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MAPLE SYRUP FEST IS A SWEET TREAT IN VERGAS

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By Heather Rule

"It's like coming out of a hibernation," said Hanson, president of the [Vergas Community Club](#). "People are looking for an event to take part in, see some of their friends and see how they've changed over the winter. The social gathering of that is always fun."

The annual [Maple Syrup Fest](#) is scheduled for April 9, 2022. Vergas is the northern-most area in Minnesota with maple trees that can be tapped for sap. Many local people do their own tapping of trees for syrup production, Hanson said, with some in the area commercially zoned to sell their syrup.

The event started about 20 years ago with a pancake breakfast complete with real maple syrup which drew more than 1,000 people, Hanson said. "It was a hit right away," Hanson added.



Tapping into a tree to collect sap.

The Fest expanded over the years with more events. There's a 5K run called "Saps Running," marking one of the first 5K runs of the season in the area. Community businesses come on board for Maple Syrup Fest, offering specials or feature maple-related items like maple cookies or a maple-infused drink, Hanson said. Look for maple cotton candy, maple ice cream cones and maple shakes at Maple Syrup Fest as well. There's also a maple leaf hunt for kids with maple leaf wood carvings hidden in different parts of town. Kids find them and turn them in for prizes.

The pancake breakfast remains the staple and most popular part of Maple Syrup Fest. The maple syrup served comes from a local producer. People really enjoy that it's real maple syrup since it's "a huge treat" for those who might buy something different at the grocery store, Hanson said.

Along with enjoying breakfast, visitors enjoy live music and learn about tapping trees for syrup and how the whole process works. Folks head out to nearby Maplewood State Park to see the sugar boiling production process from the trees to boiling it down.

Maple syrup is the main event, so naturally, there's a maple syrup judging contest where home syrup producers from all over can bring in a sample of their syrup for the judges to

blindly sample for clarity and taste. About 50 to 100 people bring in samples for the contest, Hanson said.

"It's also a way for the local syrup producers to gauge how their syrup is compared to others, too," Hanson said.

The winner has his or her name added to a traveling copper trophy with a copper leaf. As numbers have grown with 50 or more syrups, imagine being one of the judges tasting all of them, Hanson said. "They're just on a sugar high by the time they're done," Hanson said. "Pretty crazy."

The Vergas Community Club and Vergas Lions sponsor Maple Syrup Fest. The breakfast is from 7:00 a.m. until noon at the Vergas Event Center. The 5K run starts at 8:00 a.m. down Main Street.

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