

Title:

Like Your Tea Sweet? Add Honey Instead of Sugar

Word Count:

499

Summary:

Most people think of honey as the sweet, sticky stuff you put on toast or drop into hot tea, but in recent years, researchers have been exploring its potential and health benefits in other ways.

Keywords:

health benefits of tea, honey, sugar, beverage, antioxidants

Article Body:

One of life's purest pleasures is a cup of steaming tea. Some like it pure but most like it sweet. Adding sugar is by far the most common way of sweetening tea. Common table sugar (sucrose) is comprised of fructose and glucose. While sugar satisfies a natural craving, it is not without its downside.

Sugar is the quintessential source of energy and most foods, when digested, are metabolized by the body as basic sugar (glucose). It is a major source of calories in the diet. The body will save the excess energy in sugar as fat. While some stored fat is necessary, too much is undesirable and pose several health concerns especially for diabetics. Sugar also supports the growth of the bacteria that causes tooth decay.

A healthier alternative is honey. Honey is one of the oldest sweeteners used by man and was highly valued by ancient Egyptians for its medicinal and healing properties. It is a sweet, usually viscous, liquid made by bees from flower nectar and stored in the cells of the hive for food. Consumed fresh or after processing, it is usually used as a nutritive sweetener.

"Honey is the ultimate in products derived from herbs. It's like liquid gold. Fashioned through an ingenious alliance between animal and plant kingdoms, honey delivers a diverse array of phytochemicals in one package. This bounty arrives courtesy of the industrious honeybee, who visits some 2 million flowers to manufacture just one pound of honey" said Dr.Gina Mohammed, a plant physiologist in Sault Ste Marie, Canada. "Honey blends exceptionally well with black and flavored teas and enhances its fragrance", added Kim Yong, founder of Your Tea Place, an online tea site which focuses on tea and health.

A study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, shows that the level of antioxidants of honey is comparable to that of many fruits and vegetables. And while you are unlikely to devour a cup of honey in lieu of broccoli, the golden liquid may be a respectable alternative to sugar and a healthy supplement to your diet. It has been found that honey lessens the ill effects of radiation therapy in patients with cancer of the head and neck, improves oral health, preserves food, boosts antioxidants and enhances athletic performance.

Researchers at the University of Illinois studied 25 healthy men who consumed various combinations of hot water, buckwheat honey, black tea and sugar. They found that serum antioxidant capacity increased by 7 percent within two hours of ingesting 2 cups of hot water containing about 4 tablespoons of honey. Those antioxidants also help your arteries as it reduces oxidation of low-density lipoproteins (known as "bad" cholesterol), a benefit which likely thwarts development of atherosclerosis. The findings also show that many varieties are full of phenols and flavonoids - known cancer fighters even more powerful than vitamin E.

So the next time you're having a cup of tea, do your health a favor by added a spoonful of honey, nature's liquid gold.