

Meet the Farmers: Susan & Diana Walling

Walling's Maple Syrup

South New Berlin, N.Y.



Diana (left) and Susan (right) of Walling's Maple Syrup, based in New Berlin in Chenango County

"Each year we've added more. Finally, we couldn't use buckets because we had too many taps, so we had to go to tubing!"

While tapping entails drilling a small hole into the tree then inserting a spout from which the syrup drips, tubing expedites the process. Long tubes are attached to the spouts, so the sap can flow into a collection tank.

Some seasons, sap starts flowing as early as the second week in January, but this winter brought delays. "You have to wait for Mother Nature to warm up enough," Susan explains. "Sometimes she doesn't cooperate, like this past year. It was frozen, frozen, frozen and we were wondering if we were ever going to get any sap."

The sap finally did come on March 9. As it turned out, the amount of syrup was about average, on par with other seasons.

Once the sap is collected, the next step is boiling it. "Sap has a certain percentage of sugar," Susan explains. "Most of the water is taken out when it's boiled. It just becomes a thick, sticky, sweet liquid." Enter Maple Syrup.

One of the Walling Family's most popular products is actually Maple Cream, which is essentially Maple Syrup boiled down even further.

"That's something a lot of people don't know," Susan says. "They hear Maple Cream, and they think it's a dairy product. But, it's just Maple Syrup."

And it makes just about anything taste better. "You can put it on toast, cinnamon rolls, use it as an icing. It's really good on a sandwich with peanut butter," says Diana Walling.

The Walling family says their favorite part about the Downtown Farmers Market is getting to know everyone – from the regular customers to the other vendors.

"You make relationships, and become friends. That's my favorite part," says Susan.

On the first Tuesday of every month, Downtown Farmers Market visitors are in for a sweet treat – a repertoire of Maple products from Walling's Maple Syrup.

The Wallings offer Maple Syrup, Maple Candy, Granulated Maple Sugar, Maple Coated Nuts and Maple Cream. Best of all? It's all good for you.

"It's nutritious as a sweetener," says Susan Walling. "It's got antioxidants, minerals... If you're going to use [Maple] as a sweetener, it's a pretty healthy choice."

She says some of her more health conscious customers tell her they use it to bake with, trading out white sugar for Maple Syrup.

The Walling family has been tapping trees in South New Berlin in rural Chenango County for 22 years.

"We started out with just a few buckets," says Susan.



Sap, Courtesy of Walling's Maple Syrup



Be sure to say hello to Susan and Diana at the Downtown Farmers Market on the first Tuesday of every month.