

FARM MARKET REPORT

Maple fest at the market this Saturday morning

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Are you wondering if winter is ever going to end? Come what may with the retreat of winter, we know that Laurie and Roy McLellan are all set for the traditional Woodstock Farm Market Maple Fest on Saturday, March 28, from 10 a.m. to noon.

There'll be taffy on snow, pancakes and maple syrup, hot drinks, and fun for kids and parents – grandparents too, or maybe especially grandparents. It will all be set up in the newly renovated Woodstock Farm and Craft Market with great new space for sitting down and eating up the Maple Fest specials.

Speaking of winter, if you been paying attention to global weather patterns and the latest comments of Canadian meteorologists, you will know that our northeast zone of the continent has been in a “privileged” position all winter.

While the rest of the planet has been rolling up temperatures far warmer than normal, we have been sitting in a pocket of the jet stream that, month after month, has allowed arctic air to pour over us. At the same time, the storms coming across the American Midwest have been combing with storms coming up the Atlantic coast and then routinely sweeping across the Maritimes with snowfalls that have broken records.

Some privilege! But I guess it has been a great winter for snowmobiling, skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and snow blower sales. Considering some past seasons when we had almost no snow stay on the ground, these folks deserve a good old-fashioned winter.

But for sure, we are all waiting for winter to come to an end, especially the maple syrup producers. This last week has seen some temperatures above freezing by day and below by

night; just what is needed for the sap to begin to flow. Now if the snow starts melting back from the base of trees, the maple season will get underway with urgency.

This season is going to be real workout for maple producers who still collect the sap by hand, going from tree to tree emptying the pails and carrying it out to a big tank on a wagon. It will be snowshoe work this spring, which is not so bad until the snow starts to slump and the packed trails give way. Then your snowshoes become worse than useless, they plunge through the crust at all angles and you get stuck trying get your feet back out. This is especially bad if you are carrying a five gallon bucket of sap back to the wagon. At least, this is the way I remember it.

With the new plastic piping from tree to tree, that most producers now have installed, it's world of difference. Producing maple syrup is hard work however you do it, so the convenience of plastic piping is a welcome improvement.

Let's hope the winter recedes slowly so maple producers have a good season and the danger of a sudden thaw and damaging floods is low.

Keith Helmuth One of the founders and a longtime member of the Woodstock Farm Market