



Perris Press Release

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Chili Cookoff Spiced With an International Flavor

The 2013 version of the annual chili cook-off at Perris American Legion Post 595 took on a national and even international flavor. Teams of chili-meisters from California, Arizona, Nevada and Canada all took part in the event, which serves two purposes—raising money for American Legion programs and earning the chance to participate in the International Chili Society's World Championship in Palm Springs in October.

More than 20 teams took part in the April 6 cook-off in Perris. Long-haul trucker Steven Sigurdson made the longest haul, driving 2,054 miles from Winnipeg, Manitoba in Canada to Perris. Before coming to the big cook-off, Sigurdson stopped at his cousin's home in Los Angeles and brought Paul Murray to Perris with him. Together, they call themselves "Desert Dogz Chili."

Like other cooks, the Dogz say they just love cooking up their own blend of herbs and spices to make the best possible chili. Like most chili-cookers, the team loves the competition, the chance to show off their culinary skills and the opportunity to travel to great places like Perris.

"I like the friendliness of the people," Sigurdson said.

Murray echoed the sentiment.

"It's a kind of family event," he said. "I like the small-town atmosphere in Perris."

Veteran chili cooks like Pam and Mike O'Sullivan of Canyon Lake (PJ's Howling Dog Chili) have been making the short drive to Perris for five years. The couple said they have noticed major improvements in the City since that first trip. In the area around the Legion Post, for instance, a new apartment complex recently opened and work on a new park progresses rapidly. Many D Street businesses have received new facades thanks to a City-sponsored program, including the American Legion Post.

"We love it here," Pam O'Sullivan said. "We've gotten to know many of the locals and we always have a great time here."

All cooks at the Legion prepared two separate batches of chili—the "people's choice" version which featured beans and the competition brand, no beans allowed. Cooks used various cuts of pork for the non-competitive brand. Tri-tip is the meat of choice for the actual competition. Chili-powder, cumin, onion and garlic powder are among the spices used to flavor the chili, although each cook regards his or her recipe as a never-to-be-share secret.

Dr. Paul Whitney, a dentist/chili cook from Flagstaff, Ariz., says he buys "top quality meat and spices" for his chili, without divulging anything further. He's made the 500-mile, eight-hour trip to Perris for three years and always looks forward to spending a little time in the City. He knows many of the other cooks and considers them colleagues and as all we competitors.

"I get to see all my friends," said Whitney, who cooks under the name "Wild Whitt's Snakebit Chili."

Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez welcomed the cooks on behalf of the City.

"These kinds of events are great for community engagement and the food was delicious as well," he said.



Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez welcomes Pam and Mike O'Sullivan to the 12th Annual International Chili Society cook-off at the American Legion Post.



A pot of "people's choice" chili, with beans, simmers at the April 6 cook-off at American Legion Post 595 in Perris.



Winnipeg, Manitoba resident Steven Sigurdson traveled more than 2,000-miles from Canada to take part in the American Legion Chili Cook-off.