

About the Farm

Conducted by Allan Campbell

Notes on Honey

With the general trend of prices, including that of sugar to go as high as the consumers will pay, it is as well to turn our attention to the importance of honey as a human food. It is superfluous to say much about the reputation that honey has enjoyed from the earliest history, and to-day, even with our very rich diets, it is still a prime favorite. The honey we obtain from our honey bees is certainly obtained with the minimum amount of cost and labor. While we obtain our milk as the harvest of our efforts in hauling feed, watering, cleaning out, grooming, milking, etc., for which we pay elevated prices for both labor and material, we obtain our honey by the simple means of going to the hive and taking out the full combs and placing them in the extractor, but of course this operation is eliminated where the small comb honey is arranged for. We leave the labor to the bees who have no labor troubles, but diligently seek the flowers extract the nectar, fill the combs, keep their hives clean, feed themselves and their young and only look for enough honey left in the hives to carry them through the winter without risk of starvation. Shakespeare eulogizes the honey bee in "King Henry the Fifth":

For so work the honey bees,
Creatures that by rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.

Others, like soldiers, armed in their
stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet
buds,
Which pillage they with merry march
bring home
To the tent-royal of their emperor.

To obtain the greatest amount of honey, it is essential to have the hive full of bees when the first honey flow arrives, which is usually at the time of the fruit bloom. Early in the season the bees are busy gathering nectar and pollen from the early flowers to be used as food for the young bees and it is important that this work be finished at the time of the first honey flow in order that the bees may be free to gather honey without the extra task of having to provide feed for the young.

A rather attractive form of honey for table use is "comb honey," that is, the honey is served in its natural form of storage, the comb being eaten together with the honey. These combs are built on foundation in little wooden sections, a full section weighing about one pound. Greater care is needed in the production of comb honey than in working for extracted honey. The sections must be well filled and sealed over, the comb

must be straight and the cappings must be as white as possible. If they are soiled, as they will be if the super is left too long in the hive, their value will be less.

Nectar-producing flowers are abundant in Canada, and in the Prairie Provinces there are many thriving apiaries. The quality of Canadian honey is said to be unsurpassed.

Honey is graded according to color as there is light and dark honey. The better way to classify honey is from the plants from which it is gathered. As a general rule the light colored honey is mild in flavor, the dark being strong. The white honey produced in Canada is mostly clover honey gathered from alsike and Dutch clover. Clover honey is considered to be the standard of fine honey. Basswood honey is another fine white honey but it has a stronger flavor than that obtained from clover.

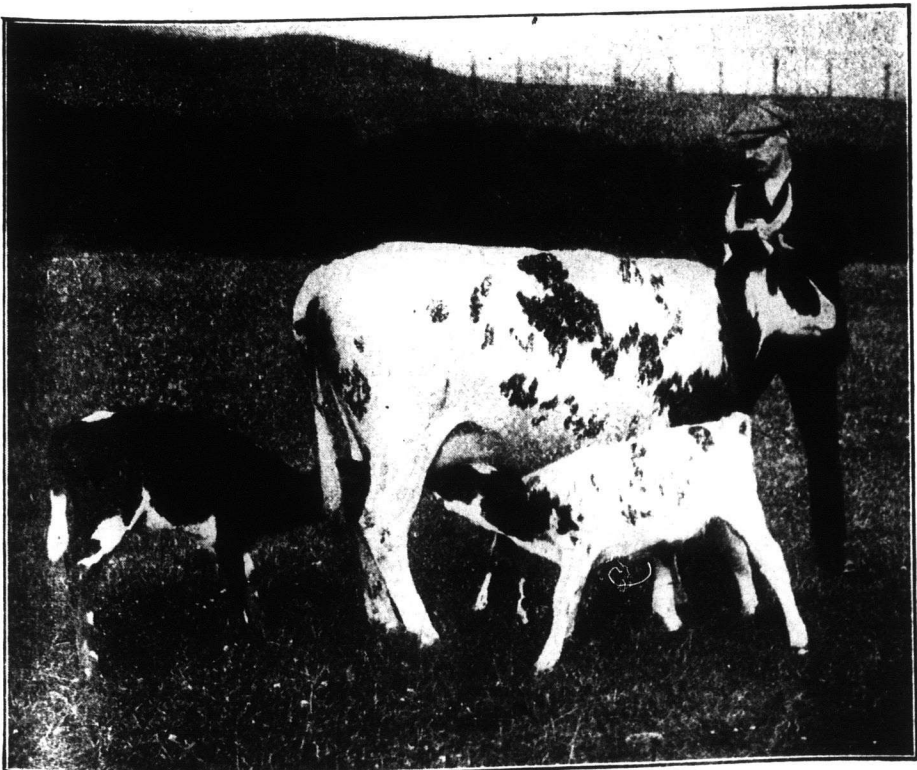
The fire-weed which is common in forest clearings also produces a white honey. This weed is a tall plant with purple flowers; it is also known as the willow herb. This may be sown by the apiarist on his land in order to provide extra variety for his bees.

Buckwheat honey is a deep brown in color and strong flavor. It may be advantageously mixed with other honeys if the flavor is found to be too strong, but it will appeal to a good many tastes in its flavor form.

On the prairie the honey comes principally from wild flowers and a list of some of them may be interesting.

Dandelion, produces nectar in June; Apple and Plum, produces nectar in May; Pin Cherry and Choke Cherry, produces nectar in May; Alsike Clover, produces nectar in June; Basswood, produces nectar in July; Sweet clover, produces nectar in July; Fireweed produces nectar in July; Buckwheat, produces nectar in August; Golden Rod, produces nectar in August and September.

The principal honeys of Canada granulate a few weeks after removal from the hive. This granulation is hastened by cold. It may be brought back to a liquid condition by heat, though the granulated honey is perfectly good. There are certain advantages in using honey in the granulated form. It is not liable to leak out of the container, it is easier to handle and it is less likely to make any articles in its near vicinity, sticky. Honey is liquified by raising it to a temperature of from 130 degrees to 150 degrees F. The vessel containing the granulated honey is placed in hot water and the temperature should not go higher than 160 degrees or the honey is likely to start decomposing. Honey should never be liquified by the direct application of heat.



Lunch time.

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