



Junior Hereford members from Washington earn top honors in the first Great American Hereford Grill-off.

Great Grilling

Washington juniors win inaugural JNHE Great American Hereford Grill-off.

by *Megan Galloway*

The perfect end to any hot summer day often begins by firing up the grill and preparing a tasty Hereford burger or a juicy Hereford steak. Few things are more relaxing than a terrific outdoor eating experience shared with family and friends at the picnic table. To celebrate this time-honored American tradition, the 2007 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) included a popular new competition — the Great American Hereford Grill-off.

Great grilling begins with great recipes — and great Hereford beef. These items were the foundation for each of the 12 tasty entries in the inaugural grill-off. The event, sponsored by the American Hereford Women (AHW) and the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), required each team to prepare and grill their favorite Certified Hereford Beef® (CHB) recipe for evaluation by a panel of three highly qualified judges. But food quality wasn't the only thing being judged. Each team of six or fewer juniors also had a maximum of 10 minutes to present their items through a themed skit of their creation.

A successful start

Grill-off chairwoman, Barb Wilkinson of Johnstown, Colo.,

says this combination of recipe development and showmanship led to some very tasty dishes served by everything from pirates to “Desperate Housecows.”

Selecting the top three from this pool of 12 turned out to be a tough job taken on by three industry experts: Roxanne Johnson, executive director of the National Cattlemen's Foundation and a past member of the American Junior Hereford Association; Bill Hammerich, Colorado Livestock Association chief executive officer; and Michael Musel, National Cattlemen's Beef Association senior culinary specialist.

All three were impressed with the grilling expertise and promotional capabilities of the juniors participating. “Michael thought the juniors did an excellent job and volunteered to help fine-tune the recipes for publication,” Wilkinson says. The AHW sent the compiled recipes to participants and will distribute them at Hereford events for all members to enjoy.

Although each team did an outstanding job, the judges managed to select their favorites from the mix. Winning the event was the team from Washington. Second was awarded to Pennsylvania, and third place was a tie between Nebraska

and South Dakota. All teams received comment cards from the judges to give them some tips for the 2008 grill-off.

Grill-off goals

The grill-off was created with more than just pure competition in mind, and all participants were winners in what they took away from the contest. The event was created in hopes of encouraging Hereford youth to learn more about the preparation and marketing of CHB, Wilkinson says.

“We hoped that this contest would help make kids more comfortable in talking about CHB products while, at the same time, teaching them a little more about cooking, marketing and so on,” Wilkinson says. “The bottom line, however, was to be a fun event that maybe wasn't as much about competing as others going on throughout the week.”

A member of Washington's winning team, Brady Irwin, Enumclaw, Wash., says those goals were met. “The grill-off was a blast,” Irwin says. “It was great to do this together with my team members and it definitely created a lot of teamwork while teaching us more about working with CHB products.” Irwin, along with five other Washington juniors of varied ages, cooked up a balanced meal that won the judges over. The Certified Hereford Beef entrée — Washington's Blue Ribbon Top Sirloin — was accompanied by a salad, grilled Walla Walla sweet onions, grilled garden veggies, grilled asparagus spears, grilled artisan bread and “Seattle's

Summer Rain Spritzer.” The meal didn’t end there, as judges were served a dessert consisting of grilled peaches drizzled with rosemary infused honey along with Starbucks’s coffee chillers.

To present their food, Irwin and his team created a “Rachael Ray style” cooking show with their “chefs” as the guest cooks. Putting the meal and the skit together was an exciting challenge for the team, according to Irwin. “We learned a lot while researching the meal, especially about portion control and nutrition. We worked to put together a balanced meal with elements from all of the food groups.”

Although the recipes were at the center of the Great American Hereford Grill-off, Wilkinson says what she most appreciated was how the skits brought juniors of all ages together for the contest. “It really turned out to be a multigenerational event that had juniors of all ages working to put on a great meal and a great show. We saw a lot of team building through the skits, and that interaction between younger and older juniors may be one of the most valuable results of the grill-off.”

Irwin’s mother and Washington team advisor, Paddy Irwin, also saw grill-off benefits that went far beyond a simple competitive event. “The kids worked really well together and everyone learned something, from cooking and grilling to teamwork and CHB facts,” she says. “It was a winning event all around.”

More cooking to come
Wilkinson and others involved in the grill-off were delighted with the number of entries in the 2007 competition and are eagerly looking forward to

the continuation of the contest at future JNHEs. “We’re definitely going to do it again,” Wilkinson says. “We’re already looking ahead to Kansas City and considering a focus on balanced meals.”

So juniors who missed out in 2007 should start searching for that great Certified Hereford Beef recipe and a few team members to join the fun when

the Great American Hereford Grill-off moves to Kansas City for the 2008 JNHE. **HW**

Editor’s Note: An adult division will be added in the 2008 competition. For more information about the Great American Grill-off, contact Chris Stephens at cstephens@hereford.org or (816) 842-3757.

Washington Junior Hereford Association

Theme: TV Celebrity Interview of Restaurant Owner/Chef

Segment: “Great Grilling USA - Regional Bests/the Northwest”

Menu Items: (Highlighting Washington products)

Starter: Garden fresh salad highlighting WSU Cougar Gold cheese and Ocean Spray cranberries and grilled artisan bread

Main: Blue-Ribbon Grilled CHB Top Sirloin Steak with blue cheese smear and grilled seasonal vegetables highlighting grilled Walla Walla sweet onions

Finale: Grilled Peach Summer’s Delight (as dessert)

Beverage suggestions: Starbucks coffee cooler or “Seattle’s Summer Rain” (Ocean Spray’s line of cranberry drinks mixed as spritzer)

Washington’s Blue Ribbon Grilled CHB Top Sirloin Steak

4 oz. butter softened at room temp

4 oz. blue cheese, crumbled

1 Tbsp. chopped garlic

fresh chopped herbs

salt and white pepper to taste (Salt can be replaced with squeeze of lemon juice.)

4 CHB top sirloin steaks portion controlled to 4 oz. each

2 Tbsp. (approx.) steak seasoning (McCormick’s Grill Mates Montreal steak seasoning)

sprig rosemary or thyme

Combine blue cheese smear ingredients in small bowl. Set aside at room temperature. Sprinkle steaks generously with seasonings and salt mixture of choice (Montreal steak). Place steak on medium grill. Allow 13-15 minutes for medium-rare doneness (145F). Turn 3 times.

To serve: Generously spread top of steak with blue cheese smear; garnish with sprig of fresh herb (rosemary or thyme).

Note: Steak may be marinated for 1 hour 30 min. refrigerated in zip-lock bag and 30 min. at room temperature prior to grilling).

Marinade: ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce, ¼ cup olive oil, 2 Tbsp. finely chopped garlic

Makes four servings. Total prep and cook time, 25 minutes.

Backyard Vegetable Grill

½ lb. fresh asparagus

1 sweet red pepper, cored, seeded and cut into 1” strips

Toss vegetables in basil infused olive oil and grill until bright; arrange for serving.

Diagonally slice 1 medium green zucchini and 1 medium yellow zucchini. Toss in basil infused olive oil; sprinkle with finely chopped fresh rosemary and thyme. Grill until light grill marks appear on each side. (May cross hatch.) Keep crisp.

or

2 ears fresh sweet corn on the cob brushed with olive oil. Grill; slice nibbles from cob and toss with red pepper, butter, salt and pepper.

Walla Walla Sweet Onion Steak Grill

2 medium (3-4”) Walla Walla sweet onions, sliced to ¼” thick (two slices per serving)

3 Tbsp. finely minced garlic

sea salt

Sprinkle onion slices with sea salt; let stand 5 minutes. Drizzle with olive oil and grill 7 to 10 minutes. Turn and sprinkle with finely chopped garlic, sea salt and olive oil. Continue to grill until tender and translucent (after 5 min. may want to “tent”).

Note: Start first; takes longer to cook than steak.