

Anicet Desrochers



When studying and understanding the quasi-organic ties that link bees and nature to the humans who share their every flight, each beating of their wings, and every honey flow, the beekeeper's curiosity takes off. The Desrochers family was first bitten by the beekeeping bug in 1978 when Marie-Claude Dupuis and Claude Desrochers acquired their first beehive in Ferme-Neuve, in the Upper Laurentians. They harvested the treasured honey, turned it into mead —that sweet honey wine—, and developed their craft for over 20 years. The adventure sparked the passion in Anicet and Anne-Virginie, the family's son and daughter-in-law. Hence, a second family farm was established in 1998 (Api Culture Hautes Laurentides inc.) to oversee the family apiary, specialize in rearing queens, and market Miels d'Anicet honeys. To this day, Anicet's sister Naline and her partner Géraud still make DesrochersD mead (<http://desrochersd.com/>) from the family farm. Claude "Papi" has now taken on the role of wise old man, of the grandfather who watches and keeps watch over what happens in his backyard.



The artisans: Anne-Virginie Schmidt and Anicet Desrochers

But who are we? Two honey-crazed epicurean artisan farmers, two curious minds that see in the beekeeping craft the perfect mix of entomology, biology, and botany.

Anicet, aged 38, was born in a beehive. He completed his beekeeping education in Alberta and California universities, and has become one of the country's rare queen rearers. The science of apiology is to him both a labour of love and a means of finding natural ways to reverse the recent worldwide trend toward high bee mortality. Indeed, he selects the hardiest specimens, the ones best suited to their environment. Turning his world-renowned beekeeping expertise to good account, he lends a helping hand every day in the apiary to ensure the health of the bee colonies.

Anne-Virginie, aged 40, traded urban living for farm life. Trained as a chartered accountant, she left her major accounting firm and its high-rise office tower to settle far away from the big cities and pursue beekeeping. Summing up the choice she made for her life, she says she "surrendered to the bees." She is now brilliant at working with honey, turning it into gourmet foods or the body care products sold under the brand name Mélia. She is also working toward developing a honey culture —just as there is a wine culture— and raising awareness about the role of bees in the environment.

The Upper Laurentians | Authentic wilderness

Located 275 km north of Montreal, the farm is nestled at the foot of Devil's Mountain in a rolling countryside sprinkled with natural meadows, forests, lakes, and rivers. This wilderness, forest-covered and free from intensive agriculture, provides an extremely high-quality environment for our 1,200 hives.



The resulting floral abundance makes for healthy bees, with cherry trees and dandelions blooming in the spring; linden, white clover, vetches, raspberry, brassicas, and sweet clover in the summertime; and bonesets, goldenrods, and asters in the fall. The amazing diversity gives Miels d'Anicet honeys incredible texture and complex flavours that change with the seasons.

Vision of beekeeping

Beekeeping is a working partnership, carried out with the utmost respect, between humans and insects—respect for a collective that, through individual work, brings collective magic. Our every action is guided by this vision! The farm's Queen Bee Rearing Centre is working on natural-selection criteria, i.e. hardiness, disease tolerance and adaptability to surroundings and environmental conditions.

Community, knowledge, and honey culture

Over the last 25 years, beekeeping work has changed a great deal. The overmarketing of honey, often imported and packaged by people who have no contact with the bees, threatens their very survival as a species. Treating honey as a mere commodity tarnishes the role of the beekeeper, turning it into honey brokering. Miels d'Anicet does not buy into this approach: respect for the bees and ensuring their survival come first.



We are involved in developing a honey culture, challenging the idea that honey is a homogeneous product that leaves little room for surprise, its main characteristics being that it is yellow, sweet and sold in bear-shaped bottles. Hence, throughout the honeys' preparation, we make sure that our consumers get the purest, healthiest, most delicious of honeys while leaving the smallest environmental footprint possible.

The beekeeper plays an important role in feeding the planet. Around 40% of the food we eat depends on insect pollination, mostly by honeybees. Their role extends far beyond mere honey production.

Laurentian workers

Community, to us, means producing locally, contributing to our vibrant region, and providing quality jobs. It also translates into sharing with the beekeeping community and ensuring its

ty.



We never stop learning. Beekeeping is all at once an ancient art and a modern science. We will keep on studying, building expertise, and paying attention to the wise words of others while also spreading in the beekeeping community the findings of our own research. We will continue to reach out to our customers, to speak publicly about the important role bees play, and to underscore the urgent need to keep honey in its purest, most natural form.

Driven by this enthusiasm and supported by our team, our families, and our friends, Anne-Virginie Schmidt and I, Anicet Desrochers, are deeply committed to this fight to save the bees.

Honeybees, safeguarding the heritage of tomorrow

Honeybees are great bioindicators: they act as barometers of environmental quality. By coming and going between nature and the beehive, they assess the health of ecosystems, taking a biopsy of all they forage, samples of all that surrounds us —plants, water, soil, particles in the air—, and providing us with an imprint of the environment.

The past two decades have seen bee populations decline. The imprint is worrisome, a symptom of the diseased state of the environment and a tell-tale sign of this decline's implications and consequences for biodiversity and human life worldwide.

Impelled by a genuine passion for beekeeping, we are actively committed to saving the bees and showcasing their work. We travel worldwide, eager to bring endless discoveries to our taste buds, make a difference in the fight to save the bees, and find more tools to develop our expertise further.

We are well aware that, despite all the energy we put into it, we will not be able to make a difference on our own. Protecting the bees requires the participation of the entire society! So long as significant changes are not made to our agricultural models, bees will keep on dying. Honeybees are little known insects —despite the fact that they bring colour to our plates and feed us by pollinating more than a third of the food we eat— which explains part of the indifference toward their fate.



The indifference also stems from the unwillingness to change our eating habits and to make environmentally responsible choices that will in turn pressure our governments and the agrochemical industry. It is crucial that political leaders get involved to bring about a movement that will save not just the bees, but all pollinators and ecosystems. We must reconfigure agriculture to harmonize practices, to reassert the importance of diversifying crops, to re-humanize farm work, to reduce monoculture, and to invest in pollinator-friendly sustainable development.

This process must lead to better collaboration between farmers and beekeepers, so realistic solutions are considered and implemented. There is an urgent need to re-think pesticide use and registration and to take action to lessen agriculture's dependence on chemical inputs. Beekeepers can be major players, front-line informants of the direct and indirect impact of sources of pollution affecting honeybees.

We hope for a community that will busy itself like a bee colony to get the job done. The time has come to start sowing life around us again, to make environmentally responsible choices regarding what we put in our plates, how many flowers bloom in our fields, and how we develop our countryside. The earth, which we borrow from our children, deserves our best efforts in making the choices that need to be made to preserve its riches, so our children will be able, in turn, to borrow it responsibly and respectfully from future generations. We should all honour and respect this Native American pearl of wisdom.