



Honey

VARIETAL GUIDE



NATIONAL
HONEY BOARD™

Honey.

Naturally sweet.
Incredibly versatile.
Deliciously diverse.



Water white	Extra white	
Amber	Dark amber	White
Light amber	Extra light amber	

There are more than 300 different types of honey in the United States, each with a unique flavor and color profile influenced by the types of blossoms the bees visit when searching for nectar.

Floral source, location and climate factors all affect the taste, color and texture (viscosity) of honey. Its colors range from nearly colorless to deep dark browns. Each has its own distinct flavor ranging from delectably mild to impressively bold.

Such unique flavor nuances lend themselves to different pairings, as well as cooking and baking applications. This National Honey Board Varietal Guide features descriptions of floral sources, tasting notes and preferred pairing suggestions for 21 of the most popular honey varieties.

For information on the other varieties, visit honey.com.



ALFALFA

Alfalfa's violet-purple flowers bloom throughout the summer because it is usually harvested several times a year for hay. Its honey is white or extra light amber in color with a mild flavor and aroma similar to beeswax. A very important honey source in most western states, it produces a honey that is ideal for baking and cooking, or for daily table use. It is also perfect for mildly sweet marinades for fish or chicken.



AVOCADO

A subtropical fruit that requires bee pollination, the avocado is the source of a unique honey that is dark amber in color with a smooth, velvety texture and rich flavor featuring notes of caramelized molasses. Its robust flavor and dramatic coloring make avocado honey a great choice for use in rich desserts such as chocolate and nut tarts or as a welcome accompaniment for pancakes, waffles and ice cream.





BASSWOOD

The basswood tree grows quite well in northern states throughout the U.S. and is renowned for its shade and fragrant, cream-colored flowers. Its honey has a fresh taste similar to that of green, ripening fruit and can be identified by its water white color, warm herbal notes and clean finish. Basswood honey subtle complementary sweetness pairs well with green apples, vanilla ice cream and fromage blanc.



BLUEBERRY

More than 20 species of low blueberry shrubs with bell-shaped white or pinkish flowers are often found in the eastern U.S. and Canada. Blueberry honey has an aroma reminiscent of green leaves with a touch of lemon. Moderately fruity in flavor with a delicate, slightly buttery finish, it is light to medium amber in color. Blueberry honey's excellent flavor pairs well with yogurt, walnuts, melons, sour cream and crème fraiche.





BUCKWHEAT

Buckwheat is a summer annual that blooms late into fall. Its nectar produces a dark flavorful honey with marked molasses and malt flavors, and a lingering aftertaste. The color and flavor of the honey may vary by region. Its strong flavor makes it a popular ingredient in hearty baked goods and barbecue sauces. It also pairs well with strong cheeses, grapefruit, or as a maple syrup replacement.



CLOVER

One of the country's favorites and found on pantry shelves around the world, clover honey has a sweet, flowery aroma and pleasingly mild taste that hints at the plant's delicate blossom. Made from several different types of clover plants including White Dutch, Red, Sweet, and White varieties, honey from the different species is often blended to produce a mild honey that excels at the table and as a key ingredient in many cooking and baking situations.





COTTON

Cotton is one of the leading honey plants in the southern U.S. Its nectar is protected from the parching sun by large flowers and leaves. The honey is white to extra light amber with a good, mild flavor. Cotton honey is an excellent table honey, and its mild taste makes it a good choice for use in cooking and baking where a subtler sweetness is desired. It also pairs well with hard cheeses such as Parmesan.



CRANBERRY

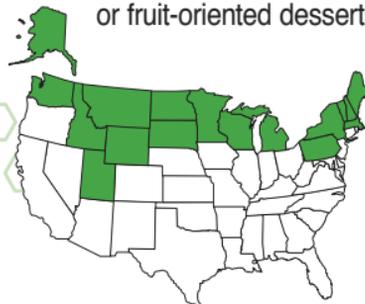
Cranberry shrubs are an important cultivated crop in the northeast. They also grow wild in some areas. Cranberry honey is available in limited quantities because individual cranberry bogs bloom no more than two weeks annually. The honey is medium amber in color with a light red tint and a strong berry flavor. While cranberries are known for their tartness, its honey is delightfully sweet and pairs well with apples, pork, poultry and dark chocolate.





FIREWEED

Fireweed is a tall perennial herb with large clusters of red-purple flowers growing in dense stands on cut or burnt over timberlands. No other major honey plant grows as far north, and blooms from early July through late September. Fireweed honey is delicate with subtle tea-like notes and a smooth finish. Water white in color and very mild, its sweet, almost fruity flavor makes it a natural choice for sweetening citrus or fruit-oriented desserts.



GOLDENROD

This well-known, field-oriented plant features great compound clusters of yellow flowers, and can be found throughout North America. Goldenrod covers high prairie, pasture land and even open woods. It is the source for large quantities of amber honey with a slightly strong, almost spicy flavor that is not overly sweet. Use it in a variety of cooking applications such as sauces and marinades. It also pairs well with strong cheeses and salted nuts.





MACADAMIA

This exotic, harder-to-find honey is the result of the blooms from the popular macadamia nut tree of Hawaii. Medium amber color with a sweet aroma and delicate nutty flavor, macadamia honey makes a delicious marinade for fresh fish and is also perfect when paired with dark chocolate and/or coconut desserts. It is also delicious as a spread or topper on breads, pancakes and vanilla ice cream.



MESQUITE

In the southwestern U.S., the mesquite tree is prized for its sweet, smoky smelling wood, primarily used in barbecues and meat smokers. It produces numerous golden-colored blooms during spring and summer. The honey's color can vary from amber to water white. Considered earthy and aromatic with a dominating flavor, it is ideal for use in rich, dark desserts (often replacing molasses or brown sugar). It also pairs well with fresh berries and hearty, whole grain breads.





ORANGE BLOSSOM

A leading honey plant in southern Florida, Texas, Arizona and California, orange trees bloom in March and April and produce a white to extra light amber honey with a pronounced aroma of orange blossoms. It has a sweet, fruity taste with a flowery perfume aftertaste. A great table honey, it also excels in fruit and vegetable salad dressings, and in marinades for fish and poultry. It also pairs, particularly, well with custards, vanilla and chocolate.



PALMETTO

Distributed from North Carolina south to Florida, palmetto is especially abundant along the Atlantic Coast. Trees up to 60 feet tall produce whitish flowers in great compound clusters. Its honey is light amber to amber in color with a thinner body than most honeys. Palmetto honey's taste is full-bodied and herbal in flavor with woody overtones. It pairs well with hard cheeses, ham and prosciutto, as well as fresh citrus.





PUMPKIN

Found throughout the U.S. wherever this prolific plant is cultivated, pumpkin plant blossoms supply bees a liberal amount of pollen and nectar. However, the honey can still be difficult to source. Pumpkin honey is amber-colored with a spicy, complex, almost squashy flavor. Use this honey seasoned with fresh herbs to make a sweet vegetable glaze. It's also the perfect sweetener for homemade pumpkin pies, dessert bars and other baked goods.



RASPBERRY

The raspberry is a thorny shrub that produces just one crop of fruit per year. Its springtime clusters of white, 5-petaled, rose-like flowers give way to red raspberries that mature in summer. Raspberry honey is light amber in color with a mellow, smooth flavor and unique raspberry finish. This sweet honey pairs well with vanilla flavors, champagne, chocolate, and with fresh fruit such as pears and peaches.





SAGE

There are three types of sage honey: Black Button Sage, Purple Sage and White Sage. Sage honey is rich and light with a predominantly sweet, clover-like flavor and an elegant floral aftertaste. It makes an excellent marinade, pairing well with veal, beef and game. It can also add just the right hint of sweetness to lemonades and teas, and is delicious when served with Parmesan or Manchego cheeses.



STAR THISTLE

A one-foot high annual herb introduced from the Mediterranean Region, star thistle is widespread in California where it produces a white or extra light amber honey with a slight greenish cast. Moderately sweet with a grassy, anise aroma and flavor, star thistle honey pairs well with toasted nuts, strong cheeses and nut bread. It is also excellent in most cooking applications.





SUNFLOWER

Growing up to nine feet tall, the sunflower is cultivated in vast fields that are a paradise for bees as its blossom produces far more nectar than smaller flowering plants. Sunflower honey is light to extra light amber in color and tastes slightly herbaceous with citrus notes. Use it in sweet and savory baking applications such as honey sesame shortbread, or serve with fresh fruit. It can also add simple sweetness to yogurt or fresh cheese.



TUPELO

Tupelo Gum trees grow in southern wetlands and bloom during April and May. Florida beekeepers place their apiaries on high platforms or even boats in the wetlands to avoid losing their colonies to frequent floods. Smooth in texture, light amber in color, with complex floral, herbal and fruity flavors, tupelo honey is very sweet, making it an excellent choice for baked goods. It is also the only honey that never granulates. Tupelo pairs well with Blue, Aged Pecorino and other robust cheeses.





WILDFLOWER

The term “wildflower honey” is often used to describe honey from miscellaneous and undefined flower sources. Wildflower is amber to dark amber in color with mild floral overtones. The color and flavor of wildflower honey can vary depending on the region in which it is produced. Available throughout the U.S., it is extremely versatile. Wildflower honey is delicious in fruit and vegetable salad dressings, excellent in baked goods and makes a delicious table honey.



Honey FAQs

Q: Can I use honey to sweeten recipes in place of sugar?

A: Yes, honey is a delicious, all-natural sweetener. When replacing sugar with honey in cooking and baking applications, follow these simple guidelines:

To Cook with Honey:

For sauces, marinades and salad dressings, substitute pure honey for up to half the granulated sweetener called for in your recipe (e.g., replace one cup of sugar with one-half cup of honey).

To Bake with Honey:

Use pure honey for up to half the granulated sweetener called for in your recipe. In addition, for each cup of honey used:

- Reduce any added liquid by 1/4 cup
- Add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- Reduce oven temperature by 25°F

Q: How should honey be stored?

A: Store honey at room temperature. Your kitchen counter or pantry shelf is ideal. Storing honey in the refrigerator accelerates crystallization, the natural process in which the liquid in honey becomes solid.

Honey stored in sealed containers can remain stable for decades and even centuries! However, it tends to darken and lose its aroma and flavor over time. Two years is the typical shelf life.

Q: What should I do with crystallized honey?

A: If your honey crystallizes, simply place the honey jar in warm water and stir until the crystals dissolve. Or place the honey in a microwave-safe container with the lid off and heat in the microwave while stirring every 30 seconds until the crystals dissolve. Be careful not to boil or scorch honey.

Q: What forms is honey available in?

A: Honey comes in a variety of forms including liquid, whipped and comb. Free of any crystals or wax, liquid honey is extracted from the comb in the hive by centrifugal force, gravity or straining. Whipped honey is finely crystallized so that it is creamy and spreadable. Comb honey is honey in its original state taken straight from the hive.

Q: How can I find the honey varieties featured in this guide?

A: Regional varietal honeys are most readily available at farmers markets and local specialty gourmet stores.

For more information about honey varieties and suppliers, visit the Honey Locator — an online honey search engine at www.honeylocator.com.



honey.com

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