

# To drink or not to drink – on Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Presented at Ides of March Collegia 20/3/2010 by Kara of Kirriemuir

Okay so you want something to drink that's period but you are not interested in alcohol. What do you look for? How was it made? Were there such beverages around?

All good questions needing answers. Firstly recognise the limitations of our language as compared to languages used by writers and cooks from the time period. Much like everything else it has evolved, changed shape and or sound and may or may not resemble the same meaning it had then. 'Cordial' was first recorded in use by 1350.

## *Adjective*

-*Archaic.* of or pertaining to the heart.

## **-noun**

-a strong, sweetened, aromatic alcoholic liquor; liqueur.

-a stimulating medicine.

-anything that invigorates or exhilarates.

## **Origin:**

1350–1400; ME < ML *cordiālis*, equiv. to L *cordi-* (s. of *cor*) heart + *-ālis* -al<sup>1</sup>

An excerpt from *Basic Brewing: Introduction to Meads, Wines, Beers, Cordials, and Exotics* (Graves, 1996, ¶16) provides the following information:

### ***Background -- Cordials***

*Cordials and liqueurs were made in one of the three following ways: (1) distillation of a brewed product; (2) infusion in a wine or mead, and distillation of the resulting product; and, (3) infusion in a distilled spirit. The first seems to have been used when the desired flavor was honey or fruit; the last was preferred when the desired flavor was herb or spice. While these processes ultimately involved distillation, a fruit cordial was obtained by producing a wine and then distilling it to a brandy, which might then be sweetened or spiced lightly. In contrast, a spice cordial, such as one of cloves, was obtained by distilling a dry wine, such as sack, and infusing the spice in the resulting spirit. As a result of modern statutes, the latter infusion process tends to be preferred today for almost all types of cordial.*

From these it can be determined that as a beverage cordial was akin to alcoholic liqueurs – not a concentrate to be watered down as it is today. (#NB Author resides in mainland Australia, Tasmania records cordial as being carbonated non-alcoholic drink, as seen here <http://tasmaniantimes.com/index.php/article/tasmanian-words-a-lingua-franca>)

So if not cordial then what word can be used to search out recipes for consumption by non-alcoholic drinkers? Solving this issue is like putting the cart before the horse. In other words, check your known sources for beverage recipes and scope out the word used to describe beverages in general (thus finding such recipes ready for usage).

*Le Menagier de Paris* (Hinson) provides recipes of ‘beverages for invalids’ where terms discussed include tisanes (herb infusion of water - barley), bouillon (thin stock of bread), bouchet (honey beer), capon water (thin chicken stock) and nut beverages (hazel and almond). Cariadoc’s Miscellany (Friedman) citing *An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the Thirteenth Century* mentions syrups, whilst Renfrow in *Take a Thousand Eggs or More* (vol. Two) uses the terms caudell (with variant spellings) – hot drinks some with wine, cheaut de almondes – hot almond milk and tannye- based on red wine. *The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby* (Digby, 1669) uses the term meathe to describe beverages both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, although some experts believe the lack of yeast in the recipes came from households or places where it was not necessary due to the environment. Stefan’s Florilegium (Miscellaneous) files reveals terminology provided by a number of contributors, from a variety of sources – julep, oxymel, sekanjabin, sharab (or sharbat). Gleaned from these files and recipe books are also the names of specific drinks such as Jalap, Hippocras and Clarea de Agua.

Clearly some translation and reading of the recipes is necessary for further identification of the terminology. Thus terminology for non-alcoholic beverages is as follows:

**Syrup:** syr·up [sir·uh p, sur-] –*noun*

1. any of various thick, sweet liquids prepared for table use from molasses, glucose, etc., water, and often a flavoring agent.
2. any of various preparations consisting of fruit juices, water, etc., boiled with sugar: *raspberry syrup*.
3. *Pharmacology*. a concentrated sugar solution that contains medication or flavoring.
4. simple syrup.

–*verb (used with object)*

5. to bring to the form or consistency of syrup.
6. to cover, fill, or sweeten with syrup.

Also, sirup.

*Origin:*

1350–1400; < ML *syrupus* < Ar *sharāb* a drink; r. ME *sirop* < MF < ML, as above

**Tisane:** ti·sane (tī-zān', -zān') n. An herbal infusion or similar preparation drunk as a beverage or for its mildly medicinal effect.

[French, *barley water*, from Old French, from Latin *ptisana*, *tisana*; see *ptisan*.]

Some of the other terms are currently defined below.

Bouillon: noun      1. broth      2. bubble      3. puff      4. stock      5. bouillon

[http://www.stars21.com/translator/arabic\\_to\\_english.html](http://www.stars21.com/translator/arabic_to_english.html) (using French to English)

Bouchet – no translation available

Caudell: cau·dle[kawd-l] –*noun* a warm drink for the sick, as of wine or ale mixed with eggs, bread, sugar, spices, etc.

*Origin:* 1250–1300; ME *caudel* < ONF < ML *caldellum*, equiv. to L *calid(um)* warmed watered wine (n. use of neut. of *calidus* warm) + *-ellum* dim. suffix; see -elle

*Caudle* - "hot drink," M.E., from O.N.Fr. *caudel* (O.Fr. *chaudel*, 12c., Mod.Fr. *chaudeau*), from M.L. *caldellum*, dim. of *caldum*, neut. of *caldus* "warm."

Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper

Cheaut – no translation available. However from the definition of caudell it is seen that old French provides possible etymological derivation for this word. Thus examining ‘hot drink’ in the translator the phrase ‘boisson chaude’ is provided; boisson meaning drink, and chaude meaning hot. Subsequently, from both the recipe and translations it can be seen that ‘Cheaut’ is most likely [in short] “hot drink”.

Clarea: According to Cuenca (2000, ¶ 1), “Clarea, or clar□ or clary, is a mixture of honey, wine and spices closely related to Hippocras. Hippocras is made with red wine, while clary is made with white wine.”

\*\* ‘Agua’ translates to water however the only translation of ‘clarea’ available is lightens. Clary refers to herbal plants (clar-y [klair-ee] –noun,pluralclar-ies. any of several aromatic herbs of the genus *Salvia*, esp. *S. sclarea*, having hairy, heart-shaped leaves and open clusters of lilac or blue flowers, used as a seasoning, a wine flavoring, and an ingredient in perfumes. *Origin*: bef. 1000; ME *clare*, *sclari*, OE *slarege* < ML *sclareia*.)

It is possible that its name is making reference to the process of producing the water. This is likely considering further in the article it is stated “One problem is apparent though; if the spices are finely ground, some particles will remain in suspension no matter how many times you strain the clarea.” (Cuenca, 2000, ¶9).

The straining of the fluid could be referring to ‘lightening the water’ – clarifying (clarify early 14c., from O.Fr. clarifier, from L. clarificare "to make clear," from L. clarus "famous, clear" (from clarare) + root of facere "to make, do" (see [facticious](#)). Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper)

Julep: c.1400, a syrupy drink in which medicine was given, from O.Fr. julep, from M.L. julapium, from Ar. julab, from Pers. gulab "rose water," from gul "rose" + ab "water." Sense of "alcoholic drink flavored with mint" is first recorded 1787. Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper  
#NB ‘gulab’ is now written as golab and translates as rosewater (still)

Meathe: Meath \Meath\, Meathe \Meathe\, n. [See Mead.] A sweet liquor; mead. [Obs.] --Chaucer. Milton. [Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary 1913]

Oxymel: Main Entry: ox-y-mel Pronunciation: 'äk-si-"mel Function: *noun* : a mixture of honey and dilute acetic acid used as an expectorant. Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary, © 2002 Merriam-Webster, Inc.  
**#NB For non chemical personnel Acetic acid is vinegar**

Sekanjabin: discussion within Stefan Florilegium files state various view points as to the nature of this word. Two excerpts from the files provide these viewpoints.

*I will stick with my previously stated agreement with Professor Martin Levey, [Sakanjubin is Arabicized from Pers. sirka-anjubin, "vinegar and honey."] and continue to refer to drinks containg vinegar as sekanjabins. (Contributed by Crystal A. Isaac - Crystal of the Westermarck)*

*2.) Sekanjabin is \*not\* a generic term. It is a Near or Middle Eastern oxymel, i.e., contains vinegar and honey literally) or sugar (more commonly). If a beverage liquid/syrup is not an oxymel, it is not sekanjabin. I have found, however, that way too many SCAdians use "sekanjabin" as a generic term for a Medieval Near or Middle Eastern - or modern SCA invented - beverage syrup with darn near any set of ingredients, usually with NO vinegar. (Contributed by lilanah - al-Sayyida Anahita al-Qurtubiyya bint 'abd al-Karim al-Fassi)*

Using the translator determines that 'sirka' indeed translates from Persian as vinegar, whereas anjabin has undergone some derivation due to language and has no translation. However after finding the current word for honey – نىبگنا and the actual translation of anjabin – نىبجنا, the similarities are clear and language derivation can be presumed.

Sekanjabin – beverage containing vinegar and honey or an Oxymel.

Sharab: Found in dictionary: Arabic > English. شراب noun  
1. drink 2. drinkables 3. beverage 4. slop 5. syrup  
[http://www.stars21.com/translator/arabic\\_to\\_english.html](http://www.stars21.com/translator/arabic_to_english.html)

Tannye – This term may come from the colour of the resulting fluid (mixing milk, galingale, cinnamon and red wine).

Tawny: "tan-colored," late 14c., from Anglo-Fr. tauné "associated with the brownish-yellow of tanned leather," from O.Fr. tané (12c.), pp. of taner "to tan hides," from M.L. tannare (see tan).

Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper

However by this time having checked a number of recipe books and sources for suitable terminology a number of useable recipes has already been researched.

Here are some examples:

### **Sekanjabin** [Cariadoc's Miscellany – Cariadoc's and Elizabeth's Recipes]

Dissolve 4 cups sugar in 2 1/2 cups of water; when it comes to a boil add 1 cup wine vinegar. Simmer 1/2 hour. Add a handful of mint, remove from fire, let cool. Dilute the resulting syrup to taste with ice water (5 to 10 parts water to 1 part syrup). The syrup stores without refrigeration.

Note: This is the only recipe in the *Miscellany* that is based on a modern source: *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*, by Claudia Roden. Sekanjabin is a period drink; it is mentioned in the *Fihrist* of al-Nadim, which was written in the tenth century. The only period recipe I have found for it (in the Andalusian cookbook) is called "Simple Sekanjabin" (see below) and omits the mint. It is one of a large variety of similar drinks described in that cookbook—flavored syrups intended to be diluted in either hot or cold water before drinking.

### **Clarea** [Period Drinks – Spiced Wines and Sweet Waters]

#### Clarea de Agua

A un azumbre de agua, cuatro onzas de miel; echa las mismas especias que la otra clarea; hervir el agua con la miel y despues echar las especias aparte del fuego.

#### Water Clarea

To an azumbre of water, four ounces of honey; add the same spices as the other clarea; boil the water with the honey and then add the spices off the fire.

\*\*An azumbre is equivalent to four pints, so the proportion of honey to water is one ounce per pint.

## Spices for “Clarea” (\*NB Alcoholic)

### Espicias de Clarea

Canela tres partes, clavos dos partes, gengibre una parte, todo molido y pasado por estameña y para un azumbre de vino blanco echa una onza de especias con una libra de miel, bien mezclado y pasado por una manga de lienzo pesado tantas veces para que el vino salga claro.

### Spices for Clarea

Cinnamon three parts, cloves two parts, ginger one part, all ground and passed through a sieve and for an azumbre of white wine add an ounce of spices with a pound of honey, well mixed and passed through a sleeve of heavy linen enough times that the wine comes out clear.

Ginger three parts

Cinnamon two parts

Cloves and grains of paradise one part each

For competition, I doubled the Clarea de Agua recipe:

1 gallon water

8 oz honey

2 oz mixed spices.

I boiled the honey and water together, skimmed off the foam, then removed the pot from the fire and added the crushed spices. I let them steep overnight, then strained them out through some fine cheesecloth.

### **Lemonade** [Stefan’s Florilegium]

Adapted from *The French Cook* by Francois Pierre de La Varenne [Anr ed.] For Charls Adams, 1654.

12. University Microfilms International. (1653 English translation of the 1651 text). Page 288-9

### How to make lemonade

It is made several ways, according to the diversity of the ingredients. For to make it with jasmine, you must take of it about two handful, infuse it in two or three quarts of water, and there leave it for the space of eight or ten hours; then to one quart of water you shal put fix ounces of sugar; those of orange flowers, of muscade roses & of gilli flowers are made after the fame way. For to make that of lemon, take some lemons, cut them and take out the juice, put it in water as above said, pare another lemon, cut it into slices, put it among this juice, and some sugar proportionally. That of orange is made the same way.

1 cup lemon juice

1 cup sugar

2 cups water

additional flowers as desired

Boil the water and sugar together, allow to cool slightly and add the lemon juice. Serve cold. The very late recipe (1651) for lemonade includes the addition of flowers, including jasmine, orange blossoms, muscade roses or gilly-flowers. The flowers should be added as an infusion and removed before drinking. Remember that the flowers will carry wild yeast and will ferment your lemonade if it is not kept under constant refrigeration.

## **Rose Soda – Two methods** [Stefan's Florilegium]

#1 Adapted from \_The 'Libre de Diversis Medicinis' in the Thornton Manuscript (MS. Lincoln Cathedral, A.5.2)\_. Edited by Margaret Sinclair Ogden. Published for the Early English Text Society by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. Amen House, E.C. 4. England. 1938. Text circa early 1400 CE. Page 60.

### Rose Syrup

Tak an vnce or twa of roses & sethe tham in water to the ij partis be sothen in. Than clene it thurgh clathe & do suger ther-to & sethe it to it be thikk as hony & vse as thu dose the tother.

### My Interpretation:

Take an ounce or two of roses and seethe them in twice as much water until they are soft. The strain them through cloth and add sugar. Reduce it until it is the thickness of honey. The use it as you do the other (the honey?).

#2 Anonymous. \_An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13th Century. A Complete Translation by Charles Perry of the Arabic Edition of Ambrosio Huici Miranda with the assistance of an English Translation by Elise Flemming, Stephen Bloch, Habib ibn Al-Andalusi and Janet Hinson of the Spanish Translation by Ambrosio Huici Miranda. \_□1992 by Charles Perry. Reprinted in A Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Cookery Books by Friedman, David (Sir Cariadoc of the Bow) Published privately.

### Syrup of Fresh Roses, and the Recipe for Making It (#NB Alcoholic)

Take a ratl of fresh roses, after removing the dirt from them, and cover them with boiled water for a day and night, until the water cools and the roses fall apart in the water. Clean it and take the clean part of it and add to a ratl of sugar. Cook all this until it takes the form of a syrup. Drink an uqiya of this with two of hot water....

1 tabelspoon rose extract  
2 oz dried rosehips  
1 pound sugar  
water to one gallon

Rose extract can be found at Indian grocery stores. Bring sugar and rosehips to a gentle boil in 1 or 2 quarts of water until the rosehips have given the solution a pleasant pink color. Skim out all the pieces of rosehips (strain if necessary). Add water to one gallon. Allow solution to cool to 70 degrees, and add rose extract and champagne yeast. Stir. Bottle quickly. Allow to stay at room temperature for about 3-5 days then keep refrigerated.

### **Lavender Drink** [Stefan's Florilegium]

Adapted from Anonymous. \_An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. A Complete Translation by Charles Perry of the Arabic Edition of Ambrosio Huici Miranda with the assistance of an English Translation by Elise Flemming, Stephen Bloch, Habib ibn Al-Andalusi and Janet Hinson of the Spanish Translation by Ambrosio Huici Miranda. \_□1992 by Charles Perry. Reprinted in A Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Cookery Books by Friedman, David (Sir Cariadoc of the Bow) Published privately. Page A-74

### Syrup of Lavender (Halhal)

Take a ratl of lavender and cook it in water to cover, until its substance comes out. Then take the clear part and add it to a ratl of honey, and cook all this until it is in the form of a syrup. Drink an uqiya and a half of this with three of hot water....

Simmer equal volumes of lavender and sugar in water, dilute for drinking..

### A Syrup of Honey [An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook]

Take a quarter uqiya each of cinnamon, flower of cloves and ginger, mastic, nutmeg, Chinese cinnamon, Sindi laurel, Indian lavender, Roman spikenard, elder twigs, elder seeds, oil of nutmeg, bitter and sweet nuts, large and small cardamom, wild spikenard, galingale, aloe stems, saffron, and sedge. Pound all this coarsely, tie it in a cloth, and put it in the kettle with fifteen ratls of water and five of honey, cleaned of its foam. Cook all this until it is at the point of drinking. Drink an uqiya and a half, and up to two, with hot water. Its benefit is for weak livers; it fortifies the stomach and benefits dropsy among other ailments; it dissolves phlegm from all parts of the body and heats it a great deal, gives gaiety, lightens the body, and it was used by the ancients like wine for weariness.

### Recipe for Honey-Water

Take a ratl of honey and add five ratls of water, cook until the water departs and the honey remains, and clean off the foam little by little. Pound half an uqiya of pellitory and place it in a cloth, put it in the kettle and bruise it once and again until its substance comes out. Remove it to an earthenware vessel, and take it from it at the necessary time, for it makes up for all that which detracts from this notable quality.

### Syrup of Lemon [An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook]

Take lemon, after peeling its outer skin, press it and take a *ratl* of juice, and add as much of sugar. Cook it until it takes the form of a syrup. Its advantages are for the heat of bile; it cuts the thirst and binds the bowels.

### Sweet Tisane [Le Menagier de Paris]

Take water and boil it, then add for each sixth of a gallon of water one good bowl of barley, and it does not (or it does matter? - Trans.) if it still has its hulls, and get two paris' worth of licorice, item, or figs, and boil it all until the barley bubbles; then let it be strained in two or three cloths, and put in each goblet a large amount of rock-sugar. This barley is good to feed to poultry to fatten them.

### Cheut de Almondes [Harlein MS. 4016, Take a Thousand Eggs or More volume two]

130 Cheut de Almondes. Take almonds, and blanche, hem and grynde hem with faire water, and drawe hem thorgh a streynour, and sete hem on the fire, and lete hem boyle ones; and cast there-to sugur and salt, And serue it forth hote.

130 Cheut de Almonds. Take almonds and blanch them, and grind them with fair water, and draw them through a strainer, and set them on the fire, and let them boil once; and cast thereto sugar and salt, And serve it forth hot.

### **Another [Way] To Make Meath – 1669 [A Sip through Time]**

- 6 wine quarts water
- 1/2 ounce whole nutmegs
- 1 lemon peel
- 1 quart honey
- pulp of 2 or 3 lemons
- lemon juice

#### **Time to completion: less than 1 month.**

To every quart of honey allow six Wine-quarts of water; half an Ounce of Nutmegs, and the Peel of a Limon, and the meat of two or three, as you make the quantity. Boil these together, till the scum rise no more; It must stand till it be quite cold, and when you Tun it, you squeeze into it the juyce of some Limons, and this will make it ripen quickly. It will be ready in less then a month.

(From *The Closet of... Sir Kenelme Digby... Opened, 1669.* )

### **Another White Meath – 1669 [A Sip through Time]**

- 3 lbs. honey
- 1 gallon water
- 1/8 ounce ginger root
- cloves
- mace blades
- agrimony

#### **Time to completion: 2 or 3 months.**

Take three Pound of White-honey, or the best Hampshire-honey, and dissolve it in a Gallon of water, and then boil it; and when it beginneth first to boil; put into it half a quarter of an Ounce of Ginger a little bruised; and a very little Cloves and Mace bruised, and a small quantity of Agrimony. Let all this boil together a full hour, and keep it constantly skimmed, as long as any Scum will rise upon it. Then strain it forth into some clean Kiver or other vessel, and let stand a cooling; and when it is cold, let it stand, till it be all creamed over with a blackish cream, and that it make a kind of hissing noise; then put it up into your vessel, and in two or three months time it will be fit to drink.

Look how much you intend to make, the same quantities must be allowed to every Gallon of water.

(*ibid.*)

**Note:** in both these recipes no mention is made of the addition of yeast. In older houses, where brewing and baking have been done for many years under less than sterile conditions, yeasts have taken up residence, their spores swirling freely in the air and falling into vats and kneading troughs, raising the bread and fermenting the beer without human intervention. It is possible that those recipes which leave out the yeast come from homes with such resident yeast colonies. Or, it may simply have been an oversight.



### **Ginger syrup** [Non-Alcoholic Dinks in Period]

Chop 1/2 pound of ginger finely (makes about 1 and 2/3 c.).  
Mix with 4 c. water and boil for 30 minutes Cool overnight  
Mix 1 c. honey with 1 c. water; boil for 5-10 minutes  
Strain ginger and add liquid to honey syrup. Boil for 5 minutes.  
Add 1/3 c. lime juice. Boil 2 minutes.  
Cool & bottle.  
Dilute 1 part syrup in 6-8 parts water.

### **Syrup of Apples** [Non-Alcoholic Dinks in Period]

Take a ratl of sweet apples, those that the common people call sar□j [this might mean "little lamps"], cook them in water to cover until they fall apart and their substance comes out, then clarify it and take the clear part and add it to a ratl of sugar. The bag: an □qiya of aloe stems, pounded and put into the bag. Cook until it takes the form of a syrup. Drink an □qiya in two of hot water. Its benefits: it fortifies and gladdens the heart.

5 lbs of sweet apples (like winesap, gala, braeburn, etc□)  
5 lbs of sugar  
Several gallon size tea bags or crushed aloe stems in cloth bag  
Water

Wash and quarter apples. Put in a large stockpot and cover with water. Cook apples over medium heat until they fall apart easily when pressed with a spoon, about an hour and a half. Keep an eye and stir occasionally to prevent sticking and scorching. Once the apples are soft and have given up their juice pour the mass into a strainer set over another stockpot and press out as much juice as possible. Discard the apple remains.

Add tea bags or aloe stems to the liquid. Add sugar. Set stockpot over the fire on low and allow to reduce over several hours until the liquid has reduced to a quarter of the volume. Cool and place in jars.

The recipe calls for it to be mixed with hot water and this creates a very satisfying "hot toddy" effect. This is great for a cool evening

## NOTES

# A ratl is about a pound, an Uqiya an ounce--but as in the Troy system, there are 12 uqiyas to a ratl.

# Link to one cooking terminology glossary: <http://home.olemiss.edu/~tjray/medieval/cooking.htm>

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