



Compressed air is heated before being used to aerate syrup. Aeration speeds up evaporation.



Heated Air Speeds Maple Syrup Cooking

Roger Meihak, Forest Lake, Minn., was looking for ways to speed up cooking maple syrup. "Reverse Osmosis is too expensive as we only cook 6 to 8 gallons of syrup per year. This year I tried an idea I had been thinking about for a while," says Meihak.

"It seems as though water evaporates faster if it's aerated. But in my case, the water is at or near boiling and running air through the water would also cool it down. To heat the air I found a stainless steel beer-cooling coil on eBay," says Meihak.

The outside diameter of the coil is 5 in., to fit in the 6-in. stove pipe. He installed it just below the damper. The coil is 50 ft. long to transfer heat. A small air compressor forces air through the coil. Meihak uses brake line up to and into the syrup pan. The brake line

has a few holes near the end of the line, and is insulated from the chimney to the pan. "I was hoping for a temperature of at least 250 F. leaving the coil and at times it's closer to 400 F., so I am able to aerate the sap without losing heat," says Meihak.

"This method seems to speed up the cooking as the sap evaporates more being aerated, even if it's not boiling. If someone was to build a better model, such as with a longer brake line, perhaps U-shaped, with many holes in the line but very small, maybe laser cut, it could work even better. I think it's also important to use an oil-free compressor," says Meihak.

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Boyd's custom 28-speed bike can haul up to 300-lb. loads. It can pull a spreader, or be used to cultivate fields with its oversized tires.

"Triketor" Hauls, Spreads And Cultivates

Ron Boyd's Triketor carries big loads of produce, cultivates garlic, and hauls tools and supplies wherever needed. Best of all, it only burns calories. The 3-wheel bike with its own toolbar and carry-all trailer has done it all at Boyd's 5-acre Mer-Girl Gardens for most of the past 10 years.

"I started out using a 3-wheel Schwinn to get around the 5 acres," says Boyd. "I was always forgetting something, and it worked great to carry a few tools and supplies. Over time the idea expanded."

Lightfoot Cycles in Darby Mont., took Boyd's idea to a higher level. Lightfoot was once one of the largest makers of 3-wheelers but has since closed. They brought Boyd's idea for the "Triketor" to life. The recumbent design frame has a positive 2-WD off a jackshaft with a 28-speed derailleur. As Boyd turns the grip, it increases or decreases the gear ratio. Fat Larry tires are equipped with 3 sets of tubes each, 2 split open and 1 with air to reduce flats. The bed on back rides directly over the rear wheels.

"It was designed for our 4-ft. wide beds

with 1-ft. walkways," says Boyd. "The bed on the back can handle up to 300 lbs., or I can pull a manure spreader that also carries about 300 lbs."

Boyd has used the toolbar underneath the seat to strike rows for a walk-behind seeder, as well as for cultivation. He credits many years of no-till and cover crops on his sandy soil for ease of cultivation with the Triketor.

"It works extremely well due to the tilth of our soil," says Boyd. "It's really simple to cultivate with sweeps on the toolbar. It could have motorcycle chain and heavier tires, as it is occasionally a little light for what I demand of it."

While still useful, the role of the Triketor has diminished as Boyd's farm recently expanded from 5 acres to 80 mostly irrigated acres. After years of market gardening, he and his wife Debora now focus on seed production for Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds.

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Ketola has left-handed saws, reciprocating saws, an old electric 3-phase saw made in the 1940s, saws with a circular blade, saws that accommodate attachments such as augers, and even a saw that runs on kerosene.

Collector Owns More Than 1,800 Chainsaws

Gerald "Mutti" Ketola jokes that his favorite chainsaw is the one that starts. Odds are good for that because he has about 1,800 saws that he's collected over the past 15 years.

The retired mine worker also collects hit-and-miss engines and tools associated with industries in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He was inspired to collect chainsaws after seeing a pile of them at a scrapyards.

It bothered him because, "That's history and they are just throwing them away." Ketola started using chainsaws to cut wood when he was growing up, following family traditions started by his great-grandfather who moved from Finland to Michigan to farm and build log cabins.

Within a few months of his scrapyards visit, Ketola had about 3 dozen saws and was asked to display them at his town's Gwinn Fun Days in 2006. That led to more donations to his collection and a pattern. Go to a show, get more saws.

"People see them and they appreciate it. They want me to have them instead of throwing them away," he explains, adding he also purchases saws. "I love auctions; that's where I pick up a lot of saws and other tools. I've also got a network of people that watch for chainsaws and buy them for me in my price range. Thanks to them I've received a lot of saws I would have never gotten."

That's led to some unusual pieces including a Russian chainsaw that was expensive but worth having.

He also has a Remington pneumatic underwater saw, which was used to clear remains of old docks, piers and bridges. He has left-handed saws, reciprocating

saws, saws with circular blades, saws that accommodate attachments such as augers, and one saw that runs on kerosene.

"I have an old electric 3-phase saw made in the 40's. It's very heavy," Ketola says.

The old 2-man saws are all very heavy, weighing up to 80 lbs. When they used sandcasting and made them out of aluminum it made the saws lighter. It wasn't until 1952 that the float-style carburetors were changed to diaphragms so the saw could be used in any position.

"What surprised me most was the different places they put the recoil to start them. Some are on handles, some are on the right, some left and some in the middle," he says.

Ketola stores the chainsaws and his other collections in 8 log buildings that he has obtained from people, torn down and restored, refitting them with original beam-style frame roofs. To show the saws, he loads up a 12-ft. covered trailer that has shelves.

"I put in 120 chainsaws or so, and I leave room because it's not uncommon to pick up 20 to 30 saws at a show," Ketola says.

He is also a blacksmith so he can make parts to repair his engines, tools and saws.

"I just like mechanical things. It's just the history of the whole thing that I really enjoy. Mining and logging built this part of the country," he says.

Ketola is happy to let visitors traveling through the Upper Peninsula see his collection. Just call ahead.

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White Strawberries Coming Soon

There's nothing quite like biting into a juicy, bright red strawberry, but what would a white berry taste like?

Plant breeders at the University of Florida have released a new white strawberry variety, and it's now being test marketed. By next year, the new white strawberries should be available in some U.S. grocery stores.

The strawberry is white inside and out, with a slight pink blush on the skin and red seeds. Not only is the color unique, but also the flavor - sweet but with a pineapple-like aroma.

White strawberries were developed by crossing pollen from Japanese plants with a Florida variety.

"White strawberries have been popular in Japan for some time, but this is expected to



New strawberries are white inside and out, and have red seeds.

be the first white strawberry on the market in the U.S.," says Vance Whitaker, a University of Florida professor of horticultural sciences and a strawberry breeder.