

Tasting sweet success

A POOLING of skills and talents has enabled two Horsham Downs families to establish their own honey product business.

Stephanie and Martin Lynch moved on to their 4.2ha block north of Hamilton in 2002. Martin is an electrical engineer and inherited a small number of beehives from his father. The couple built up the number of hives to about 30 and collected bee pollen to sell to Comvita.

Then Miriam and James Discoll moved in next door. The families got to know each other and, it turned out, James had worked in the bee-keeping industry for years.

A plan was hatched; while the men would handle the practical stuff with the bees and hives, the women contributed their collective business and marketing skills to product development.

Last year Vitality Honey was formed as a company with \$15,000 in equipment and capital contributed between the parties. The number of hives was boosted to 100.

About 70 of the hives were transported to a family member's farm in the backblocks of the Marokopa Valley where the bees feasted on the blooming flowers of the heketara or daisy tree earlier in the



SWEET: Vitality Honey partners Stephanie Lynch and Miriam Discoll with a selection of their products.
Photo: SHANE MORTON

season, and masses of manuka later on. The heketara is known to flower profusely with the onset of a long and dry summer – so the 2007-2008 year produced a bumper crop of honey.

The later part of the season produced a mix of manuka and white rata also from the Marokopa area.

Miriam described the heketara honey as a "fine and subtle honey, not as sweet as clover and not as strong as manuka".

"People are beginning to appreciate the differences in honey and to understand monoflorals, rather than blends," she said.

Closer to home, the hives produced honey sold as Farm Blend – from nectar

gathered from clover, thistle and buttercup.

The hives were constructed with a trap to collect bee pollen, now packaged and sold in its dried or raw form and prized for its vitamins, minerals, anti-oxidants, amino acids and proteins.

The pollen is used in a wide range of ways – as something to sprinkle on the morning cereal through to a dietary supplement.

The family-based business has sold the pollen since last year and went into commercial retail from about March this year, making its first entry to the

Hamilton Farmers Market in May.

The enterprise produced more than three tonnes of honey this year, and one of the good things about the sticky stuff was that it keeps almost indefinitely.

Additional uses and outlets for other by-products such as the antiseptic propolis, and beeswax, were being considered.

Honey products is a regular at the Hamilton Farmers Market. The market is held in the Wintec carpark corner Tristram St and Collingwood St, every Sunday, 10am-1pm.

Anyone interested in contacting Vitality Honey can ph (07) 829-4405. www.vitalityonline.co.nz or email info@vitalityonline.co.nz.

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