

Crowds pack South Haven's National Blueberry Festival

By JENNIFER VINCENT

FROM a sip of blueberry coffee to a bite of a blueberry bratwurst, the 45th National Blueberry Festival Aug. 7-10 packed in visitors at record numbers to get a taste of midsummer's bountiful blueberry harvest.

The west Michigan shoreline city of South Haven was host to more than 60,000 visitors for a weekend celebration that included a sidewalk sale, youth pageant, sand-sculpting contest, 5K competitive run, several community

dinners, concerts in the park, a parade and more blueberry-flavored food than anyone could imagine.

A demonstration also showed visitors how to cook with blueberries, which have been proven to carry many healthful benefits, including being rich in antioxidants.

The festival is one of about 38 blueberry festivals in the United States and one of four in Michigan. It is one of the longest-running blueberry festivals in the nation and began calling itself a national festival in 1969.



NONSTOP BERRIES: The Blueberry Store is an enterprise of True Blue Farms, owned and operated by Dennis and Shelly Hartmann of Grand Junction. Blueberry farming has been a longtime tradition in the Hartmann family, dating back to the early 1900s when blueberries were first pioneered in Michigan. The farm consists of 150 acres with 12 blueberry varieties. Many of the berries are used to produce products especially made for the store.



TASTE OF THE FARM: Velma and Alfred Blair, owners of Blair Farms in Grand Junction, had plenty of visitors buying fresh blueberries at their stand at the festival. They sold about 160 pies a day, and Velma baked 144 pies for the kids' blueberry pie eating contests.



TASTE TEMPTING: The Blueberry Store in South Haven has hundreds of blueberry-related products from special blueberry preserves, salsa, barbecue sauce, mustard and juice to clothing and unique accessories for the home.

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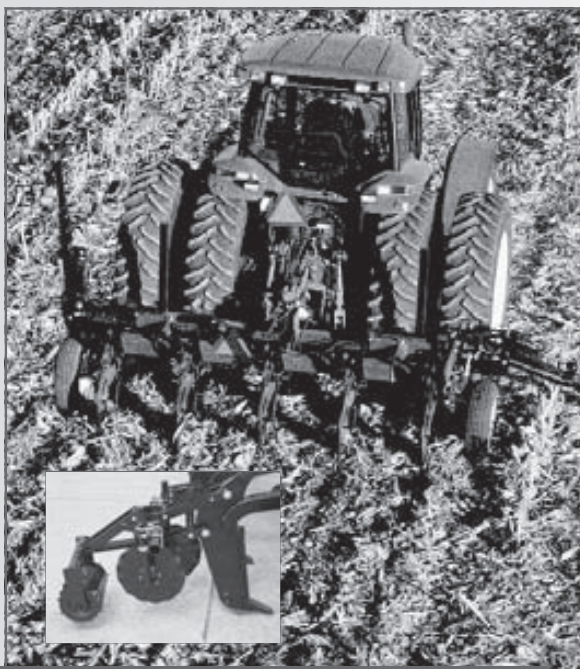
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