

# Maple Syrup, Facts & Grades

**Q: I want to use maple syrup in my mead (or cider), but I don't know how much to use.**

**A:** The key to using maple syrup is two-fold. First, use a grade that provides the depth of flavor you want (a darker color provides a bolder maple flavor). Second, the amount of maple syrup to use will depend on the OG that you want the must to have. By Federal law, maple syrup must have a minimum of 66% sugar content (66°Brix). That corresponds to a SG of 1.329. However, there can be variability in the syrup's SG - it can be more than 1.329. One Grade A dark amber syrup I used was measured at 1.402 SG.

The following information was transcribed from Cornell University, and state & federal regulatory documents:

"Maple sap is a colorless liquid taken directly from the maple tree. There are over 100 varieties of maple trees, but only the Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) has a high concentration of natural sugar. The sap contains about 2% sugar. A tree takes 40 years to become mature enough to be productive and then produces only about one quart of maple syrup per season. Excess water is boiled off in an evaporator, often over a wood fire. It is believed that this system of evaporation gives better flavor and better color. Absolutely nothing is added. Approximately 40 to 50 gallons of sap, or "sugar water" as it is sometimes called, are required to produce one gallon of 100% pure maple syrup. The average maple season covers the period between late February and early April.

By U.S. federal statute, syrup must test at 66% sugar (66°Brix) or 11 lbs. to the gallon. This point is reached at 7.1 Fahrenheit degrees above the boiling point of water. Syrup is drawn off from the evaporator at this point.

Producers in Vermont generally bottle their syrup at a slightly higher sugar content (66.5 Brix) than producers in New York (minimum of 66 Brix although many New York producers go higher). A higher Brix reading gives the syrup a little more viscosity, which consumers generally prefer. Higher sugar content (over 67 Brix) may result in sugar crystals in the syrup."

<b>Maple Syrup Grading</b>		
<b>Canada</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Vermont</b>
No. 1 Extra Light	Grade A Light Amber	Fancy
No. 1 LightGrade A	Medium Amber	Medium Amber
No. 1 MediumGrade A	Dark Amber	Dark Amber
No. 2 Amber	Grade B for reprocessing	Grade B
No. 3 Dark		Commercial
	Substandard	Substandard