

Grayson Enterprises Ltd.
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First NA Series! Rights
Usual format: introduction,
Sidebars, and Recipes

A DOCTOR GOES MAPLE SUGARING

Written by June Grayson - Photographed by Richard Grayson

The Promised Land had its milk and honey. North America has the sugar maple tree. North America got the better deal.

Long before the arrival of the Europeans, American Indians made sugar by tapping the maple trees with their tomahawks in the spring. They stored the sugar in birch bark boxes and even used it as a medium of exchange.

The colonists considered maple sugar a direct gift of God.

Northerners exhorted the nation to turn to maple sugar so as to

boycott the sugar cane plantations manned by African slaves in the

West Indies. An agricultural publication

of 1824 stated, "The cane sugar is the result of the forced labor of the most wretched slaves, toiling under the cruel lash

of a cutting whip, while maple sugar is made by those who are happy

and free."

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Gift of God or not, maple sugar producers work hard.

Sap flows best in early spring wherever there are warm, sunny days

and freezing nights - conditions met in southeastern Canada and

the northeastern United States. North America is the only

continent with a maple products industry.

Trees must be tapped at just the right time. A season

can begin the end of February and last until early April. When

the sap starts flowing, farmers stay in their sugar houses around

the clock to feed the furnace and supervise the evaporators.

Thirty-five gallons of clear, thin sap must be boiled down to produce one gallon of maple syrup.

Commercial producers use sophisticated vacuum systems of plastic tubing to collect the sap and automatically deliver it to the sugar house. Industrial-size, metal evaporators with compartmentalized pans over a huge firebox further mechanize production. Still, the maple sugar farmer, like farmers of other commodities, is at the mercy of the weather. If just the right combination of temperature, wind, and moisture is not met, sap flow may be erratic or even stop prematurely. As soon as the leaf buds swell, the flow stops and the season is over.

It takes a maple tree at least 50 years to reach a trunk diameter of 10-13 inches, big enough to tap. The average sap is two percent sugar. Farmers and foresters use a hygrometer to identify the "super-sweet" trees which may have a concentration as high as 12 percent. State forestry departments propagate the seeds from these trees and (more-over)

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distribute the seedlings to upgrade existing maple groves. Though research continues, no one has been able to produce a tree maturing earlier than the usual fifty years.

This may explain why financial planners never suggest a maple sugar farm as a good investment.

It takes a special kind of person to develop a business with a 50-year payoff.

Our friends, Ruth and Dave Drewry, dairy farmers and maple syrup producers of Plymouth, Wisconsin, are these special people. Dave, a direct descendant of Captain Miles Standish of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and a signer of the famous "Mayflower Compact", is the fifth generation to work the same Wisconsin farm which his children and grandchildren may someday inherit.

To these Americans, farming is a life as well as a living.

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HOW TO TAP YOUR OWN MAPLE TREE

You can collect the sap from any tree of the maple family, even a box elder, although the sugar maple gives the highest yield.

Collect the following equipment in advance:

A 7/16" bit or drill used in a hand drill. Metal spouts, sometimes called "spiles".* Covered containers to catch the sap (use the commercial

galvanized pails with lids, or use gallon plastic milk bottles.

Large kettle in which to boil down the sap. Out door fire.

Cheesecloth to strain syrup.

On the first day after a freezing night when the daytime temperatures rise above freezing, drill a 3" hole slanting slightly upward (so the syrup can run out) on the side of the tree trunk warmed by the sun. On trees 10-14" in diameter, you may drill one hole, if 15-19" in diameter, drill two holes, and over 20" in diameter three holes. Drive the sap spout into each hole with a couple of good taps of a hammer. Hang a collecting pan on each spout. Treat the sap as you would milk: the sap is not sterile and will spoil if left over long at a warm temperature. The sap may be frozen or stored in a refrigerator until you have collected enough sap to start "boiling

down." Remember this magic ratio: 40 to one - it takes approximately 40 parts of sap to reduce to one part of maple syrup. That is why

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you should boil it down outside. Releasing so much water vapor inside your house might loosen all your wallpaper. Strain the sap before and after boiling. You may add more sap to the kettle as soon as it boils down so that there is enough room, making this a continuous process. Strain and store in your refrigerator when done. You may get an average of five gallons of sap from one tap on a 10-14" tree. That will boil down into one pint of maple syrup.

Our friend, Terry Frerichs. of St. Charles, taps the eight maple trees in her yard every spring. She hooks a five gallon seamless steel kettle over the top rung of a child's swing set and builds a wood bonfire on the ground underneath it for her boiling down process.

* picture of spout, cost is less than \$1.00 for each one

You may order a helpful catalog, the "MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS'

GUIDE" from Leader Evaporator Co., Inc., St. Albans, Vermont, 05478,
telephone (802)524-4966

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(proposed sidebar)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For a more detailed history of maple sugaring in America, read

THE MAPLE SUGAR BOOK TOGETHER WITH REMARKS ON PIONEERING AS A WAY
OF LIVING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY by Helen and Scott Nearing.

To learn how to make maple syrup in your own backyard and where

to get the proper equipment, read BACKYARD SUGARIN' by Rink

Mann, Country Press, Woodstock, Vermont, and MAKING MAPLE SUGAR

distributed by Garden Way Publishing, Dept. F157, Charlotte,

Vermont, 05445.

To find out what maple festivals and tours are available to you

in your nearest northern state, call that state's Department of Tourism. For Vermont, call 1-800-622-4247. #or Quebec, Canada, call 1-800-443-7000.

In addition, many park districts and forest preserves throughout the United States sponsor maple sugaring festivals and demonstrations in the spring.

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HOW TO USE MAPLE SYRUP IN YOUR COOKING

Maple syrup is delicious just as it comes from the container. It can be used as a topping on pancakes, waffles, French toast, puddings, yogurt, and ice cream.

You can use it to sweeten fresh fruits. Use it to brown meats and add it to barbecue sauces. For a

quick cake frosting, add a little maple syrup

to confectioner's sugar until it is of spreading consistency.

Since maple syrup is not as concentrated as honey or some corn syrups, you will have to experiment with the proportions of liquid to thickening if you use maple syrup as a substitute for another form of sweetener in a recipe.

Unopened maple syrup containers can be stored in a fresh, dry cupboard.

After opening, the container should be tightly sealed and kept in the refrigerator.

MAPLE POT ROAST

Contributed by June Grayson

1 3-pound boneless beef roast, rump or similar cut 3 Tbsp. oil

cup maple syrup

cup cider vinegar

1 large onion, diced

1 tsp. salt

tsp. black pepper

1/8 tsp ginger

1/8 tsp cloves

Brown beef on all sides in hot oil in heavy skillet. Then place
roast in slow cooker. . Brown onion in pan juices, add to roast
in cooker. Add maple syrup, vinegar, and all spices to oil in
pan and stir to mix with pan juices. Pour all from skillet over
roast in slow cooker. Keep at high heat for four hours. Serve
hot thinly sliced with pan juices poured over. Also good served
cold, thinly sliced, for sandwiches.

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GINGER PEAR UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

Contributed by June Grayson

2 Tbsp. butter or margarine

cup maple syrup

2 or 3 ripe fresh pears, peeled and cored

1/8 cup crystalized ginger, cut into little slivers 1# cup sifted flour

2 tsp. baking powder

tsp. salt

cup butter.or margerine

3/4 cup sugar

2 eggs

cup milk

Melt butter in one round 9" cake.pan, remove from heat and stir in

maple syrup. Cut pears and arrange attractive!y in pan over the

butter and syrup. Sprinkle the ginger over and around the #ears.

Sift dry ingredients together into a mixing bowl!. Blend the

butter, eggs, and mi!k in b!ender. Mix into dry ingredients.

Spread batter carefu!!y in pan so as not to displace the pears.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 40-50 minutes. Cool slightly.

While sti!! warm enough to come out of pan, invert onto serving

plate. Serve warm plain or with whipped cream.

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CUMBERLAND MAPLE PIE

Contributed by Ann Drewry Goetsch of Drewry Farms

1 baked pastry she!! 8" or 9" in diameter

2 cups map!e syrup

2 Tbsp. f!our

cup milk

cup cream

1 Tbsp. butter

Mix map!e syrup and f!our in a saucepan, then add mi!k, cream, and butter. Stir gent!y over moderate heat and boi! to 210 degrees.

Cool!. Then pour into .she!!. Bake at 375 degrees for 30-40 m#nutes

unti! top of pie is brown.

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MAPLE GINGERBREAD

Contributed by Ann Drewry Goetsch of Drewry Farms

1 cup sour cream

1 egg

1 cup maple syrup

cup sugar

tsp. cinnamon

2 cups flour

2 tsp. baking soda

Combine sugar, spice, and salt. Add sour cream and gently stir in maple syrup to which soda has been added. Mix well and add flour, then add egg. Bake in buttered 8" x 10" pan at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes. Serve plain or with maple flavored whipped cream.

MAPLE FLAVORED WHIPPED CREAM

1 cup whipping cream

cup maple syrup

Whip cream as usual. When it is almost stiff, instead of adding sugar, gradually pour in maple syrup while continuing to beat cream.

Serve at once over cakes, waffles, etc.

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MAPLE MOLASSES TAFFY

Contributed by Ann Drewry Goetsch of Drewry Farms

1# cups sugar

cup maple syrup

2 Tbsp. butter

tsp. baking soda

1 cup light molasses

cup water

cup nuts ..

Combine sugar, maple syrup, molasses, and water in a large saucepan.

Cook gently for about 20 minutes, stirring all of the time. Increase

heat, keep stirring, until hard boil stage, about 45 minutes in a #1. Add

soda, butter, and chopped nuts. Pour into a well-greased pan. After

about 15 minutes, pull the mixture until light golden and nearly opaque.

Make ropes and cut into # pieces with scissors. Wrap individually in

waxed paper.

