

# Church Cooks Apple Butter Over Open Fire

Mary Laeger Hagemeister LIVERPOOL (Perry County) — Smoke wafts through the air, combined with the sweet aroma of cooking apples. Crackling logs emit flames around enormous cast iron kettles as apples, ciders, and sugar are stirred for an average of eight hours per kettle to achieve the final lip-smacking product — apple butter.

The 38-year tradition of making apple butter is part of St. John's (Barner's) Lutheran Church, Liverpool. It's a tradition, not just for the congregation's members but the entire community. Individuals arrive at the church the second Friday night of October each year with large bowls and knives prepared to "snitz."

Snitzing involves everyone no matter what the age! Small children dig apples out of barrels to distribute to the adults, spanning three generations, who prepare the apples for cooking. However, more is accomplished through snitzing than meets the eye. During this time, stories are shared such as, "Remember when Suzy

was that age..." or "How are things going?"

The support for individuals is evident as well as for the community. Of course the end result is barrels and barrels of sliced apples and stained hands, but the memories that live on can't be measured in jars of apple butter — but Mary believes they do add to the flavor!

From the church fellowship hall the apples are transported to the grove where the men are preparing the fires under each kettle. Around midnight they begin cooking and stirring, not taking time out to sleep, until the wee hours of the day. At the crack of dawn women are back at the church preparing a "substantial" breakfast for smoked, stir-weary men.

Even breakfast needs to be eaten in shifts. Someone needs to continually stir the apple butter! As the day wears on, more and more volunteers appear on the scene. People are busy filling jars of apple butter for customers, fixing and serving homemade chicken corn soup, bean soup, homemade ice cream and pie. In addition,



For 38 years, church members have made apple butter the old-fashioned way, enjoying the fellowship and taste that comes from the all day and all night activity.

patrons can choose from an array of homemade crafts and goodies.

Many hours are volunteered by a multitude of people to keep this

tradition alive. While the tradition sometimes labels St. John's as the "Apple Butter Church," the toils of everyone's labors help support the community. Proceeds from the event are used only for special ministry — such as helping the homeless at Bethesda Mission or a local family who faces a crisis such as a home fire or serious

illness. Traditions, whether family or community, give a sense of belonging. They help individuals feel as though they are important and offers them a sense of values. The sweet taste of apple butter can be enjoyed only because loving, caring people give of their time and energy.

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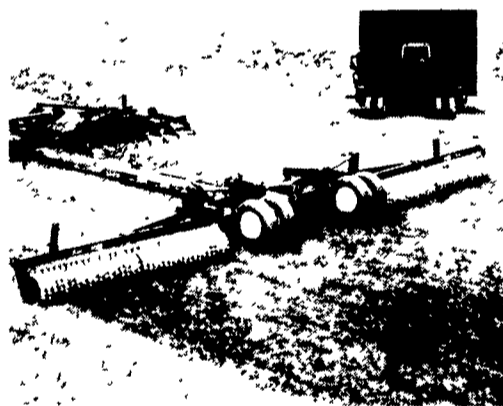
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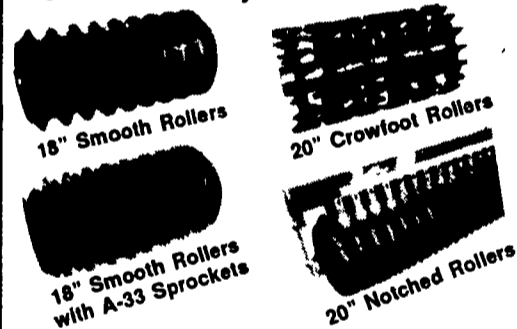


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