

MENU

How Sweet It Isn't

The dwindling honeybee population might lead to a shortage of ingredients critical to quick-serves.
By Amanda Baltazar

Here's a fact that not many people know: One-third of the food we eat is directly linked to pollination by the humble honey bee. And here's a worrying fact: The honeybee population is dwindling rapidly. What this means for quick-service restaurant operators is that more than 100 foods, from strawberries to soybeans to onions, could be in short supply if this trend continues.

The problem seems to be the result of three factors: The arrival of a lethal honeybee virus to the U.S.; an overload of environmental chemicals; and a shortage of nutritious foods due to urbanization.

Whatever the cause, over the past few winters, more than 25 percent of the honey bees in the U.S. have disappeared. According to Diana Cox-Foster, a professor of entomology at Penn State University, if this continues, honeybees might be extinct in the U.S. by 2035.

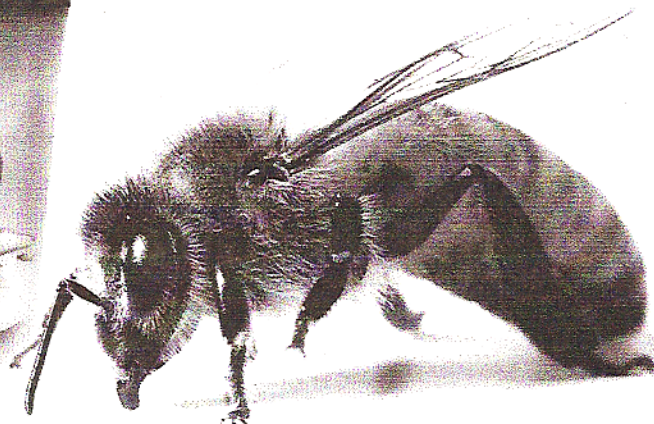
Häagen-Dazs is so worried about the shortage of ingredients that it's taking action to keep the bee population buzzing and pollinating the ingredients the ice cream company needs.

It has launched the "Häagen-Dazs Loves Honey Bees" campaign and created a new flavor, Vanilla Honey Bee. It is also highlighting all its honeybee-dependent flavors (about 40 percent of its line) with a "HD loves HB" icon to promote awareness and sales. The company is using a portion of sales from the products to fund a \$250,000 grant for researchers at Penn State and University of California-Davis to study the phenomenon.

"Our goal is really to get the word out and hopefully solve this crisis. We want to raise awareness so it doesn't mean a massive change to how we live," says Josh Gellert, Häagen-Dazs brand manager.

Häagen-Dazs is hoping to use menu icons in restaurants to highlight its products that are dependent on honey bees. Among those carrying the brand are Hard Rock Café, California Pizza Kitchen, and Ruth's Chris Steak House. ©

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