

REGION

NEWS FROM NORTHWEST LOWER MICHIGAN

Monday, January 15, 2007

NEWS TIP LINE (231) 933-1472



"I had three 3-alarms so they were all doing a pretty good job," said Carl Kucsera, wiping sweat from his forehead. "I'm a chili connoisseur, so there's no such thing as a bad bowl of chili," he said, adding the 3-alarm chili from the Bayside Market was his favorite.



Above, nine of the 18 chili samples sit in front of Blake Vidor with his ballot to mark his favorites. Below, more than 1,200 people attended the Downtown Chili Cook-Off.

CHILI DAY

The white chili from Minerva's Bar and Restaurant won its 10th People's Choice Award as temperatures outside dipped below freezing, and more than 1,200 people attended the 13th Annual Downtown Chili Cook-Off Saturday at the Park Place Dome in Traverse City.

There were 18 entries from 12 restaurants in the seven categories this year. Most restaurants brought between about 15 and 25 gallons of each chili they entered, and most of it was gone by the end of the day. Proceeds help fund community events in downtown Traverse City such as Friday Night Live and the Halloween Walk.

The white chili from Minerva's at the Park Place Hotel is the secret of executive chef Marc Pritchard, who says he keeps the recipe, along with his recipes for seafood and no-bean chili, in his head.

"If I were to get amnesia, Minerva's would be in a lot of trouble," he said. "Everybody seems to have a good

idea, but they just don't know. I call it my job security."

The restaurant's seafood chili, complete with crawfish garnish, won the seafood category.

"This is better than sitting in the restaurant and cooking all day long," said Bill Coty from J&S Hamburg Downtown, which won with its 1-alarm chili.

Freshwater Lodge won the ethnic category; Home Grown Organic Eatery's vegetarian chili won the vegetarian category; the no bean category was won by North Peak Brewing Co.; and TraVino Wine & Grille won the white chili category.

Another popular entry was the Jamaican Jerk Chicken Chili made by the students in the Culinary Arts Program at the Traverse Bay Area Career Tech Center. Three classes, made up of high school juniors and seniors, contributed in one way or another to the chili, from planning to developing the recipe, cooking and presentation.

Photos and story ■ Jan-Michael Stump



Minerva's executive chef Marc Pritchard hands a sample of the restaurant's seafood chili to Andrew Schopieray.



Becky Richards savors Freshwater Lodge's 3-alarm chili.



Meg Howard helps pack up the Bayside Market table at the end of the 13th Annual Downtown Chili Cook-Off at the Park Place Dome in Traverse City. The market won for its 3-alarm chili.