

Maple syrup, how sweet it is!

Usually by now we would be boiling the sap we collect from our backyard maples. This year we have only got one quarter of a bucket to date. Spring, so far, is not cooperating one bit. You need mild days and cool nights to get that sap running. And that is just not happening at a regular pace.

We are not the only ones who like that sweet syrup. I was able to capture this beautiful blond squirrel sitting on one of our buckets. I have never seen her since. But what a beauty! You will see once the trees start to drip that the squirrels will take a lick once in a while. Yellow bellied sapsuckers when they come back drill into the trees and the sap starts running. Hence the name 'sapsucker'? leaving a lovely drink for butterflies and our very own ruby throated hummingbirds. When they come back sometimes they have no flowers yet, and this is just the recipe they need to keep up that energy.

If you really watch when you are out for a walk. You may even see flies and bees clinging onto a tree and notice the sap is running? attracting them to Mother Nature's fountain.

This energy food contains only 3 per cent sugar from the tree, and at this point in the year is clear and tasteless. To make maple syrup it takes 40 spoonfuls of sap to make 1 spoonful of maple syrup. It's a lot of work, but it's worth it!

Maple syrup season makes for great family time together. You are outdoors and the kids can help. How sweet that first batch of homemade syrup is, although it requires a lot of boiling to burn off the water and turn it into that sweet tasty syrup (please remember to do this outside, or your kitchen ceiling will be a nice sticky mess!)

We started making maple syrup in our backyard about 15 years ago. It has become a family tradition since then. When you taste that sweet nectar afterwards, well, no words can describe it.

Milder weather is on the way hopefully, but even if you get a few jars now, it is well worth the effort.

There is a lot you can do with maple syrup. Try this recipe, your taste buds will love it:

Maple Banana Eggnog

In a blender add together: 1 ripe banana, 1 egg, 30ml maple syrup, 250ml cold milk. Put all ingredients in the blender and blend for 2 min. Serves 2. Perfect for breakfast or an after school snack. Enjoy!!

By Jennifer Howard