



Honey Labelling



Introduction – is it honey?

Honey that contains any added ingredient/s may not be described as 'honey' or by any of the reserve descriptions, listed below. The purpose of this is to maintain the purity of honey, which consumers perceive to be an entirely natural product with nothing added to or taken away.

Substances such as veterinary drug residues, heavy metal contaminants or additives should not be present in honey.

Honey (with the exception of 'bakers honey', see below); **must not**:

- have any foreign tastes or odours
- have begun to ferment
- have an artificially changed acidity
- have been heated in a way that has destroyed or significantly deactivated natural enzymes.

Selling honey from the place of the production direct to the final consumer

If you are selling honey to the actual people who will eat it, at the place where the food was produced (e.g. farm gate, croft shop) or from your own vehicle / market stall (e.g. delivered, farmers markets), then the only things you need to label it with is:

- A legally correct product name (see required 'reserve descriptions' given below)
- An indication of any irradiation treatments

If the product is not pre-packed for this type of direct sale (unlikely for honey!), then the information can just be displayed by / near the product (e.g. shelf tags, delivery note). If the honey is pre-packed for the above type of direct sale, the information should be on / attached to the pack

Selling pre-packed honey to other retailers who will sell it to the final consumer.



If you are selling pre-packed honey to others to sell on (e.g. local shops), the following information must be included on any product label (or be capable of being provided in the case of a catering outlet).

The name of the food

As per the 'reserve description' given in The Honey Regulations 2003. In order for a honey to be labelled with one of the names listed below it needs to meet the given specification.

'Honey' *(reserve description)*

You can use just the word 'honey' to name the products listed at 1, 2, 5 and 6 below. Other variations need to also include the given description of state or processing.

1. Blossom or Nectar Honey (can also be called just 'Honey')

From the nectar of plants.

2. Honeydew Honey (can also be called just 'Honey')

Mainly from the excretions of plant sucking insects (Hemiptera) on the living part of plants or secretions of living parts of plants.

3. Comb Honey

Honey stored by bees in the cells of freshly made broodless combs or thin comb foundation sheets made solely of beeswax. Sold in sealed whole combs or in sections of combs.

4. Chunk Honey or Cut Comb in Honey

Honey which contains one or more pieces of comb honey.

5. Drained Honey (can also be called just 'Honey')

Obtained by draining de-capped broodless combs.

6. Extracted Honey (can also be called just 'Honey')

Obtained by centrifuging de-capped broodless combs.



7. Pressed Honey

Obtained by pressing broodless combs with or without the application of moderate heat i.e not exceeding 45°C.

8. Filtered Honey

Obtained by removing foreign inorganic or organic matters in such a way as to also result in the significant removal of pollen.

Where the filtering removes only unwanted matter such as small pieces of comb, dead bees etc, but the filters are not fine enough to remove pollen, then the honey does not need to be classed as 'filtered'.

9. Bakers Honey

Honey which is suitable for industrial uses or an ingredient in other foodstuffs which are then processed and may have a foreign taste or odour, may have begun to ferment or have fermented, or may have been overheated. The words 'intended for cooking only' should also appear close to the name.

You may also want to put a short description alongside the name if thought necessary.

An additional description of:

Floral or vegetable origin (e.g. heather, clover) can be added to all of the above, apart from pressed or filtered honey. The honey needs to have wholly or mainly come from the indicated source and possess the characteristics the source would impart.

Regional, territorial or topographical origin (e.g. Highland, meadow) can be added to all of the above, apart from pressed or filtered honey. The honey needs to have come entirely from the indicated source.

For each honey type, there is also a specification that needs to be met re sugar and moisture contents etc. Further information can be found in the FSA Guidance Notes referenced below.

See also guidance from the Food Standards Agency: www.food.gov.uk for 'Criteria for the use of the terms fresh, pure, natural etc in food labelling'.

On the rest of the label...

Indication of durability* and / lot mark

Durability will be “Best Before” or “Use By” depending on type of food [perishable or not]. For honey ‘best before’ will apply. Other marks such as “sell by” and “display until” have no legal basis and are more for the retailers own purposes.

Shelf life is generally displayed as *date, month & year*. However ‘best before’ dates can also be expressed as: - *day and month*, only if shelf life is 3 months or less
end of month and year, if greater than 3 months but less than 18 months
as above, or *end of year* only is more than 18 months.

Product traceability needs to now to be assured by law, that means being able to identify the source of the honey that went into the end product. Durability and lot marks may be same or different, often smaller manufacturers will change the durability date for each batch they make and therefore the date mark on the product can be used to trace it back. The producer decides on the size of ‘batch’ (e.g. one season / one location / one month of production) or ‘lot’ and any numbering system.

Your name & address / some means of identification.

Country of origin

The country in which the honey was harvested.

Quantity mark*

The size of typeface for this depends on the weight of the product. Text on labels which states the weight needs to be minimum of 2mm high up to 50g, 3mm high 50g to up to 200g, 4mm for 200g – 1kg.

Some foods can only be sold in certain weights: Honey 2oz, 4oz, 8oz, 12oz, 1lb, 1.5lb or multiples of 1lb unless below 50g

See also the HILFN ‘Jam & Preserve Packing’ Factsheet for further information of packaging requirements and sources etc.

Infant Warning

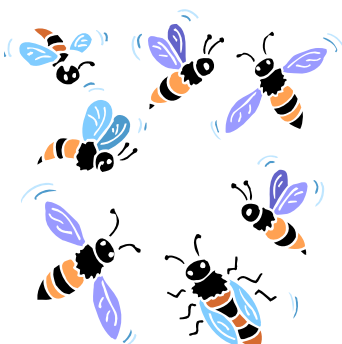
Since 1996 the British Honey Importers and Packers Association (BHIPA) have adhered to a voluntary labelling code that means all honey for retail sale includes a warning statement that ‘honey should not be given to infants under 12 months of age’. The Food Standards Agency supports the use of this voluntary warning, due to the potential for infant botulism if botulism spores are present.

Nutritional Information

Currently optional unless any claims are made (e.g. high in natural sugars), in which case compulsory to back up those claims; further advice should be sought as this is quite complex.

Other Notes

*The name, date mark and quantity mark must all appear in the same ‘field of vision’; i.e. on the same face of the product.



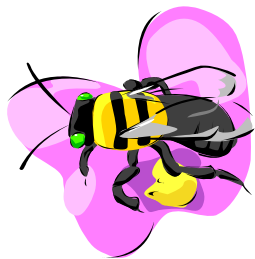
Further Information

The Honey Regulations 2003 Guidance Notes from the Food Standards Agency:

6th Floor
St Magnus House,
25 Guild Street,
Aberdeen, AB11 6NJ
Tel:01224 285100

E-mail: scotland@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Or see online at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/honeyguidance.pdf#page=5>



And for inspiration...

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES (THE TRUE STORY)

I'll tell you the story of the birds and the bees.
The bees live in hives, and the birds in the trees.

The bees favour flowers, the birds like the sky.
The bees tend to buzz, while the birds choose to fly.

The birds tweet and warble, dispelling our gloom.
The bees gather pollen, from flowers in bloom.

The birds think that aphids and worms taste real good.
The bees make us honey, to sweeten our food.

So the children who read this, I'm sure will be pleased,
As they hear the true story, of the birds and the bees.

by Ray Prillwitz

Highlands and Islands Local Food Network:

Highlands and Islands Local Food Network (HILFN) is working to link consumers to local food producers, and to encourage the development of community supported agriculture enterprises to provide local demand. Work to do this includes:

- business management advice
- food growing advice
- training courses for farmers, crofters and growers
- a website with over 50 producers, and a range of background information
- a topical newsletter

For further details about HILFN contact: Caroline Vawdrey, Reay House, George St, Cromarty, IV11 8YJ, Tel 01381600525, email info@hilocalfood.net or take a look at the website at www.hilocalfood.net