

Maple



Each year, the United States produces around five million gallons of maple syrup. Natural maple syrup has one simple ingredient: sap. Sap comes from tapping a maple tree. After the tap has been placed, sap will start to run out of the tap.

The best time to tap a maple tree is when the temperatures are above freezing during the day but drop below freezing at night. Vermont, New York, Maine, and Wisconsin are the top producing states due to their climates.

Maple syrup is made simply by boiling the sap produced by maple trees and condensing it down to the natural sugars. It takes an average of 40 gallons of sap to produce a single gallon of maple syrup. Maple syrup is mainly used as a condiment for breakfast foods like pancakes, waffles, oatmeal and French toast. However, it can also be used as a sweetener or flavoring agent when baking.



February to March is the ideal time to tap a maple because the changing of the temperature encourages sap movement within the tree. A maple tree must also be at least 40 years old before it can be tapped. A healthy tree will produce around 1 to 3 gallons of sap a day. A season will last about 4-6 weeks, with each tap hole producing 15 to 80 gallons of sap each year.

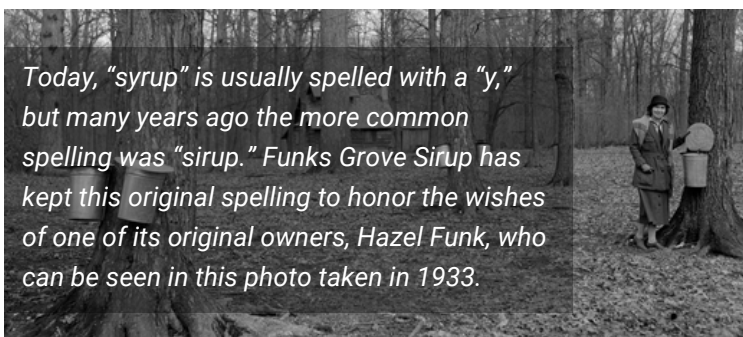


Meet the Funks

Funks Grove Pure Maple Sirup | Funks Grove, IL

Tell us about your farm.

Funks Grove is a native timber and is one of the largest expanses of old growth forest in Illinois. The forest consists of thirty-three species of trees, dominated by sugar maples. We tap over 4,000 sugar maples in late winter/early spring to produce an average of 2,000 gallons of maple sirup per year. It is generally in February and March when the freeze/thaw cycle allows for the sweet sap to flow. Pure maple sirup has been produced in Funks Grove by the Funk family since 1824 and they started producing enough to start selling it to the public in 1891. Mike and Debby are the 5th generation to produce and sell the sirup, and their son, Jonathan, and nephew, Sean, are the 6th generation to carry on the tradition.



Today, "sirup" is usually spelled with a "y," but many years ago the more common spelling was "sirup." Funks Grove Sirup has kept this original spelling to honor the wishes of one of its original owners, Hazel Funk, who can be seen in this photo taken in 1933.

All photos on this page courtesy of Funks Grove Pure Maple Sirup

How do you collect sap from your maple trees?

We tap the trees in early February. This involves drilling holes about 1.5 inches deep in the tree trunks about 5 to 7 feet high from the ground and then inserting a plastic spout into the hole. Plastic tubing is then attached to the spout. Once the watery sap starts dripping out, it runs downward through a tubing system into a larger tube where a vacuum pump gently suctions the sap into a large storage tank. The sap is then either pumped or hauled to a large stainless-steel storage tank at the sugarhouse.

How do you turn the tree sap you collect into sirup?

From the stainless-steel storage tank, sap is pumped into the sugarhouse where it runs through a reverse osmosis system and then into an evaporator to boil and remove as much water as possible, which concentrates the sugar in the sap taking it from 2% to 66%, making it pure maple sirup. It is then pressure filtered and bottled hot with nothing else added. We sell our sirup in a gift shop located on our farm, or by mail order, shipping to customers all over the world.