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Purple Valley Maple Syrup Festival a spring rite

by Lois Keays

Spring comes once again to Purple Valley that bustling community that comes to life as soon as the sap begins to flow in the maple trees. It's time to toss off the long underwear, and get out of the cabin to enjoy the rapidly approaching spring weather.

If all goes well this year, there will be lots of sweet maple sap to boil down into even sweeter maple syrup. Many Purple Valley natives are veterans of this annual rite of spring. Gathering sap and hauling it to the evaporators to be boiled until it's just the right consistency to soak perfectly into French Toast or pancakes. Last year an unseasonably mild and short spring reduced the production time considerably and many people were left without a dose of Maple Syrup Tonic.

Those who were lucky, attended Purple Valley's Maple Syrup Festival and received a generous dose which no doubt left them hale and hardy to carry on through the rest of the year! Though I don't wish to be a harbinger of bad news, it would be most wise for those of you who missed the Festival last year, to be first in line this year for a feast of Purple Valley Perfect Pancakes and fresh maple syrup, just in case we once again experience a Maple Syrup shortage!

This year, the Maple Syrup Festival in "the Valley" is entering its third decade. For many it is a ritual of spring. For the men and women who work so hard to make the event what it is, it is a tradition. Pioneer values of sharing and community spirit are proudly displayed at Maple Syrup Festival time. This year, the earlier arrival of Easter, the time for the annual event will hopefully not pose any problems, but regardless of the weather, Purple Valley will be out in force to provide fine hospitality and entertainment to friends old and new when they visit the Maple Syrup Festival.

The program of events has been expanded this year with lots of new ideas to complement the traditional. One of the new

events will be a Festival Queen, open only to ladies over the age of 65. Contestants simply register when they arrive at the Festival and the winner will be drawn from the entries received.

The theme for this year's Festival is "Memories Making History", in conjunction with the Township of Albemarle's Heritage Society working on the history of the municipality. An exhibit and information-booth by the Heritage Society will be at the Festival and visitors are invited to stop by and speak to the members about local history and pass on any information they might have about the Township of Albemarle and its families.

For the young people, there will be games and races as well as the pony rides and this year, for the first time, face painting. Children enjoy having faces painted, to represent characters and it gives them something else to do while their parents check out the various other exhibits and events at the festival.

As always the local artisans will be represented with their exhibits in the hall. Be sure while you are in Purple Valley to visit Myeegun Gallery, which has an excellent offering of native art and craftwork and it's only a few steps from the community centre.

Municipal councillors and dignitaries are invited to participate in the pancake flipping contest and the Purple Valley 4-H club will be presenting its accomplishments in a display of maple products and they will also be tending the cauldron of bubbling sap for syrup making.

There will be lots to see and do at the Purple Valley Maple Syrup Festival this year. So put on your Easter Bonnet and get to Purple Valley somehow to join in a spring tradition and a treat for your winter weary taste buds, April 2nd, 1988 from 10 a.m. on. Then dance the night away with entertainment by Pete & Ross in the Community Hall. Things will be truly hopping in the Valley on Easter weekend!



The sap is bubbling and this year's Purple Valley Maple Syrup Festival will be bigger and better.