



2026 High Country Honey Festival NC

Oct 02, 2026 - Oct 03, 2026

Chairpersons: Jennifer Welsh

Location: Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center, 162 Agriculture Way,, Jefferson, NC 28640

Entries Accepted: October 02, 2026 from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM (Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center,); October 03, 2026 from 7:30 AM until 9:30 AM (Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center,)

Release Time: Exhibitors must pick up their entries between October 03, 2026 from 3:30 PM until 4:30 PM (Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center,)

ENTRY FEE: \$10.00 per exhibit entered

General Rules

I. ELIGIBILITY

1. The honey show is open to Honey Show exhibitors who pay the entry fee of \$10 per exhibit. who wishes to enter one or more exhibits, except as otherwise specifically provided for herein.
2. The honey show is open to anyone who is a paid attendee of the 2026 High Country Honey Festival.
3. The honey show is NOT open to individuals serving as judges, stewards, or show secretaries, nor to individuals who are immediate family members of those individuals serving as judges, stewards, or show secretaries. "Immediate Family Member" is defined as individuals who are spouses, siblings, parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, first cousins, parents of common children, step-parents, step-children, or any individuals residing in the same residence.

II. Turn-in / Submission Period(s) & Deadline

4. Entries must be received during the submission period(s): October 02, 2026 from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM (Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center,); October 03, 2026 from 7:30 AM until 9:30 AM (Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center,) at Ashe County, NC Agricultural Center. No entries will be accepted after this deadline.

III. Exhibitor Declarations & Affirmations

5. Each Exhibitor must sign an affidavit stating that each exhibit he or she submits was produced by the Exhibitor in conformity with the rules set forth herein.

6. Each Exhibitor must affirm the inclusion of any image, likeness, or work of any individual other than the Exhibitor, portrayed in or made part of any exhibit, was done so with the prior, informed consent of said individual, and that each exhibit is submitted with the full consent of all parties.
7. Unless specifically otherwise provided for under an individual category's rules, ALL honey, beeswax, propolis, pollen, or royal jelly exhibited, or made part of any exhibit, must be produced by the exhibitor from honeybees owned and kept by the Exhibitor. Any exhibit previously submitted for consideration in any prior honey show sponsored by the host organization, with the exception of mead, is not eligible for this competition.

IV. Double Entries Prohibited

8. Each Exhibitor may make only one exhibit per category. More than one individual from a family or household may submit exhibits across different categories; however, family members and individuals from common households may not submit multiple exhibits in the same category.
9. With the exception of Extracted Honey, in instances where the exhibit may qualify for consideration in multiple categories, the Exhibitor shall have the right to choose which category to enter their exhibit; the Exhibitor's selection will not be overturned by the Judge(s); and, said exhibit will be judged based on the criteria set forth in the category selected by the Exhibitor. The Judge shall have discretion to make the final determination as to proper color designation in regard to all exhibits of Extracted Honey.
10. Double Entries are strictly prohibited. A "Double Entry" is when an exhibitor has more than one exhibit placed in a single exhibition category. As used in this rule, the term "Double" is not limited to two, but also encompasses any number greater than one. The Show Secretary shall not knowingly accept any subsequent exhibit which would create a Double Entry. Whenever a Double Entry is created by the decision of a judge in recategorizing an exhibit pursuant to the rules herein, the following procedure shall apply: Prior to the judging of any other exhibits in the affected category, the exhibits constituting the double entry shall be identified and examined by the head Judge; the head Judge shall make a determination as to which of the exhibits constituting the Double Entry is the best under the criteria listed for the affected category; the best exhibit of those comprising the Double Entry will be returned to the show bench, and the other(s) will be disqualified. Whenever a Double Entry results in the disqualification of one or more exhibits, and after the results are publicly announced or posted, it shall be the responsibility of the head judge to personally inform the affected exhibitor of the determination of the Double Entry and subsequent disqualification of the exhibit(s).

V. Security

11. Exhibits must not be marked or identifiable in any way, except as specifically provided herein. An example of identifying marks that are not allowed, but not limited to, are labels, signatures, signs, advertising, or anything that would identify

the exhibitor to the judge. Certain categories will allow identifying marks if they are completely covered so that they are not visible. Please see category rules for where this exception is allowed. Exhibits found to be in violation of this rule will be severely penalized.

12. The Show Secretary will provide each exhibitor identifying labels to be affixed to each exhibit as provided in the rules for each exhibition category. The Exhibitor shall be responsible for placing the ID labels on each exhibit as directed for each exhibition category, unless otherwise specified herein.
13. Once exhibits have been accepted into the competition by the Show Secretary, they may not be altered in any way.
14. After submitting entries to the Show Secretary, exhibitors may not enter the area where the exhibits have been placed. The Secretary, Stewards or Judges are the only persons who may enter the honey judging area.
15. Judges will enter the honey show area after the close of exhibitor acceptance. This is to ensure as close to a blind judging as possible.

VII. Miscellaneous

16. All exhibits submitted in categories containing the designation “Extracted Honey” are to be presented in one-pound, glass (no plastic), “Queen-line” or “Classic” style jars.
17. In regard to the requirement of uniformity, items within or comprising any single exhibit should be alike and matching in every way: jars, containers, closures, contents, composition, orientation, placement, presentation, etc., should be identical across all individual items comprising any single exhibit.
18. All weight requirements refer to the net contents of the exhibit. For instance, a 16-ounce jar of honey should contain 16 ounces of honey. This does not include the weight of the container, the lid, the label, or any other packaging.
19. For all exhibits which call for the submission of a white descriptive card or index card with the exhibit, any size card or sheet of paper from 3”x5” to 8.5”x11” will be accepted. Additionally, the Exhibitor may submit multiple cards for any exhibit as the Exhibitor sees fit. Should the Exhibitor wish to submit multiple cards, they should be secured together by staple or paper clips.
20. Copyright of any submitted recipe, artwork, literary work, or other media remains with the exhibitor, but the host organization has the unrestricted right to publish images of submitted recipes, artwork, literary work, or other media in its newsletter, on its website, and via its social media outlets, plus unrestricted rights to use the same in any related material for PR purposes.

21. Where the submission of a “recipe” is required, that term includes the complete list of ingredients, quantities thereof, and the procedure used to combine and prepare the exhibit.
22. The Presiding Judge may, based on the number of exhibits submitted, combine one or more categories into a single category, or divide a single category into one or more subcategories.
23. The honey show committee reserves the right to reject any exhibit submitted if it is objectionable in any way. For these purposes, the definition of “objectionable” includes, but is not limited to: representations of nudity, graphic violence, profanity, obscenity, or any depictions of a sexually explicit nature. Decisions of the Presiding Judge on this issue will be final.
24. The use of AI to create or enhance an entry in any category is prohibited. An example of entries not allowed, but not limited to are ...AI generated poetry, AI generated photographs, AI electronic media, AI artwork and 3D printing. It is our intent to showcase beekeepers’ talents, creativity, and originality in the culture of beekeeping.

Return/Disposition of Exhibits

- a. Exhibitors who wish to retrieve their exhibits at the conclusion of the honey show must make arrangements to pick their exhibits up by the pickup time on October 03, 2026. If an exhibitor wishes to have their exhibit(s) released to a third party or proxy, they must indicate so in writing.
- b. For Entries requiring three bottles or jars, only one jar will be returned to the exhibitor, one jar will be submitted to the Honey Tasting Bar and one jar will be auctioned off with the auction proceeds going to the NC Queen Program funds.
- c. Exhibits and other items not retrieved by the deadline posted for pick-up, shall be deemed abandoned, and shall be donated to the Honey Show Committee for future use or disposal. The sponsoring organization, nor the Honey Show Committee, is not responsible for any items left after the pick-up deadline.

Prizes and Awards

It is the intention that ribbons will be given in all categories even if there is only one entry in the category. Entry into a category does not guarantee an award. In order to receive an award that entry must be worthy of placement. A Judge may, in his or her sole discretion, make or withhold the award of any given prize(s) or placement(s) in any category over which said Judge officiates. The decisions of the Judges are final.

Exhibitors found willfully cheating, or purposefully altering or disfiguring an entry for the purpose of influencing the validity of judging will be disqualified from the contest, as well

as from any future honey shows sponsored by the association/conference for a period of not less than three (3) years.

Ribbons, Prize Cards & Sweepstakes:

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Ribbons will be awarded to all First through Sixth place winners in each category, and to all Major Division winners as follows:

Major Awards:

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- Best in Show

Prize cards for participants in the AHJA Honey Judging Program will be provided electronically (via email) upon written request.

Cash Prizes will be awarded as follows

- In each category, First Place \$100.00, Second Place \$50.00, Third Place \$25.00
- Best in Show \$500.00

Appeals

After the announcement of awards, any exhibitor may meet with the category judge to discuss their entry and ask questions. An Exhibitor may appeal the Bench Judge's ruling concerning their own exhibit in instances where the Exhibitor believes the Bench Judge misinterpreted or misapplied a rule in regard to the judging of their exhibit. The Presiding Judge, after hearing both sides and examining the rules and the exhibit at issue may, as he or she deems appropriate, uphold, reverse, or amend the decision, award(s), and/or official record in such a manner as to affect the most just result available. The decision of the Presiding Judge is final.

Accepted Categories

The following categories will be accepted and judged at the honey show:

EXTRACTED HONEY (Category H)

- [Light Extracted Honey](#)
- [Amber Extracted Honey](#)
- [Dark Extracted Honey](#)
- [Varietal Honey \(Sourwood\)](#)
- [Creamed Honey \(soft set\)](#)

NOVICE (Category N)

- [Novice Extracted Honey](#)

EXTRACTED HONEY (Category H)

Extracted Honey

Extracted honey is judged in three subcategories: (a) light, (b) medium or amber, and (c) dark. Exhibitors may submit one exhibit in each of these three subcategories. One exhibit of extracted honey is defined as three (3) identical one-pound jars, as specified in rule #16 under the General Rules of the Honey Show. Closures may be of metal or plastic. Tamper-proof seals are strictly prohibited; any exhibits submitted with any tamper-proof seal(s) will be severely penalized. Judges evaluate entries on the following: confirmation with the criteria set forth herein; cleanliness of the jar and lid; correct fill level; uniformity of the jars that comprise the exhibit; cleanliness and clarity of the honey; moisture content (only if needed); and aroma and flavor (for off aromas or flavors). *See Appendix hereafter for notes on correct jars and fill level.

The Exhibitor shall place one ID label, as provided by the honey show Secretary, on each of the jars comprising the exhibit. The labels should be affixed at the front, bottom, center of each jar, approximately 1/2 inch from the bottom of the jar.

Varietal Extracted Honey - Sourwood

Varietal extracted honey is judged in the following category: sourwood. An exhibit consists of three (3) identical one-pound jars of extracted, varietal honey, as specified in rule #16 under the General Rules of the Honey Show. Except as provided herein, judging criteria is the same as that for Extracted Honey. Entries will be evaluated on the strength of characteristic(s), including aroma, flavor, and color profile(s) typically associated with the given variety of honey. For example, is a given exhibit of "tupelo" honey strongly representative of what pure tupelo honey should taste like, or are there indications of the presence of other floral sources in the exhibit as well? Preference is given to the best representative of each respective varietal. Judges evaluate entries on the following: confirmation with the criteria set forth herein; cleanliness of the jar and lid; correct fill level; uniformity of the jars that comprise the exhibit; cleanliness and clarity of the honey; moisture content (only if needed); and aroma and flavor (for off aromas or flavors). *A white card with a description of the variety, or predominant floral source, of the honey must accompany each exhibit.

The Exhibitor shall place one ID label, as provided by the honey show Secretary, on each of the jars comprising the exhibit. The labels should be affixed at the front, bottom, center of each jar, approximately 1/2 inch from the bottom of the jar. An ID label should also be affixed to the white card accompanying the exhibit.

Creamed Honey (soft set)

Creamed or Soft Set honey is honey that has been subjected to a manual or mechanical process to assist and control

the otherwise natural process of granulation. An entry of creamed honey is three (3) identical wide-mouth jars, no less than eight ounces (8oz.), nor more than sixteen ounces (16oz.) in net weight. Creamed honey must be displayed in identical, clear, straight-sided, glass jars with one-piece lids. Judges evaluate entries on the following: confirmation with the criteria set forth herein; cleanliness of the jar and lid; correct fill level; cleanliness and purity of the honey; uniformity of product within the jar; fineness of crystals; appropriate set or firmness (should be spreadable but not runny); freedom from foam, frosting, or visible moisture; striation, or colors; uniformity of the jars that comprise the exhibit; aroma and flavor (for off aromas or flavors); and moisture content (only if in question).

The exhibitor must submit a white card describing the process and procedure (including all steps and equipment) employed to produce their creamed honey.

The Exhibitor shall place one ID label, as provided by the honey show Secretary, on each of the jars comprising the exhibit. The labels should be affixed at the front, bottom, center of each jar, approximately 1/2 inch from the bottom of the jar. An ID label should also be affixed to the white card accompanying the exhibit.

NOVICE (Category N)

Novice Extracted Honey

This category is open only to exhibitors who have never won a First, Second or Third prize in any extracted honey category at any prior honey show. An exhibit consists of one (1) one-pound jar of extracted honey, as specified in rule #16 under the General Rules of the Honey Show. Closures may be of metal or plastic. Tamper-proof seals are strictly prohibited; any exhibits submitted with any tamper-proof seal(s) will be severely penalized. Judges evaluate entries on the following: confirmation with the criteria set forth herein; cleanliness of the jar and lid; correct fill level; uniformity of the jars that comprise the exhibit; cleanliness and clarity of the honey; moisture content (only if needed); and aroma and flavor (for off aromas or flavors). *See Appendix hereafter for notes on correct jars and fill level.

The Exhibitor shall place one ID label, as provided by the honey show Secretary, on the exhibit. The label should be affixed at the front, bottom, center of the jar, approximately 1/2 inch from the bottom of the jar.

Appendix

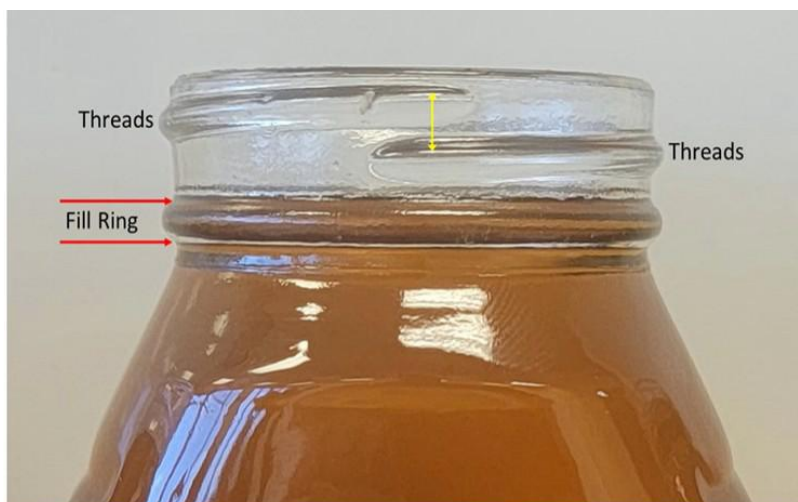
Notes on Correct Fill Level:

The correct fill level on honey entries is at the top of the fill ring of the jar, without going over.

The fill ring is the raised ridge, or ring of glass, immediately above the shoulder of the jar and below the threads. It can be distinguished from the threads in two ways:

- a. the fill ring forms a complete circle, without ends; and
- b. the fill ring will be completely parallel with the bottom and top of the jar.

Liquid honey in a circular shape forms a concave surface sometimes referred to as a meniscus. For the purpose of filling jars, the edge of the meniscus should clearly be at the top of the fill ring, without going over.



Jars

Extracted honey should be entered in 1-lb queenline or classic jars.

