

HEADLINE: **Explore the Flavours of Locally Produced Ontario Honey at Farmers' Markets**

By (Local Beekeeper)

What is your first memory of honey? I bet it goes back to childhood days. In my case, it was the drizzle of liquid amber on toast.

For food connoisseurs, honey is like wine. It may contain a hint of blueberry, for example, all depending on what the bees have been foraging.

In Ontario, we are known for our multifloral golden honey which is produced from the nectar of a wide range of flowering plants. When bees first emerge from the hives, they are attracted to the nectar of maples and other budding trees, then move on to dandelions and fruit trees.

For Ontario's 3,000 beekeepers, honey harvest starts in earnest in July and progresses through to September with the honey colour deepening throughout the summer. The deeper the colour, the more minerals can be found in the honey. Clover and canola are the key flowering species in July, while purple asters and goldenrod are the mainstay for August. It's common for Ontario 100 percent pure honey to be labeled "wildflower" or "summerblossom" because it is derived from so many plant species.

For a monofloral honey – nectar transformed from a specific plant species – the hives may be placed in locations such as cranberry bogs, clover fields or blueberry patches to obtain a distinct flavour. A discerning beekeeper can tell by the taste of honey what flowers the bees have been foraging.

Ontario chef and cookbook author, Anita Stewart, appreciates the flavours of honey to the extent she included a chapter on maple, honey and molasses in her just-released book. Her research shows that cultivated bees made their first appearance in the early 1800s and that honey was an important ingredient in baking. "*Anita Stewart's Canada: The Food, The Recipes, The Stories*" includes a recipe for honey cake which calls for two cups of robust buckwheat honey.

Explore the flavour possibilities of locally produced 100 percent Ontario honey at a farmer's market near you. Visit (name of farmer and farm) at (town) by calling (telephone number) or looking up (www.website). (Come to see us at the local farmers' market or the farm. Our hours of operation are:)