

How to tap maple trees

What you'll need:

spile, drill, hammer, bucket

Late February is typically the best time to tap trees but it differs between regions. Trees can be tapped when the temperatures are below freezing at night and above freezing during the day. This creates a pressure that helps the sap to flow.

If you decide to tap a tree that was tapped the previous year, find a new spot in the trunk to drill a hole.

1. Find a tree that has a diameter of at least 12 inches. Sugar maples, black maples, red maples, and silver maples produce the sweetest sap. Trees can be tapped 2-3 times in a single season if they are large enough.
2. Find a spot on the south side of a tree with either a large branch above it or a large root below it.
3. Drill a hole in the tree that is the same size around as your spile and 2-2 1/2 inches deep at a slightly upwards angle. The shavings from the tree should be light brown. If they're dark brown then find a different spot on the tree to drill into.
4. Remove any sawdust and put the spile in the trunk. Gently tap it into place with a hammer. The sap should start flowing immediately.
5. Hang a bucket onto the spile to catch the sap.
6. Collect the sap from the buckets daily and store them. You can run the sap through a cheesecloth to catch any unwanted particles. Discard any frozen sap. It will take 2-3 days to collect all of the sap from the tree.
7. Store your sap in a refrigerator or freezer and use within 7 days.

Go to tapmytrees.com for more information.

How to turn sap into syrup

What you'll need: large pot, small pot, candy thermometer, cheesecloth or coffee filter, heat source

It is best to boil your sap outdoors due to the large amount of steam that is produced. If you do choose to boil it indoors, do so in smaller batches

1. Fill your large pot 3/4 of the way with sap and place it over the heat source.
2. When it is down to 1/2-1/4 of the depth of the pot, add more sap while it is still boiling.
3. When the sap is mostly boiled down and has turned a golden texture, transfer it to the smaller pot.
4. Continue boiling the sap until it turns into syrup. The candy thermometer will read 219 degrees when it is ready.
5. Strain the syrup through a cheesecloth and put it in a bottle while it's still hot. A coffee filter can also be used for smaller batches of syrup.
6. Bottle and store your syrup in the fridge for up to 2 months or in the freezer.

If you choose to eat the sap without turning it into syrup, boil it for a short while to ensure it is safe to eat.

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