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**Welcome to the ABC Festival**



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*The Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival guide is produced by the staff of the Wilmot Tavistock Gazette*

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"Hosts" of the Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival:  
**FRITZ KASEBROCHKEN & ANNIE APPLESCHNITZ.**

They hope visitors will enjoy the old-fashioned  
rural atmosphere of Wellesley.



FOR HELP FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND TODAY, SEE MAP ON PAGE 6

# WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

## JOE NOWAK



This year, the Annual Apple Butter and Cheese Festival is celebrating its 51st anniversary. It is inspiring to see our community come together, showcasing the wonderful spirit and pride that makes the Township of Wellesley a special place to visit.

I want to extend my sincere thanks for the selfless efforts of the dedicated volunteers that give their time generously and for all their hard work in making the festival a success each year. All proceeds from the event are directed to major community projects.

Come early and enjoy the pancake breakfast starting at the crack of dawn on “main street”. Bring your appetite and

enjoy the many flavours of the country offered by local community groups throughout the festival grounds. A short walk from the main street will bring you to outdoor vendors with a large selection of homemade crafts. Erick Traplin will have the children “blowing bubbles” and dancing on the street. There are events for all ages. Enjoy free wagon rides and tours, and let’s not forget the apple butter and cheese products available from local vendors.

I encourage everyone to join me and my family in Wellesley on Saturday September 26th to enjoy all that the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival has to offer. Hope to see you there.



*Wellesley Mayor Joe Nowak*



Our team at the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette is thrilled to be once again participating in the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival through the production of this program. Thank you to the organizing committee for their dedication in planning such a beloved community tradition and congratulations on another successful event!

Just as the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival thrives thanks to the contributions of so many, this program also comes together through the efforts of a dedicated team. I would like to thank editor Galen Simmons, advertising representatives Heather Dunbar, Mamta Patel and Lisa Roberts, graphic designer Erin Parsons, and journalists Mercedes Kay Gold, Diane Danen, Scott Dunstall,

Emily Stewart, and Steph Muma for their valuable contributions toward this year’s program. We hope everyone enjoys reading it!

This guide would also not be possible without the support of our community-minded businesses whose advertisements fund the project. We encourage you to take special note of their contributions throughout these pages.

We look forward to celebrating with everyone in Wellesley on Saturday, September 26, 2026 for the 51st Annual Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival.

Stewart Grant  
*Publisher, Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette*



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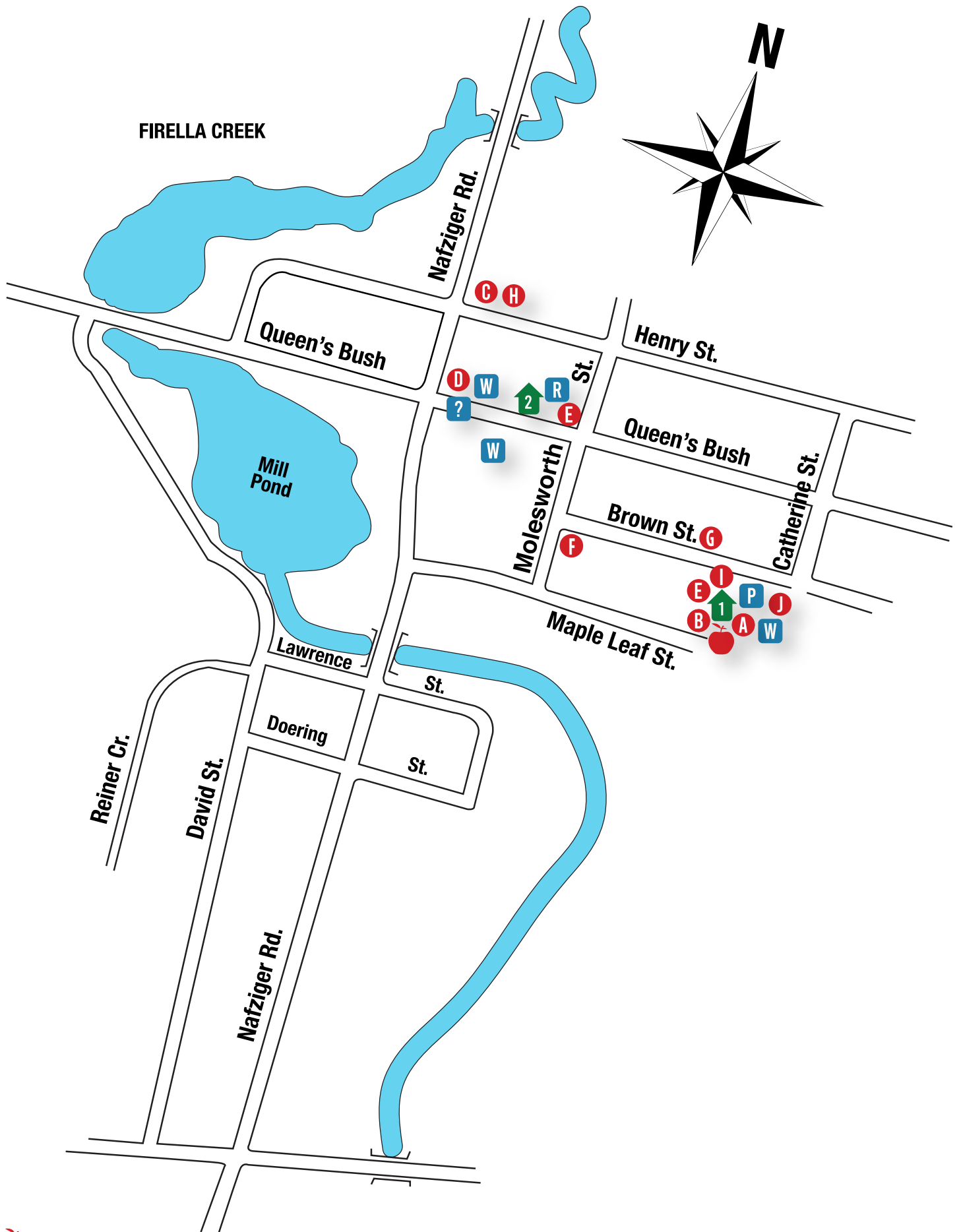
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# WELLESLEY APPLE BUTTER & CHEESE FESTIVAL

## LEGEND



**P PARKING**  
Community Centre & Old Arena, Churches, School  
(check with a fireman attendant for assistance)

**R REST AREA**  
At the top east end of the Street Mall

**1 OLD WELLESLEY ARENA/  
BALL DIAMOND GROUNDS**  
Craft Market

**2 DOWNTOWN STREET MALL**

**A CRAFT CIDER/BEER TENT**

**B CRAFT MARKET**

**C LIBRARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
(UPSTAIRS) / THEATRE WELLESLEY**

**D FARM TOURS DEPARTURE POINT**

**MAPLE CRISP APPLES**  
FAMILY GROWN FARM FRESH APPLES

**W WASHROOMS**  
Street Mall, Old Arena, at Farm Tour departure

**? INFORMATION CENTRE  
LOST & FOUND BOOTH**  
On the downtown Street Mall

**E ENTERTAINMENT (DOWNTOWN STREET  
MALL & UPPER BALL DIAMOND)**

**F HORSESHOE TOURNAMENT**

**G ANTIQUE TRACTORS**

**H ANTIQUE CARS**

**I PETTING ZOO AND PONY RIDES**

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## FESTIVAL EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS

The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival offers events and entertainment for all ages. The day starts at 7:00 a.m. with our Pancake Breakfast. Our craft and food market opens at 8:00 a.m. and the festival runs all day until 4:00 p.m.

We offer free parking and admission and we have free tractor wagons running all day to transport people throughout the festival.

### **PANCAKE BREAKFAST**

Downtown Street Mall  
- from 7 a.m.

### **ANTIQUE CAR PARADE**

Parade through town  
- from 12 p.m.

### **HORSESHOE TOURNAMENT**

Old Arena Grounds  
- from 9 a.m.

### **TIGER PAW EXOTICS PETTING ZOO AND PONY CAROUSEL**

Old Arena Grounds

### **CRAFT CIDER/BEER TENT**

Outdoor Pavilion between ball diamonds  
- starts at 10 a.m.  
Come sample some of the finest locally produced craft ciders and beer

### **MINI-TRACTOR PULL**

Queen's Bush Road  
- 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
*Contest is open to children 10 years and under, with a minimal charge to enter. Trophies will be awarded. Contestants must have signed consent from parents. Forms available at the main street information booth.*

### **WELLESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **WELLESLEY LIBRARY/ THEATRE WELLESLEY**

- 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Drop by the Historical Room during the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival to see our displays.

### **TAE KWON DO DEMONSTRATION**

10:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Our local tae Kwon Do group will be putting on performances

### **ANTIQUE CARS DISPLAY**

Library Grounds  
Visitors are welcome to see the antique and classic cars that will be arriving. At noon, there will be a parade around the Village by the classic cars.

### **CLASSIC FORD / FERGUSON TRACTORS**

Brown St. behind the old arena  
*Enjoy a bit of agricultural history and see a collection of antique farm equipment.*

### **THE CRAFT AND VENDOR MARKETPLACE**

Old Wellesley Arena and Ball Diamond Grounds  
8 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Come & check out the many quality artisan craft and food vendors

### **MODERN DAIRY FARM TOUR AND MAPLE SYRUP SUGAR SHACK TOUR**

Buses will be running back and forth to the farm and sugar shack all day, loading passengers in the Wellesley Auto Care parking lot on Nafziger Road.

### **QUEEN'S BUSH RD FOOD MALL**

Enjoy the food treats that are the specialties of the Festival including caramel apples, apple fritters, apple cider and other beverages; sausage on a bun & french fries; and schnitzel on a bun.

### **DOWNTOWN STREET MALL**

### **ENTERTAINMENT**

At the east (upper) end of the mall on Queen's Bush Road, visitors are welcome to relax and enjoy local entertainers performing at various times during the day.

### **Mainstage Entertainment Line up 2025**

9:15 to 10 a.m. - Erick Traplin  
10 to 10:35 a.m. - Kyle Geraghty  
10:40 to 11:15 a.m. - Allister Bradley  
11:20 to 11:45 a.m. - Five Hours Apart  
11:50 a.m. - 12:25 p.m. - Folklore Junction  
12:30 - 1:05 p.m. - Jonny Sauder group  
1:15 p.m. - Wellesley Idol

### **CRAFT/VENDOR MARKET ENTERTAINMENT**

*(located in the ball diamond)*

9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Vanheart  
12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - After Midnight

## A LOT OF LOVE FOR APPLE SLAW

**By Mercedes Kay Gold**

Ontario's famed fall festival has been serving up family fun and fabulous food since 1975. The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival began as a way to promote local love of the township and showcase apple products and cheese. Nothing beats bringing community together, making new friends and supporting local brands.

As a holistic nutritionist, I encourage eating wholesome, nutrient-dense food for optimal health. An apple a day is delightful.

This simple salad is a sensational standalone or a super side dish served with roasted pork. The simplicity of a sweet or tart crunchy apple and fresh veggies is soon to be a family farm-to-table favourite whether you crave classic creamy or tangy vinegar dressing.

Apples take centerstage. There are 15 varieties of apples grown in Ontario. We have Cortland, macintosh, ambrosia and royal gala to name a few. Apples are nutrient and fiber dense. They are loaded with tons of vitamin C, helping maintain strong immunity and piles of pectin, a prebiotic for gut health. An apple is the perfect portable snack, but with a little imagination, there's no shortage of ways to reap the heaps of health benefits.

Eating a rainbow of colours helps ensure the body receives a plethora of goodness, and this raw salad includes boatloads of body-boosting benefits thanks to carrots and cabbage. Looking for a simple and satisfying lunch? Toss on raw nuts for plant-based protein and good fats. Worried about weight-management, add raw seeds too. Blood sugar an issue? Whether you are on team maple syrup or honey, cut that in half. For phenomenal fiber and trace minerals, always leave the skin on.

Nothing better pairs with apples than a slice of cheese. The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival is the perfect time to sample the latest and greatest local cheese, some award winning to boot.

I topped the slaw recipe below with my personal favourite, aged parmesan by Millbank Cheese & Butter, but their maple cheddar would complement as well.

Build your body from the inside out with a basketful of favourites thanks to Mother Nature. Stylize your salad! Have fun with shapes. Chop, dice, ribbon, spiralize, or grate veggies. Use lots of colours. Pfenning's farms grow rainbow carrots, and apples stand out bold and brightly on a colourful base.

### **All-star apple slaw**

*Serves 4*

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups of shredded purple or green cabbage
- 2 large carrots grated in any colour
- 2 large apples of choice chopped or diced
- 3 Tbsp of balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbs of extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp Dijon or honey mustard
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- \*3-4 Tbsp of mayonnaise or plain yogurt
- ½ cup raw walnuts
- ½ cup shaved aged parmesan or cubed choice of cheese

#### **Directions:**

1. Wash all produce.
2. Remove outer wilted leaves of cabbage and slice.
3. Grate or ribbon the carrot.
4. Chop the apple.
5. Combine cabbage, apple and carrots in a stainless-steel



*Mercedes Kay Gold. Photos courtesy of Mercedes Kay Gold*



*This simple apple slaw is bursting with a bounty of benefits.*

bowl.

6. In a separate bowl, mix the oil, vinegar, mustard, salt and sweetener of choice.

7. Whisk the dressing. Pour on the salad and combine well.

8. Place it in the fridge for 15 minutes to fuse the flavours.

9. Sprinkle with walnuts and cheese.

*\*For creamy dressing, whisk in the mayonnaise or plain yogurt.*

The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival is simply good food, good people and good times.

## MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF APPLE BUTTER AND CHEESE FESTIVAL GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

**By Galen Simmons**

For more than half a century, the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival has drawn thousands of people to the village each fall, but the impact of the annual celebration lasts long after the crowds have gone home.

Over the festival's 51-year history, much of the money raised has been reinvested in the Village of Wellesley and the surrounding community, supporting everything from recreation facilities and playgrounds to health care, transportation, community beautification and families in need.

That tradition continues this year, with the festival committee donating \$2,000 to Generations Community Church's community backpack program and \$1,500 to the Wellesley-North Easthope Agricultural Society for Wellesley's annual fall fair.

"It's important for the community to know that their support of the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival every year translates directly to supporting the good work numerous organizations, individuals and the township is doing throughout the community and beyond," said Wellesley ABC Festival treasurer and secretary Theresa Bisch.

The list of projects supported by festival proceeds over the decades is



*The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival draws a crowd each fall, with the proceeds from the long-running event continuing to support community organizations, projects and families throughout the year. Photo courtesy of [wellesleyabcfestival.ca](http://wellesleyabcfestival.ca)*

extensive.

The festival helped fund Wellesley's former arena on Catherine Street and later contributed toward the new Bill Gies Recreation Centre. Other recreation investments have included land, ball-park lighting, playground equipment, the splash pad and accessible playground, a multi-use sports park, the Erb Haven Trail and disc golf course.

Festival proceeds have also supported Wellesley Public School's double gym and the purchase of Chromebooks, equipment for the Wellesley Fire Department, a Kiwanis Transit vehicle and a CT scanner for K-W Hospital.

Closer to the heart of the village, money has gone toward downtown

beautification, Christmas lights, memorial benches, pond improvements and two new gateway signs installed in 2025. Even the swans that have become a familiar sight on the Wellesley Pond were purchased by the festival, which continues to pay for their feed and upkeep.

This year's \$2,000 contribution to the community backpack program is another example of festival proceeds responding to a more immediate need in the community.

Program coordinator Millie Leng said Generations Community Church took over the backpack program in 2021. Operating out of the Wellesley Food Cupboard, it provides children from low-income families with backpacks, lunch bags

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and the supplies they need to return to school.

This year, the program is helping approximately 50 children.

“Our backpacks and lunch pails and things like that are the most expensive,” Leng said, noting the backpacks alone cost more than \$1,000 this year.

The children aren’t simply handed a prepacked bag, either. They have an opportunity to choose their own backpack and school supplies, including markers, pencils, rulers, scissors and water bottles.

For families already struggling with the cost of groceries, housing and other necessities, the program can remove at least one expense from the beginning of the school year.

While Generations Community Church provides significant funding for the program and Leng reaches out to area businesses for additional support, this is the first year the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival has contributed.

“It really is,” Leng said when asked how helpful the \$2,000 donation

will be. “And the kids get to choose everything, their own backpacks and all their supplies.”

She said every dollar donated can be put toward supplies for participating children.

“We’re very thankful to the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival,” Leng said.

The festival’s relationship with the Wellesley-North Easthope Agricultural Society is more longstanding. Each year, the festival contributes money toward the Wellesley Fall Fair, including its fireworks and other programming. This year’s contribution totals \$1,000.

Prange said the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival has become an important supporter of the fall fair, not only financially, but also through volunteers and in-kind contributions.

“The Apple Butter and Cheese Festival committee is a wonderful supporter of our community,” Prange said. “The festival was designed to give back to the community, and they keep this tradition alive and flourishing.”

This year, the festival was a gold sponsor of the fall fair and also loaned the agricultural society two booths to use as entrance gates and several picnic tables.

“Both of these really enhanced our fair this year and made a huge difference for us,” Prange said, adding many volunteers are involved with both events and share their knowledge of the community and its needs.

“Our community is better for the festival and the many ways it contributes to our township year-round, not just putting on a fantastic day each year,” she said. “The financial support, volunteer support and other in-kind support is appreciated by the Wellesley Township Fall Fair and many other local groups.”

From major recreation facilities to a child’s new backpack, those contributions have allowed the proceeds from one busy festival on the last Saturday of each September to continue benefiting the community throughout the year.

# Congratulations on another successful festival!



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## APPLE BUTTER AND CHEESE FESTIVALGOERS INVITED TO TOUR HOGENDOORN DAIRY

**By Diane Danen**

Visitors to the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival will have a chance to visit a modern dairy farm and see firsthand how technology and automation are changing the way dairy farmers work.

The Hogendoorn family will welcome visitors for a behind-the-scenes look at the farm's facilities, technology and innovative farming practices. Buses will run between the festival and the farm throughout the day.

The Hogendoorn family moved from Friesland, Netherlands, to Canada in 1995. In the Netherlands, the family milked 40 cows. After moving to Baden, they purchased a 200-acre farm and began building their dairy operation in Canada.

A year later, the family built a double-eight rapid-exit milking parlour, followed by a free-stall barn. The operation continued to expand, and in 2009, the family moved into its current milking facility, featuring a 60-stall rotary parlour and a 350-stall free-stall barn.

Today, Kees Hogendoorn Jr., his wife, Amanda Hogendoorn, and their children, Cole, Quinton and Grayson, have taken on the day-to-day running of the farm, while Kees Hogendoorn Sr. and Tineke Hogendoorn remain actively involved in its

daily activities. They are pleased to see the younger generation carrying on the Hogendoorn family's farming tradition.

The dairy operation at Hogendoorn Dairy looks very different from the traditional farms many people may remember. Visitors may have grown up visiting a relative's tie-stall barn, where cows were milked in their stalls and feeding and bedding were done by hand. As herd sizes grew, so did the workload, while finding people interested in working on the farm became increasingly challenging.

As a result, one of the family's goals has been to automate as much of the farm as possible, helping reduce the demand for labour while improving efficiency.

The farm's 60-stall rotary parlour is example of how the Hogendoorn family has embraced technology and automation. Unlike traditional tie-stall barns, where farmers brought the milking equipment to the cows, the cows at Hogendoorn Dairy walk into the rotary milking parlour. Cows are milked in the parlour three times a day.

Additional labour-saving technology includes a prepping robot that cleans and stimulates the cows' udders before the milking units are attached. A post-dip robot applies

disinfectant to the teats after milking is completed. The rotary parlour can milk approximately 300 cows per hour, allowing two people to milk the entire herd in about an hour.

A self-propelled feed mixer prepares a total mixed ration of feed and is then driven through the barn to auger the feed to mangers in front of the cows, while robotic feed pushers keep feed available to the cows at all times, ensuring improved cow health and reducing labour. Two calf barns are equipped with automated calf feeders.

Instead of traditional straw bedding or wood shavings, the cows are bedded with sand to provide greater cow comfort. The sand eventually mixes with the manure so a sand separation system is used to clean and recycle it.

Hogendoorn Dairy has been irrigating its crops since 2012. Two years ago, the farm purchased a 360 Rain Robot irrigation system that uses Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) GPS to apply water and manure precisely between the rows of corn. RTK GPS is an advanced satellite positioning technique that improves standard GPS accuracy from a few metres to just 1–2 centimetres. The irrigation system can deliver water, nutrients and manure across an entire field with remarkable precision.

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*Cows have access to fresh feed 24 hours a day thanks to robotic feed pushers that keep feed within easy reach at all times. The feed pushers are just one example of how technology and automation are helping improve efficiency at Hogendoorn Dairy. Contributed Photo*

Visitors to the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival are invited to take a bus to Hogendoorn Dairy for a firsthand look at the operation and an opportunity to meet the Hogendoorn family. The tour will showcase how technology, automation and family tradition come together on a modern dairy farm and provide insight into the work that goes into producing the food we enjoy every day.



*Visitors board the bus for the farm tour at a previous Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival. This year, guests can visit Hogendoorn Dairy and discover how technology and automation are shaping modern dairy farming. Contributed Photo*





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## THE ABCS OF BUILDING A GREAT FESTIVAL IN WELLESLEY

**By Scott Dunstall**

For one Saturday every September, Wellesley becomes a very different place. Streets fill with food vendors, craft booths, antique cars, families, music and visitors. The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival is one of the area's best-known community events, but behind the crowds are generations of local people who have kept showing up year after year to make it happen.

Few people understand that better than festival chair Jamie Reid. His family moved to Wellesley in the late 1970s, and he figures he has probably missed only two festivals since then.

"If I missed two festivals in 51 years, I would be surprised," he said.

The Reid family connection to the festival began with Jamie's father, Bob Reid, who quickly immersed himself in the community after moving to Wellesley. He joined the Lions Club and the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival committee and remained involved for decades. Now in his 80s, he is still a committee member.

Jamie Reid eventually took over the chairman's role, although there apparently wasn't much of an election campaign involved. His father announced that he was ready to step away from the position and asked who wanted to take over. "Everyone's looking around at the meeting and nobody really said anything, and they kind of all started looking at me," Jamie recalled. "I'm like, 'No.'" The decision, however, had apparently already been made by everyone else in the room.

The rest of the family has been equally involved. Jamie Reid's mother, Susan, was never officially a committee member, but she was a familiar face at the information booth and, during the days of the festival smorgasbord, helped prepare salads with the wives of his father's ball team.

"She was always, always, always involved," Jamie Reid said.

His wife, Katie, and his sister, Kelly Denecka, now take responsibility for the craft market, and their festival work begins long before anyone sees a booth going up downtown.

"They start in January and they get together probably once to twice a month until September," he said.

Jamie Reid's own memories go back to childhood, when one of his favourite parts was setting up. He remembers finishing school in Wellesley at 3 p.m. on the Friday



*Jamie Reid and father Bob Reid share a moment on "Set-Up Day" at a recent Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese (ABC) Festival. Contributed photo*

before the festival and heading downtown to find his dad and see where he could help.

"I thought it was just fun," he said.

These days, his opinion has changed.

"Now I would say my least favourite part is the setup."

The committee meets for breakfast at 8 a.m. Friday and can spend eight to 10 hours getting everything into place. By Sunday morning, they are back tearing it all down.

Moving booths, picnic tables, trailers, vendors and equipment into the village may look chaotic, but Jamie Reid says years of experience make it work.

"It's like a well-oiled machine now," he said. "We have such a great group of people, a great committee. Everyone just knows what to do."

Longtime volunteers carry much of the knowledge about how the festival fits together.

That dependence on longtime volunteers is also one of the festival's biggest challenges.

While the volunteer spirit remains traditional, the festival continues to evolve. Organizers have added a midway, bouncy castles and other children's activities. This year, there is a new petting zoo, and they are even hoping to bring in a camel. Asked exactly how one transports or pets a camel, Jamie Reid laughed.

"This is going to be all new to us."

The licensed area has also expanded from

cider sampling to local cider and beer, with Jamie Reid determined to keep it close to home.

"I don't want national brands," he said, explaining that organizers looked within roughly an hour to an hour and a half of Wellesley for suppliers.

Cheese remains part of the mix as well, with Mountinoak Cheese among the local producers taking part.

"It's a big enough part that people can get what they're looking for, for sure."

No one knows exactly how many people come through Wellesley on festival day. Estimates generally fall around 30,000 to 40,000 people, but Jamie Reid admits there is no turnstile keeping count. Instead, organizers use a very small-town measuring system.

"We guess by how far out the cars are parked," he said.

When vehicles stretch past the bridge, toward the fire hall and fill every available field and parking area, they know they have had a good year.

After more than half a century, the Apple Butter and Cheese Festival remains a celebration of food, crafts and entertainment, but its real foundation is people. Jamie Reid once hurried downtown after school because he couldn't wait to help his dad set up the festival. Decades later, he is still there, helping put Wellesley together for one very busy Saturday in September.

## FESTIVAL ENTERTAINMENT KICKS OFF WITH ERICK TRAPLIN



**By Wilmot-Tavistock  
Gazette staff**

The Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival is getting an early start on Saturday, Sept. 26, with a morning full of food, fun and family entertainment.

After enjoying the festival's Pancake & Sausage Breakfast, visitors can make their way to the Main Street Stage for the first entertainer of the day, award-winning musician and children's performer Erick Traplin, beginning at 9:15 a.m.

Known for his energetic and interactive performances,

Traplin has delighted young audiences and their parents with a mix of original and traditional children's songs. His concerts encourage children to sing, move and participate, making for a fun-filled start to the festival day.

A musician, singer/songwriter, author and educator, Traplin has released eight CDs and written three children's books. His engaging style is sure to have festival-goers of all ages singing along as the 51st annual Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival gets underway.



*Bubbles, music and plenty of smiles fill the air as Erick Traplin entertains young festival-goers at a previous Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival. Contributed photo*

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## NATURE'S MULTI-VITAMINS

**By Steph Muma, co-owner of Silver Creek Nursery**

Here's a radical reminder; it is indisputable that our current food is generally depleted in vitamins and minerals compared to what it was 50 years ago. The powers that be have provided us with a plethora of "enriched" options to attempt to fill the void.

However, nutrient-dense food is abundant if we shift our focus away from the shelves of the grocery store. It starts in your own backyard with healthy, living soil in which diverse varieties and species of plants grow. It includes eating bitter, tart and pungent flavours. It involves re-educating ourselves on how to interact with our environment and what we put in our mouths to nurture our bodies. And it involves remembering that weeds, herbs and berries (particularly wild or non-commercial varieties) are loaded with nutrients, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory qualities.

Taste and aroma are good indicators of nutrient density when the food hasn't been ultra-processed, so when it comes to real ingredients (thoughtfully grown fresh fruits, vegetables and meat), follow your

taste buds!

In celebration of all the good things around us, and of embracing Mother Nature in all her glory, here are a couple suggestions to include the unusual into your daily meals. Bear in mind these suggestions come from a super busy momma-farmer with very little time.

### **Chili**

I've successfully included all manner of nutritional treasures in the depths of chili. Rhubarb, aronia berries, pureed organ meats, even apple sauce when cooking for a friend who avoids nightshades/tomatoes.

### **Salad dressings and sauces**

These are excellent carriers for berry goodness. Acidulants like red currant, sea buckthorn, or rhubarb juice add the tang while dried berries can balance with sweetness. Apple honey BBQ sauce, rhubarb ketchup and creamy aronia berry salad dressing are standbys in my kitchen.

### **Wilted greens in everything**

All the soups, casseroles, etc. get a dose of dark leafy goodness. Start with small amounts as needed, cut small so little mouths can easily swallow. Wild "weeds" are fantastic: lambs quarters, nettles and chick-

weed are personal favourites.

### **Sun tea and moon tea**

Many fruit tree and berry leaves are loaded with nutrients and suitable for tea: peach, raspberry, sea buckthorn to name a few. Another opportunity for enjoying weeds too: nettles, alfalfa, red clover, etc.

### **Cordials and honey syrups**

These are so easy to make, loaded with good nutrition and easy to get kids to take on the daily. Enjoy with fizzy or plain water. My go-to is about two cups berries to two cups water, additional spices, herbs as desired, simmered gently for an hour or so. Strain well and mix the juice with roughly equal parts raw honey while still warm.

Follow our blog for more ideas, including pawpaw cheesecake!

Interested in some of the plants I mentioned? Visit our fruit tree nursery online at [www.silvercreeknursery.ca](http://www.silvercreeknursery.ca) or in-person on Gerber Road in Wellesley. We specialize in healthy heritage and unique food-plants for your garden, big or small!

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Eating healthy can start in your own backyard through foraging and growing ingredients that are good for you and taste even better. Photos courtesy of Silver Creek Nursery

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## JUST DANCE RETURNS TO WELLESLEY APPLE BUTTER AND CHEESE FESTIVAL

By Diane Danen

Visitors to this year's Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival will have an opportunity to be entertained by the group Just Dance for the second year in a row.

Formed in 2019, the Just Dance line dancing group has 12 members, ranging in age from 33 to 71, with dancers from Brantford and Cambridge. While the team has changed over the years, it has continued to grow, expanding from a single class to three.

The performance will take place along the main street, giving festivalgoers a chance to enjoy the dancing while they wait in line for the pancake and sausage breakfast. Those who are feeling inspired can even join in the fun.

"We are very excited to be returning to the festival," said Lynn Thomas, communications and media director for Just Dance. "It is a great community event and we love to bring line dancing for people to see and partici-



*Members of the Just Dance Line Dance Group are looking forward to entertaining visitors at the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival and inviting festivalgoers to join them on the dance floor and try a few line-dancing steps. Contributed photos*

pate in."

"When people think of line dancing, they envision country music, and yes, that is true for most of it," she said. "However, it's so much more. Disco, pop, rock, the classics. It is all genres!"

Thomas said line dancing has "literally exploded" in popularity over the past few years. Younger dancers are discovering the activity, while people who danced years ago are returning to it. Line dance events in the area are well attended, and conferences and workshops demonstrate how the activity has grown into a universal and international community.

One of the biggest attractions is that people do not need a partner to participate.

"It is a fun activity that you do not need a partner to participate in," Thomas said. "Dancing in a room full of people doing the exact same moves creates a sense of

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community.”

Line dancing is also a great workout for the brain, as dancers learn and remember different steps and routines.

For anyone watching the festival performance and thinking about giving line dancing a try, no previous experience is necessary. When Just Dance offers public teaching sessions, the instructor chooses simple dances that beginners can follow. Team members are also there to help newcomers learn the steps.

“We never forget that we were beginners at one time too!” Thomas said.

Her advice to first-time dancers is to be patient and consistent. Most people will not learn everything in one class, but repeating the steps and building on what they have learned makes the movements easier.

For Just Dance members, the group is about much more than learning dance routines. It has provided an opportunity to build friendships and develop connections within the local community.

“Honestly, on a personal level, we have met the best people and forged lifelong friendships within our team and community, even nationally and internationally,” Thomas said.

Thomas said line dancing has also helped some team members and students through personal challenges. Music and dancing can provide a sense of consistency and belonging during difficult times.

“In class, it can be an escape for one hour, no matter what you are dealing with,” she said. “This is your time, surrounded by likeminded people.”

For many dancers, music is an important part of that experience. We have always found music to be healing, invigorating and grounding,” Thomas said.

The group has become a regular part of several com-



munity events, returning to many of them year after year. Just Dance participated in Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day in August and will be performing at an Autism Dog Services event in October.

“Looking ahead, Just Dance hopes to take part in more public performances and private functions while continuing to share its love of line dancing with the community.

Brantford classes will resume in September, with three levels available:

Absolute Beginner for those with little or no experience, High Beginner for those comfortable with the basics and Improver for more experienced dancers.

For those attending the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival, Thomas hopes the performance will encourage festivalgoers to join in and experience the fun of line dancing for themselves.

The message from the Just Dance members is simple, “Come on out and dance with us!”

Anyone interested in learning more about Just Dance Line Dance Community or registering for classes can contact Thomas at [jdld2019@yahoo.com](mailto:jdld2019@yahoo.com).



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*Continued to page 21 →*

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## ANTIQUE CARS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT WELLESLEY ABC FESTIVAL

**By Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette staff**

Classic cars will be rolling into Wellesley on Saturday, Sept. 26, as the Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival welcomes antique car enthusiasts for a day of vintage vehicles, community and nostalgia.

The Antique Car Show will take place at 1137 Henry St., where visitors can admire the craftsmanship, gleaming chrome and careful restoration of a variety of rare and classic vehicles. It's also an opportunity for car enthusiasts to connect, share stories and celebrate

the timeless appeal of vehicles from a bygone era.

Antique car owners are invited to bring their vehicles and take part in the show. Festival volunteers will be on site beginning at 7 a.m. to direct participants to their parking locations.

The highlight of the day will come at noon, when the antique cars leave the show for the Antique Car Parade, travelling through the festival streets for visitors to enjoy.

For more information about the festival and its full schedule of events, visit [wellesleyabcfestival.ca](http://wellesleyabcfestival.ca).



*Vintage vehicles take to the streets of Wellesley during the Antique Car Parade at a past Apple Butter & Cheese Festival. Contributed photo*

# TIM LOUIS

Member of Parliament for Kitchener-Conestoga

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## 'SMALL TOWN FEEL' OF ABC FESTIVAL BRINGS VISITORS TO WELLESLEY ANNUALLY

By Emily Stewart

For half a century and counting, the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival's welcoming environment has drawn in plenty of visitors while showcasing a variety of local entertainment and food vendors.

The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival was founded in 1975 by Board of Trade members with the assistance of the Elmira Syrup Festival and the New Hamburg Quilt Auction, to promote the town and major businesses like the J.M. Schnieder Cheese Factory and Wellesley Brand Apple Products (A.W. and Sons Limited).

These days, about 30,000 to 35,000 people come to the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival for their annual trip to the town. The festival features live music, tours, craft vendors, and food vendors offering goodies like hot sauce, baked goods, artisan cheeses, apple products, and farm-fresh culinary delights.

When asked how the festival impacts tourism in the Town of Wellesley, Jamie Reid, chairman of the festival committee, said it was hard to say.

"It's a tough question because it's not something they come for the weekends because it's a one-day festival," he said. "It always amazes us how everyone flocks into town. Like the festival starts at 7 a.m. and people start showing up at 6:30 and by 4 o'clock the town looks like the day before - it's a ghost town again, so it's amazing how they come in, they attend the festival, and then they're literally gone and we don't see them for another year."

Still, visitors from all over Southwestern Ontario like London, Woodstock, Kitchener-Waterloo, as well as the Greater Toronto Area and even as far North as Owen Sound, come back year after year.



*The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival welcomes between 30,000 to 35,000 guests every year. Contributed photo*

"It's probably the food for the most part but I think it's the small town feel. You get city goers coming out and it's just different for them right?" Reid said. "They drive through the country side to get there and all of a sudden they come across a little town by the name of Wellesley and there's a whack of people."

The small town hospitality and the large turnout of visitors also entices returning vendors.

"With the number of visitors that we have, it's kind of a nice drawing point for these vendors. We've had vendors that have been coming for 25 years every year and it's one of their favourite festivals just 'cause I think it's just got a small town feel and it just brings in so much people," Reid said.

All of the performers and the food vendors are within the region. If not the Wellesley Township, then Stratford, Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Marys, and surrounding areas.

"It's just something we've always done. We try and keep everything as local as possible," Reid said. "We do have some craft vendors that come as far as Toronto, but it's just kind of a neat thing to highlight local people."

More information about the festival can be found online by visiting <https://www.wellesleyabcfestival.ca>.

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# The Best APPLE BUTTER

## Recipe

Slow-cooked to perfection for  
*rich, cozy, homemade goodness!*



### INGREDIENTS

- 5.5 lbs (2.5 kg) soft, sweet apples (see note 1), Cored and chopped into small pieces, about ¼"
- 1 cup (200 g) brown sugar, firmly packed
- ¾ cup (150 g) granulated sugar
- 1 Tablespoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 vanilla bean, (may substitute 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract)



### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Slice apples into small pieces (about ¼") and dispose of cores (you do not need to peel the apples).
- 2 Place apples in the basin of large slow cooker
- 3 In a medium-sized bowl stir together sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, salt, and cloves until well-combined.
- 4 Pour sugar mixture over apple pieces and stir until well combined.
- 5 Place lid on crockpot and cook on low heat for 10 hours.
- 6 Once 10 hours has elapsed, use an immersion blender to puree apples until smooth and no chunks remain (see note 2 if you do not have an immersion blender).
- 7 Scrape the inside of the vanilla bean into your apple puree (or add vanilla extract).
- 8 Turn crockpot on to low heat and cook another 2 hours uncovered, stirring occasionally.
- 9 Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container, where it will keep about 2 weeks.

### NOTES

- 1 I recommend using Golden Delicious, McIntosh, Fuji, or Gala. Don't use Granny Smith; they are too tart and firm for this recipe. Weigh your apples before coring and chopping. Do not peel them! For me this was about 13 apples but this could vary wildly depending on the size of your apples.
- 2 If you do not have an immersion blender, pour the apples into a blender and puree until smooth, then return to crockpot. You may need to work in batches, depending on the size of your blender.



### STORING



Store apple butter in an airtight container in the refrigerator for several weeks or freeze for up to several months.

*Made with love and simple ingredients.*



# The **BEST** Homemade **BAKED** **MAC** and **CHEESE**

*Creamy, cheesy and  
totally irresistible!*

## INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz elbow macaroni, cooked (or other tubular pasta)
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup all purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 4 cups sharp cheddar cheese shredded
- 2 cups Gruyere cheese shredded
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 1/2 cups panko crumbs
- 4 tbsp butter melted
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese shredded
- 1/4 tsp smoked paprika (or regular paprika)



## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350F. Lightly grease a large 3 qt or 4 qt baking dish and set aside. Combine shredded cheeses in a large bowl and set aside.
- 2 Cook the pasta one minute shy of al dente according to the package instructions. Remove from heat, drain, and place in a large bowl.
- 3 Drizzle pasta with olive oil and stir to coat pasta. Set aside to cool while preparing cheese sauce.
- 4 Melt butter in a deep saucepan, dutch oven, or stock pot.
- 5 Whisk in flour over medium heat and continue whisking for about 1 minute until bubbly and golden.
- 6 Gradually whisk in the milk and heavy cream until nice and smooth. Continue whisking until you see bubbles on the surface and then continue cooking and whisking for another 2 minutes. Whisk in salt and pepper.
- 7 Add two cups of shredded cheese and whisk until smooth. Add another two cups of shredded cheese and continue whisking until creamy and smooth. Sauce should be nice and thick.
- 8 Stir in the cooled pasta until combined and pasta is fully coated with the cheese sauce.
- 9 Pour half of the mac and cheese into the prepared baking dish. Top with remaining 2 cups of shredded cheese and then the remaining mac and cheese.
- 10 In a small bowl, combine panko crumbs, Parmesan cheese, melted butter and paprika. Sprinkle over the top and bake until bubbly and golden brown, about 30 minutes. Serve immediately.



Comfort food at its finist!



## NEW FESTIVAL BUS TOUR OFFERS A TASTE OF MAPLE COUNTRY

**By Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette staff**

Festival-goers will have a new way to experience the sights and flavours of fall at this year's Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival.

For the first time, visitors can hop aboard a free bus to Sand Hills Maple Sugar Bush for a behind-the-scenes look at how maple syrup is made. The tour will offer the chance to sample four different grades of Sand Hills Maple Products' award-winning syrup while taking in the beautiful fall colours of the sugar bush.

There will also be fall-themed games to enjoy, along

with a special treat of maple soft-serve ice cream served by the Sand Hills Maple Products team.

The first bus will begin loading at 10 a.m., with the bus trip and sugar bush tour offered free of charge.

Visitors can also find Sand Hills Maple Products at the festival's Craft Market, where they can sample the various maple syrup grades before choosing a favourite to take home.

It's a sweet new addition to the festival's lineup and a perfect opportunity to experience a little more of the local maple tradition.



*A cozy fire pit provides a welcoming gathering spot at Sand Hills Maple Sugar Bush, where visitors can enjoy the sights and flavours of the fall season. Contributed photo*

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## TRACTORS TAKE OVER WELLESLEY AT ANNUAL FESTIVAL

By Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette staff

There will be plenty of horsepower on display at this year's Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival on Saturday, Sept. 26, as classic tractors take centre stage.

The festival will feature a Classic Ford and Ferguson Tractor Show, along with antique farm equipment for visitors to explore. Young tractor enthusiasts can also get in on the fun with a kids-only tractor pull featuring children's ride-on tractors, giving youngsters a chance to experience the excitement for themselves.

For those who want to experience the festival from behind the wheel, or at least behind the tractor, the popular Festival "Ubers" will be cruising around Wellesley throughout the day. These free tractor rides



*The Festival "Ubers" offer a fun way to get around, as visitors enjoy a tractor-drawn wagon ride during a previous Wellesley Apple Butter & Cheese Festival. Contributed photo*

offer a fun and unique way for visitors to travel between festival stops while taking in the sights and sounds of the event.

Whether you're a longtime tractor enthusiast or simply looking for a fun way to get around, the festival's tractors are sure to be a big attraction.



*We are a proud supporter of the  
Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival*

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# THE BEST Caramel APPLE DIP



*Creamy, sweet and irresistible!*

## INGREDIENTS

### CREAM CHEESE BASE:

- 250g cream cheese
- ⅓ cup butter
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup mini chocolate chips
- ½ cup toffee bits

### CARAMEL TOPPING:

- 14 oz sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup salted butter
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- generous pinch of sea salt
- 1 tsp vanilla



This **Caramel Apple Dip** is the ultimate sweet treat for any occasion! A rich and creamy base loaded with chocolate chips and toffee bits, topped with a luscious homemade caramel.

*Perfect with crisp Granny Smith apples!*

### MAKE THE CARAMEL TOPPING

- 1 COMBINE INGREDIENTS:** Add the sweetened condensed milk, brown sugar, butter, corn syrup, and sea salt to a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Place over medium heat.
- 2 STIR TO MELT:** Stir frequently with a wooden spoon or silicone spatula as the butter melts and the mixture begins to come together. Continue stirring to prevent scorching.
- 3 HEAT UNTIL BUBBLY:** Let the mixture come to a gentle bubble, not a full boil. Small bubbles should form around the edges. Stir constantly and cook for 8-10 minutes, or until thickened and smooth.
- 4 REMOVE FROM HEAT AND ADD VANILLA:** Once thickened, take the pan off the heat and stir in the vanilla until fully incorporated.
- 5 COOL:** Let the caramel cool and it will continue to thicken. Set aside and make the cream cheese base.

### MAKE THE CREAM CHEESE BASE

- 1 MIX WET INGREDIENTS:** Add softened cream cheese and butter to a bowl along with the vanilla and mix until fully combined.
- 2 ADD DRY INGREDIENTS:** Add the brown sugar and powdered sugar and slowly mix until fully combined.
- 3 STIR IN CHOCOLATE CHIPS AND TOFFEE BITS:** Fold in the mini chocolate chips and toffee bits
- 4 REMOVE FROM HEAT AND ADD VANILLA:** Once thickened, take the pan off the heat and stir in the vanilla until fully incorporated.  
**COOL:** Let the caramel cool and it will continue to thicken. Set aside and make the cream cheese base.

### LAYER THE DIP

- 1 SPREAD CREAM CHEESE BASE:** Smooth a layer of the cream cheese base on the bottom of an 8x8 pan.
- 2 SPREAD CARAMEL TOPPING:** Smooth a layer of the caramel topping on top of the cream cheese base.
- 3 SPRINKLE WITH CHOCOLATE CHIPS & TOFFEE BITS, AND REFRIGERATE FOR AT LEAST 1 HOUR**



*Serve and enjoy!*

Serve with your favourite crisp apple slices.



# THANK YOU!

The Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival would not be possible without the many people who help bring this special day to life.

To our **dedicated volunteers**, thank you for the countless hours, hard work and passion you provide before, during and after the festival. Your commitment and community spirit are at the heart of everything we do.

To our **vendors, entertainers and community partners**, thank you for sharing your talents, products and support and for helping make the festival such a vibrant and welcoming celebration.

And to our **wonderful visitors**, both near and far, thank you for joining us! Your smiles, enthusiasm and continued support are what make this tradition so special.

From all of us at the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival, thank you for being part of our story and helping us celebrate 51 years of community, friendship and fun!

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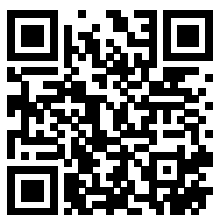
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