

## Maple Month

**Here's how the Northeast celebrates this last hurrah of winter--and the maple harvest.**

March—the month of winter's last hurrah in the Northeast—is also known in New England as “Maple Month,” the month when maples are tapped and their sweet sap fills buckets bound for the sugar shack. Ideal maple sugaring weather includes cold nights and warmer days—daytime temperatures in the 40s are best.

Making maple syrup and maple sugar is hard work; it takes about 1,800 gallons of sap to make 40 to 50 gallons of syrup.

As you might guess, the resulting product is not cheap, with a gallon of the amber ambrosia selling for upwards of \$25 a gallon. But for those who might think that's too much to pay for pancake topping, maple syrup isn't just for your father's pancakes any more. It is also featured in gourmet recipes such as Maple Mustard Salmon, Maple Broiled Scallops and Chunky Maple Beef Stew, and has found its way into snacks such as maple-sugared nuts and maple-coated popcorn. There is even a maple jelly. Although the supermarket shelves are lined with cheaper imitations, there is no substitute for the real thing—especially when it comes to cooking.

For skiers looking for an interesting side trip during their late-winter getaways, maple sugaring operations are often open for tours during Maple Month to show visitors how it's done.

Visitors to Massachusetts can contact the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association at 413-628-3912. In Vermont, contact the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association at 802-763-7435.