

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. What if you could not only stop using unhealthy refined sugar in your kitchen, but replace it with a sweetener that's actually good for you? In today's episode, I am so excited to be talking with maple syrup queen Michelle Visser about all things maple syrup. It's health benefits and how you can start swapping it in to the recipes you're already using. Here's a little bit more about Michelle before we dive into this interview. Michelle is a homesteader in rural new England in their 219 year old farm house and in their 14 Rocky tree filled acres. Her family makes an effort to live life a little more simply by growing some of their own food, raising a few farm animals and making their own all natural maple sugar. Michelle has been featured in whole foods magazine, cappers farmer and mother earth news. Her new book, sweet maple is an instructional book on backyard sugar making that's also the story of the family's connection to the past on their small sugar farm and a cookbook filled with more than 30 maple infused recipes. I know you're going to enjoy this interview just as much as I did. So here we go. Hey Michelle, I'm so excited to get to chat with you today.

Speaker 2: [01:33](#) Thanks Jill. I'm totally excited that we could do this.

Speaker 1: [01:36](#) Yes. So for those of you who don't know, Michelle and I go way back, which way back being what, a year and a half. Two years almost.

Speaker 2: [01:46](#) Yeah. Can you a year and a half? Yeah.

Speaker 1: [01:48](#) Feels like...It feels like longer cause like I've known you forever and that's a good in a good way. In a good way. I agree. Um, but Michelle is actually part of the team, my Prairie homestead team and she helps me with all sorts of things. Um, if you participated in the heritage cooking crash course over the spring, you probably saw her name pop up quite a bit. She was helping you answer emails and do customer support. And if you're in our homestead and heritage cooking group on Facebook, she's very prevalent in there. You'll see her, her face in videos and in posts and she's wonderful with engagement and answering questions. So she is my right hand woman. Um, she keeps, I would, I would throw in there, Jill that if they are not in your heritage cooking group. Why not? Because it is so fun. I love that group.

Speaker 1: [02:35](#) It is a blast. We'll include a link to that group in the show notes. If you're on Facebook you gotta join us cause it's where all the good stuff happens and you get to hang out with us, which is pretty cool. But beyond being my amazing assistant, Michelle is

also has her own homestead brand and she's also a published author. And so we kind of, yeah, we have a lot in common beyond us. The Prairie Homestead. It's fun to talk shop with her when we're together. So today I'm having her on the old fashioned on purpose podcast because I am so excited to talk about one of her main focuses, which is maple syrup and not just cooking with it, but she is the real deal. She taps her own trees. Um, she's start to finish. So this is not something I know anything about, you know, making maple syrups. So I'm so excited to have you on Michelle and we can just dive in to all things Maple.

Speaker 2: [03:32](#)

Thanks.

Speaker 1: [03:33](#)

Alrighty. So give us a little background of your homestead journey and kind of where you, how you got to where you are now.

Speaker 2: [03:42](#)

Ah, you know, it's so much different than you. I feel like you are such a person of vision and I kind of wind up just being plopped in situations and look around and go, okay, what can I do with this? So we moved from the mid Atlantic area to new England. It's been five years now. And when we purchased our home, we didn't purchase it looking for a homestead, which when I think back to that, it just blows my mind because I can't imagine life any other way today. But back then I was moving from suburbia and I was just kinda tickled that we had a little bit of land. Um, I have to admit, I thought it was kind of romantic that we live in, a 219 year old farm house. You know, that was kind of cool, but I didn't even realize some of our outbuildings when we kind of cleared away the shrubs and actually found our way to the buildings that had been most dilapidated and unused for, I don't know how long we realized, Oh my gosh, okay, this is a stable and that I think that's a chicken coop, you know, and we just started realizing let's use this land the way it's been used for a few hundred years.

Speaker 2: [04:49](#)

Let's take it back to like a kind of a homestead. So we've been having a ton of fun doing that as we go.

Speaker 1: [04:55](#)

I actually kind of love that you came into it with maybe more accidentally because that's par. I know it's going to resonate with a lot of listeners cause not everyone comes into it, this crazy laser vision. Um, some do kind of just ramble into it. So it's reassuring to know that you can start that way, um, and get to such an amazing home and then turn your land to be something that's so productive.

- Speaker 2: [05:21](#) I agree. I wouldn't like to think that hopefully I am inspiring people, but I don't want to make it too romantic. Especially here in new England. It is a Rocky, hilly, hard land. So I don't want to make it sound like it was a piece of cake, but it has been fantastic and I'm so, so thankful to be doing what we're doing.
- Speaker 1: [05:40](#) I just have to say totally off topic, but if you go to Michelle's, um, Instagram or Facebook pages, you have to check out her house. And I know for those of you who maybe on the East coast, I know you've told me Michelle, 219 years old is like, eh, just a house, right? It's cool but not like crazy. In Wyoming, that's old. And so I see pictures of her house and the history and I just like drool all over myself. So cool. Old houses. Go check out Michelle on Instagram. We'll drop some links in the show notes, but anyway, we're going to talk about maple syrup and how you go from each tree and then magically you have syrup in your kitchen. So this is not something I am an expert on by any means. So can you just start off by giving us some insights into what it really means to tap a tree and then make the syrup?
- Speaker 2: [06:32](#) Absolutely. Um, we're talking about something I love, just be careful if I go on forever, you know,
- Speaker 1: [06:39](#) Do your thing.
- Speaker 2: [06:41](#) Okay. During the really, you know, the warm summer months when we're not even thinking about sugar making, that's when the trees really start getting busy. They are busy making natural sugar for themselves. I mean, they're not doing it for us, you know, they're doing it to supply the food for themselves. And you know, we all learned about it back in like what fourth grade? I know it's photosynthesis and we learned how it works when we were kids. It's that simple. So then fall comes and it's, I think this is kind of cool at the same time that we are starting to preserve the harvest and we're stuck in the barn with hay for the animals to get us through the long winter. And I know you're a long winter is a little bit longer than mine even. So yeah, it's hard work, but the trees all around us are kind of doing the same thing.
- Speaker 2: [07:27](#) They're busy storing away. There's sugar and then all winter, that sweetness is just stored up in the inner bark. It's actually starch and it's just waiting for the tree to be ready when it's going to need the food and when it's going to start, you know, the new growth for the spring. And, um, so when the spring thaw comes along, it's, it's really miraculous. These enzymes in the trees start doing this magical thing and they start changing that starch that the tree is stored away in the winter. And um,

they turn it back into sugar and it mixes with water so it can travel through the tree. And the water of course, is absorbed up through the roots come the early springtime. So the tree sends that wonderful sugar all the way through its bark and the sugar makers go, it's time. And we get out our taps and we start getting really excited.

Speaker 2: [08:18](#) Um, but all that the sugar maker has to do is literally just put a tap in a tree and that SAP that's flowing, it starts dripping out. You know what I mean? I think we've all seen that it's, it's literally drip by drip by drip that slowly, you know, and eventually it fills up a bucket and you'd take it and you boil it down and it does get a little complicated there, which is, you know, why there was a great need for this book because there are a lot of small details along the way. But basically in a nutshell, you're boiling down the sap to the right temperature and the right sugar consistency and you have syrup, you put it in a bottle, you put it in your pantry and you have something delicious to use in all kinds of ways.

Speaker 1: [09:04](#) It just is like an enamor to me. I just like the thought of being able to do that is just, I'm jealous. Um, but I guess I, maybe I shouldn't be jealous because I know in your book, which we're going to talk about in a minute, but you mentioned, this intrigued me, that every state in the, in the U S I think you said, we all have a tree that can be tapped. Maybe not maple, but we have some sort of tree.

Speaker 2: [09:28](#) we do. Exactly. Um, there the book explains 30 different varieties of trees and I'm realizing I went up to an upstairs office cause I knew I was going to be interrupted otherwise and I'm realizing, Oh I left all my books and everything downstairs. So, but I can tell you that it advises 30 different varieties of trees that can be used to make syrup and at least one, if not many of each of those varieties can be found in every single state of the United States. Even Hawaii because Hawaii has Palm trees and Palm trees are not going to be tapped in the typical way that I tap a maple here in my yard. But you lance the flower, it's like a four week window that these guys climb these really tall Palm trees and then Lance the flower every day and they make delicious syrup from the Palm tree. So even in Hawaii, I'm telling you, no matter what state you live in, there is at least one tree that you can tap. And I think that's so cool.

Speaker 1: [10:28](#) It's very cool. And it really kind of zapped my excuse because I was like lamenting, Oh I can't do maple or can I do syrup in my state? Oh well, and you're like, actually yeah. And you said it was in Wyoming is to box elder tree, which I don't believe we

have any. I actually Googled it and like maybe I have one out in the backyard and I don't think I do, but we could maybe planted it and have it down the road in awhile. So it's, it's promising.

- Speaker 2: [10:52](#) True. And that is a good thing about some of these alternative trees. The one of the good sides is they do become mature and they're ready for tapping a lot earlier than a maple. And maple is the best tree in the world you could ever top, especially a sugar maple, because mainly the sugar content is the highest. It's gonna make the sweetest syrup and you're going to have to collect less SAP to get that amount of syrup. But um, it takes 40 years. If you're gonna plant the sugar maple, it's going to be 40 years till you can tap it. Yeah. I don't know how much, I don't know how long a boxelder takes, but I'm pretty sure it's a shorter time period than them.
- Speaker 1: [11:26](#) Yeah, that's a long along bit of delayed gratification.
- Speaker 2: [11:30](#) It is. Although I have talked to so many people across the country, I mean, people, it's amazing the fortitude and the creativity they have if they want to make syrup. I've talked to people that traverse neighborhoods all around them. They put a big container on the back of their pickup truck and off they go and collect from all the different trees and they have all different ways that they will go up to their neighbors or maybe they live by a Park land and they'll talk to their County extension or whatever and they'll get permission. All different things people will do to, you know, find a tree that they can tap and make the syrup.
- Speaker 1: [12:06](#) I love that it's making do with what you have, which is really the homesteader spirit.
- Speaker 2: [12:10](#) Absolutely.
- Speaker 1: [12:11](#) Yeah, so speaking of just like the specifics of tapping and the processes, you kind of mentioned that it can be maybe not hard, but there is some nuances and a little bit of complexity there, which is why you created your book. It is called sweet maple for those of you who don't already have it, backyard sugar making from tap to table. It's beautiful. You guys like it's, it's a work of art. It's not just an instruction manual and I know that some folks are calling it a cookbook, but it's actually a lot more than that. Right? It's like kind of an instruction manual.
- Speaker 2: [12:43](#) Exactly. It's actually really hard to quantify what it is. I've actually talked to a few different porters in the past week and

they're like, well, can you define it? And it's actually a little hard. One person that I wrote an article for a local magazine, I thought she did a good job because she said, you know what, Michelle just crosses all the genres and combined it into one. I thought, well maybe that is kind of why it is definitely a cookbook. It is definitely an instructional how to book. I've talked to a few people, you know it's funny, I'm sure you went through the same process when you're booking now. Like no matter how hard you worked on it, no matter how much of yourself you literally just poured into it. There's this fear when it's out there in the real world, and the first few people that I started getting comments that they had purchased it, I was kind of afraid to like read their message they sent me, Oh, I hope they like it.

Speaker 2: [13:33](#) But I've been blown away by how sweet people are and how they've just gone on and on that this was exactly what they need and there's nothing else out there like it. Um, but I itemize from beginning to end every question you could think of every question that bill, my husband and I had that we worked through, it's taken us five years to get to this point. Um, and, and I just itemize it all in a very down to earth instructional manual of how you can make syrup. But it's also kind of a memoir because the whole experience of moving from suburbia to this rural area and the whole process of realizing what homesteading is and how we could be a part of it, that's all in there too, because that just, it just made sense to me. It was all just part of what I was writing, you know?

Speaker 1: [14:20](#) Absolutely. Yeah. And so it's really a good fit. Like you said, it's a memoir with beautiful photos. So there's a lot of storytelling. But also, you know, if you don't have maple trees like me and you just like using syrup, the recipes are really helpful and unique. They're not just running a mill. Oh, we add maple into this regular recipe and call it good. Like they're very, uh, they're very creative and then it is that manual. So literally when I find my box elder tree, I will be using this book to figure out what to do with it. So it's a really good job.

Speaker 2: [14:51](#) Well thank you. And I also, it was important to me, like I wanted to help people understand this aha moment that I had like this realization that once we moved out of that nonstop grind of suburbia, because in that life the old me would have been like, there is no way it is worth that intense effort to own chicken and you know, and deal with the mess, you know? And, and I'll stop for what? For a dozen eggs a week. Are you kidding? And, and like the old Michelle would have been like, um, I'll just go buy a dozen eggs for a few bucks. Like I had no idea. I just, my

head couldn't get around the concept of why I would want to have chickens. Um, and I mean, I always said there's no way that I'm going to just spend time collecting SAP drop by drop. Are you kidding me?

Speaker 2: [15:35](#) And it takes what, 40 gallons to make one gallon of syrup? Um, can I just like buy aunt Jemima? You know what I mean? Like the old Michelle, I just, that was just the way I thought. But what was missing? I realized what I was missing out on what I think a lot of folks today are really missing out on is the fact that we enjoy everything better. Even like the really small joys, like a few fresh eggs if we had to work for it in some way and together, like if we're doing it with the folks that we care about, you know, and I'm cleaning out the chicken coop with one of my teen daughters. I mean that's actually, it doesn't sound very romantic and it's kind of stinks. Literally. It just, it makes the eggs even that much better. It's just, it's a concept that I didn't understand before and I wanted, I wanted to somehow help people see that a little bit in a way that I never saw until we started living this life.

Speaker 2: [16:34](#) I think also it dawned on me after we got to this rural area that I never had the solitude that I needed and I never really had that hard hands on work like I do today. Um, and I, I think our society needs it more than we ever did because we are so remote. I, that's funny. I'm just twisting what I mean here because if somebody is in suburbia, they're not remote. But I think they're remote from this idea that without the solitude and without the hard work, we're missing out on something all the previous generations had, you know, they had so many things that required them really hard work. I mean, right now I'm looking at my grandmother's wooden butter mold on the desk and funny cause it's holding my SD cards, you know, and like my reader from my computer. But of course, you know, the girl mom would've had it filled with hand churned butter for her children to spread on their home.

Speaker 2: [17:33](#) The homemade bread that she made and she made bread, I'm pretty sure daily, you know. Um, and then on the floor, and this in the opposite, I have Bill's grandmothers, braided wool rug. Like it still is being used by our family 80 years after this sweet woman tour, every strip of wool by hand and worked together to make this rug. And here we are still reaping the joy and I just think about the quiet and the reflective time that, that my grandmother spent churning the butter, you know, and Bill's grandmother spent parading the rug and we just don't have that today. You know, we're just too caught up in electronics and the busy-ness of our jobs and we just don't have that

reflective time. And I think our fast paced society like denies us these opportunities that we do need that solitude and that hard work. But I'm sorry, I'm totally on a soap box, aren't I? I get caught up in thinking about these things and I kind of go nutty.

Speaker 1: [18:27](#) No, I mean I love talking about this and I feel like this is the, this is the aspect of homesteading that surprises people in a good way. Um, because a lot of us come into it for food or we want the chickens or the animals or the fun. And my favorite thing is hard but good. Right? Chickens are hard, but good tapping maple trees is hard but good. And we are missing that. Absolutely. And that piece of solitude, when your brain has blank space, that's when it creates. And when it, that's when it works through problems and processes. And I think so many of us are missing that processing time because we're just go, go, go, um, one actually to the next. So it's super valuable.

Speaker 2: [19:09](#) No, I agree. And you know, it's the egg that I would've bought in the store and suburbia is so different than the egg on my counter today. Not only for the nutritious value and all of that, but the joy of having to clean that cube actually makes that egg more valuable to me, which I guess sounds crazy, but it's true.

Speaker 1: [19:26](#) It's so true. It's so true. So one of both of our favorite authors and speakers, Joel Salatin himself actually wrote the forward for your book, which was super exciting. I remember when you called me, you're like, ah, he said yes. Um, and he actually said a quote from his beautifully written forward was that sweet maple is a compelling book for everyone's self reliance bookshelf. So that is, that is so awesome.

Speaker 2: [19:55](#) Yes. I was so excited. Oh my gosh. I mean, I'm, I literally was, I embarrassed my daughters the way I was jumping up and down and dancing around when I heard from Joel. But then when I got his actual foreword and I read it, I think I cried when I got to that. Oh my goodness. Joel Salitan thinks it's a good book for everybody. Self-reliance bookshelf. Oh my goodness. Maybe I've written a good book. So I was thrilled, absolutely thrilled that he loved the buck. Um, but I guess I really haven't like, Oh, I haven't really, um, broken down for you. Like I guess I've kind of told you how I covered these different genres, but I guess I couldn't tell you a little bit more about like what's in the book. I don't know.

Speaker 1: [20:36](#) Yeah, just give us the birds. The birds eye view.

Speaker 2: [20:39](#) Yeah. Okay. So, um, see, let me see. Um, I started off with were like, why it's a logical thing to do this, you know, sustainable

living. And the reason I was thinking, I would tell you this as I thought it was fun, my editor made me decide, okay, what recipes Michelle, you have to narrow this down. And then she made me decide how are you going to decide where you're putting these recipes cause I want to spread these recipes out throughout the book. So I had a really fun, like, it was like a puzzle trying to, to fit where things should go. So in the first chapter when I was talking about sustainable living, I thought, okay, that needs to be whatever we're sharing the bread recipes. And the really basic getting back to homesteading feel with food. Um, so that made sense to me. And then in the next chapter it was all about tapping trees.

Speaker 1: [21:31](#) So you and I got to travel together a little bit this summer. We went to Ohio in July and had the privilege of visiting Lehman's hardware, which if you're listening to this podcast and you don't know about Lehman's, you need to know about Lehman's cause they already have some, it's like Disneyland, like literally they are amazing. But we went out to their store and it's workshops and I got to sit in on your maple workshop and I remember you talking a lot about the difference in maple and then refined sugars. And I was wondering if you could explain to the listeners a little bit how they can switch out refined sugars for more maple syrup in the kitchen.

Speaker 2: [22:11](#) Absolutely. This is like something I am passionate about because it's really so simple and people don't realize, first of all, the huge difference between these types of sweeteners and then they don't realize how easy it is to switch it out. Um, but I mean let's talk about refined sugar for a minute. It's processed in a factory, right. And it does start off as sugarcane or sugar beets, but then it goes through so much processing. And I had no idea until I started writing this book and I started reading about this, that okay, first of all, the cane or the beets, they're mixed with hot water. They're boiled and they're mashed a whole bunch to release all the juices. But this is the part that got me upset. Then they start adding chemicals because that's how they refine it. And I started looking up the chemicals, I couldn't pronounce them and they really did not sound like something I wanted in my food. Um, but then the juices are whitened with carbon or bone char or sometimes they use an ion exchange system, but regardless of how they get it nice and pretty white and it says silly cause it's just to make it, you know, pretty white. I don't care if my sugar's way, I kinda like it when it's not white. I think it's pretty hard.

Speaker 1: [23:19](#) I do see though, suddenly,

Speaker 2: [23:21](#) yeah, in the end if you're eating refined sugar, you literally have 99.96% sucrose. That's it. And the final product does it resemble the sweetener from its natural state at all anymore. So you have zero health benefits. You can just add sucrose. But with maple, you know, literally, you know, like we were talking about, you're literally putting SAP from a tree on your food or in your baking. It's just amazing. It's from nature right from the plant. And of course because of that, the health benefits are just fantastic. Um, it has, um, antioxidants, of course that's going to support our body's immune system. It even has natural anti Carcinogens...I always get tripped up on this word, Jill, anti carcinogens, right. Um, and has vitamins and minerals and polyphenols, which are those micronutrients that we get from plants. And of course, syrup is literally right from the tree.

Speaker 2: [24:21](#) So of course it has polyphenols and, um, all these health benefits that we can enjoy because of the ingredients in the syrup. It blows my mind when I talk to different scientists and chemists. I couldn't believe it. The more that they would itemize, what they found when they analyzed the syrup and the things that science has decided it could possibly be beneficial for like it, it can improve digestive issues, some of the polyphenols that are in it, they actually think that it could help with weight management difficulties and even maybe with diabetes cause some of these polyphenols that are in there are used to help diabetics, not just absolutely. I can't even get my head around that weight. This is a sugar that has something in it that's actually somewhat good. Like for diabetics. That doesn't make sense to me. Um, and it's just the list goes on and on. But so you asked me about putting it in recipes. So simple. If you just replace one cup of sugar with roughly two thirds to three quarters cups of maple syrup. I do play around sometimes with different recipes, but it's in that ballpark, let's just say three quarters cups and you're going to have to remove about three tablespoons of liquid from the recipe. Because you're taking out a dry sugar and you're putting it on liquid. Of course.

Speaker 1: [25:45](#) Yes,

Speaker 2: [25:46](#) you do want to reduce your oven temperature, usually like about 25 degrees. I'll turn it down. And that's just because maple syrup caramelizes at a lower temperature than refined sugar does. So I just want to avoid any burning or problem. So I'll just turn the oven down a little bit and then I'll increase the time. It's baking for a few minutes. But of course in the book, all the recipes in there, I've done all the hard work. I figured out all those things I just said and you know it's all done for you, but it's really not hard to take a recipe that you love and play

around with it and come up with something that's even more delicious than my opinion because of that subtle maple flavor. And it's even better for your families. So it's like win, win, win.

Speaker 1: [26:27](#) Absolutely. And I think it's just mind blowing. Like you said, that we go from sugar, which we all know is a bad food, especially refined white sugar and it's actually detrimental to our health. And we're swapping it out for something, not just neutrals who are health but actually beneficial. Like you know, my blown. That's fantastic.

Speaker 2: [26:44](#) Absolutely not I should say, cause I don't want anybody to be like, Oh come on Michelle. You know it is still sugar. Yes. It absolutely as you absolutely still have to use it in moderation. And I have my best friend from childhood is a dental hygienist. So in honor of Jean, I always tell everybody and you really should brush your teeth after having anything with maple syrup. You know, it's a fact. So, but given that it's so delicious and it actually has something good for you in it, like you said, mind blown.

Speaker 1: [27:13](#) Okay. So here's my, where's my, my next question, where my brain is going because I don't have trees yet and we don't have a plethora of maple tappers locally. So how do I find good maple syrup in like this maple desert? Do you have any suggestions?

Speaker 2: [27:32](#) Uh, good question. Um, you know, if, do you have, do you ever go to like the big box stores and get, I mean cause you actually can find in just a typical store that you could find across the country, you can find the big gallon jugs sometimes of all natural maple syrup. So that's the most important thing to read it closely and make sure it actually is made strictly from maple SAP that it is all natural maple syrup. Unfortunately, people will often try and make something that's totally artificial sound like it's maple syrup and they do a pretty good job sometimes. Um, so if you carefully look at the label, you know, you're, if you're getting all natural syrup, you're good. If you have choices though, and I realize in your maple desert you kind of don't really, but if you have choices, I always recommend going directly to a sugar maker.

Speaker 2: [28:24](#) If you can find one. Of course in today's wonderful age of technology, we can find them online and I have ones that I love that I recommend people to. But if you can go directly to the source, the benefit to that is it's all his trees or hers and all of their SAP versus when you get it at the big box store, your big gallon jug, it's probably something like 385 different sourced SAPs coming from around the country and being combined,

which is okay because they know how to do that. They know how to ship it well, they know how to take care of it and keep it the right temperature. It's just not as good of a taste and it's not as pure as if you're going directly to the one source, if that makes sense.

Speaker 1: [29:10](#) That totally makes sense. So I like to think of ingredients as kind of a good, better, best scale. So maybe we could say like good would be 100% real maple syrup that we would find in a grocery store. Right. If that's all we have, maybe that would be good level and maybe better would be I'm getting maple syrup direct from the source, whether that's online or local. And then best of course, is doing it yourself. If you have that capability, but does that sound fair? Yeah,

Speaker 2: [29:40](#) that sounds very fair. And in fact, if you have that best option and you have a tree like is right there outside of your door, I even recommend, I do it almost every day during the four to six weeks of sugaring season. Take a glass outside and dip it in that bucket of the SAP that you're collecting every day and enjoy a glass of cold Sap. People look at me like I'm crazy, but it's really true. It is amazing. It's, it's very cold. It's very refreshing. It's naturally filtered right through that tray and it has a very subtle maple taste that makes it delicious.

Speaker 1: [30:19](#) That sounds good on like an a hot summer day when you need a little electrolytes or something and it sort of reminds me of

Speaker 2: [30:26](#) there would be great if you could do that. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way

Speaker 1: [30:28](#) usually. Yeah, usually not in the hot hot periods, so, okay. One other question just about purchasing. Sometimes when I look at maple syrup in stores, it'll say, I think it's like type a or no grade a or grade B. What does that mean? And does it matter for us Consumers?

Speaker 2: [30:50](#) actually not at all. And in fact, just recently in the past few years, the entire syrup industry changed the way they do things. So if you're seeing that label, it's probably maybe last year syrup, which is okay and syrup lasts, they tell you in definitely there's different great syrup, um, resources that I've gone to and they all agree that it's, as long as it's been bottled correctly, you can keep syrup indefinitely. Um, but currently they call everything grade a and it's simply labeled by its color. And the only difference honestly is if it's a dark syrup, it's going to be as, I think it's kind of obvious, a richer, deeper, more maple on this, more molasses flavor to it versus your light syrup, is going to be

the sweeter, lighter taste. And that's the syrup that you get early season. Um, so if you're collecting yourself, you're going to notice as you collected throughout those six weeks, how it gets darker in those color and flavor as you go if you're using it for baking.

Speaker 2: [31:56](#) I personally always go for the darker and I recommend that because it's gonna get more of the flavor into your baked goods. Um, one thing that people are kind of surprised about when they bake with maple, but I personally think it's a good thing. I like the fact that you don't always get this huge maple flavor, which I kinda like because I like using it in place with sugar and almost everything that I do. So I don't always want the maple, you know, big burst of flavor. But if you do want that and you're not getting enough of it, one thing I say is to go try the darker syrup. And also of course you can use maple extract to bring out the flavors.

Speaker 1: [32:34](#) Hmm. So not so it gives it a richer flavor, but not necessarily like more of vitamins and minerals per se.

Speaker 2: [32:41](#) Correct. Actually the same trace minerals and elements are going to be in the SAP throughout the season. Correct.

Speaker 1: [32:48](#) Good to know. Cause I remember reading some blog posts back in the day that were like, don't ever buy grade a because it has no nutrients. So yeah, that myth is busted. So now we don't have to slap out about if that's what we have, which it sounds like it's, they've changed their standards that maybe that is there. It's kind of all the same labeling now. So yeah.

Speaker 2: [33:09](#) Yeah, they got to the point that it was just so confusing. People are kind of overwhelmed. The average person purchasing syrup didn't understand these things. And on top of that, Canada was labeling it all different than the U S so it was just totally confusing. And they said, you know what, let's just have one standard and I'll call it grade A.

Speaker 1: [33:25](#) So it makes sense. Okay. So we're, we're getting short on time. So just in wrapping up, what is your number one piece of advice that you would like to impart to hopeful sugar makers?

Speaker 2: [33:42](#) I would say don't get discouraged and don't give up if whatever, like as our first season, every single mistake. I think that we could make a pretty sure we did, but the second year was so much different. So hang in there if you are having difficulties but also look out for resources, reach out to people around you

who are all saying tapping trees. Go to Facebook groups. I have a great group. It's called maple syrup making and the folks in there, it's the whole gamut of brand new first time tappers to folks who are third generation sugar makers and they are all in there together and we're there to offer advice. So if you have a problem or a situation that you're getting discouraged though, find someone who can give you encouragement and help you and trust me, it is so worth figuring it out and getting over that difficulty because the rewards are amazing. The first time that we sat at our kitchen table and we poured our own maple syrup on our pancakes. I remember looking out the window at the gorgeous sugar maple in our backyard to syrup came from and thinking, that's unbelievable. This on my pancake came from that tree and it's a feeling like none other and believe me, it is worth working for.

- Speaker 1: [35:02](#) I love it. Sounds like a lot of life. Just keep on trucking and you'll get success eventually because totally. Yeah, absolutely. This has been so fun to get to talk shop with you on all things syrup making, so I appreciate it. Thanks for
- Speaker 2: [35:17](#) thanks a whole bunch for putting up with my nonstop going on and on about how much I love maple, huh?
- Speaker 1: [35:24](#) Perfect, so we love it.
- Speaker 2: [35:25](#) All right. Thanks. Jill.
- Speaker 1: [35:27](#) I don't know about you, but I am feeling more inspired than ever to add more maple into my kitchen. For a sneak peek into Michelle's book, you can go to [soulyrested.com/order](http://soulyrested.com/order) to check it out. We'll include that link in the show notes and you can even download Michelle's conversion chart that will help you swap maple sugar into recipes that you're already using that call for other types of refined sugar. And you can grab that chart link also in the show notes. And that's it for today. Thanks so much for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, I would love it if you'd pop over to your favorite podcast player and leave a quick review so more people can bring home studying into their lives. I'll catch up with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Take care.