



New York State Maple Producers Association, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SYRACUSE-The 2007 New York State Fair was a sweet experience for the New York State Maple Producers Association, which saw its sales increase, continuing a trend of the last several years.

The most popular item: maple cotton candy.

Lyle Merle, who helped manage the Association's booth at the Fair this year, said the group sold about 6,000 bags of the spun sweet stuff over the 12 days of the Fair. That's with the machines spinning maple sugar upwards of 11 hours a day, sometimes two machines at a time.

The cotton candy joins other maple products the Association has been selling at the Fair since 1954. Sales have increased each of the last several years, Merle said.

"The demand for maple products seems to be really good. Maple is becoming better known with the public, and people are searching us out," Merle said.

He has been working at the Fair for 39 years, and he remembers when Fair visitors were hesitant to try free samples of maple cream. Now they look forward to it, Merle said.

"I've got to believe that the Maple Weekend has really helped with the awareness," he said, referring to the annual spring event organized by the Maple Producers Association at maple operations around the state.

Merle said visitors to the Association's booth in the John Deere Horticulture Building enjoy watching the daily production of maple sugar candy – 240 gallons of syrup were used this year – and are eager to learn how to cook with maple products. The Association is ready with recipes and other information.

The booth is staffed by volunteers, upwards of 12 people each day of the Fair, Merle said. Producers who are selling their own wares at the booth are required to help, he said.

"We have a good time," Merle said.

The Association will have a permanent booth in the Horticulture Building at next year's Fair. Merle, who is chairman of the State Fair Building Committee, is hoping the new facility will be usable for the Farm Show at the end of February.

"We are all looking forward to more space next year," he said. More products for sale will be added, he said.

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EDITOR: Photos available.