

Maple Sugar Candy

Each year, usually in March, Indians would go to collect sap from maple trees and make sugar and maple syrup. Indians discovered long ago that maple trees have a sweet sap that can be drained from the tree and boiled to make syrup and sugar. They used an adze (like an ax) to make a cut in the maple tree's bark. A short stick was pushed into the opening and the sap ran down the stick and into a bucket (usually a bark pan or wooden bowl) below.

Mothers would make candy for their children by folding little cones of thin birch bark and filling them with sugar. They also made molded candies. First they would carve the shapes of animals, moons, and stars into wooden molds. Then they pressed soft sugar into the molds. When the sugar hardened, they wrapped it in thin pieces of birch bark.

You can make an easy maple candy. This recipe makes about 30 candies.

Ingredients:

1/3 cup butter or margarine, softened
1/3 cup maple syrup (or maple-flavored pancake syrup)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 pound powdered sugar

Utensils:

Large mixing bowl
Large wooden spoon
Cookie sheet (covered with aluminum foil or parchment or wax paper)
Plastic candy molds, if you have some

Directions:

1. Wash your hands well and get all your ingredients and utensils together.
2. Put the first three ingredients in the bowl and mix with the spoon.
3. Mix in the sugar. When it gets difficult to stir, use your hands to mix it until it is smooth. Add more sugar if the dough sticks to your hands.
4. Roll 1-inch balls and set them out on the cookie sheet till they get firm.

If you want to make molded candies, press the mixture into the plastic candy molds. If you don't have candy molds you could try using small lids or bottle tops; butter them first so the candy won't stick. When the candy firms up, pop it out of the forms and let the candy harden on a cookie sheet. These are a fondant-type candy, which means that they won't get really hard.

You can dip the balls in melted chocolate if you want, or roll them in coconut, chopped nuts, or dry cereal.

