





What's the Cost of Real Honey?

Attiki's Honey Alexandra Pitta-Chazapi on wildfires, counterfeits, and what it takes to keep producing after 100 years. *By Theodora Tsevas*

Attiki Honey has been on Greek tables for nearly a century. The jars have crossed oceans, raised generations, and become part of Sunday mornings and late-night kitchens in Greece and across the diaspora. But the company, approaching its 100th anniversary, isn't celebrating without worry.

"The difference in recent years is that, beyond the unpredictable weather factor, we must confront terrible human intervention, fires in our forests that intensify shortages in qualities and varieties," says Alexandra Pitta-Chazapi, vice president and managing director of Attiki Honey. "The risk is clearly greater for our future."

Greek honey comes from approximately 1,800 plant species unique to Greece. Each one follows its own life cycle and responds differently to rainfall and temperature. Some years bring abundant thyme honey. Other years, shortages. Beekeepers have always navigated this. It's part of the rhythm. But wildfires have changed the equation. They don't just destroy one season. They take out ecosystems that took centuries to establish. Young trees don't produce the same nectar as mature forests. Some plants don't come back.

"Greek honey is a rich product because it comes from an enormous variety of nectar and pollen from different plants and flowers," Pitta-Chazapi says. "In just a few square meters, our botanical wealth is extraordinarily vast." So far, the diversity has been a buffer. When one region burns, bees forage elsewhere. Different flowering periods mean total collapse hasn't happened. But each fire narrows the margin.

Energy costs have exploded. Transportation expenses have made it nearly impossible for beekeepers to achieve a second harvest within the year, crucial for anyone trying to make beekeeping their only job. Many producers now split time between bees and other work, or turn to small-scale packaging to sell directly. "This is particularly dangerous," Pitta-Chazapi says, "because like all agricultural and livestock products, honey requires controls, stability in production, and repeatability in proper

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production processes.”

Her position is clear: “Producers should specialize in quality honey production, and companies should focus on proper and careful packaging.”

For Attiki, the problems multiply: energy costs in production; scarcity of quality packaging materials. More controls are required, each one more expensive. Small producers selling locally face fewer regulations and lower costs, but they sacrifice consistency. Finding workers is hard, though Pitta-Chazapi doesn't accept this as permanent. “The basic criterion is how correct the company itself is in its provisions and cooperation with employees,” she says. “The hiring process has to do with each company separately and how much it supports its workers.”

In honey production, beekeeping remains largely a family affair. But there's something pulling people in. “The fortunate fact is that beekeeping is attractive both to young members of beekeeping families and to other people who want to engage in an outdoor activity.”

European regulations grow stricter. Costs increase. Bureaucracy expands. But Pitta-Chazapi doesn't fight it. “Regulations are necessary, especially in a market like honey where adulteration is particularly high and not easily addressed.” The counterfeit problem might be worse than the fires—adulterated honey, imported honey sold as Greek. “It's a particularly big problem that every four to five years, while it persists, changes form and as a result isn't addressed,” she says. The reason is simple: price. “Cheap and genuine honey doesn't exist.”

When substandard honey gets exported as Greek, it damages the reputation abroad. The European Commission has finally recognized this as a pan-European problem. Measures are expected soon. Attiki supports them. “We now focus on our work and our specialization,” Pitta-Chazapi says. “We know good Greek honey. We know how to select the best qualities, how to control them, and how, each time, to package and distribute an excellent product to the Greek

market and abroad.”

Despite everything, Attiki's Honey U.S. sales keep growing. The American market matters. It's built on second- and third-generation Greek Americans who grew up with Attiki in their pantries. “Through them, we've become known to other sales channels, such as delicatessen stores or ethnic stores of other nationalities, mainly from the Middle East, due to the tradition these countries also have in honey use,” Pitta-Chazapi says.

When asked about distributor feedback on higher prices, she is measured: “The effort is great, but our indications show we can have both stable presence and continued growth.” What sets Greek honey apart? It's recognized as high-specification honey—dense, flowing, distinctive flavors from diverse flowering rather than monoculture. In a crowded market, that story still sells.

Attiki Honey not only produces honey. Twenty years ago, the company established an independent Beekeeping Development Department. The goal: support Greek producers trying to make beekeeping their primary income. The department provides guidance, answers questions about flowering, and sends weekly weather bulletins via email so producers can plan movements.

Financially, Attiki Honey offers contract farming arrangements through Piraeus Bank and Kardítsa Bank. The company's specialized laboratory runs analyses not just to control batches, but to improve overall results. “If the state supported all of the above for Greek production as a whole, while simultaneously strengthening advertising for the uniqueness of Greek honey and being stricter with controls at production units and in the market, then we'd be talking about the diamond of Greek production,” Pitta-Chazapi says.

She pauses. “Greek honey is a unique and very special product.” The company reaches its centennial this year. When asked how they got here, the answer is simple: “By maintaining the values of the founders.”

Those values, quality, support for producers, and rigorous standards have carried the company through wars, economic crises, and now climate change. The forests are burning. Costs keep rising. Counterfeits flood the market. But the bees keep making honey. And Attiki will keep putting it on tables, in Greece and abroad, for many years to come.

