

# Tapping Into Tradition

Wisconsin's maple sugaring roots run deep, and a bevy of fun events can get you up close to the process and the sweet, sticky results.

By LAURA BENGIS

**T**aught to early settlers by people indigenous to Wisconsin, maple sugaring continues to be passed down from generation to generation, says Emily Brown, naturalist at the Wehr Nature Center in Franklin. It's also an important business for the Badger State, whose weather conditions are just right for producing maple sugar from our state tree. Celebrate our sugaring heritage at one of these events:

## MAPLE SUGARING

March 18

Identify native maple trees and learn the history of maple sugaring at this outdoor education center. Taste test maple syrup against factory-made, and enjoy Wisconsin syrup over pancakes with – this may sound a little weird – a pickle, to cut the sweetness. *Hawthorn Glen, 1130 N. 60th St.; \$5 city residents, \$8 nonresidents*

## MAPLE SUGAR TIME

March 18

Test old-school hand drills, watch a tree-tapping, observe sap boiling and enjoy a pancake breakfast with maple syrup from a local Wisconsin farm at this ticketed annual event. *Schlitz Audubon Nature Center, 1111 E. Brown Deer Rd., Bayside; \$10 members, \$15 nonmembers*

## MAPLE SUGAR DAYS

March 18-19

Volunteers lead a short hike, stopping to explain how to



tap a tree, how to boil sap and the history of maple sugaring in Wisconsin. The last stop includes a pancake served with maple syrup from a local farm. *Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Ave., Franklin; \$10 person*

## MAPLE FEST

March 19

Enjoy food and beverages from local vendors, and have fun with outdoor activities – like ax throwing – at this camp's annual community event. Sign up for a tour of the maple tree forest to learn more about the

tapping process, or buy tickets for the popular pancake breakfast. *Covenant Harbor, 1724 W. Main St., Lake Geneva*

## MAPLE SYRUP FAMILY DAY

March 25

Get involved in this free event by retrieving a bucket of sap, joining a hands-on demonstration of goat milking, watching an authentic blacksmith at work or purchasing the \$7 all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast (topped with maple syrup, of course). *Richfield Historical Park, 1896 Highway 164, Richfield; Free* ●

## STICKY SITUATION

A little intel on how sap becomes syrup

**OURS IS ONE OF THE FEW STATES THAT'S ABLE TO PARTICIPATE**

**IN MAPLE SUGARING** – a simple process that involves drilling a hole, attaching a spigot and letting the sap drip into a bucket – and that's thanks to our notorious spring weather. Tree tapping requires freezing nights and above-freezing temperatures during the day (weather Wisconsin typically sees starting in late February and lasting about six weeks) to start the circulatory process in the tree. Once the sap is tapped from the tree, it needs to be boiled (to remove water and produce a concentrate), filtered and graded before it's ready to be bottled and poured over your pancakes – or ladled outdoors to become “sugar on snow,” a taffy-like candy.



