

**Making Medicinal Honey (Miel)**  
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**What is honey?**

- Honey is the method by which bees store nectar in their hives.
- The chemical composition of nectar varies and includes vitamin C and some B vitamins, as well as water, but is primarily sugar (up to 80%). Plants in the Fabaceae (Pea family) and Asteraceae (Sunflower family) are prominent sources of nectar.
- Honey is also a great source of protein (up to 35%) which, when coupled with the high carbohydrate content, is a great energy booster. These proteins also promote internal and external healing.
- Raw honey contains pollen, another great source of proteins and minerals that is also a reputed treatment for allergies.
- Propolis is a resinous substance that the bees use to seal small open spaces in their hive. It is a powerful antimicrobial and also protects tissue, and can be used as a bandage or spray.

**Honey as Medicine.**

- Miels are herbal extractions made using honey as the menstruum.
- Honey's usefulness in medicine is due primarily to its antibacterial properties. As honey is a super-saturated sugar (at least 80% fructose and glucose), it contains very little water. This means that very little water is available to support the growth of microorganisms, and that any water in the microorganisms will be removed by the sugars due to osmosis, which destroys the microorganisms.
- Honey is quite acidic, with a pH between 3.2 and 4.5, which is low enough to inhibit the growth of many microorganisms, whose preferred growth conditions are in the neutral pH range of 7.2-7.4.
- Honey also produces hydrogen peroxide enzymatically (using glucose, water, and oxygen in combination with the enzyme glucose oxidase), and acts as a slow-releasing antiseptic that does not damage the surrounding tissue.
- Volatile oils found in nectar may contribute to honey's antibacterial nature. Varying nectar sources have also been found to affect the antimicrobial properties of honey. Manuka, buckwheat, and heather honeys are higher in protein and also exhibit greater antimicrobial activity. Sunflower and buckwheat honeys are higher in antioxidants. Some honey is derived from the sap of certain conifers and is darker in color with a higher mineral content.
- Honey has a very soothing and demulcent effect on the mucous membranes. If dried herbs are used, moisture will be extracted from the honey. If fresh herbs are used, moisture will be added to the honey as the water-soluble constituents, as well as some volatile oils, are extracted from the marc.

**Historical Uses of Honey.**

- The Smith Papyrus (1700 BC) and Ebers Papyrus (1500 BC) contain descriptions of the packing of wounds and burns with a paste made of honey and coagulated milk, covered with a bandage made of muslin.
- The traditional Chinese pharmacopeia also mentions the use of honey for wounds and burns, as do the records of the ancient Aztecs.

## Herbal Honeys

To make a fresh miel/herbal honey:

- Coarsely chop fresh herb (garlic cloves should be left whole) and place into a jar.
- Pour gently-warmed, raw, unpasteurized honey into the jar, stirring it together with the herb. Do not over heat or boil the honey (over 110°F) or you will kill the beneficial enzymes and lessen its medicinal effectiveness. Add honey again to fill the jar.
- Cover the jar tightly. Place the jar in a warm place, like a sunny window.
- You can use the honey after macerating for 1-2 days, but it will have greater medicinal benefits if allowed to sit for 2 weeks.
- You can also heat the jar in a 100°F water bath (such as a crock pot) for a few hours, which will quicken the process and still make a strong miel.

Some of the fresh herbs that can be used in honeys are:

- Comfrey, *Symphytum officinalis* Lf.
- Garlic, *Allium sativum*
- Ginger, *Zingiber officinale*
- Horseradish, *Armoracia rusticana*
- Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*
- Lemon balm, *Melissa officinalis*
- Oregano, *Origanum vulgare*
- Osha, *Ligusticum porteri*
- Peppermint, *Mentha piperita*
- Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- Sage, *Salvia officinalis*
- Spearmint, *Mentha spicata*
- Thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*
- Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*

To make a dried miel/herbal honey:

- When using dried herbs (leaves, flowers, roots, berries, seeds, and barks), grind them into a fine powder. You can pass the herb through a fine mesh strainer to be sure you get a fine consistency.
- Fill jar 2/3 full of honey and place in a saucepan with a water bath. Gently heat until honey becomes thinner and easier to stir. This is about changing the consistency of the honey so that it's less viscous, not about actually heating the honey.
- Add powdered herb by the spoonful, stirring thoroughly each time. Continue adding herb by the spoonful and stirring until it reaches the desired consistency. The goal is for your honey to become thick and saturated with herb. This generally takes about 6-10Tbsp of powdered herb.
- Dried herbal miels should not be strained and can be eaten immediately.

**Dried herbs we will be using today:**

*With gratitude to Mountain Rose Herbs for their generous donation <3*

- Ashwagandha, *Withania somnifera*
  - Part used: root
  
- Schisandra, *Schisandra chinensis*
  - Part used: berry
  
- Devil's Club, *Oplopanax horridum*
  - Part used: root bark
  
- Cinnamon, *Cinnamomum verum*
  - Part used: bark
  
- Ginger, *Zingiber officinale*
  - Part used: root
  
- Rose, *Rosa* spp.
  - Part used: hips and petals