

## The Buzz On Honey

### U.S. Honey: A Taste for Every Preference

Preference – a greater liking for one alternative over another <sup>1</sup>. There are more than 300 unique kinds of honey in the United States. With this many choices people will definitely have very diverse preferences. In this essay I will be explaining about different “table honeys” and their forms, medicinal honeys and cooking honeys and why one might choose one variety over another.

Clover honey is what most people think of as being the typical honey flavor and color <sup>2</sup>. It has a sweet mild taste and is a light amber color. It is widely used “on the table”<sup>2</sup>. Most people buy honey in a liquid form but honey comes in many forms. Some of the other ways to buy honey besides the typical liquid honey are comb honey, cut comb and one of my personal favorites, whipped honey, which spreads like butter. For some people the texture of these other forms of honey affect the way the honey tastes in their mouths. For fun I decided to investigate if clover honey was the most preferred honey by conducting my own survey. I had 25 4H members, friends and family from the age of 7 to adult judge 5 different liquid honeys on color, smell and taste. I covered up the labels on the honey so people wouldn't be influenced by the name of the honey's nectar source. A honey's color and taste varies depending on what type of nectar has been collected. The color and flavor of honey are linked; lighter honey is often delicate and sweeter in flavor, where darker honey often has a stronger taste. I chose clover honey and 4 others with very distinct color and taste differences that I thought people wouldn't have tried before, these were orange blossom, sage, buckwheat and eucalyptus. I created the judging sheet so people judged the

honeys with a rating of one to five, five being the best. I had them rate on color first, then smell and finally taste. I found that some people rated a honey high in color and smell but when they actually tasted it, they didn't like the flavor very much. I tallied up the results and was surprised to find that in overall scores more people preferred sage. Clover was a close second with orange blossom, buckwheat and eucalyptus not often picked as a top preference. I think based on the results of my honey survey that clover is definitely a widely liked honey but I also think that less marketed varieties like sage are very well liked when people actually try them. I think sometimes the nectar source or color of a honey deters people from trying a new variety; they just stick with what they know.

As part of my research I wanted to speak to a local beekeeper so I contacted the Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association and was referred to Mr. George Bleekman. I interviewed Mr. Bleekman a Granite Bay, California, Beekeeper and found out that he has over 15 hives of bees which produce wildflower and blackberry honey. Since I wasn't able to personally have Mr. Bleekman participate in my honey judging survey I asked him what his favorite honey is, his response: "My favorite honey in the Sacramento Valley is Blackberry<sup>3</sup>. It is mild, smooth, of a dark amber color and does not crystallize easily"<sup>3</sup>. I am excited to try this local honey I didn't know about; maybe it will become my new favorite preference.

Preference for a honey variety is not always based on taste alone it can be based on what medicinal values a certain variety of honey contains. My family's preference is raw local wildflower honey; not only do we enjoy the taste but this honey contains local pollen grains and helps with our allergies. Buckwheat honey is not only tasty but if you eat 4 or

more tablespoons of it daily it will raise your antioxidant levels. Got a cough? Proven in a study published in *The Archives of Adolescent and Pediatric Medicine* buckwheat honey does a better job of reducing nighttime coughing than dextromethorphan (DM), a cough suppressant found in many over the counter medications. After learning this I will never have to take yucky cough syrup again.

Honey is the perfect ingredient to have in your cupboard for cooking and baking; it does not need to be refrigerated and has an exceptionally long shelf life. Choose your honey by taste when you are cooking so that it compliments your food. Honey is used in making cookies, ice cream, salad dressings, barbeque sauces, ham glazes and many other things. Bamboo and buckwheat honeys because of their strong flavor are good on pancakes in place of maple syrup. Fireweed and orange blossom are good in desserts especially cookies and cakes because they both have a sweet delicate flavor. Clover and wildflower are both good in salad dressings and as an everyday table honey to put on toast or in tea. With so many varieties of honey it shouldn't be hard to find the perfect one for your recipe!

In researching this topic I learned a lot about different types of honey that I didn't know and I had a lot of fun watching the expressions on people's faces when they judged my honeys. It really surprised me from my survey that sage honey was better liked than clover honey. I never knew that buckwheat honey could be used as a cough suppressant and now when I cook I'll be sure to pick a honey that fits my recipe! With over 300 honey varieties in the United States there is definitely a honey for everyone's taste preference.

(Essay word count 955)

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The New Oxford American Dictionary

<sup>2</sup> National Honey Board website <http://www.honey.com/nhb/about-honey/>

<sup>3</sup> Bleekman, George, Granite Bay California, Beekeeper  
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