

BEER JUDGE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

2026 STYLE GUIDELINES

Mead Style Guidelines



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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2026 MEAD GUIDELINES

The 2026 BJCP Mead Style Guidelines are a major rewrite of the 2015 edition. This document is a companion to the 2021 BJCP Beer Style Guidelines and the 2025 BJCP Cider Style Guidelines. While some of the 2015 content has been retained, there has been a reorganization and renaming of the categories and styles, including the addition of a few new styles.

INTRODUCTION TO MEAD STYLES (CATEGORIES M1-M4)

This preamble applies to all mead styles, except where explicitly superseded in individual style descriptions. It identifies common characteristics and descriptions for all types of these beverages, and should be used as a reference when entering or judging. For more detailed information on applying the styles in a judging session, look at **Studying for the Mead Exam** on the BJCP website (Exam & Certification, Mead Judge Program).

Mead is an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting diluted honey, often with other added ingredients. There are four categories in these guidelines for mead: Traditional Mead (Category M1), Melomel (Category M2), Spiced Mead (Category M3), and Specialty Mead (Category M4). See the preamble to each category for more detailed descriptions. Do not attempt to infer any deeper meaning from the names or groupings within these categories, as none is intended.

As with beer and cider, there is no requirement that competitions judge mead categories separately – individual styles may be grouped for judging and award purposes. Likewise, competitions may split styles further by sweetness, strength, varietal vs. non-varietal honey, or other groupings to facilitate judging in large competitions.

The information discussed in this preamble should be considered the basic knowledge any mead judge is expected to know. The individual mead style descriptions assume a judge is familiar with this knowledge base; styles are not meant to educate untrained people on how to evaluate mead.

Aroma and Flavor

- The **honey varietals** used may have a subtle to strong, variety-dependent character (floral, fruity, spicy, earthy, etc.) that is perceived in the aroma and flavor of the mead. Mead should not taste like a cocktail made with raw, unfermented honey. The intensity of the honey impression often increases with strength and sweetness.
 - In the wine world, aromatics are normally separated by origin – those derived from the ingredients, those derived from fermentation and conditioning, and those derived from aging. Mead judges may benefit from thinking similarly, understanding how the meadmaking process transforms raw ingredients into a finished product. The process-related bouquet often becomes more apparent in smaller, drier, or more delicate meads.
 - A clean fermentation profile is desirable in most styles, but this does not mean the total absence of **yeast character**. Yeast can add estery notes or may have a light, pleasant freshness; these are not faults. Aging on yeast can contribute light nutty, toasty, or bready notes.
 - Harsh chemical notes are undesirable. Unpleasant, stinky, dominating, or excessive sulfur is a fault, often indicating poor fermentation. Oxidation is undesirable in most styles (except those where extended aging is typical), and often presents as a dullness of intensity, muted overtone, or a nutty suggestion of sherry. However, a pleasant age character is desirable in many stronger meads.
 - The perceived residual **sweetness** of the mead assists with categorization for judging purposes. Measured residual sugar or final gravity are not the only determining factors – tannin, acidity, starting gravity, alcohol, and other ingredients may alter this perception.
 - **Dry:** FG 0.990 – 1.010. No perception of sweetness, but the perception does not need to be *bone dry*.
 - **Semi-sweet:** FG 1.010 – 1.025. The perception is sweet but still balanced and refreshing. Also known as *medium* sweetness.
 - **Sweet:** FG 1.025 – 1.050. From definitely sweet to levels similar to dessert wines. Must not be syrupy, cloying, or tasting of raw, unfermented honey. Some regional styles and dessert meads can go above this level.
- When judging, arrange samples in order of increasing sweetness and palate impact (including spiciness). Understand that sweetness can mask faults, so be more attentive to this in sweeter meads. Likewise, do not overly penalize dry meads for minor faults that may only be evident due to the lack of sweetness.
- **Acidity** is an essential element that balances sweetness, wets the palate, and gives a clean, lively, crisp, bright, juicy, refreshing impression without being puckering. Solventy or vinegary notes are undesirable faults. Sweetness without balancing acidity is flat and boring, and is described as **cloying**.
 - **Tannin** supplies astringency, body, and sometimes bitterness, which contribute to balance, structure, and drinkability. Tannins can make a mead seem drier than residual sugar levels might suggest. Tannins may be perceived as ranging from soft, smooth, and velvety to hard, abrasive, and grippy.
 - **Alcohol** may be noted in stronger examples as a light spiciness, not a sharp, solventy, harsh, or burning hot sensation.
 - Tannin and Acidity work together to balance sweetness, honey character, and alcohol.

Appearance

- **Clarity** may be good to brilliant.
 - **Brilliant or Crystal Clear:** gem or lens-like, more highly regarded in most styles
 - **Good clarity:** free from visible particulates and haze, appearing clear and transparent

- **Fair clarity:** may have fine suspended particles, with a light haze or cloudy appearance
- **Poor clarity:** noticeable suspended particles, cloudiness, always undesirable.
- Oxidation is sometimes evident as dull, brownish shades or lack of brightness and vibrancy in color. However, do not assume oxidation by color alone.
- Stronger or sweeter examples may show evidence of legs or tears on the glass.
- **Carbonation** can vary from completely still to Champagne-like. At higher carbonation levels, the mousse (head) may be retained for a short time. However, gushing, foaming, and difficult-to-manage heads are faults.
 - **Still:** Very light to no carbonation, but does not need to be completely flat.
 - **Pétillant:** Light to moderate carbonation, noticeable bubbles. Lightly sparkling, gentle effervescence, softer fizz.
 - **Sparkling:** Highly carbonated, often effervescent.

Mouthfeel

- The components of acid, tannin, carbonation, alcohol, body, and sweetness combine to give the **structure** of mead, which can also be described using the beer term **mouthfeel**.
- In general, the **body** and fullness of mead increases with sweetness and strength. Acidity and carbonation can often cut or reduce the perceived body. Extreme examples (excessively thin or cloying) are undesirable.
- As stated in Appearance, mead can have a still, pétillant, or sparkling level of **carbonation**. Higher levels of carbonation tend to brighten the presentation by adding acidity that can lighten the palate impression and add crispness to the finish.
- **Tannins**, including those derived from spice, fruit, or wood use, can affect mouthfeel by increasing body, bitterness, or the perceived dryness in the finish by adding a gripping or pulling sensation. Tannins can add astringency and bitterness that may balance sweetness.
- The **alcohol strength** affects the mouthfeel primarily through a warming sensation. Mead may be categorized by its alcohol-by-volume (ABV) as:
 - **Hydromel:** ABV 3.5 – 7.5%. Generally having no sensation of alcohol warmth. *Hydromel* (or variations) means *mead* in many Romance languages. *Session* is a reasonable beer-derived alternative name.
 - **Standard:** ABV 7.5 – 14.0%. Similar to a table wine, having a slight warmth but no burn.
 - **Sack:** ABV 14.0 – 18.0%. Generally with a noticeable alcohol presence, but should not be hot, solventy, sharp, or unpleasant.
- Higher sweetness levels can mask alcohol strength, so strong and sweet meads should be carefully evaluated.

Overall Impression

- Mead should express an enjoyable balance of honey flavors, sweetness, acidity, tannins, and alcohol.
- Any additional ingredients should likewise be well-integrated into the final presentation, not seem like an add-on or afterthought.

- Mead should be well-fermented and conditioned, presenting as a coherent fermented beverage not a raw, honey-based cocktail.
- Flavors should be a pure, fresh, and natural expression of the declared ingredients. Fermentation and conditioning can add complexity.

Ingredients

- Finished meads may be adjusted for sweetness, acidity, or other characteristics.
- Stabilizers or other processing aids should not leave residual flavors.
- Honey varietals vary in intensity and character, with some being more readily recognizable than others. Subtle honeys should not be penalized for expressing their true varietal character. Likewise, highly expressive honeys are not inherently superior to subtle honeys.
- Relatively neutral wood use for fermentation and aging is allowed in any style at a background level. However, examples with a substantial wood character should be entered in *M4D Wood-Aged Mead*, while those exhibiting a barrel character with flavors derived other types of alcohol previously in the barrel should be entered in *M4E Barrel-Aged Mead*.
- Fruit in mead can affect acidity and tannin levels, and contribute color. Fruit should not seem artificial, raw, or unfermented. The mead color derived from fruit is often lighter than the fruit flesh, and may take on slightly different shades when fermented. Meads made with lighter color fruits may show color derived from honey varietals used. In meads that produce a head, the head can take on some of the fruit color as well.
- When using spices, not all spices must be declared if they cannot be perceived. Well-known spice blends may be referred to by a common name, such as apple pie spices, pumpkin pie spices, curry powder, etc.

Entry Instructions

- Carbonation, sweetness, and strength levels must be specified for all styles. Minor differences from stated levels should not be heavily penalized or used as justification for disqualification.
- Perceived carbonation is dependent on judging conditions, so specifying or requiring absolute volumes of CO₂ is not necessary.
- Declaring honey varietals is allowable in any style. Further information about the season or source may be provided. Judges may assume wildflower (unknown or polyfloral) honey if no information is furnished.
- Fermenting or aging in wood is allowable in any style, but must be declared if noticeable. Judges will treat this as a background character unless in a *Specialty Mead* style (M4D, M4E, M4F).
- Several styles require additional information, typically about added ingredients. Additional explanatory information may be supplied if the ingredient or process is not well-known to judges. Comments should be limited to explanations, not judging conclusions.
- Potential allergens must always be declared, but do not need to be perceived by judges. For this purpose, do not declare ingredients that are either required by the style (and thus assumed to be present) or already declared (do not be redundant).

M1. TRADITIONAL MEAD

Traditional Meads are fermented from honey and water with no additional adjuncts or additives, other than common flavor-neutral processing aids. Aging in traditional wood is allowable in any style as a relatively neutral, background character. The styles within this category are divided by perceived residual sweetness, which allows for less fatiguing judging.

M1A. Dry Mead

Overall Impression: A mead without significant residual sweetness, allowing more of the natural honey aromatics to be appreciated without the associated sweetness of raw honey. Lower levels of sweetness may allow more of the fermentation, conditioning, and aging bouquet to be perceived. Has a similar balance, body, finish, and flavor intensity as found in the full range of dry white wines.

Aroma: Subtle to noticeable honey aroma, reflective of declared varietals. Significant honey aromatics or an impression of sweetness should not be expected. The aromatics from honey are more about the floral, fruity, spicy, and other notes derived from honey rather than the aroma of unfermented, raw honey sweetness. The lower levels of sweetness allow the fermentation bouquet and age character to be more noticeable. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from declared honey varieties, but often pale straw to gold. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Subtle to noticeable honey character, reflective of declared varietals. Flavors similar to fermented honey aromatics in the aroma. Dry, soft to crisp finish, but does not have to be completely devoid of sweetness. Residual sweetness levels are minimal to none. Acidity may be more noticeable but should not be overly sharp or biting. Tannin may make the mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Body is generally light to medium, but should not seem watery. Stronger meads may have a fuller body and warmth. Sensations of body should not be accompanied by noticeable residual sweetness. Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling.

Ingredients: Honey of any source. Varietal honeys are expected to exhibit distinctive characteristics associated from those declared varieties.

Comments: May seem more wine-like than other mead types since the sweetness associated with honey is largely absent. Dry mead can place more emphasis on the residual fermentation characteristics of the honey and yeast, as these are the primary means of adding complexity.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels; sweetness is restricted to dry in this style. Honey varieties may be declared.

Commercial Examples: Brothers Drake Wild Ohio, Honeygirl Meadery Orange Blossom, Heidrun Meadery (all dry sparkling single-varietals), Intermiel Bouquet Printanier, White Winter Dry Mead

M1B. Semi-Sweet Mead

Overall Impression: A mead with a noticeable, balanced honey sweetness. Increased honey character and body is noticeable, as compared to a *M1A Dry Mead*. Acid and tannin levels support the sweetness, but finishing sweetness does not dominate the mead. Has a similar balance, body, finish, and flavor intensity as found in the full range of semi-sweet to sweet white wines.

Aroma: Honey aroma should be noticeable to moderate, and can have a light sweetness that may express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varietals. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from declared honey varieties, but often pale straw to gold. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Subtle to moderate honey character, reflective of declared varietals. Flavors similar to fermented honey aromatics in the aroma. Residual sweetness levels are medium-low to medium-high. Light to moderate sweet finish. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not crisp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Body is generally medium-light to medium-full. Stronger meads may have a fuller body and warmth. Sensations of body should not be accompanied by a residual sweetness that is higher than moderate. Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling.

Ingredients: Honey of any source. Varietal honeys are expected to exhibit distinctive characteristics associated from those declared varieties.

Comments: Semi-Sweet Mead is characterized by its balanced sweetness. The actual range of sweetness can be quite broad, since it needs to cover the space between dry and sweet meads.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels; sweetness is restricted to semi-sweet in this style. Honey varieties may be declared.

Commercial Examples: Colony Meadery Straight, No Chaser; Intermiel Verge d'Or; Rabbit's Foot Tupelonium; Redstone Traditional Mountain Honey Wine; Sky River Dry Mead

M1C. Sweet Mead

Overall Impression: A mead with significant honey sweetness. Increased honey character and body is noticeable, as compared to a *M1B Semi-Sweet Mead*. Acid and tannin levels support the sweetness, but the finishing sweetness is a major flavor component. Has a similar balance, body, finish, and flavor intensity as found in the full range of well-made dessert wines (such as Ice Wine).

Aroma: Honey aroma should be moderate to strong, and can express the sweetness and character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from declared honey varieties, but often pale straw to gold. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Moderate to strong honey character, reflective of declared varieties. Flavors similar to fermented honey aromatics in the aroma. Residual sweetness levels are medium-high to high, with a noticeably sweet and full finish. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not crisp, and keep the sweetness from seeming cloying or overwhelming. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Body is generally medium-full to full. Stronger meads may have a fuller body and warmth. Sensations of body should not be accompanied by cloying, raw, unfermented residual sweetness. Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling.

Ingredients: Honey of any source. Varietal honeys are expected to exhibit distinctive characteristics associated from those declared varieties.

Comments: Sweet Mead is characterized by noticeable sweetness. Some examples may seem similar to well-made dessert wines that have sufficient acidity and tannin to balance the prominent sweetness. The most common flaw is a raw honey sweetness that makes the finished product taste under-fermented.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels; sweetness is restricted to sweet in this style. Honey varieties may be declared.

Commercial Examples: Intermiel Benoîte, Moonlight Sensual, Prairie Rose Traditional Sweet, Rabbit's Foot Sweet Mead, Schramm's Mead Sunflowers, White Winter Sweet Mead, Winehaven Stinger

M2. MELOMEL

A mead made with fruit is called a **Melomel**, although some melomels are better known by other names (e.g., cyser, pyment). Styles within the Melomel category are divided to assist with judging, and should be thought of more as competition entry categories than actual styles. M2E Other Fruit Mead is for types of fruit not specifically listed or for melomels that mix fruit from multiple styles.

In the context of this category, the term **fruit** is defined as having the same usage as in the preamble to category 29 Fruit Beer in the 2021 BJCP Beer Style Guidelines. Category M1 describes the base character expected from dry, semi-sweet, and sweet meads.

M2A. Cyser

A **Cyser** is a melomel made with apples (generally unfermented cider, but can be a must from table or cider apples) or other pome fruit (pears, quince).

Overall Impression: Like a M1 Traditional Mead with a noticeable pome fruit character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The fruit character should be harmonious with the base mead, and not seem solely like a cider.

Aroma: The pome fruit aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from delicate, floral, and white wine-like, to a fresh sweet cider, to an aged Apple Brandy, depending on strength and sweetness. If fruit varieties are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. Cysers often have a suggestion of acidity in the aroma.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma. The fruit-derived aromatics should harmonize with the base mead.

Appearance: Fair to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is generally more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color may range from pale straw to deep golden amber (many are yellow to gold), depending on the variety of honey and the blend of fruit or cider used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruit may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour, savory) in addition to their distinctive characteristics. Many fruits bring natural acid and tannin that must be appropriately balanced with the base mead.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. However, cyser often has a higher acidity than many other meads. Pome fruit and fermentation character appropriate in ciders and perry are likewise acceptable in cyser. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Some apple varieties supply considerable, perceivable tannin.

Ingredients: Same as a M1 Traditional Mead, with the addition of at least one type of pome fruit, or as a blend of mead and cider.

Comments: Examples with a relatively low honey character may be evaluated better as a C3C Experimental Cider. A spiced cyser should be entered as a M3C Fruit and Spice Mead. A cyser

with additional non-pome fruit should be entered as an M2E Other Fruit Mead. A cyser with additional ingredients should be entered as an M4F Experimental Mead.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Fruit must be declared. If fruit varieties are specified, a varietal character will be expected.

Commercial Examples: Brothers Drake Pollinator, Redstone Apple Nectar, Schramm's Mead Apple Reserve, White Winter Cyser, Williamson Idunn

M2B. Pyment

A **Pyment** is a melomel made with wine or table grapes (generally from juice or must). Pyments can be red, white, or rosé, just as with wine.

Overall Impression: Like a M1 Traditional Mead with a noticeable wine-like character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The fruit character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The grape aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from a fresh sweet juice to an aged reserve wine, depending on strength and sweetness. If grape varieties are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. Pyments often have a suggestion of acidity or tannin in the aroma.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma. The grape-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color may range from pale straw to deep purple-red, depending on the variety of grapes and honey used. The color should be characteristic of the variety or type of grape used, although white grape varieties may also take on color derived from the honey variety. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruit may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour) in addition to their distinctive characteristics. Many grapes bring natural acid and tannin that must be appropriately balanced with the base mead.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Grape and fermentation character appropriate in wine are likewise acceptable in pyment. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Tannin from grapes or skins (particularly in red varieties) add some body and a drying sensation, but this should not be excessive.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one type of grape, or as a blend of mead and wine.

Comments: A Pymment that also contains other fruit should be entered as an *M2E Other Fruit Mead*. Spiced pyments (*hippocras*) should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. Fruited meads with other non-fruit ingredients should likely be entered as *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Fruit must be declared. If grape varieties are specified, a varietal character will be expected.

Commercial Examples: Aurum Verdelho Pymment, Hammen Family Orchard Pymment, Meadow Vista Ostara, Mount Stirling Red Pymment Mead, Remeadies Sour Grapes

M2C. Berry Mead

A **Berry Mead** is an entry category for melomels made with one or more type of berry, such as raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, currants (black, red, and white), strawberries, boysenberries, elderberries, marionberries, mulberries, lingonberries, huckleberries, cranberries, etc. Generally, any fruit with 'berry' in the name would qualify. Berries can have seeds, but do not have stones/pits.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable fruit character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The fruit character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The berry aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from a fresh sweet juice to an aged fruit wine or Port, depending on strength and sweetness. If fruit varietals are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. If multiple types of fruit are declared, they do not have to be perceived in equal proportions, bearing in mind that some fruit are stronger and more distinctive than others and can easily take prominence in a blend.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varietals. Berry meads often have a suggestion of acidity in the aroma. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

The fruit-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of fruit and honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruit may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour) in addition to their distinctive

characteristics. Many fruits bring natural acid and tannin that must be appropriately balanced with the base mead.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Tannin from darker fruit can add some body and a drying sensation, but this should not be extreme.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one type of berry.

Comments: A Berry Mead that also contains other fruit should be entered as an *M2E Other Fruit Mead*. Spiced versions should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. Fruited meads with other non-fruit ingredients should likely be entered as *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Fruit must be declared.

Commercial Examples: Moonlight Wild, Prairie Rose Honeyberry, Rabbit's Foot Raspberry Mead, Redstone Boysenberry Nectar, Schramm's Mead Black Heart, St. Ambrose Rhythm and Blues, White Winter Strawberry Mead

M2D. Stone Fruit Mead

A **Stone Fruit Mead** is an entry category for melomels made with one or more stone fruit, such as cherries, plums, peaches, apricots, and mangoes. Stone fruit are fleshy fruit with a single large pit or stone.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable fruit character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The fruit character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The stone fruit aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from a fresh sweet juice to an aged fruit wine or Port, depending on strength and sweetness. If fruit varietals are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. If multiple types of fruit are declared, they do not have to be in equal proportion, bearing in mind that some fruit are stronger and more distinctive than others. The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varietals. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma. The fruit-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it. Some fruit (and fruit pits) can add a spice-like aroma.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of fruit and honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruit may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour) in addition to their distinctive

characteristics. Many fruits bring natural acid and tannin that must be appropriately balanced with the base mead.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Tannin from darker fruit can add some body and a drying sensation, but this should not be extreme.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one type of stone fruit.

Comments: A Stone Fruit Mead that also contains other fruit should be entered as an *M2E Other Fruit Mead*. Spiced versions should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. Fruited meads with other non-fruit ingredients should likely be entered as *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Fruit must be declared.

Commercial Examples: Moonlight Entice, Prairie Rose Chokecherry, Redstone Peach Reserve, Redstone Sunshine Nectar, Schramm's Mead The Statement, White Winter Honey of a Plum

M2E. Other Fruit Mead

The Other Fruit Mead style is for melomels made with any fruit not associated with any previous melomel style, or with a combination of fruit from multiple fruit mead styles (such as grapes and stone fruit). Some examples include citrus fruit, dried fruit (dates, prunes, raisins, etc.), fig, pomegranate, prickly pear, banana, pineapple, guava, and most other tropical fruit. If in doubt, enter the fruit here – judges should be flexible in allowing fruit not explicitly named in other styles.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable fruit character. A wide range of outcomes is possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The fruit character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The fruit aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from a fresh sweet juice to an aged fruit wine or Port, depending on strength and sweetness. If fruit varieties are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. If multiple types of fruit are declared, they do not have to be in equal

proportion, bearing in mind that some fruit are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma. The fruit-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of fruit and honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable.

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruit may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour) in addition to their distinctive characteristics. Many fruits bring natural acid and tannin that must be appropriately balanced with the base mead.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Tannin from darker fruit can add some body and a drying sensation, but this should not be extreme.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one type of fruit that is not a pome fruit, grape, berry, or stone fruit.

Comments: This is a catch-all style for the Melomel category, so only meads that do not fit in a prior fruited mead style should be entered here. Spiced versions should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. Fruited meads with other non-fruit ingredients should likely be entered as *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Fruit must be declared.

Commercial Examples: Intermiel Black Currant and Citrus Sparkling Mead, Lost Cause Malum, Moonlight Desire, Redstone Blood Orange Nectar, Redstone Passion Fruit Nectar, Schramm's Mead Apple Crandall Reserve

M3. SPICED MEAD

*Spiced Mead includes mead with some form of added spice, herb, or vegetable (SHV). The general term **spice** is defined as in category 30 Spiced Beer in the 2021 BJCP Beer Style Guidelines, including the distinction between specific usages of **spice**, **herb**, and **vegetable**. Table salt at a noticeable level is considered a spice. Hopped meads are best entered in the Experimental Mead style. The category is divided into three styles based on the specific ingredients used; read the style preambles for details.*

Category M1 describes the base character expected from dry, semi-sweet, and sweet meads.

M3A. Metheglin

*A **Metheglin** contains one or more culinary spices or herbs, but does not include any vegetables. This explicitly includes coffee, chocolate, nuts (or anything with ‘nut’ in the name, including coconut, rose petals and hips, spruce tips, hibiscus, fruit peels and zest, and the like.*

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable herb or spice character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The herb or spice character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The herb and spice aromatics may be subtle to aggressive, reflecting the character of the declared ingredients. Many possible descriptors exist, such as fragrant, aromatic, pungent, herbal, spicy, floral, fruity, smoky, earthy, resinous, minty, or words reminiscent of other ingredients (licorice-like, piney, citrusy, peppery). Declared herbs and spices should be noticeable. If multiple herbs and spices are declared, they do not have to be in equal proportion, bearing in mind that some are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

The herb- and spice-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable. The color is not typically affected by spices and herbs (although flowers and petals may provide subtle to significant colors).

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in herb, spice, and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter

versions. The herb and spice character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some herbs and spices may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour, salty, savory) in addition to their distinctive characteristics.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Spice additions may increase body, increase astringency, or add spicy-hot warming notes; none of these aspects should be excessive.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one herb or spice.

Comments: If spices are used in conjunction with other ingredients such as fruit, cider, or other fruit-based fermentables, then the mead should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. If spices are used in combination with other ingredients, then the mead should be entered as an *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Often, a blend of spices may give a character greater than the sum of its parts. The better examples of this style use spices deftly; when more than one spice is used, they are carefully selected so that they blend harmoniously.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Perceivable herbs, spices, or spice blends must be declared.

Commercial Examples: Colony Meadery Moravian Spice Cake, Prairie Rose Vanilla Cinnamon, Redstone Juniper Berry Mountain Honey Wine, Schramm’s Mead Nutmeg, Sky River Chamomile Mead, White Winter Holiday Harbor

M3B. Vegetable Mead

A **Vegetable Mead** must contain at least one vegetable and may contain one or more herbs or spices. The following ingredients are explicitly included as vegetables: rhubarb, pumpkins, and chile peppers. Culinary transformations of ingredients (e.g., roasted peppers) are also allowable.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable vegetable and optional herb or spice character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The spice, herb, or vegetable (SHV) character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The vegetable aromatics may be subtle to aggressive, reflecting the character of the declared ingredients. Declared vegetables should be noticeable, but some are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The optional herb or spice aromatics may be subtle to aggressive, reflecting the character of the declared ingredients. Many possible descriptors exist, such as fragrant, aromatic, pungent, herbal, spicy, floral, fruity, smoky, earthy, resinous, minty, or words reminiscent of other ingredients (licorice-like, piney, citrusy, peppery). Declared herbs and spices should be noticeable. If multiple herbs and spices are declared, they do not have to be in equal proportion, bearing in mind that some are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

The SHV and honey components do not have to be in equal proportion, but the balance of the ingredients should be pleasant and enjoyable. The SHV-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable. The color is not typically affected much by spices and

herbs (although flowers and petals may provide subtle to significant colors).

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in SHV and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The SHV character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some SHVs may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour, salty, savory) in addition to their distinctive characteristics.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Spice additions may increase body, increase astringency, or add spicy-hot warming notes; none of these aspects should be excessive. Chile peppers can be spicy-hot, but any capsaicin-based burning sensation must be balanced with the base mead and must retain drinkability.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one vegetable, and optionally any number herbs or spices.

Comments: If spices are used in conjunction with other ingredients such as fruit, cider, or other fruit-based fermentables, then the mead should be entered as a *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*. If spices are used in combination with other ingredients, then the mead should be entered as an *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Entrants must specify added vegetable(s). Perceivable herbs, spices, or spice blends must be declared. Meads with spicy-hot flavors should specify the level of heat (mild, medium, hot) to assist judges with ordering the samples.

Commercial Examples: iQhilika Africa Birds Eye Chili Mead, Lyme Bay Winery Chilli Mead, Sky River Red Pepper Mead

M3C. Fruit and Spice Mead

A **Fruit and Spice Mead** is a mead containing one or more fruits and one or more spices, herbs, or vegetables. Basically, this is any mead containing at least one allowable specialty ingredient from each of categories M2 and M3.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a noticeable fruit and spice, herb, or vegetable (SHV) character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients, but the final product should be balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The SHV character should not completely dominate the mead.

Aroma: The fruit aromatics may be perceived as anything in the range from a fresh sweet juice to an aged fruit wine or Port, depending on strength and sweetness. If fruit varieties are declared, the varietal character should be noticeable. If multiple types of fruit are declared, they do not have to be in equal proportion, bearing in mind that some fruit are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The SHV aromatics may be subtle to aggressive, reflecting the character of the declared ingredients. Many possible descriptors exist, such as fragrant, aromatic, pungent, herbal, spicy, floral, fruity, smoky, earthy, resinous, minty, or words reminiscent of other ingredients (licorice-like, piney, citrusy, peppery). Declared SHV should be noticeable. If multiple SHVs are declared, they do not have to be in equal proportion, bearing in mind that some are stronger and more distinctive than others.

The honey character can be subtle to strong, depending on strength and sweetness, and can express the character of flower nectar, reflective of any declared honey varieties. Balanced fermentation bouquet. Stronger meads may have a light, spicy alcohol note. Carbonated meads tend to express more aroma.

The fruit- and SHV-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not overwhelm it. The fruit, SHV, and honey components do not have to be in equal proportion, but the balance of the ingredients should be pleasant and enjoyable.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Greater clarity is more desirable. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color as derived from the variety of fruit and honey used. Greater color vibrancy and brightness is more desirable. The color is not typically affected much by spices (although flowers, petals, and peppers may provide subtle to significant colors; tea blends may provide significant colors).

Flavor: Similar to Aroma in fruit, SHV, and honey character and intensity, becoming more prominent in stronger and sweeter versions. The fruit and SHV character should be noticeable and balanced with the sweetness level of the mead. Some fruits and SHVs may bring basic flavors (bitter, sweet, sour, salty, savory) in addition to their distinctive characteristics.

Residual sweetness and finish per the declared sweetness level. Acidity should be balanced, soft, or bright but not sharp. Tannin may make a sweeter mead seem drier. Harsh, unpleasant, or excessively sulfury or yeasty fermentation characteristics are undesirable.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Fruit and SHV additions may increase body, increase astringency, or add spicy-hot warming notes; none of these aspects should be excessive. Chile peppers can be spicy-hot, but excessive heat is a fault. Any capsaicin-based burning sensation must be balanced with the base mead and must retain drinkability.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of at least one fruit and at least one SHV.

Comments: If only combinations of herbs or spices are used, enter as a *M3A Metheglin*. If only combinations of fruits are used, enter as an *M2E Other Fruit Mead*. If other types of ingredients are used, enter as an *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Often, a blend of fruits and SHVs may give a character greater than the sum of its parts. Sensory components derived from fruit and SHV additions should be harmonious and supportive of those from the base mead, and should not clash.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Honey varieties may be declared. Entrants must specify added fruits and SHVs. Meads with spicy-hot flavors should specify the level of heat (mild, medium, hot) to assist judges with ordering the samples.

Commercial Examples: Intermiel Pear & Ginger Sparkling Mead, Lost Cause Banshee Part II, Moonlight Kurt's Apple Pie, Prairie Rose Strawberry Rhubarb, Rabbit's Foot Chocolate Raspberry Love, Schramm's Mead Apple Crisp, St. Ambrose Shotgun Wedding

M4. SPECIALTY MEAD

Specialty Meads include those meads with added flavorings or using processes not already described in categories M1, M2, or M3. All must be recognizable as a mead with a pleasant integration of the specialty aspect into a coherent, synergistic end product. Category M1 describes the base character expected from dry, semi-sweet, and sweet meads.

M4A. Braggot

A **Braggot** is a mead made with malt or beer. A braggot should be discernable as a mead and not simply a honey beer, but specific ratios of honey to beer are not mandated.

Overall Impression: Like a *M1 Traditional Mead* with a supporting malt or beer character. A wide range of outcomes are possible depending on choices of the base mead and additional ingredients. The mead character should be stronger than in honey beers, but the blend of mead and beer should be pleasant and well-integrated.

Aroma: The mead components may be evaluated as in *M1 Traditional Mead*, but declared malt/beer components should be noticeable and well-integrated with the honey-derived aspects. A pleasant balance between honey and malt/beer should be achieved, and any declared components should be perceivable. The best examples will achieve a synergy between the honey and malt selections, and will not be clashing. Honey and malt do not need to be of equal intensity, but both should be represented. May or may not have hop aroma, as declared.

Appearance: Often more similar to a beer in appearance than to a mead. Color may range from light straw to dark brown or black, depending on the malt, beer, and honey used. Clarity may be good to brilliant depending on any declared base beer style, although many braggots are not as clear as other meads. A light to moderate head with some retention is expected if the mead is carbonated.

Flavor: As with the aroma, the declared mead and malt/beer components should both be noticeable and be mutually complementary. The mead components may be evaluated as in *Traditional Meads*, especially in regards to declared sweetness and any declared honey varieties. If a base beer style is declared, the braggot should have a noticeable character derived from that style. May or may not have bitterness and hop flavor, as declared. Beer flavors tend to somewhat mask typical honey flavors found in other meads. The final presentation must be pleasant, well-integrated, and balanced.

Mouthfeel: May exhibit a character different from other meads in that it can have beer-like qualities. Compared to beer, the body may be fuller or thinner depending on how much of the honey was fermented. Compared to mead, usually has more of a lingering carbonation. Body and warmth depend on declared sweetness and strength levels. Still braggots often have a light carbonation to avoid the flat beer association, but this is not universally true.

Ingredients: Same as a *M1 Traditional Mead*, with the addition of a malt-derived component (malt, malt extract, beer). May be hopped or not. The malt component does not need to represent a Classic Style of beer. A braggot with additional non-malt/beer ingredients should be entered as an *M4F Experimental Mead*.

Comments: Sometimes known as *bracket* or *brackett*. Products with a relatively low proportion of honey should be entered as a beer in the *31B Alternative Sugar Beer* style. Common flaws in beer (such as oxidation) are also flaws in braggots.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Entrants may identify details

such as honey varieties, base beer styles, or types of malt used to allow judges to discern the meadmaker's intent. A classic base beer style is not required, but entrants should provide enough information to assist judges with ordering the samples. Specifying whether or not hops were used is often helpful to judges.

Commercial Examples: Atlantic Brewing Brother Adam's Bragget Honey Ale, Kuhnenn Braggot Mead, Meadow Vista Pictish Beast, Staropolskie Miodne, Tributary Bière de Miel

M4B. Bochet

A **Bochet** is a modern interpretation of a historical concept involving heated or caramelized honey, and may optionally include spices and fruits.

Overall Impression: Like a *Traditional Mead* with a noticeable caramelized honey character, but not burnt, harsh, or acrid notes. Acidity levels should be balanced. Optional spice and fruit additions should enhance, not dominate, the base bochet character.

Aroma: A subtle to distinctly identifiable honey character, increasing with sweetness and strength. The heating process may transform the honey by adding caramel, toffee, butterscotch, chocolate, or coffee notes. Varietal honey notes may be apparent, although they should show some evidence of transformation through heating. A clean, fresh, pleasant fermentation character is most desirable. Optional spice and fruit additions may provide background notes suggestive of these ingredients.

Appearance: Good to brilliant clarity. Any bubbles, foam, head, or effervescence is based on the declared carbonation level. Color is typically golden yellow to dark brown or black, depending on the heating process. The color will also be affected by an optional use of fruit, and to a lesser degree, spices. The color is typically darker than that expected from the unheated honey varieties.

Flavor: Has the elements expected in a traditional mead, or a mead with spices and fruit as the base character, as described in those styles. An additional caramelized honey flavor should be apparent, and may range from subtle to high in intensity. Flavors associated with caramelization include caramel, butterscotch, treacle, chocolate, and coffee. Some bitter and acidic notes may be present, but must be balanced. Undesirable flavors include rubber, diesel, petroleum, solvent, or a generalized 'industrial' impression.

A mead without any caramelization character should not be entered in this style.

Mouthfeel: Carbonation as indicated by declared level, from still to sparkling. Body generally increases with sweetness and strength, typically medium-light to full. Perceived alcohol by declared strength, ranging from none to noticeable and warming. Some astringent notes may be present from higher levels of caramelization, but must be balanced.

Ingredients: This is primarily a process-defined style involving heating honey using a variety of methods, temperatures, and durations. The ingredients are the same as with other meads. Spices and fruits are optional, at a background level.

Comments: While versions inspired by historical references may feature burnt honey flavors, this character is undesirable in

modern bochet. A major fault is excessive caramelization that creates acidity, astringency, and umami flavors that thin the body, increase the bitterness, and wash out the flavors.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. If spices or fruits are used, they must be specified. Honey varieties and base style are optional.

Commercial Examples: Lost Cause's Wicked Counsel, Manic Meadery's Elliot Bochet, Prairie Rose Caramel Apple, Sky River Brochet Mead, Zymarium Meadery's Swam Intelligence

M4C. Polish Mead

A **Polish Mead** is family of styles with a common background and character that is legally defined within the European Union (EU) with a Traditional Specialty Guaranteed mark under the Staropolski Tradycyjny (Traditional Historical Polish) name. The BJCP style definition aligns with these EU specifications.

Polish mead is categorized by the ratio of the volume of honey and water used, with identified versions as **Czwórniak** (1:3, roughly equivalent to Semi-Sweet Mead), **Trójniak** (1:2, roughly equivalent to Sweet Mead), **Dwójniak** (1:1), and **Półtorak** (1:0.5).

However, without a distinctive character, Polish mead would be simply any other mead made with restrictive recipe ratios. This style therefore describes a subset of the family of Polish meads that has a distinctive traditional character of maturity and mouthfeel.

Overall Impression: Stronger or denser versions of Polish Mead are characterized by a viscous mouthfeel, aged character, and often sweet finish while the weaker or thinner versions may seem superficially similar to meads in the *M1 Traditional Mead* category, and derivative fruit and spiced versions. This style is intended for meads that exhibit this distinctive Polish character.

Aroma: Honey character and intensity varies with the honey varieties used and the strength and sweetness of the mead. An aged character is common, which may exhibit positive, light to moderate oxidation notes that are a natural byproduct of maturation. The sweetness level depends on the final gravity but could be substantial in meads with more honey.

Any fruit additions will have the same aged (not fresh or juicy) character as the honey, and may range from very low to medium in intensity. Any spice or herb additions are medium-low to none, and should not dominate the honey or fruit. Some alcohol may be noticeable in the aroma, but age and sweetness often mask or soften this character.

Appearance: Clear. Still. Unaged color is golden to dark amber, depending on honey varieties used. Color may become darker, less vivid, or develop brown overtones with maturation, and with any fruit additions.

Flavor: Similar to aroma in honey character and intensity, fruit and spice additions, alcohol, and age character. The finish becomes sweeter in versions with a higher honey-to-water ratio, yet should not taste of raw honey or seem cloying.

Acidity and tannin, sometimes coming from fruit and spice additions, can temper this perception of sweetness, as can long maturation. The acidity and tannin levels are often lower in the balance than in many other mead styles. For meads with fruits or spices, the balance is often towards the honey with the added ingredients playing a supporting not dominating role, particularly in well-matured examples.

Age is often expressed as a smoothness, softness, and integration of flavors, including the tempering of strong sweetness. Age may optionally be detected as the positive maturation notes found in aged Sherry, Port, Marsala, and Madeira that can be perceived as a nutty note, or a dark or dried fruit character. Faults include

acetic or solvent flavors, sharp acidity, harshness, and excessive oxidation.

Mouthfeel: Still carbonation. Denser versions have a viscous body, but should not seem cloying or overly heavy. Maturation can add a velvety, silky, smooth texture. The body ranges from medium-light to full in a *Czwórniak*, medium to full in a *Trójniak*, medium-high to viscous in a *Dwójniak*, to full and viscous in a *Półtorak*. Alcohol warmth dependent on version. Versions with fruit, spice, hops, or wood additions might have higher tannin or acidity levels that partially offset the sweetness and viscosity.

Ingredients: Traditionally made with honeys of the region such as Linden, Buckwheat, Acacia, or various field or forest honeys. May contain fruit juices, spices, or hops. Local fruits such as apple, pear, plum, apricot, cherry, raspberry, black or red currant, blackberry, blueberry, lingonberry, gooseberry, grapes, or wild forest berries. Spices may include those used in baking or fall or winter spices typical of the region. Background wood (oak) character is acceptable, not required.

Comments: A traditional product made for over a millennium in a region spanning current Poland and Lithuania, and parts of Belarus and Ukraine. Ingredients from this area are considered traditional. All varieties of Polish Mead can contain fruits, spices, and hops. When using fruit, fruit juice is traditional and replaces at least 30% of the volume of water in the mandated ratios.

Dwójniak and *Półtorak* are traditionally produced as *Trójniak*, then fed the remaining honey late in fermentation or during aging. Modern versions may be fortified with distilled spirits.

Modern versions using non-traditional ingredients or versions using other ratios of honey to water should be entered as *M4F Experimental Mead*, if they still retain the Polish character.

Vital Statistics: The OG figures are for meads without fruit additions; those using fruit would be higher.

Variety	ABV	Min Age	OG	FG
Czwórniak	9-12%	9 mo.	1.090	1.012-1.033
Trójniak	12-15%	1 yr.	1.144	1.024-1.045
Dwójniak	15-18%	2 yrs.	1.215	1.065-1.089
Półtorak	15-18%	3 yrs.	1.286	1.150-1.170

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify the Polish style variety (*Czwórniak*, *Trójniak*, *Dwójniak*, or *Półtorak*). Strength and carbonation are assumed to be within specification. Sweetness level must be declared. Any special ingredients (fruits, spices, hops) must be declared. Honey varieties may be declared.

Commercial Examples: Ami Honey *Trójniak* Sandomierski, Apis *Czwórniak* Korzenny, Apis *Półtorak* Jadwiga, Augustowska *Trójniak* Jabłko na Miodzie, Dziki Miód *Trójniak* Porzeczkowiec, Jaros *Dwójniak* Maliniak, Jaros *Trójniak* Trybunalski, Mazurskie *Półtorak* Piasecki

M4D. Wood-Aged Mead

A **Wood-Aged Mead** is a mead with a noticeable amount of wood character, greater than a background level. Meads aged on a wood other than oak can be entered here, if there is a noticeable varietal wood character to the mead. Any prior mead style in the guidelines may be used as a base style.

Overall Impression: Any style of mead that uses wood at a noticeable level, but still in a way that is balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The wood character should not completely dominate the mead, but can play up to an equal role as the other ingredients.

Aroma: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with balanced, pleasant aromatics associated with the declared wood variety and any process details (toast levels, etc.). The wood-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not dominate it.

Appearance: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with darker shades of color.

Flavor: Same as the base style of mead, with added flavor from the declared wood variety and any process details (toast levels, etc.). The wood-derived flavors should complement and enhance the base mead, not dominate it.

Mouthfeel: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with added tannins from the wood giving a drying quality and additional body.

Ingredients: Any mead style. One or more variety of wood (oak, Spanish cedar, amburana, etc.) in any toast level and any form, such as chips, chunks, staves, or new barrels.

Comments: Meads featuring only a background character of wood should be entered as their base style. Those meads featuring a mix of *M4D Wood-Aged Mead* and *M4E Barrel-Aged Mead* should be entered as *M4E Barrel-Aged Mead*.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Entrants must specify a base mead style, as well as any components typically required by that base style. Entrants must specify the type of wood used, and may specify the toast or char level.

Commercial Examples: Brothers Drake Honey Oak, Intermiel Chouchen'n Signé Macle, Intermiel Médiéval, Lost Cause Wolf, Rabbit's Foot Mead of Poetry, Silver Hand Virginia Tonight

M4E. Barrel-Aged Mead

A **Barrel-Aged Mead** is similar to the Wood-Aged Mead category, except that meads are aged in barrels that previously held other contents (beer, wine, cider, spirits, other food products) and now feature both the wood and the previous contents as added character.

Overall Impression: Any style of mead that features a used barrel character at a noticeable level, but still in a way that is balanced, pleasant, and enjoyable. The barrel character should not completely dominate the mead, but can play up to an equal role as the other ingredients. Both the barrel and the prior contents of the barrel should play a role in the final product.

Aroma: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with balanced, pleasant aromatics associated with the declared barrel, prior barrel contents, and any process details. The barrel-derived aromatics should complement and enhance the base mead, not dominate it.

Appearance: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with darker shades of color or colors that reflect the prior barrel contents.

Flavor: Same as the base style of mead, with added flavor from the declared barrel, prior barrel contents, and any process details. The barrel-derived flavors should complement and enhance the base mead, not dominate it. The best examples exhibit a coherent, intentional synthesis of flavors.

Mouthfeel: Same as the base style of mead, possibly with added tannins from the wood giving a drying quality and additional body. Barrels may increase the alcohol warming impression and alter other mouthfeel components, depending on the nature of the prior barrel contents.

Ingredients: Any mead style. A barrel or wood product that previous was used to age or mature beer, wine, cider, spirits (whiskey, gin, rum, cachaça, etc.), or food products (maple syrup, hot sauce, etc.).

Comments: Meads featuring only a base character of wood (even if barrel-derived) should be entered in *M4D Wood-Aged Mead*. Those meads featuring a mix of *M4D Wood-Aged Mead* and *M4E Barrel-Aged Mead* should be entered in this style.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. Entrants must specify a base style, as well as any components typically required by the base style. Entrants must specify the type of barrel used, prior barrel contents, and may specify additional process details.

Commercial Examples: Lost Cause The Connoisseur, Moonlight Utopian X, Prairie Rose Cherry Wood, Rabbit's Foot Barrel Aged Odin, Redstone Barrel Aged Black Raspberry Mountain Honey Wine, Schramm's Mead The Icon Reserve, Sky River Solas Honey Wine

M4F. Experimental Mead

An **Experimental Mead** is a mead that does not fit into any other mead category or style. No mead can be “out of style” for this category unless it fits into another existing mead style.

Overall Impression: Depends on the declared experimental nature, but should be recognizable as mead, contain identifiable experimental components, and be pleasant to drink.

Aroma, Appearance, Flavor, Mouthfeel depend entirely on the experimental nature of the mead and the declared special ingredients, processes, or balance. The special nature must be identifiable, as should the base mead, and both should complement each other. The overall balance and drinkability of final product is the critical success factor for this style. Creativity may be rewarded but not at the expense of drinkability.

Ingredients: Depends on the experimental nature.

Comments: Some examples of this category include:

- Mead that blends multiple mead styles (unless the combination fits elsewhere, such as *M3C Fruit and Spice Mead*)
- Mead using additional fermentable or unfermentable sweeteners (e.g., maple syrup, molasses, brown sugar, agave nectar, lactose)
- Mead using additional ingredients (e.g., liqueurs, distilled spirits, smoke, dairy-derived products, hops)
- Mead using alternative processes, methods, or techniques (e.g., icing, smoking, souring)
- Mead fermented with non-traditional yeasts or bacteria that produce a noticeable effect (e.g., *Brettanomyces*, *Lactobacillus*, Belgian lambic, sake)
- Regional, traditional, historical, or indigenous mead not in the guidelines
- ‘Concept’ mead meant to evoke a cocktail, dessert, or other food or drink (unless it fits an established style)
- Mead that otherwise meets existing guideline descriptions except that it is *noticeably* outside listed style parameters or uses non-traditional ingredients.

This list is representative, and should not be interpreted as restricting experimental meads to only these examples. The experimental nature should not include anything illegal in the jurisdiction where it is produced or judged, or anything potentially dangerous to judges.

Entry Instructions: Entrants must specify sweetness, carbonation, and strength levels. The entrant must specify the experimental nature of the mead in sufficient detail to justify its entry as this style.

Commercial Examples: Lost Cause Goblin King, Lost Cause Lemon’s Cello, Prairie Rose Mojito, Redstone Nectar of the Hops, Samuel Adams Honey Queen, St. Ambrose Razzputin, White Winter Black Harbor