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Tallahassee Museum hosts annual Farm Day

Local farmers show antique and modern techniques to the community

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Tallahassee's annual Farm Day took place on Saturday, Nov. 17. Local farmers showcased antique and modern farming methods, including sugar cane growing and syrup making. The Amalgamated Syrup Makers of America provided Farm Day attendees with homemade cane syrup. / Lindsay Marshall/FSView

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It's not often the consumer gets a taste of where their food comes from. At Tallahassee's annual Fall Farm Day last Saturday, local farmers gathered to demonstrate both antique and modern farming techniques for the community, such as sugar cane growing and syrup making.

Shawn Moore, a gardener and sugar cane grower in Tallahassee, explained the difference between certain types of sugar cane and his process for growing it to museum-goers.

"You take a stalk about two feet long, make sure it has eyes, and put it in the ground," said Moore.

Moore revealed sugar cane takes about a year to grow.

"Try and wait until after it freezes to cut it off,"

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Alexandra Chura/FSView

said Moore. "Then strip it and get all the leaves off of it. There's a point when everything becomes green after stripping it. Chop that off, and then you have a stalk."

A stalk can be replanted, cut up into pieces to chew or put through a mill to create juice that can then either be made into syrup or cooked into sugar.

"It takes about a hundred gallons of juice to make 10 to 15 gallons of syrup," said Moore.

"It takes about four or five hours to make."

Moore showed different types of cane at the event. He informed guests about its uses.

"Syrup cane does not make good chewing," said Moore. "But, it makes fine syrup."

The Amalgamated Syrup Makers of America made cane syrup for Farm Day attendees to purchase.

Senior syrup maker Glenn Mayne explained the characteristics of a kettle and syrup as it cooks.

"The outside is the lip of the kettle and the inside is a ring," said Mayne. "When it goes over the side, it stays in the pot. We did it one year without the ring and it took about half an hour longer to make."

The first step in making syrup is planting the sugar cane. Mayne says he plans to replant the cane within the next week to make it into syrup in a year.

After the sugar cane has been run through a mill to create juice, the kettle is then filled with the juice, and is powered by fat lightered.

"Fat lightered is part of the short leaf indigenous pine," said Mayne. "It burns extremely fast and extremely hot."

Syrup makers check on the syrup by measuring the viscosity with the baum scale.

"When the liquid gets to 33 on the baum scale, we move the liquid into the log and drain it," said Mayne. "Then you have syrup."

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