

Using a CMBA Extractor to Remove Honey from a Frame

Note #1: This is messy. If doing the job in your kitchen, get a drop cloth or plastic tablecloth to work over. Both honey and wax will reach the floor.

Note #2: Make sure you are either extracting at night or in a bee-proof environment. Be assured, the bees will find you if you do not follow this note.

What you will need:

- Extractor
- Hot knife/cold knife – for cutting off the cappings
- Capping scraper or multi-tine fork for breaking open cappings you cannot reach with the hot knife
- Bucket to catch the cappings
- Something to support the frame over the cappings bucket while cutting cappings off (can be a narrow board with a nail up through it)
- Bucket to catch honey from the extractor

Step 1: Set up the extractor so you can run it conveniently. It may need some sort of tie-down, or you may need a scantily clad assistant to hold it, as the extractor will wobble in use.

Step 2: Have your capping bucket at a convenient height to work.

Step 3: Take a frame and hold it on the board over the capping bucket. If using a hot knife, it is ready when hot enough to melt wax. Using a cold knife, heat it in boiling water. Best not to use open flame to heat it, as the wax will catch fire. You may need to unplug the hot knife between sessions to avoid the honey on the knife burning. This will flavor your honey; it is not encouraged.

Step 4 (assuming right handed): Hold the frame at the top with the left hand, bracing it on the board over the capping bucket. With a slow sawing motion, run the hot knife up the face of the frame just under the cappings, removing the cappings and letting them drop into the bucket. Do this for both sides of the frame. Use the capping scraper or a fork to break the capping cover on comb not reached with the hot knife.

Step 5: Once the cappings have been removed, place the frame into the extractor. Repeat Steps 4 & 5 until the extractor is full and ready. In the case of a tangential extractor, you will extract one side of the frame (the outside), then reverse the frames within the extractor to extract the other side.

Step 6: Rotate the extractor for 2-3 minutes per side. If using a tangential extractor, you may want to do Side 1 lightly, then Side 2 hard, then return to Side 1. This keeps the weight of the honey on the inside face from crushing the comb, or “blowing out” the frame.

Step 7: Once both sides of the frames have been extracted, place the empty frames in a hive body or super. Tomorrow, you will put this super on a bottom board with a cover and allow the bees to rob out the remaining honey. Do this as far away from your apiary as possible to avoid encouraging robbing.

Step 8: Open the honey gate on the extractor and allow the honey to run out through a filter and into the buckets.

Step 9: Clean the extractor and hot knife. You can let the bees rob out the leftover honey in the extractor, but my experience says a lot of bees die in this exercise. If doing this, however, best to lie the extractor on its side, as it make entry/exit easier fort the bees. Use hot water to finally clean the extractor, but no soap. It is best to not disassemble the extractor; however, if you do, be aware of the single ball bearing that supports the main shaft. It will often stick inside the shaft hole and fall out when you are not looking. Make sure you know where it is, and replace it during reassembly.

Step 10: The cappings should be set in a warm, bee-proof place to drain for 2-3 days. A significant amount of honey is retrieved this way. You can also squeeze the capping in the nylon filter. Once done, you can set the cappings out as you did the empty frames, to be robbed out. This will take only a day. Then the wax can be melted for reuse..

Good luck, and have fun

Roger Williams, July 2013