

Baumans Continue Apple Butter Heritage

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SASSAMANSVILLE (Montgomery Co.) — The fragrance of simmering apples drifts across the small village of Sassamansville. The source of the aroma wifts from a nondescript two-story

While people today use apple butter basically as a spread or condiment, the story is told that apple butter served as a food staple that enabled refugees fleeing religious persecution to stay alive during their ocean voyage. In 1734, the followers of Casper

steam engine in his shop. Soon he began making apple butter, made with the recipe his wife had received from her Schwenkfolder ancestors.

The apple butter business continues to grow and has long ago replaced the carriage business. The same building is still in use, although it has been added onto again and again to house the growing demand for fruit butters and cider.

Although the process has been automated, the original cider press, although modified, is still in use. Most of the wooden pieces of the 1892 press have been replaced with stainless steel and metal parts. The bill of sale for the original cider press is posted on the wall of the store. The purchase price in 1892 was \$432.

Harvey is a mechanical engineer who has designed much of the mechanical process. Despite his training, his wife said, "Harvey learned the most by following his dad around."

Several apple butter cookers are used for processing, but the same lid that Harvey's grandfather patented in 1906 is still used.

Kathy runs the day-to-day operation while Harvey holds down a full-time job as an engineer. Ten full-time and 10 part-time employees work during the busy summer and fall months. If equipment breaks down, Harvey is contacted by phone. Most of the time, Harvey can diagnose and walk the caller by phone through making the repairs.

An automatic turn table is used to fill the jars with the fruit butter.

Bauman's apple butter is darker and richer in flavor than most mass produced varieties on the market. Kathy explains that the richer flavor is derived from cooking cider with the apples for seven hours. No hurrying up process for them.

More than five pounds of apples are required to yield one pound of apple butter. The original apple butter contained no added sugar, but for those who prefer it, the added sugar variety is also available. However, Kathy said, "The extra cider cooked with the apples makes it almost as sweet as the sugar-added style."

During the peak of the season, Baumans process about 400 bushels of apples a day for apple butter and another 500-800 bushels for cider. They buy all the



Kathy and John examine apples to determine which will be used for apple butter and which will be used for cider. Each day during peak season, about 400 bushels of apples are turned into apple butter and 500-800 bushels are pressed into cider.

building flanked on either side by brick homes situated in the middle of town.

Passers-by would never suspect that inside the aging building some of the most delectable fruit butters and cider are being processed.

It's a historic family business, dating back to 1892 and passed down through the generations to Harvey and Kathy Bauman and children, John, 13, and Heidi, 9.

The secret of the Bauman's success stems from a family recipe from the 1700s.

"We use the same recipe — no preservatives or shortcuts," Kathy said of the rich, dark apple butter that requires seven hours of cooking.

Schwenkfold came to Pennsylvania as Christian refugees from Silesia, seeking freedom of worship.

"They survived on the high seas in part due to an ample supply of apple butter, which could be kept without preservatives or refrigeration," Kathy said.

When the group arrived safely in the new world, they celebrated with a meal of bread and apple butter.

The group settled in southeastern Pennsylvania alongside Mennonite settlements. Harvey's great-great-grandfather, a Mennonite, operated a carriage manufacturing shop. In 1892, he purchased a cider press and operated it with a



Harvey and Kathy Bauman with children, John, 13, and Heidi, 9, are in the midst of their busy season making apple butter, other fruit butters, and cider. The Baumans still use the centuries-old apple butter recipe, which helped keep Harvey's ancestors alive during their escape from religious persecution.



apples from local growers who are in abundance in the area.

Baumans use a mixture of sweet and tart apples to make the apple butter. The red delicious variety is

not useable for apple butter but is needed for cider in which they also use a mixture of in-season varieties. Because cider is made from a different mixture depending on what's available, it may vary in taste a bit. "But the flavor doesn't vary much," Kathy said.

Apple cider is made in a press that has 3,000 pounds of pressure. In addition to their own, the Bau-

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Heidi and John are already helping in the family business by waiting on customers such as Ford Greer. Andy Allen, an employee, stands at right.



After seven hours of cooking, apple butter, made in 20-gallon batches, is ready to jar. About 5 pounds of apples are needed to make one-pound of the dark, rich apple butter made with a recipe handed down through the centuries.



Kathy shows some of the gift boxes packaged with several varieties of fruit butters.