



## liquid gold

Cate Burton of Queen B is generating a buzz with her range of natural beeswax candles

WORDS ANNA KOOREY STYLING ADAM DE LAUNAY  
PHOTOGRAPHY SUE STUBBS



*The scent of honey* fills the air and blocks of beeswax line the walls of the Queen B studio in Brookvale, on Sydney's northern beaches. The occasional bee buzzes by, lured by the sweet fragrance. "The only reason we've never had a swarm is because they don't find any pollen, just beeswax," says Cate, the hive's queen bee. For 15 years, Cate has made candles by hand from pure Australian beeswax and, with a level of motivation that mirrors that of worker bees themselves, she shows no signs of slowing.

Cate is surrounded by rows of caramel-coloured candles cooling in their moulds, her enamel teapot waiting to be filled with molten wax for the next pour. "I make my candles from capping wax, which is removed by running a hot knife down the surface of the honeycomb," Cate explains, demonstrating with a nearby block of honeycomb she keeps in a glass display case. She then melts and filters the wax in her studio to remove dust and other impurities before it's ready to pour. This simple method explains why the hot wax still smells enticingly like honey. "I find beeswax mesmerising, it's such a beautiful raw material," she says, rolling up a fresh candle. The wax is slightly sticky and emits a pleasant crackle as she pushes the honeycomb cells onto the tabletop. "I start my dinner parties with candle rolling," she reveals. "It gets parties off to the best start - everyone channels their competitive four-year-old selves."

What started as Cate's way of relaxing after a stressful day at work in corporate litigation has slowly evolved into a fully fledged business. "I needed more balance in my life so I took up candle-making and carpentry, but I'd often get home at 10pm and I couldn't start up the belt sander then," she says. "Candle-rolling is just as meditative but makes no noise."

Cate rolled so many candles that she started giving them away to friends. She then took them to weekend markets, and established a loyal customer base. Now, she uses over 10 tonnes of beeswax a year, sourced from keepers as far afield as Queanbeyan and Gundagai. >



For candle-maker Cate (top left), a meditative hobby formed the foundation of a successful business. The process of candle-making begins with scraping the wax from honeycomb (top right). The wax is then melted and poured from a kettle into moulds (above right), where it sets in a variety of shapes. Queen B's hand-crafted hive-shaped candles (above left) are a popular seller.

Pillar **candles**, from \$24.95 each, beehive **candles**, \$24.95/pack of 2, beeswax **blocks**, \$18 each, rolled tapered **candles**, \$24.95/pack of 4. Washable **bag**, \$27.50, Paper2, paper2.com.au. **Flowers** from Poho Flowers, poho.com.au.

"I like the idea of people getting home from a hard day at work and lighting a candle to **soothe their mind**"

< With the help of her assistant Tilly, she makes 20,000 candles a year. They are sold to individual customers as well as big names like Grandiflora, Swarovski and WWF Earth Hour, all of which have used Queen B to illuminate some of Sydney's most spectacular events.

Cate is passionate about maintaining Australian beekeeping and promoting natural beeswax over products like paraffin. "If you live in the city you can't control what you breathe in every day, but I can control what I burn in my living room – and it's not bleached petrochemicals or genetically modified soybean oil," she says.

Cate works by the light of her own candles each night. "I'm interested in helping people have a bit of romance. I like the idea of people getting home from a hard day at work and lighting a candle to soothe their mind," she says. "A lot of people tell me their kids loved Earth Hour so much they now have a candlelit dinner once a week. It's creating or being part of those moments that drives me."

Visit [queenb.com.au](http://queenb.com.au) to find out more about natural beeswax and to buy online.



### Cate's top tips for candlelit magic

1. Trim the wick before lighting your candle. To put out a candle, push the wick into the wax (ensuring it pops back up again). This stops the candle smoking and protects the wick.
2. Place a candle in a glass to increase the light output – the flame reflects off the glass. Pop tealights into recycled jam jars and pillar candles into hurricanes. The jars also provide wind protection so you can line garden pathways for parties.
3. If you're having trouble sleeping, turn off the lights and light a candle an hour before you go to bed. Dimming the lights tells our bodies to prepare for sleep and your mind will thank you for the head start. 