



TRADE SHOW POETRY

A well-versed columnist shares his trade show tales, including encounters with blue ribbon baker Marjorie Johnson.



STALL SUCCESS

Checking out some restaurant restrooms whose design actually adds to the overall dining experience.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

When construction closed its kitchen, Birchwood Cafe popped up at Verdant Tea—and the pairing brought out the best in both.

The Best Cook

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Battle of Burgers

Local burger joints compete for patty bragging rights

By Joey Hamburger

WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT THE upcoming burger battle in St. Paul, I immediately pictured two semi-truck-sized hamburgers squaring off in a cage death match, fighting for burger survival and burger glory. When someone explained this burger battle in more detail, I found the reality even more spectacular.

On Saturday, May 17, from 5 to 8 p.m. in Mears Park, 12 local burger outlets are handing out burger sliders alongside Summit beer—and tickets only cost \$40. Essentially it's exactly what I pictured, but with 12 burgers instead of two.

Jim Buron, the man behind the Twin Cities Burger Battle, was born and raised on Minnesota burgers and is back after organizing events in New York City for the past seven years. One event included the New York Wine and Food Festival, encompassing more than a hundred events during a week in October—everything from wine tastings to sushi samplings to, most importantly, a burger cook-off. This spurred Buron's idea to bring the same cook-off concept to Minnesota.



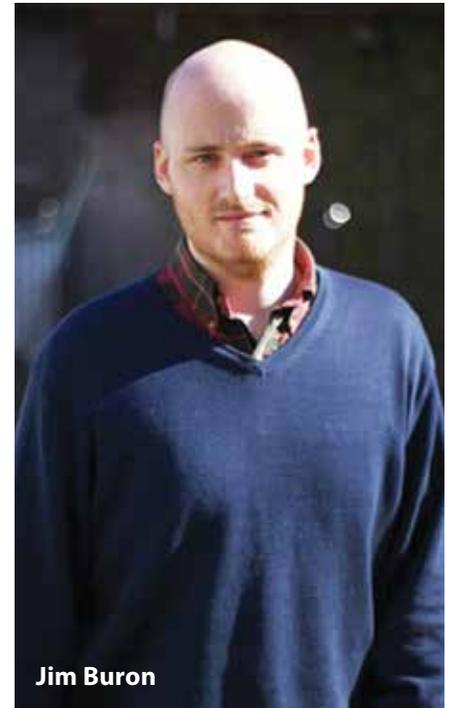
"Seeing the event a couple of times, it rang a bell. Minnesota restaurants cook the best burgers so why not bring this idea to Minnesota," Buron said. His goal is to make this first official burger battle an annual staple.

The event will bring in expected burger dynasties like the 5-8 Club and the Nook, along with some new contenders, including the Red Cow and My Burger. Restaurants accepted the invitation after being chosen by a team of expert burger researchers who might just have the best job ever.

Note the magnitude of accepting this challenge. It's one thing to make a great burger during a busy dinner rush. It's an entirely different task to make an award-winning burger on the grill provided in a park on a hot May day for 1,500 hungry ticket holders, looking to get the most out of their \$40 with a pint of Summit in hand.

Each restaurant will serve only one creation. The slider can be something brand new or a favorite item off their menu. Then a panel of judges will review the creations based on taste, preparation, creativity, juiciness and something else. These burger experts will be non-competing local chefs, a celebrity judge, and hopefully me. The Burger Battle Champion will receive a trophy and some true burger bragging rights, with proceeds going to the Sanneh Foundation. Started by St. Paul native and former professional soccer player Tony Sanneh, the Sanneh Foundation focuses on youth development for at-risk kids in the Twin Cities.

Attendees will also vote on their favorite burger to decide which



Jim Buron

restaurant wins the people's choice trophy, which Buron said is gigantic, with an even larger burger on top.

Buron's favorite style of burger? The Juicy Lucy, which both the 5-8 Club and Matt's Bar in south Minneapolis claim they created. Only the 5-8 Club will be participating in this year's Burger Battle, though Matt's Bar is a definite contender in its own right.

Even though it's not featuring burgers clad in boxing gloves fighting one-on-one, the Twin Cities Burger Battle promises to be just as heated. With live local music, Summit beer and burgers, I don't think there could be a disappointed person in attendance. **FSN**