

FROM BEE

The journey of honey begins with humble honey bees. Whether buzzing in their hives or foraging for nectar in wide open fields, honey bees are a critical component of today's agricultural market. In addition to producing delicious, golden honey, they perform the vital function of pollination.

Although other insects can pollinate plants, honey bees are premier pollinators because they are available throughout the growing season and pollinate a wide range of crops including almonds, apples, avocados, cucumbers, pears, melons and many more. In fact, about one-third of the U.S. diet is derived from insect-pollinated plants and honey bees are responsible for an impressive 80 percent of that process.

TO HIVE

Honey bees visit millions of blossoms in their lifetimes, collecting nectar to bring back to the hive which is then naturally broken down into simple sugars and stored in honeycomb. Within the hive are thousands of worker bees, drones and a queen bee, all working together to create the perfect environment for producing all-natural honey. The unique, hexagonal design of the honeycomb, coupled with the constant fanning by the bees' wings, causes evaporation to take place, creating the thick, sweet liquid we know as honey. For the final step, the bees then seal the honeycomb cells with wax caps.



To communicate the location of nectar sources and water, honey bees perform several distinct, figure-eight dances called the waggle dance.



TO BOTTLE

Beekeepers lend a helping hand to the hard-working honey bees to get their honey into bottles and jars. To harvest the honey, beekeepers collect the honeycomb frames from the hives and scrape off the wax caps that the bees make to seal off the honey in each cell. Once the caps are removed, the frames are placed in an extractor – a centrifuge that spins the frames, forcing honey out of the comb. The honey is spun to the sides of the extractor, where gravity pulls it to the bottom and it can be collected for bottling.

Fortunately, honey bees will make more honey than their colony needs, so it is necessary for beekeepers to remove the excess. On average, a hive will produce about 65 pounds of surplus honey each year.

NOT ALL HONEY IS THE SAME

Honey bees work tirelessly to produce this gift of nature, visiting countless sources for nectar. And depending on the blossoms the bees tap, the color and flavor of honey can differ greatly. Honey's color and flavor range from almost colorless with a mild taste to robustly-flavored dark amber brown. In the United States alone, there are more than 300 unique types of honey produced, each originating from a different floral source. But honey's diversity doesn't stop with varieties. Honey also comes in various forms including liquid, creamed and comb.



Honey bees gather nectar and pollen from 50-100 blossoms per collecting trip. Two million flowers must be tapped to produce a single pound of honey.

