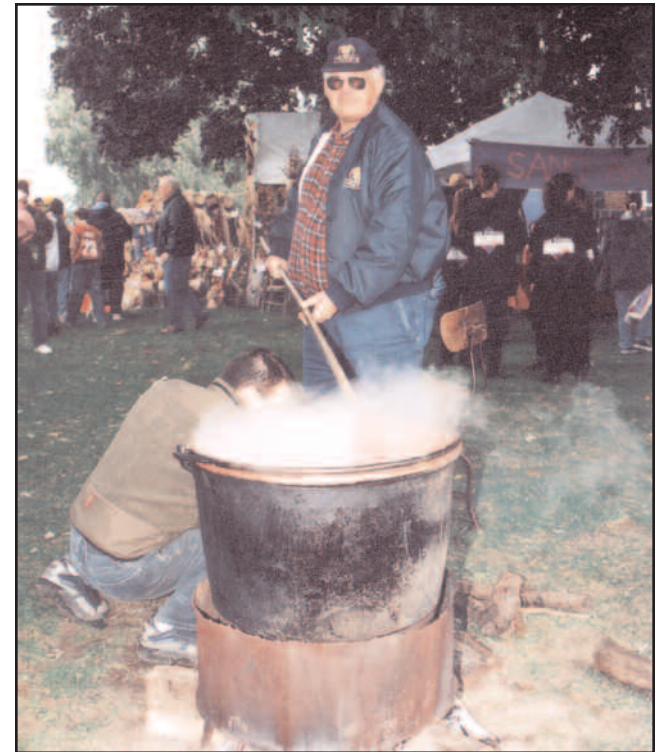




More than 20,000 people will enjoy the annual apple butter stir this weekend at MacQueen Orchards. Since its humble beginnings, the farm has grown into a thriving year-round business.

PLAYLIST PHOTO BY MELISSA GARRETT



One of the featured attractions at the MacQueen Orchards Apple Butter Festival is watching apple butter created over an open fire. David Cooper, of Cooper's Mill, makes apple butter the old-fashioned way.

PLAYLIST PHOTO BY MELISSA GARRETT

# MacQueen Orchards Prepares For 24th Annual Apple Butter Stir

BY NANCY GAGNET  
PLAYLIST REPORTER

On the first weekend of October, approximately 20,000 people will descend upon MacQueen Orchards in Holland for its 24th annual Apple Butter Stir and Crafts Festival.

It's all about apples at the festival where the 175-acre orchard features 18 varieties of the tasty fruit that can be used for anything from salads and sauces to baked goods and snacking.

The country feel draws a local crowd as well as those from Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania and southern Ohio.

"People who know we have it come from all over," explained Marlene MacQueen, who helps run the orchard along with her husband Bob.

"It's right on the farm and everything is done right here," she said, referring to the open-air market where fresh produce and fresh baked items are sold.

The festival also offers a family-friendly atmosphere with sights and smells centered around many of the things the fall season offers. Spectators can see apple butter slowly churned over an open fire throughout the two-day event.

Those seeking apples may find them in the market or venture into the orchard to pick them by hand. Other fall items available for purchase include pumpkins, gourds, mini-pumpkins and Indian corn.

Plenty of food will also be a feature of the festival, with sweet treats including caramel apples, apple fritters, funnel cakes and kettle corn. Other items being served will include barbecue chicken and ribs, bratwurst sandwiches and hot dogs.

The festival originated as a form of gratitude to customers.



The Apple Butter Festival features attractions for all ages, including kids' rides, pony rides, horse and wagon rides, face painting and sand art as well as food, crafts and entertainment.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MACQUEEN ORCHARDS

"We originally planned the festival as a 'thank you' to the people for coming and visiting," MacQueen explained.

She is pleasantly surprised by how large the response has grown.

"It's really amazing to us to see how many people come out," she said.

The festival has added many features over the years including kids' rides, pony rides, and horse and wagon rides.

Arts and crafts are also

major attractions as festival goers browse the booths of 100 crafters and artisans from Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania who showcase their merchandise under a large tent.

Marlene says the years she has worked on the farm have been rewarding but tiring, as she has seen the farm evolve from humble beginnings to a year-round industry.

It began in 1936 when the late Hugh and Martha MacQueen planted their first

apple tree. They owned 25 acres and used 10 of them to harvest apples that they transported on a daily basis to area fruit stands and markets.

In 1954, Bob joined his parents Hugh and Martha with the business. They expanded the land by 15 acres and added peach trees to the harvest. In 1956, after Bob and Marlene married, they continued to expand the business. They purchased more land, erected temperature-controlled storage units to store the apples, replaced the peach trees and added more varieties of apples.

Today, with the help of their children and grandchildren, MacQueen Orchards has grown into a thriving year-round business. In addition to the apples and other produce sold on site, the orchard also provides wholesale packaging to several stores.

MacQueen Orchards produces fresh cider on a daily basis from September to May and offers orchard tours to area groups and schools.

A Sweet Shoppe Bakery features homemade donuts and fresh baked pies, and the Apple Rock Café on site features a variety of candy, ice cream, soups and sandwiches.

The Country Gift Barn was added to feature Christmas items throughout the year, while Martha's

### Entertainment Schedule

Saturday, October 1

11:00 a.m. — The Julie O'Connell Dancers  
Noon — On the Beach  
2:00 — The Thunder Road Band

Sunday, October 2

10:00 a.m. — Gospel music  
Noon — The Sounds of Music  
2:00 — polka music featuring Larry Zabo's Glass Town Sound

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Gas Relief Special Save \$1.00 Per Entree For Lunch Limit 1 per person Expires: 10-31-05  
Free Dessert Choice Of Carrot Cake Or Chocolate Cream Pie With Purchase of Dinner Entree Coupon Expires: 10-31-05

**Fun Apple Facts Reveal A Fruity Past**

- Apples come in all shades of reds, greens and yellows.
- Two pounds of apples make one nine-inch pie.
- 2,500 varieties are grown in the United States.
- In 2001, U.S. consumers ate an average of 45.2 pounds of fresh apples and processed apple products. That's a lot of applesauce!
- Apples are fat-, sodium- and cholesterol-free.
- Apples are a member of the rose family.
- Most apples are still picked by hand in the fall.
- Apple trees take four to five years to produce their first fruit.
- The pilgrims planted the first apple trees in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- Apples are great source of fiber pectin.
- One apple has five grams of fiber.
- A medium apple is about 80 calories.
- Twenty-five percent of an apple's volume is air; that is why they float.
- The largest apple picked weighed three pounds.
- It takes about 36 apples to create one gallon of cider.
- Archaeologists have found evidence that humans have been enjoying apples since 6500 BC.

Source: University of Illinois Extension  
[www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/apples/facts.html](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/apples/facts.html)