H's a honey of a food

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

LITITZ — One of the most confusing and yet tempting foods on grocery shelves seems to be delectable, delicious honey.

To those who have used it, it becomes a regular addition to favorite recipes. For those who haven't, the food "sounds" like it would be good.

Because a lot of foods require honey, they are often cast aside in search of another recipe because the cook doesn't understand honey or doesn't have it readily available on his or her shelf.

So, to make honey another cooking conquest for you, here is, please pardon the praise, everything you've ever wanted to know about honey, but just didn't bother to ask.

Perhaps the best hint in working with honey is to remember that it absorbs and retains moisture. Thus honey keeps baked products fresh longer. But this also means that uncovered, honey will lose flavor and aroma because it absorbs moisture.

Other suggestions come from the Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association:

Honey is a natural, unrefined food. It is safe and wholesome, since bacteria cannot live in honey. Honey is available in a variety of forms; liquid, comb, chunk, cut comb, solid (sometimes called granulated or finely crystallized), and creamed (a finely crystallized honey of creamy consistency).

When buying honey: The color and flavor of honey depend on the flowers from which bees gather the nectar. It comes in a wide range of colors, from crystal white through several shades of amber. The flavor, too, depends on the kind of flowers from which bees gather the nectar. Flavors range from the "lightness" of clover to the "sharpness" of buckwheat.

To store honey: Keep liquid honey in a cool dry place. Avoid damp storage places because honey can absorb and retain moisture. Do not refrigerate; this hastens granulation. While freezing does not injure color or flavor, it may hasten granulation.

Honey is a quick energy food because it is composed of simple sugars, dextrose and levulose, that doesn't require digestion by the human body. For this reason, it is often used as a quick energy source by athletes and sportsmen.

In a cake or cookie recipe that calls for other sweetening, the

general rule is to reduce the amount of liquid one-quarter cup for each cup of honey used. Honey may be substituted for sugar cup-for-cup. When honey is substituted in baked goods, add 1/2 teaspoon baking soda to the recipe for each cup of honey used, and bake at a lower temperature. When using a recipe formulated for honey, no such changes are necessary.

So try honey in your next recipe for a honey of a meal. Some more easy honey recipes are:

HONEY ICE CUBES

These cubes go great in iced tea or punch.
1/2 c. honey
2 c. very hot water

2 T. lemon juice Freeze

HONEY BAKED CHICKEN to 3 pound frying chicken

1 to 3 pound frying chicken 1 cup catsup

1/2 c. honey 1 lemon, sliced

Combine catsup and honey and pour over chicken in a shallow baking pan. Arrange lemon slices over chicken and bake at 325 degrees for one hour or until tender. Try this same rcipe with ribs!

HONEY ICE CREAM SUNDAE

Pour a generous stream of honey over a serving of ice cream, usually vanilla or chocolate. Sprinkle nuts on top.

MARINADE FOR HAM

1 c. catsup

1/4 c. light flavored honey 1/4 c. prepared mustard

Stir together and baste ham during last 30 minutes of baking.

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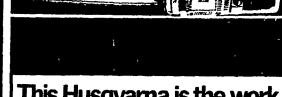
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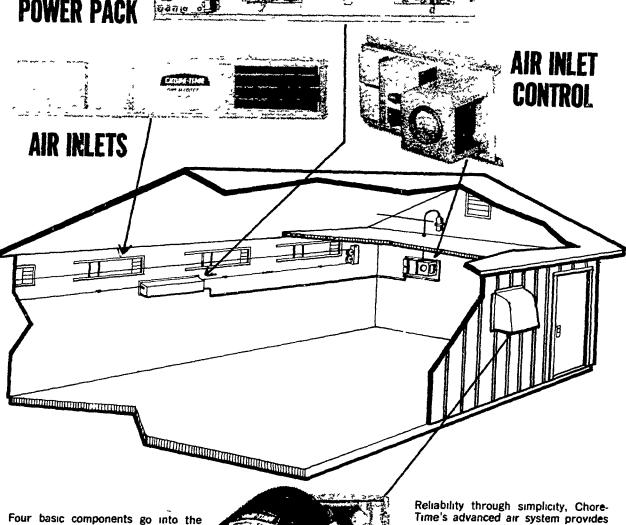
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