



Quarterly Newsletter

December 2024

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## Producer Spotlight Church's Sugar Shack, LLC



## Message from the Vice President

I wanted to start out by saying thank you to everyone who has stepped up over the last few months to keep our Association moving forward after the loss of Lyle. We were fortunate to have him and now see all that he did behind the scenes that went unnoticed. I especially want to thank Jo-Ann, Lexi, and their family for working so hard to help us put on a first class NAMSC meeting that all attendees agreed was one of the best, ever. Lyle would have been proud.

Many thanks to Jason Lilley for his efforts as well. The educational portion of the conference was well received, and we had many positive comments. Jason is a great resource for us and went above and beyond making the NAMSC a huge hit.

I also want to thank the board of directors and all the members who have helped guide me through this unexpected transition. Your combined efforts at the North American meeting put our association in a positive light.

The board recently gave approval to fund Christmas ads to promote Maine maple syrup. Last year, New Hampshire surprised us with a widespread and lengthy campaign to promote their state's maple products just before Christmas. There was a lot of feedback that we needed to find a way to offset their advertising. Our budget was much more limited, but we are currently advertising on Maine Public Radio and website. Their radio signal reaches 99% of the State of Maine, and parts of New Hampshire. It's a start. The board of directors hope to work toward grants to expand our advertising in the future.

The board also approved the purchase of a cargo trailer to store our supplies. We can safely store our equipment, like the inflatable jug, trade show display, governors tree tapping material and some fair displays. Having a place to put most of our routinely used materials will certainly help in making everyone's job easier. Thanks to Doug and Gail Tibbetts for going to pick it

*Continued on page 3...*

## Producer Spotlight, Lewis and Andrea Church, Church's Sugar Shack, LLC, Columbia Falls, Maine, Washington County

Steady progress and enthusiasm characterize our operation, which was established in 2016. Our maple adventure began with five taps and a turkey cooker. The following weekend we, along with some friends, built an evaporator out of an oil barrel in our driveway. Then the next weekend we moved it inside an old shed that was on our property, and this is where Church's Sugar Shack got its start.

### The operation...collecting, boiling and finishing

In 2017, the new building, on the same foundation as the original shed, was completed. We also purchased a new 2x6 raised flue, wood fired evaporator made by Northwoods Stainless in Hebron, ME. In 2024 we purchased an automatic draw-off. The sugarbush is located on our 20 plus acres behind the sugar shack and home. We also tap trees at our friend's home and hunting camp. We have a total of 900 taps. Sap is collected in five-gallon buckets and 30-gallon trash cans. The sap is pumped into a tank on our side-by-side then brought to the sugarhouse and pumped into the holding tank. The sap is then pumped from the outside tank to evaporator, and then drawn off for finished syrup.



The greatest memories are made around the evaporator. We're looking toward our 10<sup>th</sup> season in 2025, and we especially want to thank our friends Dean and Terri Crowley, and our children Brittney and Nathan Moores and Jasmine Church. Family and friends made it all possible over these 10 years. We have a lot of loyal friends who stop by every weekend, who also help make Maine Maple Sunday Weekend a success.

### Marketing

Most of our sales are on Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, and we try to have syrup available year-round. We usually have a booth at a local craft fair in the fall. We have a Facebook and Instagram page. We also receive orders via email. We advertise on radio station Star 97.7 during the week leading up to Maine Maple Sunday Weekend.



On Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, our sugar shack is open for tours and demonstrations. We have a large tent set up with all our maple goodies including maple syrup, maple cotton candy, maple sugar, maple sugar and cinnamon, maple drop candy, maple glazed almonds, pecans and cashews, maple popcorn, maple pretzels, maple whoopie pies, maple pecan cheeseballs, maple scrub, maple cream and our fruit jams and jellies. We give free samples of vanilla ice cream and maple syrup, and maple baked beans. We also have door prizes we raffle off. You can also get your photo taken with our eight-foot bottle of maple syrup.

(Top photo: Owners, Lewis and Andrea Church; bottom photo: Some of the Church's helpers on Maine Maple Sunday 2024, (1 to r) Jeff and Sherri Bradstreet, Carol and James Anthony, Ranger, Nathan and Brittney Moores, Lewis and Andrea Church, Amy and Marcus Norton.

*Continued on page 3...*

## Message from the Vice President, ...Continued from Page 1

out and getting it to their place. In the coming months we will have a workday (or several) to get track installed and shelves built.

I recently traveled to Jackman for a meeting of the Jackman and Big 6 area sugarmakers. There is a Forest Tent Caterpillar outbreak that is threatening the largest sugarmakers in our organization. I feel it is vitally important that we work with them to create a plan to slow or stop the defoliation. Jason Lilley, our maple expert from Cooperative Extension, has been a key part of spreading the word and coordinating a response. If you have concerns about FTC or other maple tree related issues, reach out to him. He is a great resource and can often point you in the right direction when dealing with issues related to sugaring. Thank you to Shawn Dunning for organizing and hosting the meeting.

Our annual meeting will be held on January 15<sup>th</sup> at the agricultural trade show in Augusta. We welcome all our members and would love to see new faces. There are plenty of committees and projects that need more ideas and hands to keep our organization thriving and growing.

The monthly directors' meetings are held the first Thursday of each month. It has been suggested to the board that we set a schedule of traveling meetings around the state to visit different sugarhouses, at least a couple times a year. By having a potluck dinner in different areas of the state, we hope to bring in more participation and allow everyone to socialize more. Look for a schedule before our annual meeting, and if you would like to host, please contact me. Our intention is to still offer a Zoom meeting option whenever possible so those who cannot attend in person can still meet via the world wide web.

*Sincerely,*

A. T. Greene, Vice President

## Producer Spotlight ...Continued from page 2

### Lessons learned and future plans

A few days prior to Maine Maple Sunday Weekend, we offer private tours for school groups, nursing and veterans' homes, boy scouts and girl scouts. We show them how to tap a tree, collect sap and how the evaporator works to make pure maple syrup. There is a sweet treat at the end of the tour - vanilla ice cream with drizzled maple syrup. We love looking at the thank you notes from the school children!

We have learned that maple sugaring is totally weather driven. We are constantly learning new ways to improve the operation and have several things on our Sap Bucket List.

Our future plans include building a new, larger sugar shack that will include a retail space to better serve our customers. This will also allow us to expand the operation. (Pictured, right, are owners Andrea and Lewis Church.)



### MMPA membership

We are proud members of the Maine Maple Producers Association. We love hearing and seeing what our fellow sugarmakers are up to.



## NAMSC Convention Overview

The 65<sup>th</sup> Annual North American Maple Syrup Council's (NAMSC) Annual Convention was held in Portland Maine on October 21-24. The event was hosted by the Maine Maple Producers Association with support from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. This 3.5 day packed schedule was well received and well attended. Approximately 220 registrants signed up from throughout the maple producing region from New Brunswick to Ontario, Minnesota to West Virginia.

The program is an opportunity for delegates of the North American Maple Syrup Council to share what the council and their subcommittees have accomplished over the past year. NAMSC reports included updates on education committee projects and proposals, and updates to the council's approach to funding research projects. Attending these meetings is great way to better understand the wide diversity of ways that NAMSC is working to support producers and producer associations.

The trades show floor was well represented by 21 businesses and organizations who support the maple industry. Vendors included a number of equipment manufacturers and distributors, container companies, University Extension services, the USDA National Ag Statistics Service, funding agencies, and more. MMPA included punch cards with folks' registration packets to encourage participants to visit all of the vendors.

On Tuesday and Thursday of the convention week 41 presenters offered 32 technical sessions on 12 different topics. Topics included:

- Associations and Collaborative Approaches
- The Chemistry of Maple Syrup
- Marketing Your Business
- Industry Level Marketing Trends
- Climate Change
- Syrup Quality
- Sap Collection
- Setting Up a Maple Business
- Food Safety
- Equipment Discussions
- Sugarbush Management
- Business Management

Reach out to Jason Lilley ([jason.lilley@maine.edu](mailto:jason.lilley@maine.edu) - 207-581-8368) for more details on topics and speaker contact info.

The tours on Wednesday highlighted the diversity of local agriculture, the strong microbrewery culture, and the interconnectedness among the local food system in Maine. The Pineland Farm tour stop highlighted this unique farming operation with a dairy, creamery, large produce production, meat processing, and a small-scale sugarhouse. Lone Pine Brewery offered convention goers an inside look (and taste) of one of the Portland area's many breweries and highlighted their annual collaboration with MMPA to make the "Maple Sunday Maple Brown Ale".

Dunn Family Maple and Merrifield Farm both served as tour stops to highlight the maple production and customer-facing aspects of sugarhouses in the greater Portland area. Merrifield Farm opened the doors for their very impressive museum of historical maple and logging artifacts. This restored barn is organized and systematic, yet jam packed with interesting tools and equipment that tell the story of the rich history of maple. This museum was a passion project of Lyle Merrifield and will live on in his memory.

Lastly the tour ended at the Cumberland Fairgrounds, where the Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association has their demonstration sugarhouse. Everyone was surely stuffed by the end of the feast of lobster and steamers, or steak, with corn, potato salad, drinks, and all of it topped off with a big serving of locally made maple ice cream with a pump of maple syrup on top. One convention

*Continued on page 7...*

## NAMSC Convention Overview ...Continued from page 4

goer shared that the conference was "So well done. I felt like royalty. I really enjoyed my time at the fairgrounds and the lobster boil. It's going to be hard to beat this one."

The Thursday evening banquet really sums up why this program has been a mainstay of the maple industry for the past 65 years. The banquet is an opportunity to shine a light on those who have gone above and beyond to support the industry. The evening was launched by the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, Amanda Beal. She highlighted the state of the industry in Maine, and the importance of this industry to the economic and cultural vitality of the state. Additionally, winners of the syrup and photo contests, as well as the silent auction were recognized.

This program would not be possible without the generous sponsorship. Sponsors for the program include:

GOLDEN DELICATE LEVEL  
 CDL USA  
 Lapierre USA

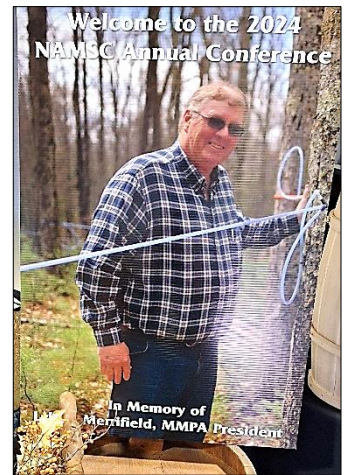
VERY DARK STRONG LEVEL  
 D&G USA  
 Farm Credit East, ACA

AMBER RICH LEVEL  
 Sugarhill Container - Altium Packaging

The organization of this convention is a major undertaking. While the full team of Maine Maple Producers Association directors and many members contributed to the coordination of this program, this event would not have happened without the dedication and leadership of the Merrifield Family.

This program was dedicated to the life of Lyle Merrifield. His passing, just over a month before the conference, shook the entire Maine agricultural community. Lyle's leadership of MMPA, the Cumberland Fair, and numerous other activities that were central to this program will be sorely missed. The continued leadership of Jo-Ann, Lexi, and Molly to make this event a success is appreciated beyond words.

We hope that all attendees thoroughly enjoyed their time in Maine and gained something that will make your businesses stronger for the upcoming season. Thanks to all who were part of making this event such a success!!



## Photo Contest (Maine) Winners

207-Tappers  
 Lexi Merrifield  
 Hilltop Boilers



## Maple Contest Winners

In total the contest had 59 syrup entries and 39 product entries. Flavor (16) and color (21) led to the highest rate of disqualification among all syrup submissions. 59% of the submitted syrup was disqualified based on not meeting one or multiple characteristics.

Here are the winners of each submission category at the 65th Annual North American Maple Syrup Council's Annual Meeting. Congratulations to all contest winners!!

### Granulated Sugar

- 1) Alicia & Theresa Baroun of Maple Buzz: De Pere, WI
- 2) Tony Zenner of Timber Range: Durango, IA
- 3) Jack Brown of Jack & Jill's Maple Hill Farm, Paw Paw, MI

### Maple Candy

- 1) Kristi & Kevin Brannen of Spring Break Maple and Honey: Smyrna, ME
- 2) David Briggs of Briggs Maple: Hillsborough, NB
- 3) David Yeany of Yeany's Maple LLC: Marienville, PA

### Maple Cream

- 1) Rob & Missy Leab of Ioka Valley Farm: Hancock, MA
- 2) Paul Zononi of Paul's Sugarhouse: Williamsburg, MA
- 3) David Briggs of Briggs Maple: Hillsborough, NB

### Golden Delicate

- 1) Jo-Ann Merrifield of Merrifield Farm, Gorham, ME
- 2) Howard Boyden of Boyden Brothers Maple: Conway, MA
- 3) Michael Bryant of Hilltop Boilers: Newfield, ME

### Amber Rich

- 1) Dan Brown of Bonhomie Acres: Fredericks Town, OH
- 2) Michael Bryant of Hilltop Boilers: Newfield, ME
- 3) Rob & Missy Leab of Ioka Valley Farm: Hancock, MA

### Dark Robust

- 1) Michael Bryant of Hilltop Boilers: Newfield, ME
- 2) Jack Brown of Jack & Jill's Maple Hill Farm, Paw Paw, MI
- 3) Ron Rhynard of Green River Maple Camp: Shepherd, MI

### Very Dark Strong

No Placings



Merrifield Farm



Spring Break Maple & Honey



Hilltop Boilers



## Scenes from the 65<sup>th</sup> NAMSC Convention (pages 9 and 10)



Dedicated In Memory of  
Lyle Merrifield

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 7, 2025 6:00-8:00pm: [Backyard Maple Webinar](#): UMaine Extension and MOFGA.
- January 9 4:00-5:30pm: [Backyard Maple Workshop](#): UMaine Extension and Julia Adam Morse Memorial Library in Greene.
- January 15 9:00-2:30: MMPA Annual Meeting at the Ag Trades Show, Augusta.
- January 15 9:00-11:00: Local Foods Matchmaking Event: Institutional Buyers, Local Producers, and Distributors (Sponsored by MMPA). Ag Trades Show in Augusta. [RSVP Required](#)
- January 30 6:00-8:00pm: [Backyard Maple Workshop](#): UMaine Extension and Massabesic Adult Ed in Waterboro.
- February 1 (Snow date of the 8<sup>th</sup>) 9:00-11:30: [Backyard Sugaring](#); 12:30-2:30 [207 Tappers Sugarhouse Tour](#). Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association and UMaine Extension.
- February 4 6:00-8:00pm: [Backyard Maple Workshop](#): UMaine Extension and Lewiston Adult Ed.



MAINE MAPLE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION



c/o A. T. Greene  
Greene Maple Farm  
Phillip View Farm  
723 Bridgton Rd.  
Sebago, ME 04029

Quarterly Newsletter (December 2024)





**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Due \$** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please check items that apply:**     Member     Bulk Producer     Equipment Dealer

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

\_\_\_\_\_ **\$100.00 MAPLE PRODUCER MEMBERSHIP** (Licensed 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](mailto: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.

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



## Maine Maple Sunday Application 2025

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 1<sup>st</sup> will be subject to a \$50 late fee. After March 14<sup>th</sup> they will not be processed.**

### Event details:

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:dunnfamilymaple@gmail.com) or mailed to: MMPA, C/O Scott Dunn, 419 Chicopee Rd. Buxton, ME 04093