



# Maple Syrup

Written by:

Kendra Wills, Extension Educator

Maple syrup is among the first locally harvested food products available in Michigan farmers markets each spring. According to the Michigan Maple Syrup Association (n.d.), Michigan ranks fifth nationally in maple syrup production at about 90,000 gallons annually. It takes approximately 40 gallons of maple sap to make one gallon of maple syrup.

One-hundred-percent pure maple syrup tastes very different from the pancake syrups found in most grocery stores. These pancake syrups consist mostly of corn syrup or cane sugar. They may contain either no pure maple syrup or pure maple syrup in very small amounts. Be sure to read the label of ingredients if you are looking for pure maple syrup.

## Nutrition

One tablespoon of maple syrup has about 50 calories. Maple syrup is approximately 67 percent sugar and 33 percent water. The sugar in maple syrup is sucrose (88 to 89 percent) with small amounts of glucose and fructose sugar (11 to 12 percent). White sugar is also sucrose. According to the Ohio State University Extension (2009), there is no direct scientific evidence that maple syrup is healthier than white sugar. Diabetics and others who are limiting their sugar intake need to treat maple syrup as they do other sugar products.

## Storage

Store pure maple syrup in the refrigerator – even if the bottle has not been opened. Pure maple syrup in glass or tin containers may be stored in the refrigerator for up to one year. Use syrup stored in plastic containers within three to six months. Plastic breathes causing a change to syrup color and flavor (Ohio State University Extension, 2009).



You may freeze maple syrup. To freeze, pour it into freezable glass jars, making sure to leave a one-inch space at the top. Frozen syrup maintains quality and flavor for an indefinite period.

## Selection

The characteristic flavor of maple syrup includes sweetness from the sugars, a slight tartness from the acids, and a range of aromas that includes vanilla, coffee and chocolate. The longer the syrup is boiled, the darker the color (University of Vermont, n.d.).

All states must use the U.S. Department of Agriculture color standards to grade, or classify, maple syrup based on color, flavor and sugar content. However, states may use their own words to describe color. Grade A refers to the lighter, more delicately flavored, sometimes less concentrated syrups, which people pour directly on food. Grade B, more often used for cooking, is stronger in caramel flavor. Maple syrup grading kits are available at specialty stores or through online retailers. Maple producers use them to help classify their syrup for quality control (University of Vermont, n.d.).

# Maple Syrup

---

Michigan maple syrup has four grades: Grade A Light Amber, Grade A Medium Amber, Grade A Dark Amber, and Grade B. The Michigan Maple Syrup Association (2005) says Grade A Light Amber has a delicate maple taste and extra light amber color; Grade A Medium Amber has a mild maple taste and light amber color; Grade A Dark Amber has a hearty maple taste and a medium amber color; and Grade B, good for cooking, has a robust maple taste and dark amber color.

## Production

Maple syrup is typically harvested from sugar maple and black maple trees. Even though other tree varieties can produce sap for syrup production, these two varieties typically provide the sweetest sap. A maple tree needs to be about 40 years old and at least 32 inches in circumference at 4.5 feet off the ground before tapping.

Maple sap is harvested as a slightly sweet, colorless liquid. Sap is boiled so the water in the sap evaporates and the sugars become concentrated. Sap harvesting can start as early as February in southern Michigan and go until April in the north. The Michigan Maple Syrup Association (n.d.) estimates that only about 1 percent of Michigan's maple forest resources are utilized for syrup production.

To learn how to tap maple trees and produce your own syrup, read the Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Bulletin *Homemade Maple Syrup*. Obtain it from [www.shop.msu.edu](http://www.shop.msu.edu). Search the MSU Extension Bookstore section for "E2617."

## References:

Michigan Maple Syrup Association. (n.d.). *Maple facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.mi-maplesyrup.com/education/maple-facts/>

Michigan Maple Syrup Association. (2005, Spring). Grading!!! Should our current system be changed? *Michigan Maple Syrup Association Members Newsletter*.

Ohio State University Extension. (2009). *Selecting, storing, and serving Ohio maple syrup*. (HYG-5522-09). Retrieved from <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5522.pdf>

Oland, S. (2011, Dec. 17). *Maple baked beans*. Retrieved from <http://www.seriousseats.com/recipes/2011/12/maple-baked-bean-stew-pork-recipe.html>

University of Vermont. (n.d.). *Maple syrup*. Retrieved from <http://library.uvm.edu/maple/nutrition/index.php>

University of Vermont. (2010). *Spring greens with maple balsamic vinaigrette*. Retrieved from <http://library.uvm.edu/maple/recipes/?cat=17>

## Resources:

Michigan Maple Syrup Association:  
[www.mi-maplesyrup.com](http://www.mi-maplesyrup.com)

**Lawn or garden questions?**

Visit [migarden.msu.edu](http://migarden.msu.edu).  
Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

---

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at  
[msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi\\_fresh](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi_fresh).

## Recipes

### Spring Greens With Maple Balsamic Vinaigrette

#### Maple Balsamic Vinaigrette

1 cup Grade A pure maple syrup  
(light, medium or dark - your preference.)  
3/4 cup balsamic vinegar  
3/4 cup canola oil  
Whisk or use immersion blender until blended  
and stable.

#### Salad

1 large bunch of mixed greens and/or arugula (or  
enough for the number of servings you require.)  
1/2 cup gorgonzola cheese  
1/2 cup pecans  
1/2 cup raisins  
Toss 1/2 cup vinaigrette with greens, top with cheese,  
nuts, fruit and serve. Produces 6-8 servings depending  
on serving size.

Adapted with permission from UVM Libraries Maple Research Website: <http://library.uvm.edu/maple/recipes/?cat=17>  
(University of Vermont. (2010). *Spring greens with maple balsamic vinaigrette.*)

### Maple Baked Beans 4-6 servings

#### Ingredients:

2 cups dried navy beans (You may want to look for  
Michigan navy beans.)  
6 strips bacon  
1 onion, chopped  
1 teaspoon dried mustard  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup pure maple syrup (Grade A or Grade B - your  
choice.)  
1 pork hock, fresh or smoked  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons brown sugar

Preheat oven to 325 °F. Simmer navy beans in water until  
tender, about 20 minutes. Drain beans and reserve liquid  
for cooking. Line bean pot with strips of bacon. In a large  
bowl, toss together onion and beans. In another bowl,  
combine 2 cups bean cooking liquid, mustard, salt and  
maple syrup. Place half the bean mixture on bacon strips  
in pot. Place pork hock on beans, top with rest of bean  
onion mixture, then pour over reserved cooking liquid/  
syrup mixture. Cover with lid and place in oven for 3  
hours, or until pork hock is fully cooked and pulling  
away from the bone. If beans begin to look dry, add more  
cooking liquid.

Once pork hock is cooked, remove beans from oven and  
remove lid. Mash together butter and brown sugar into  
a paste, scatter sugar paste over beans and place back  
in the oven, uncovered, for an additional 30 minutes.  
Remove from oven and serve.

Adapted with permission from a recipe from Sydney Oland, food writer, posted on [seriouseats.com](http://seriouseats.com).

Retrieved from <http://www.seriousseats.com/recipes/2011/12/maple-baked-bean-stew-pork-recipe.html>