

# Southern Arizona Beekeepers Meeting

DATE: 7.12.17

LOCATION: Eckstrom Library @ 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Columbus

ATTENDEES: (34 people)

FACILITATOR: Will Fitz, Lucas Schvindt

Sign in and Introductions –

Business – last month's raffle raised \$194, which was used to purchase a used laptop and used projector for the bee meetings. Raffle today – proceeds to go toward more bee club equipment.

Discussion Topic - Honey Extraction and Honey Tasting

There are many ways to extract honey from hives as there are beekeepers! Depends on what equipment and how many hives you have, and what time and energy you have to expend on the process.

NOTE: Extracting can make bees agitated or feisty, so do not do it when your neighbors are having a party or barbecue next door!

Bee Removal –

- Queen excluder - make sure you have placed queen excluder between your brood chambers and honey chambers to prevent “bee babies” in the honey.
- Brushing – remove honey supers, brush gently with bee brush. Put honey supers into kitchen, bee house, or garage where you will be extracting. This is used by hobby or small scale beekeepers.

Chemicals – Bee Quick (smells like almonds); Honey Robber (stinky) and a Fume board

- Fume board is same width and length as honey super, but only about 3” deep, with quilted fabric or thick fabric stapled across surface to disperse the chemical. Place several drops of chemical on quilted fabric, remove top cover and put fume board on. In very few minutes (1-5) bees will move down into brood supers because of the smell. Remove fume board and honey supers. This chemical smell does not affect the honey.  
**Do not get the chemicals on your clothing, skin or hair!!!**
- Blower – leaf blower. Set honey chamber on its side and blow out the bees. This method is primarily used by large commercial beekeepers who have a lot of honey supers to extract. Really upsets the bees.

Uncapping the Frames –

NOTE: Honey should be at 16-18% water content. Higher water content can cause fermentation of honey, which ruins it. Some states require testing of water content before honey can be sold. Refractometer demonstrated by Lucas. Shake test discussed – shake a frame, if nectar or honey spill out it is too wet. If frame is completely or more than 95% capped on frame it is “dry” enough. In Arizona humidity is low, not usually a problem. Locations with higher humidity this can be issue.

- Uncapping Roller – device like paint roller, with spiny teeth on roller for piercing the wax cappings. Cost range \$20-30. Will use this method.
- Cappings Scratcher – device like long handled many tined fork for piercing the wax cappings. Costs about \$8-20.
- Hot Knife – long bladed knife for cutting off the wax cappings. Either electric knife (adjustable or non-adjustable heat settings) or a pan or bottle of HOT water to keep knife hot. Electric knife costs about \$100, so it a significant investment. Lucas uses long knife in thermos of boiling water. Clarks use electric knife.
- Heat Gun – to melt the cappings. Take care not to melt the frames or set the honey or frame on fire. No one mentioned experience with this method.

**NOTE: anything used to uncap and extract honey will have wax on it, which you will never get off again. Check with spouse or partner before using.**

Extractor –

- Device used to spin the frames to get honey out of cells. This uses centrifugal force to throw honey out of cells against wall of extractor where it runs down to bottom, then out the honey gate into bucket. These can be hand cranked or electric motor. There are two types of extractors. Tangential extractors have plane of frame facing outward, force throws honey directly at walls of extractor. Need to turn frames around to get each side of frame empty of honey. Smaller extractors are this type. Radial extractors have frames like bicycle spokes and honey flows out and downward. Larger extractors are usually this type.
- Crush and mash method – if no extractor is available, can cut up or mash the comb with something like a potato masher or sauerkraut masher, then strain the honey out of the wax comb and cappings.

Collecting –

- Buckets for collecting honey (5 gallon food grade buckets with honey gate)

Straining and Filtering –

- Honey will have bits of wax, pollen, and bee parts. All are edible, but some folks like the honey to be “clean”.
- Sieve – kitchen sieve or fine hole strainer can be used. These come in 200/400/600 micron sizes. The smaller is the number the finer the holes. 200 is very fine, and very difficult to get the honey through without heating it significantly.
- Filters - These can be used with strainers to remove all pollen and wax particles.
- Crystallization – mesquite and catclaw honey crystallize quickly and easily. Heating and filtering can slow this process. If honey is held and extracted at temps in the 95-98 degree range it is less likely to crystallize. Discussion about temps – over 100 degrees begin to destroy or denature enzymes and pollens, over 140 begin to caramelize the honey. Honey can be de-crystallized by heating slowly.
- Creamed honey - is NOT the same as crystallized honey. Creamed honey is made by “seeding” clear honey with very fine crystals which then causes the creaminess.

Bottling and Labeling –

- Many types and sizes of containers can be used.

- Honey is sold by weight, not volume.
- Labels can be homemade or purchased.

#### Honey Tasting -

Monica, Will, Lucas, and Jaime donated several jars of honey for tasting. There were 10 different honeys. Buckwheat (Virginia), Alfalfa (Virginia), Mesquite (local), Orange/Holly (Florida), Holly (N. Carolina), Cat Claw(local), Clover (Dakotas), Wildflower (Washington), Tulip Poplar (N. Carolina), Eucalyptus (Argentina). Everyone had the opportunity to taste each of these honeys and try to guess the variety. They were all delicious!!

ADDENDUM: from Jaime de Zubeldia

Noted a couple things below in case you feel the need to update, but not essential.

Wax can be removed from capping utensils by submerging in hot water and wiping with cloth while still hot. Caramelized/burnt sugars on hot knife can be reduced/removed with same method, but allowing to soak with some concentration of vinegar - make sure knife is unplugged (electrical hazard).

Smaller Maxant extractor is dual tangential/radial, with tangential allowing only 3 deep frames and radial allowing 6 medium frames (I think).

Another form of straining is settling in a holding tank. Impurities and wax particles (lighter density than honey) will float to the top and can be skimmed off after settling for 24 hours or so. Warmer honey temps facilitate this.

Next meeting will be August 9, 6:00 pm at Columbus Eckstrom library.

CORRECTION: Our September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting will have our guest speaker. John Slattery, author of Southwest Foraging will be our speaker. *Southwest Foraging* helps new and experienced foragers find the most flavorful wild plants the region has to offer, including barrel cactus, chickweed, Indian tea, and saguaro. This savvy, accessible, full-color guide shows you what to look for, when and where to look, and how to gather in a responsible way. It profiles 117 plants, with detailed information for safe identification, advice on sustainable harvesting, and tips on preparation and use.