



**MAINE MAPLE
PRODUCERS
ASSOCIATION**

THE MAINE TAP

NEWS AND RESOURCES FOR SUGARMAKERS

Quarterly Newsletter

June 2024

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Producer Spotlight: Hall Farms Maple Products



Member of



President's Note

Greetings Maple Producers,

Well, another season in the books. It appears that most producers across the State had a pretty good season, and for most of our larger producers in the north a very good season. Some of our smaller producers on buckets and or gravity tubing may not have fared as well seems to be a common theme. It seems that weather patterns we are starting to see are not real conducive to natural sap flow. One common comment across the entire state I have heard is low sugar content. Some producers in the State saw a 4-month season of making syrup, certainly with breaks in between, but this is starting to be the normal. The State overall has produced a good volume of syrup for the 2024 season and showing a good selection of all table grades.

Best regards.

Lyle Merrifield
President



NAMSC

North American Maple Council, Inc.

65th Annual Conference

October 21 through October 24, 2024
Double Tree by Hilton, Portland Maine

SEE DETAILS INSIDE!

Producer Spotlight ~ Rodney Hall and Family, Hall Farms Maple Products, Dixfield, Maine, Oxford County

I bought my first evaporator in 1984 and in the spring of 1985, we made our first syrup from 386 taps. My dad and I had made syrup on a barrel stove a few years before that. Our first Maine Maple Sunday was the spring of 1986. We have grown over the years only small increases at a time on land that was purchased by myself or on land that has been in our family for generations.

The operation ~ collecting, boiling, and finishing

With my wife Joanne and my son Caleb we currently have 11000 taps with 8200 running directly into the sugarhouse away. We have a 6x14 oil fired evaporator with steam hood and preheater. Sap is taken to 20% before boiling. We run two CDL RO's, one is a 1200 gph and the other is a CDL 2400 gph.

We have a commercial kitchen where we package our maple syrup, make our maple cream, and also make our line of BBQ sauces as well as our maple mustard. Our sap is collected all by tubing system with high vacuum. Spouts are changed every year and I feel this has helped increase production.



Son, Caleb, and seasonal employee, Mason, boiling sap.

Marketing

Syrup is marketed in several different way: direct to the consumer, some is sold private label, and we have several wholesale accounts as well as a few bulk consumers. My maple Sunday has

changed over the years as we moved locations away from our dairy farm. Our event now includes an all you can eat pancake breakfast, a lunch which includes hamburger and cheeseburger with hamburger that is produced on the farm and maple soft serve ice cream. Another product we are very proud of is maple cheese that was first introduced to us by a local dairy family, and we work with them producing the maple cream that is infused into the sharp cheddar cheese.



Hall Farms commercial kitchen.

Lessons learned and future plans

As far as any lessons along the way, we have learned so much and have also come to realize there is always more to learn. Probably one of the things I always seem to hear most (and have to agree with) is the money is made in the woods! I guess that's one of the best lessons I've learned along my

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EXTENSION PIPELINE

Keeping an Eye on the Health of Your Sugarbush

The blackflies are out and the trees are fully leafed out. We all spend a lot of time in the woods from fall to spring. However, once the taps are pulled there's a tendency to get pulled in other directions. While farm chores, marketing syrup, other jobs, maybe even going to camp all become more of the focus this time of year, this is the perfect opportunity to take stock of the health of the woods. The relatively dry conditions this spring make for excellent conditions for cruising the sugarbush, just keep your fly dope handy.

An easy indicator of tree health lies in the visual health of the canopy. Things to keep an eye out for include the fullness of tree crowns, numerous short, weak, and clustered shoots the length of the trunk, crown dieback, and peeling or hole filled bark. If you notice these symptoms, also pay attention to how many trees are showing those symptoms. If it is one tree, there was likely a very specific event that damaged the tree, like it being scuffed up at the base during logging, compaction around its roots, or infestation by a disease that took advantage of a wound in the tree. If the damage is widespread, it could be due to environmental factors, such as sandy or gravelly, excessively well drained soils combined with the droughts of 2021 and 2022. Or, from a localized outbreak of defoliating insects or diseases over several seasons. Most likely, when trees are showing signs of decline, it is due to a complex of factors (AKA, the maple decline complex). This is the idea that a series of factors usually align to create the stress to the trees, vs. there being a single cause of the decline. This starts with a **predisposing factor**, like heavy poorly drained soils or nutrient limitations. That is paired with an **inciting factor** like heavy defoliation from an insect or disease outbreak, and then a **contributing factor**, like a fungus causing root rot that all come together to result in the decline of the trees.

Sugar (and Red) maples are susceptible to many [foliar diseases](#) and insects. If the problem only persists for one or two seasons, most of these are not a major concern. However, if those diseases are prevalent and persistent over many years, they can drain the trees' energy reserves, leaving the trees more susceptible to the other issues listed above.

Last year UMaine Extension received numerous calls about foliar diseases of maple, both direct questions to me, and submissions to the [UMaine Plant Disease Diagnostics lab](#). The majority of these samples were identified as maple anthracnose. After that outbreak, we had been expecting a second year of infections due to the high spore load on the leaves on the forest floor. Luckily, we've had relatively dry conditions this spring to limit the spread of those spores. Maple anthracnose is also thought to be primarily a foliar disease and therefore having less negative effects on the health of the woody components of the tree. Identifying diseases can help to determine the level of risk.

If you are observing signs of declining tree health, or insect or disease issues in your sugarbush, don't hesitate to contact me, the [UMaine Plant Disease Diagnostics Lab](#), or the [Maine Forest Service's Insect and Disease Lab](#) for support identifying the cause of the issues. In addition to identifying the cause of the problems and potentially finding a management approach to slow the problem for you, the UMaine Maple Program and the UMaine School of Forest Resources would benefit from identifying areas of the state that are experiencing maple decline in higher concentrations to support upcoming research that we are collaborating on.

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Producer Spotlight, ...continued from page 2

maple journey. Future plans include expanding to a new orchard that our forester inventoried at 12000 - 14000 taps. This sap will be hauled two miles to the sugarhouse. (In 2019 we started our new sugarhouse and made the first syrup there in 2021.) During the summer we also plan to install our new silo for water storage as well as continuing to upgrade our tubing system.

MMPA Membership

I belong to the MMPA for several reasons but one that I'm very proud of is that my grandfather Orlando Small was one of the original members when the MMPA was formed. So, I guess this has been a family affair to belong to and watch the maple industry grow in the state of Maine.



Pictured l-r: Caleb, Joanne, and Rodney Hall, Gov. Mills, sister-in-law Lori, Com. Beal, and Rodney's brother, Rep. Randy Hall. Celebrating the opening of new sap house.

New Marketing Resources for Members

As part of the Marketing Specialty Crop Block Grant, MMPA has recently launched the new Marketing Resources Library portion of the website, for members only. This currently has a series of high quality videos that any member can grab the link of to use on your own social media and websites. The videos include longer version promotions of Maine Maple Sunday and Open Houses, general overviews of maple production and uses, Reels for social media for relevant special days, and videos of recipes. The videos are hosted under the "Maple Producers" dropdown menu at the top of the MMPA website, then under "Marketing Resources for Members", or at this link <https://mainemapleproducers.com/marketing-resources-for-members/>
PASSWORD: MMPA2024.

EXTENSION PIPELINE ...Continued from page 3

A final note on this (for now), **prevention is key!** Oftentimes, by the time we see symptoms of tree decline, it can be too late to do anything about it (other times, it's just temporary defoliation). By implementing practices to reduce "contributing factors" we can greatly reduce stress of the trees and increase their resilience. Avoiding soil compaction and driving over root zones, improving roads for better water management, selectively cutting to optimize tree diversity, health, and soil characteristics, and many other practices are all increasingly important factors to improve the health and resilience of your woods. Reach out to your local branch of the [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) to learn about how they can support you with technical support and cost sharing (financial support) to implement these resilience enhancing practices. Sean Horan works to support forest landowners statewide through both Extension and NRCS, and may be a great starting point to learn more about what practices NRCS could support you with. Sean.horan@maine.edu – 978.516.8376.

If you have invasive plant species in your sugarbush, look into the newly released [Maine Invasive Plant Control Grant Program Applications](#) through the Maine Natural Areas Program. In the next newsletter, we'll cover more about the specific practices that NRCS and Extension can support you with in the sugarbush.

Jason.lilley@maine.edu or 207-781-6099. – [UMaine Extension Maple Program](#)

North American Maple Syrup Council 65th Annual Conference



“Be Sure It’s Maine Pure”

UPDATES



The Maine Maple Producers Association will be host to the NAMSC annual meeting as most of you know. The meeting will be held October 21st- October 24th, 2024 (Monday thru Thursday) at the Double Tree Hilton in Portland Maine. Plans for this event in Maine are already well underway, but certainly much more to do for many of us. The Association needs many of our members as volunteers to help organize and facilitate this event. Realizing that we all have busy lives, to encourage members and their immediate family and friends to help. The Officers and Directors have decided to offer a reduced registration rate to the first 30 who register for the event and commit to register. This will only be applicable to members and family who sign up to volunteer a minimum of 8hrs time, keeping in mind that the Association can use your help as much as possible throughout the event. This is MMPA’s opportunity to showcase to the Maple world what sets Maine apart from the rest. Although a final price has not been established for the entire 4-day conference (as of 6/11/2024), the reduced price for volunteers is set at \$300.00 (approx. 50%), not including your rooms if you stay in Portland.

We would ask that the members (and or immediate family) that want to help on the NAMSC conference please fill out the following form and forward with a check by **July 15th, 2024**.

SMMSA Monthly Meeting and Potluck



The May monthly meeting and potluck dinner of the Southern Maine Maple Sugarmakers Association (SMMSA) was held at the new sugarhouse Greene Maple Farm in Sebago (pictured below), owned by Alan and Valerie Greene. The retail area is completed but the room that will house the evaporator, etc. is still under construction. Some of the food enjoyed at the potluck included maple sloppy joes, baked beans with maple syrup, smoked pulled pork, and maple ice cream. A great meeting with good food, great people and excellent conversation.

SMMSA has monthly meetings (except for March, June and July), that are usually held at a different member's home or sugarhouse during the year, (except for August which is always held at the Cumberland Fairgrounds to get ready for the Cumberland Fair). The monthly meeting really helps with camaraderie and gives everyone time to chat. “Since we are building our new sugarhouse, we wanted to offer the space to host the meeting and the potluck which provides extra time for conversation. We are hoping to be able to host the meeting multiple times a year as we have a mini split and can either have heat or a/c depending on the weather.”

Attending the SMMSA meeting were (l-r): Johnathan & Erica Brahmer, Valerie Cole, Steve McKenney, Lisa and Tom Pingree, Valerie and Alan Greene, Richard & Roberta Morrill; front-center Andy Cole. Thanks to Valerie Greene for providing the photos and the write-up.



"Be Sure It's Maine Pure" Preliminary Schedule

Monday Oct. 21st, 2024

9:00am-4pm	Vendor Set Up
9:00am	Registration Set Up
9am-4pm	Antique Room Display Set Up
TBD	NAMSC Committee and Delegates Meetings as necessary
Noon	Registration Open, Contest Entries- Syrup/Candy/Cream/Sugar/Photo
Noon-4pm	Silent Auction/ Auction Items Drop Off
3pm-6pm	Informational Workshop/Round Table/Social/Cash Bar
	Dinner on your own - 15 plus restaurants within 10 min.

Tuesday Oct 22nd.

6:30am- 8:30am	Breakfast Buffet
8am-5pm	Registration Table Open
	Contest Entries- Syrup/Candy/Cream/Sugar/Photo
8am-6pm	Trade Show
10am-4pm	Antique Exhibit Room Open
	Silent Auction Room Open/ Auction Items Drop Off
9am-3pm	Companion Tour
9am-Noon	Workshops- TBD
Noon-1pm	Lunch-
1pm-3pm	NAMSC Annual Meeting - Open to All
1pm-3pm	Workshop-TBA
5pm-6pm	Social/Tradeshow
6pm-9:30pm	"Be Sure it's Maine Pure" Buffet, Music/Dance

Wednesday Oct. 23rd

6:30am- 8am	Breakfast
7am - 8am	Registration table/Syrup/Sugar/Candy/Cream
8am-Noon	Morning Tours-Dunn Family Maple/Lone Pine Brewery/Merrifield Farm
1:30pm	Afternoon Tours-Pineland Farms-Morgan Horse Farm / Sugarhouse/ Dairy barn
	Cumberland Fair Grounds- Farm Museum, Sawmill, Sugarhouse, Blacksmith Shop
3:30pm	
3:30pm-8pm	Social/Cash Bar, Dinner, Music, Head back to Hotel

Thursday Oct. 24th

6:30am- 8:30am	Breakfast
8:00am- 3pm	Trade Show
8am - 9am	Entries last call Syrup/Sugar/Candy/Cream
9am-3pm	Antique display
9am - 3pm	Silent Auction Ends
9am - 4pm	Technical Session-TBA
Noon-1pm	Lunch
3pm	Trade Show Break Down
5pm	Social, Banquet Buffet, Award, Auction items

Friday Oct 25th

Saturday Oct 26th

	Grading School
	Grading School



“Be Sure It’s Maine Pure”



**North American Maple Syrup Council 65th Annual Conference
October 21st thru October 24th, 2024
Double Tree by Hilton, Portland Maine**

**MMPA Members (and or Immediate Family) Reduced Conference Volunteer Registration.
(Due to food commitments no cancellation refunds)**

Applicants must commit to not less than 8hrs of volunteer work.
This is just a few ideas of volunteer work:

- *Manning Registration Desk
- *Syrup, candy cream contest entries (Table) (taking entries) etc.
- *Photo Contest (Table) (displaying)(Winners) etc.
- *Raffle tables, (set up etc.) (manning room) (tracking items) etc.
- *Manning antique room

Full Registration

Includes admission to all workshops, all day tour, trade show, program book,
and the following meals: Tuesday breakfast, lunch and “Be Sure Its Maine Pure” dinner,
Wednesday breakfast, lunch, and Lobster Bake, Thursday breakfast, lunch and banquet.

Companion Tour is not included. Rooms are not included, Hotel Link below.

#of Registrations _____ @ \$300.00 _____ Total amount enclosed \$ _____

*Please let us know if you have any food allergies, we should be aware of. _____

Name(s) of attendee(s) _____

Sugarhouse name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip/Country _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Make check payable to “MMPA”, mail form and check to Lexi Merrifield, PO BOX 143, New Vinyard,
ME 04956

Reserve your rooms, using this link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/pwmmmdt-mpl-3c04d501-bbd7-460e-bf60-a1cb1a1f0490/>

or call Direct 1-207-756-6519

Coal-Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Maple-Chili Butter (or use gas grill)

- 4 large (12 to 14 ounces each) sweet potatoes, scrubbed
- 3/4 cup (6 ounces) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon Aleppo pepper, plus more for garnish
- 1/4 cup chopped toasted pecans
- Optional: A little extra drizzle of maple syrup on top!

Directions: Prick sweet potatoes all over using a fork. Wrap sweet potatoes individually in a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Prepare grill by forming pyramid of charcoal, light, and when briquettes are turning to ash gray, it's ready!

Using long metal tongs, carefully place wrapped sweet potatoes on top of coals. Using a metal spatula, nestle coals around sweet potatoes; using tongs, place some coals on top of sweet potatoes. Grill uncovered and undisturbed, for 20 minutes.

Flip sweet potatoes over. Nestle coals around sweet potatoes again, placing some coals on top of sweet potatoes using tongs. Grill, uncovered and undisturbed, until a paring knife or cake tester very easily pierces into middle of sweet potato, 20 to 25 minutes. To test for doneness, remove sweet potato from coals using long metal tongs; carefully remove aluminum foil, and pierce sweet potato. If sweet potato is not tender, rewrap and place back in coals; cook 5 minutes, then test again. Once cooked, remove sweet potatoes from coals; let cool for 5 minutes. Carefully remove foil.

While sweet potatoes cool, beat butter, parsley, maple syrup, vinegar, salt, and Aleppo in a medium bowl with a hand mixer on medium speed until whipped and well combined, about 2 minutes. Set aside until ready to serve.

Cut sweet potatoes in half lengthwise three-fourths of the way through. Top each with 2 to 3 tablespoons compound butter; sprinkle evenly with pecans, and garnish with additional Aleppo. Serve alongside remaining compound butter. (FoodandWine.com)



c/o Lyle Merrifield
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Quarterly Newsletter (June 2024)

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