

SMOOTH AND CREAMY

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Creamed honey is not as popular in the US as it is in other countries. However, much of that honey is a gritty, coarsely crystallized product and some of it is really unpleasantly crunchy. The process of making a very fine crystal as a spreadable product eluded beekeepers until Dyce perfected the technique at Cornell University in the 1920s. Today the popularity of creamed honey is slowly increasing in the US. Actually a nice creamed honey would solve our problems of honey crystallizing naturally on the shelf but the product will require extensive customer education.

Creamed honey is sold under quite a few names: honey creme, granulated (not a very pretty word), honey spread, honey butter (a poor choice unless it actually contains butter), and perhaps other names.

Because creamed honey is a solid it should be packaged in a wide-mouth container. Therefore not only the appearance but the suitability of the container is judged. Creamed honey put into a queenline jar is all wrong. The top opening is small and the customer cannot remove the honey easily or completely.

The texture of the crystals should be such that they cannot be felt in the mouth. Squish a piece of creamed honey between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. It should feel like butter—smooth. The crystallization is one of the most important criterion.

Yes, it is difficult to have the firmness exactly right. The initial water content is one of the secrets. Creamed honey is best made with a water content of 16.5-17.5%. If the creamed honey is runny, drips off the knife and runs out the back of a peanut butter sandwich the whole purpose of creamed honey is missing. Creamed honey needs to stay put. However, it must be spreadable. Creamed honey that is too firm needs to be dug out of the jar and then tears up the toast or biscuit because it will not spread. Firmness is, therefore, another important criterion.

In making creamed honey the starter or seed crystallized honey must be mixed with liquid honey. This is not easy to do without incorporating air. If air is mixed in it will appear as a solid froth or foam on the sides of the jar or on top. If the foam does not escape you will see mysterious trails of white along the sides of the jars. You know what it is. The customer sees it as something that has gone wrong inside the jar. Therefore such foam is to be avoided. Foam on top appears as a whiter layer on top of the creamed honey. Here again this foam can give the customer the wrong impression. Foam is under the control of the beekeeper, therefore it is another important criterion.

A good presentation of creamed honey takes some practice. Keep the judging criteria in mind as you try the Dyce process and your result should be successful.