

The Local Yokel  
Volume #8

By April Cappel

These days the impact of Environmental Change is a hot topic on every level from Federal Government to your “Average Joe”.

While the Federal Government seems to have found sudden motivation as of late to “jump all over things”, your “Average Joe” has been all too aware of most of these issues, and their implications for at least the last ten to twenty years.

Evidence to this can be found in conversations all over the Valley, (especially this year), including statements like “I just pack away my snow boots and shovel, and here it is again! Two feet of snow! By-the-Jay-soos, when I find Mother Nature, is she gonna get a piece of my mind!”

What does this have to do with buying local? Plenty!

When asked, as Canadians, what is one of the most popular and uniquely Canadian products we produce? It is not hard to look up at our flag, and proudly boast, “Maple Syrup”!

We are blessed here in the County, to be one of the few regions in Ontario that produce this decadent nectar. While there are lots of small, non commercial producers around the area, there are really only a select, small group of commercial producers, located from Renfrew to Killaloe.

It has been this quest of discovery to find out just where our larger producers are located, that has lead me to meet one of the most remarkable women I think I have ever come across!

After meeting Carole Anne Bonenberg of Mapleside Sugar Bush, not only did I leave with a bottle of the most incredible Maple/Mint Vinegar, (which blows any Balsamic Vinegar out of the water), but I also left feeling like I had just spent an hour with an inspiration!

Mapleside is located on Reiche Road, off of Hwy 41, between Pembroke and Eganville. While I was there, I toured the maple bush, enjoyed the fresh air and learned a few startling things.

It is getting harder every year for our Local producers to continue to produce. In the past three years, while this year was better than last, over all sap production has been reduced by about 60%.

Not only is the Environmental change resulting in a steady decrease in sap, but finding supplies locally for bottling, can be a challenge.

Most of Mapleside's larger whiskey style bottles are purchased from the Brewer's Edge in Pembroke, and a few other supplies they travel to Scott and Son's in Renfrew to be able to pick up locally.

Despite the adversities, Carol Anne shared with me plans for the future, and showed me the new trees that had recently been planted, the new evaporator that this has helped them to make an even better final product. She explained where they are planning to be by the year 2010 with regards to production, hopefully moving to a pipeline for collecting the sap.

She showed me the old fashion "Maple Mustard", and new Corporate baskets she has been creating. I saw the beautiful little mini bottles she will prepare for weddings and banquets. (Truly magnificent idea I might add!)

She also showed me the menu from Frisco's in Eganville, who I am sure did quite well with the "Maple Pecan Chicken" dish that made this vegetarian's mouth water just by its description, during their "Maple Fest", the last week of April. All the maple syrup used in their recipes came from Mapleside. Carol Anne told me she and her husband were heading back there that weekend for "round two" of that menu! She acknowledged that they typically spent as much if not more than what they may have made for the syrup, but that it was very important to support the local businesses!

Up until this year, Mapleside has hosted 7 to 8 groups per season ranging in audience from the local schools, to the local Community Living program. All of whom go home with at least, a beautiful maple sucker!

This year has been different for Carol Anne. She has been fighting Breast Cancer since last fall. While she admits that the battle has made her appreciate knowing her physical limits, she has no intentions of doing anything less than winning the battle. I, for one, completely believe her! I have never met a person more inspiring both by example and in spirit! My hat truly does go off to her!

If you would like more info on Mapleside Sugar Bush, check out the web at [www.mapleside.ca](http://www.mapleside.ca). Or, contact them at [info@mapleside.ca](mailto:info@mapleside.ca).

If you would like more information on the Buy Local Campaign, or have any article suggestions for the "Local Yokel", please email me at [buy\\_local@nrtco.net](mailto:buy_local@nrtco.net).