

West Virginia Maple Day 2016



West Virginia's first Mountain State Maple Day was a sweet success. Hundreds of people from all across West Virginia and surrounding states visited one or more of the seven maple producers who opened their sugar shacks for tours and demonstrations.

"We want to grow the maple industry here in West Virginia," stressed Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. "West Virginia has more tappable maple trees than the state of Vermont, the number one maple producer in the country. We have an opportunity here to produce, bottle, and sell West Virginia maple syrup to millions."

More than 200 people showed up at Family Roots Farm in Wellsburg for a tour of their new sugar shack. Britney Hervey-Farris walked visitors through the operation. "It takes 50 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. We collect thousands and thousands of gallons of sap water each winter." Family Roots has doubled in size since 2013. This past season, they tapped 600 trees and plan to sell about 200 gallons of pure maple syrup.

Cedar Run Farm in Friendly attracted a young crowd for their demonstrations. A troop of Girl Scouts and two young farmers interested in starting up their own maple production were just a few of the visitors.

Lee Barb, the owner of Rock Haven Maple Camp in Mathias, prides himself on both learning and implementing the best management practices. He's thrilled West Virginia maple syrup is getting its due. "I'm part of Mountain State Maple Day because I want to make it into history. What we are doing here in West Virginia right now is making history. We are getting back to our heritage."

Visitors had the chance to purchase maple products from the farms. Many took advantage of pancake and maple syrup dinners offered at several different locations. At the Landis Ruritan Club in Petersburg, they served up pancakes and sausage throughout the day and there was plenty of pure West Virginia maple syrup to go around. "This is so good! There's nothing better than buckwheat cakes with lots of butter and maple syrup. I think I'll have seconds," said one man who stopped by the Ruritan Club for lunch.

The farms who participated in Mountain State Maple Day include: Bowers Maple Farm, Cedar Run Farm, Cool Hollow Maple Farm, Daniels Maple Syrup, Family Roots Farm, Frostmore Farm, and Rock Haven Maple Camp. Also taking part were Barn with Inn, Brooke County Farmers' Market, Landis Ruritan Club, Spicy Gringos, and Southside Depot.

The annual WV Maple Syrup Festival in Pickens was held on the same weekend.

For more information on West Virginia maple syrup, check out the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association at <https://www.facebook.com/wvmaplesyrup>.