





# *the* **NEED** *for* **MEAD**

## **Amesbury's House Bear Brewing Makes an Ancient Beverage with a Modern Twist**

by **Dean Johnson**    *photos by* **Adrien Bisson**

**W**hen a product wins an international competition before it's been introduced in the marketplace, it must be something special. Beth Borges and Carl Hirschfeld are banking on it. In 2013 the pair founded House Bear Brewing in Amesbury. Their specialty: mead, once a fabulously popular alcoholic beverage that now has cult status. Borges and Hirschfeld hope to change that, and they've certainly started on a high note. Before any of their craft meads were available to the public, they won the gold medal at the 2014 Mead Free or Die international competition held in Londonderry, N.H.

The winner was House Bear Brewing's "Show Bear," a traditional mead that's made with blueberry honey — one of several flavored meads produced by the pair in their downtown "meadery," a onetime mill brewery space not much larger than a nice loft apartment.

Borges had toyed with home brewing while she was a student at Babson College in Wellesley, and when she decided she didn't want a career in finance, she thought: "There could be a niche market for mead" in a beverage world that had suddenly gone craft beer crazy.

And that is the target market for their product: the craft beer crowd. But Borges admits, "When I decided to start a meadery, I didn't know if anybody did this." She convinced best friend Hirschfeld, who was tired of working in the computer industry, to join her.

"It's easy to make mead," Borges says. After all, it's really just honey, water and yeast with the various flavors added along the way in the three-month process. "But it's very hard to make good mead."

Borges and Hirschfeld make their mead in 55-gallon plastic drums that once contained Pepsi syrup. Each drum can churn out about 20 cases of mead, a good way to maintain quality control.

The first bottles hit local liquor stores last September, and House Bear Brewing products are now available in nearly 20 stores in the Bay State. They are also served at Crave, a wine bar in Amesbury.

The average person usually expects mead to be thick and sweet, something to be imbibed out of a container with Viking horns. None of that is true.

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Passionfruit Madras

**M**ost people think of mead as being a cold-weather beverage, but here are some mead cocktail recipes that work well for springtime get-togethers.

### **Bourbon Stinger**

(from Rachel Whitty-Hajj, mixologist at Crave wine bar, Amesbury)

**Ingredients:**

- 1 part bourbon
- 2 parts World War Bee lemonade-style mead

**Directions:**

1. Mix and add a twist of lemon.
2. Serve on the rocks.

### **Passionfruit Madras**

(from Rachel Whitty-Hajj, mixologist at Crave wine bar, Amesbury)

**Ingredients:**

- 2 parts Paradise Unpaved passionfruit mead
- 1 part rum
- 1 part orange juice

**Directions:**

1. Stir and add your favorite garnish.
2. Serve in your favorite glass.

### **Berry Bellini**

(from House Bear Brewing)

**Ingredients:**

- 2 parts Nursery Crimes strawberry/basil mead
- 1 part prosecco
- Half a handful of small frozen blueberries (for edible ice cubes)

**Directions:**

1. Mix (don't shake) mead and prosecco.
2. Pour into martini glass over frozen blueberries.

### **Ecco Poco Cocoa Nog**

(from House Bear Brewing)

**Ingredients:**

- 1 part Demonic Presents chocolate hot pepper mead
- 2 parts egg nog

**Directions:**

1. Mix ingredients together.
2. Sprinkle with fresh nutmeg and stir with a cinnamon stick.

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Here are six things you should know about mead:

**1. It can be served at any temperature.** Borges and Hirschfeld believe the best flavors are discovered at room temperature. But chilled or served on ice mixed with other beverages? Not a problem.

**2. It's usually not carbonated or effervescent.** Don't expect a lot of bubbles or a nice, foamy head. You really must get over your beer prejudices. It isn't beer. It isn't near beer. It's mead.

**3. It can have an alcoholic content of between 8 percent and 18 percent.** So it carries more of an alcoholic kick than an average bottle (7 percent) of that other beverage it's always confused with.

**4. It is made with fermented honey, not grain.** And that's why it once was the beverage of royalty and the well-to-do. Honey wasn't easy to come by in the old days. When people learned that they could make a cheap alcoholic beverage out of a grain like barley, which was easily grown in large fields, mead was a goner. Beer for everyone!

**5. It can be made in a wild variety of flavors.** No matter what kind of beer you sample, there is always a ... well ... beeriness to it. House Bear Brewing offers mead in flavors that include strawberry/basil, passion fruit, lemonade, chocolate hot pepper and more.

**6. The earliest archaeological evidence of mead in Europe dates back about 4,000 years.** It was considered the alcoholic beverage of choice during the Golden Age of Greece. And we all know what party animals those Greeks were.

It's springtime. It's getting warm and sunny after a miserable winter. What better way to celebrate than with a glass of liquid sunshine, the beverage of kings made from fermented honey. Why not feel the need for mead?

mvm

**House Bear Brewing**

Amesbury, Mass. | (978) 388-1506  
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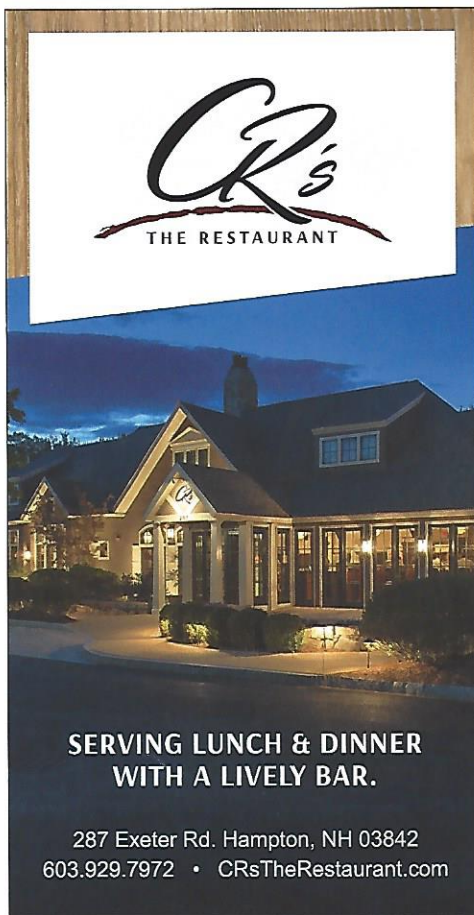
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