



Misty's View of MAPLE SYRUP

Just recently, I was in front of grade 8 students and asked them what it means to be Canadian. Their feedback indicated that our identity as Canadians is closely tied to many quirky things, like our universal use of the expression “eh?,” our

love of hockey and our knowledge and use of maple syrup. Bigger concepts included our love of freedom, diversity, and good health care. I was impressed by their consensus and accuracy!

But as a foodie at heart, I latched onto their love of maple syrup. **This liquid that drips from our mighty maples is a national treasure.** Even middle school students identify it as a unique ingredient that defines our identity. My French brother-in-law, however, sees it as the perfect gift to bring back to France after his tri-annual trips to Canada. That is a compliment, if you really know any French people.

When you think about it, maple syrup has been the reason for many culinary creations over the years. Can any Canadian imagine a

pancake without it? Many of us don't know what we love more, the fluffy buttermilk pancake or the syrup that cascades with poetry down the sides of a stack of hot-off-the-griddle wonders! In France, the crepe, a thinner version of our pancake, is a wrap for Swiss cheese and ham, or a sponge for Grand Marnier and butter, both wonderful dishes that are served at lunch or dinner, but are still not nearly a maple syrup experience.



In our past culinary history, **maple syrup has been a star at breakfast**, but never made many appearances after noon. Awhile ago, however, Canadian chefs began to realise that their artistry could be more recognised by elevating indigenous ingredients and incorporating them into high-level culinary preparations.

Thus the lowly fiddlehead, bison, caribou, and venison meat walked onto the Canadian culinary stage. It was not long afterwards that

maple syrup became the new savoury sugar in the best kitchens on the Escarpment.

Imagine this! Maple-cured salmon, a totally Canadian-inspired revision of the classic Gravlax that replaces the typical sugar and salt curing with a subtle hint of maple.

Other chefs have seen how painting capon, chicken, Cornish game hens, and quails with maple syrup towards the final minutes of roasting can create a delicious new basting ingredient. More than that, how about maple-pecan glazed salmon, salmon marinated in maple syrup and soy sauce for an Asian-Canadian fusion.

But fish and poultry are not the only proteins to get the maple treatment. Think about maple syrup Korean teriyaki beef or the beef tenderloin with maple syrup and grainy mustard that was made famous by Jean Souldard at the Chateau Frontenac, a castle fortress located in the heart of this ingredient's homeland, Quebec!

I hope you're inspired to **give your own dishes the maple treatment.** Here is a suggestion to get you started:

- ◆ Use maple syrup to boost the natural sweetness (or lack thereof) in root vegetables. Some carrots are sweet enough on their own, but others may taste lacklustre depending on when they were harvested. Why not cook your carrots French Vichy-style in about an inch of water (lid on) flavoured with salt and maple syrup to taste? About 2 to 3 tablespoons should do for carrots for four to six guests. Naturally, you will want to toss your carrots in butter for extra richness.

Maple syrup can go other places too, but in moderation. Why not add a Canadian edge to your next vinaigrette dressing? Instead of a touch of honey, why not **try a little of our liquid gold, eh? EV**

Misty Ingraham and Bill Sharpe of Ancaster own the catering company The Portable Feast at Home.