

History of Sunshine State Chili Pod

The idea of starting a POD in Central Florida happened during the first CASI cookoff held at Natures Resort on August 26, 2000 ran by Ken Rodd. The only POD in Florida at that time was located in Pensacola, FL 400 miles away. Bill Garbutt and Ken Rodd started contacting Chili cooks as potential members of new POD by attending ICS cook-offs in 2000. Debbie Turner, owner of the Goat Gap Gazette, provided Ken with names and address of cooks she sent her newspaper to. Bill and I contacted them. I returned to Winter Haven, FL in May 2001 to assist my mother and father. Bill and I worked contacting possible members to establish the POD and accomplished the required 25 members in time to present this new POD to the Great Peppers meeting being held in Houston, TX in 2001. Ken Rodd officially represented the POD at that meeting. The "Sunshine State Chili Pod" was accepted as a new CASI POD. Bill Garbutt was the PODS Great Pepper as he lived in Florida. Tom Ince was the Pepper Popper and Myrna Ince was the Treasurer. Ken Rodd was "Public Relations".

The POD has been host of the Florida State Chili Championship since 2005

Some interesting information about the PODs background:

1. Candi Knight Arevalo cooked in her first cookoff as an adult in 2001. The daughter of Richard & Carol Knight had participated in cook-offs with her father and mother as a Jr for years before.
2. Natures RV Resort, Homosassa, Florida became the home for the POD in 2002 and has supported the POD and CASI 100% from the start and it continues today.
3. Three of the original POD officers came from being ICS cooks.
4. Sunshine POD & Natures Resort hosts a "river cruise" for the chili cooks stopping at several local taverns along the river to take a break and enjoy a cold one.