.
- Inventory and clean all equipment the night before.
  - Don't go into brew day without a plan and all equipment ready to go.
  - Things will never go quite as planned. Accept that.
  - Clean all equipment with hot soapy water and air dry.
  - Sanitize and rinse well if you don't mind using chemicals.
- Bring 1 ¼ gallon water to a boil (for 1-gallon batch).
- Add extract or sugar substitute (molasses, brown sugar, etc.).
- Stir mightily to avoid boil-over; keep at a steady, rolling boil.
- Add hops, herbs, spices, etc., following recipe schedule.
- Cut off boil and cool rapidly in an ice-water bath to 60-70 F.
- Proceed to Brew Day, Part 2.



# Brew Day, Part 2

- Add yeast once wort is 60-70 F.
- Pour through strainer into fermentation vessel.
- Check potential alcohol by volume (ABV) with hydrometer.
- Insert airlock half-full of water or cover brewing bucket with cloth.
- Set fermentation vessel in warm, (60-70 F) dark room (no direct sunlight).
- Active fermentation should commence within 2-10 hours.
- Troubleshoot if no visible fermentation within 24 hours.
- Prepare to bottle within 7-10 days of brew day.





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