

SPICE OF THE MONTH

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November's spice is maple sugar!

Now that the colorful days of fall are ending, we're entering the best and sweetest baking months of the year – and some of that sweetness is thanks to a baker's favorite tree: the maple.

Researchers believe that maple trees originated in mainland China during the Paleogene period, between about 25 and 65 million years ago, and that they made their way to Europe and North America on the land bridges that arose during the colder years of that era. Once the trees arrived on this continent, the indigenous nations of North America recognized the phenomenal culinary potential of the maple trees.

Written records of collecting, processing, and eating maple syrup date back to the mid-16th century, but the practice itself extends back many generations before that. Traditional stories from the Cree, Iroquois, Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Chippewa demonstrate the strong historical and cultural impact of maple. Other sweeteners (including honey; the honeybee is a European import!) are not native to North America and weren't a part of the diet in that region until relatively recently, making maple a precious commodity for anyone wanting a sweet treat.

The maple sugar we're bringing to you as November's Spice of the Month has all the warm, complex, sweetness of maple syrup. Try it as part of one of the recipes we've included, or sprinkle it on scones before baking, add it to tea, or shake it up with cinnamon for an upgraded cinnamon toast. Don't be afraid to get creative!

**Croton
Free
Library**

All books listed here are available to check out from the Westchester Library System!

Our sources:

- Cornell Maple Program: Sugar Maple Research & Extension: blogs.cornell.edu/cornellmaple/
- *The Crown Maple Guide to Maple Syrup: How to Tap and Cook with Nature's Original Sweetener* by Robb Turner
- Model Maples from Arnold Arboretum: arboretum.harvard.edu/arnoldia-stories/model-maples/
- *The Oxford Companion to Food* by Alan Davidson

The recipes in this kit are:

- Gingerbread Pancakes from *The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion* (p. 5)
- Baked Brie from *The Crown Maple Guide to Maple Syrup: How to Tap and Cook with Nature's Original Sweetener* by Robb Turner (p. 171)

See our cookbook collection for additional info & recipes, like:

- Baby Carrots with Brown Sugar & Mustard from *Cold-Weather Cooking* by Sarah Lee Chase (p. 81)
- Chocolate-Covered Chai-Tea Bars from *Everyday Dorie: The Way I Cook* by Dorie Greenspan (p. 248)

What did you make with your
maple sugar?

Post it on social media with the hashtag
#CrotonSpiceClub and tag us,
or send a photo & description to
ref@crotonfreelibrary.org!

Maple sugar purchased from My Spice Sage.