

Maple Syrup



What is maple syrup?

Maple syrup is produced when the sap collected from sugar maple trees in the spring, is evaporated by boiling to produce maple syrup. About 40 litres of sap is needed to produce 1 litre of syrup. If the syrup is processed even more, other maple products, such as maple butter, maple cream and maple sugar are produced.

Interesting facts:

The preferred species for syrup is the Sugar or Rock Maple. Red Maples can also be tapped; however, the sap is generally not as sweet as that from the Sugar Maple.

Where is maple syrup produced in Nova Scotia?

Nova Scotia's maple industry is primarily situated in the northern and central region of the province. Cumberland and Colchester counties account for almost 85% of the total production. Inverness, Kings and Annapolis counties also have significant production.

How much maple syrup do we produce?

Currently, there are more than 70 maple producers in Nova Scotia with the total number of taps being over 300 000. This represents ten percent of the 36 000 acres of good producing maple sugar trees in the province. Annual production exceeds 140 000 litres of maple syrup, with gross farm sales being close to \$1.5 million.

How is maple syrup produced?

The time when maple sap flows, sugaring time, occurs in early spring when days are 2° to 7° C, and nights are below freezing. When several of these days occur in succession, sap begins to flow. When night time temperatures remain above freezing and days are warm (above 10° C), the trees begin to bud and the season ends.

The first step in sugaring is to drill 1.1 cm diameter holes about 7.5 cm deep into the maple tree trunks. If a few trees are tapped, this can be done with a hand drill, but most large producers use battery charged drills. Many old trees have been tapped by drilling for 75 or more years.

The majority of producers are using plastic tubing to collect sap, rather than the traditional method with buckets. The tubing is stretched from tree to tree and allows sap to run directly from the tree into the tubing and to the sugar camp or to a holding tank. Some producers use a vacuum pump on the tubing to aid the flow of sap. When it comes from the tree, maple sap is mostly water. Sap is processed into syrup by removing much of the water.

Producers use evaporators to boil the sap to syrup. Efficiency of the concentration process is increased by the addition of a reverse osmosis machine which removes up to 75% of water from sap before it enters the evaporator.

Filtering is the process of clarifying pure maple syrup. Raw syrup contains various suspended particles, called sugar sand, brought out in the boiling

process. In earlier days, these particles were settled out in bulk containers before retail packaging. Today, they are filtered through cloth and paper membranes, producing crystal clear syrup.

The syrup is checked to see that it is the proper concentration, and then is usually packaged bulk, in barrels. Later it is reheated and packed into glass bottles or plastic containers. It is also graded and labelled. The grades and colour class of the syrup will be on the label: Canada No. 1 (Extra Light, Light, Medium); Canada No. 2 (Amber); Canada No. 3 (Dark).



How is maple syrup used?

Maple syrup is used as a delicious table syrup for pancakes or waffles. It can also be used in baking where people often prefer the darker syrup because it has a stronger flavour. Unopened containers of pure maple syrup may be left in a cool, dark place for 6 months without refrigeration. After opening, syrup should be refrigerated. Freezer storage keeps open or unopened containers indefinitely and the liquid does not solidify. Around 90% of the syrup made in Nova Scotia is sold as pure maple syrup. The other 10% is further processed into maple butter, maple cream, maple candy, maple sugar, maple taffy and maple jelly. Look for "Pure Maple Syrup" written on

the label for genuine, 100 % pure maple product.

What happens after maple syrup leaves the farm?

The syrup is usually bottled on farm and trucked to stores, restaurants and institutions.

What challenges do maple producers face?

The proper weather conditions in spring time are a huge factor in how much sap can be collected. Maple producers have to deal with high fuel costs. They have a challenge to keep the selling price low enough so people don't resort to imitation syrups.

Who's involved in producing maple syrup?

- Maple producers
- Equipment manufacturers/dealers
- Fuel companies
- Container designers/manufactures
- Truckers

Contacts and other resources:

Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia

