SWEET AND SIMPLE SPA MOMENTS

Honey

In need of a little pampering to relax the body and revive the soul? With sweet and soothing honey, you can bypass that expensive trip to the spa and create mini-spa treatments and healthful menu ideas economically at home.

Pure and natural honey has long been a part of beauty regimens and healthful diets. Its natural hydrating properties make it ideal for use in moisturizing products. Honey also serves as a natural source of antioxidants, which may help protect our health and well-being. Antioxidants can counteract free radicals that are believed to contribute to many chronic diseases.

A touch of honey also adds rich, distinctive flavor to a variety of foods and beverages. The following pages include honey-based spa treatments and delicious recipes for pre- or post-workout activities. Try some! You'll enjoy honey's soothing effects throughout the day.

Homemade Spa Treatments

Few can resist the inner and outer glow produced by a trip to the spa. Honey, which has been used in beauty treatments since the time of Cleopatra, continues to be featured as a moisturizing ingredient in skin care and hair care products. The recipes below allow you to make inexpensive, all-natural honey spa treatments at home.

Lavender-Honey Milk Bath

3 tablespoons dried lavender flowers*
1½ cups whole milk, cream or combination
⅓ 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 half of the mixture into the bath. Store covered in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Makes enough for 2 baths.

**Dried lavender flowers can be found in the spice section of gourmet and specialty stores.*

Cucumber-Honey Toner

1 medium cucumber, peeled and cut into pieces
2 teaspoons honey

Puree cucumber in a blender. Line a sieve with cheesecloth and set the sieve over a glass bowl or measuring cup. Pour the cucumber puree through the sieve and let it stand for 15 minutes for the juices to drip into the bowl. Pour the clear juice into a clean bottle and add honey.

To use, shake the bottle and saturate a cotton pad with the lotion. Sweep over face, neck and chest morning and night, and let it air dry (about 3 to 4 minutes). Store covered in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Makes about ½ cup.

Honey-Almond Scrub

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

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

Honey-Kissed Lip Balm

1 cup sweet almond oil*
1/2 cup beeswax**
2 tablespoons honey

Place almond oil and beeswax in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 1 minute or until mixture melts. Whisk honey into beeswax mixture; stir well. Set aside to cool completely. When cool, pour into small containers with lids. Apply to lips as a moisturizer or on top of lipstick for extra shine. Makes about 1 1/2 cups.

**Sweet almond oil can be found at natural food stores.*
*** Beeswax can be purchased at craft and beekeeping stores.*

Food For Fuel

Honey contains a unique mixture of carbohydrates, mainly fructose and glucose. Recent studies suggest that the natural sugar mixture in honey can help enhance athletic performance. With that in mind, you'll want to try these beverages and energy boosters before or after your workout.

Strawberry-Kiwi Smoothie

- 1½ cups frozen strawberries
- 1 large kiwi, peeled
- 1 (8-ounce) container low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 10 ice cubes

In a blender or food processor, combine all ingredients and process until smooth. Serve immediately. Makes 2 (1½-cup) servings.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 230; protein 7 g; fat 1.5 g; carbohydrates 50 g; cholesterol 5 mg; fiber 4 g; sodium 85 mg.

Honey-Citrus Tea

- 3 tea bags (green or black)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cups boiling water
- 1 cup grapefruit juice
- ¼ cup honey

Place tea bags and cinnamon stick in a 1-quart tea pot. Add boiling water; steep for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove tea bags and cinnamon stick; discard. Stir in grapefruit juice and honey. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 90; protein 0 g; fat 0 g; carbohydrates 23 g; cholesterol 0 mg; fiber 0 g; sodium 0 mg.

Honey Morning Muffins

2½ cups 100% bran cereal
1⅓ cups buttermilk
½ cup honey
⅓ cup vegetable oil
½ to 1 tablespoon grated orange peel
2 eggs
⅔ cup dried cranberries
½ cup chopped pecans (optional)
1½ cups flour
¼ cup brown sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
Honey-Orange Butter (below, optional)

Preheat oven to 375°F and line 12 muffin tins with paper wrappers. Stir cereal and buttermilk together in a large bowl; let stand for 5 minutes to soften. Add honey, oil, orange peel and eggs to bowl. Stir until combined, then add cranberries and pecans. Mix all dry ingredients in a small bowl and add to cereal, mixing just until combined. Spoon into prepared muffin tins. Muffin tins will be very full. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown and cooked through. Serve warm with Honey-Orange Butter, if desired. Makes 12 muffins.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 270; protein 6 g; fat 8 g; carbohydrates 50 g; cholesterol 35 mg; fiber 6 g; sodium 330 mg.

Honey-Orange Butter: Stir together ½ cup softened butter, ¼ cup honey and 1 tablespoon grated orange peel.

Honey-Hazelnut Spread

Beat ½ cup softened butter and ½ cup honey until smooth; stir in ½ cup roasted, skinned, ground hazelnuts. Spread on toast, biscuits or muffins.*

** Roast hazelnuts on a baking sheet at 325°F for 15 minutes or until skins blister and nuts are lightly colored. Cool slightly; rub nuts between palms of hand or with clean towel to remove skins.*

Spa-Inspired Serving Ideas

Honey-Marinated Tofu: In a small bowl, whisk 3 tablespoons honey, 1 tablespoon peanut or vegetable oil, 2 teaspoons soy sauce and 1 teaspoon dark sesame oil. Brush generously over ½-inch rectangles or triangles of firm, drained tofu and refrigerate until ready to grill. Grill and serve on a bed of mixed greens; sprinkle with sesame seeds and thin strips of green onion. Drizzle with any remaining marinade.

Honey-Ginger Drizzle: Simmer ½ cup honey, 2 tablespoons water, 5 or 6 peeled, quarter-size slices fresh ginger and strips of peel from ½ of a lemon for 5 minutes. Strain and cool, then drizzle over melon or peach slices, strawberries and frozen yogurt.

Honey of a Lunch: Arrange fig halves or pear slices and toasted walnuts around a scoop of ricotta cheese on a plate; drizzle the fruit and cheese with honey. Serve with slices of toasted whole wheat walnut bread or other rustic loaf.

Honey-Roasted Garlic Canapés: Peel cloves from 1 head of garlic and place them in a very small baking dish. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons honey; wrap with aluminum foil and bake at 350°F for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the garlic is tender. Let cool, then mash to a paste. Spread on thin slices of whole wheat bread; top with crumbled Gorgonzola and toasted walnuts. Try honey-garlic paste on grilled fish, chicken or pork tenderloin, or with roasted vegetables.

Honey-Sesame Salad: Arrange mixed greens on a plate and top with a handful of sprouts, avocado slices and sesame seeds. In a small bowl, whisk 1 tablespoon each of honey and olive oil and 2 teaspoons each of lime juice, rice vinegar and soy sauce, then drizzle over the salad.

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