

Honeydew honeys are better antioxidants than nectar honeys

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A study of 36 Spanish honeys from different floral origins revealed that honeys generated by bees feeding on honeydew have greater antioxidant properties than those produced by bees feeding on nectar. The study is published in this month's edition of the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*.

Source: John Wiley & Sons

Naturally occurring antioxidants are important ingredients of many foods, and keenly sought in many 'health foods'. They are believed to help protect people from diseases like cancer, cardiovascular disorders, neurodegenerative diseases and aging. They operate by mopping up potentially damaging free radicals that are released in the body. Honey is one source of antioxidants.

The composition of honey depends greatly on where honeybees collect their raw materials. There are two key types of source. First, honeybees can collect nectar from flowers, and this generates nectar honeys. Secondly they can collect fluids that exude from plants, usually after the plants have been visited by a plant-sucking insect and this generates honeydew honeys.

"Honey is a natural source of antioxidants, and among honeys, honeydew honey is the best," says researcher Rosa Ana Pérez, who works at the Instituto Madrileño de Investigación y Desarrollo Rural, Agrario y Alimentario, in Madrid, Spain.

Each of the 36 honeys was exposed to a range of physical and chemical tests. Honeys with high antioxidant properties (measured by the DPPH test) also had high total polyphenol content, net absorbance (as colour parameter), pH and electrical conductivity.

"These laboratory results show some aspects that people could use to get an idea about which honeys are likely to have the most potent antioxidant properties," says Pérez.

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