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MAPLE SUGAR MAKING ON THE FARM

This industry is One of Growing Importance. The Market Requires a High Grade of the Finished Product, which Can be Obtained Only by the Use of Modern Methods and Appliances

AN INDUSTRY that is rapidly growing into prominence in Canada, is the production of maple syrup and sugar. This is by no means a new industry. Its development has been hampered, however, by the placing upon the market of adulterated goods. These are put up in attractive packages, and find easy access into the homes of unsuspecting consumers. As a consequence, the consumer is defrauded, the market for pure goods injured, and the producers of pure goods discouraged. Fortunately, this abuse is being overcome, largely through the better enforcement of that section of the Adulteration Act dealing with goods, such as maple syrup and sugar. Producers of pure goods, therefore, are receiving more encouragement than was accorded them formerly, and the industry is benefitting thereby.

The maple sugar industry is dependent largely upon weather conditions. When these are favorable, a larger run of sap is assured, which, if properly handled, will result in as great a profit an acre as can be realized on any acre of the farm, provided the sugar bush is a good one.

Again, sugar-making comes at a time when other farm work is not pressing. The trees require practically no care, the sugar bush is essentially one of our great natural resources.

Unfavorable weather conditions, and the prevailing low market price of maple sugar products, militate somewhat against the industry, yet it has been proven that the equipping of a sugar bush with a modern outfit for making syrup and sugar, is a profitable investment.

The quality of product that the market demands is that having a delicate, clean, maple flavor, being in texture, and of a high grade. This grade is best produced in considerable quantities, and requires only adequate government protection to ensure its increased production. Again, an increased production of a guaranteed pure article, will be attended ultimately with an increased price.

THE EQUIPMENT

The great essential in the production of a high-grade article of maple syrup is the possession of a

first-class equipment. A good description of a modern equipment is given in the Dominion Department bulletin B, on the manufacture of pure maple sugar and syrup. The following extracts from the bulletin are to the point: "Everything with which the sap comes in contact should be made of tin or metal. In the bush it is necessary to have a sap spout and sap bucket for each tree tapped; a team attached to a wooden sled, to draw the gathering tank around when collecting the sap, and two larger tin pails for transferring



GATHERING THE SAP

The process of gathering the sap in a sugar bush is here illustrated. In the foreground a man is seen emptying the sap from the sap bucket into a gathering pail. Thence it is carried to the gathering tank and emptied as shown in the background.

the sap from the trees to the gathering tank. At the sugar house it is essential to have a large sap holder an iron or steel arch, with a modern evaporator in which the sap can be boiled into syrup, a skimmer, two or three syrup cans, and a small iron or steel arch, with a heavy tin pan attached, for boiling the syrup into sugar. This is commonly called "sugaring."

THE SUGAR HOUSE

The sugar house should be located on a side hill, so that the gathering tank can be driven to an elevation at the side, high enough for the sap to run by gravitation from the gathering tank to the sap-holder, and hence to the evaporators. If the location will not permit of this, an artificial mound will meet requirements. A drain should be dug under the sugar house to carry off

rain water and water used in cleaning utensils. The size of the house will be regulated by the size of the sugar bush. It should be well lighted and ventilated. Suitable spouts and buckets should be provided for gathering the sap. These are described elsewhere in this issue.

THE PROCESS

The first operation in the sugar bush, after having everything in readiness, is tapping. The time to tap is when indications point to warm, sunny days, following cold nights. Care must be taken not to tap before the sap will run, as it has a tendency to dry the sap fibres, and curtail the flow. Tap in a healthy spot, preferably a southern exposure. Remove the bark from the spot selected, and with a bit, or tapping spoon, bore a hole slightly upwards, and about two inches deep, and from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. The hole should be cleaned out and the spout inserted, to which a bucket is attached to catch the sap.

The sap should be collected when there is about a gallon in the buckets, as it rapidly deteriorates in color after leaving the tree. It should be strained several times during the process of handling, and kept free from impurities and foreign matter. The sap holder should be kept as cool as possible as heat is detrimental to the quality of the sap.

Boiling should be commenced as soon as there is enough sap to keep the evaporator in operation. Boil rapidly, with the sap as shallow as possible in the evaporator, and remove the skimming when ever necessary. As the syrup is drawn from the evaporator, pour through a filter into a small can to cool, and when cool pour into the setting cans.

At the conclusion of each day's boiling the evaporator should be removed from the arch, and thoroughly cleaned. A convenient apparatus for removing the evaporator, is a set of pulleys attached to an over-head track, crosswise the arch.

SYRUP

Syrup should be of uniform grade, of a transparent amber color, and free from all sediment. An imperial gallon, properly strained, and allowed to settle, should weigh when cold, 13 lbs. 2 ozs. If it is heavier or thicker it will easily grain; if lighter or thinner it may sour. The former is the lesser evil.

SUGAR

When the syrup has properly settled it is poured off through a strainer, into a "sugaring off" can. It is then boiled until it reaches a granu-