

## 7 Getche Honey (Southern Nation Nationalities and People region)

### Food community

The Ghetche honey is a typical product from the area inhabited by the Guraghe, located on a plateau between 2000 and 2500 meters above sea level. The ethnic and linguistic group of the Guraghe has a long-standing tradition of trade and beekeeping. Until a few years ago, they exclusively used traditional harvesting methods, but in 2008 the first modern hives were introduced. Traditional hives are made with wood logs, bark and clay and hung to trees to attract swarms. The honey harvested in October is reddish and made from various nectars: eucalyptus, nug (yellow flowers, similar to daisies), avocado and other trees of the forest. It is then kept in terracotta pots and sold in local markets and shops. The association of beekeepers includes 12 producers who work with 200 traditional hives and about a dozen modern ones.

Community coordinator: Wujira Ke'erga, tel. + 251 910877368

### For more information

#### Coordinator of the Honeys of Ethiopia network

Zerihun Hailemariam Dessalgn - tel. +251 (0)911214454 - zerihunbd@yahoo.com

#### Slow Food International - Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity Onlus

Francesco Impallomeni - tel. +39 0172 419712 - f.impallomeni@slowfood.it



Printed on recycled and ecological paper - Photo Slow Food Archive - © Paola Viesi



Fondazione Slow Food  
per la Biodiversità  
ONLUS



Terra  
madre

# Honeys of Ethiopia

የኢትዮጵያ ማር



የኢትዮጵያ ማር

## Honeys of Ethiopia, the first network of quality honey producers in Ethiopia

Honey is one of the most representative products of Ethiopia, where it is also eaten after it has fermented, processed into tej (a typical drink similar to hydromel), or used as a medicine.

The **Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity** has been working in Ethiopia for several years with two honey Presidia: the **Tigray White Honey Presidium** and the **Wenchi Vulcano Honey Presidium**.

In 2009 the first network of quality honey producers was created, and helped to connect Presidia to several Terra Madre beekeeper communities.

This network has been promoted and supported by Slow Food with other Italian partners: **Modena per gli Altri** and **Parma per gli Altri** (MOxA, PPA), **Terra del Terzo Mondo**, and **CONAPI** (the Italian Consortium of Beekeepers and Organic Producers).

The network was created to safeguard a sector which - more than any other - is a symbol of the biodiversity and richness of this region, and does it through a sort of map of the best Ethiopian artisan honeys.

In addition to supplying technical assistance to producers, the network provides them with suitable communication tools, and helps communities to diversify their sources of income by promoting by-products of honey production, such as wax.

The medium-long term objective is the creation of a consortium with a technical and commercial structure which can ensure good quality production and access to the national and international markets.

### The involved communities

The Honeys of Ethiopia network currently includes two Presidia (the Wenchi Vulcano Honey and the Tigray White Honey) and the food communities in Gassa Chare (Dawro Konta), Wolisso, Shalala, Horde, and Getche. Each honey has its specific and distinctive features, just as the areas where they are produced. Each of these areas enjoys unique environmental and climatic conditions and therefore has its specific flowers.

With the support of





## 1 Tigray White Honey (eastern part of the Tigray region)

### Slow Food Presidium

Wukro lies at the heart of the Tigray, the most northern region of Ethiopia. Here, on a plateau at 2000 meters above sea level, where – according to a local saying - “mountains gather in a meeting”, one of the finest honeys of the country is produced. During the dry seasons the vegetation, made almost exclusively of bushes, acacias and succulents, decreases. The resulting landscape is semi-desert and struggles to become green again even during the following rainy season. Despite the dryness of the area, the yearly honey yield is considerably high, as beekeeping is a very common activity. Honey is harvested twice a year: the first harvest, which produces a higher yield, takes place straight after the rainy season (September to December), while the second one is only possible on particularly rainy years, from May to June. Three types of honey are produced, which stand out for their distinctive color: red, yellow and white. 90% of the production consists in a bright white colored honey with a rather rough, non-homogeneous texture. Its scent is delicate and the flavor is not too sweet, with a persistent aftertaste. This honey is produced from specific flowers, largely belonging to the family of Labiatae flowering plants and, to a lesser extent, from prickly pear and euphorbia flowers. The “Selam” association of beekeepers includes 17 members who harvest honey from modern hives located in common apiaries.

Presidium coordinator: Gebre-Mariam Alem Abraha, tel. +251914711005

## 2. Wenchi Volcano Honey (south-west of the Oromia region)

### Slow Food Presidium

The wonderful crater of the Wenchi volcano, two-hour drive from Addis Ababa, is a ring of steep green sides which surround a deep blue lake at the bottom. Thanks to its warm thermal waters, the entire area has been a well-known touristic destination for a few years now. In Wenchi, an association manages all eco-touristic activities and safeguards and promotes the natural resources of the volcano area. In 2010 a group of 40 beekeepers created the Wenchi Beekeepers Association. The volcano honey - harvested from October to December, at the end of the rainy season - is yellow-amber in color and has a very fine and smooth texture. Its aroma is intense, with floral scents and notes of lightly roasted caramel. Creamy to the palate, it has medium acidity and is mellow and fresh, thanks to the presence of a balsamic note. The main flowers it is made from are *Egynia abyssinica* (Kosso), and *Erica arborea* (Hasta). The honey is partly produced with traditional hives (large cylinders made of interwoven bamboo strips, covered with leaves of false banana and then closed at one end with a round wooden plank), and partly with modern hives.

Presidium coordinator: Miressa Hailemeskel Igo, tel. +251910652023

## 3. Dawro Konta Honey (Southern Nation Nationalities and People region)

### Food community

The Dawro, a mountainous area south-west of Addis Ababa, is an ideal place for the production of high quality honey, thanks to the botanic richness of its forests and its location. For the Kulu Konta people, beekeeping is one of the main sources of income. Traditional hives (kafò), made with interwoven bamboo strips covered in clay and dung, are dried over a fire of aromatic shrubs and thus take on an intense aroma which attracts bees. The beehives are covered with the bark of false banana trees (ensete) and then placed on the trees. When the honey is ripe, the hive is closed and brought to the homes of beekeepers. The first harvest, in November-December, produces the largest yield. This honey is obtained from various flowers, such as wanza (*Cordia africana*) and coffee (*Coffea arabica*). The second harvest, in April-May, comes from eucalyptus flowers and fruit trees such as dokuma (*Syzygium guineense* or water pear). The Dawro community has set up an association of 32 beekeepers; in 2011 a new laboratory for honey extraction and the packaging of honey was opened.

Community technical coordinator: Mattewos Mesele Mara, tel. +251910990533

## 4 Wolisso Honey (South-East area of the Oromia region)

### Food community

In Wolisso – 120 km south-west of Addis Ababa, at 1800 meters above sea level – an association of 15 beekeepers is gradually combining modern beekeeping with traditional honey harvesting techniques. Its aim is to improve the purity of the product and diversify production, making not only tej but also honey, bee-glyce and wax. The honey, made from eucalyptus flowers and local plants such as wanza (*Cordia africana*), is harvested in June and November. It is rather fluid and red colored, sweet and fragrant. Wolisso is in a strategic location: on the national road which goes to the West, it can be easily reached from Addis Ababa and from the road that comes down from the Wenchi volcano.

Community coordinator: Jamal Muzeyin, tel. +251 910294780

## 5 Shalala Honey (Southern Nation Nationalities and People region)

### Food community

In the village of Shalala, at 2277 meters above sea level, in the heart of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People region, beekeeping has ancient origins and is very widespread among the families of the Hadiya, the local ethnic group. In December 2008, 22 beekeepers joined in the Shalala Beekeepers Association. Their honey – yellow-reddish, thick, and very sweet – comes from the nectar of various local plants: sunflowers, legumes



such as *Vicia sinensis*, black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), dokma (*Syzygium guineense*), and more common trees such as eucalyptus. The honey is harvested in June and November. The hives are kept in containers made with interwoven bamboo and covered with leaves. The community also includes a group of women who produce wax and bee-glyce.

Community coordinator: Sumoro Hagiso, tel. +251 910797457

## 6 Horde Honey (Southern Nation Nationalities and People region)

### Food community

Horde is located at about 2000 meters above sea level, on a plateau covered by natural forests which surround the nearby Gomborra falls. In 2010 20 local beekeepers gathered in an association, which the following year built a laboratory for honey extraction. Each producer owns several kafò and the first modern hives have only recently been introduced. The honey, harvested from September to November and from March to June, is made from the nectar of various plants, such as wanza (*Cordia africana*), coffee (*Coffea arabica*), tikur inchet (African *Prunus africana*), and a local variety of *Olinia rochetiana*. It has a red color, a fluid texture and very sweet scents and flavors; it is sold to traders (tej producers or middlemen) in nearby villages such as Osanna and Gomborra. In the past, honey was used for blessing rituals and to show honor and respect, as well as for therapeutic reasons.

Community coordinator: Teketel Wage, tel. +251 910083646