

# Plenty Of Sap, Not So Much Sugar In This Year's Maples

It's A Good Year To Try The Darker Syrups

By Eric Johnson

Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op

Having just come in from juggling up the last of our season's maple syrup, I feel I can finally sit down and write up some observations of the 2009 maple season.

The general consensus from a variety of producers in the region is that this season was above average for sap production, yet the plentiful sap was low in its sugar content. Several producers had record end-of-season syrup totals, yet because of the low sugar content of the sap, many had to burn a lot more wood. The added time for boiling the sap also resulted in many producers not making any light amber syrup.

Several folks asked me over the course of the year why much of the maple syrup for sale in supermarkets had gone up so much in price, in some cases nearly doubling in price from the year before. Much of the retail price increase people noted was related to producers in the province of Quebec having a bad 2008 sugaring season.

Quebec, which makes between 75% and 80% of the world's maple syrup, controls the wholesale price of maple

syrup. (There are some towns in Quebec that make more maple syrup than the entire state of New Hampshire.) With low Canadian production in 2008, the price for syrup on the wholesale nearly doubled. Supermarkets were forced to pass on these prices to consumers.

The following is a summary of the 2009 season for some area producers.

**The Proctor Academy Woodlands** sugaring crew sets out nearly 300 taps, most of which are in a sugarbush adjacent to the Blackwater Ski Area. This season the crew produced a little more than 30 gallons of medium, dark, and grade B syrup.

Dave Pilla, Woodlands manager at Proctor, observed that the timing of the season was just about in line with historical data, running from early March to the first week of April. Dave also noted that his sap was low in sugar, but there was plenty of it.

**Parker Rowe** and the crew who run the Maplecreek Sugarhouse on North Road in Salisbury had a record year for overall syrup production, besting their previous season high by almost 160 gallons. Most of the nearly 2,000 taps set out by Parker and his crew is on a tubing set-up and use vacuum to help increase sap yields.

New for Maplecreek this season was



(L-r) Mark Cowdrey, Dave Swanson, Eric Johnson, take a short break from running the Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op in East Andover.

Photo: Heide Johnson

the deployment of nearly 200 buckets, mainly in and around the North Road area of Salisbury. Parker noted that the sap in the buckets – mostly roadside trees that have big crowns and little competition – was the sweetest sap of all his trees. Despite some equipment theft which threw a wrench into the end of his season, Parker noted that, “The Maple Gods were good to me this year.”

**Bill Clough** and his brother John operate a beautiful sugarhouse on Whitney Brook Road in Wilmot. The Clough sugarhouse sets out nearly 600 taps per season – a combination of nearly 200 buckets and 400 taps on tubing.

Bill noted that the majority of his syrup this year was darker than he typically produces. The overall production of 130 gallons was very good, despite pulling their taps a week or so earlier than in previous years. Most of their syrup is sold out of Spring Ledge Farm in New London.

**Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op** also had an excellent sugaring season, making 155 gallons of medium, dark, and grade B syrup off of 475 taps. The Co-op, run by Dave Swanson, Mark Cowdrey, and Eric Johnson, taps 18 different properties in Andover and East Andover. The 75% of the crop this sea-

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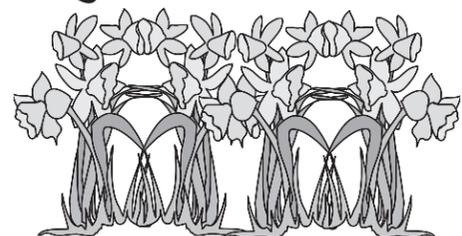
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