

## They're Turning Honey Into A Tasty Adult Beverage

As more folks taste and discover mead, which is alcohol made from honey, more meaderies are opening up throughout the country. Prairie Rose Meadery owners Bob and Susan Ruud may have an advantage. Their Fargo, N. Dak., business is in the state that produces the most honey in the U.S.

"It's a hobby gone wild," says Susan, who happens to be a microbiologist that loves mead and loves fermenting it.

After tasting mead made by a friend, she started home brewing in 1996. With her meads winning awards from the American Homebrewers Association, the Ruuds officially opened Prairie Rose Meadery in May 2015.

Ruud deals with one honey producer to provide mostly clover honey and some basswood honey for the several mead varieties she makes.

"The process is similar to making wine; no heat is involved," Ruud says. "Mix

honey and water and add yeast and nutrients. After a few days add fruit and spices. Let it settle out, filter and bottle it." Mead is generally ready in 8 to 12 weeks and is about 12 percent alcohol.

"I use all fresh ingredients and real fruits," Ruud says. Many of them, such as mint, plum, chokecherry and rhubarb are from North Dakota. She used red grape juice for Pink Rose Grape Mead recently.

Though North Dakota leads in honey production, Prairie Rose is currently the only meadery in the state. It is one of the hundreds of meaderies listed on [www.meadbuzz.com](http://www.meadbuzz.com) which includes listings by state and country.

"It takes some education to get people to understand what mead is. That it's not your grandmother's mead; it's not thick and syrupy. We make mead more wine-like and easy drinking," Ruud says.

"I get a lot of tourists coming to Fargo who seek out meaderies," Ruud says. The Ruuds'



**Bob and Susan Ruud enjoy making several varieties of mead, which is alcohol made from honey. Their Prairie Rose Meadery is licensed to sell in 35 states.**

tasting room is open Thursdays-Sundays, and they offer samples as well as glasses of mead, cocktails with mead, and sell bottles of mead.

Working with a shipping company they are also licensed to ship bottles to 35 states.

"I love the process of making mead and seeing people's faces when they first try it," Ruud says. "There is a lot more variety with

meads than wine because you can add any flavor or spice."

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**Roland and Georgie Smith raise miniature bulls for young rodeo riders.**

## They Raise Mini-Bulls For Young Riders

As a 10-year-old, Roland Smith climbed aboard an unhappy bovine for his first rodeo ride. That ride five decades ago led to a career that now includes raising miniature bulls for young riders around the world. Smith and his wife Georgie are the owners and operators of S&S Mini Bucking Bulls in Rainsville, New Mexico. They care for an interesting collection of 25 cows and 40 bulls.

Roland Smith's interest in mini bulls came from his own experience as a young rider. "Back then we started out on steers, which are smaller and less temperamental than bulls," Smith says. "When I was about 13 or 14 I started riding bulls and found the transition really tough. Bull riding is an entirely different experience, and many young riders get injured during those first 2 to 3 years of learning."

The Smiths thought young riders would benefit from riding smaller bulls, which rode like regular bulls, so they started breeding a collection of mini-bulls. The term "mini-bull" is relative of course. The smaller bulls are 36 to 48 in. tall at the shoulder and usually weigh 750 to 1,200 lbs. Regular bulls average 1,500 lbs.

The Smiths' breeding experience began in 2008 with when they acquired 4 miniature Zebu cattle, a breed that contains Brahma genetics. Brahmas developed the bucking trait as a defensive mechanism to throw off predators. Smith says "I bred the Zebus with a low-line Angus and developed

what I called a 'Brangus', which are just like regular Angus, but with shorter legs."

The Smiths began showing their Brangus bulls at rodeos and they worked fine, except each one was black like an Angus with a hump like a Brahma. People needed some color variety, so they added Dexters into the mix, a smaller and reddish Irish breed. For even more variety they bred in some tan colored long-haired Scottish Highland cattle. The Highland bulls spin to throw riders off their backs. With those genetic crosses the Smiths had spinning, bucking, colorful bulls.

The Smiths put their bulls through basic training so they get used to people and travel. They cull out bulls that turn on a rider who falls off. They have 160 acres of alfalfa for feed and add grain during travel to help reduce a bull's stress level.

In 2011 the Smiths joined the Miniature Bull Riders Association (MBR), which was started a year earlier. The Smiths travel to rodeos throughout the South and West. Roland says the bulls require a lot of work, especially when travelling, but he and his wife enjoy it. They rent bulls to rodeos for a small fee, which sometimes covers expenses, and once in a while they sell a bull to a family. The Smiths say there's no real money to be made in the business. "We do it for the love of the sport and to help the kids," says Roland.

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**Native to India and Australia, the pongamia tree produces seeds the size of soybeans.**

## "New" Oilseed Tree Out-Produces Soybeans By A Factor Of 10

The pongamia tree produces seeds the size of soybeans, but a mature stand will yield 10 times more oil per acre. The tree is catching on in southern Florida and Hawaii.

"The pongamia tree is a good alternative for growers in both states who are having trouble with citrus and sugar cane," says Peter McClure, TerViva.

TerViva is promoting the tree and developing high-yielding cultivars, as well as setting up processing and marketing for the seed. The tree is native to India and Australia. Seeds contain 40 percent oil, and the seed cake is high in protein. TerViva describes the seeds as "soybeans on a tree", and they're expected to compete well in the biofuel and livestock feed markets.

"The cost to establish is similar to planting a citrus orchard," says McClure. "The same infrastructure of irrigation and drainage that works for citrus also works for pongamia. One benefit is that it's a legume, so there is less need for nitrogen."

TerViva is selling seedlings for about \$10 each with a goal of 100 to 120 trees per acre when the orchard is established. McClure says trees start producing at 4 years and reach full production by 8 years. Peak production is maintained for decades with a lifespan of 40 to 70 years. Seeds are harvested with a pistachio shaker.

McClure reports the tree is very hearty and robust, resistant to disease and pests. The first



**Clockwise from upper left, photo shows seeds in shell, shells, oil, seed cake, and seeds.**

trees planted in Florida are around 6 years old and have yet to be treated for either.

"The pongamia is self-pollinating and stands up to flooding that occurs with hurricanes and heavy rains," says McClure. "It's very tolerant of pH ranges and soil types."

McClure notes that the early plantings were proof of concept to show citrus growers the potential of pongamia. So far the state has around 300 acres of the oilseed orchards with another 100 acres in Hawaii.

"With the data in hand, growers are ordering trees for commercial planting," says McClure. "Scaling up nurseries to produce the trees is the only thing holding the industry back. We have more demand than trees to sell."

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