



L: Bees atop the Queen Ecluder; R: Red House Honey Raw Honeycomb

ABUZZ WITH SUCCESS

Red House Honey

By Lisa Crandall

The output of a single worker bee, over her lifespan is 1/12 of a tsp of honey. That lifespan is a mere 30-35 days. (Ontario Beekeepers' Association). Just pause for a moment and try to calculate how many bees worked hard, for how long, to make enough honey for you to spread on your toast or sweeten your tea. At peak season there may be as many as 60,000 bees in a single hive.

Red House Honey is the love child of Leslie Smith, a local bee keeper near Cardinal. Her house sits well back from the road, backing onto the St. Lawrence River in the midst of sweeping cultivated fields. It is an idyllic location for bees. When the weather cooperates, the nearby fields and gardens provide a reasonably long season, offering a variety of pollens to harvest as well as water, shade and shelter.

Leslie was introduced to bee keeping when her neighbors set up one of their hives in the field in front of her house. Curiosity drew her in, first as an observer and then as a helper. Before too long she was hooked and looking to set up her first hive in 2013. She extracted her first sweet harvest in her neighbor's garage using their equipment and she has never looked back.

Now she has five Langstroth style hives which were handmade for her by an Amish craftsman in nearby Ogdensburg, NY. This

style of hive is the familiar cube shape you see in many farmer's fields. For extracting honey, she uses a specially designed piece of equipment called a Lega extractor. It works like a centrifuge and extracts the honey by spinning the honey combs, the wax form that bees create to store their honey in. The honey is then strained to remove any solid debris. One of the very popular products offered by Red House Honey is a jar of honey that includes a piece of the comb,

Another of the unique products that Red House Honey produces is RAW/Kosher honey. Every year her extracting equipment and her working environment are examined and certified by the Ottawa Vaad Hakashrut of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. The honey for this line comes specifically and solely from Leslie's own hives.

Other Red House Honey products, such as her FARM/Select Apiaries line are made from a blend of her own artisanal honey and other local hives. By working with local beekeepers the source of the honey is known and the quality of the sweet nectar is guaranteed.

Just last year Red House Honey also introduced a line of bee friendly and pollinator approved seeds for the home garden. These are seeds from Leslie's own garden, harvested from the plants she has

noticed are the most popular with her own bees. The seeds include: pink poppies, Russian kale, Cherokee Trail of Tears beans, and several easy to grow herbs.

Winters in this part of Canada can be very harsh. Each year Leslie assumes she will lose a portion of her bees. A bee colony survives the winter by clinging together inside the hive. Their constantly fluttering wings warm the air just enough and by constantly moving around within the group (from the outside colder edge to the warmer center) each bee, hopefully, gets to eat from the stored honey (and treats contributed by the beekeeper) and stays warm enough to survive. The bees generate enough warmth to create condensation and humidity. If the bees get wet and cold, they are in trouble. When necessary, Leslie replaces the failed hives with bees who are native to Ontario. Soon after their arrival the new bees are busy creating fresh honey for Red House Honey fans.

Red House Honey products are available through a wide range of stores in South East Ontario, including Brockville, Prescott, Cardinal and Ottawa. They are also happy to educate interested groups through Honey Pot Parties. For more information, check out their website at redhousehoney.ca. LH