

Just call this Maple Syrup — Part II.

Perhaps you remember our recent maple syrup-making experiment.

While removing invasive young trees from along the edges of some fields, The Farmer discovered sap pouring out from the stumps of several small maples he had downed. Intrigued by the abundant flow of sap, he carted several plastic containers to the site and gathered a few gallons of the clear, slightly-greenish-tinted liquid.

When they ended up on the kitchen counter, it was obvious that the kitchen was going to become a temporary sugaring house. So we boiled for several hours, refrigerated the condensed stuff overnight, started a second kettle in the morning and boiled some more.

Eventually the couple of gallons was reduced to a pint of still-thin syrup that had a least transformed to a warm, brownish color. In the house for lunch, The Farmer eyed the remnants of his gathering and suggested we halt the process before reducing the yield to a mere few tablespoons.

So into the refrigerator went a two-cup container of sweet,

brownish, very runny, sort of Maple Syrup Lite.

Since then, we've been fascinated to learn how many other amateur syrup concocters there are out there. One friend related how she and her husband gathered 50 gallons of sap in the mountains and cooked it down over a fire kept roaring under a large, metal cooker once used by the local fire company for frying doughnuts.

A reader shares how he taps maple trees in his yard and also cooks the sap down on an outside fire. Boiling down maple syrup in the house, he relates, "is a good way to take off wallpaper."

We didn't remove any wallpaper — most of our walls are paneled to cover up the old, crumbling, horsehair plaster — but did enjoy extra high humidity from the steam generated during the process. But keep that thought in mind should you need to remove wallpaper from your house at some point in time.

And to neighbor John, who left a message on the phone machine asking if he could bring over a pancake to sample the syrup, my apologies. You're too late.

See, several days after our sugaring event, I had to be away for a meeting. While The Farmer had

been sampling the syrup as a spread on bread, he decided maybe he could thicken it up a bit.

So, he emptied the syrup into my favorite one-quart, stainless steel saucepan — a wedding gift, so you know how long I've used it — and returned it to the stove. He did this at lunchtime, then remembered he needed to run out "a minute" to do something at the barn.

Right. The minute stretched into many. And he returned to a house filled with smoke, no maple syrup, and a blackened pan. In fact, the pan had gotten so hot that the inner layer of aluminum had melted out into a thick puddle on the stove. (He confessed — and gave me permission to tell this tale — before I discovered my favorite saucepan missing.)

No, I did not "fly off the handle." What I did was offer a prayer of thanks that all that was destroyed was a pan — and not the house. And made him promise to NEVER leave the house with the stove turned on. Even for a minute.



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I am now the owner of an original aluminum-sculpted paperweight. If you use your imagination, it looks like a reclining elephant with its trunk raised up in the air.

The paperweight will sit on a windowsill next to another "souvenir" — a part removed a

couple of years ago from the pickup truck's gas tank. Wiring problems had started a fire that got so hot that the plastic on this piece — from inside the gas tank — is partially melted. But it never exploded.

I look at it now and then. And count our blessings.

Garbers Grind Wheat

(Continued from Page B3)

Her fears of what she would do with so much flour were groundless. Now she orders four tons three times a year, which she sells by word of mouth.

Because Brenda, her husband Glenn and children, Michele, 15, and Richard, 12, live in a suburb, they rent storage facilities elsewhere. Brenda said that she started teaching bread making from freshly milled flour one by one to others. The idea caught on, and Brenda received more and more requests for the demonstration. Now she offers demonstrations to groups, either in her own home or in the home located within a one-hour drive of Lancaster City. She charges \$10 a person, but serves lunch made of wheat chili, freshly baked bread, and even wheat roasted coffee. Each participant also goes home with a loaf of bread.

Although Brenda will sell freshly ground flour to those who attend her classes, she limits the amount. "I am not in the business of grind-

ing flour for people," she said.

She prefers to teach others how to do it and have them order the equipment and grind the wheat themselves. She sells 50 pounds of whole kernel wheat for \$16.

Bosch, she said, is a Germany company that is well known for making quality auto parts and tools. Brenda checked out other brands but believes the Bosch brand is outstanding for its whisper quiet motor, speed, and ease to operate and clean.

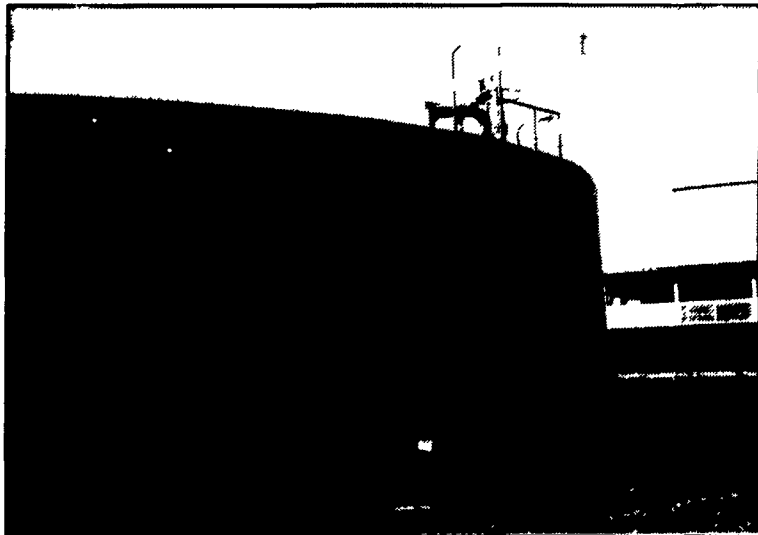
Although the initial outlay for the equipment may seem high, Brenda said, "It's an investment, but you get your money back."

She estimates that it costs her only 40 cents a loaf to make the bread. In addition the kitchen system serves as an electric mixer, blender, and food processor.

All types of hard grains can be ground in the mill.

For more information on bread making classes or the whole kernel wheat, contact Brenda at (717) 569-0158.

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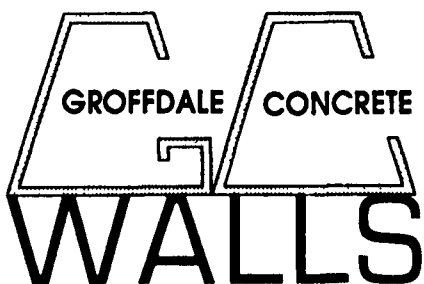


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