

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP VENISON COOK-OFF FEATURED AT HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Port Gibson is home to the Mississippi Venison Cook-off State Championship, sponsored by Mississippi Farm Bureau, and this year it will be held on Saturday, March 29, 2008 as a part of the 16th annual Port Gibson Main Street Heritage Festival.

Deer hunting is a large part of Claiborne County's tourism industry and this year's championship cook-off will be held at the corner of Main and Farmer Streets. Bin Andrews, co-chair of the event, said "In addition to hosting award winning cooking teams, the Venison Cook-off area will provide several fun activities for everyone to participate in and at no charge." Cash prizes and trophies will be awarded to winning cooking teams. Applications to cook will be taken until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 and are available on the Main Street by calling (601) 437-5811 or (601) 437-5971.

Meat inspection for all cooking teams will be at 7:00 a.m. on the day of competition. Any teams not ready for inspection will not be allowed to participate. Cooking will be throughout the morning and judging will begin at approximately 12:30 for the deer camp division and 1:00 p.m. for the championship division. The public can purchase tasting tickets (10 for \$5.00) and participate in the People's Choice voting.

Event co-chair Randy Hynum said he expects up to 15 cooking teams which makes for great competition for the \$1000 first prize. "Some people take this seriously and prepare for months ahead of time to make sure their secret recipe is the best. Others just love the camaraderie of the day. In either case, it is a day full of good friends, great food, and now fun activities that the whole family can enjoy."

The Port Gibson chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Mississippi Wildlife Department are providing a video shooting gallery that will allow people to test their marksmanship skills. Claiborne County Farm Bureau will sponsor Fatal Vision, an exercise that simulates drunk driving. Participants will don goggles and drive a golf cart through a designed course.

Also scheduled again this year is the Big Turkey Contest and a Turkey Calling Contest. This event will be at 11:00 a.m. in the Venison Cook-Off area. Turkeys will be judged on length of spurs and beard combined for a total score. The Calling Contest will have a youth and adult division if there is enough interest. Prizes and plaques will be awarded to winners.

For those interested in outdoor adventures of a different sort, two guided tours are being offered at this year's Festival. Tom Bowen and Emma Crisler will host a walking tour of the beautiful and historic Wintergreen Cemetery. Port Gibson is known for its beautiful churches and the Rev. Michael Herrin will again conduct a walking tour of Church Street. Tickets for both of these tours can be purchased at the information booth which will be located at the intersection of Main and Walnut Streets.

For information on the 2008 Heritage Festival call the Main Street office at (601) 437-4500 or visit the web site at www.portgibsonmainstreet.com. The Port Gibson Heritage Festival is sponsored in part by the Mississippi Arts Commission and other generous sponsors.