



The Sugar Season: A Year in the Life of Maple Syrup, and One Family's Quest for the Sweetest Harvest

Douglas Whynott

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A year in the life of one New England family as they work to preserve an ancient, lucrative, and threatened agricultural art--the sweetest harvest, maple syrup...

How has one of America's oldest agricultural crafts evolved from a quaint enterprise with "sugar parties" and the delicacy "sugar on snow" to a modern industry?

At a sugarhouse owned by maple syrup entrepreneur Bruce Bascom, 80,000 gallons of sap are processed daily during winter's end. In *The Sugar Season*, Douglas Whynott follows Bascom through one tumultuous season, taking us deep into the sugarbush, where sunlight and sap are intimately related and the sound of the taps gives the woods a rhythm and a ring. Along the way, he reveals the inner workings of the multimillion-dollar maple sugar industry. Make no mistake, it's big business--complete with a Maple Hall of Fame, a black market, a major syrup heist monitored by Homeland Security, a Canadian organization called The Federation, and a Global Strategic Reserve that's comparable to OPEC (fitting, since a barrel of maple syrup is worth more than a barrel of oil).

Whynott brings us to sugarhouses, where we learn the myriad subtle flavors of syrup and how it's assigned a grade. He examines the unusual biology of the maple tree that makes syrup possible and explores the maples'--and the industry's--chances for survival, highlighting a hot-button issue: how global warming is threatening our food supply. Experts predict that, by the end of this century, maple syrup production in the United States may suffer a drastic decline.

As buckets and wooden spouts give way to vacuum pumps and tubing, we see that even the best technology can't overcome warm nights in the middle of a season--and that only determined men like Bascom can continue to make a sweet life off of rugged land.

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