



It's Official! Albuquerque is a "Bee City USA"

A year ago, we began letting NMBKA members know about Bee City USA, a growing program to get American cities to commit to creating and maintaining healthy pollinator habitats. Here in New Mexico, a group of inspired beekeepers led by Anita Amstutz of ThinkLikeaBee.org began working with city officials to certify and designate Albuquerque as a Bee City USA. Their work has now come to fruition, as the city of Albuquerque just adopted a resolution to become a Bee City USA!

As part of the push for Bee City USA designation, both Anita and NMBKA president Jessie Brown met with City of Albuquerque department heads. Many city departments have been working together to implement Integrative Pest Management solutions. Finally, some 26 beekeepers and supporters, including Abq Beeks and NMBKA members, attended a meeting of the Albuquerque City Council on August 15, many dressed in white and wearing bee veils.



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SAVE THE DATE!

February 3-4, 2017
NMBKA Annual Meeting
Albuquerque, NM



Photo: Anita Amstutz

THE NEW MEXICO BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

is dedicated to informing and inspiring persons interested in beekeeping, and educating the general public.

The resolution notes that communities "have the opportunity to support bees and other pollinators on both public and private land," and commits the City of Albuquerque to living up to Bee City USA's standards for maintaining that support. That includes pollinator habitat plantings or restoration, educational events, and tracking progress on the initiative. For more information visit beecityusa.org. 



Message from The President

Howdy! I don't know about you, but I'm enjoying the beginning of crisp evenings in Albuquerque and the sweet taste of my first honey harvest this year.

It was wonderful seeing and meeting many of you during the Varroa Mite Monitoring Workshop with Megan Mahoney of the Bee Informed Partnership. Last year, our state saw one of the highest rates of varroa mite in the nation and we thought it was important for New Mexico bees to learn how to test our own hives.

For anyone who wasn't able to attend, the easy step-by-step procedure on page four should take some of the mystery out of keeping our hives healthy, so I encourage all of you to give it a go! (Yes, people with both Langstroth and Top Bar hives can test.)

Of course, what you do with this test results is up to you and your own personal practice. But I strongly recommend anonymously recording your numbers here:

bip2.beeinformed.org/mitecheck

Sincerely,

Jessie Brown, President
NM Beekeepers Association
president@nmbeekeepers.org
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Enter your Honey in the New Mexico State Fair!

Randy Swartz

The 2016 New Mexico State Fair is coming up, and one of the highlights (especially for our state's beekeepers) is always the honey competition.

There are many great reasons for entering your honey and hive products in the New Mexico State Fair. You can help promote beekeeping and local honey in our state, share the wonders of the hive with the people of New Mexico, and help improve the beekeeping and honey production skills of your fellow bees. Of course, entering honey in the State Fair can also be a lot of fun—especially if you win a ribbon.

I encourage you to make the decision now to enter your honey, wax or other hive products in the State Fair. To maximize your opportunities for a good experience and success, it is important do a few simple things. First, review the NM State Fair honey rules. You can find the rules [HERE](#) (or just Google "New Mexico State Fair rules honey." The rules are contained in a PDF file. You should read the rules in their entirety so as to increase your odds at success, but the following is a summary of some key facts:

Entry Dates: Tuesday, September 6, 2016 from 8:00am-5:00pm, and Wednesday, September 7, 2016 from 8:00am-12:00pm in the Agriculture Building.

You must submit at least one pound of extracted honey to be eligible for a ribbon. If you don't have a one-pound Queenline type jar, a one-pint mason jar works just as well and will be more than enough honey.

Your honey will be judged on flavor and aroma, color and brightness, clean jar and lid, and cleanliness—without wax, foam, dirt or lint.

There are also individual rules for Cut Comb Honey, Chunk Comb Honey, Beeswax, Beeswax Products, Beeswax with Additives—and don't forget to enter your beekeeping photographs. Each of these categories has its own rules. Follow them carefully—but don't be intimidated by the rules or because you may be new to beekeeping. This will be a fun, learning experience.

Finally, even if you don't enter any honey, don't forget to come to the fair! Walk through the Agriculture Building and marvel at all the honey, wax and beekeeping photographs. We have some amazing bees and beekeepers in New Mexico, and the New Mexico State Fair is a great place to learn more about them.

See you at the Fair!

Randy Swartz is a beekeeper and photographer whose work has been featured in the NMBKA newsletter. He will be serving as a Honey Division judge at the upcoming New Mexico State Fair. 



Putting the “Bee” in Beer

A few years back, Dana Koller tried a honey wheat beer and loved it. Now he’s brewing some right here in New Mexico, using honey from his and other local beekeepers’ hives.

Of course, brewing your own beer is a lot easier when you run a brewery. Koller is the owner of Kaktus Brewing Company in Bernalillo, and his business partner Mark Matheson is a brewer and wine maker. Matheson has extensive experience working with fruits and honeys as well as malts. According to Koller, “This makes a perfect combo to come up with the perfect honey beer.”

Koller was first exposed to beekeeping a couple of years ago when he attended a workshop at the Gutiérrez-Hubbell House. He finally got to try his own hand at it when Tyler Schutte of New Mexico Bee Removals relocated some rescued bees to his property. (For more about Tyler and his work, see Mike Kruchoski’s three-part series, “The Art of the Cut-Out” in our Sept. 2015, Dec. 2015, and Mar. 2016 newsletters, available online at NMBKA.org)

Koller is hands-on, working with the hives himself, but says that he also still gets a lot of help and guidance from more experienced beeks like Tyler. Recent harvesting has gone “smooth and easy,” but to avoid pressuring production from his “newcomer” bees, Koller says that Kaktus will still be supplementing its honey supply with outside honey for the first few years, “Until we really have a great system down that we can rely on.”

The honey is incorporated into the brewing process right from the start, Koller explains. “We put it right into the boil and carry it over to the fermenters as well so that we can break down the sugars with yeast so that the beer keeps the wonderful honey flavor without being too sweet. The sugar content is really the most important thing in this particular beer and making sure to keep a close eye on how the yeast reacts to it all.”

Kaktus is a small brewery, and is using a five gallons of honey to produce just 100 gallons of the new brew. Koller is calling it “Pollinators Wheat” and it is available while the limited supply lasts.



Photos: Dana Koller

Brewer Mike Waddy adds local New Mexico honey to make Pollinators Wheat beer for Kaktus Brewing Co.





How to Test for Varroa Mites

Based on Varroa Mite Monitoring Workshop conducted by Megan Mahoney, the Bee Informed Partnership.

Equipment needed:

1/2 cup measuring cup

1 quart or pint glass jar with a canning lid rim

2 tbsps. powdered sugar

Water

8 by 8 mesh screen, cut round to fit the lid of the glass jar ("8 by 8" means 8 wires per inch)

Container to shake bees into (*see bucket in picture*)

Timer to measure 1 minute

Flat, white container to shake powdered sugar and mites onto (*see bucket lid in picture*)

Step 2

Open beehive to the brood chamber. Select one frame or bar of comb that has a mixture of closed and open brood and lots of nurse bees. Make sure the queen isn't on the bar or frame.

Step 3

Shake frame or bar of bees into your container. Quickly replace frame or bar to the side or back into hive. Next, take container and shake all the bees into a corner. Scoop 300 bees, or about 1/2 cup of bees with measuring cup. Pour the bees into the glass jar and close the jar with the screened top.



Step 4

Using hive tool, put about 2 tbsps. powdered sugar on top of the screwed lid of the glass jar, and work the sugar into the jar and on top of the bees. Swirl the jar a few times to make sure all the bees are coated with powdered sugar. This is a good time to shake any excess bees from your container back into the hive, and reassemble the hive while allowing the bees to sit in the powdered sugar for 1-2 minutes.



Step 1

Set up equipment close to hive. Make sure glass jar is open and lid, fitted with screen mesh, is next to jar.



Step 5

Set timer for 1 minute. Start timer, and with the mesh lid still on the glass jar, vigorously shake the glass jar with the bees in it onto a flat, white container. The powdered sugar and any mites holding onto the bees will fall through the mesh onto the white surface.



Step 6

Pour a small amount of water on the powder sugar covered surface and swirl. Count any mites.

Step 7

Return the sugar-dusted bees back to the hive.

Step 8

Time for some math. Most mite counts are reported per 100 bees. Since our test was for 300 bees, divide your total number of mites by 3. This gives you the number of mites per 100 bees. Then, if you tested in the brood chamber, multiply by 2, estimating for the number of mites in the capped brood. (For example: if you counted 18 mites from your sample pulled from the brood, then $18 \div 3 = 6$ mites per 100 bees. $6 \text{ mites} \times 2 = 12$. 12 is your final mite count.) 

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Harvesting Honey from Top Bar Hives

T.J. Carr

Harvesting the first batch of honey from a hive is always exciting, especially for the first-time beekeeper. I use top bar hives, but the information supplied with this narrative is equally appropriate to Langstroth hives that do not use plastic foundation. This method of harvesting can be done at little or no cost.

When going into the apiary to harvest honey, a really simple method is to take two nucs with top bars along for the harvest. As a honey bar is found to be ready for harvest, remove it from the parent hive and replace with an empty bar from the nuc. Another method is to take buckets into the apiary for harvest. Take a bucket for the clean light colored wax and another bucket for the older darker wax. The honey is the same in both cases, but it is far easier to remove the honey from the fresh bars than it is to extract the honey from the older darker bars. Far better to not mix the dark with the light for the slurry bucket.

There are a number of ways to crush the combs for the crush and strain process. A large potato masher can be utilized by placing about two inches of comb honey in the slurry bucket at a time and mashing until all cells have been crushed, then add two more inches and repeat. This is slow and very labor-intensive process. A more efficient system is to crush the combs by hand—after cleaning all equipment, hands and fingernails!



Crushing combs by hand

If only a small number of bars were harvested, then once the honeycombs have been crushed, a simple colander and nylon filter will suffice to provide a suitable strainer assembly for table-ready honey. If larger quantities were harvested and crushed, a simple Honey Harvester system (see photo) will make the task much easier. Plans for this structure are on the NMBKA and AbqBeeks websites. The parts are also available pre-cut in kit form from NM Beeworks.

As an alternative, the slurry bucket can be placed on a kitchen counter and the strainer bucket can be placed below the honey gate on the slurry bucket. After the slurry bucket has drained for several days, a good practice is to disturb the wax with a sharp knife. If the slurry bucket is still heavy, there is still honey to be drained. After most of the honey is drained out, it is possible to tilt the slurry bucket to allow the remainder of the honey to drain out.



Honey Harvester system



The slurry bucket is the uppermost bucket, the strainer bucket with the paint strainer and colander is the second bucket in the system, and the lower bucket is the decanting bucket where the finished raw honey can be transferred into suitable containers.

The longer the slurry bucket is allowed to drain and the warmer the environment is, the more honey will be passed through the strainer. Occasionally the colander should be stirred to brake up the accumulated wax; often the nylon paint strainer will need a bit of a stir as well.

When the paint strainer is new, be certain to wash it carefully with dish soap, rinse carefully, and dry it thoroughly before use. After each use, wash it again so that it is ready for the next use. The lids with these five-gallon buckets come with a black rubber gasket. Remove and clean the rubber gasket from a lid, and use the gasket to hold the paint strainer in place on the top of the strainer bucket.

The nylon paint strainer resides on a piece of perf metal that rests on a ledge at the open bottom of the strainer bucket. Without the perforated metal sheet, the weight of the full nylon paint strainer would fall into the decanting bucket. The honey in the decanting bucket is called raw unfiltered honey. Plans for the construction of such a strainer bucket assembly will soon be posted on both the NMBKA and AbqBeeks websites.

Photos by T.J. Carr and Robert Wall 



Straining



Book Review

Sarah Malone

Safe to Chew: An Anthology

Editors: **Lawrence Connor, Randy Kim, and Robert Muir**

Publisher: **Wicwas Press, LLC**

Unlike technical and how-to texts that expound on the many types of manmade hives and strategies for colony maintenance and honey extraction, *Safe to Chew: An Anthology* focuses more on the experience of ordinary backyard and commercial beekeepers going about their daily rounds. Beekeepers from all walks of life were invited to submit original essays or poetry about bees; 75 winners were selected for publication. All of the contributors (including Albuquerque's own Phill Remick) share a love of bees and beekeeping, making *Safe to Chew* a fun and delicious read.

Essays are organized into different sections with titles like "Kinship," "Waxing," "With the Season," "Applied Beekeeping," and "Passing the Smoker." While not all selections are equally well-written or conceived (a few appear to be dubious figments of the writers' imaginations) most of these shared experiences will give encouragement to any wannabe beekeeper by providing reassurance that beekeeping is very challenging under most circumstances, problems are common, and failures are not necessarily due to beekeeper ineptitude.

A pleasant departure from beekeeping books that speak more to the intellect than to the heart of beekeeping as a

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Book Review: Safe to Chew

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life choice or experience, *Safe to Chew* answers more human questions having to do with why people are drawn to bees and to beekeeping in the first place. As such, it traces a line directly from the earliest beekeepers depicted on ancient cave paintings to modern day apiarists. Selections address not just the practical, but also the mysterious and delightful aspects of beekeeping, from protecting against varroa mites, rattlesnakes and hive thieves, to beekeeping as a spiritual practice.

In "Sharing a Cell," a prison inmate becomes a beekeeper when he discovers a feral hive in a storehouse. "The bees live in cells, I live in a cell. They like sweets, I like sweets... For me, watching the little guys go back and forth to the free world, and right through 'no man's land' and razor wire fences... it's like a little taste of freedom." Other writers recount childhood experiences with bees such as stings from unexpected encounters with feral hives, or watching a beloved grandparent tend bees and dipping

their fingers into fresh honeycomb drawn from the hive. Entries by commercial beekeepers describe grueling physical labor, in sharp contrast with rhythmic, funny poems such as "From a Bear's Perspective."

Safe to Chew should resonate in any beekeeper's heart, make you feel like part of the beekeeping community, and reassure you that if you feel, at times, both amazed and mystified by the demands of beekeeping, you are not alone.

East Mountain resident Sarah Malone has been a beekeeper since 1990, when her husband became the third certified organic farmer in New Mexico. Following a hiatus of many years, she returned to beekeeping in 2014 and is currently completing the NMBKA certified beekeeper training program. She is also working to match beekeepers with organic growers who provide safe habitat for bees and other pollinators. 



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