

# *Tapping* into TRADITION

NESTLED IN THE HEART OF A CENTURY-OLD MAPLE FOREST  
FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WEST OF MONTREAL, SUCRERIE DE LA MONTAGNE  
RECAPTURES A BYGONE CHAPTER OF FRENCH-CANADIAN HISTORY  
WHILE PRESERVING THE SWEET HERITAGE OF MAPLE-SYRUP MAKING.

TEXT KIMBER MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHY KATE SEARS





Time stands still at Sucrerie de la Montagne (Sugar Shack of the Mountain), where maple syrup is still made the way it was more than one hundred years ago. As freezing nights give way to thawing days—usually in early March—sap rises within the sugar-maple trees throughout the 120-acre property. Some 1,200 mature trees are then tapped with spouts and their maple water collected in buckets before being transported to a wood-fire evaporator, where the liquid is transformed into syrup. This “sugaring-off” ritual continues for three to six weeks (although the farm is open year-round).

Pierre Faucher, the sugar shack’s founder, eagerly embraces this nostalgic way of life. He started the venture in 1978 with his wife, Sandra, on land where syrup had been produced since the 1930s. “As a boy, my dad would get together with his uncles to make maple syrup every spring,” says son Stefan, who helps operate the business with his family. “Dad ended up working with the previous owner in 1977 and enjoyed it so much that he bought it a year later and became the first to open a year-round maple-syrup farm in Canada.”

*Left: Dressed in a circa-1906 handwoven, arrow-head-patterned sash used as a scarf, Pierre Faucher, founder of Sucrerie de la Montagne, pays tribute to his French-Canadian ancestry. Above: Evening falls on the main lodge.*



*Center right: Adults and children alike relish the sugaring-off-season custom of making maple lollipops. Highly concentrated syrup is poured onto a trough of snow, allowed to harden, and then rolled into delicious treats. Below right: Pierre and his son, Stefan, glide through the snow on a horse-drawn sleigh.*



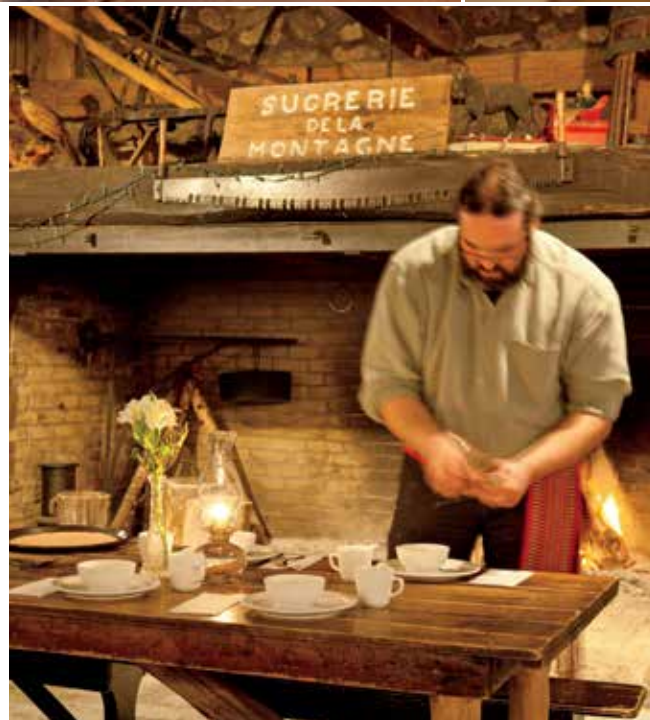




Onlookers can observe the syrup-making process during the sugaring-off season. “The whole room where we make the syrup fills with a cloud of maple vapor,” Stefan says. “For those lucky enough to see it, it’s often the highlight of their visit.”

But there is plenty to savor throughout the rest of the year, when guests can tour the sugar shack and other buildings on the property or indulge in an all-you-can-eat Canadian lumberjack feast made with cherished recipes from Stefan’s grandmother. Diners are treated to such hearty delights as soufflé omelets, maple-glazed ham, and meat pies made with ground pork, beef, and secret spices served in dining halls crafted of two-hundred-year-old barn wood and warmed by stone fireplaces.

Whether it’s a beloved recipe or a celebratory bonfire, the Fauchers are dedicated to preserving the culture of yesteryear’s French-Canadian frontier—so much so that they erected an idyllic village where patrons can experience what life in the 1800s might have been like. What began as a single clapboard building has expanded into a storybook setting of four inviting cabins that host overnight visitors, a



*Within the rustic dining halls, the warm glow of oil lamps and a tempting menu of home-cooked fare prepared by Stefan’s wife and her cooking team transport guests back in time. At night, musicians entertain with folk songs and dance tunes.*





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fieldstone bakery where bread is baked in an 8x10-foot wood-fired oven, and a general store stocked with comestibles made from the farm's maple harvest. To achieve an authentic period look, Pierre and his team created the structures from centuries-old log dwellings that were disassembled in neighboring towns, then transported and rebuilt at Sucrerie de la Montagne.

"I think our guests enjoy being immersed in the French Canada of one hundred years ago," Stefan says. "I grew up seeing how important it was to my parents to preserve the traditions of our ancestors, and I want to continue sharing those so that future generations will know about them."

*Above left: Shoppers can take home a taste of the sugar shack from the general store, which sells maple-glazed popcorn, maple chocolate bars, and Sucrerie de la Montagne's one-hundred-percent-pure maple syrup. Opposite: The Maisonnnette D'Amour cabin offers cozy accommodations with a wood-burning stove and three beds.*

