

Preparing honey for show

Diane Spoden

Items needed:

Show jars (queenline or Gamber classic 1lb)
Clean scratch free lids for show jars (extras too)
Good flashlight
2 x quart Mason jars
Fine nylon mesh cloth
Rubber band
Plastic wrap
Shammy or soft lint free cloth
Metal teaspoon and cup with scalding water
Tea towel
Water bath (warm water in pan) or heat pads

Start process 2-3 weeks ahead of show

2-3 weeks before

Read the Honey show rules - many require specific containers and usually several of each

After you've extracted let your honey settle in the bucket for 2 or 3 days so bubbles, particles and wax come to the top

Fill a wide mouth mason jar from your honey gate - fill the jar to the very top, place a lid and leave for a couple of weeks to settle again

When you are ready to fill your jars for competition:

1 week before

Start this process at least a few days to a week before competition

Select jars that conform to rules (American standard is queenline or Gamber classic 1lb jars)

Clean show jars thoroughly - hand wash in very hot water - drain dry upside down - don't use towel to dry the inside (leaves lint which can show up in the honey)

Slightly warm through the mason jar of honey that you previously filled in a hot water bath (never microwave) or heating pad for a couple of hours

Take a fine mesh nylon cloth, doubled and secure with a rubber band over another empty mason jar and strain the warmed honey into it

OVER....

Meanwhile, warm your empty show jars in a water bath or heating pad making sure no moisture gets on the inside of the jars

Then pour the strained honey into warm show jars and fill to the very top

Cover jars with plastic wrap and leave to settle and cool for a few days

A few days later remove the lid and plastic wrap and skim the top of the jar with a baby spoon heated in hot water then dried, taking any debris or bubbles off the top and bringing it to correct level... at this point you can use plastic wrap placed gently on surface of honey and pull off.. it lifts foam and dust off surface

Inspect thoroughly with a strong flashlight for any foreign particles, foam, bubbles, crystals etc and correct (see tip sheet)

Day before show

Make sure the fill level is perfect

Re-cover the jar with ~~fresh~~ plastic wrap and place cap (not too tight)

Use a flashlight to inspect honey

Clean jar of all fingerprints and smudges using a shammy or lint free soft cloth

Inspect outside of jar with good flashlight for fingerprints or smears on glass jar

From this point handle the jars with lint free cloth or gloves on

Keep upright

Transport show jars with plastic film and just before entry remove plastic film and replace lid (this keeps the lid clean)...

GOOD LUCK!

Also see Virginal Webb's YouTube video on preparing honey for show

Call or email if you have any questions:

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HOT TIPS for Honey Show preparation

What the judges look for...

Glass - show jar should be clean - no fingerprints or smears -

TIP: hand wash in very hot water and dry upside down - after filling use shammy or soft lint free cloth and inspect with flashlight - don't touch with bare hands after cleaning

Closure - lid should be perfect and not damaged or scratched

TIP: use only new lids and bring a few spare lids to show

Honey on underside of lid - should be none -

TIP: cover jar with plastic film under lid until time to hand to show steward

Under filled - should be no air gap showing when lid is on

TIP: overfill when initially filling to take down to correct level when skimming

Over filled - not enough air gap between lid and surface of honey

TIP: do a careful final check before handing to show steward

Foreign objects in honey - should be well strained and free of debris

TIP: inspect with flashlight, strain when warm through a fine nylon mesh cloth (doubled)

Air bubbles in honey - should be none, should be clear -

TIP: inspect with flashlight, don't wait til last minute to fill jars... prep ahead to allow bubbles to settle up to surface and skim off - warm jars before filling

Foam or air bubbles on surface - should be none -

TIP: inspect with flashlight, use baby spoon to skim or plastic wrap to pull off surface

Dust or particles on surface - should be none -

TIP: inspect with flashlight, use baby spoon to skim or plastic wrap to pull off surface

Crystals in honey, - should be none

TIP: inspect with flashlight, use fresh honey for show and warm slightly to remove any crystals

Moisture content should be 18.6% or under

TIP: test with refractometer

Odor - should be detectable and pleasant

TIP: use your very best honey, don't overheat honey or use fermenting honey

Flavor - depends on varietal should be fresh and pleasant

TIP: use your very best honey, don't overheat honey or use fermenting honey