

Coleman Cooking Challenge

Outdoor Cookoff on the Shores of Chequamegon Bay Lives up to its Name



The Last Thought
MIKESCHOONVELD

I'll readily admit I've become a "foody." It used to be just Rachel Ray and her 30-minute meals, but now I'd almost as soon watch the next episode of Chopped or Iron Chef America as settle in for Monday night football.

Perhaps it's because though I can't go out and play football anymore, I can go to the kitchen and play "chef." In fact, a few weeks ago I played chef and actually competed in head-to-head competition with another wannabe cooking wizard.

A few years ago at the annual conference of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW), the Coleman Company began sponsoring an amateur outdoor cook-off based loosely on the Iron Chef television show. It has become an opportunity for a pair of the most culinary minded members of AGLOW to show off their abilities. It is a chance for other mem-

bers to observe, photograph and taste the concoctions these outdoor chefs are able to prepare, then write stories for their own readers, back home with recipes hunters, fishermen and campers can use to deviate from the usual camp stew and weiners. It is a great opportunity for Coleman, one of the leading maker of outdoor "kitchen" products, to show off their top sellers and spot light new products.

On the shores of Chequamegon Bay in Ashland, Wisconsin, the teams were set. Jeff "Cheesehead" Davis, *Whitetails Unlimited* editor (and Packer-backer) from Green Bay, Wisconsin and myself -- a devout Chicago Bears fan, dubbed "Iron Mike" -- squared off to prepare dinners featuring cocktails, appetizers, entrees and deserts for the judges: Ashland's mayor and local media members.

Instead of a single secret ingredient as is featured in the TV version of Iron Chef, the AGLOW / Coleman Cooking Challenge

has a theme. This year's: "Wisconsin Cuisine," which to me includes cheese, beer, bratwurst, fish and cherries.

Servings from my outdoor kitchen included a beer-based, Bloody Mary I called a Wisconsin Sunrise. I served a fresh mozzarella/tomato salad with beer-based dressing; deep fried salmon balls; a beer, brats and mushroom casserole; German Spaghetti and grilled angel food cake for desert. Cheesehead Davis served a bacon-infused Bloody Mary, a cheese curd soup, bison burgers, a strudel and other dishes.

I left the competition with two different and distinct impressions. First, a renewed admiration for the TV chefs who are able to turn out a variety of dishes in an incredibly short time frame. It seemed I was into the challenge only a few minutes when I checked my watch and saw I had less than 20 minutes left. I went from cool and confident to panic mode.

Secondly, I learned today's Coleman outdoor cooking products are a far cry from the "white-gas" stoves used in the past. All of our appliances ran on dispos-

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Iron Mike's German Spaghetti

- 4 bratwurst sausages
- 1 large can (or 1 pint of home-canned) tomatoes
- 1 envelope of French's Spaghetti Sauce mix
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, mashed and minced
- 4 cups of shredded fresh cabbage

Grill bratwurst until about 2/3rds cooked through. Remove from grill and slice each sausage into 4 or 5 chunks. Add tomatoes and spaghetti sauce mix to a sauce pan, then add bratwurst chunks. Bring to a simmer and allow to cook for 15 minutes. While the sauce is cooking, add a bit of olive oil to a 10-inch skillet, saute onions until just translucent, then add garlic and shredded cabbage. Cook cabbage, stirring frequently until it's mostly cooked, but still slightly crisp. The cabbage is the pasta or spaghetti. Plate the cabbage first, then cover with bratwurst/spaghetti sauce.



(Left) The author goes into panic mode with only 20 minutes to go. (Right) Jeff "Cheesehead" Davis played the game well, scoring a few Packer points with the all Wisconsin judges.



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