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## Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 134

### How Mead Is Made with Nick Lorenz

**Show Notes are at: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/134](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/134)**

**Nick:** ... full circle. Some of this fruit that we're getting is coming from farms that the beekeepers that we buy honey from are also doing the pollination work for. So we're then getting honey in turn, and we're also getting fruit from the same farms that are coming back, and that's pretty amazing and pretty fun for us to get to do.

**Theresa:** This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, Episode 134.

**Announcer:** Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

**Theresa:** Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe, and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm. Now that includes preserving the harvest, artisan food crafts, small space food growing, and just taking small steps towards living a more sustainable lifestyle. All the different ways that we can live closer to our food, even if we have little or no garden space at all.

Today's interview, I think you'll find really interesting. I thought it would be really fun to bring someone on who has a product that ties into our mission of being closer to our food. In other words, yes, we can grow our own vegetables, we can grow our own fruits, and sometimes there's things we have to purchase in the store. And I love it when I come across a company who has the same values that I do in that they're trying to do things right, and they're trying to tie everything that they're creating to sustainable agriculture.

So the story behind how this interview came about was that I was searching for something on mead, because I wanted to do an episode on how it was made. Now if you're not familiar with mead, it is basically honey wine, or fermented honey, that is turned into a beverage just like you might create a craft hard cider. So it's an alcoholic beverage, but it's made with honey, and I wanted to do an episode on how it was made.

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In my searching and in my research, I stumbled across Nectar Creek Mead, which is an Oregon based company. And as I started reading what these two brothers who own the company, when I started reading what they were doing, I was absolutely hooked, and I was fascinated. Nectar Creek is all about creating an absolutely delicious product that supports their local farmers and their local beekeepers in a way that really rings true with how I like to see companies work. They're really trying to create something that the foodie in me would love, but they're doing it in a really intentional and careful way, so that they are supporting the environment as well.

As I started diving into more of the story behind these two brothers who created this company, I just thought, "This sounds like a great interview for the Living Homegrown Podcast." So this is not something I normally do. They have not sponsored the show in any way. There's no tie like that. I just thought it would be really fun to bring on one of the owners and have them explain what mead is, how it's made, and how they came about to create this product that really ties into sustainable agriculture. And what we ended up with, was a really fascinating interview, so I really hope you enjoy this one.

Let me tell you a little bit about the company. Nectar Creek is located in Oregon, and it's very close to Oregon State University. The two brothers, Nick and Phillip Lorenz, started this company after being home brewers, and it's a very interesting story how they got into this. I'll let Nick tell the whole story, but they have been homebrewers for a very long time, and they've really, really mastered their craft. They have won all sorts of awards for their meads, and a few years ago, they started this company, Nectar Creek. The flavors that they have created really, really shows the foodie side of what they're doing.

They have the typical meads, and then they have raspberry and ginger. And they have a cranberry-strawberry mead. They also have things like peach and hibiscus, really unusual mead flavors. But they even have one made with clary sage, which really captured my eye because I love to grow clary sage, so I thought, "Oh, I would love to taste that one someday."

And speaking of tasting the meads, I realized during the interview with Nick, that as he was describing these flavors, that a lot of you are going to want to find this particular Nectar Creek Mead in your stores. So I'm going to put in the show notes for this episode, links to their website, so you can contact them and find out if there are any stores in your area that carry them, but I'm also going to put a link to a place where you can mail order their particular products. I'll have all of that in the show notes. They also have a great graphic on their website showing exactly how mead is made, explaining the science behind it, which I found really fascinating. To get to the show notes, you just got to [livinghomegrown.com/134](http://livinghomegrown.com/134). I'll have links to their website, and everything else.

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Now before we get started, I have one last thing to tell you. And that is that this episode is brought to you by my group coaching program, Level Up. As you probably know, I have several online programs in things like canning, artisan food crafts, and organic gardening. But what you may not know, is that for the last few years, I've been coaching garden food and wellness entrepreneurs on how they can create their own online digital courses and memberships. And I find that most people in the farm fresh space have a lot of uncertainty about moving into digital products, with one of the biggest questions being, "Am I ready for this?"

Now this is totally understandable when you dive into something new, so if you've been considering sharing your own expertise in an online course, I've created something to help you decide if this is the right venue for you. It's a PDF called The Five Signs You're Ready to Digitize Your Expertise, and it has a section at the end that will help you narrow down a good topic for your online product, whatever that may be. If you'd like to get a copy of this completely free resource, I have it all set up for you at [livinghomegrown.com/free](http://livinghomegrown.com/free), that's F-R-E-E. And you can download it there to get started.

I hope you enjoy this episode. I just found it really, really interesting, and very inspiring that two brothers would come together and want to create something that had a lot of integrity. And I'm sure you're going to find it as enjoyable as I did. So with that, let me bring on Nick Lorenz, of Nectar Creek Mead.

Hey Nick, thanks so much for coming on the show.

Nick: Thanks a lot for having me. I'm excited to get to chat with you.

Theresa: Yeah. This is really exciting for me. I have not had a business like yours on my podcast before, but I stumbled across your website, and you guys really caught my attention because you're being very intentional with your product, and so I just thought you would be a perfect fit, and I think it will be really interesting for my listeners. I know you and your brother, you own this business called Nectar Creek. So why don't you tell everybody what it is that you guys make?

Nick: Absolutely. In the fall of 2012, my brother and I started Nectar Creek, and we make mead, which is an alcohol defined by the fermentation of honey. Essentially we're similar to a craft cider or craft beer, something along those lines. But our main ingredient, and our first and most important ingredient, is just raw honey sourced directly from sustainable beekeepers.

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- Theresa: Yeah. So it's essentially like you said, fermented honey, and it's very similar to a craft beer or a craft cider, but I know there's different styles of mead. How would you guys describe what it is that you create?
- Nick: We use the term which we call "session" mead. Session is in relationship to the alcohol content, the body. So our meads are all very light, they're refreshing, they're carbonated, and something you can drink a full pint of, similar to a beer or a cider. I would say that's what really has made us stand out a lot, is that commercially, when we opened up, we couldn't really find much or any meads on the market anywhere in the country that were in the same style as us. I think that what that's really doing is opening up the mead category and really making it more approachable to people, and making it more of a everyday style of drink. And that didn't really exist too much before we really got going.
- Theresa: Yeah, I totally agree with you. I think mead is just now kind of up and coming. It's really an old-fashioned drink from centuries ago, but it's definitely had a resurgence, and I love it. I'm so excited about that. So I guess one of the things we should talk about though, is you guys are located in Oregon, and didn't you just open up a taproom as well?
- Nick: That is correct. Actually yesterday was our very first day open to the public.
- Theresa: Oh, that's so exciting. Yeah, I saw pictures on your website of what you guys were working on. So tell me about that, how does the taproom work?
- Nick: Up to this point, up until yesterday, we've just been a production business, so we've been focusing on making the meads and producing them for wholesale, so that means that they'd go out to bars or grocery stores, and that type of outlet. But as of yesterday, we now have kind of a direct to consumer location where we can bring people in and we can show them how we make our meads, explain where we source our honey, and teach people about honey and the importance of it, and then also offer a great menu of food. We kind of grew up, and we're definitely a bit of foodies ourselves, so it's really nice to get to kind of add that side of the business and fun for us to add that part of what we're offering for everybody.
- Theresa: Yeah, I wish you were closer, because I'm in Los Angeles, so I totally wish I was close. Well-
- Nick: We'll have to get you to come up and visit soon.

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Theresa: Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely. Well I think everyone would really love to hear the story about how you and your brother really got into this. So what really turned you guys on to the idea of becoming mead brewers?

Nick: You know, the story really starts when we were both in high school or even younger. We grew up with parents that had a garden and farmed in their backyard. I remember getting veggies from a CSA and directly from farms here in the Corvallis area more than I remember going to grocery stores as a young kid, and so that had a big influence on us.

By the time that we were both in high school, we were both working for a big, organic vegetable farm here in Corvallis, and we started talking about going into business together, and we were really excited about the idea of doing some kind of value added agriculture. The general thinking with that is, you know selling strawberries in this part of the world is really great, but you only have a day or two to sell them right after you pick them for them to be fresh. Then on top of that, you only have a couple months really, that is a good growing season for them. We were kind of thinking to ourselves, "Well, if you make strawberry jam, you got the connection with the agriculture, and then you also have a product that you can sell year round. So I guess that's kind of the entrepreneurial side of us that was coming out very early.

The next kind of key part of the story that we love to tell is my brother, like many 16 year olds, got caught drinking by our mom at one point, and her response was to say, "You know, you're gonna be exposed to alcohol the rest of your life. You gotta know where it comes from and how to make it and how to control it." With that, they went to the local brewing supply store, and my brother got a home kit and started making beer at home.

Theresa: Oh, that's so funny.

Nick: I'm four years younger than my brother, and I'm not even a teenager, I'm 12, and I'm helping him make beer, and I have no idea what I'm doing. I don't understand the end result, but here I am learning the process. By the end of high school, both Phillip and I were doing quite a bit of homebrewing. Here in Corvallis it makes sense because we have at Oregon State University one of the only fermentation programs in the country, and it's one of the largest and it's also where the USDA Hop Research Facility is, right here in Corvallis. So a lot of the hops that are used in the craft brewing world were actually cultivated and invented right here in our backyard.

Theresa: Wow. I did not know that. So they have an actual fermentation program at Oregon State?

- Nick: Yeah. So it's one of the only schools in the country where you can get a masters degree in fermentation science.
- Theresa: Wow. That is so cool. Did one of you go through the program?
- Nick: You know, it's funny. Actually both of us ended up going to school on the East Coast.
- Theresa: Oh no. Yeah.
- Nick: I went to school in Vermont at the University of Vermont, and I studied and got a degree in ecological agriculture, essentially a plant chemistry degree. And my brother went to Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. There he did a combination of apiary science, which is the study of bees and beekeeping, and then as well as his senior thesis was actually making mead.
- He made 12 or 15 varieties of mead, and he did chemical analysis on them, so he was testing for ester production and that sort of stuff, as well as sensory analysis. He trained a tasting panel on how to do proper sensory analysis for about six months, and then they tested the differences between the yeast strains we were using and the difference in, depending on what variety of honey, what different flavors come out of what specific varieties of honey. From that research at school, that's actually how we came up with the yeast strain that we use in house as our house yeast strain now.
- Theresa: That is so fascinating. So he actually taught them to do the tasting kind of like the way they do tasting of wine, and understanding the nuances there?
- Nick: Exactly. You start very basic with things like what does cinnamon smell like? What does pepper smell like? What are kind of these bigger broad-based adjectives that you use to describe different nuance in flavors that come out of all the different foods we get? And then when we smell and taste other foods, how do we pick those different flavors out to be able to describe them accurately?
- Theresa: Wow. That is so cool. That must have been a really fun project. So you guys then, really you'd been doing it for a long time. One of my questions that I was going to ask you was if you had started out as homebrewers, so obviously you did. And you guys were going along doing this, so at what point did you realize that you could really create something that was viable as a product that people would want?

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Nick: It was a long time in the making. There was probably five years that Phillip and I were ... we'd talk to each other on the phone pretty much every single day, and we would go back and forth about things that were important for us in business. Sometimes it was specific to what we wanted to do for what kind of products we wanted to make, and sometimes it was just about how we wanted to run our business, and things that were important for us when we hired employees and that sort of stuff.

But kind of one of the big turning points was actually my brother started working for a big commercial bee farm here in Oregon. That's also right here in Corvallis, right in the Willamette Valley. We have tons of agriculture here in the Willamette Valley, and hence, a ton of bees here, and my brother was one of their first employees. When he started I think the farm had close to a thousand beehives, and about eight years later when he stopped working for them and when we started Nectar Creek, they were up to managing over 5,000 beehives.

Theresa: Wow.

Nick: Even then, when my brother was beekeeping, we were still thinking about making beer, trying to find some kind of piece of land that we could grow a bunch of ingredients for a restaurant that we'd have, and then make our own beer, but what we kind of realized is the craft beer world is really well covered. There's a lot of people making really great beer.

We thought we could make some great beer too, but the people that were starting were starting these businesses with anywhere from one million, five million to ten million dollars with a ton of experience, and we were saying, "How are we gonna compete? We're young kids with a bunch of college debt, you know, what are we thinking going into that?"

So we kind of really started thinking about other options, and we really just were asking ourselves, "How do we marry our interest of fermentation science in sustainable agriculture?" And it finally just kind of became this no-brainer, it was like, "Oh. Duh, you know? Honey. Bees. It's like this is the work that Phillip's doing. Let's start making mead."

Theresa: Fantastic. Wow. You haven't even said this, but I want to make sure everyone realizes, you guys have won all sorts of awards. There was something you had on your website called, I think it's called a Mazer Cup? Is that how you pronounce it?

Nick: Yeah. It's the Mazer Cup.

- Theresa: Mazer Cup. Okay. So tell everyone, what did you guys win there?
- Nick: The Mazer Cup is at this point the world's largest mead competition, and in 2015 we swept the session mead category. So we won gold, silver and bronze for three different of our meads.
- Theresa: Wow. That's really good. That's really, really good. So if anyone has any doubt, we know it's good.
- Nick: Yeah, it was just so exciting and such an amazing surprise for us.
- Theresa: So you guys have decided at this point in your story, you decided that you wanted to do this, and then you had to just dive in. How many years have you been actually in business making mead commercially?
- Nick: We've been open just a little bit over five years at this point.
- Theresa: Wow. And so what do you feel makes your mead so special?
- Nick: You know, there's definitely a couple things that I think are really important. One of them is our access to honey. If you're making something where the main ingredient is honey, you know your product's only going to be as good as your honey is. We are in this beautiful agricultural valley, and we have direct connections with a lot of beekeepers.
- Something that's big for us is 100% of our honey, it's raw, it's unfiltered, and it's directly sourced from the bee farm. So there's no middle man, there's no packing house, nothing like that. The way we describe it is we get to see it all the way from farm field all the way into bottles. We know what types of farms our beekeepers are working with, so what kind of crops are getting pollinated, and what are the practices of those farmers, all the way through to how we take care of it into the finished product.
- Theresa: Yes, you guys really talk about that in the nuances of the flavors that you describe, and I was really surprised how a bee, a hive, or a certain set of honey that you get from a certain field would really be able to pull that flavor of whatever the crops are that the bees are going through. So talk about that a little bit, because you have some rather unusual flavors in your meads.

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Nick: Absolutely. On a bigger picture, it talks a lot about the potential opportunity for the mead category. And if we think about it, bees make honey by collecting nectar from flowers. Every flower has the opportunity to produce a nectar that produces then a honey with a unique color, a unique flavor, a unique aroma.

I think that there's something like close to 400,000 known flowering plant species at this point? Obviously not every single one of them produces a nectar that bees can turn into honey, but that just in unique varieties of honey, the potential for the mead category compared to kinds of grapes that exist in the world that can turn into wine, or kind of grains that can turn into different beer, is really pretty limitless. That doesn't include using different yeast strains, different aging techniques, having meads that end up with different alcohol contents, or carbonation levels, or anything like that, that just looking at unique varieties of honey, the potential for the mead category is really tremendous.

Theresa: Absolutely. Absolutely. And you guys not only have different honeys that maybe the bees had access to different fields, but you also have different flavors, like you have raspberries and different things in there. So what are some of the things that you're doing there where you're working with agriculture directly?

Nick: Absolutely. We like to put different products in our mead, or adjuncts, if you will, and it's kind of fun because honey on its own is neutral, in the sense that it's not too acidic or anything like that. So the meads that we make that are just honey and water are so clean on the palate, and so light. What we like to do is utilize fruit or spices such as ginger, that we can source from places that we understand how they're growing it, and then also as much as we can just right here from our own valley. So we do things like make a raspberry mead or a cranberry-strawberry mead, because raspberries and cranberries have this really great acidity that add a nice depth to our final product, and add a sort of perceived tartness to our final product, that just using the honey you don't quite get.

So one, you get these really great aromas of fresh fruit and berries, but we also can add some depth that otherwise we wouldn't be able to get. And full circle, some of this fruit that we're getting is coming from farms that the beekeepers that we buy honey from are also doing the pollination work for. So we're then getting honey in turn, and we're also getting fruit from the same farms that are coming back, and that's pretty amazing, and pretty fun for us to get to do.

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Theresa: Yeah. That was the part of the story that I just thought was so cool. So it is, it is full circle. I just think it's fascinating, and such a great, great business model. Especially for people like me who really want to be connected to their food and kind of want to know where their food comes from. If I can't grow it or make it myself, I really want to understand that the company has the same intentions that I'm trying to do. So I think that's really, really important.

Well I know a lot of my listeners are home fermenters. Most of them do things like maybe they ferment their vegetables, or they might even be cider makers. I'm currently learning how to make cider myself, which is a lot of fun. I've never made mead, so I would love it if you could kind of walk us through what the process is to make a mead, whether we're doing it at home or in a large commercial aspect, what are the steps that are involved?

Nick: Absolutely. I always joke and say that, "Making mead is really easy, but making good mead is really hard." The really simple idea is mead is really simply fermenting honey, and so if you are able to put honey into solution, so mix honey and water and add a yeast, you'll make a mead. But that doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to taste really great.

So the simple version is that honey is all simple sugar. Right? Which is a great thing for our bodies because it means we can process it. It also means that yeast are able to eat the sugar. So honey on its own never goes bad, right? They've got examples of honey being found in tombs that's thousands of years old that's in the same state that it was a thousand years ago.

What you have to do to be able to make the honey ferment in yeast, be active and eat the sugar in it, is you have to dilute it, because honey on its own otherwise is just going to stay as is. Essentially your ratio of honey to water is going to determine how much alcohol you can end up having in your final product.

On a homebrewing scale, if you're doing like a five gallon carboy, or something along those lines, you can pretty simply think that one pound of honey in five gallons is equivalent to 1% potential alcohol. And to expand on that a little bit, a gallon of honey is about equivalent to 12 pounds. All right? So a gallon of honey weighs about 12 pounds, so if you were to add one gallon of honey and then the rest of it water, so four gallons of water, one gallon of honey to create something that's a five gallon carboy, you would end up with something that had the ability to be about 12% alcohol.

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And then the next detail is the first part you're essentially just, as long as you're being really sanitary, which is key in all fermentation, right? So you don't have cross contamination or anything like that. It's as simple as getting really good quality honey and putting it into solution with water.

Then the difficult part of the whole process is the actual fermentation part, because we use a yeast that's comparable to a white wine yeast, and yeast has a need for different nutrients, and honey on its own doesn't really have much of that. An example would be YAN, or yeast assimilable nitrogen, is something that's measured a lot in the fermentation world, especially for alcohol, and honey barely has it on a measurable amount, and yeast would like it to be kind of around at least 200 parts per million or something like that.

What we have to do is really monitor the pH of the product during the fermentation process, and make sure that we're doing good healthy nutrient additions that are helping the yeast to make sure they have the nutrients they want, and that kind of guarantees that we're not going to be producing off flavors or stressing the yeast out so they are either not working or producing flavors that we don't want.

Theresa: Ah. So it's kind of like you're trying to give it a little extra boost of nutrients so that it stays viable and is working really well. And I always wondered about that, because I know honey on its own is very anti-bacterial, and I wondered how you're able to ferment the honey. But first you dilute it, and then you're adding in things that will help boost the yeast so that it can do the fermentation.

Nick: Exactly. Yeah. You know something that I see and hear a lot is there's a lot of kind of misleading resources on the internet, as we all know. And in one of them is there's a lot of mead recipes that are on the internet, and they say, "Mix 50% honey and 50% water. And add yeast." But even at that 50/50 ratio, going back to the comment that I made about kind of calculating how much potential alcohol you have, if you have something that's two and a half gallons of honey, and two and a half gallons of water, that's something that would be close to 30% alcohol. And one, there's not many yeasts that can survive up to that alcohol content, and two, the honey is still so dense at that point. And honey has so many anti-bacterial qualities and everything like that that the fermentation really is not going to be successful.

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A lot of people say, "Oh, you know it takes four or five years to really ferment mead well, and you have to age it." And it's like well, if you're making it in a style where you're actually able to put the yeast in an environment where they can be viable and be healthy, you can end up with a much different scenario. But essentially what's happening if you're dealing with a 50/50 ratio or something along those lines is you're still putting the yeast in such a harsh environment and stressing them out so much that one, they're going to be so stressed out that they're producing flavors that you don't really like, and two, they're hardly going to be able to be active.

- Theresa: Yeah, yeah. That's what it sounds like. So when we're doing this where maybe we have more water and it's more of a ratio like you were describing, like one part honey to four parts water, then how long would the fermentation be? How long is your fermentation when you're doing this commercially? Because I'm sure you can't wait six months for something to ferment.
- Nick: Absolutely. For us, for most of our flagship products, it's about 25 days from the day that we brew until we either put it in a keg or bottle it or can it.
- Theresa: Okay. Okay. And so after you're done with the fermentation, then do you have to filter it or rack it or what do you do to get the mead off of the yeast?
- Nick: We filter our mead. What that does is kind of guarantees that we're not going to have bottles that are going to-
- Theresa: Explode?
- Nick: ... re-ferment or explode, or anything along those lines. And then it makes the product very clear and brilliant, so you can see through it, and it's just very pretty and clear. Also, commercially it makes it so we can have a consistent shelf stable product.
- Theresa: Yeah. And so when you're doing the flavorings, like let's say you have raspberries, are the raspberries in the first fermentation with the yeast?
- Nick: What we have discovered, and it's a little bit of a secret, but I don't think I'm giving too much away here-
- Theresa: Yeah, no trade secrets or I'm going to get in trouble by your brother.

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- Nick: Yeah, I'll keep the important stuff hidden. We found that if you add fruit or spices or anything along those lines, one, if you go to something like our ginger mead and your only ingredients are honey, water and ginger, it's only as good as your honey, and it's only as good as your ginger, and it's only as good as your fermentation process. So we get organic ginger root and we juice it in house. And we add this raw, unfiltered ginger juice that we've juiced in house.
- Theresa: Ah, okay. So you're not throwing in the entire ginger, it's a juice that you're adding.
- Nick: Exactly. And we found that that gave us the best extraction of flavor, and it gives you the brightest, freshest expression of ginger, like someone's grating ginger right in front of you. And if you add it towards the end of the fermentation, what you end up with is a bigger brighter ginger character. Where otherwise if you add it in the beginning, as the fermentation is happening and CO2 is being produced as a part of the fermentation process, a lot of the delicate flavors and aromas that are in something like ginger would blow off and dissipate. So you would end up with not as strong as a ginger flavor, or as clear as a ginger flavor because a lot of those volatile esters would be dissipating. And so adding it in the end guarantees kind of the biggest and brightest and purest character of that.
- Theresa: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. That makes a lot of sense. Something when you just said about the bright flavor, there was something in your process that I saw on your website. You had something that you guys have called a bright tank? What is that in the process? What does a bright tank do?
- Nick: A bright tank is different than a fermentation tank in the sense that the actual physical structure of it is it's a thicker gauge metal and it has stronger welds on it, so it's a tank that can hold pressure. In the bright tank, we carbonate our product, and that's a way that we can consistently carbonate our product to a consistent volume, and control it and everything like that, so once again, we can have a stable, consistent commercial product.
- Theresa: Ah. Okay. So that makes a lot of sense. It's almost like a second little fermentation that you're doing just before you bottle it, so it has that bubble when you open it up.
- Nick: Exactly. On a home scale, the way that you can think of that, and some people have systems where they can keg product at home or they have Kegerators, is that you can make the product, put it in a Kegerator or in a keg, and then you can just carbonate directly in the keg so you can end up with carbonated product pretty easily yourself that way.

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Theresa: Got it. Okay. Now do you age your mead? Is it put in barrels at any point?

Nick: We have a line of specialty meads. Some of our meads are not aged, and some of our meads we age anywhere from six months to a year. We like to do all kinds of different stuff. I think maybe it's a little bit of the beer geek in us, but we like to make sours. So we do fermentations with *Brettanomyces* and we do fermentations with *Lactobacillus* to make sour meads.

We also do bourbon barrel aged meads, we've done gin barrel aged meads. We've done really kind of a whole different spectrum of fun stuff like that where we're able to kind of give our brewers some freedom, and for us, really create some unique special things that are really exciting to people that are in the craft beer world that understand the kind of barrel aging process and the souring process. It really attracts a different customer base. And also, for us it's kind of showing people what's possible with mead, even within the confines that we're sticking with this just making the session style meads.

Theresa: That is so exciting from a foodie standpoint. It just sounds like a whole lot of fun. With all the different flavors that you guys have created, or what you have on your line right now, what is your absolute favorite right now?

Nick: Oh, you know, I can't limit it to one, but I can give you kind of three standouts. From our specialty line right now, the first one is we have a mead that we call Nectarade. It is just fermented wildflower honey. Then we add a bunch of fresh lemon and lime juice, and it's just big, citrusy, tart and acidic, and it's dangerously refreshing. It's just like a really nice craft adult honey lemonade.

And then, additionally, some more specialty things is we have a mead that we call Apus. The word Apus comes from *Apis mellifera*, which is the Latin word for honey bee. Apus is a style of mead that was made with a couple different varieties of honey. I believe we used a bunch of radish honey in that, and then also a bit of wildflower honey. Then that we aged in old wine barrels, in French oak barrels, and we aged it with a bunch of single estate black Ceylon tea, and also a bunch of organic orange peel.

Theresa: Wow. That sounds so good.

Nick: You know that the combination of the honey character with a little bit of citrus from the orange peel, and the tea just go together surprisingly well, and like all of our meads, they're light, they're refreshing, but they just give you this depth of flavors and aroma and a really crisp mouth feel that's pretty amazing.

Theresa: Wow. What's the third one? You said you had three.

Nick: Oh. The third one is called Top Bar. Top Bar is actually a style of beehive, and so that's where that name comes from. But Top Bar is a coffee mead. It's interesting to try to think of those flavors together I think. So we work with a coffee roaster that's in Corvallis, so it's about 15 minutes away from our production facility. We tasted a bunch of different kinds of coffee with them, and found the one and the roast that we liked that paired with the honey just the best, and we soak a bunch of oak chips in bourbon, and we add a bunch of cold brew coffee, as well as a bunch of whole beans, so it smells like fresh brewed cold brew coffee. Just a huge, big aroma of coffee. But you get the floral notes and the fruity notes, and everything like that that come out of the honey, and in the end you drink in this light, refreshing, almost ... I think the best thing I can compare it to for people is like a lighter bodied slightly effervescent cold brew.

Theresa: Wow. That just sounds so amazing. And you're right, I would not have thought of pairing coffee with a mead, but that sounds really intriguing. And the oak chips, and the bourbon, oh my gosh, really sounds amazing.

Well Nick, I just want to thank you, really, for coming on the show and letting us kind of peek behind the scenes of how this has come about for you guys, and how you put the mead together, and really your integrity to sustainable agriculture. It's really inspiring. So thank you, I really appreciate it. Thanks for coming on the show today.

Nick: Oh, thank you so much for having me. I hope if anyone that's listening finds themselves in Oregon that they stop by and visit. We're just about 40 minutes away from Newport, Oregon, which is the coast, so we have a facility that can't be missed. It's kind of between the heart of the Willamette Valley and the Oregon Coast, and we're really excited to be in this new location, and happy with all the support we've gotten. Thank you for reaching out and bringing me on.

Theresa: Yeah, absolutely. I'm hoping that some of the listeners make a road trip, because it sounds like a beautiful drive and a fun place to visit, and they can load up the car and head back home.

Nick: There we go.



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Theresa: Well I hope you enjoyed that interview. It was kind of interesting to find out how they make their mead, exactly the different ways that they look at the wonderful flavors, but especially how they tie all of this together with sustainable agriculture. And they're supporting their local farmers and their local beekeepers. So remember, everything that we talked about links to their website, different places that you can find their product, will be in the show notes for today's episode. To get to the show notes, you just go to [livinghomegrown.com/134](http://livinghomegrown.com/134), and I'll have everything right there for you.

I hope you enjoyed that. I thought it was really interesting, and I hope you found it interesting as well. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal and homegrown. Take care.

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown Podcast. Visit [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com) to download Theresa's free Canning Resource Guide, and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown Podcast.