

Mead



Mead is almost certainly the oldest alcoholic beverage known to man and likely discovered before the wheel was invented. As long as there have been bees and honey there has been mead. Mead occurs naturally when honey is mixed with water and yeast. A chance occurrence of mead was likely produced during the Stone Age when honey became wet from rain and wild yeast in the air settled into the mixture.

According to Nordic mythology, the Norse gods lived wild lives of reckless abandon often given to lechery. Legends revealed stories of various gods giving goddesses cups of mead, which reduced the goddesses' resistance to advances by them so the scheming gods could take full advantage of their physical delights.

The ancient Greeks honoured Bacchus, who was widely regarded as the God of Mead long before he became accepted as the God of Wine. The Greeks respected a mead-making season after which the mead matured and was saved for an orgy which took place once or twice a year. The Moors considered honey to be an aphrodisiac while Pollio Romulus wrote to Julius Caesar that at 100 years old he attributed his full sex life to drinking copious amounts of metheglin — a spiced mead. During the Middle Ages, Queen Elizabeth possessed her own royal recipe for mead and Chaucer wrote of mead on more than one occasion. Shakespeare drank mead. In Germany, judges were served mead and army troops were provided mead for fortification.

But mead's real claim to fame is in its origins in wedding celebrations, hence the word "honeymoon." Mead was traditionally drunk during the month-long celebrations following weddings to insure fertility and the birth of sons.



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Some customs sent the bride to bed and then filled the bridegroom with mead until he could no longer stand. He was then delivered to the bride's bedside to sire a son that very night. If, per chance, the bride did, in fact, bear a son nine months later, the maker of the mead was complimented on its quality.

A basic mead of honey, water, and yeast — whether sweet, dry, sparkling or still — is called traditional. Once a mead maker begins adding fruits, spices, and herbs it takes on an entirely different character and a new name.

Types of mead



Traditional Mead A fermented honey beverage made from approximately two and one-half pounds of honey diluted with one gallon of water only.

Hydromel Weak, or watered mead

Sack Mead that is made sweeter by the addition of twenty to twenty-five percent more honey; a sauterne-like beverage.

Metheglin Spiced mead; originally spiced with a combination of herbs (gruit) but later hops became more popular.

Sack Metheglin Sweet spiced mead; traditionally similar to vermouth.

Melomel, or Mulsum Mead made with fruit juice.

Cyser A melomel made with apple juice or cider; similar to a sherry wine.

Pyment, or Clarre A melomel made with grape juice; sometimes referred to as honey sweetened grape wine..

Hypocras Spiced pyment

Braggot a honey-ale beverage made by fermenting honey and grains together.



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