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## Copper and Competence

### Netherlands - 11 May 12

In the Netherlands, in the southern part of the Limburg region and along the border with Belgium and Germany, they have an old recipe for the preparation of a traditional fruit syrup called stroop.

Originally devised to preserve fruit for the winter, it was eaten spread on bread, like a jam. The ordinary family in the region always kept a store of around 100 kilos of syrup and each village had at least one stroop producer. But during the post-war period, the industrial version began to dominate the market and urbanization led to the gradual disappearance of local varieties of fruit trees.



Making the syrup is a laborious process. The traditional recipe calls for around 60 percent pears and 40 percent apples, picked between September and October from the region's orchards, exclusively from heritage variety trees. Each variety has its own unique flavor and balance of sugar, pectin and acid, hence no two batches will ever taste the same.

It takes an expert artisan to select and measure out the fruit and oversee the cooking process. The apples and pears cook for four to six hours in a copper cauldron, placed directly over a fire the intensity of which varies during the various phases of the cooking process. Industrial production uses steel vats that never come into contact with the flame.

The cooking juices are then filtered, but only roughly to preserve the texture and intense flavor. They are then brought to the boil again in the same copper cauldron for four to 15 hours, depending on the recipe. When it reaches the correct level of viscosity, the syrup has to be bottled immediately.

In 2010, four Limburg producers decided to revive the old tradition and learn the ancient production techniques. Today the syrup is prepared on new modern premises, using old equipment and restored utensils.

To preserve the biodiversity of the southern Limburg landscape and the original flavor of the stroop, one of the Presidium's essential tasks will be to reintroduce heritage apples and pears varieties.

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