

First timers, pros to fire up grills, smokers Barbecue challenge April 26-27

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Professional barbecuers beware.

Hogz Brew, Boners Barbecue and the Naked Pig will have their tongs ready when the Annual Spring Blowout & Pony Express Barbecue Challenge rolls into Lafayette Park April 26-27.

The local teams, headed up by Cody Eggleston, Jim Beenblossom and Chuck Taylor respectively, are part of an estimated 48 teams of professional and first-time barbecuers from several states signed up for a new Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce event.

And the stakes are high as chefs vie for \$7,500 in prize money.

One of event organizers, Mike Eberle, said the public can view professional barbecuers and take advantage of fun events in the park and throughout town.

"It's a great way to kick off spring," said Community Development Office director Anne Anderson.

The event begins Friday, April 26, with a chili championship, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Lafayette Park pavilion.

Community members and others are encouraged to enter their favorite chili. Participants can sign up by calling the Chamber at 537-3505.

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On Saturday, April 27, from 7 to 9 a.m., local Lions Club members will host a pancake feed in the pavilion.

Food and craft vendors scattered throughout the park open at 8 a.m. as do city-wide garage sales and a Goodwill truck for items no longer wanted. The truck will be parked next to the old Slack nursing home at 117 Sixth Street.

At Lafayette Park, kids can enjoy a jump house, laser shooting sports and a farm chore relay .All ages are invited to participate in a horse shoe tournament that begins at noon.



Barbecuers will begin grilling and smoking early Saturday morning and continue throughout the day. Eberle said certified judges will sample how contestants prepare beef, pork, chicken and brisket.

Awards will be announced at 3:30 p.m. as well as the winner of a raffle for a grill.

The idea for a competition barbecue event evolved when Chamber officials and members were looking for another community event and came up with a barbecue.

Eberle, a retiree who moved to Gothenburg from North Platte, is a master certified barbecuer and judges events as a hobby.

He helped the Chamber join the Kansas City Barbecue Society (KCBS), the Rocky Mountain Barbecue Association and the Greater Omaha Barbecue Society as a way to attract professional barbecuers and judges.

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Membership to these organizations has also helped promote the sanctioned event on the Internet and elsewhere as barbecuers accumulate points at such competitions and a chance to compete nationally.

Eberle said he thinks barbecue shows on television have increased interest in the hobby and in competitions which are growing around the country.

One of the teams competing in Gothenburg, the Parrothead Smokers from Dakota Dunes, SD, is the No. 1 KCBS team in the country.

Anderson added that the Chamber is looking for more sponsors for the event and recipes for barbecue sauces, rubs and side dishes for a recipe book.

Contact the Chamber at 537-3505 or at gothenburg

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