

# Documenting Your Potable

Lady Sylvia du Vey

meadlady.com

Your documentation serves two basic purposes: 1) To record your notes, research, and thinking, and 2) To present this information to others who can give you critical feedback. To that end, your documentation must be thoughtful, legible, and complete. It does not need to be long, complicated, or boring. I like to think of my documentation as a resume, of sorts. It give the critical information that people are looking for and does so in a manner that is easy to read. Think - one pager/resume style.

There are varying degrees of documentation. This outline should help you sort out what would be right for you and, perhaps, what your next step should be.

Degree of paperwork	What it includes	How helpful this is for competition
<b>Nothing</b>	No notes, recipe, or even any verbal comments about the potable.	This is fine if you just want some grog to drink around the fire. This is NOT fine for any type of competition. **Documentation is typically 10% or more of your score, which means you could have the best brew at the table - flawless and delicious, but you may not win because there is no paperwork to back it up. You will get a zero for documentation. This makes me sad.
<b>Recipe</b>	List of ingredients, including the yeast used.	The bare minimum to start receiving points for documentation. Additionally, it is polite (and safer) to let people know what they are drinking.
Recipe plus: <b>Notes/Process</b>	Dates, racking notes, hydrometer readings, heating methods, times, etc.	This helps judges see what you know about making your potable. It demonstrates your skill and knowledge base for the basic processes that go into brewing.
The above plus: <b>Original, Period Recipe</b>	Reference that you used to base your recipe on and a copy of that recipe as written by the original author.	Period references are a nod to what we are trying to accomplish (above and beyond making something good to drink). It is acknowledgement that you are a member of the SCA. It indicates to others that you are WORKING on the scholarly and historical aspects of brewing.
The above plus: <b>Redaction</b>	Interpretation of the period recipe as you see it, including modern measurements, spellings, and grammar.	A redaction is helpful because not all period recipes are written in a reader friendly manner, or even in English. This also gives you an opportunity to demonstrate that you've put some effort into finding out what a "groat" is or how long it takes to walk for a acre. **To really do well in competition, you should include all of the above components (recipe, process, original recipe, redaction), preferably in a one-pager, resume type document.

<b>Extensive research paper</b>	Scholarly research paper on your type of potable. This may include history, scientific methods, recipes, or other information. Usually several pages or more.	Helpful if the competition is a serious A&S competition and you are submitting your research paper as a research paper or as part of your entire submission. Less helpful for a roundtable as there is not time to sufficiently read and think critically about your research.
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## Note and a cautionary tale about “Reverse Documentation”

**Reverse Documentation** - documenting your potable AFTER is it made (and you realize you want to bring it to competition.)

Looking back, I was not ready to research period recipes prior to brewing until I had the whole brewing thing under control. I read a lot, but never anticipated that I would be bringing anything to competition, ever. It wasn't until I had brought some things to competition that I even realized that I should consider recreating period recipes and documenting my meads. My own documentation began after some gentle nudging from the experts around me. Reverse documentation was the only strategy I had in order to bring at least something that resembled documentation to the table. I expect that if this is how I evolved as a brewer, than this may be the path of many, many others. My advice to you is to start the next batch with a period recipe in mind. That will help, in about a year or so...

### What to do in the meantime:

It is tempting - very tempting - to engage in reverse documentation. I myself have done so on many, many occasions. I have to say, it is better than nothing, in my opinion, and it does help you work on the paperwork process and find the resources you will need. I say go for it! (For now.)

However, there are many people out there who believe firmly that you should research your potable first, then brew. These people tend to be very vocal about this belief. Be aware that you may run across such individuals. Be prepared with an answer that will work for you. Mine has been: “I did not brew with the intent to bring this to competition. I wanted to make something good. Now that I have it done, I want feedback from other brewers. I will continue to work on documenting prior to brewing, but in the meantime, I value your opinion. Can you tell me what you think?” ☺

So there it is.

# How to Document Your Mead (Potable)

## An example with some explanation

### Documentation:

*This is where you document where you got your recipe and how you know it's period. You may want to write the recipe as written **and** then provide a translation (redaction).*

*Example:*

### From Curve on Inglisch, Early English Text Society, p. 148:

Potus clarreti pro domino. Take of canel 1 lb as it cometh out of the bale; of gyngyuer, vii unce in the same manner; iii quarter of a lb. pepir; ii unce of longe peper; ii unce & a half of greynes; iii unce & a half of clowis, ii unce & a half of galyngale; ii unce of caraway; ii unce of macis; ii unce of notemugges, ii unce of coliaundir; a quarter of a pynte of aqua ardaunt; with iii galouns of honey: rescett for xx galouns of clarrey

### My Redaction:

To make clarrey. Take 1 pound of cinnamon as it comes out of the bale; 7 oz. of ginger,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a pound of pepper; 2 ounces of long pepper; 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of grains of paradise; 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of cloves; 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of galingale; 2 ounces of caraway; 2 ounces of mace; 2 ounces of nutmegs; 2 ounces of coriander; a quarter of a pint of aqua ardaunt (fire water?); with 3 gallons of honey; recipe for 20 gallons of clarrey

### Recipe:

*List ALL ingredients used.*

3 cinnamon sticks	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz ginger chopped
$\frac{1}{4}$ oz. white peppercorns	20 cloves
6 whole nutmegs, quartered	4 t mace powder
1 sprig rosemary	1 lime quartered
20 lbs honey	

Lalvin 71B-1122

### Process. Brewed 9/20/08 - 7/8/09:

*This is a section I add to show my statistics, dates, etc.*

I cut the recipe approximately into one third of the original. I brought the honey and about a gallon of water up to 180 degrees. I placed the spices in a spice bag and let them steep. Before placing in the primary fermenter, I took the rosemary out. The rest of the must was left on the spices for about 5 weeks. This batch was racked only 4 times before it was clear and ready for bottling.

**Initial Gravity: 1.120**

**Final Gravity: 1.032**

**Alcohol Content: 11-12%**

### Problem solving: (OR - My Variations)

*Use a section like this to show how you, if at all, varied from the period documentation/recipe. It is also a*

*good place for any special notes you may have regarding the process.*

There were several ingredients I did not have at the time of making this metheglin. Galingale and grains of paradise are difficult to obtain in this area. I was out of caraway and coriander. I added the rosemary largely because I had it.

*(Identify your self. I suggest doing this at the bottom of the page so if the competition is “blind” they can just cut it off or fold it under.)*

**Lady Sylvia du Vey**  
Shire of Endewearde

## Resources:

Places to find period (or really close to period) recipes:

### **The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby Knight Opened (Dodo Press) [Paperback]**

Digby is a common, albeit slightly out of period, resource that is easy to read and accessible to everyone. It has loads of recipes most of which are mead recipes. I highly recommend this book to people who want to start brewing period recipes who aren't ready to spend a lot of money for 1 or two decent ones. *This book is a treasure trove and a must have for mead makers.*

### **Curve on Inglysch (Middle English recipes) (Early English Text Society Supplementary Series) [Hardcover]**

So, if you are itching to make a solidly period recipe and are willing to pay for the period reference, this is the book for you. There aren't a lot of brewing recipes included (most are other types of foods). However, if you want to try your hand at redacting and recreating some truly period recipes, this may be a book worth purchasing. It includes recipes for meads, ypodras (spiced wine), and braggot. For the price, you get about 7 period recipes. Fair warning - they are not easy to read and must be carefully redacted. Good luck! :-)

### **A Sip Through Time: A Collection Of Old Brewing Recipes [Paperback]**

Cindy Renfrow has compiled a thorough presentation of period and somewhat out of period recipes for brewers of medieval beverages. She does a great job referencing each recipe and includes a helpful glossary of terms, as well as a lengthy list of herbs and fruits found in those recipes. Many of her recipes are directly from Digby, so there is some redundancy if you have both. If you are a mead maker, this is a great reference book to have in your library.

Note - this book has more for mead makers than for those brewing beer, though there is something in it for everyone.

### **The Compleat Meadmaker : Home Production of Honey Wine From Your First Batch to Award-winning Fruit and Herb Variations [Paperback]**

(Not a period resource) Ken Schramm does a pretty remarkable job breaking down the mead making process in this book. This book is a terrific resource for those just starting out or brewers who have been brewing for a while and want to freshen up their knowledge base. He includes a lot of practical advice, methods, and tips. He also includes many good recipes that would be easy to try out as a new mead maker. This book, in my opinion, is a "must have" for the mead maker's library.

### **The Goodman of Paris (Le Menagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by A Citizen of Paris, c.1393 [Paperback]**

Includes a recipe for "bochet" which is a mead that involves caramelizing the honey, then adding water and optional spices. Fun project for brewing over a fire - you'll need a BIG pot!

