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This Month's Beer Profile:

MEADS

Mead à la Murphrey

(by Steve Murphrey)

I was introduced to Mead a few months after I began brewing my own beer. After reading a newspaper article about a homebrew competition (the North Texas State Fair in Denton, Texas), Donna and I decided to check it out. We arrived at the competition a little late, and they were in dire need of mead judges. Surprisingly, my "What's mead?" question did not deter the competition organizers from their quest for judges. Apparently, all the other experienced mead people had entries in those categories. So Donna and I judged a flight of about 12 mead entries with Ben Weatherall, possibly the Dallas area's most experienced mead judge. Judging meads in such a hotbed of mead brewers was quite an experience. Even today, I think we did a decent job of judging, and I still remember that sweet raspberry mead that won the blue ribbon. It was a few weeks later, after joining a homebrew club (the Denton Fermented Brewers Society - I don't know whether that name is a pun or not!), that we found out that the alcohol level of mead is much higher than beer (which explained our post-competition buzz).



Mead-Meister Stephen Murphrey (seated, above) and Richard Todd (seated, below) oversee check-in at CARBOY's 1999 Shamrock Open.
(photo - Jim Navecky)

It was probably the following spring when I attempted my first mead. I bought a copy of *Brewing Mead*, by Gayre and Papazian, a rewrite of a book first published by Gayre in 1948. I've always found published reference material comforting! Then I got 15 pounds of

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FAMOUS BEER QUOTE:

"You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on."

- Dean Martin

This Month's Style Profile:

MEAD

Meads are produced by the fermentation of honey, water, yeast and optional ingredients such as fruit, herbs and/or spices. Their final gravity roughly determines whether they are: dry - 0.996 to 1.009; medium - 1.010 to 1.019; Sweet -1.020 to 1.029; or very sweet - 1.030 and higher. Wine, champagne, sherry, mead, ale or lager yeasts may be used.

25. Traditional Mead and Braggot

a) Sparkling Traditional Mead - Effervescent. Dry, medium or sweet (designate on entry form). Light to medium body. No flavors other than honey. Honey character in aroma and flavor. Low to medium fruity acidity. Color depends on honey type. Absence of harsh and/or stale character.

b) Still Traditional Mead - Not effervescent. Dry, medium sweet or very sweet. Light to full body. Honey character in aroma and flavor. Low to medium fruity acidity. Color depends on honey type. Absence of harsh and/or stale character.

c) Sparkling Braggot - Effervescent. Made with malt. Dry, medium or sweet. Light to medium body. Honey flavors predominate.

d) Still Braggot - Not effervescent. Made with malt. Dry, medium or sweet. Light to medium body. Honey flavors predominate.

26. Fruit and Vegetable Mead

Melomel is made with any fruit. **Cyser** is made with apples and/or apple juice. **Pyment** is made with grapes. **Ingredients should be expressed in aroma and flavor. Color should represent ingredients. Honey character apparent in aroma and flavor. Absence of harsh and/or stale character.**

a) Sparkling Melomel - Effervescent. Light to medium body. Dry, medium or sweet.

b) Still Melomel - Not effervescent. Light to full body. Dry, medium, sweet or very sweet.

c) Sparkling Cyser - Effervescent. Light to medium body. Dry, medium or sweet.

d) Still Cyser - Not effervescent. Light to full body. Dry, medium, sweet or very sweet.

e) Sparkling Pyment - Effervescent. Light to medium body. Dry, medium or sweet.

f) Still Pyment - Not effervescent. Light to full body. Dry, medium, sweet or very sweet.

27. Herb and Spice Mead

Metheglin is made with any herbs or spices. **Hippocras** is made with spices and grapes (spiced pyment). **Ingredients should be expressed in aroma and flavor. Color should represent ingredients. Honey character must be apparent in aroma and flavor. Absence of harsh and/or stale character.**

a) Sparkling Metheglin - Effervescent. Light to medium body. Dry, medium or sweet.

b) Still Metheglin - Not effervescent. Light to full body. Dry, medium, sweet or very sweet.

c) Sparkling Hippocras - Effervescent. Light to medium body. Dry, medium or sweet.

d) Still Hippocras - Not effervescent. Light to full body. Dry, medium, sweet or very sweet.

SOURCE - 1997 AHA Style Guidelines

(Mead a la Murphrey - con't)

honey which I boiled in about 4 or 5 gallons of water, and skimmed the foam off. After cooling, into the carboy it went, along with some yeast energizer, some yeast nutrient, some acid blend, and a package of dry Champagne yeast. This seemed a lot easier than brewing the extract beers that I had been doing. Unfortunately, the miracle of fermentation did not happen. After a few weeks of no activity, I tried more nutrients, energizer, yeast, and aeration - all to no avail. I tried everything that anyone at the homebrew club suggested. Finally, I relaxed and stopped worrying. Then, a few weeks later, I saw a bubble in the fermentation lock. One bubble led to another, and after another 2 or 3 months, my 1.095 original gravity must have fermented down to a 1.000 final gravity. I never found out what the problem was, although I have some suspicions (see below). After a few more months, Donna and I started to enjoy an occasional bottle of a pleasant little mead. It aged rather well, and some of my new North Carolina friends actually got to taste that traditional mead (i.e., mead made out of just honey) after about 3 or 4 years of aging.

After moving to North Carolina, I began making melomel (i.e., mead made out of honey and fruit - but not grapes or apples). My technique has been to use an electric juice machine to create about 2 gallons of fruit juice. To this, I add 3 gallons of water and 5 quarts of honey. I heat this to about 180 degrees Fahrenheit and hold that temperature for about 10 or 15 minutes. Then, after cooling, it goes into the fermenter with my yeast nutrient, acid blend, and yeast. All of my fruit meads have begun fermenting within 24 hours after pitching the yeast. They have also all been a little cloudy, at least for the first couple of years after bottling. I think that is caused by heating the fruit (it sets the pectin), and I think a few drops of Pectinase in the secondary fermenter would have cleared them up.

I also tried a cyser (i.e., mead made out of honey and apples). I used 5 gallons of unpasteurized cider and 3 quarts of honey. I didn't heat this at all. Instead, I sanitized with potassium metabisulfite. After waiting a day, I pitched the yeast. This one took off like gangbusters, fermented very quickly down to 1.000 final gravity, and was crystal clear. It is the best mead I have made, so far. Unfortunately, there is none left. I have a friend who tried a similar recipe with pasteurized cider; he used Pectinase to clear it up. Probably, the

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**Have you paid your CARBOY dues? If not,
contact Mike Wallace at:
mike_wallace@ncsu.edu**

(Mead a la Murphrey - con't)

pectin was set during pasteurization.

My latest endeavor is another traditional mead. It is still in the secondary fermenter. This was 5 quarts of honey in 5 gallons of water, held at 185 degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes to sanitize. I also added yeast nutrient, acid blend, and yeast. This one took about 5 days to start fermenting. It went from 1.098 original gravity to 1.062 and stopped. I measured the pH at 2.7. So I added 3 table-spoons of calcium carbonate (to raise the pH) and stirred vigorously. It started bubbling the next day, and it is still bubbling 9 days later.

So if you want to start making mead, I have a few suggestions.

* The most important thing is aging. My best meads have been at least 3 years old. None of them has been as good at 21/2 years as it was at 3 years. I suspect that they all would have been better at 4 years, but I have no actual evidence to back up that suspicion. What this means is that you have to plan for the long haul. Make your meads with the intent of not touching them for at least 2 years. Just build up your stock, making some mead each year. If you just cannot wait, make a cyser. This particular style seems to be very drinkable right away.

* I think pH in the fermenter may be important. I've seen articles that propose keeping the pH above 4.0.

* If you get a ring around the neck of your bottles, don't worry about it. I've had several batches of melomel that did this, and none of them was infected. One has recently won a blue ribbon. You still have to emphasize sanitation when bottling, but don't throw any bottles away because of the ring.

* If you want to enter competitions, I suggest rebottling your entries. Many good meads will have thrown a large sediment (say 1/4 inches deep) by the time they are ready to drink. You don't want the rough handling at a competition to stir up that muck. Just decant these carefully and enter the new sediment-free bottles in the competition. You may also want to add a little honey when rebottling, in order to get a bigger honey flavor and aroma. This will increase the sweetness, so taste it before submitting the entry, so you can indicate whether it is medium or sweet (it won't be dry if you do this).

* Look for local honey sources. A little searching can save quite a few dollars. I've been getting mine at a barbershop, whose owner has a farm down south! Some people are concerned about where the bees were when they made the

honey (i.e., sour wood honey, clover honey, orange blossom honey, etc.). Those differences may be pretty subtle in the final product, and I suggest that you don't worry about stuff like that. But if you find a farmer with some really dark honey, please let me know.

* Be willing to experiment. There are a lot of ways to make good mead. You can sanitize by boiling, by heating without boiling, or with sulfites. All of these are good ways to do it. You can add fruit in the primary or in the secondary. You can crush the fruit, juice it, or freeze it - or you can use commercially prepared puree. Try any fruit you like - it's bound to be good in a mead. You can use mead yeast, wine yeast, or even beer yeast (but if you try using bread yeast, that may be going too far!). You can make any strength mead you like. Last year, a 5%-alcohol mead won a blue ribbon at the TRUB Open. There's no one correct way (or two or three) to do anything.

* Don't forget to read about mead. There have been mead articles in *Zymurgy* and *Brewing Techniques* within the last few years. There are several good books available. Subscribe to the Mead Digest. (Send an E-mail message to request@talisman.com for [un]subscribe/admin requests. When subscribing, include your name and E-mail address in the body of the message.)

* Taste as many different meads as you can find (in moderation, of course). We tasted a braggot (i.e., a mead made with honey and malted barley) this week that was just superb. I'm going to get the recipe and make one for myself.

I hope this article has whetted your appetite for some good mead. Now it's time for you to get some honey and make a batch. Don't forget to save a sample for me.

EDITOR'S NOTE - Steve won First (and Third) place in the Meads category at the 1999 Shamrock Open.

Bluebonnet Brew-Off

(by Steve Murphrey)

A few days after another fun Shamrock Open weekend, Donna and I made our annual trek to Texas to visit the kids and to attend the 13th annual Bluebonnet Brew-Off (held in Irving, between Dallas and Fort Worth). Richard Todd was lucky enough to be able to wangle a business trip to Texas that week, and he was able to stay over. So for the 2nd consecutive year, 3 people comprised the North Carolina contingent at the Bluebonnet. It was a blast.

(Blue Bonnet Brew Off - con't)

It started at 5 PM on Friday with check-in and reception. The check-in was pretty hectic, but I did eventually get to pay our fees and collect my commemorative T-shirt. I decided to forego the commemorative glass, because I'm not up to drinking my beer out of a blue glass. The reception was more fun, since it involved standing around talking to old friends and drinking some good brown ale and porter provided by Al Kinchen, the brewer at the Routh Street Brewery (Dallas's most up-scale and best brew pub).

At 7 PM, the hotel served its usual catered chicken dinner, which was pretty dismal. We endure the dinner in order to have a bit more of Al's beer and to hear the speakers. In addition to the usual AHA representative (whose name I forget), the keynote speaker was Ray Daniels (author of *Designing Great Beers and Brown Ale*). I was impressed when he recognized Richard, right away.

At 8:30 PM, Charlie Gottenkieny conducted a Lambic tasting. He served 1 Kriek and 4 Geuzes, all purchased in Belgium. 4 of them are only available in Belgium, so it was an opportunity that most of the crowd really enjoyed. Even the few attendees who were not of the sour-beer persuasion enjoyed it, because they got to steward. A commercial-beer tasting followed the Lambics. Representatives of the breweries served many of the common European beers and some unusual ones (a Belgian abbey ale and a Czech Pilsener that I had never had before). By 10:30 we had consumed sufficient mass quantities to warrant calling it an evening. I only had to bear a little mild criticism from my Texas friends about our early exit.

On Saturday morning at 8:30 AM, there was a yeast demonstration. The speaker fermented the same batch of wheat-beer wort with 3 different yeasts. The differences were remarkable. He did a similar experiment with a pale-ale wort and 3 ale yeasts. The differences were still pronounced (although not as much as the wheat beers, probably due to the higher hop bitterness of the pale-ale wort). We may want to consider doing an experiment like this as a CARBOY activity.

Next was a question-and-answer session, with Russ Bee and Dean Fiker (2 wildly successful Dallas-area contest brewers). Ray Daniels also joined the panel. They discussed their brewing techniques and philosophies. One interesting phenomenon was that there are several areas where the two brewers used completely opposite techniques. This proves what most of

us already knew, that there is more than one way to brew a good beer.

Then we had the 2nd-round judging. Richard judged German Wheat beers, and I judged Belgians. My judging partner was none other than Charlie Gottenkieny, Dallas's expert on Belgian beer. I had 13 beers in the flight (only 2 of them Wit), which was absolutely the best flight I ever judged. My lowest score was 29, and I wound up scoring the highest beers 40, 42, 47, and 49 (the first beer I ever scored that high)! The Tripel that I scored 49 was the eventual Best-of-Show winner and was better than Westmalle, in my opinion. Finishing off the bottles of that flight was quite pleasant.

Next came the pub crawl. We all piled onto a bus (3 buses, actually) which carted us off to 2 beer bars (including the famous Gingerman and its 70+ taps) and 3 brew pubs. We got 30 minutes at each place, with a little more time at the last one because we ate there, too. I was able to taste Sierra Nevada Big Foot barley wine on tap for the first time. It was quite nice, although it did not seem to be as high alcohol as the bottle I had a couple of weeks ago. The Two Rows Restaurant and Brewery also had a barley wine that was delicious. All of the brew-pub beers I had (from 5 different brew pubs) on this trip were quite good - improved from what I've tasted in other years. I guess competition helps.

Finally, we got to the awards ceremony. Nothing unusual here, except that I won 4 door prizes in the raffle (my best showing, to date). I bet I was the only one on our return flight who checked 90 pounds of malted barley as baggage. I also packed the wine kit and 2 pounds of hops in my luggage. They gave away over 1100 pounds of grain, lots of malt extract, lots of hops, various beer paraphernalia, 2 complete kegging systems (brand new), 2 converted-keg pots (with valves), and a 3-tier steel rack with a burner at each level (I wonder how I would have gotten that thing home!). This was the most impressive beer raffle I've ever seen. Unfortunately, after judging the big beers and sampling some big ones on the pub crawl, I was unable to enjoy any of the culls during the awards ceremony. The Central Florida Homebrewers club was the big winner at this year's Bluebonnet. Those guys are really good brewers.

NOTICE: Absolutely no beer was spilled in the production of this document!

Final Thoughts On Shamrock...

(by Mike Wallace, Competition Director)

The Shamrock open is behind us now and I wish to thank all the many folks in our club who helped make it such a great success. Forty-six brewers from five states entered 176 beers. Thirty-six judges and 9 stewards pulled together on the day of the competition to make it come alive. The Organizing Team rocked! Steve Murphrey did a slam band



Shamrock Open Director/steward Mike Wallace (standing - left) oversees judging of some good homebrew at Southend Brewery & Smokehouse. (photo - Jim Navecky)

job serving as both registrar and judge director. Both are challenging jobs, and Steve commented several times about the new respect he developed for the work Bill MacKenzie has done in the past as registrar.

(Who the hell signed MacKenzie's leave slip for the same time as Shamrock??) Richard Todd worked with data entry, and I'm so glad he's logical and organized (as opposed to me who is loose and scattered) - everything went smooth as silk. Bob High and John Clark, the brewers at Southend did everything necessary to provide us with the best event site we've ever had. It was a genuine pleasure working with them, their energy and enthusiasm for beer and brewing really add to our brewing community. Jim Cross did so much from publicity, printing, and catering breakfast, to being ready to handle anything on an "as needed" basis....it's a shame there is no official title in the competition guide for this role, so let's create one! Here's to Jim Cross, Kingpin!

I also want to thank, by name, all the club members who served as judges and stewards and made it happen. (This is kinda like the Academy Awards!) Stewards: Kevin Myers, Rob Cohen, Jim Navecky, Jim Cross, Donna Murphrey, Kevin Newsome, and David Green (Honorary CARBOY). Judges: Mike Lewandowski, Jon Yusko, Mitch Hayes, Dave Buning, Paul Vezzetti, Conrad Cowan, Jess Stokes, Richard Todd, and Larry Matthews.

Hats off to you all!

National Homebrew Plans Change!

Big Brew date postponed until May 22....Bill MacKenzie will host club brew-in at his "brewhouse"

After several attempts to get the NHD committee together, and a general sense of "exhaustion" of the clubs' officers and members, the Big Brew scheduled for May 1 has been pushed back until May 22. This should give the committee a chance to organize the Big Brew in the manner that it deserves. The job just proved to be too demanding coming off of a very successful Shamrock Open.

Not wanting to let NHD go by unnoticed, the committee decided that a more informal brew-in/cookout would give all club members a chance to relax and enjoy the event. Bill MacKenzie has graciously offered to host the event at his home in North Raleigh. Bill will also provide "space" for brewers who want to bring their brewing equipment out and join in the fun. Bill can be reached at: dedpetvet@aol.com. Or, give him a call at 846-8329 if you have questions. We'll have all the info on this event and the re-scheduled BIG BREW at the April meeting. *Please contact Bill and let him know if you plan to brew!* Bill will cook sausages, and each club member is asked to bring along some sort of side dish to share with everyone at the event. Let's all get ready to enjoy National Homebrew Day!

CARBOY Calendar

April

- Style of the Month Mead: Cat 25-27, COC August
 - 4/17 US Open Homebrew Competition (Charlotte)
<http://www.hbd.org/cbm/usopen/>
 - 4/23,24 6th Annual SE Microbrewers' Invitational Conference And Festival (Durham)
 - 4/28 Meeting
Judge Bocks for May COC (Entries due 5/??/99)
- AB Brew-In (Steve Murphrey)

May

- Style of the Month - Oktoberfest
 - 5/1 National Homebrew Day Brew-In @ Bill MacKenzie's home
 - 5/4 CARBOY Night - Southend
 - 5/22 BIG BREW @Pale Ale Brewery
 - 5/26 Meeting
- AB Brew-In (tba)

Meeting Location

CARBOY's monthly meetings are currently held at the BB&Y Restaurant. It is located on the first floor of the Caswell Building at 3700 National Drive, in the Koger Center off Glenwood Avenue in West Raleigh. Owner Nick Jones allows CARBOY to meet monthly at his restaurant when we don't have picnics or field trips scheduled.

BB&Y is open for breakfast and lunch each weekday. We encourage members to visit BB&Y for a relaxed informal meal. Please let Nick know you're from CARBOY when you visit his restaurant.

E-Fermenter

The Fermenter is now available via e-mail. It will be delivered using Adobe's (p)ortable (d)ocument (f)ormat, or pdf. Anyone can download a copy of Adobe's ACROBAT READER for free at Adobe's website (www.adobe.com). Please email Jim Cross at jscross@eos.ncsu.edu if you would like to receive the newsletter this way. I hope to have it available electronically a few days before the mailing date, which is around the 15th of each month. Thanks!

Jim Cross
Communications Director
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Join CARBOY!

CARBOY is a family-oriented social club that enjoys the art of brewing and drinking their own beer. We meet monthly on the 4th Wednesday. Although we know have almost 40 brewers, we would like to have you as a member.

To join, contact Mike Wallace. Our current annual dues are \$15.00 for regular members, and \$10.00 for associate members. Please send a check and membership application to:

CARBOY c/o Mike Wallace
5001 Dantree Pl.
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To offer suggestions, articles, or assistance to *The Fermenter*, please contact Jim Cross at jscross@eos.ncsu.edu.

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