

Guideline for Judging Criteria of Honey at County Fairs

County fair honey entries are evaluated primarily on exterior/visual quality and taste. Entry categories can range from extracted filtered honey, and extracted unfiltered honey, to cut comb and chuck honey (cut comb in a jar along with liquid honey). Most county fairs in West TN will focus on jars of extracted honey, but you may encounter a few unique categories like flavored honey or honey candy.

Honey can be evaluated on several visual characteristics.

Container

Ensure that all entries follow guidelines for the category as specified in the fair book. This includes size of container, type of container, and proper selection of category. Containers and lids should be clean and honey should be easily seen.

Granulation

There should be no crystallization or granulation. Granulation occurs when solid particles of glucose precipitate (separate) from the supersaturated liquid honey. This will naturally occur over time and is not an indicator of poor quality honey, but is not desirable for contest entry.

Purity

There should be no foreign objects in the honey. This could include small fragments of comb, wax, lint, or other debris. The entry should be free of froth or foam. This forms at the surface as a result of air bubbles, which were trapped in the honey during processing, escaping to the top.

The Water Test

This is a test that assists in identifying honey that has been diluted with water. Simply fill a glass of water and add a teaspoon of honey into the glass. Adulterated honey will easily dissolve in water and you will see it around the glass. Natural/Pure honey will settle right at the bottom of the glass.

Taste

Flavor is a very subjective characteristic and the use of flavor as a factor in judging honey is usually limited to checking for fermentation and overheating. Fermentation will give a sour taste to the honey and overheating will give the honey a caramelized (burnt sugar) taste. The flavors associated with different honey sources should not be a factor in honey judging, unless the floral source produces a honey with a very disagreeable flavor.

Comb

Comb can be judged on the precision of its cut edges and uniform filling.