

GENERAL.

Melting old Combs.—Sun, Steam and Hot Water Wax Extractors.—Several Hints.

DADANT & SON.

FRIEND HUTCHISON.—In reply to your request, we will give you our views on rendering beeswax as the clarifying of beeswax is not a question of general interest. If we can get bee keepers to render their combs properly, there will no longer be any need of clarifying. In the first place, allow us to say that there is a great deal of beeswax wasted all over the country because many people think that it is not worth while to save little bits of it at a time. But a careful bee keeper will save every particle, clean or dirty.

I would advise every man to have a sun extractor, but every man should also be prepared to melt wax over water. The reason of this is that old combs when put into the solar extractor will yield nothing, the cast skins, residues and old pollen absorbing every bit of wax as it is melted. To succeed in getting everything out of the old combs they should be well mashed in cold weather, at a time when they are brittle. This destroys the shape of the cells and avoids the lodging of particles of beeswax in the cells. Any one who has melted old combs has noticed that it is in this way that the greatest waste takes place. After the combs are well crushed they should be put to soak in water till all is thoroughly soaked. This is to prevent the wax, when it melts, from soaking in the refuse, and it helps it to separate from the refuse as the latter becomes heavier than water and settles to the bottom. One need not be afraid that the wax will rot, for beeswax cannot rot, at least it does not during any reasonable time, as we have proven time and again.

As to the wax extractors for melting the combs over water, we think most of those in use are good, but a very cheap one can be made by using a common wash-boiler in which the combs are melted with a great deal of water. The wax, as it liquifies, comes to the surface. A piece of wire cloth about a foot square is made into the shape of a small round basket and forced down into the mixture and the wax can be dipped out of that strainer with a ladle. A great deal of water will be dipped out with the wax, but the whole is put into some flaring vessel and allowed to cool. These cakes will not be entirely clean, especially if the wire cloth strainer has coarse meshes, but with another melting very nice cakes are secured and the

smell of the hive and of the honey is well retained. The wax must not be boiled much, but it must be thoroughly hot before it is removed from the fire. Soft water must be used. Propolis will not mix with wax, but will settle to the bottom of the kettle during the first melting. When the wax is melted for the second time it should be placed where it can be allowed to cool every slowly, undisturbed, so that all light foreign substances may settle freely to the bottom. Bees and flies should be skimmed off when the wax is hot, as they will usually remain at the top. If there are any particles of beeswax left in the top of the residue or if anything has to be scraped from the bottom of the cakes, it should be preserved to be put with the next lot of combs. Cappings and pieces of light colored combs should not be melted with the old combs, as they will make a better grade of beeswax, which can be used for different purposes, but the very dirtiest combs will make a fair article of golden colored or red wax, according to the locality, if properly rendered.

Cappings may be treated in the same way, or can be rendered in the solar extractor, but it is a mistake to render them before having washed them of all the honey that they contain. Each year we usually get two barrels of capping water which can be used for either wine, cider, or to make the very best of vinegar. To test the strength of the capping water the cheapest method is to try it with an egg. To make good strong vinegar an egg should float in it so as to just show itself at the top.

The solar extractor is necessary for two purposes; first to render out the little bits that may be picked up during the season at different times and which might run the risk of being consumed by the moth if preserved during hot weather. It is also useful to render any wax that has been damaged by melting with very hard water or by over-boiling. Beeswax which has a grainy appearance and which some people have mistaken for grains of pollen is wasted by many and can only be recovered by the sun process. It contains a great deal of water, sometimes half of its weight, and this must be evaporated before the wax is fit to be used.

Wax extractors should be nearly flat and so made that every nook and corner be exposed to the rays of the sun through a glass. Beeswax can be melted in them from May to October, but the best month for their use is June. They give a first class article of beeswax without much labor, and for this reason they will be much more extensively used in the near future.

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