

Did you know that September is National Honey Month?

There are over 300 varieties of honey in the United States; the light-colored ones are milder in flavor and the darker ones are higher in mineral content. Because of the floral sources that honey comes from, no two honeys are the same in flavor and nutritional content. The amazing new thing is that since honey may have pollen in it, researchers are studying it to see if honey can help relieve or alleviate allergy symptoms.

There are many uses for honey; some state that it is a natural source of energy because it contains a unique mixture of glucose and fructose. Many studies have shown that mixing honey into your diet can prevent fatigue.

Have you ever gotten burnt by touching something hot? By rubbing honey onto the spot you can alleviate the pain. Honey is used for many reasons such as beauty products, sweeteners, skin products and hair care products.

Honey has also been used for treating sore throats. If you mix a spoonful of honey with tea or hot water, it will help relieve a sore throat or irritated sinus. Honey is an ingredient in more and more manufactured products from cereals to cough syrup. Over 200 new products containing honey have been introduced since 1998, many of which promoted honey's all-natural, wholesome image.

There are many ways to help celebrate National Honey Month such as eating more honey, or going to the Honey Bee Festival in Palo Cedro on Sept. 11 and 12.

Below are some wonderful recipes to help you celebrate National Honey Month.

CLASSIC HONEY MUSTARD DRESSING

1-1/4 cups fat-free mayonnaise
1/3 cup honey
1 tablespoon vinegar
2/3 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon onion flakes
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons prepared mustard

In small bowl, whisk together all ingredients until blended. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

HONEY GARLIC DRESSING

1 package (3/4 to 1 oz.) Italian salad dressing mix
2 tablespoons water
1/4 cup honey
1/3 cup cider vinegar
1/3 cup vegetable oil

Combine all ingredients except oil; mix well. Gradually beat in oil with whisk or fork.

Tip: Variation: Honey Mustard Dressing: Add 2 Tablespoons Dijon mustard to basic dressing and decrease oil to 1/4 cup. Use as a salad dressing or marinade for chicken breasts.

HONEY SESAME DRESSING

1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup rice vinegar
1/4 cup honey
3 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
1 to 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger root
1 small clove garlic, minced
3/4 teaspoon sesame oil
1/8 teaspoon crushed dried red pepper
Salt, to taste

Whisk together oil, vinegar and honey in small bowl. Add sesame seeds, ginger root, garlic, sesame oil, red pepper and salt to taste; mix thoroughly. Dressing may be stored in refrigerator, tightly covered, for up to one week.

SWEET AND SOUR SPINACH SALAD

1 bunch spinach, washed thoroughly and dried
2 slices bacon
2-1/2 tablespoons tarragon vinegar

3 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon grated fresh lemon peel
Juice of 1/4 lemon
1/2 hard cooked egg, grated
1 tablespoon sharp cheddar cheese, grated

Remove stems from spinach and place on serving plate. Chill while preparing dressing. Fry bacon until very crisp. Drain and reserve fat. To bacon drippings, add vinegar and honey. Simmer two minutes. Add crumbled bacon, lemon peel and juice. Spoon hot dressing over chilled spinach. Garnish with grated egg and cheese. Serve immediately.

WARM POTATO SALAD WITH HONEY DRESSING

1/3 cup cider vinegar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/8 teaspoon bottled hot pepper sauce
1-1/2 lb. small new potatoes, cut in bite-sized pieces
5 slices bacon, crisp cooked, crumbled
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 tablespoons chopped green onion
1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine vinegar, oil, honey, mustard and pepper sauce; mix well. Add potatoes; mix gently to coat all surfaces. Cook on medium heat until potatoes are thoroughly heated. Add bacon, parsley, green onions and salt; mix well.

THAI-STYLE SALAD WITH SHREDDED GLAZED CHICKEN

1 medium head Napa cabbage or romaine lettuce, shredded (about 6 cups)
1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded and sliced (1-1/4 cups)
2 medium carrots, coarsely grated (about 1 cup)
2 small oranges, peeled and cut into segments
1/2 cup chopped cilantro
2 whole roasted Chicken, shredded,
(see recipe for Honey Lime Dressing below)

Combine all ingredients except Honey-Lime Dressing and peanuts in large bowl; toss until well blended. Pour Honey-Lime Dressing over salad; toss until well blended. Sprinkle each serving with peanuts just before serving.

HONEY-LIME DRESSING

6 tablespoons honey
3 tablespoons peanut butter
3 tablespoons lime juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
1 Tablespoon jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
1-1/2 teaspoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon minced garlic
3/4 teaspoon grated lime peel
1/4 cup dry roasted peanuts, chopped

Whisk together all ingredients in small bowl until well blended.

CRISPY CHICKEN SALAD WITH HONEY-JALAPEÑO VINAIGRETTE

1 cup flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6 (4 oz. each) skinless, boneless chicken breasts
1 egg, beaten with 1 Tablespoon water
Vegetable oil, such as canola, as needed for frying
9 cups lightly packed baby spinach
Honey-Jalapeno Vinaigrette, divided (recipe follows)
6 oz. (about 1-1/2 cups) Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
3 slices crisp-cooked thick bacon, crumbled
3 small tomatoes, each sliced into 4 wedges lengthwise (8 wedges total)

Thoroughly combine flour, salt and pepper; reserve. Pound chicken until each piece is of uniform thickness. Coat chicken with egg, then press each side into reserved seasoned flour. Heat two inches oil in a large frying pan until hot but not smoking. Fry chicken, in batches if necessary, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, about three minutes total. Drain on paper towel. Cut chicken across grain in 1/2-inch wide strips, keeping strips from each piece together; reserve. Put 1-1/2 cups spinach on each serving plate. Drizzle each with one tablespoon vinaigrette. Top each with strips from one piece chicken. Sprinkle each with 1/4 cup cheese, then 1/6 of the crumbled bacon. Garnish each with two tomato wedges. Drizzle one tablespoon remaining Honey-Jalapeño Vinaigrette over each salad.

HONEY-JALAPEÑO VINAIGRETTE

Makes 3/4 cup

1-1/2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1-1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped
1/2 tablespoon jalapeno pepper, coarsely chopped
1 large clove garlic, quartered
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup honey
1/3 cup vegetable oil, such as canola

In a blender, process vinegar, lime juice, cilantro, jalapeno, garlic, salt and pepper. With blender running, add honey, then oil.

HONEY POPCORN BALLS

3 quarts popped corn (12 c.)
1/2 c. sugar
1/2 c. honey
1 tsp. salt
2 tbsp. margarine
1 tsp. vanilla

Pop corn and set aside in a large bowl. Combine sugar, honey and salt in a small saucepan. Heat and stir to dissolve sugar. Boil to hard ball stage (when a drop forms a hard ball in cool water). Add margarine and vanilla. Pour syrup over popped corn and stir. Butter your hands and shape into balls. Wrap balls with waxed paper.

BAKLAVA

1/2 lb. sheets filo dough, frozen
2 cups blanched almonds, ground
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon lemon rind, grated
3/4 teaspoon cinnamon, ground
1 cup unsalted butter, melted
almonds, sliced, for garnish

Honey and Rose Water Syrup

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
1 cup honey
1 tablespoon rose water

Thaw filo dough for eight hours in refrigerator, if frozen. Unfold sheets of filo dough so they lie flat. Cover with waxed paper, then a damp towel, to prevent them from drying out.

Preheat oven to 325°F. In a medium bowl combine almonds, sugar, lemon rind, and cinnamon. Generously butter an eight or nine-inch-square pan.

Carefully fold two sheets of filo to fit pan; place in pan one at a time, brushing each with butter. Sprinkle about three tablespoons of the almond mixture over top sheet. Fold one sheet of filo to fit pan; brush with butter. Sprinkle evenly with another three tablespoons almond mixture.

Continue to add layers, using one folded sheet of filo, a generous brushing of butter, and three to four tablespoons almond mixture for each, until nut mixture is used up (there should be about 10 nut-filled layers).

Fold remaining two to three sheets of filo to fit pan. Place on top, brushing each, with butter before adding the next. With a very sharp knife, carefully cut diagonally across pan to make small diamond shapes--about 1 1/2 inches on a side--cutting all the way to bottom of pan. Pour on any remaining butter.

Bake until golden brown (about 45 minutes).

To make Honey and Rose Water Syrup, combine sugar and the water in a 1 1/2-quart saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring. Mix in honey and cook until syrup boils again. Remove from heat; mix in rose water.

Pour warm Honey and Rose Water Syrup over top of baked filo layers. Decorate each piece with an almond slice. Cool before serving. Makes 24 servings

BEEHIVE COOKIES

3 cups flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup (6 oz.) butter, lightly chilled, cut in bits
1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
1/2 cup whipped honey or crème
1 tablespoon (about 2 lemons) lemon zest
1 egg
Coarse sugar, optional, as needed

Cream butter, brown sugar, honey and lemon zest until smooth; beat in egg. Add dry ingredients in thirds, mixing well with each addition. Scrape dough onto plastic wrap; shape it into a log about 12 inches long. Chill an hour or so until firm, or up to 24 hours. Heat oven to 350°F. Thoroughly mix dry ingredients; reserve. Cut log into 1/4-inch slices; place one inch apart on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with coarse sugar, if desired, lightly pressing sugar into dough. Bake until edges are lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Cool five minutes on baking sheet, then transfer to a rack. Cool completely.

CANDIED HONEY APPLES

Makes six servings

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup honey
1/4 cup heavy cream
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 small (4 to 6 oz. each) apples with sticks
1/3 cup chopped nuts

Combine all ingredients except apples and nuts in two-quart saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat to 265°F; stir constantly. Remove from heat. Cool five minutes. Holding apple by stick, roll in hot honey mixture to coat; roll bottom of apple in nuts if desired. Place on waxed paper squares to cool. Repeat with remaining apples. Makes six apples.



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