



Becky Fisher Gerhart, chairperson for the Pennsylvania Honey Queen Committee, shows off beeswax ornaments and candles that she makes. Becky is a former state honey queen who was nicknamed Queen Bee when she was a high school student. Now Becky is working on establishing her business named Queen Bee and Company.

'Queen Bee' Continues Bee Industry Promotion

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
MOUNTVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Becky Fisher Gerhart flits here and there in honey promotion but she's no fly-by-nighter.

After a two-year stint as Pennsylvania Honey Queen in 1980-81, she had only a one-year break before returning to become chairperson of the Pa. Honey Queen Association.

"I believe in the program. It did a lot for me. It gave me more confidence in myself," she said.

But the underlying reason for the efforts Becky contributes to the bee industry is for her father, Merle Fisher.

"Dad has worked so hard for the industry. He has done so much to help many beekeepers get established," Becky said. "I'd like to see the industry really boom."

Her dad is now 76 years old and still raising bees in what Becky refers to as "my parents' beekeeping dynasty."

At one time, her father had 1,200 beehives and was one of the first migratory beekeepers.

The Fisher name is well known in beekeeping circles. Merle was instrumental in reinstating the Honey Queen program in the state. Two of his 10 children and three of his 22 grandchildren have held honey queen and princess titles since 1975.

Becky's brother Dyson now has a bigger operation and travels from Maine to Florida setting up hives. Recently he took a tractor and trailer load of bees to California to work among the almond trees.

Becky's pantry is stocked with honey of all flavors and sizes. Although she does some baking and cooking with honey, she said, "I like every day uses the best. We

(husband Dave and two children) like drizzling it over ice cream, cereal, and sausages. My children love warm milk with honey stirred into it."

She is especially enthusiastic about the new honey sticks marketed by her brother Dyson and his son Wade.

Sold in snack packs, the honey sticks come in multiple flavors.

"Instead of buying flavored teas, use regular tea and stir in a honey stick. It makes regular tea taste like blueberry, lemon, raspberry or whatever flavor you use," she said.

For years Becky has dreamed of starting her own honey company.

"I'm in my element in marketing. I enjoy promotion and maybe it's vain, but I wanted to carry on the Fisher name in honey," she said.

But Becky's dream for her own company has simmered on a back burner because her love for marketing honey is superceded by her love for being home with the couple's two children, Brock, 6, and Drew, 3.

"I don't want a business to interfere with my time with the kids. I'm willing to do with less materially so I can be home with the kids," she said.

Since she has a teaching degree, she does substitute teach occasionally.

Recently, Becky has been thinking of launching a business from her home and naming it Queen Bee and Co.

She said, "When I was in school, my nickname was Queen Bee. I thought it appropriate for a business name that would include selling Fisher honey, honey products, and homemade beeswax ornaments."

Becky worries when funds are low for the Honey Queen program. She said that funding comes from the State Beekeepers' Association, which relies on profits from food stands at Ag Progress and the Pennsylvania Farm Show. Profits have been down in recent years because of weather-related problems.

"It's important to keep the program going. When people have the opportunity to taste the many varieties of honey, they really like it."

She considers it effective marketing for the honey industry.

Here is one of Becky's favorite recipes.

ZUCCHINI SPICE CAKE

- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup oil
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup honey
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Sift flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, and cinnamon. Combine eggs, oil, sugar, honey, butter, zucchini, and vanilla in a large bowl and beat well. Stir in flour mixture. Stir in raisins and nuts. Pour into greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes or until finished.



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