



The Canadian skin-care industry's latest hot ingredient? Maple syrup

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Temperatures are on the rise across the country and, for maple-syrup producers, that means one thing: Get to work. Canada is responsible for 85 per cent of the world's maple syrup: Most of the more than 900 million litres of sap that is collected every year will be processed and land on breakfast tables all over the world. Recently, though, that sap has been taking a detour on its way to pantry shelves, oozing its way onto beauty counters in the form of skin-care products.

It's pretty widely known that pure maple syrup and sap dish up a host of nutrients along with sweet, sticky goodness. Recently, however, a study conducted by University of Rhode Island researcher Navindra Seeram (made possible by Conseil pour le développement de l'agriculture du Québec) confirmed more than 20 health-enhancing compounds, including minerals such as manganese, potassium, zinc and [calcium](#), good stuff like vitamins A and B, serious doses of antioxidants and a host of anti-cancer, anti-bacterial and anti-diabetic properties. The beauty industry took immediate notice. Surely, what's good for the body is just as good for the skin, right?

Ben Kaminsky thought so more than 30 years ago. Long before he started his booming beauty business, the founder and chief executive officer of B. Kamins had an Oprah-esque aha moment during an ice-fishing trip when he wondered how maple trees managed to thrive and survive through harsh Canadian winters. A pharmaceutical and dermatological chemist, he decided to find out, taking some sap into his laboratory and finding it contained a host of drug substances, [hormones](#) and a natural humectant. The experiment led to the development of his first product, Menopausal Skin Cream, which he made for his wife.

Today, a key component in B. Kamins' lineup of 80 (and growing) high-end products is its trademarked Bio-Maple Compound, extracted from the sap of Canadian Acer Saccharum maple trees from Quebec, where the company is based. "The early spring sap has the highest percentage of active ingredients," Kaminsky says. "These include amino peptides, calcium and phosphorous. It also has antioxidant properties that neutralize free radicals and the hormones have a regulatory effect on cells, aiding in their regeneration."

B. Kamins is now sold in 12 countries and has earned a spot on spa menus from Canyon Ranch in Lennox, Mass. to Spa Eastman's two Quebec locations. Most recently, Oceanfront Properties Limited announced that it will offer B. Kamins as its in-room toiletries at a number of its hotels in North America.

While B. Kamins is at the fore of exploiting maple syrup's skin-enhancing potential, it's by no means the only outfit doing so of late. Among the leading players is Citadelle, the Quebec maple-product producers co-operative, which channels sap, syrup and sugar from over 2,000 farmers into the making of Samara, a line of maple-infused beauty boosters.

The latest entry into the market comes from Pakenham in eastern Ontario, where Shirley Fulton-Deugo produces Maple Luscious, a six-product line that incorporates maple tapped from the 400-acre forest that has been in her family since the 1840s. Launched in February, the budget-friendly line (products range from \$6 to \$30) had been in the works for almost three years; its various formulations contain maple syrup, sugar sand (a byproduct of evaporation, part of the syrup-making process), granulated maple sugar and maple sap. A men's line is slated for debut in 2012.

"The research coming out now on maple goes beyond just nutritional data," Fulton-Deugo says. "I had a feeling that it would be as good on the skin as it was in the body. It was a good fit for us."

Maple Luscious is being sold through www.fultons.ca and at a handful of Ontario spas, such as Holtz Spa in Ottawa. Holtz's owner, Christine O'Grady, has even added a new treatment to her roster of services, the Maple Luscious Body Scrub, built around the line. "It smells delicious," O'Grady says. "It reminds me of a pancake breakfast."