

[John Curran, the Associated Press](#)

Under fire in maple syrup country, the maker of Log Cabin All Natural Syrup said Tuesday it's getting rid of the product's caramel coloring in response to complaints by producers of the real thing.

That may not be enough. Officials in Vermont — the nation's largest producer of pure maple syrup — say the Pinnacle Foods product's label and packaging are still misleading to consumers and violate the state's maple syrup labeling regulations.

"By continuing to market its product with jug-like packaging and 'all-natural' labeling, Pinnacle leaves consumers with the impression that Log Cabin table syrup and Vermont maple syrup are one and the same," said U.S. Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt. "As Vermonters know, they're not even close. It's time for Pinnacle to stop misleading customers and stop imitating the Vermont maple industry."

Vermont maple syrup is made from maple tree sap that's boiled down and has no artificial ingredients. The state's producers churn out about 710,000 gallons of the stuff annually.

And Vermont is zealous about blowing the whistle on products that claim to have "Vermont maple" in them — even employing a "maple cop" who enforces maple regulations governing how the state's signature product is made, marketed and sold.

Earlier this month, Welch and Vermont's agriculture secretary called on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to investigate whether Log Cabin All Natural Syrup violated federal guidelines by marketing itself as a natural product, noting that the ingredients included caramel color, xanthan gum — a natural thickener — and 4 percent maple.

Worse, it hit shelves in a beige, plastic jug looking much like those used by Vermont maple syrup makers.

New Hampshire's maple syrup makers chimed in last week, saying stores should segregate the Log Cabin syrup from pure maple syrup on the grocery shelves.

On Tuesday, Log Cabin relented — partly. In a prepared statement, Mountain Lakes, N.J.-based Pinnacle Foods said its product was in full compliance with FDA regulations but that it would no longer use the coloring. "Although this product does not pose any health or food safety issues, we are changing our recipe to remove caramel color immediately. With regard to the other ingredients, xanthan gum and citric acid are natural plant-derived ingredients," it said. Company officials didn't respond to requests for an interview. The decision came a day after the makers of another Vermont staple — Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream — announced they were removing the phrase "all natural" from their packaging after complaints from the Center for Science in the Public Interest. That beef centered on Ben & Jerry's use of alkalized cocoa, corn syrup and hydrogenated oil, which the group said didn't qualify as "all natural."