An organoleptic survey of meads made with lactic acid-producing yeasts

Carolyn Peepall[a], David G. Nickens[b], Joseph Vinciguerra[c], and Matthew L. Bochman[b,d]*

[a] American Mead Makers Association Member, Crotonville, NY 10562, USA.
carolyn.peepall@gmail.com

[b] Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry Department, 212 South Hawthorne Drive, Simon Hall MSB1, room 405B, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.
dnickens@indiana.edu
bochman@indiana.edu

[c] American Mead Makers Association Member, Rochester, NY 14617, USA.
joseph.vinciguerra@outlook.com

[d] Wild Pitch Yeast, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.
hello@wildpitchyeast.com

* Corresponding author:
Matthew L. Bochman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry Department
212 South Hawthorne Drive
Simon Hall MSB1, room 405B
Indiana University
bochman@indiana.edu
812-856-2095

Abstract

We previously reported the isolation a suite of wild lactic acid-producing yeasts (LAYs) that enable

"primary souring" during beer fermentation without the use of lactic acid bacteria. With sour meads

gaining popularity in modern mead making, we were interested in exploring the same primary souring

approach to traditional semi-sweet meads. In this study, we utilized 13 LAY strains to produce semi-

sweet meads using a standardized batch of honey must to ensure consistent starting conditions.

Thirteen 11-L batches of mead were prepared, and each was inoculated with one of the LAY strains,

along with two control batches inoculated with champagne yeast. The initial pH and specific gravity

were measured for each batch before inoculation. Traditional organic staggered nutrient addition was

utilized for the first 72 h of fermentation with specific gravities being taken throughout the mead

making process. Meads were racked, tasted, stabilized, cold crashed, bottled, and transported to the

American Mead Maker's Association 2018 Conference in Broomfield, Colorado. There, organoleptic

surveys were conducted on these meads utilizing an array of tasters with varying levels of mead sensory

analysis experience. The results of the sensory analysis, focusing on aroma and flavor, are discussed.

Keywords: mead, yeast, fermentation, lactic acid yeast, sour mead, modern mead making

Abbreviations: LAY, lactic acid-producing yeast; ABV, alcohol by volume; OG, original gravity; FG, final
gravity; SG, specific gravity; AMMA, American Mead Makers Association; TOSNA, traditional organic
staggered nutrient addition

1. Introduction

Mead, and its origins, are the focus of many legends found deep within the lore of a variety of civilizations throughout the world. Mead is arguably the oldest alcoholic beverage known to humankind, preceding beer but perhaps not fruit-based wines, with mead evidence found in pottery dating to 6500-7000 BC in China (1) and in the Hindu texts of the Rigveda predating 1700 BC (2). The fact that both mead and fruit wines contain fewer ingredients and are easier to produce than beer, which requires the malting of grains to convert complex carbohydrates into readily fermentable sugars (3), also argues for the mead/wine before beer supposition.

The origin of mead is likely serendipitous as described by the Neolithic hypothesis (4): Honeycomb fell into a container of rain water (or rain water fell into a container of honey), wild yeasts initiated fermentation at mild ambient temperatures, and then a curious soul wandered by at the right time, tasted the elixir, and being ignorant of fermentation and alcohol, soon succumbed to the wiles of intoxication. No doubt a quest to replicate that magical elixir ensued, but it was not until the French chemist Louis Pasteur provided experimental evidence that yeast fermented sugars into ethanol in 1856 that alcoholic fermentation became more studied and understood (4-6). Until then, mead in its various forms became known for possessing sacred, mystical, and even healing properties. Receiving legendary notoriety as "ambrosia, or nectar, of the Gods" in ancient Greece, mead has notoriety as being the mythological source of the Norse god Odin's strength when, as an infant, he drank mead from a goat's udder (7).

Today, the fascination with mead and its mystical charm continues. Mead production is fast evolving with modern mead-making techniques riding on the coattails of craft brewing and distilling, rendering it easier to make and reducing fermentation times (8,9). More akin to wine making than beer brewing, mead has tapped into the creative minds of home and commercial mead makers alike (10). By replacing the grapes and grape juice typically found in wines with various honey varietals and adding

yeast, water, and nutrients, traditional meads are born. Meads can vary from being light-bodied and low

in alcohol to being sweeter, full bodied, and containing a higher alcohol by volume (ABV). They also vary

in sweetness from being dry, semi-sweet, or sweet, which is not dissimilar from typical wine

characteristics. Yeast choice has certain organoleptic influences on mead, impacting mouthfeel, aromas,

and flavors (11). A plethora of adjunct additions (*e.g.*, fruits and spices) and wood aging techniques may

also be used to make meads more complex. However, once again like wine, achieving the delicate

balance between sweetness, alcohol, tannins, and acidity is the key to making an exceptional mead.

The Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) guide on mead styles (12) provides insight into how

much creative license craft mead making provides. The Experimental Mead category provides the

creative mead maker with almost endless options for barrel aging, fortification, and experimenting with

microbes. It was with this creative inspiration that we sought to use heterofermentative lactic acid-

producing yeast (LAY) to make meads and perhaps develop a novel Sour Mead category in the BJCP

Mead Styles. As documented in the 2017 American Mead Makers Association (AMMA) Mead Industry

Report, sour meads currently account for 13.2% of the mead styles being commercially produced (9).

Current souring techniques for both beer and mead require either rapid kettle souring or slow

techniques using mixed culture (lactic acid bacteria and yeast) fermentation (13), both presenting risk of

infection across batches. Recently, the use of LAY has been suggested as an alternative to these

techniques (14), being as rapid as kettle souring but reducing the risk for contamination of other batches

because LAY are susceptible to traditional sanitation procedures. Here, we used a collection of 13 LAY

strains to produce sour meads and assessed their perceived organoleptic properties by surveying a

panel of mead sensory analysts at the 2018 AMMA Conference. The detailed fermentation and sensory

results are presented below, and we conclude that LAY strains expand the options available for mead

makers in producing sour meads.

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Strains, media, and culture other reagents

S. cerevisiae strain WLP715 (champagne yeast (15)) was purchased from White Labs (San Diego,

CA). The LAY strains were provided by Wild Pitch Yeast (Bloomington, IN) and are described in (14). All

yeast strains were routinely grown on yeast extract, peptone, and dextrose (YPD; 1% (w/v) yeast extract,

2% (w/v) peptone, and 2% (w/v) glucose) plates containing 2% (w/v) agar at 30°C and in YPD liquid

culture at 30°C with aeration unless otherwise noted. All strains were stored as 15% (v/v) glycerol stocks

at -80°C. Media components were from Fisher Scientific (Pittsburgh, PA, USA) and DOT Scientific

(Burnton, MI, USA). All other reagents were of the highest grade commercially available.

2.2. Mead fermentation

Fifteen 11-L batches of traditional mead must, with an original gravity (OG) of 1.112 and initial

pH of 4.13, were prepared using true source clover honey (Dutch Gold, Lancaster, PA) and spring water.

Each was inoculated with approximately 1.85×10^{10} cell of one of the 13 LAY strain or the WLP715

control and degassed using a degassing wand attached to a standard electric drill. To assist with

clarification, 22 g (1-3g/L) of dry Albumex Perl Bentonite (Max F. Keller GmbH, Mannaheim, Germany)

was added to each batch 12 h before inoculation. Traditional organic staggered nutrient addition

(TOSNA) (16) using a FermaidO (Lallemand Oenology, Canada) regimen and twice daily degassing were

utilized to provide the yeast strains with sufficient and consistent nutrients, as well as oxygenation

during the first 72 h of fermentation. The ambient and mead fermentation temperatures ranged from

17-20°C.

The meads were racked off the yeast 3 weeks after inoculation, and the specific gravity (SG) for

each batch was measured using a hydrometer. At 6 weeks after inoculation, each batch was racked for a

second time, and the SG was again recorded. Tastings were performed intermittently throughout the

process. In the ninth week, a 6-g (2 g/3.7-L) potassium sorbate (LD Carlson Co., Kent, OH) 0.5-g (1g/7.4-

L) potassium metabisulfite (LD Carlson Co., Kent, OH) combination was added to stabilize the meads.

Fermfast DualFine Super Kleer (LD Carlson Co., Kent, OH) was added as a fining agent per the

manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, DualFine solution A1 (silica) was gently stirred into the mead and

allowed to incubate for 1 h. Then, Dualfine solution A2 (chitosan) was gently stirred in for 30 s. The

meads were cold-crashed by being incubated at an ambient temperature of -2.2 to 3°C for 36 h before

bottling to aid in clearing. All mead making equipment was thoroughly cleaned and sanitized with Star

San (Five Star Chemicals and Supply, Inc., Commerce City, CO.) prior to each step of the mead making

process. The bottles were transported under refrigeration to the 2018 AMMA Conference in Broomfield,

CO, to conduct tasting and sensory evaluations (below).

2.3. Sensory analysis

The goal of this experiment was to analyze the mead sensory characteristics produced by the 13

LAY strains utilizing a wide variety of taster sensory analysis experience levels, as well as variation in

palate sophistication. The benefit of this, rather than only using expert sensory analysts, was to gather

feedback from a population that would mimic the full range of craft mead consumers, from individuals

tasting their first mead to long-term enthusiasts. The tasting occurred at the 2018 AMMA Mead

Conference and Trade Show during the "AMMA Grant: Sour Mead Tasting and Feedback Session

(https://mead-makers.org/2018-amma-mead-conference-and-trade-show/keynote-speaker-dr-patrick-

mcgovern/wednesday-march-14/#Sour). After a brief verbal introduction to the LAY sour mead project,

sensory analysis feedback sheets (see Supplemental Materials for examples) were provided to tasters

for all 13 batches of experimental mead. Tasters were asked to provide their feedback on the flavor,

aroma, and mouthfeel, of each mead. In this informal setting, the sensory volunteers were given as

much time as possible to smell and taste the meads, as well as individually document their feedback on

the sensory analysis sheets. A total of 490 sensory analysis feedback sheets were completed and

gathered during the mass tasting session held at the 2018 AMMA Conference. However, it should be

noted that not all tasters completed their surveys. For instance, seven out of 40 tasters of the mead

fermented with strain YH25 failed to record their expertise level (see Supplemental Materials). We

chose to include data from incomplete survey sheets because participants were not explicitly instructed

to fill out every section of the surveys. Further, our goal was not to categorize our participants and the

data from individual groups but simply to receive feedback from a broad range of tasters, from novices

to experts.

2.4. Overall impression scoring

Overall, the meads were ranked on a scale from 1-5, with 5 being most favorable. The sums of

these overall impression scores were then calculated, taking into account the score of each volunteer

who tasted the mead. For instance, the mead fermented by YH77 received no scores of 5, three scores

of 4, 23 scores of 3, 12 scores of 2, and two scores of 1. Multiplying the number of scores by the score

value and summing the total yields an overall impression score of 0 + 12 + 69 + 24 + 2 = 107 for the YH77

mead. The average of these scores across all of the experimental meads was calculated to determine

how individual meads ranked relative to the entire group. If 40 surveys were returned for a mead, each

with the highest rank of 5, then the perfect mead would have received an overall impression score of

200.

2.5. Statistical analysis

All sensory analysis data from the feedback sheets were entered into Microsoft Excel

spreadsheets. Statistics were determined using Microsoft Excel and/or GraphPad Prism.

3. Results

3.1. Fermentation performance

To compare the fermentative abilities of all 13 LAY strains to the WLP715 control, 170 L of honey

must was prepared using clover honey and spring water, and 11 L was added to each of 15 individual

fermenters. These vessels were then each inoculated with a different LAY or the control strain (x2) and

allowed to ferment at ambient temperature (17-20°C). Samples of each batch were collected several

times during fermentation to measure SG and collect tasting notes (Supplemental Table S1). Table 1

shows the specific gravity, attenuation, ABV, and pH information for the 15 meads, including the two

control batches (C1 and C2) at the end of fermentation.

Table 1. Fermentation parameters.

Strain	Species	OG[a]	FG	Attenuation (%)	ABV (%)	Initial pH	Terminal pH
WYP39	*L. fermentati*	1.112	1.068	37	5.8	4.12	3.24
YH25	*L. fermentati*	1.112	1.062	42	6.56	4.12	3.33
YH26	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.070	35	5.6	4.12	3.13
YH27	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.034	68	10.2	4.12	3.15
YH72	*H. vineae*	1.112	1.080	27	4.2	4.12	3.07
YH73	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.072	34	5.3	4.12	3.12
YH77	*L. fermentati*	1.112	1.066	39	6.0	4.12	3.35
YH79	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.044	58	8.9	4.12	3.00
YH81	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.038	64	9.7	4.12	3.02
YH82	*W. anomalus*	1.112	1.070	35	5.6	4.12	3.1
YH109	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.056	48	7.4	4.12	3.01
YH144	*L. thermotolerans*	1.112	1.048	55	8.4	4.12	3.09
YH156	*S. japonicus*	1.112	1.038	64	9.7	4.12	3.35
C1	*S. cerevisiae*	1.112	1.006	94	13.9	4.12	3.51
C2	*S. cerevisiae*	1.112	1.002	98	14.4	4.12	3.70

[a] Abbreviations: OG, original gravity; FG, final gravity; ABV, alcohol by volume.

Broadly comparing the LAY-fermented meads to the controls, it is obvious that as a group, they

were significantly less attenuated and, consequently, had lower ABVs than meads produced with

WLP715 (p = 0.0003; Fig. 1A,B). This was not unexpected because WLP715 is an industrial strain known

for its high levels of attenuation (15), while the LAY have displayed variable levels of attenuation of beer

wort (14) and mead (17). Although all 15 meads had a final pH of 3.70 or below, those made with LAY

were significantly more acidic on average (p = 0.0004; Fig. 1C). This is consistent with their

heterofermentative nature and ability to sour beer by lactic acidification (14).

3.2. Sensory analysis

Various methods have been used for the sensory analysis of mead (*e.g.*, (18,19)). At its root,

sensory analysis is subjective, being influenced by multiple factors including the experience level of the

participants and various methods of analysis (20). To simulate consumer feedback, participants in our

sensory analysis were all mead enthusiasts but varied from self-described novices to experts. We

received and documented the results recorded on 490 sensory analysis feedback sheets. The overall

impression scores calculated from the feedback (see Section 2.4.) are shown in Figure 2. Eight of the LAY

strains yielded meads that scored better than the average of 86 ± 7, with the YH77 mead scoring highest

at 107 points. The mead fermented by YH26 scored lowest at 56. Further trends in aroma and flavor

perception are detailed below.

3.2.1. Aroma

Next, we calculated the average general aroma rating for a series of descriptors: delicate, light,

mild, pleasant, pungent, rich, sharp, and strong. No two meads had identical profiles, though several

were quite similar (*e.g.*, YH73 and YH77 meads) to the average of the group, which tended toward light

and mild (Fig. 3). Overall, the aromas were favorable, though several LAY produced meads whose

aromatics stood out as being pungent (YH26 and YH156) and/or sharp (YH79 and YH156).

The sensory analysts also scored aromatic esters with the following descriptors: apple, banana,

berry, citrus, clean, floral, fruity, grape, mango, melon, nail polish, pear, ripe fruit, stone fruit, tropical,

and unripe fruit. On average, the meads displayed citrus and fruity notes (Fig. 4). Among the 13

experimental meads, the results were more mixed here than above. Some were ranked highly for

banana aromatics (YH27 and YH156), while others had stronger tropical notes (YH25 and YH77) or were

more variably scored (WYP39 and YH82).

Finally, "other" aromas were scored for odors reminiscent of acetone, acidic, alcohol, bitter,

bread, bubble gum, buttery, candy, cinnamon, earthy, grassy, medicinal, oaky, phenolic, smoky, sour,

vegetal, vinous, and yeast descriptors. The average other aroma profile was not dominated by any of the

descriptors, highlighting the variability among the experimental meads (Fig. 5). Two meads were

reported as highly buttery (YH26 and YH77), two were earthy (YH82 and YH140), and YH156 yielded a

mead with a strong acetone aroma.

3.2.2. Flavor

As above for aroma, we also calculated the average general flavor ratings for the experimental

meads using a series of descriptors: bright, delicate, light, mild, pleasant, pungent, rich, sharp, strong,

and yeasty. The mean flavors were overall mild and pleasant, but there was some diversity among

individual meads (Fig. 6). For instance, the meads produced by YH27, YH81, YH109, and YH156 tasted

quite sharp, while the YH72 mead had a rich flavor.

Flavors were also scored for apple, banana, berry, Brett, citrus, fruity, pear, stone fruit, and

tropical descriptors. Here, Brett refers to "Brett character" or the rustic barnyard flavors characteristic of

beverages fermented with common strains of *Brettanomyces* spp. (13,21-23). On average, apple, citrus,

fruity, and pear flavors predominated, and several individual meads shared this general profile (YH27,

YH73, YH77, and YH82) (Fig. 7). Notably, some meads scored highly for citrus and/or pear flavors, such

as those made by YH79, YH81, and YH140.

Additional flavor descriptors (acetone, astringent, bitter, bread, bubble gum, buttery, earthy,

funk, grassy, leather, oaky, silky, smoky, sour, sweet, tart, vegetal, vinous, and yeast) were also

considered. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the average profile ranked as highly sour (Fig. 8). Indeed, this was

the case for all but two of the individual meads (YH25 and YH77), which were instead perceived as

buttery. Several meads were also ranked as bitter: YH27, YH79, and YH156. Concerning the perceived

sourness of the meads, however, it should be noted that tasters were informed that the meads were

sour, and this may have influenced their feedback. This could explain why the WLP715 control meads

were also ranked as having some perceived sour flavor. That said, the terminal pHs of all experimental

and control meads were all well below 4.0 (Table 1) due to their organic acid content at the end of

fermentation, which corresponds with sour perception (24,25).

Discussion

This project provided insight into the sensory characteristics LAY can provide in mead making. In

the overall organoleptic survey of sour meads, most sensory analysts preferred the mead fermented

with *L. fermentati* strain YH77, which produced citrusy, tropical aromas with mild, fruity, and pear

flavors. In contrast, the least preferred mead was produced by *S. japonicus* strain YH156, which

displayed pungent banana and acetone aromas, as well as strong, bitter, and acetone flavors. It is

interesting to note that even though YH156 was the least favored strain, it flocculated the most rapidly

and exhibited some initially pungent ammonia aromas during fermentation that were not discernible in

the finished mead. Regardless, it should be noted that the evaluated sensory data only provide insights

into customer preferences and not the absolute quantified intensity of these characteristics. Additional

experiments using gas chromatography and mass spectrometry would be needed to compare the

concentrations of sensory compounds between meads. One should also be mindful of the effects of

other additives on the final sensory attributes of the meads as well. For instance, the choice of fining

agents is known to impact the organoleptic profiles of meads (26,27). We did not test such variables in

this work, but their influence on the final sour perception of meads fermented by LAY deserves

attention.

The LAY strains tested here tended to attenuate mead less than they do beer wort (17,28), with

L. thermotolerans strain YH27 yielding the highest attenuation, finishing with an ABV of 10.2%. *H.*

vineae strain YH72 had the lowest attenuation, with an ABV of 4.2%, which is in stark contrast to our

recent work with YH72 in mead production that yielded a finished product with 8.2% ABV (17). The

reason for this discrepancy is currently unknown but could be due to variations in the honey musts used

between experiments or the yeast nutrient supplementation regime used here. There was also some

stochastic variation in the attenuation of the meads (*e.g.*, the FGs of C1 and C2 were 1.006 and 1.002

despite identical must, nutrient, inoculation, and fermentation conditions). Additionally, the terminal pH

also varied among the experimental meads, with *L. thermotolerans* strain YH79 producing the lowest at

pH = 3.0 and the highest terminal pH being found in meads made by YH77 and YH156 (both finishing at

pH = 3.35). It is interesting to note that of the four strains with the lowest terminal pH (YH79, pH = 3.0;

YH109, pH = 3.01; YH81 pH = 3.02; and YH72 pH = 3.07), YH81 mead scored as having the highest

perceived sour flavors (Fig. 8), and the YH72 and YH82 meads had the highest perceived sour aromas

(Fig. 5).

The sensory data gathered from this initial study of LAY-fermented meads makes the case for

future work with these organisms. For instance, it would be interesting to examine the effects of

fermentation temperature on the organoleptic properties of LAY meads, the effects of initial honey

must gravity on attenuation, and the alcohol tolerances of these yeast strains. We also suggest the need

for the addition of a sour mead category into the existing BJCP Mead Styles to encourage such

experimentation by professional and home mead makers using LAY and other more common souring

microbes.

Given that the yeast strains used here produced such an array of aromas and flavors in a

fundamental semi-sweet traditional mead, paired with the variety of attenuation levels and levels of

clarity yielded by traditional souring techniques, the addition of a new sour mead category will help to

encompass the LAY attributes. Indeed, a sour mead category would allow such meads produced by a

variety of souring methods to be further evaluated with regard to their unique organoleptic

characteristics, resulting in potential growth in what is already a popular style among all levels of mead

drinkers. Sour mead could potentially win favor with the already established sour beer enthusiasts and

encourage kombucha and other fermented product consumers and brewers to try sour meads, thus

expanding the already growing mead market.

Acknowledgements

Funding for this project was provided by a grant from the American Mead Makers Association. We thank

all of the sensory analysts for their feedback.

References

1.   McGovern, P. E., Zhang, J., Tang, J., Zhang, Z., Hall, G. R., Moreau, R. A., Nunez, A., Butrym, E. D.,
Richards, M. P., Wang, C. S., Cheng, G., Zhao, Z., and Wang, C. (2004) Fermented beverages of
pre- and proto-historic China. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* **101**, 17593-17598
2.   (2018) Fermentation Science: Liquid Fermentation. Linda Hall Library,
https://libguides.lindahall.org/c.php?g=242326&p=1616531
3.   Cornell, M. (2009) Beer: not the oldest drink in the world. Zytophile,
http://zythophile.co.uk/2009/10/15/beer-not-the-oldest-drink-in-the-world/
4.   Rogers, A. (2015) *Proof: the Science of Booze*, Mariner Books
5.   Platt, D. (1988) Memoire sur la fermentation appelee lactique (Louis Pasteur). *Del Med J* **60**, 23-
24
6.   Pasteur, L. (1858) Nouveaux faits concernant l'histoire de la fermentation alcoolique. *Comptes*
Rendus Chimie **47**, 1011-1013
7.   McCoy, D. (2016) *The Viking Spirit: An introduction to Norse Mythology and Religion*
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
8.   (2016) Third Annual Mead Industry Report.
9.   (2017) What's the Buzz? 2017 Mead Industry Report. American Mead Makers Association,
Mead-Makers.org

10.   Iglesias, A., Pascoal, A., Choupina, A. B., Carvalho, C. A., Feas, X., and Estevinho, L. M. (2014)
306   Developments in the fermentation process and quality improvement strategies for mead
307   production. *Molecules* **19**, 12577-12590

308   11.   Comfort, S. A. J. Yeast & Grape Pairing. (MoreWine! ed., MoreFlavor! Inc.,
309   https://morewinemaking.com/web_files/intranet.morebeer.com/files/wyeastpair.pdf

310   12.   (2017) Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) https://www.bjcp.org/

311   13.   Tonsmeire, M. (2014) *American Sour Beer: Innovative Techniques for Mixed Fermentations*,
312   Brewers Publications, Boulder, CO

313   14.   Osburn, K., Amaral, J., Metcalf, S. R., Nickens, D. M., Rogers, C. M., Sausen, C., Caputo, R., Miller,
314   J., Li, H., Tennessen, J. M., and Bochman, M. L. (2017) Primary souring: A novel bacteria-free
315   method for sour beer production. *Food Microbiology* **70**, 76-84

316   15.   WLP715 Champagne Yeast. White Labs, https://www.whitelabs.com/yeast-bank/wlp715-
317   champagne-yeast

318   16.   Moutela, S. TOSNA 2.0 Mead Made Right: Traditional Organic Staggered Nutrient Addition,
319   method of advanced nutrient addition in mead making Mead Made Right,
320   http://www.meadmaderight.com

321   17.   Barry, J. P., Metz, M. S., Hughey, J., Quirk, A., and Bochman, M. L. (2018) Two novel strains of
322   Torulaspora delbrueckii isolated from the honey bee gut microbiome and their use in honey
323   fermentation. *Fermentation* **4**

324   18.   Gomes, T., Dias, T., Cadavez, V., Verdial, J., Sa Morais, J., Ramalhosa, E., and Estevinho, L. M.
325   (2015) Influence of Sweetness and Ethanol Content on Mead Acceptability. *Polish Journal of*
326   *Food and Nutrition Science* **65**, 137-142

327   19.   Hernandez, C. Y., Serrato, J. C., and Quicazan, M. C. (2015) Evaluation of Physicochemical and
328   Sensory Aspects of Mead, Produced by Different Nitrogen Sources and Commercial Yeast.
329   *Chemical Engineering Transactions* **43**, 1-6

330   20.   (2010) *Sensory Analysis for Food and Beverage Quality Control* Woodhead Publishing,
331   Cambridge, UK

332   21.   Steensels, J., and Verstrepen, K. J. (2014) Taming wild yeast: potential of conventional and
333   nonconventional yeasts in industrial fermentations. *Annu Rev Microbiol* **68**, 61-80

334   22.   Bokulich, N. A., and Bamforth, C. W. (2013) The microbiology of malting and brewing.
335   *Microbiology and molecular biology reviews : MMBR* **77**, 157-172

336   23.   Fleet, G. H. (2003) Yeast interactions and wine flavour. *Int J Food Microbiol* **86**, 11-22

337   24.   Li, H., and Liu, F. (2015) The chemistry of sour taste and the strategy to reduce the sour taste of
338   beer. *Food Chem* **185**, 200-204

339   25.   Ramos Da Conceicao Neta, E. R., Johanningsmeier, S. D., and McFeeters, R. F. (2007) The
340   chemistry and physiology of sour taste--a review. *J Food Sci* **72**, R33-38

341   26.   Pascoal, A., Oliveira, J. M., Pereira, A. P., Feas, X., Anjos, O., and Estevinho, L. M. (2017) Influence
342   of fining agents on the sensorial characteristics and volatile composition of mead. *Journal of the*
343   *Institute of Brewing* **123**, 562-571

344   27.   Pascoal, A., Anjos, O., Feas, X., Oliveira, J. M., and Estevinho, L. M. (2018) Impact of fining agents
345   on the volatile composition of sparkling mead. *Journal of the Institute of Brewing*

346   28.   Osburn, K., Amaral, J., Metcalf, S. R., Nickens, D. M., Rogers, C. M., Sausen, C., Caputo, R., Miller,
347   J., Li, H., Tennessen, J. M., and Bochman, M. L. (2017) Primary souring: a novel bacteria-free
348   method for sour beer production. *bioRxiv*

Figure legends

Figure 1. Average attenuation, ABV, and terminal pH of the experimental meads. Comparisons

between the mean attenuation, ABV, and pH of the meads produced in the control fermentations

(black) and LAY fermentations (gray). The error bars correspond to the standard deviations (SD). Values

were compared by *t* tests using the Holm-Sidak method, with a = 5% and without assuming a consistent

SD. Significant *p*-values are listed on the graphs.

Figure 2. Overall impression scores for the LAY meads. Each sensory analyst gave the LAY meads an

overall impression ranking from 1 (least favorable) to 5 (most favorable), and those scores are tallied

here. The dashed line indicates the average overall impression score of the 13 experimental meads.

Figure 3. General aroma ratings. The average scores for the indicated descriptors were calculated and

plotted as radar charts. Not every survey participant sampled every mead, so averages were calculated

from between 26 and 43 evaluations for each mead depending on the number of tasters. The LAY strain

used to ferment the mead is indicated above the plotted data. The "Average" label indicates that the

data are the means across all 13 experimental meads. Mild, light, and pleasant aromas dominated the

meads.

Figure 4. Aromatic ester ratings. The average scores for the indicated aroma descriptors were

calculated and plotted as described in Figure 3. The aromas were predominantly described as citrus,

fruity, and tropical.

Figure 5. "Other" aroma ratings. The average scores for the indicated aromatic descriptors were

calculated and plotted as described in Figure 3. All meads smelled acidic.

Figure 6. General flavor ratings. The average scores for the indicated flavor descriptors were calculated

and plotted as described in Figure 3. The meads tasted mild and pleasant overall.

Figure 7. Fruit and Brett flavor ratings. The average scores for fruit-like and Brett character flavor

descriptors were calculated and plotted as described in Figure 3. Flavors of apple, citrus, fruit, and pear

were common.

Figure 8. "Other" flavor ratings. The average scores for the indicated flavor descriptors were calculated

and plotted as described in Figure 3. All meads scored highly for the sour flavor descriptor.