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Pot-Honey

A legacy of stingless bees

- ▶ Concentrates on honey and the stingless bees that produce it
- ▶ This work is an effort to bring together experts on Meliponini
- ▶ Updated information, guidelines and references offer scientific background to pursue further investigations and surveys on the most ancient honey of the world

The meliponines, stingless honey-making bees, encircle the tropical world and penetrate every forest there. This book brings together and synthesizes, on a global scale and for the first time, information on these bees as honey producers and natural alchemists. Their ability to store their food in flexible cerumen 'pots' made from wax and resin enables them to produce honey for which the world has no other source. These little known and often rare denizens of remote reaches of the globe have found a way to produce honey and survive in the permanently wet and unforgiving rain forests, since before the continents of Africa and South America split apart 100 million years ago. In Australia, we find them equipped to survive in cold deserts, and in the Amazon some feed within the nests of other social bees, utilize flesh of dead animals, or even live among scale bugs that give them food and building material. Some are obligate parasites, stealing the brood food from inside nests of other meliponines. Pot-honey is a minor honey in the market but a major honey in the forest, produced by many hundreds of flowering plants and demanding integrated conservation. Complementing the unifloral honeys of *Apis mellifera*, many more pot-honeys are yet to be appreciated by the public. The analytical corpus developed to study and standardize honey produced in combs is also valid for pot-honey. Honey ferments inside the nests of Meliponini, and the process continues after harvest. According to *A. mellifera* standards it is spoiled, yet a more medicinal product results and may remodel our concept of honey. As shown here, the meliponines, support a legacy of bees interacting with human culture, traditions, art, science and philosophy.



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