

# Give foods a different twist with honey

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Thinking about dining al fresco? Grilling is ever more appealing, which isn't surprising since most foods just seem to taste better cooked on the grill and eaten outdoors.

Consider paying more attention to the role of honey in your repertoire of seasonings, by taking advantage of the choice of varietal honeys now available. Grilling-sauce recipes using different varieties can have very different flavors.

First, know your honey. There are more than 300 floral honey sources in the United States.

These are the flavor characteristics of some of those available; they vary from delicately light to full and rich.

**Light honey group:**  
 ■ Alfalfa: mild flavor; beeswax aroma.  
 ■ Basswood: green ripening-fruit taste; lingering flavor.  
 ■ Clover: sweet, flowery flavor.

■ Fireweed: delicate and sweet with subtle tinkle notes.  
 ■ Sage: sweet, clover-like flavor; mild floral aftertaste.  
 ■ Sourwood: sweet, spicy nixie aroma with a lingering aftertaste.

**Medium honey group:**  
 ■ Blueberry: aromatic reminiscent of green leaves with a touch of lemon; moderate fruitiness with a delicate aftertaste.

■ Brazilian pepper: spicy bite.  
 ■ Dandelion: strong floral flavor.  
 ■ Loosetrife: delicate, sweet flavor.  
 ■ Orange blossom: sweet and fruity taste reminiscent of citrus.

■ Tupelo: smooth honey with a complex floral, herbal, fruity flavor and aftertaste.  
**Dark honey group:**  
 ■ Avocado: rich, caramelized-molasses flavor; flowery aftertaste.

■ Buckwheat: pungent, molasses-like flavor; dark and mild flavors with lingering aftertaste.  
 ■ Eucalyptus: mildly sweet; herbal flavor with a fruity aftertaste; some eucalyptus honeys have a slight menthol flavor.

■ Gallberry: heavy-bodied and extremely mild flavor.  
 ■ Wildflower: floral, pungent flavor.

Here are two recipes for grilling sauces that make the most of individual honey flavors.

The distinct varieties used in the sauces bring out the best attributes of each.

The first, a honeyed Baja barbecue sauce, benefits from the sweet, fruity flavor of orange blossom honey.

The other, a sweet and spicy grilling sauce, features buckwheat honey, which is a full-bodied, richer variety.

## HONEYED BAJA BARBECUE SAUCE

1/2 cup Honey Barbecue Sauce (recipe follows)  
 1/2 cup orange blossom honey  
 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
 1 canned chipotle chili, minced (see note)

1 teaspoon adobo sauce (from canned chipotle chilies)  
 1/2 cup pureed fresh mango  
 1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro

Combine honey barbecue sauce, honey, lime juice, chili and adobo sauce in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly; stir in mango and cilantro. Brush over beef, chicken or pork during the last 5 minutes of grilling. Makes 1 1/2 cups. **Note:** Chipotle chilies in adobo sauce may be found in the Mexican foods section of most grocery stores.

## HONEY BARBECUE SAUCE

1/2 cups ketchup  
 1/2 cup orange blossom honey  
 1/2 cup red wine vinegar  
 2 tablespoons molasses  
 2 tablespoons yellow mustard  
 1/2 teaspoon chili powder  
 1 teaspoon liquid smoke  
 1 teaspoon garlic powder  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1/2 teaspoon pepper  
 2 tablespoons butter  
 2 tablespoons water

Combine all ingredients except for the butter and water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes. Stir in butter and water. Makes 1 1/2 cups.

## SWEET AND SPICY GRILLING SAUCE

2 tablespoons peanut oil (see note)  
 2 small shallots, peeled and minced (about 3 tablespoons)  
 4 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
 1/2 cup grated fresh ginger root  
 1 cup dry sherry  
 1/2 cup buckwheat honey  
 1 cup soy sauce  
 2 tablespoons water  
 2 tablespoons cornstarch  
 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce

Heat oil in a medium saucepan; add shallots and garlic; cook over low heat for 5 minutes, until softened. Add ginger and cook for 1 minute more, stirring frequently. Add honey and sherry and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 3 minutes. Combine the soy, water and cornstarch in a small bowl; add to pan with hoisin sauce. Cook and stir for several minutes more until slightly thickened. Remove half of the sauce to a small bowl and set aside. Brush remaining sauce over pork ribs, beef skewers or chicken during last 5 minutes of grilling. Place reserved bowl of sauce on the table to drizzle over the cooked meat. Makes 1 1/2 cups.

**Note:** Vegetable oil can be substituted for peanut oil.

# Corn makes a great side dish

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Fresh corn is a favorite food that comes increasingly to mind as spring and summer prompt a change to lighthearted foods, for outings and cookouts. Even though the traditional harvest of local sweet corn reaches its peak later in the season in many regions, supersweet varieties, many of them from Florida, are already available for cooks to get reacquainted with their summery recipes. Beware in mind that the sugar-to-starch conversion that starts as soon as fresh corn is picked is slower in new supersweet varieties. But to stay sweet and tender longer, the corn should be kept refrigerated if you don't use it immediately.

The following quickly made recipes can be cooked either on the grill or in the oven, and some of the preparation can be done ahead. The food is cooked in foil packets, which keeps flavor in and leaves little or no mess behind on the grill. The packets are also easily portable, for outings.

## SUPERSWEET CORN, SEAFOOD AND ZUCCHINI PACKETS

3 tablespoons olive oil  
 1 teaspoon minced garlic  
 1 teaspoon dried thyme  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 2 medium zucchini, cut in 2-inch chunks (about 3 cups)  
 4 ears fresh supersweet corn, cut in 2-inch pieces  
 1 pound shell and deveined shrimp and/or scallops  
 8 thin slices lemon

Preheat oven to 450° F or heat outdoor grill.

In a large bowl, combine oil, garlic, thyme and salt. Add zucchini, corn and shellfish; toss. On each of four 14-by-18-inch sheets of heavy-duty foil, place a quarter of the sweet corn mixture in the center. Top with lemon slices. Draw together longer edges of foil and crimp, leaving room for steam to circulate; seal foil ends. Seal foil ends. Alternatively, divide mixture evenly among

four ready-to-use single-portion foil bags. (At this stage packets can be refrigerated up to 4 hours, or packed with ice in a cooler for up to 2 hours.) Place packets in a single layer on a large baking sheet or on a rack in a grill. Bake or grill 15 minutes for shrimp or 20 minutes for scallops. Remove packets; let stand 5 minutes before opening. Makes 4 servings. **Nutrition information per serving:** 276 cal., 21 g pro., 12 g fat, 24 g carbo.

## SUPERSWEET CORN AND COUSCOUS PACKETS

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided  
 1 1/2 cups couscous  
 1 teaspoon ground cumin  
 4 ears fresh supersweet corn, cut in 2-inch pieces  
 4 cups sliced mushrooms (about 1 pound)  
 2 cups red bell pepper cut in 1-inch squares  
 1 cup thinly sliced onion  
 1/2 cup chopped pitted imported olives (optional)

Preheat grill or oven to 450° F.

In a small saucepan, combine 2 cups water, 1 tablespoon of the oil and 1/2 teaspoon of the salt; bring to a boil. Stir in couscous; cover and let stand for 5 minutes; fluff. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the remaining 1/2 teaspoon oil, 1 teaspoon salt and the cumin. Add sweet corn, mushrooms, bell pepper, onion and olives; toss.

On each of four 14-by-18-inch sheets of heavy-duty foil, place a quarter of the corn mixture in the center, top with fluffed couscous. Draw together longer edges of foil and crimp, leaving room for steam to circulate; seal foil ends. Or, divide mixture evenly among four ready-to-use single-portion foil bags. (At this stage packets can be refrigerated up to 4 hours, or packed with ice in a cooler for up to 2 hours.)

Place packets in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Bake or grill packets for 20 minutes. Remove packets from oven or grill; let stand 5 minutes before opening. Makes 4 servings.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 417 cal., 14 g pro., 9 g fat, 76 g carbo.

# Lemon makes couscous salad tangy

BY JAM HIRSCH

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Annie Somerville's subtle yet substantive philosophy guides Greens, a nearly century-old vegetarian restaurant with Zen Buddhist roots, in San Francisco.

"My big agenda is fresh," she said in a recent telephone interview.

"Fresh in terms of making sure we're getting the freshest, most locally grown, organic, high-quality delicious ingredients, and that the food we're preparing feels fresh."

It is a fitting approach for a restaurant started in 1979 by the San Francisco Zen Center — placing the highest value on something that would be noticed mostly by its absence.

Such subtlety is a specialty at Greens, where Somerville has cooked since 1981. Nowhere except on the cover of her new cookbook, "Everyday Greens" (Sterling, 2003, \$40), does the word vegetarian appear. Not even on the menus.

"It's an expression of how we think about food. We take fresh ingredients and make good food" that just happens to be vegetarian, she said. "We're

not trying to make the vegetarian point. We're just making great food."

However, while Greens and the cookbook featuring more than 250 of its recipes have monastic roots, the food is anything but. Though Somerville's recipes have been simplified for the home kitchen, there is nothing simple in terms of taste.

Her offerings include salads of grilled figs, endive and watercress, phyllo pastry turnovers with goat cheese, leeks and walnuts, and risotto with asparagus, morels and Parmesan cheese — hardly a

sacrifice to tuck into these dishes.

That's the point, said Somerville, who has been executive chef at Greens since 1985.

"The thing that everyone remarked upon about the food ... was that it wasn't health food," she said. "It was delicious food in spite of the fact that it was vegetarian."

Greens maintains strong ties to its Buddhist origins, which Somerville calls the restaurant's taproot.

Much of its produce is purchased from Green Gulch Farm, a residential Zen community and organic farm.

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