

### Mulmur beekeepers make a buzz with consumers]



Written By **Brian Lockhart**

Mulmur beekeepers Debbie Gray and Jeff Chalmers brought innovative products like dark chocolate and triple lemon honey to the One of a Kind Winter show in Toronto, and their booth became a popular attraction for visitors who wanted a taste of real Ontario honey.

Debbie and Jeff operate the Heritage Bee Co. and offer hive hosting programs, produce Ontario wildflower honey, and also sell liquid, creamed, and infused creamed honey products.

The Heritage Bee Co. has created quite a buzz in the industry. With support from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, they've accessed the marketing support and production technology required to serve an emerging market for tasty, flavoured honey with a longer shelf life.

“The first time we were at the One of a Kind show in Toronto, we had exposure to over 120,000 people, and people were constantly coming up to us asking what other flavours of honey we had to offer,” Jeff said. “At the time, we had a liquid honey and a creamed honey, and we realized there was a huge opportunity for us to develop a whole new product line of flavoured honeys.”

Following advice from their accountant, the beekeepers checked out the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to better understand how it could help them take advantage of their business opportunity.

After attending a Growing Your Farm Profits and Biosecurity workshop, Debbie and Jeff believed their honey marketing opportunity would perfectly fit the program.

Their application was approved, and with support through the partnership, they were able to access technology and marketing support required to create and package their new honey products.

“It was a really exciting process for us, which involved engaging with some of the top graphic design people and packaging experts,” Debbie explained. “Our vision was to create a gift set that actually looked like our hives. It also involved purchasing some quite expensive and intricate creaming equipment to make these amazing products.”

When Heritage Bee Co. launched its new products at the One of a Kind show in November, innovative flavours like ginger, cinnamon, lavender, dark chocolate, and triple lemon honey became huge favourites and were quickly bought up by visitors.

?What began as a simple idea to increase farm gate sales and support efforts at local farmer's markets has grown way beyond expectations,? Debbie said. ?Thanks to the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we've been able to launch new products. We've gone direct to the consumers by enhancing our social media account, we're participating in events such as One of a Kind, and consumers love it. We feel we've filled a market need with some innovative products, and it's all direct from the bees.?

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3 billion investment by federal, provincial, and territorial governments to strengthen the agriculture, agri-food, and agri-based products sector.