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Did you know?

Many may recall the Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist of 2012. Did you know what gave the caper away? At an estimated value of \$18.7 million (most never recovered), the heist netted thousands of barrels of maple syrup from the Quebec Federation syrup stockpile. The thieves replaced the syrup with water. After about a year the barrels began to rust sparking suspicion, and the rest is history.

March Producer Spotlight Eureka Farms



Maine Maple Sunday visitors at Eureka Farms.

President's Note

Fellow Maple Producers,

Well, maple season is upon us again and like always it seems like we are never ready but somehow, we make it work. Many experts and researchers agree that this maple season has the potential to be a good one. Last summer's abundance of rain coupled with a more normal snowpack have all the makings for this to be a full to above average crop.

As we are finishing our 2020 Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) we ended up with a surplus of money that the State allowed us to carry forward and use for marketing for Maple Sunday 2022. This was a situation that we were not anticipating but excited to see. We have contracted with Nancy Marshal Communications for marketing and promotion. This spring we are going to be expanding our marketing to the Boston market as there is a large population base that can daytrip to Maine or make a weekend of it. We are also having them manage our social media pages with multiple posts per week to grow our page followers as well as promote the event. They are already in full swing and good things look to be on the horizon.

Jason Lilly at UMaine Ext. was able to set up a meeting to go over our 2020 SCBG and the State asked if we would be interested in changing our 2021 grant from a one year to a two-year grant for 100k. We scrambled to come up with a plan and submitted it and are waiting for approval. If we are awarded the full two-year grant, we have some real opportunity to think outside of the box and expand our market share beyond Maine. If approved this money will not be available until April 2022.

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President's Note *...continued from page 1*

If you have not heard there is a real shortage of jugs for maple syrup. One of the largest jug manufacturers is not able to keep up with demand and has eliminated the oxygen barrier coating process. Currently dealer orders are being delivered around a year after they are placed. Printed jugs are almost not available also. We are exploring plans that could alleviate the shortage for producers, but they will not be available until after the 2022 production season. At the February Directors meeting the Directors approved a plan to come up with an association jug logo. This would be in part with the new grant but potentially take care of a small piece of the jug disaster. More to come on the new logo and we are going to be looking for members to work on a logo/jug committee, potentially with other states too. If you or someone you know is in the design field, please contact me.

As always remember to drill straight holes, keep vacuum levels high, and make the highest quality syrup that you can. Take pride in everything you do because you are a Maine sugar maker and that's what we do.

Respectfully,

Scott Dunn



North American Maple Syrup Council, Inc.

NAMSC Update:

- There have been discussions with the Vermont Maple Sugar makers Association to encourage them to rejoin the NAMSC.
- Kentucky is forming a maple association.
- The 2022 maple conference is scheduled for October 26-29 in Wisconsin with technical sessions and tours.
- Plans for a Maple 101 educational handbook are in the works. This would provide curriculum for everything maple that could be used when presenting classes or hosting tours. Several different topics would be available.



INTERNATIONAL MAPLE SYRUP INSTITUTE

IMSI Update:

- Annual meeting to be held June 8-9 in Burlington, VT.
- Please sign up for the USDA census so accurate data can be collected this time.
<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/> .

Producer Spotlight ~ Eureka Farms, Palmyra, ME, Somerset County

Father and son duo, Hollis and Seth Edwards, established Eureka Farms in 2010 - with Hollis carrying on his lifetime obsession with maple sugaring from when his Dad taught him and got him started when he was 10 years old.

About our operation

We have been surgaring at our farm on Shy Road in Palmyra since we purchased it 12 years ago. We started with about 200 taps using buckets. Every year we worked in our sugarbush and cleaned out dead and diseased trees as well as trees that were inhibiting the growth of our maples. This allowed us to increase our taps every year. We continue to do this annually. We just added 400 taps this year, bringing our number of taps to 1500, and hope to continue to add 250-500 every year. All of our trees are located right here on our farm. No leased land. We still have many more trees to tap on this land.



Collecting, boiling and finishing

We collect the sap using a pipeline system with vacuum. Near our sugarhouse we tap some maples using traditional buckets so visitors can go out and see the sap dripping from the trees. We take this for granted as it has been a part of our lives for as long as we can remember. In the interest of giving something back we enjoy being able to share this experience with folks that stop by and visitors on Maine Maple Sunday. We find that many folks have never seen the process.

Our boiling process is with our 30'X10' Leader raised flue, forced draft evaporator. We do not use an RO at this point but plan on implementing one for the 2023 season. We fire with wood from our own land here on the farm. Mostly softwood slabs that we get from logs we have sawed for lumber around the farm. We have a hood on our evaporator.



Marketing

We market all of our syrup retail at our farm store here on our farm. Our store actually occupies half of the sugarhouse. We decided early on that we wanted to get into retail and have a presence in that market. Sooooooo, at the end of a dirt, dead end road, in Palmyra, we are open 365 days per year from daylight `til dark. If it is daylight we are open! Our store is unique in many ways, including the part that we operate on the Honor System. We sell all the syrup we produce and have to purchase some, so we have it available all year. We also sell on the Internet and ship all over the country.

Lessons learned and future plans

Maine Maple Sunday is typically a very large event for us. We have always tried to make it that way. It has become great advertising and it is a chance for us to meet and thank our customers. We run it with volunteers and make it a family event. Three teams of horses pulling sleighs giving free rides, three school buses getting people in and out of our operation, a food vendor, and we do maple donuts, maple cotton candy, and maple kettle corn. We also invite a few select local businesses that we patronize to be here and show their products. It promotes good business and helps to disburse the crowd. It is a rite of spring and a true family day. We could write a book on this!!! But keeping it simple I would say, Mother Nature runs this show. Never stop thanking your customers. Make yourself available. Never apologize for your price, and always be persistently consistent.

Future plans are continuing to grow our operation by adding new trees yearly right here in our own sugarbush, continuing to focus on the retail end of our operation so we always sell more than we produce, and adding new products as we see fit.

MMPA membership

We belong to the MMPA because it is the right thing to do. They support us and this industry, and it is our duty to support our organization. We are honored to be a member.



EXTENSION PIPELINE

Quality First: Keeping the Reputation of Your Business and Maine Maple Syrup High

The season is off and running for most of you. While MMPA launches a new branding and promotion program about the high quality of Maine Pure Maple Syrup, it's as important as ever to focus on quality. Talking to repeat customers of Maine sugarhouses, it's common to hear that their preferred sugarhouse has "the best tasting syrup around". That's the kind of reputation that we want to keep. That said, it only takes one experience with off-flavored or contaminated syrup to lose customers (at best), stain the reputation of the industry, or (worse) cause injury or illness to consumers.

The weird flavors that sap can pick up, and the ways those off-flavors can get into the product continues to amaze me. I've had syrup that tasted like bleach, mold, coffee, Christmas pickles, lemon scented dish detergent, and the two most memorable, an ashtray and straight diesel. I'm proud to say that most of these samples weren't Made in Maine... These are the kinds of things that we don't want to become memorable for our customers.

Going into this season, do a walkthrough of your sap collection and storage systems. Keep an eye and nose out for rodents, bird nests, dust build up, mildew and other contaminants and smells. If you have fuel or equipment near your sap storage areas, consider moving those to another area for the season. Be sure that all cleaners are rinsed very well after use and that you're regularly giving your RO an extra rinse. Chemical residue in syrup doesn't add to your flavor and is a dangerous prospect.

Check out your evaporator room for evidence of those critters and make sure all glass is covered with shatterproof protection, and all tools and hardware secured away from areas where syrup will be. Store chemicals and DE away from the evaporator, in a separate room. In the evaporator keep your pans clean. Letting nitre build up, especially in your front pans can cause nitre, or worse, scorching off flavors. That little bit of extra elbow grease can save whole batches from docked prices. Minimize how long you let sweet hang out in the pan, ideally draining the pan between each run. Remember that we're producing the ideal growth medium for microbial growth and things can turn sour or ferment quickly.

Make sure to can your filtered syrup hot, between 180- and 190-degrees F. Give your containers a quick flip before filling to dump any potential floaties, and look to make sure no enterprising critters have moved in. Double check and temperature compensate your density readings to avoid mold and crystal formation.

Maintaining consumers' high regard for our product is everyone's responsibility. If you are interested in learning more about quality control and grading of maple syrup, I'm working on organizing a Maple Grading School here in Maine this year. Contact me jason.lilley@maine.edu - (207) 781-6099, or fill out the [interest list here](#) if you'd like to be informed when those details come together. And don't hesitate to reach out this season if you'd like a second unbiased set of taste buds to sample your syrup. Happy Boiling!

The Forgotten Trees

I would like to share some food for thought that should help any producer from 100 taps right on up to 15,000+. Let's tap into some hard-earned information.

Like me, many of you have low areas and hills that slope away from your sugarhouse or roadside pumphouse. I would like to tell you about a couple of things that have helped me over the last two years, especially last year.

The Sap Lifter

Sap lifters are what I call over engineered pieces of equipment. Basically, they allow you to pull sap with vacuum and air up around 20 feet vertically. It consists of two tanks. The upper one has a vacuum line coming from your pumphouse and 2-6 mainlines feeding it sap. This feeds into a smaller tank below the first one. This small tank has a float valve that, once the tank is full, will stop the flow of sap into the tank and trip the air valve. This lets air into your vacuum system and forces the sap up the small 3/4-inch pump line and into your vacuum system coming from your pumphouse. See diagram below. I have some video of this in action and will try to post on our YouTube channel: Sawyer's Maple Farm. Now this may seem quite simple, however there are a lot of moving parts that can get gummed up with slime, wood chips from tap holes, bits of tubing from saddle installation and, you guessed it, ICE. Yup, because this introduces air into the vacuum system, when it gets to freezing at night this whole sap lifter system can turn into a big ice cube. Here are a few pros and cons to the sap lifter:



Pros: Allows you to lift around 20 feet, allows you to tap harder to reach places.

Cons: Very cold-sensitive, requiring heating; prone to mechanical failure; very expensive, a 600 tap capacity 3-tank lifter is about \$800, plus a shelter to house it and something to heat it with; allows air into your vacuum system, the exact opposite of what you want.

Pro tip: Do not use anything with flames, burned my whole sap lifter system up in the middle of the night, but, I came up with this alternative.

The Sap Ladder

This is a simple and easy to install system that pulls that sap. Twenty feet up and does "not" introduce air into your vacuum system. As you see from the photo there really is not much to it. There are four 3/4 inch lines coming down from my wet line on my conductor. Two of these are feeding vacuum to the 600 taps and the other two lines are pulling sap up into the conductor. Last year this gave me around 20 inches of vacuum and I had 27 inches back at the pumphouse. About as well as the sap lifter was doing. What I might do this year is add a 1 1/2 inch vacuum line to this with a valve so I can regulate the vacuum, allowing me to increase the vacuum on



these taps and still lift sap.

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The Forgotten Trees *...continued from page 5*

Pros: Lifts sap 20 feet; easy installation; inexpensive, this cost around \$200 and it is all fittings you will likely have on hand; does not let air into your vacuum system.

Con: Not 100% on par with the pumphouse vacuum level.

Conclusion

I do wonder if the vacuum can be increased by adding a bigger designated vacuum line. Or is this really all that can be done since we are lifting sap 20 feet vertically. (We will do some more experimenting and hopefully get some video of it.) This does thaw out on its own and because all four lines are not lifting sap there are at least two open if the other two freeze overnight. Allowing for vacuum and sap to keep moving until things thaw out in the morning.

I will talk about our experiences with bringing vacuum 4000 feet over a hill to another pumphouse and pumping sap back over those 4000 feet in my next article.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Kurt Sawyer

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Phone. 1-207-668-6026

YouTube Channel: Sawyer's Maple Farm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar. 26-27 **Maine Maple Sunday Weekend** – make sure to get your information updated on the MMPA website.

Dealer Open Houses – most dealers are planning to host in person.

Jun. 2022 **Maple Mania** – CANCELED – due to commitment requirements and potentially low attendance. Look for it next year, June 2023.

Jun. 8-9 **IMSI annual meeting**, Burlington, VT.

Oct. 8-9 **Maine Maple Producers Association 2nd Annual Maine Maple Fest**
See mail-in application on page 2 of the January newsletter, or go to The association website to register online: <https://mainemapleproducers.com/>

Maine Maple Sunday Checklist

- Ag tourism liability signs posted
- Update MMPA Maple Sunday map information
- Update State of Maine Get Real Get Maine information
- Update Southern Maine Maple Sugar makers map information
- Update social media pages and business websites
- Communicate with neighbors about the event
- Parking plan
- Restrooms
- Hours posted
- Change for check out
- Evaporator safety plan
- Rainy day plan (they will still come)
- Samples
- Signs at intersections
- Staff assignments
- Trash cans
- Storage for syrup made during the event if boiling sap
- Food and drinks for staff and someone to allow staff breaks

MMPA Supplies for Sale

Recipe Cards

\$10 for bundles of 50

Carrots, Salmon, Salad Dressing, Lemonaid

Rack Cards

\$10 for bundles of 100

Maple Sunday, Nutrition Facts, Maple Facts

Maine Maple Sunday

"Official Host" signs

\$10 each stakes \$2 each

MMPA Member signs

\$40 each

Grade Labels \$12 rolls of 1000

Golden Delicate, Amber Rich, Dark Robust, Very Dark Strong

Supplies can be shipped through the MMPA website or purchased at these partner farms

Spring Break Maple Bacon Maple Products Merrifield Farm Dunn Family Maple

Smyrna

Sydney

Gorham

Buxton

Maple-BBQ-Glazed Meatballs

Ingredients for meatballs:

2 lbs. ground beef or combination of ground beef and ground pork or turkey

1 Egg (or use 4 Tbl. oil for moistener if you want to omit egg)

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. pepper

½ tsp. garlic powder

½ tsp. onion powder or 1 Tbl. dried onion flakes

½ cup breadcrumbs

Ingredients for sauce:

1 cup maple syrup

1 cup barbecue sauce

1 cup chicken stock/broth

1 tsp. garlic powder

Salt and pepper to taste

2 ½ Tbl. cornstarch

Directions: Preheat oven to 350° Or, you can also use a slow cooker set on low. To a large frying pan add 2 Tbl oil. Mix meatball ingredients in a large bowl. Form meatballs (large if serving as a meal, and small if using as an appetizer). Brown meatballs, then transfer to a baking dish or slow cooker.

Mix the cornstarch with a small amount of water, then mix it with all the other maple sauce ingredients in a medium saucepan. Heat to just until it boils, stirring constantly. Pour over the meatballs and stir to just blended. Bake in the oven for about 1 hour. If using a slow cooker, set on low and cook for about 6 hours. Makes about 20 large meatballs. (For a quicker method of preparing this dish, you can also cook on the stovetop. After browning the meatballs, drain off fat, gently stir in all the sauce ingredients, cover and cook over low heat for about a ½ hour.) Whatever method of cooking you use, be sure to stir slightly a few times to coat the meatballs with the sauce. Serve over rice or with boiled or mashed potatoes.

Maine Maple Sunday Info Inside

Buxton, ME 04093
419 Chicopee Rd.
c/o Scott Dunn

Maine Maple Producers Association

