
Maple crowds match high yield

Popular festival marks sweet year

By Jason Parks
Gazette Staff

Prince Edward County's favourite syrupy sweet celebration of all things Maple enjoyed great weather this weekend and, accordingly, scores of people flocked to their favourite sugar shacks, restaurants and wineries to take part.

Maple in the County's seventh edition played to a large crowd and whether you were standing in a lineup at Foster's waiting for a seat at their now infamous pancake breakfast or in downtown Picton, enjoying a more urban approach, it became clear just how popular the festival is.

At Stone's maple bush, first thing Saturday morning, the Danaher family of Belleville took in a wagon ride to visit Doug Stone and watch him boil sap to make syrup the old fashioned way — over a wood-fired evaporator.

"We've been coming every year and we usually bring friends from Toronto," Elane Danaher said. "Every year there's something new to see and do."

If there's one common theme amongst the maple men in Prince Edward County, it's slow and steady not only wins the race, it produces great maple syrup.

"It's been an interesting year so far," Stone said. "We don't have any frost in the ground, but there's a good snow cover that's kept the sap running steady."

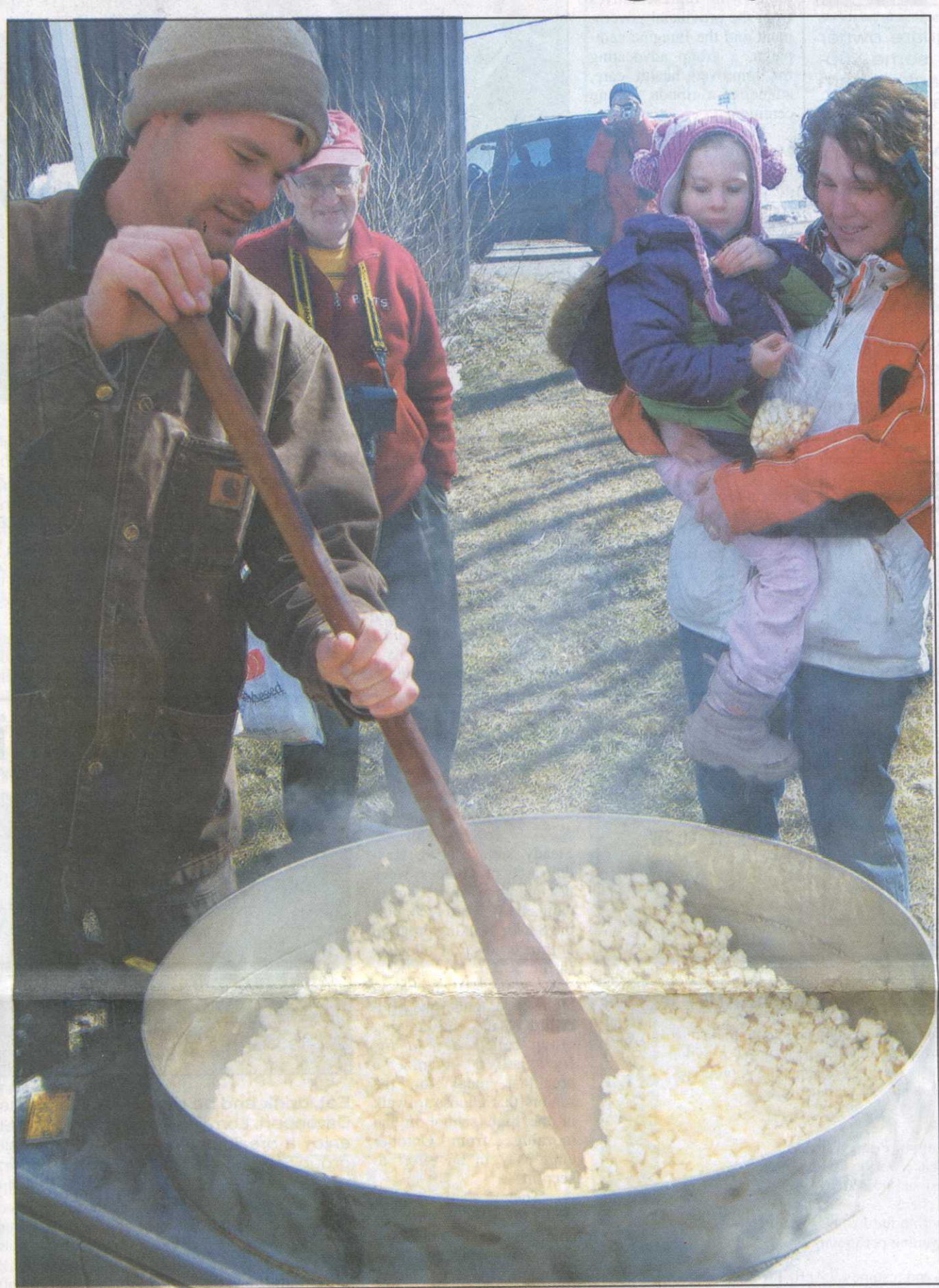
Stone added a great deal of high quality light syrup was produced at his operation just north of Picton earlier in the season and while weather conditions haven't been exactly ideal day-in-and-day-out, low pressure from storm systems working their way through the area has aided the process.

"Every year is different and this is a different year, but we've already equaled our total litres of maple syrup produced from last year and I figure we have about two weeks to 10 days left in the season," he said.

If one looked hard along the Maple trail on Saturday, one might have seen Prince Edward-Hastings MPP and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Leona Dombrowsky.

The minister stopped off at the Waring House Inn & Cookery School on Saturday afternoon to present an award of recognition to Taste the County for having Maple recognized as one of the top 100 festivals in Ontario recently.

"Your hard work has truly paid off and you are helping to uncover the great treasure that is Prince Edward County," Dombrowsky said. The ag. minister added maple syrup is the first harvest of the season and she was honoured to celebrate it in her own riding.



Gazette photo by Jason Parks

Maple's a popping – Anna and Erin Louder check out Tyler Lester as he makes some Maple Kettle Corn at Vader's sap house in Athol on Saturday afternoon. The Vader Maple Syrup production facility was just one of the mouth-watering stops of the seventh annual Maple in the County festival last weekend.