



Winter 2018 Edition

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORBAY BRANCH,
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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Torbay Branch web site: www.tbbk.co.uk

EDITOR'S WELCOME

I'm writing this on a stormy, winters day, thinking about Christmas, and wondering how the bees are doing out there. The temperatures are not too bad, but the wind and rain will certainly prevent the bees from venturing too far away from their cluster. There is never really a time of rest for the beekeeper, even in the darkest winter months, a time for contemplation and planning... Do they have enough stores? Did I secure mouse guards to the front of all our hives? Do I need to move any of my hives next year? And a time for compiling the Buzz newsletter for the Beekeepers of Torbay!

One event which occurred recently was the Christmas Social which took place on the 10th December at St Pauls Church Hall, Preston, Paignton. It was well attended and there was lots of delicious food, some generous raffle prizes and a fun quiz hosted by Vice Chairman James Schindler-Ord. It was lovely to see new and 'more seasoned' beekeepers there, including Doug Westaway who used to edit Buzz.



In this edition the 'Beekeeper's Top Tips' come from our own Chairman, Liz Westcott, again proving that there are many beekeeping related activities to keep us busy throughout the winter. There is another competition, and details of who won the last one! Scroll down to find out who won. Also, there is an interesting article about how scientists are developing a vaccine to help prevent American Foul Brood, and possibly other bee diseases.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a very **Happy Christmas and New Year**, and hope that 2019 is a happy and successful beekeeping year for you!

Chairman's Chat

December 2018

Another year draws to an end and, looking back, I think it has been a very good one. Our local beekeeping association has grown in number and, more importantly, our new members are enthusiastic about keeping bees and looking forward to setting up their own apiaries. This is a direct result of running our Introduction to Beekeeping course which starts each January and continues at the apiary when it opens in the spring. We had twenty-two people complete the course and most of them have gone on to keep bees. Then we had three beekeepers attend the course to prepare them for the Basic Assessment and all three passed. We also ran a Study Group for Module one. Four people attended and two took the exam - they are awaiting the results, but I am sure they will pass. More study groups and courses are planned for next year so please find the level you are interested in and join us.

This last year we have been thinking carefully about building a new club house. We are at the exploration stage and are planning to look other associations' club houses in order to get some ideas. No doubt we will be looking for ways to raise funds so if you have any good ideas please share them with us.

This year has seen further incursions by the Asian hornet - both in the UK and in the Channel Islands. Gerry and Judith flew to Jersey to help track and catch the Asian hornets that are starting to become established there. This experience will stand us in good stead when we eventually have to face the problem ourselves. In the meantime, Gerry has ensured that we are well equipped with all the resources we need to protect our bees and track Asian hornets. Devon and Torbay are working hard to ensure that members of the public know what to do if an Asian hornet is spotted and hopefully we will be able to hold them back for as long as possible.

On a sad note, at the end of this year we lost our friend and beekeeper, John Vyle. John was always ready to offer insight into a tricky beekeeping situation. He had the gentlest sense of humour and laughter was never far away when John was around. Beekeeping associations like ours don't just drop out of the sky, they are the result of all the hard work of all the beekeepers that have gone before. John Vyle's father was an enthusiastic beekeeper before him and an active member of Torbay BKA. John was of the generation that worked with Ron Brown whose beekeeping expertise was acknowledged nationwide. All these beekeepers worked hard, reflected on their beekeeping craft and passed their experiences on so that we can benefit from them today. Other names also spring to mind - Kingsley Law, Maurice Satterley, Jack Berry, Peter Tattersall, Jim Mogridge, Douglas Westaway and Russell Beach. They certainly taught me all I know, and I hope that I too can pass it on to the members who join today.

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the Christmas Social - the first one I have ever missed. Family commitments and my two week old granddaughter take me away. However, I may see some of you at the Devon AGM in Plymouth on 15th December. If not, I hope to see a lot of you at the South Devon Honey Show on 5th January at the Methodist Church, 40-42 Fore Street, Totnes. If you are entering any of the competitions you will need to be there for about 9.30 am (doors open at 9.00 am) and the judging starts at 10.00 am. There is a trophy to be won for the Novice from Torbay who gets the most points. There are also trophies for the Torbay members who get the most points in the Honey section, the Wax section and the Cookery section. The first winter meeting of the New Year will be on Monday, 14th January when Glyn will be talking to us about Reproduction in Honey Bees.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a wonder new year of beekeeping.

Liz Westcott
Chairman

DIARY DATES

South Devon Honey Show

January 5, 2019, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Totnes Methodist Hall, 40-42 Fore Street, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5HW

More Information will be available closer to the date, keep an eye on Totnes & Kingsbridge Beekeepers website.

Introduction To Beekeeping Course 2019 Session 1

January 7, 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

St. Pauls Church, 19 Locarno Ave, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2DH

This year we are offering an eight week course, one year's membership to the British Beekeepers Association (which includes membership to the Devon Association of which we are a branch), plus hands on experience...

Branch Winter Talk

January 14, 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

St. Pauls Church, 19 Locarno Ave, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2DH

Speaker: Glyn Davies Bee Sex. Part 2. The Mating Process - Evolution and Consequences

Introduction To Beekeeping Course 2019 Session 2

January 21, 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

St. Pauls Church, 19 Locarno Ave, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2DH

Introduction To Beekeeping Course 2019 Session 3

February 4, 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

St. Pauls Church, 19 Locarno Ave, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2DH

Introduction To Beekeeping Course 2019 Session 4

February 18, 2019, 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

St. Pauls Church, 19 Locarno Ave, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2DH

TOP TIPS FOR WINTER

Winter is no reason or season to forget about our bees, there are certainly many things to be thinking about and doing while nature rests in the darkest, coldest months of the year. This edition of Buzz's Top Beekeeping Tips comes from **Liz Westcott**, Chairman of the Torbay Branch.

Winter Tips for Torbay Beekeepers

Tip 1 In the cold weather the warm air in the hive rises and condenses on the underside of the roof. This can then make the inside of the hive very damp. As any experienced beekeeper will tell you, it is damp that kills bees not cold. So you really want to be able to keep the inside of the hive as dry as possible. We can do this by absorbing the humidity before it condenses on the cold surfaces. The best way to do this is to put scrunched up newspaper in the cavity between the crown board and the roof. The newspaper absorbs the damp and prevents it from dripping

down on the cluster. Another way to achieve this is to line the inside of the roof with carpet. This insulates the inside of the hive, absorbs the damp and makes sure there is no cold surface on which the humid air can condense.

Tip 2 At various intervals through the winter the beekeeper should heft the hive to ascertain how heavy it is and whether there are enough stores to get the bees through to spring. If you are in any doubt that there are enough stores to get the bees through the winter, then fondant should be fed. I make my fondant from icing sugar mixed with a few tablespoons of warm water. 1 kg of icing sugar to 100 mls of warm water. Mix the water into the icing sugar with a knife until the mixture is the same consistency as pastry. Wrap in cling film to stop the fondant from drying out and going hard. Peel back one side of the cling film to expose it and put it exposed side down, facing the bees, over the hole in the crown board. Check at regular intervals to ensure that there is enough fondant to feed the bees until the weather is warm enough for them to go out and forage.

Tip 3 Winter time is a good time to check that your supers and spare brood boxes are clean and in good condition. If there is brace comb, wild comb or propolis on the tops or underneath frames now is the perfect time to clean them up. In the cold weather the wax and propolis become brittle. When it is scraped with the hive tool it comes away clean, whereas when the weather is warm and the wax and propolis is warm it simply spreads when scraped with the hive tool.

Tip 4 Supers should be kept in a cold, dry environment, preferably where they will be exposed to temperatures below zero as this will kill any wax moth larvae. Don't be tempted to leave them out in the apiary over the winter. If the wet penetrates into the super and the frames get damp, they will turn black and mouldy and will be unusable.

Tip 5 Dry, sunny days in winter are perfect for apiary maintenance when the bees are clustered in the hive and keeping a low profile. Cut back shrubs that have become overgrown through the summer, check for bramble and stinging nettles and, if possible, pull them out by the roots. Make sure paths are maintained and steps are safe - this is particularly important for when you are taking honey off and you need to make your way quickly and safely to your vehicle with a heavy super.

Tip 6 You can now turn your attention to all those wax cappings you took off when processing your honey. If you are busy like me, they are probably still in a bucket or plastic box somewhere. After letting my cappings drip for a day or two I then washed them in cool water, strained the liquid and used it to make mead. I now have washed cappings ready to turn into good quality wax. You can either use your wax to exchange it for foundation with any of the big Bee Supply companies. Or,

you can make candles to give as Christmas presents or use the wax to make lip balms and skin creams. It is too valuable a commodity to allow it to go to waste.

Tip 7 *Having made good quality wax, think about how you will enter it for the South Devon Honey Show in Totnes on Saturday, 5th January. There are several classes - five x 25g blocks of beeswax (you will need to buy a mould from Thornes), one cake of beeswax with minimum weight 225g (make sure your mould doesn't have writing on the bottom) or a matching pair of candles. For a Novice (someone who has never won a prize at a Honey Show before) there is a class of one candle - so you don't have to worry about getting them to match. Of course, if you weren't lucky enough to get enough cappings to make a candle, you can always enter one of the other classes - cookery, photography, craft or honey.*

Tip 8 *Now that you are not out tending to your bees, think about using the time to improve your knowledge and expertise as a beekeeper. Torbay BKA will be running Module study groups in the New Year. We shall be looking at Modules One and Six. Module One is general beekeeping and Module Six is entitled Bee Behaviour. You wouldn't believe how interesting these are! To take the Module exams you need to have passed your Basic Assessment which is taken one year after you have started keeping bees. We shall be running a course in the spring to prepare beekeepers to take their Basic Assessment. We are starting the Introduction to Beekeeping Course on Monday, 7th January. Any beginner beekeepers who did the course last year and would like to repeat it again this year - and many do - can do so for half price of £60. Or, of course, you could just buy a good book on bees and read it. Jurgen Tautz, The Buzz About Bees - a fabulous book about bee behaviour. If you just want a light read then try Dave Goulson's two books - A Buzz in the Meadow or A Sting in the Tail.*

Tip 9 *Think about how you are going to market your honey or package it to give to friends. Design a nice label to put on your jars and then enter it into the South Devon Honey Show, Class 7 - 'two jars of the same honey with home-produced label for sale.' You will need to check the rules and regulations for sale of honey. It should include contact details of producer, country of origin, weight and an accurate description of where it is from eg Brixham Honey or South Devon Honey. Look at any honey label and you will see what you need.*

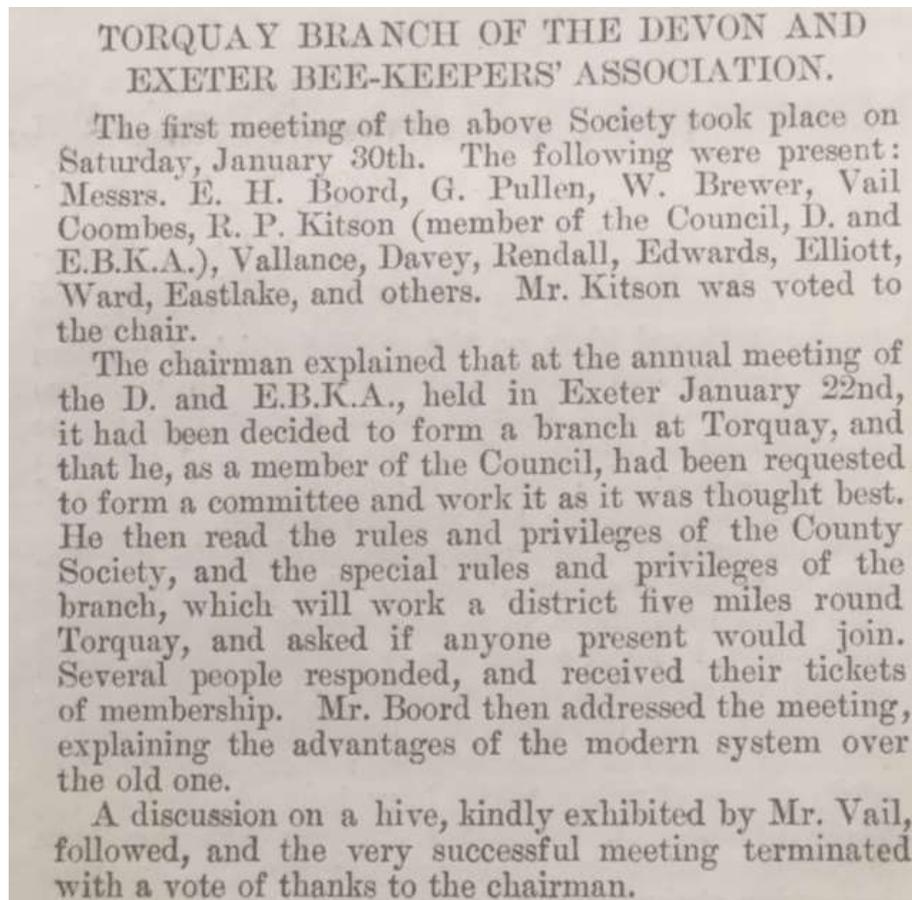
Tip 10 *Meet with other beekeepers and talk about bees! The best place to do this is at the winter meetings held by local beekeeping organisations. If you look in the back of the Devon Beekeeping magazine it lists all the meetings held by the various branches and the speakers they have booked. It will also give you a title of the talk, so if you see something that interests you go along and enjoy it. It is advisable to*

telephone the Branch Secretary to let them know you will be coming. You will be made very welcome.

TORBAY BEEKEEPING HISTORY

Glyn Davies found this very interesting clip in an old edition of the British Bee Journal. Glyn said:

"I found this clip in a copy of British Bee Journal. March 11 1886. It makes TBKA. 134 years old. Problem is I wouldn't then qualify for membership on grounds of residency. I wonder if the Mr Vial is related to the John Vyle whose memorial chair we have at the apiary."



I'd love to know what the 'modern system's advantages are over the old system'! Glyn also came across an interesting account:

"The County Show in 1886 was held in Lynton on August 2nd. And there was a prize for 'The best skep of bees' won by a Mr Antell who also came Joint second in the class for 12 sections of honey. He must have been a good skep beekeeper with plenty of others still around."

Thank you Glyn for these very interesting contributions, it is always interesting to hear about the history of beekeeping, especially local history. If you have any interesting beekeeping related historical facts, photos or documents, please email me at jane@jso.me.uk for inclusion in Buzz Newsletter.

RESEARCHERS CREATE HONEY BEE VACCINE FOR AFB

The compound protects against the American foulbrood disease, but the same technique could lead to protection against other major pathogens

Vaccines are one of humanity's greatest medical breakthroughs—ridding the world of smallpox, limiting outbreaks of mumps and measles and putting polio on the ropes. Now, reports Bill Chapell at NPR, researchers are hoping to harness the power of vaccines for the first time to help honeybees, which are currently being bombarded by a long list of threats.



Vaccines in non-human creatures are not new—any responsible pet owner has taken their dog or cat to the veterinarian for plenty of rabies and Lyme disease vaccinations. Inoculating an insect, however, is very different. In typical vaccines, either a dead or weakened version of a virus is introduced into an animal, whose immune system is

then able to create antibodies to fight the disease. Insects, however, don't have antibodies, meaning they don't have the same type of immune response as we do.

Biologist Dalial Freitak of the University of Helsinki, the study's author, found that when a moth was exposed to certain bacteria, usually through eating it, it was able to pass down a resistance to the bacteria to the next generation. She met with Heli Salmela, also of the University of Helsinki, who was working with a bee protein called vitellogenin that seemed to trigger the same reaction to invasive bacteria in the bees. The two began using the protein to create an immune response in the bees against American foulbrood, an infectious disease that is harming bee colonies across the world.

The vaccine helps the bee's immune system recognize harmful diseases early on in life, similar to the way antibodies in the human body recognize diseases. When the queen bee consumes foulbrood bacteria, the vitellogenin protein binds with the pathogenic molecules, which are then passed along in her eggs. The developing baby bees' immune systems then recognize the foulbrood bacteria as an intruder, setting off an immune response that protects the bee from the disease.

The result is a vaccine against foulbrood the team is calling PrimeBEE. The technology is undergoing tests, so it is not yet commercially available. The team has also yet to decide if the vaccine will be delivered by feeding queen bees sugar patties or if they will send out queen bees that have already been inoculated against the disease.

Whatever the case, apiculturists are excited to have a new tool to fight foulbrood. Toni Burnham, president of the DC Beekeepers Alliance in Washington, D.C., tells Chappell acquiring foulbrood means a bee colony has to be destroyed. "It's a death sentence," she tells Chappell. "If a colony is diagnosed with AFB – regardless of the level of the infestation – it burns. Every bit of it burns; the bees are killed and the woodenware burns, and it's gone."

The team says that the new technique could be used for other bee pathogens as well. "We need to help honey bees, absolutely. Even improving their life a little would have a big effect on the global scale. Of course, the honeybees have many other problems as well: pesticides, habitat loss and so on, but diseases come hand in hand with these life-quality problems," Freitag says in the press release. "If we can help honey bees to be healthier and if we can save even a small part of the bee population with this invention, I think we have done our good deed and saved the world a bit."

Bees could certainly use some good news. Since 2006, and perhaps a little before that, honey bee colonies began to experience something called Colony Collapse Disorder, in which hives would dissolve over the winter months. Researchers looked for causes from pathogens to pesticide exposure, but were never able to figure out exactly what was plaguing the bees. Though the problem has gotten better in recent years, the prospect of losing our bees, which pollinate lots of fruits and nuts, showed the world just how important our buzzy little friends can be.

<https://tinyurl.com/ybp36lvx>

Please send all contributions for Buzz to jane@jso.me.uk

Stories

Poems

Recipes

Photos

Top tips

Ideas

Drawings

Crafts

Anything bee related!

Contributions from all ages welcome!

WATER BEES - BY CARL ANSELL

The phone burst into life rather early for a Sunday, the chap on the end of the phone apologised for the rude awakening, but could I attend what he thought was some bees on a boat in the harbour? The date was the 24th June and after some further questioning, I thought it could be interesting to check out his unusual story and proceeded to Kingswear for a rendezvous with the harbour assistant and a trip to a Crab fishing boat to see if they really were bees?

The owner of the Crabber apparently wanted to put to sea, but gave up on the job when he caught sight of his new 'crew mates' and called the Dartmouth harbour authority to see if they had any ideas? Perchance, one of the staff on duty knew me (one of my old shipmates) and called to request the extra crew be removed post haste.

It's rather odd, donning one's bee suit, and a life jacket at 8 o'clock on a Sunday morning!.....still, it was a beautiful day, and in next to no time, I was whisked out by the authority launch, to the middle of the harbour (on a floating pontoon), to gather a rather pleasant, albeit sleepy, bunch of bees! Indeed, despite being hung up from the night before, and being surrounded by water, they amiably walked up into the skep when encouraged, by a few gentle puffs of smoke from the smoker.



The equipment they decided to hang onto, is a part of the winch hauling system, which serves to pull the crab pots up from the sea floor by means of a small rope which is firstly put onto the open pulley at the end of the arm (below where the bees are clinging) and from there to the winch drum, which would be spinning to put tension on the rope and so, bring the crab pots to the surface of the water.



Having collected my prize, both the bees and myself were then safely put ashore at Hoodown (Kingswear) and thence off to my apiary at Churston.

As always, it is such a delight to 'pop' the bees onto a running in board and watch them march up and over each other in a race to gain entry into a bait hive, (which I always have ready for such occasions). Naturally, a couple of jars of honey were then donated to the crew staff room, to remind them of a different start to their day (and mine!). Although they didn't produce any surplus honey this year, they developed into a very nice 'round' colony which needed no feeding for winter and, who knows, may turn out to a quality colony for next year!



Carl Ansell

The South Devon Beekeepers Conference

Sunday, 4th November 2018

Report by Liz Westcott

Another excellent conference was held at Kevics in Totnes recently with first class speakers! Claire Barker started the day with a superb talk on everything one needed to know about the basic principles of making cosmetics. She explained the importance of using preservatives if the recipe contains water, the difference between a cream and a lotion, and defined a serum, a gel and a balm. We learned about the things not to put in your lotions - parabens, SLS's, mineral oils and lanolins.

Claire finished with the long list of requirements needed to comply with the Health and Safety demands on those who wish to sell their products of the hive. Not only does it entail a lot of paper work and form filling, it can also be rather expensive. Certainly, if you have any aspiration to make and sell creams and soaps then this was tailor made for you.

Professor Keith Delaplane gave an in-depth account of the honey bee as a superorganism. A couple of key points from Professor Delaplane's talk were that:

1. If you want to make increase within your apiary you should breed from the existing stock and not bring in new queens.
2. In Professor Delaplane's opinion, the honeybee superorganism lives for only about five years. Certainly, as a beekeeper, I notice the cyclical nature of how the colony prospers. The first two years the colony seems to be building. The next two years the colony is strong and does well. Subsequently, the colony seems to struggle and dwindle somewhat.

In his second talk, Professor Delaplane talked about genetic diversity in honey bees and how this had made possible all the different layers of variation in the bees nest. It is the exact opposite of how farmers have honed in on desirable attributes in livestock and bred to improve specific aspects such as lean muscle or good quality wool. Honey bees have ensured that there is as much genetic variation within the hive in order to promote a maximum skill set to carry out all the various jobs which ensure the colony's survival. As would be expected, Professor Delaplane's talks were at a very advanced level and a good understanding of every aspect of the honey bee was necessary to keep up with him. However, it was extremely interesting, and I learned a lot.

For the beekeeper who is new to the craft, Andy Willis's account of how he fell into beekeeping through his gardening job was an easy to understand, interesting stroll through his experiences as an up and coming beekeeper. This was as simple to understand as Keith Delaplane's was complicated and gave a subjective view of beekeeping for beginner beekeepers. We were entertained and regaled by his experiences as he learned how to keep bees and mastered the craft of beekeeping.

As in previous years, South Devon Convention ensured a day of engaging speakers who enjoy their craft and are delighted to share their experiences with their fellow beekeepers. Lunch was a delicious pasty. There were different stalls selling a variety of goods for the beekeeper. Next year, don't read a write up in the magazine about how good the conference was. Buy a ticket, attend and find out for yourself.

COMPETITION TIME!!

The winner of last season's competition, which was drawn out of James' motor cycle helmet as we didn't have a hat to hand, is **Andy Bullen** who answered correctly that the picture was the top handle of a smoker. Congratulations! You have one a pack of 10 sheets of super foundation and frames (national or commercial).



This season's competition question is...

Approximately how fast does the honey bee fly?

The correct answer drawn out of a hat (or helmet!) on 15th February 2019 will win a bee related prize!

HONEY RECIPES

Honey and Whiskey Truffles

These dense, sumptuous truffles are straightforward to make and provide a special after dinner treat. Try this recipe with different chocolates and honeys and you will find significant variations in flavour. Heather honey is a good choice, not least to accompany its compatriot, Scotch whiskey.

Makes about 30

Ingredients:

200 g / 7 oz dark chocolate, broken into pieces

100 g / 3 ½ oz unsalted butter

3 Tbsp double cream

2 Tbsp whiskey (or other spirit)

2 to 3 Tbsp honey

Unsweetened cocoa powder to coat

Instructions:

1. Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl with the butter, cream and whiskey. Place over a pan of simmering water and heat gently, stirring occasionally until the chocolate has melted and everything has come together. It is important that you do not overheat the bowl, so make sure the water doesn't bubble up. (If the mixture does separate, cool the bowl by putting the bottom of the bowl in cold water and place in the fridge for 10 minutes)

2. Stir the honey into the melted mixture, to taste, remembering that the flavours get less strong as they cool and chill. The amount of honey will depend in what kind of honey, chocolate and to a lesser extent, spirit that you are using and how they balance together - any excuse to keep tasting!
3. Leave the mixture to get cold, then cover with clingfilm and put in the fridge for at least two hours to harden.
4. Cover the bottom of a small plate with cocoa powder. Take a teaspoonful of the truffle mixture and use your hands to mould into a rough truffle shape - these are truffles as if from the earth, not the perfect circles of confectioners. Roll the truffle in the cocoa powder then transfer to a plate. Repeat with the rest of the mixture.

These will keep in the fridge, covered, for a week or two.

Polish Honey Spice Cookies (Pierniczki)

Traditional Polish cookies flavoured with honey and spices.

Yield 3- 4 dozen medium sized cookies

Ingredients:

1 cup honey
4 cups all-purpose/plain flour
4 eggs
1 cup soft dark brown sugar
pinch of ground black pepper
½ tbs ground cinnamon
½ tbs freshly ground nutmeg
½ tbs ground cloves
½ tbs ground allspice
1 tbs baking soda

300 g chocolate, white and/or dark chocolate (for decorating)

Instructions:

1. Heat the honey in a small saucepan until it just begins to boil. Take the honey off heat and allow it to cool slightly.
2. Combine the eggs and sugar in a bowl beating until it is slightly thickened. In another bowl, mix together the flour, spices, and baking soda and slowly add the egg and sugar mixture while beating rapidly. Ensure that dough does not have any lumps. Pour in the lukewarm honey and mix together until smooth.
3. Cover the dough with plastic and refrigerate for at least one hour (overnight is better) and leave until ready to make the cookies.
4. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface, kneading it for a minute and then roll it out with a floured rolling pin to a thickness of a 1/4 inch. Use cookie cutters to cut into desired shapes.
5. Bake in 170 c / gas mark 5 preheated oven on greased cookie sheets for about 12 minutes. Allow to cool completely before decorating.
6. When cookies are cold, melt chocolate in a small saucepan or in a microwave. Immediately brush it on the cookies or sprinkle with almond flakes or decoration of choice. Leave to cool. Store in a cookie tin/sealed container for a week or even two.

Note: The cookies taste even better after 2-3 days....if they last that long!