

Honey

How Honey is Made:

Honey gets its start as flower nectar, which is collected by bees, naturally broken down into simple sugars and stored in honeycombs. The unique design of the honeycomb, coupled with constant fanning by the bees' wings, causes evaporation to take place, creating the thick, sweet liquid we know as honey.

The color and flavor of honey varies from hive to hive based on the type of flower nectar collected by the bees. For example, honey made from Orange Blossom nectar might be light in color, whereas honey from Avocado or Wildflowers might have a dark amber color. In the United States alone, there are more than 300 unique types of honey produced, each originating from a different floral source.

Fortunately, honey bees will make more honey than their colony needs, so it is necessary for beekeepers to remove the excess. On average, a hive will produce about 80 pounds of surplus honey each year.

Extracting and Bottling:

Beekeepers — large and small — harvest honey by collecting the honeycomb frames and scraping off the wax cap that bees make to seal off honey in each cell.

Once the caps are removed, the frames are placed in an extractor — a centrifuge that spins the frames, forcing honey out of the comb. The honey is spun to the sides of the extractor, where gravity pulls it to the bottom and it can be collected.

After the honey is extracted, it is strained to remove any remaining pieces of wax or other particles. Some beekeepers and bottlers might heat the honey to make it easier to strain, but this does nothing to alter the liquid's natural composition. It only makes the straining process easier and more effective.

After straining, it's time to bottle, label and distribute the honey to retail outlets. Whether the container is glass or plastic, or purchased at the grocery store or farmers market, if the ingredient label says pure honey, you can rest assured that nothing was added, from bee to hive to bottle.

Honey Variations:

The color, flavor, and even aroma of a particular variety of honey may differ depending on the nectar source of flowers visited by the honey bee. The colors may range from nearly colorless to dark brown, the flavor may vary from delectably mild to distinctively bold, and even the odor of the honey may be mildly reminiscent of the flower.

Varietal honeys may be best compared to varietal wine in terms of annual climactic changes. Even the same flower blooming in the same location may produce slightly different nectar from year-to-year depending upon temperature and rainfall.

There are more than 300 unique types of honey available in the United States, each originating from a different floral source.

Health Benefits:

Honey has been used for centuries to help alleviate some of the symptoms associated with a common cold. For relief of the irritating symptoms, try a spoonful of honey to soothe and coat your throat. Take a spoonful straight, as often as you need, to relieve the irritation.

Honey is a source of carbohydrates, providing 17 grams per tablespoon, which makes it ideal for your working muscles since carbohydrates are the primary fuel the body uses for energy.

Honey is a humectant, which means it attracts and retains moisture. This makes honey a natural fit in a variety of moisturizing products.

Honey has been used to heal burns and prevent infection for thousands of years. It has been used as a wound cover in studies on treating burns and is found in many licensed medical products. There is evidence to support the benefit of honey in healing and sterilizing infected wounds. Promising results show that honey may reduce burn-healing time.

Honey has been commonly used for wound management and the promotion of healing. It has also been used to treat antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The pollen particles in honey can help to relieve allergy symptoms by helping you build immunity to the pollen in the air.