

The Legend of Chief Woksis

There is an Iroquois legend about the sap of the maple and how Woksis, the Indian chief, first tasted it as a sweet syrup because he had an ingenious wife.

Woksis was going hunting one day early in March. He yanked his tomahawk from the tree where he had hurled it the night before, and went off for the day. The weather turned warm and the gash in the tree, a maple, dripped sap into a vessel that happened to stand close to the trunk. Woksis's wife, toward evening, needed water in which to boil their dinner. She saw the trough full of sap and thought that would save her a trip to get water. Anyway, she was a careful woman and didn't like to waste anything. She tasted it and found it good—a little sweet, but not bad. So she used it for cooking water. Woksis, when he came home from hunting, scented the inimitable maple aroma, and from far off knew that something especially good was stewing. The water had boiled down to syrup, which sweetened their meal with maple. So, says the legend, was the happy practice inaugurated.

Taken From:

The Maple Sugar Book Nearing, Helen and Scott, 1950
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