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OH *honey!*

Living the Sweet (and Lovely) Life

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Deep Dish

Houston's top toques reveal the answers to our burning questions.

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oh, honey!

OUR ONGOING HUNGER FOR HONEY PROVIDES SWEET INSPIRATION, FROM FASHION TO FOOD, FROM DRINKS TO DÉCOR.

scan this page
with Layar to see more honey, including a video of the making of honey drink The Bear's Tea at The Bird & The Bear.

by
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One of nature's greatest gifts to us is honey. Soothing, restorative and golden—for centuries it has been our food, medicine and more. Legend has it that Cleopatra—no slouch in the beauty department—treated herself to daily milk and honey baths. Today, honey's appeal even extends into the realm of fashion and interior design.

SWEET INSPIRATION INDEED.

Fashion

A golden yellow holds timeless allure. Looking across the Houston fashion landscape, it's easy to find examples of designers who use the color not because it is a new trend, but because whether in pale yellow, rich gold or almost brown, the tones are consistently flattering and flexible.

David Peck USA production coordinator Shelbi Smith notes that they are doing two jackets and a pencil skirt in goldenrod for the fall. Jonathan Blake of Jonathan Blake Designs makes the distinction between honey as the darker end of yellow, which flatters darker skin, and straight yellow, which he thinks complements a pale complexion.

For JD Designs' Jan Forrester, honey colors are a staple.

"I'm always drawn to it when I'm looking for gemstones," the jewelry designer says. In fact, I have to remind myself of the many other colors to choose from."

Two honey-toned earrings from her collection are rutilated quartz gemstones and golden citrine gemstones, both set in vermeil.

Carrie Underwood is just one famous fan of Houston jewelry designer Debi Mattingly, founder of Debi Lynn Designs and Yaya Chique, whose fall "Mystic Bayou" collection tweaks the golden hues by substituting mustard and brass beads to complement brown, cream and turquoise.

"The beads I used have a matrix that resembles a hive," she says. That's certainly appropriate for someone whose name in Hebrew means bee.

Beyond the color, the shape is popular, too. Geometric, honeycomb-inspired styles have been the rage on the runways over the past few years. See Tamara Mellon's gold honeycomb sandal at Tootsies as a recent example (coming in suede for fall!).



1 Lamps from Murano glass by Seguso for Donghia, including Bollicina, Alba, Increspato, Ondoso and Torre in shades from amber to Champagne, cognac and citrine *2* Inge Christopher python print clutch *3* Honey-infused cocktails Black Bees and Smoked Honey at Canopy *4* Samurai Bloom in Mango, Silk Lantern in Yellow, Monsier Mango, Fuji in Neptune and Silk Ocean in Yellow from Robert Allen | Beacon Hill's Floating World Collection *5* Laura Mercier Crème Brûlée honey bath

SPOON: DEBORA SMAIL



6 Janavi cashmere wrap with grey and pewter beading *7* Suitsupply's Fall/Winter collection uses accents from burnt orange to ochre and oxblood. *8* TOT gold laser cut leather dress from José Sanchez *9* Tamara Mellon Scandal cutout metallic leather sandals

Interior design

Honey is represented in both shape and color across current home trends, too. For Pamela O'Brien of Pamela Hope Designs, it is easy to see how honey is inspiring home décor.

"Probably the first thing is penny tile, in hexagonal shapes—it does have that honeycomb look," she says. "I see it in bathrooms a lot, in white and gray, on floors and backsplashes. In newer construction, it gives a vintage feel."

She also noticed the honeycomb in rugs and upholstery, in an enlarged pattern. "I've seen it with squiggles and chevrons, too. It's sophisticated."

Honey colors are now influencing wood floors and furniture, whose caramel tones can lighten up a room.

"We've had enough of espresso, java and mocha," she says. "The wood is lighter, airier."

The effect is turning up in fixtures by way of brass, which people couldn't get far enough away from in the 1990s.

"It's a brushed light brass today—a contrast to chrome. I shocked myself by liking it," says O'Brien. Bonus: It doesn't show fingerprints.

A walk through the showrooms at Decorative Center Houston shows plenty of "honey": fabric in colors from pale gold to bright yellow to an almost golden brown, as well as accessories like lamps where the gold tones glow.

"Overall there's a golden hue," she says. "It's a change of pace—I haven't seen this much gold for a while and it looks fresh."

Food and drink

On the table, honey appears in savory and sweet dishes and drinks. For Chef Donald Chang at Nara Sushi & Korean Kitchen, honey is a key ingredient in the honey-wasabi cream that accompanies his seared peppercorn tuna tataki.

"It has a woody/oaky aftertaste that complements the nutty flavor of wasabi and peppercorn," Chang says. "It also tempers the spiciness of the wasabi."

It is the obvious choice for Bistro Provence's lavender duck with honey, according to owner Genevieve Guy.

"Honey and lavender, you can hardly get more Provençal," she says. "The honey helps make the perfect, crispy glaze and keep the duck moist."

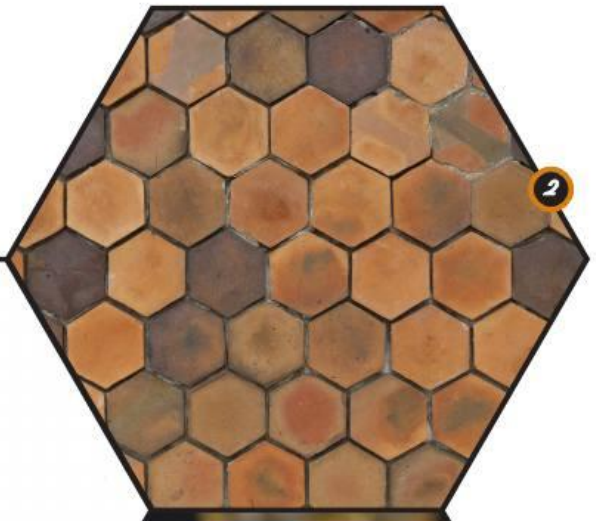
For dessert, Benjy's and Kiran's Restaurant & Bar both do a yogurt dish with honeycomb. Chef Dylan Murray says that the honey for Benjy's Greek yogurt panna cotta with grapes and honeycomb brittle comes from Bee Wilde Honey "since it is much tastier than your typical store-bought stuff."

Likewise, Kiran's Chef Kiran Verma is all about the taste of her Mishti Doi. She wanted to add sweetness without adding sugar.

"Also, I feel that after a spicy meal, it's good to have honey as it helps with digestion," she says.

At Canopy, honey cocktails are "the 'glue' that brings all of the elements together," says Deidre Goodhue, general manager and beverage director. "Its earthy taste imparts a depth of flavor."

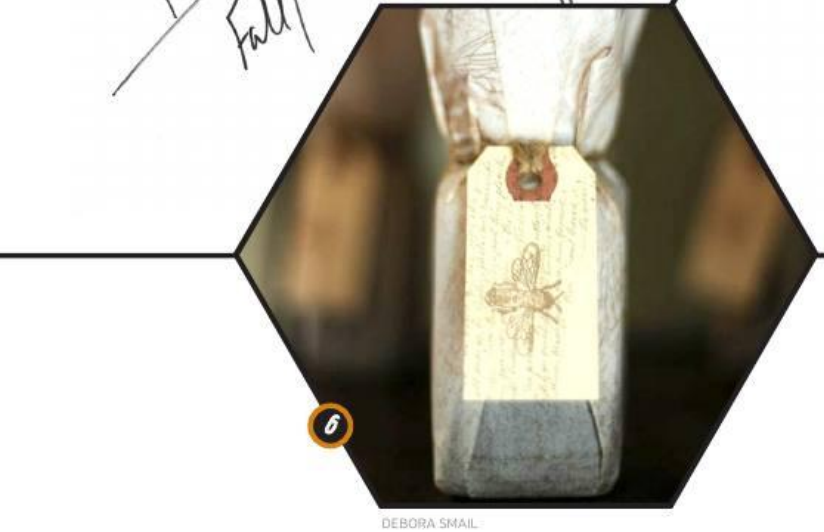






JENEAN GIMLER





DEBORA SMAIL



DEBORA SMAIL

1 Chef Jamie Zelko adds Heights Honey to drinks at Zelko Bistro. *2* Decorator Pamela O'Brien says that in addition to the honey colors, she sees the honeycomb pattern in current décor and design. *3* Houston designer David Peck will have honey tones in his fall/winter collection. *4* Canopy's scones offer another way to taste honey. *5* Rutilated quartz citrine dangles from JD Designs *6* The Heights HoneyBee Project sells local honey to help bees flourish. *7* Honeycomb offers a sweet treat paired with a cheese course and a shape inspiration for design.

Bath and body products

While all-natural may be the current trend, honey has been used for centuries in bath and body products for a variety of reasons: as a moisturizer and humectant, as a preservative, as flavor and fragrance, as a skin soother and conditioner, and, of course, for its color.

Sylvia Forsythe with Saks Fifth Avenue thinks that it's the historical comfort of honey that makes it a popular choice for cosmetic companies and perfumers. Among their offerings are Marc Jacobs' Honey perfume, Laura Mercier Crème Brûlée Honey Bath and Chantecaille Detox Clay Mask with Rosemary and Honey.

Ashley Banuelos and Brandy Herrera of Pure Rituals Spa love the Abeeco Bee Venom Mask.

"It's been called the natural alternative to Botox and, until recently, was only available in New Zealand," says Banuelos. "Not only does it contain bee venom, but also Manuka honey."

Maggie Hollywood with Lush in Highland Village says they carry a lot of products with honey because they're working toward going preservative free in their products. Honey is a natural preservative. Her favorite is Fairly Traded Honey shampoo.

"It makes hair really shiny and gives it weight, which helps with frizziness," she says.

According to Tracey Keever of Enchantier Cosmetics, it's the honey color that bestows a youthful glow, especially when used as a foundation. Keever offers a popular blush called Honey Glow, which is a combination of yellow and pink.

"It works for most people," she says.

Healing and medicinal purposes

While scientific research continues into honey as a healing force, its healing powers have a long tradition. Tracy Southwick, a naturopath who owns Heights of Health, is well versed in the healing power of honey.

"It is a remarkable substance that has been used since ancient times in the healing arts," she says.

Southwick also seconds what your grandmother always told you: Honey and warm lemon juice does the trick for a sore throat.

"Some people will add a sprinkle of capsicum (cayenne pepper) or a crushed clove of fresh garlic to enhance the healthful cocktail," she says.

The big name in honey right now? Manuka honey from New Zealand.

"It is darker in color because of the higher mineral and antioxidant properties and has a stronger taste," she says. "The healing potential is measured as UMF (Unique Manuka Factor), and a UMF rating of greater than 10 is recommended."

It's a cough suppressant, immune enhancer, digestive tonic and general health tonic all in one.

Suffer from allergies? Honey that has been collected from within a 30-mile radius of your home may help reduce or prevent seasonal allergies.

"The local honey contains small amounts of pollen from the area which can, like a homeopathic or immunization, help the body be able to better cope with the onslaught of pollen during allergy season," Southwick says.

HEIGHTS HONEYBEE PROJECT

Watching the documentary "Vanishing of the Bees" was a crystallizing moment for Zelko Bistro co-owners Jamie and Dalia Zelko. In her career as a chef, Jamie had been well aware of the increase in produce prices due to scarcity. Learning more about the declining honeybee population across the planet made her see that the dearth wasn't as much about drought and heat as it was the lack of pollination.

Others may just have gone back to business as usual. Jamie and Dalia started the Heights HoneyBee Project where they relocate unwanted wild bees to places where they can do what they do best: thrive.

"We take bees which would normally be exterminated and put them in hives where they flourish," says Jamie. She notes that the native "cowboy" stock with strong native DNA have no problem in the Houston climate. They've established 89 colonies in five years with no colony collapse disorder.

Integral to this effort is Jennifer Scott, the Bee Wrangler from Alvin, who makes it her life's work to rescue and relocate bees.

"Jennifer lives it and she enjoys it," says Jamie.

All the Heights HoneyBee Project hives are on private property in the Heights, Spring, Alvin and elsewhere, volunteered for the purpose. According to Jamie, farms that are in proximity to the bees are producing at least 50 percent better.

You could become a trained beekeeper like Jamie and Dalia, or you could skip the hard work and buy their honey, which benefits the program 100 percent.

"Honey is the last perfect food in the world," says Jamie.

For more information, visit heightshoneybeeproject.com.

