

# DRYDEN Courier

NUMBER 45 • NOVEMBER 11, 2009 • 75¢

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## German is Chili Champ

*Three-time Winner Holds Chili  
Title; Martin Bakes Blue Ribbon  
Pie*

BY KARA CUSOLITO

There were pie champions and chili victors, but most importantly, there was community at the third annual Chili Cook-off and Apple Pie Bake-off, held Saturday at the Dryden Community Center Café.

It was a merry scene on a mild mid-fall Saturday: a café filled with Drydenites of all sorts. There were adults milling, teens chowing, seniors surveying, and kids weaving among all of this, hyped on pastries. Aromas of sweet apples and spicy bean soups floated in the café air amongst the sounds of soft chatter and lively music preformed by the Fun Bus, a quartet of Ithaca school bus drivers. All of this in what--just a couple of years ago--was a bare concrete former diner. The cook-off was originally thought up and exe-

### Dryden's Best Chili



(From left) Ed Bugliosi, Jean German and Astrid Csida at the Dryden Community Center Café Chili Cook Off.

photo/Kara Cusolito

cuted to raise money for the beginning stages of Dryden's café. It continued as a fundraiser for the following years, and will for the foreseeable future, said Monica Knight, president of the community café's board of directors.

The two contests were run separately: pies were judged by a three-person panel, and chili batches were judged as a people's choice contest.

Pie went quickly on Saturday, with the judging taking place early on. Three judges of local high status—Melissa Bianconi, town recreation director; Mike Lane of the county legislature and Mayor Randy Sterling determined Dryden's best pie chef. The decision was based on presentation, texture, and (of course) taste.

Wendy Martin won the blue ribbon, and Beth Peck and Lindy Gustafson went home with second and third place, respectively. Other entries came from Linda Nydam, Nicole Lane, Deb Fisher and Bev Babcock. Joanne Sterling, who manned the pie table sales post-judgement, indicated the day's event was a success and confirmed that all subjects were sufficiently yummy. There were pies with flaky crusts, crispy pies with brown sugar toppings, even a pie with a cheddar cheese infused crust.

Across the room sat a few tables lined with chefs and crock pots. Here, the chili contest heated up. Seven entrants from around town, most of them sponsored by a community group of one strain or another, competed for top chili-making honors.

This year's winner was no surprise.

"It's a three-peat for Jean German!"

Knight announced at the end of the day. German's chili represented the town historical society.

But German's recipe is no stranger to the Dryden Community Center Café. She cooks it often for Comfort Food Fridays, a weekly food special at the café that draws lunch business from around the village. She cooks a spicy bean chili, with her secret weapon of crushed Frito and shredded cheese topping.

Second place went to Ed Bugliosi of the Frog Hollow Chili Alliance, who concocted a spicy pork chili. Third place was awarded to Patrick McParlin. But competition was tight this year. Up against venison chili by the Brassy Mamas, vegetarian bean chili by the Dryden Beautification Brigade, and other recipes by the Tuesday Night Book Club and the Dryden Kiwanis, it was a tough call.

## As American as...



*Deb Fisher, the café's co-treasurer, exhibits some of the pies in the annual apple pie contest.*

In all, about 55 locals attended the day's event, estimated Anne Grant,

who was in charge of chili entries and often volunteers around town. But the event was really less about finding the town's best baker or chef and more about nurturing the community centered in this cozy café. From her seat at the café's entrance, where she worked the door on Saturday, she chatted about the good that goes on in this small upstate town. She pointed to the park across the way that was fixed up not too many years back by a group of ambitious townspeople. She nodded to the Methodist church in the village, where a group of women gather fre-

quently to sew sleeping bags from donated blankets for homeless people around the state. She mentioned book programs for underprivileged children and adults. Even the café is largely volunteer-run. The list could go on.

There's still work to be done in the community, Knight said. The hope is that the Café will inspire even more sense of community and will spark a revitalization of the Dryden village center.

"We have a wonderful community. It's amazing how volunteerism catches on and spreads," Grant said.