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Local Producers Place First at International Maple Syrup Competition

Two local Minnesota maple syrup producers placed first at the international maple syrup competition recently held at the North American Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC) convention in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

Stu and Corinne Peterson owners of Camp Aquila Pure Maple Syrup of Star Lake near Dent, MN (Otter Tail County) took the first place in the Grade A – Light Amber class. Petersons' Camp Aquila Maple is a family-owned licensed commercial operation tapping approximately 1200 trees. Camp Aquila uses a gravity tubing collection system which is installed and removed from their sugar bush (wood lot) each season. Petersons boil their sap on a 2 ½' X 8' wood-fired continuous flow evaporator. Their syrup is marketed primarily through a network of West Central MN and Twin Cities retail outlets.

Ralph "Butch" and Amy Fideldy, owners of Timber Sweet Maple of Cohasset, MN (Itasca County), placed first in the Grade A – Dark Amber syrup class. In addition, their winning entry was named "Best In Show" over all other entries. Best In Show is the top honor and is selected from among the class winners as best representing the desired flavor attributes for their class.

Timber Sweet is one of Minnesota's larger licensed commercial maple producers tapping nearly 2,800 trees. It is a family-owned business that includes son Troy and close family friend Larry Tanner in the operation. Timber Sweet uses a vacuum collection system which collects sap and transports it directly from the trees to their sugar house. Their sap is boiled down to syrup on a gas-fired 4' X 14' continuous flow evaporator.

Both Ralph Fideldy and Stu Peterson are active members of the Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association (MMSPA). Fideldy serves as a MMSPA director and Minnesota's delegate to the NAMSC convention, while Peterson currently serves as President of the MMSPA.

Syrup entries were judged by a panel of experienced maple syrup judges on the basis of color (grade), density (correct sugar concentration), clarity and flavor appropriate for the grade. Producers from seventeen states and Canadian provinces from the maple production region competed for top honors.

The concurrent NAMSC and International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) annual conventions were hosted by the New Brunswick Maple Syrup Association in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada on October 22-24, 2013. Nearly 300 maple syrup producers from the U.S. and Canada attended the conventions. Producers are encouraged to enter samples of their current year production in the contest at the fall convention.

Although not considered one of the major maple producing states, Minnesota maintained its reputation for producing high quality flavorful pure maple syrup. Timber Sweet, Camp Aquila, Jake's Syrups

(Vergas, MN), Wild Country Maple (Lutsen, MN) and several other Minnesota operations have been ribbon winners in prior year international competitions.

The NAMSC is a network of U.S. and Canadian maple syrup producer associations representing seventeen states and provinces. The IMSI is a trade organization comprised primarily of packers, suppliers, distributors and large producers of maple products. Both organizations share many common objectives and work closely together to produce and protect the integrity of pure maple syrup.

The Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers' Association is a member of the NAMSC and is scheduled to host the NAMSC convention in 2019. The NAMSC and IMSI bring together industry groups to share knowledge, industry developments and to encourage research for the advancement of the maple syrup industry.

On a world-wide basis, maple syrup is produced commercially only in North America, within a region that generally surrounds the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic. The Province of Quebec, Canada is the largest maple syrup producer in the industry, producing about 2/3 of the industry total. The states of Vermont and New York are the largest U.S. producing states. Minnesota is the western most area producing maple syrup on a commercial scale.

For more information contact Stu Peterson, President MMSPA at 218-758-2796 or visit www.mnmaple.org.

MAPLE FACTS

- Pure maple syrup is only made on a commercial scale in North America – nowhere else in world.
- Maple syrup is generally produced in the states and provinces that surround the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Minnesota is the northern-most and western-most commercial maple syrup production area in North America.
- Maple sap is collected in the early spring, when temperatures get below freezing at night and above freezing during the day.
- It takes approximately 40 gallons of maple sap from the trees to make one gallon of pure maple syrup.
- Nothing is added to the sap, only water is evaporated away, to make pure maple syrup. Once concentrated to the correct density, pure maple syrup is filtered and “hot pack”-bottled.
- A tree large enough to tap can be re-tapped year after year, although a new tap hole must be drilled each season.
- Each tap can yield up to 10+ gallons of sap per season on a gravity system, resulting in approximately one quart of finished syrup.
- Vacuum collection systems will yield approximately twice the sap of a gravity system.
- Pure maple syrup is a great natural food. It contains no preservatives, colorings or other additives.
- A gallon of maple syrup weighs 11 pounds compared to 8 pounds for a gallon of water.
- There are three classes of Grade-A pure maple syrup as set by the USDA:
Light Amber, Medium Amber and Dark Amber.