



Bartender Elea fills a bottle of mead for a customer.
PHOTO/MARC TIAR

Pleased to mead you

Black Rabbit Mead Company

By now, most of us know what to expect from a brewery, winery or a distillery. Most of our bases are covered in terms of alcohol production and consumption in the same place, right? However, just when you think you've got everything figured out, welcome to Black Rabbit Mead Company—Nevada's first meadery.

For those not hip to mead, it's a fermented, honey-based drink. It's possibly the oldest alcoholic beverage known, dating back millennia and often associated with Vikings. Mead can vary widely, from light, carbonated versions to a flat, wine-like drink, and from dry to sweet—often infused with fruits, herbs or spices.

When Black Rabbit opened last year in the heart of Fourth Street's Brewery District, I was eager to go mead drinking. Beer and I are like soulmates, intimately familiar on a molecular level, but I'm still a mead amateur. I've tasted a few world-class examples, but the one time I tried making it years ago, it was an undrinkable hot mess reminiscent of gasoline.

My wife and I made it down to Black Rabbit on a recent Friday evening with few expectations. I didn't know if it would be more like a bar or a tasting room. Their website promised "cider

style" meads, which I correctly assumed would be lighter and carbonated. They were different than I have tasted before, made with honey sourced from the Sierra Nevada, but beyond that, we went in blind.

After finding easy parking, we entered past the curious black facade like we knew what we were doing. The place is welcoming, clean and a little idiosyncratic—including elements of bicycle culture, mountain sports, breakdancing on the TV and botanical decor. Dark wood beams and tables evoke both "Swiss ski lodge" and "Viking drinking hall."

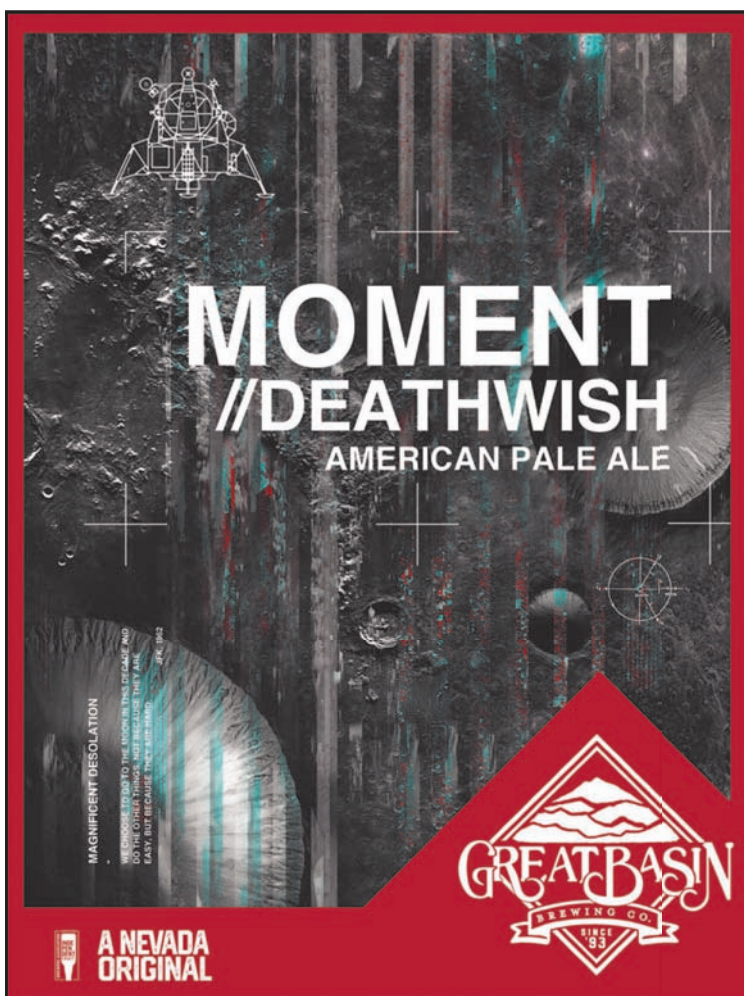
Entirely uncrowded, it was easy to approach the bar and ask questions—signage explained

a lot, almost too much information at once. The main menu lists four dry, cider-style house meads, all 6.9% alcohol. I liked the unflavored "Church of Roger,"—basic, light and refreshing, balanced between dry and slightly sweet. I really enjoyed the pineapple/jalapeno "Hawaiian Ember"—flavorful but without heat—and the hop-infused "Three Headed Rabbit." Neither the tangy raspberry nor the rosemary/blackberry versions appealed to me, though. Their flavors were too subtle or out of balance for my palate. Convenient flights of four five-ounce pours made it easy to sample everything without fully committing to something unfamiliar.

The draft menu also offers three "beer-style meads," which were blended with beers from neighboring Lead Dog Brewing Co. I enjoyed them but found them beer-dominant, not balanced enough to find the "wow" I hoped for. I do appreciate the collaboration, though. There's also a non-alcoholic "junbucha," a green tea/honey kombucha, available.

While the draft meads and blends are the core lineup, there's certainly more to enjoy at Black Rabbit. Weekend afternoons offer a variety of "mead-mosas," blending meads with different fruit juices, or a "mead-chelada." A few commercial sodas, CBD shots and a warm spiced mead round out the options. We took home a fresh bottle of the hoppy mead and growler fills are available as well.

Find Black Rabbit Meadery at 401 E. Fourth St., or go to www.black-rabbitmeads.com.



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