

MAPLE SYRUP

Part 1: Maple syrup is exclusive to North America

Spring brings winter's thaw and with it, the running of the maple sap. The sugaring season begins as early as January and continues into April. Unlike our ancestors, we need not wait for spring to arrive to enjoy pure maple syrup. Before we get on to the recipes, let's take a look at the rich history of maple syrup, how it is made, and how to avoid imposters.

MAPLE SYRUP HISTORY

The word maple comes to us from the Old English maple. *Acer Saccharum* is known as the sugar maple, hard maple or rock maple and *Acer nigrum* or black maple are the two varieties with the sweetest sap. Although maple trees grow in Europe, Europeans were unaware of the potential uses of the sweet sap until colonists learned how to tap the trees from Native Americans who had long been using maple sap as a sugar source. Maple syrup is only produced in North America since Europe does not have the proper weather conditions conducive to producing meaningful amounts of sap.

MAPLE SYRUP LORE AND LEGEND

Legend has it that the first accidental sugar maker was an Iroquois squaw. It seems as he went off to hunt, her husband yanked his tomahawk from a tree where it had been thrown the night before. The weather had turned warm, and the sap ran from the cut in the tree into a container at the base of the tree. The woman found the container of clear liquid and thinking it was water, cooked a meal in it. The resulting sweetness and flavour delighted the Chief and thus led to sugar making. The Native Americans later traded what they called sweet water with the colonists. After the passage of the 1764 Sugar Act imposing high tariffs on imported sugar, maple sweeteners became even more popular.

After the colonists learned how to tap maple trees, they soon realized the practice of slashing the trees to retrieve the sap was not the ideal method. It not only resulted in much waste, but it also damaged the trees. The use of taps, troughs and buckets ensued. Nowadays, sugar makers recommend no more than three taps per tree to avoid damage, and the sap is still collected via spouts with hanging galvanized metal buckets.

Part 2: Grades can be confusing

MAKING MAPLE SYRUP

The clear sap has a 2 to 3 percent sugar content on the average, although some trees can produce up to 6 percent sugar content. Production can be unpredictable, depending on the tree itself and weather patterns. The rest is water which must be removed to concentrate the sweetness into syrup. In the old days, this was done by boiling to evaporate the water or freezing (the water rises to the top and freezes while the sweet, concentrated syrup sinks to the bottom). Today's innovations include reverse osmosis for removal of the majority of the water before boiling, but most pure maple syrup is still made by simply boiling the water out by use of an evaporator. The resulting concentrated syrup is filtered to remove impurities.



The sap becomes syrup when it reaches 7 to 7.1 degrees above the boiling point of water. Since the boiling point of water varies with elevation, the actual benchmark temperature will vary depending on the location of the sugar making establishment. Experienced sugar makers can tell by how the syrup sheets or aprons off the paddle. Specific density is also a requirement and is measured with a hydrometer. The syrup must reach a standard density of 66.5 to 66.7 degrees Brix, the scale used by sugar makers to measure the percentage of sugar in the syrup. Too low a density produces a thin, runny syrup which is susceptible to fermentation and souring, while syrup with a higher density runs the risk of crystallizing during storage. It takes approximately 36 gallons of maple tree sap to make 1 gallon of maple syrup.

Other maple products include maple sugar, maple honey (thicker than syrup), and maple cream (almost as thick as peanut butter) or maple butter (thick and spreadable).

Maple syrup grades

In general, the lighter the colour, more delicate the flavour. The United States has some basic grading standards based on colour and flavour.

CANADIAN/USA Grades of Maple Syrup	
No. 1 Extra light/ Grade AA Light Amber (Fancy)	Light transmission is more than 75% with a subtle taste, and the colour is slightly golden with a very mild and delicate maple flavour. / A light amber coloured syrup with a mild flavour, usually made from the first brief flows of the season. Considered the highest grade.
No. 1 Light/Grade A Medium Amber	Light transmission is between 60.5% and 74% with a subtle taste, and the colour is golden with a mild and sweet maple flavour. / Medium amber colour and pronounced maple flavour. A good general usage syrup delicate enough to be used with subtle flavours but is generally used as a table syrup.
No. 1 Medium/Grade A Dark Amber	Light transmission is between 44% and 60.4% with a typical maple taste, and the colour is amber with a mild and sweet maple flavour. This is the typical maple syrup used on pancakes, cooking, etc. / Deep colour with a flavour likened to caramel. Some find it a bit too strong in flavour for general usage, but it can be used like Medium Amber grade.
No. 2 Amber/Grade B	Light transmission is between 27% and 43.9% with a strong and pronounced maple taste. The colour is dark. This maple syrup taste is too bold to use as normal table maple syrup but can be used for cooking and baking. / Very dark amber, less sweet with a robust, molasses-like flavour recommended primarily for baking. This is the least expensive variety. Also known as Grade C in Vermont.
No. 3 Dark/Grade C	Light transmission is less than 26.9% with a full-flavoured, slightly caramelized maple syrup taste. It is only used as commercial ingredients, and the colour is very dark.

[Beware imitations](#)

REAL MAPLE SYRUP

You'll find many imitation or maple-flavoured products on the market, but the real thing is worth the higher price tag. By definition, maple syrup is syrup made by the evaporation of maple sap or by the solution of maple sugar and



contains not more than approximately 33 to 35 percent water. Imitation maple syrup, usually sold as pancake syrup, must be labelled and generally is made of mostly corn syrup with 2 or 3 percent of pure maple syrup. Some imitations may contain only artificial maple extract. Pure maple syrup is three times as sweet as regular table sugar, whereas maple sugar is twice as sweet.

MAPLE SYRUP STORAGE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Pure maple syrup should be kept in a cool, dark place for up to two years until opened and then refrigerated after opening where it will last one year. Since pure maple syrup will not freeze if properly made, the freezer is a good place to store it almost indefinitely. Improperly stored maple syrup can grow harmful mouldy toxins, in which case you must toss it out. Bring the syrup to room temperature or warm it before serving. The microwave works well for warming maple syrup. Use a microwave-safe container and heat on high from 30 to 60 seconds per 1/2 cup, depending on how cold it is and the power level of your microwave.

If you're planning on using pure maple syrup in place of sugar in a baked recipe, use 3/4 cup pure maple syrup for 1 cup of granulated sugar and reduce the dominant liquid in the recipe by 3 Tablespoons for each cup of maple syrup used. Keep in mind that using maple syrup in place of sugar will give a brownish tinge and also cause the baked goods to be brown more quickly due to the high sugar content. For substitution of maple syrup in general cooking, use three-fourths the amount of maple syrup as sugar. When substituting maple syrup for honey, use a one to one ratio. If you find yourself in a bind without maple syrup, you can try this substitution for mock maple syrup, but don't expect it to come anywhere near the real thing in taste.

COOKING WITH MAPLE SYRUP

Although most are familiar with maple syrup as a topper for pancakes or in sweet desserts, it also has other applications in savoury dishes and works particularly well with vegetables. Vermont residents have an unusual tradition of celebrating the sugaring season by snacking on a combination of maple syrup, plain raised doughnuts and dill pickles. Yes, dill pickles! Each bite of the doughnut is dipped in syrup and eaten, with bites of dill pickle interspersed about every two to three bites of doughnut. Proponents of this intriguing combination say the sweet and sour tastes compliment each other. Maple syrup taffy, also called Sugar on Snow, is a favourite pastime for kids as well as adults when the sap begins to flow.

RECIPES

Eggs Poached in Maple Syrup

500 ml of maple syrup
6 beaten eggs
Heat maple syrup and let it boil for five minutes.
Add beaten eggs and reduce heat. Stir syrup delicately with a fork to cook evenly. Simmer till eggs are cooked. To poach eggs, break them one by one into the boiling syrup and simmer until cooked.

Maple Drink

30 ml of maple syrup
1 pinch salt
250 ml of milk
1 scoop vanilla ice cream
Put all ingredients in the blender jar and blend at top speed. Chill and serve in large drinking glasses.

Maple Dressing

250 ml of ketchup
250 ml of cooking oil
125 ml of maple syrup
5 ml of dry mustard
1 diced celery stalk
1 diced onion
1 crushed clove garlic
300 ml of lemon juice
15 ml of parsley
Put all ingredients in a blender jar and blend until smooth.

Maple Syrup Glazed Carrots

18 small fresh carrots
Boiling water
Salt and pepper



5 ml of sugar
60 ml of maple syrup
60 ml of butter
5 ml of dry mustard

Cook carrots in boiling salted water. Drain and save the cooking water. Remove carrots and set aside. Heat cooking water and reduce to 125 ml. Add maple syrup, butter and dry mustard and simmer 7 minutes. Add pepper. Put carrots back into the hot liquid and cook until glazed. Serve very hot.

Maple Syrup Chicken

100 ml of butter
250 ml of maple syrup
50 ml of dry mustard
2 cut-up chickens (1,5 to 2 kg each)
15 ml of curry powder

Melt butter in a saucepan. Add maple syrup, dry mustard and curry powder. Mix thoroughly. Put chicken pieces in the saucepan and coat with sauce. Bake one hour at 190°C. Baste frequently.

Maple Sugar Glazed Ham

1 cooked ham
200 ml of gr granulated maple sugar
Cut rind and excess fat off ham. Score remaining fat diagonally. Cover with granulated maple sugar and bake at 190°C until golden brown.

Maple Syrup Glazed Ham

1 cooked ham
100 ml of maple syrup
100 ml of apple juice
Cut rind and excess fat off ham. Score remaining fat diagonally. Mix maple syrup and apple juice. Bake at 190°C until golden brown, basting with the liquid at 5-minute intervals.

Maple Syrup Pork and Beans

500 ml of dry beans
500 ml of water
5 ml of salt
125 g salted pork, cut into 3 cm cubes
125 ml of maple syrup
500 ml of the cooking water
5 ml of salt
Pepper
2 ml of dry mustard
125 ml of chopped onions

125 ml of maple syrup

Place beans in a saucepan, add water and salt. Cover and boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and let stand for one hour. Bring beans back to a boil and cook till beans shells burst. Drain, reserving cooking liquid. Put the beans in an earthenware jar, add all other ingredients except 125 ml of maple syrup. Cover and bake at 120°C for 5 1/2 to 6 hours. Add liquid if necessary. Thirty minutes before baking time is up, add remaining maple syrup. Return uncovered jar to the oven for another half hour.

Maple Glazed Pork Roast

2 kg of pork
2 ml of dry mustard
5 ml of garlic salt
5 ml of savoury
1 sliced onion
125 ml of maple syrup

Remove excess fat from roast. Mix 3 seasonings and sprinkle on the meat. Cover with onion slices and bake at 160°C for two hours. Baste with maple syrup and put back in the oven for another 30 minutes. Baste occasionally.

Maple Syrup Square

125 ml of butter
15 ml of maple sugar
250 ml of flour
30 ml of mace
Cream butter add maple sugar, flour and mace. Mix thoroughly. Pour into a square pan and bake at 170°C for 8 minutes.

Frosting

125 ml of maple sugar
250 ml of maple syrup
2 eggs
125 ml of butter
125 to 250 ml of nuts
30 ml of flour

Combine maple syrup and sugar in a saucepan. Simmer for 5 minutes. Let cool. Beat eggs. Add syrup, butter, nuts and flour. Pour frosting on first preparation and cook at 170°C for 30 minutes. Let cool before serving.

Maple Custard

750 ml of hot milk
4 eggs



200 ml of maple syrup
1 pinch salt

Beat eggs lightly, add maple syrup, hot milk and salt. Mix thoroughly. Pour into individual moulds and bake in, a double boiler at 170°C, for 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool before unmolding.

Maple Sugar Pie

375 ml of maple syrup
250 ml of whipping cream
60 ml of corn starch
60 ml of cold water

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Heat, stirring constantly, and let boil for 2 minutes. Let cool and pour in a pre-cooked pie crust. Garnish with whipped cream.

Maple Syrup Cookies

250 ml of butter
250 ml of brown sugar
1 egg
90 ml of maple syrup
50 ml of milk
5 ml of baking soda
2 ml of ginger
Flour

Cream butter add brown sugar, egg and maple syrup. Beat thoroughly until smooth. Combine flour, baking soda and ginger. Add to the first preparation alternately with milk. Roll dough out and cut the cookies. Cook at 200°C until golden brown.

Maple Meringue Apples

6 apples
250 ml of maple sugar
750 ml of water
15 ml of lemon peel
1 egg white
30 ml of sugar
Almonds

Peel apples and hollow out center. Heat maple syrup and water and let boil for 2 minutes. Simmer apples in syrup until tender. Remove apples from saucepan and place in baking dish. Peel and hollow out the center of two remaining apples. Stew apples in syrup with lemon peel. Beat until foamy. Pour on cooked apples. Beat egg white until stiff, fold in the sugar. Top apples with the meringue and sprinkle with almonds or grated coconut. Bake at 175°C until golden brown. Let cool.

Maple Spirals

75 ml of melted butter
250 ml of granulated maple sugar
500 ml of hot maple syrup

Short paste

500 ml of flour
175 ml of shortening
1 pinch salt
Cold water

Prepare pastry and roll out 1 cm thick. Brush with melted butter and sprinkle with maple sugar. Roll the dough and cut delicately into 2,5-cm thick slices. Arrange slices in a buttered dish and coat with hot syrup. Bake at 220°C for 30 minutes.