

Simplified Food Safety System for Honey production

Date of production:

Batch/Lot number:

Transporting frames from the hive to the extraction point:

Confirm the container is clean, dry and food safe:

Confirm frames have been kept clean:

Extraction of the honey:

Confirm all food contact surfaces have been cleaned and disinfected:

Confirm that the extractor has been cleaned and disinfected:

Confirm all honey buckets have been cleaned and disinfected:

Potting the honey:

Confirm all jars are in good condition:

Confirm all lids are new and in good condition:

Confirm all jars have been cleaned and disinfected:

Confirm all filters are clean and in good condition:

Labelling the honey jars:

Confirm the labels meet specifications –

Type of honey:

Producers details:

Country of origin:

Quantity:

Batch/Lot number:

Best Before date:

Signed:

Producer.

Notes for Food Safety Sheet

I have produced this sheet in an effort to condense the information in the latest editions of “Beeecraft” magazine regarding selling honey.

Under the Food Safety Act 1990 it is a legal requirement for all food producers to have a documented food safety system based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). This can be quite complicated, but in smaller establishments it is acceptable to have a simple plan. My version for small producers such as you is outlined below and is adapted from a version I created for use in smaller catering establishments. When I use the term “disinfect” I mean using something similar to “Dettox” sanitiser.

The key thing to understand is that you would have to show that in the event of a problem, that you had taken reasonable steps to safeguard the quality and safety of the food you produced. Some paperwork will help you do this. Of course it is no guarantee to safety, but it shows that you had thought about what you were doing.

HACCP works by establishing a control measure where food safety could break down. At each stage a confirmation that you had checked things to be acceptable is sufficient.

Transporting the frames from the hive to the extraction point needs care. The honey frames must be kept away from dirt and dust and covered to prevent physical and chemical contamination. Therefore, the container you are transporting them in must be clean.

During extraction there is an obvious risk of contamination. The food contact surfaces need to be cleaned and disinfected/sanitised. If using a chemical sanitiser, ensure you do not spray it onto the exposed honey frames. For the extractor you should use hot water above 82°C. This would remove the risk of chemical taint, but still allow disinfection to occur. Similar treatment for the honey buckets would work. Ensure everything is dry before storing honey in them.

Potting the honey into clean jars is the next step. Ideally wash the jars in a dishwasher. If hand washing, ensure any detergent residue is rinsed off. Then place the jars into an oven on a low temperature (80-90°C) to ensure they are dry. This also helps with the disinfection. Decant the filtered honey into the jars and seal with a clean lid.

Labelling also needs to be done carefully. You must ensure that all information is accurate and reliable.

Type of honey: For most of us just the word “Honey” will suffice, unless you are making specific claims for it (ie. Lavender or Borage honey). If using the word “Cambridgeshire” for instance, then all of the apiaries where the honey is collected must be in that county.

Producers details: Who you are and where you live

Country of origin must be on the label

Quantity in the jar must be indicated. Firstly, in metric with letters no smaller than 4mm in height. Imperial can also be indicated, but use smaller type. It is not necessary to have prescribed weights, so if you have a large fancy jar that holds an odd amount of honey that is fine, as long as the weight indicated is accurate.

Batch/Lot numbers. This allows basic traceability, an important part of modern food safety. You can use any number as long as the one on the jar matches the one on the HACCP form.

Best Before date. This is used on non-perishable products. Typically, a 5-year date is used (Production date + 5 years).

I am happy to get you all to undertake a Level 2 Food Safety programme if you want (reasonable fees apply), however that would seem to be an extreme step for occasional producers. Anyone producing honey in **large quantities** for sale into commercial premises such as shops will have to register as a food business with their local council (HDC for most of us). The form can be downloaded from the website. **I am pleased to report that for most of us this rule is not applicable.**

Nonetheless we should all be working towards producing safe food and complying with food safety standards. The HACCP sheet is to aid with your compliance of the regulations.

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Huntingdon District Council website: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/