

# Pass the Maple Syrup

*Nutrition Notes by Natalie*

I love trees! I can't pinpoint the exact reason I have such an obsession with them, but I am drawn to areas where they grow in abundance. I love the shade they provide, the different smells, leaf patterns, and the sound that they make on a windy, autumn day. But not all trees are created equal. My least favorite tree, ironically, is the pine tree. Maybe because their leaves are pointy and lack a unique pattern, but it might also be because they make a mess year round. It's either sap on my car, a mysterious yellow powder blanketing every surface around, or its pine needles and brown little pods clogging up my gutters. I prefer trees that only make a mess once a year when they shed their leaves, while giving me a wonderful and fantastic color-filled show. That's why it's no wonder that when I stumbled upon an article this summer about the maple tree, I was intrigued.

Not only do I love trees for their aesthetics, but also for their functionality. Some bear fruit, others nuts, and some varieties even sweeteners, like the maple tree. Historically, Native American tribes shared a legend that ancestors drank syrup straight from the tree, but the practice of collecting sap and then boiling it down to concentrate the sugars became the common practice. Scientists are now discovering some pretty incredible health benefits from this so called syrup.



Pure maple syrup is all natural and doesn't undergo a refining process that removes nutrients. It's simply concentrated tree sap. Sap moves the nutrients from the soil to the new buds, which later become leaves. It is packed-full of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. The boiling process removes the water which then concentrates the nutrients. In fact, maple syrup is rich in minerals like manganese, zinc, magnesium, calcium, and potassium. The syrup also has over 67 different phytochemicals which host antioxidant properties.

The phytonutrients in maple syrup are showing promise in zapping colon and breast cancer cell growth and reducing inflammation. Wow, finally something that not only tastes good but is good for you! But, not so fast. Despite the promising benefits of maple syrup it is still a sugar and too much sugar is also linked to negative disease effects. So what is the recommendation, you might ask? If you are going to use a sweetener in your recipe, why not use one like maple syrup that is packed full of beneficial nutrients vs plain old sugar which is not. Substituting maple syrup in recipes has a few general rules however.

1. Substitute  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of maple syrup for 1 cup of sugar.
2. Reduce recipe liquids by 3 Tablespoons.
3. Maple syrup and molasses or honey are an equal exchange.
4. Reduce oven temperature by 25 degrees.
5. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of baking soda.
6. Use dark or very dark syrups for cooking.

Here's a great Fall recipe to serve as an appetizer:

## Maple Drizzles Brie

- 1 round goat Brie
- 2 Tablespoons Maple Syrup
- 1 Tablespoon dried cranberries
- 2 Tablespoon coarsely chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut the top rind off the Brie round. In a small bowl, mix syrup, cranberries, and walnuts together and spoon on top of Brie. Place on ceramic baker or foil lined baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes, until soft.

Enjoy Mother Nature this season not only for the landscape but for the hidden treasures, like maple syrup, that come from this earth's creation.