

# Varietal Mead Comparison

Susan Ruud/Gordon Strong

# The Great Honey Experiment

- 6 varietal honeys
- Same base recipe
- Same yeast
- Same fermentation temperatures
- Same original gravity
- Same final gravity
- Same total acidity
- The purpose of this was to try to determine the different aromas and flavors that are unique to each individual honey.

# Base Recipe

- 18 lbs varietal honey
- 3.5 gallons reverse osmosis water
- 1 tsp Fermaid-K
- 2 tsp diammonium phosphate (DAP)
- 6 grams Potassium Carbonate ( $K_2CO_3$ )
- 2 packets (10 gr) Lalvin Narbonne 71B-1122 dry yeast – rehydrated in 110<sup>0</sup> spring water with GO-FERM-4.5 tsp 15 minutes before pitching.
- Staggered nutrient additions were used every 24 hours.
- Fermented 62-64 degrees

# Varietal Honeys

- Basswood – Northern Brewer/The Bee Folks
- Mesquite – Trader Joes
- Orange Blossom – Local apiary that takes their bees to California for the winter.
- Star Thistle – Sleeping Bear Farms
- Tupelo – Smiley Apiaries
- White Sage – Northern Brewer

# Mead Statistics

Honey	OG	FG	Total Acidity
Basswood	1.122	1.028	6.0
Mesquite	1.122	1.026	6.0
Orange Blossom	1.126	1.028	6.0
Star Thistle	1.126	1.030	6.0
Tupelo	1.128	1.032	6.0
White Sage	1.126	1.030	6.0

# Tasting Panel

- We had 15 people sit down and taste the 6 meads paying close attention to the aroma and flavor that the honey imparted.
- They were asked to use as many descriptive terms that they could to describe each of the meads.
- Notes added from attendees at National Homebrewers Conference.
- All Varietal Meads were too high in final acid. Matching honey to Mead was tasted beside each Mead and then added to the Mead to show the effect of how sweetening balances acid.

# Color range of honeys



# Orange Blossom Honey



- **Floral Source:** Orange tree blossoms.
- **Location:** California, Florida, Texas and Arizona.
- **Color – honey:** light amber.
- **Color – mead:** Light gold to amber.

# Orange Blossom Honey Mead

## **Aroma:**

- Orange Blossom honey aroma – strong (12)
- Floral (9)
- Citrus (8)
- Fruity esters (3), vanilla (3) apple (2) pear (2)

## **Flavor:**

- Orange Blossom flavor (9)
- Citrus (8)
- Floral (5)
- Fresh fruit (4), light pear (2) vanilla, creamy

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- White grape, light almond in finish

# Tupelo Honey



- **Floral Source:** White Tupelo trees.
- **Location:** South Georgia and Florida panhandle.
- **Color – honey:** Light amber.
- **Color – mead:** Golden.

# Tupelo Honey Mead

## **Aroma:**

- Apple (5)
- Fruity (4)
- floral (2), pear (2), vanilla (2), spicy (2)

## **Flavor:**

- Apple cider (4)
- Peppery (4)
- Vanilla (3)
- Spicy (3)
- Minty (2), woody (2), white grape (2), cinnamon (2)

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- Earthy, butter, fresh marshmallow, caramel, oaked chardonnay

# Basswood Honey



- **Floral Source:** Basswood (American linden) tree blossoms.
- **Location:** Southern Canada to Alabama and Texas.
- **Color – honey:** Water white.
- **Color – mead:** Straw.

# Basswood Honey Mead

## **Aroma:**

- Floral (5)
- Spicy (3)
- Earthy (3)
- Woody (3)
- Herbal (2), caramel (2), fruity (2)

## **Flavor:**

- Herbal (3)
- Floral (3)
- Caramel (3)
- Minty, vanilla, citrus, pepper, woody, white wine, buttery(2)

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- Menthol, oregano, thyme, perfumy

# White Sage Honey



- **Floral Source:** White sage blossoms.
- **Location:** California, Southwest US.
- **Color – honey:** Water white to extra white.
- **Color – mead:** Water white to straw.

# White Sage Honey Mead

## **Aroma:**

- Earthy (8)
- Floral (5)
- Peppery, spicy (4)
- Musty, herbal (3)

## **Flavor:**

- Minty, Floral, menthol(6)
- Pepper (5)
- Herbal, musty, fruity (3)
- Vanilla, earthy, spicy (2)

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- Sauerkraut, light smoke, caramel

# Star Thistle Honey



- **Floral Source:** Purple-Pink blossoms on Star Thistle herb.
- **Location:** US West, Midwest and Florida.
- **Color – honey:** White to extra light amber, greenish.
- **Color – mead:** Straw, greenish tones.

# Star Thistle Honey Mead

## Aroma:

- Floral, spicy (5)
- Vanilla (2)
- Grassy, herbal, buttery, caramel, earthy

## Flavor:

- Floral (5)
- Cinnamon, woody (3)
- Piney, citrus, fruity, spicy, grape, vanilla (2)

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- Dates, fig, woody, cinnamon, nutmeg, lavender, Nasturtium

# Mesquite Honey



- **Floral Source:** Mesquite tree.
- **Location:** Southwestern US.
- **Color – honey:** Water white to amber.
- **Color – mead:** Straw to golden.

# Mesquite Honey Mead

## **Aroma:**

- Woody (8)
- Vanilla (4)
- Buttery, earthy (3)
- Floral, black pepper, spicy, mint (2)

## **Flavor:**

- Woody (7)
- Vanilla (6)
- Peppery (4)
- White wine, fruity, caramel, herbal (3)

## **Additional Aromas/Flavors From Conference:**

- Smokey, pipe tobacco, cinnamon, cheddar cheese