

Coffee syrup makers reminisce

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Coffee syrup is one of those comfort foods that always evokes pleasant childhood memories shared with family and friends.

Whether flavoring a tall glass of cold milk or a frosty frappe, the very mention of this delicious regional specialty evokes smiles from folks of all ages and colorful stories of visits to pharmacy soda fountains and ice cream parlors.

When Dartmouth residents David and Mary Sylvia pulled out an old family recipe for the tasty syrup more than a decade ago, as a way to make holiday gifts, the couple never dreamed that one day they'd become the successful entrepreneurs behind Morning Glory Farms Coffee Syrup, which is enjoyed by customers all across the United States.

Like many artisan confectioners, bakers and cheese makers, the Sylvias started their adventure with little cash. "We were pretty much poor," David says, adding that the young couple had just started a family and were trying to renovate an old house.

But they were armed with determination, a wonderful sense of humor and the encouragement of anyone lucky enough to try their syrup.

"We got a lot of feedback telling us that this was really good," David recalls. He had often enjoyed the syrup as a child when his older brother Richard would whip up a batch.

While the Sylvias won't divulge the secret family recipe or the cooking process, they will reveal that the all-natural syrup doesn't contain high fructose corn syrup or any artificial preservatives, colorings or flavorings.

"It's just the raw stuff," David emphasizes, noting that the syrup is made from medium roast coffee, sugar and water.

Several years ago, the couple approached Albert Lees III, owner of Lees Market in Westport, an advocate for local farmers and producers of artisan foods. Lees guided the budding syrup producers through the complicated maze of establishing a commercial kitchen, which they created in their former home.

With some research, they refined their treasured family recipe a few times, and Morning Glory Coffee Syrup was ready to hit the store shelves.

And the rest is history.

As the company expanded and as their young family grew, the Sylvias decided to forego the labor-intensive process of producing the artisan syrup in small batches, and teamed up with a boutique bottler who is able produce the syrup more efficiently in larger quantities before it's distributed to vendors throughout New England, including Whole Foods, Auclair's Market in Somerset, and numerous other small supermarkets and specialty food stores.

Mary, now a mother of four, says the entrepreneurs decided to produce a decaffeinated variety for parents who don't want their children to consume caffeine, as well as others who must avoid the stimulant for medical reasons but who still want to enjoy the delicious taste of old-fashioned coffee syrup.

Mary credits her parents, John and Linda Gurney of Mattapoisett, for helping the couple financially, thus allowing the company "to take the next step" and expand.

While the Sylvias constantly have their eyes focused on expanding their small business, the couple has held onto their day jobs. David works as a case manager in a health care facility, while Mary is employed as an occupational therapist at Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River.

The Sylvias still hand-deliver the syrup to several local retailers, and sometimes showcase their popular product at agricultural fairs.

While many folks think that coffee syrup can only be used to flavor milk or in soda fountain drinks, Mary emphasizes that the thick, rich-tasting concoction can be substituted for or added to molasses in creating barbeque sauces and glazes, as well as in making pulled pork and other entrees. She adds that a tablespoon or two can heighten even the taste of chow mein.

"It's good to experiment," she Mary says.

To learn more about Morning Glory Coffee Syrup or where it can be purchased, visit www.morningglorysyrup.com.

Following are two of Mary Sylvia's favorite recipes:

Coffee Walnut Muffins

Makes one dozen muffins.

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon espresso powder

1/2 pound butter, melted (two sticks)

2 eggs

3/4 cup milk

2 teaspoons vanilla

2/3 cup Morning Glory coffee syrup

1 cup chopped walnuts

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line muffin cup with paper liners.
- Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and espresso powder into the bowl of an electric mixer. Add the melted butter and blend on low speed.

In a separate bowl, combine the eggs, milk, vanilla and coffee syrup. Add the liquid to the mixture and blend on low speed.

- Using a spatula, fold in the walnuts until the nuts are evenly distributed throughout the batter. Fill muffin tins three quarters full.
- Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean.

Spicy Coffee Grilled Pork Chops

1/2 cup Morning Glory coffee syrup

3/4 cup molasses

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

6 to 8 sprigs thyme

1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

4 (6-8 ounces each) bone-in, 1-inch thick pork chops

- Place all the ingredients in a large zip-top bag, seal and shake well. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least two hours, preferably overnight.
- Before grilling the chops, remove them from the marinade and set aside. Pour the liquid mixture into a small saucepan and place over high heat. Bring marinade to a boil, and then reduce heat to medium high. Boil gently, stirring often, for 12 to 15 minutes until the sauce is reduced to about 1/2 cup. Remove the thyme stems after the sauce has reduced.
- Meanwhile, grill the pork chops for 3 to 4 minutes per side or until the chops reach an internal temperature of 145°. Allow the chops to rest for five minutes before serving them with the sauce.