



**Preparing Honey & Wax  
for  
Christmas gifts or for Show**

Joyce Nisbet



# Preparing Honey

- **Honey is Food**
- **Food Safety Act 1990**
  - **Not damaging to health**
  - **As consumers expect**
  - **Labelled etc not misleading**

# Preparing Liquid Honey

- Well capped honey
- Uncap
- Extract, strain
- Settle & skim
- Bottle: clean 'standard' 1lb jars with clean lids & skim again
- Clear - Warm to 62°C for 1 hour

# For Show - Why Bother?

- High quality product - standards
- Promote beekeeping to public
- Prize cards can enhance sales
- Expand product range and beekeeping skills
- Fun & sociable – many levels
- Socially acceptable obsession

# Where to Start?

- Small local show?
- Members / Novice classes
- **READ THE SCHEDULE / RULES**

# Where to Start?

## **A typical local show honey schedule:**

1. One round 1lb jar of light clear honey
2. One round 1 lb jar of medium clear honey
3. One round 1 lb jar of Heather honey
4. One round 1 lb jar of granulated honey
5. One frame of honey suitable for extraction (in a bee proof container)
6. Three identical small/ one ounce bars of wax
7. One photograph related to bees or beekeeping (mounted)
8. One brood frame with foundation made up by the exhibitor
9. One round 1 lb empty jar with fully compliant label

**•Enter a few classes that suit you / your honey**

**•Plan ahead to give your entries best chance**

# Preparing Honey For Show

- Honey jars are not all the same
- Glass free from bubbles and blemishes
- As colourless as possible
- If two – pair, from same batch

Schedule may specify metal or plastic lids

- Clean lids, free from rust, scratches etc

# Preparing Honey

- Wear glasses if you need them!
- Skim (maybe natural daylight)
- Clean the jar: above honey & thread; outside
- Class label
- Enter

**RE-READ THE SCHEDULE**



# Judging Honey

- In class (grading glasses)?
- Full jar?
- Obvious faults of jar / lid?
- Debris / bubbles in honey (torch)?
- If liquid, incipient crystallisation (torch)?
- Lid part off - Aroma?
- Lid off - Surface clean?
- Viscosity (if crystallised is it set)?
- Flavour?

# Preparing Set Honey

- Naturally granulated

OR

- Soft Set

In both cases a clean exhibit, with a pleasant strong flavour and a smooth grain is preferred. Lighter honey also generally preferred. Frosting does not disqualify

# Preparing Soft Set Honey

- Tub of set but coarse grained honey, warmed to 52°C then cooled to 32°C
- > 10% seed, warmed to 32°C
- Mix well, settle, skim & jar
- Settle & skim again, then 14°C

# Set Honey

- Is it clean?
- Is it set?
- Was it skimmed before setting?
- Was it set on a level surface?
- Crystals coarse or smooth?
- Aroma & Flavour?

# Ling Heather Honey

- Thixotropic gel
- Usually pressed
- Bubbles
- No crystals

# Comb Suitable for Extraction

- Wired Foundation,
- Well capped, clean, 'fat' comb
- Glazed case

# Comb Honey Preconditions:

- Clean frames & wax (as beginners)
  - No old comb, even brood comb
  - Scraped boxes and excluders – not flamed
  - Don't feed old comb scraps / cappings
- Strong colony
- Good nectar flow, slow granulating

# Apiary Honey:

- All slow to granulate – GREAT!
- Otherwise:
  - Another apiary!
  - Wait until after OSR and use / create a colony with minimal stores – sheets of brood, at start of strong favourable flow
  - Timing: Previous Years Records  
10 day forecast!



# Managing Colony - Tips

- Space frames for comb thickness wished
- Frames part-capped before spaced
  - Uncapping fork?
- Drawn comb at outside of super
- Comb Super above natural pollen arc
- Avoid moving combs once being capped
- Remove super/frames as soon as capped

# Cut comb honey

- Don't need an extractor
- Unwired foundation / starter
- NB Food Hygiene / Safety
- Welcome gifts

# Beeswax - Risks

- Wax ignites easily (204°C) – risk of fire
- Use water bath, not direct heat
- Hot water & hot wax
- Water
- Electricity
  
- Properties: melts at 64°C, discolours above ~80°C

# Bees and Wax

- From wax glands of young bees when:
  - Gorged on nectar/honey/sugar
  - Swarm / Strong nectar flow / well fed
  - Hang in festoons
  - Many young bees / space to ‘congregate’!
  - Warm
  - Weather / many bees / above broodnest

# Preparing Wax : > 64°C

- Solar Wax Extractor +/- tights
- Large Bain Marie
- Thermostatic Urn
- Slow Cooker

**Filtering: 64°C – 80°C**

# Preparing Wax for Gifts Candles

- Rolled candles
- Poured candles
- Dipped candles

# **Fine Filtration – For Show**

**Electric oven, 70°C**

**Slowly melt through coffee filter**

# **3 x One Ounce Blocks**

- Same weight (minimum variation)
- Clean wax
- Yellow or cream coloured
- Same batch of wax
- Good aroma
- Unmoulded surface smooth

**Preparing a Plain Cake of Wax 64-80°C**



# Showing Honey & Beeswax

- Going further
  - Volunteer judges' steward at larger show / NHS
  - Enter county shows / NHS
  - Enter a range of classes
  - **BBKA Show Judge Certificate** – Pre-entry:
    - BBKA Basic certificate
    - 30 prizes 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> county / national in 10 categories
    - Have stewarded for 6 BBKA judges

Then Modules 1, 2 & General Husbandry , Log book,  
5 years: 75 prizes, steward for 4 BBKA judges,  
Judge 5 shows, 3 supervised / assessed, Plus  
another role!

# Showing Honey & Beeswax

- Information Sources:
  - National Honey Show leaflets (11 of them)
    - [www.honeyshow.co.uk/shop/nhs-booklets](http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/shop/nhs-booklets)
  - Books, Welsh Beekeeper, Beecraft & BBKA News
  - Workshops, NHS, Spring Conventions
  - Steward for a judge locally
  - Other competitors!