

What's Simmering ... With Chef Jack!



Greetings to all!

Well, we had a little reprieve and we're ready to get back at it!

March Madness - no not basketball! Maple syrup! The best thing about this time of year is that the syrup is running. The maple trees may look dormant, but under the bark the syrup is flowing upwards towards the buds, getting ready for the eventual bursting of young, new leaves. The maple sap moves up from late January to mid March; the buds then get ready from February to mid May and then burst open. Maple syrup is one of my favorite sweeteners. I just love the flavor. It may come with a high price tag, but I just learn to use it wisely and with a little restraint. I would rather put 1 oz. of pure syrup on my pancakes than ½ cup pancake syrup. The taste is so much better and it's better for you!

Here is a little information about maple syrup. It takes 40 - 50 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. The sap is collected from trees and slowly boiled down. Maple syrups made in the U.S. are rated Grade A to B along with a color designation: light, medium or dark amber. Light grades tend to be made earlier in the season, around January, when the weather is cold and the resulting syrup has a light, mild flavor. This is the one I use as a topping. As the weather warms in March and April, there is more chance for tree sap to ferment, which contributes to darker syrup and stronger maple flavor. These generally are graded B or dark and work best in recipes such as muffins, desserts or sauce.

Be sure to sign up for our Earth Day Celebration on April 17th. I know it's several days earlier, but who's counting.

Here are two recipes. One is from the Chicago Tribune and the other a favorite of mine that we serve often at the Club. Enjoy and happy cooking.

Chef Jack

Expect to pay four or five times as much for pure syrup over the imitation varieties. That's because the process -- from tree-tapping and boiling to syrup on the table -- is an incredibly time-consuming, labor-intensive one that is often done on a very small scale. The payoff in flavor is well worth it.

Baked Maple Custard Adapted from Ken Haedrich's "Maple Syrup Cookbook."

Preparation time: 15 minutes Cooking time: 50 minutes Yield: 6 servings

<u>Amt.</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Ingredients</u>
4	ea.	Eggs, lightly beaten
1/2	cup	Pure maple syrup
1	tea.	Vanilla
1/4	tea.	Salt
3	cups	Milk, heated just to the boiling point

Method:

1. Heat the oven to 350°. Heat a teakettle of water to a boil; set aside.
2. Whisk together the eggs, maple syrup, vanilla and salt in a large bowl; slowly stir in the hot milk. Ladle mixture into six 6-ounce custard cups, filling each to within 1/4 inch of the rim. Place the cups in a large, shallow casserole dish; pour the water into the pan until it comes about halfway up the cups.
3. Bake until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Serve warm (or cool to room temperature; cover and chill).

Maple Teriyaki Salmon

<u>Amt.</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Ingredients</u>
Marinade		
1	cup	Maple syrup
1	cup	White wine
9	tblsp.	Tamari or Soy sauce
1	ea.	Onion, minced
6	cloves	Garlic

Combine ingredients in a sauce pan and bring to a boil; cool marinade.

12 ea. Salmon steaks

Marinate 1 to 3 hours; grill and baste with marinade. Bring remaining marinade to boil and serve on the side. You can also pour marinade over fish and roast in oven.