

# JOHN L. GUILFOYLE PTY. LTD.

www.johnlguilfoyle.com.au

email: john@johnlguilfoyle.com.au

ABN: 57 548 699 481

38 Begonia Street  
Inala  
Brisbane  
Qld 4077

Shop 6  
82 Victoria Street  
Werrington  
NSW 2747

299 Prospect Road  
Blair Athol  
Adelaide  
SA 5084

Ph: (07) 3279 9750  
Fax: (07) 3279 9753

Ph: (02) 9623 5585  
Fax: (02) 9673 3009

Ph: (08) 8344 8307  
Fax: (08) 8344 2269

PO Box 18  
Richlands Qld 4077

PO Box 4011  
Werrington NSW 2747

PO Box 128  
Kilburn SA 5084

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## How to Produce Comb Honey Sections

These are the large square pieces of honey in the comb, surrounded by a small wooden box. Well drawn, they look spectacular and usually attract premium prices.

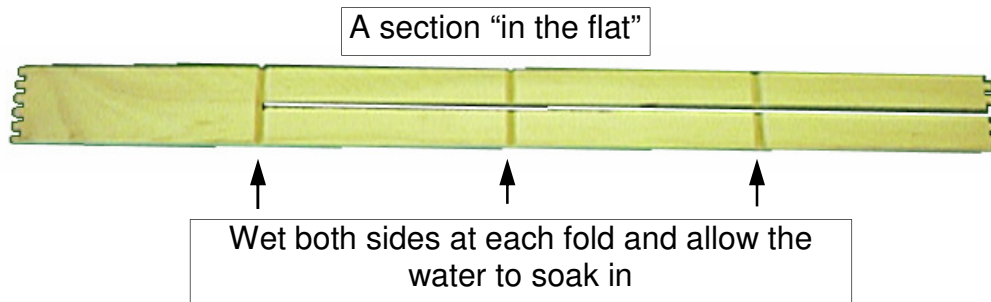
**However**, before you race out and replace all your honey frames with frames of sections, remember

- ◇ **bees do not like sections.** They can be forced to draw sections if the hives are strong and the honey flow is heavy, but the moment either weakens, the bees will stop, and it is virtually impossible to get the bees to start on the sections again.
- ◇ **sections are difficult to pack** for retail sale. Goods on display get poked, squeezed and dropped, so lots of sections end up damaged and not saleable. Not good for either the beekeeper or retailer.
- ◇ **sections are too large for the modern family** who already have 7 or 8 other spreads in the fridge. Even the most enthusiastic honey eater finds a section a lot to get through. Each section holds approximately 1/2 kilo of honey, so some will end up a sad candied lump in the fridge. Mum then refuses to buy any more.

Given all that, most beekeepers usually try producing sections at least once in their career. This pamphlet is about "How to produce sections" not the "why".

# Assembly Instructions

**Sections** - Our sections are thin laths of wood, shaped and grooved, so that when the grooves are wet, you can fold the section into a box.



Using water, wet the 3 fold joints on both sides. Leave a few minutes to let the water soak in. Wet again. After a few more minutes you will find the sections will fold into a square and the little dovetail joins will clip neatly together. If you happen to break the section along one of the folds, just put it aside until it is thoroughly dry. Then mend it with a bit of sticky tape or a small piece of sticking plaster in a matching colour. Black insulation tape will not improve the look or future saleability of the section.



**Section Frame Holder** - Arrange 8 square sections so that the slits will allow you to slide the sections on to a complete sheet of full depth foundation. Gently slide each section into position. Place a section frame holder around these 8 sections, squeeze them together firmly, and nail the section frame holder together.

To put this assembly into your hive you will need to remove 2 frames. If you place the sections between 2 well-drawn frames, the bees often do a better job on them. This method of producing sections gives you the choice of producing only 8 at a time, or more than that if you wish. It is better not to put 2 frames of section side by side. Leave a standard well drawn comb between them.



When your sections are full, remove them from the section frame holder by gently pressing on the corners of the section framework. They should gradually ease out for you and you can then separate the 8 individual sections. You leave the individual wooden square section attached as this supports the honeycomb. The section frame holder can be reused.

If the sections have been in the hive too long, you may need to use a sharp knife and scrap off surplus wax or cells to tidy them up and make them look better.

**Marketing Sections** - Sections are very fragile to handle and transport. Years ago, when sections were very popular, you could buy cardboard boxes complete with a decorative paper lace edging in which to market your sections. Nowadays most people wrap them in Glad Wrap.

However, with the variety of craft materials available now it would be very easy to create your own presentation boxes, and make the sections really attractive, ideal for the prestigious tourist outlets.

Some people are reluctant to eat honey-in-the-comb because they are concerned about swallowing the beeswax. It is a good idea to make sure everyone knows that beeswax will do no harm. It is not digested, and just passes through the body.

## CUT COMB - An Alternative to Sections

As you are extracting look out for a near perfect white-capped, well-drawn comb preferably full of a light honey. Use it to make cut comb.

1. Lay the frame best side down, on a large cutting board inside a tray. The tray catches all the loose honey.
2. Cut the wires where they run between the holes on the outside of the frame, straighten the wires. Gently pull them out. If they are extra stubborn, use your electric embedder to warm and therefore help loosen the wire.
3. Using a good sharp knife, cut round the comb and lift off the frame. The frame can now be re-wired, re-waxed and used again.
4. Measure the containers you are going to put the comb honey into and cut the comb into suitably sized pieces. Remember you are creating a premium product so make the comb pieces a generous size. Little bits of comb in large containers look mean, and are not good sellers. Make sure the piece will fit into the container, crushed round the edges, honey comb looks terrible.

5. You now have 2 choices -

Comb honey immersed in honey. Once the comb is cut, use a kitchen lifter and carefully place a piece in each container best side up and fill the container with some of the same light honey from your extractor. These can be filled to a standard weight and sold at a standard price. Much easier if you are selling on to a retailer. Another variation is to cut the pieces of comb long and skinny and immerse them in jars of the same light honey. This sells more honey for the same amount of comb and is often very popular because it gives everyone in the family the choice of comb or liquid honey.

Cut comb on its own. Once you have cut the pieces of comb, carefully transfer them to a cake cooling rack also sitting on a tray to collect the loose honey. Allow to drain completely, then carefully place each piece in its own container. Well done, they look very good but are certainly more fiddly to produce. They also require perfectly capped combs on the top because it is very visible. Each piece varies a little and this makes the weight and therefore the price vary which can be harder for retail sale.

If you make some cut comb while you are extracting, all the surplus honey, offcuts and failures can be put through your extracting process with your cappings and cleaned up in one go.