

Basic Period Potables:

Introduction to Meads, Wines, Beers, Cordials, and Exotics

Believe It or Not!
Canton of Lindenwood

A.S. XXXXI

Lord Tadhg macAedain uiChonchobhair

Introduction

This course is intended to give interested parties an introduction to the various types of period potables. It is my hope that everyone who takes part in this endeavor will leave with the following considerations, which I share with many of my brethren:

- (1) Brewing is Simple!
- (2) Brewing is Educational!
- (3) Brewing is Rewarding!
- (4) Brewing is Fun! (though challenging in Oklahoma--please refer to disclaimer at end)

Brewing has a minimum of cardinal rules to ensure good results:

- (1) Keep everything as clean as possible.
- (2) When you sanitize glassware, nothing beats bleaching and boiling.
- (3) Learn a little patience--brewing is not fast but well worth any wait.
- (4) Don't brew or bottle when you're ill--it will come back to haunt you.
- (5) Take good notes.

Brewing (meads and beers) requires a minimum of basic equipment to get started:

- (1) Large cooking pot (3 to 6 gallons);
- (2) Large glass or food-grade plastic jug, which can be made airtight (a 5 to 6 gallon jug can be had for \$10 to \$20);
- (3) 6 feet of siphon tube;
- (4) rubber stopper with hole;
- (5) bubbler;
- (6) some household strainers;
- (7) suitable space for the fermenter to sit undisturbed for the duration of the brewing process.

The first two items can be obtained at a discount department store, like K-Mart or WalMart. The remainder (in fact, all of these items) can be obtained at a brewing supplies store.

Cordials require substantially less equipment to produce:

- (1) One-gallon glass jug, which can be made airtight (such as a cider or juice jar);
- (2) large funnel;
- (3) sturdy muslin sack for straining;
- (4) suitable space for the cordial to sit undisturbed for the duration of the process.

For brewing meads and beers, the overall process involves 10 simple steps:

- (1) Boil honey (or malt) and water;
- (2) Skim dross (for honey);

- (3) Add flavoring elements (hops, herbs, spices, juices, peels, etc.);
- (4) Continue cooking for appropriate amount of time;
- (5) Strain into fermenter and allow to cool;
- (6) Pitch yeast;
- (7) Allow to ferment for a while (normally until fermentation ceases);
- (8) Add priming sugars (use malt, corn sugar, honey, corn syrup, etc.)
- (9) Bottle;
- (10) Age.

For wines (at least, those that are not produced like meads), the process is somewhat simpler:

- (1) Produce juice (usually by squeezing);
- (2) Strain into fermenter;
- (3) Pitch yeast;
- (4) Add flavoring elements (herbs, spices, etc.) in muslin bag;
- (5) Allow to ferment for a while (normally until fermentation ceases);
- (6) Bottle;
- (7) Age.

For cordials, the process is simpler still:

- (1) Place fruit and flavoring elements (herbs, spices, juices, peels, etc.) in jar;
- (2) Cover with vodka (normally, vodka or grain alcohol);
- (3) Allow to steep;
- (4) Strain into bottle;
- (5) Age.

Background--Meads

Several different names are used for meads and their cousins. In many cases, we have developed a set of definitions, which we tend to follow more rigorously than in period. Currently, some of the following terms are commonly used:

- (1) mead--honey and water with a minimum of herbs, spices, etc.;
- (2) metheglin--honey, water, herbs, and/or spices;
- (3) melomel--honey, water, and fruits or juices;
- (4) pymeth--honey, water, and grapes (like a cross between mead and wine);
- (5) braggot--honey, water, ale, and spices (traditional Welsh drink).

Keep in mind, these are examples. A review of period sources indicates that they were often used interchangeably--especially, mead and metheglin.

Meads typically fell into two categories: short and long. Short meads, as the name implies, took a much shorter brewing time--typically, less than a week before bottling. These drinks were low in alcohol--also referred to as small meads--and were drunk on a daily basis. They were the period equivalent of a soft drink. Long meads took somewhat longer to brew--typically, several weeks to several months. In addition, they tended to be aged for a good deal longer. Some period recipes call for as much as three years before drinking! (Remember, I said this took patience!) The alcoholic content of these meads tends to be in the 7% to 15% range, and were drunk more in the manner of wines.

Background--Wines

Like meads, wines have a vast variety associated with them. Unlike meads, however, their variety is drawn from the vast variety of grapes. The cultivation of which is an art unto itself. Wines tend to be classified by the variety or varieties used and its overall performance.

Wines share a further similarity to mead--they also fell into two categories: short and long. Short wines, as the name implies, took a much shorter brewing time--typically, less than a week before bottling. These drinks were low in alcohol and were drunk on a daily basis. These types of wines have been making come back modernly. In period, they were produced on a much quicker schedule than we see today, but their return is marked by what is referred to as 'nouveau wines'. More traditional wines took somewhat longer to brew--typically, several months. In addition, they tended to be aged for a good deal longer. The alcoholic content of these wines tends to be in the 7% to 15% range.

Background--Beers

Historically, we find only two names for malted barley beverages--beer and ale. (Aside from Welsh braggot, which is a heavily spiced cross between ale and mead.) Initially, these were two separate entities whose distinction has been lost over time. In early England, ale referred to a beverage drunk as soon as fermentation ceased; beer referred to an aged drink.

Preservatives were needed to prevent aged beer from going bad. The types of herbs used in this process varied from country to country, and included juniper, coriander, rosemary, and other aromatic herbs. Eventually, a mixture called gruit found widespread use in England. Gruit included sweet gale, sage, common yarrow, bay, and pine resin. (Gruitbeer also included wheat and oats in addition to the barley.)

As you may have noticed, I did not mention the most common preservative in modern beer--hops. Hops were a German introduction to the brewing process. In fact, the battles fought between the gruit producers and hops farmers--and the supporting brewers, reflects the most colorful segment of brewing history. Hops were initially introduced to England by Benedictine monks in the 11th century. But the true battles over their use, did not occur until the 15th century with substantial intercession from the English crown. In the end, hopped beer won its place and is the only remaining commercial form--to the best of my knowledge. (A review of period sources indicates that beer and ale were often used interchangeably.)

As was the case for meads, beers and ales fell into two categories: short and long. Short ales, as the name implies, took a much shorter brewing time--typically, less than a week before bottling. These drinks were low in alcohol--also referred to as small ales--and were drunk on a daily basis. They were the period equivalent of a soft drink. Long ales took somewhat longer to brew--though, rarely more than a month. The alcoholic content of these ales tends to be in the 7% to 15% ranges. Today, a person would be hard-pressed to find a producer of small ales!

Background--Cordials

Cordials and liqueurs were made in one of the three following ways: (1) distillation of a brewed product; (2) infusion in a wine or mead, and distillation of the resulting product; and, (3) infusion in a distilled spirit. The first seems to have been used when the desired flavor was honey or fruit; the last was preferred when the desired flavor was herb or spice. While these processes ultimately involved distillation, a fruit cordial was obtained by producing a wine and then distilling it to a brandy, which might then be sweetened or spiced lightly. In contrast, a spice cordial, such as one of cloves, was

obtained by distilling a dry wine, such as sack, and infusing the spice in the resulting spirit. As a result of modern statutes, the latter infusion process tends to be preferred today for almost all types of cordial.

Background--Exotics

The class referred to as 'exotics' is more of a catch-all class for brewers in the SCA. It includes all those beverages which do not easily fit within the previous descriptions--meads, wines, beers, cordials. Exotics include such things as kumiss and kefir (produced from fermented milks), brandies, and whiskeys.

A recipe for Irish whiskey, *Usquebath* (pronounced Oos•ke•bah), has been included. Of course, the distillation of whiskey is forbidden by law--however, a recipe is available from The Queens Closet Opened by W. M., which uses an infusion technique--in effect, a very unusual herbal cordial.

Period Sources

Four fine late-period sources for brewing and distillation are The Jewell House of Art and Nature by Sir Hugh Platt (1594), Delights for Ladies by Sir Hugh Platt (1609), The Queens Closet Opened by W. M. (1655) and The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Kt. Opened: Whereby is Discovered Several Ways for Making of Metheglin, Sider, Cherry-Wine, etc. (1669). Each of these works has various discussions of beers and ales. Certainly, the work of Sir Kenelme Digbie is unequalled with its vast array of recipes for mead, metheglin, wine, and ale--over 140 recipes in all! The mead recipes below draw heavily from his work--commonly referred to as The Closet Opened.

In addition, the works of Sir Hugh Platt and W. M. (taken from the Receipt Books of Queen Henrietta Marie, wife of Charles I) are especially instructive on the arts of distillation and the making of "the extractions of all hearbs". In addition, Sir Kenelme Digbie discusses how to make cordials (although he is better known for his vast array of recipes for mead, metheglin, and ale.) These works serve as the principal historical basis for the author's entries in the category of cordials. The author has included, as an attachment to the article, specific passages considered most illuminating to this area of inquiry.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Their Graces, Duke Gyrth and Duchess Melisande, for access to their library, herb garden, and copious experience. I am most thankful for all their help.

Oklahoma Disclaimer:

At present, it is illegal to produce beer in the state of Oklahoma. Wines and ciders (up to 200 gallons per annum) can be produced for personal consumption under license from the state. The state license is free--you simply phone your information into the Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement (ABLE) Commission. I strongly recommend taking appropriate steps to get your license--it's free after all.

Sir William Paston's Mead

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|------|---------------------------------|
| 7 1/2 | lbs | honey (about 5 pt.) |
| 2 1/2 | Tbsp | rosemary |
| 2 1/2 | Tbsp | bay leaves (about 40-45 leaves) |
| 2 | | lemons |
| | | ale yeast |

Process:

Scrape lemons with serrated knife to remove peel--no pith (white part) as it will give the mead a bitter taste. Place 2 gallons of water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add honey and skim dross. Add rosemary, bay, and lemon peel. Cook for 30 minutes. Remove from heat. Pour 3 gallons of cold water into fermenter. Strain wort into fermenter. Top off with remaining water to 5 gallons. Allow to cool. During cooling, close container or cover mouth with a bleach-soaked rag. Pitch yeast and shake well. Let work for 3 to 5 days, and bottle or keg. Ready to serve in about 10 days. Alcohol content is approximately 2%.

Source:

SIR WILLIAM PASTON'S MEATHE, The Closet Opened, pg. 41-42.

Take ten Gallons of Spring-water, and put therein ten Pints of the best honey. Let this boil half an hour, and scum it very well; then put in one handful of Rosemary, and as much of Bayleaves; with a little Limon-peel. Boil this half an hour longer, then take it off the fire, and put it into a clean Tub; and when it is cool, work it up with yest, as you do Beer. When it is wrought, put it into your vessel, and stop it very close. Within three days you may Bottle it, and in ten days after it will be fit to drink.

Angel's Short Mead

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|------|--------------------------------|
| 5 | gal | water |
| 7 1/2 | lbs | honey (about 5 pt.) |
| 1/2 | hand | ginger, sliced |
| 1 | Tbsp | balm (lemon balm or balm mint) |
| 2 | Tbsp | spearmint |
| 2 | Tbsp | elderflowers |
| 4 | | cloves |
| 2 | | lemons |
| | | ale yeast (Edme) |

Process:

Scrape lemons with serrated knife to remove peel--no pith (white part) as it will give the mead a bitter taste. Place 2 gallons of hot water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add honey and skim dross. Add ginger, balm, spearmint, elderflowers, and lemon peel. Cook until ginger is limp and various flavors are evident (usually 30-35 minutes to bring out elderflowers in color and bouquet). Add cloves. Cook until cloves appear in bouquet--about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Pour 3 gallons of cold water into fermenter. Strain wort into fermenter. Top off to 5 gallons. Allow to cool to about 100°F. During cooling, close container or cover mouth with a bleach-soaked rag. Pitch yeast and shake well. Let work for 3 to 5 days, and bottle or keg. Ready to serve in about 10 days. Alcohol content is approximately 2%.

If any remains after 3 weeks, refrigerate!

Source:

SEVERAL SORTS OF MEATH, SMALL & STRONG, 2. Small, The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, pg. 56.

Take ten quarts of water, and and one of honey, Balm a little; Minth, Cloves, Limon-peel, Elder-flowers, a little Ginger; wrought with a little yest, bottle it after a night working.

Sima

Recipe:

| | | |
|-----|-----|------------------|
| 3 | gal | water |
| 3 | cp | sugar |
| 3 | cp | brown sugar |
| 2/3 | cp | raisins |
| 6 | | lemons |
| | | ale yeast (Edme) |

Process:

Scrape lemons with serrated knife to remove peel--no pith (white part) as it will give the mead a bitter taste. Squeeze lemons. Set juice and peel aside. Place 1 gallon of hot water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add sugar, brown sugar, lemon juice, and lemon peel. Remove from heat and steep for 10 minutes. Add remaining 2 gallons of cold water. Strain wort into fermenter. Allow to cool to about 100°F (with these proportions, there is usually no waiting period.) Pitch yeast and shake well. Let work overnight--or at least 8-10 hours--in a warm place under a bubble. Add raisins and bottle. Let stand until raisins float. Chill and store in a cool place until ready to serve. Self-conditioning. Alcohol content is approximately 2%.

Source:

This recipe was translated for me by a dear friend in An Tir. The recipe was from his grandmother's cookbook, Finnish Holiday Cookbook, 1924. Not exactly period, I confess, but quite traditional. I am still looking for a period citation.

Stepponi

Recipe:

| | | |
|-----|-----|---------|
| 1 | gal | water |
| 1 | lb | raisins |
| 1/2 | lb | sugar |
| 2 | | lemons |

Process:

Boil water. Place raisins and sugar in an earthen pot. Squeeze lemons over raisins and sugar. Slice rinds and throw into pot. Pour boiling water over mixture. Let stand for 24 hours. Filter into bottles and chill.

Source:

TO MAKE STEPPONI, The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, pg. 106.

Take a Gallon of Conduit-water, one pound of blew Raisins of the Sun stoned, and half a pound of Sugar. Squeeze the juyce of two Limons upon the Raisins and Sugar, and slice the rindes upon them. Boil the water, and pour it so hot upon the ingredients in an earthen pot, and stir them well together. So let it stand twenty four hours. Then put it into bottles (having first let it run through a strainer) and set them in a Cellar or other cool place.

Eorann's Cool Mead

Recipe:

| | | |
|-----|------|---------------------------------|
| 15 | lb | clover honey (for five gallons) |
| 1/2 | hand | ginger |
| 3 | | limes (see note 1) |
| 1 | | mint tea bag (see note 2) |
| 2 | tbsp | spearmint |
| 1 | tbsp | peppermint |
| 12 | | juniper berries |
| 1 | | vanilla bean (see note 3) |
| | | yeast starter (see note 4) |

Process:

Scrape the limes with a serrated knife to get lime peel. Be careful to leave the pith! Half the limes and squeeze thoroughly. Set aside peel and juice.

Using a five-gallon (or greater) stainless steel or ceramic-lined pot, put in 1/2 gal of hot tap water. Empty bottle of honey into pot and rinse out the container 1 1/2 times with hot tap water. Bring solution to a boil and skim the dross. Continue until dross no longer forms quickly (45 minutes to 1 hour). Put in ginger, tea, and mint (use a tea ball for mint and tea, if available). Cook for 15-20 minutes--until ginger is limp and mint is noticeable in taste. Add lime juice, lime peel, and juniper berries. Cook 5 to 10 minutes--until the juniper berries are noticeable in smell.

Remove from heat. Remove tea ball. Pack off with ice and cold water to five gallons. Strain into fermenter. Add vanilla bean. Allow to cool overnight. Make sure mouth of fermenter is covered at least with a damp rag--preferably bleach-soaked. Pitch yeast in morning. Rack off once a month until the mead has completely cleared--"until you can read newsprint through the carboy"--and fermentation has all but stopped (usually 6 to 8 weeks).

Notes:

1) While limes were available in period, and their use can be documented for cooking, my sources for brewing do not indicate that they were used in this manner. Instead, their kin--lemons and oranges--were used. In period, citrus was used for taste and the concept of pH control was not understood.

2) Tea is added as a brewing adjunct to provide tannins. This practice was not followed in period; however, inferences can be drawn that brewers used other practices, which accomplished the same thing. The most notable example is in [The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened](#). Sir Digbie admonishes the reader to use barrels, which were previously used to produce sack, for brewing mead. Sack is a dry period wine, and wine has its own natural tannins.

3) The most notable exception from the use of period ingredients is the vanilla bean. The vanilla bean was a New World product, and extremely late period. As a result, it was probably never used in the manner noted; however, it has a wonderful effect upon the mead.

4) I use a cultivated yeast starter. After pitching the yeast, I wait about 2 to 3 days--until the fermentation is well established--and draw off about 1 1/2 cups of mead, which I refrigerate. After about 2 weeks, I draw off another 1/2 cup and add that to the culture. The second drawing is a hardier yeast and serves to introduce stronger strains. Over a period of two to three meads, a hardy yeast develops, which can produce as much as 18% alcohol--or so I have been told.

5) Starting specific gravity: 1.092 @ 78° F

- 6) Finishing specific gravity: 1.029 @ 72° F
- 7) Brewing period: 15 May to 5 October (yesterday) with 2 intermediate rackings on 5 July and 19 August. (The remainder of the batch is still in the bottle!)
- 8) Estimated alcohol content at bottling: 8.5%
- 9) Will be conditioned with 1 cup of honey.

Source:

This recipe uses period ingredients in proportions consistent with many of the recipes noted in The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened. Exceptions from this practice, are discussed in proceeding notes. Briefly, the proportions of honey and spices are documentable through many recipes in the noted reference; however, no recipe specifically uses this particular spice combination. The mead draws its name from Lady Eorann O'Connor, and the unique blend of fruits and spices were initially chosen to produce a non-allergenic mead for her.

Scarborough Metheglin

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|------|--------------------------|
| 15 | lbs | clover honey |
| 3 | tbsp | sweet bryar (see note 1) |
| 1 1/2 | tbsp | parsley |
| 1 1/2 | tbsp | rosemary |
| 1 1/2 | tbsp | sage |
| 2 | tsp | thyme |
| 2 | tsp | marjarom |
| | | ale yeast (Edme) |

Process:

Place 1/2 gallon of hot water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add honey and rinse each container 1 time with hot water. Skim dross. Add herbs. Cook for 1 hour. Remove from heat. Pour 2 gallons of cold water into fermenter. Strain wort into fermenter. Top off with cold water to 5 gallons. Allow to cool to about 100° F. During cooling, close container or cover mouth with a bleach-soaked rag. Pitch yeast and shake well. Rack off once a month until the mead has completely cleared.

Notes:

- 1) Sweet bryar, also referred to as eglantine, is no longer commercially available so far as I have been able to discern. Fortunately, I have been able to obtain two such plants, which are my sole source of the herb. In period, sweet bryar (a form of wild rose) was quite common; regrettably, this is no longer the case.
- 3) Starting specific gravity: 1.087 @ 106° F
- 4) Finishing specific gravity: 1.045 @ 75° F
- 5) Brewing period: 17 May to 16 Dec 1993 with 2 intermediate rackings on 5 July and 18 August 1993.
- 6) Estimated alcohol content at bottling: 6%

Source:

The specific recipe is drawn from several different recipes in The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened. The inspiration for this work comes from a medieval song--resurrected by two gentlemen known as Simon & Garfunkel--about the Scarborough Faire. Based upon this perhaps peculiar inspiration, several recipes containing some or all of the desired herbs were consulted. The research was substantially enhanced by access to Duke Gyrth's notes. Some years ago, His Grace did an analysis of all the herbs and spices used by Digbie in his recipes. As a result of this early work, His Grace had a set of notecards with all the recipes which used a given herb or spice. I was able to prevail upon Duke Gyrth and used these cards to identify the appropriate recipes.

I examined each of the recipes which used one of the four desired herbs: parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme. From these many recipes, I was able to identify the following quantities: (1) relative proportions of each of the herbs when they were used in conjunction, (2) reasonable amounts of the each herb used for flavoring meads and metheglins, and (3) additional herbs and spices commonly used in conjunction with the primary four. The redacted recipe is the result of these labors.

Raisin Wine

Recipe:

| | | |
|-----|------|---------------------------|
| 1 | lb | raisins |
| 1/2 | lb | sugar (see note 1) |
| 1 | | lemon |
| 1 | tbsp | elderflowers (see note 2) |
| | | ale yeast (Edme) |

Process:

Scrape the lemon with a serrated knife to remove peel. Be careful to leave the pith! Half the lemon and squeeze thoroughly. Set aside peel and juice.

Place 1/2 gallon of hot water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add lemon peel, lemon juice, sugar, and elderflowers. Cook for 30 minutes. Remove from heat. Pour 1/2 gallon of cold water and raisins into fermenter. Pour wort into fermenter. Allow to cool to about 100° F. Pitch yeast and shake well. Let work for 3-5 days--stirring twice daily. Strain into bottles. Ready to drink in 2 to 3 weeks. Self-conditioning.

Notes:

- 1) In period, sugar was a rare commodity. Note, that it is specifically called out for this recipe in [The Queens Closet Opened!](#)
- 2) The recipe calls for Clove Gillyflowers or Cowslips. I was unable to obtain either, so I substituted elderflowers.
- 3) Brewing period: 22 April to 25 May 1993.

Sources:

[The Queens Closet Opened](#), W.M., 1655, pp. 20-21

To make Rasin Wine

Take two pound of Raisins of the Sun shred, a pound of good powdered Sugar, the juice of two Lemons, one pill, put these into an earthen Pot with a top, then take two gallons of water, let it boil half an hour, then take it hot from the fire, and put it into the pot, and cover it close for three or four dayes, stirring it twice a day, being strained put it into bottles, and stop it more close, in a fortnight or three weeks it may be drunk, you may put in Clove Gilly flowers, or Cowslips, as the time of the year is when you make it; and when you have drawn this from the Raisins, and bottles it up, heat two quarts of water more, put it to the ingredients, and let it stand as aforesaid. This will be good, but smaller than the other, the water must be boiled as the other.

Currant Wine

Recipe:

| | | |
|---|----|------------------|
| 1 | lb | currants |
| 3 | qt | water |
| | | ale yeast (Edme) |

Process:

In a 1 gallon jug, place 2 quarts of cold water and currants. Add 1 quart of hot water (scalding to boiling). Check temperature. Let mixture cool to about 100° F. Pitch yeast. Let work 3-5 days and bottle. Ready to drink in 1 week. Self-conditioning.

Notes:

- 1) Used about 12 oz. currants and the remainder were golden raisins.
- 2) Checked after 2 days--already at the point of spewing. Returned to fermenter.
- 3) Brewing period: 17 to 30 March 1995

Sources:

CURRANTS WINE, The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, pg. 98.

Take a pound of the best Currants clean picked, and pour upon them in a deep straight mouthed earthen vessel six pounds or pints of hot water, in which you have dissolved three spoonfuls of the purest and newest Ale-yest. Stop it very close till it ferment, then give such vent as is necessary, and keep it warm for about three days, it will work and ferment. Taste it after two days, to see if it be grown to your liking. As soon as you find it so, let it run through a strainer, to leave behind all the exhausted currants and the yest, and so bottle it up. It will be exceeding quick and pleasant, and is admirable good to cool the Liver, and cleanse the blood. It will be ready to drink in five or six days after it is bottled; And you may drink safely large draughts of it.

Black Raspberry Wine

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 4 | pt | fresh black raspberries (see note 1) |
| 1 1/2 | lbs | tulip poplar honey (see note 2) |
| | | Montrachet wine yeast (Red Star) |

Process:

Clean raspberries. Place raspberries in strong muslin bag and press thoroughly. Set aside juice. Place 1 quart of hot water in pot. Bring to a boil. Add honey and skim dross. When dross no longer forms quickly, remove from heat. Place juice in fermenter. Add 2 quarts of cold water. Pour wort into fermenter. Top off with cold water to 1 gallon. If necessary, allow to cool to about 100° F. (These quantities do not usually require cooling.) Pitch yeast and shake well. Rack off periodically until wine has completely cleared.

Notes:

- 1) Black raspberries are referred to several times in Digbie. In addition, I was able to pick this berries by hand at a local farm in the Barony of Storvik.
- 2) The honey used for this recipe is indigenous to most of Atlantia. I was able to obtain a quantity from my local beekeeper in the Barony of Dun Carraig (where I lived at the time.)
- 3) Starting specific gravity: 1.058 @ 76° F.
- 4) Finishing specific gravity: 0.995 @ 55° F.
- 5) Brewing period: 10 July to 28 December 1993 with 1 intermediate racking on 14 December 1993.
- 6) Estimated alcohol content at bottling: >8%

Sources:

The specific recipe is an adaptation drawn from several different recipes in The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened. One such recipe is that for strawberry wine given below. Upon tasting the must, I was uncertain as to whether a sufficient amount of sugar was available for fermentation. As a result, I added the honey to aid in the process. In addition, I chose not to leave the fruit suspended in the must and used the juice alone.

The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, 1669, pp. 109

STRAWBERRY WINE

Bruise the Strawberries, and put them into a Linen-bag which hath been a little used, that so the Liquor may run through more easily. You hang in the bag at the bung into the vessel, before you do put in your Strawberries. The quantity of the fruit is left to your discretion; for you will judge to be there enought of them, when the colour of the wine is high enough. During the working, you leave the bung open. The working being over, you stop your vessel. Cherry-wine is made after the same fashion. But it is a little more troublesome to break the Cherry-stones. But it is necessary, that if your Cherries be of the black soure Cherries, you put to it a little Cinnamon, and a few Cloves.

Strong Brown Ale

Recipe: (see note 1)

| | | |
|-----|----|--------------------------------------|
| 6 | lb | dry amber malt extract (see note 2) |
| 4 | oz | black patent malt |
| 4 | oz | chocolate malt |
| 2 | oz | Styrian Goldings plug hops (boiling) |
| 1/2 | oz | Kent Goldings leaf hops (finishing) |
| | | ale yeast (Nottingham) |

Process:

Using a five-gallon (or greater) stainless steel or ceramic-lined pot, place 2 gallons of cold water into pot. Add crushed specialty grains. Bring to a boil. Cook for 5 minutes and remove grains with strainer. Rinse grains with 2 quarts of hot water back into wort. Add malt extract and boiling hops to wort. Continue to boil for 1 hour. Put 2 gallons of cold water into primary fermentation vessel. Add finishing hops for 1 minute at end of boil. Remove from heat and sparge immediately into fermenter. Allow to cool overnight. Make sure mouth of fermenter is covered at least with a damp rag--preferably bleach-soaked. Pitch yeast in morning.

Notes:

- 1) In general, this recipe uses modern brewing techniques. While there are period sources, which indicate that the ingredients are used in consistent proportions, i.e., The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, I can find no sources describing the use of different grades of malted barley. Barleys are commonly malted and then roasted to stop the process. Varying roasting times and temperatures are used to give a variety of barleys. While these techniques were probably used, I can find no documentation to this effect.
- 2) Dry malt extract was used rather than whole grains because they are more economical in terms of time and money. The extracts are derived by cooking malted barleys and dehydrating the resulting wort to a powder.
- 3) Starting specific gravity: 1.051 @ 96° F
- 4) Finishing specific gravity: 1.013 @ 65° F
- 5) Brewing period: 12 to 28 December 1993
- 6) Estimated alcohol content at bottling: 5.25%
- 7) Conditioned 2/3 cup of Black Diamond honey (The honey used for conditioning was indigenous to the Barony of Black Diamond. I am uncertain of its derivation but it has the consistency of molasses--and has been referred to by some brewers as "black" honey. This unusual honey lends a unique smoky flavor to the beer.)

Black Raspberry Cordial

Recipe:

| | | |
|---|----|----------------------------|
| 4 | lb | fresh black raspberries |
| 3 | cp | grain alcohol (see note 1) |
| 2 | cp | sugar syrup (see note 2) |

Process:

Clean raspberries. Place in 1 gallon jug. Cover with grain alcohol. Shake well every day for 3 weeks. Remove raspberries. Add sugar. Allow to clear.

Notes:

- 1) Use a good grain alcohol, e.g., Clear Spring or Golden Grain. Try to select one which is low on esthers. In other words, do not use Everclear.
- 2) In period, sugar was a rare commodity. However, I have found techniques for producing sugar from both Digbie and Platt. As a result, I believe that its use was not unknown although somewhat rare. In addition, I make a syrup from 2 parts sugar to 1 part water (heated until the sugar is completely dissolved). The syrup dissolves more readily into the cordial.

Sources:

The Jewell House of Art and Nature, Sir Hugh Platt, 1594, pp. 29-30

How to give a prettie grace both in tast and propertie, unto the spirit of wine.

If you infuse the same upon the rinde of a civel sower Orange, or Lymon, you shall finde a pleasaunt and comfortable taste thereby, or if you woulde not have the same descried by his colour, you may redistill the spirit so tinted in balneo. Some give a tuch unto the spirit of wing with rosemary, some with annis seedes, some with sweet fennell seedes: som with one seed, or hearbe, and some with another, by infusing the same a day or two upon them.

Delights for Ladies, Sir Hugh Platt, 1609, p. 50

4. *Spirit of wine, tasting of what vegetable you please.*

Macerate Rosemary, Sage, sweet Fennell seeds, Marioram, Lemmon or Orenge pils, &c. in spirit of wine a day or two, and then distill it over again, unless you had rather have it in his proper colour. for so you shall have it upon the first infusion without any farther distillation: and some young Alchymists doe hold these for the true spirits of vegetables.

The Closet Of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Opened, 1669, pp. 22-25

SACK WITH CLOVE-GILLY FLOWERS

If you will make a Cordial Liquor of Sack with Clove-gillyflower, you must do thus. Prepare your Gillyflowers, as is said before, and put them into great double glass-bottles, that hold two gallons a piece, or more; and put to every gallon of Sack, a good half pound of the wiped and cut flowers, putting in the flowers first, and then the Sack upon them. Stop the glasses exceeding close, and set them in a temperate Cellar. Let them stand so, till you see that the Sack hath drawn out all the principal tincture from the, and that the flower begin to look palish; (with an eye of pale, or faint in Colour) Then pour the Sack from them, and throw away the exhausted flowers, or distil a spirit from them; For if you let them remain longer in the Sack, they will give an earthy tast to them. You may then put the

tincted Sack into fit bottles for your use, stopping them very close. But if the season of the flowers be not yet past, your Sack will be better, if you put it upon new flowers, which I conceive will not be the worse, but peradventure the better, if they be a little dried in the shade. If you drink a Glass or two of this sack at a meal, you will find it a great Cordial.

Upon better consideration; I conceive the best way of making Hydromel with Clove-gillyflowers, is thus: Boil your simple Liquor to its full height (with three parts of water to one of Honey), take a small parcel out, to make a strong infusion of flowers, pouring it boyling hot upon the flowers in earthen vessels. If you have great quantity, as six to one, of Liquor, you will easily draw out the tincture in fourteen or sixteen hours infusion; otherwise you may quicken your liquor with a parcel of Sack. In the mean time make the great quantity of Liquor work with yest. When it hath almost done fermenting, but not quite, put the infusion to it warm, and let it ferment more if it will. When that is almost done, put to it a bag with flowers to hang in the bung.

I conceive that Hydromel made with Juniper-berries (first broken and bruised) boiled in it, is very good. Adde also to it Rosemary and Bay-leaves.

Upon tryal of several ways, I conclude (as things yet appear to me) that to keep Meath long, it must not be fermented with yest (unless you put Hops to it) but put it in the barrel, and let it ferment of it self, keeping a thick plate of lead upon the bung, to lie close upon it, yet so that the working of the Liquor may raise it, to purge out the foulness, and have always some new made plain Liquor, to fill it up as it sinks, warm whiles it works: but cold during three or four month's after. Then stop the bung exceeding close. And when you will make your Mead with Cherries or Morello-Cherries, or Raspes, or Bilberries, or Black-cherries, put their juyce to the Liquor when you tun it, without ever boiling it therein; about one quart of juyce to every three or four gallons of Liquor. You may squeeze out the clear juyce, and mingle it with the Liquor, and hang the Magma in a bag in the bung. I think it is best to break the stones of the Cherries, before you put their Magma into the bag.

Since I conceive, that Clove-gilly-flowers must never be boiled in the Liquor: that evaporateth their Spirits, which are very volatile: But make a strong infusion of them, and besides hang a Bag of them in the bung. I conceive that it is good to make the Liquor pretty strong (not too much, but so as the taste may be gratefull) of some strong herbs, as Rosemary, Bayleaves, Sweet-marjoram, Thyme, Broad-thyme, and the like. For they preserve the drink, and make it better for the stomach and head. Standing in the Sun is the best way of Fermentation, when the drink is strong. The root of Angelica or Elecampane, or Eringo, or Orris, may be good and pleasant, to be boiled in the Liquor. Raspes and Cherries and Bilberies are never to be boiled, but their juyce put into the Liquor, when it is tunning. Use onely Morello-Cherries (I think) for pleasure, and black ones for health. I conceive it best to use very little spice of any kind in Meathes.

Cinnamon Cordial

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|-------|--------------------|
| 12 | stick | cinnamon |
| 1 | qt | vodka (Finlandia) |
| 1 1/3 | cp | sugar (see note 1) |
| 2 | tbsp | honey (see note 2) |

Process:

Place cinnamon sticks in container. Cover with vodka. Let stand for 1 week. Strain into second container. Add sugar and honey. Allow to clear.

Notes:

- 1) In period, sugar was a rare commodity. However, I have found techniques for producing sugar from both Digbie and Platt. As a result, I believe that its use was not unknown although somewhat rare.
- 2) The small quantity of honey is used to help reduce any bitterness from the fruit or the vodka.

Sources:

Same as previous recipe.

Peppered Strawberry Cordial

Recipe:

| | | |
|-------|------|---------------------|
| 4 | lb | fresh strawberries |
| 1 | qt | vodka (Finlandia) |
| 1 1/3 | cp | sugar (see note 1) |
| 2 | tbsp | honey (see note 2) |
| 1/2 | tsp | mace |
| 1/2 | | cinnamon stick (3") |
| 4 | | cloves |
| 2 | | peppercorns |

Process:

Clean and chop strawberries. Place in 1 gallon jug. Cover with vodka. Shake well every day for 1 week. Add spices. Let stand for 2 days. Strain into second container. Add sugar and honey. Allow to clear.

Notes:

- 1) In period, sugar was a rare commodity. However, I have found techniques for producing sugar from both Digbie and Platt. As a result, I believe that its use was not unknown although somewhat rare.
- 2) The small quantity of honey is used to help reduce any bitterness from the fruit or the vodka.

Sources:

Same as previous recipe.

Bainnecor

(pronounced Bonn-i-kur--Gaelic for “heart of milk”)

Recipe:

| | | |
|---|----|---------------|
| 1 | qt | grain alcohol |
| 3 | lb | sugar |
| 2 | qt | milk |
| 1 | oz | vanilla beans |
| 1 | | lemon |

Process:

Pour milk into gallon jar. Cut lemon into small pieces (don't waste any of the juices), and add the lemon and juice to the milk. Add the alcohol, then sugar, then vanilla. Shake well and let stand for 2 to 3 weeks. Filter into bottle.

Usquebath

(pronounced Oos•ke•bah--Gaelic for “water of life”)

Recipe:

| | | |
|-----|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | qt | vodka (Finlandia) |
| 1/2 | cp | sugar |
| 2 | oz | licorice (see note 1) |
| 4 | oz | raisins |
| 4 | oz | dates |
| 4 | oz | figs |
| 2 | oz | anise seed (see note 2) |
| 1/4 | oz | nutmeg (broken) |
| 1/4 | oz | cinnamon |
| 1/4 | oz | ginger |

Process:

Place all ingredients except sugar in 1 gallon jug. Cover with vodka. Let stand in a cool place for 10 days. Shake well twice a day. Strain into second container. Add sugar. Allow to clear.

Notes:

- 1) I was unable to “scrape” the licorice. As a result, I broke the roots into small chunks and placed them in whole.
- 2) Rather than use anise seed, as called for in the recipe, I used whole star anise.
- 3) The original recipe calls for ambergrise and musk. While essential oils are available, they can cause serious allergic reactions. As a result, I do not incorporate them.

Sources:

The Queens Closet Opened, W. M., 1655, p. 23

To make Usquebath the best way.

Take two quarts of the best *Aqua vitae*, four ounces of scraped liquorish, and half a pound of sliced Raisins of the Sun, Anniseeds four ounces, Dates and Figs, of each half a pound, sliced Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Ginger, of each half an ounce, put these to the *Aqua vitae*, stop it very close, and set it in a cold place ten dayes, stirring it twice a day with a stick, then strain and sweeten it with Sugarcandy; after it is strained, let it stand till it be clear, then put into the glass Musk and Ambergreece; two grains is sufficient for this quantity.