

Maple Syrup, Yum!!

March is the time of year that we all think of spring. The days are getting longer, the sun is feeling stronger, and the snow starts to melt. March is also Maple Syrup time!!!

WHAT: Maple syrup is made from the sap of maple trees (sugar, red, or black). It can be made from any other maple species, birch trees whose sap runs about the time maple trees are done, and others.

WHEN: The maple sap starts to run then daytime temperatures are above 5 C, and nighttime temperatures drop below -5C.

HOW: It is a simple but time-consuming process. Basic tree tapping supplies are inexpensive, and can be found in farming supply stores, and online.

- Trees are tapped by drilling the appropriate size hole for the spile or tap purchased, at a slightly upward angle. The drilled wood shavings should be light brown/ tan to indicate healthy wood. A variety of items can be used to collect the sap including recycled containers. Collect the sap daily, store in a cold location.
- Sap is boiled to make syrup. It takes 40 liters of sap to make 1 liter of syrup. This boiling should take place outside to reduce the amount of sticky steam in a building. Use a large, preferably wide boiling pan (a large soup pot, or canning pot are good options) Strain the sap as it is poured into the pot to remove twigs, leaves, etc. As the sap boils, and the level falls, keep topping up with fresh sap. Strain the boiled sap when it starts to thicken a bit and turn a golden color, this removes any sediment. (cotton, cheese cloth, paper towels, J cloths can be used to line a colander) When the supply of fresh sap is finished, keep boiling until the temperature of the sap is 104 C. It can be strained again if desired. Store in sterilized glass jars and seal with an appropriate lid.
- Fresh sap can be used as a drink, like a mineral or energy water drink, it also makes great tea. Sap contains small amounts of sugar and minerals, and some feel it is very healthy.

Maple syrup originated in North America. The European settlers were shown how to harvest and use the maple sap by our first nations. There are several legends around how it was first discovered. A 'V' shape was cut into the tree with an ax type tool, and a reed or curved piece of bark inserted into the hole to funnel the sap into a birch bark container. Freezing and removing the ice was successful in removing some of the water. Hot stones were used to evaporate the excess water. Early settlers refined the process, which has changed considerably over the years to what we see today.

This website has lots of information: <https://www.maplefromcanada.com/about/how-its-made/>, and for youth <https://jeunesse.erableduquebec.ca/>

Making Maple Syrup



(pictured left)
Tap the trees and collect the sap, empty containers regularly. Pictured both plastic hose and taps, along with slightly less modern pail and metal tap.

(Pictured right)
Filter the sap to remove twigs, and debris that may enter during collection, filtering again when downsizing pots is also a good choice.



Boil filtered sap vigorously preferably outside over a fire/ propane or other heat source, to evaporate much of the water.



Transfer to smaller pots, filter again when transferring, and continue boiling, finished product in foreground



Product is finished when it reaches approximately 104 degrees C or 219 F

