







## THE SAP RUNS SWEET IN COLRAIN

FIFTH-GENERATION  
SUGARING AT SUNRISE  
FARMS

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**N**ot a lot of people can say that they work the same land that their ancestors did. I like showing and telling people about the trees my ancestors tapped, which we continue to tap today, and, up in the sugar house, the old black-and-white photo of my father's Uncle Fred running the evaporator. My brother and I are the fifth generation working Sunrise Farms in Colrain. Hopefully, our children will carry the torch to the sixth generation.

Our farm started around the mid to late 1800s when French Canadians came down to work in the cotton mills in Colrain. Our ancestors worked the







land, logging to supply lumber for the mills and farming to feed the workers. They would tap trees with hand-crank drills and gather sap by horse and sled. They said that the French Canadians, back in the day, liked their syrup “the darker the better.” They would boil sap by the light of lanterns, poach eggs in the back pan, and make coffee with the sweet sap. My dad remembers his “Meme” making him galettes, a French Canadian fried dough with maple syrup.

Today is much different than the old days, but the farm still has the same heart. Where our ancestors sold syrup directly to the mill workers, we take our syrup (including bulk syrup) and maple products to farmers’ markets. Newer technology for collection and production helps product consistency, efficiency, and volume. Our ancestors used buckets for collecting sap and they gathered them miles into the woods. We liked the nostalgia of buckets along the road, but they became too much

work for not much sap. We run tubing instead and use a high-vacuum pump to help pull the sap through. We also use a reverse osmosis (RO) machine to concentrate the sap. With all those motors and pumps running almost nonstop during sugaring season, we offset the electric demand for our sugar house with our onsite solar panels.

This sugaring season will be our third year being certified organic. Customers always ask, “Isn’t maple syrup already





organic?” There are a lot of requirements that we have to meet. We can’t tap trees under 10 inches in diameter, and we have number of tap requirements to the circumference of the tree. The defoamer in the boiling process has to be organic as well. (Defoaming is needed to “knock down” the foam from the boil, just like when you cook pasta and have to knock down the foam from boiling over.) Most defoaming agents are chemical- or dairy-based. We only use organic safflower oil. All of our soaps and cleaning procedures have to be approved as well. In addition, no galvanized buckets or tanks for collection or storage are allowed because of lead.

By the 2020 sugaring season, with the help of a new electric evaporator, the EcoVap, we will be a zero-emissions farm. The EcoVap is a sealed evaporator, keeping contaminants out and steam in. It uses electric elements to heat up the sap and when the sap starts to boil, it captures and compresses the steam. That compressed steam brings the syrup to a boil without risk of burning it. The evaporator is fully automated, making a better, more consistent, organic product.

If our ancestors could see how things are now! With all this new technology we are bringing to the farm, we still hold the old traditions to heart. The old stories, knowledge, lineage, and roots are deep here in the hills of Colrain.



### ERIK’S MAPLE BACON DELIGHT

Erik says: I found this recipe online a few years ago and it’s a party favorite! I like to use fresh, thick-cut bacon, but in a pinch, you could use microwave bacon. As for the maple syrup, I use Amber, but Dark is also good. This is super-easy and, like I said, it’s a crowd pleaser!

**Cooking spray**  
**10 slices of bacon, chopped**  
**1 tube crescent rolls**  
**¼ cup maple syrup**  
**¾ cup brown sugar**

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and spray with cooking spray. Set aside.

In a medium skillet, cook bacon for 6 minutes, stirring pieces occasionally.

Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate. When cool, crumble. Roll out crescent rolls onto parchment. Pinch seams together to make 1 single sheet. Prick all over with fork and drizzle with half the maple syrup. Top with a single layer of brown sugar, doing your best to cover the whole sheet of dough. Top with cooked, crumbled bacon, distributing evenly, and drizzle with remaining maple syrup. Bake until golden, 22–25 minutes. Let cool completely before slicing and serving.