

NEWS RELEASE

Old Loon Farm

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Nostalgia for a slower, more laid-back era blends with a modern-day interest in sourcing healthy products locally to celebrate the first annual Sorghum Fall Festival on Thursday, October 12 and Friday, October 13, at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center.

A new product to some, sorghum syrup has a history as rich as its flavor in the Midwest.

“Our grandparents and folks living in the southern US states are likely more familiar with sorghum syrup than most people living in northern Indiana,” explained Jane Loomis of Old Loon Farm. “You may see sorghum syrup (often mislabeled as “sorghum molasses”) in country stores that carry Amish products, but sorghum cane syrup is not in regular use as a sweetener in most of our area.”

The Festival is part of a revitalization of this time-tested sweetener spearheaded by Old Loon Farm, in partnership with Wise Farms LLC, Palmer Farms, and the sustainable farm at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College (Merry Lea).

The goal of this project is to reintroduce this nutrient-rich, hyper-local sweet-tooth satiating treat to the area’s farmers markets, restaurants and craft brewers and distillers.



“We were awarded a SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grant from the USDA to research the economic viability of small-farm sorghum syrup production in northern Indiana,” said Loomis. “It’s a two-year project that includes planting, tending, harvesting, processing and marketing sorghum syrup.”

Sorghum bundles are turned into thick, sweet syrup- a healthy, locally-sourced alternative to many sweeteners.

Over the next two growing seasons, the three small farms and the Merry Lea staff will work cooperatively to investigate the optimum scale for profitably growing, harvesting, pressing and processing sweet sorghum cane on small plots, and to develop new local and regional markets for sorghum syrup.

2017 Sorghum Festival

Thursday October 12, 6:00 pm

- Enjoy delicious foods made even better with the addition of our golden, sweet sorghum syrup. Meats, vegetables, breads and biscuits, salads, and dessert.
- Overview of the Project
- Panel Discussion: Small Plot Sorghum Growing for Food and Profit.

Friday, October 13, 10:00 am—5:00 pm

- Day-long demonstrations:
 - Cane Pressing
 - Evaporating Juice
 - Finishing the Syrup
 - TASTING natural, sweet sorghum

RSVP to oldloonfarm@gmail.com

Merry Lea Sustainable Farm
Take SR 109 south from Wolf Lake, Indiana; Turn right (west) on CR 200 to the entrance at 4415 W CR 200 S.

“Our last year’s product was smooth and delicious, a great addition to pumpkin pies, cookies and – beer!” remarked Loomis. “So this year we are hoping to move to a bigger, and more standardized production, and document our effort to share with other northern producers.”

The 2017 Sorghum Festival kicks-off Thursday, October 12, at 6:00 pm at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center’s farm, 4415 W, (Noble) County Road 200 S, just south of Wolf Lake, Indiana. Join the cooperative for supper which will feature delicious foods made even better with the addition of golden, sweet sorghum syrup. The meal will include meat, vegetables, breads and biscuits, salads, and dessert. Following the dinner, there will be a short presentation about the project followed by a Panel Discussion: Small Plot Sorghum Growing for Food and Profit.

Then, keep the fun going on Friday, October 13, from 10:00 am—5:00 pm. Day-long demonstrations include pressing the cane with an antique press, evaporating the juice, finishing the syrup, and finally TASTING natural, sweet sorghum!

For more information, contact Jane Loomis at oldloonfarm@gmail.com. This event is open to the public, but RSVPs are appreciated to prepare adequate food.