

Showing your honey

The honey stand at the show always attracts constant interest from show patrons in the products on display and the beekeeping industry in general. Stewards prepare the stand to show entries, products and beekeeping activities to their best advantage. And manning the counter are experienced local beekeepers very keen to talk about apiculture and answer all the enquiries. All in all it is a great way to promote our industry at all levels - the amateur with 2 hives to the apiarist with 1000 hives.

The central focus of this display is the entries section of nine classes of honey, comb honey and beeswax.

And the success of this competition relies on the support of beekeepers and the quality of their entries.

Having entered our honey in shows over many years and observed many judges at work, we have gleaned the following guide for preparing quality show entries.

Be aware of judging criteria :

- Density : Measured on a refractometer; more dense honey scores high points.
- Aroma : Judged when the lid is removed from the jar.
- Flavour : The judge tastes a small sample.
- Colour : Judged in relation to allocated class, which ranges from :
 - Light • Amber • Golden • Dark
- Clearness and Brightness : Cloudy dull honey loses points.
- Finish : Quality of jar ; No imperfections ; Appropriate air space under lid - fill to 6mm of the top.
- Total score is judged out of 100 points (most points are allocated for density and flavour).

Select your honey :

During the year we all experience the excitement of producing a special honey crop - great flavour and aroma, very clear and dense. Right then is the time to put aside about 1.5 kg - make sure you select a frame of honey that is fully capped on both sides, and preferably gather the honey by hand, rather than mechanically extracted.

First drain the honey through a colander, then strain through muslin. Store honey in a glass jar in a cool, dark place. Avoid exposure to moisture, air and heat. Tag jars with date, and source/site.

Prepare your entries :

- Obtain the Show Schedule for Apiculture.
- A few weeks before the show take out your samples and decide which ones to enter - some may be ready for the granulated class.
- Obtain 2 x 500g jars with white metal lids for each entry. They must be clear and unmarked, preferably new. Wash jars in hot soapy water, rinse & dry well.
- Fill jars, remove any blemishes and stand for 24 hours. During this time it's good to stand the jars in direct sunlight for an hour (no more) - this seems to energise the honey.
- Skim off any froth until a space of 6mm from the brim (this is a requirement of the judges). Check and polish jar and lid. Make sure this is completed a few days before delivery to allow for final settling. Always keep the jars still and upright.
- Deliver to the steward on time.
- Also consider entering the whipped honey, comb honey and beeswax classes, but that is another story.

So the floral sources and the bees have done their best to produce a quality honey and you have added your skill in preparing it to its best advantage.

It can take only one hive and one proud beekeeper to produce a quality winning entry.

So go ahead and make the steward happy... and give the judges a hard time!



Valley Bees