

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION: MACHAKHELA HONEY

NUMBER OF REGISTRATION: 17

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MACHAKHELA HONEY ('Machakhela Datunia' [Machakhela Teddy Bear])

Description of the product

'Machakhela Honey' is a food product made by bees from flowers growing in the Machakhela Valley. 'Machakhela Honey' can be of four kinds – May honey, acacia honey, chestnut honey and lime (white) honey.

May honey is collected in the early spring from the early flowering plants and is distinguished by varied taste and aroma.

Acacia honey is the early spring honey, the color of which is so light that is practically transparent. Robinia (the so-called "white acacia") is considered to be the best early melliferous plant. Because of the high level of fructose the product granulates slowly to produce a soft fine-grained white mass. The acacia honey has a smell of fragrant acacia.

Lime honey in the liquid state is of light yellow color. Crystallized lime honey becomes of peach or chestnut color and fine-grained, smell is mentholated and taste slightly bitter.

Chestnut honey is light to dark brown in color, smell is reminiscent of overripe apples and taste is tannic and slightly stringent, is not easy granulated.

Geographical area

The production area of 'Machakhela Honey' consists of the territories of the villages: Machakhlispira, Ked-Kedi, Acharisaghmarti, Chkhutuneti and Chikuneti.

Proof of origin

The honey should be extracted, decanted and accredited within the fixed geographical area. The process of accreditation shall encompass a declaration of the production hives on the place with the data indicating the time of placement, number and exact location of each of them, as well as a yearly declaration of the Association of Producers concerning the total number of hives, total extracted honey, including the honey that may be qualified as honey of local origin (appellation of origin).

Each producer is obliged to make yearly declarations on own honey reserves. The data on the origin of honey, its amount, designed supply and placement on the market should be entered in the registration book.

The results of the product's analysis and organoleptic testing are used to corroborate its origin.

Method of production

Hives are placed in an area in which the forest or floral species are found that correspond to the type of honey sought: acacia, lime, chestnut, etc. The honey is extracted when ripe without heating, is decanted, stored and packaged. Each batch is subjected to a physico-chemical and sensory analysis. The honey must also comply with the physico-chemical and organoleptic criteria set out in the specification.

Link

Distinctive features linked to the geographical area:

The Machakhela Valley is noted for well-pronounced natural and climatic conditions favorable for production of diverse honey.

Summers in the Machakhela Valley are relatively cool and warm, while winters are rather mild. It is always warm during the day. In summer the temperature may vary between +30 °C to +35° C, and between 5° C to +10° C in winter. The snow cover in winter may reach from 0.5 to 3 meters, although because of the warm climate it is short-lived. The Machakhela valley is surrounded by mountains covered with softwoods.

In general, black soils prevail in the Valley (best for growing honey-yielding plants) with vertical- zonal location of plants, which conditions abundance and diversity of melliferous plants and the possibility of making quality honey.

The length of the Machakhela Valley is 45 km. In the beginning of the Valley, the village of Machakhlispiri is located at 70 m above sea level. In the end of the valley, at 1200 m above sea level there are chestnut groves, also lime forests a little higher, and more higher begin the Alpine zone, where the honey-yielding bushy plants grow. The percentage of glucose increases in the nectar in proportion to the elevation growth, creating thus favorable conditions for producing quality honey there.

The nectar productivity of the melliferous plants of the same variety is known to gradually increase from the south to the north; an increase in the percentage of sugar in the nectar is subject to the same regularity. The honey-yielding plants located on the deep mountain slopes in the Machakhela Valley, mostly on the northern slopes, are in full compliance with these conditions.

The Machakhela Valley is noted for one more unique characteristic essential for producing quality honey. Namely, in the east where the Machakhela Valley is bordered with Karchkhali Mountains the snow cover does not melt until the late June, because of which the Valley retains the permanent moisture and is protected from the dangerous for nectar production phenomena, such as droughts and dry winds. The moisture nearing the optimum value (60-80%) provides in plants a continuous discharge of nectar during the day.

It should be noted that the Machakhela Valley is rich in wild hazelnuts, which in the early spring produce pollen - the best material for beebread, the production of which is necessary for feeding young bees. The great numbers of the latter are necessary for

collecting nectar in the early spring and producing brood. The local bee is healthy and well reproduced.

The Machakhela Valley is ecologically safe and less liable to the effects of environmental pollution that is characteristic of modern civilization. The local population do not apply, in general, herbicides or pesticides. The Machakhela Valley abounds in ecologically safe spring waters, which honeybees use daily. All this makes it possible to produce ecologically safe honey, which the most important factor for ensuring the making of high quality and competitive products.

Reputation past and present

The historic Machakhela Valley with century-old experience is the classical region of traditional beekeeping. Beekeeping practices are being passed here from old to new generations. The region has been known for producing ecologically safe natural honey with medicinal properties. The Chronicle of Tbeti Spirits, which is a monument of the 12th-17th centuries, mentions the family of Meputkrisdze, the son of Putkara, while in the Machakhela Valley, where the Putkaradzese used to compactly reside, their village is called Saputreti ('putkari' means bee in Georgian).

Three forms of beekeeping prevail in the Machakhela Valley – forest (rock bee, wood bee), half-domesticated (arrangement of hives on trees) and domesticated (artificial log hive (geja) and specially arranged apiary).

Labeling

The words 'Machakhela Honey' must figure on the label together with a reference to the type of honey according to the established specifications.

Control

The official control over compliance of the product 'Machakhela Honey' with the established specifications should be exercised by the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia.