

Indigenous Food Hubs

2025 Harvest of the Month



FEBRUARY: MAPLE SYRUP

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Many Indigenous tribes, including the Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, Mi'kmaq, Abenaki and Menominee, have been making maple syrup for hundreds of years. Each winter, they tap the trees and use the sap to make syrup, sugar and other products to eat, sell and trade. Harvesting sap is hard work and it is a precious food to be consumed sparingly and thankfully - a sweet gift from nature!

AT-HOME ACTIVITY

Make maple sugar at home! Boil maple syrup and bring it to 257-262 degrees. Use a candy thermometer. Take it off the heat, and stir it vigorously with a wooden spoon (or in a stand mixer). Be sure to have someone else to take over when your arms get tired. It will be very hard to stir at first but get easier as it gets drier. Store in an air-tight container! One quart of maple syrup makes about two pounds of maple sugar.

A MENOMINEE SAYING

“Dip
Maple sap
Morning, noon,
and night,
and you will live well.”

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- “Acer” is the scientific name for a group of trees and shrubs called Maples. When people say “Acers,” they mean any tree that belongs to this group.
- Maple syrup has more healthy plant compounds and minerals, like malic acid, amino acids, calcium, potassium, zinc and magnesium, than regular sugar.
- Maple syrup causes a smaller rise in blood sugar and insulin compared to regular sugar, making it a better choice for people with diabetes, or at risk for diabetes, when used as a sugar substitute, in moderation.
- When substituting maple syrup for sugar, use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of maple syrup for every 1 cup of sugar you would normally use.
- Maple syrup is sweeter than granulated sugar, so less is needed to achieve your preferred sweetness level.



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MAPLE SYRUP POPCORN BALLS



COOK TIME

30 Minutes



SERVINGS

9-12 (depending on size)

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup of maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 2 quarts of popped corn



DIFFICULTY:

☒ EASY ☐ MEDIUM ☐ HARD

DIRECTIONS

1. Boil the butter and maple syrup in a heavy saucepan.
2. Cook until the mixture spins a thread or hard ball stage. (About 250 degrees on a candy thermometer.) Do not stir.
3. Pour over the two quarts of popcorn and mix well.
4. When the mixture is cool enough to handle, butter your hands and shape it into balls.

NOTES

- Making maple sugar or maple syrup from sap is a physically demanding process that includes harvesting the sap and boiling it down without burning it.
- Maple sugar and syrup can be used like regular sugar on oatmeal, wild rice, berries - anything!



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