

Every spring my wife laments the forest of maple trees in our backyard and how their roots and shade will affect our little garden plot.

This year she decided to embrace them instead.

Armed with 10 tin buckets and spigots she inherited from her parents, she tapped our glorious maples two weeks ago when the daytime weather turned warm hoping to suck some juice out of those trees in order to make some maple syrup.

Me, I'm for anything that involves free food so I happily went along with the plan.

Our first day's yield came to one teaspoon of sap. Knowing we needed about 40 litres of sap boiled down to produce about one litre of syrup, we were disappointed. Nevertheless, our preschool kids were excited to help mom check the cans twice a day with the promise of something sweet to eat in the not-to-distant future. The following day our trees produced 12 litres and on the third day we had our first taste. The color was a beautiful light amber gold. The texture a little runny just like the expensive stuff. And the taste -- aaahh, just right.

By Sunday of that first week, we had hit a high of 26 litres tapped in one day and were in full production mode checking the trees three times a day and boiling the sap down in two large pots from sunup to sundown on a double burner in our mudroom.

We reacted with both enthusiasm and alarm when the weather forecast predicted daytime highs of over 10 degrees for the upcoming week. That would do wonders for our sap production which was averaging more than two litres per tree per day. But we'd already reached the limits of our storage capacity. We needed more containers to store the sap. More burners to boil the sap. And more pots to put the sap in. It was a classic business dilemma. Our finished maple syrup production stored in unused mason jars stood at two litres and represented about \$40 on a grocery shelf. Should we invest those savings in some larger stockpots or more burners in the hope the good weather would continue or let the sap run off our trees and be satisfied with our current 100% efficiency? Take our profits off the table or plow them back into new capital investment costs?

We mulled over our options over a family brunch of waffles smothered in a delectable light flavored syrup before deciding to purchase some larger stockpots on sale.

Fortunately for us, the weather forecast was wrong and not only did daytime temperatures soar but the nighttime drop stayed above zero and our sap production withered back to a dribble in one night.