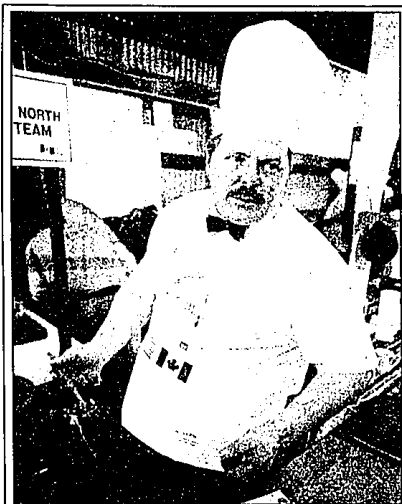




David Frank, Street Scene graphics coordinator, cooks up a batch of Street Scene chili. "People are going to bring in all kinds of arcane chilis," Frank was heard to say, "and they're going to taste ours and say, 'This is good chili.'"



Joseph Wnuk of Westland has drafted a site plan for the world's biggest pot of chili.

## Chili of the gods?

By Richard Loch  
staff writer

Recipe for the world's largest pot of chili (clip and save):

### Ingredients

1,000 pounds ground chuck  
200 quarts tomatoes  
Heaven knows how many onions,  
spices and other ingredients

### Directions

Take a pot, 6 feet tall by 6 feet in diameter. Toss in ingredients, let stew. Stir occasionally with canoe oars. Makes 3 tons. Feeds an army large enough to topple most banana republics. Afterward, authenticate the chili with the Guinness Book of World Records people. Then lord it over those polecats out West who sneer when someone mentions Michigan and chili in the same breath.

Just how big is the pot of chili Westland resident Joe Wnuk is planning?

Why, it's so big that he actually has a site plan for it.

It's so big that you'd have to climb a scaffold just to get a whiff of it.

It's so big that the pot will have to be specially made in a machine shop — at a cost of \$4,000.

That is not your ordinary pot of chili. That is not your ordinary pot of anything.

WNUK and his Great White North Chili Cooking Team hope to make this Paul Bunyan-size chili at this year's Michigan State Fair.

What drives a man to want to make a chili like nothing mankind has ever seen before? Well, getting in that Guinness book, for one thing.

"I saw in the Guinness book that they had the largest salad and largest pancake, but there was nothing in there about chili," said Wnuk, who competed in both the sanctioned and unsanctioned cook-offs in Saline.

He already is on file with Guinness for setting a world record for putting the most ingredients in a pot of competition chili, two years ago at the Lark Restaurant in West Bloomfield. His team shoved 74 ingredients into that pot, including too unchili-like, except maybe the olives.

But there is something else inspiring Wnuk besides getting in The Book. What else dare we call it, in this, Michigan's sesquicentennial year, but pride of state?

"Here in the Eastern states, chili is not as popular as California or Texas," said Wnuk, who has been cooking chili competitively for six years. "A lot of people from here have been down there (to the chili cook-off nationals) but never won."

"That's one of the main reasons I'm doing it, to hype up our chili. People on other side of Mississippi, they laugh at Michigan, that's why I'm doing it."

Wnuk, who spends his non-chili time designing cars for American Motors, intends to spend a total of \$10,000 in order to wipe smirks off some Western faces. At this point, he has gotten a preliminary OK from the State Fair people for his dream project, but not final approval.

If he doesn't do it there, though, he probably will do it somewhere. "The Big Chili" is an idea whose time apparently has come.



## Street Scene spills the beans

By Richard Loch  
staff writer

It's probably happened to you.

You're sitting around with friends, discussing things to do, and someone suggests, "Say, how about entering the unsanctioned 'renegade' competition at the Great Chili Cook-off in Saline."

"A swell idea," you say, "because, unlike the previous day's sanctioned competition, beans and other fillers are allowed."

SO WHAT do you do next?

Well, we — Street Scene, that is — can give you a few tips because we did exactly that, entering a team in the recent renegade chili cook-off. We didn't win anything, but it was a great learning experience.

First of all, it is a good idea to come prepared. You might want to try fixing a prototype chili at home beforehand, especially if you've never made chili before.

We cooked up three trial pots: regular, hot pepper and beer, and chocolate and raisin. Hot pepper and beer won over regular (too bland) and chocolate and raisin (the description "it doesn't taste as bad as it sounds" is not exactly the stuff of prize-winning chili).

THE TYPE of gear you bring also is important. A metal pot and a portable burner are musts. It also is a good idea to bring a cutting board. You do not want to be cutting onions on a pot lid while the rest of your chili crew rushes off to the Saline supermarket to buy a darned cutting board.

The choice of knife also is important. A steak knife may look formidable in your cozy kitchen at home but most competitors come with knives taken from the set of "Conan the Barbarian." Bring lots of ingredients too. Bring more than you plan on using. You never know when the creative urge will strike. But more importantly, it just looks so intimidating to have rows and rows of spices lined up in front of your cooking spot.

AFTER YOUR chili has been bubbling away for several hours, the moment of truth arrives. You are given a tall Styrofoam cup to fill up with chili and take to the judges' tent. Taping a \$5 bill to the bottom of the cup is frowned upon.

After this, the public starts lining up to sample your chili. They pay 25 cents for a little plastic cup of chili, with the proceeds going

toward the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan. If you haven't tasted your chili, you'd better act quickly. The stuff goes faster than you can say "Hungarian banana peppers."

If you're lucky, some people smile and say, "I've come back for seconds." At this point, silently bless his/her/their little hearts. A hug is optional.

Finally, you wait around for the judges' decision. "It is not important who wins," you think. "We are just doing this for the fun. We are just doing this to help a good cause." But do keep any leftover chili peppers. You can crush them with your bare hands when/if you find you didn't win or place.

SOME OTHER vignettes from a chilly chili day:

Practice made perfect for Phil and Maria Janness' second-place "North of the Border Chili." (Their first attempt, three years ago, was merely close to the border.)

"We cooked a lot of different batches," Phil said. "We cooked a batch for relatives, and I took a batch to work and we served it at a party. Oh yeah, I went on a fishing trip and took some."

The Troy couple refine their chili every year by experimenting with new ingredients, serving the results to family and friends and then by totally ignoring their reactions.

"We don't take a lot of suggestions," Phil admitted. "We enjoy cooking chili and we came here to spectate one year. We decided to develop our own recipe. We got the International Chili Cookbook to find out the rules and regulations and started experimenting."

"Chili started as meat, onions and spices. You're really not supposed to have tomatoes. In some places down South they don't like tomatoes in chili. But we have them."

The couple also add Labatt's Blue ("That's where we got North of the Border") and honey. The honey sweetens and takes the edge off the chili's peppery sting.

IN HIS FIRST time competing in a chili cook-off, Bill Fabek of Bloomfield Hills had the natural misgivings of any beginner.

"I know I'm going to win it, that's why I entered," said Fabek, who was wearing a red cowboy hat.

"The reason mine is the best is I have mushrooms and Bob Evans' hot and spicy sausage. That's the little kick on the side with the rest of the ingredients."

Sad to say, however, his "Willie's Chili" didn't win.

Sharon Dargay contributed to this article.



Steve Dill doctors up his chili with a surgeon's touch.

## Nuke chili: It's a blast

By Sharon Dargay  
staff writer

Dear Etiquette Adviser:

I'm serving chili to friends Saturday night and plan to set the table with a nuclear annihilation theme. I paneled the kitchen with portable lead containment walls, mapped out escape routes from the dining table to the bathrooms and alerted the Atomic Energy Commission.

Here's my dilemma: I was wondering whether the soup spoons should be placed buffet-style to the right or left of the cooling tower centerpiece?

Also, is it proper, etiquette-wise, to wear goggles and a belt-mounted fire extinguisher while serving? Or just my decontamination garb?

Please answer soon. My dessert (Nuclear Winter Baked Alaska) is beginning to melt down.

If you're searching for that extra decorating touch at mealtime, look no farther than the Great Chili Cook-Off contest.

You probably can't drive a pickup truck into your cooking area as one competitor did. Or create an exotic ambience with a caged Tasmanian Devil at the dining room table. But you can try a few scaled-down versions.

BESIDES A cooling tower replica (to camouflage the chili pot), you'll need flashing yellow lights, atomic symbols and a welcome mat that

says "Entering Nuclear Chili Zone." If you plan to duplicate Leo Buk's winning "Nuclear Chili" booth. Instead of an apron, try a glow-in-the-dark yellow decontamination suit, a belt with fire extinguisher and goggles.

"I have some friends in the nuclear field and nuclear is confinement. So, this is confinement," the Taylor man explained, speaking through the plastic sheeting that separated spectators from the chili pot.

"It's gotten better every year. This year I put up the plastic and the cooling tower."

Buk won first place with the same booth concept in 1985.

"This is a blast, a riot, the best day of the year. You can make a fool of yourself and everyone loves it."

Just one word of warning before trying your own display at home: Be sure to check local zoning ordinances. There's nothing more embarrassing than the city building inspector raiding your dinner party because you forgot to get a site plan or variance.

MEANWHILE, IF you're planning a chili theme party, don't worry about mixing food metaphors. If chili conjures up visions of surgeons in scrub suits instead of cowboys and señoritas, go for it.

Surgeons eat too, don't they? "Someone we know works in a doctor's office, so they got us all this," explained Elsie Landin, Union Lake, as her daughter-in-law ar-

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Leo Buk's nuclear chili was safely contained behind plastic sheeting. Any nuclear spills were purely accidental.

Staff photos  
by Stephen Cantrell