

Kansas City couple celebrate 13th wedding anniversary with \$10,000 Mesquite barbecue victory

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Kim and Andy Groneman of Kansas City, Mo., will undoubtedly never forget the 2011 Labor Day Weekend. The couple flew to Las Vegas to celebrate their 13th wedding anniversary before driving to Mesquite to win the third annual Smokin' in Mesquite BBQ Championship on the grounds of the CasaBlanca Resort.

The decision to take the 80-mile trek to Mesquite proved profitable considering that the victory in the prestigious event generated a \$10,000 payday for winning the Grand Champion title ahead of more than 40 other teams.

Spearheading the Smoke on Wheels BBQ team, the Gronemans capitalized big-time in a form of competition that has been lauded for its camaraderie. The victory actually proved to be quite a teamwork effort thanks to the fact that friends from Palm Springs, Calif. hauled the equipment to the \$40,000 event.

The Gronemans obviously had all of the ingredients ranging from the preparation of their chicken (third), pork ribs (sixth), pork (eighth) and brisket (fourth).

"We were consistent, that's for sure," Mr. Groneman said adding that the team name was the result of an interesting story.

"We were going to a Ducks Unlimited banquet where we were going to cook," he said. "It started raining really hard and I was afraid that we wouldn't be able to get the cooker started when we arrived, so I stopped and lit it. We headed down the road and I had people telling me that it looked like smoke on wheels."

The winners ended up with 673.1424 points to outdistance Rhythm'N Que (662.2850); Porky's Revenge (659.998); Left Coast Q (658.2854); Mad Max's BBQ (656.578); All Sauced Up (655.4284); R&R BBQ (655.4282); Smokin' Triggers (653.1430); I.A.B. 30 BBQ (650.8570); and UP N Smoke (650.2860).

All Sauced Up entered the Smokin in Mesquite BBQ Championship in second place in the Nevada State Championship before capturing the title and a check for \$3,000. The last event culminated a combined score that also included the Best Dam BBQ on Memorial Day weekend in Boulder City.

Complemented by a great following of fans and competitors, the Smokin' in Mesquite BBQ Championship sanctioned by the Kansas City BBQ Society lived up to its expectations packing hotel rooms and generating a buzz many other resort cities would love to have in the midst of a bummer economy.

The Peoples Choice gatherings Saturday and Sunday generated big money for the Mesquite Boxing Club and the Mesquite Elks Lodge. At last count, the Mesquite Boxing Club was the recipient of \$2,200 while the Elks Lodge added another \$1,700 to its bank account as both groups continue to help local youth.

"Once again, the fans of the Smokin' in Mesquite BBQ Championship have come through to help the youth of our community," said Matt McCulloch, boxing coach for the past four years. "When we opened up, the line went all way across the tent and down. We started at 3 in the afternoon and we were sold out by 5:15 p.m. We really want to thank the Mesquite Resort Association for including us again this year."

Many of the fans attending the giant event were first-time visitors. All had a good time.

"It was fabulous," said Diane Garcia, who rode on the back of a BMW motorcycle driven by her husband, Hiram, for the trip from Las Vegas. "We had a great time and both the food and the beer were great.

"We're coming back next year, for sure."

Mr. Garcia said he'd definitely return next year.

"This was the first time I had attended anything like this," said Mr. Garcia, a 41 year-old native of Las Vegas. "To find something as unique as this in the middle of the desert was certainly an interesting experience. We will definitely be back next year."

Gil and Esther Pineira also attended from Las Vegas.

"I learned about the event on the BBQ channel," said Mr. Pineira, a retired truck driver for Miller Beer. "We got here Friday and it was really nice. There is a lot of science that goes into the art of BBQ. We talked to lots of the people who competed.

"One guy even flew his meat in from Japan."

Mrs. Pineira said the event was very educational.

"I really enjoyed it," she said. "I was trying to pick up some tips."

People involved in the promotion and running of the extravaganza also felt good as the equipment was packed while fans and competitors headed home.

"It went very well," said Arlie Bragg, an award-winning BBQ competitor who also ranks right up there as the top promoter of events throughout the nation. "The teams are all hyped up; and the entire staff at the CasaBlanca from the electricians to the ice lady was all fantastic."

Bragg, a resident of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., remembers well when the inaugural event in 2009 was interrupted at one in the morning by a storm that had competitors scrambling to chase tents and supplies.

"We could not be happier," said Bragg of the continued growth of the event. "Everyone here works so hard."

Christian Adderson, the sporting event manager for the CasaBlanca, echoed Bragg's comments.

"This was another great event," Adderson said. "We had fantastic crowds both days with people coming to watch the competition and take part in the many activities. The families enjoyed walking through and watching the teams cook before moving into the air-conditioned event center where the kids were able to enjoy the kids zone."

Adderson said the 43-team field included entrants from Missouri, California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

The never-ending Mesquite Gaming machine continues with the Bunco or Bust tournament Oct. 1; the ReMax World Long Drive Championship Oct. 27-Nov. 4; the 2011 Mesquite Fall Pro-Am Nov. 13-15; the Southwest Invitational Nov. 15-17 along with the Mesquite Tri-State Marathon and Valley of Fire Marathon Nov. 19-20; the High Desert Robinson Regional & Mojave Desert Regional Back to Back Chili Cookoffs Nov. 25-26; and the 2011 Nevada Open Dec. 14-16.

A full slate of 2012 events will kick off with Mesquite Motor Mania and the Smokin' Big Chili Challenge Jan. 13-16.

Further details can be found at www.casablancaresort.com.