

# Pure Sweetness

JEREMY ASHLEY  
THE COUNTY

If there was someone to know at Hubb's Sugarbush over the weekend, it had to be Rick Casson.

After all, the long-time member of the Masonic Lodge's Ameliaburgh Lake Lodge No. 215 was in charge of pouring steaming hot fresh maple syrup on plates of pancakes placed before him.

"They tell me I'm the person who decides whether we make a profit or loss," he joked, while flooding another plateful of someone waiting patiently in line during the lodge's 30th annual pancake breakfast, Saturday.

"I'm in charge of pouring out the liquid gold here," he added with a smile. "Because they don't trust me around the grill."

The event, which was held at Hubbs Sugarbush on Pulver Road in Ameliaburgh on both Saturday and Sunday, served as a special kick-off for the sixth annual Maple in the County festival.

Over the weekend, thousands descended upon Prince Edward County sugarbushes, restaurants and the downtown core of Picton.

Maple in the County spokeswoman Rebecca

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Leheup-Bucknell said the event was one of about a dozen spread throughout the county over the weekend.

"This is a true testament to the pride of those who live in Prince Edward County — how everyone can come together and put on such a fabulous event to support the first harvest of the year, maple syrup."

In addition to the six sugarbushes participating, this year the festival expanded to include much of the town of Picton — 20 businesses took part in a Maple Madness and Celebration Sale, offering kid-friendly activities such as clowns, petting zoos, maple-flavoured pet treats and live performances.

As the festival began to grow dramatically several years ago, organizers approached the Masonic Lodge about a potential partnership, said lodge master Leonard Bedford. "This is one of the major fundraising projects we have for Lake Lodge, and has been a great asset in maintaining our presence in the community."

The additional publicity attained by the partnership prompted event organizers to expand the breakfast to two days — both Saturday and Sunday mornings — just to keep up with the demand, he said.

Sugarbush owner and lodge member Ron Hubbs recalled the first pancake breakfast three decades ago.

With the help of friends and neighbours, the first was put together within a matter of several weeks and has been held at Hubbs' ever since, he said.

"The first breakfast was held at the old sugar house, and the one thing that always stuck in my mind was when Albury Church got out and Rednersville Church got out, all of the ladies all showed up with their church shoes on — and the mud was ankle deep.

"It was a real treat, but they did come back." Janice Hubbs, president of the Quinte local branch



Rick Casson was in charge of pouring the maple syrup at Hubb's Sugarbush.

Jeremy Ashley photo

of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, spoke about the heritage of maple syrup in Canada. The Maple in the County festival is a celebration of the first crop of the farming season, she added. "Sugaring parties and pancake breakfasts have been a unique Canadian expression to celebrate spring." Greetings were brought from provincial agriculture minister and neighbouring MPP Leona Dombrowsky and Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Ernie Parsons. Ameliaburgh councillor Lori Slik presented the Hubbs with a plaque in honour of the 30th anniversary.

