

LEARNING MADE EASY



Honey

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Discover honey's
many health benefits

Shop for, taste, and pair
varietal honeys

Make over 50 honey-
inspired recipes

C. Marina Marchese

Founder, *American Honey Tasting Society*

Howland Blackiston

Author of bestselling *Beekeeping
For Dummies*



Honey

by C. Marina Marchese and
Howland Blackiston

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Honey For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2021 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES OR WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A PROFESSIONAL WHERE APPROPRIATE. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021932806

ISBN 978-1-119-78093-9 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-78094-6 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-78095-3 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Honey, Give Me the Lowdown	7
CHAPTER 1: Dipping into Honey's History and Its Importance Today	9
CHAPTER 2: Looking at How Honey Is Made and Harvested	19
CHAPTER 3: Appreciating the Different Styles of Honey	29
Part 2: Nutrition, Health, and Honey	37
CHAPTER 4: All About Apitherapy	39
CHAPTER 5: Making Honey Remedies at Home	49
Part 3: Honey Varietals	69
CHAPTER 6: Discovering the World's Top Honey Producers	71
CHAPTER 7: Getting to Know 50 Varietals of Honey	81
CHAPTER 8: All That Glistens Is Not Liquid Gold	113
Part 4: Becoming a Honey Tasting Expert	121
CHAPTER 9: Thinking Like a Honey Sommelier	123
CHAPTER 10: Knowing How to Taste Honey	133
CHAPTER 11: Taking the Terror Out Of Terroir	151
CHAPTER 12: Looking at What Can Go Wrong With Honey	159
Part 5: Hey, Honey, Let's Party	165
CHAPTER 13: Shopping for Your Honey	167
CHAPTER 14: Brewing Honey Wine (Mead)	177
CHAPTER 15: Cooking with Honey	201
CHAPTER 16: Baking with Honey	223
CHAPTER 17: Using Honey for Thirst-Quenching and Celebratory Beverages	243
CHAPTER 18: Pairing Honey with Cheese and Other Foods	257
CHAPTER 19: Honey, Let's Have a Party	265
Part 6: The Part of Tens	275
CHAPTER 20: Ten Great Honey Festivals	277
CHAPTER 21: More Than Ten Frequently Asked Questions about Honey	281
CHAPTER 22: Ten Honeys for your Bucket List	289

Part 7: Appendixes	295
APPENDIX A: Glossary	297
APPENDIX B: Helpful Honey Resources	305
Index	317

Recipes at a Glance

Honey Sugar Body Scrub	51
Honey Facial Cleanse	52
Honey Facial Wash/Mask	53
Honey Body Wash	54
Honey Mineral Bath	55
Honey Bath Bomb	56
Hair Rinse	57
Shaving Lotion	58
Honey Whipped Hand and Body Cream	59
Sunburn Skin Soother	60
Honey Lemon Ginger Cough Drops	62
Honey & Propolis Throat Spray	63
Honey & Lemon Throat Gargle	64
Honey Lemon Water	65
Oxymel: Honey and Apple Cider Vinegar Shot	66
Golden Milk: Honey and Turmeric	67
Honey and Ginger Tea	68
Traditional Mead (Show Mead)	187
Sack Mead	189
Bochet Mead	191
Hydromel Mead with Ginger	193
Metheglin Mead	196
Cherry Melomel Mead	198
Ova Spongia ex Lacte (Eggs With Honey)	202
Honey Cashews	203
Honey Vanilla Butter	204
Creamy Honey & Gorgonzola Dressing	205
Curried Honey Veggie Dip	206
Honey & Rum Barbecue Sauce	207
Smoked Salmon Langstroth	208
Chocolate Honey Chili	210
Roasted Chicken Thighs with Honey Mustard Glaze and Onion Gravy	211
Grilled Scallops with Citrus Marinade	213
Roasted Honey-Mustard Potatoes	214
Pork Chops with Honey and Sage	215
Honey Orange Mousse	218
Panna Cotta with Honey Stewed Apricots	219
Honey Crème Brûlée with Passion Fruit and Raspberry and Cherry Coulis	220

Roman Libum Cheese Cake and Honey	226
Honey Peanut Butter Cookies	227
Cracked Black Pepper Biscuits with Thyme Honey	228
Grandma’s Honey Spice Cake	230
Armenian Paklava Dessert	231
Fennel/Honey Doughnuts	233
Honey Granola Bars	235
Focaccia with Honey, Prosciutto, and Grapes	236
Honey Banana Oatmeal Pecan Bread	239
Honey Cornmeal Muffins	240
Honey Lavender Shortbread	241
Honey Bourbon Pecan Pie	242
Brinley’s Honey Lemonade	245
Hot Chocolate with Peanut Butter and Honey	245
Iced Coffee Honey Slush	246
Monkey & Oats Smoothie	246
Bee’s Knees	248
Bee Sting	248
Blackberry Margarita	249
Honey Bee	249
Jose Wallbanger	250
Pear Martini	250
Beansley	251
Blosh	251
Gold Rush	252
Grapefruit Penicillin	252
Scotch Carpano	253
Brown Derby	253
Honey Tangerine Sour	254
Bee in the Attic	254
Honey Old-Fashioned	255
Air Mail	255
Bermuda Honey Bee Punch	256

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	3
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	4
Where to Go from Here	4
PART 1: HONEY, GIVE ME THE LOWDOWN	7
CHAPTER 1: Dipping into Honey’s History and Its Importance Today	9
Introducing <i>Discoscapa apicula</i> — the World’s Oldest Bee?	10
Raising Bees in Ancient Egypt	11
Embalming with Honey and More	12
Discovering the World’s Oldest Beehives	13
In Praise of Honey	14
Islam	15
Hinduism	15
Judaism	15
Buddhism	15
Christianity	15
Sikhism	15
Finding Honey in Literature and Folklore	16
Honey Bees Come to America	17
Honey Today: Celebrity Status	18
CHAPTER 2: Looking at How Honey Is Made and Harvested	19
Gathering Their Groceries	19
Understanding the Composition of Honey	23
Harvesting Honey: From Bee to Bottle	24
It’s all about timing	25
Driving the bees out of the honey supers	27
Removing the honey from the comb	27
CHAPTER 3: Appreciating the Different Styles of Honey	29
Walkin’ Talkin’ Honeycomb	30
Savoring Liquid Gold — Extracted Honey	31
Getting Chunky with Chunk Honey	31
Whipping Your Honey	32
What’s the Story on Honey Straws?	34

PART 2: NUTRITION, HEALTH, AND HONEY	37
CHAPTER 4: All About Apitherapy	39
Bee Venom.....	40
Bee Pollen.....	42
Royal Jelly.....	43
Propolis.....	44
Beeswax.....	44
Enjoying the Many Benefits of Honey.....	45
Cuts, burns, and scratches.....	46
Fixing sore throats and coughs.....	46
Getting the honey glow.....	47
CHAPTER 5: Making Honey Remedies at Home	49
Mixing Up Some Honey-Based Hair and Skincare Products.....	50
Honey-Based Elixirs.....	61
PART 3: HONEY VARIETALS	69
CHAPTER 6: Discovering the World's Top Honey Producers	71
1. China (500,000 tons).....	72
2. Iran (112,000 tons).....	72
3. Turkey (110,000 tons).....	73
4. India (85,000 tons).....	73
5. United States (81,000 tons).....	74
1. North Dakota (19,000 tons).....	74
2. South Dakota (19,000 tons).....	75
3. Montana (7,000 tons).....	75
4. California (6,850 tons).....	75
5. Florida (5,950 tons).....	76
6. Minnesota (3,905 tons).....	76
7. Texas (3,700 tons).....	76
8. Michigan (2,650 tons).....	77
9. Idaho (1,650 tons).....	77
10. Wisconsin (1,500 tons).....	77
6. Russian Federation (70,000 tons).....	78
7. Ukraine (66,500 tons).....	78
8. Mexico (57,000 tons).....	79
9. Brazil (42,400 tons).....	79
10. New Zealand (23,000 tons).....	80
CHAPTER 7: Getting to Know 50 Varietals of Honey	81
Learning about Varietal Honeys.....	82
1. Acacia.....	82
2. Ailanthus.....	83

3. Alfalfa	83
4. Avocado	84
5. Basswood	85
6. Bell Heather	85
7. Blackberry	86
8. Black mangrove	86
9. Blueberry Blossom	87
10. Borage	87
11. Buckwheat	88
12. Chestnut	89
13. Coriander	89
14. Cranberry Blossom	90
15. Dandelion	90
16. Eucalyptus	91
17. Fireweed	91
18. Gallberry	92
19. Goldenrod	92
20. Honeydew	93
21. Honeysuckle	94
22. Huajillo (pronounced wa-HE-yo)	94
23. Japanese Knotweed	95
24. Kamahi (pronounced car-MY)	95
25. Kiawe (pronounced kee-AH-vay)	96
26. Kudzu	96
27. Lavender	97
28. Leatherwood	98
29. Ling Heather	98
30. Litchee	99
31. Macadamia	99
32. Manuka	100
33. Meadowfoam	101
34. Mesquite	101
35. Ohi'a Lehua	102
36. Orange Blossom	102
37. Rapeseed	103
38. Raspberry	103
39. Rhododendron	104
40. Rosemary	105
41. Sage	105
42. Saw Palmetto	106
43. Star thistle/Knapweed	106
44. Strawberry tree	107
45. Sunflower	107
46. Thyme	108
47. Tulip poplar	108

48. Tupelo	109
49. Ulmo	110
50. Yellow Sweet Clover	110
A Word about Wildflower Honey.	111
CHAPTER 8: All That Glistens Is Not Liquid Gold	113
Laundering Honey.	114
Transshipping Honey	115
Removing Pollen to Conceal the Honey's Origin.	117
Blending Honeys	118
Cutting Honey	119
Intervention of Humans.	120
PART 4: BECOMING A HONEY TASTING EXPERT	121
CHAPTER 9: Thinking Like a Honey Sommelier	123
Differentiating Taste and Flavor	124
Taste sensations	124
Flavor sensations.	124
Other taste sensations	125
Are You a Supertaster?	126
The Nose Remembers	128
Describing What You Taste	128
Tuning Up Your Taste Buds and Sharpening Your Sniffer.	129
Training your sense of taste.	129
Refining your sense of flavor.	131
CHAPTER 10: Knowing How to Taste Honey	133
Looking, Smelling, and Tasting: Sensory Analysis.	134
Creating the Right Environment for Tasting	135
Making certain you are fresh and rested.	135
Staying healthy.	136
Fasting before tasting.	136
Avoiding extraneous smells.	136
Setting Up For Honey Tasting	137
Picking honeys to sample.	138
Gathering your tasting tools	138
Getting organized using a tasting mat	139
Picking a palette cleanser.	140
Writing Tasting Notes	140
Starting with a basic look-see	140
Determining liquid or solid	141
Discovering undesirable stuff	142
Evaluating clarity	142

Defining the Color of Honey	142
Smelling Your Honey.	143
Profiling Honey Characteristics	145
Using the Aroma and Flavor Chart	146
Trigeminals.	147
Determining the Honey’s “Finish”	148
Talking About Texture.	148
CHAPTER 11: Taking the Terror Out Of Terroir.	151
Capturing the Flavors of Local Foods	152
Ensuring quality standards	152
Certifying and protecting honeys	154
Influencing Nectar.	155
Getting the Dirt on Honey (Geology)	156
Honey and Geography	157
Knowing What Weather Has to Do with It.	157
Rain, rain don’t go away	157
Here comes the sun!	158
CHAPTER 12: Looking at What Can Go Wrong With Honey	159
Recognizing Defects	160
Burnt honey	160
The brood factor	160
Medico mayhem	160
Smoky stuff.	161
Just one word — plastics!	161
Metal madness.	161
Crossing Crystallization Defects	162
Incomplete crystallization	162
Crystal striping	162
Separation of honey	162
Knowing Why a Honey Tastes Like Beer	163
PART 5: HEY, HONEY, LET’S PARTY.	165
CHAPTER 13: Shopping for Your Honey.	167
Knowing Where to Shop.	167
Go straight to the source	168
Farm stands and farmers markets	168
Gourmet markets	169
Cheese shops	170
Deciphering Labels	170
Nutrition labels	171
True Source	173

	Gluten-free	174
	Vegan	174
	Raw, natural, organic, all natural —Descriptors that mean nothing	174
	GMO	175
	Fair Trade Honey	176
CHAPTER 14:	Brewing Honey Wine (Mead)	177
	Discovering Mead's Long History	178
	Introducing Seven Types of Mead.	179
	Traditional mead	179
	Sack mead	179
	Hydromel	180
	Bochet mead	180
	Metheglin	180
	Sack metheglin.	180
	Mead made with fruit juices	180
	Getting the Necessary Mead-Making Equipment.	181
	Understanding Useful Mead-Making Terms	184
CHAPTER 15:	Cooking with Honey	201
CHAPTER 16:	Baking with Honey	223
	Swapping Out Sugar for Honey.	223
	Checking Out Some Recipes	225
CHAPTER 17:	Using Honey for Thirst-Quenching and Celebratory Beverages	243
	Making Honey-Inspired Beverages	243
	Mixing Honey-Based Cocktails.	247
	Gin	247
	Tequila.	248
	Vodka.	250
	Scotch whisky.	250
	Whiskey (bourbon or rye).	253
	Rum	255
CHAPTER 18:	Pairing Honey with Cheese and Other Foods	257
	Pairing Honey with Cheese	258
	Understanding the dynamics of honey and cheese.	259
	It's a matter of taste	259
	Conjuring Creative Pairings	261
	Choosing complementary duos	261
	Considering that opposites attract.	261

	Taking texture into account	261
	Staying local	262
	Just go for it!	262
	Considering Classic Pairings of Honey and Food	262
CHAPTER 19:	Honey, Let's Have a Party	265
	Planning the Party	265
	Deciding on the theme	266
	Setting the mood	266
	Assembling the Right Stuff	268
	Developing Your Menu	268
	Creating Honey Grazing Boards	270
	Piloting Tasting Flights	270
	Including Fun Honey Games	272
	Trio tasting game	272
	Honey spelling game	273
	Show Friends How It Went	273
	PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	275
CHAPTER 20:	Ten Great Honey Festivals	277
	Oregon Honey Festival, Ashland, Oregon	278
	Philadelphia Honey Festival	278
	NYC Honey Week, Rockaway Beach	278
	Honey Bee Fest, New York	278
	Sweet Bee's Honey Festival, New York	279
	Vermont's Golden Honey Festival	279
	Arizona Honeybee Festival, Phoenix	279
	Michigan Honey Festival	279
	Tennessee Honey Festival	280
	Uvalde Honey Festival, Texas	280
CHAPTER 21:	More Than Ten Frequently Asked Questions about Honey	281
	What's the best way to store honey once the jar has been opened?	282
	Does honey ever spoil or go bad?	282
	Why does my honey look like it has two different layers?	282
	My honey has crystallized; can I get the honey liquid again?	283
	What's organic honey?	283
	What's the difference between Grade A and Grade B honey?	283
	What accounts for the different colors and flavors of honey?	284
	Why do honey bees make honey?	284
	Is it true that eating local honey will relieve pollen-related allergies?	285

What does “raw” honey mean?	285
How can I test my honey for authenticity?	285
Why does honey from the same local beekeeper taste different sometimes?	286
Why shouldn’t you feed honey to a baby?	286
How many flowers must honey bees visit to make one pound of honey?	286
How much honey does a worker honey bee make in her lifetime?	286
What famous Scottish liqueur is made with honey?	287
What’s the U.S. per capita consumption of honey?	287
How many honey-producing colonies of bees are there in the United States?	287
Do all bees make honey?	287
CHAPTER 22: Ten Honeys for your Bucket List	289
The Most Expensive Honey in the World: Elvish	289
Most Sacred Honey: Sidr	290
Most-Difficult-to-Get Honey: Pitcairn Island	290
Most International Awards: Sourwood	291
Most Bitter Honey: Strawberry Tree Honey	291
Psychedelic Mad Honey: Deli Bal	292
Most Unique Texture: Ling Heather Honey	292
Volcanic Honey: Wenchi	293
Silkiest Honey: Ulmo Honey	293
Most Buttery Honey: Kamahi	294
PART 7: APPENDIXES	295
APPENDIX A: Glossary	297
APPENDIX B: Helpful Honey Resources	305
INDEX	317

Introduction

This is a handbook for serious honey lovers. After all, who doesn't love honey? If you don't, perhaps you haven't tasted the real thing! It's been treasured, coveted, idolized, and even revered by all of the world's major religions. It was hunted by primeval humans and was regarded as the food of Greek gods. Honey was so treasured by the early Romans, it was used to pay taxes. Through the ages honey has been the choice for ensuring good health, healing, and fertility. And honey has always been regarded as a natural, healthy ingredient for cooking, baking, beverages, and food accompaniments.

In recent years, honey has taken on even greater notice, with the ever-growing interest in beekeeping and the endless flavor profiles of each harvest, healthy eating, and the surge in social media and internet solely dedicated to epicurean delights. Today, honey has truly reached a celebrity food status, featured prominently on the menus of the world's finest restaurants. In fact, honey is becoming acknowledged with the same reverence offered to wine, coffee, cheese, and olive oil.

About This Book

This book is a reference, not a lecture. You certainly don't have to read it from beginning to end unless you want to. We organized the chapters in a logical fashion, each clustered under one of the book's seven different parts. We included lots of great photographs and illustrations (we hope each is worth a thousand words) and lots of practical information, advice, instructions, and suggestions.

Just take a look at the sorts of things we've included. This book

- » Travels back 10,000 years to share highlights of the role honey has played in cultures, religions, literature, and folklore
- » Explains why and how bees make honey and how it's harvested by honey gatherers and beekeepers

- » Provides a listing of 50 different honey varietals from around the world, along with their botanical sources, regions produced, color, aroma, flavor, terroir, suggested food pairings, and interesting notes
- » Describes honey's role as a natural source of good health, providing nutritional facts and sharing information about honey's use in apitherapy as a healing agent
- » Includes recipes for honey-inspired remedies in the form of soaps, lotions, salves, exfoliates, elixirs, and beauty baths
- » Helps you shop for honey by understanding the best places to buy, how to read and understand honey labels, and how to avoid honeys that may not be all that they claim
- » Teaches you how to become a "honey sommelier" by understanding the skills for properly tasting, evaluating, and describing a honey's sensory characteristics by using a subtle honey-centric vocabulary
- » Introduces the role "terroir" plays in determining the unique characteristics and flavors of honeys
- » Recognizes potential and avoidable defects in honey that are often the result of a beekeeper's poor management practices
- » Includes more than 50 delicious and tested recipes using honey in baking, cooking, cocktails and mocktails, and brewing honey wine (mead)
- » Celebrates honey with some fun ideas for hosting a honey tasting party

We also include some back-of-book materials, including helpful honey-related resources: websites, honey suppliers, where to buy rare and hard-to-find honeys, schools that certify professional honey sensory experts, and a list of great honey festivals worth attending. We've created a glossary of honey terms that you can use as a handy quick reference and some useful templates for tasting notes and other honey-related logs.

Note: You may have noticed that two authors are listed on the cover. And yet in all of the pages that follow this introduction, the text is written in first person. A lot of what we've written is anecdotal, opinionated, and based on lots of personal experience. So writing in a singular voice is much easier and less cumbersome than attributing each individually to Marina or Howland. And after all, we totally agree with each other on everything. Mostly.

Foolish Assumptions

We assume there must be something about you that's eager to know more about nature's most glorious food: honey.

Whether you're already quite knowledgeable about honey, or have just occasionally had honey on a slice of toast, we guarantee you will discover all sorts of new information. And it's likely all readers will be inspired to try out more of the many hundreds of varieties of honey available to consumers. After all, honey is much more than clover and orange blossom.

For beekeepers, this book has lots of betcha-didn't-know information about the treasured liquid gold that your bees produce. You will appreciate more than ever just how amazing and wonderful honey is. You will learn how to produce a better product and market it more effectively, through better beekeeping practices and effectively educating your customers about honey.

For consumers, chefs, cooks and foodies, this book will help you make informed choices about selecting and purchasing honey. You will understand the differences between a great honey and the ones to avoid. You will find out which honey varieties pair best with which foods. The book includes over 45 honey-inspired recipes for baking, cooking, and blending or brewing beverages with honey.

And for those with a yearning to become a honey sensory expert (honey sommelier), this book shows you the exact methods and detailed instructions for how to taste and evaluate honeys like a certified honey sensory professional.

Whichever of these categories you fit in, you'll appreciate the way the book has been organized for easy and ongoing reference. In short, this book is for just about anyone who's a fan of nature's most celebrated all-natural food: honey.

Icons Used in This Book

Peppered throughout this book are helpful icons that present special types of information to enhance your reading experience and make you a stellar beekeeper.



TIP

Think of these tips as words of wisdom that — when applied — will make your honey experience sweet!



WARNING

These warnings alert you to potential missteps that may make your experiences unpleasant and/or downright disappointing. Take them to heart!



REMEMBER

We use this icon to point out things that need to be so ingrained in your consciousness that they become habits. Keep these points at the forefront of your honey knowledge and experience.

Beyond the Book

Much more information is available from your authors, and from the *For Dummies* brand, for your learning pleasure. “Bee” sure to check out the online Cheat Sheet, which contains handy tools you can use as you fine-tune your honey tasting skills.

To access this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and enter “Honey For Dummies Cheat Sheet” in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

You can start anywhere with *For Dummies* books, but there’s a logic to beginning at the beginning. However, if that’s not in your personality, no problem. Consider starting with Chapter 17 and try one of the refreshing honey-infused cocktail or mocktail recipes. Then, while you’re sipping, move over to Chapter 1 and read some historical information about honey’s role in different cultures over the past 10,000 years. There’s lots of trivia here that’s sure to make you a honey superstar at your next party.

If you are keen on knowing how to professionally taste and evaluate honey, check out Chapter 9 to find out (scientifically) how your tasting apparatus actually works. Then try the tasting exercises to tune up your taste buds. Going on to Chapter 10, you can follow the same step-by-step methodologies used by certified honey sensory experts to taste, evaluate, identify, and describe different honeys’ characteristics and flavors. And now that you are becoming a tasting guru, hop back to Chapter 7. It profiles 50 of the world’s most famous varieties of honey. You can find detailed information, tasting notes, and food pairing suggestions for each of the honeys listed. We promise you’ll appreciate honey as you never have before.

Hungry? Why not jump to Chapters 15 and 16 to savor different honey recipes for cooking and baking. Many of these recipes were provided by renowned executive chefs. Chapter 14 has recipes for making honey wine (mead). Waasail!

Or if you just want to have some yum fun, Chapter 19 is all about how to plan and host a honey tasting party. There are ideas for the invitation, the menu, and how to set up honey games, music, contests, and of course, the main event — honey tasting. Please don't forget to invite us authors!

Our advice is to not hurry through this book. There's a ton of information here, and all of it will help you appreciate, better understand, and find new ways to use and enjoy honey. So, whether you just want to discover how to cook with honey or you're planning to become certified as a honey sensory expert (sommelier), there's an abundance of sweet stuff here just for you.

And, although this book includes some info about bees and how and why they make honey, if you want to know more about honey bees and the art of beekeeping, check out *Beekeeping For Dummies*, by Howland Blackiston (Wiley), and *Honeybee, Lessons From an Accidental Beekeeper*, by C. Marina Marchese (Black Dog & Leventhal).

1

Honey, Give Me the Lowdown

IN THIS PART . . .

Journey back to the dawn of time and through the ages and discover how honey has been an influential contributor to our culture, spiritual beliefs, folklore, and culinary enjoyment.

Understand how and why honey bees make honey, as well as some other interesting facts about bees.

Gain knowledge about what's in honey and why it's considered such a beneficial and healthy food.

Find out how honey is harvested from the bees.

Get acquainted with the four basic styles of honey.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Meeting one of the oldest known species of bees
- » Appreciating the significance of bees and honey in ancient Egypt
- » Discovering a not-so-pleasant use for honey
- » Glimpsing the oldest known beehives
- » Tracing honey's arrival in America
- » Appreciating honey's role in today's culture

Chapter **1**

Dipping into Honey's History and Its Importance Today

The history of honey predates record keeping. But there are clues and documents that validate the significant role this remarkable and treasured food has played since the early days of life on earth. Honey is a celebrated food that has filled entire books. In this chapter I'll share some betcha-didn't-know information about honey's role throughout history. The information is sure to make you a trivia celebrity at your next party.

Introducing *Discoscapa apicula* — the World’s Oldest Bee?

It may not be a catchy name, but *Discoscapa apicula* is the binominal nomenclature, or commonly, the genus and species, of one of the oldest known species of bees. A rare specimen of this bee was preserved in Burmese amber that was found in what is now Myanmar (Southeast Asia). This bee, shown in Figure 1-1, is believed to date from the Cretaceous period, which was about 100 million years ago. To put that timeline in perspective, this bee was buzzing around during the same period that T-Rex was hunting for prey. *Discoscapa apicula* certainly shows some resemblance to the modern honey bee. Pollen grains were found on its legs that showed the bee had recently visited one or more flowers before becoming stuck inside a drop of resin and preserved for millions of years. You’ve got to wonder whether this bee also collected nectar and made honey? Maybe?

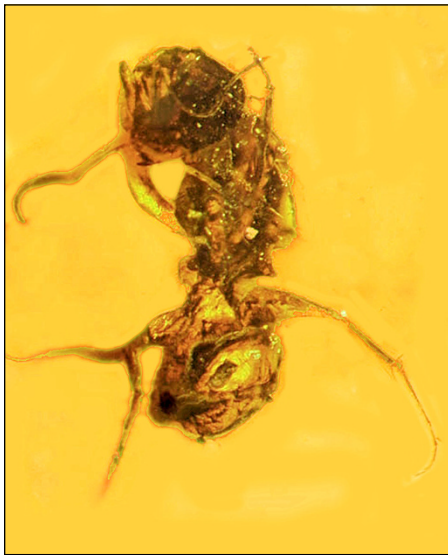


FIGURE 1-1:
This little bee (entombed forever in amber) shared the earth with T-Rex, making it around 100 million years old. It's the oldest known species of bee.

Courtesy of George Poinar

Eight thousand years ago, long before humans “domesticated” honey bees and became beekeepers, our early ancestors enjoyed the wonderful sweet qualities of the honey that bees made. They would hunt the honey from wild hives. No doubt a dangerous pursuit, climbing tall trees and sheer rock cropping to hunt down the bees and steal the honeycombs from the defensive occupants. In this early cave painting discovered in Biscorp, Spain, circa 6000 BC, we see a figure harvesting wild honey (see Figure 1-2). These early honey hunters found nutrition and energy from eating the wild honey, as well as rich protein from the bee brood.

FIGURE 1-2:
Honey hunter
collecting
nourishment
from a wild
colony of bees.



Illustration by Howland Blackiston

Raising Bees in Ancient Egypt

The honey bee held great religious and spiritual significance in ancient Egypt. It was once thought that honey bees were the tears of the sun god Ra. Bees were regarded as a symbol of royalty and represented the lower Egyptian kingdom. There is no shortage of hieroglyphs documenting the significance of honey bees, the honey they produced, and the beekeepers who attended the hives. See Figure 1-3.

Honey was a treasured commodity for ancient Egyptians. They would float their beehives up and down the Nile following the bloom of the seasonal flowers. When the flowers stopped blooming in one region, the bees were moved further down the Nile to forage on other flowers, eventually traveling the entire length of Egypt. Honey was produced on a very large scale from a variety of floral sources. Surprisingly, the coveted Egyptian cotton is pollinated by honey bees.

The Egyptians loved their honey. It was used as a sweetener in cooking and baking. It was used for paying taxes and preventing infection by being placed on wounds. An ancient Egyptian marriage vow stated, “I take thee as wife . . . and promise to deliver to thee twelve jars of honey each year.” Honey was even presented as tribute to the Egyptians from the countries they conquered.

FIGURE 1-3:
Egyptian
beekeepers tend
to their clay hives
while helpers
smoke the
colonies to calm
the bees.



Illustration by Howland Blackiston

Honey was also used for religious purposes. Sacred animals were fed honey. Mummies were often embalmed in honey and propolis, and amphorae of honey were left in tombs, giving the deceased something to eat in the afterlife.

In short, the Egyptians revered honey as a very valued commodity.

As far back as the first dynasty, the Egyptians were known to value the quality and authenticity of their honey. The government assigned the title “Sealer of the Honey” to an esteemed individual who would witness all aspects of the production, insuring the best-quality honey for the Pharaohs and elite. Each vessel of prized honey was marked with an official seal insuring quality control.

Embalming with Honey and More

Spoiler alert. This section gets a little gross and may put you off honey for a while, but it’s interesting to note that due to its high acidity and hygroscopic properties, honey acts by drying out the water necessary for microbes and bacteria to survive. And when combining that with the antiseptic qualities of the hydrogen peroxide produced by honey, you have a pretty effective embalming fluid. In fact, upon his

death, it is said that Alexander the Great's body was preserved in a golden coffin filled with honey and taken back to Macedonia.

Now if that's not gruesome enough, here's a honey of a legend you may want to skip over. Have you ever heard of a mellified body? It is said that *Mellification* was a way for elderly people nearing the end of their lives to donate their body to become medicine that would be ingested by others to alleviate ailments. In short, turning the body into—yuck—a mummified human confection to be consumed for its healing properties. I'll skip over any further details.

Discovering the World's Oldest BeeHives

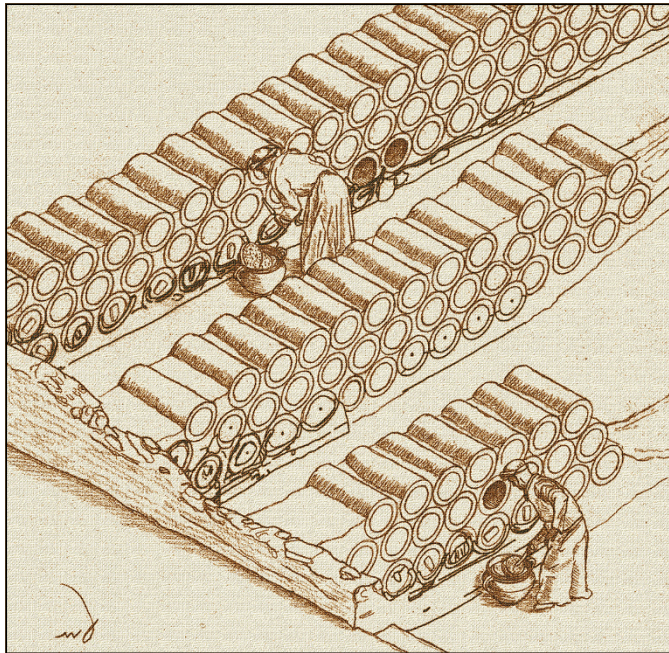
Archaeologists recently discovered ancient beehives dating back 3,000 years at the site of Tel Rehov in the Jordan valley in northern Israel (see Figure 1-4). This site appears to be the earliest physical evidence of beekeeping, around the time the prophet Elisha lived. Researchers estimate there were at least 180 hives made of clay cylinders, home to more than a million bees (shown in Figure 1-5). Archaeologists identified the remains of honey bees — including workers, drones, pupae, and larvae — inside about 30 clay hives. Each hive could have produced about 11 pounds of honey each year, making it a profitable business effort.

FIGURE 1-4: The discovery of these beehives during the Tel Rehov Expedition suggests that beekeeping was already an elaborate agricultural practice in Israel 3,000 years ago.



Courtesy of Amihai Mazar and Amihai Mazar, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

FIGURE 1-5:
Artist rendering of this 3000-year-old apiary, which was estimated to have included over 180 clay hives.



Drawing by Ana Iamim. Courtesy of Amihai Mazar, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This is the earliest discovery of beekeeping from ancient times. Each hive had a small hole on one side for the bees to come and go, and on the other side was a lid for the beekeeper to access the honeycomb. The archeologists used carbon dating on grains (of pollen?) that had spilled from a broken storage jar next to the hives to estimate that they were about 3,000 years old.

“The location of such a large apiary in the middle of a dense urban area is puzzling because bees can become defensive, especially during routine beekeeping inspections or honey harvesting,” the researchers wrote. They speculated that maybe the honey was so valuable it was worth placing in such a congested area where it could be watched and kept safe.

In Praise of Honey

Honey is referenced in all the world’s most prominent religions. It always symbolizes richness and great wealth, usually provided through the goodness of God. Honey can be a reward or a gift, or simply a sign of prosperity and a sign of God’s blessing. Following are some examples.