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Did you know we grow... Honey?

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Bee-utiful Burnett flavour

By Jessica McGrath

Honey is the sweet topping of choice for toast, porridge, scones and pancakes… and is produced right here in the Burnett.

Yanjala Honey's Scott Cossens harvests pure Australian unfiltered raw honey from his bee hives, which he moves around the South Burnett and the Gympie region.

Bees have always been a fascination for Scott, with his grandfather owning bees.

"I've just liked bees since I was a kid," he said.

Beekeeping started as a hobby, but then became a fresh career change last year.

"I just started with a few bees and I quite liked it," Scott said.

He now works with a Kingaroy-based beekeeper, is studying a Certificate III in beekeeping and maintains his own hives in his spare time.

Scott and his partner Selina Carey are based at their property, Yanjala Farm, at Goomeribong -near Goomeri and Murgon.

The 40 bee hives are currently at the farm, but often get moved around every two or three months around the Murgon and Wondai area so far. The plan is to expand to more hives later this year.

At the moment the spotted gum is in flower, but moving around allows the bees access to different types of pollen, bringing a variety of flavours and colours to the honey.

"Ironbark is coming in flower, I might be able to get some of that," Scott said.

Yanjala Honey is a mixed flora honey.

"A bit of a brush box, a bit of legumes, spotted gums that flowers -it's a bit of everything."

Spring and summertime is the best for honey harvesting as this is when the plants are often in full bloom and there is an abundance of pollen and flower nectar for the honeybees to collect.

Yanjala Honey Beekeeper Scott Cossens checks on his bee hives. Pictures: CONTRIBUTED

This then gets broken down into simple sugars and stored inside the honeycomb within the hive, which creates the sweet liquid honey -typically sitting in the hive at 36 degrees.

The honey is then extracted from the hives. Yanjala Honey uses a wide mesh strainer to remove any unwanted impurities and debris, whereas some beekeepers use heat treatments to extract the honey.

"You extract that and bottle it -it's a pretty simple process," Scott said.

Honeycomb can also be taken from the top box, it is then frozen for a few days and then packaged.

It is important to look after the health of the bees, checking them regularly, looking for signs of diseases and if they have enough room in their boxes to breed and store the honey.

Honey has many health benefits, being good for colds.

Scott is currently looking into propolis, a natural resinous mixture produced by honeybees to glue up their hives. It has antibacterial properties in it and is often found in lollies and teas at health food shops.

The product currently comes from New Zealand, but there are now trials to produce it in Australia.

"Our beeswax is very pure because we don't have as many chemicals in Australia [compared to other countries]."

Yanjala Honey has even been used by a local vet who used the raw honey on a bandage for a wound on a horse.

"It still has all of the microbes in it, as long as the honey hasn't gone above 42 degrees," he said.

In a unique combination, Scott looks after the bees and the 'Yanjala Honey', while Selina is equally passionate about free range pork, overseeing their small herd of Wessex Saddleback pigs.

Through pollinating the plants on the property, the bees assist with the biodiversity -especially since the couple also have a focus on legumes and have planted a number of different trees.

"They are separate, but they do work together in a way -pigs help the soil, bees help the biodiversity," Scott said.

When it comes to cooking with honey, Scott particularly likes honey joys or using honey as a sugar substitute when brewing beer.

Yanjala Honey is produced in the Burnett region.