

Book Review

HONEY PRODUCTION. EDITOR, DR EVA CRANE, BEE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION. Pp. 608. London: Heinemann, 1975. Price £15.

This book is written by world experts and covers the whole subject of honey, its plant sources, production, marketing and economics. Its 608 pages include indexes totalling 50 pages and a bibliography of about 80 pages. The indexes are under the headings of subject, plant and author.

This is a well-printed hard-back book copiously illustrated with figures, diagrams and tables as well as several pages of photographs.

The Editor's preface states that the book should be used for reference by those concerned professionally with honey, including food chemists and Public Analysts (these two groups are specified) among others.

Nineteen sectionalised chapters deal with all aspects of honey, its history, production, sale, etc., but I shall deal only with such chapters as are of particular interest to the Public Analyst.

"How Bees Make Honey" written by Dr Anna Maurizio of Switzerland is very concise, yet full, and should be studied for an understanding of some of the work the bee does to get nectar into the comb. "The Composition of Honey" by Dr J. W. White of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and "The Physical Characteristics" by the same author, cover much of what the Public Analyst is interested in, although specific methods for the determination of values are not given.

"The Microscopy of Honey" is dealt with by Dr Maurizio and whilst not illustrating pollens, gives many practical details concerning "melissopalynology" and points a warning to the interpretation of the pollen analysis of honey which has been filtered. Indeed, in Switzerland there is a legal limit for the lowest mesh size to be used in filtration (0.2 mm).

A short chapter is contributed by several authors on "The Biological Properties of Honey" covering the presence of nutrients in honey, anti-bacterial effects and other as yet unproven benefits.

Another interesting chapter is "Wines from the Fermentation of Honey" and this deals fully with mead and production methods including the use of nutrients for particular yeasts. This is, in part, historical and suggests alcoholic strengths attained in former times. It is of interest that 10 per cent. alcohol by volume is the probable figure, not far different from present day mead but the latter is produced under conditions where there are few side reactions.

Despite so many authors and the need for translation in a few cases, the book is of a consistently high standard and eminently readable.

In my opinion the book is good value for the money and of further interest because of the current high price of honey with the associated risks of falsification, and also because of the new EEC Regulations concerning the product.

A chapter, "Honey Standards Legislation", written by Mr A. Fasler, the manager of the food legislation section of Reckitt & Colmans Food Research Department, collates standards and legislation dealing with "standards" (not diseases or hygiene) from many countries across the world and is germane to this topic and worthy of study.

G. V. JAMES