

Honey Extraction

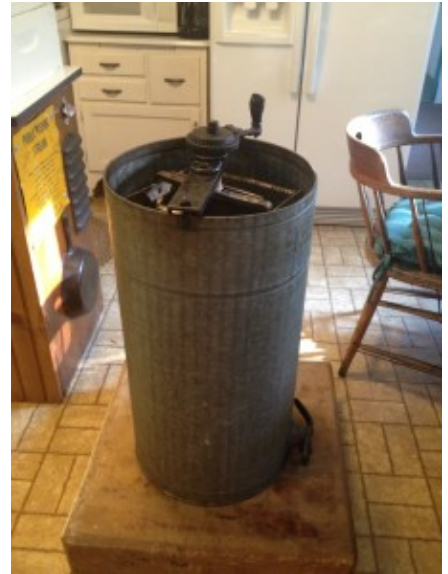
[print_link]

At the current time we only have a few honey bee hives and we do not have enough volume to use our large honey extractor. When we extract the honey from only a few shallow supers, we use the old antique honey extractor that we bought second hand over 30 years ago. This extractor is easy to operate and easy to clean. We are fortunate to have some beautiful fresh honeycomb to extract.



Frames of honey ready to be extracted

The extractor is a basically a round tub with a drain and a hand crank. The crank turns a mechanism that holds two frames of honey at a time. Once one side of the frame is extracted, the frame is reversed and the other side is extracted. The honey flows outside of the frames by centrifugal force. Once it hits the side of the tub, it gradually flows to the bottom of the extractor. After extracting several frames, the honey is drained from the bottom of the extractor.



Antique hand crank
honey extractor

The honey bees seal the wax honey cells with a cap once they are filled and the honey is ready to be sealed. The honeybees use their wings to create ventilation in the hive to remove excess water from the flower nectar, from which the honey is made. Once the sugar content of the honey is the proper concentration, the cells are sealed. Prior to extraction, the caps need to be removed. To do this we use an electric hot knife which cuts and melts the caps at the same time. The removed wax caps are saved to use later to make candles.



The wax caps are removed
with a hot knife

Once both sides of a frame have had its caps removed, it is

immediately placed in the extractor. When two frames are ready for extraction, the extracting process can begin. You need to have two frames in the extractor for proper balance. An evenly balanced extractor will have less vibration and the honey will be easier to extract.



The caps removed the frame is ready to go into the extractor

After the honey has been extracted it can be stored in large plastic five gallon storage containers. A spigot can be attached to the container for bottling. When the honey is initially extracted it will contain a variety of natural impurities which originate from the original frame. The impurities in the honey include, wax pieces, and propolis. Propolis is a “glue” secreted by the honeybees to fill spaces in the hive. If you let the storage container set for a few days the impurities will rise to the top. The honey is heavier than the impurities. This allows the pure raw honey to be dispensed from the bottom of the container for bottling.



Emptying the extractor