

# Chilimania still bringing the heat after nearly 30 years

Adapted from press release from Chilimania

As chili cooks can attest, the search for that perfect recipe is a lifelong pursuit. The main ingredients remain consistent, but there's always a bit of experimentation that goes on with each delicious batch made. A dash more of this, a pinch less of that – all to see (and taste) how the flavors mix and meld.

The same premise applies to organizing and producing an annual event for the better part of three decades. Now in its 29th year and held during the weekend following Labor Day in downtown Edgerton, Chilimania co-founder Dr. Tom Reitz believes "Edgerton's largest annual party" has found a near-perfect concoction: Take a late-summer weekend. Add plenty of chili, music, friends and fun. Throw in some food, beverages, and (hopefully) some sunshine. This recipe yields enough for 5,000 people and serves all of Edgerton through scholarships for college-bound high school seniors and donations to an array of community-based organizations and projects.

"It's amazing how Chilimania just gets bigger and better every year," said Reitz, an Edgerton native who followed his father into dentistry. "As the years have gone by, we've learned a lot about what works, and a lot about what might not fit into the mix very well. It seems like chili and classic rock and an outdoor street party really makes it attractive to people."

As proof of the festival's popularity, Chilimania was voted as the Best Tourism Event in the 2018 Best of Kosh Awards presented by the Edgerton Reporter.

## Bringing the rock to the Rock River Valley

Aside from being the longtime host to the Wisconsin state-championship Chili Appreciation Society International's (CASI) cook-off, Chilimania has long prided itself on its live music lineup, complete with a professional stage, sound system and light show. The festival often features regionally and nationally known tribute acts, providing a big-time show at family-friendly prices.

The 2018 edition should excite longtime fans and first-timers alike. Headlining on Saturday night this year is *Queen Nation*, a Los Angeles-based Queen tribute act whose live, 90-minute production of the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame band's greatest hits preserves the image, sound, and stage persona of vintage Queen. Queen Nation plays from 10-11:45 p.m.

The Saturday lineup also features *Bostyx* (7:30-9:30 p.m.) playing the best of Boston and Styx; *Infinity* (5:30-6:45 p.m.), with its mix of arena-rock anthems and hits; *Heartache Tonight* (2-5 p.m.), bringing the sounds of The Eagles to Edgerton; and the *Monday Morning Dixie Band* (11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.), kicking off



A cook at a past Chilimania tests her creation. (Edgerton Reporter photo/Toni Turnquist)

Chilimania for the 28th consecutive year with all the Dixieland classics.

## A "Country" beginning to the weekend

There's no need for concern if rock-n-roll is not your thing. Now in its third year, Chilimania presents Country Edge on Friday, Sept. 8. Held on the Chilimania grounds, the only chili you'll find will be for sale from our food vendors. (More on that later...) What you will find is a lineup full of some of the finest local, regional and national Country music acts kicking off the Chilimania weekend on our Main Stage.

"Country Edge was created as a way to cater to all the Country music fans in southern Wisconsin," said co-organizer Casey Schmeling. "For years we got requests to book Country acts, but it was difficult to mix them into our rock-based lineup. We decided to dedicate a separate event specifically for the Country crowd."

In just a few short years, Country Edge has gained the reputation for bringing big-time talent to small-town Edgerton. The lineup routinely features both Nashville up-and-comers and hitmakers alike, supported by some of the finest regional talent from Wisconsin and beyond. For instance, Country Edge 2017 featured country star Keith Anderson, best known for his top-10 song "Pickin' Wildflowers." He was supported by local

party band *Pink Houses*, fronted by Edgerton dentist and Chilimania co-founder Dr. Tom Reitz.

We have another special lineup arranged for 2018, but planning was still taking place as of press time. Please visit [chilimania.com](http://chilimania.com) for headline act and ticket information.

Rounding out the Friday night lineup are *Saving Savannah* (7-9:30 p.m.), a dynamite Milwaukee-based act playing "Country music as it should be"; and *A Tad of Sarahcha* (5-6:30 p.m.), an Edgerton-based duo playing all your favorite Country tunes accompanied by another local act, *TheMadTadders*.

## Before the Mania, there must be Chili

Did you notice that we've come this far and barely talked about chili? Well there's no need for concern, as we haven't forgotten about the biggest part of the entire weekend! Chilimania is host to both CASI and traditional chili cook-off contests, as well as a Best Salsa competition.

All cooks are encouraged to also participate in the CASI Showmanship category, for which they must choose a booth theme complete with decorations, costumes, a skit and more. This makes for a flavorful and fun event for all ages.

One of the most popular parts of Chilimania Saturday is the public tasting, which begins promptly at 3 p.m. This allows all attendees to sample as many chilis as they would like (or have time to try) and vote for their favorite as the coveted People's Choice Award, which comes with a cash prize and hand-carved wood trophy for the winner.

It's amazing how quickly a couple thousand people can polish off countless gallons of chili – it can sometimes happen in under an hour! In order to accommodate growing crowds and their hungry bellies, Chilimania in 2018 has reduced its cook-off registration fee by a third and is encouraging its cook-off participants to make more than the minimum two gallons per cook.

"It's not cheap to make enough chili to feed thousands of people, even when the cups only hold a couple ounces apiece," said Dr. David Luellwitz, Chilimania board of directors president and co-chair of the Cook-off Committee. "We wanted to make it easier for our cooks to participate while at the same time ensuring that sampling lasts long enough to allow people to try as much chili as they'd like."

Once sampling is complete, attendees turn in their People's Choice ballots, with the winner being announced alongside other categories from the Main Stage at 6:45 p.m.

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LIVE MUSIC | 5K/10K FUN RUN/WALK | CHILI COOK-OFF | STREET FESTIVAL

The Original

# Chilimania

SEPT. 7-8, 2018

DOWNTOWN EDGERTON | [CHILIMANIA.COM](http://CHILIMANIA.COM)

SATURDAY:

Public Chili Tasting at 3pm  
until it's gone!

FRIDAY

Headline Act announced  
soon! Watch [chilimania.com](http://chilimania.com)

5pm-6:30pm A Tad of Sarahcha

7-9:30pm Saving Savannah

SATURDAY



10pm - 12am

11am - 1:30pm Monday Morning Dixie Band

2pm - 5pm Heartache Tonight

5:30-6:45 Infinity

7:30-9pm Bostyx

9:30-10 Jason & Robert Stubbs



FRIDAY, SEPT. 7

Live music starting at 5pm  
Admission TBD | 12 and under free



SATURDAY, SEPT. 8

All day festival! 10:30am - 12 midnight  
\$8/person | 12 and under free