

42 gallons of sap make a gallon of maple syrup

Maple syrup is one of nature's most flavorful sweets. Each spring approximately 1 million gallons are produced in the Northeastern United States. Much more is produced in Canada.

Until the middle 1800s, this native-American farm product was a principal source of syrup and sugar for Americans. Originally, the greater portion of the annual crop was processed into sugar. Today, most is marketed as syrup.

The sap begins to flow when the daytime temperature warms up above freezing. It will continue for approximately eight to 15 hours, unless the temperature drops below freezing before then. Sap will flow daily as long as the freezing and thawing continue.

It takes approximately 40 gallons of maple sap to make 1 gallon of maple syrup at the sugarhouse. The sap is heated and the water evaporated. When it reaches the correct sugar density, 66 percent, the maple



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syrup is packaged and ready for use.

UNOPENED MAPLE syrup can be stored for 12 months in a cool, dry place. Once opened, store the maple syrup in the refrigerator or freezer. If you open a large container of maple syrup, heat the excess to 190

degrees and re-can in hot, sterilized jars and seal. Process 10 minutes in hot water bath.

Store in cool, dry dark place. If a sugary crust forms on the bottom of the container, set the container in a pan of hot water until sugar dissolves. If maple syrup is left open,

mold will grow on top. If this occurs, heat syrup to 190 degrees and skim off the foam. The syrup will taste as good as it did when you purchased it.

Maple syrup is widely used as an ingredient in a variety of other food products. Because of its high sugar content, it can be substituted for sugar in many recipes. When substituting, use one and one-half cups of pure maple syrup for each cup of granulated sugar, plus one-quarter teaspoon baking soda for each cup of syrup used. When maple syrup is substituted for all the sugar in a recipe, reduce the amount of liquid used by one half. If maple syrup is substituted for half the sugar, reduce liquid amounts by one fourth.

A variety of sugar and confection products can be made from maple syrup simply by additional heating, stirring and cooling procedures. The more common products are hard or soft maple sugar candy, granulated sugar, and maple creams. Of course,

many cookbooks have recipes for main dishes, breads, cakes, cookies, pies and more, using maple syrup.

Maple syrup can also be enjoyed over pancakes, ice cream, french toast, or cereal. To add a little different flavor to whipping cream, add a little maple syrup after the cream has been whipped. Serve on angel food or white cake. Pour a little maple syrup over apples you are baking. Maple syrup can be used for a glaze on baked ham, ham loaf, pork chops, or roasts and chicken. Next time you make baked beans, use maple syrup.

THE QUICKEST and easiest candy to make is called a maple nugget. Boil one cup maple syrup until it forms a soft ball (235 degrees) in water. Remove from heat, add one tablespoon butter and beat until it thickens. Add one and one-half cups puffed rice cereal. Mix thoroughly and drop on wax paper. So simple, but great tasting.

To make hard maple sugar candy, use a darker grade of syrup. Heat until the temperature is approximately 252 degrees. Remove from heat and begin stirring immediately. When the syrup begins to thicken and sugar crystals form, pour the partially crystallized syrup into molds to harden.

Soft maple sugar candy is made by heating the syrup to 235 degrees. Cool slowly, set pan on wooden surface to more evenly distribute the heat. When the temperature of the syrup solution drops to 155 degrees, stir with a wooden spoon. When crystallization begins, pour into molds and allow to harden.

Maple syrup is a natural, sweet treat that we begin to think about in the warm days and cool nights of spring. It is a pure product, nothing added. Only the water is removed during the concentration process. It can be said that the maple syrup is a pure, natural sign of spring.

Want to brew a better cup of coffee? Tips abound

AP — With a history and mystique as romantic as that of wine, coffee represents America's favorite after-dinner beverage. These tips from coffee merchant Douglas Carpenter will help you brew a better cup every day. For special occasions, please your guests with one of these dessert coffee suggestions.

FOR BETTER COFFEE

- Start with fresh coffee that has been stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.
- Match the grind of coffee to your coffeemaker.
- Measure — don't guess — the amount of coffee. Carpenter recommends 2 level tablespoons (1 coffee measure) of coffee per 6 ounces (¾ cup) of water.
- Use fresh, cold water. For best flavor, your coffeemaker should heat the water to about 200 degrees.
- Choose a coffeemaker that passes water through the coffee just once.
- Serve brewed coffee immediately; never leave on a warmer more than 30 minutes. If it must wait, transfer to an insulated server after brewing.
- Keep your coffeemaker clean. Oil buildup affects the flavor.

SPECIAL COFFEES

- After tasting many types of coffee you can develop your own blend. Ask your coffee merchant to grind together beans of two or more coffees. Make up a small amount at a time, taste, and experiment until you have exactly what you want.
- Try a flavored coffee. Both regular and decaffeinated coffee are available with flavors such as hazelnut, vanilla and amaretto.

DESSERT COFFEES

In a cup or mug stir together ¼-cup hot coffee and the desired flavoring. Dollop with whipped cream; sprinkle with ground cinnamon or nutmeg. Each drink makes one 6-ounce serving.

- **Cafe Alexander:** Stir 1 tablespoon creme de cacao and 1 tablespoon brandy into hot coffee.
- **Cafe Benedictine:** Stir 2 tablespoons Benedictine and 2 tablespoons light cream into hot coffee.
- **Cafe Caribe:** Stir 1 tablespoon coffee liqueur and 1 tablespoon rum into hot coffee.
- **Cafe Colombian:** Stir 2 tablespoons coffee liqueur and 1 tablespoon chocolate-flavored syrup into hot coffee.
- **Cafe Dublin:** Stir 1 tablespoon

Irish whiskey and 2 teaspoons sugar into hot coffee.

- **Cafe Holland:** Stir 2 table-

spoons chocolate-mint liqueur into hot coffee.

- **Cafe Israel:** Stir 2 tablespoons

chocolate-flavored syrup and 2 tablespoons orange liqueur into coffee.

- **Cafe Almond:** Stir 2 tablespoons amaretto or Fra Angelico into hot coffee.

cooking calendar

- **Syrup festival**
Cranbrook Institute of Science's 17th annual Maple Syrup Festival continues from 1-4:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday through March 25, at the museum in Bloomfield Hills.

The festival offers step-by-step demonstrations that reveal the maple syrup production process. Festival activities are included in the museum admission of \$3 for adults and \$2 for senior citizens and children (ages 3-12).

Visitors can walk the museum's sugar trails, see how the trees are tapped and watch the sap flow into buckets. The sap is then transported

to the New England-style sugar-house for evaporation and syrup production (often referred to as "sugaring").

Visitors have an opportunity to pose questions to a naturalist, but the highlight of the festival is tasting the sweet syrup. Museum members also can partake of the annual Maple Syrup Breakfast that includes sausage, beverages and all the pancakes they can eat.

- **Holiday foods**
Passover and Easter foods will be featured at "A Spring Cooking Class" from 7-9 p.m. Monday, March 26, at the Southfield Art Center. A

tasting will follow the class. Fee is \$12. For registration call 354-4717.

- **Free information**
Free literature is available from the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service. A list of Safe Food Storage tips and a guide to "Refrigerator Storage" is offered, as is a booklet entitled "When the Freezer Stops Working." For the storage information or for the freezer booklet, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Cooperative Extension Service, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Pontiac 48053. For food and nutrition questions, call the Food and Nu-

trition Hotline at 858-0904, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

- **Regional recipes**
Uncle Ben's Cook & Tell Regional Recipe Contests are being run simultaneously. The winner of each of four regions will receive an expense-paid trip for two to Aspen, Colo. The contest, open for entries through June 15, seeks creative, original recipes prepared with one of Uncle Ben's various kinds of rice. For contest rules and details on prizes, send name and address to: Rules, Uncle Ben's Cook & Tell Recipe Contests, P.O. Box 11147, Chicago 60611.

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