

Sweet taste of success

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

There's no mistaking what real honey tastes like.

While some big companies are scandalised by alleged 'fake' honey, Dandenong Market-based Joe Hart is true to his craft.

He travels and works long hours, ensuring his mobile beehives literally follow the seasons.

Through the year, he moves his 700 hives and 37,000 bees to where the gum trees flower across Victoria and Queensland.

At the moment, it's the season for yellow box. Early December for red river gum, the New Year for stingybark and February-May for grey box.

"Most beekeepers move their hives within a 500 kilometre radius depending on the flowering season."

It's hard to describe the difference in flavours, though they undoubtedly tickle the palate in diverse ways.

EAT LOCAL, DINE GLOBAL

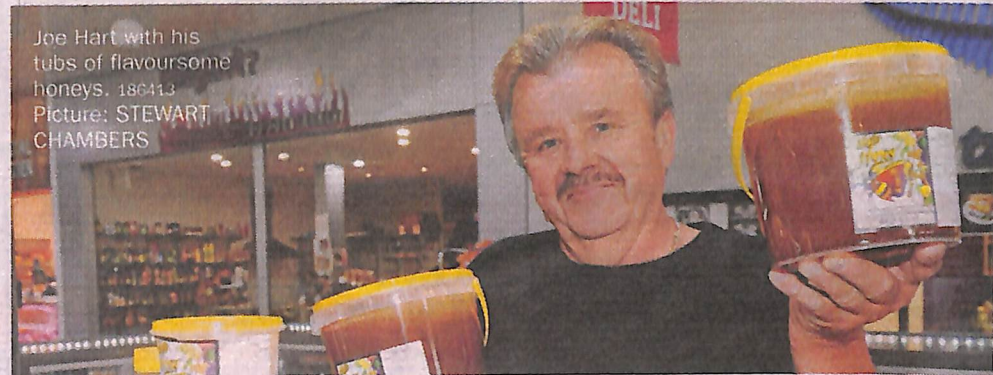
The orange citrus honey has a unique light zest and sweetness.

Mr Hart's favourite, the river gum, has a deeper flavour.

And even richer in texture is the dark, thick honey from the stringybark.

Bee stings are part of the trade. Mr Hart estimates for every 50 hives he opens, he might hit an aggressive one.

He's kept bees his whole life, following in the footsteps of his 90-year-old father who still



Joe Hart with his tubs of flavoursome honeys. 186413
Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

tends a few hives.

The Hart's Honey outlet at Dandenong Market has served his native honeys for 17 years.

Through that time, Australia produces the fourth-largest amount of honey in the world. Its bees have steered clear of the diseases that have wiped out swarms overseas, Mr Hart says.

Mr Hart says he'd prefer not to speculate on why some companies have contaminated their honeys with fake ingredients.

"There's no reason for doing that. Australia is quite a rich environment for honey.

"If you want to keep your customers happy, you should supply them a quality product."