

Stahlman Beekeeping Notes for 2022

Honey as a gift for Christmas



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I have been asked what one can do with the honey the bees made for 2022? It is an interesting question.

Thanksgiving is past us and Christmas is only 29 Days away! There are a number of things I do to share the love I have for family and friends. Besides gifting honey, I set up a hive display in my front yard with a Christmas theme. Each year a little variation allows me to let people know I keep bees.



Once in a while we have snow on the ground that make a display more impressive.

Most of us go thru the cycle of decorating our house for holiday events. We put up lights, air filled figures, flags, etc. Why not include bee hives in the decorating scheme.

I might add that hives used for Christmas decorations have no live bees in them. I can put them out and take them in when the time is right. Why not a wreath, or lights? It doesn't take much time to share your love for bees. A snowman might help draw some attention as well as a deer or two. I would be glad to publish any pictures you provide as a lead in for Christmas editions of my notes.

The topic this week is hive products as Christmas Gifts to family and friends. Even if your honeybees produced little honey, it is a good idea to buy a few bottles of honey from beekeeping friends to give as great gifts.



Honey tasting is a popular event for bee club meetings. We as beekeepers are accustomed to the honey our bees produce. Christmas gives us an opportunity to teach our family and friends a little about bees and honey.

Most non informed individuals are surprised to know that honey has a great range of flavors



and colors as well as different characteristics. According to the National Honey Board, there are more than 300 unique types of honey in the United States. Each of the types come from different floral sources. As an example, I have included a sample of Mesquite honey in my gift pack for this year. Many of us not living in the arid southwest have no idea of what this honey taste like. However, this is a honey highly regarded in that area of the U.S. It is a light honey with a mild flavor. It

does granulate rather quickly. To add some interest to my selection, I added Buckwheat honey which has a bold strong flavor which may be well liked or disliked. It is dark in color and is grown primarily in northern states. I included two of my favorite varieties: Both light colored with outstanding flavors. Tupelo from Florida which has a reputation of being very slow to granulate and Sourwood from the eastern mountain ranges with an outstanding flavor. To this mix, I was able to get some Yellow Sweet Clover honey. There are many varieties of honey available and almost all are mild tasting. Yet some are very special and the taste sets them apart from all others.

Beeswax makes good gift products as well. Beeswax blocks, beeswax paste, candles and soap are popular. I have left a lot of products of the bee hive off my list such as Meade, cosmetics, etc. A book could be written about these products. They could be added to gift packs. How a gift is packaged adds to the value of the honey gift. Most friends and family are happy when a honey product is given as a gift especially if it is your honey.

I value honey! It is special and I want the person receiving the honey at Christmas time to know I put some effort into the gift to make it special. Small gift packs of your own honey will be welcomed in the same way. The standard weights of honey bottles range from 8 oz. to 32 oz. bottles. Larger containers are considered bulk sizes. A gallon of honey weighs in at 12 pounds or more depending on the moisture content.

Local honey has a value unto itself. Any information that can be provided with the gift of honey makes it special. A new beekeeper's first honey crop is special because any honey produced in later years will never be the first honey crop. Even local honey will have seasonal variation in honey sources, flavor, and color. Giving honey is a way a beekeeper can help inform friends that honey is unique.

How I make up my gift packages. First I need honey to put into containers -- what you call them (bottles, jars, jugs etc.) Wide mouth containers are far easier to fill than small openings. Bee suppliers sell a variety of bottles – from plastic to glass.

Walmart of all places sells jars for individuals making up jams etc. These jars are found in the canning section of the store. Ball Glass Company makes a number of jar sizes. I selected the

4 oz. mini [(4oz. | 118 ml] storage jars made in the U.S.A. It is round and has a base slightly larger than 2 inches. It looks much like the quart canning jar except it is small. There is also a great selection of jars on Amazon.



Making up the base for the honey jars.

I selected 1" pine lumber 4" wide. I am fortunate to have a drill press and some various Forstner bits. Drilling holes in soft wood is essential to a good fit for the bottle size selected. In my case the largest drill bit I had was 2 inches. The hole size needed for the base of the bottle was 2

1/8 inches. Thus, I had to make several cuts to increase the size of the hole the bottle would fit into. It is mandatory that one using a Forstner bit have a drill press!



The bit cuts all wood from the circle leaving a solid floor for the jar to set in. This is a blank with holes cut to fit the jars. Each wood section was cut

to be 12 ½ inches in length and 3 inches wide with five holes. I used five bottles with five different varieties of honey. I bought selected honey from commercial friends rather than use the honey produced by my bees. My honey could be classified as local wildflower. I wanted to share different tastes and colors produced from plants grown in the U.S.

Labels: Anyone with a computer and printer can make labels. I went to a local office supply store and bought Avery labels. Templates are available for various designs. I like the ability to select the size of labels so I bought full sheet 8 ½ x 11 shipping labels # 8165. My bottles were small and it was easy with Microsoft®Word to print an entire sheet. I was then able to cut them so they fit the bottles. These labels stick firmly to smooth surface bottles.

Each variety of honey has a label to list the honey source and some information about the honey in the jar. They are shown here:



I included my name & address, the weight (The jars are sold in a small box that indicated each jar held 4 oz. but the actual honey weight in the bottle is more than 4 oz. of honey). How do I know? I started using one pound jars of honey to fill these small jars. Seems like

a one pound jar will fill three of these bottles with just a little bit left over to start the fourth bottle. I am not too worried about this but if I were selling honey, I would need to know the exact weight of the honey in these jars and price them accordingly.



I then wanted to carry thru on a Christmas theme. I shrink wrapped the 5 jars in the wood base to secure them in place. (One could use three or four jars rather than the five I used)!

A near-by Dollar store had some very neat decorations that could be added to each package, I wanted to give something with eye appeal!

This is what I came up with!



Backlighting the honey display gives honey a bit of a snap.

A gift basket could be put together easier and faster.

But Christmas is special!



The honey products above make great gifts and many local beekeepers sell products like this! There is still time to start your own Christmas Gift – If you need to buy honey get it from “local beekeepers” people you know.

Add honey products to your Christmas Giving!