

The Maple Lake MESSENGER *Extra*



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Maple Lake Wine and Spirits: where holiday fun begins

By Brenda Erdahl

Maple Lake Wine and Spirits off Highway 55 East is celebrating the holidays and its nine-year anniversary with tastings, specials and new products that will make your holiday party the talk of the town.

Holiday Beer, Wine and Spirits Tasting

Get a taste of what they have available on Thursday, Dec. 5 at the Holiday Beer, Wine and Spirits Tasting at the Maple Lake American Legion.

General Manager Angela Berthiaume has invited 14 vendors for guests to sample from for two hours, from 7 to 9 p.m. Several Minnesota wineries including Millner Heritage and Winehaven will attend as well as distributors of brands Berthiaume sells in the store. There will be more than 90 items to sample, she said, and the night will include gift baskets and giveaways.

If guests order that night, they get a discount on their purchase. You must be a member of the local Wine Club to get the discount, but there will be an opportunity to sign up that night so guests can take full advantage of the event, Berthiaume said. Members will also receive a 50 percent discount on the \$20 cover charge.

Birthdays celebration and holiday favorites

The fun continues Saturday, Dec. 21 when Maple Lake Wine and Spirits celebrates nine years at its new location. Throughout the event there will be in-store beer, wine and spirits tasting, snacks, hot apple cider, giveaways and "super specials," including a new sale every week.

"One week we'll have a liquor sale, another week we'll have a sale on wine and one week we'll have a beer sale. Watch to see which sale is on which week," Berthiaume said.

Throughout the month of De-

ember, Maple Lake Wine and Spirits will continue to hold tastings so customers can explore new flavors. Berthiaume always stocks a vast variety of wines, liquors and champagnes that are sure to fit everybody's tastes. The store's expansive wine section includes holiday favorites like the always popular Reindeer Wines. These come with pictures of Santa's reindeer on the bottles, Berthiaume said. Donner, Blitzen, Comet and Cupid are all depicted on these fun but, limited

Business Buzz

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edition wines.

"These are unique wines that are fun to have at a party," she said.

The store also carries Holiday egg-nogs, cordials, gift packs and gift cards perfect for that hard-to-buy for person on your Christmas list.

A great selection

Maple Lake Wine and Spirits carries a vast variety of Minnesota-made wines and liquors. Customers will find wines from Carlos Creek Winery in Alexandria; Crow River Winery in Hutchinson; Northern Hollow Winery in Graston; Indian Island Winery in Janesville; Millner Heritage Winery in Kimball and Winehaven in Chisago City.

The store has also expanded its spirits portfolio to include a larger selection of liquor, whiskey, rum and cordials, and is always adding to its craft beer options for the craft beer lovers out there.

With everything from moonshine pickles to peanut-butter whisky, Maple Lake Wine and

Spirits has a "great selection for a small, hometown liquor store and customers like that we have such a wide variety," Berthiaume said.

If a guest can't find something they want, Berthiaume and her staff will happily order it for them.

"I'd say 95 percent of the time we can get it for the customer and then we stock it," she said.

Rewards program

To make shopping at Maple Lake Wine and Spirits even more economical, Berthiaume and her staff have a successful rewards program called the Lucky Irish Rewards where every pre-taxed dollar spent earns customers a point. When they reach 500 points, they get a \$20 in-store credit.

Monthly specials on domestic beers, craft beers and wines, makes shopping at Maple Lake Wine and Spirits even more affordable.

Knowledgeable staff

Besides a wide selection of products, Berthiaume oversees a friendly, knowledgeable staff who will help you make the perfect selection then carry it out to your car for you.

Last winter the store received new flooring which really brightens up the place, Berthiaume said, and makes for an even more pleasant shopping experience.

"It's non slip, offers easy clean-up and adds warmth to the store," full-time lead Kate Hebreling. "We've had a lot of nice comments about it."

Berthiaume reminds the community that when you shop at Maple Lake Wine and Spirits 100 percent of the profits go back to the city for projects and upkeep.

Their slogan is "where shopping local makes a difference."

Wine Club

Maple Lake Wine and Spirits promotes the community in other ways as well. Berthiaume and Hebreling organize a successful



General Manager Angela Berthiaume, right, says "just like your door is welcoming to family and friends ours is too! Berthiaume leads a friendly, knowledgeable staff with the help of full-time lead Kate Hebreling, left. (Photos by Brenda Erdahl)

Wine Club that currently has 300 members and meets every six to eight weeks.

They hold tastings that non-members can also attend for \$5 per person.

"It's a great way to try new wines or have a night out on the town and if you like the tastings, you can sign up to join the club," Berthiaume said.

Beer tasting

Next summer, look for the liquor store's second annual beer tasting. Their first event was a success with about 70 people at-

tending. It was held at the Maple Lake American Legion in September and featured a variety of craft beers, whiskies and bourbons.

MLFD fundraiser

In August and early September, the store was part of a fundraiser for the local fire department sponsored by the Municipal Beverage Association and Miller Coors. The store raised \$740 for items the Maple Lake Fire Department needs. Next year they hope to raise even more, Berthiaume said.

"Thank you to all who donated this year. It will help them greatly," she added.

Hours

The municipal liquor store is open Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Holiday hours will be as follows: Christmas Eve, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and New Year's Eve 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The store will be closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.



The municipal liquor store carries everything from crisp, dill pickles canned in moonshine, to local Vodka made in Duluth and Whisky with a natural peanut butter flavor.



Maple Lake Wine and Spirits is celebrating the holidays and nine-years at its location on Highway 55 East in Maple Lake with wine tastings, specials and new products.



Maple Lake Wine and Spirits also carries a selection of craft beers and many come from local breweries right here in Minnesota like Lupulin Brewing in Big Lake.

Holiday Beer, Wine & Spirits Tasting

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Christmas tree tips and tricks

Christmas trees are an iconic symbol of the holiday season. Whether they are personal trees nestled in the corner of a living room for families to enjoy or towering evergreens serving as the focal point of a town square, Christmas trees are a wonder to behold.

Many people have fond memories of time spent around the Christmas tree sharing gifts and family traditions. Live trees and their pine-like aroma can be especially nostalgic trees to include in holiday plans. The National Christmas Tree Association says that approximately 25 to 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States every year. North American trees hail from all 50 states and areas of Canada.

While freshly cut trees can be particularly beautiful and aromatic additions to the season, they require a bit more work than artificial trees in order to remain beautiful and thrive throughout the holiday season. Maintenance

can help keep Christmas trees as perfect as possible.

- Even though it is tempting to buy a real tree as early as possible, their shelf life is limited even with the best care. Dural Christmas Tree Farm advises that, under the best conditions, a real tree should last up to four weeks before drying out.

- Consider the needles when looking for a real tree. Pull your hand toward your body along the branches. If many needles fall off, the tree is past its peak.

- Think about the room in which the tree will be located. Leave at least 6 inches between the tip of the tree and the ceiling, accounting for the height of the tree stand as well.

- If needle retention is a goal, the Scotch pine variety has the best needle retention and a high survival rate, lending to its popularity, offers Precision Tree and Landscape. Douglas fir and balsam fir are other durable trees.

- If possible, buy a freshly cut tree from a reputable nursery or

tree farm, advises The Old Farmer's Almanac. Many pre-cut trees sold elsewhere were likely cut weeks before and may not be fresh.

- Cut the bottom of the tree trunk before bringing it home to facilitate the uptake of fresh water daily. Trees can absorb as much as a gallon of water in a day, so make sure the tree gets fresh water every day.

- Keep trees away from as many heat sources as possible and away from direct sunlight to prolong longevity.

- According to Karabin Farms in Connecticut, to make a Christmas tree last longer, boil a gallon of water and then dissolve one cup of sugar in the water. Allow to cool. After freshly cutting the trunk, pour in the warm sugar water. Continue to add fresh, cool, plain water to the tree stand afterward.

Once needles begin to fall off with frequency, the tree is reaching its prime. Remove it so it does not become a fire hazard.



Freshly cut Christmas trees are farmed specifically for the holiday season and support local economies. They also tend to last a bit longer than pre-cut trees available elsewhere. (Photo submitted)

Giving a little more this holiday season

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The generosity on display during the holiday season may not have an official start date, but the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day may be the unofficial beginning of the giving season. (Photo submitted)

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Cooking for a holiday crowd

Decorations and shopping draw much of the attention come the holiday season, and rightfully so. But many people's fondest holiday memories occurred around the dinner table during meals with friends and family.

Holiday foods tend to be rich, flavorful and time-consuming to prepare. However, all the effort is usually worth the satisfied smiles on the faces of loved ones.

Planning holiday meals is challenging, and hosts often doubt if they have enough food for everyone. No one wants guests to leave feeling hungry, nor do they want to have tons of leftovers, much of which will inevitably end up in the trash. Determining how much food to serve involves figuring out a few key items, including the mix of guests (ratio of children, men and women), the length of the occasion, the timing of the event, and the type of meal one plans to serve. For example, if the holiday gath-

ering is an after-dinner cocktail party, hosts can get away with offering very little food. However, hosts of holiday dinners have a lot more food to prepare.

To get started, consider these general guidelines, courtesy of All-recipes.com and The Spruce, a home living resource.

- Think about which foods you plan to serve. Popular foods tend to go more quickly than other items, so serve more than the general portion guidelines suggest. Shellfish appetizers, roasted or mashed potatoes, wings, and slices of rich meat are examples of popular fare.

- The more foods you offer, the smaller the portion sizes can be. But because guests will likely want to try all the offerings, expect the average person to consume more food per individual when several foods are offered.

- Most people will eat two to three portions each of appetizers or

snacks. In fact, appetizers (for a hungry crowd) may be consumed in greater abundance than subsequent courses.

- Average portion sizes for each guest include: 3 ounces of dips; 3 ounces of salad; 6 ounces of meat or main entrée; 5 ounces of starch; and 1 1/2 pieces of dessert. These estimates can be used to calculate how much food will be needed.

- Think about adding "safety" items to the menu that can be pulled out in a pinch and don't require much prep work. These can include cheese and crackers, extra bread, nuts, olives, or pretzels.

Hosts who are overly concerned that guests may go overboard can tame portion sizes by hiring servers who can oversee buffet lines. Otherwise, serve guests plated meals directly from the kitchen, from which hosts can dole out the right amount of food to ensure everyone gets enough to eat.



Determining how much food to serve involves figuring out a few key items. (Photo submitted)

Holiday hosting in small spaces



A few helpful strategies can help space-starved hosts pull off a holiday soiree where everyone is comfortable. (Photo submitted)

Gatherings of family and friends are a big part of the holiday season. Hosting such gatherings can be a great way to show loved ones how much you appreciate them, and hosting also saves hosts the trouble of traveling during one of the most hectic travel seasons of the year.

When hosting a large crowd at home, space can be a difficult hurdle to clear. However, a few helpful strategies can help space-starved hosts pull off a holiday soiree where everyone is comfortable.

- Pare down the menu. Holiday feasts don't have to resemble medieval banquets with excessive amounts of food and drink. Hosts with small kitchens and tiny dining quarters can pare down the menu, limiting offerings to just a single entrée and a few simple side dishes, so everyone feels comfortable at the table and has ample room to eat. A small menu also gives hosts more time to spend with their loved ones during the festivities.

- Don't overdo it on drinks, either. When planning the drinks menu, avoid offering cocktails, which take time to prepare and often require guests to visit the kitchen for refrigerated ingredients. Limit drinks to wine, beer, water, and soft drinks, storing cold beverages in a cooler kept outside on a front or back porch or in an area outside the kitchen so cooks can work without interruption.

- Move some furniture. If your main living space is small, consider moving some bulky furniture into

a bedroom or office where guests won't be spending time. Then make better use of the open living space by placing folding chairs or other accommodations to ensure there's ample seating for everyone. A single recliner can only be enjoyed by one person, but removing it from a room may create enough space for as many as three folding chairs.

- Go small on decorations. If you know you'll be hosting in ad-

vance of the holiday season, decorate with guests in mind. That might mean skipping a six-foot Christmas tree in favor of one that takes up less space. Avoid leaving any fragile decorations out, as adults or overexcited kids may knock them over as they try to navigate a cramped space.

Holiday hosting can be fun, even in small spaces. A few simple tricks can make even the smallest spaces accommodating.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7  Christmas in Maple Lake • Jingle Ball Dance, 7:30 p.m.	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
22	 <p style="text-align: center;">CHRISTMAS BREAK</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Happy MERRY CHRISTMAS Holidays</p> <p>• Wright County Snowmobile Assoc. Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Legion Club</p>						28
29	 <p style="text-align: center;">NEW YEAR'S EVE</p>						

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