

First Addition  
April 2005

# The Sapsucker



Welcome to the first edition of *The Sapsucker*, a newsletter for Vancouver Island maple syrup producers. Our intent is to produce a newsletter at least twice yearly that will become a forum for sharing information and resources between local maple tappers, regardless of their scale of operation.

Currently we only have email addresses of about a quarter of the estimated 300 Vancouver Island sapsuckers. If you know someone interested in getting on our mailing list, please pass a copy of this email to them and ask them to email Jan Hewson at [jhewson@shaw.ca](mailto:jhewson@shaw.ca).

## Inaugural Meeting of the Sapsuckers

For those that are interested, we have scheduled the first ever meeting of the sapsuckers for the morning of May 7, 2005. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and the location is Malaspina's G.R. Paine Horticultural Centre. The address is 2324 East Wellington Road, Nanaimo. From the Parkway, you turn west onto Jinglepot Road. Go past the Jingle Pot Pub and turn right onto Holland Road, and at the end turn left onto East Wellington Road. Travel about a kilometre along East Wellington Road, the driveway entrance to the Horticulture Center will be on your right and well signed. At the fork in the driveway, turn left and drive to the greenhouses (not to the trailer on the right fork). There's a map at <http://www.mala.ca/horticulture/findus.htm>. We meet in room 107.

The objective of this half-day workshop is to share information, meet other "sapsuckers", discuss common challenges and explore opportunities. While some sort of sector organization might come out of this meeting, this is not its sole purpose.

The meeting will start with each person introducing themselves and hopefully telling a bit about their trials and tribulations regarding tapping and syrup making. After that we'll move on to discussing common issues, such as; access to trees on private, forest company, or Crown land. We'll discuss taphole closure, vent taps, sap storage, evaporators (local-made and commercial), syrup finishing and regulatory issues (health and labeling).

We'll look at common objectives such as; purchasing of supplies, central evaporation and/or finishing, marketing and sap purchasing. We will also look to see if those attending feel there is a need for forming a syrup producers group and what form that association should take.

Lastly, we invite all of you who wish to bring a bit of bigleaf maple syrup or something cooked with syrup to do so for the group to taste.

## **Health Regulations for Syrup Sales at Temporary Food Markets**

The Vancouver Island Health Authority has available a small booklet titled "A Pocket Guide for Temporary Food Markets". It contains excerpts and guidelines from BC's Ministry of Health, Health Act, and addresses the Food Premises Regulation and Sanitary Regulations concerning foods that have been prepared in kitchens which are not routinely inspected by a regulatory authority.

The guide contains a list of examples of non-potentially hazardous foods acceptable for home preparation and sale at temporary food markets. Among the examples listed are: **syrup**, toffee, popcorn and hard candy. This is positive information for the Vancouver Island maple syrup producers as we are not required to have a Health Canada approved commercial kitchen in order to sell our products. However, registration with the VI Health Authority is still required. Registration means that a person will be licensed to sell their registered products during 14 (non consecutive) days, per year, at a temporary food market. Temporary food markets include, but are not limited to, farmer's markets, community markets and charity fairs.

The guide also recommends that food handlers ensure that all persons engaged in the home preparation of foods intended for sale at temporary food markets have completed the FOODSAVE level 1 program. For information concerning FoodSave Courses please contact:  
North Island - phone (250) 287-2818  
Central Island - phone (250) 755-6215  
South Island - phone (250) 388-6070

On a similar note, we have learned that grading might not be required if selling farm-gate or at farmers markets within BC.

## **A Local Bottle Source**

For those of you looking for an affordable Vancouver Island supplier of glass bottles, Vancouver Island Apiary in Duncan is such a source. Grant Tuplin is the owner. The location is 3737 Riverside Road and their phone is 250 746-1676. Grant is an agent for Dominion and Grimm. He stocks 250 ml syrup bottles and some nice little 45 ml sampler bottles. Gary Backlund will bring samples of both to the meeting. Grant is willing to special order fancy syrup bottles. You can see what's available and the prices at [www.domgrimm.com](http://www.domgrimm.com).

## **66.5% – Is this Really the Magic Number?**

66.5% sugar is the government standard for maple syrup, but many of us are having problems reaching this number without creating a lot of crystallized sugar in the bottom of our finishing pans and/or jars. Birch syrup producers have reported the same problem. Is mold really an issue under 65%. 58% sugar is sweet enough for most palates and our syrup has lots of flavour at that ratio. So far tests haven't shown mold to be a problem at 58% sugar. Peter, the largest birch syrup maker in BC says, "The day I stopped trying to make eastern maple syrup out of birch sap, is the day I started making good syrup". He stops well short of 66.5% sugar in his syrup making.

We may need to work with government regulative authorities to set guidelines in this regard for bigleaf maple syrup.

### **Making Milder Syrup by Adding Fructose**

The purists may not like this idea, but most birch syrup producers (not Peter) take their syrup to about 45% sugar and add fructose to bring it up to the final sweetness. They do this because straight birch syrup is too strong tasting. Gary Backlund felt his family's homemade syrup was great for most applications, but that it over powered the delicate taste of some things like Swedish and buttermilk pancakes. The Backlunds tried making a milder bigleaf maple syrup using the above method of going to 45% sugar and adding fructose (berry sugar bought at the local grocery store). They were very happy with the results. Now they make full strength for sale to the public and for home use, plus they make a milder syrup for home use only.

### **Cleaning and Storing Sap Jugs**

Even though the use of bleach is not recommended during the sugaring season, now that the season is over, it's recommended to rinse your sap containers with a 20:1 water to bleach solution, rinse with fresh water and then store them with the lids off until the next sugaring season starts. At the beginning of the next sugaring season, give them a good rinse with warm water. If some of your tubing needs more than just rinsing, baling wire and a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide strip of toweling works well. Fold a hook into one end of the wire, feed it through the tubing, hook the toweling strip to the wire, and pull the wet toweling through the tubing.

### **A Note from Stephen Mills,**

Non-Timber Forest Products Coordinator,  
Mt. Waddington Innovation Centre Society, Port McNeill...

Perhaps of interest to the Island Sapsuckers: I met with several Japanese clients a few weeks ago and introduced our Maple Syrup. One of the companies requested a maple flavored chocolate candy with cranberries or blueberries in the center. The candy should not be greater than 12 grams each.

It turns out that Japan sells 80% of their chocolates in the 3 weeks around Valentine's Day. This scenario provides for immediate sales as opposed to gathering inventory over time, thereby limiting expenses that are accrued processing other products on an annual basis.

I believe there is opportunity here.

We have a certified processing facility here on the North Island and would like to make some prototypes of the chocolate described above as we have the ingredients here, except for the Maple Syrup. This is where you come in. Please let me know if this is an area you would like to explore with us. Thank you.

## **More Favourite Recipes**

### **Maple Candy**

Butter a 9x9" glass baking dish and add about ½" of syrup. Bake at 250° Fahrenheit for several hours until thick and bubbly. Cool until it forms a thick taffy-likeness. Pour onto wax paper and place in the freezer for 30 minutes. Melt chocolate in a microwave oven or in a double boiler (nut lovers may want to add nuts to the melted chocolate). Remove maple from freezer; break into pieces while still frozen. Dip maple pieces in melted chocolate and place on wax paper. Place the chocolate coated maple in freezer for a few minutes to solidify. The end result is a bit like the Turtles candy only better.

### **Maple Oatmeal Raisin Cookies**

- 1/2 cup (125 ml) shortening
- ¼ cup oil
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) pure maple syrup
- 1 3/4 cups (425 ml) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp (5 ml) baking soda
- 1 tsp (5 ml) salt
- 2 cups (500 ml) quick cooking or regular oats
- 1 ½ cup (250 ml) raisins

Heat oven to 375°F. Mix shortening, oil, sugar, eggs and maple syrup. Stir in remaining ingredients, mix well. Drop dough by rounded teaspoonful, about 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until light brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Immediately remove from cookie sheet and cool.

### **Caramelized Maple Popcorn**

- ½ cup popping corn
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- ¼ cup bigleaf maple syrup
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp vanilla extract

Pop enough corn to make 10 – 12 cups. Place popped corn in a buttered mixing bowl and set aside. In a small saucepan melt butter then mix in syrup, brown sugar and salt. Boil for five minutes without stirring. Remove from heat then stir in baking soda and vanilla extract. Pour mixture over popcorn and mix well. Turn into large casserole dish or roasting pan and bake in 250°F oven for one hour, stirring every 15 minutes.