

# Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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August 2014

## Wrapping it up.

**There is no meeting in August**, instead we host a booth about Honey Bees at the Skagit County Fair on August 6th through the 9th. Hopefully you volunteered to staff the booth and share your knowledge of beekeeping to those curious enough to stop and look and ask questions.

On another topic. It's kinda weird that it is all wrapping up. The season we've been waiting for is almost at an end. Wow. I hope it has been an enjoyable year. I know I've learned a few things. Those honey bees are amazing creatures!

## Things To Do This Month

- Remove your surplus honey and extract.
- After honey supers have been removed, treat for mites as necessary (and as desired).
- If you plan to re-queen you need to get your queens in those hives soon.

As the SVBA president, **Seth Smith** said in a recent Facebook post:

*"When it comes to beekeeping, beekeepers are always planning ... even if you don't think you are planning, you are. What we did in the spring affects what we get during the honey flow .... and what we do during the honey flow affects what we plan to have in the fall. Thinking this way will go a long way in your beekeeping endeavors. Having said that I would like members to start planning now for fall and winter ... start buying and storing sugar for fall feeding. Start researching mite treatments. Start planning winter holding yards ( out of wind and flood prone areas). Start thinking about queen issues as queens availability will start getting scarce. So just remember that during a good honey flow, don't get distracted from year round good beekeeping. "*

Remember your Bee Math! What you do now effects

what happens 42 days from now. If you want good healthy bees ready to go into winter, you need to make sure your bees can raise good healthy bees now.

## Making Mead

I have such a tiny operation, so I crush and strain my honey from the comb instead of using an extractor.

Once the honey has been strained and bottled, I rinse all my gear in warm water. But instead of rinsing all that diluted honey down the drain, I make mead.

**Mead** is simply wine made from honey and water and fermented with yeast.

There is also **Metheglin** which is mead containing spices. **Melomel**, a mead mixed with fruit juice. **Pyment**, a mead mixed with grape juice. There are many more variants of mead, left only to the imagination. Mead can be very dry or very sweet.



Making mead is quite easy. All you need is about \$15 to \$20 for equipment from your local homebrew shop. Except for the yeast (and yeast nutrient) these things are reusable year after year.

- 1 gallon jug (if you can, get 2 jugs)
- 1 air lock
- 1 stopper for the air lock
- 1 packet of yeast

One really nice thing to get is a hydrometer. These cost about \$5.00 and it tells you how much sugar is in your liquid. A hydrometer will let you know how strong and/or how sweet your mead will turn out.



**You also need honey!** About 3 to 4 pounds of honey. Or you can do as I do, just rinse the honey out of your buckets and off your cappings and wax and use that. You might have to add a little honey but it's a great way to do something with all that sweet nectar!

I won't go into the recipes or instructions on how to make mead as the following site

explains that very well:

<http://www.realbeer.com/edu/mead/makeyourown.php>

## Or Don't Make Mead

If you're not interested in making mead, there are other uses for that nectar of the gods! I just hate to see all that honey stuck to the sides of those buckets and extracting tanks go to waste. Sure. You can let the bees clean it out. Or **with just a bit of warm water, you can remove most that honey**, pour the rinsings in a bottle and save it for other uses.

Some might take the honey water and mix it with baking soda for a facial rinse but I think that is a horrible way to drink it!

I like to hike around the island and there's no yummier energy drink than honey diluted in ice cold water. Dilute it to be as sweet as you like and take it along with you in a water bottle. Relieves the thirst and gives you a boost of energy!

Or save those rinsings in order to make a nice warm honey/lemon drink in the morning. It's supposed to help your tummy and other inner workings. I don't know about all that but it sure tastes good!

You can also save that liquid for when a cold hits you

hard. Again, I don't claim that it will heal you but I do know that it tastes great and feels good on a sore throat! Simply take some of those rinsings, add orange juice to taste and warm it up. Nice and easy. Not too hot. Enjoy!

## Grading Honey (Update)

In the June 2014 issue, I mentioned the factors for grading honey. **I left out some information.**

According to the USDA, there are two styles of honey. One style for filtered honey. The other for strained honey.

Filtered honey is *filtered to the extent that all or most of the fine particles, pollen grains, air bubbles, or other materials normally found in suspension, have been removed.*

Strained honey is *honey of any type that has been strained to the extent that most of the particles, including comb, propolis, or other defects normally found in honey, have been removed.*

With those two styles, there are two methods for grading honey.

For filtered honey to be labeled as Grade A, honey must conform to the following:

- Water content: Must have 18.6% or less moisture content.
- Defects: practically free of defects, with practically no defects that affect appearance or edibility.
- Flavor & Aroma: Free from caramelization, smoke, fermentation, chemicals and other causes that affect flavor and aroma.
- Clarity: Clear but may contain air bubbles that do not materially affect the appearance. May contain trace of pollen grains or other finely divided particles in suspension that do not affect appearance.

For strained honey, the same criteria above applies, except the Clarity category is not used.

## Harvesting honey on the Cheap!

Sometimes you have only a few frames of honey to harvest and don't want to take the time to borrow an

extractor, clean it all up and return it. With about \$10.00 and the willingness to destroy that beautiful looking honeycomb, you can Crush and Strain your honey.



First, you need 2 buckets with 2 lids. The buckets should be the white, food safe 5 gallon buckets that are available at most big box stores.

Next drill lots of holes in the bottom of one bucket. As many as you want. The more the merrier.

Now take a saw and cut a large hole in one of the lids. You want the hole big but not too big that a bucket can't sit on top

without falling through.

The last piece you need is a paint strainer which is a nylon mesh that fits over a 5 gallon bucket.. Usually you can get these in the paint department not too far from where you find those buckets. We'll use the paint to gently strain our honey and filter out the wax and other hive bits.

Now take the bucket without any holes and set that on the floor.

Next, take the lid with the big hole you made and place that on the bucket.

Now, place the bucket that you drilled all those little hole in on top.



Fit the paint strainer into the top bucket and cut out your comb from the frames and place into paint strainer.

Now with a masher or other utensil, smash all that comb!! You want to make sure you get every last bit of comb all smooshed (is that a word?).

Now put the last lid on top of everything and let it sit.

When it is all finished, you should see nothing but comb up above and a nice amount of honey down below.

## 2014 Summer BBQ

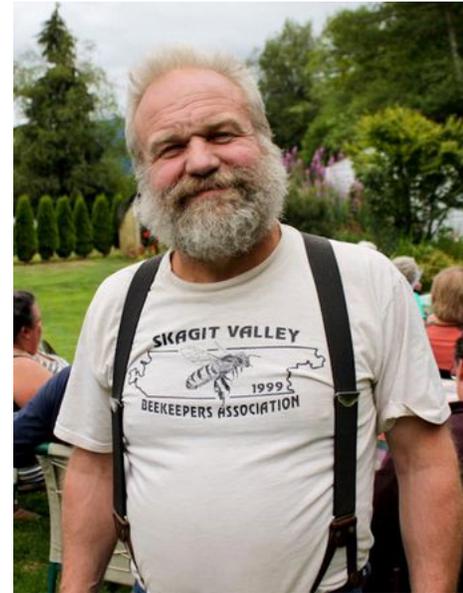
*Pictures by Lisa Phillips*



*Outdoor SVBA meeting*

Unfortunately I was not able to make the July BBQ and Potluck. I hate it when I miss all that wonderful food. I asked Lisa Phillips to snap a few shots and from what I heard, everyone had a good time, relaxed and talked bees.

I hope you all are having a great summer!



*Bruce Bowen in a SVBA tee*



*Bill Marcus' Beehives and Fireweed*

