

The Buzz

Newsletter of the
Iowa Honey Producers
Association



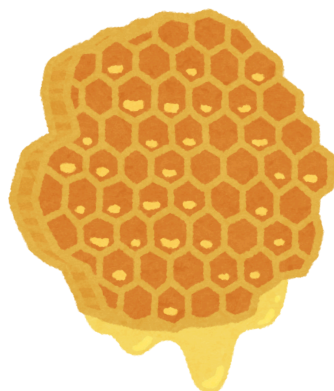
November 2024

<https://www.iowahoneyproducers.org/>



**Queen Britta reflects on
her year as royalty
on Pages 10 and 11.**

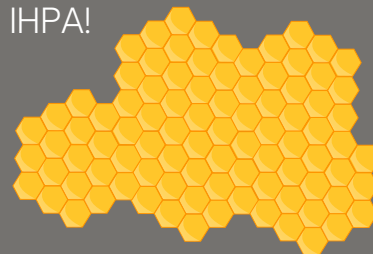
**Sara has the scoop on
The Italian Register
of Experts on Page 9.**



**Learn more about Phil's
honey extraction system
on Page 7.**

The Buzz

The Buzz is a monthly publication printed by the Iowa Honey Producers Association (IHPA). This is one of the many perks of being a member of the IHPA!



You may opt to receive an electronic version of The Buzz, as a donation to the IHPA. Please contact the editor at:
ihpaeditor@gmail.com

IHPA Officer & Director News

Ramblings from The Russian Bee Guy

President, Jason Foley

Hello and welcome to the November edition of The Buzz. Well, if you got this mailer the first part of November, then I just finished seeing most of you at the annual conference and trade show. Unfortunately, I can't speak on events at it because we have to get each edition of The Buzz wrapped up around the 15th of the prior month so it can be printed and mailed on time.

So far my October has been quite busy. About every week I am making the rounds to my 13 bee yards and doing fall prep so my bees will be super healthy and well fed for the journey out to California. My wife has me labeling up products for the store and practically every day I'm in the mead room doing some step with our multiple batches in process. The other day I was bottling up our Sweet Mead and did 315 bottles. Now I have the tiresome job of labeling all 315 bottles with a front and back sticker that we hand-write the batch and bottle numbers on. Oh boy, that's gonna take a while. I've also been doing a little remodeling to both the store and mead room. In the past few weeks I installed a water line for the mead room and a heat pump HVAC system so now we can keep the space at optimal fermentation temperatures year round! I've been crunching away hours of conference work, as well. A steady flow of registrations keep pouring in that I have to enter into our database to generate nametags and meal designations, all the lanyards need assembled, gift bags for check in need assembled, contacting vendors, sorting out details with our big ticket speakers, and too many other things to list here. Whew! And on top of that, I still have all the responsibilities of a homeowner, too. Like I have not yet split all the wood we will need to heat our home this winter. At least I have a healthy pile of dried logs to work with, but that'll be several long days of back breaking work.

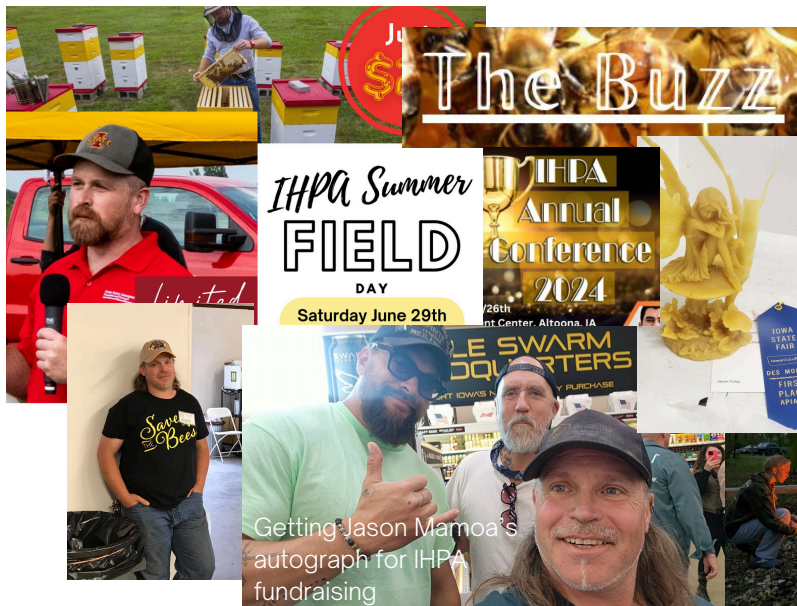
So far, the bees are looking really good. I have a couple yards right close to home here that are light on honey



IHPA Officer & Director News

stores, but all of the other yards are just packed to the brim. No biggie, just gotta run around those light ones a few times with the syrup pump. I'm also seeing really good mite levels. I've heard others (mainly out of state, but some here in Iowa) who are seeing record losses. They note that their mite levels seem fine, but their hives are just magically crashing on them. Some people are losing as much as 80% of their bees. That there is business-crushing numbers. I'm sure they will be filing for aid, but still that has got to be scary to be faced with losing so much. Whatever your main source of income is, just picture that being threatened by a loss of 80% and trying to come up with a backup plan to fix things; very terrifying.

Thank you all again for letting me serve as your president these last 3 years. Don't worry, I'm still on the board as "past president," I'll still be helping with The Buzz, working with legislators to protect and improve your beekeeping rights, helping with membership and registrations, running bee camp, working at the state fair, handling advertising initiatives, and all the other things I am a volunteer with. In the last 15 or so years of being associated with IHPA I've worn a lot of hats, and it all started with volunteering a few shifts at the Iowa State Fair booth. Maybe in the coming year or two I'll try on a couple more hats lol. It has been an honor, and a privilege to serve you.



Letters from the WILDHILLS

How is it already November? Seems like I was just out pulling supers and sweating in the August heat. Now I'm just sweating cause it's still hot out (despite being a beekeeper, I'm a winter person). I'm writing this actually right before we are all going to be meeting up for the Annual Conference, I'm pretty excited, as a newer beekeeper when I saw that post come out from our Vice President, asking for topics, well, I didn't hold back. I'm a huge supporter of life long learning and maybe that's how I got into this hobby, seems like there is something to learn every day. I'm also very excited to be able to pick up more things from vendors there, I learned the hard way putting on mouse guards how long a box does not last....let's just say the girls didn't appreciate my thumb coming on into their home.

Anyway, before I start rambling. November is marking a bit of a slow down in the apiary for me. I was lucky enough to sit in on a class with Andy Joseph in September and it was great in terms of helping to be ready for winter. I had to have surgery late last year and didn't get all my bees ready in time, it was a rough spring. I'm feeling good now (granted there is never any promise of success), my Formic is done, & following up with Apiguard along with feeding. I'm feeling lucky about the feed though, somehow we had an outstanding goldenrod flow this year



Letters from the WILDHILLS

and a lot of the hives were looking good, but with warmer temps, well you all probably have heard what Tyler was saying online, but they have been pretty active when there is zero food out there for them. Just have to keep pushing along I guess.

Now that things have slowed down, I'm working on building out networks for steady sales, it's not something I have had to work on in the past but as I've grown, there is more and more honey that needs to be moved between now and next August. I'm also starting the process of going through all my boxes and frames, making the determination on what gets kept and what needs to be replaced. I did a great job last year thrifting some supplies for frames, as in a huge box of plastic foundation, and frames for it, never used, never even opened. Makes expanding a little easier. My goal is to have everything cleaned up, replaced or tossed before snow flies, which for all we know, could happen by the time you read this.

So that's where things are for me at this time. I'm also debating building a shed, something to house the supplies, handle extraction and storage but for now...time to figure out what I'm going to do with all the wax we have this year. Candles, chapstick, beard balms...so many options.

All the best, and Bee Real.
Chris





From the Honey House



A collection of information from those with direct, personal knowledge about beekeeping

Fall Transition

Fall is a transition period for the honeybees. There are a lot of changes in beehive dynamics and many of these are the result of the environment and weather factors. As the days get shorter, and temperatures go lower at night, the brood nest starts to contract and the bees start to backfill the hive with honey.

In August and September the winter bees are being born. These bees have to be healthy to make sure that the hive has a good chance to over-winter. The mite load normally is the largest in August so we use formic acid mite treatments in early July to reduce the mite load. When the honey supers are off, we will be putting on another mite treatment.

In August the goldenrod blooming here in southern Wisconsin is a sign that summer is coming to a close, and honey flow is probably reducing. We currently have pretty bad drought conditions here, but with the early summer drenching rains, we still have some moisture deep in the ground. The soybean fields are turning yellow now, which is another weather indicator. We need to have the honey supers off, get our fall mite medication on and start feeding sugar syrup. The bees may need the additional food to compensate for the reduced nectar flow, and to ensure that the bees have enough winter stores.

Around the end of September, the drones are being kicked out of the hive to die, and the queen is reducing egg laying. A lot of hobby beekeepers get anxious due to the lack of brood, not realizing that the queen is starting her winter vacation. The timing of this varies, which sometimes adds to the confusion.

We normally see some deadouts in October, and this is

one indication that we were behind on mite treatments. The dynamics of mite control continue to change, with different conditions and different mite treatments. We need to keep up on our reading and networking.

In almost every beeyard this year some hives were producing and some just sat there. We had two weeks of solid rain the beginning of June. I think that the hives that were ready to go made it through this period well and produced honey, while the weaker ones did not get a chance to really get going. This was common to a lot of beekeepers here in southern Wisconsin with multiple hives.

Thanksgiving has always been a general target date to have our beehive work done for the season. We put on candy boards containing around 12 pounds of pure sugar as an emergency food supply. Hives are wrapped with tarpaper or insulation. After that the beehives are on their own until late February or early March, depending on weather, when we do our first hive inspections for spring.

There are a lot of variables in beekeeping and the only calendar the bees go by is their environment. I am constantly observing this symbiotic relationship, and tucking it away for future reference. Overall, the bees did an incredible job producing honey this year, many even producing a fall flow. The hot summer weather combined with the early rains seemed to be like magic.

There is a lot of beekeeper activity in the fall. I hope that you are keeping up with your bee chores.

Andy Hemken, Bee Guy
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From the Beeyard

A collection of information from those with direct, personal knowledge about beekeeping

Written by Phil Ebert

Sara ran a couple of pictures of the Lynnville extracting system last month. It was a last minute deal for a filler so no explanation was included. The system is made up of stuff mostly found in the bone piles of other beekeepers. I don't know if anyone is interested in how we acquired it but I think I will tell you anyway. It will be an easy column to write. Before we had the uncapper, it was two kids with hot knives and one extractor. In the mid-90's, we went to Wisconsin and bought the uncapper from Al Baldwin. I don't remember how we got hooked up with Al. I didn't know him prior to this and it was before social media. We gave \$600. It was quite a bit of work to get it running. Cowan's have told me it dates back to the 70's. I built the stand for it myself. We have used it for over 25 years.

Now, we needed another extractor and a bigger building. I found an extractor in Dubuque. It was \$300. We expanded the building. I still needed a tray to catch the wax from the uncapper. I found one in Harlan. It was water jacketed and had a wax sump at the end of the tray. I gave \$1,000 for it. Glen Stanley had some of these made at International Livestock in Fairfield in the 60's or 70's. We had trouble with the wax sump. Most of it was related to using too much heat. A high school kid working here at the time figured it out for me.

The honey from the wax sump and extractors are piped into a pit where we have a 20 gallon Kelley tank. I met a guy at a rest stop on the interstate to pick that up. It was \$100. When it fills, the float switch turns a pump on and the honey goes into a baffle tank. I bought the baffle tank from Earl Eibo in the late 90's. That was another \$100. He was watching the US women's soccer team playing in some big competition when I went to pick it up. I think Mia Hamm was the American star. Sometimes, I get this stuff mixed up.

As the honey goes thru the baffle tank, most of the wax separates out. Then the honey goes into a barrel. We are not set up to get a forklift into the extracting room. We have the barrels on dollies and roll them into the storage area when we can stack them. That's the story. I am sure you have gathered from this that I am very economy minded.

Mite loads are too high. Some of the counts are up to 8. We are putting in another treatment. We are not seeing yards crash, but Alex picks up some colonies on every round. We saw this coming but the treatments have not been very effective. There is still a lot of brood as I write this (Oct 10). There is potential for things to get out of hand.

Extracting is finished in Lynnville. I would only rate the crop as fair but we did get a record amount of comb honey—around 150 supers. I still have 15 to go thru. I suspect they will be mostly chunk pieces. There are always the super colonies that seem to do well in spite of everything. Alex has gotten good at recognizing those and using them for comb honey. I still marvel at how the demand for that has grown.

We will start to gather up the bees soon. I don't know what almond pollination is going to look like in 2025. I don't even know if we are going. The price of nuts is up over \$2 but still a long way from pre-Covid levels. Exports have been at record levels for the last 10 months. The backlog is being reduced. Will this increase the demand for bees? There was a glut last year. I don't know what 2025 will bring.



Additional photos of the extracting system.





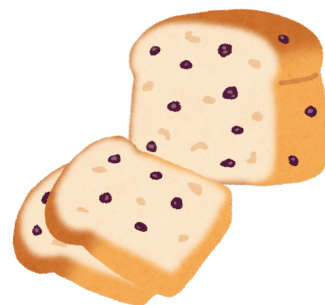
Recipes by Emma Ingram

Happy November! I am amazed how quickly this fall has traveled! With the conference being a few weeks earlier, my mental calendar is just a little off. Oh well, the conference is always such a good time to see old friends and meet new beeks. For the November issue, I was feeling like baking. I tried out a tasty baked chicken and a personal favorite, banana nut bread. Both were quite tasty with good balances in the flavors.

Honey Banana Nut Bread (Pg. 13)

1 cup honey
2 cups flour
1 cup mashed bananas
3 tablespoons milk
½ teaspoon baking power
½ teaspoon baking soda

½ cup melted butter
2 eggs
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 teaspoon vanilla



Beat together honey, egg, milk, and vanilla. Add butter and bananas. Combine dry ingredients and add nuts. Grease bottom and halfway up sides of two 7 3/8" x 3 5/8" x 2 1/4" loaf pans. Put batter in pans. Bake at 325 degrees for about 1 hour.

Emma's Notes: The banana bread had a really nice balance of sweet with a nice nutty flavor at the end. The walnuts were a must as they really balanced with the super sweetness of the bananas. When I make banana bread, I usually use almost brown bananas. Having such sweet bananas meant it needed something to balance it. I used standard bread pans and was really pleased with the results. I would flour my pans when I make this again to give a nicer edge to the bread and make it release as it cools.

Honey Rosemary Chicken (Pg. 51)

¼ cup honey
¼ cup minced fresh rosemary
6 bone-in skinless chicken breast halves
(about 7 ounces each)

1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ teaspoon pepper



In a bowl, mix honey, vinegar, rosemary, and olive oil. Place half of the marinade into a large resealable plastic bag. Add the chicken; seal the bag; turn to coat the chicken. Refrigerate for 2 hours. Cover the remaining marinade and place in the refrigerator. Drain and discard the marinade from the chicken. Place chicken bone-side down in a 9x13x2 baking dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 55-65 minutes until juices are clear. Baste with reserved marinade from the pan. Yields 6 servings.

Emma's Notes: I misread the recipe when I made this and used boneless chicken breasts instead of bone-in. The chicken turned out dry, but had a good flavor. Although I have not made it a second time, I would try it with bone-in chicken breasts to see how that affected the moisture. The honey was very mild and acted more like a glaze but paired well with the sour of the vinegar, so no flavor was overwhelming.



From the Editor

Sara Sleyster, IHPA Editor
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Hello, everyone!

Last month, I told you I'd give you more information on The Italian Register of Experts in the Sensory Analysis of Honey in November. That promise was a little trickier than I anticipated since all of the official information from their website is in Italian. Thankfully, the American Honey Tasting Society provided some of the details in a language I could easily understand!

Honey sensory analysis has a long history in Italy. The first course on the subject was conducted in 1979. The Italian Register of Experts in the Sensory Analysis of Honey was founded in 1988. It finally received official recognition from the Italian Ministry of Agriculture in 1999.

Luckily, the organization does hold international classes in English so even non-Italian speakers are able to earn their certification in honey sensory analysis. To become an official expert, it requires three stages of training and being able to pass a final exam.

The first stage of training is done over a four-day span and includes 28 hours of lessons. According to the American Honey Tasting Society website, "It is a very intensive course and theory lessons are alternated with practical lessons in which the future assessor is taught to improve their focus when using the senses and learn to describe and memorize their sensory perceptions of the most common unifloral Italian honeys." More than a dozen honeys are listed on The Italian Register's website for tasting and analyzing.

The second stage can be taken four or more months after successfully completing the first course. It entails 7 hours of lessons each day for three days. Students get to participate in numerous practical



Logo of The Italian Register of Experts in the Sensory Analysis of Honey from their website.

exercises to help perfect their skills in honey evaluation. The hands-on experiences are meant to help prepare them for their final exam.

After waiting three or more months, people who have completed the first two stages can sign up for the third, and final, stage. It's a three-day exam of practical and written tests on the sensory characteristics of the unifloral honeys. If you achieve satisfactory scores, you qualify to be registered on the Italian National Register.

If you would like more information on The Italian Register, you can visit their website at www.albomiele.it, but if you can't read Italian you'll have to utilize Google Translate to get the most out of it.

Bye for now!
Sara

Iowa Honey Royalty



Britta McCollum - 2024 Iowa Honey Queen

Happy November everyone! By the time you are reading this I will no longer be the Iowa Honey Queen. It is hard to believe that it has been 6 years since my first time at the Iowa Honey Producers Conference. When I first started with the youth scholarship program it was near impossible to get me to talk about anything, but thanks to the amazing programs that we offer in Iowa I have found a lifelong passion that I am proud and eager to share with others. I have traveled a total of 4,255 miles visiting 22 different places, attending Iowa Bee Day, and the State Fair. I wanted to share a few of my favorite stories about the places I have visited throughout this year.

May 4th I visited a STEM group in Des Moines Valley Junction. I was really excited to visit with these kids because I remembered loving my STEM classes in elementary and this program offered more exposure to different fields. I talked about the importance of beekeeping and what we can do for the bees. We then did an arts and crafts project making bee hotels which are cans/bottles cleaned and opened with rolled up paper, sticks, and leaves in the middle and you could tie them up into a tree branch and wait for bees to take a rest. What was awesome is the STEM group had bee robots which you could program to move a certain number of spaces so that they could visit different flowers. One of the kids got to teach me how to program the bee robots and how to work them and I ended up staying an extra 20 minutes playing with bee robots.

On May 10th I visited Strong Roots Christian School in Indianola, Iowa. I visited a classroom of kindergarteners and I had invited my friend Mey to come along with me to wear the bee suit. I was explaining how bees to me are just like any other pet I have like a cat or a dog. I had one student raise his hand, "I had a dog, he died." The teacher then talked to the student and we carried on to one more slide. Then the same student raised his hand again, and thinking he had a question I called on him and he told me, "I also had a cat she died too, and Judy too." I sympathized with the kid and the teacher told the class only to raise their hands for questions from there on out. The same kid proceeded to raise his hand and the teacher told him no more questions. The rest of the time we played a game of bee telephone and got to look more at the bee suit. I still don't know who Judy is but he ended up being one of my favorite kids.



Iowa Honey Royalty



Britta McCollum - 2024 Iowa Honey Queen

June 5th, I visited Greene Public Library with my friend Abby. Out of every town I have visited in Iowa this was one of the most charming. About 6 people showed up and 4 of them happened to be beekeepers. I talked about what I do as the Iowa Honey Queen and my experience throughout the years and then we made lemonade. And because our group was not as big we could talk as one big group and go around and share the knowledge we had. Two of the beekeepers were a couple from the town, one was a retired beekeeper, and the last beekeeper was from Maine visiting family. Two of the librarians also sat in on the conversation. We went around sharing our experiences, asking each other questions, and enjoying each other's company. Group discussions are one of my favorite ways of getting to know the people I am talking to and making the group feel more like a group rather than people listening to a speaker. What I thought was awesome is the visitor from Maine wanted to work in the hive with some beekeepers more, and the couple offered to take her to their apiary and the last beekeeper tagged along as well. It is amazing the sense of community that we develop with total strangers and welcome them into our hives.

I owe a huge thank you to my best friend, Abby, who has been by my side throughout this entire year. For almost every presentation I gave, if someone was wearing the bee suit, it was Abby 99% of the time. Abby helped me prepare for each event, rehearsed with me, and walked through different scenarios to make sure I was ready. Not only that, she accompanied me to almost every presentation so I

wouldn't have to drive alone. I know she was a true friend when she woke up with me at 4 a.m. to drive four hours to Mount Pleasant. Every time she came along, people would ask who she was, and she'd proudly say she was my mascot in the bee suit. Abby's never been inside a beehive, yet she could probably be buzzing with 100 facts about honey bees. And even with my mom's best efforts to convince her, she's made it clear Abby will not be the next Iowa Honey Queen. Abby is one of the most supportive, selfless people I've ever met, and I can't imagine those drives and trips without her. I'm incredibly lucky to have her by my side as my best friend and my mascot.

It is hard to believe I am the same kid that walked into the conference center in Ames hiding behind my mom trying to seem as small as possible. Throughout this experience I have learned so much, but what I am going to be walking away with is every person that I have ever met in my time being Queen. I hope that throughout my time being in Iowa I have inspired at least one person to pursue beekeeping, eat more honey, or even to take after honey bees and work as a hive to get a job done. After our conference, I will be continuing my education at Iowa Central for one more semester and then I will be transferring to the University of Northern Iowa to pursue psychology for another 6 years with my friend Abby. I hope to become a clinical psychologist and a hobby beekeeper.

Stay sweet!
Queen Britta





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When sending photos please send them as separate files and not embedded in a Word document or Google doc.

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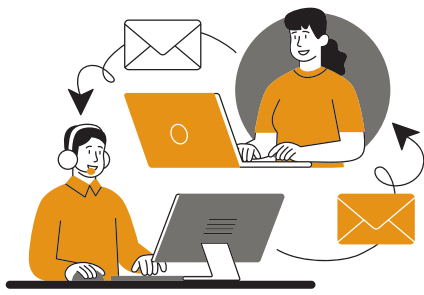
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Please email ihpa1912@gmail.com

The Buzz Newsletter

Iowa Honey Producers Association
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Des Moines, IA 50320



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Deadline for submissions to *The Buzz* is always the 10th of the month at 11:59 p.m. the month prior to when you would like to see information published.

If writing an article for *The Buzz*, submissions must be 800 words or less. Pictures are encouraged!

Deadline to submit information for the December Edition of *The Buzz*

November 10th at 11:59 p.m.

Please submit materials to: ihpaeditor@gmail.com

