



MONA *drinks*

Mead: Nectar of the Gods

By Dave Fox

According to Viking legends, brave warriors who died in battle went to Valhalla — a heaven of sorts, where beautiful maidens would await their arrival with jugs of mead.

In ancient Greece, the same beverage was known as ambrosia. It was believed to be the drink of the gods — sent down to earth from heaven in the form of dew, and then gathered by bees.

In Celtic mythology, a river of mead flows through paradise.

Mead is made from fermented honey. It is perhaps the first alcoholic beverage ever known.

Modern mead enthusiasts — inspired by primitive cave paintings of people gathering honey from hives — claim the drink was discovered by accident. They say hunter-gatherers out in the woods came upon a beehive filled with rain water. Thirsty, they guzzled the water from the hive. Naturally occurring yeasts could have been present in the hive, causing the honey-water to ferment... and bam! The world's first drunks were feeling magical.

Eventually in southern Europe, mead waned in popularity as people learned to ferment fruit and make wine. Fruit was cheaper than honey, and the flavor of wine was more consistent. In the north, however, where fruit was harder to grow, mead remained a popular drink through the Middle Ages.

Mead today is available in several varieties. Sweet meads are a fun alternative to dessert wines. They have a strong honey flavor. Due to their intense sweetness, they are best enjoyed in small doses. The Sky River Meadery in Sultan, Washington recommends them warmed up in the winter, perhaps with a sprinkling of cinnamon, nutmeg, or cardamom. Dry meads, with a more subtle honey flavor, are also available. They can be a nice alternative to wine with Asian and Mediterranean cuisine, and also go nicely with Thanksgiving turkey.



Don't mix great mead with great art.

[Current Travel News](#)

[Back Issues menu](#)

[Return Home](#)

If you're interested in purchasing mead in the United States, you'll find information on the [Sky River](#) website. Or to sample the ancient beverages of the Vikings and the Celts, consider hopping on one of our [tours](#) in Scandinavia or Ireland.

Dave Fox is a Scandinavian tour guide for Rick Steves' Europe. You'll find more of his travel and humor writing at www.davethefox.com.