

## Bee and Honey Facts

It is Jewish tradition to dip apples in honey at the start of the new year (Rosh Hashanah). Where did this come from?

The first reference to honey on Rosh Hashanah comes from Rav Hai Gaon (d. 1038 CE), who on Rosh Hashanah night would bring "gourds, fava beans, leeks, dates, beet greens, and fruits in a basket with honey and black-eyed peas" and recite "A land flowing (with milk and honey)." The earliest mention of eating an apple dipped in honey is from 1330 CE by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, who described the German custom of beginning the Rosh Hashanah meal in this way followed by reciting "May we have a sweet year." (from Ravsak)

Honeybees eat pollen, it is their protein source. They gather the grains of pollen in little "baskets" on their back legs. They gather nectar, and ripen it into honey, this is their carbohydrate. As a honeybee gathers pollen or nectar from a flower, some grains of pollen cling to the hairs on the bee's body. When the bee then visits another flower, some of those grains are brushed off into the new flower. In this way, the bees transfer pollen from one flower to another. This transfer of pollen is what allows a flower to ripen its seeds, which is how the flower reproduces.

Honeybees are the pollinators for about one-third of our food crops. It is estimated, that the value of the crops pollinated by honeybees in the US is \$15 billion per year. Some of the foods that rely entirely on honeybees for pollination are: apples, almonds, cherries, blueberries, avocados, cucumbers, onions, oranges, grapefruit, pumpkins, kiwis, all melons, and much more.

A teaspoon of honey is the life-work of twelve bees.

Honeybees have incredibly sensitive antennae at the top of their heads. These allow them to smell and they can detect the scent of a flower a mile away.

To make one pound of honey, bees need to visit 2 million flowers and travel a collective 55,000 miles, more than twice the distance around the earth.

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