

How to Harvest Quality Honey



Additional images provided by Len Dixon and the National Bee Unit (fera)

Basic Beekeeping Manual 1: How to Harvest Quality Honey (© Author Pam Gregory, who offers this as her gift to beekeepers in developing countries)

A good honey harvest is important. Good quality honey keeps well and gets the best price. It may be possible to take several honey harvests in one year. Honey harvesting time will vary from place to place. Local beekeepers are the best people to ask for this information.



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This hive is full of honey and needs harvesting. However, the top bars are the wrong size here so the honeycomb is cross combing, and will take more time to harvest. "Cross combing" makes a top bar hive into an expensive traditional style hive.



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One comb on one top bar makes honey harvesting easy



a good comb

For safe and easy harvesting work with a friend



You will need these tools for harvesting honey.



Plastic gloves, knife, cutlass and hive tool

Honey bucket

Smoker and smoker fuel

Give smoke to calm the bees. Honey is usually stored as far as possible from the hive entrance. Here the entrance is in the front gable end so most of the honey will be stored at the back of the hive.



Check where the bees are and open the hive gently.



Gently brush the bees covering the honeycomb back into the hive. You can use a brush made of chicken feathers or a brush made of grass.



Only select honeycomb with well sealed honey for harvesting. It is best to harvest honey in the cool of the evening, so disturbed bees have the night to settle down again. Harvesting honey at night makes it hard to see if the honey being harvested is good quality.



Harvesting just after the rain will increase the moisture content of honey and reduce its quality.

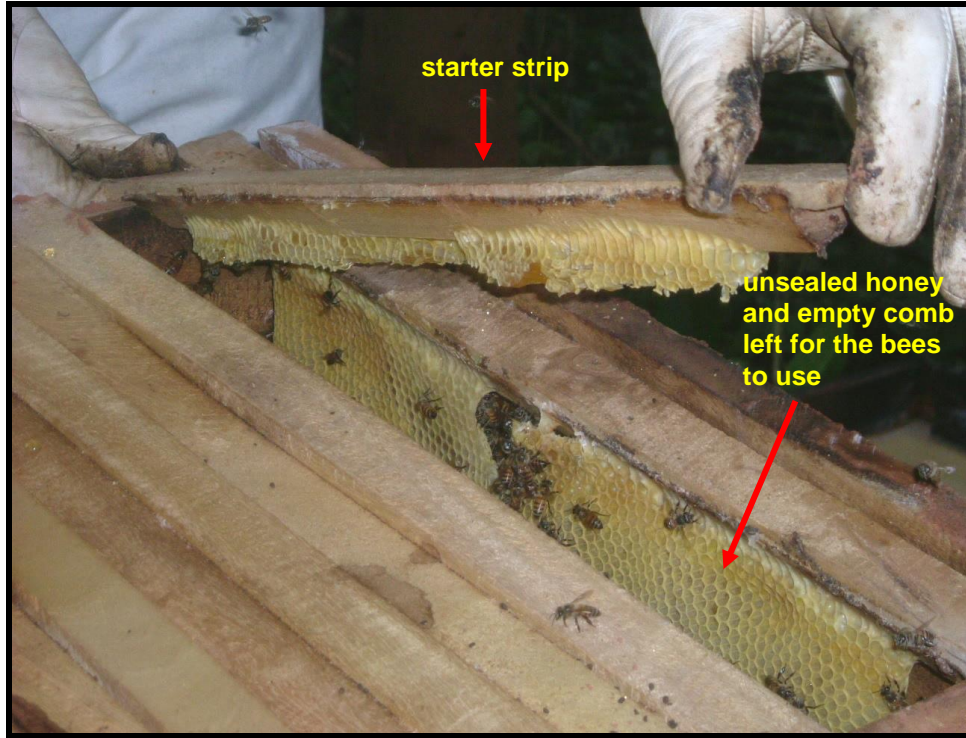
Cut the honeycomb from the top bar into a clean bucket. To keep bees out, the bucket lid must be replaced as soon as the comb is cut off the top bar.



A clean bucket with a good lid is needed to keep the bees away from the honey, and this also keeps the moisture content of the honey down.



Harvest each comb in turn until you reach the combs with brood. Leave a starter strip for the bees to build a new comb. Some honey should be left for the bees own food or the colony may abscond or die.



If you wish to protect the life of the colony, brood combs should not be harvested.

