

SHORT HISTORY OF THE COLORADO CHILI POD

The Colorado Chili Pod was formed in the mid-1980s in response to the efforts of numerous chili cooks both inside and outside the state of Colorado. Out-of-state chili cooks (primarily Texans) had been coming to Colorado for several years to cook with the Colorado cooks in the Colorado State CASI Chili Championship. Based on the success of this State Chili Championship, it was felt that there needed to be a local chili organization (a Pod) in Colorado. After much discussion, two influential CASI Chili Pods in Texas sponsored the Colorado Chili Pod for membership into CASI.

Led by two esteemed members of CASI (Bill Cook, Great Pepper of the Cowtown CASI Pod, and Harvey West, Great Pepper of the Top of Texas Pod), Colorado was nominated for CASI membership in August 1987. Dr. Ray Calhoun of Dallas presented the credentials of the newly founded Colorado Chili Pod organization to the annual CASI Great Pepper's meeting in September 1987. With the unanimous vote of the Great Peppers, the Colorado Chili Pod was approved for membership.

Long-time local chili cook, Don Luckinbill, spearheaded the effort to get the Pod going in conjunction with his chili partner, the much recognized and infamous Dr. Ray Calhoun and Marty Maldonado (the local United Way representative). Don, believing that there must be some other crazy chili people out there, decided to host the Pod's first meeting. The purpose of that first meeting was to discuss the national CASI organization, outline goals for the local Pod, nominate officers, and "kick-off" the efforts of the local Pod. This first meeting, held at the United Way's Denver office, attracted 30 largely dedicated "chili" and "charity" people. Members in attendance almost instantly felt a part of CASI and committed themselves in creating a "chili organization" in the state of Colorado.

To assist in that effort, the members nominated John Montgomery and Don Sanders for Great Pepper and Pepper Popper, respectively. Joining these two chiliheads in the Pod's executive group was Tom Klug and Lyman Wilkinson. John held the position as Great Pepper for over seven years when he became the "Great Pepper Emeritus". Taking over the reigns was Tom Klug – a long-time Pod member who returned to Colorado after a relatively short job assignment in Illinois. Tom stayed as the Great Pepper of the Colorado Chili Pod for six months and then his job moved him to Mesa, Arizona. The new Great Pepper was Lyman Wilkinson, one of the Pod's original members. Lyman has effectively led the Pod since early 1995.

We have been blessed over the years to have many special and loyal members of our organization. Some of these members live in Colorado and some of them live in other parts of the United States. Some of the most noteworthy ones include the following: Colorado (Lyman & Linda Wilkinson, John Montgomery, Tom Klug, Karen Hendricks, Don & Sandy Sanders and Doug & Julie Ingerson), from Illinois (Bill & Cheryl Pierson and Kathy Martin) and from Texas (Colleen Wallace, Maxine & Cindy & Don Reed and Johnye Harriman). Without the support of all of our members and friends, we would not have been able to grow and prosper as an organization.

The Colorado Chili Pod's sole purpose is to assist organizations raise money for charities and to promote the cooking of "Competition-Style chili" (aka Texas Red). The organization started with one annual chili cook-off and since that time has hosted dozens of chili cook-offs in Colorado over the last 23 years (in such cities and communities as Denver, Greeley, Castle Rock, Fort Collins, Golden, Evergreen, Bailey, Fairplay, Frederick, Longmont, Loveland, Wheat Ridge, Commerce City and Grand Lake) and has raised thousands of dollars for various charities and organizations. In addition the Colorado Chili Pod believes that it needs to actively support chili cook-offs in the entire Rocky Mountain Region. To that effort, the Colorado Chili Pod actively "manages", coordinates and supports the Wyoming State Chili Cook-off in Chugwater, Wyoming and the Red River Chili Cook-off in Red River, New Mexico each year. Hopefully, we will have the opportunity to continue to support our Colorado Cook-offs as well as our Regional cook-offs well into the future!

The Colorado Chili Pod is a strong proponent of the CASI organization. Efforts and accomplishments include the following: the Pod has hosted (by itself) the annual Great Peppers' Meeting; owns a 320 site at the Ranch; has donated money for tables at the Ranch; is a member of "Friends of CASI", has as a member a Great Pepper of the Year; has a member of the Chili Hall of Flame; has an effective website; publishes a monthly newsletter; holds monthly meetings and has attended every Great Peppers' meeting since 1988.