

## Family Cooks Maple Syrup In Home-Built “Sugar Shack”

“Our family-operated maple syrup operation was set up entirely from recycled equipment and uses an old tracked manure carrier to keep things moving. Our family has a lot of fun cooking maple syrup in this building,” says Barry Norenberg, Grantsburg, Wis.

The “Sugar Shack”, as he calls it, is a small wooden 14 by 10-ft. building with kitchen and dining facilities inside, where the family eats meals during the maple syrup cooking season. An attached garage-like structure stands outside and is where the sap is cooked into syrup.

The cooking system includes a wood-fired stove and a 4 by 6-ft., 6-in. deep stainless steel pan, which is moved back and forth on an old barn manure cleaner and track. The pan is supported by a metal bracket and chains that attach to the pan corners. The stove is an old 750-gal. propane tank, cut down on one side to accommodate the pan where the sap is boiled. An old 12-in. dia. silo filling tube is welded to the stove and forms the chimney. An old round bulk milk tank serves as the finishing tank. And off to one side is a 150-gal. round storage tank.

“We built it about 9 years ago, and our family and many relatives have really enjoyed the time we’ve spent here,” says Norenberg. “Most of the construction work was done by my brother-in-law, Duane Meyer. We don’t sell any of the syrup we make, but sometimes we give it away as Christmas gifts. Last year we made 370 pints of syrup, which we split up between 6 different families.”

To build the wood-fired stove, Meyer cut the top half off one side of the propane tank and then welded on a steel plate that the pan sets on. He also cut a couple of doors into the

tank to load firewood.

Norenberg says they make the syrup in batches, with 140 to 160 gal. of sap needed to make each batch.

“We collect the sap in 5-gal. containers and pour it into the pan. Once the fire is good and hot, we chain up the pan and roll it down the track and lower it onto the steel plate on the stove. We let the sap in the pan boil down to about 1 in. deep. Then we lift the pan off the stove, roll it down the track to the finishing tank, and open a valve to empty the sap into it. A small fire under the finishing tank does the final cooking. Then we start making another batch.

“The first day of maple syrup season this year we collected 200 gal. of sap, but we can only put 50 gal. into the firebox tank at a time, so the rest goes into the storage tank.”

Norenberg says they can boil down about 10 gal. of sap per hour, so with a 150-gal. storage tank it takes about 18 to 20 hrs. to finish each batch.

The entire setup cost very little to build. “The tracked manure carrier came from an old barn a few miles away,” says Norenberg. “The tin and boards for the building came off a torn-down structure. The windows were recycled after we remodeled our house, and the kitchen cabinets came from my brother and sister-in-law after they remodeled their kitchen. We use an old stove from my sister and brother-in-law to heat the building.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Barry Norenberg, 20591 Pickle Lake Road, Grantsburg, Wis. 54840 (ph 715 327-4345; barry.norenberg@bosch.com).



Barry Norenberg and family make maple syrup in their home-built “Sugar Shack”. It includes a wood-fired stove and a 4 by 6-ft. stainless steel pan, which is moved back and forth on an old tracked manure carrier.



Small 14 by 10-ft. wooden building has an attached garage-like structure where sap is cooked into syrup. There is full kitchen and dining facilities inside, where the family eats meals during the maple syrup cooking season.



“It looks like a Farmall F30 in pedal tractor size,” says Bill Dyche about his wooden Farmall. The only non-wood parts are the wheels, steering wheel and seat. He made a 3-bottom, No. 8 plow to go with the tractor.

## Wood Farmall Looks Real

Over the years, Bill Dyche has restored tractors with his father and fixed up many of the pedal tractors in his collection. The tractor that stands out, however, may be the one he made out of wood.

It looks like a Farmall F30 in pedal tractor size. His reason for choosing that model tractor is simple.

“My dad and I had restored a Farmall F30, and so I could work off of that,” Dyche explains. “I did it by eye, by guess and by gosh.”

The only non-wooden parts are the wheels, steering wheel and seat.

Dyche notes that fellow woodworkers complimented him on his tractor, but cringed when he covered up the walnut wood with Farmall red paint.

Like all the pieces in his collection, Dyche wanted the tractor to resemble the real thing. He made a 3-bottom No. 8 plow to go with the tractor. It’s just one of the dozens of implements he’s made for each of his



Dyche has made dozens of implements for each of his 40 plus pedal tractors, including this planter.

40+ pedal tractors. The metal implements include a manure spreader, planters, grain drills, auger, cultivators, sprayers, and other equipment.

Dyche, 75, says he builds the pieces “for fun.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Dyche, 110 Country Place Dr., Jacksonville, Ill. 62650 (ph 217 245-9131).

## Custom-Painted Milk Cans

After a shoulder surgery, Phyllis Muller rediscovered her love for painting and a new niche – painting milk cans. Since the young entrepreneur can no longer do a lot of the physical work on her family’s dairy farm, painting cows, pets, and landscapes keeps her connected to farm life.

The experience of growing up on a dairy farm and appreciating the lifestyle is reflected in her work.

“Painting animals comes easy to me. Because I’ve lived on a farm all my life, I can capture the personalities of animals,” Muller says.

Most of the cans she paints are custom made, based on photographs her clients provide. Many are pets that passed away; others are show cows. Sometimes one side of the can is an animal and the other side is a farm scene.

Muller notes that when she is in the mood to paint, she paints a can within about 5 hrs. She paints instinctively and directly on the can without making drawings ahead of time.

But she also spends quite a bit of time and work preparing the milk can and applying clear coats.

“I usually sand the cans by hand and paint on two coats of primer. I paint with acrylic paints and then three coats of clear coat,” Muller says, explaining she has restored other milk can paintings that didn’t last long because they weren’t coated.

With just word-of-mouth advertising she has been busy painting cans for people within driving distance of her Maryland home. Her prices start at \$125 when the customer provides a milk can that is in good shape, to \$250 for milk cans that are in bad shape or that she provides.

Though it isn’t practical to ship milk cans because of the cost, Muller also paints



Phyllis Muller loves to paint animals and landscapes on milk cans. Most of the cans she paints are based on photographs that her clients provide.

something that is easy to ship – Christmas ornaments. The 3 1/2- to 4-in. balls sell for \$40.

Though most paintings are farm-related, Muller is up for other challenges. She painted a football team on one can, for example.

It’s only been a year since she started painting cans, but she already has many repeat customers, and Muller enjoys her painting time after her full-time job at a bank.

Can orders are usually filled within 2 months. Christmas ornament orders are filled in 2 to 3 weeks.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Phyllis Muller, 2420 Salem Bottom Rd., Westminster, Md. 21157 (ph 410 259-1276); Phyllissparkles1@gmail.com).