THE BEE’S KNEES

October 20, 2026



MEET UNION STREET HONEY, THE COOP’S MOST LOCAL PRODUCT

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By Liz Yap

Photographs by Michael Berman

A few doors down from the Coop, urban beekeeper Jonathan Derow tends to his rooftop hives, harvesting honey and supplying shops around Brooklyn with liquid gold. It's the most hyperlocal product the Coop sells, and it's named after its point of origin: Union Street Honey.



Jonathan Derow in full gear, including leather gloves and veil, next to his four hives.

Derow began his beekeeping journey in 2011, months after it became legal in New York City. "I'd always been interested in honeybees, and it seemed like a good family activity. My son was 12 at the time. You want to find something kids are going to be interested in that you can do together," Derow said. Along with his wife Janice and their son Jaxon, they took a free class offered by an apiarist named Jim Fischer. He

taught them the basics of beekeeping and bee behavior; the rest they've learned by doing, starting with one hive and eventually expanding to four.



Derow examines a frame of honey.

Urban beekeeping involves a vertical, modular setup: a stack of wooden boxes with removable frames, known as a Langstroth hive after the 19th-century apiarist who invented it. Bees build their honeycomb across these frames, filling the cells with nectar, fanning the cells with their wings to evaporate excess moisture, then sealing each cell with wax.

> IN THE SPRING, THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF NECTAR IS LINDEN TREES. "THERE'S PLENTY FOR THEM TO FORAGE ON. THEY GO TO PROSPECT PARK OR TO THE BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN."

Through the sheer wonder of nature, bees instinctively know when the honey is ready, dehydrating the nectar until the moisture level is below 18.5%, which is essential to the sticky condiment's famously long shelf life. "It will never go bad as long as the water content is below 18.5 percent," Derow noted.

He estimated that their hives house around 250,000 bees, which can produce up to 40 gallons of honey in a good year. The itinerant insects typically collect nectar within a two-mile radius of their hives. "When I'm walking on the street and I see a honeybee—more than likely, it's one of my bees." In the spring, their main source of nectar is linden trees, of which there are many in the neighborhood. "There's plenty for them to forage on. They go to Prospect Park or to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden."



Derow uncapping a frame of honey.

Harvesting is a full-day process. Derow, now retired from his career as an art conservator, extracts honey in the same room in his home where he once preserved works of art. The frames are removed from the boxes, brought down one flight of stairs and placed in a centrifugal extractor, which can handle six panels at a time. Sitting on a stand, the extractor has a valve to fill jars with the fresh yield.



A frame of honey, hive tool in hand.

Derow and his wife collect honey twice a year, in the beginning of July and the end of September, timed to preserve distinct seasonal flavors. Like wine, the beauty of honey is its terroir, its characteristic sense of place. The spring honey produces a very unusual flavor from linden nectar—“bright, floral, with a slightly minty finish”—as well as a lighter yellow hue. “When I started keeping bees, I didn’t know anything about linden. I just noticed that if I extracted in the early summer, the honey had a particu-

lar color and flavor. I learned from talking to other beekeepers that it was because of the linden trees. If you harvest at a certain time, you'll always get that flavor."

THE FALL HONEY IS AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER, TYPICALLY SELLING OUT BY DECEMBER. THE NEXT HARVEST ISN'T UNTIL JULY. "WHEN IT'S DONE, IT'S DONE."

This is what sets locally sourced honey apart. It's beautifully unique, not uniform. Derow draws comparisons between honey and orange juice. "They blend lots of different varieties to make Tropicana, so it always tastes like Tropicana. You can do that with honey, and with most commercial honey, that's what you're getting—blends from not just hundreds of different hives, but hundreds of different apiaries in many different states. It tastes like honey, but honey doesn't taste like that. Honey tastes of the place."

It's why Union Street Honey isn't always available on Coop shelves. A seasonal harvest can yield 40 to 80 cases, and they supply to several stockists around the neighborhood, including Sahadi's and Brooklyn Larder. The fall honey is available now, typically selling out by December. The next harvest isn't until July. "When it's done, it's done."



Derow and his rooftop beehives.

APIARISTS MUST ALSO CONTEND WITH THE VAGARIES OF WEATHER—THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IS HELPING BEES SUCCESSFULLY MAKE IT THROUGH WINTER. BOTH VERY COLD AND UNUSUALLY MILD SEASONS CAN THREATEN A COLONY.

Beekeeping is time-consuming, often physical work. The boxes that house the honey-filled frames are heavy, each weighing as much as 70 pounds. Even in scorching weather, Derow works in long pants that he tucks into socks, wearing gloves and a protective veil. (For all their reputation as winged stingers, bees aren't naturally aggressive. Getting stung is uncomfortable but manageable, he said; what you want to avoid is the swelling and itching that inevitably follows.)

Apiarists must also contend with the vagaries of weather—the greatest challenge is helping bees successfully make it through winter. Both very cold and unusually mild seasons can threaten a colony. Frigid temperatures can decimate a hive; warmer and shorter winters can make bees use up more energy and burn through their stored honey before spring blooms emerge. This year, only two of their hives survived.

And yet, losing a colony is simply part of the process. An entire hive can fail for reasons besides weather, ranging from external elements (dreaded parasites) to internal factors (an unproductive queen). Even the most experienced beekeeper can do everything right and still open up a hive in spring to find it no longer abuzz. As he put it, "It's disappointing, it's frustrating. But many hives in the wild don't survive. That's the way it works." In nature as in life, recover from the sting of failure. Clean up the hive. Get more bees. Begin again.

Anecdotally, he shared that most people who get into beekeeping as a hobby don't usually last more than five years. "It's a very confusing, complicated thing to learn how to do," he said. "Most likely, in the first few years, you're not going to get much

honey. Your hive is probably going to die at least once."

One key to success is tapping the beekeeping community, a hive mind of knowledge that is generous with its time and expertise. "Most of us learned from someone else who didn't take money for it," Derow said. "Jim Fischer mentored me and a lot of other people. I feel a responsibility to mentor others who are starting out. Having someone else who has done it at least a few more years than you have is really a huge help."

For all its demands, beekeeping is equally rewarding. Part of the appeal of this apiarian endeavor is that it's an ongoing education. "You never feel like you really have a handle on what's going on. You're always learning." After 15 years, Derow is both mentor and student, and he still enjoys looking after his hives. What he finds most fulfilling is sharing their honey harvest—with friends, family, neighbors, even their mail carrier and UPS driver—and seeing other people appreciate something he helped create on his own rooftop. What could be sweeter than that?



Derow holding a nearly capped frame of honey.

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MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: A NEW PARK SLOPE CAFE WITH FAMILIAR OWNERS

October 20, 2026



March 24, 2026

By Roman Vandercruyssen

(Editors' note: Roman submitted this article with the following explanation:

"I'm 15 and I just joined the Coop. I'm not totally new to the Coop—I used to help my parents in the childcare room and recycling shifts when those shifts still existed.

I'm a food lover, explorer and aspiring critic.

This is my first article ever, and I especially wish to have it published in the Gazette, the Coop being my neighborhood anchor since I was born.

Anyway, this is my article, and I hope you'll like it.)

There’s a new popular foodie spot in the neighborhood: Lincoln Station! If the name sounds familiar, you might think of the original one, which opened 13 years ago in Crown Heights.

The second location sits at 7th Ave and 1st Street, replacing the family-favorite spot Bareburger (RIP). Even though it’s a big open room, it still feels cozy—a brick wall, lots of small tables, filled with colorful teapots—giving the friendly vibe we need in this freezing winter. Just a warning though: weekends from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the place can get crowded.

The menu is classic café stuff, but let’s be real: for a teenager like me, price matters. That’s why I immediately spotted the $6.75 egg sandwich. Basic? Yes. But wow—-worth it. “A must-have,” said Anna Klinger, the owner and chef of the place, whom I interviewed for this article. “For the first time, definitely take the egg sandwich. It’s my personal favorite. It’s made with two fried eggs, so when you bite into it, it’s runny. The sandwich is topped off with salsa rosa and melted cheddar.”

To say it’s great would be an understatement. The yolk spills out and adds to the sweet sauce, complementing the richness of the fried eggs and cheddar, all between a soft brioche bun. I added bacon for $2, giving the sandwich the crispness and meaty flavor I always enjoy. Exactly what a specialty item should be. Don’t get scared of getting messy savoring it!

If Klinger’s name rings a bell, that’s because she and her husband, Emiliano Coppa, are Park Slope residents who also own Al Di La, an iconic Northern Italian cuisine restaurant, which opened 28 years ago in our neighborhood. Al Di La is more of a fancy celebration spot, while Lincoln Station is casual and everyday. And if you’re wondering, we’re not related; this article isn’t some disguised ad. Just my way of exploring and supporting our local food scene.



Lincoln Station

Other popular picks? “The avocado egg and the chicken sandwich,” Klinger said. “Those are the real crowd pleasers.” The avocado egg comes on a multigrain roll with jalapeño salsa, giving it a nice kick smoothed by the avocado. The chicken sandwich is next-level: real rotisserie chicken (generous pulled bites) on crunchy ciabatta, packed with fresh parsley and topped with caper mayo. It’s fresh, flavorful and quite filling. Bonus, you can actually take out the whole rotisserie chicken with sides for dinner at home.

For veggie lovers, the kale salad is another of my favorites—very garlicky, so maybe don’t eat it before a date. The tart dressing pairs well with the crispy croutons and flavorful Parmigiano. I personally balanced it with added avocado. There’s also the soup of the day that changes daily, plus baked goods at the counter that I *will* be trying

next time.

Overall, Lincoln Station already feels like it belongs in Park Slope, and it’s exciting to see our local food community growing strong. Good food, fair prices, cozy vibes—what more do you want? Okay, maybe one thing: please add the famous Al Di La’s “torta di pere” (pear cake) to the dessert menu.

I could eat that anytime.