

For Immediate Release

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Local Beekeepers Win Again at Mountain State Fair Best-of-Show for Second Consecutive Year

Fletcher, NC – As crowds pour into the 2004 Mountain State Fair in Fletcher over the next 10 days, they will see a familiar site in the beekeeping display – a blue ribbon rosette for Best-of-Show on bottles and jars of beautiful honey. Once again local beekeepers Chris Mathis and N’ann Harp, owners of The Spicewood Farm, have taken top honors at the Fair, this year with a lemony-clear, cut comb honey.

“We’re thrilled,” said Harp. “When we spotted the characteristic pale color of black locust honey in our first harvest, we knew the bees had brought us something special. Late frosts often hit our mountain black locust bloom, so this is a rare treat as well as an honor.”

The Spicewood Farm’s winning entry was selected as Best-of-Show among all entries in six honey-related categories.

“The ribbon is gratifying, especially after another tough year for our honeybees,” said Mathis. “Like many other mountain beekeepers, we harvested only about a third of a full crop because of erratic and rainy weather throughout the summer.”

“Packaging this particular comb honey - to show it off to its best advantage for the Fair - was one of our real challenges,” observed Harp. “Chris and I scoured shops, supply catalogues and web sites with no luck. Then, unexpectedly, we found the ideal solution - a flat-sided, narrow, rectangular, glass kitchen canister - right under our noses. It was holding a collection of small seashells in Chris’ office. We tracked down the manufacturer and ordered a handful of the canisters – *right* before the company went out of business!”

The Spicewood Farm also won a second place ribbon for a unique, 20-inch long, hand-blown Spanish glass rolling pin filled with honey. The cork was hand-dipped in burgundy colored wax.

“N’ann is an avid cook and baker. The glass rolling pin idea was hers. It’s filled with rich, reddish wildflower honey from Yancey County. We’ll be offering this extravagant item as the perfect gift or award for any deserving baker or chef in time for Christmas,” Mathis quipped.

Chris and N’ann manage hives on the former farm of Chris’s grandparents, the late Roy and Evie Mathis of Burnsville. Their products and packaging have won numerous awards and recognitions, including blue ribbons and Best-of-Show at last year’s Mountain State Fair.

The Spicewood Farm products can be found at the Amish Store in Prices Creek in Burnsville, the Asheville Airport Gift Shop, Greenlife Grocery and Grove Corner Market in Asheville, and, soon, via online ordering. Gift-worthy bottles, items small enough to be party favors or stocking stuffers, gift boxes, and corporate gifts are company specialties. They also offer a Honey-of-the-Month Club subscription for honey lovers around the country.

Mathis is the 2003-4 president of the ToeCane Beekeepers and also serves on the Board of Directors for the Buncombe County Beekeepers.