



CUISINE

A very sappy story

Making my own maple syrup sounded so easy. As I turned the old-fashioned drill into our lone sugar maple, I imagined the perfect sweetness of my final product. Any day now, I thought. That was my first mistake. My second mistake was failing to notice five pinholes in the sap bucket. My third was getting the angle on the spigot wrong, so the sap ran onto the ground. And while I knew that you have to boil 40 litres of sap to get one litre of maple syrup, who knew that a single tap could produce those 40 litres all by itself?

My syrup making went like this: Gather sap from tree each day after work

and store in fridge to prevent fermentation. Fill fridge until groceries are displaced. Begin filling freezer. When freezer becomes a toppling jumble of sap-filled yogurt containers, begin boiling. With no firepit, boil outdoors on camp stove, Coleman stove, barbecue, and rented propane burner. Repeat every Saturday for one month until tree stops gushing sap.

In a superabundant syrup season that got all of the locals talking, my single tree with two taps produced much more than 80 litres of sap, and I shelled out more than twice the value of my final product in white gas, propane, and rental fees. But, in the end, I made two litres of beautiful syrup, which tastes more delicious for all of the memories it holds.

My conclusion? Homemade maple syrup is worth the adventure, but the stuff from a commercial sugar bush is a bargain. —Jennifer Kingsley

➤ To learn how to tap your own trees for maple syrup, see cottagelife.com/making-maple-syrup