

Metheglin

Vanilla Mead

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History of Vanilla

The first keepers of the secrets of Vanilla was the ancient Totonaco Indians of Mexico. The Totonac people were regarded as the producers of the best vanilla. The Totonac are from the region that is now known as the state of Veracruz, Papantla, Mexico. In 1427, the Aztecs conquered the Totonacos and they demanded to relinquish their fruit of the Tlilxochitl vine, vanilla pods. They called the prized spice "tlilxochitl" "black flower". They used it to flavor their famous chocolate drink, cacahuatl (chocolate water), made from cocoa beans, ground corn, ground vanilla beans, and honey.

The Spanish Conquistadors, lead by Hernando Cortez in 1519, traveled through Vera Cruz where he became intrigued by vanilla and conquered the Aztecs and returned to Spain with the precious plunder – Vanilla Beans, an exotic spice meaning "little scabbard" – which were combined with cacao to make an unusual and pleasing drink. The French took a particular liking to the flavor and began using it as an ingredient in pastries, cakes and beverages. For around 80 years after then, the beverage was enjoyed by Nobility. Then, Hugh Morgan, apothecary to Queen Elizabeth I, that the exotic spice can be used as a flavor all by itself in 1602.

Vanilla, the main species harvested is *Vanilla planifolia*, is a vine: it grows by climbing over some existing tree, pole, or other support. It can be grown on trees, or in a plantation. If left alone, it will grow as high as possible on the support; every year, growers fold the higher parts of the plant downwards so that the plant stays at heights accessible by a standing human.

From the pollination of the flower that will results in the distinctive flavor compounds in the fruit. One flower produces one fruit. *Vanilla planifolia* flowers are hermaphrodite: they carry both male (anther) and female (stigma) organs; however, to avoid self-pollination (which would tend to result in genetic deficiencies), a membrane separates those organs. Such flowers may only be naturally pollinated by a specific bee found in Mexico. They tried to bring the bee into other growing locales, to no avail. The only other way to produce fruits is to artificial pollination.

The fruit (a bean), if left on the plant, will ripen and open at the end; it will then exhaust the distinctive vanilla smell. The fruit contains tiny black seeds, which, in ripe fruits, carry the vanilla flavour. These black seeds are the tiny black "dust" one may find in dishes prepared with whole natural vanilla. *Vanilla planifolia* seeds will not germinate in normal ground; they need a certain symbiotic mushroom.

Scientific classification



Vanilla planifolia

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Magnoliophyta
Class: Liliopsida
Order: Asparagales
Family: Orchidaceae
Subfamily: Epidendroideae
Tribe: Vanilleae
Subtribe: Vanillinae
Genus: Vanilla Miller

Did they make Vanilla Mead/Wine in Period?

All the basic ingredients were there by the 16th Century in Spain including Vanilla Beans, Honey, and Water. We cannot know if they made Vanilla Mead/Wine in period because I research Vanilla Mead/Wine and there is no manuscripts, documents, period recipes to make mead/wine, etc but because the ingredients was there and they know how to make Mead/Wine so there is a potential to make Vanilla Mead/Wine in Period. If they made Vanilla Mead/Wine, it would be a Metheglin – mead/wine made with spices and extracts.

Ingredients

Ingredients	Quantities
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Honey	10 lbs
Vanilla Extract	2 ounce
Water	2 gallons
Wine Yeast	1 pkg

S.G. 21% alc.

Procedure:

Simmer approx. 1 gal water at 160° F. Add honey and simmer, stirring to dissolve honey. Remove scum at the top of liquid, looks like white film. Then cool liquid until room temperature. Put liquid into carboy, add Vanilla Extract - and put that in the carboy. Add more water to get about 3 gallons of liquid. Pitch yeast to liquid and put the airlock on the carboy. Rack every month until mead to ferment out. Rack mead, and age in carboy for at less 3 months. Transfer some mead and mix with bentonite and then put that mixture back in to the carboy (looks like clay) and wait for 2 weeks more, rack. Then I transfer the Mead thru a Filter to remove the last of the waste. The Sweeter is Wine Conditioner Bottle. The Sweeter is Wine Conditioner Bottle. The next batch, I am going to try to use natural method so it will be more natural and in think, it will improve the taste over time. The Vanilla Mead is a light clear yellow. The mead tasted good at bottling. It is medium sweet, and I find very enjoyable.

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