Good afternoon chili heads! For those that don’t know me, my name is Kris Hudspeth and I am the President of CASI.

The last few months have put an unforeseen and unforgettable complexity on our lives and beloved hobby. Never in modern times have we been forced to shut down our lives in this type of manner. It has been an interesting experience, and thankfully we seem to be headed towards a sense of a return to normal.

Local county and state governments are starting to pull back the stay at home orders, social conveniences are starting to open back up, and I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors have decided to lift the cook-off moratorium, effective June 1, 2020.

With many states and counties starting to implement a phased approach, we came to a unanimous decision to allow the local promoters, pods, and chili heads to determine the feasibility of hosting events in their areas. With the phased openings, it would be too much for the board to keep up with which areas were safe to open, who needed to delay longer, etc. Please continue to follow the guidelines of your local and state leaders. The Board will continue to monitor any changes that occur regarding the pandemic.

During this break in cook-off action, the Board has been extremely busy addressing the ever changing landscape, as well as discussing what our new normal will entail. Keith Karaff, the executive director has announced a few of those changes in the last two videos.

Today, in addition to some new recommendations on cookoff procedures, I will address the qualification changes for TICC this year.

* The one topic that has been asked the most, how am I going to get qualified for Terlingua? This topic has been the most discussed topic we have discussed as a Board.
  + Terlingua is the grand daddy of all cookoffs, and one that many hold very dear. It was important to keep TICC as an invitational event, and continue to provide cooks with the accomplishment and achievement that comes with qualifying for TICC.
  + For the remainder of the chili year, the Board has voted to make the following changes to the qualification structure.
    - 12 point states now require 6 points.
    - 9 point states are reduced to 4 points.
    - 6 point states need 3 points.
      * Again, these changes are only for the remainder of this chili year, ending on September 30th. We hope that this change will be met favorably from the members.

At the beginning of May, Keith and I asked Renee Moore to lead a task force of CASI members looking at all processes required for hosting and running a cookoff. These are some of the recommendations that came out of those discussions. The biggest thing that we can stress is SANITIZE, SANITIZE, SANITIZE.

* + Registration:
    - Signage should be posted advising on the preparation of all items for the event detailing the method and precautions taken.
    - Cooks should be encouraged to either use a pre-printed label for registration, or bring their own pen.
    - Designate a separate table, distanced from registration, to pick up cups and show numbers.
    - Have hand sanitizer, or a hand washing station available
  + Public Tasting/Peoples Choice
    - At this time, the recommendation is to discontinue People’s Choice for the remainder of the chili year.
  + Showmanship
    - Signs posted advising how giveaway items were packaged.
    - Designate a 6 foot barrier between show teams and audience.
  + Judging
    - Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations for use before, during and immediately after judging.
    - Each judge to be provided their own “judging packet” of supplies consisting of spoons, napkins, pencils, judging sheet, and pre packaged palate cleansers.
    - Have judges walk around the table sampling chili rather than being seated.
      * This would somewhat eliminate the need for ‘distancing’ that seated in chairs would present. Also, the chili cups would not be touched by the judges. Lids would be removed by the monitor and replaced at the conclusion of judging.
        + NOTE: This is an alternative judging method and can be very effective in meeting the contact/distancing health guideline. If done, all chili cups would be placed on the table at the same time using the CASI ticketing system and the CASI cup labeling method.
    - Non-seating of judges would require a clipboard or like item for them to use for marking judging sheet.
      * NOTE: A manila folder with score sheet stapled inside could be used as it would be a proper writing surface.
    - Adjust number of judges to 4 on lower levels. When necessary, reduce number of Final Table judges required.
      * OR
    - If decided to continue using the sit down method of judging:
    - Provide each judge with enough paper towels for the number of cups on the table plus 2. Each judge would use a paper towel to pass the cup and then dispose of the paper towel.
    - Provide only prepackaged crackers as a palate cleanser
    - Sanitize all tables, chairs, clipboards (if applicable) and pencils between each round of judging. Golf Pencils would be an alternative to regular pencils. They can be ordered online in boxes of 144 for about 0.06 each. One online site sells them for 7.95 a box.
    - Pre packaged spoons should be given in the “judging packet”
    - Partitions between seated judges (much like in local elections). These would require sanitizing after each round. Tables and chairs would have to be sufficiently separated to keep judges on other tables safely distanced. To accurately follow the CDC guidelines on distancing, without partitions, you would need a table at least 14 feet long to accomplish this.
    - Judging the “aroma” criteria should be done from the spoon, instead of from the cup.
    - Use several turn in tables that are socially distanced. Cooks should place their own cup in the turn in box rather than someone receiving the cups. For large cookoffs, consider using golf carts/UTV’s placed through the cook site. Cooks would turn in chili to these areas, instead of one central location. This method was used at Chilympiad for years, and was effective.
    - Beverages should be individual servings that are sealed from the factory. Think cans and bottles. Do not use keg/pitchers for beer and water.
    - Post signage detailing how judging supplies were packaged, and consider signage detailing sanitation practices between rounds.
  + Announcements
    - Announcer – recommend mask and gloves, as well as social distancing
    - Trophies - Sanitize where possible, and place trophies in sealed bags until presented to winner. Allow winner to unseal the bag and remove trophy/certificate

Again, these are just recommendations. This is all new, uncharted territory for each of us. We are all aware that this is a change from “business as usual”, and we must adapt to survive. For those events that are scheduled in the month of June, please be sure that you share information, your best practices and what works/doesn’t work through social media and the Board, for others to learn.

I would like to thank those that served on this task force. The information and suggestions that you shared will help CASI adapt to this new landscape quickly, and get us back to serving our local communities.

As we start coming back together in the name of chili, stay safe and continue to practice good hygiene and social distancing. If you don’t feel good, stay home. And most importantly, remember that our local charities are going to be hurting more than ever, and that is why we cook chili. The chili and fun are important, and we are all more than ready for that, but the charity is what brings us together.

Lastly, we have decided to move up the Summer Board meeting from the typical late June/early July date to May 30-31. We will be holding the meeting at Victoria Coleto Creek Lake RV Park in Victoria TX, and everyone is invited to attend. We will have a full day workshop on Saturday, and will hold the Board Meeting on Sunday.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and may God bless us all!