

How to Make Fondant for Bees

4 Reasons to Make Bee Fondant, Including Feeding Bees in Winter

September 17, 2020

<https://backyardbeekeeping.iamcountryside.com/health-pests/how-to-make-fondant-for-bees/>

Reading Time: 6 minutes

Fondant for bees is a little different than the fondant that you find at the bakery. The bakery fondant can have high fructose corn syrup, cornstarch, coloring, and flavorings added to it. Making fondant for bees is a lot like making candy.

When [starting a honey bee farming project](#), even a small one, it's super important to consider the availability of food for the bees. Now, bees are great at finding food but it's still wise to intentionally grow [plants that attract bees](#) to ensure that they have plenty to eat.

However, even with the best planning and intention, there are times that bees might need food from the beekeeper. If you manage your hives well and are diligent to leave enough honey for the bees to make it through the winter or better yet, wait until spring to harvest any honey, you shouldn't have to feed your bees very often.

When do Bees Need to be Fed?

There are several reasons why bees might need to be fed instead of relying solely on what they stored or on foraging.

1. Winter lasts longer normal. No one can predict the future and know exactly how long winter will last or how much honey the bees will eat during the winter. This is the main reason some beekeepers prefer a spring harvest instead of a fall harvest.

2. Winter is warmer than normal but there isn't nectar flow. During the winter bees cluster to stay warm. Since they aren't out flying around, they aren't using much energy and don't eat as much stored honey. However, if the winter is warm the bees

will naturally want to fly around and forage. The problem is that even in a warm winter there isn't much to forage. So, they come back to the hive and eat more stored honey than they would have if they had been clustered.

3. A new hive is being established. Setting up house and drawing out comb takes a lot of energy. Providing extra food at the beginning can help the bees draw out the comb quicker. Feeding for the first few weeks of installing a new hive is a very common practice.

4. A hive is weak. Sometimes even after a summer of foraging a weak hive won't have enough honey stored for the winter. Some beekeepers will feed a weak hive to encourage them to store more honey and hopefully make it through the winter.

Why Fondant for Bees?

Fondant can be made ahead of time and stored in the freezer in gallon zip lock bags. When you realize that a beehive needs to be fed, it's ready.

Fondant is dry. Unlike syrup, fondant is dry so the bees can use it right away. Also, feeding bees syrup can increase the humidity in the hive and if a freeze comes, the hive can freeze because of the humidity. Fondant doesn't increase humidity in the hive.



How to Make Fondant for Bees



How to Make Fondant for Bees?

Fondant is just sugar, water and a small amount of vinegar. The best sugar is to use is just plain white cane sugar. At this time cane sugar is non-GMO but beet sugar is GMO. Also, don't use powdered sugar since it often has anti-caking ingredients such as corn starch or tapioca in it. Likewise, don't use brown sugar which might be caramelized or have molasses in it, both of which are not good for bees.

You can use white vinegar or apple cider vinegar. It's just a small amount and won't make the fondant taste like vinegar. The acid in the vinegar will invert the sucrose into glucose and fructose, which is what the bees like. There is some disagreement among beekeepers as to whether this is necessary since bees do this almost immediately when they eat sucrose. So if you decide to leave it out, that's fine.

Ingredients and Supplies

4 parts sugar (by weight)

1 part water (by weight)

¼ tsp vinegar for every pound of sugar

Candy thermometer

Thick bottomed pot

Stove

Hand mixer, immersion blender, stand mixer, or whisk

So, if you have a four-pound bag of sugar, you will need one pint of water (16 oz. of water which weighs just a bit over a pound) and a teaspoon of vinegar.

Put all the ingredients in a pot on the stove and heat over medium high heat until it reaches a 235°F which is the soft ball temperature for candy making. If you don't have a candy thermometer you can check the consistency by putting drops of the fondant into a cut with very cold water. If it balls up into a soft ball, you've reached the stage. If it just kind of dissipates, you need to let cook more. If it turns into a hard ball, you've let it get too hot.



As the sugar starts to melt, the liquid will become translucent.



Syrup foams quite a bit when it boils so make sure you use a large enough pot to contain it all. Also, keep an eye on it and turn down the heat if it starts to boil over.



After a while, the foaming will stop and the syrup will start to jell.

After it reaches the softball stage, remove the pot from the heat and let it cool until it reaches about 190°F. If you don't have a thermometer let it cool off enough that it begins to look opaque instead of translucent.



Once it's cooled, mix it well to break up the crystals. I prefer to use an immersion blender for this because I don't like having to pour the mixture into my stand mixer when it's super hot. Beat until the bee fondant is white and smooth.



This is what it will look like.



Pour into prepared pans. I like to use disposable pie pans that I have saved from being thrown away, you could also use a plate lined with wax paper. I like this size because I can put the whole thing in a gallon zip lock bag without cutting it or breaking it apart. Some people like to use a cookie sheet (the kind with a lip) that is lined with wax paper. Whatever you have and want to use is fine. Just make sure it's ready to go when you're finished mixing. The cooler the fondant gets, the harder it is to pour.

Once it's completely cooled, put it in zip lock bags and store in the freezer. Don't forget to label them so everyone knows they're for the bees.

When it's time to use the fondant, just put a disk in the topmost part of the hive. If the bees need it, they will eat it. If they don't need it, they won't take it. But be sure to remove any leftover fondant when it is no longer needed.

What About Protein?

Like people, bees cannot live on just carbohydrates, they also need protein. When bees forage they get protein from the pollen they collect. When feeding bees fondant, you can also feed them pollen patties to help round out their diet.

Beekeeping is an art and a science and quite often there is no clear cut way to do things. One of the best things a beginning beekeeper can do is find a mentor. The mentor can be an

individual or a local beekeeper's group. Not only can the mentor help you learn [how to start a honey bee farm](#), he or she can also help you learn how to maintain the beehives in your climate.

Have you ever made fondant for bees? How did they like it?