



## WHY WE CELEBRATE

This local tradition has been observed in the Juniata River Valley for more than two centuries, carried here by an early local settler. Legend has it that if you eat goose on St. Michaelmas Day, or locally called Goose Day, you will never want for money all the year round. Believers of this tradition adhere to it faithfully and eat goose every September 29th, thus ensuring wealth and prosperity for the coming year. In the 1970s, both the Mifflin and Juniata County Commissioners issued formal proclamations establishing Goose Day as official county holidays.



Photo: Kate Newcamp

**Businesses, nonprofit groups, individuals, and community organizations are stepping up to build our local holiday into something bigger.**

If you'd like to add an activity to the list, which is released on Sept. 1, contact the Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau, 717-248-6713, [vbinfo@juniatarivervalley.org](mailto:vbinfo@juniatarivervalley.org).

For more information about the wide variety of activities, events, and promotions held throughout the Juniata River Valley for Goose Day and year-round, go to [www.JRVVisitors.com](http://www.JRVVisitors.com).

The official Goose Day List is released on September 1st.



*Official 2020 Goose Day postcard by Neil Demi.*



**CELEBRATED ANNUALLY  
SEPTEMBER 29**

# GOOSE DAY



**IN THE JUNIATA RIVER VALLEY**

# SEPTEMBER 29TH

**GOOSE DINNERS  
EVENTS ACTIVITIES  
ART MUSIC WORKSHOPS  
CONTESTS GIVEAWAYS  
& MUCH MORE!**

Lewistown • Mifflintown  
Belleville • Port Royal

**PENNSYLVANIA**





Photo: Melissa Tabb

## The History of Goose Day in the Juniata River Valley

St. Michaelmas Day, locally called Goose Day, all started in 1786 when a Pennsylvania Dutchman named Andrew Pontius moved his family to Snyder County to farm. His farm prospered and he needed to hire a tenant farmer to help. On his way to Lancaster to hire a fellow dutchman, he stopped in Harrisburg for the night where he met a young Englishman named Archibald Hunter. Hunter told Pontius that he'd jumped ship while the British fleet was docked in Philadelphia and that he was working his way west.

Impressed with the youth, Pontius dropped his original plan and offered Hunter the job. He accepted and the two drew up a contract which included a clause specifying that their accounts were to be settled each year on the traditional day to do so, September 29th.

On that day, Hunter appeared at Pontius' door with accounts under one arm and a goose under the other. The tenant explained to his wondering landlord that in England, eating a goose on September 29th would bring good luck. Since Medieval times, accounts in England had been settled, contacts renewed, and rents paid on St. Michaelmas Day. A goose was an expected payment since they were at their prime. Legend has it that a slice of goose breast could predict the winter to come.

If the meat was dark, the winter would be severe; if light and dark, variable; if fair, the sun was predicted to shine. Pontius, his family, and Hunter followed this prediction.

Hunter also introduced a second English tradition. Anna Snyder, Pontius' niece, was visiting that first Goose Day when Hunter appeared with the goose. She overheard the man say that a special Michaelmas treat was a cake with a gold ring stirred into the batter. The lucky one who found it could expect an early marriage.

Anna, a romantic girl, persuaded her uncle to include a Michaelmas cake as dessert. While the men settled their accounts, Anna and her aunt prepared the goose and baked the cake. According to the story, Anna found the ring and she and Hunter were soon married. Her uncle Andrew felt that he had struck an exceptionally good bargain that day when he met the Englishman.

The people of the Juniata River Valley continue to celebrate Goose Day by dining on goose and by enjoying a wide variety of events and activities held all over our two-county area. We encourage you to check our website starting every September 1 to find the newest list of things to do: [www.JRVVisitors.com](http://www.JRVVisitors.com).



Wondering where to find your lucky goose?

Scan this QR code on September 1st to find the list of this year's participating businesses and restaurants.

**Wild Geese**  
*Flock Together*

A community-wide public art project, led by Community Partnerships, features fiberglass geese painted and designed by local artists and sponsored by local businesses. For a list of geese landings, scan the QR code at the right for the Wild Geese Tracker.



## FACTS ABOUT GOOSE DAY

St. Michaelmas Day was first declared a festival by Pope Gelasius in the year AD 487. The feast, which always falls on Sept. 29th, honors Saint Michael the Archangel who led God's war against evil in the biblical book of Revelation.

On St. Michaelmas Day of 1588, Queen Elizabeth I was eating roast goose, one of her favorite meals, when she was brought news of England's victory of the Spanish Armada. Ecstatic at the news, the Queen decreed that goose should be eaten on the holiday every year.

Folklore in the British Isles suggests that St. Michaelmas Day is the last day that blackberries can be picked. It is said that when Saint Michael expelled Lucifer, the devil, from heaven, he fell from the skies, landed in a prickly blackberry bush and cursed the bush.

Since St. Michaelmas Day falls near the equinox, this holy day is associated in the northern hemisphere with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days. This is a sister holiday to Candlemas Day, or Groundhog Day, where clergy would bless and distribute candles needed for winter. The candles represented how long and cold the winter would be.

In recent years, Juniata River Valley chefs have taken a creative approach in using goose in a variety of dishes like goose stew, goose pizza, and foie gras. Also, thanks to some grassroots efforts, many Goose Day events are held annually to celebrate the holiday.

