

National Honey Day

Today it is National Honey Day and the British Beekeepers' Association are inviting you to share in this day. They are encouraging everyone to buy a jar of local honey, produced by bees here in the UK.

There are several beekeepers locally, go and seek them out, they should all have honey available following this rain-free summer.

Not only do the British Beekeepers' Association want to ensure people are aware of all the benefits honey provides but we are seeking to celebrate the pleasure of eating honey. Honey has been enjoyed all over the world for centuries; it was found in the Egyptian tombs and is often depicted being collected by bees in ancient cave drawings.

Every batch of Pure Honey collected by local beekeepers is unique, by the different mixes of flower nectar turned into honey by the bees. It is slightly different in colour, flavour, aroma and texture. The best honey is "pressed or extracted honey" which is extracted by a press or centrifuge with no added heat, poured through a sieve, allowed to settle in an air tight tank and poured into sterilised jars and sealed.

Pure Honey has a built in antibacterial substance based on the production of peroxide by an enzyme added by the bee. There is no need to buy the much hyped Manuka brand as local extracted or pressed honey exhibits the same benefits and is used in hospitals for wound dressing.

But you can eat and drink the Honey as well. I start my day with a warm drink of Honey and Lemon, followed by Honey in my porridge or on toast. You will have your favourite use.

The microscopic pollens present in the honey are said to reduce the effects of hay fever if the local honey is taken for some weeks during the hay fever season.

Honey can be made into mead, an alcoholic drink made over the centuries but you have to be patient for the best results as it is at its best after maturing for at least 6 years. I have recipes for Dry, Medium and Sweet Mead.

The bees use honey to make beeswax honeycomb which is their home and nursery for the early stages of bees from egg to adult. Beeswax can be extracted and used. I have listed 93 uses of beeswax. I make a variety of large and small decorative candles and others in fancy glass jars of up to 20 hours of burning. We might need them this winter!!! Beeswax candles burn with little or no

smoke with no toxins just the unmistakable beeswax aroma, unlike artificially produced or paraffin based wax.

The beeswax, of course, is a natural substance and is highly sought after in cosmetics. I produce a range of Lip Balms and body balms to help with dry skin.

Some beekeepers collect pollen from the bees. They sneakily take the pollen off by a mesh. The bees, in order to enter the hive, have to wriggle through a mesh which displaces the pollen attached to their legs and drops it into a trap. Then it is dried and sold for medicinal purposes. Pollen collection should only be done for a few hours as it deprives the young bees of their main food supply.

The other bee product that has amazing properties is Propolis which I collect and produce. This is the subject of another article.

Enjoy National Honey Day and buy a jar of local honey.

Post Script

The British Beekeepers' Association are petitioning government to Label all Honey with the Country of Origin. The important underlying issue here is 'Funny' Honey — i.e honey that has not necessarily involved a honeybee collecting nectar, processing and storing in the hive. Supermarket own-label honey can be bought for as little as 69p a jar. Although supermarkets say every jar of honey is "100% pure" and can be traced back to the beekeeper, there is no requirement to identify the countries of origin of honey blended from more than one country. We want consumers to start looking at the labels when buying honey — does it clearly state the country of origin? If it seems cheap compared to the other honeys on the shelf, ask themselves why?

But they are concerned that consumers can buy honey made by bees and not a jar labelled honey that may contain additives such as corn syrup and chemicals. We want people to be aware and informed about the world-wide fraud affecting imported honey.