

Comb Honey

*Anyone can make comb
honey in good years.....the
trick is making it in bad years*

Why Make Comb Honey?

- Comb honey production is considered to be one of the highest forms of the beekeeping art - certainly in the same league with rearing quality queens.
- It requires more work and attention to detail than other management techniques.
- The end product, though, is well worth the extra effort. The best advice is to start small and increase production as you gain experience.

What You Need

- A good knowledge of bee behavior
- A good nectar flow
- Dependable management techniques
- A good disease/pest control program
- Strong colonies
- Ideally a big swarm

- A pound (0.4536 kg.) of beeswax, when made into comb, will hold 22 pounds (10 kg.) of honey.
- The production of a pound of beeswax required a mean of 8.4 pounds of honey (range 6.66 to 8.80). (Whitcomb 1946)

Comb Honey Types

- **Bulk frame comb honey**
- **Cut comb honey**
- **Chunk honey**
- **Section honey**
 - *Wood sections*
 - *Round sections*
 - *Plastic sections*

Comb Honey Types

There are at least seven different methods of comb honey produced today:

- a. Traditional cut sections of comb honey: wooden frames with comb foundation or starter strips.
- b. [Foundationless Frames](#)
- c. Round combs produced with plastic equipment with or without comb foundation: [Ross Round Sections](#)
- d. Pre-waxed plastic square sections: [Hogg Cassettes](#)
- e. [Wooden sections](#), usually sections are square and made from the finest basswood.
- f. [Romanov Comb Sections](#)
- g. Unwaxed plastic frames with rectangular sections: Bee-[O-Pac System](#)

Cutting your own

- Cut Comb Honey
- or Chuck Honey



Plastic sections

- Use thin foundation



Ross Round Processing...



Comb Honey Advise

- “Time your honey flow ... When there’s a major flow during a good strong colony, you get that colony almost to a swarming point but don’t want them to swarm. Some folks will pull a few frames in the bottom so queen has new space in bottom.”

Notes

- Select a hive with lots of new workers which means prime the hive (feed syrup if a nectar flow is not going on before you remove her).
- Watch that hive so it doesn't swarm before you remove the queen.
- Remove the queen, put her in a nuc, meaning all those new workers can do while waiting for the new queen to hatch is make wax and fill it with nectar, thus making comb honey. Amen!"

Influencing the strength of the Colony

Hives should "boil over" with bees!

- Some use the two-queen system; others a single queen.
- Some run double-brood chambers; others insist that only singles are needed.
- Some dequeen colonies and give cells or young queens to prevent swarming; others stick with a queen-right system and try to prevent swarming by other means.
- It's generally agreed that the bees must be crowded in order to "make" them go up into sections.

Comb Honey Production

1. Try to reach the maximum colony populations prior to the main honey flow - Checked every seven days without fail/ timing is critical.
2. Do not give room before it is needed but Supers must be in place prior to the start of the honey flow. Giving enough room to reduce swarming and pollen storage yet forcing the bees into the sections
3. Two supers are added at the beginning of the flow; additional ones are put on as each preceding super is one-half to two-thirds full. Any error means incomplete sections - a waste of bee and beekeeper time!
4. Remove filled supers as soon as they're completed to avoid staining of wax cappings.
5. Bees must be forced up into the comb honey supers. Keep the queen out of the comb honey supers.
6. Harvest the crop when section boxes, ring, or cassettes are capped over. Often this will require the beekeeper to move supers up as new supers are added.
7. Bees are best removed from comb honey supers by means of an escape board - either an inner cover with a porter bee escape or a triangular escape board.

Harvesting

- Removing the frame from the box just before it is fully capped ensures avoiding tracking marks over the new wax.
- Then cut the comb into sizes which will fit whatever containers you may have like plastic sandwich containers or boxes especially made for the purpose.
- Leave these portions on a wire rack (queen excluder) on a tray for 24 hours to drip off, then place in the containers and store away.
- If you don't allow the portions to drip off before packaging, they will create a mess in the containers once they are packed. There will be quite a lot of drippings in the tray.
- You can store comb honey in the fridge or the freezer.

Preparing for Market

- If the honey produced granulates in the comb, the comb honey will be less attractive to the consumer
- Avoid travel staining of wax cappings. This browning of the wax makes the product less appealing.
- Make sure the bees have capped completed sections before removing from the hive. Part filled sections are of little value and all comb honey producers face this problem.
- Check all sections for pollen in cells by holding the sections up to a strong light. Pollen filled cells are easy to see: honey will allow light to pass through, pollen will not.
- Do not remove sections with smoke because the bees will chew holes through the cappings during smoking. In addition, the honey may absorb the flavor of the smoke and become distasteful

Storing Comb honey

- Do not leave filled and capped sections on the colony after they are finished. They can become travel-trained and, therefore, unmarketable in a short period.
- Storing completed sections . The best alternative is freezing the sections to kill wax moth eggs and small hive beetles. To reduce condensation, sections should be sealed in air tight plastic bags while being frozen and during thawing.

Equipment Needs...

- Section scraping knives
- Cut comb, thin surplus and 7/11 foundation
- Thin slotted top bars
- Packaging Method

Comb Honey Books

- **Killion, Carl E. Honey In the Comb. Paris/IL: Killion & Sons, Apiaries; 1951.**
- **Killion, Eugene E. Honey In The Comb. Hamilton/IL: Dadant & Sons; 1981**
- **Morse, Roger A. Comb Honey Production. Ithaca/NY: Wicwas Press; 1978.**
- **Sechrist, E. L. Honey Getting. Hamilton/IL: American Bee Journal; 1944.**
- **Taylor, Richard. How to Raise Beautiful Comb Honey. Linden Books; 1977.**
- **The New Comb Honey Book. Interlaken/NY: Linden Books; 1981.**