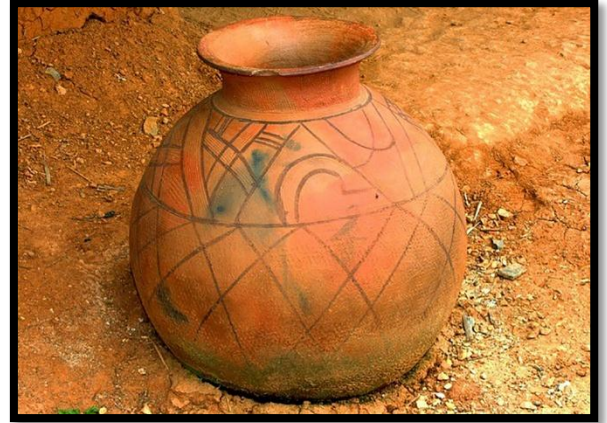


Honey in the Pharaohs' Pyramids (VI)

Name: _____

When you think about treasure hidden in the pyramids of Egypt, you probably imagine gold, jewels, or statues. But archaeologists — the scientists who study the past by digging up objects — have found something even more surprising: honey. Inside the tombs of pharaohs, jars of honey have been discovered that are over 3,000 years old. The most amazing part is that the honey is still good to eat!

The pharaohs were the rulers of ancient Egypt. They were treated like kings and queens, but also as gods on Earth. When a pharaoh died, the people believed he or she would live on in the afterlife. To prepare for this new life, the Egyptians buried their rulers with food, clothing, tools, and treasures. The pyramids — those enormous stone structures that still stand today — were filled with everything a pharaoh might need. Among the treasures were jars of honey.



Why would they choose honey? Honey was very valuable in ancient Egypt. Sugar did not exist yet, so honey was one of the only sweeteners. People used it to flavor bread and cakes. They also believed it had healing powers. Doctors would put honey on cuts, burns, or sore throats because it kept away infection. Honey was even used in religious ceremonies and offered to the gods. To the Egyptians, honey was not just food — it was medicine, a gift to the gods, and a treasure.

But how can honey last for thousands of years without going bad? Most foods spoil quickly. Bread gets moldy, fruit rots, and meat goes bad in just days. Honey is different because of how nature made it. First, honey has very little water in it. Germs and bacteria need water to grow, so they cannot survive in honey. Second, honey is full of sugar, which pulls water away from anything that tries to grow inside it. Third, honey is slightly acidic. This makes it hard for tiny organisms to live in it. Finally, bees add special enzymes when they make honey. These natural chemicals fight off bacteria.

Because of all these reasons, honey can last for thousands of years if it is sealed in a jar and kept dry. Archaeologists who tasted honey from the pyramids reported that it was still sweet and safe to eat. Imagine tasting the same honey that an Egyptian pharaoh once ate over 3,000 years ago!

The discovery of honey in the pyramids tells us a lot about ancient Egypt. It shows how much they valued food, medicine, and gifts for the gods. It also shows us how amazing honey truly is. Nature created a food that can outlast even the greatest civilizations. Honey is not only golden in color — it is a golden link between our world and the world of the pharaohs.

Comprehension questions:

The article says tasting the honey is “like traveling back in time with our senses.” What do you think the writer meant?

The article says honey can “outlast even the greatest civilizations.” What do you think the writer means by this?

Do you think the Egyptians had scientific reasons for using honey, or do you think they just noticed it worked well? Explain.

Honey That Endures for Millennia (V2)

Name: _____

When we picture treasures inside the pyramids of Egypt, glittering gold masks and precious jewels usually come to mind. Yet some of the most fascinating discoveries are far more ordinary: jars of honey, perfectly preserved for over 3,000 years. Remarkably, this honey is still edible, providing scientists and historians with both a taste of the past and insight into the ingenuity of nature.

The pharaohs of Egypt were powerful rulers who were seen not only as kings and queens, but also as divine figures. When they died, they were buried in vast tombs filled with objects meant to serve them in the afterlife. Food was especially important, since it symbolized both nourishment and wealth. Alongside bread, beer, and dried meats, honey was carefully placed into sealed clay jars.



Honey held a special place in Egyptian culture. It was one of the few sources of sweetness in a world without refined sugar. It was also a luxury product, often reserved for the wealthy or for religious offerings. Doctors in ancient Egypt used honey to treat wounds, burns, and throat infections, knowing — even without modern science — that it prevented infection. Priests poured it as an offering to the gods. Farmers used it to preserve fruits and mix into cakes. In many ways, honey was both food and medicine, practical and sacred.

The survival of honey for over three millennia is not just luck. Its chemical structure makes it one of the only foods that never spoils. Honey has extremely low water content. Most bacteria, fungi, and molds cannot grow in dry environments, so honey naturally resists decay. In addition, its high sugar concentration absorbs any moisture that does enter, effectively drying out and killing microbes. Honey is also slightly acidic, creating another barrier against bacteria. Finally, bees add an enzyme called glucose oxidase, which produces small amounts of hydrogen peroxide — a natural disinfectant. Together, these features create a hostile environment for germs, ensuring honey's nearly eternal shelf life.

The jars discovered in Egyptian tombs were sealed, keeping out air and additional moisture. This airtight environment preserved the honey in almost perfect condition. When modern archaeologists opened these jars, they found honey that was thick, golden, and still sweet. A person today can safely eat it, tasting exactly what an ancient Egyptian might have tasted thousands of years ago.

This discovery highlights both the sophistication of the Egyptians and the wonders of natural science. For the Egyptians, burying honey with a pharaoh symbolized wealth, health, and eternal life. For us today, it is a reminder of how extraordinary honey truly is: a food that defies time. Unlike the empires that rose and fell, the honey placed in the tombs endures, a simple yet powerful connection between past and present.

Comprehension questions:

Why do you think archaeologists are so amazed that honey can last thousands of years, while most foods spoil in days?

The article says honey is "a simple yet powerful connection between past and present." In your own words, explain what this means.

Do you think the Egyptians knew why honey lasted so long, or do you think it was just luck that it didn't spoil? Defend your answer.
