



Juicy fruit

Nebraska's apple capital a-peels to autumn lovers

BY TED TAYLOR
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NEBRASKA CITY — From the Morton Orchard and the chance to buy a bushel and some butter to the craft shows to the parade downtown, Nebraska's Big Apple this weekend provided fun to the core.

And with the temperature as crisp as the first bite into a ripe Red Delicious, the 29th Annual Applejack Festival was the perfect way, for many, to fall into autumn and leave the hazy days of summer behind.

"This is our kickoff for fall fun," said Carol Cammarata of Omaha who, with her 5-year-old son, Nick, and friends, made their first visit to the apple capital of Nebraska.

"We came down to enjoy the crafts and the beautiful day," she said during the parade. "It's sort of the beginning of fall."

The festival's roots date back to 1936 when the city declared its autumn apple harvest a holiday for local school children. It turned into a two-day event the next year and continued to grow. In 1968, in an effort to boost tourism in Nebraska City, the autumn apple harvest celebration was revised and officially given the Applejack Festival title.

The three-day event was expected to draw between 20,000 to 40,000 people to the small southeast Nebraska town that took the slogan "An Apple a Day is the Nebraska City Way." The huge crowds and wholesomeness of the weekend may be the reason the American Bus Association has listed the Applejack Festival as one of the top 100 events in North America.

Most of those thousands of people, sitting on curbs, lawn chairs or blankets, lined Central Avenue downtown for the parade. Even more sat on the grassy embankment in front of city hall.

They were treated with politicians and police, fire trucks and

floats. Everyone in the parade was greeted with gracious applause and friendly waves.

And the cool Shriners mini-race cars and huge inflatable clown weren't even the biggest attractions for some children.

Nick's favorite part of the parade? "I like the flags," he said, plugging his ears as one of the 25 marching bands stopped in front of where he was standing.

Many visitors either began or ended their day at the Morton Orchard and Apple House where they had the chance to buy apples, take a tour of the orchard, enjoy apple pie or caramel apples, or watch how homemade apple butter is made. The children could even get their faces painted.

The small fire Ferd Lintel used to heat his copper kettle full of apple butter was a popular congregating spot for many who were not prepared for the cool morning temperatures.

Lintel, constantly moving his handmade wooden paddle back and forth in the kettle, used the opportunity to chat with visitors and answer the common question, "Is that caramel?"

"A lot of people think it's caramel because of the color," he said of the golden brown mixture of apples and spices. "Some people look in there and call it beans. Ooh, I get mad when they call it beans."

With his wife, Delores, and their "Grandma's Jellies," they have been part of the festival for about 15 years, he said.

"We've been here when it's 104 (degrees) and when it's been colder than the dickens," he said. "We have a good time when we come here."

Delores Lintel stood a few feet away from her husband trying to sell more than 10 different kinds of jellies and jams, but that's not what people came for.

"Today it's the apple butter," she said taking money from four people at once, "because people come down here with apple on their mind."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: GENE BOOTH of Brighton, Iowa, devours an apple while watching the Applejack parade in Nebraska City Saturday. Booth said he has been coming to the festival for five years to see the beautiful parade and to visit family who live in the area.

RYAN SODERLIN/DN

TOP RIGHT: SHARON HARSEMANN of the Otoe County Bank hands out apples to the people who line the parade route.

RYAN SODERLIN/DN

BOTTOM RIGHT: NEBRASKA CITY'S JUSTIN BARRETT, 10, gets his face painted by Sunshine T. Clown on Saturday during the Applejack Festival in Nebraska City.

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BOTTOM LEFT: JANET STOLL of Stanberry, Mo., looks over the apple selection at the Applejack Festival. Stoll said that she came to Nebraska City for the festival, the apples and the arts and crafts.

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MIDDLE LEFT: VETERANS DECKED OUT in their uniforms carried Old Glory during the Applejack Festival parade.

NIKKI FOX/DN

