In the Garden with *Honey*

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Next time you hear the buzz of a honey bee in your garden, think positive thoughts about this little wonder. Gardens need bees to flourish because of the pollination they provide. Honey bees are responsible for pollinating most fruits, vegetables, legumes and more. In fact, to produce a pound of honey, bees must visit some 2 million flowers. Those floral blossoms help create more than 300 varieties of honey ranging in flavor from clover and sage to blueberry and buckwheat.

This season, gather up your favorite produce items and combine them with the sweet and soothing properties of honey. Traditional blended honey is available at retail outlets nationwide, while regional varietal honeys are found at farmers' markets, specialty food shops, gourmet stores or on-line at www.honeylocator.com.

On the following pages, you'll find a variety of ideas for delicious recipes, soothing beauty treatments and homemade food gifts that combine honey with nature's generous garden bounty.

With more than 300 varieties of honey in the U.S., there is a honey for every occasion. Following is a sampling of varietal honeys ranging from light to dark, with darker honeys having a stronger flavor.

Light Honey	Flavor Characteristics
Alfalfa	Mild flavor; beeswax aroma. Use in desserts such as tarts and cookies.
Clover	Sweet, flowery flavor. Delicious in fresh brewed tea and other beverages.
Sage	Sweet, clover-like flavor; mild floral aftertaste. Pair with cheese and crackers for a tantalizing appetizer.

Medium Honey	Flavor Characteristics
Blueberry	Aroma reminiscent of green leaves with a touch of lemon. Adds fruity flavor to warm scones.
Orange Blossom	Sweet, fruity taste with notes of citrus. Delicious in frosty smoothies.
Tupelo	Complex floral, herbal flavor and aftertaste. Decadent atop warm biscuits.

Dark Honey	Flavor Characteristics
Buckwheat	Pungent, molasses-like flavor. Use this dark and malty honey to create rich barbecue sauces.
Eucalyptus	Herbal flavor with a fruity aftertaste; sometimes with a menthol flavor. Mild, sweet flavor complements tender lamb shanks.
Wildflower	Pungent, floral flavor. Ranges from dark to very dark and is delicious blended in dressings and marinades.

ALL-NATURAL BEAUTY RECIPES

Honey has been used as a beauty product since the days of Cleopatra. It continues to be featured in manufactured and homemade skin care and hair care products. As a natural humectant, honey has the ability to attract and retain moisture, making it ideal for use in moisturizing products. The following recipes allow you to make inexpensive, all-natural beauty products at home.

Lavender-Honey Milk Bath

⅓ cup dried lavender flowers
3 cups whole milk, cream or combination
¾ cup honey

Process lavender flowers in a blender until they become a powder, turning off the blender and scraping down the sides as necessary. Whisk together lavender powder, milk and honey in a glass bowl, then pour into a jar. Before each use, shake the jar and pour 1¼ cups into the bath. Store covered in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Makes enough for 3 baths.

Honey Almond Scrub

8 whole unblanched almonds, ground (2 tablespoons)
2 tablespoons rolled oats, uncooked
1 tablespoon honey
2 teaspoons yogurt, sour cream or lightly beaten egg white

Process the almonds and oats in a blender until they are finely ground. In a small bowl, mix the ground almonds and oats, honey and yogurt until blended. Pat the scrub on face and neck and upper chest; leave it on for up to 10 minutes for extra softening. Wet your hands and massage gently to exfoliate. Rinse off and pat dry. Makes enough for 1 scrub.

A HONEY OF A GIFT

Rosemary-Infused Honey

Drizzle over warm Brie and serve with baguette slices. Or add to marinades and barbecue sauces.

1 cup honey (such as clover honey)
¾ cup fresh rosemary leaves

Place honey in a double boiler with water in bottom. Squeeze rosemary leaves to release flavor and add to honey. Bring water to a boil; bring honey to 185°F and keep at 185°F for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 10 minutes. Strain while still warm. Place in sterilized jars and cap. Makes 1 cup.

- To make **Mint Honey**, substitute 1 cup loosely packed mint leaves for rosemary. **Serving suggestion:** Drizzle into hot or cold teas, add to dressing for fruit or green salads, or serve over pound cake or angel food cake.

- To make **Orange-Flavored Honey**, substitute the zest of one orange, cut in strips, for rosemary. **Serving suggestion:** Combine with butter and serve over sautéed vegetables. Makes a delicious topping for breads, biscuits, pancakes and French toast.

A HONEY OF A RECIPE

Fruit Salad with Honey-Lime Dressing

- ½ cup honey (such as clover or orange blossom honey)
- ½ cup lime juice
- Pinch of nutmeg or cinnamon
- 4 cups assorted fruit (berries, sliced apple, melon, peaches, plums, quartered kiwi, etc.)

In a blender or food processor, combine honey, juice and seasoning; blend until smooth. In a medium bowl, toss fruit with dressing and chill until ready to serve. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 257 calories, 1.6 g protein, 0.9 g fat, 61 g carbohydrates, 5 g fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 10 mg sodium.

Honey-Dijon Dressing

- ¼ cup honey (such as buckwheat or chestnut honey)
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl; mix well. Serve over grilled or sautéed vegetables, or toss with salad greens. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 120 calories, 1 g protein, 4.5 g fat, 21 g carbohydrates, 0 g fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 290 mg sodium.

Honey Usage Ideas

Roasted Pepper, Honey and Balsamic Dressing: Roast or grill 2 red bell peppers until charred; peel peppers and discard seeds. Puree in a blender with 2 tablespoons honey (such as star thistle honey), 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar and salt to taste. Drizzle dressing over a composed salad of roasted chicken, cooked and sliced small red potatoes, blanched green beans, red onion slices and shaved Parmesan cheese.

Sliced Tomato Platter: Arrange sliced fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, feta cheese and ripe olives on a platter. Drizzle with equal parts of honey (such as sage honey), tarragon vinegar and extra virgin olive oil. Sprinkle with fresh chives.

Grilled Corn with Honey-Lime Butter: Melt ¼ cup butter and stir in 2 tablespoons honey (such as clover honey), 1 tablespoon lime juice and salt to taste. Brush on ears of corn after grilling.

Honey Caramelized Onion Pizza: Sauté sliced onions in a little butter until tender. Stir in several tablespoons of honey (such as buckwheat honey) and continue to cook onions, stirring constantly, until golden brown. Arrange caramelized onion on a prepared pizza crust with sliced prosciutto, sliced fresh tomatoes, crumbled Gorgonzola cheese and minced fresh thyme; heat in a preheated 400°F oven for 10 to 15 minutes.

Honey Crème Fraîche: Stir together ¼ cup crème fraîche and 1 tablespoon honey (such as orange blossom honey) and spoon over bowls of fresh berries: blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries.