

The 2018 Maple sap run is over. Finally.  
Minnesota weather is always amazingly variable.  
It warmed up early in March.  
I tapped a few trees. The sap run started slowly.  
Good weather for the sap run is 45 degrees, and sunny in the day. Moderate freezing at night.  
I tapped 20 trees. Most of the trees are on the small side.  
Then it got cold. Then warm. Then very cold. Then warm. And so on.  
The weather strung the sap season out incredibly long.  
I just pulled the taps on Monday. The last week of April.  
A normal sap run lasts about three weeks.  
Some years the season is short. Only a week or so long.  
This year the maple syruping season was two months long.  
It takes over forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.  
Producing syrup from sap is matter of vaporizing off most of the water.  
As the water boils off, the sugar gets more and more concentrated until it is thick as syrup.  
We use a very simple process to collect and make our maple syrup.  
I use open pails to collect the sap. The pails hang on a nail. My taps are sections of economical PVC pipe that I cut on a band saw.  
I pour the sap through a dish cloth to filter out bark chips and bugs.  
Then Gail evaporates it on the wood store until it gets relatively concentrated.  
She finishes the job in the kitchen.  
I normally collect sap in the morning. The first photo was taken on a cold morning. The sap had run well the day before. Notice the frozen stream coming from the tap.  
When the night is cold, some of the sap will freeze. For example, there might be one inch of ice with two inches of liquid below it.  
The portion that freezes is pure water. Water tends to freeze in pure crystals. That concentrates the sugary liquid below. I throw the ice away. Throwing away some of the water reduces the boiling time.  
Every year the sap is different, but in general, a lighter colored syrup is produced early in the season. Darker syrup at the end of the run.  
In Vermont, where they know a lot about maple syrup, they identify the syrup by four grades. Amber is first, then Medium Amber, Dark Amber and finally Dark.  
The flavor changes with the color. Amber syrup has a delicate, delightful maple flavor. Dark syrup is full bodied, earthy and wonderful.  
For the second photo, Gail set out some representative jars that show the range of colors she got this season. The syrup ran from Light Amber to very Dark.  
All are delicious. Gail and I prefer the Dark.  
Best regards. Tom  
(Sorry, we can produce only enough for our family.)

