



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

The eighth annual Chili Cook Off takes place April 2 at EastRidge Evangelical Church.

# Chili contest heating up

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Having the best chili in the neighbourhood or one that everyone constantly asks you to bring to a potluck dinner is a bragging right many cooks cherish.

So too is winning the annual Chili Cook Off, which supports the Whitchurch-Stouffville Emergency Care Fund.

"It's not a huge trophy, just a dollar store trophy," said event co-ordinator Wanda Knights of what the winners receive.

The eighth annual Chili Cook Off takes place April 2, 6 to 7:30 p.m. at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church, 12485 Tenth Line.

The idea for the annual culinary contest came from Knights and her husband Cal, also a co-ordinator for this year's event, about eight years ago while they were driving to Florida.

The Knights heard about successful chili contests in other communities and wanted to bring one to Stouffville, with a fundraising component.

The Emergency Care Fund has been the recipient of all money raised from the event since the beginning.

"Even though the numbers were small the first couple of years, people were enthusiastic and wanted to see it continue," she said.

In its first year, 18 people entered the contest. Last year, there were 36 entrants and more than 300 people taste tested and voted for their favourite chilis. They also raised \$1,300.

This year, Knights hopes to raise \$2,000. "I love the town of Stouffville coming together and helping each other," she said.

Chili chefs compete in four categories — traditional, unique, hot and vegetarian. An overall people's choice winner is also named.

The recipes that tend to win in the best overall category are tried and true, passed down from grandmothers, according to Knights.

What also makes them successful, Knights said, is they are "made with love."

"There's a pride people take in their chili and their ingredients. What can be an easy, one-pot meal, we're bringing it up a notch," she said.

EastRidge's ESL class is a regular winner.

Knights, who teaches the class, said it's enjoyable watching people from other cultures add their traditional ingredients to a dish such as chili and transform it into something completely unique.

The cooking class is also used as a vocabulary lesson and opportunity to teach about terms such as measuring cups and tablespoons.

Knights' husband Cal won for most unique entry last year with his Possum Lodge Roadkill chili. She has no idea what he'll come up with this year.

Admission is \$5 and includes all the chili you can eat, a drink and a hot dog.

This year's judges are: Kym Pyke, Marty Bartley, Tim Soukup, Mayor Justin Altmann as well as councillors Iain Lovatt and Hugo Kroon.

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