

CASI QUICK FACTS

I got to thinking about questions that cooks new to CASI will probably ask. Here's a few that'll probably get shot your direction:

1. Do I have to be a member of CASI to participate in the CASI portion of the cookoff? No. They do not have to be members to participate/compete. This is a great way to invite the others to try to make CASI chili.
2. What is CASI chili? Traditional Texas Red. You've listed the definition pretty well. It doesn't *HAVE* to be beef, but I've never heard of a winning entry that wasn't beef. FYI: Many cooks are cooking with such lean beef that they actually need to add a small amount of fat to the pot to get the ingredients to merge/combine properly, so we'll use a small ball of sausage early on and remove it later in the cooking cycle... Texas Red is meat and gravy. It's not our traditional/local chili by any means.
3. They may ask all kinds of questions about CASI, etc. Most of it you know by reading the packet. Most anything else, have them run Google searches or something. They'll probably find their answer.
4. Can I enter more than one chili in the CASI portion? No; one chili entry per person in CASI. You will need to collect the \$20 for each entry.
5. They may ask all kinds of questions about gear, etc. The simple answer is they bring it, all of it.
6. May I bring my chili in my crock pot? You'll be asked all types and variations on this. You've already stated the answer. No. Nothing pre-cooked, whatsoever. No store-bought mixes. They CAN mix their ingredients ahead of time. CASI-style, but Open, they CAN pre-cut their veggies. Oh, some will cook veggies in the CASI pot and remove them before submitting to judging. This is fine and legal, but not a great idea. One flake of an onion and immediately gone... Particularly noticeable is garlic. A white garlic bit will get their entry killed right off the bat. IF they do this, they need to use cheesecloth, and be VERY VERY careful.
7. Do I have to grind/cut my meat on site? No. I can and should be ground ahead of time, but no marinating of any kind allowed.
Just
raw ground meat. They *can* grind it there, but it's unlikely they'll do this.
8. What is CHILI GRIND? We dont see this in stores much any longer. But, it's out there. It comes out of the grinder about as big around as your pinkie finger, perhaps a little smaller, about the size of a 22 caliber bullet... If they use regular hamburger grind, they might do ok, but again it's unlikely that they'll place very high. Before I purchased my own grinder I had to

specifically pre-order the meat about a week ahead of time...

9. Beef; what cut do I use? Strictly their choice. As a competitor of their, I highly suggest them using the ears. :-) Seriously, 99% of the winning entries are either Mock Tender or Chuck. I personally have had better success with Chuck. Some use sirloin or round. Doesn't matter, the winning entry will always be very very very low fat. Fat, frankly, when it begins to cool in a judging cup, looks NASTY.
10. They'll ask questions about the judging cup. I know you guys haven't seen this yet. They'll be plain white cups with tops. You will provide the cups to the cooks in a cooks meeting that's usually held around 9:00 or 9:30am. They cannot lose them nor mark on them in ANY way whatsoever. One little scratch on the side of the cup and they'll be disqualified. You will take their cup and apply the number portion of their ticket downward against the cup and fasten it with duct-tape. (you'll need a roll of duct tape) Yep, nobody will know the name nor the number on the cup. The numbers are not revealed until the awards ceremony. The duct tape will be removed on stage right there. Nobody, not even the head judge / referee, know's who won until the very end. Ken, your referee, will take care of all of this for you, but you'll be asked anyway. I thought you'd want to know.
11. You'll get all types of bizarre questions about putting this or that in the chili. You may take the stance of "fine, but it'll be disqualified". Seriously, meat and gravy only. The more fine the gravy, the better. Clumps will not help!

-Hance