

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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This Treat's a Trick

This weekend is the big candy night, with ghosts and ghouls shouting 'Trick or Treat' at your front door. Traditionally we hand out sweets, which they love but which may or may not be very good for them. Another sweet that gets much more attention than it deserves, especially in the 'good for us' category is honey. Now, don't get me wrong - I love honey in my tea and have a favorite homemade honey bread recipe (which is too long to share in this column). Honey is great for eating.

The tricky part comes with all the claims for antioxidants, enzymes, special carbohydrates and minerals that are found in honey. There are honey-containing creams, salves, lip-balms and cosmetics. There are now products for treating cuts, ulcers and burns appearing on the market. What's the basis for all these claims?

As with many things, there is a tiny germ of truth underneath the hype. Honey does have a *tiny* amount of several minerals, *trace* amounts of a few obscure antioxidants, and a *few* active enzymes. But what good do they do us? It depends on what you compare them to.

For example, yes, honey does have antioxidants. Which ones and how much depends on what flowers the bees were visiting when they made the honey. But the amounts are tiny. So if you compare honey to sugar or corn syrup, ounce for ounce, honey is the winner. Table sugar and corn syrup have no antioxidants.

But only some honey has antioxidants. The darker the honey, the more it is likely to have. The kind and the amount vary from place to place, season to season. So you

never know if there are any in your jar of honey. And since these things are not standardized, there's no proof that the lip balm, skin cream, or shampoo that claims to be made from honey has any antioxidants or other active ingredient either.

But what else do we get from these sweeteners? Lots of calories and not much else. If you add an ounce (2 tablespoons) of honey to your tea, you get 86 calories, and 15 mg of potassium. That's the mineral in highest amount in honey. Add an ounce of sugar to your tea, you get 108 calories and no potassium. But, if you eat only one or two cherries, about an ounce, you get 20 calories and 109 mg of potassium.

To get as much potassium from honey as you do from a cup of raw sweet cherries, you would need to eat 17 ounces, or a little more than a cup. That comes at a cost of 1502 calories, a whole day's worth of calories for many people! While honey does have some minerals, they're just not significant in a normal diet.

There are claims, but nothing that has been verified, that honey helps heal cuts. But only some kinds, at some times of the year, seem to show any positive effect. There is nothing reliable for treating cuts with honey. Maybe research will find a way to guarantee that the bees put the right active ingredients in all the time, but it hasn't happened yet. Stick to the tried and true for now.

One last note: Never, ever, give honey or foods that contain honey to an infant under 1 year of age. Honey sometimes has spores of the botulism bacteria. If they grow, they can kill or paralyze a baby.

So, if you like the flavors of honey, enjoy it. Remember it has as many calories as the sugar it's replacing. Here's a sweet and spicy recipe for roasting a chicken using honey. You might use this glaze on the grill, but don't put the glaze on until the end, so that it doesn't burn.

Spicy Honey Glaze for Roasting Chicken

1/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth

2 Tbsp honey

2 Tbsp Dijon mustard

½ tsp grated lemon zest

4-5 pound whole chicken for roasting (to serve 6 people)

1 orange, optional

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

In small pan bring broth to boil. Add honey, mustard and lemon zest. Lower heat, cook and stir 2 minutes until well blended. Put chicken in roasting pan breast side up. Poke some holes in orange with a knife and place in cavity of chicken. Tie leg tips together. Insert pop-up meat thermometer in thigh. Brush chicken lightly with glaze. Place in oven and reduce heat to 350 degrees. After 45 min. brush again with glaze. Repeat after another 10 min. (If you don't have a pop-up indicator, use a meat thermometer to check the temperature inside the thigh.) Continue roasting and glazing until pop-up indicator pops or meat reaches 178 degrees. Remove from oven, cover and let sit 20 minutes before carving. Meat should reach a final 180 degrees for safety.

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