

PREPARING HONEY FOR SHOW - KEITH PIERCE

Try to look at your honey in much the way that a very critical customer would examine a jar before making a purchase: is it free from foam, dirt and partially granulated honey? Does it have a very clean jar and cap, and does the honey sparkle? The Honey Judge can see these things before opening the cover, but will open the jar and look at the inside of the lid, as well as testing for moisture content and flavour.

1. Pass the honey through the finest filter you can. To do this, you will need to warm the honey gently. After it has been filtered, allow the honey to sit in a covered bucket in a warm place for as long as possible, so that air bubbles rise to the surface.
2. Carefully select the jars to use. Try to avoid those with blemishes in the glass, although the Honey Judges can tell the difference between glass blemishes and faults in the honey.
3. If you are entering 2 jars, prepare at least 6 so that you can pick the best of them. Never assume that your jars are clean. Wash them thoroughly, but do not dry them with a cloth as this leaves fibres which will show up when the Honey Judge inspects the entry.
4. Be extra careful when pouring the honey into the jar to avoid incorporating air bubbles. These air bubbles would rise to the top and be readily visible when the Honey Judge opens the lid. Pour the honey slowly down the side of the jar, filling it to within a couple of millimetres of the rim, and then set aside in a warm place.
5. Check the jar(s) after several days, skimming off any bubbles or particles around the mouth of the jar. Place a piece of clingfilm over the surface of the honey and then lift it slowly, so that it releases the bubbles from the surface.
6. Inspect the honey with a strong light behind the jar to check for impurities. You can often tease them out with a clean plastic straw.
7. Use several cloths for wiping the jars. Very old laundered cloths work well for cleaning the jars as they do not usually leave fibres. Having selected the cloths you want to use, wash them to be absolutely sure that they are completely clean and free from grease.
8. Using a barely damp cloth, carefully clean the inside rim of the jar. When the lid is on the jar, you must not be able to see any air space between the honey and the lid. If there is a space, the Honey Judge will assume that there is not the correct weight of honey in the jar.
9. Check the surface of the honey on the day of the contest, just in case.
10. Keep the jars upright at all times from now on.
11. Wash your hands thoroughly and carefully wipe the outside of each jar with a damp cloth, removing all fingerprints or other marks. Polish the jars with another, dry lint-free cloth. From this point on, handle the jars only by the lid
12. The most common faults leading to disqualification are cloudy honey beginning to crystallize, jars not full enough, air bubble scum on the surface of the honey and fingerprints on the outside of the jar.

Don't make the Judges' job too easy. They need to disqualify as many jars as possible, until they have just First, Second and Third, Commended and Highly Commended in front of them for their final decisions.

Best of luck. Keith Pierce