



## Monofloral Honey

Anne Lesenne

According to the National Honey Board, most of the \$920 million of honey purchased last year in the U.S. was from a grocery store in a 12 oz. plastic bottle.<sup>1</sup> This honey is usually processed (not raw) Wildflower, Clover or a blend of honeys to achieve a consistent light amber color and mild flavor. Most people don't know that there are over 300 different plants that honey can be produced from here in the United States. Since each plant is different, the nectar they produce is also different, and will produce a honey with a unique flavor profile. These honey flavors can be categorized according to the sensations they trigger in our taste buds: Sweet, Spicy, Sour, Bitter, Savory. Since taste is closely related to our sense of smell, flavors of honey will also remind us of other tastes and smells we've experienced.

### Honey Flavor Families

**Animal** – sweat, cat pee, gym bag, leather

**Caramel** – Confection or Chocolate

**Chemical** – pharmacy, cosmetic, detergent, turpentine

**Earthy** – soil, mushrooms, potatoes

**Fruity** – Berry, Citrus, Dried Fruit, Tree Fruit, Tropical Fruit, melon

**Floral** – violet, rose, honeysuckle, dried flowers

**Herbaceous** – Fresh or Dried

**Micro biotical** – Lactic or Yeasty

**Nutty** – walnut, peanut, almond,

**Refreshing** – peppermint, aromatic

**Spice** – peppery, zesty, sharp

**Spoiled** – beer, fermented, vinegar, mold, basement

**Vegetal** – green stalks, freshly cut grass, hay

**Warm** – confection, chocolate, coconut, dairy, nuts, marshmallow

**Woody** – Burnt or Resinous, sawdust, old trunk, attic, clove

Honey also varies in color from water white to dark amber. Usually, the lighter honeys have a lighter flavor



Honeybee on Mesquite blooms

and darker honeys not only have a stronger flavor but also contain more minerals and antioxidants.

While some beekeepers leave their hives in one place all year long and harvest honey after each big bloom period (nectar flow) other beekeepers will move their hives to crops as they bloom either to provide pollination services or to take advantage of the unique honey from that crop. Many crops are only in bloom for a few weeks so the beekeeper will bring in one strong hive per acre needing pollination. Each hive will have an empty honey super placed on top. The hives will stay in place until that crop is finished blooming and the honey super will be removed and harvested. The bees will receive a new empty honey super and be placed on the next blooming crop. This process will repeat as the Beekeeper moves the hives from crop to crop throughout the year.

In the low desert of Arizona we get two nectar flows per year following the winter rains and summer monsoons. Between these nectar flows the bees must search out nearby floral resources to provide the pollen and nectar they need for survival, or the beekeeper supplies supplemental feeding. In the higher elevations of Arizona there is only one nectar flow in the summer. Some beekeepers from the low desert will

<sup>1</sup>National Honey Board <https://honey.com/honey-industry/research/market-research>



An array of monofloral honeys arranged by color from light to dark

move bees up to the higher elevations to escape the intense heat of the desert and take advantage of the floral resources available there. For more information regarding the specialty honeys of Arizona please refer to the publication **Arizona Specialty Honeys**.

All honey is most flavorful when used within the same year it is produced and when stored at room temperature in a glass jar with tight fitting lid out of direct sunlight. Raw honeys are those that haven't been processed by heat or filtration so they also have more unique flavor and health benefits.

## Monofloral Honey Flavors

**Acacia** – sweet, delicate, flowery  
**Alfalfa** – light, mild, spicy, floral  
**Apple** – light, sweet, fruity  
**Aster** – sweet, floral, rich,  
**Avocado** – smoky, warm, molasses  
**Blackberry** – fruity, berry  
**Black locust** – sweet, vanilla, light,  
**Black Sage** – earthy, savory, peppery  
**Blueberry** – lactic, fruity, tangy,  
**Borage** – light, delicate, herbal, floral  
**Brassica** – savory, sweet, vegetal,  
**Buckwheat** – leather, cocoa, coffee, spicy  
**Camelthorn** – deep, rich, molasses,  
**Carrot** – strong, earthy, caramel,  
**Cat's claw** – very light, smooth, tangy, fruity  
**Chestnut** – fruity, woody, bitter aftertaste  
**Christmas Berry** – herbal, nutty,  
**Clary Sage** – floral, resinous, nut brittle,  
**Clover** – vegetal, dry hay, cinnamon, spice  
**Coffee** – rich, deep,

**Coriander** – vegetal, spicy, coconut,  
**Cotton** – fairly sweet, spicy afterthought  
**Cranberry** – warm, fruity, tart, tangy  
**Dandelion** – strong, mildly tangy, floral,  
**Eucalyptus** – intense, savory, salty,  
**Fireweed** – delicate, fruity, sweet, smooth  
**Goldenrod** – bright floral, sharp ale notes  
**Guayule** – light, floral  
**Kamahi** – strong, caramel, toffee, nutty,  
**Kiawe** – tropical fruit, menthol,  
**Lavender** – dry hay, fresh peaches  
**Leatherwood** – savory, spicy, floral  
**Lehua** – fragrant, savory, buttery, butterscotch, caramel, toffee  
**Lemon** – sweet, fruity,  
**Linden** – delicate, fresh, woody,  
**Ling Heather** – strong, bitter, smoky  
**Lychee** – sweet, savory, fruity, floral  
**Macadamia** – tangy, savory, musky floral,  
**Manuka** – medicinal, burnt sugar, peppery, earthy, woody  
**Maple** – maple, mild,  
**Meadowfoam** – vanilla, marshmallows, burnt sugar  
**Mesquite** – warm caramel, woody, smoky, nutty, light floral  
**Mimosa** – sweet, floral,  
**Mint** – musky, menthol, medium sweet,  
**Olive** – mild, hints of caramel and vanilla  
**Orange** – jasmine, gardenia, fruity, lactic,  
**Palmetto** – mild, sweet,  
**Peach** – light, fruity, sweet, floral  
**Pecan** – strong, dark, molasses  
**Pear** – light, fruity, floral, sweet  
**Pine** – bitter, strong, astringent,





A charcuterie plate ready for a honey pairing party

- Pohutukawa** – slight butterscotch,
- Poison Oak** – mellow, earthy, butterscotch
- Prickly Pear** – sweet, fruity,
- Pumpkin**- floral, light,
- Rapsflower** – sweet, aromatic, mild,
- Raspberry** – smooth, floral, warm, fruity
- Rata** – mild, smooth, sweet,
- Red Beech** - (NZ) hints of berries, caramel, nectar
- Rewarewa** – (NZ) full bodied malt like taste
- Rosemary** – herbal, floral, bitter almond, fruity
- Sage** – mild, sweet,
- Salt Cedar** – earthy, malted, hickory, citrus
- Sidr** – lavish, buttery, sweet,
- Snowberry** – butterscotch, toffee, lavender, cherry,
- Sourwood** – caramel, buttery,
- Star thistle** – vegetal, tropical fruit, spicy, buttery, astringent
- Sunflower** – vegetal, dry hay, apricot,
- Tawari** – creamy butterscotch, mild,
- Thyme** – dried flowers, cloves, cedar, wood,
- Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron)** – savory, dried fruit, dates
- Tupelo** – floral, herbal, cinnamon, melon, pears,
- Ulmo** – aniseed, jasmine, vanilla, violet, cloves

To truly know how a honey tastes, you need to taste it all by itself, but honey is also truly exceptional when paired with other foods. Try some of these combinations.

## Honey Pairings

- Acacia** – any cheese, meat, fruit
- Ailanthus** – tropical fruits,
- Alfalfa** – cornbread, baking, teas
- Avocado** – BBQ sauce, burgers, pulled pork
- Basswood** – green apples, melon,
- Bell Heather** – Stilton or cheddar cheese
- Blackberry** – over cobbler
- Blueberry** – yogurt, coffee cake
- Borage** – tea, scones, biscuits,
- Buckwheat** – blue or strong cheeses, BBQ
- Cats Claw** – grilled pork chops,
- Chestnut** – gorgonzola or blue cheeses
- Clover** – toast, teas, scones, biscuits
- Coriander** – best straight from the spoon
- Cranberry** – brie, turkey, dark chocolate
- Eucalyptus** – salty cheeses, savory meats
- Fireweed** – ricotta, nuts, berries
- Gallberry** – brie, camembert, pecans
- Goldenrod** – strawberries, nuts, cottage cheese
- Honeydew** – coffee
- Honeysuckle** – warm focaccia bread, cheese cake
- Japanese Knotweed** – Norwegian gjetost cheese, raisin bread, waffles, gingerbread,
- Kamahi** – granola, fish, meats
- Kiawe** – lemon curd, chocolate, matcha
- Kudzu** – roasted carrots,
- Lavendar** – shortbreads, tea, ice cream
- Leatherwood** – Tasmanian smoked cheddar, Australian cheeses, sourdough bread,
- Ling heather** – Stilton or cheddar cheese,
- Lychee** – smoothies, cantaloupe
- Macadamia** – ricotta, goat cheeses, fresh pineapple, passion fruit, chocolate,
- Manuka** –
- Meadowfoam** – smores, sweet potatoes
- Mesquite** – goat cheese, fresh mango,
- Lehua** – almond butter, coconut, oatmeal
- Orange** – goat cheeses, glazes for meat, carrot cake
- Raspberry** – goat or brie cheese, walnuts, lemonade,
- Rhododendron** – Val d’Aosta cheese, fresh pears, figs, winter squash
- Rosemary** – roast lamb, lemon chicken, roasted potatoes
- Sage** – pasta, mushrooms, pumpkin
- Saw Palmetto** – hard cheeses, ham, prosciutto,

**Star thistle** – salty cheeses, kiwi, mango, green melon, banana bread, grilled salmon

**Sunflower** – yogurt, biscuits, bread

**Thyme** – Greek salad, feta, granola,

**Tulip poplar** – pecan pie, cinnamon toast, bacon, waffles, bran muffins,

**Tupelo** – blue, aged pecorino, robust cheeses,

**Ulmo** – Chilean chanco, panquehue, quesillo cheeses

For more information on how to host a honey tasting event, see the publication Tasting Honey.

## References

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The Beekeepers Bible by Richard A. Jones and Sharon Sweeney-Lynch

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
Cooperative Extension

### AUTHORS

**ANNE LESENNE**  
*Assistant Agent, Horticulture*

### CONTACT

**ANNE LESENNE**  
[annelesenne@email.arizona.edu](mailto:annelesenne@email.arizona.edu)

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