



2026

Spoon Gathering

Jun 4, 5 & 6, 2026

20th Anniversary

Join us in Milan for 2 1/2 enjoyable days of carving, green woodworking, demonstrations, workshops, presentations, networking, and friendship.

Mission Statement.

Sharing the knowledge of carving spoons and related handcrafts, while creating an inclusive gathering for all.



Preparations for the 2026 Spoon Gathering are a work in progress. Some details may change as the event draws closer. If you have not attended before, please contact the school so that you can be added to the email list and receive any updated information as it comes available.

Feel free to contact the school with any questions.

The Spoon Gathering

The seed for a unique green woodworking event was planted 18 years ago by artist and MVAS spoon carving instructor, Frank Foltz. Frank and the founders of the Spoon Gathering envisaged the creation of an event that would encourage carvers and spoon enthusiasts to gather once a year to celebrate the humble wooden spoon. What started as a small gathering of spoon carvers has grown into a vibrant and entertaining 3-day festival of carving, friendship, and learning. Each year, carvers from across the United States and beyond converge on Milan to celebrate the wooden spoon, an international symbol of family, meals, and friendship.

The Spoon Gathering today offers a family friendly event for those interested in wood spoon carving and traditional handcrafts. There is a full schedule of demonstrations, workshops, and presentations that not only center on the world of wood spoon carving, but also includes other forms of green woodworking and the decorative arts. In past years, these have included, knife sharpening, spoon blank harvesting and shaping, axe safety, wood bowl carving, kuksa carving, shrink box carving, blade forging, dying wood with natural dyes, chip carving and kolrosing.

The event caters to inexperienced carvers, however the school highly recommends those new to spoon carving take a beginning spoon carving class prior to the gathering.

During the event, a tent site is set up which allows beginners to access the hands-on instruction of a number of Minnesota's finest spoon carvers.

Other highlights of the weekend include a spoon exhibition by the festival attendees and a Friday evening potluck party and get-together. Free camping is available.

The Spoon Gathering is a carving weekend, so bring your spoon blanks and carving tools or just come to watch and enjoy the weekend.

Venue and Dates

Location: Milan Village Arts School & Burns Park, Milan, MN. Visit www.milanvillageartsschool.org and click on “**Location**” in the main menu.

Thursday, Jun 4 12 noon till late into the evening.

Friday, Jun 5 All day and late into the evening.

Saturday, Jun 6 All day and late into the evening.

Sunday, June 4

The school is open Sunday morning if attendees wish to use the facilities.

Registration

To register, either contact the Milan Village Arts School or register online at www.milanvillageartsschool.org.

Registration Fee: Pre-purchased Tickets

Friday only: \$25/adult

Saturday only: \$25/adult

Friday & Saturday: \$35/adult

Thursday, Friday & Saturday \$40/adult, \$55/family

A family consists of a couple or a couple with children.
Children under the age of 18 are free.

On Arrival

Driving in Milan

Milan has one of the youngest demographics in Minnesota. More than half the town's residents are South Pacific Islanders from the Federated States of Micronesia. There are a large number of children in town, so please drive carefully.

Parking

It is not permitted to park vehicles in Burns Park. Please, park your vehicle on a side street. If you park on the perimeter of the park, please park nose or rear in so that we can maximize the parking space. For the safety of those crossing the road, Washington Ave between the park and the school is blocked off. It is possible to drive around the barriers, but please drive slowly and watch for pedestrians. A large number of children live in Milan.

Checking in

On arrival, look for a festival organizer. The check in desk will be in the main school building. If you can't find an organizer, feel free to set up camp in Burns Park, across from the school. In past years, there has been camping allowed in the front yards of properties surrounding the park. Please check with organizers before setting up your tent.

There will be a class in the school until noon on Thursday, so please wait till 1 p.m. on Thursday to check in. There is no hurry. The registration desk will be in the main room of the school building. Enter between the 2 dragons at the front entrance and walk down the hall.

Official Welcome

The official Spoon Gathering welcome is held on Friday morning around 8.30 a.m. Roughly half of the attendees are returnees so feel free to ask others if you have questions.

Camping

Burns Park: Free camping is available on the Thursday, Friday & Saturday nights. Those attending a pre-event class may camp earlier. Please inform the school.

Pick a spot in Burns Park and set up camp. Warning!!! There is a tower at the south end of the park. A very loud siren goes off at noon, 5.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. every day. Welcome to small town Minnesota. The siren is a tradition. It signals lunch, supper and time for kids to go home.

For those looking for more space or a quieter location, the field behind the Milan Community Center (old Milan High School) is available for camping and is just a short walk to downtown. The second camp ground is not supervised, so please lock all your valuables in your vehicle when not present. Due to the cost, there will not be porta potties at this location. The local non-profit, GMI, gives us permission to camp at this location, but neither MVAS or GMI is responsible for any loss or damage to property.

Restrooms

Male & female porta potties are provided in the park. There is also a bathroom in the school with the luxury of a flushing toilet and running water. Please help to keep the school bathroom clean. **If the bathroom needs either toilet paper or paper towels, you will find supplies on the shelves outside the bathroom door.**

Showers

There are no showers onsite, but there are hot showers available at the Lac qui Parle State Park campground, which is about 5-minute drive from Milan. Please try to use the park showers outside of peak camper time.

Cost:

1. If you are a current holder of a Minnesota State Parks Annual Vehicle Permit (\$35), the showers are free.
2. If you do not have an annual permit, it is possible to purchase a 1-day permit at the front gates to the upper campground (\$7). The permit is per car, so several people can enter at a time.
No key is necessary. The shower block has private cubicles entered from the exterior.

Main Red School Building

The school will be open through most of the event, so come in, relax, and use the facilities. The school will remain open in the evenings as long as carvers wish to socialize and carve. At some point in the evening, the building will be locked, but a responsible adult will open the building early in the morning. The building is fully air conditioned or heated if required.

What do I need to bring?

Please bring:

A chair

Tools you will need for carving and blanks. The school has a number of chopping blocks and 3 carving horses.

Camping equipment if you choose to camp in the park.

Cooking equipment. There are no open fires allowed in Burns Park. Gas and charcoal grills are permitted. There will also be a gas Weber and Blackstone griddle available for cooking. Weather permitting, there is a fire pit in front of the school.

Coolers for food and drinks (if needed). There are no refrigeration facilities provided, but Bergen's Prairie Market has a good supply of ice.

Food and drinks

Small table. If you have items for sale or wish to put on display, bring a **small table** to set up in the park.

Other Accommodations

If you wish to have full-serviced camping facilities, you will need to camp at the Lac Qui Parle State Park campground about 5 miles outside of town. Call **320-734-4450**.

A limited number of RV hookups are available in the **Lions Park on Highway 7/59 in town** and a short walk to the festival. Payment is by donation to the city office. It is not possible to reserve a site. First come first served.

For other choices of accommodation, please visit www.milanvillageartsschool.org and click on "**Location**" on the top menu. You will find there is an ample supply of reasonable accommodation within a short driving distance of Milan.

Demonstrations, Presentations & Workshops

Demonstrations, workshops, and presentations are still being finalized. All 3 days will have something on offer. Friday and Saturday are the busiest days. Some of the favorites are retained every year and new ones added to keep the event fresh. As soon as they are finalized, an email will be sent out, so please make sure you are on the school's email list for the event. As they become available, the school will also list them on the Spoon Gathering Facebook page.

Once everything is finalized, a document titled "**Schedule of Events**" will be sent out. Last year we were a little late publishing the document. We will try and list it sooner this year. The Schedule of Events changes every year and late term changes are unavoidable.

Impromptu Chalkboard Demonstrations

Keeping with the tradition of sharing knowledge freely, impromptu demonstrations are encouraged and add color and interest to the weekend. While the school arranges demonstrations and presentations for the weekend, please feel free to set up and demonstrate your particular skill. You will always get an appreciative and attentive crowd. If you wish, inform the organizers, so your demonstration can be announced.

Pre-event Classes.

There are 4 pre-event classes being offered this year. Fred Livesay is teaching **Advanced Spoon Carving**, Alex Yerks will teach **Scandinavian Kuksa Carving**, Mary Tripoli will teach **Swedish Butter Box Carving** and Eric Goodson will teach **Intermediate Spoon Carving**. At this point, only Alex Yerks' Kuksa Carving class has space available. It is possible to be

added to the Waiting list for any of the 4 classes. These classes are scheduled to end at noon on Thursday. The main school will not be accessible till after the classes end.

Carving Time

The Spoon Gathering is a spoon-carving festival, so be prepared to carve. While demonstrations add to the interest of the Gathering, this is a time to meet fellow carvers, network, and work on your latest project. The event caters to beginners and novices. You will find the Spoon Gathering is a welcoming environment for all, so please feel free to ask for assistance. All are happy and willing to share their knowledge.

Spoon Blanks

Please bring along a supply of blanks. If you have extra, please bring them for sale, to barter, trade or just giveaway. There is always someone looking for a blank. If you do not have blanks, there is generally a supply available for sale at a reasonable price. There will be a designated area for the sale of spoon blanks. All sales proceeds go to the seller of the blanks.

Can I buy carving related tools at the Gathering?

The school will have a variety of carving related items for sale. Other attendees will also have items for sale.

Attendees Items for Sale

Carvers and attendees often have items for sale. If you are selling a large amount, please consider donating 5% of your profit to the Spoon Gathering. The school does not monitor sales and contributions are based on the honor system. All funds are used to help fund the current and future Spoon Gatherings. Bartering, trading, and selling is encouraged. Feel free to set up a small table in the park.

Spoons on Display: Saturday

As is tradition, space and tables will be provided in the school to display your spoons on the Saturday (time to be decided). Bring along any spoons you have carved, or other spoons in your collection. While spoons are the focus, feel free to bring other items of interest, especially those related to green woodworking and carving. You are sure to find admirers.

Feel free to sell some of your items at the exhibit. The school is not responsible for selling items, so if you have items for sale, please have your photo with your display so a potential buyer is able to locate you. The room will be monitored at all times. **Please label your display with your name and hometown. See one of the event organizers for labels.**

Beginners Tent (20' x 20' with red striped roof)

There will be a designated area for beginners to learn from experienced carvers. There will be an "instructor" at advertised times under the smaller tent. A black board will advertise the instructor's name and time. **If you are interested in being a volunteer teacher in the Beginner's tent, please contact the school prior to the event.** Duration of a session is about an hour, though you are welcome to volunteer for more than one session.

Silent Auction

A silent auction will be held on Saturday (Saturday afternoon. Exact time to be decided). All items are welcome. All profits go to sustaining future Spoon Gatherings. Anything can be donated for auction. It is not limited to spoon carving.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many opportunities to help during the festival. If you would like to help during the Spoon Gathering, please contact the school.

Spoon Gathering T-shirt

There will be a t-shirt this year. Fred Livesay is currently working on a design. Pricing and details to follow shortly. Orders will be taken prior to the Spoon Gathering. Some extra t-shirts in common sizes will be available at the event. We do not know the price per t-shirt yet. I suspect it will be higher than last year due to tariffs.

The Weather

Early June on the prairie can bring almost any type of weather. We have had rain, high temps, cold and drizzly weather, and beautiful sunny days. The prairies are often windy. The best thing to do is be prepared for any type of weather as conditions can change quickly. We will send out a final email shortly before the weekend regarding the weather. Please check the weather reports before departing home, on your way to the event and during the event.

Music

If you play a musical instrument, feel free to bring your instruments. We encourage music, but please remember we are located in the center of town. Noise outside needs to be kept to a minimum after 10 p.m. Socializing often goes on till late into the night. Please be quiet by the fire after 10 and move inside if necessary.

Trash & Recycling

Please keep the venue tidy and free of trash. Trash bins and a dumpster are on site. Recycling bins are located in front of the school. Please clean up your site if when you leave for home. This is highly appreciated by the organizers.

Meals & Refreshments

Water

The town water is fine for drinking. The water from the school kitchen is also fine for drinking and is the same water as the spigot in the park. Bergen's Prairie Market on Main St. has a supply of drinks, bottled water and ice.

Alcohol

The responsible consumption of alcohol is permitted on site, but please be responsible. We have not had an issue in 19 years. Please do not be the first one. This is a family friendly event. There is no off-sale liquor in Milan. All the neighboring towns have liquor stores. The Milan Legion on the highway is open to the public and opens at 4 p.m.

The Spoon Gathering is a Drug Free Event

Minnesota, like many states, has legalized the possession and use of cannabis for both medicinal and recreational use. However, it is not permitted in public areas. **Please do not consume cannabis products in the MVAS facilities or public areas of Milan, including Burns Park.** Consumption of illegal drugs is not permitted at the Spoon Gathering.

Cooking Facilities

A campfire will be located in front of the school for the purpose of relaxing and cooking. Wood is provided. There will also be a Weber gas grill available. Please keep the grill clean and turn it off once you have finished cooking. Open fires are not allowed in the park, but feel free to use a gas or charcoal BBQ. **Absolutely no open flames in the school or on the porches. The school is 111 years old and made of wood.**

Meals & Food

Beverage & Treat Room

Complementary coffee, tea, and treats will be provided throughout the weekend. A freewill donation bowl is located in the **Beverage Room**. If you would like to bring cookies or snacks for the table, please do so. Your contribution will always be appreciated.

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

MVAS should have all meals on Friday and Saturday covered this year. A full list of choices will be emailed prior to the event. All meals are reasonably priced. The new Milan Café will be open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Lions Club of Milan food truck will be located in Burn's Park and will be open throughout the event. This year there will be an expanded menu.

Breakfast

MVAS provides coffee and treats in the **Beverage Room** throughout the event. In the mornings there will be coffee, muffins from the local bakery and mandarins. There is also a microwave and a toaster provided.

Potluck Party: Friday 6:00 p.m. and onwards.

In past years, the potluck party has been held on the Saturday evening. This was possible when the Gathering was a 1 day or 2-day event. By request, the potluck party was moved to the Friday evening.

If possible, please bring something to add to the table. We understand that contributing is difficult for some attendees who are traveling from afar. MVAS is looking into alternative choices this year that will make attending the dinner easier for everyone. There is a

microwave in the school if you wish to reheat something. Feel free to bring refreshments of your choice. Please bring your own plate and utensils.

Services in Town

Bergen's Prairie Market

Thursday & Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Prairie State Bank

ATM available 24/7

billy maple tree's Gift Shop

Friday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Gas Station

On the corner of Hwy 40 and Hwy 7 as you come into Milan from the south. The station is card only.

Medical Facilities

CCM Health

Montevideo Hospital and Clinic

Open 24 hours (15 miles south of Milan)

824 North 11th Street

Montevideo, MN 56265

(320) 269 8877

Appleton Area Health

Open 24 hours (8 miles north of Milan)

30 S Behl St.

Appleton, MN 56208

(320) 289 1580

Cell phones

Phone reception in Milan can be questionable depending on your provider.

Feel free to use the school's phone if it is an emergency. Talk to an organizer.

There is no fee for charging phones, computers or cameras in the school. There are multiple places to charge a phone in the school. Though we have never had an issue, attendees are responsible for their own property.

Frank Foltz. Founder of the Spoon Gathering

Frank Foltz was born in Mt. Pleasant, MI, where he lived until leaving for Chicago to pursue an education. He began whittling when kids were still encouraged to develop their skills with a knife, carving his first neckerchief slide with the Boy Scouts at age 11. Carving became a part of his life and after moving to Minnesota in 1976, Frank began carving wooden signs for businesses.

While finishing a degree in creative therapy in 2001, Frank began carving spoons and woodenware in the Scandinavian tradition from Minnesota hardwood and fruitwood. His spoons were a co-operative venture between his creative whimsical nature and the piece of wood with which he was working. No two pieces were alike and all were intended to be used as well as enjoyed for the elegant beauty of the wood and design. One of his main interests was reviving the use of wooden spoons in everyday life for eating as well as cooking and the carving of spoons for self and friends. To that end, he found himself spending more time teaching spoon carving as folk art. Frank was an extremely popular wood spoon carving instructor at the Milan Village Arts School for a number of years until his passing in 2009.



Spoon by Frank Foltz