

The Sweet Stuff: Maple Syrup in
Our Past, Present, and Future....
It's Sticking With Us!



By Barbara Snelling

What is Maple Syrup?

- Maple Syrup is a thick, sticky liquid that is made from the “sap” of Maple trees.
- “Sap” is a sweet water that is created by the Maple trees in spring to make the leaves sprout after the long winter.



Sap dripping into a bucket

(Courtesy of <http://www.k12.nf.ca/jakeman>)

What Trees Contain Sap ?

- Three different types:
 - Sugar Maple
 - Black Maple
 - Red Maple



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But How Does Sap turn into Maple Syrup?



- Warm days and chilly nights of spring prompt the sap to start flowing in Maple trees. The first step to producing Maple syrup is tapping the tree.

Collecting Sap

- Sap needs to be collected every day. It is taken from the trees to holding tanks near sugar houses, or sometimes piped directly to houses depending on the technology preferred.



(picture courtesy of http://www.theworkshop.ca/ruralskills/maple%20syrup/Sap_Gathering.jpg)

Boiling

- At the sugarhouse, Maple syrup is boiled for hours in a large pan called an evaporator, to remove all water- leaving only the sugar left.



Bottom of Evaporator



Evaporator Pan

Filtering

- After the syrup is boiled, it must be filtered to separate any small impurities that were in the sap. It is poured through layers of a soft, thick cloth.





Syrup as we know it...



Was not always done this way. Methods of collecting and boiling have changed since its discovery by the Native Americans. So how has it progressed?



The History Begins...

We will now take a look at the progression of Sugaring in Vermont from the 1900's to today.



- How sap was collected in the early 1900's



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Maple Sap Collection (1939)

Gathering Maple Sap in a Sugar Bush
(1929)



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How Sap was Boiled in the Early 1900's



Cauldrons were used to boil the sap, and wood was built around them to keep the heat centralized.

Changes Begin: Horses were used to transport the sap from the trees to the sugarhouse. Wooden buckets would be replaced by tin buckets by the late 1900's.

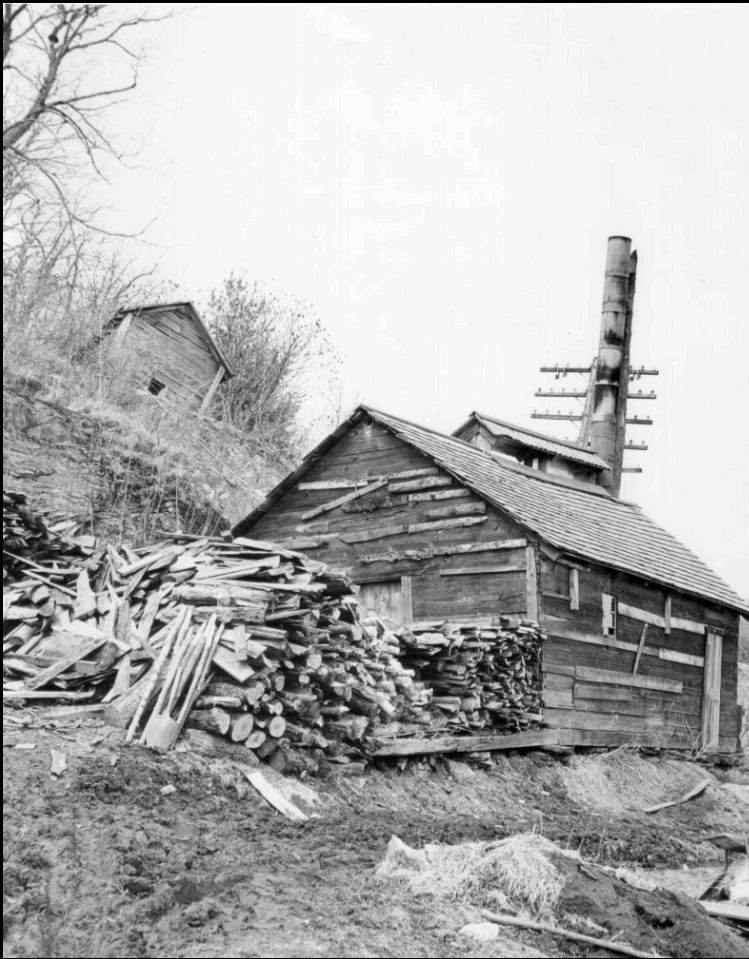


Men in Collecting Sap in Forest LS08838_000.jpg



People Outside Sugarhouse LS08846_000.jpg

More Changes : In the mid- late 1900's sugar houses were built, allowing sugar makers to stay warm and make syrup faster....



Sugarhouse and Firewood (1955)
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Sugar House (1969) LS05966_000.jpg

Sugar houses improved over time, as production grew....



Men at Sugaring House (1981) LS08052_000.jpg

Although technology improved for boiling and Sap collecting, many sugar makers still stuck to traditions- despite the times...



Sugaring Time (1968) LS05917_000.jpg



Oxen and Maple Sap Collection (1975)
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“Sugaring” Parties were an important part of the season in the 1900’s and still are today. They are occasions where the community comes together and socializes, boiling sap, eating “sugar on snow”, and enjoying the traditions of the season.



A-11 Sugaring-off Party at the Miller-Kaiser sugarhouse.

Collecting Maple Sap is almost a dance between a man and his trees... It usually is done alone, and very rarely involves more than two people. Some trees are tapped for centuries, and the connection runs deep....



Man Collecting Sap LS08834_000.jpg

**Sugaring isn't just for
the product, it's about
spending time with your
surroundings, and
listening to your
environment...**



Horses With Sap Collection Sled LS08833_000.jpg

Maple Sugaring has always been a family tradition, and passing it on to future generations is an important part of the process...



E-17 Thomas Gebbie ready to gather sap at sugaring time - pretty small tanks in those days!

Maple Facts:

- It takes approximately 40 gallons of sap to create just 1 gallon of Maple syrup!
- Vermont is the largest producer of Maple syrup in the country 37% in the year 2000 alone.
- Weather has the biggest impact on syrup. A cloudy day will make dull, bland syrup.
- The tourism industry has a very positive impact on syrup, and presently syrup is sent to countries all over the world.



My Last Words:

Maple syrup production will remain in our future, its in our blood- just like the mountains...

