



Local Harvest

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Local Farm Profile: Hergott's Cider Mill and Products

The Hergotts are a household name in Waterloo Region. At the western edge of the City of Waterloo, Joe and Gerrie Hergott have created a cultural destination where schoolchildren and families flock to absorb fun and knowledge about honey and apples. A unique part of Waterloo's history, the Hergott's 8 acre farm is home to the Cider Mill, a retail store and an Agri-tour business—enough to keep the Hergott family busy year round! The diverse business relies on the skills of both Hergotts. Gerrie's scientific knowledge and teaching experience shape the farm and tours into kid-friendly and educational experiences while Joe's mechanical knowledge keeps everything running smoothly.

Joe's ancestors bought the land the farm sits on from the German Company in the late 1820's and have farmed it ever since. After decades of mixed farming, Joe's father started processing apples into cider in 1929. Fifteen years ago Joe and

Gerrie got into beekeeping, acquiring 11 hives when they purchased an orchard in the Drumbo area. They now have almost 60 hives and were able to extract over 2,600 pounds of honey last year.

The Hergotts sell most of their honey from their farm store. Glancing around the well-stocked shelves you'll notice all kinds of specialty honey that you just won't find anywhere else—*Spring Wildflower, Spring Forest, Summer Wildflower, Summer Forest, Golden Blossom, Creamed Honey and even Cinnamon Honey Spread* (a creamed honey with cinnamon stirred in). They also sell other Canadian varieties such as *Buckwheat and Melon*. They process all of their honey on the farm, so if you happen to come at the right time you can watch them extract the honey from the comb. You can also see how they make the "creamed honey"—the smoothest, butter-like honey you've ever spread on your bread. Part of what makes

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Gerrie and Joe Hergott at Hergott's Cider Mill and Products



Local Farm Profile continued



Hergott's 8 acre farm is located on Erb St. on the western edge of the city of Waterloo

their honey unique is that it's all natural and fresh. Most grocery store honey is pasteurized, a high temperature process which destroys many of the nutrients and healthful enzymes. Pasteurizing also degrades the flavour of the honey. One taste of the Hergott's honey and you'll notice the difference.


Many people don't realize the work and expense that goes into creating a local product like honey. Joe half-jokes that: "I think some people think you put a tap on the back of the hive and honey comes out." Approximately every 10 days, from May to September, Gerry and Joe devote a full day to tending the hives. They extract honey early to late summer and sometimes into the fall, and the off-season is spent building and repairing equipment. Gerrie points out that it would take at least 500 hives to produce enough income to rely on beekeeping alone. Why such devotion to a labour intensive side line? Gerrie and Joe explain that they initially wanted some bees to pollinate their orchard, but they soon found that they enjoyed the art of beekeeping as well. According to Gerrie, "There's always something new to learn".

As the production side of the honey business grows, marketing becomes equally important. Gerrie has noticed a number of interesting trends among her customers—trends that may provide hope to other local farms and food processors. In just the last few years the Hergott's have noticed an increased demand for *local* honey (and other local products). They used to easily sell honey they picked up in Texas but now find that the imported honey is just not selling. A few years ago people may have been attracted to more exotic products or cared most about finding the cheapest price but Gerrie has observed a real shift in attitude when it comes to buying food.

Product origin has now become one of the first questions asked.

In their store you'll also find many apple and pear products, and local artisan crafts. If you're looking for unique gift ideas that represent part of the food heritage of "Waterloo County", Hergott's store is *the* place to shop. Why not take home an attractive gift basket featuring a selection of honey, fruit butter and juice, candles and crafts. Don't forget to pick up a couple of litres of the Hergott's famous apple cider while you're at it!

If you're looking for fun countryside events, plan to attend the Hergott's annual **Honeyfest** (June 18th) and **Applefest** (September 10th). The Hergott's pull out all the stops on these days to provide family-oriented activities. Both "fests" feature children's crafts, orchard and bee tours, product taste-sampling, and BBQ's put on as local fund-raisers. The Hergotts also book tours for adult or school groups throughout the honey and apple seasons. Be sure and check out the unique live bee display, which they also take to other regional events and festivals. With a screened in mini-ecosystem, the display is perfect way of finding out about the world of bees without the risk of being stung.

Keeping the honey and cider business going is a lot of work but Gerrie and Joe take satisfaction in knowing that their work is contributing to the local community. No other place in our region does what they do to educate children and adults about the wonders of bees. They contribute local products and local knowledge, nurture local culture and touch people's lives. They feel good knowing that they represent the roots of this community and they take seriously their responsibility to maintain those roots and pass them to the next generation. 



Find unique gift ideas at Hergott's retail store

Busy Bees!

- A single honeybee colony can produce more than 100 lbs (45 kg) of extra honey and this is what is harvested by the beekeeper.
- It takes one colony of honeybees to pollinate an acre of fruit trees. Pollination success increases if there are more honeybees present at the time of peak flowering.
- A colony of honeybees in early spring has 10,000-15,000 bees.
- A colony of honeybees in summer has 50-60,000 bees.
- A honeybee flies up to 24 km/hr or 15 mph and its wings beat 200 times per second or 12,000 beats/minute.
- A worker bee gathers in her entire life 0.8 grams of honey (1/10 tsp), and it requires 1,223 worker bees to gather a kilogram of honey.

Did you know?

The word "honeymoon" carries the significance that the first month of marriage is the sweetest.

The term "making a beeline for" describes the shortest and quickest route the nectar-gathering bee follows to return to the hive.

Apiculture is the real term for the practice of beekeeping.





The Buzz About Honey

History

A dictionary would define honey as the sweet liquid made by honeybees from the nectar of flowers. But, honey is so much more than that, providing human civilization with food, medicine, and a bartering tool. The earliest illustration we have of honey being gathered is around 15,000 years old and appears in a painting on the walls of a rock shelter in eastern Spain. The ancient Greeks minted coins with bees on them. The beer that the first Anglo-Saxons drank was a brew of water and honeycomb in a clay pot, with the addition of herbs for flavoring. Napoleon used the bee as a symbol of his empire after his coronation in 1804, as it stood for industry, efficiency and productivity

One of the most efficient factories in the world is indeed the beehive. And within its hub of activity is found the only human food produced by insects. The modern beehive is made up of a series of square or rectangular boxes without tops or bottoms placed one on top of another. Inside the boxes, frames are hung in parallel. The bees fill these frames with hexagonal-shaped wax comb. Then the bees get busy filling the comb with nectar. The field bees gather the nectar in the field, storing it in their honey sacs. During the flight back to the hive, the sugars in the nectar are simplified so that they can be changed into honey. At the hive the nectar is transferred from the field bee to the house bee via their tongues. The house bee then spreads a drop of the nec-

tar in a honey cell where it begins drying. Over the next few days house bees fan their wings over the comb to evaporate moisture from the nectar. Nectar is 80% water, while honey contains only 19% water. House bees then cap the cell with wax and, inside, the thickened nectar ages to become honey.

Honeybees are social insects with a marked division of labour. A colony contains one queen, 500 – 1000 drones, and about 50,000 workers, which are divided into field and house bees. The matriarch of the colony is the queen. She is specially chosen by the worker bees while still in the larval stage, and is fed a special diet of royal jelly. A few days after hatching, the queen mates with the drones, the sole occupation of these male bees. During this ritual, the queen receives enough sperm to last her entire life – about 2 years. A productive queen can lay up to 3,000 eggs in one day.

All the other females – the worker bees – perform various tasks within the colony. They clean the nursery, feed the larvae, collect the nectar, guard the hive, and fan the hive with their wings.

In addition to gathering nectar, honeybees perform another vital function – pollination of agricultural crops, orchards, and home gardens. As bees travel from blossom to blossom in search of nectar, they transfer pollen from plant to plant, thus fertilizing the blossoms and enabling them to bear fruit. Fruit and vegetable producers often rent beehives from beekeepers in the spring



to make sure that pollination takes place. It has been estimated that honeybee pollination in Canada contributes up to \$1 billion annually in terms of increased agricultural production, which is 10 times the value of the honey produced.

Beekeeping, as opposed to foraging honey from wild bee colonies, has been portrayed in Babylonian and Sumerian cuneiform writings and sacred Indian texts dating back 40 centuries. Today's beekeepers work long hours in spring and summer monitoring their hives to ensure that the colony is clean, free from disease, and supports a healthy queen. Honey is harvested in late summer or early fall. 🐝

Nutrition

Honey is a source of carbohydrates – mainly fructose (38%) and glucose (31%). On average, honey is 19% water. In addition, honey contains a wide array of trace vitamins such as B6, thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, and pantothenic acid. Essential minerals include calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, and potassium. Several compounds that function as antioxidants are also present in each teaspoon of honey. 🐝





Honey in Canada

The colour and flavour of honeys differ depending on what kind of blossoms the bees visit. As a general rule, the lighter the colour, the milder the taste. Canadian honey is recognized around the world to be of the highest quality. Vast expanses of canola, clover and alfalfa provide foraging for bees, which produce a mild, white honey prized for its taste. The traditionally sunny and long summers of the Canadian prairies provide honeybees with access to bountiful flowering crops. The result is that the average honey yield in Canada is twice the world's average. Canada is the world's sixth largest producer of honey.

In 2002, 8,884 beekeepers in all 10 provinces and the territories maintained 585,683 beehives that produced 33,297 tonnes of honey valued at approximately \$90 million in farm-gate receipts. On average, Canada exports one third to one half of this honey each year. In 2002, Canada exported 21,914 tonnes of honey valued at \$87.9 million. The US absorbed 90% of total exports followed by Germany with 4%.

In Ontario, honey production was valued at \$20 million in 2002.

The Canadian honey industry offers much more than just honey. Other honey by-products include:

- beeswax for candles and household products such as polishes;
- protein-rich pollen, which is used as a diet supplement;
- propolis, which is becoming widely known and accepted as an ingredient in cosmetics and lip balms, as well as a tonic; and
- royal jelly, a special feed produced by worker bees for the queen bee, which is used in skin creams and lotions. —▲

Finding Local Honey

Floralane Produce

2191 Arthur St. North, Elmira
669-3167

Hergott's Cider Mill and Products

928 Erb St. West, Waterloo
885-2306

Maple Crisp Orchards

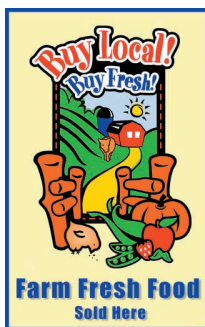
1888 Listowel Rd. Elmira
669-0795

Rolling Acres Pick Your Own

1235 Martin Creek Rd., Waterloo
664-1337

Joel Bauman

1764 King Street N., St. Jacobs
664-3093



The safety and quality of Canadian honey is second to none. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, through the Honey Regulations of the Canada Agricultural Products Act, ensures that producers and importers meet strict federal standards. In most provinces, the beekeeping industry is served by provincial apiculturists who are responsible for the registration of beekeepers, bee health, management practices and other issues affecting beekeepers. 🐝



"I have a very simple no-bake recipe that I like to make in a pinch when I need a sweet treat for some occasion and have no time for cooking, etc. It's called 'Almond Cookies'. I also have a recipe for a salad dressing that I use a lot. I have included both recipes below." – Gerrie Hergott

Almond Cookies

Ingredients:

- 2 cups almonds
- 1 cup Shredded coconut
- 1/2 cup Hergott's liquid honey

Preparation:

Grind almonds into a fine meal. Work in enough honey to make a sticky dough. Roll into balls or log shape and roll in coconut. Chill and slice.

Sun-dried Tomato Dressing

Ingredients:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice (juice from 1 lemon) | 1 teaspoon dried oregano |
| 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil | 7 - 8 pieces sun-dried tomatoes, quartered |
| (I use some oil from the sundried tomatoes)* | 4 - 5 fresh tomatoes, quartered |
| 1/3 cup Hergott's liquid honey | Celtic Sea Salt to taste (optional) |
| 1 clove garlic crushed | |
| 1/2 teaspoon dried basil | |

Preparation:

Place all ingredients in blender and process to desired consistency. This is a very flavourful rich dressing for salads, etc.

*Measuring oil in the measuring cup first makes the honey come out of the measuring cup without sticking.

Note: Sun-dried tomatoes make the dressing thick. To make a thinner consistency, decrease sun-dried tomatoes and/or increase the fresh tomatoes.