

# THE 24th PENN-MAR IRISH FESTIVAL

## Where volunteers are family

The Penn-Mar Irish Festival is held on the third Saturday in June in York County, Pennsylvania. Gráinne McCool catches up with Festival Director, Mary Yeaple, to find out about this year's festival.



Ally The Piper

**Gráinne:** "What is the secret to the festival's longevity?"

**Mary:** "I put it down to our dedicated committee that has a true love of Irish music and culture. We love the look on the faces of our guests when they are enjoying the music and dance each year. It is rewarding to introduce new bands and then seeing lines of patrons purchasing merchandise to support their livelihood."

"We've been careful not to expand too quickly over the years, and to keep the focus on being an affordable family-friendly event, while presenting high-quality entertainment. We also have the support of *Explore York*, our county tourism bureau, and we're members of the Association of Irish and Celtic Festivals, which has been invaluable for networking and sharing best practices."

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**Gráinne:** "You had a new location last year, will it continue there this year?"

**Mary:** "Yes, we are now based at Pheasant Run Greenhouse and Garden Center. Last year was gorgeous, and we're happy to be returning this year. It's a lovely family-run garden center and sanctuary for plant enthusiasts. We did have a few challenges last year due to several days of heavy rain leading up to the big day, causing the relocation of some tent positions two days before the festival. However, we were treated to a spectacular rainbow that evening and then the sun came out for festival day."

**Gráinne:** "What can visitors expect this year?"

**Mary:** "Firstly, they'll find a warm welcome and cheerful environment. We're a smallish festival compared to other Irish festivals around the country, which creates intimacy for our guests. We have top-notch entertainment on three stages, and a nice mix of retail vendors with Irish goods. We also have a variety of food for sale; the usual Celtic festival foods will be sold, but we also offer crabcakes, sweet and savoury crepes, fresh garden salads, kettle corn, ice cream, and more. In our adult beverage area, we've added Bunratty Meade this year and will continue to offer Five Farms Irish Cream in addition to wine, whiskey, and local brews."

"Although some seating is provided under tents for shade, we do encourage guests to bring chairs or blankets if they wish. Pets are prohibited, and smoking is confined to a designated area. Pheasant Run will also have a booth on the grounds area selling shamrock plants."

**Gráinne:** "Who is playing throughout the day?"

**Mary:** "We always look forward to introducing new music each year and we are thrilled to be welcoming the fantastic Ally the Piper to the festival for the first time, along with her band. Ally is an internet sensation and people are very excited to see her perform in person. We're also welcoming Mary-Grace Autumn Lee on hammered dulcimer. Mary-Grace placed third in the Over-18 Miscellaneous Instrument competition at the All-Ireland Fleadh in 2025 and was featured in *Irish Music Magazine* last fall."

"Culra is another new band for us this year; a modern trad/folk band from Baltimore, Maryland. Rounding out the schedule will be Barleyjuice, Cas Ceol, Cassie & Maggie, The Diddley Idols (this dynamic duo with the big band sound was new last year and wowed everyone with their enthusiasm), Enda Reilly, long-time crowd favourite, Screaming Orphans, Susquehanna Pipes & Drums, McGinley School of Irish Dance, and Ni Riain School of Irish Dance."

**Gráinne:** "Will there be a children's area again?"

**Mary:** "Yes. Our free children's activity area is always a big hit with families and is made possible by a generous sponsor. We'll have a variety of games and crafts, face painting, giant bubble making, and

more. Our area coordinator does a great job keeping the kiddos happy, so that families will want to stay longer."

**Gráinne:** "Why should people attend in person in June 2026?"

**Mary:** "It's a wonderful annual tradition on the third Saturday in June. It's always rewarding to see people return year after year or visit for the first time because they follow a particular new band and then tell us on the way out that they will be back again next year. It's also a nice chance to pick up a gift for Father's Day, which takes place the next day."

Visit the festival website at [www.pennmaririshfestival.com](http://www.pennmaririshfestival.com)

