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FEATURED

Princeton Chili Fest returns Saturday, Sept. 21

Tim Hennagir Sep 15, 2019



Princeton's September culinary celebration of chili returns Saturday, Sept. 21, to the Mille Lacs County Fairgrounds from noon to 4 p.m.

Chili Fest, organized by the Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce, has returned to the community events calendar after taking a year off to make way for a community project, said Kim Young, the chamber's executive director.

"We're back," Young said. "We didn't have a chili fest last year due to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall."

The Moving Wall was in Princeton July 4 to July 6, 2018, at the Mille Lacs County Fairgrounds.

The Princeton Chamber, American Legion Post 216, VFW Post 806 and the Mille Lacs County Agricultural Society formed a committee and then worked to bring the Moving Wall to the area.

The Moving Wall was half-size replica of the permanent Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., which was erected in 1982 as a tribute to fallen soldiers of the long war.

It honors all who served in Vietnam from 1957 to 1975 who were killed, died from wounds or are or were missing in action.

Princeton Chili Fest 2019 teams will be competing for the coveted People's Choice awards, with \$500, \$300 and \$100 offered to the top three chilies. There will be a competition for salsa entries as well.

Attendees at the Sept. 21 event will pick the top awards, with a panel of judges voting for a favorite chili prepared by the competitors.

New this year at Chili Fest will be two demonstration by CrossFit Beyond Sport Taekwando, Young said.

One of the more popular Chili Fest sponsorships this year involves nonprofits, Young added.

"Both Minuteman Press and Crystal Cabinets are sponsoring nonprofits to make chili and try for the \$500 top prize," she said. "Princeton Youth Basketball Association is making chili (sponsored by Minuteman) and we are waiting to hear back from a nonprofit for Crystal's sponsorship. We have several other business sponsors as well."

Princeton's Chili Fest usually attracts 15 to 20 vendors, said Ashly Hughes, a contract community events planner and owner of Go Savvy Social. Since 2013, Hughes has been working with community organizations and chambers to help them add crafters and vendors to their annual events.

Young said she's excited for next week's event, her first big community gathering since taking over at the Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I have attended the event and been a chili maker for a number of years and have always really enjoyed it," she said. "We have a fantastic chili fest committee helping to spread the word and help organize it."

Approximately 100 gallons of chili is made every year by competitors at the Princeton Chili Fest.

Salsa hasn't been as popular in recent years, but Young and other event organizers are hoping this will grow.

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