

Is that honey the real deal? Now you'll know

There's a lot of counterfeit honey out there.

There's a lot to love about honey, but how do you know if you're getting the real deal? Unfortunately, there's no way for consumers to tell if honey is counterfeit simply by sight or taste.



"The United States imports about 70 percent of the honey we consume. Not all of it is legally or ethically sourced, and that's a problem," says Gordon Marks, executive director for True Source Honey. To combat this problem, True Source Honey has created a [certification program](#) to identify authentic honey.

Fake honey is created when real honey is mixed with other substances like high fructose corn syrup, rice syrup or artificial sweeteners. There's even a term for the process of passing off fake honey as real honey — [honey laundering](#).

In 2011, a study found that American grocery store shelves were filled with jars of honey from places like Asia and India that contained lead, other heavy metals and animal antibiotics. To try to remove evidence of contamination, the honey is usually ultra-filtered. When honey is ultra-filtered, it loses many of its [health benefits](#).

The need for reassurance

"Honey is easily adulterated and consumers are understandably concerned. The True Source Honey certification helps honey suppliers voluntarily demonstrate their commitment to responsible honey sourcing and reassures consumers that the honey they purchase is not fraudulent," says Steve

Taormina, business unit manager for NSF International's Consumer Values Verified Program. NSF International follows the True Honey certification standards.

It's not only consumers who benefit from making sure their honey is 100 percent real. When fraudulent honey floods the market, U.S. beekeepers who are doing it right and providing consumers with an authentic, healthy product are harmed, too. The fair market prices of U.S. honey is undercut.

Consumers who make it a point to seek out and purchase real honey are supporting these honest honey producers.



The True Source Honey certification is one way to make sure you're purchasing 100 percent real honey. While the certification process is voluntary, honey producers have to meet, and continue to meet, the qualifications for the certification. "True Source Honey certification combines rigorous third-party audits with active third-party sampling and container shipment oversight to trace honey to its origin," says Taormina. "To maintain the certification, suppliers must continually comply with the certification requirements, participate in annual on-site audits and respond to corrective actions in a timely manner."

Those corrective actions will occur if any deficiencies are identified in the audit and documented in the report if standards aren't being met. The supplier will have to provide documentation to identify the root cause of the deficiency, how they will fix the issue, and what they'll do to prevent it from happening again.

Made with real honey

About 30 percent of the honey sold in North America is True Source certified, and the certification can now be applied to foods and beverages that are made

with honey, also. The first products to carry the Made with True Source Honey certification have been approved. They include Droga's Money on Honey Wildflower Honey Caramel Treats, several varieties of Honey Stinger energy, protein and snack bars, and Hellmann's/Best Foods Real Ketchup made with honey.

Of course, purchasing honey from a trusted local source can also ensure that you're getting an authentic product. When you're taking honey for one of its biggest benefits — its ability to lessen the severity of seasonal allergies — it should be local so that you're taking in small doses of the local pollen to help build an immunity. Although there's not enough scientific research to back up the claim that local honey diminishes the severity of seasonal allergies, the anecdotal evidence from allergy sufferers is sufficient enough to send many people running to the farmers market instead of the pharmacy.



If you're purchasing honey from the local grocery store and aren't familiar with the brands on the shelves, searching for a brand with the True Source Honey certification can help ensure you're getting 100 percent real honey.