

## Maple Syrup Not Just for Pancakes Any More

If someone said "maple syrup" in a word association test, the most likely response would be "pancakes." The two foods have long been linked in the minds of consumers throughout the world. But many of those consumers are now discovering novel uses for maple syrup and related maple products.

Maple syrup has been called "the ultimate Canadian sweet."

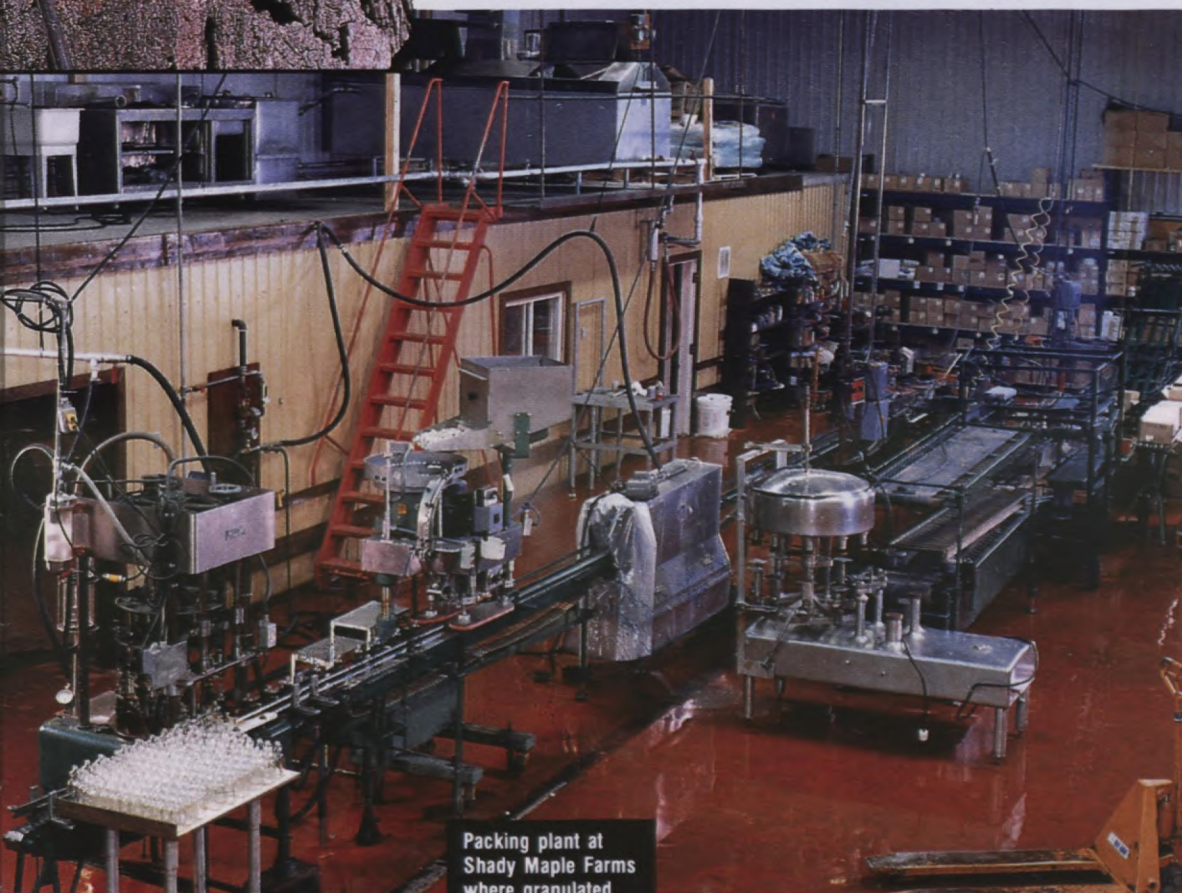
It is derived from the sugar maple tree, which is found only in northeastern parts of North America. Canada provides 75 per cent of the world's supply of maple syrup (about 10 million L annually), with Quebec accounting for 90 per cent of that total.

The syrup has long been an important part of Canada's food industry and of Canadian diets. In the old days, farmers' wives

used to do a lot of cooking with maple syrup, partly because it provided a much needed source of energy. Although many of those traditional recipes are too rich for modern cuisine, there are still a number of uses that suit today's palates.

A recently developed maple product, dehydrated syrup, can be used to replace sugar in virtually any recipe. Turkey Hill Sugarbush Ltd. of Brome, Quebec, and Shady Maple Farms Ltd. of St. Evariste, Quebec, are the only two companies in Canada to distribute this product. Like sugar, dehydrated maple syrup is sold in granulated form, requires no refrigeration, and has an indefinite shelf life. In addition, the weight of granulated maple syrup is about two-thirds that of the liquid form, making it more economical to ship. This new product is gaining increasing acceptance from health and specialty food stores, as well as from restaurants and hotels.

Although maple syrup is more expensive than sugar, it possesses a distinctive taste and benefits health. It contains more calcium than milk, has one-tenth the sodium of honey, is rich in vitamins and minerals, and is accepted by Weight Watchers Intl. as an alternative to sugar.



Packing plant at Shady Maple Farms where granulated maple syrup and other maple products are produced. Inset: Tapping a maple tree for sap, the raw material for maple syrup products. (Photos courtesy of Shady Maple Farms and Communications Branch, Agriculture Canada)

