Honey Processing: Filtration vs Straining

Filtered Honey

Honey is filtered to remove air bubbles and small particles to provide a clear, bright appearance and delay crystallization which is a natural process for common honeys. The honey is first heated to enable the honey to flow through the filters as well as reduce the growth of naturally occurring micro-organisms in the honey.

Manufacturers require filtration to ensure the honey is consistent: foreign material (small particles and air) removed and the honey in liquid form, not crystallized, for an adequate timeframe. Manufacturers of certain foods (sauces, dairy products) and personal care (soap, shampoo, cough drops/syrup) have strict requirements for micro levels to protect from the organisms in honey negatively impacting their finished products.

Strained Honey

Honey that is strained contains larger sized particles including bee parts, wax, pollen (if present) and other debris. These particles remain suspended in the honey and may cause a hazy or cloudy appearance and cause the honey to crystallize quicker than filtered honey. Prior to straining, the honey is warmed to reliquefy it from a crystallized form and allow it to flow through the strainer.

Strained honey is considered less processed than filtered honey (less heat, less particles removed). While there is no U.S. federal definition for "raw" honey, honey labeled as "raw" and/or "unfiltered" has commonly undergone a straining process to ensure any hazards have been removed from the honey. Strained honey is usually sold at retail as consumer interest in "raw" honey is high.

Key Attributes	Filtered Honey	Strained Honey
Labeling	No common call out	Typically designated "raw" and/or "unfiltered"
Consistency	Liquid, flowing, efficient for use	May thicken and experience texture change due to crystallization
Crystallization	Slower to crystallize	Quicker to crystallize
Appearance	Clear, bright	Cloudy, hazy
Heat	Heated	Warmed
Common Use By	Manufacturers, Foodservice, and Consumers	Foodservice and Consumers