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Rib Burnoff sets single day attendance record

2011 Strongsville City Club event marks 25 years of grilling excellence

By **TERRY BRLAS**

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The Strongsville City Club bills its Rib Burnoff as "Not the biggest...just the best." That may be true, but the 2011 version of the quarter-century old event was one of the biggest in terms of attendance in its 25-year history according to City Club officers. Estimated attendance for the three days was 20,000.

While the color green was a familiar color on radar screens throughout northeast Ohio during the last week, the weather situation cleared for Friday evening and all of Saturday. The final day of the event, June 25, set a one-day attendance record for the event according to City Club President David Knowles.

"It's been busy since we opened up," Knowles said during the early evening hours of June 25. "The residents of the city and people from surrounding cities support this event so significantly. Tonight is exceptional. The vendors love it."

Even though the City Club has ownership of this event there are 92 sponsors that make its existence feasible. The Rib Burnoff may be a City Club event, but the success goes beyond the organization.

"We have a lot of support from the city," Terry Toth, City Club president and event chairman, said. "Take any one away from the equation and we're done."

City Club Treasurer Bob Jirik added, "We couldn't do this without our city officials and the Service Department. We have two ribbers that have been with us all 25 years. We know we have a nice event. We are very happy with the attendance."

Strongsville Mayor Thomas Perciak said, "People in the community look forward to the Rib Burnoff. People come here from our surrounding communities to enjoy this event on our Commons. The City Club does a phenomenal job with this event. I commend them for their hard work and I commend the volunteers for all the hard work they continue to do."

The family-friendly event has a number of aspects working in its favor, one of which is location. When the Crossroads of the Nation is brought up the intersection of State Routes 42 (Pearl Road) and 82 (Royalton Road) signify that slogan.

"It's an event for families to attend and look forward to each summer," Knowles said. "It's a nice clean event on the green grass in the middle of our city."



Photo by TERRY BRLAS

One did not have to look far to get refreshed at the Strongsville City Club Rib Burnoff. Portable carts brought lemonade and water to visitors on the grounds of the Commons. Here Bob McGrath and Kim Zacharyasz get ready to serve thirsty patrons.



Photo by TERRY BRLAS

Old Carolina B-B-Q of Massillon took home the People's Choice Award for Best Ribs at the 2011 Strongsville City Club Rib Burnoff, June 23-25, on the Commons at Pearl and Royalton roads.

One of those families is the Torres' of Strongsville. Miguel, wife, Lily, and daughter, Kaitlyn, sampled some of the best ribs this event had to offer.

"This community has always been supportive of these types of things," Miguel said. "There are a lot of great people, a lot of great diversity, and more importantly a lot of great food."

Beer is prohibited at the event as well. A conscious decision was made from the start to not sell the sudsy beverage.

"Some of the other events make a nice profit on the beer, but it brings in an element that shouldn't be there," City Club member Dr. Glenn Goist said. "We weren't sure how long the sustainability of this event was going to be. Now that it's 25 years I think its here to stay. As long as we keep the ribbers happy they'll come back."

The planning of this event is 10 months in the making. Keeping with its mantra, the City Club keeps the number of ribbers to the handful that appears. There were about 15 ribbers that inquired about joining the event in 2011, but were turned down.

"We want all the ribbers to do well so we cut it down," Jirik said. "All our concessions do well. We could have a lot more ribbers squeezed into the grounds. We don't do it because we want our ribbers to do well."

All nine ribbers at the 2011 event have been at the City Club Rib Burnoff before. They were Armadillo's (Boardman), Cowboy's Barbeque & Ribs (Waterford, Texas.), Desperado's B-B-Q & Rib Co. (Hinckley), Old Carolina B-B-Q Co. (Massillon), Hog Wild B-B-Q (Mansfield), Smokin' B-B-Q (Northfield), Texas Pit (Willis, Texas), Sgt. Mike's Oinks (Tiffin) and Jack on the Bone (Navarre).

There was a competition with winners announced on June 25. The victors were Texas Pit (People's Choice - Best Sauce), Hog Wild B-B-Q (Culinary Award - Best Sauce), Old Carolina B-B-Q (People's Choice - Best Ribs) and Armadillo's (Culinary Award - Best Ribs).

Individuals were handed ballots when they entered the event. The collective votes determined People's Choice Awards.

This is the third year in a row that Old Carolina has won the Strongsville City Club People's Choice Award. The ribber is getting ready to open its fourth restaurant in Canton and is looking to open their first Cleveland area location in Strongsville some time in 2012.

"When people go through the line I tell them that they are going to get the perfect rib. Consistency is what it's all about," Jason Reinmann, pit master for Old Carolina B-B-Q, said. "This is always a nice organized event. It's a nice crowd and nice people. This is one of the best we do all year long."

The City Club uses the proceeds from the Rib Burnoff to fund other endeavors including Special Olympics and the July 4 fireworks, which have benefitted from a \$5,000 contribution from the organization.

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