

Being chili judge is heartburning experience

By Sandra Armbruster
staff writer

"Hats off to the judges — the brave," read the sign at the Chili Cook-Off sponsored by the National Kidney Foundation last Saturday in Saline.

And brave we were. Neither torrents of rain nor heartburn could deter us from our appointed task.

Crowds had gathered during the morning to watch as cooks from throughout southeastern Michigan vied for a showmanship prize by sauteeing, slicing, and stirring their pots of double trouble.

One group of cooks distributed bogus recipes for a chili that called for ground toad legs and lizards.

Radio stations had broadcast live from the event while an auction, bands, balloons and a boot-throwing contest had kept the crowd occupied. And all the while, the pots simmered.

THE 25 JUDGES, including this intrepid reporter, came from area restaurants, cooking schools at community colleges and from the media. Chief judge was Jim Lark from The Lark Restaurant.

We donned blue aprons as we awaited the start of the annual contest, which this year was expected to raise close to \$30,000 despite the downpour.

Jim Harper and Mike Bradley from radio station WHIC passed the time by handing out buttons. John Christopher of the Michigan Panthers signed autographs, and Weight Watchers Executive Chef Larry James told everyone who eyed his glass that he was drinking light beer.

Staff members decked out in red aprons gathered the 77 quart-sized styrofoam cups of chili identified only by numbers.

Our instructions were simple: Use personal preference in judging flavoring, chili pepper taste, consistency, meat texture and aroma.

Ah, the aroma! The smell of chili permeating the air was thick enough to clear anyone's sinuses.

CHILI GOURMANDS crowded the sidelines to watch as judges at each of six tables tasted 15 different bowls of chili. To clear our palates, we had a choice of beer or water. Most judges chose beer.

We rounded the tables, taking a tea-

spoon of chili, a sip of beer, a mouthful of chili, a gulp of beer, you get the idea.

Chef Kevin Gawronski of Schoolcraft College culinary arts department, whose thumb was in a cast, opted to judge the contest instead of compete as a cook. Wearing a Texas-sized western hat, Gawronski said chili is definitely part of his curriculum.

Judges weren't allowed to discuss the merits of the chili, which included some entries with an afterburn powerful enough to place the judges into or out of the contest instead of compete. Some were greasy. Many included chunks of green pepper, onion and tomato. Beans were prohibited since they aren't considered to be a traditional ingredient.

Other non-traditional entries included Fat Bob Taylor's with Kowalski sausage and cabbage. The first place entry included three cups of white wine and Italian sausage.

Rumor had it that one entry included a fifth of Cognac in Detroit.

Weight Watchers Chef James, with a fire extinguisher slung from his belt, said the chili he was helping to prepare wouldn't have chocolate, but (kidney) contain most of the ingredients used by

other chillmakers. The biggest difference would be in the preparation, which he said requires cooking and draining the meat separately from other ingredients.

AT LEAST ONE judge never made it to the finals, when the top 10 entries were sampled. Apparently no one told poor Joe Palla that he didn't have to taste all the entries.

Some of us felt relieved to know that there was a doctor, Scott Woods of the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce, in our midst.

Chief Jim Capenka, who said the hottest thing right now is nachos at his eatery, Mr. Mike's Coney Island in Westland, noted that it was difficult to taste differences in chili recipes by the end of the contest.

A tie for second place in the finals required a third, sudden death taste test which met with groans from all the judges.

When it was all over, samples of chili were sold to the public, including dislikable-approved chili, which spokeswoman Lili Donaldson said is bland.

"That's what's great about a (kidney) transplant," she said. "You get to go back to eating spicy food."



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Chili chef reveals top secrets which make him a tasty winner

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They said they began making chili on hunting trips up north.

"To kill the wild game taste, chili was a good thing," explained Morissette, 33.

"We used bear meat originally, but they wouldn't let us do that here," he said, adding that they've tried other wild game, including venison.

This isn't their first try in a chili contest. They placed 10th in last year's cook-off. They won a chili contest in Lincoln Park, but found they didn't

even qualify in a West Bloomfield event.

The pair, who were sponsored in the competition by Spearhead Automated Systems of Livonia, wouldn't release details of their recipe. Asked if they had any advice for potential chili cooks, Spitzer said, "Keep the cinnamon out."

STEAMING To first place in the cook-off was Joanne Drow of Ypsilanti, whose winning recipe follows at the end of this article. Taking third place was Michael Murphy of Dearborn with his version of Irish chili.

Southeast resident David Ritchy took fourth place, while Canton Township resident John Strzalka, who placed sixth last year, moved up into fifth place.

Sixth place winner was David Hart

of Ypsilanti. Tied for seventh through ninth places were Paul M. Pinchuck of Ypsilanti, A. Anne Smith of Saline and Walter and Clare Hunter of Canton.

Holding onto 10th place was Jac's Diner in Detroit.

Others who made it to the finals included Leslie Ward of Birmingham and JoAnn Zelsuff of West Bloomfield's Celebration! Stores Inc.

Drow's prize-winning chili makes about 15 quarts and costs roughly \$50.

Ingredients
1/4 cup corn oil
3 lb. lean chuck, diced into small cubes
5 lb. ground round
3 lb. Italian sausage chopped
4 large white onions, diced
1 bunch celery, diced
1/4 lb. hot banana peppers
5 bay leaves

2 T MSG
2 T salt
1 tsp. basil
3 T cumin
4 cloves garlic, mashed
6 oz. chili powder
3 beef bouillon cubes
1 pkg. onion soup mix
32 oz. cans whole tomatoes
32 oz. cans tomatoes crushed
5 oz. chili powder
32 oz. cans tomato sauce
112 oz. can tomato paste
5 cups white wine (French Colombar)

Preparation
Brown meat in corn oil. Transfer to a large pot. Sauté onions, garlic, celery and peppers until tender. Add spices, soup, bouillon, tomatoes, paste and wine. Combine in large pot. Cook three hours.

Jazz featured at Orchard Ridge

For those who enjoy instrumental and vocal jazz, the Orchard Ridge Fine Arts Theatre presents "Love Songs: Innocent and Otherwise" featuring the Best Bonnier Quartet and The Voices in association with The Michigan Vocal Jazz Society. This performance will be held at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 14.

Some of the selections will be old favorites while others will look at the

more frustrating aspects of love. The Orchard Ridge Fine Arts Theatre provides an informal, comfortable setting which will emphasize the rapport between audience, vocalists and instrumentalists. Ticket prices will be \$8 for general public admission and \$4 for students. For additional ticket information, call student activities at 471-7541.

INSIDE ANGLES

THE GOOD CONDUCT Medal was awarded to Marine Corporal Thomas K. Slaga, son of Robert Slaga Sr. of Farmington Hills and Glenda M. Slaga of Garden City. The Good Conduct Medal signifies faithful and obedient service during a three-year period. To earn it, enlisted Marines must achieve and maintain an unblemished conduct record for the entire period. Slaga currently is serving at the Marine Corps Air Station in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

CONGRATULATIONS to Margaret Gibson, Harold Gibson, Virginia Kraft, Daniel D. Barnard and John Tesner, who were appointed to the Farmington Hills Education Committee. Congratulations also go to Joseph Hovanesian and Randall Winston, who were appointed to the Farmington Historic District Commission.

BRENDA HOWELL was one of 32 graduating seniors in the baccalaureate nursing program at Northern Michigan University who received her school nursing pin in a traditional candlelight ceremony. She is now eligible to take the registered nurse licensure exam. According to Betty J. Hill, dean of the school of nursing and allied health, the pinning ceremony is always held the night before the Northern's graduation exercises and is a "special, more intimate graduation for our nurses."

THE MICHIGAN SWIMMING Association will host a Swimsathon 4:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday at Harrison High School, 39995 W. 12 Mile Road. The Swimsathon will benefit Beverly Cornelli, a member of the Motor City Wheelers Swim Team. Beverly is an active parent of the MSSA team who is handicapped due to a rare bone disease. In Windsor, she took three first places which qualified her for the National Wheel Chair Games to be held in Hawaii this summer. MSSA swimmers currently are soliciting sponsors for the Swimsathon. The swimmers will swim up to 300 lengths earning a specified amount of money per length. Persons interested in sponsoring a swimmer should contact Mrs. Woodcock at 661-8897 or Mrs. Morton at 661-6317.

GUITAR PLAYER Ed Uring has been named Volunteer of the Year in a five-state region by Beverly Enterprises and now will compete for a national title with other volunteers who give their time and talents to nursing homes. The Farmington Hills resident has organized "Men's Night" and a rhythm class for residents in Williamsburg Convalescent Center and is now building a fish pond in the residents' courtyard.

THE ADVANCED drama class at Harrison High School took its play "Mystery of the Gum Drop Dragon" on the road for morning shows at

Our Lady of Sorrows and Woodcreek elementary schools. Lead players were "Prince" Paul Amendt and "Princess" Amy Wright.

KUDOS to students at Power Middle School. A total of \$5,085 was raised by 166 students during their "Jump Rope for Heart" Feb. 25, according to Patricia Messina, school coordinator. Members of the winning team, which raised \$528, are: Dawn Andrew, Jamie Gresham, Rita Gupta, Tina Jamroz, Rochelle Masur and Christine Scian. They are all seventh graders. The school conducted the event as a community service project which was developed by the Michigan Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance to promote the importance of physical education. Dave Findlay, local disc jockey, volunteered his time to provide music for the event. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Michigan Heart Association in its effort to combat heart and blood vessel disease through research, risk factor education, CPR training and professional education.

ELLEN AHERN, Leslie Mohr, Collen Porter and Susan Smith, all of Our Lady of Mercy High School, won top honors in the Scholastic Art Award Program. They join the ranks of past winners such as Robert Indiana, Richard Anusiewicz and Philip Pearlstein. Since 1927 Scholastic Art has been the first to recognize the early talents of many of our nation's famous artists, sculptors and designers. Cooperation of art teachers throughout the country and the judging procedures are set up with the goal of ensuring that the artwork represents the very best teen-age work in the program's 14 categories covering painting, drawing, printmaking, design, sculpture and crafts. The Scholastic Art Award Program is conducted by Scholastic Inc., publisher of books, magazines, and learning materials for young people, schools, and at home. National sponsors of the Art Awards Program are Hallmark Cards Inc. and Strathmore Paper Co.

MARTHA SMITH, a 1970 North Farmington High School graduate, will have a role in the TV show "Love Sidney" with Tony Randall at 8 p.m. Monday, May 16. She also completed a pilot for CBS co-starring Kate Jackson. Martha also had roles in "Happy Days," "Quincy," "Fantasy Island," "The Duke of Hazzard" and "Taxi."

FARMINGTON HILLS Sweet Adelines returned from regional competition with a third-place award in competition with seven choirs coming from five states. The singers' new director, Juana Fabado, came home with the Novice Director's Award. Meanwhile, one of the members in the local chapter, Jo Gray, was elected to the regional board of Sweet Adelines.



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