



# LYNNE BOTTAZZO: FROM OPERA SINGER TO HONEY MAVEN, SHE'S THE QUEEN BEE

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*By Ann Parker, Sentinel Correspondent – December 8, 2008*

**Lynne Bottazzo is a buzzword. Her “Amen Bees” honey has been sold for the past 20 years at Whole Foods, starting with its first store in Palo Alto.**

She has 500 to 800 hives in various locations. And Bottazzo's booth at the Aptos Farmers Market displays a plethora of apiary products, from bee pollen and pure beeswax votives to a dizzying variety of honeys. Her sweet life also includes raising chickens and grass-fed beef cattle — and eight beloved Labrador retrievers — on 16 acres in San Martin. “I try to live as holistically as possible,” she says. Her husband, Pietro, died nine years ago.

A former opera singer, Battazzo trained and lived in Italy for several years and speaks three languages. “I started singing when I started speaking,” she says; her pianist mother, now 91, taught her songs in Italian. Lynne's father was a produce vendor, delivering vegetables door-to-door in wealthy San Francisco neighborhoods. “At 95, Dad's still enthusiastic and knowledgeable about produce,” she marvels.

She's passionate about research and education, including translating an Italian article about bees and doing research on the devastating hive phenomenon known as “colony collapse.” Her teaching ranges from formal seminars to innumerable conversations at the market, extolling the importance of bees and the healing qualities of their products. Three of her honeys — carrot, broccoli and pomegranate — are currently part of an antioxidant cancer research study. Lynne says she dreams of helping to find holistic treatments for cancer other than chemo and radiation. “I think that bees are very much a part of man's future.”

Although beekeeping was part of her family ancestry, Lynn laughs, “I hated clover honey as a child.” Her personal connection began in Italy when her husband, also an opera singer, asked her to find something sustaining but not filling — and she discovered honey products.

She speaks of her bees in affectionate, respectful terms, describing using only essential oils and feeding them raisin syrup. “My partner, Roger, manages the hives — it's a lot of work,” Lynne says. “I've been moved to tears when we lose one.”

Has she ever been stung? “Numerous times,” she shrugs. “After the '89 earthquake, four-story hives fell and I was working while standing in bees. But generally if I'm calm, they're calm.”

Bottazzo enjoys her educational role, saying, “The Aptos market is a wonderful way of teaching people about bees and hive products.”

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## LYNN BOTTAZZO

**BORN:** Sept. 26, 1941, in San Francisco.

**LANGUAGES:** English, Italian and Spanish.

**SONS:** Paolo, 31, and Marco, 34, both born June 3.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:** ‘The ABCs of Beekeeping’; ‘The Hive and the Honeybee’; ‘The Queen Must Die’; ‘A Spring Without Bees.’

**A FEW OF HER 15 HONEYS:** Wild raspberry, pine, sage, huckleberry, poison oak, garlic, fireweed, apricot brandy.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:** Plant bee-friendly gardens; don't use pesticides or flea collars.

**ONLINE INFORMATION:** [www.montereybayfarmers.org/aptos\\_vendors/amenbee.html](http://www.montereybayfarmers.org/aptos_vendors/amenbee.html)