MĀNUKA HONEY
BEES & TREES
NEW ZEALAND

Manuka Honey vs. Regular Honey: 10 Key Differences That Might Surprise You

Our natural world is incredibly diverse, with different climates and regions producing plants unlike any other. The history of beekeeping in different parts of the world goes back decades and in some cases, centuries or millennia. We hold the traditions of beekeeping in the highest esteem and regard the process of producing raw, minimally processed honey, to preserve all of its wholesome properties to be an artisan craft. In this article, we'll use the term "regular honey" as a shorthand for honey that is widely available in a typical grocery store setting to the US consumer. This is a form of shorthand that allows us to compare and contrast what a lot of US consumers might be used to in terms of honey they have consumed.

The properties of Manuka honey are, to a large degree, unique, and Manuka stands alone in the world of honey types for a number of its properties. We'll attempt to draw out these differences by comparison to "regular honey" in the following paragraphs. For any beekeeper producing great quality honey wherever you may be in the world, we mean no offense. We will contend that Manuka honey's wellness properties set it apart in a very real and meaningful way. That is not to say that future research will not uncover other honey types that have their own set of special properties. A recent study of several non-Manuka New Zealand native honeys began an inquiry in this very direction [1].

However, the world of honey has a dark side that is rife with honey adulteration and shady practices. This truth has been the subject of several documentaries in recent years. The US market is especially susceptible to this type of fraud, and US consumers should be ever vigilant to know the source of their honey. At Bees & Trees, we are proud to be associated with and certified by the GenuHoney project, founded to provide US consumers with a source of authentic, independently verified honey, from producers that are doing things the right way. Ultimately, knowing your beekeeper is increasingly important when sourcing honey. We'll focus here on explaining how and why Manuka honey is different and help you get to know our company. Our goal is to be your local beekeeper in New Zealand if that is not too much of a contradiction of terms.

What is Honey?

Honey is a sweet thick liquid produced by bees. It normally starts as flower nectar which is then disintegrated into simple sugars and stored in a honeycomb. While in the honeycomb, it undergoes a desiccation process where it is fanned by bees, forming honey. Different honey types have distinct colors and flavors, depending on the plant the nectar comes from. Generally, the darker the color of honey, the stronger the flavor.

What is Manuka Honey?

The word “Manuka” is the Māori name given to the plant by the original settlers of the islands of Aotearoa. [2] Manuka honey is a special type of honey that is produced by bees that forage on the New Zealand Manuka tree. This honey is so rare because Manuka trees only grow in certain areas of New Zealand, making it a limited natural resource. Manuka honey contains a high concentration of an organic compound called methylglyoxal, which correlates to its unique antimicrobial and medicinal properties. Methylglyoxal is created through the non-enzymatic conversion of dihydroxyacetone (DHA), which is normally present in high quantities in the Manuka flower nectar. [3]

Manuka honey's unique non-peroxide properties were discovered by New Zealand Researcher Peter Molan when he tested Manuka honey, clover honey, and blackberry honey. He observed that Manuka honey exhibited non-peroxide activity that was unique and effective against bacteria. [2] Manuka honey's medicinal properties are made possible by the variety of micro and macronutrients, like vitamins, free amino acids, enzymes, sugars, essential minerals, proteins, phenolic acids, and flavonoids. [4]

Similarities Between Manuka Honey and Other Honey Types

Manuka honey doesn't differ from regular honey on a nutritional basis. Dietitian Kris Sollid, RD, Senior Director of Communications at the International Food Information Council, says "Nutritionally speaking, all honeys are similar, including regular honey and Manuka honey." [5]

Here's some nutrition information from the USDA showing how one tablespoon (20 grams) of Manuka honey [6] and one tablespoon (21 grams) of regular honey compare. [7]

	Manuka honey (20 g serving)	Regular honey (21 g serving)
Calories	70	64
Fat	0g	0g
Sodium	0mg	0mg
Carbohydrates	16g	17g
Fiber	0g	0g
Sugar	16g	17g
Protein	0g	0g

While Manuka honey and regular honey have similar nutritional information, it doesn't mean they are the same. The biggest difference is in the antimicrobial and other wellness properties of Manuka honey, which are not found to the same extent in regular honey.

Difference Between Manuka Honey and Other Types of Honey

1. **Special Wellness Properties:** According to research, Manuka honey contains more potent antibacterial activity than regular honey due to the presence of methylglyoxal. This antibacterial activity contributes to the medicinal properties that make it great for healing wounds, burns, coughs, colds, and other applications. [8]

2. **Taste:** Compared to regular honey, Manuka honey has a medium sweet, aromatic flavor and earthy taste. Our premium Manuka honey has a great taste, which customers love.

3. **Type of flower:** Manuka honey is made by bees that mainly forage on the Manuka tree, while other types of honey are produced by bees foraging on other nectar sources. Other monofloral honeys are also available and are found in specialty honey shops or certain regions of the country (e.g., tupelo honey, orange blossom honey, etc.). The most common honey, though, is blended honey, which occurs as a result of blending different honey types or bees foraging on a variety of nectar sources (e.g., wildflower honey, pasture honey, forest honey, etc.).

4. **Color:** Honey, the world over, varies a lot in color depending on the nectar source. Manuka honey's color varies depending on the region of New Zealand where it is produced. Northland Manuka honey is darker than Taranaki Manuka honey (the region where we produce), which tends to be some of the lightest Manuka honey.

5. **Viscosity:** Manuka honey is more viscous than regular honey because of its thixotropic properties. That is, it will be solid at room temperature and take on more of a spreadable texture. This has to do with the concentrations of sugars in manuka that cause it to be a supersaturated solution. [9]

6. **Components:** In general, honey is primarily composed of 80% carbohydrates, and 17-19% water. It also contains other compounds like vitamins, proteins, minerals, and amino acids such as essential amino acids and non-essentials, organic acids, flavonoids, and polyphenols. It also contains monosaccharides, disaccharides, trisaccharides, and oligosaccharides. Honey also contains minerals such as calcium, sodium, sulfur, phosphorus, and magnesium. [10]Manuka honey contains a unique compound known as methylglyoxal which correlates with its antimicrobial properties. It also has distinct polyphenol and flavonoid compounds which are linked to its antioxidant properties. [11]

7. **Location:** Manuka honey is mainly produced in New Zealand, as that is where the Manuka tree grows natively. There are also a couple of areas in southern Australia where the Manuka tree grows natively. In New Zealand, the government carefully regulates the use of the word "Manuka" on honey labels and the testing of chemical and DNA markers to ensure that honey packed in New Zealand is authentic. No such standards exist for so-called Australian "Manuka" honey.

8. **Processing:** Generally, Manuka honey from New Zealand undergoes less processing than "regular honey" found on your local grocery shelf. However, the larger brands tend

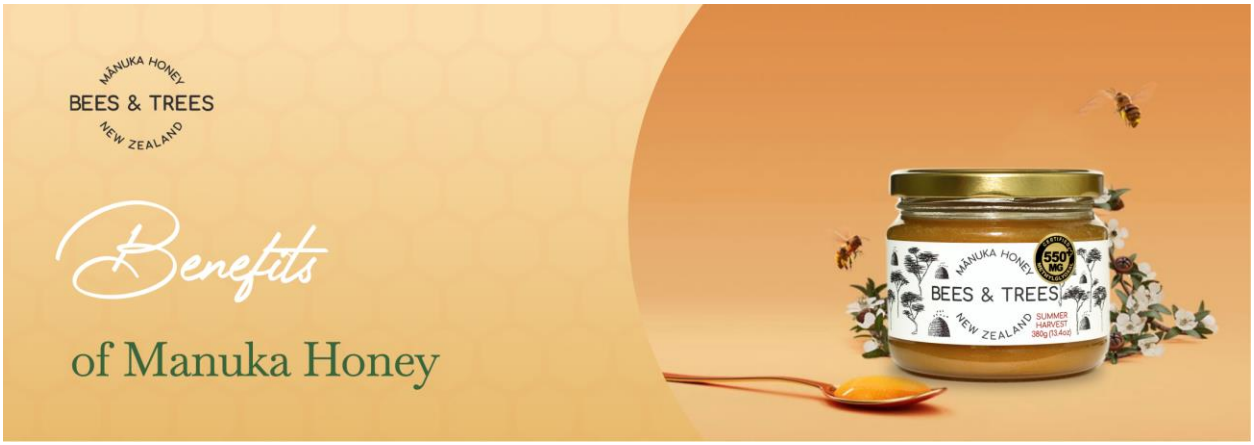
to blend Manuka and other honey types from different regions of New Zealand to arrive at their desired grade or rating (see next section). Additionally, some brands normally pasteurize honey to kill yeasts which could lead to fermentation, especially if the moisture content of the honey is too high. At Bees & Trees, we use minimal, small batch processing, which is just enough to filter it to a good consistency while maintaining all of its natural goodness. We call it hive-to-jar processing.

9. **Grading System:** Manuka honey has a different grading system from regular honey. Let's break it down. Regular honey is typically graded on color, such as light amber, medium amber, etc. Manuka honey is lab tested to determine the concentration in mg/kg of methylglyoxal. In most cases, the actual MG test result is displayed prominently on the label. Alternatively, some brands use the UMF rating system, which correlates to the MG test result via a lookup table. MG results can be as low as 30 for multi-floral Manuka and as high as 800 or above for the purest monofloral Manuka honey. The UMF scale is usually shown as 5 to 20+ for honey testing between 200 and 800 MG. All of this is in addition to the testing that is done on 4 chemical markers and 1 DNA marker to authenticate that the honey can carry the Manuka name on the label.

   At Bees & Trees, you can access our latest honey batch lab test reports on our website.

10. **Cost:** Due to its unique properties, rarity, and high demand, Manuka honey is more expensive than regular honey. The higher the MG concentration, the higher the price typically. However, we strive to give our customers the best prices for our premium Manuka honey. Visit our shop now to save on your next Manuka honey purchase.

Benefits of Manuka Honey



1. **Improved Wound Healing**

Studies have shown that Manuka honey can be beneficial in treating wounds, burns, and scarring. There's so much interest in it that it is used in making medical dressings. A study conducted in 2012 investigating the impact of Manuka-impregnated dressings on neuropathic diabetic foot ulcers showed that Manuka-impregnated dressings reduce healing time [12] In a 2017 study, Manuka honey demonstrated the ability to inhibit bacterial growth and support wound healing and tissue regeneration. [13]

2. **Contains Antibacterial and Antimicrobial Activity**

Honey, in general, has antibacterial and antimicrobial activity because of its high sugar content and low pH, which inhibit bacterial growth hence its application in healing wounds, sore throat, and even acne. Research shows that Manuka honey has more powerful antimicrobial properties because of the presence of methylglyoxal. And the higher the methylglyoxal content, the more potent the antimicrobial activity. [14]

According to a 2013 study, researchers concluded that C. difficile, a bacterial infection in the colon, is susceptible to Manuka honey and may potentially be effective in treating infections caused by C. difficile. [15] Honey is a potential alternative for managing resistant antibacterial strains. In a 2014 study, researchers showed that it has an antibiofilm effect, effectively eradicating biofilms formed by Staphylococcus aureus (staph) strains. [16]

3. **May Help With Respiratory Tract Infections**

Manuka honey has a long history of application in managing cold and flu symptoms due to its potent medicinal properties. However, its usefulness doesn't end there. Manuka honey has also been shown to be effective against other respiratory tract infections. In a 2017 study, Manuka honey sinus irrigations were shown to be effective in improving chronic rhinosinusitis symptoms. [17] A recent study reports that Manuka honey may potentially kill harmful respiratory tract bacteria like Mycobacterium abscessus, which affect cystic fibrosis patients. [18]

4. **Contains Antiviral Activity**

In a 2014 study, Manuka honey demonstrated potent antiviral properties by efficiently inhibiting influenza virus replication. [19] In a 2012 study, Manuka showed significant in vitro antiviral activity against varicella-zoster virus (VZV), which makes a great potential alternative in treating zoster rash. [20]

5. **Digestive Health**

Manuka honey can kill harmful gastrointestinal bacteria while encouraging the development of good gut bacteria through its prebiotic properties. In a 2010 study, Manuka honey showed promising activity against microorganisms like Salmonella typhimurium DT104, and ESBL-producing organisms with Manuka honey. [21] In a 2016 study investigating the gastroprotective effects of Manuka honey against ethanol-induced gastric ulcers in rats, researchers reported

that “Manuka honey likely exerted its antiulcer effect by keeping enzymatic (GPx and SOD) and non-enzymatic (GSH and NO) antioxidants as well as inflammatory cytokines (TNF-α, IL-1β, and IL-6) in a reduced form, inhibited lipid peroxidation (MDA), and preserved mucous glycoproteins levels.” [22] The anti-inflammatory properties of Manuka honey may also aid in the relief of symptoms and overall improvement of digestive health concerns. Anecdotal evidence supports the relief of common digestive issues like acid reflux and irritable bowel syndrome.

Is Manuka Honey Better Than Regular Honey?

After discovering all the differences between Manuka honey and regular honey, you might wonder, “is Manuka honey really better than regular honey?” It depends on why you are buying honey and what you are comparing it to. If you are looking for something sweet to put on your toast without concern for potential wellness properties, then a good quality, authentic honey from any floral source will be roughly equivalent.

If you are looking to incorporate Manuka honey into your daily routine to boost immunity, and help keep you well, then there is no substitute for real Manuka honey. For this use, we recommend Manuka honey with at least a 250+ MG (Methylglyoxal) test result or the correlated UMF 10+ on the label. If you suffer from chronic digestive health issues or just feel a cold/flu infection coming on and want honey that may help you feel well again soon, then Manuka honey with at least a 500+MG or the correlated UMF 15+ rating on the label is our recommendation.

Bees & Trees - Real Manuka Honey

At Bees & Trees, we only have one obsession: To produce the best quality Manuka honey in New Zealand for our consumers. As a brand, we value trust, care, natural wellness, and transparency. And in keeping with these values, we ensure that we take care of our bees and the environment. We also publish our Manuka honey test results on our product pages so our customers can verify that they are getting nothing but pure and authentic Manuka honey. We hope you try Bees & Trees Manuka honey today!

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How does the taste of Manuka honey differ from regular honey?**

Manuka honey is different from regular honey because it has a medium sweet, aromatic flavor with an earthy taste, distinct from the often milder taste of regular honey. You could describe the flavor of our Manuka honey as more complex than overly sweet regular honey.

2. **Why is Manuka honey more expensive than regular honey?**

The Manuka tree is rare and only grows in specific, often remote, regions in New Zealand. Its flowering season is short, and the trees' remoteness often requires helicopters to place and retrieve the hives. That, coupled with Manuka honey's potent health properties, makes it a sought-after and highly-priced honey the world over.

3. **Why is it important to know the source of your honey?**

Due to the risk of honey adulteration and fraud, knowing the source ensures you are getting pure, high-quality honey.

4. **What are the best uses for Manuka honey in daily wellness routines?**

Manuka honey, thanks to its unique properties, can be used in your daily routine to boost immunity, aid in digestive health, and provide relief from cold and flu symptoms.

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