

Part 2 – Comb Honey which will include frames, cut comb, section combs, and chunk honey.

Frames- The frames should give the appearance of being new frames and that may involve a lot of cleaning and careful scraping. You should not see propolis and wax on the edges of the frame. Cut cells, should either be drained thoroughly or cleaned up. The frame should not be sticky. The frames should be **all** capped with clean cappings that are not travel stained. (Notice that the color of beeswax is an off white color.) If you have open cells or watery cells, you will have to determine a deduction amount. If you have travel staining that will be a deduction. You like to see combs that have come from a hive that was perpendicular to the ground, or equal on each side of the midrib. It is best to have a comb that came from an 8 or 9 frame box, so it would be easy to uncap. You hold the frame to the light and look at the honey to see if it is a single nectar source or has several types of nectar in the cells. For a show, the single nectar source is best. Most shows require two frames so you have some comparison between the two. Did they both come from the same hive with what appears to be the same type of honey? It shows skill of the beekeeper and not just luck. Most shows require that the frames are in a bee proof case or wrapped in plastic to keep the yellow jackets away.

Cut Comb – The comb should be cut to exactly fit the box. That usually means that a template is made and the person cuts around it with a very sharp, clean knife to avoid getting ragged edges. Some people have used a hot wire method. Others advocate refrigerating or freezing the comb before cutting. You have to avoid crushing one side while you are cutting. Because you will have some open cells due to cutting you must let it drain thoroughly or let the bees clean it up. Letting the bees clean it up is tricky as they tend to start uncapping cells. But the final product is a piece of honeycomb that fits the box exactly, no free or loose honey, sharp edges, centered midrib, no open cells, single nectar source, with little or no travel staining. Many shows will have a requirement of three cut comb sections, so there is some comparison. You have to determine just how many points will be taken off for each infraction.

Chunk Honey – This is a piece of cut comb honey that is put into a jar and then extracted honey is added. The items for cut comb honey are very similar except the templates are different due to the size jars used. One of the biggest downfalls in this category is that many beekeepers don't cut their comb honey the same size. The old timers were able to place mitered comb in the 2 ½ jars which hid the cut edges. But many times you will see some floating wax flakes and the fill levels on chunk honey above the neck ring because the comb honey floats. Thus you should not take points off for an overfilled jar. You can take a refractometer reading and cut the number of points in half as it is a 10 point category.

Comb Honey – This is a category that includes Basswood sections, Round sections, half comb cassettes and Bee o Pac sections. Because some of these are much more difficult to produce, they should not be in the same entry class. You will judge them on the completeness of filling and capping, condition of the capping, cleanliness, uniformity, and floral source similar to the cut comb and chunk honey. Very rarely do I open up the sealed container and sample the honey. I prefer not to have an abundance of yellow jackets coming to the show. By the same token, both cover plates for the sections should be clear and not translucent.

Part 3 – Beeswax which will include chunk, candles, and novelty

Beeswax - As I have mentioned, the natural color of beeswax is an off white. Most of the books and people think that beeswax is a “straw yellow”. Things that discolor beeswax are propolis that chemically bonded to the wax when it is heated, hard water, overheating, the container that it was processed in and several other factors. Thus you are looking for the wax with a very light yellow color. Wax melts at 146 degrees and when you pour it into a mold at 160 or higher it will shrink and crack badly. If the mold is made of metal, you will see striations in the wax. The higher the temperature can discolor the wax, so sniff it to see if it still has the beeswax aroma. Look on what was the bottom of the wax to see if there is debris that wasn’t filtered out. Look at the color of the beeswax to see if it is uniform throughout the piece or did the beekeeper add more beeswax on another pour. Some shows have a weight limit on the chunk of wax, so I usually weigh the pieces and write the weight on the judging form. Most shows usually have a requirement that the wax has to be a new exhibit or one that was made since last year’s show. Another friend judge, marks each piece of beeswax with his fingernail in an inconspicuous spot so he can tell if it has been before him in previous years

Beeswax Candles – There are molded candles, dipped candles and rolled candles and they should all be in their own separate classes. They are judged similar to the beeswax; however they have the wicks to consider. The candle should have a wick that is the proper size for the candle diameter. With the molded candles there is liable to be more debris in the candle. A dipped candle is liable to be rough or wash boarded due to the various dipping depths. While rolled candles may have separations between the plies.

Novelty Beeswax – This category seems to have been developed for situations where you don’t have a chunk of beeswax or a candle. Some people have cast beeswax over a balloon and then popped the balloon when the wax had hardened. Others may make a candle without the wick. But some will strike out and make free formed objects out of beeswax. Thus the judging standards are similar to the chunk beeswax only with an originality factor and a design – appearance factors to be judged.

Part 4 – Baked Goods which will also include cakes, pies, breads, candy, brownies, and cookies

Baked Goods – Look at the article that I wrote on baked goods. It addresses most of the criteria. You must follow the rules that have been set by the show officials. (Amount of sweetening, number of pieces, type of plate, ingredients, and directions.) Then because things with honey in them cook differently than other items you are looking for evenness of cooking, texture of item, symmetry, and taste. Many times you may find an item that tastes differently due to the use of something other than honey. Any time I mention the list of ingredients, means that the amount of sweetening should be checked as to the rules of the show.

Candy – All of the baked goods rules apply to the candy category and then you should be able to pick it up in your hand. The pieces should all be of the same size and be attractive.

Canned Fruit – Canned items are judged by a visual inspection only. To open the container would break the seal and ruin the crop and possibly lead to a mess due to spillage. Thus you are looking for a natural color of the fruit, the way it is placed in the jar, the correct volume, and a proper seal. It should also be accompanied with a list of ingredients and the directions.

Honey Granola – Honey Granola is listed here under the baked goods, but it could also be in the honey category. It is judged on texture, taste, appearance and ease of serving. It should not be sticky as many people tend to eat it as a snack food. You should be able to taste the honey without it being overpowered by the other ingredients. It also should have a list of ingredients and the directions on how it was made.

Honey and Nuts – Normally honey and nuts is used as an ice cream topping, so it could also be listed in the honey categories. It is judged by the appearance, proper volumes, taste and quality of the honey. The quality of honey means that a refractometer reading is taken and the points would be divided from the 20 point scale. The taste would be determined from something that is objectionable.

Part 5

Gift Package – There might be two items in the Gift Package category; Novelty Gift Boxes and Gift Packages. However most shows usually have one and then the term package could be box, basket, or container. Therefore the actual container of the items is not given a lot of attention unless the show rules specifically state what it is to be. You should always have a scale ready to weigh the entire item as sometimes it could be a mailed item. Many times there is a percentage of the number of items that the beekeeper must have produced. It then is judged on appearance, originality, quality of the items and the amount of different items. Just having extracted honey in four different colors, is still one item in my opinion.

Part 6

Granulated Honey – I have seen a multitude of items that have been entered in this category and that stems from the fact that people believe that spun honey, whipped honey, honey butter, etc. are all the same. It looks terrible of an entry to start separating out while it is sitting on the shelf. One could almost mistake it for a jar of beer. The granulated honey should be made in the Dyce method. The entry is best in a wide mouth jar, but you have to abide by the show rules. I have seen shows where there have been a white class and an amber class. However most of the shows have gone to the white class because of the appearance. The honey should have the consistency of peanut butter, easy to spread and holds its shape. It should be filled to the proper level and have no froth on top. It should taste good and not have large crystals. Some shows will even have flavored granulated honey and you have to be careful that the flavoring doesn't detract from the honey.

Part 7

Mead - Mead is one of the coming categories at the fairs. It often has been banned due to its alcoholic content. There can be as many as four classes of mead and the judging comes down to mostly a subjective nature. That is why the judging of most mead has several judges. However if you end up being the only judge, look at the bottle for color and clarity. Taste the mead after you have cleansed your mouth with the first sip.

Part 8 – Miscellaneous

This section is for question and answers and for comments about some displays. Although the judge shouldn't make the rules at the show, there are shows where the superintendent might ask for your input for next year's show. This would be the time to suggest certain categories to be added, subtracted or changes. Keep in mind that the fair likes to see that the registration costs equal the premium costs, so you just can't add unlimited amount of categories. Also the local club should be consulted as to what categories they would like and enter.

I would suggest that the observation hive be eliminated from the competition category. When one enters an observation hive in a fair, that will start supersedure practices in the original hive and most likely create acceptance problems after the fair. If the club has a booth, they might have an observation hive for a day or two that can be taken home and reinstalled in the hive with little problems.

There are topics that I have not touched on as some shows have eliminated them or have just started them and there have been very few entries. They are: Beekeeping Arts & Crafts, Booth Displays, Beekeeping Gadgets, Lip Balm and Creams, Pollen, Posters, Photographs, and Soap. If you would want my opinions on these categories, please let me know.