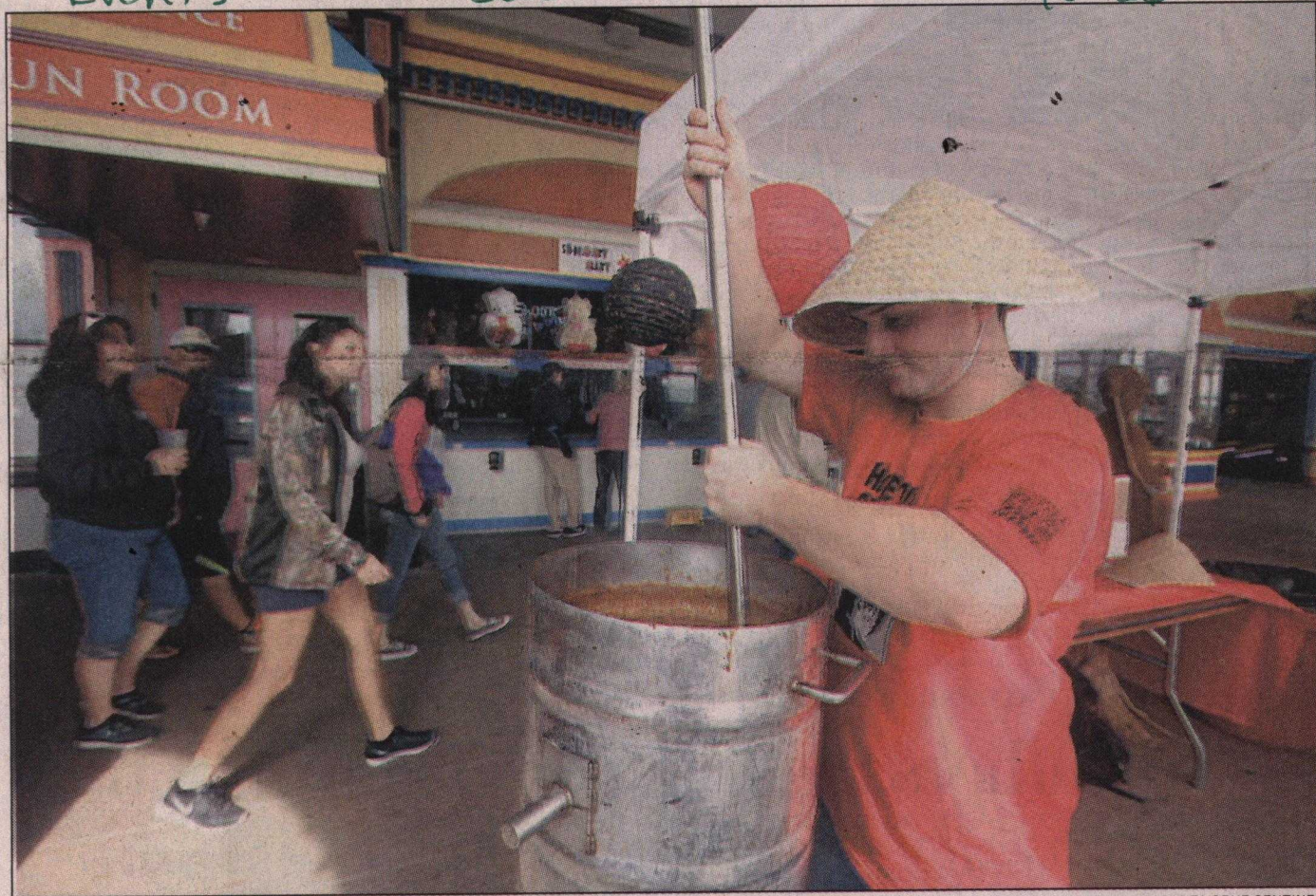


A chilly day for chili at Boardwalk

Events

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PHOTOS BY JON WEIAND — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Adam Rogers stirs his chili as visitors pass by the Santa Cruz Ale Works booth during the annual Chili Cook-Off at the Boardwalk on Saturday.

Competitors battle for bragging rights, titles

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SANTA CRUZ » The secret to a good chili is peppers roasted over an open flame.

That's according to Renee Carruth, a Modesto resident and one of 52 competitors in the fifth annual Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Chili Cook-Off.

On the boardwalk were dozens of canopies covering grills, cutting boards, large metal pots. Carruth and her family — husband, brother-in-law and a few others — were busily roasting peppers over the open flames of gas grills, sipping on beers and

Online: To see a video of competitors passing time while their chef cooks, visit santacruzsentinel.com and click on this story.

confident in their flavors. Carruth often makes chili in large batches for her family and, over time, believed she's perfected the recipe.

"We like ours with a kick," she said.

For Carruth, the day is about being with family and loved ones more than competing. One member of her preparation team chimed in "I missed the World Series to be here."

Carruth looked over and



Kenny Geyer, left, serves chili during the Fifth Annual Chili Cook-Off at the Boardwalk on Saturday.

shrugged before she said, "It's the most important day of the year for us."

The competition was divided into professional and amateur

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divisions. Competitors checked in early and were met with a drizzle that made for a cold and wet start. Moisture dripped from the canopies as many chopped vegetables and spiced meats.

Marci Carl, executive chef for the amateur team Aincho Ordinary Chili Saloon out of Watsonville, said the weather wasn't so bad once they were able to set up shelter from the rain and make walls to block the water.

"It's our third year and we're hoping to take home some glory today," she said.

She said she expected her chili to be thick with some kick, adding that she had eight types of chilis in the concoction and a combination of beef shoulder and ground beef.

Outside of the food, Carl and her crew were dressed in a old west theme, wearing vests and leather gun belts. Carl herself was sporting a curly felt moustache not unlike the villains of old.

"Chili just reminds me of nice western bad guys making chili," she said.

After the cooking was done, the booths were swarmed with people eager to taste. Robin Ove, of Felton, brought her cousin, Kim Wood, who was visiting from Las Vegas, Nevada. The two were looking for a chili that had a balance of flavors but with a good kick.

With five tasting tickets, the two selected which chili to sample based on names they were familiar with and restaurants they knew.

Brothers Dustin and Brandon Carpenter were visiting their parents from

CHILI COOK-OFF WINNERS

Best professional chili (con carne): 1, Bad S. BBQ (Sunnyvale); 2, East Side Eatery (Santa Cruz); 3, Ric's Righteous Red (San Jose)

Best amateur chili (con carne): 1, Bone Rubbin' BBQ (Lodi); 2, Some Girl & Her Uncle (Alamo); 3, Woodbine Wolverines (Woodbine)

Best professional chili (vegetarian): 1, Clifford Farms Crafted Catering (San Juan Bautista); 2, Aquarius (Santa Cruz); 3, Ric's Righteous Red (San Jose)

Best amateur chili (vegetarian): 1, Wine With Swine (San Jose); 2, The Pereli-Jensen Chili Masters (Los Gatos); 3, White Punks on Dope (Santa Cruz)

People's choice winner (amateur): Wine With Swine (San Jose)

People's choice winner (professional): East Side Eatery (Santa Cruz)

Most tasted chili (amateur): Wine With Swine (San Jose)

Most original team: 1, Aincho Ordinary Chili Saloon (Watsonville); 2, Wine With Swine (San Jose); 3, Chili Chili Bang Bang (Santa Cruz)

Turlock and were told to check out the competition.

Choosing a chili to sample wasn't a science to them.

"You just go by looks. Someone that looks like they know what they're doing," Brandon Carpenter said.

While Brandon Carpenter was impressed with some of the chili, he was still looking for one to blow him out of the water.

"A lot of the chilis are good but they taste like a fresher version of what a lot of grocery stores have," he said.