

## **The Sweet Truth of Honey**

Honey is a sweet liquid that bees produce using nectar from flowers. Honey is one of the world's oldest sweeteners. Drizzled on everything from toast to tea, honey has been a kitchen staple for centuries.

Honey varies significantly depending on the flowers from which bees collect nectar. This results in a wide range of honey flavors, colors, and even nutritional profiles.

When it comes to honey, there's an important distinction to make between raw honey vs. regular honey. Raw honey is honey in its purest form, straight from the hive, strained to remove large particles, unheated and unprocessed. Raw honey contains natural enzymes, antioxidants, and pollen. Bee pollen is a nutritious food source, containing a variety of healthy components, including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and antioxidants.

Regular honey is often pasteurized with heat and filtered, which gives it a smoother texture and longer shelf life, but can strip away some of its nutrients, including pollen. This honey is the type commonly found in grocery stores, although some stores also carry raw honey. Processed honey may also contain added sugars, such as high fructose corn syrup.

Honey comes in many different varieties and lends itself to some incredible flavors. In fact, there are over 300 varieties! Many factors affect the honey's flavor and color, but the major difference between each type revolves around the flower. That's why honey is usually named after this nectar source. Each honey variety offers unique tastes, from light and delicate to dark and robust. When exploring the world of honey, it's fascinating to discover the wide variety of types of honey available.

Store honey in a cool, dry place. Keep it at room temperature; there is no need to refrigerate it. Crystallization is natural. It is caused by being exposed to oxygen. If honey crystallizes, place the jar in warm water and stir until smooth.

While honey has an incredibly long shelf life due to its low moisture content and high acidity, it can spoil if stored improperly. Exposure to moisture can lead to fermentation and spoilage. However, when stored properly in a sealed container, honey can remain stable for years, if not decades.

When it comes to choosing between honey and sugar, honey has a slight edge in terms of health benefits due to its antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

Refined sugar is empty calories with no nutritional value. Honey also has a lower glycemic index, meaning it may cause a slower rise in blood sugar levels compared to regular sugar.

Honey is a form of sugar and affects blood glucose levels, so a person's intake should be moderate. If you're looking for a more natural sweetener with added benefits, honey is the better choice, but it should still be consumed in balance as part of a healthy diet.

Honey is primarily composed of natural sugars, mainly fructose and glucose, which provide your body with a quick source of energy. Honey also contains small amounts of vitamins and

minerals, including vitamin C, zinc, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. One tablespoon of honey contains 64 calories.

### **Baking with Honey**

Baking with honey is not the same as baking with sugar. Honey has more moisture than sugar and browns quicker than sugar. Honey is more acidic than sugar and will change the flavor. Honey baked goods tend to be moister and chewier. Baked goods with sugar tend to be crisper and have a crumbly texture.

Honey can be a sweet and nutritious addition to your diet, but it's important to remember that it's a form of sugar. Enjoy honey as part of a balanced diet, and you'll be reaping all its natural goodness without overdoing it on the sugar.