

Honey without bees? A synthetic version that mimics the ‘real thing’ could be available in 2021

MeliBio, the Berkeley-based startup claiming to make real honey without bees, has closed \$850,000 in pre-seed funding as it gears up for a soft launch supplying food service companies with its vegan honey as a branded ingredient later this year.

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So how is it making its honey... and can you call it ‘honey’ on a food label?

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[CEO Darko Mandich] won’t go into details at this stage, but said MeliBio is effectively biosynthesizing honey by replicating the multistep process that honey bees use to convert nectar (a sugary liquid produced by flowering plants) into food (digestion, regurgitation, enzyme activity, and evaporation).

The honey he and [co-founder Aaron] Schaller are producing contains all the key components of the real thing (which contains a complex mix of sugars, and small amounts of proteins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, and micronutrients), including components of nutritional interest as well as sugars, he claimed. “Not only that, we are delivering the amazing taste and texture of honey, but also the micronutrients that make it amazing.”?

Labeling and regulatory questions? Mandich and Schaller are talking to legal experts about regulatory matters, but do not anticipate major challenges given that all of the components they are producing are identical to those in honey, which has been safely consumed for thousands of years.

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