

Red-hot Chili lovers brave burned tongues to sample entries

Complete list of Chili Cook-Off winners, 2B

By Rebecca Haynes
staff writer

A slow burn... According to the "experts" this is what any good chili does to the mouth of those who eat it.

And at the recent Chili Cook-Off in Saline, sponsored by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, it was the end result each cook tried to attain. The weekend event drew more than 120 avid chili cooks and many more who came just to sample their fare.

Annette Horn, 27, of Plymouth was this year's big winner, taking first place in Saturday's Sanctioned Cook-Off and winning a spot to represent the Foundation at the International Chili Society Cook-Off this fall in California.

"I started going to the (Kidney Foundation Chili) cook-offs a few years ago and thought it looked like a lot of fun," she said. "In 1985 I entered my first competition and

placed eighth. I was just tickled pink, because when you place in the top 10 you're automatically invited back the next year."

In 1986 she made a few minor changes in her recipe and placed third.

"I thought it needed to be hotter," she said. "So I did more experimenting and really purified the recipe. Instead of getting store-bought chili powder I'd use fresh vegetables and make my own."

Chili-making is down to a science with Horn and her husband, Kenneth, who frequently host parties to serve the spicy stuff and test new ideas on their ever-willing friends.

"My husband is my nose. He can tell just by smelling it if the chili is going to be good," Horn said. "The chili I made at this cook-off was the best I've ever made. On a scale of one to 10 (for hotness) it was probably an 8½."

"Good chili should give a good, slow burn," she said. "It shouldn't be like drinking a bottle of hot sauce. My husband always says if you want to take another bite it's good chili."

'Good chili should give a good, slow burn. It shouldn't be like drinking a bottle of hot sauce.'

— Annette Horn

Getting a nice combination of spices is Horn's key to success. She said she plans to use her same basic recipe for "Fireworks Chili" in the International Cook-Off.

"I'm so privileged and honored that I get to go," she said, adding she is looking for people to sponsor her trip to Rosemond, Calif. "I'm just so excited. I almost wanted to make another batch of chili on my way home from the cook-off."

SUNDAY'S RENEGADE Cook-Off, which has an "anything goes" philosophy when it comes to the chili's ingredients, was won by Steve Dill, 29, of Union Lake.

"It was the first time I entered, and I was surprised, to say the least," Dill said of his win. "I'd been going to the cook-off for the last several years and decided it looked like fun."

The win secured a spot for Dill in next year's Saturday Sanctioned Cook-Off and also won him a trip for two to Toronto.

The Union Lake chili cook is very relaxed in his attitude toward the hot stuff.

"I'm not very exact when I'm adding ingredients," he said. "It's kind of whatever ends up on the spoon."

Although many cooks are nervous about tampering with their recipes

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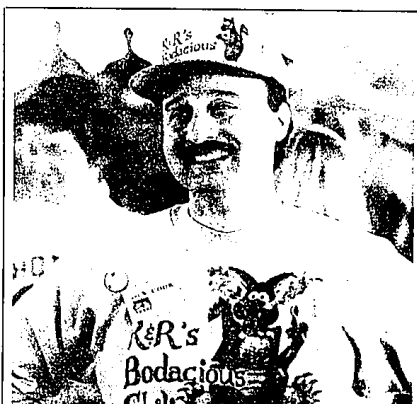
photos by RICK SMITH/staff photographer

Ron and Beth Hanson of West Bloomfield took eighth place in the Sanctioned Cook-Off for their "Hot Sauce Chili" recipe. The Kidney Foundation event not only gave cooks a

chance to test their recipes before a panel of judges, but also provided a day filled with fun and laughter.



Annette and Kenneth Horn of Plymouth took top honors in this year's Sanctioned Cook-Off for their "Fireworks Chili" recipe. The win qualified them to represent the Kidney Foundation in the International Chili Society Cook-Off this fall in California.



West Bloomfield's Rick Rold expresses delight as his group "Rubber Elvis and the Where's Your Daughter Band" is awarded first place in the Showmanship category at the Sanctioned Cook-Off.

Look out taste buds! Judges for Saturday's cook-off had to taste more than 30 entries of chili. Rebecca Haynes, Observer & Eccentric staff member was among this group. Twenty judges were used in Saturday's event, including Taste food columnist Larry Janes, while 10 helped to make the final decision in Sunday's contest.



Tex-Mex offers welcome treat

Looking for food that's assertive and exciting? Tired of friends inviting you over, only to burn the top two layers of skin from your mouth and make you wish you had stock in Rolands?

Tex-Mex cooking is different. People from all over Mexico come to the San Antonio area and brought their own regional recipes. Of course, that's not to mention the French, German and Jewish immigrants adding their own heritage.

Some Tex-Mex breads are like crusty french loaves, others are similar to German sweet rolls and they even have some unleavened breads that probably came from Jewish immigrants!

Many people think all Mexican food is HOT but the native knows that true poblano chilies can be very mild. Did you know that flour, eggs (tomatoes and tomatoes) (Mexican tomatoes that are a little more firm and green than their American counterparts) all neutralize the heat of hot chili peppers? In true Tex-Mex cooking, you search for the essence of chili flavor — not the heat.

If you get there around 11 or 11:30 a.m., start with a small Botana from the Xochimilco restaurant. I love to sit in the back bar section where gringos plop quarters in the jukebox to hear "Down Mexico Way." I shouldn't even mention the famed Margaritas, but get one, not a pitcher, because you need your faculties for the walk afterward.

When leaving the restaurant, head east (right) down the block to the Tortilla and maybe, if you're lucky, Fernando will throw out a hot-from-the-oven tortilla.

Then, drop by the Fuente D'Elena for the best Quesadillas and the Mexican soup-du-jour. Venture back west down the block to the Mexican grocery where you can get fresh poblano peppers, masa harina (corn flour) prepared sopes and chulapas, cilantro and fresh chili wroaths.

If still hungry, stop into the old Mexico for a great combination plate that we split for two. On a hot summer evening, their frozen Margaritas are by far the best. Kiddy-Corner across the street is the Xoch gift shop where you can purchase authentic Mexican pinatas and serapes.

End it all with a leisurely ride around the beautiful Clark Park that is at its peak in color right now. If you're a real down-towner, you

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes



might enjoy this quaint Mexican area during the evening hours. Waiting for tables with about 200 other city dwellers, all partying and drinking and roaming the well-lit streets is a sure-fire fun way to spend an evening.

By the way, if you're thinking about experimenting with some different chilies, remember these few tips: When handling, wear gloves or generously oil your hands to avoid burning and skin irritation. Always wash hands with soap after handling chilies.

From the "Don't make the same mistake as I did department" I was making some jalapeno jelly and using my food processor to chop the chilies. Do not look down the food tube of processor or blender while grinding as the fumes can be very irritating.

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Cooks offer chili recipes to public

The following recipes were given by the chili cooks to share with our readers. "Fireworks Chili" took top honors at the Kidney Foundation's Sanctioned Cook-Off, while "Dr. Dilly's Preparation (Hot) Chili" won its Renegade event.

FIREWORKS CHILI

¼ cup olive oil
3 lbs. cubed beef
3 lbs. cubed pork
2 lbs. hot Italian sausage
3 yellow onions
12-14 cloves minced garlic
4 celery stalks
3 green peppers
12 jalapeno peppers
1 tsp. black pepper
2 tsp. MSG
Chili powder
1 ½ tsp. oregano
1 tsp. celery salt
1 tsp. allspice
1 ½ tsp. Italian seasoning
7 tsp. beef bouillon
2 tsp. chicken bouillon
Dash of tobacco
1 (15 oz.) can tomato puree

3 cans tomatoes (drained)
5 ½ tsp. ground cumin
1 ½ tsp. honey
24 oz. beer
4 bay leaves
1 tsp. male powder
4 tsp. masa flour

In large stock pot heat olive oil; add onions, garlic, celery, green pepper and jalapenos. Cook until tender. In separate skillet, brown meats in beer (sprinkle meats with garlic powder while browning). Add to stock pot. Combine all remaining ingredients. Simmer two hours.

—Annette Horn
—Plymouth

DR. DILLY'S PREPARATION HOT CHILI

2 large onions
1 green pepper
8 cloves garlic
6 lbs. hamburger
3 lbs. Italian sausage

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