

State Beekeepers Adopt Honey Standard

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North Carolina beekeepers moved a step closer to the adoption of a honey standard that would limit the abuses of honey sold in the state. During its Summer Meeting in China Grove, the NC State Beekeepers Association voted to adopt a State Honey Standard. Negotiations are now underway with the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for incorporating the proposed honey standard into its rules and procedures that govern food safety.

“This is one of the most exciting things our state beekeepers have done,” said Jeanne Price, newly elected NCSBA President.

Among other things, the standard defines honey as a honey bee product from plant nectar and prohibits any additives or adulteration if it is to be sold as honey. The country of origin must be identified. And if the honey is marketed from a specific floral source, such as the much acclaimed mountain sourwood, the honey must contain at least 51 percent nectar from that source.

“A great deal more sourwood honey has been sold in North Carolina than has actually been produced here,” said Dr. John Ambrose, NC State University Professor and former State Apiculturist. “We hope the adoption of this standard will remedy that situation.”

Proposed Standard of Identity for Honey in the State of North Carolina

1. This standard applies to all honey produced by honey bees from nectar and/or honeydew. The standard covers all styles of honey that are processed and ultimately intended for direct consumption; and all honey packed, processed, and intended for sale in bulk containers as honey that may be repacked for retail sale or for sale or use as an ingredient in other foods for human consumption
2. The definition of “Honey” is as follows: Honey is the natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from the nectar of plants or from secretions of living parts of plants or the excretions of plant sucking insects on the living parts of plants; which the bees collect, transform by combining with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store, and leave in the honey comb to ripen and mature. Furthermore, nothing may be removed from or added to that product if the material is to be labeled as honey”.
 - a. Based on this definition, there is no difference between honey that is labeled as “Honey” or as “Pure Honey”.
 - b. The act of straining or filtering the honey product by the beekeeper or a honey processor will not violate the above definition for honey.
 - c. The addition of any product to the honey, with the exception of blending honey from different sources, will result in the honey being adulterated and not meeting the above definition for honey.
 - d. For the purposes of this definition of honey: floral nectar and honeydew nectar will be considered to become honey when the bees cap the beeswax cells containing the liquid.
 - e. “Blossom” or “Nectar Honey” is the honey that comes from the nectars of plants.
 - f. “Honeydew Honey” is the honey that comes mainly from honey bees collecting the excretions of plant sucking insects (Hemiptera) on the living parts of plants or secretions of living parts of plants.
 - g. These principles apply to all products labeled as “Honey” and includes liquid honey, crystallized honey, spun honey, comb honey, cut comb honey, whipped honey also known as honey butter, etc.

1. Geographic Origin of the Honey

- a. All honey must list a country or countries of origin if the product is not completely from the United States.
- b. Honey from multiple countries of origin should have the countries listed on the container in descending order of content.
- c. Honey labeled as produced in North Carolina must contain only honey produced in that state.

1. Floral Source of the Honey

- a. If honey is labeled as coming from a particular floral source such as "Sourwood Honey" then the honey must meet the following criteria.
 - 1). Based on pollen analysis, at least 51% of the honey must come from the labeled floral source and
 - 2). The honey must accurately represent the labeled floral source in color, odor, and flavor. The honey must correspond with the organoleptic, physicochemical, and microscopic properties of the labeled floral source.
- b. The requirements on floral source do not restrict the labeling of honey as "Fall Flower Honey", "Wildflower Honey", or other similar descriptions.

1. Moisture Content of the Honey

- a. No water or any other liquid may be added to honey in the course of extraction or packing for sale or resale as honey.
- b. Honey shall not have a moisture content exceeding 18.6%.

1. Sugars and Their Content in Honey

- a. The ratio of fructose to glucose must be greater than 0.9
- b. The sum of the fructose and glucose components of the honey must not be less than 60grams per 100 grams of the product.
- c. The sucrose content of honey must not be more than 5 grams per 100 grams of the product unless the honey is labeled as a particular floral source. In that case the sucrose content may be higher, if it is properly labeled as to floral source.

1. Use of the Word "Honey" and Honey Labels

- a. If anything is added to honey, including natural flavors, then the final product may not be labeled as "Honey". For example, if blueberry flavor is added to honey then the product may be labeled as "Blueberry-Flavored Honey Syrup"; but it may not be labeled as "Blueberry Honey".
- b. If anything is added to the honey, then the product may not use the term "Honey" as the final noun in the name of the product. For example, a mixture of high fructose corn syrup and honey could not be labeled as "High Fructose Honey" but it could be labeled as "Honey Flavored Corn Syrup".
- c. If anything is added to honey, then the use of the word "Honey" in the product name must be in a font size that is no larger than the last word of the product name.

1. Information Required on Honey Labels

- a. For individuals or companies selling honey, the label should identify the product as "Honey" (Identity Statement) unless the product does not comply with this standard and
- b. The product must have a net weight statement for the honey or the honey and associated beeswax comb and

- c. The name and address or phone number or e-mail address of a contact person must be provided.
- d. Information on country of origin must be on the label or somewhere on the container if the product is not produced 100% in the United States.
- e. Information on feeding honey to children under one year of age is recommended.
- f. See also Sections 3 and 4 of this Standard.
 - 1. Types of Honey Based on Packaging
 - a. Liquid Honey is honey that is completely liquid in form and is sold by net weight and not by volume.
 - b. Comb Honey is stored by honey bees in the cells of beeswax comb and is sold in sealed whole combs or sections of such combs.
 - c. Cut Comb Honey, Honey with Comb, and Chunk Honey are containers of honey that include one or more pieces of comb honey.

Crystallized Honey is honey that has been processed into a solid state by the beekeeper or the honey processor. If the crystallized honey is whipped with air, then it may be labeled as "Spun Honey", "Whipped Honey", "Honey Butter", or other such descriptive names.

- 1. Violations of this Honey Standard
 - a. A citizen of North Carolina may bring a complaint against someone selling a product labeled as honey, if they think the honey is in violation of this standard.
 - b. The costs of such a complaint will be paid by the complainant unless the claim is verified by the NC Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In that case, the guilty party should be assessed to cover the costs of the complaint and the party bringing the Verified complaint will be reimbursed for their expenses.

Prepared by: [John T. Ambrose](#), May 18, 2010, Revised May 29, 2010
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