

The great maple syrup heist

From the sweeties.net wiki

If there were a hall of fame for sweet crimes, this would be the headline act. It is the story of how thieves in Canada stole nearly 3,000 tonnes of maple syrup, and very nearly got away with it.

A reserve of liquid gold

Quebec produces most of the world's maple syrup, and its producers' federation keeps a large stock of it in reserve to keep supply and prices steady. In 2011 and 2012 part of that reserve was stored in barrels in a warehouse at Saint Louis de Blandford.

Syrup out, water in

Over several months, thieves moved barrels out of the warehouse by lorry to a remote sugar shack. There they siphoned off the syrup, filled the barrels back up with water, and returned them to the warehouse so that everything looked normal from the outside. In total they took nearly 3,000 tonnes of syrup from 9,571 barrels, worth about C\$18.7 million at the time.

A wobble on a barrel

It unravelled in July 2012, during the annual stock check. The inspector, Michel Gauvreau, was climbing over the rows of barrels when he nearly fell: each one should have weighed around 270 kg, and the ones under his feet were empty. Once they started checking, investigators found the scale of it.

Seventeen men were arrested in December 2012. The ringleader, Richard Vallières, was sentenced in 2017 to eight years in prison and a fine of C\$9.4 million. The size of the fine went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, which in 2022 restored the original amount.

Why it matters to sweet lovers

Maple syrup is not a sweet in the pick and mix sense, but the story sits at the top of every list of sweet thefts because of its sheer size. For heists closer to home, from Creme Eggs on the M42 to KitKats lost in Europe, see [famous sweet thefts from lorries](#).

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