



Quarterly Newsletter

March 2026

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Producer Spotlight Slattery's Farm and Maple Supply Co.



Member of



President's Message

Maple season is on our doorstep. A few members have even made a little syrup, although the long, cold winter seems to be hinting at a slow and gradual warmup.

With Maple Sunday less than a month away, I encourage all of our members who are listed on the map to update their information immediately. If you need assistance, the deadline is looming for the webmasters to get changes done in time for the big weekend. Also, please note that our new website address is up and linked to the map. Mainemaplesunday.com is now the official web address for all things Maple Sunday. Members are encouraged to use it to direct customers to your corner of our association website. With over 100,000 views, it pays to be a member and have updated information on the map.

Also worth noting, we are in the process of creating a link from the home webpage that will list sugarmakers who ship syrup. Many visitors to our page assume they can buy syrup there. We are working to set up a process where those who ship can fulfill those requests.

Also, we will be posting a link and sending out an email from our social media coordinator. She is looking for brief bio's from sugarmakers across the state to use on our social media. She is collecting photos and brief videos as well to be used throughout the year. Please feel free to contribute anything that will help promote maple producers in our state. Here is the link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdmUg6R9xtZfMKH1pyd5F87vaYS8wcCm_uJp-4qKKbO7csM6w/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=117656343012182038449

I hope you all have a safe and productive season, and I look forward to hearing the updates on production as we get rolling.

Thank you!

A. T. Greene
President

Producer Spotlight ~ Slattery's Farm and Maple Supply Company, Wayne and Joni Slattery, Minot, Androscoggin County

It all started when a delivery driver wanted to sell his 2 x 6 evaporator to Wayne and Joni. Two hundred taps, and some “wonderful friends evolved to 5500 taps and the wonderful friends!”

The operation...collecting, boiling and finishing

Wayne's dad, Bill Slattery, and uncle, Larry Slattery, had a lot of land with maple trees which they allowed us to use, and we later purchased. And early on, one of our customers heard that we had bought the evaporator and wondered if we wanted help getting started. YES ! And for 25+ years Jim Mavor AKA "Sugardaddy" has helped us make "West Minot's finest" maple syrup.

Our collection process is mostly 5/16th tubing with vacuum, and some areas we use 3/16th tubing, which is on our property, and we hang a few (100) buckets on our neighbor's trees.

Our process for making syrup is collecting the sap, bringing it to the sugarhouse where it is filtered multiple times, then put through an R.O. system, then boiled in our 3 x 10 Waterloo/Small evaporator, which we upgraded to in 2005. We boil what we collect every day each day. We have two bottlers, both jacketed – a CDL and an older Waterloo/Small bottler.

We were fortunate to have Garth Atherton, owner of Waterloo/Small in Vermont, as a neighboring camp owner in the north woods of Maine. Garth took us on as a dealer for maple sugaring equipment in Maine. We continue to sell maple equipment to area sugarmakers, but now for CDL out of Vermont and Canada.

Marketing

We sell our maple syrup in our farm store, to a warehouse in New Hampshire, and bulk in drums. We employ help in the sugarbush and in our farm store. At the farm store we have two bakers who are making wonderful sweets and yeast breads seven days a week. Lots of maple syrup is used!

Maine Maple Sunday/Weekend has been many things for us over the years. It has been a full-blown agritourist affair with 1000's of people to what we do now which is being at the sugarhouse and having a tour of our operation and product to sell. Company is always welcome throughout the season.

Lessons learned and future plans

Each year we learn new things to make our operation better. The thing that sticks out in our minds is the importance of cleaning in the woods, the sugarbush, and the sugarhouse; new drops each year keep the bush healthy. The front pans of our evaporator are cleaned each day.

We will continue with all our endeavors until we are unable.



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Producer Spotlight ...Continued from page 2

MMPA membership

We are proud members (not too active) of MMPA. We feel it is important to have many voices together versus one alone.

Photo captions: Front page: Wayne and Joni Slattery; page 2: West Minot Sugar House; bottom, page 2: Bakers Christine and Michele (l-r); photo right: Wayne, Ken, Micah and Cameron (l-r).



UPCOMING EVENTS, ETC.

NEWLY LAUNCHED!! [Resilient Sugarbush Management Course](#): This UMaine Extension and UVM Extension course is heavily discounted in year 1. This asynchronous on-line course means you can do it in your own time, when you have time. Level 1 is live. Level 2 and 3 will launch this Spring.

UMaine Sugarbush Management Survey

We are conducting a survey on resilient sugarbush management in Maine. We're surveying all licensed producers in the state. This survey will ask about management decisions they've made in their sugarbushes, as well as their experiences with extreme weather, pests and diseases, and other issues. This information will help us better understand how maple syrup producers are adapting to some of the changes we're seeing in our forests, and better help foresters and extension agents work with them to address those changes. This will also help our graduate student, Isabella Sferra, complete her thesis.

If you have not received a notice in the mail about this survey, and would like to participate please email (Isabella.sferra@maine.edu) (graduate student project leader) for a link and unique ID number.

2025 U.S. Maple Producer Survey

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a maple sap or maple syrup producer in the United States. This study is being conducted by Mark Cannella at the University of Vermont Extension. The survey research is being conducted to explore the trends and issues important to the success of maple producers nationally.

The survey is available online at this Qualtrics link: [2025 U.S. Maple Producer Survey](https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_efD2a2tAeTKxW8S) or https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_efD2a2tAeTKxW8S

Participants who complete the survey will be invited to register for a \$75 gift card raffle; 30 winners will be selected. If you would like to request a hard copy survey with anonymous return envelope, please contact Corinne Cooper at Corinne.Cooper@uvm.edu or by phone at [802-656-4820](tel:802-656-4820) or [1-866-860-1382](tel:1-866-860-1382) (toll-free in Vt.) You will be asked to provide your contact information and mailing address, which will not be stored or linked with your survey responses in any way.

FYI... Interested in viewing and/or showing the MMPA reels? Several reels are available through the Association by going to <https://mainemapleproducers.com/marketing-resources-for-members/> and the password is MMPA2024.



EXTENSION PIPELINE

“It Doesn’t Taste THAT Bad.” Syrup Flavor and Quality

I grew up in a “log cabin” (pancake syrup) home. I know, I know, it’s hard to admit it. But I feel better now that I got that out... I remember being in high school and getting sugar on snow at a local fair. I took a few good licks and threw it out. I asked myself why anyone would want to eat something that was bitter and sulfur tasting like that. That was an early opportunity to convert me to the sweet side, but the extremely buddy syrup used for the sugar on snow turned me away for several more years.

A recent University of Vermont Extension project purchased over 260 syrup samples (either Golden Delicate or Dark Robust) from retail or online maple syrup vendors. They found that between 21% and 26% of the Dark Robust syrup was off-flavored. That means that a consumer has a 1-in-5 to 1-in-4 chance of purchasing that grade of syrup and being disappointed. As maple syrup producers, we sell an iconic, high quality, high value food. It is up to all of us to ensure that every drop of syrup in retail containers meets the highest flavor standards.

There are several causes of off-flavors in maple syrup. Off-flavors can be clumped into the following categories.

- Processing Problems
- Chemical Contamination
- Musty/Mold, and
- Mother Nature Issues

Processing and Chemical off-flavors are largely preventable. As the season is launching review your sap handling, evaporator management, and syrup handling process to look for potential issues.



Niter on pans.

- Are tanks cleaned regularly? This reduces microbial load and reduces the risk of sap spoilage.
- Have filters and filter aids been stored in clean, low odor, must-free areas? Filters are essentially the last thing your syrup contacts prior to bottling. They can easily transfer undesired flavors into your near finished syrup.
- How often do you clean your pans? Letting niter build up can reduce boiling efficiency. It also risks niter off-flavor (like a baking soda sizzle on the back sides of your tongue), or scorch when the niter lifts off the pan slightly and burns.
- What type and how much defoamer are you using? Excess defoamer (both organic and conventional) can leave an oily coating on your mouth. Old defoamer (especially organic oils) can cause a rancid oil off-flavor.

Chemical off-flavors can be unpleasant and even dangerous.

- Be very cautious of scented chemicals and detergents. Bleach and scented detergents should be used sparingly, if not avoided all together. I have had a few too many Lemon Pledge® tasting syrup samples. Those “cleaners” are very hard to get fully rinsed, especially from porous plastics like tubing or maple jugs.

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Extension Pipeline ...*Continued from page 4*

- Strong acids and bases (pan and RO cleaners) require extra attention. Develop a procedure for thorough rinsing, neutralization, and disposal of these cleaners. There have been some very scary stories of strong acids accidentally contaminating syrup. Depending on the concentration this can cause off-flavor (in-low quantities) to hospitalization (in extreme situations).
- Canada and international buyers are raising the alarm about high levels of chlorides in syrup. Random sample testing is underway Keep this in mind when selecting and using sanitizers.

Must/Mold off-flavors can taste unpleasant but also cause allergic reactions.

- Be sure your syrup reaches legal density, and hot pack at 185F to 190F to prevent mold growth in syrup.
- Store all supplies and tools dry and in a must free area. Double check that diatomaceous earth, cone filters, and other porous supplies have not absorbed must and mold spores/smells.

Mother Nature issues are caused either in the tree, or in the environment. There is less we can do to prevent them, but awareness and proper identification is key.

- Metabolism is usually caused mid-season. It's a temporary change in the sugar compositions and can result in a cardboard, popcorn, or general lack-of-maple flavor.
- Sour sap is caused by high microbial loads feeding on the sugars in the sap prior to hitting the evaporator. This is more likely to happen with increased temperatures later in the season. Sanitation and tank cleaning can help.
- Buddy sap comes at the end of the season. It can appear prior to bud swell but is related to the chemical signals telling the buds to break. It can taste exactly like a tootsie roll when starting, and a combo of bitterness and sulfur when advanced.

When grading for flavor, I recommend saving a sample jar or two after filtering and tasting in the days after boiling. During the boil you are surrounded by the steam and smells of the syrup, which can desensitize your taste buds. Tasting cooled off syrup before jumping into the sugarhouse for the day can help pick up on various good and bad flavors. Having others on your team/family to serve as back up tasters is also a good idea. The decision to take a batch of syrup out of your retail supply can be a difficult one. But your reputation and the industry's might depend on it. Many of you have developed value-added outlets for your off-flavored syrup. For example, using sour sap syrup in a batch of BBQ sauce adds both acidity and maple sweetness to the BBQ sauce in a way that works nicely (and increases the value of that syrup). Packers also have extensive markets for off-flavor syrup and are willing to buy bulk off-flavor syrup at a discount.

Don't hesitate to reach out if you have a batch of syrup that you can't quite pinpoint the flavor. I'm happy to do sugarhouse visits, and to taste syrup (even the bad stuff!).

Reach me at Jason.lilley@maine.edu or 207-581-8368.

Officers and Directors

Voted in at the 2026 Annual Meeting

President: Alan Greene

Vice President: Scott Dunn

Secretary: Elizabeth Belanger

Treasurer: Valerie Greene

Director: John Lee

Director: Ryan Liberty

Annual Awards

SUGAR MAKER OF THE YEAR ~ JO-ANN MERRIFIELD

ALFRED BOLDUC LEADERSHIP AWARD ~ JASON LILLEY

Bill Mason (pictured far right) was recognized for donating an evaporator for the annual raffle for many years, and he was then voted in as a life member of Maine Maple Producers Association.

The winner of the Mason evaporator, donated by Bill Mason, was Louise Hunter of Brownfield, Maine.



Pictured left, is Shawn Dunning presenting Jo-Ann Merrifield with the Sugar Maker of the Year Award; center, Shawn presenting Jason Lilley with the Alfred Bolduc Leadership Award; right, Shawn presenting Bill Mason with a plaque recognizing him for his years of support to MMPA.

New Members as of January 2026 ~ Welcome!

Home Farm Products LLP, Randy, Kevin & Ford Nelson,
Canaan

Honeybee Acres Farm, Kathleen Young, Orrington
Out on a Limb Maple Farm LLC, Shawn & Vanessa
Dunning, Parlin Pd Township

River's Bend Sebec.org, RJ, Dover-Foxcroft
Susanna W. Thorne, Somerville

Frederick Family Farm, Devin Frederick, Gorham

D.B. Sugar Bush, Inc., Louis-Jose Bilodeau,
Saint-Pamphile, QC, Canada

Arndt's Aroostook, Scott Arndt, Rockland

207 Tappers, Bethany & Brandon Ruel,
Biddeford

Record Maple, Lloyd & Linda, W. Paris
Al Lappin, Scarborough

Soiett's Maple House, Darren Soiett, W. Gardiner

A-Z Maple, Andy Gilson, Skowhegan

Tripping Gnome Farm, Robin Silverman,
Freeport

Scott MacDonald, Newcastle

MapleOak Farm, Bill Grant, Winthrop

Midnight Maple, Michael Lamb, Windham

Annual Maple Syrup Contest Winners

GOLDEN DELICATE

1. Merrifield Farm
2. Spring Break
3. Hilltop Boilers

AMBER RICH

1. Merrifield Farm
2. Cain's of Maine
3. Spring Break

DARK/ROBUST

1. Merrifield Farm
2. Spring Break
3. Greene Maple Farm

VERY DARK/STRONG

1. Hilltop Boilers
2. Black Owl Farm
3. Merrifield Farm

CREAM

1. Spring Break
2. Long Drive Acres
3. Merrifield Farm

CANDY

1. Spring Break
2. Hilltop Boilers
3. 207 Tappers

SUGAR

1. Spring Break
2. Hilltop Boilers
3. Sawyers Maple

Judges: Kathy Hopkins, Elsie Caldwell, Travis Schafer, Sierra Shaw, Lindsey Werner, Claire Stretch, Jason Lilley.

Best of Show – Spring Break Maple Farm – Cream



Pictured top, l-r: Best of Show, Spring Break, Kevin and Kristi Brannen; First Place Golden Delicate, Zach Bellefleur, Merrifield Farm; First Place Dark/Strong, Mark Bryant, Hilltop Boilers; Second Place, Very Dark/Strong, John Lee, Black Owl Farm; Third Place, Dark/Robust, Alan Greene, Greene Maple Farm; Annual meeting luncheon. (Photos are sample of Maple Syrup Contest winners, entire list is above. Scott Dunn presented the ribbons.) *Congratulations All!*



Annual Blaine House Tree-Tapping



Pictured top row: Association President, Alan Greene, with Governor Janet Mills, tapping; Sampling of Maine Pure Maple Syrup, maple products. Right (l-r): John Bryant, Russell Black, Valerie Greene, Scott Dunn, Gail Tibbetts, Alan Greene, Gov. Mills, Kevin Brannen, member and State Rep. Mark Cooper. Back: Ryan Liberty, Randy Hall.



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