

A Family Project: You can make maple syrup at home

People who want to make a small amount of syrup as a family project can do so with inexpensive equipment from the kitchen or someplace else.

- **Milk jugs** or plastic buckets can be used as sap buckets
- **Elderberry stems**, hollowed out can make usable spiles (taps)

Tapping trees

Hand drill a 7/16 inch hole 2 1/2 to 3 inches into the tree. Only tap trees 10 inches or more in diameter. Tap the spile into the hole, set or hang a bucket to catch the sap. Sap should be collected daily and cooked as soon as possible because it spoils quickly, particularly if it has warmed at all.

Boiling the sap

Check the boiling point before cooking because it varies according to the barometric pressure. Cook the sap to 7 1/2 degrees above the boiling point. It is best to cook outdoors because cooking syrup creates a very large volume of steam. Filtering the syrup before canning it, will help remove the sugar sand, a mineral occurring naturally in sap. Do this by pouring the syrup through thick flannel or felt.

Canning or bottling

Can your syrup while hot. Seal the jars and invert them for a minute or two to sterilize the lids and insure a good seal. Enjoy your syrup! It was a lot of work but it is well worth the effort.

Patronize your Indiana Maple Producers!

They are your neighbors,
make a good product
and appreciate your
business.

For more information about
maple syrup production, or to find out
where you can purchase pure
Indiana Maple Syrup, contact:
The Indiana Maple Syrup Association
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Maple Facts from

The Indiana Maple Syrup Association



Maple Syrup



Although you may not know anyone who makes maple syrup, there are many maple producers in Indiana. These people make from a few quarts of syrup to several hundred gallons per year.

In years past, maple syrup supplied an important part of the sweetening used by farm families. Many farmers made maple syrup as part of their provisions for the family and also for a cash crop.

In 1916, Indiana was the leading maple syrup-producing state in the country, according to information distributed to the North American Maple Syrup Association at their 2002 meeting,

Now, of those states in which records are kept, Indiana ranks last in quantity of syrup but certainly not last in quality!

Maple syrup can be made anywhere sugar maple (*acer saccharum*) trees grow and where there is freezing and thawing in the spring. But syrup is mostly made in the New England and Great Lakes states.



Syrup can be made from many different types of trees; sycamore and birch, to name two. And it can be made from other maples, even box elders, which are of the maple family.

But the sugar maple is the one with the highest sugar content in the sap and the one with that wonderful maple syrup flavor so prized by cooks and consumers world wide.

Maple syrup is made in the spring when the nights are still freezing but daytime temperatures reach 40 degrees or so. Tapping the trees catches some of the sap as it rises to the tops of the trees.

Trees are not harmed by tapping. Tap holes heal over in a year or two. There are records of trees being tapped for many years with no apparent harm to the tree.

Spiles are removed at the end of the season and the spile holes allowed to heal naturally.

Sap is taken from the tree through spiles or spouts, either into buckets or through plastic tubing, which runs to a central tank.

It is then taken to a sugar shack or sugar house, where it is cooked down (evaporated) to syrup.

It takes about 45 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. Syrup cooked properly will not sugar or ferment.

If syrup does sugar, it can be restored by heating until the crystals are dissolved. A very little water may be added at this time.

Syrup should be stored in the refrigerator once the bottle is opened. If it is not, it may mold. If mold forms, it should be skimmed off and the syrup reheated to boiling. then it may be used as before, though the flavor will probably be stronger.

In years past, most sap was collected with horses and sleds but now most people use tractors and many use 4-wheelers to get through the woods.