

PREPARING HONEY FOR SALE AND SHOWS –David Charles

As a novice, David Charles was encouraged to enter 2 Honey- Classes at the Slough show where his passion for showing his produce began. He has recently entered, for the first time, the World Honey Show – where an entry of his came in fifth place!! The skill of preparing for shows has also taught him the benefits of preparing honey for sale. He highlighted three main points:

- It must look good;
- Must have been prepared well and finally
- Must taste great!

David began explaining the 'classing' procedure. Show schedules ask for two jars of honey for each class you are entering. And they need to be identical! There are normally Light, Medium and Dark classes. Light honey, we were told, is delicately flavoured, frequently high in clover. Medium honey is a darker honey with a stronger flavour. Dark honey is the most strongly flavoured honey of all. David had coloured Grading glasses that judges use to classify honey groups.

- The judge will want to see if the two jars are well matched and as identical as possible.
- Do they have nice, clean lids?
- Are they free of any crystals forming?
- Is the underside of the lid clean and scum free?
- Is the label correctly in position, 15mm from the base, and level?
- Is the jar well filled or is there any space visible at the neck?

Any of these obvious problems will immediately disqualify your entry! The judge should want to give your honey a second look, take off the lid and try it!

To sell good quality honey, beekeepers need to know the possible faults it can have. The advice was to learn to smell and taste it!

With David's prompts we checked several points of sample honeys he had brought along. We were asked to point out anything we thought was amiss. The aroma - is it just brief and short lasting or maybe unpleasant, even fermented? Honey that has been allowed to granulate is more likely to ferment. How does it look? Is it clear? Is there any surface scum, any separating or wateriness? It was explained that a high glucose/low fructose honey would granulate faster than a low glucose/high fructose one, the latter having a much longer shelf life. David recommended the use of a water- bath to warm granulated honey and restore its texture. We learned that wet years give a lower viscosity to honey.

David had a sample of his own clover honey that had not been spun and warned that even centrifuge extracting will prompt the start of loss of smell & flavour.

Once you can perfect producing a good quality honey, David has found that attractive labelling sells. Of course, labels need to be accurately produced with the required info and font size but try to include anything of added attraction like the region and type etc. David's own experience has shown that set-honey sells well and the finer the texture of this, the better!

M.D.