



Wax for Show (No 3)

F. PADMORE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Apart from wishing to provide interest and pleasure for Beekeepers, the National Honey Show has the serious aim of raising the standards of production of honey and all other bee-produce.

With this objective in view, leading authorities have been invited to write for our Schedules on a number of subjects and their work is here available for more general distribution. We wish to thank all our contributors, they are leading exponents of their skills, we have, however, to make it clear that the advice which they give is their own individual method, we feel sure that they would be the first to encourage new alternative ways of preparation with a view to continual advancement and progress within the Craft.

Hon. General **Secretary**

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW

Wax for Show

By F. PADMORE*

I have been asked "What is the use of a class for a plainly moulded cake of wax weighing a certain amount?" The truthful reply is "None". However for the exhibitor there is no doubt that the production of a perfect cake of wax is a real challenge to his skill. In honey classes care and cleanliness are the main considerations but whilst these are of importance in the wax class, without skill success will not be obtained. It has been said that an exhibitor who gains an award for wax deserves a gold medal as large as a frying pan.

After this introduction let us consider the production of a cake of show wax. There are two things which must always be remembered. Never allow wax to be heated above 90° C (194° F). Never allow molten wax to come into contact with water other than soft. This includes distilled, clean rain water and condensation water collected when the refrigerator is defrosted. On no account use rain water from an asbestos tiled roof.

Apparatus

Mould. Oven proof glass, free from internal blemish and kept exclusively for show wax.
Jug, holding not less than 1 ½ pints.
Several pudding basins to hold wax when filtering.
Filters, made from empty bottomless food cans. These should have hooks fitted so that the can may be hung on a grid at the top of the oven.

Filtering material. Surgical lint and filter paper.
Sheet of heavy glass to cover mould.
Soup plate in which to stand jug.
Washing up bowl. Small grid on which to stand mould in bowl.
Thermometer, preferably two, reading up to boiling point.
Piece of nylon stocking. Pair of gloves to use in oven. Sundry polishing cloths Methylated spirit.
String. Polythene covers to protect wax. Water proof marker. Unscented liquid detergent.

Method

Use only wax from cappings or light coloured free comb, which should be as clean as possible. Wash well in cold water to remove all honey, spread out to dry. When dry discard any dark pieces of wax. Alternatively, cappings and selected wax may be melted in a solar wax extractor or on a Pratley tray. If this is done you will have a cake of wax in a container with a layer of slum gum on the bottom. When quite cold remove the cake of wax from the container and stand it slum gum side down in water at about 48° C (118° F). This will soften the slum gum which can then be scraped off easily.

**The Author. Paddy, now alas no longer with us, was complete, master of the skill of making a perfect display cake of beeswax. It a some years since he announced that having won 100 First Prizes, he and his wife Margaret, his aide and partner in wax production, would no 'longer be showing, but every so often a new supercake would appear and as usual won 1st Prize. Margaret Padvnore has made two small additions to the original text of this leaflet.*

1st Filtering. Use a large can such as 1 ½ lb. instant coffee tin. Tie a piece of lint, fluffy side inside, over the bottom. Fill can with dry cappings or broken wax. Hang the can in the oven over a suitable pudding basin which should be non-metallic, containing about ½inch of soft water. Set the oven temperature at not more than 90° C (194° F) at top of oven. As wax melts, fill up can until all wax required has gone through filter. One should cater for not less than 50% more wax than will be required for the final cake. Filtering will take several hours. When all the wax is through, take the basin from the oven and allow it to get quite cold, when the cake of wax should come out of the basin when it is tipped. There will probably be some fine dirt on the bottom of the cake, scrape this off.

2nd Filtering. This is done in exactly the same way as the 1st filtering except that a somewhat smaller can is used, and instead of lint, the bottom of the can is covered with filter paper supported by a piece of nylon stocking, to hold the paper against the weight of the wax. No water is put in the basin. While filtering is proceeding a small can is fitted with a lint filter and shortly before filtration is complete it is put in the oven to get hot. Now pour the wax through the small heated lint filter into the jug. The small filter is used to remove any dirt which might have fallen into the basin. Cover the jug with polythene held by a rubber band.

Mould. Since water and wax have approximately the same specific gravity, the depth of wax required in the mould can be found by weighing the same amount of water in it. Stand the mould on the scales and add water to the weight required. Mark the water level on the outside of the mould with a waterproof marker. When the wax is finally poured the mould will be standing in hot water in the washing up bowl. The level of this water must now be marked. Stand the mould on the grid in the bowl and pour water into the bowl until the level of the water is 1 inch below the level marked on the mould.

The mould must now be prepared for casting. Thoroughly wash the inside with hot water and liquid detergent. Dry carefully with non fluffy cloth. Add two or three drops of both soft water and liquid

detergent and rub this with the fingers all over the inside of the mould until the surface appears dry. While preparing the mould put the jug containing the filtered wax in water in a large saucepan and heat until wax melts, taking care that the temperature of the wax does not rise above 90° C. This is where two thermometers are useful, one for wax and one for water. In the meantime put the mould upside down and the glass sheet in the oven to get just too hot to hold without gloves.

Pouring. At time of pouring the temperature of the wax should be within 1° C of 70° C (158° F) and the hot water in the washing up bowl 66° C (151° F). Just before pouring stand the jug of wax in 1 inch ice water in a soup plate, to congeal any dirt which may be at the bottom. Pour hot water into bowl and adjust temperature to 66° C and check that its level is that marked on bowl. Lower the mould into the water, being careful that no dirt or water falls into it. The mould will float before the wax is poured. Wipe the outside of the jug and pour wax into the middle of the mould. Examine for surface bubbles, and remove any by touching with a warm skewer. Cover the mould with the hot glass and cover all with a light cloth. By this method the hot glass keeps the surface of the wax hotter than the bulk of the wax and results in a smooth level surface, this is to be desired. It is advisable to do ones pouring in the evening just before going to bed.

In the morning take the mould and wax out of the bowl. Pour off the water, refill the bowl with cold water and immerse mould and wax in it. The wax should float out but this may take a little time. If release is long delayed, remove mould and wax from the bowl, fill mould with water, add some blocks of ice and stand in refrigerator. When the wax floats do not attempt to remove the wax from the mould. Fill the bowl with cold water, place the mould in it so that the wax floats clear of the mould. Lay a clean folded cloth on the table and place the cake of wax air side down on it. Mop off any water on

mould side with blotting paper. When the cake is quite cold carefully turn it over and carefully rub round the sharp edge with the thumb or a soft cloth. Be very careful to prevent any crumbs of wax being rubbed into the cake. Now examine the mould side with a lens for any specks. These and any smearing can be removed by polishing with surgical lint soaked with methylated spirit. If polishing is necessary and methylated spirit is used, the process is similar to french polishing, the wax being slightly soluble in the spirit a very thin film of wax is removed. Should more drastic polishing be required this may be done by the addition of a little carbon tetrachloride to the spirit, in this case always have a second pad of methylated spirit at hand to remove the waxy carbon tetrachloride. **WARNING.** Any use of carbon tetrachloride should be in a draught so that any fumes are dispersed quickly. On no account should one smoke, there is no fire hazard but the effect of drawing carbon tetrachloride vapour through burning tobacco is to produce phosgene. It is inadvisable to polish the air side which should be quite flat. Ideally there should be no polishing of either side, apart from gentle rubbing on the mould side with a piece of soft well worn silk.

Packing for Show

It is generally recommended that wax should be presented on the bench in a glazed case. There are at least three disadvantages. Cases often acquire a musty or wood smell which may be imparted to the wax. Cases take up a lot of room on the show bench. If cases are damaged in transit the glass may be broken and spoil the exhibit. More people are now putting their wax in plastic bags and protecting it with soft plastic foam inside an outer container. Make quite certain that the plastic bag and other packing have no smell.

It is very seldom that a cake of wax that has been at one show is fit to be shown again. Dust and damage by the public who will finger the exhibit are responsible. Do not be dismayed, refilter and recast the cake. Provided that the suggested temperatures are not exceeded there will be no appreciable alteration in colour. There will be a loss of weight but you should have wax in hand from the original filtration and this can be added to the damaged cake for further filtering and casting.

You may query the need for two Filtrations. If the lint filtration is omitted you will find that the filter paper gets so blocked with dirt that filtration nearly stops. Even after using lint you will be amazed at the amount of dirt that is extracted by the filter paper.

It is suggested that any dark bits of cappings, all dirty slum gum and waste wax should be filtered through lint in the oven. On no account use the wax so obtained in making a show cake as it will smell strongly of propolis. It should be included with other waste wax when this is exchanged for foundation.

One is frequently asked what colour a cake of show wax should be. In my opinion, as long as it is clean, bright and translucent, any colour between pale straw and light orange is acceptable. There should also be a pleasant and characteristic wax aroma. Judges differ in their preferences regarding colour, but there seems to be a feeling against very light almost white wax, as this gives rise to the belief that the wax has been bleached. Many judges do not like bleached wax.

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The National Honey Show presents annually a three day show of the best of the products of the honeybee, with additional classes for kindred interests and skills, including school bee-keeping, a lecture programme and a display of the latest and finest bee-keeping equipment on the market today.

It attracts entries and beekeepers from all over these Isles, and a number of leading organisations hold meetings during the Show.