

# Honey



Honey is a sweet, thick liquid that is produced by honeybees. Honey starts out as flower nectar which is collected by the worker bees. Worker bees fly from flower to flower collecting nectar and bringing it back to their hive. They store the nectar in the honeycomb.

Worker bees fan their wings by the nectar which causes it to break down into simple sugars and into what we call honey. Honeybees store the honey for food during the winter months. Lucky for us, a single hive can produce 55 pounds or more of extra honey each year!



There are close to 4,300 beekeepers in Illinois who manage over 30,000 colonies. Beekeepers usually build their hives with boxes that stack on top of each other. Frames are placed inside the boxes for the bees to build their honeycomb on. A collection of hives is called an apiary. Beekeepers harvest the honey by removing the frames and scraping the honey out of the honeycomb. The honey is strained to remove any wax particles and then bottled or used for other products.

Honeybees live in colonies that are made up of one queen bee, many female 'worker' bees, and many male 'drone' bees. The queen remains in the hive and is responsible for laying eggs. The drones are responsible for mating with the queen. The workers are responsible for cleaning and guarding the hive, making the honeycomb, collecting nectar and turning it into honey, and more - no wonder they are called workers!





# Meet the Felkers

Felker's Honey Bees | Metropolis, IL



## Tell us about your apiary.

We currently maintain just under 20 hives for honey production. We currently have Italian Honey bees, locally caught swarms of bees with various genetic backgrounds, and recently introduced Russian Honey Bees. We are family owned and operated as a hobby, but have plans to grow into a sideline business in a few years.

## Where do the bees live?

Our hives are all located near Mermet Lake and near Metropolis, Illinois. We have two more locations we are exploring in order to expand to in 2024 near Joppa and a farm along Highway 145 to provide pollinators for their crops. Our bees all live in wooden hives. I have built most of the hives in my wood shop myself. Most of our hives are called "Langstroth hives." These hives are made up of a series of wooden boxes that each hold 10 frames. Female worker bees create beeswax in honeycomb patterns on each frame. Bees store honey and pollen in the honeycomb, as well as raise their young. In the winter months, the bees form a "cluster" in the hive to stay warm and eat their stored honey.

## How do you harvest the honey?

When harvesting we use a hive comb, decapping knife, and a lancing roller. We first place the frames of comb honey into a spinning extractor to remove the honey. The extractor uses centrifugal force to fling the honey from the frames. Then we collect the honey and bottle it for sales. We then reuse the wax foundation in the frames to increase production in the next nectar flow.

## What honey products do you sell and how do you sell them?

We sell raw unfiltered honey, Habanero Hot Honey, Lip Balm, Hand Cream, and occasionally Beard Balm upon request. We promote our products through social media and sell to members of our community from our home as well as at special events.

