10th Annual Chestnut Roast -- A Big Success

Under perfectly blue skies and a pleasant October sun, the MU Center for Agroforestry celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Annual Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival. The event took place on Oct. 8, 2016 at the Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center (HARC) in New Franklin, Mo. Over 3,000 attendees enjoyed the beauty of the Missouri River Hills, feasted on a variety of local foods, enjoyed an array of demonstrations and presentations, ate roasted chestnuts, bought fresh chestnuts, listened to live music, and joined in on HARC farm and Hickman House tours.

The Missouri Chestnut Roast is a festival of culture and agriculture that celebrates agroforestry farming through Missouri’s traditional and specialty crop industries such as tree nuts, elderberries, pawpaws and forest products.

Presenters at this year’s festival included Mildred Mattfeldt-Beman who spoke on growing culinary herbs and medicinal botanicals, John Dodam who presented the history of mules in Missouri, Leo Sharashkin shared his knowledge on Ozark beekeeping, and Michael Gold spoke about growing market opportunities for chestnuts. The New Franklin Athletic Booster Club provided the food to festival goers including buffalo and elk burgers. There was a children’s area, cooking demos, walking tours and rides with the MU Mules for all age groups to enjoy.

“I am so glad I came today. The weather is perfect, and I’ve been having so much fun trying all the food samples. This is the perfect fall event” MU student Kaitlyn Wallace said. Wallace is a journalism student who heard about the festival from one of her sorority sisters.

Many MU students outside the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources showed interest in the festival this year as they looked for new fall activities to do around Columbia.

“My friends and I have always gone to the pumpkin patch or the corn maze, but we wanted to try something new this year. This festival has been a unique and educational experience. It’s been so cool to see all these vendors and get to know more businesses in Missouri” Columbia native Anastazia Prost said.

In addition to getting to know the vendors at the festival, first-time festival attendees learned about the Historic 1819 Hickman House.

“I had no idea that there was something so cool on university property. The tour of the house was super interesting, and I can’t believe I didn’t know this house existed until today” MU Student Jordan Donner said after his tour of the Historic Hickman House.

Wallace, Prost and Donner all said they would like to attend the festival again next year. With many new attendees and a big crowd enjoying the event, the 2016 Annual Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival was a big success.

“All the speakers and tour leaders did a fabulous job!” Dr. Shibu Jose, Center for Agroforestry Director and HARC Farm Superintendent, stated in his email to those involved with the festival. “The volunteers, faculty, staff and students worked really hard to ensure an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all the attendees. I heard a lot of positive comments throughout the day!”
The GLBW Conference will include two hour working group sessions on cover crops, agroforestry, perennial biomass crops, perennial forage/pasture systems, and perennial grains, as well as a “Tour of Midwest Watersheds.”

Registration: $180. For details and registration: http://snr.missouri.edu/green-lands-conference/

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