

A Compendium of Mead Knowledge

Kyle Byerly

Various Gotmead Contributors

July 31, 2011

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1 Fermentation

This is perhaps the most important aspect of mead making. You can have the best ingredients, but if you don't have a healthy fermentation your honey, and other ingredients, won't shine.

1.1 Yeast

There is a vast variety of high quality yeasts available to the average meadmaker. Highlighted below are a few of the favorite more easily available ones. In general, the best results from a given yeast are usually obtained when fermenting in the lower third of the yeast's fermentation temperature range.

D-47: A classic yeast for white wines. Often used to great effect in traditionals. Be careful of letting it get too warm (above 70F) as it throws off fusels and harsh alcohols. It can surlee for quite some time, adding floral characteristics.

DV10: A champagne isolate of a bayanus strain that produces minimal esters and phenols. Also tends to not blow off more delicate honey aromas. Ferments to 18% regularly. Good for dry meads and high alcohol sweet meads. It is a low nutrient yeast, but tends to produce sulfur unless front-loaded with nutrients (50/25/25 schedule or 75/25 seems to work well).

71B-1122: Narbonne yeast that can metabolize a certain amount of malic acid. Useful for young meads (low alcohol) or those with a significant portion of an acidic fruit.

K1V-1116: A generic fruit wine yeast. Seems to produce good results in high temperature fermentation environments such as in excess of 75F.

Uvaferm 43: A bayanus yeast strain that has an alcohol tolerance of 18%+. It is commonly used for high alcohol wines and tends not to blow off delicate aromas. Also commonly used with dessert wines and stuck fermentations.

1.2 Yeast Nutrients

Nutrients are used to make up for the lack of proper nutrients in the must, to aid in fermentation speed, or to overcome a stuck fermentation. They are typically added in relatively small amounts throughout the fermentation process. Because of the small amount needed, adding too much can be done easily so some amount of care should be taken when calculating and adding nutrients to the must.

Go-Ferm: Used in rehydrating yeast. 1.25g of Go-Ferm per gram of yeast with 17g grams of water. Mix go-ferm and water together and add yeast at re-hydration temperature (typically 104-109F). Provides

DAP: Also known as Di-ammonium phosphate, chemical name $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{HPO}_4$ is a source of inorganic nitrogen, which provides YAN (Yeast Available Nitrogen) for nitrogen deficient musts (such as honey). 1g/L provides 210ppm of YAN. 1g/Gallon provides 50ppm of YAN. Do not add past 2/3 sugar break. The yeast cannot consume the nutrient at this stage and it will likely result in Urea type aromas and flavors in the finished mead. Do not add to hydrating yeast as DAP is somewhat toxic to re-hydrating yeast.

Fermaid K: Provides micro-nutrients and YAN for yeast health. Pyridoxine and Pantothenate are two of these micro-nutrients. 1g/Gallon provides 25ppm of YAN.

Yeast Hulls: also called Yeast Ghosts are dried yeast cells. Used to aid in unsticking of a stuck fermentation or to combat H_2S formation at the end of a fermentation (usually past 2/3 sugar break).

1.3 Yeast Feeding

The process of yeast nutrient additions is relatively simple at the core. Yeast need nutrients and honey does not have enough, therefore small amounts of nutrients need to be added in order to keep the fermentation healthy. The Nanaïomo Winemakers have a good bit of detail on nutrient addition for fermentation [1].

1.3.1 Guidelines

There isn't a set amount of nutrients to add, although there are guidelines. One of the easier (and common) to use nutrient combinations is Fermaid K and DAP at a ratio of 70% Fermaid K and 30% DAP. Ratio is based on weight.

1.4 H₂S and Mercaptans

One of the simplest indicators of yeast stress is the production of H₂S. H₂S smells of rotten eggs or sulfur. Yeast stress indicates that there is something off in the fermentation dynamics. The most common reason for H₂S is low nutrients. Other causes are temperature (either too low or too high for the yeast) and pH (too low or too high).

1.4.1 Eliminating Before 2/3 Sugar Break

1.4.2 Eliminating After 2/3 Sugar Break

If you smell H₂S after 2/3 sugar break you should not use DAP or fermaid K to remedy the situation. Both of those contain inorganic nitrogen (DAP) that the yeast can't metabolize very well at that point of the fermentation. The best thing to add is Yeast Hulls at .5g to .9g per Gallon. Start with .5g/Gallon and then if after stirring and waiting 5 minutes the H₂S smell doesn't go away add additional Yeast Hulls in .2g/Gallon increments (stirring and waiting inbetween additions).

1.5 Must pH

1.6 Temperate control

1.7 Step Feeding

1.7.1 Classical Step Feeding

1.7.2 Bottom Dwelling Continuous Diffusion Yeast Feeding (BDC DYF)

2 Honey

3 Spices

3.1 While Aging

3.2 Tinctures

3.2.1 Alcohol Tinctures

3.2.2 Water Tinctures

4 Oak

4.1 Benefits

4.2 Barrels

4.3 Cubes, Chips, and more

5 Fruit

6 Fermentation Vessels

6.1 Carboys

6.2 Kegs

6.3 Connicals

6.4 Buckets

7 Sanitation

8 Aging

8.1 Bulk Aging

8.2 Bottle Aging

References

- [1] Nanaïomo Winemakers, Adding Nitrogen to Fermentations. <http://www.nanaimowinemakers.org/Winemaking/General/AddingNitrogen.htm>