

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

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dummies[®]
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Honey For Dummies®

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

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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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)

Honey For Dummies®

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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 varieties 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).

Part 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.

Chapter 1

Dipping into Honey's History and Its Importance Today

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
-

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?



Courtesy of George Poinar

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.

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.



Illustration by Howland Blackiston

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

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.



Illustration by Howland Blackiston

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

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