

Potato Fest Spuds Family Fun

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EBENSBURG (Cambria Co.)**

— The 4th annual Potato Fest is being held in the main streets of Ebensburg on Saturday, September 30, beginning at 9 a.m. This harvest festival, celebrating the potato, is sponsored by the Ebensburg Business District Authority (EBDA). Spokesman Tim Houser promises that "the festival will feature all-day family fun and entertainment."

The Potato Fest was initiated by the EBDA in an effort to promote the area's potato industry. Most of the area's potatoes are grown in the northern part of Cambria County and Ebensburg seemed the logical place to hold this festival.

In addition to a Farmer's Market featuring locally-grown produce, the business district will hold an in-town sidewalk sale.

The food booths are popular, as they are at any festival, and many of these will be serving a "potato" menu. This includes such items as potato candy, potato soup, baked potatoes, the ever-popular french fries, potato pieroghis, and even "flowering" potatoes.

A large assortment of homemade craft items is expected in the craft booths and a variety of entertainment will be continuous throughout the day. This includes music, a dog show, an ice sculpture demonstration, a clown, magician, and "Unicycle Sam." "Mr. Potato Head" will even make an appearance. A "children's activities" tent will also be in operation.

Local schools participated in the poster contest and potato carving contest held this past week. Entries are to be judged and prizes will be awarded to the winning students. Last year, carved likenesses of Bill and Hillary Clinton were entered in the contest.

Another feature of the festival is the Miss Potato Fest Pageant.

A few of the chipping companies which purchase Cambria County potatoes distribute sample



Mid Mandichak (left) and her sister, Donna Penatzer, in the kitchen of "Mid's Homemade Candy," RD Ebensburg, are busy preparing potato candy for Potato Fest '95.

bags of their product to festival goers. It's quit possible that these chips were made from locally grown tubers.

Why the potato? The lowly spud may seem an odd thing around which to center a celebration, but here in Cambria County, potato is king! In fact, according to figures given by Ron Hostetler of the local PSU extension office, Cambria County ranks second in potato production in Pennsylvania. Only Erie County produces more. Both "chipping" and "table stock" potatoes are grown in the area.

This year's potato season has been a real challenge to area farmers. Present drought conditions are making harvesting a little more difficult since the ground is harder than usual. Hostetler did remark that surprisingly, in spite of the drought, yields seem to be pretty respectable. "In general, the area potatoes are not as big as usual as a consequence of the drought, but there are a lot of potatoes on the vines."

The potato is an economical and versatile vegetable. Potato candy, the stuff that you ate as a kid — a concoction of mashed potatoes and confectioners' sugar, rolled out and smeared with pea-

nut butter, will be featured. However, Mid Mandichak, owner of "Mid's Homemade Candy" located in RD Ebensburg, has taken the old-fashioned potato candy recipe and through trial and error in her candy kitchen, updated it for a more modern taste.

Mid, a member of the Ebensburg Rotary, along with several other Rotary members prepare some of the candy during the week previous to the festival and donate it back to the club for sale during the Potato Fest. She remarked that her "newer" version of potato candy has been quite a "hit" during the Potato Fest and generally sells out before noon.

Potato soup is another featured item at the festival and Ebensburg area resident, June Griffith, was gracious enough to share her "tried and true" recipe. She has prepared this particular soup for other activities held in the Ebensburg area and it has received "rave" reviews. According to Tim Houser of the EBDA, "it is absolutely delicious!"

June also shares her version of a recipe for potato bread which is made in a breadmaker. She remarked that this recipe has quite an interesting flavor due to the chopped green onions and tops which are added. It uses potatoes in another form — dried potato buds.

June and her husband Richard N. live at "Bryn Teg Farm" (Welsh, meaning "Pleasant Hill") a few miles outside of Ebensburg. For years they owned and operated a retail farm dairy until the early '70s, and then went in to the potato growing business for a number of years.

June is a "Jack of Trades" having been a home economist for the local extension office before her children were born, a home economics teacher, substitute teacher, and now a realtor. June is also called upon to judge entries and exhibits at fairs in neighboring counties.

As a home economist, June remarks that potato soup is a very economical and hearty meal. When asked what the secret is to making delicious potato soup, this wife of a former potato farmer answered "begin with good Cambria County potatoes!"



The crew at Rick Weakland farm in RD Portage is busy sorting potatoes before shipping.

MID'S 'MODERN' POTATO CANDY

¾ cup mashed potatoes (homemade or from instant mashed potato puffs)

4 cups flaked coconut

4¾ cups sifted confectioners' sugar

2 cups smooth peanut butter

CHOCOLATE COATING:

Mix 2 tablespoons soft butter, 2 tablespoons corn syrup, and 3 tablespoons water in the top of a double boiler. Stir in one pkg. (15.4 oz.) chocolate fudge flavor frosting mix until smooth. Heat over rapidly boiling water 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Combine ingredients except coating; drop by teaspoonfuls on waxed paper. Roll in balls, refrigerate ¼ to 1 hour. If mix is too soft to form balls, refrigerate first, then shape balls. Dip balls in coating, turning to coat on all sides. Keep chocolate over hot water while dipping candy. With tongs or forks, lift balls out of chocolate on waxed paper or cake rack.

Place candies in refrigerator to harden. (6 doz. candies) ***Mid's Homemade Candy" uses Nestle's Pure Milk Chocolate in place of chocolate coating.

JUNE GRIFFITH'S POTATO SOUP

6-8 potatoes, peeled and cubed

2 onions, chopped

3 carrots, chopped or shredded

2 ribs celery

1 tablespoon parsley

7 cups water

½ cup butter

salt and pepper to taste

Cook all of the above ingredients together and mash with a potato masher.

Add ½ of a 13-ounce can of evaporated milk.

Heat and enjoy!

JUNE'S BREADMAKER POTATO BREAD

1 egg plus enough water to make 1 cup + 3 tablespoons

3 tablespoons oil

1 teaspoon lemon juice

3 tablespoons dry milk

1 teaspoon salt

¼ cup sugar

½ cup Potato Buds

2 tablespoons green onions

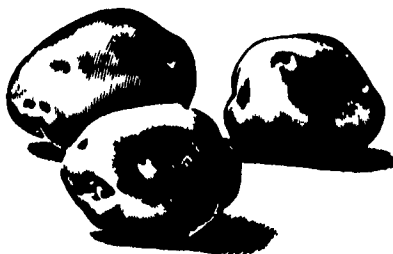
3 cups + 3 tablespoons flour

1 teaspoon dry yeast

Bake according to manufacturer's directions for Basic Bread — Dark. This recipe is designed for a 1½ -pound loaf breadmaker.



Doug Weakland, 4-year-old son of Rick and Dawn Weakland of RD Portage, holds spuds from his dad's recent potato harvest.



Museum Begins Activity Program

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)—Registrations are currently being taken for two adult classes scheduled this fall at the Hershey Museum. "Watercolor Techniques" instructed by Robert Nisley will be held on Wednesdays, October 18 through December 6. This eight-week course is designed to accommodate a variety of experience levels. Many watercolor techniques are explored in this class and participants are encouraged to progress at their own pace. The instructor, Bob Nisley, is a signature member of the Pennsylvania Watercolor Society, winner of an honor award in the WITF exhibit. He exhibits his paintings at many regional arts and crafts festivals. A list of materials will be supplied upon registrations. Class fee is \$35 for

nonmembers and \$30 if you are a museum member. Please register by October 9 by calling (717) 534-3439.

"Introduction to Honeysuckle Basketry Workshop" taught by fiber artist and basketmaker, Susan Kelleher will be held on Tuesday, October 24, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Honeysuckle vine grows wild throughout the mid-Atlantic region and has long been gathered and prepared to be woven into baskets. Students will make a small basket using wicker basketry techniques. Instructions on how to gather and prepare honeysuckle vine and natural dye materials will be given. Class fee is \$29 nonmembers and \$25 museum members. Please register by October 13 by calling (717) 534-3439.