

## **New Maple Syrup Grades Approved by USDA**

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture adopted revised grading standards for pure maple syrup on January 29, 2015. The new regulations became effective March 15, 2015. However a transition period from the old standards to the new is anticipated to allow producers to use up existing labels and to obtain grading kits calibrated to the new standards. The new standards eliminate the old "Grade B" class and create a new "Grade A Very Dark". Any syrup containing "off flavors" (regardless of color-grade) is not to be marketed to the public and must be set aside in 5-gallon (minimum) for reprocessing.

The MN Department of Agriculture (Dairy and Food Inspection) recently confirmed that the labeling of grades for pure maple syrup produced and marketed in Minnesota remains optional, but syrup that is graded must meet the applicable USDA standards.

The following is an excerpt from the recent USDA press release announcing the new grades:

*The U.S. Standards for Grades of Maple Syrup are voluntary standards issued under the authority of the Act, which provides for the development of official U.S. grades to designate different levels of quality. These grade standards are available for use by producers, suppliers, buyers, and consumers; and, serve as the basis for the Federal inspection and grading of commodities as provided under the Act. Like all standards for fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops, these standards are designed to facilitate marketing by providing a convenient basis for buying and selling maple syrup, and for identifying product value.*

*Color. Under current U.S. standards, producers include a grade statement and color descriptor on maple syrup labels. Darker syrups with rich bold flavor are currently labeled as Grade B for Reprocessing and are not intended for retail sale. However, consumers are increasingly seeking the darkest color class of maple syrup for cooking and table use. The revision of the U.S. standards will categorize Grade B syrup that contains no damage or off flavors/odors as Grade A to allow the darker syrup to be packaged in retail size containers (less than 5 gallons). Specifically, the Grade A classification is revised to include four new color and flavor classes of maple syrup:*

- *U.S. Grade A Golden (delicate taste,  $\geq 75.0$  percent light transmittance (%Tc))*
- *U.S. Grade A Amber (rich taste, 50.0-74.9%Tc)*
- *U.S. Grade A Dark (robust taste, 25.0-49.9%Tc)*
- *U.S. Grade A Very Dark (strong taste,  $< 25.0$ %Tc)*

*The four color and flavor classes of maple syrup will be determined by using a spectrophotometer that provides a measure of percent of light transmission using matched square optical cells with a 10 millimeter (mm) light path at a wavelength of 560 nanometers (nm), with the color values expressed in percent of light transmission as compared to*

*analytical reagent glycerol fixed at one hundred percent transmission, and symbolized by %Tc values; or by any method that provides equivalent results.*

*Composition. Grade A syrup is the quality of maple syrup that:*

- *Is not less than 66.0 nor more than 68.9 percent solids content by weight (Brix);*
- *Has good uniform color;*
- *Has good flavor and odor, and intensity of flavor (maple taste) normally associated with the color class;*
- *Is free from off flavors and odors considered as damage;*
- *Is free from cloudiness, turbidity, sediment, and is clean, and*
- *Contains no deviants.*