



Press release

## **TRADITION AT RISK: SUGAR SHACKS ASK QUEBECERS TO LEND A HAND**

**Montreal, February 22, 2021** – The province’s sugar shacks, hard hit by the pandemic, are calling on Quebecers to save the sugar season tradition. In the last year, 40 have been forced to shutter their operations. But those that remain aren’t giving up – they’ve launched an exciting new venture: [macabanealamaison.com](http://macabanealamaison.com).

### **A legacy in danger**

Starting February 22, 2021, Quebecers will be able to pick from some 70 sugar shacks and have the sugar shack experience brought right to their doorstep. “Our goal is to save the tradition so that next year we can gather once again for great times together. Our sugar shacks are teetering on the brink. If we do nothing, 75% of them may soon disappear forever,” says **Stéphanie Laurin**, chair of the Association des salles de réception et érablières du Québec (ASEQC) and co-owner of Chalet des Érables.

### **A sweet new take on the sugar season**

Quebecers can show their support by visiting the new Ma cabane à la maison website, where they can order gourmet “home sweet home” kits. Each participating sugar shack has a menu there, made up of 90% local products featuring maple ham, pork and beans, oreilles de crisse, puffy omelettes, and maple syrup dumplings. There are also vegetarian, vegan, pork-free, and gluten-free options. And Ma cabane à la maison proudly buys local and limits its environmental footprint with 100% recyclable, made-in-Québec containers and packaging.

### **Answering a cry for help**

When Stéphanie Laurin’s cry for help rang out through the media, **Sylvain Arsenault**, partner and president of Prospek communication marketing, was listening. He reached out, they met, and the result was Ma cabane à la maison. The rest, as they say, is history! Agency staff signed on without reserve. Hundreds of hours were spent creating an inspiring brand, developing a big-league marketing communication plan, and designing content that would get people dreaming sweet dreams and attract Web creators to develop the ideal e-business platform for the sugaring-off season.

### **An awesome partner**

With a sales strategy in place, all that remained was to get those “home sweet home” kits distributed province-wide. When approached by project instigators, the **Metro** grocery chain happily offered 196 pickup points and threw in added visibility with targeted marketing initiatives. “We didn’t think twice,” says **Richard Pruneau**, Senior Vice President of the Metro banner. “When you think of the positive effect on

participating sugar shack owners – and the importance of keeping an important cultural tradition alive – we were eager to host the project at our stores. All our grocers all over Québec are thrilled at the idea of helping out these small businesses and standing with them in tough times.”

The “home sweet home” kits can be picked up at any participating Metro or Metro plus store or right at the sugar shack. Some sugar shacks also offer home delivery.

### **Québec rallies behind sugar shacks**

“Sugar shacks are part of our culture and of who we are,” says Sylvain Arsenault. “For me it was clear we had to do everything possible to save them. So we got everyone to pitch in.”

The Québec government answered the call by granting the project financial assistance. It is also encouraging Quebecers to support sugar shacks by making the most of this year’s sugaring-off season. The Ma cabane à la maison initiative also attracted much-needed support from other partners, including Cascades, Publisac, LM Packaging, Groupe Lacroix, Lafleur, QuatreCentQuatre Web agency, UEAT, Soma productions, and Tuango. ATR regional tourism associations, Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec, and Fédération des producteurs d’œufs du Québec signed on as well to get things off the ground.

### **A historic first**

Inspired by the idea, close to 70 sugar shacks joined up. “For us, it’s truly historic,” says Stéphanie Laurin. “Sugar shacks have always seen each other as competition, but now they’ve come together to uphold a tradition that’s part of all of us.” For Érablière Charbonneau owner **Mélanie Charbonneau**, the project “has rekindled our faith in the future.” It means we can continue doing what we love – sharing the sweetness of life through food!”

### **Artists to the rescue**

The wave of support didn’t stop there. Ma cabane à la maison called on the team at [boucaneendirect.com](http://boucaneendirect.com) to get the arts community on board and organize and webcast a groundbreaking show. Artists such as **2Frères, Daniel Boucher, Yves Lambert,** and **Guylaine Tanguay** backed the initiative, agreeing to cook up a festive show filmed right in the woods. The exclusive performance is available with any “home sweet home” kit order.

### **Key figures**

- In regular years, sugar shacks generate **more than \$300 million** in economic impacts, not including tourism.
- Health restrictions in the last year have led to a **drop in sales of more than 90%**, according to data obtained from its members by ASEQC.
- The economic impacts of Ma cabane à la maison for rural communities have been estimated at over **\$10 million** for its 8-week run.
- The current slowdown affects more than **6,000 workers** and an entire ecosystem of food industry suppliers and distributors who depend on sugar shacks.

To learn more: [macabanealamaison.com](http://macabanealamaison.com)

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Source:

**Ma cabane à la maison**

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