

It was a great day for a great event. On November 12th, 2011 The Iowa BBQ Society held its 10th Annual R.I.B.S for Kids Day at the Cookies Food Headquarters in Wall Lake, Iowa. With help of Urban Dreams (www.urbandreams.org) we were able to bring 45 young people from the Des Moines area out and give them a day that they will not soon forget.

The day began with a ride in a luxury coach for the two and half hour drive from Des Moines to Wall Lake. For many of the kids, just the ride out in the Iowa country side is something they have never experienced before. When they arrived Speed Herring greeted them and let them know what was laid out for them. The kids were excited, but you could see as much excitement in Speed. His caring for our young people obviously runs as deep as his love for BBQ

Once inside breakfast was served. The kids obviously were enjoying being with their friends and getting to experience something new. After the meal Speed led the group on a tour of his 120,000+ square feet facility. Between the storage area with the huge Cookies BBQ Sauce event trailers, ingredient and finished product storage, shipping and receiving areas and production area Speed really has an impressive facility. I was amazed at how well everything was maintained. The place was spotless. Speed gave a great overview of how the raw products that come in are transformed into Cookies products and packaged. The kids really enjoyed it and asked a lot of questions. I don't think all of them really understood what "one million pounds" of tomato paste was, but they all knew that it meant a lot!



After the tour our group from the Iowa State meat lab joined in and gave some very informative talks about food safety. The kids were taught the correct temperatures for different foods and how to properly handle and store food items. They were each given a meat thermometer to take with them and share what they learned with their families. After the food discussions the first competition of the day began. The kids were divided up into teams and were challenged to create their own BBQ sauce. Each team got a base of catsup, vinegar and sweeteners and then was able to choose from a huge assortment of different seasonings to create their own special blend. There were some creative sauces made.

A traditional BBQ'd pork lunch was served by Speed's crew and the kids really enjoyed it. After lunch one



of the highlights of the day started – the dessert competition. There was an unlimited amount of sweets, sauces, cakes and cookies to choose from and each competitor's goal was to make the most creative dessert they could dream up. No rules, just let your imagination run wild. It was quite a sight. 45 completely different, completely original desserts were created. No two were alike.

The kids had a blast as they tried to cram as much into a clamshell turn-in container as they could. I am certain that much sugar would keep them all wound up for a few days

After dessert the group got some instruction on how to use a grill safely. Many points were covered and the kids were very attentive. Once the grill instruction was done,

Paul from Raccoon Flats gave a presentation on how to build a competition style turn-box. Each kid would soon receive their own portable charcoal grill to take home with them at the end of the day. However, before they got to take it and go they had one more competition to do. Each student was going to grill chicken, beef and pork and create a turn in box to present to the judges. The winners got bragging rights and a nice trophy.

The kids received their meat and had many rubs and sauces to choose from. It was great to see each of them go to a hot grill and begin cooking. The competition was fierce. You could tell this really meant a lot to them. Everyone applied what they had learned by using gloves, keeping their tongs clean, not cross contaminating the meat and using a meat thermometer to assure the meat was properly cooked. Once the meat came off the grill our Iowa BBQ Society helpers sliced the meat for them and the kids created their boxes. There were definitely some "9's" on the table. The kids really put some effort into this and it showed. Judging was no simple task.

Once judging was complete, it was time for the awards. The kids went wild hearing their names called and getting recognized for the work they had done that day. Sound familiar? I think many of us could relate. Winners were announced for the sauce, dessert and BBQ contests. The kids took a lot of pride in their accomplishments. There was a huge amount of excitement in the air by the time the last name was called.



At the end of the day the kids got a shirt and a bag of goodies and also got to take their grill with them. I know this is one day that many of them will never forget. The day was more than about BBQ. It was about sharing a passion for BBQ with the next generation of cooks. It also gave an opportunity to show a group of kids the positive side of competition. The lessons in food and cooking safety are also very important, especially this time of year with the holidays fast approaching. At the end of the day, the most important thing may have been just reaffirming how fulfilling it is to share things with others who may not have as much. This was a great bunch of kids that have their whole lives ahead of them. Showing them that people do care and giving them a day to be themselves and enjoy it will hopefully help them in the future.



The day was a huge success for both the students and the volunteers. However, these types of events don't just happen by themselves. It took a large number of volunteers and donations to make it happen. Without Gwen Marshall from Urban Dreams helping coordinate the kids, Speed Herring and Cookies Foods, Mike Tucker from Hawgeyes BBQ, Smokey D's, Iowa State Meat Dept., the Iowa BBQ Society and a very generous donation from the Kansas City BBQ Society we never could have pulled this off. Thanks to the kids for teaching us all a thing or two and to all the volunteers

that made it happen. It was a great experience.

