

Fall is for Feasting - Take your Appetite to Wisconsin!

The Harvest is coming in - Enjoy!

By Gary Knowles

Don't worry, there are no calories involved in reading about these yummy, mouth watering, tasty and delicious food fests. Oh heck...yes...head off to Wisconsin and celebrate. There's nothing as good as foods at a festival. The people are friendly. It's fun. You deserve it. See you there!

Taste of Madison – Madison

Sept. 3-4, 2011

Held annually over Labor Day showcasing more than 75 local restaurants, 20 beverage stands and three entertainment stages. Admission and live entertainment is free. 608-276-9797; www.madisonfestivals.com

Dairy Days – Platteville

Sept. 9-11, 2011

Celebrates Wisconsin's dairy heritage with Midway rides, concessions, 4-H exhibits, dairy show, a truck/tractor pull, car show, family entertainment and parade. And, oh yes...free cheese at the cheese tent from local producers. 608-348-8888; www.platteville.com

Lake Geneva Wine Festival – Lake Geneva

Sept. 10, 2011

The 5th Annual Lake Geneva Wine Festival presents an extraordinary schedule of events including seminars, a grand tasting, fine cuisine and a fine wine auction under the Ferro Pavilion at George Williams College. Nationally recognized vintners and chefs share knowledge and expertise in a beautiful lakeside setting. 262-245-8635; <http://www.lakegenewinefestival.com>

U.S. Watermelon Eating Seed-Spitting Championship – Pardeeville

Sept. 10, 2011

In just 3.56 seconds you could set a new record for speed eating at the 2011 Watermelon Championship! Pucker up and enter the Seed-Spitting Championship. Lots of free watermelon plus watermelon carving and arts & crafts. 608-697-6744; www.pardeevillewatermelonfestival.com

Annual Wine & Harvest Festival – Cedarburg

Sept. 17-18, 2011

Ready for some grape stomping? Join the fun in the grape stomp, scarecrow contest, pumpkin carving, apple bobbing contest and hayrides. There's "Arts on the Avenue" and a farmers market with seasonal treats like caramel apples and steamed sweet corn. Taste seasonal wines and tour the Cedarburg winery tour. 262-377-3891; <http://www.cedarburgfestivals.org>

Beef-A-Rama – Minocqua

Sept. 23-24, 2011

One of Wisconsin's most unusual events, Beef-A-Rama celebrates beef with the "Parade of Beef," Rump Roast Run, and storefront beef roast cook-offs. It concludes with a tasty beef sandwich sale. 800-44-NORTH; <http://www.minocqua.org>

Warrens Cranberry Festival – Warrens

Sept. 23-25, 2011

The world's largest cranberry festival boasts 1,300 booths with arts and crafts, antiques, farmers market items and delicious cranberry treats. Tour of the marshes Friday and Saturday and don't miss the arts and crafts fair, cranberry parade and "berry good" entertainment. 608-378-4200; <http://www.cranfest.com>

51st Oktoberfest – La Crosse

Sept. 23 – Oct. 1, 2011

The 2011 Oktoberfest theme is "Gemutlichkeit—Your Friends are Here!" There's a "License to Cruise" classic car show (Friday), Torchlight parades, Festmaster Ball, Miss La Crosse/Oktobertfest pageant, Lederhosen Luncheon & 100 food booths! 608-784-FEST <http://www.oktoberfestusa.com>

Gays Mills Apple Festival – Gays Mills

Sept. 24-25, 2011

Head to Gays Mills to celebrate apples! Enjoy apple products, arts and crafts, a 2K and 5K run, flea market, apple race, parade and horse shoe tournament. 608-735-4341; <http://www.gaysmills.org>

32nd Annual Stone Lake Cranberry Festival – Stone Lake

Oct. 1, 2011

One of Wisconsin's largest cranberry festivals. Take a bus tour of cranberry marshes. See hundreds of crafters, a farmers' market, parade and crate derby. 715-865-3378 www.stonelakecranberryfestival.com

Apple Affair - Galesville

Oct. 1, 2011

What better way to kick off an Apple Affair than with a spaghetti dinner on Friday?! On Saturday a 10-foot apple pie is baked on the square. There's a bike tour through orchards, a cemetery walk and an open house at Eastside Farm. 608-582-2868; www.galesvillewi.com

Nekoosa Giant Pumpkin Fest – Nekoosa**Oct. 1-2, 2011**

Meet some of the largest pumpkins ever! Watch the giant pumpkin weigh-off and the smashingly fun pumpkin drop. There's a pumpkin bake-off, pumpkin rolling contest, pumpkin pie eating contest, craft show and farmers' market. 715-323-4533; www.nekoosagiantpumpkinfest.com

Cranberry Fest – Eagle River**Oct. 1-2, 2011**

Get your fresh cranberries, craisins, cranberry beer, hot spiced cranapple drink, cranberry meatballs, cranberry chili, cranberry mustard, lots of fresh baked goods, cranberry bratwurst and a slice of the "World's Largest Cranberry Cheesecake." Tour cranberry marshes and taste cranberry wine There's a free shuttle bus through town. 800-359-6315; <http://www.cranberryfest.org>

50th Anniversary Bayfield Apple Festival – Bayfield**Oct. 7-9, 2011**

The granddaddy of Apple fests! 60 orchard and food booths with caramel apples, apple dumplings, tarts, cider and apple brats. On Sunday the Grand parade has a 600 member finale with an original song by Big Top Chautauqua. Entertainment all weekend. 150 artists and crafters, traditional fish boil, orchard visits and an evening boat parade. 800-447-4094; <http://www.bayfield.org>

20th Annual Oktoberfest Celebration – Lake Geneva**Oct. 8, 2011**

A celebration for the entire family, Lake Geneva's annual fall festival features children's activities, music, magic, pony rides and the Great Pumpkin Giveaway. You'll also find food and craft booths, a farmers market, restaurant and shopping specials, carriage rides and a street dance. 800-345-1020; www.lakegenevawi.com

Ice Wine Release Celebration – Prairie du Sac**October 13**

Celebrate and taste the "nectar of the vines" – the release of the fabulous 2010 Wollersheim Ice Wine harvested on a freezing day in December 2010, crushed frozen, aged and released in very limited quantities. Self guided tours today 10am to 6:00PM 800-847-9463 www.wollersheim.com

Autumn Harvest Fest – Wisconsin Dells**Oct. 15-16, 2011**

Two days of fun for the family with scarecrow stuffing, pumpkin decorating, hay rides, and for adults – the Wisconsin Dells On Tap microbrew tasting. 800-223-3557; <http://www.wisdells.com/ahf>

Kohler Food & Wine Experience – Kohler**Oct. 20-23, 2011**

An epicurean adventure you'll never forget! Famous, award-winning food and wine specialists share talents and tastes. Enjoy food and wine tastings, seminars and demonstrations. 800-344-2838; <http://www.destinationkohler.com>

3rd Annual Wisconsin Original Cheese Festival – Madison**Nov. 4-5, 2011**

On Friday, choose from a variety of interesting private cheese tours. A wine and cheese tour ends at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin or try the Classic Cheese and Goat Dairy Tour. 10 participating restaurants along with a "meet the cheese maker" gala and farmer's market. 608-358-7837; <http://www.wicheesefest.com/events.php>

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