

## Honey creating buzz at airport hotel



Kamal Silva, executive chef at the Fairmont Vancouver Airport Hotel, and sous chef Marcus Routbard show the busy bees behind the hotel's honey at McDonald Beach Park.

By [Matthew Hoekstra - Richmond Review](#)

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A local hotel is turning to a million busy Sea Island inhabitants to satisfy the sweet tooth of guests.

The Fairmont Vancouver Airport Hotel is managing 24 honeybee colonies at McDonald Beach Park—a 20 minute bicycle ride from the hotel.

The hives were installed in July with help from Surrey-based Honeybee Centre. After just one week, 200 pounds of honey were ready.

By September, the hotel expects to have one tonne of honey on its hands.

Executive chef Kamal Silva said the local sweetener will be used in the kitchen, offered on the breakfast buffet, given away to guests, shared with staff—and maybe even dished out to other Fairmont properties.

“I just want to show the team here that every challenge can be an opportunity,” said the London-trained Silva, who came to the hotel two years ago after working in Dubai and elsewhere in the Middle East.

When Silva landed at YVR, he realized he couldn't grow his own food on the hotel's property. So he started

thinking.

“I cannot have a plot here, I cannot have a garden here, I cannot have bees on the roof. But you can take the challenge as an opportunity and still do it.”

On his mind were memories of childhood: stealing the sweet nectar from a neighbour’s beehives with a stick late at night. (The gig was up when his parents discovered bee stings on his arms.)

Talks began with the Honeybee Centre and Silva discovered no airport in the world made its own honey. After six months of working to get approval, the bees moved in to a fenced area at the Sea Island park.

“We want to showcase to the rest of the world that an airport hotel, and the airport, can do this and support the environment.”

Silva is big on local ingredients. He buys local when possible and the hotel grows vegetables at Terra Nova Sharing Farm that are featured for dinner. His staff also assists Ian Lai’s schoolyard society and the Growing Chefs society, where Fairmont chefs are dispatched to a Richmond school to teach students about food and how to grow it.

“I want to show the young generation of cooks how important it is to grow (your own food),” he said. “Because nowadays, you just order it, and it just comes in—you don’t even have to wash it.”

As for the product of the estimated 1.2 million bees at McDonald Beach Park, Silva said honey from one hive tastes like blueberries—another, like cloves.

“That means the bees are going in different areas,” he said. “We put it in the cafeteria so everybody got to eat that. It’s awesome.”

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