

NEWS

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Winners Take Home \$4,800 in Prize Money at Chili and Salsa Cook-off

Toms River, NJ... Competition was stiff this year at the 21st Annual New Jersey State Chili and Salsa Cook-off as nearly 60 cooks competed for the \$1,500 top prize. The Cook-off was held on Saturday, May 15th from 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Washington Street in Downtown Toms River. Judges and the voting public sampled all the spicy, taste-tingling entries to declare the winning chili and salsa cooks, who shared a total of \$4,800 in prize money. The hugely popular event, which is hosted by Downtown Toms River, attracts cooks from across New Jersey and as far away as Ohio, Virginia and Connecticut.

The Cook-off features two divisions - the International Chili Society (ICS) sponsored categories and the People's Choice. The ICS division offers three categories - red chili, chili verde and salsa. People's Choices offers red chili and salsa. Prize money aside, for contestants entered into the ICS categories the singular goal is to win first place, which guarantees eligibility for the Worlds Championship later this year. All winners below received a plaque for their category in addition to any cash prizes. ICS competition winners are: Red Chili: 1st place and \$1,500 was awarded to David Lorenz of Marlton, NJ with Duffy's Irish; 2nd place and \$200 went to Monica Parker of Alexandria, VA with Mo's Give Me The Money 3rd place went to Tommy Yanisko of Bayville, NJ with Silent But Deadly and 4th and 5th place, respectively, went to Rich Omerza of Wilkes-Barre, PA with Brooklyn's Best and Kurt Leithner of Avenel, NJ with Dirty Kurty Chili. The ICS Chili Verde winners are: 1st place and \$500 went to Judi Omerza, Wilkes-Barre, PA ; 2nd place and \$200 went to Kurt Leithner of Avenel, NJ; and 3rd place went to Mike Freedman, Somers, CT. ICS Salsa winners include: 1st place and \$400 to Michael Scranton of Edison, NJ; 2nd and \$200 to Monica Parker of Alexandria, VA; 3rd place to Frank Jensen of South Orange, NJ. All of the ICS 1st place winners are invited to compete in the 2010 Worlds Championship later this year as representatives for New Jersey.

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This year's People's Choice winners are as follows: 1st place Red Chili and \$1000 went to Felix Del Valle of Lakewood, NJ; 2nd place and \$300 to Tom Blackmore of Manahawkin, NJ; and 3rd place to Mary Miranda of Colonia. People's Choice Salsa winners are: 1st place and \$400 went to Ray Palazzo of Franklin Park, NJ and 2nd and 3rd place, respectively, went to Habinaro Brothers and Elmer P. Bean of Forked River, NJ. Best Booth/Showmanship award went again to Pop Hots, represented by Mary Miranda who received \$100 for outstanding efforts.

Also announced were the winners of the children's coloring contest, which was held prior to the Cook-off for children 3 – 12 years of age. Participants were encouraged to be as creative as possible when decorating their coloring page. Winners are Lydia Frick of Kannapolis, North Carolina in the 3 – 5 year old category; Kayla Levine of Toms River in the 6 – 8 year old category; and Julia Mitchell of Bayville in the 9 – 12 year old category. Winners were each presented with a \$25 AMEX gift card. Artists and Cookie Cab co-owner Helen Harris judged the contest.

The 21st Annual New Jersey State Chili & Salsa Cook Off was sponsored by Comcast, Capone's Gourmet Pizza & Restaurant, New Jersey Natural Gas, United Water Toms River, Extra Space Storage, Allen Consulting and radio stations Magic 100.1 WJRZ and The WRAT. Upcoming Downtown events include: Cruisin' Downtown, held the second Wednesday of each month through September; the Arts & Music Festival, and the kickoff of Concerts in the Park, both in Huddy Park on May 22; Concerts in the Park continues the 4th Saturday of each month through August; the 8th Annual New Jersey State Ice Cream Festival, July 17; the 5th Annual Pizza, Pasta, Pastry, September 25; and the weekly Farmers Market on Wednesdays from June 9 through October 27.

For additional information on this event or other Downtown events in Toms River, call 732-341-8738 or Allen Consulting at 732-946-2711 or visit www.downtownomsriver.com.

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