

THE RECORDER

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Winter carnival: Hot chili, cool contests & some last-minute snow

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“Bacon!” said Amber Ortiz of Greenfield.

“Man, that’s delicious,” she said after taking a bite of chili at the annual chili cook-off at Beacon Field during Greenfield’s Winter Carnival on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Ortiz is one of dozens of residents who gathered around a table to sample chili. While she says she loved all the contenders, her vote goes to chili number three, which she described as a minestrone soup with bacon.

Three chili batches from local Greenfield businesses were lined up on the table, in order from least spicy to most spicy.

The smells of cayenne pepper, roasted tomato chunks, and sweet onions drew in crowds. Children stopped by the chili table after sledding down the hill or taking a ride in the horse-drawn carriage.

Family dogs circled around the table, hoping for scraps, as chili sauce dripped from the chins of children. Only 30 minutes into the chili cook-off, the plastic jar containing ballots for “The Best Chili Around” was already half full. Organizers named chili batch #1 from Brad’s Place the winner.

The secret ingredient in the winning chili batch is horseradish, said the owner of Brad’s Place, Dan Devine. He wanted to give the recipe an extra kick and the tactic appears to have worked. This is his first time winning the annual chili cook-off.

“It’s not crazy hot, but it gives it a boost,” said Devine. He let a mixture of chili sauce, kidney beans, red onion and green pepper with sweet onions simmer for about five hours the night before the competition. He

also mixed in ground beef and pork with diced and peeled tomatoes, garlic, cayenne pepper and home fries seasoning.

Before casting their votes, the tasters took time to eat second and third servings. Most tasters agreed that all the chili was delicious.

“It has the right amount of spice,” said Erica Mielke, who came to the carnival from Great Barrington with her children. She penciled in chili “#1” on the ballot, voting for what most tasters said was the spiciest batch from Brad’s Place.

Batch #3 came from Hope & Olive co-owner Maggie Zaccara, who concocted the chili while channeling memories of her mother’s cooking. She named the chili, Carol, after her mother.

“I was feeling like maybe this is my day, maybe I will win the chili contest,” Zaccara said. Her recipe was a mixture of beef, beans, bacon and chili powder. “Its very basic, a classic Connecticut chili,” she said.

Carnival goes gobbled up the chili samples from noon to 2:30 p.m., as volunteer Terry Adams happily ladled out several servings, but she didn’t try the chili because she hates spicy food and is allergic to bell peppers.

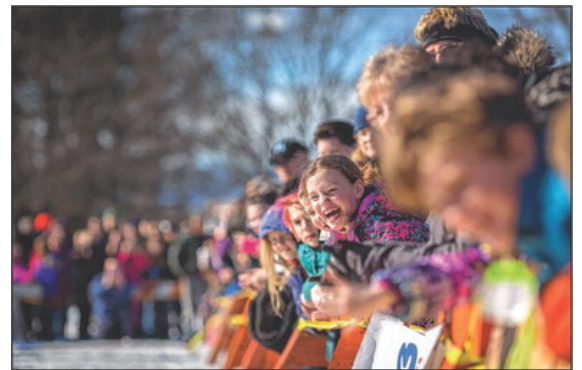
A round of chili samples went for \$2, all to benefit the Greenfield Recreation Department, which puts on the Winter Carnival in Greenfield every year. Hundreds of hours go into planning the event, said Christy Moore, Greenfield’s recreation director.

The cook-off was just one of many contests during the weekend of festivities.

Children built snow sculptures and snowmen, marshmallows were roasted over a fire, and dogs crossed the finish line in the annual keg pull race.



Children sled down the hill at Beacon Field during Greenfield's Winter Carnival Sunday.
Recorder Staff/ Matt Burkhart



Spectators watch the K9 Keg Pull at Greenfield's Winter Carnival at Beacon Field Sunday.
Recorder Staff/ Matt Burkhart

Jager, a Staffordshire Terrier, runs to his owner, Paul Buldoc, of Greenfield, pulling a beer keg during the K9 Keg Pull at Greenfield's Winter Carnival at Beacon Field, Sunday. Recorder Staff/ Matt Burkhart