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Making Sorghum Sirup

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In response to many enquiries concerning the making of sorghum sirup the following suggestions are offered:*

Mills and Evaporators. Since the making of sirup will require the attention of one man practically all of the time, it is important that the equipment be large enough to justify his attention. A number two, or a number three roller power mill and an eleven or twelve foot evaporator will usually do this. The main requirement of a mill is that it shall get all of the juice, and shall be large enough to keep an ample supply for the evaporator. Where farm power engines of sufficient power are available, a three roller power mill would be desirable. Have it trued up on a good, solid foundation. The power mills will cost from $75 up. Best results have been secured by many from the sectional evaporators since the heat can be controlled very satisfactorily, and the work is more evenly distributed.

Varieties of Sorghum Cane. Goose Neck or as it is sometimes called, Texas Seeded Ribbon Cane, yields well—two hundred gallons and over per acre—and some of the best sirup makers in the Gila Valley prefer it. The sirup from it, however, is somewhat darker than from the Sumac or Red Top Cane. The Amber Cane is a short season variety adapted especially to the colder climates. Goose Neck Cane requires about ten days longer season than Sumac, but yields more sirup and is of a better body.

Cutting the Cane. To make the best sirup the leaves should be stripped from the cane and of course the tops also cut off. Stripping also offers the advantage of reducing the amount of skimming by half, and gives a

*The experience of Martin Mortensen of Thatcher, Arizona, a practical sorghum grower and sirup maker has been drawn upon extensively in the preparation of this circular The U S Dept of Agriculture, Washington, D C, has issued Farmers' Bulletin 477 entitled 'Sorghum Sirup Manufacture," which can be secured free upon application

greater yield of juice from the stalks, since when the leaves are not removed they absorb part of it as it is pressed out and the leaves that are crushed impart an undesirable flavor and increase the amount of dark solid particles that are often noticed in sorghum sirup.

When the cane reaches the "roasting ear" stage or when the seed is in the stiff dough and until it becomes hard, is the proper time to cut it for sirup making. The earlier cut cane—or the juice from it—will require more boiling but will produce a finer flavoring sirup than that from the cane cut when the seed is hard, tho the yield of sirup will not be quite so great as from the later cut cane.

Be sure that the cane is cut before frost, as standing after having been frosted impairs the quality and flavor of the sirup made from it. When the sorghum is mature it can be stripped, cut and piled in small piles and covered from freezing and be worked up later. Sorghum so handled will require much less evaporating.

Making the Sirup. Scrupulous cleanliness in making sirup will be repaid by the superior flavor of the product, as well as in its superior keeping qualities. Repeated cleansing of the juice containers and the sirup pans is necessary.

As the juice runs from the mill it is important that it be strained, preferably thru a flannel cloth, tho several thicknesses of cheese cloth or a fine wire strainer will do.

As the sirup is removed from one section of the evaporator to the next, repeated skimmings of the coagulated scum will be necessary. Skimmers are usually flat with perforations in the bottom.

When a stick is dipped in a cooled sample of the sirup in the last section shows it adhering well—not running off and leaving only a thin film—then the boiling is completed and the sirup is ready to be strained again into the sterilized cans in which it is to be sold.

Sixty gallons of sirup in an eight hour run from an eleven foot evaporator is an average days work. Where it is run twenty-four hours of course the production will be increased accordingly.

Marketing. A superior quality of sorghum sirup attractively packed should find a ready sale in any community. It is far superior to the corn sirup commonly found in our grocery stores and should be handled by our grocers to the exclusion of the imported corn sirup. This should be done from a sense of local patriotism if from no other motive. But makers of sorghum sirup should be sure that their products are attractively put up in containers adapted to the trade and above all things be sure that only quality products are branded as such.