

What is incipient granulation?

The term incipient describes the early stages of a process, indicating something that is starting to happen or exist. So, when referring to honey, it is the early stages of natural granulation, the process where liquid honey turns into a more solid state due the sugar separating from the water content and forming crystals.

This can give jarred honey a 'cloudy' appearance and can get marked down or even disqualification by the judges.

Incipient granulation can be removed by heating the honey. A few days before a show, use a torch to shine through the honey from the back of the jar and up through the base. If there are signs of granulation gently heat the jars in either a water bath, the oven method or, controversially, the microwave method!



Use a torch to check for clarity
(Photo by National Honey Show)

Water Bath Method

- Fill a container with warm water (not boiling, ideally around 40°C to 50°C (104°F to 122°F))
- Place the honey jar in the warm water, ensuring the water level is below the jar's lid
- Stir the honey occasionally as it warms to help distribute the heat and break down the crystals
- Once liquid again, remove it from the water bath and store it at room temperature (18°C - 24°C) in a dark place to prevent future granulation

Oven Method

- Heat oven to around 40°C/105°F but no higher than 50°C/120°F
- Place lidded jars on baking tray and gently warm over a few hours
- Once the jars have cooled, gently open the lids to release the pressure (a vacuum may have been generated)
- Store it at room temperature (18°C - 24°C) in a dark place to prevent future granulation

Microwave Method

Be careful not to overheat the honey:

- Remove lids before putting in microwave
- Heat in short intervals at medium power. Do 30-second cycles, stirring in between each one
- Check the texture to avoid overheating; the honey should transform into a liquid state without bubbles or excessive steam
- Replace lids and store it at room temperature (18OC - 24OC) in a dark place to prevent future granulation

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