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2 HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

U. S.
Tuesday, February 9, 1932.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Maple Sugar Days." Information from the Bureaus of Chemistry and Soils and Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.
Bulletin available: "Production of Maple Syrup and Sugar." Farmers' Bulletin 1366.

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"Pancakes and maple syrup this morning," announced Cousin Susan, as Uncle Silas drew up his chair to the breakfast table.

"Sounds like the first call to breakfast in the days when we were boys, doesn't it, Ebenezer? And, speaking of maple syrup, isn't it time for sugar weather to be setting in? Seems to me it was about this season that we used to get out the sap buckets and prepare to tap the maples in the old sugar bush."

Uncle Ebenezer nodded. "You're right, Silas. When the first mild weather came along the middle of February or later, we were off to the sugar camp. By the way, did you see in the paper that farmers in northern West Virginia this year tapped their maple trees on the ninth of January? Yes, sir. That's what the paper said. And, what's more, they got 900 gallons of sap, too. Mighty early for tapping, seems to me, even to get the earliest and sweetest runs."

"And did you see," added Cousin Susan, "that the same paper reported that a robin was building his nest in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania? and that a man in a nearby town had been out mowing his lawn on January eighth? The new year set off with some freak weather, didn't it? Have more pancakes, Ebenezer?"

"Believe I will. And more syrup, too, please. I can't remember, can you, Silas, that we ever went out with our sap buckets before the middle of February, and more often it was March before the sap was running."

"That's right. I know because just as soon as the thaw sets in, I get the old urge in my bones to join the boys at the sugar bush, just as I used to when I was a youngster."

"I know. I know the feeling. Sugaring off time was as much fun for us as Christmas, I do believe. No Christmas candy ever tasted better than the maple wax grandfather used to make for us on the snow. I remember just how he used to do it. He'd boil down the sap syrup in the big iron pot over the open fire. Yes, he'd boil and boil without stirring until it had a density equal to hard sugar. Then he'd pour this boiling syrup out in patches right over the white snow. The quick cooling formed golden brown wax instead of sugar. There's a recipe for you, Aunt Sammy. That's the way to make the most delicious maple confection ever tasted."

2-9-32

Uncle Silas began to chuckle. "I remember something else about that maple wax. I remember the time old Rover begged when he saw us eating it. So we treated him to a big ball of it. Once his teeth got into that taffy-like substance, they stuck, stuck tight. He had trouble even in howling for help."

"Then, too, we used to make maple cream which we thought was delicious. I guess they must have a better way of making it nowadays for at that roadside place where we stopped for lunch on our touring trip last summer they had the best maple cream and candies I have ever tasted. The funny part of it was they didn't seem to dry out the way ours used to in the old days if you didn't eat them up right away."

"Well, a lot of people spend their time in winter complaining about the weather, but there's one thing to be said for these severe winters and long, slow springs up in our northern states--they do produce maple sugar. It's the gradual spring that brings a profitable sap flow. And the production of maple syrup and sugar is a 100 per cent American industry. The U.S. and Canada are the only countries on earth where these products are made."

"And d'you know how it all started? Just the way a lot of good American things started. From the Indians. The earliest explorers found the Indians making this sugar from maple tree sap. Up along the St. Laurence River they were producing it in quantity for trade. The white settlers soon improved on the crude methods used by the Indians. But beyond the tapping and boiling, the general process used today is the same as it was then."

"And I'll tell you a little more history," added Cousin Susan. "My grandmother often told about the time when maple sugar was the only sugar to be had for cooking or sweetening of any kind. She said the settlers up North and even down as far as Kentucky and Virginia used maple sugar entirely for a long time. Some makers even tried to refine it and make it just like the white cane sugar that was such a luxury and was imported from the West Indies."

"Well, it looks as if the luxuries and necessities in the sugar line have sort of reversed themselves during the years. Maple sugar can almost be considered a luxury today. Modern ways have changed and improved a lot of things, even the process of making maple sugar. Take the tools for the job, for example. In the old days they used a big, black, iron kettle, a birch-bark tank and wooden buckets. And they didn't know how to tap the trees properly either. So the product was dark and strong tasting. Well, after awhile the scientists took a hand in the matter. They discovered better tools to use and better methods.

"I remember, too, when we took our sirup to market and were able to sell it just as sirup. That wouldn't do at all these days. Now it has to be graded and the lighter the color the better it is. That's all right, too, for it makes us want to produce the best sirup and take a pride in it." Wouldn't my grandfather have welcomed some good booklets giving scientific information on the subject when he was trying to make the most of his sugar bush?"

"And that remark reminded me of a bulletin--a free bulletin--on maple sirup which contains directions for making maple sirup and sugar, as well as for such maple delicacies as maple cream, maple honey and maple wax. Its name? Write for 'Production of Maple Sirup and Sugar'. It's No. 1366. You can order either by name or number or both. The latest information, however, on making maple

cream and candies is given in two leaflets - one entitled 'Making Maple Cream' and the other 'Home-Made Maple Candies'. Both of these leaflets are free for the asking."

Our pleasant breakfast chat was interrupted by a household disaster. Betty Jane had left her new overshoes on the radiator to dry last night. And when she came to put them on for school this morning, alas, she found them sadly gummy on the bottoms.

"Where are the proud new overshoes of yesterday?" sang Uncle Silas. "They've melted with sorrow. I ask you; Betty Jane, wouldn't any self-respecting overshoe melt with sorrow which was left on a radiator all night? You have to be kind even to goloshes and rubbers if you want them to keep their good health and good looks."

I've noticed, haven't you, that the same applies to all rubber articles--raincoats, overshoes, bathing caps, elastic goods, rubber gloves, rubber aprons and even dress shields. Rubber can easily be spoiled under certain conditions. Intense heat is one of these conditions. It makes rubber soft and gum-like. Both raincoats and overshoes dried in a hot place will wear out easily. Rubber aprons, which come in contact with a hot stove, suffer the same fate.

What's the best way to clean rubber materials? Wash them in lukewarm water, say the specialists, and dry them slowly at room temperature. To clean rubberized raincoats, lay them flat on the table and scrub both sides with a soft brush, cool water and soap. Wipe them off with clear water of the same temperature, and hang them out to dry without wringing. Clean elastic goods and dress shields the same way. And, of course, never iron rubber fabrics. If they need to be dried quickly, you can use talcum powder.

Other things that may harm rubber are alcohol, chloroform, gasoline, turpentine, and benzine. So do your cleaning with mild soap and rinse it off well.

Oh, yes, one more item about taking care of rubber things. You know that rubber articles tear easily. So, naturally, you'll want to use a soft brush when washing them. And it's far safer to hang them up on hangers than on hooks.

Tomorrow, "Bathing the Baby."

