

Raspberry Melomel

Edgar Refskegg - cja66@drexel.edu

December 10, 2016



Longship Brewery
Raspberry
Summer 2016
Brewer: Edgar Refskegg (cja66@drexel.edu)
Mead

Longship Brewery
Raspberry
Summer 2016
Brewer: Edgar Refskegg (cja66@drexel.edu)
No Sulfites
10% Alcohol

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Period Information	1
2	Recipe	2
2.1	Comments	2
3	Potential Improvements	3
A	Glossary	4

1 Introduction

Presented here is a Raspberry Melomel created in the spirit of the brewing competition at Bhakail's Yule event that was brewed beginning on October 15, 2016. The intent was to piece together elements of a few period, and not quite so period, sources to create a plausibly period beverage while simultaneously eliminating potential negative outcomes. Thus, this drink was born. Overall the drink turned out much drier than I originally intended. However, it does taste of raspberry and still retains the honey character. Contained below is the procedure and general idea, the recipe, and my thoughts on improving this in the future. If there are any questions, do not hesitate to ask me!

1.1 Period Information

The mead was created using the general techniques outlined in Ken Schramm's book, *The Compleat Meadmaker* [1]. Extending from this, the ubiquitous brewer's book by Digby [2] was used in conjunction with another book, *Wassail! In Mazers of Mead* by Robert Gayre [3] to arrive at the recipe used for this mead. In Digby, he lists many mead recipes so the techniques are fairly well understood. He also lists only one raspberry recipe, but it is for a wine. Here is the text from the book for mead:

TO MAKE MEATH (Digbie, pp. 92):

Take to six quarts of water, a quart of the best honey, and put it on the fire, and stir it, till the honey is melted: and boil it well as long as any scum riseth: and now and then put in a little cold water, for this will make the scum rise: keep your kettle up as full as you did put it on; and when it is boiled enough, about half an hour before you take it off, then take a quantity of Ginger sliced and well scraped first, and a good quantity of Rosemary, and boil both together. Of the Rosemary and Ginger you may put in more or less, for to please your taste: And when you take it off the fire, strain it into your vessel, either a well seasoned-tub, or a great cream pot, and the next morning when it is cold, pour off softly the top from the settlings into another vessel; and then put some little quantity of the best Ale-barm to it and cover it with a thin cloth over it, if it be in summer, but in the winter it will be longer a ripening, and therefore must be the warmer covered in a close place, and when you go to bottle it, take with a feather all the barm off, and put it into your bottles, and stop up close. In ten days you may drink it. If you think six quarts of water be too much, and would have it stronger, then put in a greater quantity of honey.

In Robert Gayre's book, on page 118 he mentions the following:

Prominent, and indeed famous, among those liquors closely related to mead is what, for want of a more specific name, one would call raspberry sack-mead. This, as a sweet liquor, was greatly prize in Poland before the late war. One old writer quoted by Edward Spencer¹⁹¹ tells of its being obtainable in Sweden, Muscovy, and as far as the Caspian Sea. This consists of the juice of raspberries and honey fermented together. It is by no means an easy liquor to make, as there is a strong tendency to vinegrate unless it is made with skill and care.

It is really important to note here that the person referenced, Edward Spencer, and the book he wrote, was written in 1903 and has no sources of its own. As a result, this reference should be seen as a tertiary source at the least. See the source [4]. The book can be found posted on the internet with a simple web search. It has a red cover with a crazy looking wizard drawn on it.

Considering the availability of raspberries and their use in wine, and knowing that mead has been flavored with fruit for ages, it makes sense that a raspberry melomel would indeed be a period drink. It is my thinking that this drink was sweet and raspberry like.

2 Recipe

Ingredients used to make 3 gallons OG: 1.135:

- 9 lbs Blueberry Honey (Fruitwood Orchards)
- 49 oz Vintner's Harvest Raspberry Fruit Puree
- 1 oz Light Oak Wood chips.
- Water to 3 gallons or target gravity
- 1 Packet Safale S-33 Yeast

Procedure: Mix all of the ingredients into a sanitized glass carboy at room temperature, cap with an airlock. Let it ferment until completion (about 1.5 months with Ale yeast) and then bottle. FG:

2.1 Comments

The brewing and fermentation were all done using modern equipment: glass carboy, siphon hose, sanitization equipment, etc. which is absolutely in contrast to period brewing methods. However, as a result of the lack of equipment and time, and considering raspberry's propensity to vinegrate, period practices were omitted in favor of maintaining control on several of the variables. Blueberry honey was used in this as well. In period times it is very unlikely that a swarm of bees could be utilized in such a way to receive pollen from only one plant. Thus, the use of this honey in this drink is not period. A more suitable honey to use would be Wildflower, since there is no deliberate restriction on the pollen used. To get even crazier, one could even research local plantlife in Digby's area and attempt to obtain honey more akin to that profile.

Additionally, ale yeast was used instead of wine yeast for a number of reasons. Primarily, ale yeast (or even bread yeast) was most likely to be used in period brewing of any sort. Thus it makes sense to use it here. Ale yeast also results in a much quicker finished product. Using a wine yeast for this same recipe may take several months to years to condition properly. Period drinks were likely consumed much quicker as a general rule, rather than aged for

many years. It seems likely, though, that the reason for that is the lack of good containers to keep out light and microbes.

Lastly, lacking an oak cask for the brewing resulted in my decision to use light oak chips in the drink to simulate the fermentation and storage of the mead in a cask. The effect achieved isn't quite the same, especially considering that the casks in those days would probably have many drinks cycled through, but the oak chips did impart a flavor that is detectable very clearly affects the overall taste.

3 Potential Improvements

First, as mentioned above, the raspberry melomel turned out to be far more dry than I intended it to be. Somehow the yeast went above and beyond its tolerance and basically fermented it dry. Luckily the ale yeast used retains nice fruit character and not too many off flavors.

The recipe for the Raspberry wine in Digby's book suggests taking wine that has already fermented and putting it into several gallons of raspberries. If I were to make this in the future, I would instead make the mead first and let it fully ferment and later add the raspberries. That would likely help retain a lot of the sweetness and general flavor profile of the raspberry and honey.

Wildflower honey should also be used to produce a more authentic period drink, instead of the Blueberry used.

A Glossary

- Melomel - Mead infused with fruit
- Metheglin - Mead infused with herbs
- Pyment - Mead made with grapes in addition to honey
- Sack-mead - Very sweet mead. Contains more honey than is usually used which causes higher ABV and sweetness
- Yeast - Organism used in fermentation. Converts sugar to alcohol and CO₂

References

- [1] K. Schramm, *The Compleat Meadmaker*. Brewers Publications, 2003.
- [2] K. Digby, *The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby Knight Opened*. H. Brome, 1669.
- [3] R. Gayre, *Wassail! In Mazers of Mead*. Brewers Publications, 1948.
- [4] E. Spencer, *The Flowing Bowl*. London: Grant Richards, 1903.