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Salsas, cheeseburgers, jerky battle it out at state fair

The fiery taste of New Mexico can be found at state fair competitions

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ALBUQUERQUE – Everyone knows New Mexico is the place to get a green chile cheeseburger and salsa, however, who makes the best? You’ll have to attend the New Mexico Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge and Battle of the Salsas at the New Mexico State Fair to find out. But the spice doesn’t end there – you can also enjoy New Mexico-made beef jerky at the Beef Jerky Showdown.

The New Mexico State Fair announces the return of the Beef Jerky Showdown – a competition to showcase the popular, savory snack that is enjoyed by so many – at 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 8. This event was last held at the New Mexico State Fair in 2019. There are two categories in this competition: salt and pepper flavor and green chile flavor, and each category will have a People’s Choice Winner.

New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte encourages fairgoers to attend the return of the Beef Jerky Showdown.

“We are excited to have the Beef Jerky Showdown back at the fair,” said Witte. “It is a great way to experience a New Mexico twist on a traditional snack. All fairgoers should come by the Agriculture Building Courtyard and cast their votes for the best beef jerky in New Mexico.”

The Beef Jerky Showdown isn’t the only event bringing some spice to the fairgrounds. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) announces the return of the spiciest competition at the New Mexico State Fair. The Battle of the Salsas is a contest of the taste buds and will crown the best salsa in the Land of Enchantment.

The spice-tacular battle will take place at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9 in the Agriculture Building Courtyard, and the first 200 people in attendance will serve as judges. Each judge will be provided with individually packaged salsa samples, a bag of tortilla chips and a ballot. After the judges try all the salsas, cast their votes and submit their ballots, the results will be tallied, and the top three winners will be announced as the most enchanting salsas in the land.

Last year's first place winner of Battle of the Salsas was Black Market Salsa with its Belligerent Batch. Since winning Battle of the Salsas, Black Market Salsa CEO Mike Greiner said business has been booming for the company.

"Last year's win for Belligerent Batch was an amazing honor," Greiner said. "Winning any tasting competition is a great feeling, especially when the votes are coming from fair attendees, from the people of New Mexico; the distinction is more rewarding. I was born and raised in Las Cruces and have known New Mexico's food culture all my life, so to be told we have the best salsa and to receive the Battle of the Salsas trophy is very fulfilling."

This contest has become a long-standing tradition at the fair and is a great way to showcase one of New Mexico's signature foods through a friendly and spicy competition. "Battle of the Salsas is a great way to try the different flavors of New Mexico through value-added products and to support New Mexico agriculture," said Witte.

The Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge will take place at 12 p.m. Monday, Sept. 11 in the Agriculture Building Courtyard. This contest has seen some tough competition in recent years, by bringing in some of New Mexico's most renowned restaurants for a chance to claim savory victory.

Competitors prepare their burgers on site before the mouth-watering goodness is passed on to the judges. Comprised of prominent members of the local community, the panel of judges will determine the champion of this twist on an American classic.

Fairgoers are invited to watch the event before a limited number is able to taste and rank the competitors. Participation is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Once the judging is completed, both the Judges' Choice Winner and People's Choice Winner will be crowned.

Sparky's Burgers from Hatch won big last year by claiming the Judges' Choice Award. Big Mike's from Belen took home the People's Choice Award. Peko Nunn, owner and chef of Sparky's Burgers, said the competition is a great way to unite the New Mexico community.

"We love coming to this competition," said Nunn. "It is a great way to showcase the green chile cheeseburger phenomenon and to highlight the New Mexico tradition in each bite. We are beyond grateful to be a part of this competition year after year."

"The green chile cheeseburger is an iconic food in New Mexico," said Witte. "The New Mexico Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge at the New Mexico State Fair is a win-win,

because it gathers the community to celebrate and enjoy some of the best food in the state.”

All three events will be held at the Agriculture Building Courtyard at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds. For more information about the mouthwatering Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge, Battle of the Salsas or the Jerky Showdown, please visit the [New Mexico State Fair website](#) or contact the NMDA Marketing and Development Division at 575-646-4929.

As a reminder, below is a list of all NMDA events happening at the State Fair. All events will take place at the Agriculture Building Courtyard.

- Beef Jerky Showdown 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 8
- Battle of the Salsas 1 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 9
- Green Chile Cheese Burger Challenge 12 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 11
- Red, White and Brews Happy Hours 3 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 8, Saturday, Sept. 9, Friday, Sept. 15 and Saturday, Sept 16
- Country Store will be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 7 through Sunday, Sept. 17 (located inside the Agriculture Building)

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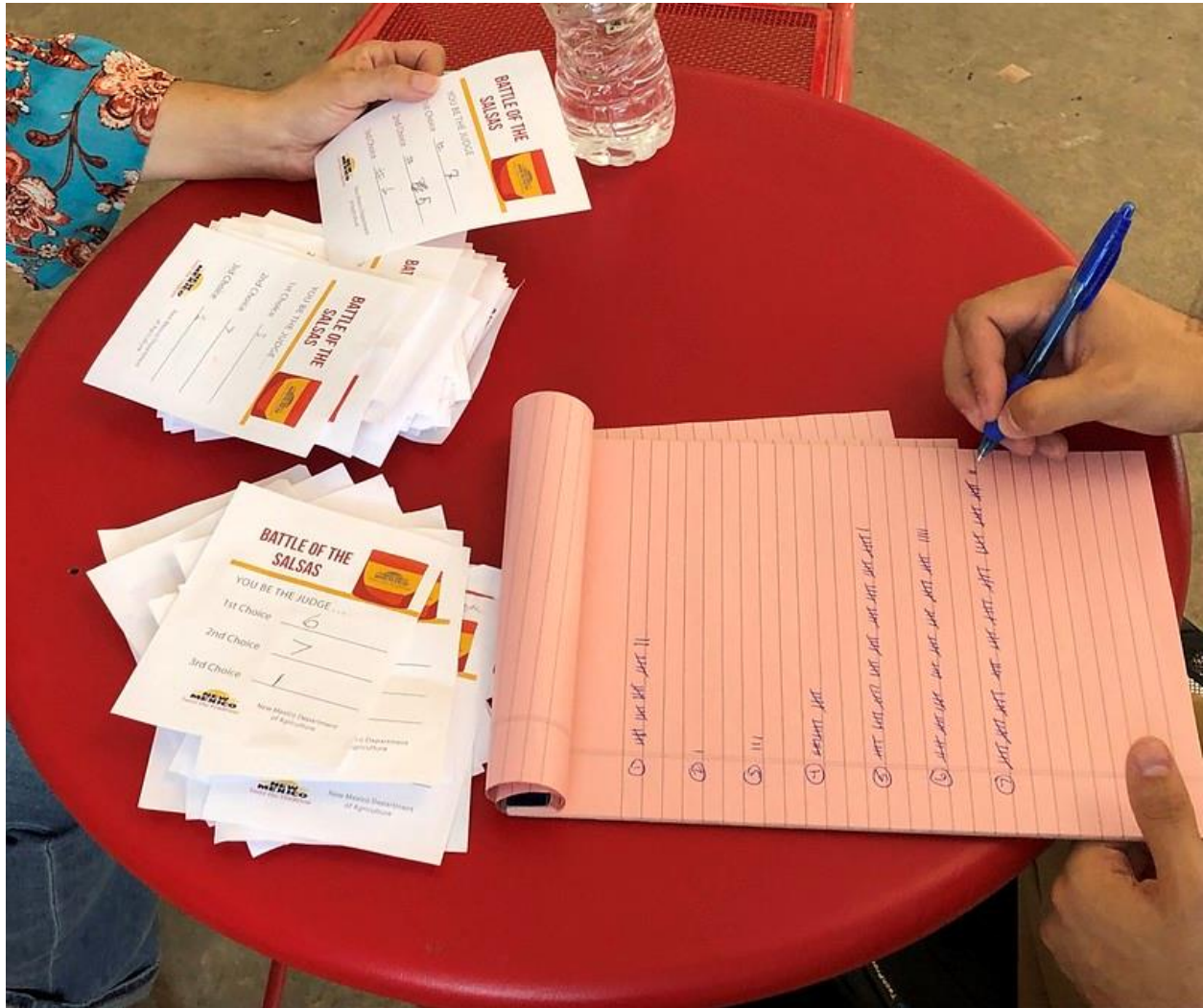
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Cutline: Which green chile cheeseburger is the best? You'll have to attend the 2023 New Mexico Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge Sept. 11 at the New Mexico State Fair to find out. Last year the teams competing had a great time grilling up their specialty for the judges. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)



Cutline: Which green chile cheeseburger is the best? You'll have to attend the 2023 New Mexico Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge Sept. 11 at the New Mexico State Fair to find out. Judges will crown a People's Choice and a Judge's Choice award to the best green chile cheeseburger in New Mexico. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)



Cutline: Battle of the Salsas will take place at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9, and the first 150 people in attendance will serve as judges. Each judge will be provided with individually packaged salsa samples, a bag of tortilla chips and a ballot. After the judges try all the salsas, cast their votes and submit their ballots, the results will be tallied, and the top three winners will be announced as the most enchanting salsas in the land. (Photo courtesy of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture)