



## It's Maple Sugaring Season & Maple Mousse with Apple Compote

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**With daylight savings time knocking me off balance last week and the first day of spring on Wednesday, the calendar is insisting that spring has sprung.**

Between you and me, I'd hardly call the mountainous snow banks in my driveway spring-like. But as long as I can still eke out a few more days of skiing, I relish the longer, warmer days.

In spite of climbing daytime temperatures, the nights are still pretty darn cold. This change in the weather heralds not just the tail end of winter but sugaring season. Take a long walk through the country and you may spot a few metal buckets hanging from maple trees. Or more likely you'll see a strange tangle of plastic tubing running from tree to tree.



**Farmers across New England are collecting sap from their sugar maples.** Depending on the weather, maple syrup production can begin as early as

February and can continue through to April. Freezing nights and warm days are needed to get the sap flowing. To draw the sap, taps or spouts are inserted into the trees.

Historically, buckets were then hung on the taps to collect the sap. Today most syrup producers use plastic tubing instead of buckets. While less picturesque, this innovation saves the back breaking work of gathering and emptying bucket after bucket of sap. The tubing deposits the sap directly into large metal tanks.

After collecting the sap, it goes to the sugar house for sugaring-off. Sugaring-off is the simple, but long and tedious process of boiling the sap until the sugars concentrate into sweet syrup. Since sap runs during the day, traditionally sugaring-off has been done at night. It takes lots and lots of boiling and evaporation to transform the watery sap into the golden syrup we enjoy on our pancakes. One gallon of pure maple syrup starts out as roughly forty gallons of sap. Long past midnight and into the wee hours of the morning, sap boils and slowly turns to gold.

Not surprisingly, all that boiling produces lots and lots of steam. Unless you want to turn your house into a sauna; don't try to make syrup inside. It's best to do your sugaring-off in a well-ventilated sugar house. Drive through rural New England and you will see large sheds in many backyards. If the shed has a stovepipe, it may do more than store lawnmowers and snow blowers. Chances are good, it's a sugar house.

**But what if your shed has no chimney and is packed with old bicycles, lawn furniture, flotsam and jetsam?** You can still join in the fun with a trip to a sugarhouse. Maple Weekend is this Saturday and Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Across New Hampshire farmers will be opening their doors and welcoming visitors. It's a great opportunity to meet some of the people who bring a little sweetness to your mornings. You can see firsthand how maple syrup is made and enjoy a taste of New Hampshire gold. Visit the New Hampshire Maple Producers website at [www.nhmapleproducers.com](http://www.nhmapleproducers.com) for a list of participating sugarhouses and more information.

Enjoy the sweet taste of spring in New Hampshire and bon appétit!

## Maple Mousse with Apple Compote

*Not just for breakfast, maple syrup is great for dessert! Enjoy.*

Serves 6

1 teaspoon gelatin  
 1/2 cup maple syrup  
 1/2 cup cider  
 4 eggs yolks  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1-2 tablespoons dark rum  
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, cold, cut into pieces  
 1/3 cup cold sour cream  
 1 cup very cold heavy cream  
 Apple Compote (recipes follows)  
 About 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, toasted

Prepare an ice bath in a large, shallow bowl and set aside.

Place 2 tablespoons water in a cup, sprinkle with the gelatin and let stand for 10 minutes to soften.

Whisk the maple syrup, cider, yolks and salt together in a small, heavy saucepan. Set over low heat and, stirring constantly, cook until the custard reaches 165 degrees on a candy thermometer.

Remove the pan from heat. Whisk in the rum and vanilla. Add the butter, 1 piece at a time, whisking until incorporated. Pass through a fine mesh sieve into a bowl. Add the gelatin mixture to the maple custard and whisk to combine. Set the bowl in an ice bath, and whisking frequently, cool to room temperature. Cover and chill the custard in the refrigerator for about 1 hour.

Stir the sour cream into the maple custard. Whip the heavy cream until medium-stiff peaks form. Gently fold the whipped cream into the custard.

Divide the mousse among 6 dessert glasses or bowls, cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 8 hours. Serve with a dollop of Apple Compote and a sprinkle of toasted walnuts.

### Apple Compote

1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
 1 pound Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and chopped  
 1 cup apple cider  
 2 tablespoons maple syrup  
 1 tablespoon dark rum  
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
 Pinch salt  
 1/4 cup raisins or craisins

Melt the butter in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the apples and sauté until golden, about 10 minutes. Transfer the apples to a bowl and reserve.

In the same skillet, combine the apple cider, maple syrup, rum, cinnamon, cloves and salt and bring to a boil. Continue to boil until reduced by about half, about 10 minutes.

Add the raisins and return the apples to the skillet. Bring to simmer, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 3-5 minutes. Cool to room temperature.

