

The Monthly Extractor

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association

*To increase interest in and knowledge of bees and beekeeping for the hobby and commercial beekeeper,
and to educate the general public in the value of bees.*

Volume 28, Issue 1

January 2006

WE WILL MEET ON 2ND MONDAY OF THIS MONTH--MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Jan. 9th-

From Your New President

I'm in my fourth year of beekeeping. I became interested in bees, because of gardening and arthritis. But, there was never a right place or a right time! I got started by buying 2 hives from Vince Detweiler at a garage sale (can you say "fate?") and then came back and got 4 more, so 6 colonies for year number one. With all my bungling and failures, they all made it through the first winter. (too moist, too shady and one laying worker hive to deal with.) Serge, help!!! I printed out his e-mail instructions and took them right out to the hives to "save" that hive. It dawned on me that more people need to help beekeepers get started the easiest way. The way most likely to keep them in beekeeping through their second year. As a newly proclaimed "bee advocate," I wanted to create more beekeepers and teach others about bees and their very important role of pollination and natural medicine." (Yes, I do sting myself for arthritis!)

My mentor is Serge Labesque, who guided me to beeing "beeyond organic." (my name for what I do with my bees!) He impressed on me several things. One was how to trap bees and remove them from walls. Simple, you say? It can be, but it is so much more than that. It taught me to see all that the bees do in a hive... naturally. This has been a fantastic learning experience

that I continue doing each spring. He made me question and he answered.

My second year I offered hives for sale. I made notes of my hives, graded my queens and started using the best queens for egg donors. I did this by hive divisions, ala Serge (do you know about fan division?) AND swarm queen cells, and it kept my hives from swarming and still allowed me a honey crop. I got two more apiary yards. Year number two I went through the winter with 14 hives, that had all been re-queened from eggs from my "queenmothers."

By June '04, when the Farmer's Market starts in Guerneville, Monte Rio and Occidental, I had caught 35 swarms/and/or wall extractions. But, I had a rough two months in late summer. Frank was on the road and I had the whole responsibility of the farm. Plus, I had a girlfriend with a 13 year old daughter, who's husband had abandoned them and they were being kicked out of their apartment in Seattle, who came to stay in July and August. Two months went by and I didn't keep up the grease patties. By the end of August, my hives were absconding from tracheal mites. Only 7 made it through the winter. I suffered severe depression over this. I'm sure some of you who have had losses know what I'm referring to. 8-(

From that 7, I grew to around 80 last summer. I sold 20 nucs and 50 queens. My tours were going well and I have a definite "beeyond organics" following at my markets and farm stand. Right now, I've reduced down from 80 at the peak in '05, to 45 I'm taking through the winter. Looking beyond my first few years in beekeeping, I see myself growing older and unable to do much of the heavy lifting that is required. I thought that moving into

queens and nucs was a partial solution to a body that wasn't cooperating anymore. In August '05 I attended the International meeting of beekeepers, called "Apimondia", in Dublin, Ireland. Talk about inspiration!!! I met so many interesting individuals. And, I found myself reading more of the abstracts from the talks on apitherapy, queen breeding, genetics and bee races. When I got home in September, I had had calls from California, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon and Washington for queens. You can see the light going off in my head about now!!! I had an epiphany!!

So, as I write this, my girls are snug tight in their boxes, it is raining, and I am waxing starter strips of natural foundation in little tiny mini frames, that go in a mini mating nuc for queen breeding. I have 200 of these mini mating nucs. 100 are drawn with comb and ready to go as soon as I get the drone mothers to the special isolated mating yard. I am working out lots of little important details, that one can't find in a book about

bees. I have found another mentor in England who has been queen breeding for 30 years and is active in the use of a computer program guide to morphometry. (a means of determining the subspecies of honeybee colonies, using wing measurements and computers). AI, artificial insemination, is just around the corner for me. My first order is from Scott Nelson for 200 queens in the middle of March. Thank you. Scott, for having faith in me. I think Sonoma County is going on the map as an Italian bee

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President's Message continued

breeding place to watch. 8-)

Yes, I am your president in 2006, after serving as VP for two years. This looks to be an

exciting year for me and you! Help me, please, by telling me what you like/don't like about the meetings, what you want to hear from our speakers. New people, please get involved with our group. Speak up. Ask questions. I am going to announce a bit later a special part of the meeting just for newbees!!! The rest of us. Well, volunteer to be an educational part of our group by attending the fairs and events we are a part of. Let's all get together in 2006 to make the Sonoma County Beekeeper's Association as good as it can be.

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Calendar

Jan. 9- Monthly meeting- Duane Swensen of Mann Lake, Ltd. to come talk about his life experience as a fourth generation beekeeper at the meeting on January 9th. He, his wife Judy and daughter just moved out here to manage the new Mann Lake warehouse in Woodland. He has been keeping his own bees for 15 years in Minnesota (wintering in Mississippi). His family has been a member of Sioux Bee since 1946.

Jan. 20th (Friday evening)Pot Luck Dinner at Ettamarie's 636 Gossage Ave. Petaluma -Graham Law beekeeper from the Midlands in England will be at Ettamarie Peterson's home putting on a special presentation about observation hives. Graham Law is an electronics/software engineer by profession. He was born in Glasgow in 1958 and moved to live in England in 1976. He presently works as the Technical manager at 'The National Space Centre' in Leicestershire.

He was inspired to keep bees by seeing an observation hive at the Scottish Royal Show 1974. Having traveled extensively with work his beekeeping ambition was on hold and he eventually started keeping bees fourteen years ago. For the last twelve years he and his wife Annie have kept an all year round observation hive in their home in the East Midlands and this amusing video presentation of their observations has impressed even the most seasoned 'old hand'.

Graham is a member of the Leicestershire & Rutland Beekeepers Association and is also known as the author of the Honey Bee FAQ found at many web sites around the world including the SBKA and the BBKA.

Take a look at his web site:www.beeginners.info

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SCBA December Minutes-

Gadget night.

Spring Maxfield expressed her gratitude in being our president for the past year and turned her title over to Kathy Cox for 2006.

Mickey Marshall announced her resignation from being our awesome Raffle Chairman for the last couple of years and Leonard Riepenhoff stepped forward to take the job for 2006.

We had a short discussion on moving the meeting to another location and we are still discussing it.

Sean Straw, our 2006 Club Secretary, will establish a domain name for the club and build a web site which he has offered to manage.

The newsletter will be available on the web site which will help to reduce printing and mailing costs.

We no longer have closet space for the library at the Farm Bureau.

Shelly asked if we could discuss returning our meeting to Tuesday nights and Ettamarie reminded her that the reason we switched was because members that attended Farmer's Markets on Tuesdays couldn't make it to the meetings.

A motion was made to become a recognized nonprofit with the official name of Sonoma County Beekeepers Association. The motion was seconded and Serge has volunteered to facilitate the paper work involved.

Some of the gadgets that were shared were as follows:

Bill Cervenka has a dolly with wheels that is 16.25" X 20" with a 2.5" rim. He uses this to put his honey supers on so that they don't drip. The front wheels turn all the way around. He can stack four to five supers on it. Bill also suggested we use A blue tape called "Blue Mask Tape" for labeling boxes. This tape lasts longer in weather to use with an indelible marker so you can erase on it. Bill suggested that folks save their burr comb to make light wax. Bill also uses cedar pet bedding as smoker fuel, cost about four bucks.

Doug Vincent shared his pollen trap contraption idea he got off the internet using a 3" plumbing pipe. It won't pick up chalk brood but does a nice job otherwise. Here is the web page doug used to build his pollen cleaner designed for cleaning birdseed

<http://www.multiscope.com/hotspot/kleener.htm>

Serge Labesque unveiled his pail stand. Two pieces of slanted wood with a strip to hold the honey pail

on a slant. The cork that Serge uses in his feeder is slanted so that the bees can walk down to the level of sugar water in the feeder.

Kathy Cox uses a homemade shaker, made from a half gallon plastic juice bottle, to distribute powdered sugar over her bees.

Eric Oncken uses a simple board for a frame holder, when embedding the wax into the frames. The board is routed out to clamp across to a work bench. Easy to pull a wire across and hand tie 10 frames in about 1 hour. Use a battery charger to tap the electricity across, heat the wax just enough to melt it onto wire.

Fred Nelson suggested using a stainless wire as it doesn't rust.

Bill Cervenka suggested buying a wire embedder from Mann Lake.

Ettamarie brought here uncapping tank that she bought from Dadant a couple years ago. Works great with a window screen under the queen excluder shelf that separates the wax cappings from the honey. She said she just loves it! She uses a Salton warming try to warm the crystalized honey so it will drain out.

SCBA board meeting minutes

Date: 2005-12-19

Meeting at Fred & Donna Nelson's home in Santa Rosa

Attendance:

Sean Straw (2006 Secretary), Ettamarie Peterson (Newsletter Editor), Donna Nelson (Treasurer) & husband Fred, Katia Vincent (2005 Secretary / 2006 Vice President) and husband Doug, Mickey Marshall (Raffle Chairperson) and husband Don, Kathy Cox (2005 Vice President / 2006 President)

Absent: Spring Maxfield (2005 President), out of town

Doug Vincent raised an issue about Copper Gluconate (Cupric, or Copper Salt) as a treatment for Varroa mite. Available in health food stores as a mineral supplement. NOT approved for use in beehives, but there's a report from Czechoslovakia about it's use.

There was a mention of Serge having mailed the articles of Incorporation out to board members, but not everyone has received a copy. Ettamarie will contact Serge.

Kathy mentions that there's space in the LBC. She spoke with a Donna Campbell, president of LBC in the next year. The criteria for use: educational and not-for-profit. The cost issues have not been explored.

Another possibility is using the Calgary Church, which is in Sebastopol, just past the Bradley video.

Katia proposes possibility of obtaining a free airtime radio advertisement through some local stations that may offer announcement time. We could use this to look for a meeting place.

Ettamarie covered some notes from older newsletters which she is planning for the February 2006 newsletter.

Topics for future meetings are bounced around:

Extraction, Wiring Foundation, Equipment, Marketing and Packaging, Replacing Queens, Hive Pests, Hive Division, Swarm Catching, Package Bees, Queen Rearing, 4-H Presentation, Potluck is in November. Serge has classes that start in January so newbie stuff might be best right around that time

Katia made a more complete list and was (as VP), arranging it to produce a meeting topic schedule for the 2006 year. Fred commented about a Professor Emeritus at Santa Barbara who is willing to discuss mites.

Mickey Marshall mentioned possibly not showing up at future board meetings. She was told she would be welcomed at any of them!

8:58 pm

Meeting disbanded.

Donna provided membership roster file to Sean, as well as a printout of the accounting for the NOV-DEC 2005 period.

Respectfully submitted, Sean B. Straw

What's in Bloom

The Eucalyptus and wild mustard are blooming in some areas.

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For Sale

This area is available at no cost for any member to advertise any bee related item to sell, buy, trade or donate.

For sale by Kathy Cox:

2006--5 frame Nucs for sale, price to be announced in January. Deposit required and waiting list sign up is

recommended. The purchase of a nuc includes a 3 hour hands on class. 2006 queens will be available sometime in April. Again, a deposit and waiting list sign up is recommended. Queens are \$19 and \$20 marked. Call 823-2804 to order for 2006 or e-mail kathycoxusa@comcast.net.

Sale at beekind shop

Beginning January 23 beekind shop in Sebastopol will open with a 10% off SALE on all beekeeping supplies (bees excluded). The SALE will run through the entire month of February. We will also be offering other specials on complete hive set ups to be announced soon for the start-up season. We should know the price of package bees by then and expect it to be around 75.00 for a three pound package with a laying Italian Queen. Get on the list now to order in January. (707) 824-2905 The beekind shop will be closed January 15 through the 22 for a much needed rest. Katia Vincent, beekind

beekindbees@aol.com 921 Gravenstein Hwy. South
Sebastopol, CA 95472

For sale, available now Bee Syrup 50% sugar-50% corn syrup. \$3 per gallon (bring your own containers) Bee pollen patties 50¢. Contact Scott Nelson at beekeeper@nelsonfamilyapiaries.com or 799-8902 (Scott's cell phone)

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The postage rates will be higher next issue. You can save the association money on that and printing costs by viewing the newsletter on line. Send an e-mail to Ettamarie at peterston@svn.net and request to be an on-line viewer only. Last month and this month it will be part of www.petersonsfarm.com web site but before you know it we will have our own web site for SCBA! Sean Straw has been gathering photos and has secured our name. He would like bee pictures to add to the site. I have given him photos I have taken at meetings and events and of lots of bees on various flowers. If you can catch a shot of a bee on a flower, let us know what month it was taken so we will start a collection of seasonal blooms bees like.

He can be reached at sean.straw@beekeeping.mail.professional.org

Attention All SCBA members!

It is time to renew your membership.

The swarm hotline list is put together in February so please pay your dues by then and notify Katia Vincent that you want to be included on the list! She needs to know your contact phone numbers, locations where you are willing to go for swarms, times you are available and if you charge. Katia can be reached at the beekind store 824-2905 or e-mail beekindbees@aol.com.

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Bee Trivia

Number of honeybee colonies in the USA: 2 million

Number necessary for pollination of the almond trees now in place: 1.3 million

Number necessary in 2010: More than 1.5 million

Number necessary in 2012: More than 2 million

Percent of colonies damaged by the varroa mite last season in California: An estimated 40 percent.

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Keep Your Colonies Strong!

Keep the Species Strong!

(Part IV: *Getting It Done!*)
By Serge Labesque © 2005

We have seen that building strong and healthy bee colonies can be achieved while relying on local bees, and without using any antibiotics or synthetic chemical compounds to control pests and diseases. This is the direction I have decided to follow. Let me emphasize that I do not consider these choices to be additional burdens or unnecessary challenges in the management of bees. Quite the contrary. In fact, I am convinced that they substantially contribute to successful beekeeping. Indeed, our local bees are well adapted to our area and climatic conditions. Furthermore, some strains have developed remarkable levels of resistance to the pests and diseases we currently have to contend with.

This being said, let's take a look at some of the more concrete aspects of beekeeping.

The placement of my hives is semi-permanent, and I do not practice migratory beekeeping. In spite of this, there may be minor adjustments to the orientation of the hives and an occasional trimming of the surrounding vegetation when necessary. These have shown to be beneficial to the bee colonies, and at times made hive manipulations easier.

Simple but sturdy bases may carry two to three hives side-by-side. Thanks to these stands, the hives they support are somewhat elevated above ground level. The hive bottoms remain dry year round, and preying on the bees by skunks has been eliminated. It is easy to slide the hives laterally and to switch their relative positions on these bases. This feature is of great convenience when equalizing foragers or when dividing and combining hives. I also like to feel the firm base under my feet when manipulating the supers of hives that have become tall.

To a large extent, pest and disease prevention consists of ensuring that the bees are not placed at a disadvantage in their fight against pathogens. This is where a little attention paid to the design and use of our beekeeping equipment comes into play. The hives are meant to shelter the bee colonies from environmental stresses, excessive heat and moisture, carbon dioxide accumulation, and rainwater penetration. They also are to assist the bees in controlling the conditions around the brood nests. I consider it crucial that we provide our bee colonies with an adequate amount of ventilation, year-round. The use of follower boards brings flexibility to the size and configuration of the brood chambers, and, at times, to the honey supers as well. Bees respond positively to the presence of these simple pieces of beekeeping equipment, which allow beekeepers to match the volume of their hives to the strength of the colonies they contain. This amounts to a stress reduction on the bees that is critical during the winter, and through the period of spring build-up.

Screened bottoms are a must. Their trays, removable from the rear of the hives, are also invaluable tools from which beekeepers can obtain valuable information about the bee colonies.

The care of a beehive primarily includes the management of its brood nest and of its queen. It is only after colonies have reached a sufficient strength that we can add honey supers. Indeed, stacking honey supers on weak colonies is a vain exercise and a waste of time. Bees, queens, or entire colonies should never be taken for granted, as they are constantly, and sometimes rapidly, evolving. To strengthen them, or to keep them strong and healthy, requires that they be monitored and actively cared for. So, timely hive inspections and manipulations are very important. This does *not* mean that hives should be frequently and lengthily opened. Remember that each intervention by a beekeeper should be an act that effectively benefits the colony.

A queen should be prolific, laying viable fertilized eggs in abundance. But at certain times of the year it is beneficial that she stop or reduce her egg production. This is the case in November and early December, or in cases of stress-induced diseases. The characteristics of her offspring, whether it is gentleness, pest and disease resistance, or honey production, are important, but only secondary to the queen productivity. I consider that queens that reach one-and-a-half years of age are about to slow down or fail if they have not already done so. For the good of the colonies, these queens should be replaced by younger ones before this happens. The only exceptions are queens whose daughter queens have proven to be excellent. It is preferable to retain these queen mothers as long as

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Keep Your Colonies Strong continued possible to produce young queens, and not so much to manage their colonies as honey producing hives.

By adequately managing the brood chambers of their hives, beekeepers may assist queens in developing their full potential. For example, paying attention to the amount, type, and quality of empty comb available to queens for egg-laying is an important step towards building the population of colonies at the end of winter and in early spring. Just as important are the quantity of stores and their location relative to the brood nests. Such aspects of hive management may even be vital for bee colonies in winter and early spring. Furthermore, the management of the brood chambers is a key element of swarm

prevention during spring build-up.

The routine removal of old and misshapen combs from brood chambers, and their replacement by newer ones greatly helps in preventing diseases.

Every beekeeper develops a set of preferred methods. Here is a partial list of additional procedures which I use in the management of my beehives:

- Horizontal and vertical frame management
- Expansion/contraction of brood chambers, mainly with follower boards
- Reversing brood chamber supers
- Hive division
- Requeening on a yearly basis, or as needed
- Queen selection
- Queen rearing
- Frequent cleaning and scorching of tools and equipment
- Hive combination
- Hive stores management
- Two-queen colonies
- Brood equalization
- Forager equalization
- Swarm prevention and control measures

Most of these procedures are fundamental to practicing the craft of beekeeping. Often, several of these techniques may be used concurrently, and they may achieve multiple goals. The short-term goal is of course the establishment and maintenance of strong and healthy colonies. The ultimate goal is to keep the bee species strong.

After listing beekeeping tools, equipment, techniques and procedures, I must mention what I consider to be of the greatest importance in beekeeping: our mindset. We must have consideration for the bees and their natural life cycle while we take care of them. When we realize that the needs of the bees have to be satisfied first, before any of our wishes, we are in possession of the best beekeeping tool. We find this in our minds and hearts.

By acquiring a little knowledge about bee biology, a little science to figure out when and how to use these techniques, we can reduce the chance factor. The result is strong bee colonies, which are true masterpieces of the art of beekeeping.

Strong colonies send large numbers of foragers to gather nectar and pollen. This means more stores for the bees, and much more honey for the beekeepers. But these immediate benefits pale in comparison to the impact populous hives have on our environment. Indeed, for every additional pound of honey produced, bees have visited another two million flowers on average. This means more pollination, more seeds, more plants, more food and richer habitats for wildlife and humans. What a tremendous contribution to our planet! What a gift! We definitely owe a lot to bees. We have to do our very best to keep the species strong.

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Book Review

<http://bees.library.cornell.edu/>

This is a collection of historical beekeeping books that have been donated to Cornell University and have now been copied so they can be used for research via the internet. It is a free resource made possible by many beekeeping associations and individual donors. Many of the books are rare or one of a kind.

I Learned About Beekeeping From This

Thanks to Shelley Arrowsmith for this lesson.

I have been beekeeping for about six years in our little corner of the county, south of the town of Sonoma. There always seems to be something blooming, even in the dead of winter. In the fall, I would check my bees to find that there was very little activity, no brood, larvae, lots of pollen. I always wondered why there was so much pollen when there was no prospect of bees, no eggs, larvae or brood, probably an out-of-work queen!. I always closed the hive up wondering why.

This year my hives were no different. On checking them, I had 10 or so that were very light, weak of bees and full of pollen. This year, however, I took Serge's class on hive preparation for winter. In his class, Serge

recommended checking for sufficient nectar (uncapped cells of nectar) and feeding bees without sufficient nectar with a light syrup. This light syrup is close to the nectar they are supposed to be collecting at that time of year in order to spur the queen into egg laying action in time for the spring flow.

I checked the hives, adding a 1:1 syrup to the weakest hives first and before I knew it, I had hives full of brood in all stages. The queen had been spurred into action from the addition of the nectar. The bees know they have enough stores to feed the upcoming babies and all is well in the hive.

I circulated the feeders to the next weakest hives and fed them with the same syrup and lo and behold, I have hives full of bees and nectar and capped honey in their hives. Now I have to make sure they have access to the honey by scratching some of the cappings on the edges of the frames next to the brood box, even adding an empty frame or two in the center to give the

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I Learned about Beekeeping continued
queen room to move up.

So, what I learned is that there can be a dearth of nectar in my neighborhood and I have to pay a little more attention and feed the bees when that dearth comes on!

New Year's Resolutions for Beekeepers

1. Check the monitoring boards no less than once a week if possible.
2. Keep better records of what bees are in what hives and what they are doing.
3. Keep track of where I caught the swarms I keep and how strong they were when I got them.
4. Make firewood of old broken frames and make planter boxes out of those rotten hive bodies.
5. Clean out those old black combs and start over with fresh foundation early in the spring while the bees are interested in drawing out comb. (See Serge's article!)
6. Keep better track of how many pounds of honey each hive made.
7. Chris Slade says on the Irish list, "I use this quiet time to review the beekeeping year that is ending; to make an inventory of my livestock and equipment and their locations and honey in store; to plan the beekeeping year ahead including deciding how many honey jars to buy. I usually write it down and sometimes am able to find the bit of paper a year later to compare plans with actuality." Maybe it would be a good idea to have a bulletin board with this on it in the area where we keep our supplies and do our fixing up chores.

January Recipes

Lip Balm for Cold Winter Days

2 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 tsp. honey
3/4 tsp. beeswax-grated
1/2 tsp. cocoa butter
flavored oil of your choice-to taste (I liked the oil of wintergreen I bought at beekind store.)
1 vitamin E capsule (or 1/4 tsp. vitamin E oil)

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Lip balm recipe continued

Place a pyrex or other heat resistant glass dish in a saucepan with water to make a double boiler. Heat oil, honey, wax and coca butter in the glass dish just until melted. Remove from heat and allow to cool for 2-3 minutes. Stir in flavoring and vitamin E. Pour into small containers that have lids. (See more about this on www.liberty4hbees.com's Craft page.)

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Banana Oatmeal Cookies

1 1/2 C sifted all-purpose flour
3/4 C. honey
1/2 tsp baking soda
1 egg
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
3/4 C. shortening
1 C. mashed bananas
1 3/4 C. quick cooking oatmeal
1/2 C. chopped nuts or raisins (or both if you insist)

Preheat oven to 375° F. Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cinnamon. Cream together the shortening and honey; beat until light and fluffy. Add egg, banana, oatmeal and nuts. Mix well. Add dry ingredients, mix well and drop by the teaspoon on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 15 minutes or until edges turn light brown. Cool on wire rack. Store in a closed container.

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Honey Baked Red Onions

from Oct. 1991 issue of the Monthly Extractor
3 Large red onions peeled and cut in half crosswise
1/4 C. water
Glaze
1/3 C. Honey
3 Tbsp butter or margarine, melted
1 tsp. paprika (preferably sweet Hungarian)
1 tsp. ground coriander
1/2 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. red pepper
For garnish: parsley sprig

Heat oven to 350°F. Have ready a baking dish just large enough to hold the halved onions in a single layer.

Arrange cut sides down in one layer in ungreased baking dish. Sprinkle with water, cover with foil and bake 30 minutes.

Meanwhile mix all glaze ingredients until well blended.

Turn onions cut sides up. Spoon half the glaze over the onions. Bake uncovered 15 minutes. Baste with remaining laze and bake 15 to 20 minutes longer until onions are tender when pierced.

Makes 6 servings.

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Headache Prevention and Cure
from the National Headache Foundation

Eat two tablespoons of honey on a cracker, before or after drinking. Honey supplies fructose, which helps the body metabolize alcohol. Editor's Hint: Use a big cracker for this one or your next headache will be cleaning up the drips unless you used set honey on that cracker!