

The Story of Maple Syrup

Maple trees are tapped in February or March by drilling a small hole in the tree. Trees will have 1, 2 or 3 taps depending on size. A spile, or spout, is put in the tap hole. Spiles have buckets or plastic tubing attached to them. Sap is either poured from buckets or channeled through tubing into holding tanks before it is processed in the sugarhouse. Alternate freezing and thawing temperatures are required to produce a flow of sap from the tree. These conditions occur only on relatively few days (5 to 20 days) in the late winter or early Spring. Sap is heated in evaporators, large cooking pans, to remove most of the water and to concentrate the sugar into syrup. The cooking also causes the sugars to produce the maple flavor and amber color. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup. As sap moves through the evaporator the sugar concentration increases from about 2% to 66% when it is drawn off from the syrup pans... After syrup is collected from the evaporator, it is filtered and stored in airtight barrels to preserve its quality and freshness until it is moved into consumer sized packages.

Maple syrup is classified by color from almost clear (light amber) to dark amber or extra dark. All contain the same amount of sugar. The color relates to the intensity of flavor. Some people enjoy the light colored and delicate flavored light amber, while other people prefer the darker and more robust dark amber or extra dark syrup. The most intense maple flavor is found in extra dark syrup.

Maple Popcorn

Here's what you will need to make it:

- 1/2 stick melted butter or margarine
- 4 cups popped popcorn in a large bowl
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- spoon for mixing

Here's what you have to do:

1. **Check with a grown-up before you start this.**
2. Melt a half stick butter in the microwave for about 45 seconds. Make sure you use a microwave-safe bowl -- no metal in the microwave!
3. Add 1/2 cup maple syrup to the melted butter and stir it together.
4. Pour the mixture over the popcorn and mix it with a wooden spoon.
5. Now you're all set for a night at the movies!

