



## Culinary kids

### Smokin' in McMinnville introduces inaugural Youth Grillin' contest

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The inaugural Youth Grillin' in McMinnville competition will hold special memories for youth griller Ethan Hitchcock. He won the competition, wowing the judges with his skill level, flavors and presentation. He served a delicious burger with a side of grilled potatoes for the first round, but went the extra mile in the final round. He grilled a perfect pork chop with a side of squash and zucchini with some extra ingredients added for flavor.

According to judge and Warren County High School culinary arts teacher Suzanne Prater, Hitchcock did an excellent job.

"Ethan had a perfectly seasoned and properly cooked pork chop. It temped correctly at 145 degrees and was juicy and tender," said Prater. "He grilled apples to serve with his pork, and his side of zucchini and squash was colorful and well cooked. He incorporated several of the pantry items, such as herbs, sausage, carrots and more into the side. As an extra, he grilled corn rolled in Parmesan cheese, which was delicious too."

Joining him in the winner's circle is second-place finisher Nicolas Smith, and third-place finisher KeyLe Rhea. They started out in a field of 11 contestants ages 12 – 18, with everyone grilling their best hamburger and a side dish of their choosing in 30 minutes.

Judges had their work cut out for them tasting each dish and scoring on creativity, taste and appearance. They were able to observe the grillers, and talk to each one as they tasted their dish.

Following the completion of the first round, a top 5 was named advancing them to the second round. Those five were Smith, Hitchcock, Rhea, Carl Parris

and Clayton Jones.

"The top 5 were all winners in my book," said Prater. "The students thinking on the spot with a time clock ticking showed these students have great problem solving skills and the ability to be very creative. Both of these skills will help them in school and in their future careers."

For round two, the finalists were provided with a mystery protein (pork chop), and squash and zucchini to be incorporated into a side dish. For this level, they were allowed 45 minutes to prepare their meal, and were able to choose from a well-stocked pantry of various ingredients, seasonings and spices.

"The participants were all well prepared and did an amazing job," said Prater. "As a ServSafe instructor, it made me happy to see young students already following proper measures to prepare safe foods. Most were wearing gloves, had meat thermometers to check the internal temps of their finished products, and many other guidelines I teach in my classes were being followed."

Second-place winner Nicolas Smith was confident in the kitchen, as he and his family are part of an award-winning competition team. The 16-year-old has been cooking for about five years, and used a special sauce created by him and his father.

The Youth Grillin' completion is part of Smokin' in McMinnville, with professional teams participating in the Kansas City Barbeque Society-sanctioned event. Several activities were held during the weekend event, with the Best of the Butts for Charity event won by The Hope Center.

Other winners in the various activities held during Smokin' in McMinnville last weekend include: corn hole, Denny Vaughn and Michael Martin; kan jam, Rodney Whiles and Beau Lowe; kickball, Security Federal; adult disc golf, Alex Welcome; youth disc golf, Caleb Hines; home run derby 12U, Easton Denning; and home run derby 14U, Brayden Shockley.

McMinnville Parks and Recreation program coordinator Kyle Clyde said, "We are extremely happy with how the Youth Grillin' event went, and can't wait to host more youth grilling competitions in the future. It was great to see those kids' creativity shine as they prepared delicious meals for the judges."



Margaret Hobbs photos

**Teen griller Ethan Hitchcock earned the title of master griller, and took home the first-place trophy at the close of the Grillin' in McMinnville event.**



**Achieving the correct temperature is key to grilling a perfect hamburger patty. KeyLe Rhea placed third in the competition.**



**Tasty grilled beans served in a glass jar was a unique touch to Nicolas Smith's first round entry. He was awarded second place for his efforts.**



**Carl Parris prepares vegetables to be included in his food presentation.**



**Contestant Clayton Jones has experience grilling, as he is a member of the 4-H Grilling Team. Here he seasons hamburger meat using Worcestershire sauce and dry seasoning.**



**Griller Cameron Chilcutt adds charcoal to his grill under the supervision of his father, Russ. Cameron has been cooking for almost two years, with desserts being his favorite thing to prepare.**



**Cole slaw is contestant Emma Young's side of choice. She plated it with a juicy burger for the judges approval.**