

Stamford Museum & Nature Center to Host Annual Maple Sugar Festival Weekend, March 4 & 5

By Stamford Museum & Nature Center

Stamford, CT - Presented by First County Bank, Maple Sugar Festival Weekend returns to the Stamford Museum & Nature Center on Saturday, March 4, and Sunday, March 5, 11 am to 3 pm each day.

This year marks sixth year of the two-day event schedule, which was expanded in 2012 from the SM&NC's traditional "Maple Sugar Sunday." First County Bank has sponsored the family festival for the past 17 years.



Tapping a tree trunk to extract maple sap for maple syrup (contributed photo)

Like the SM&NC's other popular festival weekends – Harvest Festival in October and Spring on the Farm in May – March 4 & 5 will be chockful of fun family activities like scavenger hunts, face painting, live music, arts & crafts, and close-up views of the animals of Heckscher Farm as well as the exotic denizens of the SM&NC's Heckscher WILD! exhibit.

But the sweetest celebration of all is the Maple Sugar Festival, for it revolves around the production of maple syrup from some 200+ mature maple trees found among the SM&NC's 118-acre facility in North Stamford. The non-profit is one of only two official maple sugar producers in Fairfield County and annually produces from 40 to 90 gallons of maple syrup each year.



Maple Sugaring in 2016 (contributed photo)

"We can prepare as best we can for the syrapping season, but Mother Nature is really the one who will tell us what kind of season and festival we are going to have," says Lisa Monachelli, the SM&NC's Director of Education. Last year's Maple Sugar Festival attracted 3,528 attendees over the two days, a 50 percent boost over a snowy March weekend in 2015.

This year, Heckscher Farm staffers are set to begin tapping the trees around Valentine's Day, and over the coming weeks will collect thousands of gallons of "maple water" from the stands of trees – collectively known as the sugar bush – to be processed on-site into pure maple syrup.

Visit the little red sugarhouse on Heckscher Farm during the Maple Sugar Festival to see firsthand how sap is turned into maple syrup. Learn how trees are tapped, find out how sap is collected, and make a maple-themed craft. There are also demonstrations of how Native Americans of the area made maple sugar using vessels of bark and wood and cooking the sap with the "hot-rock method."

Saturday, March 4, brings a special treat: In the comfy confines of the SM&NC's Bendel

Mansion, festival-goers can watch local teen chefs create delicious dishes using SM&NC maple syrup and vote for their favorites in the First County Bank Teen Chefs Challenge. The event starts with the tastings at 11:30 am and ends at 1:30 pm with the winner declared by popular vote and celebrity judging. (Young chefs ages 10-18 are invited to participate; please contact Allison Biele at 203.977.6548 or abiele@stamfordmuseum.org to learn more.)

On Sunday, March 5, enjoy the popular pancake brunch from 11 am to 2 pm and tour the latest exhibition in the Stamford Museum Galleries: "Powerful yet Fragile: Connecticut's Waterways," a provocative display of images captured by the Women Photographers of Connecticut, a diverse group of women photographers from across the state. And don't forget to purchase a pint of fresh maple syrup to take home!

Daily Admission Fees to the Maple Sugar Festival are \$ 5 per person for SM&NC Members; \$10 per person for non-member. Director's Circle & Family Plus Members and all children 3 & under are admitted free of charge. The Pancake Brunch on Sunday, 11 am - 2 pm, is an additional \$6 per person.

You can save time by purchasing your festival admission and pancake brunch tickets in advance at stamfordmuseum.org.

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