

GENERAL MEAD KIT INSTRUCTIONS

These instructions are basic brewing procedures for all Northern Brewer mead kits - please refer to the kit-specific instructions at the end of this document for any special instructions or procedures pertaining to your particular mead kit. Please refer to your starter kit instructions for specific instructions on the use of equipment and common procedures such as siphoning, sanitizing, bottling, etc.

Before you begin ...

Minimum requirements

- homebrewing starter kit for brewing 5 gallon batches with a two-stage fermentation
- kettle of at least 2.5 gallons capacity
- thermometer
- approximately 2 cases of either pry-off beer bottles or wine bottles

Procedure

Before you brew

1. REFRIGERATE YEAST AND DOUBLE-CHECK KIT. Unless you are brewing immediately, refrigerate the yeast. Double-check the kit contents against the kit inventory.

2. ACTIVATE LIQUID YEAST 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE. If your mead kit includes Wyeast liquid yeast (Dry Mead, Sweet Mead, Melomel, Orange Blossom, and Basswood-Riesling), you will get best results if you incubate the yeast a day or so in advance. To incubate: remove the yeast from the refrigerator, and smack the package. This breaks open the inner pouch and releases yeast food and nutrients into the yeast. Shake the package well and leave it in a moderately warm place (70-80 F). As the yeast incubates, the package will begin to inflate. It is not necessary for the pack to fully inflate before use. **NOTE:** When stored in a refrigerator and used within 3 months of purchase, our Wyeast packs will show inflation within 5 days of activation, or we will replace them free of charge. **DO NOT BREW WITH INACTIVE YEAST** - we can replace the yeast, but not a batch that fails to ferment properly.

If your kit uses dry yeast, continue with Step #3.

On Brewing Day

3. HEAT WATER AND DISSOLVE HONEY AND NUTRIENT. In a kettle of at least 2.5 gallons, heat 1 gallon of good-quality drinking water to boiling. Remove the kettle from the burner to avoid scorching; add the honey and 5 teaspoons of yeast nutrient (do not add the whole package!). Stir to dissolve, and check the temperature of the honey-water mixture, now called the **MUST** - it should be at least 150 F. Allow the must to stand at this temperature for 10-20 minutes while you continue with Step #4.

4. REHYDRATE DRY YEAST. If your kit uses dry yeast (Wildflower Braggot, Peach-Ginger Melo-Metheglin, Blackberry Melomel), rehydrate the yeast before use. To rehydrate: fill a sanitized measuring cup or small dish with 1/4 cup of water at approximately 100 F, and pour the yeast into the water. Allow the yeast to stand for 15 minutes; stir with a sanitized spoon before adding it to the must in Step #7.

If your kit uses liquid yeast, continue with Step #5.

5. SANITIZE FERMENTING EQUIPMENT. While the must is resting, sanitize the fermenting equipment - fermenter, lid or stopper, fermentation lock, funnel, etc.

6. FILL PRIMARY FERMENTER. Fill the sanitized fermenter with 3 gallons of cold water. Carefully pour the hot must into the primary fermenter. Top up the fermenter to 5 gallons with more cold water if needed, and stir with a sanitized spoon or paddle to mix.

7. PITCH YEAST. "Pitch" yeast into the fermenter when the temperature of the must is 80 F or lower (not warm to the touch).

If using liquid yeast, sanitize the yeast packet and a pair of scissors; hold the yeast packet upright and make a small cut in the top to release pressure. Continue to cut off a corner of the packet, and carefully pour the yeast into the fermenter.

If using dry yeast, stir the yeast slurry with a sanitized spoon and carefully pour it into the fermenter.

8. SEAL THE FERMENTER. Add approximately 1 tablespoon of water to the sanitized fermentation lock. Insert the lock into the rubber stopper or lid, and seal the fermenter.

Fermentation

Fermentation temperature: Wine and mead yeast is very temperature-sensitive; meads ferment best between 65 to 75 F.

LAG PHASE: The more fresh healthy yeast you add to the must, the shorter the "lag phase" - the amount of time before fermentation begins. Fermentation should begin within 24 to 72 hours, although it may take longer.

ACTIVE FERMENTATION: During active fermentation, the yeast cells absorb sugars from the must and produce CO₂ and alcohol. You may see the fermentation lock bubble. During active fermentation, the specific gravity of the must will steadily drop until fermentation ends, at which point it will remain the same.

FERMENTATION TIME: Primary fermentation normally lasts 2 to 3 weeks for most meads - this is a guideline, actual fermentation times may vary.

END OF FERMENTATION: After the mead has been in the primary fermenter for 2 weeks, begin taking hydrometer readings to see if it has completed fermentation - when you take two identical readings on consecutive days, primary fermentation is complete. There will be little or no activity in the fermentation lock. Once primary fermentation is complete, proceed with secondary fermentation.

SECONDARY FERMENTATION: Allow the mead to condition and clarify in a 5-gallon secondary fermenter for at least 3 months - no need to rush things. You may wish to add a fining agent like Sparkoloid or gelatin to facilitate clearing.

Bottling and conditioning

9. SANITIZE EQUIPMENT. Sanitize siphon equipment, bottling bucket, bottle filler, bottles, and bottlecaps (if using beer bottles).

10. OPTIONAL - A PRIMING SOLUTION. If you would like your mead to be sparkling (carbonated), mix a priming solution. Combine 5 oz priming sugar with 1 pint of water in a small saucepan. Boil 5 minutes to sanitize. Pour the priming solution into the bottling bucket. Important - sparkling meads should be packaged in pry-off (non-returnable) beer bottles with crown caps or champagne bottles with corks and wires.

If you are making a still (non-carbonated) mead, omit this step and proceed with Step #11.

11. SIPHON MEAD TO BOTTLING BUCKET, FILL AND SEAL BOTTLES. Siphon the mead into the bottling bucket, leaving behind as much sediment as possible. Stir gently to mix with priming solution if you are making sparkling mead.

If you are packaging your mead in wine bottles with corks, allow the bottles to stand upright for 72 hours to allow air to escape, then store horizontally.

12. CONDITION. Your mead will be ready to drink 6 months to 1 year after brewing day, and will continue to improve and develop with additional aging.

KIT-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

Dry Mead:

Follow General Mead Kit Instructions.

Sweet Mead:

Step #11 (Optional) - You may wish to add acid blend before packaging the mead to balance the sweetness. Add 3 to 5 teaspoons of acid blend to taste to the mead in the bottling bucket, during Step #11.

Melomel:

Step #11 - Pour 4 oz natural fruit extract into the empty bottling bucket; siphon the mead in after the fruit extract, and stir gently to mix prior to filling the bottles.

Orange Blossom Special:

Follow General Mead Kit Instructions.

Basswood-Riesling Pymment: Step #6 - Mix both cans of Riesling concentrate with the 3 gallons of water in the primary fermenter. Add the honey-water mixture to the Riesling-water mixture and proceed as above.

Wildflower Braggot:

Step #3 - Heat 1 gallon of water to boiling; remove from the burner, and add the malt extract (do not add the honey or yeast nutrient at this point). Return the kettle to the burner and add 1/2 to 1 oz of Nugget hops, if desired (a larger dose of hops will add a hint of beerlike bitterness to the finished mead, while a smaller amount will be more subtle; you can omit the hops entirely if you prefer). Boil the malt extract mixture for 20 minutes. Remove from the burner, dissolve honey and nutrient, and proceed as above.

Peach-Ginger Melo-Metheglin:

Step #6 - Add peach puree to primary fermenter along with 3 gallons of water; continue as above. Secondary fermentation - Add ginger root to the secondary fermenter; use the mesh bag to help contain it. Allow the ginger to infuse for 1 to 2 months; sample the mead regularly to determine the level of spicing, and remove the ginger once the desired level is reached. Ginger flavor and aroma fades with time, so if you plan to age the mead for a long time, err on the side of too much ginger. A note on clarification - because of the ginger and peaches, it may be necessary to use multiple rackings (transfer from one 5-gallon vessel to another to separate the solids) and/or the addition of finings like Sparkoloid during secondary fermentation to achieve a clear mead.

Blackberry Melomel:

Step #6 - Add blackberry puree to primary fermenter along with 3 gallons of water; continue as above. A note on clarification - because of the blackberries, it may be necessary to use multiple rackings (transfer from one 5-gallon vessel to another to separate the solids) and/or the addition of finings like Sparkoloid during secondary fermentation to achieve a clear mead.