BRENDA'S DELI BRINGS HOME TOP PRIZE IN CHILI CONTEST



The Rev. Don Morgan and Brenda Smith, owner of Brenda's Deli, look on as Honore McIlhaton talks about her friendship with Brenda.

Downtown Vallejo eatery wins Judge's Award at "A Taste of Soup" event

VALLEJO - A panel of judges has selected a chili recipe prepared by Brenda Smith of Brenda's Deli in downtown Vallejo as the best chili in Northern California.

"I was shocked," said Smith when she heard the news that her Kickin' Chili" had been selected the best out of 12 entrants from 20 participating restaurants in Solano and Napa counties.

The contest was held at an event known as "A Taste of Soup," a fund-raiser for Bay Area Family Services held in Vacaville. Judges and the public were asked to select the best soup, chili and chowder.

Smith's win meant a prize of \$250 and a plaque, which was presented to her at her restaurant, 314 Georgia Street, on March 31.

"The recipe was a basic recipe that I had that I use when I make homemade chili," Smith said. "Sometimes I use ground turkey instead of beef, but this time I used ground sirloin and ground sirloin tips."

And while she entered the chili hoping for the best, the fact of the matter is she thought her lentil soup would bring home a prize.

"I expected my lentil soup would win," she said. "It's on the menu."

Customers who visited her restaurant the day of the award presentation were treated to a sample of her winning creation. Somewhat spicy but with a sweet, pleasant edge, kidney and pinto beans were combined with the sirloin and bits of tomato in a rich sauce.

Smith has been working in downtown Vallejo for a little over two years, and will be celebrating her one-year anniversary at her current location in April.

Brenda's Deli is open Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, visit www.brenscatering.com or call 644-6421.



The Rev. Don Morgan presents Brenda Smith with her winning plaque and a check for \$250.