



Can Canadians get the world drinking tree sap?



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While drinking tree sap does not immediately sound appealing, Canadian producers are hoping that it will be the next must-try soft drink around the world. We have all heard of maple syrup, which is made by boiling down the sap of maple trees to produce a thick, sweet, golden-to-brown coloured syrup that is typically poured over pancakes.

What is far less well known is that you can drink the sap itself, which is called maple water. Clear in colour, it contains just 2% natural sugars, so it is only slightly sweet.

A small but growing number of producers in Canada are now selling this maple water in bottles or cartons, after first giving it a filter and pasteurisation to kill off any microbes. "People feel like they're drinking the wild Canadian forest," says Yannick Leclerc of Maple3, a producer of maple water drinks, based in Quebec City.

Advocates point to the fact it is a natural drink, and makers hope that it can steal some sales from the existing similar product – coconut water. The latter is made from water that naturally forms inside coconuts.

As Canada is far and away the world's largest producer of maple syrup – accounting for more than 80% of production – it is understandable that the nascent maple water sector is also Canadian. Furthermore, it is centred on the province of Quebec, which makes 90% of Canada's maple syrup. Mr Leclerc says that Maple3 is one of the pioneers of the sector. "Nobody [previously] thought about keeping the sap for its hydration purposes versus just boiling it into syrup."

He founded the company back in 2013 with business partner Stéphane Nolet. In recent years an increasing number of other producers have entered the marketplace. Mr Leclerc claims that Maple3 has doubled its annual profits since 2021, with sales not just rising across Canada, but in 12 other countries, including France, Japan, Singapore and South Korea. Some 75% of its sales now come from overseas, and it sells both still and sparkling. Mr Leclerc says that Maple3 is one of the pioneers of the sector. "Nobody [previously] thought about keeping the sap for its hydration purposes versus just boiling it into syrup."

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