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Two County Festivals Win Top Award

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Bloomfield, ON—Prince Edward County's reputation as a compelling tourism destination received a major boon this week as two of the region's premier events earned the title of Top 100 Ontario Festival. Maple in the County (www.mapleinthecounty.ca) won the prestigious designation for the second year in a row, while TASTE! *a celebration of regional cuisine* (www.tastecelebration.ca) won it for the first time.

"We couldn't be more proud. To have not one, but two of our great County experiences selected is a great honour particularly when you consider of the quality of the competition," says Kathleen Kennedy, executive director of Taste the County, Prince Edward County's award-winning non-profit destination marketing organization, which produces both events. "Attracting crowds from both near and far, Maple and TASTE! not only enhance the County's reputation as a top tourism destination, they make important contributions to our economy and on top of all that, they're good fun," says Kennedy who, along with colleague Grace Nyman, attended last Saturday's awards ceremony in Burlington, hosted by Festivals & Events Ontario, the province's professional association for the festivals and events industry.

A self-guided, two-day adventure, Maple in the County features activities for young and old set against a backdrop of fresh country air. Every year, more than 6,000 people enjoy scores of experiences ranging from lip-smacking pancake breakfasts and sugar shack demonstrations to horse-drawn wagon rides and musical concerts. It is a celebration of the arrival of spring in the County and the first harvest of the year—maple syrup. This year's award-winning edition of Maple in the County presented by the Waring House and Prince Edward County Maple Syrup Producers will take place on Saturday, March 28 and Sunday, March 29, but will include a special Friday night (March 27, 8pm) kick-off concert at the Regent Theatre (613.476.8416) by Canadian folk music icon Murray McLauchlan.

Not just another food and wine festival, Prince Edward County's annual TASTE! *a celebration of regional cuisine* (11am to 5pm, Saturday, September 26, 2009) is eastern Ontario's premier epicurean experience. Staged each autumn at Picton's historic Crystal Palace, the event showcases the region's finest artisanal foods, wines, beers, ciders and cuisine against a backdrop of live jazz. Hours are lost sampling savoury dishes and sweet confections—all prepared with an emphasis on locally sourced ingredients. The atmosphere is convivial as chefs, winemakers and, cider and beer masters happily discuss their craft with visitors who are encouraged to attend intimate and interactive cooking demonstrations and wine seminars.

Maple in the County was developed by the Municipal Economic Development Department in partnership with the maple syrup and tourism industry to highlight the first agricultural crop of the season and to promote shoulder season tourism.

Developed and launched by the Municipal Economic Development Department in partnership with Taste the County and the culinary community, TASTE! was devised to strengthen the link between agriculture and tourism and to brand Prince Edward County as regional cuisine destination.

For more information regarding Taste the County, its programs and its events, visit www.tastethecounty.ca.

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