

What Grade of Maple Syrup Do People Like Best?

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Fortunately, there is a close relationship between the flavor of maple syrup and its color (grade). This makes it possible to consider grade and color as almost synonymous. Thus a very light-colored syrup will have a pure maple flavor but of low intensity. As the syrup darkens in color its flavor is intensified, the true maple flavor usually being augmented by the development and intensification of other flavors such as caramel (not burned sugar).

Since it is possible to have a wide range of flavor and intensities in pure maple syrups, the question naturally arises as to which flavors are most acceptable to the largest number of people. In an attempt to obtain some data that would provide such an answer, we at the Eastern Laboratory have conducted several taste test panels. In all cases the syrups tested were of standard density and they met all other specifications for pure maple syrup. The samples had been selected by different organizations as having the best maple flavor regardless of their color (grade).

Three such taste panels have been conducted. The first was at the maple industry conference, held at Philadelphia in 1953, with 50 persons taking part. This was an interesting panel since it was composed of people from every maple-producing section of the country, nearly all of whom had a keen interest in maple syrup. This panel showed no strong sectional preference for any one grade of syrup, the preference of the judges being for U.S. AA and U.S. A grades (Wisconsin Fancy). Those few judges who had a limited association or experience with maple expressed a strong preference for U.S. B grade (Wisconsin No. 1). This is not surprising since this syrup is more strongly flavored.

More recently a taste panel was conducted at the New York State Maple Festival, Cooperstown, New York, 1956. The samples had been previously selected by the different maple producing states as having the best flavor regardless of their color. The evaluation of this consumer taste panel showed that a large majority of those panelists who were not associated with maple syrup, but who lived in the maple area, preferred U.S. grade B (Wisconsin No. 1) maple syrup. The panel of maple producers was 100 per cent in favor of the U.S. AA and U.S. A grades (Wisconsin Fancy).

The third consumer taste panel evaluation of maple syrup was conducted at the 1957 New York Festi-

val. The syrups tested were similar to those described above. In this test the panelists turned in some most interesting results since those who were producers and those who had no association with maple syrup reversed themselves in respect to the color (grade) of syrup which they judged as having the best maple flavor. This time the producers chose U.S. grade A, whereas the non-experienced chose U.S. grade AA, both of course being within Wisconsin's grade Fancy.

These tests have indicated that a syrup of the U.S. AA or U.S. A and U.S.B. (Wisconsin Fancy and No. 1) grades are preferred by almost everyone, whether a maple producer or simply one who eats maple syrup occasionally. In the former category the preference is for Light Amber syrups, while in the latter the darker colored syrups (approaching Medium Amber) are preferred.

"As the evening shades gathered, how delicious was the odor of the sap steam, permeating the woods further than the shafts of firelight pierced the gloom! How weird and delightful was this night experience in the woods and how cheerfully we swallowed the smoke which the contrary wind seemed ever to turn toward us!"—*Anna Botsford Comstock*

PURE MAPLE SAP SYRUP

Shipped F.O.B. in Gallon, Half Gallon
and Quart Tins

Produced by:

VITUS CHELL

LEWIS, WISCONSIN

* A laboratory of the Eastern Utilization Research and Development Division, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.