

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

The Sap is running



Ever since we have moved to Hawk Hill Farm ...getting to be 14 years now... I have wanted to make maple syrup. We have several large maples around the house so it seemed an obvious thing to try. This year we were in the hardware store and supplies were on sale. Bob suggested maybe next year but he turned his back and I bought enough to set up three buckets. Well that got us started and we now have a grand total of 6 collection buckets and are boiling down sap. After less than a week we have 2 and a bit litres of amber syrup made and the sap is running really well. We just want to make enough for ourselves so about 5 litres in all will be more than enough. Because we can collect the sap on the way back from the barn, it is a very painless way to make syrup. And we are doing a big "no no" in everyone's opinion. We are boiling it off on the wood stove in the house but in our defense it will be this year only.

We have a refractometer that we use for testing the brix (sugar) level of grasses for making hay. We are using this to test the brix level of both the sap and the syrup as it is being boiled off. Surprisingly the sap from one sugar maple is testing at about 6° Brix coming out of the tree compared to the normal 2° brix. That makes it a whole lot better for boiling off since we have about a 20 to 1 ratio of sap to syrup rather than the typical 40 to 1 ratio. The other two trees are testing at about 3° brix. We are partially freezing the sap to concentrate the sugars before we start boiling so the maximum ratio we are dealing with is 20 litres sap to 1 litre syrup. We remove the frozen (for the most part) water from the container and the remaining sap has a higher concentration of sugars than before freezing. It is the same principle that works for production of ice wine. It saves us a lot of time and fuel for boiling off the sap.

With the weather forecast for this week ie cold nights and bright sunny days we should be finished making our syrup for this year by the end of the week. Dream number 534 accomplished.

TTFN,
Laurie