

# The Monthly Extractor

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November 2023

## President's Message

Hello Bee Friends,

November is here, and we are finally feeling the seasonal, autumnal weather. Our environment is changing. The air is getting cooler, the leaves are starting to fall, and we're even getting some rain-drops. Yay!



Just as the bees are beginning to prepare for a winter of living primarily indoors, we too can turn inward and take some time to study more about how the bees live, work, and interact with the environment. There is so

much to learn that even the most seasoned beekeeper could discover something new.

November is also our annual nomination month. It is your opportunity to nominate someone who you think would be a great person to serve on the board of directors. Don't worry that they may not know what to do. The current board members will be there every step of the way to help guide any new member of the board. So, think about who might be a good fit.

Now is also the time to recognize any members who have gone above and beyond for SCBA this year. We all know someone that says yes all the time. Let's give them the thanks they deserve. Please take a moment to nominate anyone you think should get some rightfully earned kudos. Keep an eye out for the nomination email! We will announce the nominations at the General Meeting via Zoom on November 13th.

Finally, November is the month of giving thanks. So, I would like to say thank you to all the volunteers who make this organization amazing. Hosting hive dives and meetings, propagating plants and building pollinator gardens, talking with people at schools and



events, and lending a hand whenever it's needed, are just some of the ways that our volunteer members pitch in to keep SCBA buzzing. Thank you all.

Happy Thanksgiving, my friends. I hope you have a wonderful month.

See you out there!  
Your President,  
Carol Ellis

See Page 4 for a special message from the SCBA Board of Directors regarding placement of migratory beekeepers' hives on private property.

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*The SCBA newsletter reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.*

## Like a Hive, SCBA Needs Worker Bees and Leaders

By Shannon Carr

Fall is here and the holidays are right around the corner. You do not want to miss out on our two upcoming Holiday Boutiques – [November 18 & 19 at the Druids Hall](#) and [December 2](#) at the Michael Ellis School.



As the year-end quickly approaches, we are working behind the scenes to get things ready for 2024! We have our upcoming 2024 board elections this month and plans are in motion to make this coming year

amazing as we will be celebrating SCBA's 30-year anniversary!

In 2024 we are looking to increase our presence in our community, internally and externally – provide more educational opportunities through workshops and hive dives for our members, increase our presence in schools with classroom education programs, and increase the number of pollinator plants in our community through school and community garden projects. All of this is only possible with member involvement and leadership.

We are still in need of a couple of East Cluster members to become Cluster Coordinators for East; Central is also looking for co-coordinators for their clusters; and Gardening for Bees is looking for a Gardening Liaison for South Cluster.

As we continue to grow, fundraising becomes more and more important. This last year we hosted our first Pollinator Brunch. It was a lot of fun and huge success! We will be bringing back the Pollinator Brunch fundraiser in May and need our members' help in organizing. Kelli Cox and Ann Gallagher White need help with the "kitchen": designing the menu and coordinating food donations. Carol Ellis and I need help with "facilities": decorations, donations for silent auction and raffle, and everything in between.

I would also love one or two people to help in coordinating our member event – Spring Fling. Our

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## November General Meeting

Date: Nov 13, 2023; 6:00 – 8:30

Location: ZOOM

Meeting ID: 897 1664 1903

Passcode: SCBA

Join us on ZOOM for our November meeting as we welcome our guest speaker, Dr. Thomas Seeley, who will be joining us from the East Coast.

Dr. Thomas D. Seeley is the Horace White Professor in Biology at Cornell University. He is well known for his research on honey bees and honey bee behavior. He is the author of three books: *Honeybee Ecology* (1985), *The Wisdom of the Hive* (1995), and *Honeybee Democracy* (2010). He has a new book to be released in 2024: *Piping Hot Bees and Boisterous Buzz Runners, Solving 20 mysteries of Honey Bee Behavior*.

Dr. Seeley will be talking about nature-based beekeeping, an evolutionary approach to beekeeping that seeks to provide managed honey bee colonies with living conditions that are as close as possible to those of wild colonies. He will also show how we can pursue beekeeping in a way that is centered less on treating a bee colony as a honey factory and more on nurturing the lives of the bees.

## SCBA CALENDAR

The SCBA online calendar is updated frequently. Check it out to see current events.

Nov 4 – [East Cluster Café: Honey Tasting](#)

Nov 5 – [G4Bs Propagation Workshop](#)

Nov 13 – [SCBA General Meeting](#)

Nov 18 & 19 – [SCBA and Druid's Holiday Boutique](#)

Nov 18 – [Central Cluster Café](#)

Nov 18 – [North Cluster Bee Craft Dive & Potluck](#)

Dec 2 – [SCBA's 2nd Annual Holiday Boutique](#)

Dec 3 – [West Cluster Holiday Party](#)

**Program Director: Continued from previous page**

annual Spring Fling has quickly become a member favorite. It is held at the beautiful Bees N Blooms, we will have multiple workshops, lunch, and a raffle for members.

If you are looking to get more involved next year, let me know. There are various roles from coordinating events to researching grant opportunities and everything in between.

Our members are the heart and soul of SCBA, and your dedication is what keeps us going.

Shannon Carr  
Program Director  
[programdirector@sonomabees.org](mailto:programdirector@sonomabees.org)



*Roger Simpson explained how he uses this net to catch swarms.*

**Here are some photos from our "Gadgets and Gizmos" meeting in October.**



*Mike Turner and Benson had some interesting things to share. Mike's was a bee lining gadget and Benson had a feeder box the bees had filled with honey comb.*



*Ettamarie Peterson shared her swarm box made from repurposed campaign poster boards.*



*John McGinnis had a nice assortment of beehive equipment that he is making to sell.*



*Susan Kegley had a wide variety of products available at her Bees N Bloom business.*



*Kim Bergstrom showed her favorite garden tool for weed whacking.*

# A Special Message from the Board of Directors

*By Carol Ellis, SCBA President*

A few months ago, the board was contacted by a group of concerned SCBA members who told us that their clients were approached by some migratory, commercial beekeepers looking for a place to “overwinter” their hives. If you’re unfamiliar with this, it means that the beekeepers take their hives to the San Joaquin Valley, each spring, to pollinate the millions of acres of almond trees there. The bees are there for a few weeks, mingling with the 2.1 million other hives from all across the country. When it’s over, the beekeepers want to place thousands of hives on multiple Sonoma County properties from April to January, when they then take the bees back to their almond pollination jobs.

The landowners were told that they would be performing a service that would not only help the honey bees, but would help the environment thrive. Unfortunately, this is not entirely true. So, an informational letter was written to explain, to the landowners, the impacts of positioning so many hives in one place. This letter uses scientific information to provide the landowners with a balanced understanding of the situation in order to make their own informed

decisions about whether or not to house the migratory bees. It does not attack any specific businesses, it provides information.

This letter was given to the board and we were asked to endorse it, along with other prominent environmental organizations. After a lively discussion and some documentation change requests, the board voted unanimously to endorse this effort.

According to the Sonoma County Dept of Agriculture, more than 18,000 migratory beehives have been placed in our county in 2023. This is unsustainable. We felt that endorsing this letter was a vital step to protecting our local honeybees and native pollinators.

Below is the letter that we endorsed. Please take a moment to read through it. If you have any questions or comments, please write to me or anyone else on the board.

Your President, Carol Ellis and the 2023 Board

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## Letter to Our Napa and Sonoma Neighbors

**Why we are writing to you:** You may be receiving inquiries from migratory beekeepers asking you to allow them to place honey bee hives on your land for a period of time between the months of April and January. The language used in these inquiries may imply that these bees on your site will add to the biodiversity, help save the bees, and increase the sustainability of your operation. They will offer you honey in return for the use of your land. The following information will give you more knowledge to make the best decision for your property.

**Migratory bee hives are exposed to pesticides, diseases, and pests:** The majority of the migratory bee hives coming to Sonoma and Napa counties are coming off pollination contracts from the almond orchards in the central valley of California. These bees have been exposed to a cocktail of pesticides, as well as diseases and pests. The conditions are crowded and minimally regulated for the health and well-being of the bees at the holding grounds and

almond pollination sites. There were approximately 2.1 million migratory honey bee hives used for almond pollination in 2022, and there are approximately 1.3 million acres of almonds.<sup>1</sup> In a survey given to the beekeepers that participated in almond pollination in 2021, 56% responded that their bees were exposed to sub-lethal or lethal doses of pesticides during pollination in the almond orchards.<sup>2</sup>

**These beekeeping companies are not based in Sonoma or Napa County:** Most of the migratory beekeepers seeking to place their hives on your land do not live or work in Sonoma or Napa counties and their businesses are not based in either county. They do not invest in these communities either economically with taxes or with ecologically sound improvements, such as adding appropriate habitat and forage for their bees. Studies suggest that high densities of honey bee hives will compete

1 <https://www.almonds.com/about-us/press-room/almond-acreage-increases-2022-pace-growth-slows>

2 <https://www.beeculture.com/2022-almond-pollination-outlook/>

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with local pollinators, both native species and local honey bees, for forage, which may result in starvation and death of the local populations.<sup>3 4</sup>

**Overcrowded hive density goes against best**

**practices:** The number of beehives migratory beekeepers place on your land will vary, but it will exceed substantially the amount currently stated as best practices by the Sonoma County Beekeepers Association and the Napa County Beekeepers Association, which is no more than 10 hives per acre, with the caveat that there is enough forage to support the number of hives.<sup>5</sup> Even this number is far higher than wild/feral honey bee hives occurring in nature which has been observed at approximately 3.5 hives for every 640 acres in Northern California.<sup>6</sup>

**Industry standards are not what's best for the bees and surrounding ecology:** Migratory bee-

3 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0189268#sec003>

4 <https://peerj.com/articles/14699/>

5 <https://sonomabees.org/Best-Management-Practices>

6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5322407/>

**More Resources**

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13592-021-00882-6>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-07635-0>

<https://www.countyofnapa.org/DocumentCenter/View/2900/Revised-Beekeeping-Ordinance-PDF?bidId=>

keepers often have tens of thousands of bee hives that they are looking to find land to keep them on until the next almond pollination season, which is active from February to March.<sup>7</sup> The other months of the year the bees are left on land and tended to every three to four weeks with feedings of sugar

syrup, pollen patties, and miticide treatments. They often offer their hive hosts honey in return for their ability to park their colonies your land. Often this honey isn't primarily from flower nectar, it's from sugar syrup that will be fed to the bees, since there almost certainly isn't enough natural forage to sustain the number of hives placed on your land.<sup>8</sup>

**Scientific information not**

**greenwashing:** Pollinator advocates, such as the Xerces Society,

have published resources for land managers to help advise them in protecting landscapes from the ecological impact of migratory beekeeping operations. The USDA, CDFA, and other government entities also have published information about how the migratory beekeeping industry works. At the end of this document are links to scientific studies, government documents, articles, and other information so you have the opportunity to be informed with no greenwashing or propaganda.

7 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/101476/err-290.pdf>

8 <https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/overview-of-potential-impacts-of-honey-bees-to-native-bees-plant>

## Bee Talk!

# November: Managing Temperature and Humidity

By Mohammed Ibrahim

1st Vice President

November is a relatively quiet month for beekeeping in Northern California. The days are getting shorter and colder, and the bees are starting to cluster together in the hive to stay warm. There is little to no foraging activity during this time, so the bees rely on the honey they store during the summer months.



During the upcoming days, try to pick a warm day with temperatures

above 65F. You could inspect at lower temperatures. But, the advantage of having higher temperatures is to make it easy to break the propolis between frames, which makes the inspection easier. Inspections during this time could be tricky; mistakes have bigger impacts, and the bees are working harder to get everything ready for the winter. If you have any weak or struggling hives, you may want to combine them with stronger hives.

Keep your inspections short and consolidate space by removing empty frames and replacing them with follower boards; try to minimize as much dead air gap as possible. Avoid manipulating the frame orders in the brood nest (place and direction); bees are already being prepared for this. Your inspection should be only to remove extra space and make sure the colony is healthy and has enough storage. The honey super frames should be right above the brood nest. Bees move up during the winter from the center of the nest to the top for the food stores. Reduce your entrance to 3 inches; smaller openings could be clogged by dead bees in the winter and prevent access to the rest of the colony.

Insulation is a huge concern; in my experience here in our county, bees are very well adapted to manage moisture, but it gets complicated for the bees if there is too much moisture, and insulation is the main factor. You can insulate your hive by adding a layer of insulation to the top and sides of the hive. You can also use a windbreak to protect your hives from cold winds. You could use wood, foam, or other materials to insulate the hive and help keep the bees warm,

but make sure you have air circulation (not air draft) to allow excessive hot air to escape. Do not wrap your hive unless it is breathable material. Be aware of the weather forecast and take steps to protect your hives from extreme cold weather. For example, you may need to cover the hives with burlap or blankets.

Here are some things you should avoid doing at the end of November:

- Opening the hive. Opening the hive can disrupt the bees and make them more vulnerable to the cold.
- Harvesting honey. It is best to harvest honey in the summer or early fall so that the bees have enough honey to survive the winter.
- Moving the hive. Moving the hive in the winter can stress the bees and make them more likely to die.

I wish you and your bees a healthy and warm winter!



Bee on Flower, picture by Jamie Storck

# November in the Garden

## Planting a Hedgerow at Kim Bergstrom's

*By Ann Gallagher White  
2nd VP of Gardening*

**Rain and Wildflower Planting** - With winter around the corner, I look forward to relief from watering my garden and with this year's rains, I plan to spread



wildflower seeds in certain barren areas. My plan is to cut the existing weeds down, cover them with cardboard (no wax and no tape) or paper (large rolls of paper work well) or layers of newspaper, wet the paper/cardboard, cover that with at least three inches of mulch (Grab n Grow's Mango Mulch is one option), wet that

down, scatter seeds and wait for the rain to bring flowers. Gülten Eicher, SCBA's West Cluster Garden Liaison, supplied a demonstration of this process at Garden Coordinator Kim Bergstrom's hedgerow planting last month (see more on that event below) and she taught us all so much more. Fall is the best time to plant for a terrific garden next year and every year after. However, when I dig a hole in the soil in the hillside behind my Bennett Valley house, the soil is hard clay, dry as the wind, and very un-giving. Soaking the earth with a hose, using a pointed shovel, elbow grease and lots of determination helps. The rain will help soften the clay soil, too.

**Kim's Hedgerow Project** - I joined G4B volunteers in Sonoma to help Kim Bergstrom plant a pollinator hedgerow on her Sonoma property last month on a warm fall day. Kim's project was a replanting of an area along a fence line to add biodiversity and year-round forage for pollinators. G4B gardeners, some new and some longstanding volunteers, planted gorgeous plants (natives by and large) in wonderful (easy to dig) soil. We planted the hedgerow in a very short time, enjoying success from the group effort under Gülten's direction. Kim created a color-coded diagram of the new plantings to help us know where

to put them. Kim first met Kelly Corbett when she helped to plant a garden at Kelly's years ago. Yes, Kelly helped Kim with the hedgerow and that proves that what goes around, comes around in the gardening world! We accomplish more together when we work as a group than we can working alone. The camaraderie of being with other gardeners who want to help and learn is always the main attraction for any G4B activity. Plus, we learn new and unexpected things from other gardeners. As every garden is unique just like every person with its own precious elements (of altitude, soil makeup, sunlight, shade, acidity, predators and humidity) it is just plain fun to see other people's challenges and accomplishments when you visit another garden.

**Join us** - You are invited to join us at the next event (first come/first served) so look for an email and/or the G4B calendar on the SCBA webpage. G4B volunteers are supporting one another in our efforts to transform barren spaces into beautiful places where pollinators can find pesticide-free forage year-round. If you have a space you want to transform and want to reach out, please do: [2ndVP@Sonomabees.org](mailto:2ndVP@Sonomabees.org)



## Bees Aren't The Only Busy Creatures in SCBA!

By Kim Bergstrom  
Gardening for Bees Coordinator

For those of you who missed it, G4B's offered an SCBA-wide workshop on "Sheet Mulching" and "Planting a Pollinator Hedgerow" in October in Kim Bergstrom's East Cluster home. We had a great time learning about the benefits of hedgerows to pollinators, insects, birds, and other animals while also learning how to prep any area in your garden by "sheet mulching". Kim has created a hedgerow template which will be put up on the SCBA website for members to download and copy if you would like to create your own hedgerow.

As we near the end of the calendar year (Wow... did time fly by!), we are already beginning planning for next year's gardening-related events which has made me pause to reflect on all that G4Bs has done this year:

- Started a "Gardening Liaison" program within the clusters.
- Held four (and counting) propagation workshops at Ellen Sherron's home to create plants for SCBA donations and for members to take to their homes.
- Propagated hundreds of plants for SCBA donations through workshops and our home nursery team.
- Began meeting in person again (post-Covid) on an every other month basis while enjoying the gardens of those hosting the meetings.
- Refreshed the Sonoma County Children's Museum pollinator garden.
- Made succulent and bulb planters out of pots that children painted for our first ever Pollinator Brunch.
- Led three workshops on "Year-round pollinator garden plantings" including one that spruced up the planters outside of Druid's Hall
- Held several gardening related events at the cluster level including:

Holding a seed starting workshop  
Explaining a "Best Garden tools" handout  
Discussing "What to do in your fall garden"  
Conducting several cluster-focused garden tours

- Put together the SCBA exhibit at the Sonoma County Fair

Please let me know what you enjoyed participating in this year so that we can be sure to include it in next year's plans for Gardening for Bees.



Look closely and you can see the butterfly visiting one of the flowers in the Container Garden Pollinator Habitat created by G4Bs at the Druids Hall.

## Serge's November Hive To-Do List

- Complete the preparation of the colonies for winter by the end of the first week of the month. Raise hives off the ground if they are not already on stands.
- Remove old and misshapen combs (follower boards greatly facilitate this).
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated (upper ventilation slot open).
- Reduce the hive entrances.
- Install mouse guards.
- Secure the hive tops against high winds.
- Install clean monitoring trays. From them, we will obtain important information about what is happening inside the hives during the next months, without disturbing the bees.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives.
- Observe the flight paths.
- Clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from damage caused by wax moths, mice, and the weather.
- Review notes from the year.
- Start building frames and other pieces of equipment for the next season.
- Look forward to next season.
- Enjoy some honey and be thankful for the bees.

## CLUSTER NEWS

### Cluster Coordinators Make 2023 Memorable

*By Kelli Cox  
Regional Cluster Coordinator*

Fellow Beeks,

I know we're all saying it... "Where did this year go"? As we head into Fall and Winter, I reflect on what a special year it was. Your Cluster Coordinator team did their best to provide you with informative and fun cafe's, hive dives, and support. The camaraderie and friendship building were palpable. The Cluster and Gardening team of leaders will be meeting in November to plan next year's calendar.



It is extremely exciting for me to see the direction our Association is headed. The focus on pollinator and honey bee health is crucial to this county and we, as an organization, have an opportunity and obligation to help educate our Sonoma Community. 2024 is going to be even better than 2023. As our Cluster groups grow, we will be able to reach more folks and become a stronger voice for the pollinator world. We are still looking for a Cluster Coordinator for East Cluster and co-coordinator for Central Cluster. Please contact [regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org](mailto:regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org) if interested in joining our amazing team of leaders for 2024.

Kelli Cox

# Neither Rain Nor Mud Stop West Cluster

*By Cheryl Koeller  
West Cluster Coordinator*

What a busy month we've had, and the new year is looking to be busy too!

I am so happy to announce that Mailie Pieri has volunteered to be our West Cluster Co-Coordinator for next year. She has already started helping with planning the swap meet in October, the Holiday Party coming up and a few projects we are looking at for next year. I'm looking forward to her ideas and help. I believe our main goal is to have fun, educational and interesting Bee Cafes, hive dives, workshops, and other events to entice more of our 96 West Cluster members to get involved.



Perlman (of course) from West. Kelly Corbett was there offering her ideas on which plants along with Ellen Sherron who is mentoring us through the entire process.

The rain did not stop us on October 22nd we met again at Ellen's to dig up a few of the plants we needed and take a few that had been propagated earlier this year. We dug out a few plants that needed to be moved, planted the plants we brought, and some Leslie had. We put Sonny's Organic Compost from Sequoia Landscape Materials and then covered the entire area with wet newspaper. Leslie even gave up her crosswords when we ran out of newspaper! Finally, we covered it all with chips, also from Sequoia Landscape.

I'm sure we were all covered in mud and soaked from the rain that just kept on coming! It was so much fun, and I am so glad we didn't reschedule!

Our calendar is getting busy. Our West Cluster Holiday Party will be December 3rd. More details on that will come in an email soon. We're planning a frame making clinic soon after the new year and another swap meet was suggested by a few of the people who attended the one on October 22nd. Maybe we'll call it Bee Ready for Spring! Watch your email for updated information.

Is there something you would like to see happen at West Cluster this coming year? Please send your suggestions to me via email to [westcluster@sonomabees.org](mailto:westcluster@sonomabees.org).

On September 30th a small group of SCBA members met at Ellen Sherron's home to learn about and choose plants for our 1st Plant a Pollinator Garden Project. We walked through Ellen's garden listening as she explained the different points we needed to consider when choosing plants. We had a little mix of different cluster members that attended. Thank you to Maureen Bufton-Landwehr from North, Steven Storheim from Central, Paul Krular and Leslie



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*West Cluster continued from previous page*

**Our Bee Inspired Swap Meet** on October 21st was a big hit! I'd like to thank Geoff Whitford of Bloomfield Bees for his donation of quite a bit of new and used equipment to the West County Cluster and SCBA. His donation was the inspiration to have this Swap Meet! Lots of hive pieces, foundation, queen excluders and more. We had quite a few new beekeepers that were able to pick up equipment to help them get started in spring and a few seasoned beekeepers that couldn't resist the sweet deals.

I didn't keep track of everything that showed up but here are a few of the other deals that people brought out:

- Anna Versweyveld donated an 8-Frame Hive that we sold.
- Alicia Campos brought a Warre Observation Hive that had barely been used and our youngest SCBA member Nicholas Bard managed to purchase it for a steal! I bet he is excited to put bees in this coming Spring!
- Roger Simpson sold a hand-crank honey extractor.
- Mailie Pieri brought a bushel basket of rare and unusual apples from her farm.
- Susan Lepley donated dirty wool and several people had ideas of how to use it. Joanne is going to put it out for hummingbirds to use for nesting material.
- We had cookies, biscotti, apples, and breakfast muffins for the bake sale.

Thank you to everyone who brought goodies and to those who donated to enjoy them.



*Geoff Whitford (right) explained the use of equipment*

## SCBA BOOK NOOK



### *The California Wildlife Habitat Garden: How to attract Bees, Butterflies, Birds, and Other Animals*

By: Nancy Bauer

This attractive, practical guide explains how to transform backyard gardens into living ecosystems that are not only enjoyable retreats for humans, but also thriving sanctuaries for wildlife. Beautifully illustrated with full-color photographs, this book provides easy-to-follow recommendations for providing food, cover, and water for birds, bees, butterflies, and other small animals. Emphasizing individual creativity over conventional design, Bauer asks us to consider the intricate relationships between plants and wildlife and our changing role as stewards of these relationships.

SCBA has more than 250 books and DVDs in our Library. *California Wildlife Habitat Garden* is just one of many books about bees, gardening for bees, and products from the hive in our collection. You can view all our books and DVDs available to you at [SCBA-Library](https://www.sonomabees.org/SCBA-Library).

We are looking to expand the SCBA library with current books and resources. If you have any suggestions for books related to honeybees, beekeeping, native bees, gardening for bees, and products of the hive, please email your suggestions to [Librarian@sonomabees.org](mailto:Librarian@sonomabees.org).

In addition, we are starting to add beekeeping tools and equipment to the library. Keyword search "equipment" to see what we have. Currently not much, but these resources will continue to grow. We are actively looking for Candle Molds to add to our equipment library for members to borrow. Please contact us if you have some molds, or other useful equipment, you can donate to the library.

SCBA Library is available to members at in-person general meetings and during the week by appointment. If you are interested in checking out a book, email our librarian at [Librarian@sonomabees.org](mailto:Librarian@sonomabees.org) to plan to pick up one or two of the books, DVDs, or equipment available to SCBA members.

# A Cake Full of Sweet Memories

*By Rachel Parker*

From 1999 to 2002, our family lived in Munich, Germany, and while the transition was not easy it was an experience that we all now savor. Perhaps for that reason, when my youngest daughter found a recipe for Beesting Cake, she forwarded it to me. Or it could be the honey.

Story has it that in medieval Bavaria, bakers in a village being attacked by rivals saw the invaders massing at a bridge, quite near some beehives. Quick thinking, the bakers lobbed the beehives at the invaders – who were promptly stung into retreat. The lore continues that the villages' bakers (who somehow escaped stings, themselves) created this cake as tribute to their success.

Well, it is a good story. And this cake is a good one, too. More of a pastry than what we think of as a cake, it starts with an enriched yeast dough (think brioche or challah) with a honey-almond topping that is baked in a 9-inch springform pan. The resulting yeasty, sweet and almondy loaf is sliced into two 1-inch layers, then filled with a vanilla pastry cream/heavy cream mixture. That's it! The Internet has many ways to simplify the cake, mostly using either packaged vanilla pudding or vanilla custard powder. But I'm an old-fashioned kind of gal, and I liked this approach.

## Bee Sting Cake

from [SimplyRecipes.com](https://www.simplyrecipes.com)

### INGREDIENTS

#### *For the filling*

1/3 cup sugar  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
Yolks from 3 large eggs  
1 1/2 cups whole milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream

#### *For the cake*

1/4 cup (60ml) whole milk  
1/4 cup (60g) unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons (40g) honey  
2 large eggs  
2 1/3 (280g) cups bread flour (I used Keith Guisto's all-purpose)  
1 3/4 teaspoons yeast  
1/4 teaspoon salt

#### *For the topping*

1/4 cup (60g) unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons (40g) honey  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1 cup (115g) sliced almonds

### METHOD

First the filling: In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Add the egg yolks and whisk until the mixture is pale and smooth, about 1 minute. The mixture will seem too dry at first but keep whisking and it will loosen. Whisk in the milk, a splash at a time, whisking constantly until all the milk has been incorporated.

Pour the milk mixture into a saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until the custard begins to simmer and thickens, about 5 minutes.

Once it begins to gently bubble, continue to cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute longer to cook out the starch. Take the pan off the heat and whisk in the vanilla extract.

Pour the pastry cream through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl and cover with plastic wrap directly on the surface of the pastry cream. Refrigerate while preparing the cake.

Now, the cake: Heat the milk and the butter in a small saucepan over low heat until the butter melts. Take the pan off the heat and let the mixture sit until lukewarm.

Pour the milk and butter into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Add the honey, eggs, bread flour, yeast, and salt. Mix on low speed for about 1 minute until everything comes together and forms a rough dough. Then, increase the speed to

*Continued, next page*

***Beesting Cake, from previous page***

level 2/medium speed and continue kneading for 6 minutes. The dough should be smooth and elastic and not sticky.

Transfer the dough to a lightly greased mixing bowl. Cover and let it rise in a warm spot until the dough has doubled in size, about 1 hour.

While the dough is rising, make the almond topping. Place the butter, honey, and sugar in a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Set it on medium heat and cook until the sugar dissolves and the mixture begins to bubble. Remove from the heat and stir in the sliced almonds. Set aside and let it cool.

Grease a 9-inch springform pan lightly with butter. Dust the bottom and sides with flour and tap out the excess.

Punch down the dough. Transfer it to the prepared springform pan and gently press and stretch to evenly fill the pan. Gently spread the almond topping over the dough to cover the entire surface.

Cover the pan with a towel or plastic wrap and let the cake rise in a warm spot until doubled, about 30 minutes.

About 20 minutes before the cake is ready to bake, set a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake the cake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the edges are golden and the topping is bubbling.

Remove the cake from the oven and let it cool in the pan for 20 minutes to allow the topping to firm up. Then, run a knife around the edges of the pan to loosen the cake from the pan and place it on a wire rack to cool completely before filling.



In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, or a large mixing bowl if using a hand mixer, beat the heavy whipping cream on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, 1 to 2 minutes. The cream should thicken and when you pull the whisk out of the bowl, the peak should stand up.

Remove the pastry cream from the refrigerator and whisk it until smooth and creamy. Add half of the whipped cream to the chilled pastry cream and use a rubber spatula to gently combine. Then fold in the rest of the whipped cream. The filling should be smooth, light, and airy.

Once the cake has cooled completely, assemble the cake. Using a serrated bread knife, split the cake in half horizontally. Use a spatula to spread the filling over the bottom layer of the cake. Leave a half-inch margin around the edges. You won't use all the filling, or it may ooze out the sides. (Leftover filling is delicious served over sliced fruit.)



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