

# Maple ale puts spring in your sip

Cody Lobreau



Spring is here(ish) and that means that down east, the maple syrup farmers from Ontario to Nova Scotia are tapping trees to turn liquid gold sap into heavenly maple syrup.

After living in Quebec for brief stints over the years, I try to avoid faux-syrups like Aunt Jemima's and "table syrup" when having pancakes, crêpes or waffles. Once you've had tire sur neige (maple syrup taffy on snow ice-pops), you will never go back to the generic corn syrup pancake syrups ever again!

The folks over at Lake of Bays Brewing out of Muskoka, Ont., have just introduced their Spring Maple Belgian Blonde Ale, a Belgian-style pale ale brewed with maple syrup sourced by the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers' Association.

I find Lake of Bays beers — including their staples such as the Crosswinds Pale Ale and Spark House Red Ale, as well as their seasonal selections such as their 10 Point IPA — are simply average, nothing special. But they're still a better alternative than the insane amount of Labatt/Molson products on the shelves today.

Lake of Bays' Spring Maple Belgian Blonde Ale tops out at 7.0 per cent ABV, which, in my

opinion, is pretty average alcohol content for a Belgian-style pale ale before being classified as a Belgian strong pale ale.

The appearance of the Spring Maple is a clear golden, yet caramel body with a hint of haze, minimal amount of carbonation and just a hint of foam on the side of the glass.

The aroma is intriguing me a bit. The very first thing I'm getting is a bit of a rich nutty aroma that's reminiscent of a high-quality peanut butter sandwich. The maple notes are somewhat sweet, more of a woody scent and a moderate sweet maple scent — although not as "mapley" as I expected. There's also a hint of caramel maltiness.

The taste is giving off that peanut butter sandwich flavour again but as it warms up, I'm beginning to notice those flavours mellow out and turn into a dark maple syrup sweetness. The maple syrup isn't overpowering or even as syrupy as many maple syrup focused beers out there.

The beer is fairly sweet and reminiscent of what a Belgian pale ale should taste like, with notes of bubble gum, rich bread yeast, a bit of a boozy burn and a hint of pepper.

One thing I am finding is the Belgian yeasts are clashing a bit with the maple syrup, which is why it had that peanut butter vibe to it — but who knows?

I'm not someone who goes by the book when it comes to beer styles, so while a Belgian-style pale ale with maple syrup doesn't really make much sense,

it's certainly a great tribute to the French-Canadian voyageur traditions of yesteryear that led to the popularity of cabane à sucres (sugar shacks). So cheers to that!

I like that this pale ale's maple flavours become more noticeable as it warms up, but I just can't get over the peanut butter notes. However, as someone who loves Belgian pale ales and maple syrup, it's a nice brew that's not overpowering to the palate, easy to drink and would be best savoured with a tourtière or poutine.

You can find Lake of Bays' Spring Maple Belgian Blonde Ale at the Brandon Corral Centre and 10th and Victoria Liquor Mart locations for \$9.95 per 750 ml bottle.

Lastly, since we're on the topic of maple syrup, the annual Manitoba Maple Syrup Festival takes place on April 9 in McCreary.

For more information check out their website at [mbmaplesyrupfest.ca](http://mbmaplesyrupfest.ca).

## FIRST DRAUGHT

**Cody Lobreau is a Canadian beer blogger who reviews every beer he can get his hands on as he believes that he should try every beer twice to get an understanding if it's truly good or bad.**

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## PINT RATING:

