

MARCH 2014

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FUN MARCH EVENTS

Our Special Needs Issue

- Bullying
- Social Skills
- Resource Guide
- Developmental Delays

The Perfect Summer Job: Camp Counselor

PLUS

Meet the Camp
Directors Guide

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WHEN BEING SOCIAL DOESN'T COME EASY

Does your child have a social skills disorder? Find out how you can tell and then what you can do to help. Specialized programs now help children who need to learn skills that come naturally to many of their peers. The good news is these skills can be taught.

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10 REASONS YOUR TEEN SHOULD BE A CAMP COUNSELOR

Many youngsters will be looking for summer jobs soon and one of the best opportunities is being a CIT (Counselor in Training). Learn why this job is beneficial for kids and how to encourage them to apply now.



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Cover Photo

Courtesy of Jane Goodrich Photography
janegoodrich.com

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COMING NEXT MONTH

Birthday Parties Give your child the perfect garden-themed birthday party. Here's a how-to guide to make a spring birthday celebration fun and easy.

Nature Centers Time to get outdoors and explore all the wonders of the local nature centers. Find out what's happening and make plans for your visit.

Plus ...
Westchester Family's award-winning searchable calendar for families and much more!
Look for it starting March 28!



Madava Farms in Dutchess County is where Crown Maple syrup is produced from tree to bottle using state-of-the-art organic production techniques.

Photo courtesy of Madava Farms

Let's Go To ... Madava Farms for Maple Sugar

By Traci L. Suppa

This time of year, I love living in New York state. Even though it's not truly spring yet, there's one telltale sign that it's on the way: maple syrup. One of the best places my family has found to learn how maple syrup is made is Madava Farms in Dutchess County, where Crown Maple syrup is produced from tree to bottle. It's open to the public on weekends, and worth the scenic drive north.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

After driving through Madava's main gate, you wind your way through some 800 heavily wooded acres to the deceivingly rustic sugarhouse. It's hard to believe that inside is one of the most advanced maple syrup facilities in the country. Crown Maple uses state-of-the-art organic production techniques, and has become the third largest syrup producer in the state. They have also built a reputation for having one of the purest syrups on the market. Many celebrated restaurant chefs have sung its praises, and it has even been served in the White House.

TOURS

Tours are run 10 months out of the year, but the actual syrup production takes place during a short period of time – generally 20 spring days – when the sap flows from the trees. In that time, Crown Maple will bottle approximately 155,000 gallons of syrup.

The 45-minute tour goes through the company's entire syrup-making process, from its extensive tree-tapping system through bottling. It begins with the trees, where 40,000 taps are inserted into 24,000 red, black and sugar maples. I was glad to hear our guide explain the company's sustainable practices of waiting until trees are at least 40 years old before tapping them, and removing the taps after the season is over. I think it was good for my kids to also hear her speak

about the environmental threats the trees are facing through global warming.

STEP-BY-STEP

Once the sap is tapped, it's transported to the sap storage room, and briefly held in four 9,600-gallon vats. To maintain its quality, the sap only stays in these tanks for a few hours. Be aware that visiting the sap storage room does require climbing stairs, so strollers are not advisable.

During the next stop, you'll walk around the giant reverse osmosis machine, which reduces the sap into a concentrate by removing 90 percent of its water content. It's a steel behemoth with a lot of dials, switches and gauges, and so naturally, it totally enthralled the young boys on our tour. From there, you move on to the shiny evaporator where the sap is heated and caramelized, and officially becomes syrup when its sugar content reaches 66 percent. Then the syrup goes to the bottling room, where it's packaged in glass to maintain its pure taste.

The tour isn't long, and while our teenage son enjoyed it, our 6-year-old daughter began to get restless toward the end. Luckily, we were almost at the last stop: the sampling room, where everyone gets to sip three different grades of syrup. Our guide explained the different uses for the light, amber and dark syrups for cooking, dressing and glazing foods.

EXTRA BENEFITS

Following the tour, you're free to explore a little. The "Farm Stand" market is stocked with Crown Maple syrups, maple sugar products and other gourmet merchandise. Time your visit to enjoy lunch – or an afternoon snack – at the café. There are both sweet and savory menu options, many of which are made with maple syrup or sugar, such as breads, muffins, soups and delicious maple lattes and lemonades. We

were very happy with our selection: hot chocolate and puff pastry sticks sprinkled with maple sugar.

On a nice day, there's an added bonus to visiting – manicured walking trails on the wooded grounds. Grab a trail map in the lobby and take your pick from several walks ranging in length, and none more than a mile. We took the Beaver Pond road until we reached the pond. This old-growth forested land is also home to many bird species, from warblers to water fowl, so if your family is into bird-watching, take your binoculars and journal to jot down your finds.

Traci L. Suppa is a frequent contributor to Westchester Family and blogs about her family's travels at GoBIGorGoHomeBlog.com.

When You Go...

Madava Farms

47 McCourt Road
Dover Plains, NY
845-877-0640
crownmaple.com

ADMISSION

Adults \$10, children ages 10 and under \$5. Online reservations are recommended for tours in March and April.

HOURS

Saturdays and Sundays, 11a.m.-5 p.m. Check the website's events listing for special themed meals or tastings. Guided tours are offered at 11 a.m., 1 and 3 p.m.