

The Perfect Gift!

We come to this time of the year with all the hustle and bustle of the Holiday Season engulfing us, encapsulating us, and occasionally suffocating us. If we, as Keepers of Bees, would look at the absolutely perfect gifts we have available to us, which are produced by the practice of beekeeping, we could alleviate the veritable cornucopia of stress factors surrounding us this Christmas.

I get asked for a bottle of Honey more often than I get asked over for dinner. My Dad in Wyoming asked the other day when I was going to send him some Honey. The gift of Honey has many wonderful attributes which is more than I can say for the proverbial bottle of "Old Spice" aftershave. Honey never spoils. No need to refrigerate it. It can be stored unopened, indefinitely, at room temperature in a dry cupboard. Due to the high level of fructose, honey is 25% sweeter than table sugar. Honey is one of the oldest foods in existence. It was found in the tomb of King Tut and was still edible since honey never spoils. Honey has different flavors and colors, depending on the location and kinds of flowers the bees visit. Climatic conditions of the area also influence its flavor and color. To the ancients, honey was a source of health, a sign of purity and a symbol of strength and virility. In Greek mythology, it is said that cupid dipped his arrows in honey to fill the lovers' heart with sweetness. In the Bible, this sublime nectar is dubbed "the heavenly food." Democritus (460-370 BC), Greek philosopher and physician, chose a diet rich in honey and lived until he was 109 years old. Physicians in ancient Rome used honey to help their patients fall asleep. Honey was the most used medicine in ancient Egypt. Of the more than 900 medical remedies we know about for that time, more than 500 were honey based. In Nice, France, Christmas is celebrated with nougat blanc, a candy made of honey, almond and egg white. Spring, in Poland, is greeted with glasses of honey wine and the Jewish New Year is welcomed with honey cake or apples dipped in honey, to insure a sweet life in the year ahead. Go ahead; tell me how great that "Old Spice" cologne is.

Various foods have been hailed as "perfect". One that deserves this distinction but is rarely mentioned is Bee Pollen. Studies from all over the world indicate that the pollen collected by bees from the stamen of flowers is worth its weight in gold. Bee pollen is a popular nutritional supplement that builds the immune system and provides energy for the entire body. It contains 35% protein, 55% carbohydrate, 2% fatty acids and 3% minerals

and vitamins. Bee pollen contains 22 amino acids (and higher amounts of the eight essential ones than most high-protein foods), 27 mineral salts, the full range of vitamins, hormones, carbohydrates, and more than 5,000 enzymes and coenzymes necessary for digestion and healing. A little known fact is that bee pollen is also rich in the bioflavonoid rutin, important for capillary strength, and in vitamin B12. It is, in fact, one of the few vegetable sources of this vitamin. According to one source Bee Pollen is touted as a general cure-all for many things and as a high source of nutrition. Its richness in these nutrients may help contribute to overall good health and energy. It seems to help prevent the symptoms associated with hay fever, like sneezing, eye-watering, runny nose and other allergy-related ailments. I started buying Bee Pollen over 25 years ago when in University doing my anthropological and archaeological studies, I discovered the absolute unequivocal health benefits of this “perfect” food.

I like to spread a tablespoon over my oatmeal or cereal in the morning. When I juice each morning I like to add a tablespoon each of Honey and Bee Pollen to my Carrot Apple Goji juice. Why not give the gift of health. Nestle and Hershey will not go broke if you forgo the chocolates this year.

Beeswax has more uses than I could begin to delineate in this writing but I will give a smattering of ideas which you can investigate and run with.

Archery Wax, Balms, Bagpipes, Baking, Basketry, Batik, Blacksmithing, bronze preservation, Bullet Lube, Bullet Casting, Candles, Candy making, Chocolates, Copper Sinks, Cracked Hooves, Crayons, Dental Floss, didgeridoos mouth pieces, Dreadlocks, Ear Candling, Ear Plugs, Encaustic Painting, Ironing Wax, Jewelry, Glass Etching, Grafting, Modeling Clay, Lipsticks, Lost Wax Process, Lubricant, Moustache Wax, Non Toxic, Wood Finish, Oil Spill Control, Painting Restoration, Polishes, Pool Tables, Plucking, Pysanky, Reed making - Oboe, Sewing, Whip Making, Wire Pulling, Soap making, Waterproofing, etc., etc. I have personally used Bees Wax in over 22 of the afore mentioned uses. How about you? What a great gift the bees have produced for us to experiment with, use, and benefit from.

Jelly Belly Jelly beans use beeswax to coat their jelly beans in order to lock in the flavor. Many times I find lip balm priced over \$1.50. We can buy the empty tubes and caps,(approximately 15 to 20 cents each with caps) and find a unique recipe for our own “lip balm” and sell it for around \$3.00 each. Or better yet give it as a wonderful homemade, natural, healthy alternative to the chemical laden commercial products. I have a 15+ year old Filson jacket that is waterproofed with a bees wax product I make. It has NEVER leaked

or allowed water to penetrate in the worst of Alaska backcountry deluges. Beeswax; you just can't beat the real thing!

Propolis is a natural resin created by bees, used in the construction of hives. Propolis is produced from the buds of conifer and poplar trees, in combination with beeswax and other bee secretions. Historically, propolis was used in Greece to treat abscesses, by the Assyrians to heal wounds and tumors, and by the Egyptians for mummification. Today, propolis is commonly found in chewing gum, cosmetics, creams, lozenges, and ointments. April 2006 Bee Culture magazine tells us "Propolis is highly regarded for its anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and anti-fungal properties." The "sticky gunk" you have to deal with in the hive is in fact an incredible natural product that is worth its weight in gold as a health product. Isn't it great that a byproduct of our keeping bees is what others pay absurd fees to acquire?

Here are a few recipes that I have found and like.

PROPOLIS TINCTURE

Step 1: Measure the propolis granules and add an equal measure of 100-proof vodka. Heat the closed bottle in a 200 degree F. oven and shake the bottle every 30 minutes. Maintain the heat until the propolis granules are dissolved and the mixture is uniform.

Step 2: Strain the mixture through paper towel or nylon stocking. Bottle into 'dropper bottles' and label the tincture. The shelf life is several years.

Propolis tincture can be used full strength, internally or externally, on cuts, scratches and rashes.

PROPOLIS LIP BALM

1 Tsp. beeswax

1 tsp. propolis granules

1 tsp. lanolin

3 Tsp. mineral oil

A few drops wintergreen essential oil

Melt the ingredients in a microwave or make a small double boiler by placing a can in boiling water. Stir until it cools.

PROPOLIS OINTMENT

1 Tsp. beeswax

4 Tsp. mineral oil

1 Tsp. propolis granules

1 Tsp. honey

Melt the ingredients in a microwave or make a small double boiler by placing a can in boiling water. Stir until it cools.

This is from Jeanne Rose's "Herbal Body Book."

4 oz. olive oil, 3 Tablespoon beeswax, 2 oz. Orange water, 5000 units Vitamin E, 5 drops oil of Orange flower or Orange peel. (Note: I used Tangerine in my last batch.)

Melt the oil and the wax in the top of an enamel or glass double boiler, remove from heat, add your Orange water, and stir thoroughly. (you can get Orange water in the grocery store, or at health food stores) Pierce 10 capsules of 500 units of vitamin E and squeeze the contents into the cream. Add your essential oil and stir continuously until cool. This cream is very moisturizing and emollient. It is nice for rough, dry, or chapped complexions and should help promote healthy looking skin.

Value Added.

Some of the Value Added benefits we derive from keeping Honey Bees can not be defined by a dollar value. When you can take up a hobby that is relatively inexpensive (have you priced the new X Box lately), and you benefit from it, in my opinion you have found something wonderful. I love to hunt and fish. I love to fly my airplane, raft rivers, travel throughout the world, and of course spend time with my wife, children, and grandchildren. Bee keeping offers an unparalleled opportunity to develop a relationship with others that are inquisitive about the honey bees. You are able to continually learn about the insect that is so amazing. You can include the entire family and are not limited by all the parameters imposed by the rules and regulations in fishing, hunting, flying, travel, etc. You and your loved ones, children or grandchildren, can build the bee boxes in the winter, cook up the recipes for their very own flavored lip balm, hand creams, ointments, etc. in the kitchen when the weather is inhospitable outside. I love it when my 3 year old granddaughter stands on a chair in the kitchen and we bring out the grain grinder, grind up some whole wheat grain and make some of her Papas Honey Wheat bread with the honey she pours from the bottle. You can't put a price on that. I would call that a "value added benefit" of bee keeping. When you leave the world and cell phone behind and go to the bee yard to work the bees, that is priceless.

Being able to attend a club meeting without worrying if what is said will be appropriate for your children to hear is rare. I am thankful that we can as Alaskans share a common bond, SABA, and learn, grow, support, encourage, and contribute to the betterment of the hobby and realize something so sweet as honey as truly a “byproduct “of the endeavor. I hope you will have a great Holiday Season. No matter how you observe the holidays, don’t forget the greatest material gift can come from your efforts in your hobby. The non material gift or benefit is the time you get to spend with family and friends.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Respectfully,
Dr. Joe Carson