

Why Does My Honey Crystalize?

All natural honey will crystalize. It is just a matter of when. That is actually a good thing. There are several factors involved.

Pure, natural, raw honey is primarily a combination of glucose and fructose combined with enzymes from the bees, propolis, and pollen. The ratios involved are dependent on weather and the type of nectars and pollens the bees are feeding off of at any given time, but it is still a supersaturated solution of sugars with particles held in suspension. As the sugars invert, evaporation happens, and the suspension settles, the honey will become thicker and grainier. The crystals form off of pollens, wax, and even dust. It is inevitable.

To make matters worse, the mean temperature at which honey crystalizes is between 50°- 60° F. Some of our retail dealers have open meat coolers and low store temps when not open.

Why doesn't "grocery store honey" crystalize?

The honey that you buy in grocery and big box stores is heavily processed. First it is micro filtered which produces a nice clean looking honey devoid of beeswax, propolis, and pollen particles. But, if you use local honey for your allergies, the good stuff has been filtered out.

After filtering, it is pasteurized under high heat. This kills the enzymes and stops any microbial action in the solution. What is left is a sweet, but

dead, sugar syrup. If you like the aroma and flavor of raw honey, those elements will not be there.

So, smelly and grainy is good?

Well, if you want raw honey, yes. If all you want is honey to look at or cook with, please buy the processed sugar syrup in the in the supermarket. It's cheap. It likely started out in China or Brazil. It even comes in a cute little plastic bear. But...

Scottsboro Bee Company makes you these promises:

- ✓ Our base honey is local—typically everything in the jar is from our Jackson County yards on July Mountain, Jones Cove, or within Scottsboro.¹
- ✓ We never heat our honey above 110° F. It gets hotter inside a hive in Alabama August.
- ✓ We use no synthetic chemicals or insecticides in our colonies.²
- ✓ Our honey is never filtered finer than 1000 microns. We typically just use a wire screen.
- ✓ We bottle in glass. The only exception is in years the bees “cooperate” in making “comb honey.” Those big chunks of comb will be in food grade plastic.
- ✓ Our honey will crystalize. That means it is raw and as close to how the bees made it as you are going to get. That's what our customers expect. For everybody else, there is always the supermarket.

¹ Occasionally, we might use no more than 20% outside honey for blending. This could happen if the bees “get into something” disagreeable. *e.g.*, not everybody likes the gym sock taste of too much goldenrod or the soapy taste of rhododendron or mountain laurel. Even then, what we blend in will be raw honey from known peers in Georgia or Tennessee.

² US bee mortality rates of 50% make “treatment free” beekeeping cruel and unsustainable. We are not going to

raise bees just to watch them die a horrible death. Our own interventions might involve applications of formic acid and hydrogen peroxide—both naturally present in honey—applied in the very early spring before the buildup and in the late fall after the harvest. Sometimes we might fog with lemongrass or thyme oil in a medium of food grade mineral oil.