

2025 WMSPA Maple Producer of the Year Award

The Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association is proud to announce Corey Grape of Grape's Sugar Bush, Holcombe, WI as the 2025 WMSPA Maple Producer of the Year on January 24, 2026 at the WMSPA Winter Institute and Maple Vendor Trade Show in Marshfield, WI.

Corey Grape was born into it as the 4th generation of a Maple Syrup Making Family. The Grape's great grandfather and grandfather were making maple syrup the old-fashioned way in the early to mid-1900's. They tapped a few hundred trees using open pails to catch the maple sap. They would go out by foot to gather the sap and bring it back to an open pan in the middle of the woods to boil. It was then stored in milk cans until full and brought up to the house to be finished and canned.

At that time, the only place in the area to buy maple supplies was Reynolds Sugar Bush in Aniwa. So, every year before the crop was bottled a day was set aside to travel to Reynolds for supplies. It took several days to finish, clean and bottle their precious liquid gold.

After many years of making maple syrup this way, a third generation was born and raised with maple syrup in his blood. Corey had some bigger and better ideas. Sound familiar? Seems that is how a lot of syrup makers got their start. The bigger ideas brought more taps, a sugarhouse, an evaporator, sap bags instead of pails, and roads built in the woods to pull a horse drawn gathering wagon and also for cutting wood to feed the evaporator and house. After several seasons of operating like this, the horses were replaced by a tractor and a larger gathering tank and trailer. So it goes!!! Bigger and Bigger!

Then Corey, this third-generation son got married and more syrup makers were born and brought into this "flow" of maple sap. This is literally where Corey comes into the sticky family business.

Corey Grape's jobs while growing up, along with going to school, ran from just gathering sap, to helping boil sap, to cleaning, bottling, and picking up sap from neighboring sugarbushes. After all this, he graduated from high school, joined the Air Force, got married and had his own family. After years in the Air Force, he moved back home and continued in maple business by starting up his own business. For many years, he sold all sizes of evaporators, RO's and any maple equipment a producer might need. He also purchased syrup from other producers to sell and helped new producers get started in this sticky business. He always had a strong focus on the hobbyist and their needs.

As time went on, Corey sold his business and moved on to his other great interest in life, flying. He took a job outside the maple industry, but still kept close ties to the Wisconsin Maple Industry, serving as a director for many years as well as officers and eventually

President of the WMSPA. Never completely leaving the Maple Industry, Corey and his brothers have gone back to their roots with a new rustic sugar house, built in the middle of the woods with no electricity and cooking from just over 100 taps on a small 2x6 evaporator similar, with a few upgrades, to how their great grandparents had done.

Corey Grape has served 24 years in the Air Force, and that company he started was GBM LLC (Grape Bunch Manufacturing) and maker of the red handled Sap Sak holder and blue arched hobbyist evaporators.