

Brandywine Table

The Accidental Apiary

A CHESTER COUNTY FATHER AND SONS TEAM FINDS PURPOSE AND LIVELIHOOD IN THE AGE-OLD CRAFT OF BEEKEEPING.

Alyssa Thayer

PEOPLE LUCKY ENOUGH TO MAKE A LIVING DOING what they love generally don't get into their craft for the money. It's often a spark of creativity or curiosity that propels them forward. Walt Broughton, owner and founder of **Swarmbustin' Honey** of West Grove, fits this description to a tee — classic case of hobby turned way of life in the most bee-utiful way possible (the puns are just too easy).

In 1983, a friend of Walt's was moving and needed to unload a couple of beehives. Walt remembers, "I had a grand scheme to become self-sufficient as best I could." Having already planted fruit trees and a garden, bees seemed the next logical step.

He had no intention of becoming a full-time beekeeper — his colony simply kept growing. Two hives turned to four and four to ten hives, eventually leaving little time or space for the rest of his endeavors. "I had no idea the bees would take over my life — best thing that could have happened," Walt says gratefully.

Walt describes beekeeping as both an art and an adventure. Something about that adventure called to his three sons, as they have all found roles running and supporting the business. Walt laughs and says, "It's four alpha males in the same house. It's not always quiet and we all have our own opinions, but it's been a blessing." Together, they now manage up to 650 hives each summer — at 60–100 thou-



The Broughtons from left: Luke, Walter, Abram, Jeb. Father and sons team behind Swarmbustin' Honey.

sand bees per hive. "It's quite a little bit of bees," Walt says, quoting a friend.

Walt says it used to be much easier to grow his colony. Since the '90s, the decline of bees, or "colony collapse disorder," has been well documented. Walt says no one thing is to blame, but rather a trifecta of negative factors — predatory mites, habitat loss and widespread insecticide and pesticide use. Out of those issues, he says mites have been the hardest for beekeepers.

For Walt, the mission has always been greater than selling delicious local honey and bee products — it has also been about getting others involved. They do so by selling nucs (or nucleus colonies, used to create new hives) and hosting free workshops for new beekeepers. "That is my newfound passion," Walt says proudly.

To appreciate honey is to know that one pound of honey represents upwards of two million visits made to flowers and trees by bees. It's also to observe the variations in the honey depending on the time of year and what is in bloom when the honey is harvested. Walt sees the uniqueness of each batch as something to relish rather than overcome.

In celebration of pollinators, Father's Day and the delectable sweetness of honey, we've created a host of honey-focused recipes to help build the buzz around the tremendous ingredient. Enjoy!



Swarmbustin' honey bee frame with bees



Swarmbustin' Honey's home yard of beehives in West Grove

Eat Drink and Bee Merry!

The floral sweetness of honey seems like something that's meant to be savored and shared. The recipes below are a selection of dishes that celebrate the versatility and uniqueness of this liquid gold.

Roasted Feta with Honey

This sweet and salty combo is a guaranteed crowd pleaser! It's simple to put together and best enjoyed warm, out of the oven atop crunchy crackers or crusty bread.

Word to the wise — as with all heated honey dishes, pay close attention when broiling so you don't end up burning the sugars.



8-oz. block feta, removed from brine and patted dry
3 T. extra virgin olive oil
2 T. honey
½ tsp. ground thyme
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400°.

Slice feta evenly through middle, creating two thinner blocks. Lay the feta in a shallow oven-proof dish and pour olive oil over top. Spread 2 tablespoons of honey over top (1 T. on each piece), and dust tops with ground thyme.

Place in preheated oven for 8–10 minutes or until cheese is softened but not melted. Turn broiler on high for 3 minutes, watching carefully to ensure it browns, but does not burn. Remove from oven carefully (oil will be bubbling) and top with fresh ground pepper.

Serve alongside crackers or bread.

Serves 4.

***Note:** Depending on the type of honey you use and how sweet you like things, you may want to add one additional tablespoon of honey over top of the cheese after pulling it from the oven.

****Note:** As the feta cools, it gets a chewy texture (much like halloumi cheese). Feel free to pop it back in the oven for a minute or two if it cools too much before eating.

Honey BBQ Chicken Kabobs

If there's any better dish to ring in the summer months, we can't think of it. Sweet, smoky and tangy, this BBQ sauce delivers! This

Bee Informed Basics



Honey Bees: Hives are made up of three types of bees including female workers, male drones and one female queen. The workers are the ones seen buzzing busily outside the hive. One lesser known fact — only female bees can sting.

Apitherapy: Alternative medicine that uses bee products for healing, dating back to ancient Egypt and Greece.

Honey Highlights: While honey as a sweetener is not particularly novel, there's lots to learn about its quality, taste, color and type.

Raw vs. Processed: Raw honey has remained unprocessed (not heated or filtered), allowing it to maintain its delicate taste and various health benefits. Walt says their "Totally Raw Honey" is the real deal, "as raw as you can get outside of the hive," and is extracted using only centrifugal force.

Tons of Types: When purchasing honey, you may have noticed variations in color as well as labeling. Honey is named after the type of flower or plant the bees have interacted with while making the honey. It ranges from the light, creamy black locust honey of spring to the darker, almost bitter goldenrod honey of fall.

Other Goods: While honey bees are best known for their honey, that's not the only thing we harvest from them.

Bee Pollen: Small yellow pellets that are nutrient-dense and some say help lessen seasonal allergies. Walt says, "You could probably sustain yourself on the stuff." ****Note:** If you have strong seasonal allergies, use caution, as reactions can be severe.

Royal Jelly: A gelatinous substance made for young queen bees to consume. It is extremely high in vitamins (specifically B) and other enzymes and highly touted for its anti-inflammatory properties.

Propolis: Bee-made substance from the sap of conifer trees to help them protect their colony. It has potent antibacterial and anti-fungal properties and is often found at the top of a raw honey jar.

Bee Venom: Yes, you read that right! This substance, which the bees inject through their stingers, is also used for pain management and arthritis.

Beeswax: Used by bees to create hives and store honey. Humankind has used wax for centuries to help protect porous substances, create candles and, more recently, to add to cosmetics.

versatile BBQ sauce can also be used with pulled pork, or as a glaze for salmon or shrimp.

2 T. extra virgin olive oil
5 lg. garlic cloves, minced
Pinch of salt and pepper and more to taste
½ C. ketchup
½ tsp. smoked paprika
1 tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. ground mustard

- ½ lemon, juiced
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tsp. tamari or soy sauce
- 5 T. honey
- 2 lbs. chicken breast, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 large bell pepper, chopped into 1-inch squares



Add olive oil to sauté pan. Once warm, add garlic, stirring constantly and cooking until fragrant (2 minutes). Add salt, pepper, ketchup, spices, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce and tamari and cook over medium heat, stirring often for 10 minutes.

Turn heat off and stir in honey until well combined. Allow to cool completely before pouring over chicken. Reserve ½ cup for glazing or later use. Allow to marinate for 2 hours or up to overnight.

Preheat grill to medium heat (between 350° and 400°). Build kabobs (if using wood, make sure to follow instructions for soaking), alternating pepper slice and chicken until all are made.

Place kabobs directly on grill grates, checking frequently for flare-ups. Cook for 6–8 minutes on each side, or until internal temperature reaches 165° and they are browned but not burned on the outside.

Set on a heatproof tray to rest for 5–10 minutes before serving. Serves 4.

**Note: Fire can quickly turn your sugary BBQ sauce to char if not watched. Every grill is different. Try to avoid placing over any “hot spots” or higher flames.*

Honey Cumin Lime Slaw

Every great BBQ needs a fresh side salad. The veggies in this bright and tangy slaw can be adapted to whatever you happen to enjoy — Napa or purple cabbage, shredded carrots, sliced cucumber or jicama to name a few.

Dressing:

- 3 T. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 T. honey, if solid, warm until just liquid
- 1 garlic clove, minced or pressed
- ½ tsp. cumin

- ½ tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. lime zest
- 2 limes, juiced
- 2 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Salad:

- 5 C. cabbage, shredded/sliced thinly (approx. ½ head)
- 1 C. carrots, grated
- ¼ C. fresh cilantro, chopped

Whisk all dressing ingredients together and set aside.

Mix cabbage and carrots for the salad in a large bowl and pour or spoon dressing over top, a few tablespoons at a time, tossing and tasting in between adding until it's dressed to your liking.

Top with cilantro and enjoy.

Dressing can be made ahead and kept in the refrigerator. It's also delicious when poured over salmon just before roasting.

Makes approximately ½ C. of dressing, and salad serves 4–6.

Honey Lemon Bars

This sweet treat combines the sweetness of honey and the vibrance of citrus in one perfect treat. Enjoy at the end of a meal or with a cup of your favorite tea.



For Honey Candied Lemons:

- ¼ C. Swarbustin' Totally Raw Honey
- 1 T. lemon juice
- 1 lemon, sliced thinly

Add honey and lemon juice to a frying pan over medium heat and stir together. Add slices of lemons and cook. The honey mixture will bubble. Flip lemon slices occasionally.

The lemon slices are done when peel is tender and honey glaze mixture has been reduced by half. Cook time is 10–12 minutes.

Cool and dry your Honey Candied Lemon slices on a greased wire rack.

**Note: Do not throw away honey glaze, reserve to glaze squares.*

Shortbread Crust:

- 1 C. butter, melted
- ½ C. sugar
- 2¼ cups + 1 T. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. salt

Lemon Topping:

- 4 eggs + 1 egg yolk
- ⅓ C. + 2 T. Swarbustin' Totally Raw Honey
- 1 T. lemon zest
- 3 T. corn starch
- 3 T. all-purpose flour
- ¾ C. freshly squeezed lemon juice (approx. 2½ large lemons)
- ¼ C. powdered sugar
- Swarbustin' Honey Fresh Bee Pollen

Preheat oven to 350°. Line the bottom and sides of a 9x13 pan with parchment paper, allowing paper to hang over the sides to make it easier to remove bars from pan.

To make the shortbread crust, stir together butter, sugar, flour, vanilla extract and salt in a small bowl. Press evenly into bottom of prepared pan and bake for 18–20 minutes.

Remove from oven and allow crust to cool completely.

Lower oven temperature to 325° and begin making lemon topping. Mix eggs, raw honey and lemon zest together until smooth. Next, add corn starch and flour and mix well. Pour in lemon juice and whisk until combined.

Pour the lemon mixture over the cooled crust.

Bake until the topping is set, approximately 25–30 minutes. *Hint:* It's done when jiggly in the middle, like a cheesecake.

Once lemon bars are done, remove them from the oven and allow to cool to room temperature.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar, fresh bee pollen and a drizzle of reserved honey glaze. Cut into lemon squares.

Makes 24 squares.

No-Bake Chocolate Almond Meltaway Bars

Adapted from Erin Lives Whole.

If Reese's Peanut Butter Cups had a wholesome cousin, these would be it! We used almond butter, but you can use any of your favorite natural nut butters and the result is delicious!

Nut Butter Filling:

- 3 T. honey
- 1 C. almond flour, fine
- 1 tsp. flaxseed
- Pinch of salt, only if nut butter is not overly salty
- 1 T. maple syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 C. almond butter (crunchy or smooth)



Chocolate Top Layer:

- 1 C. chocolate chips
- 2 T. smooth almond butter
- 1 T. coconut oil

Prepare 9x10 baking dish with parchment paper, allowing paper to fold over sides of pan for easy removal.

If using crystalized (solid) honey, add to sauce pan over low heat to warm until liquid. Mix all dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl (almond flour, flaxseed, salt). Pour honey, maple syrup, vanilla and almond butter into the bowl and mix until well combined.

Press mixture into prepared pan and freeze for at least 2 hours.

To prepare chocolate top layer, add chocolate chips, almond butter and coconut oil to a double boiler and mix until uniform and smooth. Pour and spread evenly over frozen nut butter base. Return to freezer for 1 hour or until chocolate has hardened. Remove from freezer and slice into 1-inch to 2-inch bite squares.

These can be kept in freezer if you like them harder, or keep in fridge for softer, gooey bars.

Alternative Option for Nut Balls:

If you want something bite-size and a bit less sticky, make this recipe into little spheres. Scoop small spoonfuls of the nut butter filling and roll in hands until round. Freeze for a few hours on a tray lined with wax paper.

Melt topping ingredients together over a double boiler and drop each of the frozen balls in one by one, fishing them out with a fork. Once totally covered, allow any extra chocolate to drip off before placing back onto waxed paper and back into the freezer for an additional hour before serving. ♦

Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.



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