

Honey the Healer

Honey has long been recognized as a natural remedy and has been used as a medicine for thousands of years.

Perhaps your parents failed to mention it when they discussed the birds and the bees with you, but honey has long been known to have a multitude of healing powers with everything from relieving a sore throat, allergies, healing wounds, etc. It also goes great with peanut butter.

From deep-flavoured buckwheat honey to delicate linden honey, this golden nectar is rightly prized around the world. The word itself is derived from an Indo-European term meaning "yellow."

There are hundreds of distinct types of honey around the world, from New Zealand's Manuka honey (thought to contain beneficial bacteria that help ward off infection) to Sundarbans honey, gathered from the mangrove forests of Bangladesh.



Types of Honey

Honey can be mild or spicy, buttery, fruity, herbal, or woody, depending on the source of the nectar. The general rule is: the darker the colour, the stronger the flavor.

Clover honey--the most common type--is light and neutral. It will sweeten, but not dominate, a recipe.

Orange blossom honey is also a good, light floral choice to use in recipes.

Buckwheat honey has a bold, musky flavor (think of buckwheat pancakes).

Linden honey is characterized by its herbal and aromatic notes.

Honeycomb is fun as a novelty--try spreading it on toast--but it's not useful in recipes. Honey butters and creams are generally in a

crystallized and semi-solid form; they're best used as spreads, as they tend to be more expensive than liquid honey.

On the health side, research shows that at 64 calories, one spoonful of honey is more effective than any cough syrup in treating coughs - and is safe for children over 12 months old.

Other research reveals that honey consumption raises antioxidant levels. Honey soothes on contact and has well-established antioxidant and antimicrobial effects, which helps explain its contributions to wound healing.

In a study, 25 people were told to eat between four and 10 tablespoons of buckwheat honey, depending on their weight, each day for a month. They could eat the honey in almost any form, but it couldn't be baked or dissolved in tea. Many chose to eat it straight from the spoon. Antioxidant levels rose in the participants. Antioxidants provide defense against free radicals, which cause cell damage.

Honey is known to contain as many antioxidants – chemicals which combat the free radicals which can damage cells - as spinach, apples, oranges or strawberries. Drinking four tablespoons of honey mixed into a 16-ounce glass of water has been known to improve the antioxidant levels in the blood. It is a well known fact that honey contains varying levels of antioxidants, with dark honey having more than light. Eating honey along with supplemental calcium appears to enhance calcium absorption.

Approximately one half of the human diet is derived directly or indirectly from crops pollinated by bees. Today honeybees are an essential part of a healthy agriculture economy. If you have allergies, honey can be beneficial. If you eat honey that is local to your area, it can prevent your seasonal allergies. Bees use the pollen from local plants and eventually it ends up in your honey.

Health-promoting compounds found in honey could make this ingredient a more attractive option for food makers currently using bulk sweeteners such as high-fructose corn syrup and looking to jump on board the growing health foods trend.

Honey is composed of sugars like glucose and fructose and minerals like magnesium, potassium, calcium, sodium chlorine, sulphur, iron and phosphate. It contains vitamins B1, B2, C, B6, B5 and B3 all of

which change according to the qualities of the nectar and pollen. Besides the above, copper, iodine, and zinc exist in it in small quantities. Several kinds of hormones are also present in it. All of the above make honey a wonderful beauty aid that nourishes the skin and the hair. Honey acts as an antibacterial and antifungal agent and helps disinfect and speed the healing process in wounds, scrapes and burns.

Honey as a beautifier

- Honey mixed with ground almonds makes an excellent facial cleansing scrub.
- A tablespoon of honey whisked together with an egg white, 1 teaspoon of glycerin and about 1/4 cup of flour makes an excellent firming mask. Just smooth on the face, leave on 15 minutes, and rinse off with warm water. You will be pleased with the results.
- Honey also makes a great moisturizing pack. Just mix 2 tablespoons of honey with 2 teaspoons of whole milk, smooth over the face and throat, and let it do its job for 15 minutes. Rinse off with warm water, and finish splashing with cold water.
- Honey also makes a great lotion for dry patches of skin on hands, elbows, or other parts. Just mix 1 teaspoon of honey with 1 teaspoon of olive oil and a 1/2 teaspoon of lemon juice. Apply to hands, elbows, heels of your foot, etc., and wash off after 15 minutes. Fast relief!
- Honey works well on chapped lips and for acne because it has antibacterial properties.
- To give your hair lustrous shine, mix 1 teaspoon of honey into 4 cups of warm water. Use as a hair rinse. And if you're a blond, add the juice of 1 lemon, too.
- Mix 1 tablespoon of honey with a cup of warm water. Use it as a mouthwash. Honey cleans teeth and dentures, and kills germs in the mouth.

Honey as food

- Add to porridge so when your body burns the natural sugar it'll supply you with central heating when the weather's cold.
- Keep your fruit intake up by making a smoothie, using whatever fruit you like, with a teaspoon of honey - it will boost the antioxidant levels in your blood.
- Make a honey and banana sandwich for a snack that's delicious and quick any time, especially if you're on the run.

- If you've got a cold, put a large teaspoon of honey in a mug, add a slice of lemon with a couple of cloves, top up with very hot water.
- If you're making pancakes, try using honey instead of syrup or sugar for a natural alternative.
- Using honey in your tea or coffee instead of sugar is a good idea - honey is sweeter than sugar so you need to use less, and it's lower in calories too.
- To make a speedy yet healthy pudding, just slice up a banana and drizzle with honey.
- When you need an instant boost to your energy levels, try a teaspoon of honey neat.

Honey for better health:

- Honey is sedative, anti-fungal and nourishing
- Soothes tissues and help retain calcium in the body
- Antibacterial – great for both internal or external problem
- Considered to be a swiss army knife in the world of alternative medicine.
- Honey can boost the immune system

Home Remedies with Honey:

- Mixture of equal quantities of honey and ginger juice is a good expectorant. It helps in colds, cough, sore throat and runny nose
- For asthma, mix half a gram of black pepper powder with honey and ginger juice mixture. Drink this mixture a few times a day
- Honey can soothe and encourage the healing of sores in the mouth
- A bowl of oats porridge with a spoonful of honey will calm the nerve. Ideal to be taken before an exam.
- Honey is a great moisturizer and can be used on the skin as a natural revitalizing mask
- Eating a little local honey will make you "immune" to pollens in the area
- To improve eyesight, mix honey with carrot juice. Take one hour before breakfast
- To purify the blood, mix one glass of warm water with 1-2 teaspoonful of honey and one teaspoonful of lemon juice. It is great for reducing body fat and helps clean your bowel
- Natural honey causes a lower rise in blood sugar than that of refined sugars in people with Type 2 diabetes. A little unprocessed honey may be added in their drinks when they crave some sweetness in their diet. Just use raw

honey to benefit from this goodness.

Having gone through the benefits, you should now be raring to incorporate honey into your meals and drinks. These delicious drinks are packed with fruit and honey, so they're really good for you and an easy way of helping you towards your five-a-day target. If you have time, freeze the fruit first - it gives you a colder, thicker smoothie.

Blueberry smoothie

Makes: 1 glass

75g (3oz) blueberries
1 small banana, peeled and in chunks
2tbsp fromage frais
2tsp acacia or regular honey
75ml (3floz) milk

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and whizz smooth. Pour into a tall glass.

Two-minute smoothie

Makes: 1 glass

1 large mango peeled and stoned, flesh in scoops
1 banana, peeled and in chunks
300ml (1/2pt) milk
1tsp orange blossom or regular honey

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and whizz smooth. Pour into a tall glass.

Full of nutritious goodness these smoothies taste good and for a change are actually good for you too!!

Cooking with honey is rewarding because firstly it enriches the taste of whatever you are cooking plus makes it a lot more nutritious for the family than plain sugar.

Carrot, raisin and honey cake

This popular cake is a sure winner with family and friends and is lower in sugar than traditional versions as honey is substituted for some of the sugar. The wholemeal flour, carrots and raisins all provide extra fibre, so you can tell yourself that eating cake is good for you!.

Makes: 16 slices

3 carrots
125g (4 oz) self-raising flour
125g (4 oz) wholemeal self-raising flour
1tsp baking powder
1tsp cinnamon
25g (1oz) brown sugar
85g (3 oz) honey
3 eggs
1tsp vanilla extract
125ml (4fl oz) sunflower oil
85g (3 oz) raisins
2-3tbsp milk

1. Pre-heat the oven to 170°C/325°F/gas 4. Line a 20 cm (8in) round cake tin with greaseproof paper and brush with a little oil.
2. Peel and grate the carrots on a chopping board.
3. Place the flours, baking powder, cinnamon and sugar in a bowl and mix together.
4. Put the honey, eggs, vanilla, and oil in a separate bowl and mix together with a whisk or fork. Add to the flour mixture and mix well.
5. Stir in the grated carrots and raisins with a metal spoon. Add a little milk to give a fairly soft consistency.
6. Spoon the cake mixture into the lined tin.
7. Bake for about 1hr. Check that the cake is done by inserting a skewer or knife into the centre. It should come out clean.
8. Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 10 mins, then loosen the sides and turn out on to a wire rack. Remove the lining paper and leave to cool.

Mango and passion fruit pancakes

Ingredients for the filing:

2 ripe mangoes, cubed
Flesh of 3 passion fruit (optional)
6tbsp runny honey
Greek Yoghurt

Ingredients for the pancakes:



300g (10 1/2oz) plain flour
1tsp baking powder
284ml (10fl oz) milk
6 eggs, beaten
25g (1oz) butter

1. Sift together the flour and baking powder into a large bowl and make a well in the centre.
2. Combine the buttermilk with 100ml (3 1/2fl oz) cold water. Pour into the flour a little at a time, whisking as you go until smooth. Beat in the eggs and a pinch of salt.
3. Heat a little of the butter in a small frying pan and spoon in about 3tbsp of the mixture. Cook for 1-2 mins on each side.
4. Keep the pancake warm on a plate resting on top of a pan of lightly simmering water, covered with cling film, while you cook the rest of the batter in the same way.
5. Stack the pancakes with the mango and passion fruit, then drizzle with honey and serve with a spoonful of Greek yogurt.

Apple Spice Bread

Ingredients

1 egg, beaten
1/3 c. canola oil
3/4 c. honey
1/4 tsp. vanilla
2 1/2 c. cored % 26 thinly sliced apples
1/4 c. ground walnuts
3/4 c. unbleached white flour
1/4 c. whole wheat pastry flour
1 tsp. each baking soda & cinnamon
1/4 tsp. each salt & nutmeg

Instructions

Cream egg, oil, honey, and vanilla together. Add apples and walnuts. Sift dry and add to wet. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Lower heat to 325 degrees for 20 minutes until done. 1 loaf.

Honey Oat Squares

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats, uncooked
- 1/2 cup finely chopped dried apricots
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 2 egg whites
- 2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 Tablespoons low fat butter or margarine, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt



Directions

- Spray 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- Combine all ingredients in large bowl; mix well.
- Spread mixture evenly into prepared pan.
- Bake at 325°F about 25 minutes or until center is firm and edges are lightly browned.
- Cool and cut into 2-inch squares.

These serve as fabulous snacks for kids either in their lunch boxes or generally when out to play. Carry them with you and instead of chocolates and sweets hand them these little squares and they will be won over. For a little treat add a few chocolate chips to the recipes and once baked and cooled, wrap them in little coloured squares of tissue paper and tie with small ribbons to create a little surprise effect. Use them in party bags for kids instead of sugary treats!

Note: Never give honey to children younger than one year old. Honey may contain trace amounts of botulism spores. While these spores are harmless to most people, immature digestive systems are susceptible; infants can develop breathing problems or paralysis. Pasteurization or cooking will not destroy the spores.