

THE BEVERAGE PEOPLE

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Braggots: Between Meads and Ales

Home brewers who've made "honey beers" have already experienced something approaching a "braggot." One difference, in most cases, though, is that back in Medieval times, hops would not have been widely used as a flavoring, at least not in the British Isles. Hops didn't arrive in England until later, so if you want to explore a traditional approach, you will need to think about other flavor combinations.

Basically, a braggot would be any sort of mead, melomel, or metheglin, in which malt was substituted for honey for a significant percentage of the fermentables.

The simplest way for a beginner to approach making a braggot is to make one of these mead drinks, substituting amber malt extract for 25-50% of the honey on a pound for pound basis. Process as you normally would for whatever recipe you're adapting.

Here's a sample recipe:

Ginger Braggot (5 gallons)

12 lbs. Clover Honey
5 lbs. "Beverage People" Amber Dried Malt Extract*
5 gallons Water
2 oz. "Beverage People" Yeast Nutrient for Meads
5 tsp. stock 3% Sodium Metabisulfite solution (after fermentation)
6 Tbl. Tartaric Acid
Grated Ginger Root Tea (added to taste after fermentation)
10 grams Prise de Mousse Wine Yeast

*To brew an "all-grain" version, substitute the following for the Amber Dry Malt:

7 lbs. British Pale Malt
1 lb. Medium Dark Crystal Malt (Caramel 60)

Mash the grains for 90 minutes, sparge, add Acid and Nutrient. during the five minute boil. Cool. Add sulfite and yeast.

Original Brix: 25

Total Acid: .45-.5%

1. Heat the water until warm, turn off the stove and stir in the honey and dried malt extract until dissolved.
2. Heat to boiling, and boil for 5 minutes, adding the nutrient and acid, and skimming with a large spoon.
3. Cool to room temperature.
4. Pour into narrow-neck fermentors, filling them no more than 75% full.
5. When the temperature is down near room temperature, test the sugar and acid levels. If these are below the levels indicated above, make the necessary corrections. Slightly higher is okay.
6. Add your yeast to the surface. In 10 or 12 hours, stir it in.
7. Once fermentation begins, allow it to continue for two or three weeks until visible signs of fermentation have ceased.
8. When bubbles can no longer be seen rising through the mead, rack (siphon) away from the settlings into an open container. Make a spice tea by boiling 4 oz. of Grated Ginger in two or three cups of water. The spice tea is then added to taste.
Fine with Sparkolloid, add a teaspoon per gallon stock sulfite solution, and siphon into a narrow-neck storage container, top up, and let it set for four weeks.
9. Rack your away from the Sparkolloid settlings, top it up again, and let it stand for three to six months.
10. Carefully rack into an open container, add 1 1/2 teaspoons stock sulfite solution per gallon. If you wish to sweeten, do so now with Sugar Syrup, adding also 1/2 teaspoon Wine Stabilizer per gallon.
11. Siphon into bottles, cap, and set them aside to age for three to six months.