

Misrepresentation of maple syrup

Issue

In the marketplace today, there are numerous instances where a product that does not contain any real maple syrup conveys in various ways, on its packaging or in its advertising and promotion materials, that it does contain real maple syrup or, even, is real maple syrup. The International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) and the North American Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC) believe that such behavior is misleading and deceptive to consumers, be it intentional or not, and should be curtailed, much as with any truth in advertising or labeling issue.

Goal

The North American Maple Syrup industry seeks to prevent products that contain no real maple syrup from using the word “maple,” “maple syrup” or the imagery commonly associated with maple syrup production or packaging (e.g. trees with buckets hanging on them, a sugarhouse surrounded by snow with steam coming out a vent on its roof, etc.) to convey and, thereby, mislead consumers into thinking that they contain some level of pure maple syrup or are 100% pure maple syrup.

Definition of Pure Maple Syrup

Pure maple syrup is most commonly produced by the concentration (often referred to as “boiling”) of maple sap to 66 to 68.9% sugars (brix), with no added ingredients. Alternatively, but far less commonly, it can be produced from a pure maple product that has a sugar (brix) greater than 68.9% by diluting it in potable water back to the aforementioned range.

Recommended action steps to achieve the maple industry goal

1) **ARTIFICIALLY MAPLE FLAVORED PRODUCTS:** It is recognized that companies are allowed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to use approved flavoring agents in their products to legally deliver a maple taste and/or flavor. In such cases, it is the IMSI position, with the endorsement of NAMSC, that the package or advertising and promotion materials must clearly communicate an “artificial flavor” has been added to the product. That declaration should be in the same type style and size and placed next to the word “maple,” or right next to the maple syrup related imagery. The disclosure should be displayed prominently in a manner that allows the consumer to easily discern that it does not contain any real maple syrup.

2) **PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN SOME REAL MAPLE SYRUP:** It is also recognized that food manufacturers and food service establishments use real maple syrup as an ingredient or flavoring/sweetening agent. Indeed, the IMSI and the NAMSC encourage this alternative versus the artificial route. In such cases, the maple industry’s position is that the inclusion of real maple syrup should be listed on a product’s ingredient line, as usually required by law, and on the food service establishment’s menu as an ingredient in a particular offering. Moreover, the inclusion of real maple syrup can be flagged on the product package or menu listing as long as it is not used in trace amounts, defined by the IMSI as 2% or less.