

UNOFFICIAL APPENDIX GUIDE TO FUNCTIONAL AND ALCOHOL-FREE MEADS

Unofficial Supplement to the 2015 BJCP Mead Style Guide



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Developed as a supplement to the 2015 BJCP Mead Style Guide

This appendix adopts and extends the BJCP methodology for non-alcoholic and functional meads. Categories M1-M4 are governed by the 2015 BJCP Official Guide. All other rights reserved.

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INTRODUCTION TO CATEGORY M5

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE 2015 BJCP GUIDE

This M5 Category was developed to complement the official M1-M4 categories of the 2015 BJCP Mead Style Guide, providing a judging framework for emerging products that do not fit into traditional categories. Judges should familiarize themselves with the fundamental principles set forth in the 2015 BJCP Guide before judging Category M5 products, as this appendix assumes knowledge of the basic judging techniques and mead-related terminology established therein.

Alcohol-Free and Functional Meads

The M5 Non-Alcoholic and Functional Mead Category developed by Patagonian Yeast represents a comprehensive effort to categorize and describe emerging styles of meads that address modern trends toward conscious drinking, non-alcoholic options, and functional foods.

The objectives of this category are to better recognize and categorize non-alcoholic and low-alcohol products that maintain the authentic character of mead, address the growing demand for functional alternatives that offer additional health benefits, describe innovative products that combine meadmaking traditions with modern functional ingredients, provide a judging framework for products ranging from completely non-alcoholic to low-alcohol, and assist competition organizers in appropriately categorizing this diverse range of products.

Styles and Subcategories

Category M5 uses a subcategory system ranging from M5A to M5J, encompassing everything from traditional non-alcoholic meads to innovative functional products. Each subcategory has distinctive characteristics, but all maintain the fundamental character of mead as a recognizable base.

Subcategories M5A-M5E focus on no- or low-alcohol versions of traditional mead styles. Subcategories M5F-M5J address functional products that incorporate ingredients for specific health and wellness benefits.

Use of Category M5

This category was designed primarily for mead competitions, but also serves as a reference for innovative producers, distributors, and consumers interested in non-alcoholic alternatives and functional products. Individual descriptions are written to assist with structured judging during competitions.

Important: Category M5 is a guideline, not a specification. It is intended to describe the general characteristics of the most common examples and to aid in their evaluation; it is not intended to be rigorously applied specifications. They are suggestions, not strict limits.

Basic Categorization

The categorization of M5 styles is based on alcohol content (no alcohol vs. low alcohol), production method (dealcoholization, controlled fermentation, or addition of functional ingredients), and the presence of additional ingredients (fruits, spices, probiotics, vitamins, adaptogens, etc.).

Non-alcoholic meads (0.0-0.5% ABV), low-alcohol meads (0.5-3.0% ABV), and functional meads (variable) represent the main divisions, each with specific subcategories based on added ingredients, production techniques, or intended functionality.

Common Attributes of All M5 Styles

It is assumed that the attributes described in this section should be present in every M5 style description, unless otherwise stated.

Unless explicitly stated, all M5 styles are assumed to maintain a recognizable mead character as their fundamental base, be free from significant technical defects, exhibit harmonious integration between the base mead and any added ingredients, and comply with applicable local regulations for non-alcoholic or functional products.

All M5 products must exhibit an appropriate balance of acidity, tannins (if present), alcohol (in low-alcohol products), residual sweetness, and honey character according to their specific subcategory. Functional ingredients should not dominate the profile or create unpleasant medicinal or artificial flavors.

Subcategory Description Format

We use a standard format to describe M5 subcategories:

- **Overall Impression:** The essence of the subcategory and its distinctive features
- **Aroma and Flavor:** The primary sensory characteristics that define the subcategory
- **Appearance:** Expected color, clarity, and carbonation
- **Mouthfeel:** Body, texture, and other tactile aspects
- **Ingredients:** Typical components and production methods
- **Comments:** Technical, cultural information, or additional notes
- **Entry Instructions:** Specific Requirements for Competencies
- **Varieties:** Types of honey or other appropriate ingredients
- **Vital Statistics:** OG, FG, ABV, sweetness, and carbonation allowed
- **Commercial Examples:** Selection of representative products

IMPORTANT REMINDER: THESE DESCRIPTIONS ARE GUIDELINES TO ASSIST IN EVALUATION AND CATEGORIZATION. VITAL STATISTICS RANGES AND SENSORY DESCRIPTIONS SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS GENERAL GUIDELINES, NOT ABSOLUTE LIMITS. INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF EACH SUBCATEGORY ARE WELCOME.

GENERAL ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CATEGORY M5

MUST specify for all subcategories:

- Carbonation level (Still, Pétillant, Sparkling)
- Sweetness level (Dry, Semi-Sweet, Sweet)
- All functional ingredients used with concentrations where relevant
- All potential allergens present
- Varieties of honey used and their proportions
- Base mead style (if applicable)
- Source of functional ingredients (organic, natural vs. synthetic)

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Health claims must comply with local regulations
- Some ingredients may be restricted in certain jurisdictions
- Nutritional labeling may be required
- Alcohol limits may affect product classification

M5. Non-alcoholic and functional meads

Non-alcoholic and functional meads represent a growing category that includes products with very low or no alcohol content, as well as meads fortified with functional ingredients for specific health and wellness benefits. This category reflects modern trends toward conscious consumption, non-alcoholic options, and functional foods.

The development of this category responds to the growing demand for non-alcoholic alternatives that maintain the complexity and character of traditional fermented beverages, as well as products that offer additional health benefits beyond simple taste pleasure..

M5A. Non-Alcoholic Traditional Mead

Overall Impression: A refreshing mead that maintains the authentic honey character and complexity of a fermented beverage, but without the significant alcohol content. It should offer the sensory experience of a traditional mead while remaining accessible to all consumers.

Aroma and Flavor: Notable and distinctive honey character, which can range from delicately floral to more complex and vinous depending on the honey variety used. It should maintain the complexity derived from controlled fermentation without harsh flavors from unfermented honey. Honey-derived esters may be present but should not be dominant. Acidity should be balanced, providing freshness without being pungent. It may display a slight yeasty character that adds complexity. Tannins, if present, should be light and contribute to the structure without adding excessive bitterness. The finish should be clean and refreshing with a distinct honey aftertaste.

Appearance: Clear to bright, with no visible cloudiness. Color ranges from very pale straw to golden amber, depending on the honey variety used. Darker honeys may produce deeper shades. Carbonation, if present, should form a light foam that quickly dissipates.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium-light body, with a smooth texture characteristic of honey. Carbonation can range from still to sparkling, but should complement the overall profile. There should be no perceptible alcoholic heat. The texture should reflect the quality of the honey used, avoiding watery or artificial sensations.

Ingredients: Superior quality honey as the primary ingredient, preferably varieties with distinctive character. Dealcoholization techniques may include vacuum distillation, reverse osmosis, or early fermentation arrest. Yeasts selected for specific flavor profiles and minimal alcohol production. Yeast nutrients permitted for healthy fermentation. Natural preservatives permitted for stability.

Comments: Production requires specialized techniques to maintain the mead's character while minimizing alcohol. Methods include controlled fermentation at low temperatures, the use of specific yeasts with low alcohol production, or post-fermentation dealcoholization techniques. Microbiological stability is critical due to the absence of alcohol as a natural preservative. Pasteurization or sterile filtration may be required. The quality of the honey is critical to the success of the final product.

Entry Instructions: Entrants **MUST** specify the method used to achieve the low alcohol content. They **MUST** specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They **MUST** specify honey varieties used with approximate percentages.

Varieties: Any appropriate honey variety, from light floral honeys to more robust and complex varieties.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.040 – 1.065

ABV: 0.0 – 0.5%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.005 – 1.025

Sweetness: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Honey wine dealcoholized varieties, Non-alcoholic craft meads, Premium honey beverages

M5B. Non-Alcoholic Fruit Mead

Overall Impression: A harmonious integration of the base honey character with additional, declared fruits, while maintaining a profile without significant alcohol. The added fruit should complement and enhance, not overpower, the fundamental character of the mead.

Aroma and Flavor: The honey character should remain recognizable and form the basis of the flavor profile, but it can be more subtle than in traditional versions. Added fruits can appear fresh, lightly stewed, or like light jam, but they should always display a fermented character rather than raw juices. The intensity of the fruit can vary depending on the fruit used and the amount added. Stone fruits (peach, plum) tend to blend smoothly; berries can be more pronounced; citrus fruits add bright acidity. The balance between honey, natural acidity, and the added fruit should create a coherent and harmonious profile.

Appearance: Appropriate color for the added fruits, which can range from pale straw to deep shades of red, purple, or amber depending on the fruits and honey used. It should be clear to bright, without the cloudiness of raw fruits. Red fruits should provide natural reddish to purple colors, not artificial hues.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body, influenced by both the base mead and the added fruits. Some fruits may contribute additional acidity (citrus, tart berries) or light tannins (grapes, some stone fruits). The texture should be clean with no perceptible pulp residue, but may have more complexity than a traditional non-alcoholic mead.

Ingredients: Non-alcoholic base mead as in M5A, plus fruit added as juice, puree, or whole fruit during fermentation. Fruit may be added at various stages of the process. Fining techniques may be necessary to maintain the desired appearance. Fruit selection should complement the variety of honey used. Preservatives may be necessary to prevent refermentation of fruit sugars.

Comments: Typically made with at least 51% honey as the source of fermentable sugars, but this value does not need to be declared. The final product must maintain a recognizable mead character. The ingredient description is critical information for judges. Stability can be more challenging than non-fruit meads due to additional sugars and nutrients from the added fruit. Some successful combinations include honey-apple, honey-berry, and honey-stonefruit.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify all added fruits with approximate percentages. MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. MUST specify dealcoholization method. MUST specify base honey varieties. MUST declare potential allergens.

Varieties: Any honey variety appropriate for the base mead, plus complementary fruits that enhance the honey profile.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.050 – 1.075

ABV: 0.0 – 0.5%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.005 – 1.030

Sweetness: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Non-alcoholic fruit mead blends, Premium dealcoholized melomels, Artisan honey-fruit beverages

M5C. Non-Alcoholic Spiced Mead

Overall Impression: A pleasing integration of mead and added spices, herbs, or botanicals. The honey character should combine with the botanicals to give a balanced result without significant alcohol, creating a complex yet harmonious profile.

Aroma and Flavor: The character of the honey and the added botanicals should be noticeable and complementary. It is a fault if the botanicals dominate or seem artificial. Raw or harsh spice flavors are undesirable. The herbs used should have a fresh, well-integrated character, not an overly vegetal quality. Some spices are stronger than others and should be dosed appropriately. Oxidation of specialty ingredients or the base mead is a fault. The overall profile should be harmonious, drinkable, and distinctive.

Appearance: Clear to bright, appropriate for the base style. Color appropriate to the added botanicals and the type of honey used. Clarity may be affected by herbal material, but excessive cloudiness should be avoided. Some botanicals may contribute natural color to the final product.

Mouthfeel: Reflects the base style. Mead can be tannic or astringent due to the effect of added botanicals but should not be bitter due to overextraction. Some ingredients may contribute tannins, light bitterness, acidity, warming or cooling effects, or other tactile sensations that should be well integrated.

Ingredients: Non-alcoholic base mead plus any combination of appropriate spices, herbs, or vegetables. Botanicals may be added as extracts, tinctures, teas, or raw materials. Extraction techniques may include cold infusion, maceration, decoction, or extraction during fermentation. The selection of spices should complement the variety of honey used.

Comments: The final product must maintain a recognizable mead character as its fundamental base. Traditionally spiced meads are known as metheglin. The description of the ingredients is critical information for the judges. If special ingredients are declared, they should be noticeable but not dominant. Stability may require special consideration with certain botanicals. Some traditional combinations include cinnamon, vanilla, ginger, and Christmas spice blends.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify all added spices, herbs, or botanicals. MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. MUST specify dealcoholization method. MUST specify honey varieties used. MUST declare potential allergens.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, often selected to complement the spice profile.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.045 – 1.070

ABV: 0.0 – 0.5%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.005 – 1.030

Sweetness: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Non-alcoholic spiced meads, Dealcoholized metheglin varieties, Herbal honey beverages

M5D. Non-Alcoholic Experimental Mead

Overall Impression: An open category for non-alcoholic meads with ingredients or processes that don't fit into the above categories, maintaining the recognizable character of mead while exploring new non-alcoholic frontiers in the world of fermented beverages.

Aroma and Flavor: The mead's character must be consistently present and must blend harmoniously with the added ingredients or effects of the experimental process. Overall balance and drinkability are critical success factors for this style. The resulting mead should contain recognizable experimental components and be enjoyable to drink. Harmonious integration of all elements is key to success.

Appearance: Clear to bright, appropriate for the base style and experimental ingredients. Color should reflect the ingredients used and can vary widely depending on the experimental components. Presentation should remain attractive and professional, without excessive cloudiness unless inherent to the ingredients used.

Mouthfeel: Reflects the base style, but may also display tannic, astringent, effervescent, variable-bodied, or other characteristics as determined by the declared ingredients or experimental processes. The texture should remain pleasing and appropriate for the experimental concept.

Ingredients: Non-alcoholic base mead plus any experimental ingredients or processes not covered in other subcategories. May include non-alcoholic concentration techniques, single-culture fermentation, addition of other natural fermentables, wood aging, use of exotic honeys, innovative production techniques, or unique combinations of functional ingredients.

Comments: Some examples that fit this category include: non-alcoholic meads with other fermentables added (maple, agave), non-alcoholic meads with significant wood character, non-alcoholic meads that mimic ice mead styles, non-alcoholic meads with spices and fruit, unique hybrids with other ferments, or non-alcoholic meads that otherwise meet existing definitions except that they are notably outside of listed style parameters. Regardless of the experimental nature, the resulting beverage should be recognizable as a mead.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify the ingredients or processes that make the entry an experimental mead. They MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They MUST specify the dealcoholization method. They MAY specify a base style or provide a more detailed description of the experimental concept. They MUST declare potential allergens and any unusual ingredients.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, depending on the experimental concept.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.040 – 1.090 (variable depending on ingredients)

FG: 1.000 – 1.035 (variable according to ingredients)

Sweetness: Variable depending on the concept

ABV: 0.0 – 0.5%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Innovative non-alcoholic meads, Experimental dealcoholized honey products, Artisan honey-based beverages

M5E. Low Alcohol (Session) Mead

Overall Impression: A mead with minimal but noticeable alcohol content that maintains the traditional characteristics of the fermented honey beverage. It offers a more complete experience than completely non-alcoholic options while remaining in the low-alcohol range, also known as "session mead" or hydromel.

Aroma and Flavor: Well-developed honey character that may reflect the complexity of the fermentation. The aroma profile should reflect the honey variety used, ranging from floral and delicate to robust and complex. Esters may be present and contribute to the fruit perception without being dominant. May show a slight yeasty character that adds depth and complexity. The fermentation profile should be clean without excessive rustic notes. Acidity should be balanced, providing structure without dominating. Alcohol should be subtle, adding body and complexity without perceptible heat.

Appearance: Clear to bright with the typical color of traditional mead, ranging from straw to medium amber depending on the honey variety used. Darker honeys may contribute deeper, richer tones. Carbonation may create a light, transient head. Clarity should be appropriate for the style, typically bright.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body with a fuller mouthfeel than completely alcohol-free versions. Minimal or imperceptible alcoholic heat should not overpower the experience. Carbonation can vary widely but should complement the overall profile. The texture should reflect the quality of the honey used, providing a smooth and pleasant mouthfeel.

Ingredients: Honey varieties suitable for traditional mead, preferably high quality. Production techniques may include early interrupted fermentation, controlled post-fermentation dilution, or blending fermented meads with fresh honey. Yeasts selected for specific flavor profiles and controlled attenuation. Acidity adjustments allowed for balance. Yeast nutrients for healthy fermentation.

Comments: This style bridges the gap between completely non-alcoholic beverages and traditional full-strength meads. It is particularly popular in markets where session-strength products are prized. Production requires careful fermentation control or precise dilution techniques. It may appeal to consumers seeking the character of a fermented beverage with responsible alcohol consumption. Some countries have specific regulatory categories for low-alcohol beverages.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify the method used to achieve the low alcohol content. They MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They MUST specify honey varieties used with approximate percentages. They MAY specify special production techniques.

Varieties: Any variety of honey suitable for traditional mead, from light floral to more robust varieties.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.035 – 1.080

ABV: 0.5 – 3.0%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.000 – 1.020

Sweetness: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Session-strength meads, Low alcohol craft meads, Traditional hydromel varieties

M5F. Probiotic Enhanced Mead

Overall Impression: A base mead supplemented with live probiotic cultures that provide potential digestive health benefits while maintaining a pleasant and balanced flavor profile characteristic of fermented honey.

Aroma and Flavor: The base honey character should remain prominent and recognizable as a fundamental element. Probiotic cultures can contribute light to moderate notes ranging from mildly acidic to subtly funky, but they should never be unpleasant or dominate the honey profile. It may display a more complex acidity due to the organic acids produced by the

beneficial bacteria. The profile should be clean and refreshing, not overly acidic or foreign. Some strains may contribute subtle yogurt- or kefir-like notes, but this should be well integrated with the honey character.

Appearance: May be slightly cloudy due to the suspended live cultures, which is acceptable and expected in this style. Typical mead color, potentially influenced by additional ingredients used to support the probiotic cultures. Carbonation may vary, including natural carbonation from continued probiotic activity.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body, reflecting both the base mead and the probiotic activity. May have a slight natural fizz from the ongoing culture activity. The texture may be slightly richer due to polysaccharides produced by some probiotic strains. It should not be viscous or sticky, maintaining a pleasant mouthfeel.

Ingredients: Base mead made with appropriate, high-quality honey. Specific probiotic cultures such as Lactobacillus, Bifidobacterium, or other recognized beneficial strains. May include prebiotics (fibers that feed the probiotics) such as inulin, FOS, or natural fibers. Residual or added sugars may be necessary to maintain culture viability. Controlled fermentation techniques balance probiotic activity with the desired flavor profile.

Comments: Probiotics must be live and viable at the time of consumption, which presents unique production and storage challenges. Refrigeration may be necessary to maintain culture viability. CFU (colony-forming unit) counts must be sufficient for potential health benefits according to recognized standards. The interaction between mead yeast and probiotic bacteria must be carefully managed. Some markets have specific regulations regarding health claims for probiotic products.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify which probiotic cultures were used and the approximate CFU count. They MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They MUST declare any added prebiotics. They MUST specify honey varieties used. They MUST declare potential allergens.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, often varieties with natural residual sugars to support probiotic cultures.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.045 – 1.070

ABV: 0.0 – 12.0%

Carbonation: Variable, often

FG: 1.005 – 1.030

Sweetness: Typically semi-sweet to sweet to support crops naturally carbonated

Commercial Examples: Probiotic enhanced craft meads, Kombucha-mead hybrids, Functional honey beverages

M5G. Vitamin/Mineral Fortified Mead

Overall Impression: A nutritionally enriched mead that maintains the character and enjoyment of traditional mead while providing additional nutritional benefits through harmoniously added vitamins, minerals, or antioxidants.

Aroma and Flavor: The honey's character should remain dominant and appealing as the fundamental foundation of the profile. Added vitamins and minerals should ideally not be perceptible in the flavor, or if they are, they should be well integrated without creating medicinal, metallic, or unpleasant notes. Some vitamins may contribute subtle flavors (such as vitamin C, adding acidity), but this should complement the overall honey profile. Antioxidants such as superfruit extracts can add additional fruit complexity that should be harmonious with the base honey.

Appearance: Color may vary depending on the added ingredients and the variety of honey used. Vitamins such as beta-carotene can add deeper golden tones, while berry antioxidants can contribute natural reddish hues. It should remain clear to bright unless cloudiness is inherent to the added functional ingredients.

Mouthfeel: Typical body of a base mead with no significant alterations. Minerals should not create unpleasant metallic or harsh sensations. Some additives may slightly affect the texture, but this should be kept minimal and not interfere with the pleasant experience of the mead.

Ingredients: Base mead made with appropriate varieties of high-quality honey. Added vitamins may include C, vitamins B, D, E, or multivitamin blends. Minerals may include calcium, magnesium, zinc, iron, or electrolyte blends. Antioxidants may be derived from superfruit extracts, green tea, propolis extracts, or purified compounds. The form of the supplements (natural vs. synthetic) may affect flavor and stability.

Comments: Fortification must be functional and provide meaningful levels of nutrients, not merely symbolic or marketing-related. Vitamin stability can be challenging in a fermented mead environment, particularly with exposure to light and pH

variations. Some vitamins can interact with other mead components, affecting flavor or appearance over time. Regulations vary by country regarding nutrition claims and permissible fortification levels.

Entry Instructions: Entrants **MUST** specify which vitamins/minerals were added and in what approximate amounts. They **MUST** specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They **MUST** specify honey varieties used. They **MAY** specify the source of the nutrients (natural vs. synthetic). They **MUST** declare potential allergens.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, often selected to complement added nutrients and provide a stable base.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.045 – 1.075

Sweetness: Any level, often adjusted to mask supplement flavors

FG: 1.000 – 1.025

ABV: 0.0 – 14.0%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

Commercial Examples: Vitamin-enhanced meads, Electrolyte honey beverages, Antioxidant-rich functional meads

M5H. Adaptogen Infused Mead

Overall Impression: An innovative mead infused with traditional adaptogenic herbs believed to help the body manage stress and promote overall well-being, while maintaining a pleasant and balanced flavor profile based on quality honey.

Aroma and Flavor: Careful balance between the fundamental character of honey and the added adaptogens. Adaptogens should be noticeable yet complementary, contributing complexity without becoming medicinal or overpowering. Ashwagandha can add subtle earthy notes; ginseng can contribute a balanced, light herbal bitterness; turmeric can add warm, spicy notes; reishi can contribute earthy characteristics. The integration should be harmonious, creating a unique yet drinkable profile. Any herbal bitterness should be balanced with appropriate sweetness or natural acidity.

Appearance: Color can vary significantly depending on the adaptogens used and the variety of base honey. Turmeric can create deep golden tones; green herbs can add subtle greenish undertones; roots can contribute darker tones; mushrooms can impart earthy colorations. Clarity may be affected by herbal material, but excessive cloudiness should be avoided.

Mouthfeel: Adaptogens can contribute light tannins, natural astringency, or textural complexity that enrich the experience. Some herbs can create a subtle warming or cooling sensation. The overall texture should remain pleasant and not harsh or medicinal, maintaining the characteristic smoothness of honey.

Ingredients: Mead base with appropriate varieties of high-quality honey. Adaptogens may include ashwagandha, ginseng (American, Asian, Siberian), rhodiola, schisandra, turmeric, holy basil, reishi, cordyceps, goji berries, or other herbs recognized for their adaptogenic properties. Adaptogens may be added as standardized extracts, tinctures, concentrated teas, or raw herbal material. Extraction techniques may include cold infusion, alcohol extraction, decoction, or maceration.

Comments: Adaptogens are a category of herbs with a long history in traditional medicine, particularly in Ayurvedic, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Native American herbal medicine systems. Dosage should be appropriate for consumption as a functional beverage, not as a concentrated supplement. Flavor extraction may require specialized techniques to minimize bitterness while maximizing perceived functionality. Regulations regarding health claims vary widely and should be considered.

Entry Instructions: Participants **MUST** specify which adaptogens were used and their method of incorporation. They **MUST** specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They **MUST** specify honey varieties used. They **MUST** declare potential allergens and known drug interactions. They **MAY** specify concentrations or extraction methods.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, often selected to complement the herbal profile and provide a harmonious base.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.045 – 1.075

ABV: 0.0 – 14.0%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.000 – 1.030

Sweetness: Variable, often semi-sweet to balance herbs

Commercial Examples: Adaptogenic beverages, Wellness meads, Herbal-infused craft honey wines

M5I. Functional Honey Mead (Functional Mead with Specialized Honey)

Overall Impression: A mead that highlights the inherent functional properties of specialty honeys (manuka, buckwheat, tulsi) or honeys enriched with propolis, pollen, royal jelly, or other hive products, creating a beverage that celebrates and amplifies the natural benefits of bee products.

Aroma and Flavor: The character of specialty honey should be prominent and distinctive, showcasing the unique characteristics of the variety used. Honeys such as manuka can contribute light medicinal notes; buckwheat can contribute robust, earthy characteristics; herbal honeys can add aromatic complexity. Additional bee products should be harmoniously integrated: propolis can add resinous notes; pollen can contribute texture and floral flavors; royal jelly can contribute subtle richness. The profile should be complex yet balanced, avoiding overpowering medicinal flavors.

Appearance: Color reflects the specialized honey used, which can range from light amber to very dark hues depending on the variety. Honeys such as buckwheat produce darker colors, while specialized honeys can have unique hues. It may show slight cloudiness if unfiltered pollen or propolis is included, which is acceptable and even desirable for this style.

Mouthfeel: The body can be fuller than traditional meads due to the additional components of bee products. Pollen can contribute a light grainy texture that adds interest. Propolis can provide a balanced, light astringency. Royal jelly can enrich the overall texture. The mouthfeel should be rich but not heavy.

Ingredients: Specialty honeys such as manuka (with declared UMF), buckwheat, tupelo, basswood, specific herb honeys, or unprocessed raw honeys. Additional bee products such as propolis, bee pollen, royal jelly, or beeswax (in trace amounts). Minimal processing techniques are used to preserve the functional properties of the ingredients. Fermentation may be controlled to preserve sensitive components.

Comments: This style celebrates the potential health benefits of specialized bee products. Honeys like manuka are recognized for their antibacterial properties; propolis for its antimicrobial characteristics; pollen for its nutritional profile; and royal jelly for its unique properties. The functionality must be inherent to the ingredients, not artificially added. Health claims must comply with local regulations. The cost of specialized ingredients can result in premium products.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify the type and origin of specialty honey used. They MUST specify all added bee products with approximate quantities. They MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They MAY specify activity levels (such as UMF for manuka honey). They MUST declare potential allergens related to bee products.

Varieties: Specialty honeys such as manuka, buckwheat, tupelo, basswood, specific herb honeys, or single-variety honeys with unique properties.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.050 – 1.080

ABV: 0.0 – 16.0%

Carbonation: Any level allowed

FG: 1.005 – 1.030

Sweetness: Variable, often to highlight honey characteristics

Commercial Examples: Manuka honey meads, Propolis-enhanced meads, Raw honey functional beverages

M5J. Other Functional Mead

Overall Impression: An open category for meads with innovative functional ingredients not covered in other subcategories, maintaining the recognizable character of mead while exploring new frontiers in honey-based functional beverages and their synergies with other beneficial ingredients.

Aroma and Flavor: The mead's character should remain the recognizable foundation, with functional ingredients integrated in ways that complement rather than compete with the honey profile. Ingredients should add interesting complexity without creating unpleasant, medicinal, or artificial flavors. The overall balance should result in a pleasurable beverage that appeals to both mead enthusiasts and consumers interested in wellness and functionality.

Appearance: Appropriate for the declared ingredients and the variety of honey used. May vary widely in color and clarity depending on the specific functional additives. Presentation should remain attractive and professional, reflecting the quality of the ingredients used.

Mouthfeel: Reflects the base mead modified by the effects of specific functional ingredients. The texture should remain pleasing without being slimy, gritty, or foreign, unless inherent and acceptable to the specific ingredients used and positively contributing to the experience.

Ingredients: Mead base with appropriate honey varieties plus functional ingredients such as collagen (for joint/skin health), prebiotic fiber (for digestive health), electrolytes (for hydration), CBD (where legal, for relaxation), MCT oil (for energy), plant protein, superfood powders, functional mushroom extracts, omega-3s, or digestive enzymes. The formulation should consider the stability, solubility, and palatability of all components.

Comments: This subcategory captures the evolving nature of the honey-based functional beverage market. Examples might include collagen-infused meads for beauty/aging, fiber-infused meads for digestive health, electrolyte-infused meads for post-workout recovery, CBD-infused meads for relaxation (where legal), or superfood-infused meads for general nutrition. Functional ingredients must be safe for consumption and appropriate for the target population. Regulatory and health claims must comply with local laws. Innovation is encouraged, but functionality must be meaningful, not merely marketing-related.

Entry Instructions: Entrants MUST specify all functional ingredients used and their intended purpose. They MUST specify carbonation and sweetness levels. They MUST specify honey varieties used. They MUST declare all potential allergens and known interactions. They MAY provide information on concentrations and methods of incorporation.

Varieties: Any appropriate variety of honey, selected to complement the functional ingredients and provide a harmonious base.

Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.040 – 1.085	Sweetness: Variable, often adjusted to	Carbonation: Any level allowed
FG: 1.000 – 1.035	mask or complement functional	
ABV: 0.0 – 14.0%	ingredients	
Commercial Examples: Collagen meads, CBD honey wines (where legal), Electrolyte recovery meads, Superfood honey beverages		