

Salsa contest fires up riders at Sierra

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – It was hot, hot, hot at Sierra-at-Tahoe and it wasn't just because the sun was beating down.

The fourth annual Salsa Showdown was April 10 at the ski resort. Thirty contestants entered this year's event that drew a throng of people to the West Bowl area for much of the day.

Trays of salsa in little plastic containers kept being put in front of the judges with tortilla chips. Some judges were waving at their mouths and taking gulps of water to contend with the heat coming from the spicy entries.



All the ingredients for a salsa contest -- salsa, chips, margarita, water, scorecards.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

This year the salsas were broken into two categories – spicy traditional and fruits.

John Rice, general manager of the resort and one of the judges, raved about a watermelon cucumber salsa he had just tasted. He was impressed with many of the fruit salsas.

Leah Rademacher won the fruit salsa category.

"I found two recipes online and merged them," Rademacher told the crowd after being named the 2011 salsa champ. The honor earned her a season pass at Sierra for 2011-12.

Judges said it was unanimous for Rademacher to be the victor.

Brothers Rudy and Roman Pulido won the spicy contest. They were making the salsa right until the entry deadline Sunday morning.

Although Craig Lebaron was disappointed his entries didn't win, he was generous with sharing his salsas with those lounging in Adirondack chairs in short sleeves. Contestants were only supposed to enter once, so he put one of his salsas under buddy Shaun Keay's name.

Lebaron's spicy recipe is below. Although I have not made it, I did try it. It goes down almost mild, but then has a lingering kick that makes me want to add this to my recipe files.

"The key is to put salt in and blend, then taste," Lebaron said. "Salt is what gets you compliments."

But he cautions to start slow with the salt and add as necessary. The same goes for the garlic.

Lebaron uses organic tomatoes because they are smaller and don't have the waxy film on them.

La Sierra Salsa

8 tomatoes

6 jalapenos

10 Serrano chilies

Half onion

3 tomatillos

2 cloves garlic

50 cilantro leaves

Salt, to taste

Sear first five ingredients on stove or barbecue until slightly black.

Put roasted vegetables in blender with garlic and cilantro. Taste. Add more salt if necessary.

This is enough to fill one Mason jar.

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