PARTICIPANTS TAP, TASTE MAPLE SYRUP

University hosts annual festival

By Frank Lee
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COLLEGEVILLE — Jeannie Chu found out Saturday how sweet life can be.

The 41-year-old wife and mother from St. Cloud enjoyed her first maple syrup sundae with her daughter at St. John's University's Maple Syrup Festival in Collegeville.

"It's very, very good," said Chu, a chemistry and physics teacher at Monticello High School as she held a styro-foam bowl filled with vanilla ice cream and syrup.

Mother and daughter sat on the steps next to the sugar shack where a line of syrup lovers waited patiently during an unseasonably warm March day to see how sap becomes syrup.

"When I do buy it, I do buy the pure maple because it's so yummy," Chu said of the festival, which continues March 31.

Family friendly

Horse-drawn wagons made their way from a parking lot to a clearing along the often-muddy path where trees marked with blue bags greeted the curious.

"We went out and collected sap and saw how they tapped the trees, and we took a winter tree identification tour," Chu said.

See SYRUP, 4B

IF YOU GO...

What: Maple Syrup Festival
When: 1-4 p.m. Saturday
Where: Registration near St. John’s Preparatory School on the campus of St. John’s University in Collegeville.

Fees: $3 for St. John’s Arboratum adult members and free for child members; $7 for adult nonmembers and $3 for child nonmembers. (Receive $1 off for pre-registering.)

Information: Call 363-3163 to pre-register or visit www.csbsju.edu/maple.

MAPLE SYRUP TRIVIA
- Maple syrup is the oldest American crop.
- Maple sap contains about 2 percent sugar.
- Finished maple syrup is almost 67 percent sugar.
- Each tap produces about 10 gallons of sap, which makes about one quart of syrup.

Source: College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University
Sweet success
Beth Heroux, a College of St. Benedict senior majoring in applied physics, tried her hand at public relations by answering questions from those at the Maple Syrup Festival.

“You need it to be cold at night and warm during the day to allow the sap to move within the tree. It’s the tree’s natural reaction to the temperature change,” Heroux said.

Heroux was in good spirits as she clutched several blue sap collection bags and a hammer.

“Like the tree climbing that we were doing earlier … taking sugar samples from different heights of the tree,” Heroux said.

Heroux not only educates the public about the maple syrup-making process, but she often enjoys sampling the nearly finished product with her father at their property in Avon.

“My favorite thing to do with the maple syrup is — right before it’s completely syrup — is to just take a glass of it and drink it,” she said with a huge grin.