

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Zhiwaagamizigan, Maple Syrup

Naabdin Giizis, **Snow Crust Moon, March**

Powerful Nutrients

Pure maple syrup is all natural, as it contains no additives and does not undergo a refining process that removes nutrients. It is simply tree sap that has been boiled to remove extra liquid and concentrate the sugars to around 66% to 68% sugar, primarily sucrose.

"Sap can be considered the lifeblood of the tree, it moves nutrients from the soil to the new buds, which will become leaves. It has vitamins, minerals, amino acids, organic acids, phytohormones (plant hormones), and phytonutrients (plant nutrients that give flavor, color and protection to the plant). The boiling process removes water, which concentrates the sucrose and also the micro- and phytonutrients," per Navindra Seeram, PhD, a renowned maple syrup researcher at the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy. "The caramelization that occurs during heating creates the unique flavor, color, and odor that is characteristic of maple syrup. It takes 40 quarts of sap to make one quart of syrup."



A ¼ cup serving of **Zhiwaagamizigan** has about 217 kcal and provides 95% DV (Daily Value) of manganese (a mineral that helps your body use vitamins and keep the liver healthy) and 37% DV riboflavin (a B vitamin), as well as zinc, magnesium, calcium, copper and potassium. Researcher Seeram and his colleagues have isolated 67 different phytochemicals (plant substances) from maple syrup, mostly phenolics (lignans and phenylpropanoids) with antioxidant properties comparable to Vitamin C. Research continues on the role these phytonutrients in maple syrup might play in preventing colon and breast cancer, metabolic syndrome and inflammation.

A Drizzle or a Sprinkle

Although maple syrup and maple sugar have more nutrients and phytochemicals than refined sweeteners, they are still Added Sugars. The 2015–20 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend added sugars make up no more than 10% of daily calories," says Isabel Maples, MEd, RDN, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. For an average 2,000-kcal diet, that is 50 grams of sugar, roughly the amount found in 1/4 cup of maple syrup or maple sugar. The American Heart Association goes even lower Maples says, "recommending no more than six (6) teaspoons of added sugars a day for women and children, and nine (9) for men."



All sugars should be consumed in moderation, but when you do use sugar consider swapping out white sugar or corn sweeteners for maple syrup or maple sugar.

"Maple syrup (and maple sugar) first and foremost is a sweetener," Seeram says, "so, when choosing a sweetener, why not select one that has micro- and phytonutrients instead of refined sugar or high-fructose corn syrup, which do not have these nutrients?"

Would you consider using maple sugar in your coffee or tea? How about using maple sugar in your favorite recipes instead of white sugar or brown sugar which is really white sugar colored with a little molasses?

Maple syrup and maple sugar are local foods and meet the requirements of consumers concerned about the environmental impact of their foods because they are natural and sustainable foods.

Ziinzibaakwad is sugar, but it is a better sugar! Enjoy!

References: The 13 Moons of Anishinaabe Nutrition: *A Nutrition Curriculum Based on Traditional Anishinaabe Foods*, funded by USDHHS/ACF/ANA Grant 'Upper Midwest Indigenous Seed Keepers Network, developed by WELRP and [Maple Syrup - Today's Dietitian Magazine \(todaysdietitian.com\)](http://todaysdietitian.com)

Graphics Sources: The 13 Moons of Anishinaabe Nutrition: *A Nutrition Curriculum Based on Traditional Anishinaabe Foods*, funded by USDHHS/ACF/ANA Grant 'Upper Midwest Indigenous Seed Keepers Network, developed by WELRP [ziibimijwang-pure-maple-sugar-product.jpg \(900x900\)](http://ziibimijwang-pure-maple-sugar-product.jpg)