

# Sorghum

Sorghum syrup production is perhaps one of the sweetest traditions in Georgia. Although the thick, dark product may have lost much of its market to mass-produced molasses and other syrups, it still has plenty of nostalgia and popularity.

Sorghum cane was originally introduced to the South during the 1850's by Dennis Redmond of Augusta. Redmond obtained a few ounces of sorghum seed, first imported to America from France, from a firm in Boston. He gave a few seeds to his friends and planted six or eight in his own garden in 1855.

During this period, sorghum was known by a number of names including Chinese sugar cane, holuc saccharatus and sorgo sucre. The new crop was received with much enthusiasm. Although claims that sorghum would provide syrup and sugar for interior areas of the state were somewhat overrated, the crop did provide an excellent supply for livestock feed.

Adding to its appeal, two crops of sorghum could be planted during a single growing season. It also was said that the seed alone would produce 50 bushels of meal per acre and that parts of the plant had potential use in papermaking.

Some say that the first reported successful attempt to make sorghum syrup took place in North Georgia at the farm of Richard Peters in 1854. With technical advice from Robert Battey of Rome, Peters decided to produce the syrup commercially.

In his work with Peters, Battey conducted various experiments with

sorghum. Among his discoveries was that Georgia-grown sorghum cane produced a larger quantity of syrup than cane grown in France.

Early speculation indicated that sorghum might be more beneficial to northern farmers than southerners. However, it was discovered that while juice yield was always 50 percent of the cane's total weight, syrup yield varied 10 to 20 percent depending upon the latitude in which it was grown. It just so happened that conditions existing in the latitude of the Georgia Piedmont produced the highest yields. There was also evidence that southern grown sorghum produced a better quality syrup.

During the Civil War, sorghum syrup became known as Confederate syrup. It served as a staple,

