

# Bee & Bramble: A land of mead and honey

by Frances Nevill

The rolling mountains of western North Carolina yield a diverse mixture of flora and fauna. The beekeeper benefits from the rich nectar flows that result in a medley of honeys available only in the Appalachians (Sourwood, we're talking about you!).

The making of mead, a wine crafted from fermented honey, is one of the many ways honey can be enjoyed and one "mazer" (the official term for a mead maker), Ivar Schloz of Bee & Bramble Meadery in Fairview, is aiming to change old world perceptions of mead wine.

"I was a red wine and beer drinker, but I often got headaches the next morning," says Schloz. "I tried some mead and really took a liking to it and noticed that... I wasn't left with a headache the next morning."

Having decades of home brewing experience, Schloz tried his hand at mead making. After sharing it amongst friends while at music festivals, he started getting requests to purchase bottles of his homemade concoction.

"People would tell me that they had never tried mead, or if they had, they felt it was too sweet or too mossy tasting—what I call the barnyard flavor," he recalls. "I aimed for a dry, almost white wine quality, and that is where I started to notice that mead, particularly my recipe, could really be enjoyed by the wine drinker who enjoys a glass or two (or three) of wine a day."

When the economy downturn hit, Schloz, a metallurgical engineer by trade, found himself out of a job and decided to turn to his hobby of mead making into a potential full-



time business. He invested what savings he had into what is now Bee & Bramble Meadery. “We had immediate success with local wine shops,” he says. “Through word-of-mouth and tastings, our mead has really marketed itself.”

Jeff Alexander, co-owner of the Appalachian Vinter wine market, says he has seen an increase in requests for mead. “Right now there is a growing trend in all of the craft products. Mead is interesting in that it’s one of the oldest fermented beverages around. It takes time to make and it’s really good on its own or with food pairings.”

Bee & Bramble crafts their meads from an array of honeys including sourwood and wildflower. Mixing local fruits into fermented honey results in the meadery’s melomels that feature Blueberry-Ginger and Blackberry selections. When meads incorporate spices, it’s referred to as a metheglin. A standout example is the Head



### Mead complements any gathering

*Clockwise from top left, Photo 1: Flower Power and Looking Glass Creamery Chevre; Photo 2: Tasters sampling Looking Glass Chevre; Photo 3: Ivar Schloz and Judy Bowles of Bee & Bramble with Andy and Jen Perkins of Looking Glass Creamery; Photo 4: Looking Glass Creamery cheese artist Ashley Loakimedes sampling Bee & Bramble Traditional Dry Mead; opposite page: Pouring a sample of Blackberry Buzz. Photos by Megan Authement*

Mazer, which also happens to be their most requested product. Bee & Bramble also produces cysers (a blend of honey wine and apple cider) that make for popular fall and holiday must-haves.

“We’re really lucky that here in the mountains we have an availability of nectar sources from early spring through late fall and it makes for a great variety of flavor notes in our meads,” says Schloz. “And what better way to really enjoy local honeys, and the wildflowers and fruits that grow here, than with a bottle of mead.”

Learn more about where to find Bee & Bramble’s mead at [beeandbramble.com](http://beeandbramble.com).

**OLIVETTE**  
RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY & FARM

Olivette is  
a brand new  
community,  
yet we already  
have thousands  
of residents.



(hint: they’re our bees)

828.407.0040  
[www.OlivetteNC.com](http://www.OlivetteNC.com)

OBTAIN THE PROPERTY REPORT REQUIRED BY FEDERAL LAW AND READ IT BEFORE SIGNING ANYTHING. NO FEDERAL AGENCY HAS JUDGED THE MERITS OR VALUE, IF ANY, OF THIS PROPERTY. This is not intended to be an offer to sell, nor solicitation of an offer to buy real estate in North Carolina to residents of any state or other jurisdiction where prohibited by law.