

New Westminster Beekeeper's Association

19 Things to Know about Beekeeping

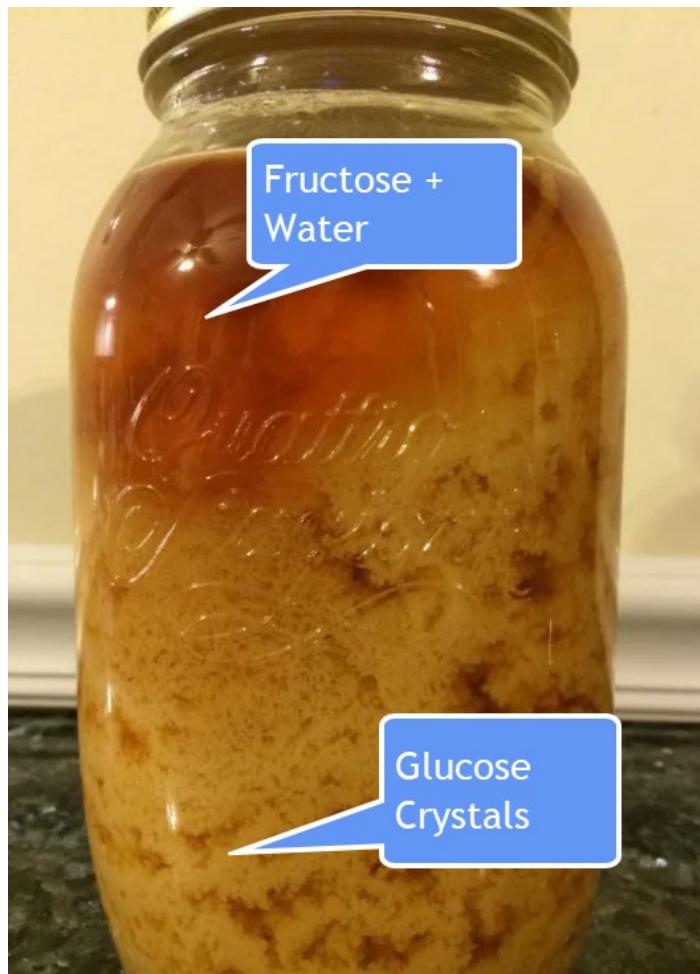
Module 13 – Processing Liquid Honey – Filtering, Storing, De-crystallizing, Labelling

This module was prepared for members of the New Westminster Beekeeper's Association and is intended to be augmented by hands-on experience in a classroom.

Properties of Honey

Plant nectar contains mainly sucrose and plants like sugar beets and cane sugar is where our table sugar comes from. Plants produce nectar to attract bees for the purpose of pollination. Nectar has no other benefit to the bees.

Honeybees ingest nectar into their honey stomach, which contains invertase (an enzyme produced by yeast), that breaks the sucrose into two simple sugars, fructose and glucose. The simple sugars are not stable at room temperature and glucose precipitates into a crystal giving off water molecules.



The amount of granulation depends on the type of flower the bees collected nectar from. Dandelion and sunflower nectar produces a large amount of glucose and thus crystallizes faster than say blackberry or clover honey. Low moisture honey granulates faster than high moisture honey.

Granulation is normal. If you do not want it to happen, you need to pasteurize the honey, which destroys all of the 'goodness'.

De-crystallizing Honey

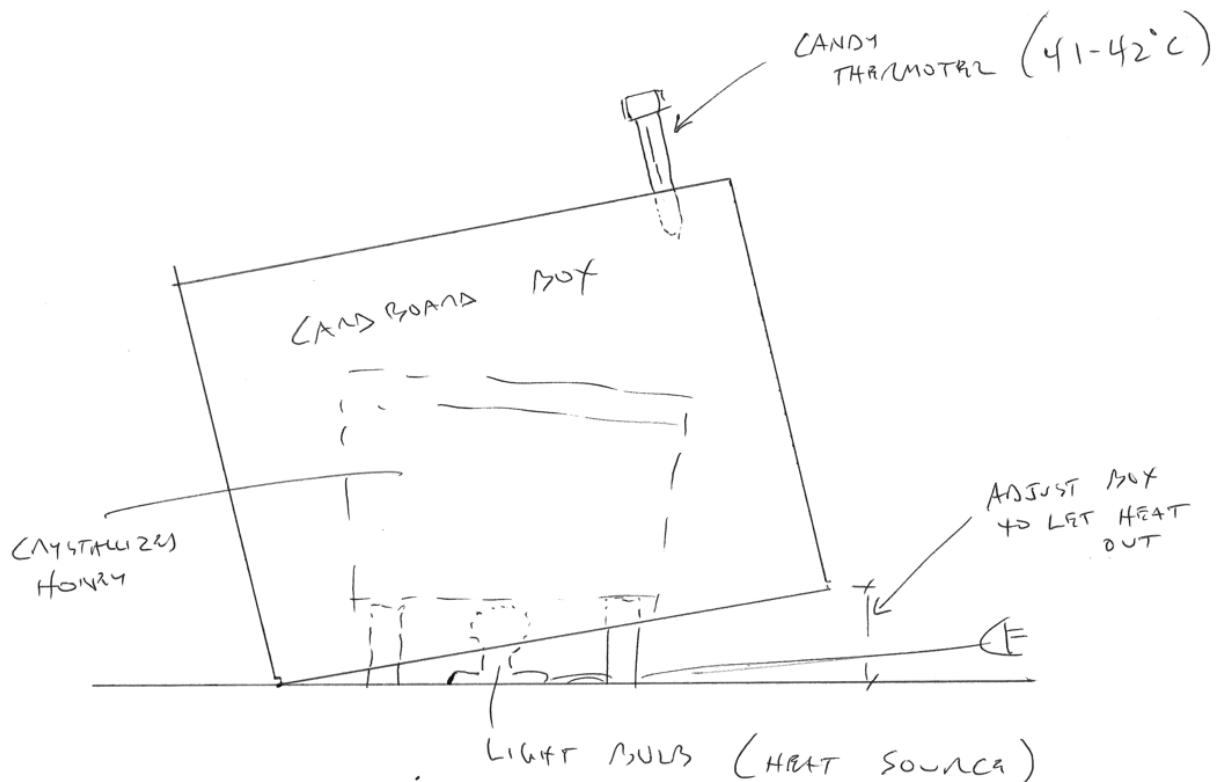
To de-crystallize, simply heat the honey. A double boiler water bath is best, but you can also use a hot box or a microwave.



Home De-crystallizing Cabinet

Cardboard box, Candy thermometer, Light Bulb (artists rendition)

15 lb PAIL DECRYSTALLIZES IN ~ 48 HOURS.



Can also use a space heater as a heat source, but it needs to be modified to heat to 42C.

Can also use a broken freezer cabinet as a box

Need to put heat source below honey, otherwise only the top will de-crystallize

Filtering Honey

Mechanical filtration is best using a pump and a bag filter. A double sieve and nylon filter cloth works, but is slow and leaves small particles of wax in the honey which acts as seed for glucose crystals.



Double Sieve



Nylon Filter Cloth



Impeller blades fold over at 30 psi preventing damage to filter



Jabsco Rubber Impeller Pump



50 Micron Filter Bag and Housing

Storing Honey

Store raw unfiltered honey at 4 Celsius for best preservation. However, the basement or garage floor (15C) works quite well.

Store filtered liquid honey at 20-22 C (room temperature) to prevent granulation.

Labelling Honey

Even though most of us are giving away our honey, it should be labelled with the words

- 'Pure Honey'
- '500g'
- 'Product of New Westminster BC'
- 'Wild Flower Honey'
- 'Your name'
- Copy the label from a store bought jar of honey.

You can sell honey without labels. You can sell honey to anyone EXCEPT to a reseller, like the local corner store.

End.