

Warkworth syrup festival stars in international TV series

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By John Campbell

Warkworth – When you boil it down, the 30th annual Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival had all the ingredients of an ideal family outing last weekend.

The weather was grand, the sap was running, the attractions drew large crowds to both the village and Sandy Flat Sugar Bush, and the sausages and pancakes soaked with maple syrup served up by the Warkworth Community Service Club were as delicious as ever.

The only thing missing was snow in large quantities, so while it wasn't possible to go for a horse-drawn sleigh ride, there was enough about to fill a trough and pour taffy over it to make easy treats on a stick.

"It was the best in years," said Dennis Gebhardt, head of the festival organizing committee. "We had the perfect weather. It was unbelievable."

Attendance at the sugar bush on Saturday was around 4,000, equaling last year's total for the two days, he said.

Another 2,500 turned out the following day.

"Normally, Sundays aren't quite as busy but this year there was a lot of traffic," he said.

Gebhardt credited the 200 volunteers who helped out in making the festival a success.

There to take everything in was a six-person crew from Chicago filming the festival's sights and sounds for a new online show, 'Eat the

Globe' for Taste Me, a food and travel production company.

"We were sad there wouldn't be snow ... but it's been so wonderful," said the show's producer, Jacquelyn Jamjoon, who found it "amazing" that volunteers organize and run the event.

"We've been covering food festivals all across the world," she said, including a Christmas festival in Germany, an onion festival in Switzerland, and a tamale festival in California.

By the time the filming is done, there will be eight episodes, each seven to 10 minutes long, "that will be coming up soon on ABC's newest platform," Jamjoon said.

The show is hosted by Amy Shuster, a food blogger and "professional eater" who

said she would be eating "a lot of taffy on snow and lots and lots of pancakes" for the episode being shot over two days.

Shuster said she was "learning about the whole process of how a maple tree is tapped for sap" and maple syrup is made.

"I knew nothing," she said, other than it came in a bottle you see in a grocery store, "so this is really cool to get to actually see it coming out of a tree."

Shuster said the show is "a good

way to introduce people to what's going on" around the world with food and cultures and to "educate them in a really fun way."

Sugar bush owner Derek Van Stam said it's been "an excellent season so far."

Trees were tapped in January "and our first boil was Feb. 4, so we've been boiling over a month now," he said. "We've got a lot of good syrup so far."

Volunteer Bill Turvey helped Carson Laing, 6, of Whitby saw a log. Photo by John Campbell



Kyla Cassidy, 4, Brighton, tried some taffy on snow at the 30th annual Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival last Saturday at the Sandy Flat Sugar Bush. Photo by John Campbell