

"I ... invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens."

-- Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863

November 24th is Thanksgiving Day this year. What are you thankful for? I sure hope "honey bees" are not the number one thing on your list! If they are, I beg you to get help from a competent therapist! Don't misunderstand – honey bees are on my list but many more important things are far ahead of them, such as the love of Jesus Christ, my family, my friends, my health and safety, my freedom, etc.

While I try to maintain a healthy perspective about things, I also strive to practice a sincere "attitude of gratitude" for all of my blessings, both large and small, every day, not just one day in November. I want to be like Goober Pyle (aka Goober Beasley), who Andy Griffith described as "the kind of person that walks into a restaurant and says 'This place has great salt!'"

One thing that is on my Thankful For list is Good Eatin'. As a beekeeper, sometimes good eatin' can come easier than it does for normal people. With that in mind, I asked the members of the Person County and Orange County Beekeepers Associations to send me their favorite recipes of foods made with honey. But not just any recipe... I specifically asked for real honey recipes. What does "real" mean? Well, I defined four criteria:

- 1) It must use a lot of honey, not merely wave a jar of honey over something.
- 2) It cannot use honey simply as a substitute for cane sugar. It has to be a food that just would not be the same if made with another sweetener. I get frustrated with "honey" recipes that you could just as easily (and much more cheaply) make with anything sweet.
- 3) It cannot just be something like "make blah



Chocolate-covered honey candy made by Diana Denz. (Photo: Diana Denz)

- blah blah and pour a cup of honey over it." I already know that recipe and I use it a lot!
- 4) It has to be something that you've actually made and actually enjoyed. Bonus points if somebody other than you actually enjoyed it too! Bonus points and a gold star if it is something that fits the Thanksgiving theme.

Baklava is a great example of a real honey food that uses a lot of honey. Honey cotton candy, which I have only ever seen at the State Fair, works too.

I received lots of great suggestions, proving that as a group, beekeepers know how to eat well and many of them can cook! Just in time for Thanksgiving, here are some ideas for a full-course meal using lots of local honey.

Appetizers

Everything's better with honey!

Chris Laudeman told me, "We use honey for teriyaki sauce, honey mustard and similar condiments, but one of our favorite uses is to serve it with aged cheeses, cured meats, and crackers as part of an appetizer or heavy snack. We especially like honey with an aged cheese like Piave, Parmigiana or aged Asiago. Our son also likes it with brie or similar soft cheeses. I like it better with the more nutty rich aged cheeses. We'll also have some prosciutto or other cured meat along with that. Add some good fresh bread and a glass of wine, and you have dinner!"

This may even be healthy...

Inge Kautzmann sent what she described as a “unique and amazing” recipe for figs stuffed with cheese and lavender-infused honey. She said it has been vetted by one of our State Bee Inspectors and he gives it his stamp of approval.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers, plus more for garnish
- 2 ounces creamy blue cheese, such as Valdeón, Gorgonzola dolce or any Rogue Creamery blue cheese
- 1/2 cup mascarpone cheese
- 12 fresh firm-ripe figs with stem ends trimmed

Preparation:

- 1) Combine the honey and lavender flowers in a small saucepan. Warm over low heat. Remove from heat and steep the lavender in the honey for at least 10 minutes. Strain the honey into a small bowl and discard the solids.
- 2) In a small bowl, combine the blue cheese with the mascarpone and half of the lavender honey. Stir until almost smooth (slightly chunky is okay). Place the mixture in a pastry bag fitted with a plain tip and set aside until ready to serve. If the mixture becomes too soft, refrigerate the bag.
- 3) Using a paring knife, cut downward lengthwise into each fig as if you were preparing to cut the fig in half, but cut only about halfway through. Turn the fig 90° and make a second cut perpendicular to the first. Using your fingers, gently pry open the top portions of the fig to create space for the cheese mixture. Pipe the cheese mixture from the pastry bag into the figs. Arrange the figs on a serving plate and garnish with lavender flowers. Drizzle the figs with the remaining lavender honey and serve at room temperature.

Main Course***Glazed sweet potatoes***

Brian Taylor said that he and his wife love his glazed sweet potato recipe. They've served

it to large crowds and everyone else always raves over it too. Brian also gets a gold star for meeting the Thanksgiving theme challenge!

- Microwave or bake four sweet potatoes until they are just getting soft.
- Allow to cool and slice into 3/4" rounds.
- Melt a pat of butter in a cast iron skillet and add two tablespoons of honey.
- Brown both sides of rounds, adding butter and honey as needed until all are done.
- The edges will become dark and crispy and the centers should remain soft.
- Very important: clean the pan before it cools or you will be sorry!

Dessert

I don't understand why “dessert” isn't the “main course”, but I didn't invent our language. Regardless, these items may tempt you to enjoy them throughout the meal, not just at the end.

You had me at “chocolate”

First is a simple yet drool-inspiring recipe for dark chocolates from Kim Buchanan:

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cocoa
- 1/2 cup melted coconut oil
- 1/4 cup honey

Preparation:

- 1) Heat slightly to ensure even blending.
- 2) Pour into molds.
- 3) Refrigerate if it's the least bit warm because the coconut oil melts easily.

Kim said, “That's the basic recipe. I add all sorts of goodies to them as well: nuts, rice crispies, raisins, dried cherries, etc. ... go crazy!”

Honey pie... oh my!

Shelley Rogers shared one of her favorite pie recipes, a delicious honey custard pie that clogged my arteries just thinking about it. The full recipe, complete with step-by-step photos, is online <[here](#)>.

Chocolate dipped honeycomb

Diana Denz provided a recipe for an outrageously delicious honey candy. The chocolate is optional... but why would anyone

leave it out? Diana made a batch for me and I can certify that this candy is exceptionally wonderful.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1.5 tablespoon baking soda
- 10 ounces dark chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons butter

Preparation:

- 1) In a large sauce pan, combine honey, corn syrup, sugar, and water.
- 2) Cook over medium-high heat and stir until the sugar is moistened.
- 3) Once well mixed, cook without stirring until temperature reaches 300°F (use a candy thermometer). Mixture will boil during this process.
- 4) At 300°F, remove the saucepan from the heat and add the baking soda quickly while constantly whisking the mixture. The mixture will foam up (whisk just enough to mix in the baking soda, but not to deflate the mixture).
- 5) Gently pour the mixture onto an aluminum foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Do not spread the mixture with a spoon/rubber scraper; this tends to flatten out the candy.
- 6) Allow the candy to cool and then break into various pieces. Tip: you can place them in the refrigerator to make them harden faster.
- 7) Slowly melt chocolate and butter in a sauce pan on low heat.
- 8) Dip the honeycomb candy into the chocolate and allow to cool on baking sheet. Or drizzle the chocolate onto the honeycomb candy. Or leave the honeycomb as is, no chocolate.
- 9) Enjoy!

Honey marshmallows

My longtime friend and former coworker Kathleen Collins sent me directions for making honey marshmallows. She said, "A child of eight can make these - so don't be intimidated by the

instructions."

You will need an 8x8 square pan with parchment paper, a stand mixer (or sturdy hand mixer, if you're industrious and brave), a candy thermometer, and a mixing bowl.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup filtered water (just don't use chlorinated water) split into half cups
- 3 level tablespoons gelatin (Great Lakes unflavored gelatin is great because the bloom is consistent; Knox brand may work okay)
- 1 cup good honey. The better the flavor, the better the marshmallows, so don't use a wimpy flavored honey or you miss the point of having honey flavored marshmallows.
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (or any extract that won't compete too much with the honey - orange is nice, almond is okay - but be adventurous)
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Preparation:

1. Grease an 8x8 pan and line with parchment paper in both directions. Cut long enough to leave some overhang to use as handles when removing the finished marshmallows.
2. If you want a coating on the marshmallows, now is the time to sprinkle that in the bottom of the pan. Arrowroot starch works well, and is great cut with powdered sugar (about half/half). Alternatively, crushed toasted coconut is a winner, as are any finely crushed and toasted tree nuts, like almond or pecan. These do not compete too much with the honey flavor.
3. In the mixer bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over the 1/2 cup of water.
4. While the gelatin is softening or "blooming", pour the other 1/2 cup of water in a sauce pan along with the honey, vanilla and the salt. Turn the burner to medium high heat and bring the mixture to a gentle boil.
5. Place a candy thermometer in the sauce pan and continue to boil the mixture until it reaches 240 degrees (the soft ball stage). This will take about 8-10 minutes (or longer, depending on your definition of a gentle

boil). Once the thermometer reaches 240 degrees, remove the sauce pan from the heat.

6. Set up the stand mixer with the whisk attachment. Adjust the standing mixer speed to low/medium. Slowly pour the hot honey mixture into the bowl over the bloomed gelatin mixture in a slow stream, being careful not to splash the sugar on the sides of the bowl too much while pouring through the whisk attachment. Take your time - about 3-4 minutes. Then turn the mixer to high and continue beating the mixture until it becomes thick like marshmallow creme (about 10 minutes). The marshmallow will be barely warm to touch and when you lift the whisk, the creme will fold gentle over onto itself. It should not form a stiff peak.
7. Turn off the mixer and transfer the marshmallow creme to the prepared pan. If you use a coating for the marshmallow, be sure to add it to the bottom of the pan first before transferring the marshmallow creme. Smooth the top and add more coating if using one. Pat to smooth again.
8. If you are not using a coating then lightly grease your hands with butter, ghee, coconut oil or avocado oil and pat smooth (select a mild oil that will not compete with the honey flavor). This will keep the creme from sticking to your fingers. Alternatively you can press it down with parchment paper, leaving it there until the marshmallows are completely set.
9. When set, remove the marshmallows by lifting from the parchment paper flaps. Cut to desired size and enjoy! Store tightly covered in an airtight container.

Tomorrow's breakfast

Fig and Honey Jam

Cynthia Speed has countless skills, and this recipe proves that cooking is one of them.

Ingredients:

- Fresh Figs to fill a pot 10 ½" wide and 5" high
- Juice of ½ Lemon

- 2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons coconut sugar
- 1 cup honey more or less to taste
- Zest of one orange

Preparation:

1. Wash figs and remove stems.
2. Mash them up really well by hand or with a potato masher.
3. Add the lemon juice, cinnamon, coconut sugar, honey and orange zest
4. On medium heat, cook the mixture down, stirring often to prevent sticking (approximately every 10 minutes for 2 hours)
5. Lower heat as volume reduces.
6. Ladle into about five sterile 8 ounce jars while hot.
7. Shake down and cap.
8. Leave jars upside down for 15 minutes, putting heat in direct contact with the lid to reduce chance of spoilage.

These will be good for a year if left unopened in a cool dark place.

Get cookin'!

Just as we don't need a designated day to be thankful for all of our blessings, we don't need to wait for a special occasion to enjoy honey! Try some of these recipes and let me know how they work out for you.



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