

Lebanon Recreational Department Sponsored

New England Regional Chowder Cook-off

SO YOU WANT TO COOK COMPETITION Chowder?

Cooking competition chowder can be a rewarding experience. Seasoned competition chowder cooks enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow cooks and especially enjoy the opportunity to exercise their "bragging rights" when they have won or placed in a chowder cook-off contest.

WHAT IS COMPETITION Chowder? Chowder cook-offs are held in virtually every state and in many countries around the world. Usually held as fund-raising events for charity, they serve also as an outlet, a hobby, for countless competition chowder cooks. Everyone loves Mom's chowder and everyone seems to have the recipe to end all recipes. So the reason for chowder cook-off competition is to settle the score and, in the process, raise money for a good cause. Chowder is cooked on site and from scratch. A panel of judges, using a blind selection process, determines the winners.

WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL YOU NEED TO GET STARTED?

Most chowder cook-offs take place outdoors. Cooks must provide their own equipment for cooking. Seasoned competition chowder cooks will come to the cook-off with canopies, tables, decorated booths and more. In addition to your meat and cooking ingredients, you will need to bring, as a minimum, the following extra gear:

- Table - Dipping or serving spoon
- Chowder pot with lid\*, 5-8 quart variety - Knife
- (Glass lids not recommended for outdoor cooking) - Measuring spoons and cups
- Portable outdoor-style camp stove - Heat diffuser (inexpensive metal device to spread flames)
- Can opener
- Matches - Propane fuel cylinder
- Pot holders - Tablecloth, paper towels
- Ladle, large and small - Ice chest and ice
- Long-handled spoon - Cutting board
- 1 to 3 gallons water - Dishpan, dish soap, scrubbers, etc.

Since samples of your chowder are usually given out to the public, most cook-offs fall under the jurisdiction of local health departments. Ray Andrews is our local Registered Sanitarian for the Town of Lebanon, he will make sure that everyone will be using all of our local health codes. You may need some additional equipment such as rubber gloves or hand-washing provisions in order to serve samples to the public.

### **WHAT PREPARATION CAN I DO AT HOME BEFORE THE COOKOFF?**

**Chowder cooks often cut the fish or seafood meat at home a night or two before the cook-off. Also vegetables and spices may be measured in advance of the cook-off. This saves time at the cook-off and provides the opportunity to take care of this time-consuming effort in the manageable confines of family kitchen. On the other hand, many cooks will cut their seafood and vegetables at the cook-off and that is perfectly all right.**

**Some cooks measure their spices at home and bring them to the cook-off in separate containers. It is best to exactly pre-measure all spices and do it the same for each cook-off, so you can replicate the results. Many cooks grind their spices in an electric coffee grinder to a fine powder. This process makes for smoother looking gravy and imparts better flavor to the finished product. If you experiment with something new, write it down so you know what you did! This practice helps keep one from being distracted by spectators or the effects of a windy or inclement day. This is your option.**

### **WHAT HAPPENS AT A CHOWDER COOK-OFF?**

**Typically a chowder cook-off will start with the organization of where the cooks will set up their cooking gear. Thereafter, the Chief Judge or some other cook-off official will call for a "cook's meeting" during which the rules of the day will be explained and the cooks will be given an opportunity to ask questions.**

**The Chief Judge will announce when the preparation of ingredients may begin and the precise time cooks will be allowed to light their stoves to begin the cooking process. The lighting of the stoves typically provides a minimum of three (3) hours cooking time before turn-in of the chowder samples to the judges. The Chief Judge will see to it that the official sampling cups will be presented to the individual cooks.**

**At the designated turn-in time, all cooks will take their chowder samples to the judging tent or similar area. The Chief Judge will oversee the marking of the sample cups for the blind judging and the process of determining the winning bowl of chowder will begin. It could take from one to two hours for the judging panel to complete the judging process. Announcement of the winners will be set at a time consistent with any other programmed activities**

#### **Definition of Chowder:**

- 1. A thick soup containing fish or shellfish, especially clams, and vegetables, such as potatoes and onions, in a milk or tomato base.**
- 2. A soup similar to this seafood dish: *corn chowder*.**

#### **Most Important HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!!!!**