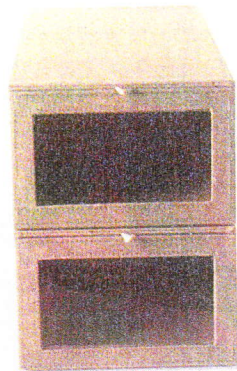


road tests



maple syrup
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how Real Simple selects the best No, there are no women in white lab coats conducting experiments and frowning over their notes. The road testers here are real people, just like you, with various body and skin types (to help find fashion and beauty choices to suit everyone), homes to clean and decorate, meals to prepare—and little time to fit it all in. Testers put products through their paces in real-life situations: They use vacuums for vacuuming; they wear night creams overnight. Then they do it again. And again. Use this guide to take the guesswork out of shopping and make the most of what you buy.

to syrup, with love

There's nothing like the real thing—except, of course, when the imitation tastes better. That's what *Real Simple* tasters discovered in a blind sampling of nationally available syrups. What's called pancake syrup—usually a blend of corn syrup and flavorings—was (surprise) the popular favorite, beating out pure maple. “It’s what I grew up with,” explained one panelist. Fans of the natural product, though, couldn’t be swayed. Here are the best in both categories.

pancake syrup

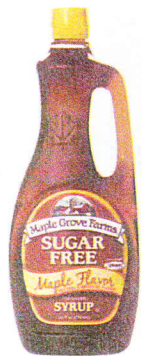


best regular

AUNT JEMIMA ORIGINAL

“Pleasantly sweet,” said one tester. Many called this “a classic syrup,” commenting on the light, mapley taste. “I love the consistency,” said a panelist of the just-thick-enough blend.

TO BUY: \$3.50 for 24 ounces.



best sugar-free

MAPLE GROVE FARMS SUGAR-FREE MAPLE FLAVOR

This diet-friendly alternative is made with Splenda, which may account for the “intense sweetness” that struck several testers. “It has a little kick that’s almost spicy,” said one.

TO BUY: \$3.50 for 24 ounces.

maple syrup



best grade A

HIGHLAND SUGARWORKS GRADE A DARK AMBER

Pure syrup is graded by color (A is the lighter and more delicate of the two available in supermarkets). This “smooth, silky” favorite has a “smoky, toasted flavor,” said a tester.

TO BUY: \$6.50 for eight ounces.



best grade B

COOMBS FAMILY FARMS ORGANIC GRADE B

The strong flavor put some off, but others found this deep, dark syrup evocative of a New England fall. “I think of cozy fires,” said a fan. Added another: “Bring on the pancakes!”

TO BUY: \$10 for 12 ounces.

beyond breakfast

Try using pure maple syrup...

- **As a glaze:** Brush on fish, chicken, or pork before baking.
- **On bruschetta:** Spread toasted bread rounds with blue cheese, then drizzle with syrup.
- **In butter:** Blend 1 tablespoon syrup with 1 stick softened butter. Use on baked carrots, muffins, and toast.
- **In a shake:** Blend 1 cup vanilla ice cream with 1/4 cup milk and 2 tablespoons syrup.
- **Over polenta:** Drizzle with syrup just before serving.
- **On carrots:** Toss 1 pound carrot sticks with 2 tablespoons syrup, 2 teaspoons olive oil, 1/3 teaspoon kosher salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Roast at 400° F for 15 minutes.



Make it with maple

For more recipes using maple syrup, go to www.realsimple.com/maplesyrup.