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Producer Spotlight Balsam Ridge



Member of



President's Note

Greetings Maple Producers,

Well, our season is not far away, and we can only wonder what it will bring. It is obvious that the spring weather we have now is changing our season and changing it in different ways across our large State. With this being said, there were producers in the southern part of the state that made syrup shortly after the annual meeting in January last year, and most producers across the entire state finished making syrup earlier than ever. Knowing that every year is different for all of us, if we look at the last 10+ years our season is changing. So, what do we do? Be ready earlier? Use more technology? Give up on some of our old methods and time frames? Certainly, no clear answer for any of us but something to think about.

NAMSC, 2023 Conference was in Sturbridge Mass. this past October. Mass. Maple Assoc. did a great job of organizing and offered something for everyone. We had a fair size group from Maine attend and hope they all brought back ideas we may be able to introduce into our program. Much more discussion on Maine hosting the NAMSC annual conference in 2024 to come at the annual meeting in Augusta.

In closing I would like to leave everyone with something to think about. All too often I hear people, (and not just in MMPA) yes, I'm a member but what do I get out of it! Well, I believe "you get out of something what you put into it". Give this some thought, what can you do to make MMPA better?

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Lyle Merrifield
President

Producer Spotlight ~ Dewey and Sharon Lloy, Balsam Ridge, Raymond, ME, Cumberland County

Balsam Ridge is owned and operated by Dewey and Sharon Lloy. They are a family owned and operated Christmas Tree Farm established in 1993. The farm itself is on 50 acres of land, purchased for the purpose of creating a Christmas Tree Farm. The property was hardwood forest which has gradually been developed into fields.

About the operation

We had the resources of maple trees on the property and like many began to tap a few trees, each year we expanded our operation to the point of building a sugarhouse and a gift shop and we continue to expand the operation each year.

Our trees are located all on our own property which keeps our operation manageable, we have always considered maple syrup to be an accent to our Christmas Tree Farm and that methodology has served us well over the years.

Currently, we have about 1200 taps, and use a 2 x 8 Bill Mason oil fired evaporator and two 250 CDL ROs. Our system of collecting sap is automated, it feeds from our main line into a pumping station, and then pumps directly into the sugar house 100 gallons at a time. Like many, processing of sap quickly and efficiently is of the utmost importance. We started with one RO and having expanded the sugarbush we have since added an additional RO to process the sap.



Marketing

Marketing our syrup is easy - when you have a great tasting product the syrup sells itself! We are grateful for the many who have come to the farm to purchase our syrup directly or have ordered online. We do have some other outlets for those looking to purchase bulk, but the majority of our sales are here at the farm.

On Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, we have always done demonstrations such as tree-tapping and sugar on snow. Over the past few years, we expanded our events to include live entertainment, blacksmith demonstrations, chainsaw carving and food trucks. All of this provides diversity of entertainment while visiting the farm.

Lessons learned and future plans

Producing maple syrup is a lesson unto itself, isn't it? Lesson in perseverance, patience, strategy, and trying to outsmart Mother Nature, who you can bet is going to throw you a curve ball every time. So, the biggest lesson is just when you have it figured out, you really don't, it's a process of continued education. The wish list always is bigger than the budget and we must remind ourselves why we started producing maple syrup, it was as an accent to the farm and an opportunity to bring families together and try to showcase to the best of our ability a pretty fine tasting Maine Maple Product.

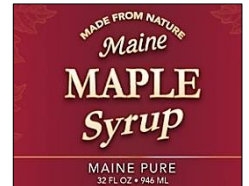
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EXTENSION PIPELINE

Building a Brand for Marketing Yourself and the Industry

Did you know that Extension is working with MMPA to manage a 2-year specialty crop block grant? The goal of that project is to enhance branding and marketing of Pure Maine Maple Syrup. We wrote the proposal knowing that there is a lot more to be done to increase brand recognition of *Maine* maple syrup. Increasing the branding of Pure Maine Maple Syrup helps us stand out from the large pool of syrup from other states or Canada, and from the “pancake syrups” who’s marketing teams work hard to minimize the pure maple marketing efforts. Fortunately, our team is underway with developing these branding and marketing resources funded by this grant. Branding and marketing are important areas to focus on to enhance the Maine maple industry and your own businesses in the same effort.



You might be asking, what is the difference between branding and marketing anyway? These two concepts have a lot of overlap but are distinct and useful to approach separately. Branding is telling potential customers who we are, why we exist, and what our values are. It is the process of creating an identity for a product or brand. For example, what do you hope comes to mind when someone hears about Pure Maine Maple Syrup. What is Pure Maine Maple Syrup and why is it different that syrup from other regions, or non-maple syrups?

Marketing is the process of getting more people to look at and hopefully purchase our products. Marketing changes often given consumer and cultural preferences and trends. It can include efforts such as email marketing, social media posts, press releases, pay per click marketing, and more. While these efforts may change depending on the time of year, audience, and goals (marketing Maine Maple Sunday, vs. online holiday sales), the underlying message should stay consistent throughout. “This is our brand, and this is why our product is the best”. Ultimately, marketing is about getting new customers, while branding is about building customer loyalty. They should both work hand-in-hand.



To achieve the goals of enhancing the brand, and increasing marketing, the objectives of the Specialty Crop Block Grant are;

1. To create a Pure Maine Maple branded label for a syrup jug line, and for promotional materials such as an inflatable jug to display at events.
2. To create two 3-minute videos promoting Maine maple events and the industry, and 6 more short videos promoting Maine maple syrup production.
3. Hire a marketing firm to coordinate brand development, and marketing efforts through social media outlets, print media, and news media connections.
4. And to aggregate developed videos, photos, social media posts, and marketing best practices into a Marketing Toolkit that will be available to all MMPA members.

The goal of the marketing toolkit (#4) is that these videos are designed to enhance the branding of the whole industry, however, the same resources are excellent marketing tools for you all as individuals. That toolkit should be created and sent out to the membership by this coming February. *Cont'd, page 4...*

Producer Spotlight ...Continued from page 2

MMPA membership

Although we are not as active currently, we were responsible for updating the website, managing membership and tours to local sugar houses throughout the southern part of the state back in the day. Like anything it's nice to see new blood step in with fresh ideas and knowledge to keep the association running smoothly. MMPA provides great resources in education, marketing, and community.



Sharon and Dewey Lloy.

EXTENSION PIPELINE ...Continued from page 3

DID YOU KNOW THAT MMPA MANAGES THE PUBLIC FACING PURE MAINE MAPLE FACEBOOK PAGE? <https://www.facebook.com/MaineMapleProdcersAssociation>. This page is loaded with newly created high-quality posts created through this grant effort. Posts include recipes with maple, links to other marketing efforts, sharable videos about Maple Fall Fest, and the industry. While it is great to have these resources on the Facebook page, **we need your support to get them in front of the public.** Your support spreading these resources and posts not only enhances the industry, but it brings folks to your pages as well. That said, the rate of engagement with these posts has been very low. Please Like and Share these posts. What better way to bring traffic and eyes to your products this holiday season!?

UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 10, 2024** **MMPA Technical Sessions, Syrup Contest, and Business Meeting at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show.** January 10, 2024. Hydrometer testing being provided by UMaine Extension during the program.
- February 3** **Backyard Maple Sugaring Workshop-** February 3rd with a Snow Date of February 17th. Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association and UMaine Cooperative Extension. Sanford. Contact Jason.Lilley@maine.edu for more information.
- February 8** **Backyard Maple Sugaring,** 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. [Lewiston Adult Ed](#), Longley Campus, 145 Birch Street, Lewiston.
- February 17** **Hydrometer Testing-** February 17th. Pownal. Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association February meeting. Testing by UMaine Extension.
- Stay tuned...** UMaine Extension will be hosting more backyard maple workshops across the state. There will also be more hydrometer testing locations and producer discussion groups across the state. Notices will come out through the UMaine Extension Maple contact list. Please reach out to Jason.Lilley@maine.edu if you have not been receiving messages from UMaine Extension.



North American Maple Syrup Council, Inc.

64th Annual Convention

Sturbridge Massachusetts, October 25th thru 28th, 2023 Business Meeting

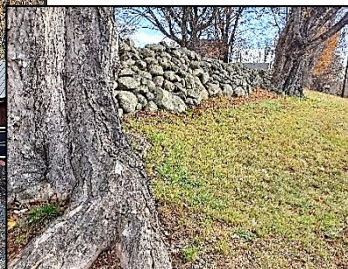
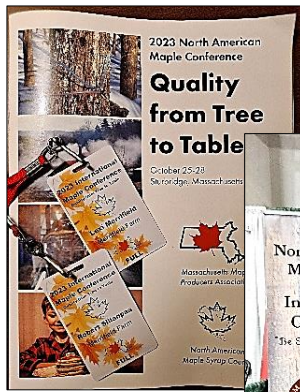
A three-hour business meeting was held Wednesday afternoon. The group covered all the normal business which includes, roll call of States, current president report, many committee reports, treasurer’s report etc. NAMSC also heard a report from the IMSI Exec. Director Jean Lamontagne. The Specialist reports from the floor were informative and shows that our overall industry certainly keeps pushing forward. A personal thank you goes to our outgoing NAMSC President Howard Boyden for his guidance and leadership over the last 2 years.

In closing thank you to Massachusetts Maple Producers Association for hosting a great convention with great tours and very informative technical sessions.

Sincerely,

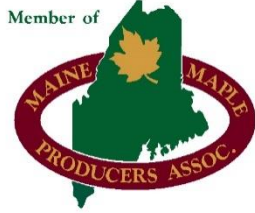
Lyle Merrifield

MMPA President, Delegate to NAMSC



Scenes from the 64th Annual Convention.

Photos: Lexi Merrifield.



**Maine Maple Producers Association
Application for Membership**

Date: _____ Business/Farm Name: _____

Owners Name: _____ Mailing Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Sugarhouse Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

Please check items that apply: Member Bulk Producer Equipment Dealer

MMPA APPLICATION **NEW** or **RENEWAL** (*please check*)

\$100.00 MAPLE PRODUCER MEMBERSHIP (License Producers)

You must be a MMPA Member to host Maine Maple Sunday. Listing on website includes: address, phone #, Maine Maple Sunday map, Fall Maple map, Newsletter & Maple Digest (1 MMPA vote) Includes Website link, Brief Biography & notes (100 words or less, Logo + Photo & link to Social Media Accounts); emailed to dunnfamilymaple@gmail.com

Friends of Maine Maple Producers and Business Membership

\$ 50.00 Friends of MMPA: Newsletter, No voting rights, No listing on MMPA website/No use of trademarks of MMPA.

\$ 150.00 Non-Producer Membership (non-producer): No voting rights, Newsletter, Rights to use Maine Maple Sunday trademark for advertising and Marketing.

Total Due \$ _____

Mail application and check to: Maine Maple Producers Assoc. 419 Chicopee Rd. Buxton, ME 04093

SOUTHERN MAINE MAPLE SUGARMAKERS ASSOCIATION: Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association Contact Richard Morrill through email at nashvalleyfarm@myfairpoint.net to become a member. You may also visit www.smmsa.org or mail to SMMSA 79 Nash Rd. Windham, ME 04062

Member of



Maine Maple Sunday Application

Maine Maple Sunday Weekend is open for all MMPA members to participate. Listing on the MMPA website map is optional. Members can log into their accounts and adjust their listing and add photos. (Prices or discounts are not permitted to be advertised on the MMPA website.) You may also submit your description with your application for it to be added. (MMPA officers will not be held liable for transcription errors or late submissions)

Maple Sunday Applications received after March 1st will be subject to a \$50 late fee. After March 15th they will not be processed.

Event details:

Bulk Producer Syrup Sales

The MMPA website will soon have a page to assist our bulk producers selling bulk syrup to other producers. Bulk producers will be able to list contact information as well as how to order bulk syrup. Contact information and ordering information should be submitted to Scott Dunn at dunnfamilymaple@gmail.com or mailed to: MMPA, C/O Scott Dunn, 419 Chicopee Rd., Buxton, ME 04093

Equipment Dealers

The MMPA website equipment dealer page has been updated and now offers more for the dealers. Dealers are now able to choose between two options to be listed on the website. Dealers do not need to be MMPA members to be listed on the dealer page.

\$25 for a business card size listing with contact information and one logo.

\$100 Approximately a 4-inch by 6-inch space, where you can provide your own artwork with photos, logos, and other information. You can also opt to provide the information that you would like, and our webmaster will incorporate it into the space. Remember, there is only so much space, so photos and logos will be sized accordingly. Please provide some sort of sketch so we can reduce the number of revisions needed as the webmaster works by the hour.

Dealer listing information should be submitted to Scott Dunn at dunnfamilymaple@gmail.com or mailed to: MMPA, C/O Scott Dunn, 419 Chicopee Rd. Buxton, ME 04093

Maple Flan

Serves 12

- 1 3/4 cups dark maple syrup
- 3 large eggs
- 5 large egg yolks
- 2 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Preheat oven to 325°. Bring 1 cup of the maple syrup to a boil in a heavy pan over medium heat, turn down and reduce to 2/3 cup.

Cool until the foam is reduced, pour into a 9" round pan or ramekins* to coat the bottom. Gently whisk the remaining ingredients so as not to stir up foam. Pour into the baking dish or ramekins (grease the pan first) and gently place in a bain-de-mer--that's where you place your pan inside a larger vessel, filled with hot water. Place in the center of the oven for about 50-60 minutes, until the edges are set but the center is still wobbly. (Bake a few minutes longer if you prefer a more golden-brown color, just make sure it's still

wobbly.) Pour a little maple syrup on top of the flan pieces when you serve. Carefully remove from the water and cool, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Run a knife around the edges so it'll come out easily, then turn over onto a dessert plate to serve.

*If you use ramekins, this recipe will require about 9 of them. Lightly grease, or spray with an unflavored oil, such as canola or avocado oil. Then pour 4 teaspoons of the maple syrup into each ramekin, preferably through a sieve to avoid any lumps. Then pour the egg mixture into each ramekin. Pour boiling water into a 14" pan, place ramekins in the pan and make sure water is about 1/2" from the top of the ramekins. Bake for about 50 minutes. Cool in refrigerator. To serve, run sharp knife around edges, place dessert plate on top of ramekins and turn upside down; pour a little maple syrup on top.



Quarterly Newsletter (December 2023)

c/o Lyle Merrifield
195 North Gorham Rd.
Gorham, ME 04038

