



**BELLY UP:** Beekind Honey Shop and Beekeeping Supply Store in Sebastopol has a honey tasting bar where visitors can sample types of California and U.S. honey.

# Honey store offers sweet rewards

By JANE EDWARDS CREED

**H**AVING trouble falling asleep at night? Try swallowing a tablespoon of California honey before you lie down. "It just soothes me right away," says Katia Vincent, who operates Beekind Honey Shop and Beekeeping Supply Store with her husband, Doug, in Sebastopol in Sonoma County.

The Vincents live in Guerneville, west of Sebastopol on the Russian River. They have had their business for four years, and they got started more or less by accident. Now in their 50s, both grew up in the culture of Marin County, just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, in tune with the environment and mindful of everybody's stake in protecting that environment.

The Vincents planted a backyard and garden when they first moved

to Guerneville. They wanted to raise squash, vegetables and fruit trees, but the garden didn't prosper.

## Bee need

"We needed bees to do their thing and pollinate the garden," says Katia. "So Doug read up on the subject, we went away for a couple packages of bees, set up the bees next to the garden — and yes, we saw results immediately."

They added more hives and learned the process of beekeeping by trial and error. "We ended up with a lot of honey," Katia says. "I asked Doug, 'What are we going to do with all this honey?' Even giving to all our friends won't use it up — and the supply increases every year."

They tried selling it at a road stand, but it was too dusty, so they decided to open a honey store. "That was the solution," Katia says, "and that meant finding

a good location, as well as lots of other things in opening a business."

Today the Vincents keep 100 hives themselves and buy honey from local beekeepers. Their son, Coral, works with them. His chores include extracting bees from walls. The family has learned the bee business together. "There's a big difference between bee-having and beekeeping," Katia says.

The Vincents do not use pesticides or blend their honey, as some large producers do. "Each season's honey is different, depending on the amount of rain and sunshine and how things are growing," Katia says. "We don't want to blend and lose those distinct tastes."

Would she do it all over again? She laughs and says, "This business takes a lot of work and a lot of investment. But there's a lot of reward — not the kind you deposit in the bank, but personal

growth and satisfaction. I'd do it again."

On a hot California day, the whole family will enjoy Summer Honey Punch.

## Summer Honey Punch

2 cups boiling water  
 ¾ cup California honey  
 4 cups cranberry juice  
 2 cups orange juice  
 1 cup lemon juice  
 1 quart ginger ale  
 ice cubes  
 shaved lemons, limes, oranges and strawberries

Combine boiling water and honey; stir to dissolve. Chill. In large bowl, mix cranberry, orange and lemon juices. Add honey mixture. Just before serving, add ginger ale, ice cubes and fruit garnish.

Edwards Creed is a principal of California Bounty. Visit [www.california-bounty.com](http://www.california-bounty.com) to learn more.

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