



Albert and Ruby Martin with the award named in their honour. [FAISAL ALI]

LIVING THE SWEET LIFE

With maple syrup flowing in his veins, Albert Martin has plenty to keep him busy

It's been years since Albert Martin has had to worry about the springtime maple harvest, but that hasn't stopped him from getting involved. Hanging a drill bit over his tool belt, the veteran maple farmer still enjoys heading out to the sugar bushes to tap the trees.

"It's something a little

bit indescribable," says Martin. "It's just that joy to go out. 'Oh, are the trees done? Have you tapped already or no?' when you ask somebody else."

Martin sold his farm some 20 years ago, but continues to take part in the yearly tree tapings that come with the arrival of spring.

When the weather hits a steady rhythm of thawing during the daytime hours and freezing at night, and the sap starts to flow, it's a sure sign that spring is here.

"It's the first crop of the year in the spring," says Martin of the significance of the maple syrup season. "Of course, you're always anxious to

get out and start tapping, and you're always glad when it's done, depending on how the season is."

When not out in the sugar bushes, Martin can be found at the St. Jacobs Maple Museum, where he educates visitors on the local history of maple syrup. The museum boasts a collection of ma-

ple implements ranging from Indigenous tools to more modern inventions like the evaporator. Martin has been involved with the museum since it first began in 1985, and continued to support the project after it moved to its current location at the St. Jacobs mill on King Street.

For Martin, maple pro-

duction is as much a calling as it is a profession.

It's that love and dedication to the industry that have made both Albert and his wife Ruby celebrities amongst fellow producers. The couples' names were immortalized by the Waterloo-Wellington local of the Ontario Maple

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SWEET MAPLE SYRUP

ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW

\$487 MILLION

CANADA'S MAPLE SYRUP EXPORT VALUE

In 2016, Canada sold 73 million kg of syrup to the world – 90% from Quebec.

66%

MINIMUM SUGAR CONTENT
needed to be labelled Maple Syrup

70%

**OF THE WORLD'S MAPLE SYRUP
COMES FROM QUEBEC**

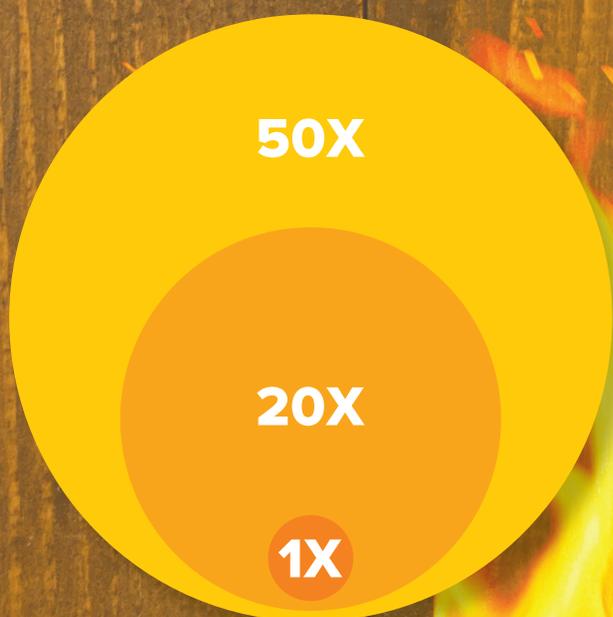
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**NUMBER OF
TREE SPECIES
THAT ALMOST
ALL MAPLE
SYRUP SAP
COMES FROM**

- SUGAR MAPLE**
(ACER SACCHARUM)
- BLACK MAPLE**
(A. NIGRUM)
- RED MAPLE**
(A. RUBRUM)

80%

**OF THE WORLD'S MAPLE SYRUP
COMES FROM CANADA**



20-50X

**THE VOLUME OF PURE SAP
NEEDED TO PRODUCE FINISHED SYRUP**

To produce syrup, maple sap is boiled down to remove excess moisture. The temperature of boiling syrup is usually kept at 4.1°C over the boiling point of water and must be adjusted as conditions change during the day.

Where it all comes from

Almost all of the world's maple syrup production occurs in North America. The maple syrup production region stretches from the east coast to the central United States. In Canada, the bulk of production occurs in the province of Quebec.



35-50L

THE AMOUNT OF SAP A TREE WILL PRODUCE IN A SEASON

Each individual tree produces enough sap to make roughly 1-2 litres of maple syrup. Sap production is highly dependent on weather conditions, with the season normally lasting between 4 - 8 weeks. Maples are normally tapped between the age of 30-40 years, and tapped sap represents about 7% of the tree's total production.

■ SYRUP: Every season finds him at the ready

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Syrup Producers Association (OMSPA) with the Albert and Ruby Martin Award, which each year goes out to a member of the local that best exemplifies the local maple advocates' spirit.

This year, the award was given out to Drayton producer Edgar Gingrich, who for years has held a booth at the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, serving almost an ambassador for Waterloo-Wellington maple.

"He's our frontline guy, when all the tourists come in," said Terry Hoover, president of the local producers' association, who helped create the award. "You can think of the millions of tourists that go through there in a year, and he's there educating them on maple syrup. So we just thought that right off the bat was enough to win the award."

With the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival coming up this Saturday, the Albert and Ruby Martin Award is a yearly reminder of the vitality of the local maple industry, and the people that help put the industry on the map.

In the past two weeks, the warming weather has seen large sap runs in the Waterloo-Wellington

and Niagara regions, according to Todd Leuty of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture – meaning there will be plenty of syrup at the table come this Saturday. Sap producers were busy boiling away as the season is expected to soon draw to a close.

"They're still boiling and still collecting fresh sap. That will continue till Friday at least. But temperatures after that, as soon as the night time temperatures don't freeze anymore, there won't be any more sap," said Leuty. "So we'll see the end of the sap collection season by Friday of this week in the Waterloo area. But that's OK, because we're also

getting good reports of quite a good season as far as the yield of syrup goes.

"I think there'll be a lot of content but tired producers this year," he added.

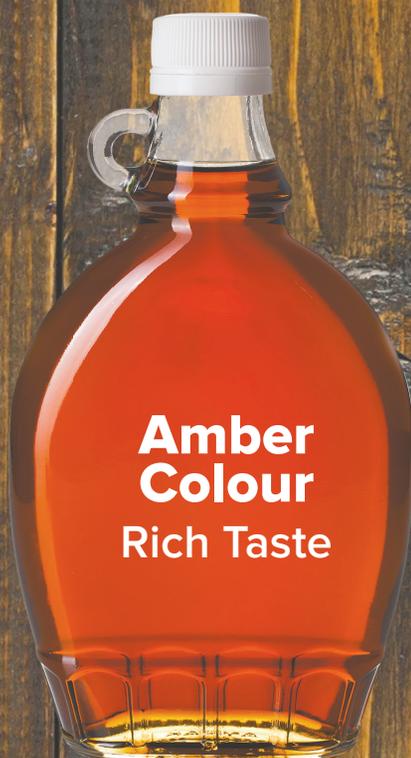
With the taps flowing and the sap being boiled, we're in the midst of what looks like a good season for maple producers. And helping to keep those trees producing is the likes of Martin, tapping one tree at a time.

"There's an old slogan about syrup producers," says Martin fondly. "They never die, they just evaporate. And it's sort of in the blood and you can't get away from it."



Not all maple syrup is the same.

Grade A Maple Syrup in Canada is sorted into four distinct types:



*Data sourced from Wikipedia. To learn more visit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maple_syrup