

DRINK *of* the GODS

The Peckham brewery bringing mead into the modern day

Words MADELEINE HOWELL



Known also as honey wine, mead is experiencing a revival with the help of London's one and only 'meadery'. Although it may sound like a relic of the past, entrepreneur Tom Gosnell of Gosnell's London Mead in Peckham has been busy updating it for the 21st century, and celebrating its heritage at the same time.

When I tell him that mead makes me think of *Game of Thrones*, he laughs. 'We've been lucky that it came along at the same time, but we try not to trade too

much on it, because we're trying to do something more modern. But if that's the first place people have heard of it, we can take them on a journey from there.'

At the brewery itself, you can commission your own bespoke mead, set out on a tour of the brewery, and even brew your own over the course of a weekend. The drink is gender-neutral, gluten-free, and makes for an excellent spritz or cocktail. Those who simply wish to kick back and enjoy the SE15 sunshine with a hoppy brew or two can

drink in their outdoor bar, open every Saturday from 12pm until 8pm. This month, we grilled Gosnell on the subject to find out more...

What is mead exactly? Mead is any alcohol that's fermented from honey. Ours is 5.5%, which is a much more modern take. It's traditionally stronger and sweeter, more like a dessert wine. We've dropped the alcohol content right down so that it's a bit more approachable, and more like a beer or a cider.



BEER & CHOCOLATE

Another craft beer offering that stands out amidst south east London's fast fermenting craft beer scene (most densely concentrated up in Bermondsey's infamous beer mile) is the newly opened and independently owned Park Fever in Hither Green. The brainchild of chocolate lover, beer enthusiast and Blackheath resident Adrian Varley, it's settling in well in the family-friendly neighbourhood with its winning combination of hops and cacao.
21a Staplehurst Road SE13 5ND; 07775 841270; parkfever.co.uk



The team is expanding, and Gosnells is available across the UK and abroad

but it always had this weird kind of castle-gift-shop thing going on. Often, it would be really strong and too sweet. When I was in the States, I met people who were doing some really great things, and putting a lot of care and attention into their products.

Is it a drink to be drunk on its own, or can it also be paired with food? It's great on its own on a sunny afternoon, but it pairs well with hard cheeses like chevre, and spicier dishes where it cuts through some of the spice.

What's the atmosphere like at the brewery bar on Saturday afternoons?

It's a place where people can come and just chill out in the sun. We're on an industrial estate, so we've tried to soften the edges a little bit with some plants and relaxed music, and plenty of seating.

What's it like being based in Peckham?

We've been here for three years now and there's a really eclectic mix of businesses and people. It's surprisingly central, and there's a brilliant sense of community, which can be hard to find sometimes in London. South London is a great place to be in general for its craft beer scene.

Where else in south east London can you buy or drink Gosnells? In terms of shops, it's available at The Beer Shop London in Nunhead, Salthouse Bottles in Brockley and Hop Burns and Black in East Dulwich. You can also drink it at The Montpelier round the corner.

How have Londoners responded? It's been really positive. It's always cool to discover something new, and demand for local produce is much more prevalent than it was maybe 10 or 15 years ago.

Gosnells London Mead, Print Village, Chadwick Road SE15 4PU; 020 3289 9562; gosnells.co.uk

Mead is any alcohol that's fermented from honey. Ours is 5.5%, which is a modern take

It's an historic drink – how else did you seek to revive and modernise it? We tried to nod to the history, but to do our own thing with it. In terms of the presentation and the branding, we're trying to update it. It helps that we're the only meadery in London!

Could you talk me through some of your different brews? Our core mead is the London Mead, made with orange blossom honey, water and yeast. It's got a clean, sweet flavour. The second is the Hopped Mead. We dry hop it with IPA hops. That gives it a bit of bitterness, and also beautiful floral notes. The Citra Sea Mead is a little bit more experimental, made with Citra hops, lemon peel, tarragon, and finished off with sea salt. That gives it a crisp, refreshing flavour. It's probably the driest of the three.

How were you inspired by the USA? The USA is where I first came across well crafted mead. I'd seen it in the UK,



The signature London Mead is made with Spanish orange blossom honey, water and yeast