

And the winners are...

By Alyssa Rooks

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The Clermont County Park District hosted its 2nd Annual Chilo Chili Cook Off and Fall Fest this past Saturday at Chilo Lock 34 Park. This event had its start last year as a fundraiser to support the Park District's naturalist programs and river museum. Once again, all proceeds go toward nature education programs, and updates for the Chilo River Museum and Visitor Center. Each year, the naturalists at the Park District serve thousands of children and adults by offering programs to schools, scout groups, homeschoolers, and through public outreach. These programs help foster a connection, appreciation, and understanding of nature through immersive, hands-on learning experiences. The Chilo River Museum and Visitor Center also reaches thousands of people each year, and informs of the unique history of the area, and the lock and dam that once operated on site.

The weather was very cooperative for the cook off. It was a beautiful, mild and sunny day as guests began to fill the lawn to taste and vote on their favorite of seven very different chilis, while also enjoying live music, beer from Fifty West Brewing Company, kids games and activities. Fatboy's Dream Floating Restaurant took home the trophy for 1st place in the People's Choice award with their traditional-style chili. The 2nd crowd favorite was Cardboard Boat Museum with their white chicken chili, which was spicy enough to also win them the Best Heat award! Fifty West Brewing company also joined the chili competition and won the medal for 3rd place in the People's Choice award, as well as the Most Unique Chili award, with their Pork Chili Verde.



Bottom left: Cardboard Boat Museum displaying their many awards; Right: Fat Boy's Dream displaying their 1st place People's Choice award

The competitors also put their chili to the test with our blind judged competition. Our judges came to us from the New Richmond Fire Department and the Felicity-Franklin Auxiliary Fire Department. It was a tough choice but in the end, the Cardboard Boat Museum received the 1st place award. Fifty West Brewing Company snagged 2nd place, and our newcomers, Sweet Felicity Bake Shop earned the award for 3rd place in the judged competition! Sweet Felicity brought vegetarian chili, and a traditional-style chili, as well as their delicious, gluten-free baked goods!



Top left: Green Kayak ready to serve their campfire chili; Bottom left: Kelly and family of Sweet Felicity Bake Shop, displaying their 3rd place award in the judged chili competition; Right: Several of our unique vendors, including Phillips Farm and LulaRoe by Trish Nash

Aside from chili, there were many other attractions for visitors to enjoy. The crowd was captivated by Charlie Cadabra the magician, before enjoying the classical rock vibes of the band, Chuck & Paul. Many visitors also enjoyed shopping and checking out the local vendors selling handmade items, including everything from jewelry and crochet items to fresh baked bread, jams and delicious canned goods from Phillips Farm, as well as independent consultants like LulaRoe and Mary Kay! Kids had fun painting pumpkins, playing pumpkin bowling, and launching walnuts across the lawn with our catapult and distance course! Fun was had by all at this year's chili cook off! We are already looking forward to next year for more Fall family fun!



Pictured: The center of the action at the chili cook off, taken from the Museum Observatory