

## More about Honey

### How can I buy Honey?

Honey is available in a variety of forms. To ensure the honey remains liquid, heat must be used to destroy all crystallizing nuclei. Some honeys naturally remain liquid longer than others. In Canada, fireweed honey is one of these. In Canada most honeys are sold **crystallized** or **creamed**. This is a process developed by a Canadian which imparts a butter-like consistency to the honey. **Comb Honey** is honey as the bees put it up. It is contained in the cells of the honeybee's wax comb in which it was produced. The comb is edible, in fact, chewing on the wax as 'honey-gum'. **Taste** and **Color** are functions due to the flora source. In general, tree sources tend to be darker.

### How should I store Honey?

Because honey is hygroscopic in nature it draws moisture from the air so it should be tightly covered. Room temperature is fine. A warm, dry place which ensures it spreads easily is the top of the refrigerator or the cupboard above. It may be frozen, but should not be kept in the fridge as this encourages crystallization. Crystallized honey can be reliquefied by placing in warm water and stirring frequently. Be **careful** as boiling or scorching will change the flavour and destroy natural enzymes. Warm water retains the best qualities of the honey.

### Cooking with Honey

Because honey is hygroscopic, baked goods will not dry out as fast as ones made without honey. Foods made with honey continue to improve in flavour after baking and will be even better the second day; for this reason honey-baked goods make excellent gifts and are especially suitable for mailing long distances. Measuring out honey is easy if the container is first moistened with oil or melted butter. This allows the honey to slide right out without scraping.

There are no simple hard and fast rules for converting recipes from sugar to honey. Generally in quick breads, cakes or cookies substitute two-thirds cup of honey for each cup of sugar. Also reduce the amount of liquid by one-quarter cup for each cup of honey used. You will also need to add a little more leavening agent – usually one-half teaspoon baking soda for each cup of honey used. In addition, remember to lower the oven temperature 25<sup>o</sup>F because foods baked with honey tend to brown faster. When only small amounts of sweetener are used such as in yeast breads or salad dressings, you do **not** need to adjust the recipe.

In some recipes you can use less honey. In most fruit pies, for example, use one-fourth cup less honey than sugar, but increase the thickening agent by one-half (flour, cornstarch, eggs, tapioca, or gelatin). Honey does have more sweetening power than sugar. In addition it brings out the natural flavours of the fruit.

Much of this information was taken from Doris Mech's book **Joy with Honey**, published by St. Martin's Press. This book contains over 200 recipes ('95).

**NOTE: Unpasteurized honey should not be fed to infants under 1 year.**