

Tree Spa For Urban Forest Healing



The Aldrich Teen Fellows & Colin McMullan

What is tree tapping?

Tree tapping is when trees are tapped for their sap. Sap generally begins to flow in the middle of February.



You might have seen these fixtures on the trees around Ridgefield - they were gathering tree sap, or as our friend Colin likes to call it, "tree juice." Speaking of Colin, he is a talented artist who we got to know: see his interview on the next page!



An Interview with Colin McMullan

Q: What are some steps in the process of making maple syrup from sap and what are the most important things?

A: You drill a hole, and you want to look... the actual drilling of the tap hole is the most important part. You want to think about the health of the tree, and you want to avoid places where the tree had been injured, or where it had been previously tapped... the tree creates a pocket of dead wood around that hole. It doesn't matter how high or how low you tap... you look at the health of the tree, and how strong it's crown is. Drill below a big healthy branch, because that means there's a lot of sap travelling in that area.

Q: How does the environment inspire your artwork?

A: I pay attention to discourse around climate change, activism, and how some of those movements were trying to foreground indigenous people, and look to those people as having a particular kind of knowledge that everyone could use more of in regard to the earth.

Q: When did you start designing the tree sauna?
How long did it take you to make?

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An Interview with Colin McMullan Cont.

A: I started thinking about it in 2016 and I was doing some drawings about it that weekend. I started doing maple syrup in 2015, but I wasn't thinking of it as an art project, or as the spa portion. The Standing Rock thing was going on and I was thinking a lot about that. I was doing a lot of reading and educating myself about more of the real situation that native people face, both here and around the country. I spent a year and a half just doing that, and thinking about it, before building anything.

Q: What were your initial feelings towards steam healing, and how did your feelings evolve/grow into wanting to contribute to the concept?

A: I had some experience in steam healing previously, my time living in Siberia when I was 22, I lived there a year in a village. I had a lot of experiences trying different peoples' banya, a steam bath, that's how many people would bathe one or twice a week. It was generally a private activity, one or two people at a time, but on the day that they would do it everyone would line up.



Process Of vs. Final Form: Tree Spa



Make Maple Syrup From Your Sap: DIY

1. Drill into a healthy tree, or multiple, to collect the sap.
2. Boil this sap (recommended to boil outside because the steam will leave a sticky residue on what it evaporates on)
3. The sap will caramelize into a golden brown color.
4. Boil it until it has the consistency of syrup.
5. Once cooled, filter the fresh syrup through coffee filters to make it completely pure.
6. Bottle it up and keep it in the fridge!



Make Sugar Candy From Your Maple Syrup

Sugar maple candy is a melt-in-your-mouth treat! This popular recipe is nice and easy and only requires only a few ingredients.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups real maple syrup
- Heavy stainless steel pot
- Candy thermometer
- Plates, muffin liners, baking sheets, or molds in which to cool the candy



Make Sugar Candy From Your Maple Syrup

STEP ONE

Pour the maple syrup into a heavy stainless steel pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Using a candy thermometer, continue to boil the syrup until it reaches a temperature of 235 degrees F (110 degrees C), stirring occasionally. This step may take about a half hour.

Make Sugar Candy From Your Maple Syrup



STEP TWO:

Remove the pot from the heat and let the syrup cool to 175 degrees F. Do not stir the syrup during this time. It will take about 5-10 minutes to cool.

STEP THREE

When the syrup reaches 175 degrees, begin to stir with a wooden spoon or whisk rapidly for about 3-5 minutes, until the mixture becomes thick and creamy and lightens in color.

STEP FOUR

Working quickly, pour the thickened syrup into molds, muffin liners, or onto plates to cool. It can be helpful to lightly grease the molds or plates first with butter or coconut oil.



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Make Sugar Candy From Your Maple Syrup

STEP FIVE

Let the maple sugar candy cool completely. Enjoy as is, or crumble on top of yogurt, oatmeal, or your favorite sweet treat.



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