

— Entertainment

Cargill Masons ready to defend title at upcoming RibFest supper, cook-off

If you smell the delectable scent of spareribs grilling over charcoal this fall, it might just be the Cargill Masons, fine-tuning their recipe for the third annual RibFest supper and cook-off.

Scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 28 at the Cargill Community Centre, the Masons will be using their own secret recipe for the ribs they will serve at the supper. For the first two years, members used a commercial pre-cooked sparerib, but it was always the group's hope to produce their own so they could control the quality and flavour of the finished product.

"A rack of ribs isn't like a steak," said Bill Prues Sr., the founder and driving force behind RibFest. "You can't just flop it on the barbecue 10 minutes before you serve it. You'd never get your teeth into it."

"Low and slow" is the rule for spareribs, said Prues Sr., adding that the Cargill Masons have perfected a process for cooking the ribs using the new, state-of-the-art kitchen in Cargill and the award-winning barbecue sauce that won them first prize in last year's cook-off.

"We have had many test meals," said Mason Bob McCulloch, and an organizer of RibFest, "with lots of tasters and many different methods and recipes. It's a dirty job, but..."

This year, the Masons hope to attract teams from the public to compete for cash prizes in the cook-off. Invitations have been extended to local businesses to sponsor a team, and individuals who are proud of their own rib recipe are encouraged to enter. The entry fee is \$100 per team, which includes two meal tickets. Teams may consist of two to four people, and need to be entered by Sept. 21.

The day of the competition is a lot like the Olympics in Beijing, without all the huffing and puffing, noted McCulloch. Entrants can pick up their rack of ribs any time after 9 a.m., and start their preparations. Ribs can't leave the cooking area after that, but pretty much any form of outdoor cooking is acceptable.

"The tension mounts all day, as the teams trash-talk each other, and then, precisely at 4 p.m., a runner arrives to pick up the entries," said McCulloch.

The ribs are rushed into a private room where they are num-



Master chefs Tim Dales, Jeff Abel, Perry Binkley and Les Abell stand over the barbecues at the 2007 RibFest cook-off in Cargill. Inset, the winning entry from last year's competition was prepared by the Cargill Masons.

Submitted photo

bered for the blind judging and 30 minutes later, the gold, silver and bronze medal-winners are announced.

"It couldn't get much more exciting than that," said McCulloch.

The annual RibFest helps the Masons support the Cargill Community Centre, the Masonic Help-2-Hear Program and the Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre.

Entertainment, provided by recording artist Rusty James, starts at 3 p.m., and the supper runs from 5 to 7 p.m.

"This year with the new facility at Cargill, and everything we have learned in the past two years, we will have everyone served in half the time it took last year," said Bill Prues Jr., chief cook.

Anyone wishing to attend this year's rib supper is advised to get their tickets early as the event has been sold out the last two years. Tickets are available at Brown's Drugstore and Holst Office Supplies in Walkerton, the Cargill General Store, or from Bob McCulloch at 519-881-1942.