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The Bee's Knees

By Julie Keller

Julie Keller is editor-in-chief of *American Spa*, an award-winning magazine that reports on the national and international spa marketplace.



Want to create buzz at your next event? Make a beeline for one of the latest hospitality trends and consider hosting your group at a property that is home to hives of honeybees, where the honey is culled for use in cuisine, cocktails, spa treatments and more.

When it comes to dining, honey is a healthy option. It's known as a great immunity booster, which is a definite benefit to any planner who wants to keep attendees healthy and alert during events. Eating local honey can help attendees deal with local allergens, and honey can serve as a homemade cure for many ailments, from athlete's foot and insomnia to sore throats and hangovers. It's also a more natural alternative to sugar and is said to be helpful in weight loss and in increasing energy. Plus, it's a truly sweet treat that many attendees will love.

Incorporating honey that is harvested on-property gives guests an authentic and indigenous experience, as on-site apiaries also lend themselves to a fun activity that informs your group of the countless environmental benefits that honeybees can provide. During the summer months, guests of The Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver are invited to join the weekly garden and hive tours to learn more about the hotel's sustainability practices. Guests of Carmel Valley Ranch in California can go on a tour of the on-site apiary and even don a beekeeper's suit and learn about the benefits of honey and how it is harvested.

Fairmont's Bees

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has embraced this trend with gusto, featuring on-site apiaries and locally harvested honey on the menu at several properties. The Fairmont Waterfront features a rooftop apiary that is home to a half million honeybees that produce a 600-pound honey harvest during the summer months that is then used to produce the hotel's popular honey truffles, the Bee's Knees. Across town, The Fairmont Vancouver Airport offers guests honey produced by bees that make their home on Vancouver International Airport's land at McDonald Beach Park. The honey is available for purchase and is also used in several cocktails and dishes, including the rum-based honey harvest, chicken and quinoa salad with honey-lime vinaigrette and the cranberry pear cobbler served with housemade honey ice cream.

The Fairmont San Francisco is home to four beehives in its 1,000-square-foot culinary garden, and harvested honey is used in the hotel's afternoon tea service as well as in cocktails, entrees and desserts at its three restaurants. At The Fairmont Dallas, on-site apiaries produce honey used in several dishes, including the local cheese plate, blueberry clafoutis dessert and baby beets and watermelon brûlée. Other bee-friendly Fairmont hotels include The Fairmont Olympic Hotel in Seattle, The Fairmont Royal York in Toronto, The Fairmont Algonquin in



Executive Chef David Garcelon with honey bees at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto.

St. Andrews by-the-Sea, New Brunswick, The Fairmont Washington, D.C. and Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City.

More Bee-Friendly Hotels

But Fairmont doesn't have a corner on the honey market when it comes to dining. Among the most popular items on the menu of Carmel Valley Ranch the honey-chile chicken wings, which are made using honey harvested from the on-site apiary located near the hotel's organic garden. The Brown Palace Hotel & Spa in Denver uses honey from its rooftop apiary during its opulent daily afternoon tea. Meanwhile, Salish Lodge & Spa in Snoqualmie, Wash., recently installed a four-hive, 120,000-honeybee apiary, which will yield between 650 and 800 pounds of a light, classic honey to be collected and integrated into the hotel's indigenous Northwest cuisine in 2012.

After a full day of meetings, many attendees find that soothing spa services can take the sting out of a busy day, so consider providing a honey-themed treatment using the local harvest. Honey is full of skin-saving antioxidants, it's hydrating and it also contains several anti-aging and anti-bacterial properties, all of which make it ideal for skincare and body-care services. Fairmont Mayakoba in Mexico's Riviera Maya uses local Melipona honey, which is created by

a rare local bee, in several healing treatments in its Willow Stream Spa. The Four Seasons Hotel, Atlanta also boasts an apiary that produces honey used in the scrumptious Honey Delight body treatment that includes an oatmeal scrub and a honey-oil massage. The InterContinental Boston recently debuted a rooftop apiary that is producing honey for use in "apitherapy" at the Spa InterContinental. Treatment highlights include the La Peau au Miel body scrub and massage and the Barefoot en Provence foot treatment.

Caneel Bay, A Rosewood Resort on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands also recently introduced an on-property beekeeper who harvests honey for spa treatments, including The Bee-utiful Facial, which helps restore vibrancy to sun-ravaged skin, and the Bee-utiful Massage, which includes a honey foot wrap. At The Spa at The Brown Palace, the rooftop honey is being used in a honey-lavender soap that is available retail and in the Queen Bee Sugar Scrub. As soon as its hives are producing honey, The Spa at Salish Lodge will debut the Salish Milk and Honey Bath, the Salish Oatmeal and Honey Body Treatment and Honey from Heaven for the Hands and Feet. "The beauty benefits of honey have long been recognized," says Spa Director Melanie Silver. "Plus, our guests are always looking for natural, locally sourced products, and Salish-produced honey provides us with the ultimate local resource to utilize in our treatments."

No matter what bee-based option you choose, from fine dining to spa to group gatherings, making honey a highlight of your next event is sure to make it a hive of unforgettable activity.