

Recipe

Traditional Mead with Spices (a.k.a. Metheglin)

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

Be aware that spices can sometimes accentuate dryness and alcohol burn, so you'll want to leave a little sweetness and keep your fermentation temperatures at 68 °F (20 °C) or lower.

Traditional Mead

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 grommets 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
- Wyeast 4184 Sweet Mead yeast, or White Labs 720 Sweet Mead yeast, or your yeast of choice
- 3 gallons (11.3 L) pre-boiled and cooled water

Metheglin Additions

If you are unsure of the affect spice will have on your mead, remember to err on the lighter side since it is easy to add more spice, but very hard to remove it once it's in the mead. The weighted mesh bag in each of the spice additions below can be accomplished by placing sterilized marbles in the bag with the spices.

- Ginger Root** – You can add 1 to 2 ounces (28 to 56 g) of peeled and thinly sliced fresh ginger root directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh or tea bag to the secondary fermenter. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the ginger.
- Cinnamon Sticks** – You can add 3 to 5, 4-inch (10 cm) sticks directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag to the secondary fermenter. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the cinnamon sticks.
- Mint** – Because varieties of mint are distinctly different in strength, add approximately 2 oz (56 g) of bruised mint leaves directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh or tea bag to the secondary. Sample your mead regularly to determine if enough mint character is present, or if it is time to transfer off the mint. If more mint character is needed, add another 2 oz (56 g) and continue to monitor the mead for mint character.
- Rose Petals** – Use approximately a one-gallon (3.8 L) bag of fresh rose petals; very fragrant roses are the best. The rose petals should be placed in a weighted, sterilized mesh bag and placed in an empty fermenter (a bucket works best). Rack the mead on top of the bag and age for approximately 1 month. Sample your mead weekly to determine when to transfer off the rose petals.
- Juniper Berries** – Use 1.0 oz (28 g) of fresh berries, if possible. Crack the berries, but don't crush them. The berries can be added directly or in a weighted, sterilized mesh or tea bag at any point in the process; primary, secondary, etc. Sample your mead regularly to determine when to transfer off the juniper berries.

Procedure

The day before you make the mead, make a yeast starter.

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, bung with hole or lid, 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

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.

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, transfer the mead to the secondary fermenter with your choice of the 5 spice additions. Take a gravity reading at this time. Be sure to monitor the spice level of the mead periodically (weekly should be good enough). Feel free to adjust the spice amounts to your own taste. When the mead has acquired enough spice character, transfer off the spices into another fermenter and allow the mead to bulk age for a few months. When the mead has cleared, it is ready to bottle.

Bottling

Depending on the spice addition you have chosen, you may not wish to carbonate your mead. In general, dry meads are better carbonated and sweet mead is better kept still.

To carbonate: Heat 1½ cups (375 mL) filtered tap water to a boil. Boil for 10 minutes and then turn off the heat and mix in one cup (250 mL) corn sugar. When the sugar is dissolved, cool the mixture to about 70 °F (21 °C) and then gently pour the sugar water into the bottling bucket. Rack the mead into the bottling bucket and gently stir the must every so often to get a good blend of the mead and the sugar water. Proceed with the bottling process.