



The Herald Tribune



Volume #21 Issue #8

Newsletter of the Ann Arbor Brewers' Guild

August 2007

August Meeting

This month's meeting of the AABG is Friday the 10st and will be hosted by **Roger Burns**. See the map and directions on the next page. The featured style is **Mead**.



AABG 2007

January	Mike O'Brien	Session Beers*
February	Randy deBeauclair	Pilsner
March	Kurt Sonen	Scottish*
April	Jason Henning	Strong Ale
May	Stephen Krebs	Bock/Extract Beers*
June	Mark Zadvinskis	Sour Beer
July	Steve Darnell	German Wheat/Rye
August	Roger Burns	Mead
September	Jeff Renner	IPA
October	American Ale
November	Chris Frey	Stout
December	Rolf Wucherer	Cider

* Denotes AHA Club Only Competition Style
All meetings are the second Friday of each month beginning at 7:30 p.m., except for the July meeting (BeerBQ) which is the second Saturday.

AABG Pico System

The guardian of the club's pico system is Mike O'Brien. Anyone wishing to use it should contact him at:
734.637.2532 or e-mail:
mobrien315221MI@comcast.net

Style of the Month – Mead

25. MEAD

25A. Traditional Mead

Aroma: Honey aroma should dominate, which may be sweet and may express the aroma of flower nectar. Aromas produced during fermentation, such as fruity esters and alcohol, may also be present.

Appearance: Clarity may be good to brilliant. Carbonated examples will show active evidence of dissolved gas but no head is expected. Color may range from pale straw to deep amber.

Flavor: The flavor of honey should be featured and may include residual sweetness. Any additives, such as acidity or tannin, should enhance the honey flavor and lend balance to the overall character of the mead.

Mouthfeel: Smooth texture. Most will be wine-like, with the warming presence of alcohol and sense of medium body. Sensations of a cloying or astringent character should be avoided.

Comments: A mead made primarily from honey, water and yeast. Meads which feature the character of a blended honey or a blend of honeys. For meads made from a single variety of honey see below "B, Varietal Honey Traditional Mead." While some oxidation of mead is OK and can actually lend useful complexity to the mead, over oxidation as exhibited by sherry-like aroma and/or taste should be avoided. Phenols produced by high temperature fermentation are also to be avoided.

Vital Statistics

OG . . .	1.070-1.120+
FG . . .	0.995-1.025
IBUs	N/A
SRM	1-16
ABV	7.5-15+%



Other Mead Categories

- 25B. Varietal Honey Traditional Mead
- 25C. Cyser (apple)
- 25D. Pyment (grape)
- 25E. Melomel (other fruit)
- 25F. Metheglin (spiced)
- 25G. Braggot (barley malt)
- 25H. Mixed Category Mead



History

Mead is an alcoholic beverage produced by the fermentation of a diluted mixture of honey and water. Sometimes with fruit and spices added as flavorings it is called by different names, melomel, metheglin, pyment, cyser and a variety of other names.

It is typically clear with a slight gold tint, with an alcohol content of between 7–22%. By varying the proportions of honey and water and the point at which fermentation is stopped, a wide variety of types can be produced ranging from a very dry and light mead similar to more traditional white grape wines, to sweet and heavy-bodied desert wine. If fermentation is left to continue while bottled a sparkling mead resembling a sparkling white wine is produced.

Until the late middle ages both mead and sparkling mead were highly popular beverages, especially in northern regions of Europe, where wine grapes could not easily be grown. It was produced by organized industry during the 15th-century, controlled as with other trades by guilds. The largest guild of brewers during the time was the Guild of Free Brewers in London, who at the time controlled all aspects of brewing wine, mead and ale. Not only did they control the manufacture of these products



but the distribution and laws governing the measurement when dispensed. The guilds controlled all aspects of the trade and production of ale, mead and only toward the end of the 16th-century wines. As the importance of honey was displaced by less expensive sugars in the late Middle Ages, mead was gradually displaced by less costly beers and ales and to a lesser degree by imported wines. Mead then became a drink of the socially lower classes. Nonetheless, it was always considered for medicinal value and was prescribed to even royalty.

WHEN AND WHERE

Friday, August 10, 7:30pm

Roger Burns

1441 Greenview Drive

Ann Arbor MI

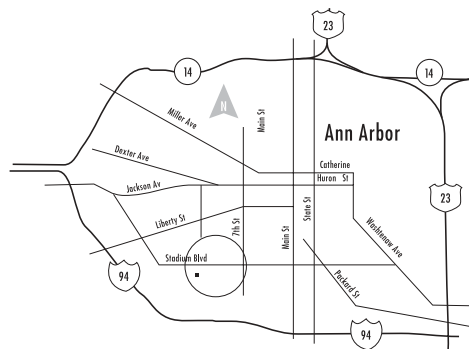
734-846-2325

Directions from Michigan Stadium

Take Stadium West past 7th Avenue. Greenview is the 4th street on the left past 7th Ave. There is a church directly across from Greenview, on the right, with a blue church sign, so if you can find the big blue sign, you can see Roger's street. It is the 3rd house on the left. Parking on the street is free and plentiful.

Directions from US23 S / M14 W.

Driving S on US23, take M14 W toward Jackson. Exit at Maple Road (Exit 2), and go left. Maple will become Stadium at Jackson Ave. Continue South until Stadium makes a big turn to the left (about 2 miles from M14 exit). Greenview is the second road after the curve. Look for blue church sign. Turn right. 3rd on left.



Guide for New Members

Bring 1–2 bottles per batch of your beer that you'd like to share, or an interesting commercial beer. Bring tasty munchies to cleanse the palate and sop up the alcohol. Feel free to share and accept constructive comments. Please use good judgment while imbibing and don't drive while intoxicated.

Some History and Speculation

Speculation is that mead was first discovered when honey somehow accidentally mixed with water, perhaps during a thunderstorm. The honey water started fermenting from the various wild yeasts which exist in nature, and the first mead was born! How did the discoverer of this nectar of the gods (for that is how it is described in many texts) find it? Did he trip over a root and pitch head-first into the puddle? Or was he drawn by the wondrous smell of the brew? Perhaps it didn't occur naturally at all. Maybe man created it, as he created beer and wine. Perhaps it really was a gift from the gods! There are a number of myths in which mead or honey or both were given to man by the gods. However it happened, the origins of mead are lost in history, and we can only speculate on its origins.

There are indications that the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Scandinavians, Assyrian, Incas and Aztec used mead, both in festivals and as a religious drink. Oddly, it seems to have pervaded many, if not most, cultures, at some point in time. You can find it in the writings of



Greek philosophers and the stories of their gods. Mead figures prominently in the tales of Scandinavia and the Vikings. You can find mead in the histories of England (Queen Elizabeth I loved it!), France, Greece, South America, Africa, Ireland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Australia.

References to mead in literature and archeological finds have been found dating back nearly 3000 years. Mead shows up in cultures

all over the world, from the Mediterranean to Africa, Scandinavia to Europe. No one knows how it became so widespread. Was it discovered in many places, or did the love of mead spread from a single location? We may never know, but the mention of it is pervasive, present in historical finds, literature, myths and legends, even in many holy books.

Remember King Midas? The story is one we learn in grade school. The man with the Golden Touch. Legend has it that the gods gifted (or cursed) him with the ability to transform anything he touched to gold. This worked out for a while. Then he touched his daughter, transforming her into a golden statue, breaking the heart of the King. Fifty years ago, the tomb of King Midas was discovered, in Gordian, Turkey. This discovery is considered one of the most spectacular archeological finds of the 20th century. The treasure trove of his final resting place contained the remnants of the king's funerary feast. At the time of the discovery, tools did not exist to analyze the organic residue left in the various vessels, but 40 years later, Dr.

See **Mead** continued on next page...

Mead continued ...

Patrick McGovern was able to determine the contents of the items. It was determined that the drinking bowls and cups in the 2700 year old tomb contained a mixture of wine, barley beer and mead. Some of the ingredients extrapolated were yellow muscat grapes, barley malt, thyme honey, and saffron.² This mixture is reminiscent of a cross between a piment and a braggot, and a sweet mead with a malty, spicy taste. Kind of makes you wonder whether the 'golden touch' was really about gold after all!

Another spectacular find goes back nearly 2500 years. The Hochdorf Tomb, near Hohenasperg, Germany, is a massive find from the late Hallstatt period through the transition to La Tène and into the La Tène period, contained, among other things, a massive cauldron that would hold 500 liters of liquid! Truly, the inhabitant of this tomb must have been somebody, to merit such a heroic drinking vessel. Drinking horns were also found in the tomb, perhaps for the dead notable to use in quaffing his or her prodigious amount of drink in the afterlife. Despite its age, there remained a substance, found in the bottom of the cauldron. Of course, when analyzed, it was found to be a honey-based drink. Mead!

Constanze Witt, of the University of Virginia, did her dissertation, *Barbarians on the Greek Periphery? Origins of Celtic Art*, and it included a section on drinking and feasts. Mead is mentioned peripherally, and the information is fascinating for its insights into Greek and Roman influences on the Celtic culture, possibly illustrating some of the spread of mead as a drink. I have even found claims that mentions of mead have been made by Greek and Roman philosophers, though I've been unable to confirm these claims.

Fermented honey drinks are illustrated in the civilizations of the Aztecs and the Incas. Small wonder that the people who drank hot melted chocolate should also have discovered the wonders of mead!

In "T'ej in America", Virginia Davis says, "The national drink of Ethiopia is T'ej, a golden sweet honey-wine. T'ej is mead that is indigenous to Ethiopia with roots going back to the 4th century." She speculates that T'ej was the drink enjoyed by Queen Sheba and King Solomon. T'ej, is a sweet mead which has a bitter side to it, created by the addition of an extract from the Gesho tree, somewhat like hazel. Even though grapes have been introduced to Ethiopia in the last century, T'ej is still the favored drink of choice for the average Ethiopian. T'ej is still a rare drink here

in the United States, with only 2 or 3 meaderies producing it, among them Berrywine Plantation in Maryland, and Saba T'ej in New Jersey. If you can find it, buy it, it is a unique treasure among meads. It can be found easily in many stores now, among them shops in Little Ethiopia in Washington D.C. and World Market stores.

Honey, and by association, mead, have been attributed with such powers as that of an aphrodisiac, and it has been said in times gone by that it imbues the drinker with attributes such as life, wisdom, courage and strength. Mead



can be found all throughout recorded history, in all corners of the world. Its variations are legion. Many, if not most, cultures that mention mead, imbue it with mystical properties. The word 'honeymoon' is purported (but not proven) to have been derived from the custom of gifting a newly wed couple with mead as they went into their 'moon' or month of seclusion, presumably to create an heir to their name. There are many myths of gods giving mead to their followers as a gift. Bees were considered sacred messengers of the gods in some cultures, and an entire group of soothsayers, called 'Melissas', were keepers of bees.

In literature, the spread of mead is even more obvious. There are mentions of mead in the Rig Veda, where speculation is that the intoxicating drink soma was in fact mead. Look at this verse from the first book of the Rig Veda: Adored, the strengtheners of Law, unite them, Agni, with their Dames: Make them drink meath, O bright of tongue. Meath is suspected to be another variation of the word from which our modern 'mead' is derived. It is also mentioned in several places in the Samaveda, another of the four Vedas. The date of the compilation of the Vedas is not known, but it is surmised that they came about sometime soon after the Aryans came to India. This verse shows again that mead could be found in that ancient culture: Soma, while thou art cleansed, most dear and watchful in the sheep's long wool, most like to Angiras! thou hast become a sage. Sprinkle our sacrifice with mead! Mead seems to have serious religious significance to the Hindus of the time. Since soma was a drink of their gods, perhaps mead was as well.

The Enuma Elish is a Babylonian creation myth, and the translation done by L.W. King in 1902 of these ancient clay tablets contains the following: The great gods, all of them, who decree fate. They entered in before Anshar, they filled... They kissed one another, in the assembly...; They made ready for the feast, at the banquet they sat; They ate bread, they mixed sesame-wine. The sweet drink, the mead, confused their... They were drunk with drinking, their bodies were filled. They were wholly at ease, their spirit was exalted; Then for Marduk, their avenger, did they decree the fate.

Not a bad argument for mead in Babylonia, is it? Certainly anyone who has had a little too much mead knows how confused it can make you. Not to mention the hangover, which can be of godlike proportions!

From the Near East to western Europe, where the Britons and Celts held sway, mead made its mark. In the Welsh epic, the Mabinogion, Arthur, King of the Britons says, "If I thought you would not disparage me," said he, "I would sleep while I wait for my repast; and you can entertain one another with relating tales, and can obtain a flagon of mead and some meat from Kai." Certainly the romantic soul has no trouble imagining Camelot, that pinnacle of light and chivalry in Medieval England, as a home to the golden essence of mead. There are many mentions of mead in this highly entertaining collection of legends from tenacious and doughty Welsh culture. To this day, one can find a

Mead continued ...

number of fine meads in Wales, some with roots dating back hundreds of years. In Wales, the tradition of mead is one that has been kept, and kept well.

The Celtic peoples of the British Isles were said to have made mead with honey and the sap of a hazel tree. Some Christian saints (probably the Irish ones!) were reputedly fond of a 'wee drop o mead' betimes. It is purported that St. Brigitte turned water into mead at the court of the King of Leinster, using her magic cauldron. The Irish, from whom a great deal of our knowledge of the Celtic peoples arises, have long been famed for their ability to produce (and drink!) fine fermented beverages. The people that give us Guinness now also gave us their version of mead long ago, in the times of the Heroes. Medb, speaking to Fiachu about parlaying with Cuchulain, one of the great Heroes of Ireland, says, "He shall be recompensed for the loss of his lands and estates, for whosoever has been slain of the Ulstermen, so that it be paid to him as the men of Erin adjudge. Entertainment shall be his at all times in Cruachan; wine and mead shall be poured out for him." The faerie folk drank mead, and if you drank it with them, you might stay in their lands forever. The legends and myths of the Celtic folk are rife with references to mead. Though we don't have any written records to prove it, it is not unlikely that the Druids might have used it in their rituals, perhaps adding some psychoactive substance to it to help them 'see' the gods.

However, the mother load of mead history in literature is in the tales from the Scandinavian lands. Vikings have long been associated with mead, in stories and cultural myths by their descendants. You can find numerous mentions in Beowulf, the well known and oft-translated saga of a man and his quest against the Grendel. Beowulf bemoans, Then was this mead-house at morning tide, dyed with gore, when the daylight broke, all the boards of the benches blood-besprinkled, gory the hall: I had heroes the less, doughty dear-ones that death had reft. The mead-hall seems to have been a central gathering place in Norse history, legends and mythology. Mead pervades their heritage, from their gods on down. It is said that Odin, the All-Father, imbibed nothing but mead. For him, say the tales, mead was both food and drink. In Valhalla, the Norse paradise, the heroes would dine upon the meat of a boar that renewed itself every night, and were supplied abundantly with mead from the she-goat Heidrum. Every day

they would go forth upon the field of battle, to fight and die gloriously, and in the evening, they would be healed, to feast in the mead-hall again.

The Norse took their mead to heart. There is mead in the halls, mead with the gods, and mead in paradise. Even more than the Ethiopians, mead seems to have been a national drink for the old Norse.



The earliest mead was a simple mixture of honey and water, fermented by wild yeast strains. Through history, man has added his own cultural and taste-based twists to the drink. There are dozens, if not hundreds of ways to make mead. There is melomel, or mead with fruit. Strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, cranberry and currant meads are readily available from commercial meaderies today in the United States and the U.K. Metheglin is mead with various spices. A popular mixture has been to use the 'Christmas spices' such as cinnamon, allspice, coriander, bay leaves and cloves to achieve a warm, spicy drink that warms you to your toes. Pyment is mead with grapes or grape juice. Sort of a combination between wine and mead, pyment is similar to what was found in King Midas' tomb. Braggot is mead with grains or malt, sort of a malt-o-mead. Rhodomel is mead made with rose water or rose petals.

A new mead that has become popular, and is extremely interesting is capsicumel. Yes, mead made with peppers. The chili-heads I have spoken with about 'chilimead' rave about the unique combination of heat and sweet. Others that are strange and wonderful are prickly pear mead, banana mead, maple mead and chocolate mead. You've heard of milk and honey? How about milk mead? It's not as gross as it sounds. Some of the horse nomads made brews from curdled fermented mares' milk, called kumiss. Did they add honey? We don't know for sure, but it certainly is possible.

Mead makers in modern times are pushing the envelope of what mead can be, with often weird, but always interesting results. Some meads only the maker can love. Others, like the milk mead, have garnered surprisingly positive feedback, both from mead lovers and mead judges at competitions!

Alas, when sugar became more readily available after the reign of Elizabeth I, mead began to decline in popularity and wine arose in its stead. More recently, mead has begun to rise again, and today there are over 100 commercial meaderies in existence around the world. Large numbers of people are brewing mead in their homes, in the best traditions of their many ancestors. There are large numbers of mead-related websites on the Internet, and the brewing of mead is a very popular pastime in the SCA and with renaissance faire enthusiasts. Many renaissance faires serve mead, and a few even have special blends that are only available at their events.

A number of books are available to learn more about mead and its history. If you're interested in details about the history, take a look at Roger Morse' book, Making Mead (Honey Wine) History, Recipes, Methods and Equipment. Roger Morse is one of the fathers of the modern mead revival.

Was mead truly a gift of the gods? We'll never know for sure, but I like to think of those thousands of meadmakers, all over the world, who are keeping alive a thousands-year old drink that has permeated civilization for as long as we can trace it back. We are furthering our heritage, one glass at a time. May your meads ferment well, and may you never want for the golden nectar of the gods. Wassail!

Vicky Rowe, known as Marsaili the MeadWench at faire, and Marsaili inghen Donnell in SCA, is creator and webmistress of Gotmead.com and an avid renaissance faire fan. She is a member of the St. Andrews Society, a reenactment group portraying the court of Mary, Queen of Scotland. She attends several fairs a year (always bringing mead for the after-gatherings!), and works part-time at faires as at various vendors, when she's not writing websites for her customers as owner of Satori Digital Marketing (<http://www.satoridigitalmarketing.com>). She resides in Youngsville, NC with her husband (a Civil War skirmisher), her daughter (also an avid renaissance faire fan and chief mead-making helper, known as Mini-Mead), and assorted dogs and horse (the number changes without notice).
