Grow **Rooted** with the HORN FARM CENTER



Education
Restoration
Reconnection

Click here to subscribe to our newsletter

To explore upcoming classes, **click here**

Click here to volunteer

Pawpaw Fun Facts!

Did you know?

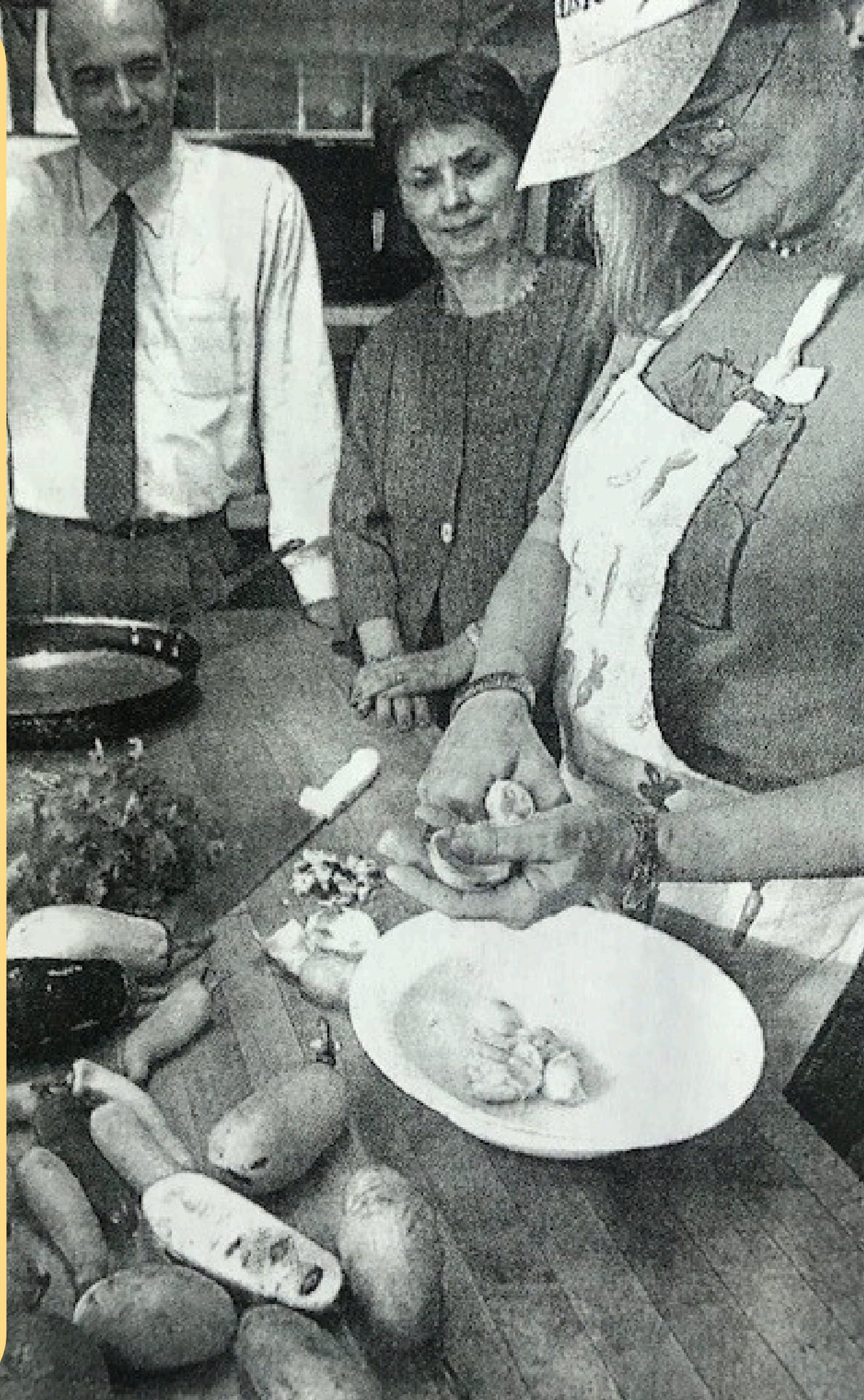


In 2004, Dick and Judy Bono started what would become the York County Pawpaw Festival by hosting a tasting at a local restaurant called Blue Moon. Their enthusiasm for the then-underappreciated native fruit grew out of a connection to the Slow Food Movement and a visit to Deep Run Pawpaw Orchard in MD. With years of selling the fruit annually at York Central Market and Judy's home gift shop, the Festival grew in reach and popularity, eventually making its way to the Horn Farm in 2013.

September 23rd, 2004

Blue Moon owner and chef Diane Weaver making a main dish for the Pawpaw Chef's Challenge. Dick and Judy Bono pictured left.

*image courtesy of Judy Bono.



Did you know?



The pawpaw tree (Asimina triloba) produces the largest edible fruit native to the United States. Its leaves, aroma, fruiting pattern, and fruits (in appearance and taste) are often described as tropical, which is on point: the pawpaw is cousin to the cherimoya, atemoya, and soursop. In fact, pawpaws are the only member of the Annonaceae, or custard apple family, that are cold-hardy and adapted to temperate climates. Like apples, their seeds need to be cold stratified (kept cold and moist) to germinate.

Comparing the temperate pawpaw (right) and the tropical cherimoya (below).

Did you know?



A friend of the forager! Thickets of pawpaw grow abundantly in forests across the Lower Susquehanna region. The trees favor streambeds, fertile bottomlands, and shady hillsides, thriving in the understory. Where trees can be found, fruits are often accessible and numerous: the trees typically top off around 15 or 20 feet, and widespread root suckering creates "groves" of natural clones. To identify pawpaw trees in spring, look for small, maroon flowers that emit a faint stench. These flowers attract various species of flies and beetles for pollination. Pawpaw leaves also have an unexpected smell, which many describe as "peppery."

Did you know?



While pawpaw is undoubtedly a delight for today's forager, its history is rooted in Indigenous communities across North America. In fact, it's probable that many of the fruits in today's forests are descended from carefully managed Native orchards that were lost after decades of forced displacement and cultural erasure. Stories and testimony remind us that the pawpaw was a staple of Indigenous foodways. For example, the Shawnee, who once called Western PA and Ohio home, regarded this time of year as the "pawpaw moon"--a time to enjoy ripe pawpaw and prepare for winter.

Did you know?



From its Indigenous roots to its current renaissance across the country, the pawpaw is truly an American fruit. George Washington enjoyed chilled pawpaw as his choice dessert, and Lewis and Clark journaled about subsisting on pawpaws at times of need along their western expedition. Pawpaws also provided sustenance and folk medicine to enslaved people, including those escaping north along the Underground Railroad. During the Great Depression, the pawpaw earned the nickname "poor man's banana" after becoming a frequent substitute for pricier imported fruits.

Did you know?



Finicky and fleeting. The pawpaw fruit has a remarkably short shelf life, making it an unfavorable choice for big-box supermarkets that depend on intensive shipping and storage. In fact, pawpaw fruit ripens very rapidly, and will spoil only a few days after harvest. Pawpaws are best gathered around the time they ripen, because unlike apples and pears, firm pawpaw fruits don't ripen well off the tree. All of this makes pawpaw a genuinely "local" commodity that naturally resists the mass market, though pulp extraction and cultivar research are increasingly making it possible for wider audiences to access pawpaw fruit in places where it doesn't grow.

Did you know?



Pawpaw fruit boasts a remarkable nutrient load! High in vitamin C, riboflavin, potassium and other essential minerals, pawpaw tends to outcompete common grocery store fruits like banana, apple, and orange in nutrient content. Indeed, pawpaw has one of the highest protein loads of any fruit, offering all essential amino acids. Recent, limited research has even uncovered high quantities of anti-carcinogens in pawpaw, though studies are still ongoing. Of course, like any other fruit, it's still best to enjoy pawpaw in moderation, and avoid consuming the moderately-toxic skin and seeds.

Did you know?



In the Lower Susquehanna region, the pawpaw tree is the exclusive host for the zebra swallowtail butterfly. Each Spring, females select young leaves on which to lay their eggs, reserving only one leaf per egg to ensure high survival (since young caterpillars can cannibalize each other!). The leaves offer a natural defense for the baby caterpillars, containing compounds called acetogenins that repel other insects and browsing mammals. In fact, by ingesting these toxic leaf compounds, the baby caterpillars make their bodies unpalatable to predators that might otherwise feed on them, like birds.

A native Zebra Swallowtail perching on a fern. Image courtesy of Judy Bono.

Did you know?



As climate change brings new challenges to everything from global supply chains to local agriculture, the renewal of the pawpaw fruit in our region takes on a new significance. The pawpaw is remarkably tolerant against many of the impacts already inflicting regional crops and orchards, including higher average temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, extreme weather, and more resilient pests and diseases. The pawpaw also offers nutritional benefits that we conventionally source through energy-intensive shipping networks. While we work toward adaptation, mitigation, and self-reliance, the pawpaw offers a great deal of promise.

Did you know?



Festival co-founder Dick Bono has been managing the Horn Farm Center's pawpaw orchard since 2012. Currently, the orchard has over 50 trees consisting of over 20 pawpaw cultivars, or "cultivated varieties." Many Pawpaw Festival enthusiasts will recognize a few of these varieties for being named after rivers: Susquehanna, Potomac, Allegheny, Rappahannock, Wabash, and more! Thousands of pounds of pawpaws have been harvested from this orchard over the years. Spend five minutes there this time of year and we guarantee you'll hear the "thump" of a ripe pawpaw falling from a tree!

One of many hauls from the Horn Farm pawpaw orchard, with varieties dutifully marked!

Grow **Rooted** with the HORN FARM CENTER



Education
Restoration
Reconnection

Click here to subscribe to our newsletter

To explore upcoming classes, **click here**

Click here to volunteer