

# Don't forget the 'love' when entering Chili Cook-off

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Ashly Matthew has entered the Chili Cook-off three times and has walked away a winner in each case.

She's entering the event that raises money for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Emergency Care Fund again this year. It takes place March 22 at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church, 12485 Tenth Line, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Ms Matthew moved to Canada from southern India 11 years ago and had no idea what chili was.

"I saw it on Tim Hortons' menu

and always wondered what it was," the married, mother of two said.

When the first chili cook-off took place six years ago, Ms Matthew looked at some recipes then created her own version. She won for most unique.

Last year, Ms Matthew took home the people's choice prize for her take on chili that consisted, in part, of minced steak, chili powder, turmeric, paprika, garlic and onion powder, cumin, cayenne and white pepper, rice, bacon, kidney beans and coconut milk. One of the

judges and event organizers, Tim Soukup, called it curry-like.

"People are experimenting and moving to the edge of what chili is," Mr. Soukup said, adding EastRidge pastor Scott Bissell may enter a Chinese dumpling-like chili.

But there is still lots of room for traditional chili as the contest categories are traditional, hottest, vegetarian and most unique. There is also the people's choice category.

Ask Ms Matthew to replicate any of her award-winning recipes and she can't. She adds some of this and a little of that, blends, tastes and repeats until she gets the flavour

she is looking for.

"The most important ingredient is love," she said.

Ms Matthew always prays before she cooks because "I'm blending with a ton of spices. I don't want anyone's stomach to get upset".

With roughly 25 chillies to taste, there are some queasy stomachs the next day, even for the judges.

"As long as the judges don't get too sick, we'll be OK," Mr. Soukup, who is often tasked with tasting the hot entries, said.

During the past five years, more than \$1,000 has been raised for the

emergency fund, which helps residents who require financial aid in order to afford the essentials due to an unforeseen emergency.

Equally important, it's a fun night out for families. Admission is \$5 and that gets you all the chili you want to taste test, a hotdog and a drink. Children under 12 are free.

RBC and EastRidge underwrite the cost of the event, therefore, all money earned goes back to the Care fund, according to Mr. Soukup, who is on the fund's board, too.

For entry details, go to [www.eastridge.ca](http://www.eastridge.ca)

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