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What's The Buzz About Bees?

Did you know that every third bite of food we eat depends on bees to pollinate the crops? Honeybees, imported from Europe, arrived in America nearly 390 years ago, however, their survival is now in question and their dwindling numbers threaten food variety and food prices. The mysterious disappearance of bees from hives in apiary colonies has been blamed on everything from pesticides and malnutrition to genetic divergence and new diseases from imported bees. Nobody knows for sure why bees are slowly disappearing.

Good news is that hobby apiarists are turning to more natural methods of integrated pest management so hopefully we'll continue to enjoy a treasure trove of botanical beehive products for diet and health.

Raw honey's (best unstrained) antioxidant and anti-bacterial properties can improve digestion – due to the enzymes in it -- and help bolster your immune system. It relieves hay fever symptoms, treats surface wounds and increases the absorption of medicines (thus honey cough syrup.)

Honey is nature's energy booster. A source of carbohydrates, which provide strength and energy to our bodies, honey is known for its effectiveness in instantly boosting performance, increasing endurance and reducing muscle fatigue. The glucose in honey is absorbed by the body quickly and gives an immediate energy boost, while the fructose is absorbed more slowly providing sustained energy. So yeah, a spoonful of honey can make that Spin wheel go round and round a little longer.

Honey has also been found to keep levels of blood sugar fairly constant compared to other types of sugar. In fact, glucose metabolism improves with regular intake just



as with liquid glucose for marathon runners or long distance cyclists.

Use temperance when consuming honey, however, because it is a concentrated food devoid of fiber and too much can spike the pancreas' insulin response causing a subsequent "crash."

In the right amount, however, honey can make for a good energy bump before your workout as well as a balanced snack after an intense workout. (1 tsp. = 36 calories) Try almond butter and honey on whole grain bread. Or a shot of honey in your smoothie.

Because of its mineral and pro-biotic properties, raw honey is considered medium to low in glycemic value, lower in fact than table sugar. (The glycemic index is a 100-point scale that measures blood sugar levels. The lower the GI rating, the slower the absorption and infusion of sugars into the bloodstream, hence a more gradual and healthier digestion process.) Table sugar, on the other hand, is sucrose, which is made up of two molecules bonded together so our stomach has to use its own enzymes to separate these molecules before we can use the sugar's energy. Honey, because of the special enzymes the bees add, is ready to use.

In recipes, replace all or some of the sugar required with honey. But remember, honey is sweeter than sugar so if a recipe calls for a cup of sugar, you may only need ½ cup of honey. Bee Healthy!

Jim Vermeer is an avid beekeeper as well as a Certified Personal Trainer and Manager of the Me Fitness Center in Sheridan.

Nutrition Corner: Carbs Are NOT the Enemy

In the 90s, Americans were swept up by the low-carb craze. The Atkins Diet, and the myriad of copycats that followed, recommended excluding all carbohydrates from the diet. These diets claim that sugar (present in most fruits and colored vegetables) and refined carbs, like bread and pasta, increase the body's production of insulin and promote body fat storage.

This theory was enormously popular, but later proved to be detrimental to overall health because although low-carb diets did produce initial weight loss, most of that loss was due primarily to water depletion within lean muscle tissue plus a drop in glycogen.

Without carbs, the body doesn't burn fat efficiently and ketones accumulate in the blood.

This process of "ketosis" is often accompanied by undesirable

side effects such as headaches, nausea, fatigue and bad breathe. In addition to ketosis, low carb diets may cause dehydration, electrolyte loss, vitamin and mineral depletion, and possible kidney problems. For athletes, low carb diets may harm performance by reducing blood sugars and muscle and liver glycogen.

Without carbs, optimal brain function cannot take place. This nutrient feeds your brain and nervous system as well as powers your muscles and fuels your metabolism. The percentage of carbs you need in your diet differs from person to person and depends on how much energy you need each day as well as your body weight. I can do a nutrition analysis that will help you figure this out. Just remember, sugar intake should be limited to 25 percent of your

total carbohydrate intake. Most clients I see aren't getting enough daily fuel from carbohydrates.

The MeFit Philosophy: diets do not work. Diets prey on our desire to find the "quick fix" or "magic pill" that everyone seeks when the main thing you need to focus on is changing your lifestyle habits. The best way to keep your metabolic engine fired up is to aim for a nutritional plan that incorporates a balance of all four essential macronutrients: Protein, Carbs, Fats, and last but not least, Water! The best time to eat carbs (even in simple carb form) is early in the day and immediately following exercise to maximize nutrient absorption.

Tammy LeBoss, Nationally Certified Sports Nutritionist
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Advanced Racquetball Clinic: Take your beginner's game to the next level, Saturday, April 4th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Space is limited so sign up early. \$20/person.



The fourth workshop in our six-month yoga series – **Core & Balance** -- is scheduled for Saturday, April 11th, from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Anytime you connect upper body movement and lower body motion, you must engage your core muscles in order to move safely and with ease whether you're playing racquetball, surfing or simply loading groceries into the trunk of your car.

The Core and Balance workshop will bring awareness to the inner core muscles as well as the outer core muscles, including glutes, hamstrings, and quadriceps.

We've designed a series of exercises that strengthen, stretch and show you how to effectively engage the muscles that keep you active without compromising your lower back, hips or joints.

Of course, integral to a strong core is understanding how proper muscle engagement can improve your balance and help protect you from injuries sustained by tripping or falling down or from sustaining constant lateral motion as in skiing.

Open to all fitness levels, this workshop will be led by Beth Williams, a certified Sivananda yoga instructor and Reiki Master who has been teaching since 2001. Assisting Williams is Holly Romero, an Anusara-inspired yoga instructor who uses storytelling and narrative to help students find their inner and outer strength.

Sign up at the front desk: \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members. For more details, please talk to a yoga instructor.