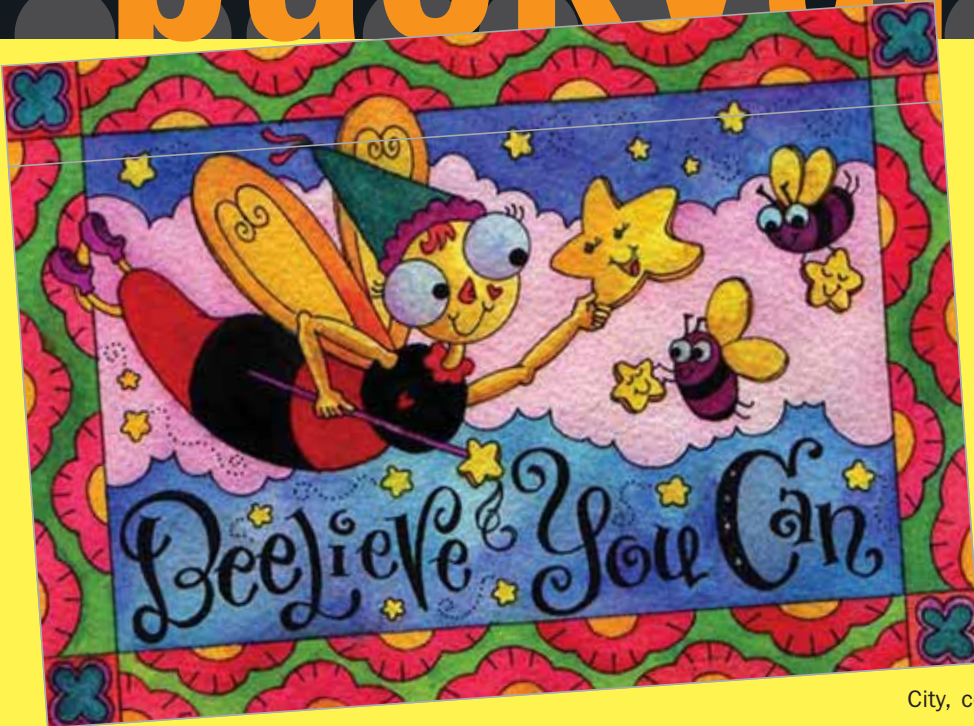


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VENTURING BEHIND THE RUSTIC RED COTTAGE, ONE finds patio furniture littered with halved egg cartons made to hold rainbow paints. Two pastel colored apiaries, one pink, the other green, are on the brink of completion. A pitcher of cold water and two honeybee glasses rest on the patio table. Some people have stamp or comic books collections, but for Marina Marchese, honeybees are her passion. With a collection of honey from numerous distinct states and countries, and over 80,000 honeybees in her very own backyard, Marchese is all the buzz.

A Weston resident for the past ten years, Marchese was born and raised in Connecticut. She has always loved to design and draw, and attended the School of Visual Arts in New York City, concentrating in commercial illustration and design.

BEE SEASON

BEES AND HONEY FORM THE INSPIRATION FOR TWO APPEALING PRODUCT LINES

BY VANESSA VOLTOLINA

After she graduated, she worked as a junior designer and a graphic artist at Jou Jou clothing company in New York City. Little did she know that this background in design would eventually lead to her own 'Bee-line.'

"I always saw myself doing a lot of things with products," says Marina about her experience in the clothing industry. "The next logical thing was stationary, because I was doing so many textile patterns and they transformed nicely into wrapping paper and greeting cards." On the side, Marchese began her line of Red Bee Products with a greeting card for Christmas of 1998. When her Valentine's Day card landed on a one-page layout in a 1999 Victoria Magazine, one of Marchese's favorite



publications, Red Bee Studio took off. In 2000, Marchese decided to pursue her dream of working for herself. "I was really grateful to find this other industry... I could work for myself and have a new adventure."

The moment of inspiration for her bee product line came unexpectedly. "I was in Borders Bookstore in Stamford, and I will never forget this moment — I was sitting there looking at an Italian children's clothing magazine. I was doing my regular research and there was a little one inch by one inch photo of a T-shirt that said 'Sweet honey bear and honey bee.' It was this little drawing of a bee and a bear, and I thought, 'How sweet is this? A honeybee! What a great idea for a design,'" Marchese happily recalls, "and I still have that cut out today."

However, what truly inspired Marchese was her first hands-on experience with honeybees. Weston neighbor Howland Blackiston, author of *Bee Keeping for Dummies* and bee-commerce founder, invited Marina over to his home one afternoon to educate her on the art of bee keeping. He told her to "Stick [her] finger in the beehive screen and taste the honey," Marchese recalls. Initially, Marchese questioned whether the honey needed to be boiled or sanitized, but discovered that honey is sanitary directly from the hive. Beeswax is also non-allergenic and bacteria resistant. "I remember that it was one of the best things that I've ever tasted, having a sweet tooth myself," says Marchese. "Having someone introduce me to the hive and doing outside research really got me fascinated with this," the artist says of her passion for honey and bees.

Between her time at Jou Jou Clothing and working for herself, Marchese spent time as a product designer working abroad in China. During this experience she "began noticing that there was a lot of honey, tiger balms, and propionate used for medicinal purposes. It was interesting being overseas and becoming aware of the medicinal purposes that honey fulfills."

As she would soon come to discover, most of the bees in the United States are Italian



honeybees. Honeybees are not native to America, but have been brought here over many centuries. This would be the foundation for her new Rossape line of beauty products. "Italian bees!" I remember thinking, "this is not only part of my passion, but my culture." Rossape, the name of her line of sophisticated, all-natural balms, salves, soaps, and candles, means "red bee" in Italian. When she started making these products on her own, she remembers thinking: "How could there be so many great products related to honey and such a lack of people selling them?"

Now Marchese oversees two distinct, yet related product lines: Red Bee Studio Products include all of Marchese's stationary goods, while Rossape is composed of beauty aids. For Marchese, "Being able to

fuse my two favorite things together, art and science, has just been such an amazing experience." Red Bee and Rossape are artisanal lines that allow her to have the best of both worlds — making the products and designing their packaging.

Besides the healing and medicinal powers of honey, Marchese was mystified by the symbolism behind the honeybee. She fondly remembers a trip to the Vatican with her mother, during which she began noticing honeybee icons in much of the art. As she later would learn, the Romans used to pay their taxes with honey, and honey is an ancient symbol for industry, strength, and hard work. "I love how this myth intrigues people and makes them ask questions about what you are doing and why and how. Honeybees are something that normally wouldn't instigate very much interest," she says.

Marchese presently explains that the in-progress apiaries on her patio are to be a donation to the Backyard Bee Keepers Association (BBKA), a group of beekeepers that hold monthly meetings at the Norfield Church in Weston. Her apiaries will be auctioned off at the annual potluck dinner. At this banquet, "We'll only eat foods made with honey, and drink honey mead, a type of honey wine," says Marchese enthusiastically. Marchese is now a member of the BBKA board.

As a testament to this amazing experience, Marchese wears a bee choker around her neck, originally a bee pin gift from her father that Marchese converted. To this beekeeper and designer, it serves as a constant reminder of her quest for healthy products and a healthy environment, and always seems to get a compliment. "I think that

people respect the integrity behind my products. They know that I know what goes into them and that I can educate them on the products."

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WHAT'S THE BUZZZZZZZ

Visit one of Barcelona's four area restaurants and try the "Crispy sweet potato tapas" with Red Bee® honeycomb and goat cheese, created by executive chef, Tim Armstrong. FOR RESTAURANT LOCATIONS CHECK WWW.BARCELONAWINEBAR.COM.

Red Bee honeycomb appears on the menu regularly at the exclusive Union Club of the City of New York, in creations by executive chef John Rellah. 101 E 69TH ST., NEW YORK, NY; (212) 734-5400.

All Red Bee/Rossape honeybee products can be purchased at THE NATURAL NUTRITION SHOPPE AT 1055 HIGH RIDGE ROAD, STAMFORD; 203.329.7400. RED BEE HAS MOVED OVER TO ITS OWN .COM! VISIT US NOW AT REDBEE.COM.

