

All the Buzz from the Hive

September 2005

Brrr. It's not hard to tell that fall is in the air. The nights are getting chilly and the golden rod is almost finished blooming. Our nectar sources are getting scarce, so we keep ourselves busy by fanning the hives (making air move through the hive) so that any extra moisture in the nectar we already have is reduced from 78% water content down to 18-20%. Then it's honey, ready to be capped over by a small layer of beeswax (otherwise we would be walking in it and that would be a sticky mess!). On some days if you were to walk in our beeyard – it's just as if you stuck your head in a jar of honey – the heavy sweet scent of honey fills the air. We've overheard our Keeper say it's so sweet it's almost sickening – though to us it's "heavenly"!!

I made a few trips up to the big house the past few weeks. Our Keeper puts the wax cappings (from the summer honey extracting) outside for us to clean up. There's always a bit of honey in there. The chickens disappeared last week and now the turkeys are gone. No one knows where they go – but it's a sure sign of fall. They're even getting the feeders ready to give us some heavy sugar syrup (2 sugar/1 water) soon. This will be done after the fall honey comes off next week. Unlike honey, this syrup does not crystallize or freeze during the winter- giving us easy access to food when it's really cold. The honey stores we have, we will use towards spring when we can move around and have access to water so that we can turn the crystallized honey into liquid again for us to consume.

This will be a busy month for our Keeper – all the honey supers, and that is all 112 of them, have to come off. Then she has to extract the honey from 1,120 frames and then start feeding us (a fair trade for taking away all that honey we worked so hard on, right?) She doesn't make our syrup anymore. It now comes in big barrel drums, much like oil barrels. I just realized – it even costs more than a barrel of oil - \$150 – and we take down 4 barrels!

How sweet it is...

- In northern Europe, too far north for grape cultivation, wine was made from honey– “mead”. In fact, the bulk of the honey crop during the middle Ages went to making this beverage.
- The word “honey moon” actually comes from the Middle Ages when newlyweds were provided with enough honey wine, or mead, to last them the first month, or first lunar cycle of their life together.
- The Aztecs offered it to their gods as a precious gift and the Bible repeatedly mentions both honeycomb and honey:
“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to the taste” - Proverbs 24:13
which translates to “Honey wets the appetite, and so does wisdom”

Margaret Cornect's

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