

**Fun with Fondant
For
Feeding Honey Bees
By
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Several years ago Jerry asked me a question to which I said HUH? The question was how do you make fondant? He had recently seen/heard some information about using fondant rather than sugar syrup as a supplementary early feed for honeybees. The advantage would be that being semisolid rather than liquid it would be more desirable since it wouldn't leak out accidentally and overall would be easier to handle.

I replied that fondant is basically fudge without any of the good stuff such as chocolate, nuts, cream, butter, or vanilla. It is ideally a finely crystallized form of sugar something like good creamed honey. Like fudge it is either good luck or good chemistry to get the right product. The basic premise is that a supersaturated solution of white cane or beet sugar is cooked to soft ball stage and then cooled slowly so fine crystals form. The addition of corn syrup or slightly acidifying the mixture with cream of tartar enhances the likelihood the resulting product will be smooth and creamy rather than crusty and grainy.

As with fudge the temperature to which the sugar syrup is cooked is an important part of the process. Like fudge it should be cooked to the soft ball stage which is usually given as 240 degrees F. on a candy thermometer. With fudge it is recommended that the solution be cooled without disturbing it to 110 degrees than it is beaten to keep the sugar crystals fine rather than grainy.

My candy thermometer was old and not all that accurate, but we went ahead. After several batches of grainy syrup that never did set properly and a couple that verged toward peanut brittle without the nuts, we invested in a new candy thermometer. Even with that the process did not always end up with consistent results.

Like honey extraction things tend to get a bit sticky, be prepared with hot water for melting the spills and mistakes.

The basic recipe we used was poured on wax paper lined jelly roll pans, allowed to cool and set up. A second layer of wax paper was added to the top like pollen patties and then cut into three or four pieces in a handy size easily applied to the top bars and next to the swarm. Two smaller fondant patties applied to either side of the swarm is better rather than one big patty. I feel fondant patties are preferable to dry sugar or candy boards since it does contain water and it therefore easily consumed by the bees. Follows is the fondant recipe we used.

BASIC FONDANT
from
McCall's Cook Book
First Printing, 1963, by The McCall Corporation

Ingredients:
2 Cups sugar
2 Tablespoons light corn syrup
1 cup of water
Makes 1 pound of fondant

Directions:

- 1. In small saucepan, combine sugar, corn syrup and 1 cup water.**
- 2. Over low heat, stir until sugar is dissolved.**
- 3. Bring to boiling; cover and boil 3 minutes.**
- 4. Boil, uncovered, without stirring, to 238F on candy thermometer, or until a small amount in cold water forms a soft ball.**
- 5. As crystals form, wipe them from side of pan with damp cloth.**
- 6. Pour out onto marble slab or large platter that has been rinsed or wiped with cold water.**
- 7. Let syrup cool to 110F, or lukewarm.**
- 8. With wooden spoon, work mixture to center of slab until creamy white mass forms.**
- 9. Knead with hands, to produce a smooth mixture.**
- 10. Place in a small bowl or jar; cover with damp cloth. Store in cool place 2 to 3 days, to ripen.**
- 11. When ready to use, knead in vanilla extract.**

Note: Steps 9 through 11 are necessary when making fine candies. For honey bees, following step 8, is the time to form your fondant patty between two pieces of wax paper. That patty could then be divided and used to feed one colony as needed.