

Charlevoix maple syrup farmer upholds tradition

BY LOUISE NELLE
NEWS-REVIEW STAFF WRITER

CHARLEVOIX — Dave Parsons admires his shiny new maple syrup evaporator in anticipation for an upcoming ribbon cutting ceremony and open house when he will show off his new maple syrup production system.

Both events will take place at Parsons' farm at 61 Parsons Road in Charlevoix in celebration of recent renovations. The ribbon cutting ceremony will begin at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, March 12, and the open house will be from 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 18.

Parsons is the third generation to own the farm and has big plans to expand the maple syrup products he and his wife, Terri, offer.

"This year we plan on getting into maple cream and maple sugar. We've always, in the past, just made maple syrup," Parsons said.

Parsons said the farm has been in his family since 1898. In 1928, his grandfather began syrup production and since then the family has continued to tap the maple trees across from the farm.

"It's something that's been

'It's a tradition and part of our heritage.'

Dave Parsons,
maple syrup farmer

a part of the farm that has stayed part of the farm," said Parsons. "It's tradition and part of our heritage."

In order to reach his goal to expand, Parsons purchased new equipment and converted his old milking facility into a store and production room.

New equipment includes a reverse osmosis machine and an evaporator. A reverse osmosis machine removes water from the sap before the sap moves to the evaporator where remaining water is boiled out to create syrup and sugar.

Parsons said his new evaporator runs on oil and will be more efficient than his old one, which was fueled by wood. Because his old system was inefficient, Parsons said some collected sap sat unprocessed and was eventually wasted.

But now that he has an oil-based evaporator, he can maintain a more consistent temperature when processing

and therefore convert sap into syrup at a faster rate to create a better quality, lighter syrup.

"With this (new) system I should be able to boil the sap I collected that day," said Parsons.

Though he has yet to see his new equipment in action, Parsons expects to reduce production time from what used to take a few days to a few hours.

The public will be able to tour Parsons' renovated building and see the new equipment during the open house.

Parsons' Harwood Heritage Gold maple syrup products will be available for purchase as well as gift baskets, which contain both Harwood products and American Spoon Foods items.

For more information visit www.harwoodgold.com. Customers can order items from the Web site or purchase them locally at Parsons' farm, area farmers markets, Marvin's Gardens and the Harbor View Café in Charlevoix and Don's IGA in Charlevoix and Harbor Springs.

Parsons said he currently does not hold regular hours at his store so customers stopping by the farm should call



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Owners of Parsons Farm in Charlevoix, Terri Parsons (left) and her husband, Dave, stand beside their maple syrup evaporator, a new piece of equipment which will enable the Parsons to increase syrup production.

in advance at 547-2038.

Louise Nelle can be contacted at 439-9339, or lnelle@petoskeynews.com.