



Danielle Downey
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apiarist and honey expert

Taste *of*

A living flavor with as many variations as the flowers it comes from. And, it's good for you.

By Mary Brown Malouf

Where are my adjectives???
I'm searching my mental dictionary frantically for the right word to describe what I'm tasting, but I can't come up with it. Floral: too insipid. Pungent: too negative. Aromatic: too imprecise.

I'm tasting honey with Danielle Downey, an entomologist—specifically an apiarist—with the Utah Department of Agriculture. She's an expert on the differences—and the reasons for the differences—between honeys.

Oenologists have the same trouble—how do you adequately describe the difference between a merlot and a malbec? Over centuries, they have evolved a code, hard for newbies to understand, but adequate for describing those nuances of flavor once you learn the language.

Honey needs its own language.

This pale syrupy honey from Salt Lake Valley is delicate, herbal, almost minty. It's light on the tongue, evanescent like the nectar on a honey-suckle stamen. This deep amber honey from up on the Wasatch benches is almost as solid as wax. Its aroma is strong enough to make you blink, and you have to melt it with your tongue before you get the first shock of caramel flavor, so fragrantly sweet and concentrated it's almost unpleasant, but softening to an aroma that lingers for several minutes after the honey is swallowed.

The reason for the flavor difference in all these substances that we call honey, is, naturally, bees. *Apis mellifera*, to be exact.

That's how Downey got into honey. "I've always loved insects," she says. "I was a tomboy, and I studied biology, but bugs—bees, especially—have always fascinated me." She's worked with bees all over the world, from South Dakota to British Columbia to Provence. It seems right that she would end up in the Beehive State.

ADAM FINKLE

Honey



Grilled Salmon with Honey-Orange Glaze

SERVES 4

- 1 pound center cut salmon fillet, skin removed
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 cup honey
- Zest from 1 small orange
- Juice from 1/2 of small orange
- 1 Tbsp. green onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger, grated
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- 2 tsp. Thai chili sauce
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, whisk together the olive oil, honey, orange zest and juice, green onion, garlic, ginger, water, soy sauce and chili sauce. Heat until the honey is easily stirred, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and let cool slightly.

Brush the salmon with the honey glaze, and let it marinate for 20 minutes. Reserve the remaining glaze.

Heat grill to high heat. Lightly oil grill grate, and place salmon on grill. Cook 5 minutes on each side, or until fish is easily flaked with a fork.

Drizzle salmon with the reserved glaze. Season to taste. Cut into four portions, and serve hot.

HEIDI LARSEN



Honey Yogurt Cake with Fresh Berries and Whipped Cream

Honey Yogurt Cake with Fresh Berries and Whipped Cream

SERVES 6-8

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
3/4 cup granulated sugar
Zest of 1 large lemon
3/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
1/4 cup honey
3 large eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
1/3 cup canola oil

Honey Syrup
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
3 Tbsp. honey
Fresh berries
Whipped cream

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9-inch round cake pan with cooking spray. Dust lightly with flour. Set pan aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

In a large bowl, add the lemon zest to the sugar. Rub together with your fingers until fragrant. Mix in the yogurt and honey.

Whisk in the eggs—working all three at once. Mix until smooth and then add the vanilla extract and stir again.

Add the flour mixture to the wet ingredients. Mix just until flour is incorporated. Add the oil, and mix well.

Pour the batter into prepared cake pan. Bake for 25–30

minutes, until your cake tester comes out clean and the cake springs back when lightly touched in the center.

Place the cake on a cooking rack and cool for 10 minutes. Loosen the cake with a knife around the edges and then remove from the pan. While the cake is cooling, make the honey syrup.

For the syrup, put the lemon juice and honey in a small sauce pan. Whisk over medium heat until the honey and lemon juice are combined.

Poke little holes all over the cake with a toothpick. Spoon the honey syrup over the cake and let it soak in. Serve the cake with fresh berries and whipped cream.

“The valley bees, who made the pale honey, collected nectar from garden and orchard flowers,” Downey explains, “and the darker honey came from tougher, woodier plants with a shorter growing season.”

While most honeys are really a blend—after all, you can’t exactly tell the bees where to collect nectar, you can only place your hives near what you’d like them to collect from—when it comes to single-variety honeys, most Americans know only alfalfa and clover. The fact is, right now a jar of honey can be whatever the producer wants to put in it; there are no identity standards protecting honey the way there are for butter, say, or maple syrup or chocolate.

“There are a lot of products that only contain some honey, and there is a lot of adulterated honey sold as honey,” says Downey, who is working with Utah beekeepers and the National Honey Board on guidelines to protect real honey from cheap imitations, and additive-filled and diluted honeys.

BACKYARD BEEHIVERS

Backyard hives are more and more popular in Salt Lake City; Downey keeps hers on property owned by urban home-

steads Kevin and Celia Bell; she extracts about 10 gallons of honey a year from five colonies. Classes for beginning beekeepers are offered by the Utah County Beekeepers Association (for more information, go to utahcountybeekeepers.org) and through the University of Utah’s Lifelong Learning program. In Europe, honey is mostly sold raw; in the United States, it is routinely pasteurized. The heat destroys tiny impurities or seed sugars that can cause honey to crystallize. This is not a health issue; it’s a marketing issue—pasteurization lengthens the honey’s shelf life. Crystallized honey is more likely to ferment. Plus, as Downey points out, Americans prefer liquid honey. But pasteurization doesn’t sterilize honey the way it does milk. Honey’s super saturation of sugar naturally inhibits the growth of bacteria—that’s why folk healers use it as an antiseptic on cuts.

The slow/artisanal food movement has been a boon to honey. As with wine, coffee, tea and chocolate, discerning and appreciating different nuances of flavor in different honeys has become a hobby. *Salt Lake Tribune* reporter Patty Henetz orders honeys from all over the world, buys them when she travels, tastes them and notes the differences.

HEDI LARSEN



COOKING WITH HONEY

Officially, **Maria Lichty** is a health educator for the State of Utah. Unofficially, she is the creator of *twopeasandtheirpod.com*, a Web site devoted to the healthy, homey cooking she does with her husband. We asked Maria to come up with some great recipes using honey.

CHEESE IT, HONEY

The new appreciation of honey has revived old ways to enjoy it—the ancients ate cheese dribbled with honey. Honey mellows the sharpness of blue cheese and sharp, acid cheeses. It rounds out the flavor of salty cheeses. Try these cheese and honey pairings from Caputo’s.

Fiore sardo DOP with mielle di castagno (chestnut honey) or sulla (a delicate floral honey)

Crotin de Champcol with eucalyptus honey

Garrotxa with eucalyptus honey

Bronet with edera (ivy flower) honey or corbezzolo-Killarney strawberry honey

Beehive Cheese Co.’s Aggiano with Slide Ridge chamomile

honey

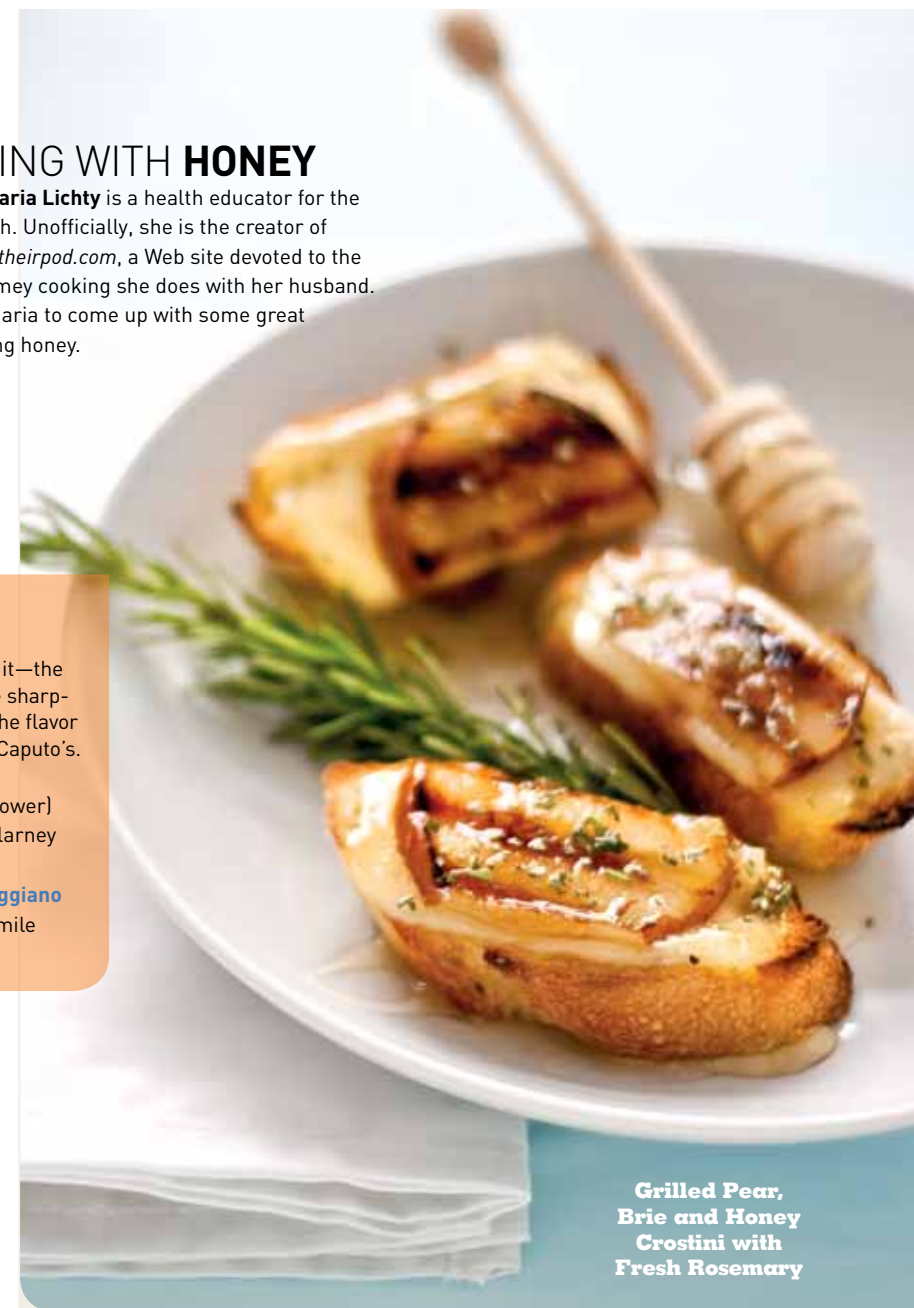
“I love orange grove honey, but my favorite is manuka honey. It’s thick, almost chewy, and dark. I first tasted it in New Zealand. Even the sap from these trees smells like honey.” Honey from manuka (tea-tree) flowers has superior antimicrobial properties.

HONEY EATERS

Utah consumers are starting to appreciate honey as more than something to drip over your so-called scone. Caputo’s Market & Deli and Liberty Heights Fresh stock shelves of different honeys: acacia, sunflower and chestnut honey from Tuscany; honey with bee pollen in it; chamomile and mahogany honey from Slide Ridge near Mendon, Utah, where the bees feed on flowers growing at over 8,000 feet.

Whatever flower they get their nectar from, it’s the bee who makes the honey, after gathering nectar nearly equal to her own body weight and storing it in her honey stomach (separate from her actual digestive system.) Back at the hive, she transfers the honey to another bee, mouth to mouth; the nectar is broken down into simple sugars by enzymes in the bee’s mouth and stomach, but it’s 80 percent water. Kept at a constant temperature in a honeycomb cell, the water evaporates from the nectar, helped by the bees’ fanning wings. In the end, honey has only 17 to 18 percent moisture—making it a viscous, golden, super-saturated sugar and a natural wonder. As Henetz (who puts honey in her green tea and on her morning toast) says, “It’s really a taste to live for.” **SI**

HEDI LARSEN



Grilled Pear, Brie and Honey Crostini with Fresh Rosemary

Grilled Pear, Brie and Honey Crostini with Fresh Rosemary

SERVES 6-8

1 French baguette, sliced 1/2 inch thick
Brie cheese, thinly sliced, rind removed
2 pears, halved, cored and thinly sliced
Honey
Fresh rosemary, finely chopped

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place the baguette slices on a large baking sheet. Place one slice of cheese on each baguette slice. Bake slices in the oven for 5–7 minutes or until the brie is melted.

While the baguette slices are baking, brush the pear slices with honey and grill on each side until soft.

Place a slice of pear on top of each cheesy baguette slice. Drizzle with honey and garnish with fresh rosemary.