

Menu includes costumes, spices and fun

Events

Neighbor pushes neighbor to enter chili contest

By CALVIN MEN

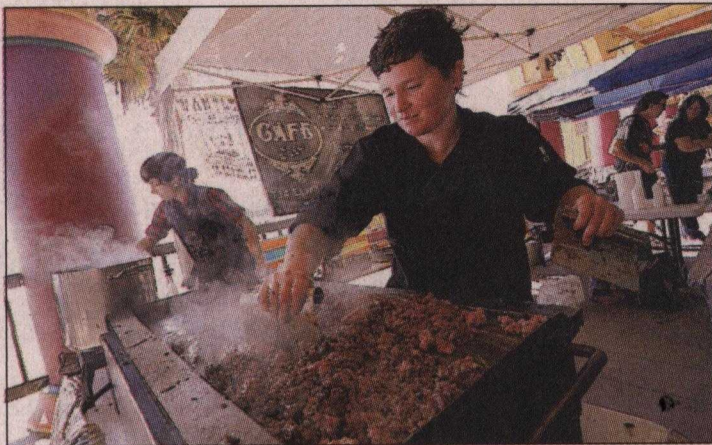
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SANTA CRUZ — Jason Barbour's journey to the 2013 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Chili Cook-Off started when he shared his chili with a neighbor.

Barbour cooks chili on a regular basis and, in the fall of 2012, he cooked so much chili that he shared it with his neighbor, Patrick Goold. When Goold returned the chili container, he brought an application for the competition.

"He said it tasted like a winner," said Barbour, of Gilroy, on Saturday with a smile.

Barbour's chili was one of 42



JON WEIAND/SENTINEL

Marci Carl cooks the meat for team Cafe Ella during the Fourth Annual Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Chili Cook-Off on Saturday.

others competing in the fourth annual cook-off. Drawing people from around the Bay Area, the competition had teams — ama-

teurs and professionals — preparing their own variations of chili.

It started after the success of

the clam chowder cook-off and people began asking when there would be a chili cook-off, said Karley Pope, the boardwalk's director of promotions and entertainment. Crowds buy a kit to sample the various chili, voting for their favorites.

Chefs arrived as early as 6 a.m. to unload equipment and set up booths. Officially, food preparation couldn't begin until 10 a.m. and ended promptly at 1 p.m.

Some teams cooked their chilis with beans and meat. Some prepared theirs as vegetarian. But every team had at least one thing in common: Each claimed to be the best chili around.

Barbour's chili was nearly all meat — a combination of bison, bacon, ground beef and Italian sausage — with spices and pep-

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pers. It was his first year competing and he liked the atmosphere.

"If we did win, I think it would make us smile a little bigger," he said.

A few booths down, Monya Gemignani was sporting a luchador mask and calling out to advertise their amateur vegan, gluten free, organic chili.

"We want to show anybody that you can make chili and make it good without meat," she said.

The rest of the people staffing the booth also had luchador masks on. One had a luchador mask with a chili pepper costume and a wrestling belt around his waist.

A number of teams followed the lighthearted atmosphere, dressing in sombreros or putting on makeup. Some teams decorated signs with glitter while others printed out full banners.

"It's Halloween at the Boardwalk," Gemignani explained.

Chili judge Jeremy Lopez said the key to making a good chili was balance between vegetables and meats. Some of the better teams have homegrown vegetables and personal spices.

And the best way to decide if a chili is worth sampling: the smell.

"If it smells good, you know it's going to taste good," he said.

Walking down the Boardwalk, the scent of spices and meats was heavy.

People at Benny Sawtelle's booth were fanning his chili's scent into the passing crowd.

"People want to smell it,"

AT A GLANCE

CHILI COOK-OFF WINNERS

BEST PROFESSIONAL CHILI (CON CARNE):

1. Parish Publick House, Zach Willis (Santa Cruz),
2. Mackenzie Bar & Grill, Zach Bradbrook (Santa Cruz),
3. Bad S. BBQ, Ryan Pang (Sunnyvale)

BEST AMATEUR CHILI (CON CARNE):

1. Ruskin, Robert Skinner (Felton),
2. Wine With Swine, Mark Brown (San Jose),
3. Trick or Treat, Joyce Nelson (Milpitas)

BEST AMATEUR CHILI (VEGETARIAN):

1. Hot Mess, Meaghan Linehan (Boulder Creek),
2. Los Luchillidores, Adele Gemignani (Santa Cruz),
3. Bean There Done That, Mariellen Smolik (Castro Valley)

PEOPLE'S CHOICE (AMATEUR):

- Wine with Swine, Mark Brown (San Jose)

PEOPLE'S CHOICE (PROFESSIONAL):

- Bad S BBQ, Ryan Pang (Sunnyvale)

MOST TASTED (AMATEUR):

- Wine With Swine, Mark Brown (San Jose)

MOST TASTED (PROFESSIONAL):

- Bad S BBQ, Ryan Pang (Sunnyvale)

said Sawtelle, 74, an amateur chili chef for most of his life.

A man passed by and took a whiff of the spice-filled concoction.

"We'll be back," the man said with a smile.

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