Marketing Local Honey & Hive Products in Douglas County, Kansas: A Resource Guide

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Time to Sell Your Honey

You have successfully managed your bees for a year or two, maybe added a second or third or fourth hive, and are consistently harvesting more honey than you can use in a year and give away as gifts. What next? Perhaps it is time to start thinking about selling your honey.

Honey is a unique food that has been revered by cultures worldwide for thousands of years. Honey has a complex, delightful flavor, a host of nutritional benefits and medicinal qualities, and boasts a vast array of culinary uses.

Locally-produced honey appeals to a wide-range of consumers. From foodies who revel in the unique floral notes of honey produced from clover or buckwheat, to allergy sufferers looking for potential relief from seasonal pollen allergies, to consumers looking to support a local food economy, to people alarmed by the plight of pollinators and wanting to do their part to support local pollinator populations - local honey is an attractive and desirable product.

Selling Honey and Hive Products

Pure honey can be sold in a variety of forms, including raw, strained, filtered, creamed, comb, and chunk. The National Honey Board website is a good place to start when looking for information about honey sales. For a summary of some of the different forms of honey, follow this link: [http://www.honey.com/honey-locator/forms-of-honey/](http://www.honey.com/honey-locator/forms-of-honey/).

Although honey is perhaps the most well-known product of the hive, there are a number of other hive products that can be sold. These include beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly, queens, bees and larvae, and venom.

Additionally, “value-added” hive products, or products to which primary hive products are added, represent a significant source of marketable products. There is almost no end to the list of products which could be produced from honey and hive products.

For a detailed report on honey and hive products, their potential uses, and instructions for producing a number of hive products, please see the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Agricultural Bulletin, Value-Added Products from Beekeeping, [http://www.fao.org/docrep/w0076e/w0076e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/w0076e/w0076e00.htm).

In addition to pure honey, some products you might consider starting out with include: creamed honey; honey sticks; herb-infused or medicinal herb-infused honey; beeswax candles; lotions, lip-balm, soaps and other body care products and cosmetics.

“...One thing I don't see much of, outside of Richard [Bean], is creamed honey or naturally infused honeys. I'm thinking ones infused with medicinal herbs as cough drops, or lemon honey concentrates for sore throats and immunity would be widely accepted!” Jennifer Kongs, Managing Editor *Mother Earth News*, and Lawrence Farmers Market vendor, on honey and hive products at the Lawrence Farmers Market
Marketing Honey and Hive Products in the Douglas County Area

A recent upswing in interest in local foods and healthful eating has created new and expanded market opportunities for small-scale producers of many types of food. Douglas County has a rich and robust local foods system. A recent report for the Douglas County Food Policy Council confirmed that there is high demand for local foods in Douglas County and the surrounding area, and that demand outstrips supply for many products.

For small-scale honey producers, researching the local market to discover a niche for a particular honey or hive product should involve exploring the many outlets in the larger cities as well as looking to smaller communities for unique opportunities and openings.

Potential Markets In or Around Douglas County

Because of the many uses for and appealing qualities of honey and hive products, there are a wide range of potential markets. Here are a few ideas!

- Apply to be a vendor at one of the local farmers’ markets. Area farmers’ markets include: Lawrence Farmers Market, Baldwin City Farmers Market, Cottin’s Hardware Farmers Market (Lawrence), Clinton Parkway Nursery Farmers Market (Lawrence), Tractor Supply Company (Lawrence), and the Perry/Lecompton Farmers’ Market. Also, try Eudora and DeSoto.

  “Try a farmers’ market in one of the smaller towns around Lawrence. They may be in need of vendors, and this can be a good place to start as you build your business.”  
  Becky Tipton, Honey Producer and Master Beekeeper, Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers’ Association Program Chair, and Kansas Honey Producers’ Association 4th Vice-President

  “[The] Tuesday market could use a consistent honey vendor.”  
  Sally Sanko, Market Coordinator, Lawrence Farmers Market

- Offer to provide honey or hive products to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). As the prime produce season fades, some CSAs look for alternative products to round out their offerings. The Douglas County area has a number of well-established and budding CSA’s - http://knowwhereyourfoodcomesfrom.com/community-supported-agriculture-csa-farms/middle-west/kansas/.

- Enquire with local wineries, pumpkin patches, Christmas tree farms, u-pick operations or other agritourism farms, about selling honey at their farm.

- Offer to volunteer at one of the farms on the Kaw Valley Farm Tour in exchange for selling your honey at the farm during the tour.

- Try a craft fair, holiday market, or other one-time event, such as Downtown Lawrence Farmers Market Holiday Market, Maple Leaf Festival, and Seed Savers Annual trade-fair.
“Local craft fairs, holiday markets, or other one-time events are a great way to get started selling honey. It’s a less formal commitment than signing on to a whole season at a farmers market but will provide a lot of exposure in a short time time-frame and start to build a customer base.” Becky Tipton, Honey Producer and Master Beekeeper, Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers’ Association Program Chair, and Kansas Honey Producers’ Association 4th Vice-President

- Check with local **restaurants, coffee/tea shops, and bakeries** about selling your honey. Restaurants and other food venues are increasingly interested in offering local products to their customers and the Douglas County area is full of options for eateries potentially looking to incorporate local foods into their menus or inventories.

- **Grocery stores, including cooperative grocery stores, natural foods’ grocery stores, and large, institutional grocers** have all at least dipped a toe into the local products’ market. Ask around to see who is in need of a local honey vendor.

- Donate jars of honey or other hive products for a **charity fundraiser such as a school auction**, non-profit event, or church sale.

- **Local breweries, artisanal cheese-makers, or bakers** might be in need of local honey for their products.

- If local regulations allow, and you don’t mind people dropping in at all times, put up a **“Honey for Sale” sign** in your yard.

- **Local health clubs or fitness stores** might be interested in selling honey or other hive products.

- **Purchase a car magnet** with your contact information to advertise your honey and hive products when you’re out and about.

  For more ideas on where to sell your honey, see Cornell Cooperative Extension’s “Where to sell honey: 31 random marketing ideas to consider.” [http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/Honeycomb-to-Consumer-13n5j37.pdf](http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/Honeycomb-to-Consumer-13n5j37.pdf).


Note: In order to sell honey to a retail outlet in Kansas, a honey producer must have a food processing license and pass inspection by the KDA Division of Food Safety and Lodging. For more information on applying for a food processing license, see: [http://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/food-safety-lodging/food-safety-licenses](http://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/food-safety-lodging/food-safety-licenses).
Honey producers who intend to sell their honey directly to the consumer only do not need a license and are not inspected. This includes honey producers who sell honey at Kansas Farmers Markets.

**Marketing Strategies**

**Start Small!** Start with family and friends – develop a price sheet and simple business card. Ask for feedback and hone your approach accordingly.

**Give samples** of your honey or hive products to neighbors, along with your business card or contact information. Let people know that you are selling your honey.

**Sell at a small event or one-time market**, to test your products, hone your sales strategy, and gain visibility.

Get to know the market. **Look for potential markets** for your products and get to know the people in charge. **Develop relationships** with these folks.

Create a brand. **Keep in touch with your customers** via an e-newsletter or blog.

Attend **honey and hive products’ marketing classes**! Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers’ Association has yearly classes and a spring FunDay which include marketing education - [http://www.nekba.org/](http://www.nekba.org/). Kansas Honey Producers’ Association is another source for marketing education and information - [http://www.kansashoneyproducers.org/Home_Page.html](http://www.kansashoneyproducers.org/Home_Page.html).

Register for a workshop or one on one counseling at the **Kansas Small Business Development Center (KU-KSBDC)**, at the University of Kansas. KU-KSBDC “assist[s] with the growth of Kansas small businesses by providing [low cost training seminars](http://business.ku.edu/ku-small-business-development-center), and free [one-to-one counseling services](http://business.ku.edu/ku-small-business-development-center). The KU-KSBDC serves Douglas, Franklin, Jefferson, Atchison, Leavenworth, and Doniphan counties in Kansas. Learn more at [http://business.ku.edu/ku-small-business-development-center](http://business.ku.edu/ku-small-business-development-center).

**Labeling Your Honey**

All honey produced and sold in Kansas should bear a **label** with the word “honey” on it, along with the “net weight” (in pounds/ounces and metric weight), and the contact information of the honey producer.


**Legalities – Licensing/Sales Tax/Liability**

Honey producers who intend to sell their honey directly to the consumer only do not need a license and are not inspected. This includes honey producers who sell honey at Kansas Farmers Markets.
In order to sell honey to a retail outlet in Kansas, a honey producer must have a food processing license and pass inspection by the KDA Division of Food Safety and Lodging.

State and Federal Regulations for Processing, Handling, and Sales of Honey and Hive Products in Kansas (excerpted from Kansas Rural Center’s Finding Your Niche: A Marketing Guide for Kansas Farms)

• **A honey producer who plans to sell raw honey directly to the consumer** does not need a license and is not regulated by the state. This includes producers who intend to sell honey at a Kansas Farmers Market.  

• **In order to sell honey that has been heated, pasteurized, or has added ingredients**, a honey producer must obtain a food processing license from KDA, pay the associated fees, follow the associated processing and handling regulations, and pass an inspection.

• **In order to sell honey or hive products (whether raw or processed) to a retail outlet**, such as grocery store, restaurant, institution, or any other commercial outlet, **a honey producer must obtain a food processing license** from KDA, pay the associated fees, follow the associated processing and handling regulations, and pass an inspection.

For more information on food processing licenses and the associated fees, see:  

**Additional Marketing Resources:**

http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/Honeycomb-to-Consumer-13n5j37.pdf

This an outstanding resource on selling and marketing honey and hive products. It provides excellent coverage of: preparing your honey for sale, honey house requirements and sanitation; packaging, labeling, and health and nutrition claims; and the business aspects of honey sales. Although it was created as a resource for New York beekeepers, there is a wealth of information which applies to honey producers in any location. **Highly recommended**

http://kansasruralcenter.org/marketingguide/

This guide has a wealth of information on marketing locally-produced products at a wide range of venues including: farmers markets, CSAs, on-farm sales, internet sales, restaurants, caterers, institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.), food hubs and coops. The guide includes marketing tools, strategies, and regulations.