



NATIONAL CHILI DAY

February 26, is National Chili Day. Oddly enough, October is actually National Chili Month. There is a National Chili Cook-off every year in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A friend sent me this story of one year's fiasco.

Each year three judges are chosen to judge and choose the best chili for that year. The citizens take their contest quite seriously. One year a man named Frank was passing through when he stopped upon the crowd to observe what was happening to draw such a mob of people. As he arrived, he learned that one of the judges had taken ill and was unable to judge. When asked to become the third judge, Frank was concerned as to how a man from Springfield, Illinois, would be qualified for such a job. The other two judges assured him that he would do a great job. He could have all the beer he wanted to drink and he need not worry that the chili would be too spicy for a man unaccustomed to such a spicy dish.

Below are the scorecards from the event.

CHILI #1 – Mike's Maniac Monster Chili

Judge #1 – A little too heavy on the tomato. An amusing little kick.

Judge #2 – Nice, smooth tomato flavor. Very Mild.

Judge #3 (Frank) – WHOA! What is in this stuff? You could remove paint from your driveway. Took me two beers to put the flames out. I hope that is the worst one. These people are crazy!

CHILI #2 – El Rancho's Afterburner Chili

Judge #1 – Smoky, with a hint of pork. Slight jalapeno tang.

Judge #2 – Exciting BBQ flavor, needs more peppers to be taken seriously.

Judge #3 – Keep this out of the reach of children. I'm not sure what I am supposed to taste besides pain. I had to wave off 2 people who wanted to give me the Heimlich maneuver. They had to rush in more beer when they saw my face.

CHILI #3 – Alfredo's Famous Burn Down the Barn Chili

Judge #1 – Excellent fire-house chili. Great kick.

Judge #2 – Salty, good use of peppers.

Judge #3 – EPA. I've located a uranium spill. My nose feels like I have been snorting Drano. Everyone knows the routine by now. Get me more beer before I ignite. Barmaid pounded me on the back, now my backbone is in the front part of my chest.

CHILI #4 – Bubba's Black Magic

Judge #1 – Black bean chili with almost no spice. Disappointing.

Judge #2 – Hint of lime in the black beans. Good side dish for fish or other mild foods, not much of a chili.

Judge #3 – I felt something scraping across my tongue, but was unable to taste it. Is it possible to burn out taste buds? I think I am eating nuclear waste.

CHILI #5 – Lisa's Legal Lip Remover

Judge #1 – Meaty, strong chili. Jalapeno peppers freshly ground, adding considerable kick. Very impressive.

Judge #2 – Chili using shredded beef, could use more tomato. Must admit, the jalapeno peppers make a strong statement.

Judge #3 – My ears are

ringing, sweat is pouring off my forehead and I can no longer focus my eyes. The contestant seemed offended when I told her I thought her chili had given me brain damage. The barmaid saved my tongue from bleeding by pouring the beer directly on it from the pitcher. I wonder if I'm burning my lips off. It really ticks me off that the other judges asked me to stop screaming.

CHILI #6 – Varga's Very Vegetarian Variety

Judge #1 – Thin yet bold vegetarian variety chili. Good balance of spices and peppers.

Judge #2 – The best yet. Aggressive use of peppers, onion and garlic. Superb.

Judge #3 – I can't feel my lips anymore.

CHILI #7 – Susan's Screaming Sensation Chili

Judge #1 – A mediocre chili with too much reliance on canned peppers.

Judge #2 – Ho hum, tastes as if the chef literally threw in a can of chili peppers at the last moment. *I should take note that I am worried about Judge #3. He appears to be in a bit of distress as he is cursing uncontrollably.

Judge #3 – You could put a grenade in my mouth, pull the pin, and I wouldn't feel a thing. I've lost the sight in one eye, and the world sounds like it is made of rushing water. My shirt is covered with chili, which slid out of my mouth. At least during the autopsy, they will know what killed me. I've decided to stop breathing. It is just too painful. I'm not getting any oxygen anyway. If I need air, I'll just suck it in through the 4-inch hole in my stomach.

CHILI #8 – Big Tom's Toenail Curling Chili

Judge #1 – The perfect ending, this is a nice blend chili. Not too bold, but spicy enough to declare its existence.

Judge #2 – This final entry is a good, balanced chili. Neither mild, nor hot. Sorry to see that most of it was lost when Judge #3 passed out, fell over and pulled the pot of chili down on himself. Not sure if he is going to make it. Poor feller, wonder how he would have reacted to really hot chili?

Judge #3 – No Report.

Hope you enjoy this week's chili recipes. They are quick and easy when using your crock pot. Thanks for reading.

VEGETARIAN THREE BEAN CHILI

- 1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (15 oz.) can Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15 oz.) can Red Kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15 oz.) can Black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (10 oz.) jar Mild Enchilada sauce
- 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce

Auditor arrests former director of DHS and co-conspirators in largest public embezzlement case in state history

Press Release

Special agents from the office of State Auditor Shad White have arrested John Davis, the former Director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS); former DHS employee Latimer Smith; Dr. Nancy New, owner and

Director of the Mississippi Community Education Center (MCEC) and New Learning, Inc.; Zach New, Assistant Executive Director of MCEC; Anne McGrew, accountant for MCEC; and Brett DiBiase in connection with a multimillion-dollar embezzlement scheme. The indictments include a range of violations involving fraud and embezzlement.

Auditors concluded, after an eight-month investigation, that the accused conspired to illegally obtain millions in public funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program administered by DHS. Defendants used a variety of business entities and schemes to defraud the taxpayers.

"The funds that were illegally obtained in this case were intended to help the poorest among us. The funds were instead taken by a group of influential people for their own benefit, and the scheme is massive. It ends today," said Auditor White.

Davis and Smith stand accused of fraudulently manufacturing documents to enrich Brett DiBiase using TANF money. Davis and Smith created invoices to pay DiBiase TANF funds for teaching classes about drug abuse, but DiBiase was in a luxury rehabilitation facility for his own drug use in California at the time and did not perform the services. Davis and Smith created documents and arranged payment knowing DiBiase was not performing the work he was hired to perform.

Nancy New and her son, Zach New, stand accused of using the News' non-profit, MCEC, to pay for DiBiase's drug treatment using TANF funds. At Davis' direction, MCEC used TANF money received from DHS to pay for DiBiase's opioid treatment at the Rise in Malibu facility. The documentation submitted by the News claimed this was to pay DiBiase for conducting training classes that never, in fact, took place.

The News also stand accused of transferring millions in TANF funds to their private businesses. They then converted funds to their personal use and concealed the conversion through various fund transfers, fraudulent documents, at least one forged signature, and deceptive accounting measures.

Finally, Davis and the News are accused of creating a fraud scheme to take TANF funds to pay for personal investments in medical device companies (Pre-

vacus, Inc., and PreSolMD, LLC) in Florida.

"I don't care how politically connected a person may be. You do not have the right to treat taxpayer money as your own or to lie to the taxpayers about what you're doing with that money. Others doing this kind of thing are on notice: this will not be tolerated now," said White.

All accused were indicted by a grand jury assembled by Jody Owens, District Attorney of Hinds County. District Attorney Owens and assistant district attorneys will prosecute the case.

"The Hinds County District Attorney's Office looks forward to working with the State Auditor Shad White and his dedicated team to end public corruption in Mississippi," said Owens. "The misuse of government funds designed for families in need will not be tolerated by our office and those who break the law will be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible."

"We have worked tirelessly in the Auditor's office to uncover this sprawling conspiracy, so I want to thank the investigators, auditors, and analysts who all assisted," added White.

The total amount of money lost to these schemes has not yet been determined, but the loss already exceeds any embezzlement scheme in the records of the Auditor's office. Records are kept for all cases from the last twenty years.

Because of the large amount of money involved, and until the full extent of the loss to the taxpayers is determined, this is considered an ongoing investigation by the Auditor's office. There will be no additional comments at this time.

If convicted on all counts, the accused face hundreds of years in prison. Persons arrested by the Mississippi Office of the State Auditor are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Additional suspected fraud involving this case or any other can be reported to the Auditor's office online any time by clicking the red button at www.osa.ms.gov or via telephone during normal business hours at 1-(800)-321-1275.

*County Man

(Continued from page 1.) received closure.

The victim's daughter, Lashunketa Noel Clark, the victim's sister, Sallie Smith and brother of the victim, Simmie Noel, each spoke to the judge and the Defendant before the sentence was given.

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**Lee Ann Fleming is a Holmes County native, food columnist and has garnered fame for her recipes featured in the film, The Help. Fleming can be reached at lafkitchen@hughes.net.*