

Rethinking how we determine sap prices

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Traditionally the *Maple Syrup Digest* has published sap prices before each season in a table that is based solely on the sugar concentration of the sap. There is always a disclaimer stating that these are only suggested prices and will not work for all producers and all situations.

In reality, there are many factors that can and should affect sap prices, so having a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. Think about it: would you want to pay the same for 1.8 brix sap that produces high-quality table grade syrup, versus 1.8 brix sap that yields commercial, off-flavored syrup? Or what if bulk prices are significantly different than expected due to a bumper crop or disastrous season? Wouldn't you want a way to adjust pricing based on the vagaries of production and bulk prices in a given year?

I've also never met a maple producer who wants to pay the same for sap that needed to be picked up as sap that was delivered to the sugarhouse.

The prices a maple producer can pay should also be tied to the processing capability of that sugarmaker. Someone who can make more than 100 gallons of syrup an hour for less than \$3 per gallon in fuel costs should be able to pay much more for sap than someone who is only making a few gallons of syrup per hour and spends more than \$10 in fuel for every gallon of syrup produced. In reality, there are sugarmakers who offer less than 50% and others that pay up to 65% of the bulk syrup value for sap delivered to the sugarhouse.

Given all of these considerations, a few years ago I developed a spreadsheet with a sap-pricing table that can be customized for each individual sugarmaker's situation. Prices are displayed in a table according to sap sugar content and bulk syrup prices by simply entering the percentage of the syrup revenues given to the sap seller. The *Digest* prices have typically hovered around 50% distribution in the past, so the default is often given as 50%, as seen on the facing page. However, you can customize the spreadsheet to whatever works best for your situation by simply plugging in a different value for the percentage distribution.

You can download a Microsoft Excel file with the customizable sap pricing spreadsheet at: <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/sapbuying.htm>. The website asks you to put in your name and email address in order to download it, as I plan to eventually conduct further research on how people are using it, exploring the pros and cons of this method, and trying to gauge the effect of buying sap on the maple industry. More than 1,000 sugarmakers are already using this spreadsheet throughout the maple industry, and I believe everyone who buys sap should use this type of pricing method. I encourage you to give it a try, and as always, feel free to contact me at mlf36@cornell.edu or 518-523-9337 with any questions.

Sap prices

This table presents suggested prices per gallon for a maple producer to purchase sap. The variables that affect sap prices in this table are sap sugar content and bulk syrup price. It assumes that the sap buyer is paying the seller 50% of the bulk syrup price.

Sap Sugar Content	Bulk Syrup Price (\$/lb)										
	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.10	\$ 2.20	\$ 2.30	\$ 2.40	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.60	\$ 2.70	\$ 2.80	\$ 2.90	\$ 3.00
1%	\$ 0.13	\$ 0.13	\$ 0.14	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.16	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.19
1.1%	\$ 0.14	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.16	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21
1.2%	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.16	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.23
1.3%	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25
1.4%	\$ 0.18	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27
1.5%	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29
1.6%	\$ 0.20	\$ 0.21	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.31
1.7%	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.33
1.8%	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.33	\$ 0.35
1.9%	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.33	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.36
2%	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.33	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.36	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38
2.1%	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.36	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.39	\$ 0.40
2.2%	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.39	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.42
2.3%	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.44
2.4%	\$ 0.31	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.46
2.5%	\$ 0.32	\$ 0.34	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.42	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.48
2.6%	\$ 0.33	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.42	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.47	\$ 0.48	\$ 0.50
2.7%	\$ 0.35	\$ 0.36	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.47	\$ 0.48	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.52
2.8%	\$ 0.36	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.39	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.47	\$ 0.48	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.52	\$ 0.54
2.9%	\$ 0.37	\$ 0.39	\$ 0.41	\$ 0.43	\$ 0.45	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.48	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.52	\$ 0.54	\$ 0.56
3%	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.40	\$ 0.42	\$ 0.44	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.48	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.52	\$ 0.54	\$ 0.56	\$ 0.58

Download a customizable spreadsheet to calculate sap prices (see facing page) at <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/sapbuying.htm>.

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