

History of Smaczne Jablka Festival in Winona (Paula Colwell)

Father Paul Breza grew up in Winona, MN and was a descendant of Kashubian immigrants who settled in Winona in the mid-1800's. Due to his family history, he developed a passion for Polish heritage, and in 1979 founded the Winona Polish Cultural Institute and Museum (now called the Kashubian Cultural Institute and Polish Museum). The museum is housed in a building in the east end of Winona that previously served as the administrative office of the Laird-Norton Lumber Company. Father Breza was actively involved with the museum up until his death on April 7, 2025, at the age of 87.

Ordained a Catholic priest in 1963, Father Breza had many accomplishments in his years of service in the Diocese of Winona (now called the Dioceses of Winona-Rochester). Early in his career, Father Breza ran a program that took delinquent youths from a juvenile detention center to area farms to work. Eventually, farms started dropping out of the program, so Father Breza bought a small apple orchard for the youth to work on, located near Pickwick, MN (just outside of Winona). A year after he bought the farm, the state government dismantled the juvenile center, so he had to figure out a new plan for the apple orchard. He spent several years reading up on the care of apple trees and applied that knowledge to his farm.

Apples from Father Breza's farm became a tradition in the Winona Polish Museum's Smaczne Jablka "Tasty Apple" Festival each fall. Smaczne Jablka is a longstanding event at the Polish Museum that celebrates Polish heritage and one of Poland's biggest exports – apples!

The Smaczne Jablka festival began in 1985, when Father Breza and the Polish museum board members decided to start a festival as a fundraising event. Father Breza donated apples from his orchard every year to the festival, with museum volunteers spending many hours peeling apples and baking pies and apple crisp for sale at the event. The festival has been a huge success for the museum over the years. A variety of Polish food, arts and crafts, costumes, a silent auction, and live Polka music have been staples of the festival, and there is always a large turn-out.

Smaczne Jablka occurs on the first Sunday of October every year - this year, it will be held on Sunday, October 5, 2025. PGS-MN will have a table at the event, and we invite you to make the beautiful fall drive down to Winona to join us in the activities!



Member Contact Information – Updates Requested

PGS-MN would greatly appreciate if you have any changes to your contact information that you provide it to us so we can update our records. Email changes to us: pgsminnesota@gmail.com

- * Mailing Address
- * Phone Number (Cell or Home, with area code)
- * Email Address
- (if unlisted, please provide two email addresses if you have two)*