

firmly and cutting it free. This section would be placed in a shady spot and the bees would restore the comb to full functionality by adding extra cells and building up their honey stores.

Honey is ASSAL in Arabic. Local honey is very expensive because it is considered an aphrodisiac. It is usually sold in recycled Vimto bottles for 170-450 Dirhams (£30-80 per bottle). It is invariably runny and of variable viscosity, probably a function of the relatively high ambient temperature and the local taste for a pouring honey. Honey and fresh butter were a favourite accompaniment to breakfast breads.

Purchase in the local suqs is problematic bearing in mind the possibility of adulteration! However occasionally during the winter vendors have honeycombs of the small bee for sale, it is called KURS ASSAL. Sometimes they are whole combs which means that the colony has been destroyed, but there is also evidence that traditional harvesting techniques have been used with just the section wrapped round the supporting branch for sale.

At a promotion in Continent in Dubai a local commercial honey producer, Emirates Honey, had a range of local honey on sale in ¼ Kg. jars. Four different types were available and samples were purchased and tasted. The first three were made from nectar collected from the SIDR tree, *Ziziphus spina-christi*.

SIDAR P40 at 19.9 Dh/Kg was a dark straw colour, had a slight haze and medium viscosity. It had a medium aroma and flowery flavour.

SIDAR P45 at 49.9 Dh/Kg was a dark straw colour with a slight haze and medium viscosity. It had a flowery aroma and flavour.

SIDAR BARRY at 87.5 Dh/Kg was medium straw colour and medium viscosity. It had a moderate flowery aroma and flavour. It was claimed by the vendor to be produced by the Asiatic small bee and hence the higher price.

SAMAR at 87.5 Dh/Kg was a medium red-brown colour with a light haze and medium viscosity again. It had a considerable depth of flowery aroma and taste. Also claimed to be produced by the Asiatic small bee. The bees had harvested the nectar of SAMR, *Acacia tortilis*.

Local honeycomb is occasionally available from the Al Ain suq and costs 30-40 Dh for a plastic bowl full weighing 0.8 to 1.0 Kg. This is produced by the large honey bee. Bees produce the wax for the construction of the comb as scales exuded between the ventral segments of the abdomen.

Honey is 35-40% fructose, 30-35% dextrose and 17-20% water. The balance is made up of pollen, wax, acids, proteins, enzymes, vitamins, minerals and pigments. Colour and flavour depend largely on the nectar source with predominantly single source honeys often having strong colour and flavour, particularly from plants such as acacias, lime and eucalyptus.