

TrueComb Honey Color Guide

The USDA Pfund Scale | Seven Official Grades | From Water White to Dark Amber

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Water White

Pfund: 0-8 mm

Very mild, clean sweetness with delicate floral whispers
Examples: Acacia, White Honey, Fireweed

Antioxidants: Low

Best for: Light teas, yogurt, fresh fruit



Extra White

Pfund: 9-17 mm

Mild floral sweetness with a smooth, buttery finish
Examples: Clover, Alfalfa, Rapeseed, Cotton

Antioxidants: Low

Best for: Toast, beverages, salad dressings



White

Pfund: 18-34 mm

Light to medium sweetness with gentle floral or citrus notes
Examples: Orange Blossom, Sage, Basswood, Tupelo

Antioxidants: Low-Moderate

Best for: All-purpose, baking, marinades



Extra Light Amber

Pfund: 35-50 mm

Medium sweetness with pronounced herbal or fruity character
Examples: Wildflower, Lavender, Linden, Sourwood

Antioxidants: Moderate

Best for: Cheese boards, glazes, cocktails



Light Amber

Pfund: 51-85 mm

Full-bodied with caramel, toffee, or earthy notes
Examples: Manuka, Eucalyptus, Thyme, Sidr, Heather

Antioxidants: Moderate-High

Best for: BBQ glazes, baking, remedies



Amber

Pfund: 86-114 mm

Bold, complex, with molasses or dried fruit notes
Examples: Chestnut, Avocado, Dandelion, Jellybush

Antioxidants: High

Best for: Dark breads, strong cheeses, medicinal



Dark Amber

Pfund: 114+ mm

Intensely bold with smoke, malt, or bittersweet chocolate
Examples: Buckwheat, Honeydew, Fir Honeydew, Pine

Antioxidants: Very High

Best for: Gourmet cooking, mead, meat glazes

What Determines Honey Color?

Floral Source

The single biggest factor. Different nectars contain different pigments, sugars, and compounds that produce characteristic colors. Light-flowered plants generally yield lighter honey.

Mineral Content

Higher mineral concentrations (iron, manganese, copper) produce darker honey. Soil composition directly affects nectar chemistry, which is why the same flower in different regions can produce different colored honey.

Processing & Heat

Heat exposure darkens honey through Maillard reactions. Raw, minimally processed honey retains its original color. Ultra-filtered honey may appear lighter due to removal of pollen and other particles.

Age & Storage

Honey naturally darkens over time through non-enzymatic browning. Light exposure and warm storage temperatures accelerate this process. This is normal and does not indicate spoilage.

Pollen Content

Pollen particles suspended in unfiltered, raw honey can affect its color and clarity. This is why raw honeys often appear

Season & Region

Late-season honeys are typically darker than spring harvests from the same area. Climate, elevation, rainfall, and soil type all

The Color-Flavor Connection

Lighter honeys (Water White to White) are milder, sweeter, and more versatile for everyday use. Medium honeys (Extra Light Amber to Light Amber) offer the best balance of flavor and nutrition. Darker honeys (Amber to Dark Amber) pack the most antioxidants and boldest flavors. Dark honeys can have up to 20x more antioxidants than their lightest counterparts.

Try at Home: Color Comparison Activity

1. Gather 3-5 different honey varieties from your kitchen or local store.
2. Place a small amount of each on a white plate or sheet of paper.
3. Hold the plate up to a window or lamp to see the honey backlit.
4. Compare colors side by side - note which are lighter and darker.
5. Taste each one from lightest to darkest. Notice how flavor intensifies with color!
6. Try pairing: light honey with mild cheeses, dark honey with sharp cheeses.

Pro Tip: Always taste honey at room temperature. Cold honey mutes flavors, and warm honey emphasizes sweetness over complexity. Use a clean wooden or plastic spoon - metal can affect the taste.