

## Creamed or Soft Set Honey

To make Creamed Honey you need to use a honey which has a tendency to granulate. Honey is made up of sugars which are predominantly high in either fructose or glucose. Honey high in glucose will crystallise more rapidly than honey high in fructose and examples of high glucose honey are oil seed rape and ivy honey. Some honey, which is high in fructose, will stay runny for a long time and is not suitable for making Creamed Honey. This honey should be processed and sold as runny honey. The best way to decide if your honey is suitable is to put it to one side for three or four months – preferably at a temperature of 14°C – and see if it granulates. If it does you're in business! Ideally, you want a honey with a fine grain and if you have you can get straight to work to make Creamed Honey.

Warm a 30 lb bucket of fine grain, set honey in a warming cabinet at 60°C for about ten hours. Until I bought a warming cabinet I always used my oven. However, ovens are not always accurate in their temperature so I use a meat thermometer to ensure that my oven is the correct temperature. The honey needs to be warm and starting to liquefy but keep a careful eye on it so that it doesn't become too runny. It needs to be just soft enough to be able to mix the soft honey with the still set, granulated honey. Take the honey out of the oven or warming cabinet and leave to cool until it is just warm. Use a wooden spoon or spatula to break the honey down into smaller sections. Then use a honey creaming paddle – a potato masher will do equally well – to mash down the granulated honey and mix with the soft honey. When it is the texture of soft butter or clotted cream it can be put into jars. The honey should be stiff enough not to move when the jar is tilted but be easy to remove from the jar with a spoon.

However, if, when you test your granulated honey, it is coarse and grainy then you need to seed it with a honey with a finer grain. To do this you need to find a good source of fine grain honey – which is not always easy. One of the things you can do is use a coarse granulated honey of your own but before adding it to the bucket of honey put it in a mortar bowl and use a pestle to grind the coarse grains down to a finer consistency. This will then seed your coarse honey to the consistency of the ground down grains in your mortar bowl. Alternatively, you can buy an excellent Creamed Honey made by another beekeeper and use it to seed your own. The first place I would look would be the Bees and Honey tent at Devon County Show. So now you have your 30 lb bucket of coarse grained honey so you will need 3 lb of fine grain honey to use as a seed. You need to warm the coarse honey completely so that it is a bucket of runny honey. When it is runny take it out of the warming cabinet and allow it to cool. Add the fine grain seed honey – still granulated and not runny - and mix it in with the cooled runny honey. Leave it in a cool place – about 14°C – for about a month and it should granulate to a fine grain, granulated honey which will be hard set. Now you can follow the above instructions – warm for 10 hours at 60°C etc – for fine grain, Soft Set Honey. Good luck!