

MJØDGÅRD - NORDIC GOURMET MEAD

# King's Mead



*In the Viking Age mead was a drink of high status. Numerous written sources tell us that it was typically amongst the elite of society you could get the good, strong and pure version of mead. Especially the importance of mead in the Norse mythology hints that mead was not an everyday drink, or something that was particularly common in the lower parts of society.*



## THE IDEA BEHIND KING'S MEAD

The King's Mead series is our own personal interpretation and suggestion for a line of mead which the kings might have drunk in the Viking Age. They have been created out of a fascination with the great Viking noblemen, especially the three "Jelling kings" from the lineage of Gorm.

Mjødgårds brewmaster has previously worked as a museum

mediator, with a focus on the time period where the kings from Jelling lived and ruled, and it was during this time he got the inspiration for the King's Mead series.

At Mjødgård we have a passion for creating stories, and we have created the taste of the King's Mead series based on our interpretation of the stories we know about those kings, their personalities and deeds.

King's Mead is therefore based on sources about the mead that the kings used to drink in those days, but it should not be regarded as an actual re-creation. Instead this line of mead should be viewed as homage to the three kings that - for better or for worse - laid the foundation for The Kingdom of Denmark



# Gorm's Mead

GORM THE OLD, UNKNOWN-958

Gorm the Old was based in Jelling, from where he ruled his kingdom. Back then his kingdom presumably encompassed most of Jutland and Funen. Gorm was married to Thyra, who was an English princess. Thyra Danebod gave birth to Knud Danaast (meaning: the one loved by Danes), Harald (who would later be known as Harald I or Bluetooth) and Gunhild Gormsdatter, who married the Norwegian king Erik Blodøkse.

Gorm came to power around year 936. It is a bit uncertain, but according to some sources, that was the year when he supposedly rejected Unni, the bishop of Hamburg. Gorm is mentioned in the Roskilde Chronicle as a brutal king. This is most likely a rumor spread by the people working for the church, who happened to write the saga, since Gorm was not particularly benevolent towards them.

Gorm is mentioned on several rune stones, with the two stones in Jelling being some of the best known examples. Also several medieval historians mention Gorm. For instance Sven Aggesen, who calls him "Gorm den Løghe" which translates to "Gorm the Sluggish", since he was supposedly inclined towards enjoying women, good food and drinks.

# THE TASTE OF GORM'S MEAD

With a king, who was fond of sweets, liked power and wanted the absolutely best, there was no doubt in our mind that this mead should be created with an abundance of good ingredients and no expense should be spared.

The mead is therefore made with even larger amounts of honey than we usually use. We have chosen a nice late summer honey and added large quantities of apple cider

to give the mead a sweet, full-bodied base, with a hint of the acidity that the apples can provide.

In addition we have added garden angelica (also known as wild celery) since this plant was widespread in the Viking age, and we know it was a good source for vitamin-c for the Vikings. As the final ingredient we have added oak shavings to the mead, to give it a bit of edginess and character.

Gorm's Mead is a sweet mead with a fruity apple aroma. The apples impart acidity to the mead and create a nice counterbalance to the richly flavored late summer honey. Garden angelica provides a lightly spiced aftertaste that clings to the palate. It goes immensely well with cheese, spicy sausage or desserts.





# Harald's Mead

HARALD BLUETOOTH, CA. 930-986

It was Harald Bluetooth who unified the Kingdom of Denmark. To ensure that everybody would remember this accomplishment he erected the large Jelling stone. On the stone Harald declares that he has made the Danes Christian. To secure his newly won kingdom Harald build a series of grand ring fortresses. Furthermore he expanded the fortification Dannevirke, constructed the almost 800 meter long

bridge over Raving Enge and the first stave church in Jelling. Besides ruling over Denmark, Harald also had a significant influence in the southern parts of Norway.

Throughout his reign his relationship with the German empire, who back then was one of Europe's superpowers, was marked by constant tension. Perhaps one of the main motivations behind all of

Harald's accomplishments is a wish to create an empire that in might could equal the German.

No matter his motivations, Harald was strategic in everything from choosing his own wives, arranging the marriages of his children and perhaps even in regard to his own christening. The German historian Adam of Bremen wrote that Harald Bluetooth was married to Queen

Gunhild. On a rune stone found near Silkeborg however, a woman named "Tove", daughter of the Wendish prince Mistivoj and "wife of Harald the Good, Gorm's son" is mentioned, so Harald must have been married twice, perhaps even three times since some sources also mentions Gyrid, daughter of Styrbjörn from Sweden, brother to the first Swedish king.

According to Widukind's Saxon Chronicles Harald was christened in 965, after having had Poppo the missionary carry red hot iron to prove the power of the Christian God. The nickname Bluetooth appears for the first time in the Roskilde Chronicle from ca. 1140, so we do not know if it was also used in his own lifetime.

Harald died ca. 985-987, following a rebellion led by his own son Sweyn Forkbeard. It is said, that Harald escaped to Wendland after the battle where he died of the wounds he had been inflicted. Legends say he was transported to Roskilde and buried in the church he himself had ordered to be built. Today Roskilde Cathedral is standing on the site.



## THE TASTE OF HARALD'S MEAD

With all his actions Harald displayed the disposition of a true nobleman. He was a strategic master and in many aspects he refused to be inferior to any European magnate. In a manner that was completely his own he created structures like no one before him, probably with some inspiration from Southern Europe.

With a king like Harald, who wanted to prove his power through his penchant for large-scale building projects, we believe he may also

have been inclined to show the other Danish noblemen that he had close connections in the southern parts of Europe. So why not make a mead with the spices one could only find in those regions in the Viking Age? That is at least what we have decided to do, so we have brewed Harald's mead with spices that for the Vikings could solely be found in the countries by the Mediterranean Sea.

We have used a good Danish summer honey, apples, cinnamon,

cloves, cardamom, ginger and oak. It has a characteristic aromatic smell that naturally brings thoughts of Christmas to mind. The combination of spices produces a lovely taste experience with a very light hint of sharpness. It is a very uncommon mead for us at Mjødgård, since we usually refrain from using herbs that do not grow locally. The mead goes superbly well with dark chocolate, ice cream, cake and coffee.



# Sven's Mead

SWEYN FORKBEARD, CA. 960-1014

Sweyn came to power after a bloody civil war against his father Harald Bluetooth. Shortly after he armed a fleet and sailed to England where he plundered and ravaged. The trip ended with the famous battle of Maldon. Here Sweyn defeated the English King Æthelred "the Unready", and forced the English king to pay tributes in the form of the so-called Danegeld. In 1013 Sweyn managed to conquer the

English throne, but he only ruled over England for a few months before he died.

According to legends, Sweyn was a brusque and bellicose king. For example he supposedly lured the Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvason into a trap meant to kill him, solely because he had slept with Sweyn's sister Thyra Haraldsdatter. Sweyn's mother is Gunhild, the second wife

of Harald. According to sources, Sweyn was viewed as an illegitimate son of Harald, and he was therefore raised by the fabled chieftain Palnatoke from Funen, who was the earl of Jomsborg which was an infamous and almost legendary Viking fortress located in the northern parts of Poland.

Sweyn had proven himself to be a great military commander before he

took over the throne, and he continued to prove this attribute after acquiring the title of king. There are many uncertainties regarding Sweyn and the ring castles. Some believe he also deserved some

credit for erecting these, building them with the purpose of using them to train and gather the large Viking army that would later conquer England.

Several of these theories have been debunked, but not with 100 percent certainty, which makes the myth of Sweyn, the ring castles and the entire Jelling dynasty an incredibly fascinating story.



## THE TASTE OF SVEN'S MEAD

To us, Sweyn is the Nordic warrior king, who contrary to his father wanted to return to the old virtues with Viking raids and a Nordic self-awareness. He was also a temperamental and aggressive man. In our interpretation we have chosen to focus on Sweyn's strive for the old virtues, and for that reason we have gone back to our most holy herb meadowsweet also called mead wort which have been

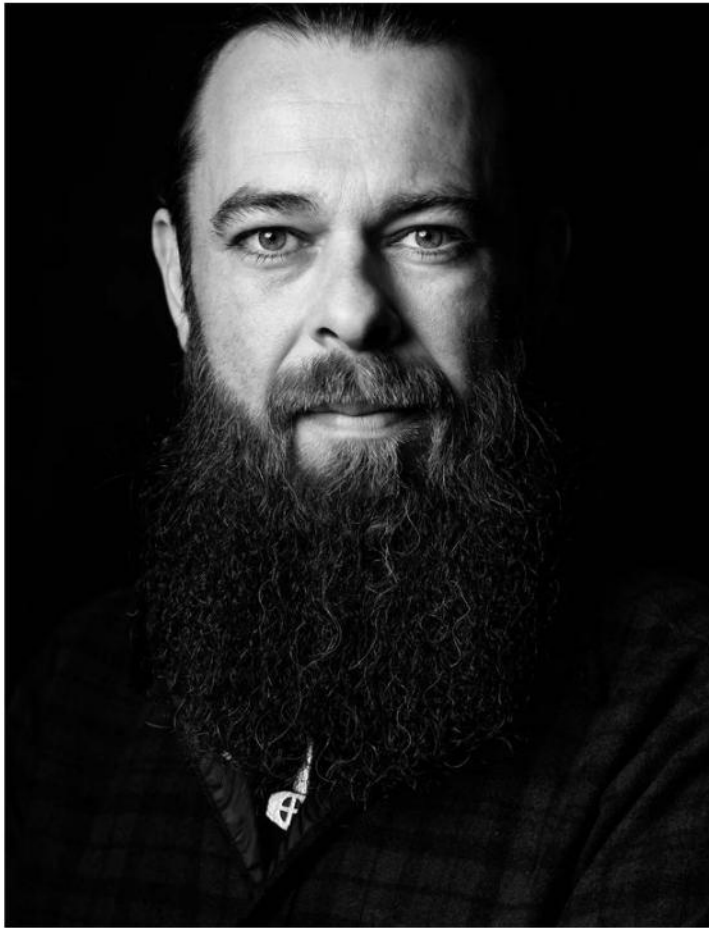
used in mead all the way back to the Bronze Age. It is an old Nordic herb that we here at Mjødgård love to include in our recipes. To give the mead a bit of acidity and sharpness to rival Sweyn's sword we have used sloe, a fruit that also grew here in the Viking Age. The combination of the sour sloe, which gives the mead a dry and tart quality along with the sweetly spicy meadowsweet results in a mead we personally find to hav

a distinguished character.

Sweyn's mead is fresh, bitter and with a lovely aftertaste of the meadowsweet that remains on the palate long after ingestion. It is a mead that is highly agreeable with cheese or a sweet dessert, and it is excellent to share at the various heathen celebrations.



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## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MJØDGÅRD

Mead is the world's oldest alcoholic beverage dating back more than 6000 years. We know mead has been brewed all over the world in many different societies, and that is why we refer to it as a cultural drink. The brewmaster here at Mjødgård has a large passion for the prehistoric and 20 years of experience in brewing mead. Mjødgård is a small family-owned brewery located on South Zealand.

We take great pride in brewing our mead as authentic and traditional as possible. Our brew is sustainably produced. We therefore solely use local ingredients to make genuine quality mead. With our respect for the craft, quality ingredients and taste combinations we are a part of the New Nordic Cuisine where we, with our mead, present something that is both modern and deeply rooted in the past.

Mead is the natural dessert wine of The Nordic countries. It is eminently suited for everything from cheese and tapas to desserts, and for "hygge" as we Danes say.



### LET'S GET IN TOUCH!

You can follow the daily life and work at the brewery on Mjødgård's social media. Here you can also read more about our brews and get inspiration for drinks and cooking with mead.



### HOW TO FIND MJØDGÅRD

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