

Waynesburg merchants competing in Chili Cook-Off



By C.R. Nelson February 26, 2016



Dave Stoneking and his son, Tyler, 3, sample the chili 5 Kidz Kandy will be serving at the Waynesburg Chili Cook-Off from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Chili will be served at 11 participating Waynesburg businesses and tasters can vote for their favorite. Proceeds go to Corner Cupboard Food Bank. - C.R. Nelson/For the Observer-Reporter [Order a Print](#)

WAYNESBURG – The first Waynesburg Chili Cook-Off will pit various borough businesses against each other this weekend in a cheerful bid to avoid cabin fever and raise money for Corner Cupboard Food Bank.

The event, which will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, will give participants a chance to taste homemade chili at 11 Waynesburg stores. The purchase of a \$5 wristband – available at any participating business – is good for a day of sampling and allows tasters to vote for their favorite chili.

As a community service, votes for best chili are a dollar or the donation of a canned good with all the proceeds going to the food bank.

“You can vote as many times as you like,” Artbeat Gallery owner-turned-chili chef Jim Winegar said.

Last fall, downtown merchants met to strategize ways to publicize what is offered locally and how to better serve their customers’ shopping needs. Now, as the newly formed Waynesburg Merchants Guild, they are coordinating new events like the Chili Cook-Off to reach weekend shoppers.

There are customers who say “nobody’s open in the evenings, so we started staying open until 7 p.m. on Thursday,” Lauren Stauffer of Ruff Creek Crafts and Antiques said. “Seventy percent of my purchases are made by out-of-town weekend shoppers.”

Having the chili cook-off on Sunday also will allow the event to be mentioned in church bulletins, she added.

“People like to have something to do after church and we thought this would be fun,” she said. “If it works out, we’re talking about having Sunday hours once a month.”

The contest brought out some friendly competition between business owners.

“I’m using my mother’s recipe and nobody beats Mom,” said Melissa Mega of The Ivy Green. “I’m sure Mom will win!”

Winegar is preparing his chili with leeks and portabella mushrooms but he will have stiff competition from Ruff Creek Crafts and Antiques.

“My husband is using a recipe he got from the company he used to work for that entered big chili cook-offs and won in Washington County,” Lauren Stauffer said with a grin. “He cooks it for two days.”

AJ’s Rustic Star, tucked away behind the Judo Hapkido studio in East Waynesburg is also part of the challenge. “My chili is spicy sweet, it’s my grandma’s recipe,” owner Alyssa Hoge said. “My family eats it up. Come try it.”

There will be more chili to sample at 5 Kidz Kandy, Bonnie Bell’s Country Store, Fischer Antiques, Purse-n-Ality, B&B Jewelry, The Fashion Shoppe and Made in America Gifts.

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