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Honey Bee Buzz

Spas harvest honey on-site for skin-healthy treatments, and help save the world's bee population at the same time

By **Nora Zelevansky**

Not long ago, honey was served alongside hot tea to sweeten or soothe a sore throat and that's where the story ended. But that was before the onset of Colony Collapse Disorder—the widespread, almost spontaneous decimation of bee populations in North America and beyond. As a result, socially conscious hotels and resorts across the United States are doing their part to conserve the bees by erecting onsite apiaries, often beside their sustainable herb gardens.

Now, the honey bee buzz has become a roar. The sticky stuff is regularly featured on farm-to-table fine dining plates, but the newest phenomenon involves harnessing locally grown honey's therapeutic properties for skincare treatments at high-end spas.

"Raw honey contains anti-bacterial properties known to heal wounds or serious skin conditions," explains Marina Peredo, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and director of Spatique Medical Spa in Smithtown, NY. "Honey contains a small amount of natural alpha-hydroxy acids, which can act as an exfoliant. It also contains pollen and propolis, the glue bees use to make honeycomb, which

contains a large amount of antioxidants, enzymes and vitamins to reduce fine lines and wrinkles and promote new tissue growth." Spas across the country are catching on in swarms.

BUTTERMILK FALLS INN + SPA

Located in the Hudson Valley, this sweet, historic 10-room inn with seven barn suites sits on 75 bucolic acres and is a pioneer in "gentleman" beekeeping. Across the bridge, Millstone Farm is home to a thriving vegetable and herb garden and animals from llamas to chickens that lay organic eggs. Five thriving Italian honeybee hives are watched over by gardener Dawn Marnell and local "Doc Bee" Chris Harp. "We wanted the bees to provide honey for breakfast and afternoon tea, and we saw it as an environmentally responsible initiative in that bees are so critically important to the eco-system," explains owner Robert Pollock. "Soil To Spa" treatments using fresh farm ingredients including an anti-aging Lavender Honey Massage, with honey slathered on the body along with homemade lavender body lotion. buttermilkfallsinn.com

A close-up photograph of spa ingredients. On the left is a glass jar filled with honey, showing a cracked wax seal. In the foreground, a white ceramic bowl is filled with a thick, white cream. A sprig of small yellow flowers with green leaves is placed across the cream. In the background, another white bowl contains a brown liquid, possibly a honey-based treatment. The overall scene is set against a light, neutral background.

“Honey is a great natural moisturizer,” says Carmel Valley Ranch Spa Manager Clint Wall. “It’s known as liquid gold.”

Opposite: a busy bee at Calistoga Ranch; this page: ingredients for a delicious Honey pedicure at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando Grand Lakes

THE RITZ-CARLTON ORLANDO, GRANDE LAKES

In its commitment to sustainability and conservation, the resort has developed its own on-site apiary. Four hives tucked amidst the pine trees about 100 yards off the golf courses' first hole allow visitors to experience the benefits of honey-infused culinary offerings and spa treatments. "The time of year determines what is blooming in the area," explains Chef Daniel Yates, who leaves the apiary he started three years ago as a legacy to the property as he moves onto his next gig. "The last batch tasted similar to orange blossom. Last year, the honey had a piney note." The resort's spa combines honey with pineapple and papaya cells in a "hot honey glaze" drizzled over the body, then incubated in a wrap during their Harvest Glow Honey Treatment. In concert with a milk bath and shea butter body massage, the service calms skin irritation or redness. ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Orlando

INTERCONTINENTAL BOSTON

Of course, it's one thing to maintain bees in balmy weather and another to keep hives healthy in Massachusetts. Just ask Cyrille Couet, urban beekeeper and sous chef at InterContinental Boston's Miel Restaurant ("honey" in French). Couet has taken care of her little yellow charges since the apiary launched on a fifth floor roof deck overlooking Fort Point Channel: "The hotel's engineering team built boxes around the hives to insulate and protect them against strong winds during the cold Boston winter," she explains. Honey is harvested twice annually, in August and October, from three hives, which amounted to over 200 pounds last year. Some was allotted to SPA InterContinental for treatments like La Peau au Miel, a brushing with warm honey to exfoliate and moisturize before an olive oil-infused body cream application. "Honey's antibacterial and natural humectant (moisture retaining) properties help protect and provide the ingredients for skin to heal itself when damaged," explains Travis Umpleby, Spa Director. "Our guests comment on how the treatment connects them physically and environmentally." intercontinentalboston.com

CARMEL VALLEY RANCH

On 500 acres with 7,000 lavender plants, Carmel Valley Ranch now has, about 60,000 bees, presided over by lavender expert and semi-resident beekeeper John Russo. Guests who don't care to don bee suits and harvest honey (and learn more about the vanishing bee problem) through the resort's hands-on program, can head to the spa for a Lavender Honey Manicure or Pedicure. Honey is the perfect remedy for hard calluses and cracked skin, a gentle lavender sugar polish exfoliates, and a honey mask nourishes and deep conditions the skin. "Honey is a great natural moisturizer," says Spa Manager Clint Wall. "It is able to rebuild the moisture level in the skin without making it oily. It's known as liquid gold!" carmelvalleyranch.com

CALISTOGA RANCH

Just one month after launching a "Bee Well" program last year, honey hit the Bathhouse Spa at this restorative retreat nestled into a private canyon. Napa Survivor bees (from Rob Keller's Napa Valley Bee Company) and Italian honeybees (from Beekind in Sepastapol) live in two Oak Savannah hives in a sustainable



The honey-drizzled exfoliating and moisturizing treatment, La Peau au Miel, at the InterContinental Boston

garden behind Sotero Vineyard. Resident beekeeper Steve Ferrini, watches over them, but Spa Director Cindy Reilly's father and grandfather were actually beekeepers too. "The program is close to my heart," says Reilly, who is interested in honey's anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory properties. "Our honeybees create our special varietal—a mixed floral honey with orange blossoms, lavender, rosemary and roses from the garden."

Among several sticky sweet services is a new addition this summer, the Honey Dream Treatment, which begins with a myofascial massage to release muscle tension and then moves to an application of bee propolis, honey and honey ginger oils as a facial mask. Guests also love the Rosemary Honey Hair & Scalp Treatment that adds moisture and shine to hair. calistogaranch.com

NORA ZELEVANSKY's writing has been featured in Elle, Self, The Los Angeles Times, Vanity-Fair.com and Newsweek/The Daily Beast.