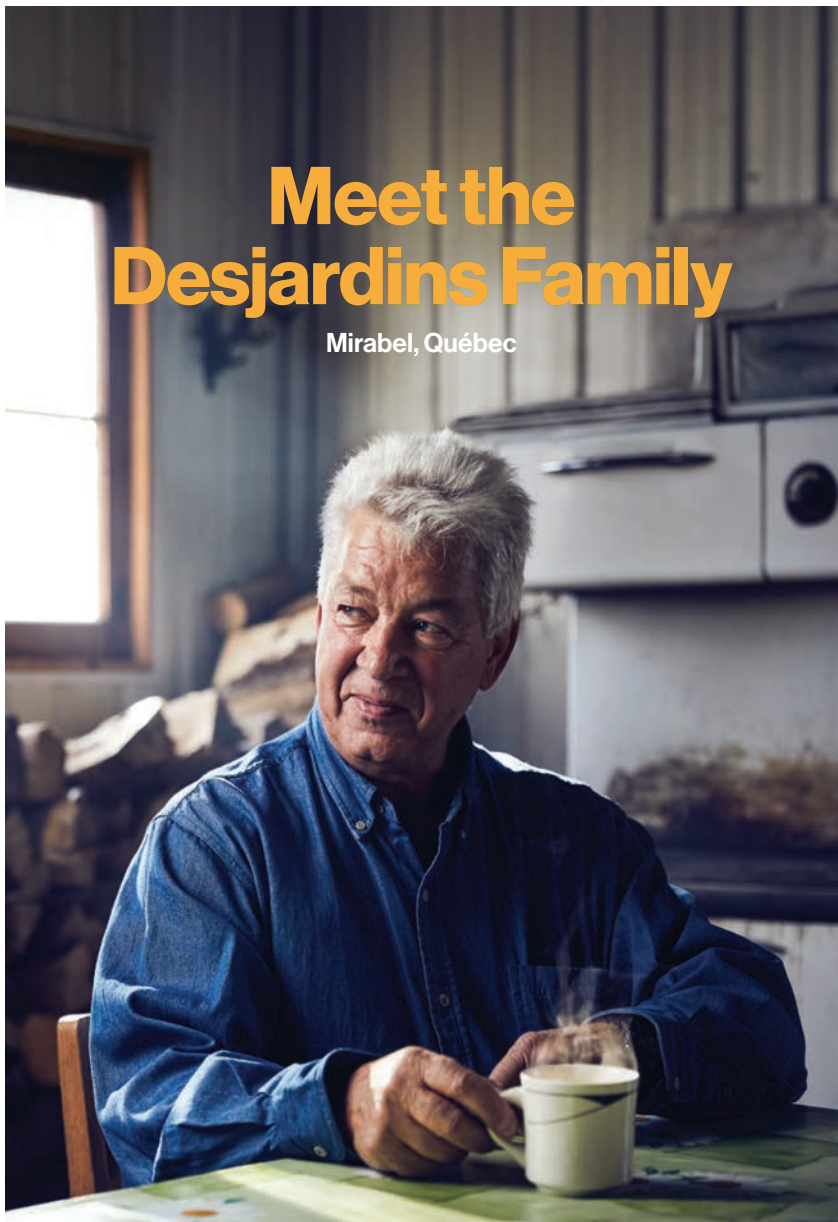


Meet the Desjardins Family

Mirabel, Québec



When a dairy farmer from Québec starts a family sugar shack, you know delicious things are bound to happen.

Getting started

How did Richard DeJardins get started in dairy farming? With a goal and a lot of persistence. Having grown up in a farming family, Richard knew he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. In the early 70s, he started visiting farms looking for one to purchase. After one offer fell through, he came across a dairy producer who had sold his cows. Seeing an opportunity, Richard made an offer. But the man refused. That didn't deter Richard though. He went back again, and again...and again. After four or five visits he wore the man down and spent the next year learning the ropes from the original owner.









Everything adds up

As much as farming is about working with the land and with the animals, it also involves accounting. "Farming is all about keeping track of details," Richard says. "You have to be efficient in everything you do. I'd say you have to post your expenses every day. My accountant can't get over it, how detailed it is. I could tell you the exact date I bought any of my machines." Richard believes that the ability to look after your books and keep track of the details is such an important skill that he's passing it on to his grandchildren—for whom he's already purchased accounting ledgers.

Sweet memories

Growing up on a farm, Richard had many great memories, from haying and seeding to sugaring off. But his favourite memory?

“My dad always had a skating rink in the yard. You got 15 to 20 guys that would come over to play hockey. In the summer everybody would get together to play ball on Sunday afternoons.”



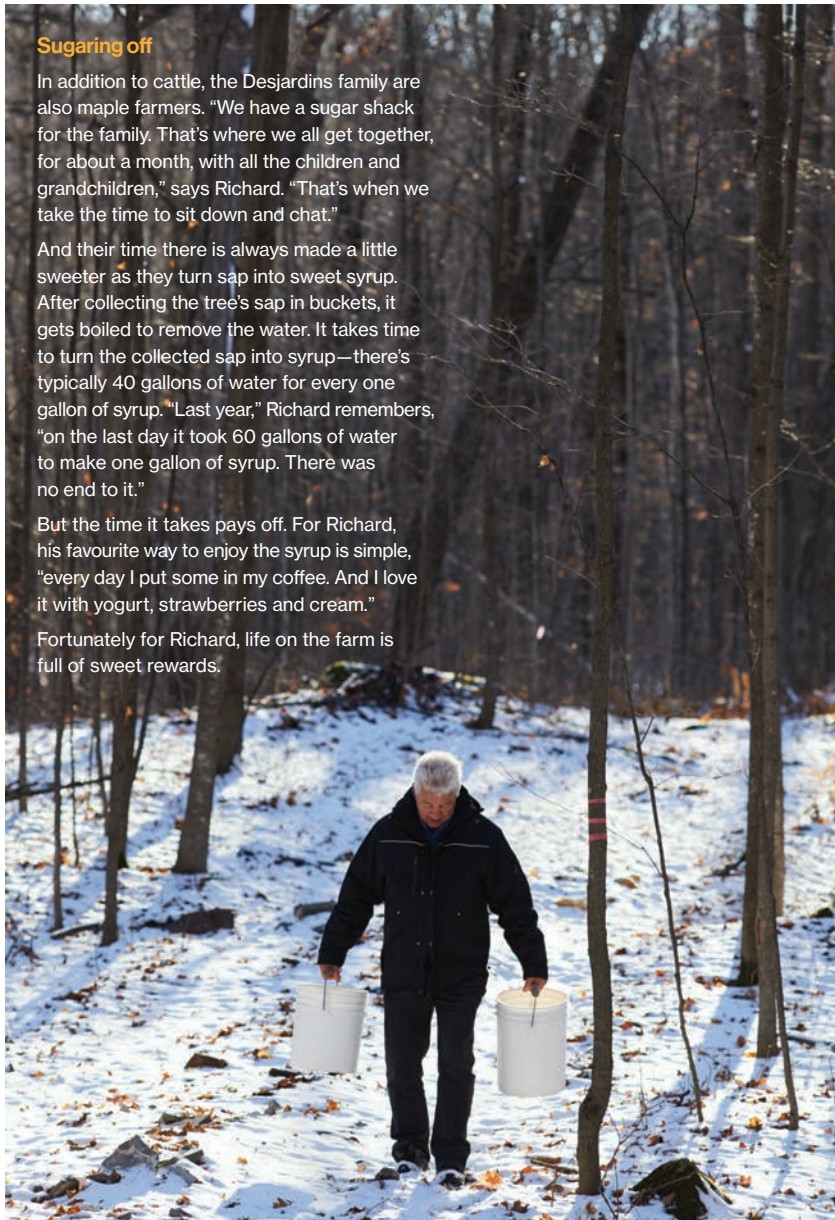
Sugaring off

In addition to cattle, the Desjardins family are also maple farmers. “We have a sugar shack for the family. That’s where we all get together, for about a month, with all the children and grandchildren,” says Richard. “That’s when we take the time to sit down and chat.”

And their time there is always made a little sweeter as they turn sap into sweet syrup. After collecting the tree’s sap in buckets, it gets boiled to remove the water. It takes time to turn the collected sap into syrup—there’s typically 40 gallons of water for every one gallon of syrup. “Last year,” Richard remembers, “on the last day it took 60 gallons of water to make one gallon of syrup. There was no end to it.”

But the time it takes pays off. For Richard, his favourite way to enjoy the syrup is simple, “every day I put some in my coffee. And I love it with yogurt, strawberries and cream.”

Fortunately for Richard, life on the farm is full of sweet rewards.



Pets de Soeur (Easy Maple Pastries)

Ingredients

1 package crescent roll dough
(e.g., Pillsbury)
½ cup maple syrup
½ cup maple sugar or
brown sugar
1 cup 15% country-style cream

Directions

Remove dough from package and place on cutting board. Do not unroll dough, slice in 8 or 9 equal disks. Place disks in a square Pyrex or other similar dish so that the disks are not touching.

In a saucepan, bring cream, maple syrup and maple sugar (or brown sugar) to a boil. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly with a whisk. Pour mixture over and between disks.

Bake in oven at 350°F for 30 minutes, or until dough is golden brown. Let stand. Serve with ice cream.

Notes

Richard & Carole Desjardins
Mirabel, Québec