

# Turkey chili takes top prize at winery chili cookoff

By STEVEN REILLY  
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Dave Williams took a chance this year at the Westfall Winery's fourth annual Chili Cookoff, he let his wife, Kimberly, make the chili for Saturday's contest.

"Every year for the past three years we made a great venison chili," Dave said. "Everyone loved it, but we never won. No one wanted to know it was venison."

So this year Kimberly cooked up a pot of homemade turkey chili.

"There is a big difference in the meats," Kimberly said. "Venison has its own flavor; its own special taste, turkey has no flavor; it just tastes the way you tell it to taste."

The Williams' turkey chili did well, and the crowds emptied out their pot. But the first-place prize for the cookoff went to A.J. Hankins from Port Jervis, N.Y., who won with his version of turkey chili called the 2-am chili.

"I think this is the first time a turkey chili won," Hankins said. "The secret was in the cooking, I let the chili slow-cook all night so the flavors get into the turkey and really blend together."

Hankins' 2-am Chili and the Williams' turkey chili were the only two that used the poultry product out of 12 entries that competed for the top prizes at the annual event.

"Next year we are going back to the venison," Dave Williams said.

About 200 people attended the cookoff and wine tasting event at the Montague winery. Mary and John Babula traveled to the cookoff

from Hardyston.

"We just love this event. The weather is so nice this time of year and the winery is so beautiful," Mary said. "The chili contest is a lot of fun, I liked the Cajun chili."

"I liked the plain chili they put on the hot dogs," John said.

While the hot dog chili was not entered in the contest, the Bayou Cajun Chili was, and it took second place behind the 2-am Chili.

Eric Stanton of Andover created the fusion dish by combining the seafood tastes of a New Orleans gumbo and a hearty western chili.

"I wanted to do something different this year. It was a matter of go big or go home with this dish," Stanton said.

The Bayou Cajun Chili had crawfish, shrimp and Cajun spices that gave it a delectably unique taste that won over a lot of the visitors, and impressed the judges. Stanton took the second place finish as a challenge for next year.

"I can't wait to get back to cooking for next year," Stanton said. "I already own second, now I want first."

Most of the contestants were not so concerned about winning. Janice Douglas took third place with her mother's chili recipe, but said she had more fun cooking and competing at the cookoff than winning a prize.

Longtime friends Lynne Oliver of Montclair and Mac McFarland of Glenn Ridge have been competing in the cookoff since it began in 2008. Every summer they spend their vacations at Culver Lake, and have visited the winery for years, but when the cookoff started, they



Photo by Steven Reilly/New Jersey Herald

Lynne Oliver serves her Florida Chili Saturday at the Westfall Winery Chili Cookoff.

became "chilenemys".

"We love competing against each other, it is a lot of fun to try new things each year and to see who found a better pepper or a new spice," Oliver said.

This year McFarland's all-meat chili took the People's Choice award, besting Oliver's Florida Chili, made with special peppers only found in the sunshine state. It was a sweet victory for the amateur chef who has been working on his Texas-style chili for the past 41 years.

"It is a recipe that I have been fine-tuning

over the years. It is pretty simple, hamburger meat, pork, bacon and no beans. I guess everything is better with bacon though," McFarland said.

McFarland uses about seven different peppers including jalapeños, cayennes and bell, to give his chili flavor. His wife, Judyann, added a taste of Bulgarian Feta cheese this year to accent the array of peppers.

"It is like a rollercoaster of flavor, starting on the tip of the tongue and rolling to the back, then taking over," Judyann said. "It is all about the balance of flavors."

## Fredon

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For the last 20 years, Rosemarie and her husband, Edmundo, have been in and out of the hospital with Chase. She said that the family has been taken to the "threshold" of their son's death many times. "The struggle has always been with Chase," she said. "Now for this to happen to Tierney is just devastation...It crippled the entire family, emotionally, physically, financially."

She said that Tierney has been something of a second mother to her other children, Christian, 15, and Marina, 12, as she helped raise them while she and her husband cared for Chase. Tierney's siblings had long been excited about her return from college. "They were heartbroken. They thought they'd lost her," she said.

There is no date yet set for when Tierney can return home, but when she can, she will require a room and bathroom specialized for her current condition. "We've dedi-

cated all our lives to keeping Chase alive, and now, we're going to do the same for (Tierney)," she said.

The hope is that the benefit will help to cover the costs of changing the Veliz house to accommodate Tierney's wheelchair. The family has a volunteer plumber and excavator for the project but are still in need of a roofer and carpenter. Anyone who would like to donate their time and expertise are welcomed. Rosemarie Veliz said that a number of the volunteers are family friends, but many are people she's never even met, who just want to help. "They (the Velizes) are really good, hard working people," said Martha Carcuffe, a family friend who is helping with the benefit. "The community has just banded together to help them out."

The event will feature bands, face painting, a movie night, a petting zoo, pony rides, prize drawings, games, various concessions and more. The benefit will run from noon to 9 p.m. and admission is \$5.

## Benefit Highlights

- Bands:
- Brian St. John Quartet, 12 to 1 p.m.
  - KISS tribute, 1 to 2 p.m.
  - The Lori Malvey Band, 2 to 3 p.m.
  - Omar Mendez, 3 to 4 p.m.
  - The John Galt Band, 4 to 5 p.m.
  - Street Survivors, (Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute Band), 5 to 6:15 p.m.
  - Blue Molly, 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.
  - 2big2fail, 7:30 p.m. to close

### Concession Stands

- Other activities:
- Movie night: 7 to 9 p.m.
  - Petting zoo
  - Bounce houses
  - Pony rides
  - Helium balloons
  - Face painting
  - Prize drawings
  - Clown
  - Free games for kids



Submitted Photo



Photo by Tracy Klimek/New Jersey Herald

Chase Vilez, who has Hunters Syndrome, shown with his nurse Kathy Titone, requires 24 hour care. Chase's sister, Tierney, above right, was in a motor vehicle accident in June and as a result is a quadriplegic. A fundraiser for the family will be held at Lodestar Park in Fredon Saturday from noon to 9 p.m.

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