



What is Manuka Honey? + [6 Incredible Benefits]



For centuries, people have harvested the sweet nectar of nature's busiest member of the insect family. Between honey's taste and numerous health benefits, you really can't go wrong with adding it to your diet.

Now imagine if the honey that was in your pantry was supercharged with antimicrobial properties, killed viruses and bacteria, and could even be used in your skincare regime. Let us introduce you to one of nature's most profound superfoods: Manuka honey!

In this article, we'll address questions like, "What is Manuka honey?" "What is Manuka honey good for?" and "Where can I get Manuka honey?" Read on to learn more.

What is Manuka Honey?





Manuka honey is produced when bees forage the flowers of native New Zealand Manuka trees. Quality Manuka honey will be monofloral, meaning that the primary nectar source for the honey comes from that single plant species.

Historically, in New Zealand, beekeepers avoided letting their bees forage on the Manuka trees if they could help it. The honey was thicker than other kinds of honey and, therefore, more difficult to extract. It was also not considered a favorite in terms of taste when compared to the clover honeys the early settlers were accustomed to from Europe. Nowadays, you can likely find Manuka honey in just about any grocery store's health and wellness section, and for good reason! Manuka honey has developed a worldwide following for its health and wellness properties. To understand how this came to be requires a bit of a quick review of the history of beekeeping in New Zealand.

Brief History of Manuka Honey



Honey-making bee populations are actually not native to New Zealand. We have to look back to 1839 when the honey-making species *Apis Mellifera* was introduced to the region by an English Beekeeper, Mary Bumby.

With her two hives of English bees in tow, Bumby set up her apiary on the North Island of New Zealand. Manuka trees flourished along this region, and many historical counts indicate that New Zealand's very first honey production was made from Mānuka trees. Soon enough, the Manuka honey industry began to grow.

Over the years, however, Mānuka honey would face difficult challenges in the market at large. Manuka honey struggled to compete against the wildflower-based honey sought all around the world. For nearly a century, Manuka honey would sit on the sidelines. But all this would change in the 1980s.



A New Zealand Biochemist, Dr. Peter Molan, would be the first to truly dive into and understand the unique antibacterial properties of Manuka honey. These properties were discovered to be quantifiable. Molan continued researching Manuka honey and eventually coined the term “Unique Manuka Factor” (UMF). UMF would later be trademarked and form the basis for one of the two primary methods of rating and labeling Manuka honey for its potency.

This discovery and the coinage of the phrase “UMF” truly helped Manuka honey find its foothold in the world market. As the popularity of alternative health and wellness grew throughout the 90s in America, Europe, and Oceania, Manuka honey skyrocketed in popularity. Now Manuka honey is comfortably in the mainstream and stands alone atop the world of honey for its wide array of natural health benefits!

Later research carried out in Germany on Manuka honey found an organic dietary compound, methylglyoxal (MG or MGO for short), which could be directly measured and correlated well with the antibacterial properties. MG testing became the standard by which all Manuka honey is tested today.

Can You Eat Manuka Honey?



Yes! Manuka honey is safe to eat and can be used in numerous ways around the kitchen! However, honey of all types, including Manuka, is not recommended for children under 12 months of age.

Consuming Manuka honey raw is the best way to ensure you receive all the great benefits. An easy and effective way to consume Manuka honey is to take a spoonful 1-2 times a day.

Besides eating the honey raw, you can:

- Enjoy it mixed in with tea or coffee
- Use as a syrup or spread for pancakes, toast, and waffles



- Combine with olive oil and vinegar for a tasty salad dressing
- Get fancy and pair your Manuka honey with a variety of different cheeses
- Sweeten up marinades for meats and veggies alike

There are many ways to get creative when working with Manuka honey! Want to see some of our favorite recipes? You can check out our blog [here](#).

What Does Manuka Honey Taste Like?



It depends. Some Manuka honey has a distinct strong flavor and an aftertaste. In our experience, the taste can be influenced by the region the honey is produced and the post-harvest processing. Bees & Trees Manuka honey tastes amazingly good. We get feedback from customers who describe it as the best Manuka honey they have ever had. We credit that great taste of our honey to the micro-climate of the Taranaki region where we produce. It also helps that our honey is minimally processed in small batches.

The texture of Manuka honey also sets it apart from other kinds of honey. It tends to be much thicker than clover or wildflower honey which stays more liquid. Manuka honey is considered a supersaturated solution due to the ratio of the sugars in the honey. It sets up after extraction into more spreadable honey vs. drizzle-on honey.



Manuka honey is widely available at many health and wellness shops, general grocery stores, and online. We recommend checking out our website for the best, most natural, raw, small-batch [Manuka honey](#).

How to Read Manuka Honey Labels



Shopping for Manuka honey requires an understanding of the testing, ratings, and labeling standards that describe the potency or bioactivity of the honey. In addition, region of origin and honey production methods differ for premium Manuka brands.

Good Labeling for Manuka Honey – MG or UMF

MG/MGO	83	113	146	182	222	263	308	356	406	459	514	572
UMF	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Low			Medium					High			



Manuka honey labels should always tell you the levels of MG (dietary methylglyoxal) in the honey, or have an official UMF logo and rating displayed, or both. MG is a naturally occurring organic compound found in Manuka honey that correlates directly to its antibacterial properties. The higher the concentration of MG, the stronger the bioactivity and antibacterial properties in the honey.

The UMF rating is determined by testing the level of MG in the honey and using a lookup table to read out the corresponding rating result. The UMF association also requires some related tests common in the industry to confirm the honey quality. Bottom line, look for an MG test result of 250 mg/kg or higher; or a UMF rating of 10+ or higher for a Manuka Honey with meaningful health and wellness benefits. The higher these numbers are, the better in terms of potency.

The thing to avoid is any label with a general claim like “Active,” “Bio-Active,” or “_Factor,” followed by a number rating. These brands are employing a deceptive marketing strategy trying to trick consumers into making an equivalency between this honey and a UMF rating. Don’t fall for this trick; typically, this will be very low MG honey and won’t provide the qualities you want.

6 Incredible Benefits of Manuka Honey!



You might be wondering, “Is manuka honey good for you?” and “Why is manuka honey good for you?” Let’s dive into some Manuka honey benefits and its unique properties.

1. Manuka Honey Kills Viruses and Bacteria

The common cold is typically caused by either a Rhinovirus or sometimes a Coronavirus. Colds and flu are also often complicated and worsened by secondary opportunistic bacterial infections. Manuka honey has been shown in several research settings to be effective at inhibiting the spread of viruses and bacteria and killing them off.



The extremely effective anti-viral properties even go as far as combating seriously harmful diseases like Influenza! A 2014 research study found that Manuka honey has a very potent inhibitory effect against the flu virus and demonstrates a potential medicinal value.

Another study that same year found that Manuka honey was [effective in eradicating biofilms](#) produced by Staphylococcus aureus, aka Staph Infection. A biofilm is a slimy, little collection of bacteria, fungi, and protists that build up inside your body and can be extremely difficult to penetrate except for Manuka honey, of course. The MGO properties of this honey are so potent that certain bacteria types and biofilms cannot develop a resistance to it. This allows for the biofilm to become broken down and eventually eradicated.

For a more expanded review of the science and a fuller discussion, see our [blog article](#).

2. Cold & Flu Symptom Relief



When you feel the first sign of early cold symptoms coming on, we recommend getting right into 2 teaspoons per day of Manuka honey. In addition to helping fight off the infection, Manuka honey can help relieve symptoms. For example, you can add it to tea with some lemon to soothe a sore throat. We have also found amazing results by diluting half a teaspoon of Manuka honey along with a saline packet in a neti pot or nasal rinse system (or another device designed for sinus irrigation). If you have never tried this, we strongly recommend it. To secure a nasal rinse apparatus, check at your local pharmacy or online.

The common cold and influenza are both caused by viruses. Meaningful research-based evidence cited above, as well as a lot of anecdotal evidence, support the hypothesis that Manuka honey can kill viruses as well as stop them from spreading in your system. Read more about how to use [Manuka Honey for Cold & Flu Season, & COVID-19](#).



3. Manuka Honey Improves Gut Health

Manuka honey's potent antibacterial properties have an immense benefit to helping your digestive system. Consuming 1-2 teaspoonfuls a day is a great way to introduce this superfood into your diet so you can start reaping the rewards. A healthy gut is extremely important for your overall immune system and even plays a role in our everyday emotions.

Scientific research into the healing qualities of Manuka honey is growing more extensive and has already produced very interesting results. First, a 2008 study revealed that Manuka honey was [successful in reducing inflammatory bowel disease](#) in rats. And later, a 2016 study found that Manuka honey was [effective in healing gastric ulcers](#).

According to a [2022 study](#), Honey has probiotic potential that can be used to address various gut conditions which involve inflammation of the bowels. Researchers report that "following administration of manuka honey treatment, cytokine levels significantly decreased, the ulcers healed faster, and oxidative damage caused by acetic acid was reversed compared to the control group."

4. Manuka Honey Can be Used to Heal Wounds and Infections

In 2007, Tom Lloyd was diagnosed with a rare yeast infection in his right leg that was so bad doctors believed it might require amputation. His immune system was already weakened after a recent kidney transplant, and the intense antibiotic regime his doctors prescribed wasn't making a difference.

Things seemed dire for Lloyd until a nurse recommended FDA-approved [Manuka honey-soaked bandages](#). Within two weeks of treatment, Lloyd's infection had turned around, and he was on the fast track to recovery.

While this story seems miraculous, Mānuka honey is now quite commonly found in hospitals around the world and is used to treat many wounds, burns, and other skin care needs. The use of [Manuka honey as a wound dressing](#) was confirmed in a 2021 study where researchers reported that "the use of manuka honey as a wound dressing material has proved to promote the growth of tissues for wound repair, suppress inflammation, and bring about rapid autolytic debridement."



5. Manuka Honey Keeps Teeth Clean



Most sweet foods are loaded with processed sugars and can damage your teeth. However, with Manuka honey, that sacrifice doesn't need to be made.

Research has shown that Manuka honey can help [reduce dental plaque and clinical levels of gingivitis](#). In addition, its superior antimicrobial properties have demonstrated impressive results in promoting and maintaining oral health, which is crucial for a healthy immune system.

Likewise, Manuka honey is crafted into many different oral products like toothpaste, mouthwash, gum, and mints! According to a study conducted in 2010 investigating the [effect of Manuka honey](#), chlorhexidine gluconate, and xylitol on the clinical levels of dental plaque, researchers concluded that "Manuka honey has a potential therapeutic role in the treatment of gingivitis and periodontal disease."

Read more about [Manuka honey oral health benefits](#).

Manuka Honey May Play a Role in Cancer Treatment

Manuka honey is already commonplace in hospitals and medical centers as a treatment for wound care. In some settings, it's even playing an active role in cancer treatment! The soothing effect of this honey helps provide patients with relief from the harsh effects of radiation treatment on cancers of the mouth, throat, and neck.

[A 2013 study](#) found that tumor growth was significantly inhibited when Manuka honey was administered alongside chemotherapy, and host survival was greatly improved. This study used several cancer cell lines in vitro, and the tumors were studied in vivo in mice. Likewise, a study performed in 2016 showed that Manuka honey was effective in [reducing a painful side effect of radiotherapy](#) called Mucositis. These findings reveal just how powerful the healing properties of Manuka honey can be and highlight its importance as a cancer-fighting tool.



Read more about Manuka honey and its effects on cancer in our blog: [Does Cancer Hate Manuka Honey?](#)

What Makes Bees & Trees Manuka Honey the Best in the World



Our Manuka honey is raw and minimally processed. The bees make it, we extract it and pack it in glass jars, that's it. Unlike most commercially produced Manuka honey, we avoid blending ours with other kinds of honey from other regions, pasteurizing, or the common over-processing practice in the industry. Consider this when you are choosing your brand of Manuka honey!

All Manuka honey should come directly from New Zealand – the only place it can be authentically produced. Bees & Trees Honey carries the New Zealand FernMark License, which certifies native New Zealand products.

Our Manuka honey is region-specific to Taranaki, where we have our hives and extraction operations. Straight from the remote eastern hill country of Taranaki to your table, our Manuka honey is 100% pure and natural. We do not aim to sell the most Manuka honey, just the very best!



Conclusion



There you have it, folks. Six amazing benefits showing why you should ditch your regular old honey for the sweet, savory superfood that is Manuka honey!

The unique properties of Manuka honey provide significantly more health benefits than the regular honey you'll find on store shelves. These benefits are so potent and wide-ranging that they can help heal ailments, including the common cold and acne, and improve oral health, sores, wounds, and viral and bacterial infections. They may also play a role in future cancer research and treatment. All this in one delicious, health conscience package? Sign me up!

Manuka honey's popularity is rapidly gaining more and more traction! So hop on the bandwagon now, and you, too, can enjoy the satisfaction of saying, "Yeah, I've been using Manuka honey way before it was cool."

Hopefully, this article will convince you enough to give Manuka honey a shot! From its numerous health benefits, richly unique flavor, and unmatched purity, Manuka honey deserves a spot on your next shopping list!

Interested in trying Manuka honey? How about straight from New Zealand? Bees & Trees offers some of the most delicious and pure honey available on the planet. Crafted by a small team of dedicated apiarists in New Zealand's Taranaki Region, Bees & Trees Manuka honey guarantees the most authentic and best-tasting Manuka honey you can find!

Have you tried Manuka honey? Are you an avid honey fan like us? Let us know what you think!

To ask a question, click [here](#).



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