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Honeys of Ethiopia

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Honeys of Ethiopia: *the first national* *network of quality* *honey producers*

The Honeys of Ethiopia network was created to promote one of the country's most representative food products. Two Slow Food Presidia, Tigray white honey and Wenchi volcano honey, formed the network's starting point, and in 2009 it was expanded to include the Terra Madre beekeeping communities. The project is the result of a collaboration between Slow Food and several Italian partners: Modena per gli Altri (MOxA), Parma per gli Altri (PPA) and CONAPI, the consortium of Italian organic beekeepers and farmers.

Established to safeguard a sector that more than any other reflects the biodiversity and wealth of the local environment, the network offers a kind of map of Ethiopia's best artisanal honeys. As well as providing technical assistance to the producers, it also promotes honey by-products, like wax and propolis. The medium-to-long-term objective is to organize a good commercial network that will allow the beekeepers to access the national market, even those living in very remote areas. This will allow them to obtain a fair price that reflects the efforts they have made to improve the quality of their honey.

The Communities

To date, the Honeys of Ethiopia network includes the four Presidia (for Wenchi volcano honey, Tigray white honey, Rira and Bore honeys) and the food communities in Gassa Chare (Dawro Konta), Shalala, Horde, Getche, Badogo, Wondo and Wassarà.

Each honey has different characteristics, reflecting the unique environment, climate and flora of their places of origin.

With the contribution of



With the support of
City of Parma and City of Modena

In collaboration with
MOxA, Parma per gli Altri, CONAPI, Slow Food, Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity





Slow Food®

Slow Food is an international association active in over 150 countries around the world, with 100,000 members, 2,000 Terra Madre food communities and millions of activists. Through projects, local activities and national and international events, it works around the world to promote agriculture based on local knowledge and respect for the environment, biodiversity and local cultures.

www.slowfood.com

www.slowfoodfoundation.org



Modena per gli Altri works on projects in Modena and Ethiopia, providing economic support to small businesses in the agricultural and artisanal sector.

www.modenapergialtri.org



Parma per gli Altri is an NGO active in Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea, where it works in collaboration with local communities to implement local health, education and economic development projects, with a particular focus on women.

www.parmapergialtri.it



CONAPI (Italian National Consortium of Beekeepers) is a national cooperative of beekeepers, the way our members take care of their bees and collect high quality honeys, who follow organic principles and maintain a close link to their local areas. The cooperative researches innovative ways of promoting honey and other beekeeping products, while its members work every day to preserve biodiversity and protect the environment. CONAPI has a technical role within the Honeys network, exchanging knowledge with the Ethiopian beekeepers.

www.conapi.it





1 Tigray White Honey Slow Food Presidium

Wukro is in the heart of the Tigray region, in the far north of Ethiopia. One of the country's most prized honeys is made here, on a 2,000-metre-high plateau, where, according to the local people, "the mountains gather for meetings." During the dry season the vegetation, mostly low shrubs, acacias and grasses, dies back, leaving a semi-desertic landscape. The subsequent rains then struggle to turn the area green again. Despite the aridity, the annual production of honey is high, as beekeeping is a very common activity in the region. The honey is collected twice a year: The primary harvest is at the end of the rainy season (from September to December), while the second is only possible in rainier years and takes place from May to June. Three main types of honey are produced: red, yellow and white. The bright white honey makes up 90% of production. Coarse-grained, with an uneven texture, it has a delicate scent, not too sweet a flavor and a lingering aftertaste. This honey is made from specific flowers, mostly from the Lamiaceae family, and to a lesser extent, prickly pear and euphorbia.

The Selam association of beekeepers has 16 members who collect honey from modern hives located in communal apiaries.

Production area: Wukro, eastern Tigray region



2 Wenchi Volcano Honey Slow Food Presidium

The Wenchi volcano's magnificent crater, two hours' drive from Addis Ababa, is ringed by steep green slopes surrounding a deep, bright-blue lake. Thanks to its thermal waters, in recent years the area has become a renowned tourist destination. An association works in Wenchi to manage the eco-tourism activities and protect and promote the natural resources of the area around the volcano. In 2010, a group of 40 beekeepers also created the Wenchi Beekeepers' Association. The honey made on the volcano's slopes, collected at the end of the rainy season between October and December, is yellow-amber in color and has a very fine, smooth grain. The scent is intense, with hints of flowers and slightly toasted caramel. Creamy on the palate, it has a medium acidity level and is soft and refreshing, thanks to the balsamic notes. The main flowers that have been identified so far are *Hagenia abyssinica* (kosso) and *Erica arborea* (hasta). The honey is made partly in traditional hives (large woven cylinders of bamboo, covered in false banana leaves, closed at one end with straw and at the other with a circular piece of wood) and partly in modern hives.

Production area: Wenchi volcano, southwestern Oromia region

3 Rira Honey Slow Food Presidium

Rira, at around 3,000 meters above sea level, is the last village along the road that climbs up to the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park. Here, the Arsi-Oromo people raise sheep, grow vegetables and grains (barley and wheat) and keep bees, an activity with deep cultural roots. The bees make honey from the nectar of many different plants; the flowers that are most popular are garamba (*Hypericum revolutum*), badesa (*Syzygium guineense*), gale (*Erica arborea*) and heto (*Hagenia abyssinica*, a member of the rose family). The honey is collected from the traditional hives at the end of the rainy season, between April and May. Pale hazelnut in color with a creamy texture, it has an intense flavor and a fruity fragrance, with notes of caramel and malt. Traditionally stored in animal-hide vessels called okole, it is offered to guests along with a soft flatbread called ambasha and vegetables like potatoes, carrots and a local variety of black cabbage. The Presidium involves 59 producers from the Rira beekeepers' cooperative, founded in 2014, and working to promote the this honey that has extraordinary potential, thanks to the unique local ecosystem and the community's knowledge.

Production area: Rira village, Bale Mountains National Park, Oromia region



4 Bore Honey Slow Food Presidium

In the village of Bore, 3,000 meters above sea level, festivals, traditional ceremonies, initiation rites and songs are dedicated to the ancient tradition of apiculture. But it is also an integral part of everyday life, with honey used in food, beverages and medicines. The long rainy season, lasting around seven months, and the rich biodiversity of plants in the forest mean the bees produce two types of honey, one white and the other dark amber, in their traditional hives, known as gagura. The white honey comes from the flowers of gatame (*Schefflera abyssinica*) and has a creamy, melting, slightly buttery texture. The flavor is sweetly vegetal, with a piquant note in the finish. The dark honey is obtained from several different flowers, primarily *Prunus africana* (miessa), *Vernonia amygdalina* (dhebicha) and *Hagenia abyssinica* (heto). The Presidium involves 30 beekeepers, joined together in the Guji Bore cooperative, which was established in 2002.

Production area: Wate village, Bore district, Guji highlands, Oromia region

5 Dawro Konta Honey Food community

Thanks to the variety of plants in its forests, Dawro, a mountainous province southwest of Addis Ababa, is an ideal area for producing quality honey. Beekeeping is an important source of income for the Kullu Konta, who belong to the larger Welayta ethnic group. The traditional hives (kafo), made from woven bamboo, are dried over a fire of aromatic shrubs, acquiring an intense aroma that attracts the bees. The hives are covered with false banana bark placed in the trees. When the honey is ready, the hives are closed and taken to the beekeepers' houses. The first harvest, in November and December, is the most abundant and is obtained from a range of flowers, including wanza (*Cordia africana*) and coffee (*Coffea arabica*). The second harvest, in April and May, is mostly from eucalyptus and fruit trees, such as docoma (wild plum).

The community has set up an association of 26 beekeepers.

Production area: Gassa Chare, Dawro Konta, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR)





6 Shalala Area Honey Food community

The village of Shalala is located at an altitude of 2,277 meters above sea level in the heart of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region. Beekeeping has ancient roots here, and is widely practiced among the Hadiya, the local ethnic group. In December 2008, 22 beekeepers formed the Shalala Beekeepers' Association. Their honey is off-white or reddish-yellow, thick and very sweet, and comes from range of local flowers and trees including besana (*Ajuga integrifolia*), sunflowers, legumes like *Vicia sinensis*, senafitch (*Brassica nigra*), and common fruit trees like papaya and mango. The honey is harvested in June and November, and some production still comes from traditional hives where the honeycombs are kept in woven bamboo covered with false banana leaves; however modern hives are widespread and beekeepers are becoming familiar with them. Furthermore, women of Shalala community have been learning how to recycle and purify wax considered a waste product of traditional beekeeping. Beekeeping is widely practiced around Shelala village; used to manage it independently, other beekeepers have assembled in four new communities: Gortha, Maldo, Arara e Arara Ogoro. Despite the tiny production, the harvesting periods and typical flowers and trees are the same of the honeys produced by the Shelala Beekeepers Association.

Production area: Shalala, Hadiya zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR)

7 Horde Area Honey Food community

Horde lies about 2,000 meters above sea level, in highlands covered in natural forest and close to the magnificent Agame Waterfalls. In 2010, 20 beekeepers from the village formed an association. Each producer has a number of kafô (traditional hives) modern hives use is increasing, as well as honey production. Honey is harvested from September to November and from March to June, and comes from a variety of local plants: wanza (*Cordia africana*), coffee (*Coffea arabica*), tikur inchet (*Prunus africana*) and a local variety of *Olinia rochetiana*. In the past the honey was used for blessings and to show honor and respect, as well as for therapeutic purposes. The red honey has a liquid consistency, with a very sweet scent and flavor. It is sold in the nearby towns of Osanna and Gombora to tej producers or traders, and in a shop in Shalala set up by the association Modena per Gli Altri. Horde Beekeepers Association positive experience inspired many other beekeepers in the area, so that Adeanna and Habicho communities have been established. The product, similar to Horde honey, is gradually improving thanks to the enhancements in traditional beekeeping and the modern hives introduction.

Production area: Horde, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR)

8 Getche Honey Food community

Getche honey is collected at altitudes between 2,000 and 2,500 meters, in an area populated by the Gurage, an ethnic-linguistic group who are mostly traders and beekeepers. Until recently only traditional collection methods were used, with hives made from logs, bark and clay, hung from trees to attract the bees. The first modern hives were introduced in 2008. The honey harvested in October is pale and produced from a number of different flowers. In the spring it is redder and comes from other flowers, from eucalyptus, mug (yellow daisy-like flowers), avocado and other forest trees. The honey is stored in terracotta containers and sold in local shops and markets. The association is made up of 10 beekeepers who work with 200 traditional beehives and around a dozen modern beehives.

Production area: Getche, Gurage zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR)

9 Badogo Honey Food community

Badogo honey is typical of the southern Ethiopian region of Hadiya, between the Omo and Billate rivers. It is collected at an altitude of 1,800 meters above sea level. The 15 beekeepers who currently work here have recently joined the Honeys of Ethiopia network. The honey is collected from April to June and again from November to December. Badogo honey is amber, almost reddish in color, and shortly after harvest it crystallizes and solidifies. The honey is made from nectar from the tree *Apodytes dimidiata*, known as white pear, native to the area.

Production area: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR)

10 Wondo Honey Food community

Wondo honey comes from southern Ethiopia and is collected at 2,000 meters above sea level in an area between the Omo and Billate rivers, inhabited by the Hadiya, about 11 kilometers from Shellala. Currently 34 beekeepers belong to this community. The reddish-amber honey is collected between April and June and between November and December. A viscous liquid when harvested, about a month after extraction it crystallizes and solidifies. The honey comes from the flowers of several different species: *Syzygium guineense* (a temperate forest plant from the myrtle family), red eucalyptus, *Rhamnus prinoides* (an African shrub from the Rhamnaceae family), *Grevillea robusta* (southern silky oak), *Dovyalis caffra* (a small evergreen tree) and *Cordia africana*, from the borage family.

Production area: Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)



11 Wassarà Honey

Food community

The Wassarà community's 13 beekeepers belong to the Kambaata ethnic group. They produce honey at an altitude of 2,400 meters above sea level. The harvest is in January and between May and June, when the honey is made from *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* flowers. The honey is dark in color, almost brown, and liquid immediately after extraction. It later solidifies, crystallizing with a fine grain. It has a very dense texture and a woody scent.

Production area: Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)



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