

THE SUN



2F WEDNESDAY 08.16.2006

TASTE//THE SUN

THE ESSENTIALS

NEXT WEEK IN THE ESSENTIALS // IN SEASON // The earthy flavor of beets is catching on.

TEST KITCHEN

A sticky debate: hometown honey

BY KATE SHATZKIN [SUN REPORTER]

One bottle of mass-produced supermarket clover honey might taste the same as another. But smaller-batch honey brings out the flavors of local flowers — its own version of the sense of place known to wine lovers as *terroir*. Maryland has 1,200 registered beekeepers, says state bee inspector Jerry Fischer. Since August is prime time for the fruit of their labors to make its way to the rest of us, we decided to taste-test four local honeys at Baltimore farmers' markets, rating them on a scale of 1 to 10. We also evaluated how well they mixed with plain Greek yogurt, and how they fared spread on an English muffin.

As we suspected they would, each honey had a slightly different taste and texture. While "Honey in the Comb" from Lord Byron's Apiary in Thurmont — a golden honey with a long piece of honeycomb still in the jar — emerged as the overall favorite, there was a range of reactions to each, proving there's plenty of room for sweet debate. Our tasters were Sun food columnist Rob Kasper, restaurant critic Elizabeth Large, Takeout columnist Sam Sessa and food editor Kate Shatzkin.

kate.shatzkin@baltsun.com



PHOTOS BY DAVID HOBBY [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

TOP TASTE

HONEY IN THE COMB

Lord Byron's Apiary // Thurmont
Taste: 8 Spreadability: 8

Mixability: 8

Comments: This light honey won praise for its clean, "not cloying" flavor. Tasters didn't mind — and some enjoyed — the bits of honeycomb that came off and mixed with the spread. This honey was an able partner to both the English muffin and yogurt.

Where to buy: \$9 for a 16-ounce jar at the 32nd Street Farmers' Market in Waverly; also sold at several retail stores in the Frederick area (locations at lordbyronshoney.com)



SECOND PLACE

LOCUST/WILDFLOWER HONEY

Triangle Apiary // Columbia
Taste: 7 Spreadability: 8

Mixability: 7

Comments: Darker, spicy and a bit smoky, this was a good all-around honey, though some found its flavor too assertive. It mixed and spread easily.

Where to buy: \$4 for a 16-ounce jar at the Baltimore Farmers' Market



ALSO TASTED

CYBEE'S HONEY

Cybil Preston // Jarrettsville
Taste: 6 Spreadability: 7

Mixability: 7

Comments: This amber wildflower honey in a teddy-bear container was thicker and sweeter than the first two and really divided our tasters. One declared it the favorite, saying it had the "most pleasing and intense honey flavor"; another found it "very, very sweet" and overpowering when mixed with yogurt.

Where to buy: \$7 for a 24-ounce container at the 32nd Street Farmers' Market; Tuesdays at the Bel Air Farmers' Market; Broom's Bloom Dairy in Bel Air; and Kefauver Lumber locations.



CREAMED HONEY WITH LEMON OIL

Brey's Farm // Brandywine
Taste: 6 Spreadability: 5

Mixability: 3

Comments: This thick, creamed honey was a decidedly different animal than the others, but if you love the taste of lemon and like your honey thick and sweet, it's worth a try. As one taster noted, "its best moment is a muffin moment"; the thick honey melted nicely when spread on the warm, craggy surface of the English muffin. But when stirred into the yogurt, this butter-like spread clumped instead of blending.

Where to buy: \$4.50 for a 16-ounce tub at the Baltimore Farmers' Market

