



Downtown Alton Chili Cook-Off Brings Community and Competition

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The Downtown Alton Chili Cook-Off welcomed the chilly weather and brought together businesses and community members for some friendly competition on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023.

The Cook-Off, a longtime tradition in Alton, invited businesses, organizations, individuals and restaurants to compete for the best chili recipe. The nonprofit [Alton Main Street](#) sponsored the event this year as a fundraiser for their organization, which aims to revitalize downtown Alton and foster community spirit.

“This is our biggest fundraiser of the year for Alton Main Street, and so we really appreciate all the organizations and businesses and individuals that come out and participate in this to help us raise some funds to keep downtown Alton on the map,” said Sara McGibany, the nonprofit’s executive director.

This year, 14 teams were set up at the [Lodge at the Lovejoy](#). Attendees could taste each batch of chili while enjoying live music from [Big George Jr. and the NGK Band](#). A panel of judges awarded one recipe in each category, and attendees voted for their favorite to receive the People’s Choice Award and coveted golden ladle. McGibany added that there was a “big ruckus” every time someone received a People’s Choice Award vote.

[Anderson’s Classic Barbershop](#) won in the business category and [iMerge Community Center](#) was the organization category winner. Virginia Woulfe-Beile, who ran out of chili halfway through the event because so many people came back for seconds, was named the best in the individual category. The Riverside Grille, a new addition to the [Argosy Casino Alton](#), won in the restaurant category. The Riverside Grille was also recognized as the Best Decorated Booth and voted the People’s Choice Award winner.

Noah Anderson, owner of Anderson’s Classic Barbershop, worked hard to perfect his recipe before he entered the competition. He said he saw many “return customers,” noting this was a good sign for his chili as well as his business.

“We got reached out to about just being able to be involved with the community and it just seemed like a fun way to get our name out there and throw down some chili and just get involved with the city,” he said. “Alton has a really booming community with a lot to do around town. You just have to get out and actually get involved. I think there’s just a lot of opportunities for people to get plugged in in town, and it’s always fun to be a part of it.”

Though the next Chili Cook-Off is a year away, McGibany said that Alton Main Street will be busy with [events scheduled throughout the winter](#). Visit the [official Alton Main Street website at DowntownAlton.com](#) or their [Facebook page](#) for more information.