

# "Sugaring"

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## S&S MAPLE CAMP

The production of maple sugar, or "sugaring," hasn't changed much since the time of the Indians. According to legend, Indians first produced maple syrup when a brave stuck a tomahawk in a maple tree. The sap flowed into a container that had been left at the base of the tree, and the Indian squaw, believing the clear liquid to be water, placed the container over the fire. The boiling resulted in a sweet flavor, and the production of maple syrup began!

Although there are many such stories told, we do know that early settlers produced and used maple syrup as a basic sweetener. In early times, gashes were cut in the maple trees to allow the sap to flow, but it was soon discovered that drilling a hole in the tree resulted in good sap flow and less damage to the tree. Today, even as equipment has been modernized, the basic process of producing maple sugar remains the same.

S&S Maple Camp, one of Maryland's largest producers of maple syrup, is located in Corriganville, Maryland, ten minutes west of Cumberland. This family business has been in operation since 1968, but founder, Leo Shinholt, proudly states that he has been making maple syrup for nearly 50 years!

The maple sugar season generally runs from the first part of February through mid-April. The right weather conditions determine the length and success of the maple season. Warm, sunny days and frosty cold nights are ideal for mapling. The maple season may last for 8 to 10 weeks, but the heavy sap may only run 10 to 20 days. The harvest season ends with the coming of spring's warm nights and the first stages of bud development of the trees. According to Mr. Shinholt, last year (2001) was a good year for the maple sugar industry. With a lifetime of experience in the business, it comes as no surprise that he has some tried and true



*Mr. Shinholt gathers "sugar water" from covered buckets to begin evaporation process.*

methods of predicting the sap run for the season. They are:

*"Wind from the North, sap comes forth."*

*"Wind from the West, sap runs best."*

*"Wind from the East, sap runs least."*

*"Wind from the South, sap is a drought."*

During a normal year, S&S Maple Camp brings in 8,000 to 10,000 gallons of sap each day. But it may surprise you to know that it takes between 48 and 60 gallons of sap to make just one gallon of maple syrup! When the sap has been collected, it is brought to the sugar house, and it is here that the actual processing is done. The evaporator, or large tank used for boiling the water from the sap, dominates the sugar house. Most evaporators are covered by hoods, which carry steam

from the boiling process out through vents in the roof. Great white plumes of steam rising from sugar houses are a familiar sight in spring. As the sap becomes more concentrated, it flows to the syrup pan, a flat-bottomed pan where the sap cooks slowly to prevent burning. Sap becomes syrup at approximately 7 degrees above the boiling point of water. The finished syrup is then filtered to remove any impurities, graded and packaged either in drums for later use, or in smaller containers for immediate sale.

100% pure maple syrup is a true delicacy of nature. Many people think they have eaten maple syrup all their lives, but most are wrong. When you buy pancake syrup at the grocery store, it is usually corn syrup with a small amount of maple syrup added for flavor. True maple syrup can be kept for a very long time. Once the container has been opened, the syrup should be refrigerated. If purchased in a large container, it's a good idea to transfer the syrup to several smaller containers.

Even if the syrup begins to ferment, or in some cases, mold may appear, the syrup can be reheated to the boiling point and skimmed. This process should restore the flavor of the maple syrup.

Although there are over 200 different species of trees in the maple family, the two most preferred and most commonly tapped are the sugar maple and the black maple. The maple tree is usually 30 years old before it is tapped, and each tap will yield approximately 10 – 15 gallons of sap per season. The commercial production of maple products in North America occurs primarily in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada, since this is the geographic area with the greatest abundance of sugar and black maple trees. Two species also tapped for commercial production, but to a lesser extent, are red and silver maples. The red maple, as compared to the sugar and



*Top photo: Mr. Shinholt as a boy (center), about 1960, when he was 12 or 13 years old. He is making a batch of syrup the old fashioned way, along with a friend and grandfather (at right, whom he was named after).*

*Center photo: Sugar water drips from a tap into a bucket.*

*Bottom photo: Shown here is the Evaporator with a unique overhead unit invented by Mr. Shinholt. It is kind of like a double boiler that uses the heat released from the bottom tank, to pre-heat the liquid as it passes through the unit, before reaching the final evaporator, saving energy and cooking time.*

black maple, is a relatively short-lived tree, rarely living longer than 150 years. Also, the red and silver maples begin growth in the spring earlier than the sugar and black maples, resulting in a much shorter collection season.

Here in Western Maryland, the S&S Maple Camp exclusively taps sugar maple trees, and they process the sap from 6,000 to 10,000 taps on their beautifully maintained farm in Corriganville. You can order pure maple syrup by calling or writing the S&S Maple Camp, but if you are in the area, stop by for a visit! Generous with their time and talents, the Shinholt family welcomes visitors anytime. They are proud and delighted to share their expertise in the maple sugar business. In fact, Mr. Shinholt was featured in a Maryland Public Television special on the maple sugar industry in the mid-1980's, a program that is still shown today!

Although modern technology has streamlined the industry in some ways since the Indian first threw that tomahawk, the pure and simple goodness of maple syrup remains the same. Also unchanged is the enduring commitment of a family-run business like S&S Maple Camp. The Shinholt family, and all those who work with them, are a testament to the timeless principles of hard work, dedication and service with a smile – pure and simple!





**Leslie Alderson,** a native of Baltimore, has called Western Maryland home for the past 13 years along with her husband Rob and their three children. While Leslie enjoys writing, her focus remains with the children, which she considers the most exciting full-time job she's ever had!

Leslie received her Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communication from Towson University and worked for the Governor's Office in Annapolis during the Schaefer Administration.

## Maple Recipes

### BAKED BEANS

- 1 quart parboiled beans (dried limas, navy, etc.)
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 1/8 tsp. Pepper
- 1/4 tsp. Dry mustard
- 1/4 lb. Sliced bacon

Place all ingredients together in a casserole dish, placing bacon slices on top. Bake in a 300° oven for 4 hours. Serves 6 - 8.

### MAPLE FUDGE

- 1-1/2 cups maple syrup
- 2 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 TBSP. Butter
- 1 cup nuts (optional)

Cook maple syrup, sugar and milk for 12 minutes after it begins to boil. Remove from heat. Add butter and nuts (if desired). Stir until thick and pour into buttered tin.

### MAPLE PUDDING

- 3 TBSP. Tapioca
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/8 tsp. Salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1-3/4 cups milk
- 3/4 tsp. Maple syrup

Mix first five ingredients in a pan and let stand for five minutes. Bring to a full boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in maple syrup. Stir once after twenty minutes. Serve warm or cold.

### MAPLE SPRING CHICKEN

- 1 (2-1/2 to 3 lb.) chicken, cut up
- 1/4 cup chopped almonds
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- dash of pepper
- 2 tsp. Lemon juice
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 1/2 tsp. Grated lemon rind

Place chicken pieces in a shallow, buttered baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients and pour evenly over chicken. Bake uncovered at 325° for 50 - 60 minutes. Baste occasionally. Excellent over rice.

*Editor's Note: S&S is located in Allegany County, MD. Orders can be purchased on-site or by calling or writing: The S&S Maple Camp, P.O. Box 138, Corriganville, MD 21524 (301) 724-1433.*

*Another fine maple camp located in nearby Garrett County, MD is Steyer Brothers Maple Products, 2735 Gorman Road, Oakland, MD 21550 (301) 334-2900. They have a gift shop and are also available for tours.*