

Organic and unheated honey a natural choice for family business

by Erik Rosenblad

Lina and Eva Norrsell, mother and daughter, actually had their two separate companies for many years. But since one was in the field of honey and apple juice and the other conveniently in the marmalade trade, they decided to team up.

- But we've split up the duties between us since I'm allergic to bee stings, Eva points out.

- And I'm allergic to paperwork, the daughter Lina adds with a smile. Now their company *linas och binas* (*transl.* Lina's and the bee's), once founded by Lina, harvests honey - plus some pollen and beeswax - from around 300 hives and a whopping 24 million honey bees. The bottled and completely raw and unadulterated honey is then mainly sold to customers in the southeastern part of Skåne, where the Norrsell family resides. The production of apple juice, jams and marmalades has been cut back during the latest years, in order to scale up the honey part of the business.

- I had been stirring the marmalade pots for well over thirty years, and felt as if it was time to move on, Eva says.

One way to purchase the products from *linas och binas* is to use their webshop and get a package shipped to the doorstep. But a growing number of customers seem more inclined to have the honey handed over by Lina or Eva in person.

- Today the bulk of our production is sold directly to customers through REKO-rings, with delivery points in the towns of Ystad and Simrishamn. It's a great way for producers and costumers to get acquainted, and for us to raise



Eva and Lina Norrsell in front of a delivery truck.

awareness of what it is we actually do, Lina explains.

The concept of REKO-rings originated in Finland and is a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden. It is best described as a self-organized, grassroots-led food network (ring) where local products are advertised online, often in Facebook groups, and payments are dealt with in advance via mobile apps. In this way, the commerce avoids falling under the legislation of market trade and the physical interaction between seller and buyer is considered a mere delivery of goods. Paradoxically, the pandemic and the required social distancing seem to have motivated people to seek out local produce even more.

- Our sales have increased during covid-19, especially through the REKO-rings. Hopefully the virus, in spite of all the harm it has done, is bringing people to recognize and value products of local origin more, Lina Norrsell says.

For her, organic farming and beekeeping has always been the only option and way of doing things, a message she also tries to convey to her customers.

- I would never think of spraying chemicals in the orchard where many of the bees go to forage, Lina stresses.

Lina and Eva Norrsell have chosen to

certify their honey according to the national KRAV organic standard, which in some ways is stricter than the EU equivalent, and the common choice among organic honey producers in Sweden.

Another way of letting customers get to know the inner workings of local organic honey production, and respond to the seemingly increasing desire amongst people to be more involved in how food ends up on the table, is community supported agriculture, or CSA.

- You pay 600 SEK which guarantees you 2 kg of honey and grants you access to two get-togethers; one in the spring where we take a closer look at the hives and one at the end of summer when we do the harvesting, Eva says.

Looking in to the crystal ball of their business, Lina and Eva Norrsell appear to see a promising future with yet growing demand for their honey. Even so, there are things they would like to improve in their products, especially when it comes to packaging. Now, the honey is bottled in glass jars, but it's not viable for

linas och binas to establish a return system as the legislation concerning cleaning and reusing food cannisters is tricky to live up to.

- Still, there really hasn't been any alternative to glass, since plastic is out of the question for us. But now we've found a company that makes jars from beeswax! Wouldn't that be something!?, Lina asks.



Organic late summer honey from linas och binas.

