

U.S. Honey: A Taste for Every Preference

Honey: for bees, for America, for the world. Whatever the flavor and color, honey puts sweetness on your toast, and replaces sugar in your coffee. America's bees churn out honey all season. But just as every state varies, all honey is unique. There are many demands by the consumer-some want a thin clear honey and others prefer a thick dark honey. Luckily, consumers all over can satisfy their craving for any type of honey, solely because of the diversity of flowers. Different states have different flowers and different flowers make different honey. The nectar in flowers is what contributes to taste, color and texture of honey. Although bees can and do make honey from a menagerie of various flowering plants, there are a few plants that make up the majority of honey consumed in the U.S. These plants tend to be regional. Some of the major honey regions include the Northeast, the East Coast, the Southeastern Coastal Plain, Southern Appalachians, Florida and Parts of the Southwest, the Midwest through Central South, the Upper Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest.

The Northeastern region thrives on berry honey. Raspberry honey is a favorite-with its attractive light yellow color, and floral taste with a hint of raspberry. It is a favorite in English Breakfast tea and Earl Grey tea. It also pairs well with chocolate, peaches, pears and sour cream. Blueberry honey is rich and dense, with an amber hue. With a strong, slightly earthy taste, it is best paired with recipes with ginger, lemon, or melons.

The East Coast is where Tulip Poplar honey dominates as the favorite. This honey is rich and a very dark amber brown and because of its high mineral content, health food experts consider it a desirable honey. It can be used in teas, as the heat brings out the best flavor. There is also honey made with buckwheat plants. With a strong powerful

taste it is known as black honey because it appears black unless the light shines through it. It is great in recipes like honey cakes, or for whenever you want the honey's taste to come through the rest of the ingredients and really stand out.

The next region is the Southeastern Coastal Plain. This region's major honey source is from gallberry-an understory shrub most common in the pine barrens of the Southeast. This honey has a warm golden flavor, and is especially good for cooking and baking, as it makes a nice golden crust on breads and pies, and is also nice to drizzle over cooked carrots and oatmeal.

The Southern Appalachians are dominated by sourwood honey. This honey is light to medium amber in color, and has a highly floral, sweet and sour taste that is tinged with maple. This honey is perfect for barbeque sauces and in iced teas and green teas. A special treat is sourwood honey on warm homemade buttered biscuits.

The region of Florida and Parts of the Southwest is dominated by orange blossom honey. This honey's flavor differs from year to year, usually light yellow, with a slight citrus scent and taste. This honey is best in teas. There is also tupelo honey, both white and black. The white is a highly prized honey, as the beekeeper must know exactly the right time to clean the combs so that only white tupelo honey is collected. This honey will not granulate, and has a light amber color tinged with green, and has a light, sweet taste. It is best used on a piece of hot buttered toast, or as an added sweetness on vanilla ice cream, or swirled into a vanilla shake. The black tupelo honey is not a prized honey, but is darker and is used in bakeries. The black tupelo honey will granulate, and is not sought after as a table honey.

The next honey crop region includes the Midwest and Central South. One small

portion of this region harvests soybean honey, which is light green in color and has a mild flavor, good for sweetening yogurts. Blackberry honey is also common, has a rich sweet flavor and aroma, and is great on breakfast foods like pancakes, toast, waffles and muffins.

The Upper Midwest consists of predominantly white sweet clover, yellow sweet clover and Dutch clover. These clovers collectively represent the largest honey crop in the U.S. The clover honey ranges from a light amber color to clear color, and is a favorite as a condiment, with its mild, grassy flavor and floral aroma.

The Pacific Northwest and Alaska mainly consists of two types of honey. The first is fireweed. This red-purple flower produces a light colored, very sweet and flavorful honey. Though fireweed is a fairly common plant, it is hard to obtain pure fireweed honey. Also, there is a very large amount of wildflower honey produced in this region. Wildflower honey is created when bees take nectar from any type of wildflower. Because there are so many choices for bees with so many wildflower types, this honey varies in color and taste from season to season. The honey usually is a light to golden honey, with a sweet and floral taste.

Each honey is as unique as the region it is produced in. Thanks to the diversity of flowers in our land, consumers can enjoy many different tastes of honey to satisfy their palate. This essay includes just a small sample of the variety of American honey available. Bees go unrecognized as America's honey makers but it's because of them that we enjoy honey on toast, waffles, ham, carrots, and more. It is thanks to America's bees, our country's meals are always going to be a whole lot sweeter!

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