



Tour the state for Maine Craft Weekend

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

Grab the DeLorme gazetteer, fill up the tank and head across the state for Maine Craft Weekend. Arriving just as the leaves start to turn, the self-guided excursion Oct. 1-2 satisfies many cravings.

“It’s a chance to go into the places where people live, see cool structures, many that artisans made themselves, and get out and explore,” said Sadie Bliss, executive director of The Maine Crafts Association, which produces the event with partners such as Maine Made, a state-sponsored program. What started in 2013 as a way to help artists sustain a liv-

ing has become a tourist magnet. This year more than 200 studios, breweries, museums, galleries and workshops participate in the statewide tour.

smiths, jewelers, woodworkers and, yes, even brewers invite the public in to experience their world.

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“It’s a great mix of people making things with their hands, using tools, fiber, metal, paper, large-scale outdoor sculptures.”

SADIE BLISS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAINE CRAFTS ASSOCIATION

Tucked away in Aroostook County, dotting Down East and set along the southern edge of the state, crafters fling open their doors to the curious, the inspired and the intrepid. If you are familiar with artist open studio weekends, you know the drill. Black-

ing things with their hands, using tools, fiber, metal, paper, large-scale outdoor sculptures,” Bliss said, adding that a partnership with the Maine Brewers’ Guild means no one will go thirsty. “It’s a way to extend our reach into different kinds of makers. We have

our idea of what craft is; this is an opportunity to celebrate brewers, too.”

Now that craft beer is king in Maine, brewers like Rising Tide in Portland are collaborating with a chocolatier and ceramicist for a dual celebration.

“This gives people an opportunity to envision their day as fully rounded. You might visit a studio and stop at a brewery,” Bliss said.

Douglas E Wilson, a Little Deer Isle blacksmith, will be firing up his forge all weekend. Enter his “old timey” blacksmith shop, adjacent to his house to see this crafter up close.

“I am deeply rooted in the technical process done for thousands
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MICHAEL WILSON

See jewelry made by crafters such as Donna D’Aquino of ART @ 57 MAINE, a teaching art studio in Bethel, during Maine Craft Weekend.

Forests still make money for towns

Many communities managing woodlots

BY JULIA BAYLY
BDN STAFF

There was a time in the early years of Maine statehood that trees were the coin of the realm.

“Town forests date back to the inception of this state,” said Jan Santerre, senior planner with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

“Towns devoted a parcel to the school, a parcel to the church and a third parcel to what would have been the ‘poor farm.’”

Today, according to forest service data, more than 170 of Maine’s 500 municipalities own and manage more than 150,000 acres of forestland ranging in size from a few to thousands of acres.

“I think it’s great there are still towns managing woodlots,” Santerre said. “By and large these towns recognize the importance of managing for revenue and for public access and recreation.”

While timber sales no longer fund churches, and poor farms are a thing of the past, income from forestland does still supplement some town budgets.

Up in Winterville Plantation just south of Eagle Lake in Aroostook County, 12,000 municipally-managed acres fund a quarter of the annual town budget.

“We are blessed to have this land,” Dale Emery, Winterville first selectman, said. “We are seeing an average of \$100,000 to \$120,000 in income a year from it, and that makes a huge impact for us.”

Day-to-day woodlot management has been turned over to Huber Land Management, Emery said.

“Huber has more resources than we do and better sources for marketing the timber,” he said.

The current management plan has the town harvesting about 4,000 cords of wood per year.

“We do an inventory every year that tells us what is out there and what the growth rate is,” Emery said. “The big thing for us is sustainability so we are not losing our forest over time and down the road there’s be nothing left to cut.”
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GABOR DEGRE | BDN

Michelle Byrman cuts bars of soap just out of the mold at SoulShine Soap Co. in Winterport. Byrman (below), owner of SoulShine Soap Co., makes all the soap in her kitchen.

Clean living

Winterport woman finds success hand-making soap

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

Michelle Byrman’s home soap-making business is located off a quiet rural road that is more heavily trafficked by wild turkeys than vehicles.

But inside her cozy Winterport workshop, it’s a different world altogether — one that is gently perfumed by the scents of lemongrass, rosemary, lavender, calendula, rose geranium and the other essential oils that give her SoulShine Soap Co. products their panache. Since 2013, Byrman, 36, has been making simple bar

soaps in her kitchen and selling them to a growing clientele in Maine and beyond. The simplicity is intentional, she said.

“I look back on my great-grandmother, who was eating real food and using real soap,” Byrman said. “I think people are so used to body washes and all this advanced skin care technology. ... We have too many options for things. It is overwhelming. We have aisles of skin care products that are overpriced, with ingredients that have numbers in them.”

But while many people now are paying much closer attention to the food they put in their bodies, fewer place the same emphasis on what they put on them.

“People are getting the hang of the local food movement now,” she said. “But they don’t realize that your skin is our biggest organ.”

Byrman, who previously worked as a farmer and a waitress, did not learn to make soap from her great-grandmother. In fact, she had never dabbled in soap-making until 2012, when a couple of major events happened that changed her life. That year, her mother was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s, and her daughter entered middle school with all its clubs, sports and other busy options that can require parents to do an extra shift as a
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JULIA BAYLY | BDN

Terry Kelly of Presque Isle turns a chair spindle on his lathe.

Presque Isle carver finds niche making chairs

BY JULIA BAYLY
BDN STAFF

PRESQUE ISLE — Terry Kelly is a one-of-a-kind craftsman in a mass-production world.

The wood carver from Presque Isle has been turning out hand-made wooden furniture for nearly 15 years for appreciative customers across the country.

“I started building cabinets 15 years ago, and it was the old ‘crawl-walk-run’ as I learned a lot along the way,” Kelly said. “But I always wanted to do chairs [because] to a lot of craftsmen, chairs are the pinnacle of furniture making.”

So Kelly signed up for a two-week class offered by one of the country’s top chair makers through the Rockport Center for Furniture Craftsmanship. From the first turn of a wooden spindle,

he was hooked.

“Up until that point my furniture making was like a 100 level Introduction to Russian literature class,” he joked. “That class in Rockport was like stepping up to graduate classes [and] really took me to that next level.”

It was there that Kelly began to learn the techniques and skills he uses today in creating quality chairs he said will last hundreds of years.

“There is also the artistic standpoint,” he said. “When a chair is well made, it simply looks good and has that ‘wow’ factor.”

Appreciation of a good chair, Kelly said, is universal.

“In any chair you sit on — at home, at the doctor’s office or anywhere — you are consciously or unconsciously evaluating how comfortable it is,” he said. “That comfort has everything to do with

how the chair is made and designed.”

Kelly makes Windsor chairs, an elegant style he said dates back to 16th century.

“Back in the day, you had guys that all they did was go out into the woods, cut trees and make chair spindles,” Kelly said. “They’d bring these spindles into a town or village where another guy was making seats and other guy making the arms — it was all very specialized.”

The popularity of Windsor chairs dropped in the early and mid-1800s as people began to favor more Eastern- and Asian-inspired designs, Kelly said.

To keep a place in the market, builders of Windsor chairs began carving the legs, arms and backs to resemble sticks of bamboo, a style still used today by furniture
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