

A New Twist on Warming Honey by John Thomas

With a great honey harvest last year, I thought I'd just save some space in the garage by leaving it in my 5 gallon pails, neatly stacked on each other. Three pails stacked not much higher than three deeps held about 180 lbs....no problem!

Except when I started to rotate it out for bottling. While storage temperatures can affect the crystallization rate, the cold concrete in the garage was taking its toll and the cycling from 50 to 70 degree's was encouraging crystallization. I needed to figure out how to manage these (relatively) small quantities of crystalized honey more efficiently and didn't have room for storage.

My first attempt was to bring it in the house, set it up next to the fireplace and let it slowly heat up, but found it didn't heat *through* enough to liquefy the honey, have the crystals resolve and in the end, I actually noticed an increase in my gas bill. I tried a box with a light bulb, then a stronger light bulb, then a little electric heating pad....nothing was really getting it done.

A google search yielded little help with using hot water baths, which work good on 1lb and 3lb jars. But, takes just this side of forever if you have more than just a couple to do....case lots?worse!.

In that middle ground of beekeeping, a little more than a two hive hobbyist and more like a "sideliner" with 8-10 hives, I needed to solve this without spending \$400 on some version of a barrel heater to use on plastic pails, and while adjustable, couldn't really be used for anything else.

The solution actually came wrapped in Christmas paper last December and a "Two for the Price of One" deal as "seen on TV", I just needed to work up to it while it was sitting in plain sight on our counter top.

- Adjustable from "warm" to "400 +" degree's in 5 degree increments.....Check!
- Cooking surface doesn't actually get hot enough to melt plastic.....Check!
- Can be set up on a timer for hours safely.....Check!
- Can be set up with a water bath/double boiler.....Check!
- Can leave the crystallized honey in the 5 gallon plastic (food grade) pail.....Check!
- Can't tip over and spill everything with shifting.....Check!
- Can be used for something besides warming honey (cooking).....Check!

The NuWave induction cooktop at about \$99.00, I got for Christmas fit the bill. Using the stainless steel pot that came with the package, I have the perfect set-up for warming a moderately crystallized five gallon pail from 65 degrees to a very pourable 110 degrees in about 2 hours.

Set up the base unit and set the temperature to 175 degree's....not hot enough to boil the water. Add water to the induction pan up to the handle grommets on the inside (about 2 inches). Then place the five gallon pail with honey in it on top of the pan. It will fit perfectly inside and should not be tippy and sit just above the water bath. Set the timer for up to several hours. I use a digital heat thermometer to check the honey temperature as it rises. Keep the lid of the pail set loosely on top and keep the kids and dog out of it until it's ready...then bottle.

