

# WNY's Best: Brickyard voted best stew, chili; Villa Coffee takes top soup spot

Lewiston restaurants are crowned in new NFP food contests



From left: Brickyard chef Tyler Miller with the restaurant's award-winning Brunswick stew and chili. • WNY's Best Stew and WNY's Best Chili can be found at the Brickyard in Lewiston. • One of Villa Coffee House owner/chef Stephen Pusateri's famed soups. (Photo courtesy of Pusateri)

**BY JOSHUA MALONI**  
GM/Managing Editor

January is a tough month. The holidays are over – the holiday debt has just begun – it's cold outside, and no one feels much like doing anything. January is good for something, however, and that is soup. And stew. And chili.

And so, Niagara Frontier Publications launched its new food contests right after the first of the new year to celebrate these cold-weather comfort foods. Here are the results.

**WNY's Best Stew/  
WNY's Best Chili**

**The Brickyard Pub & BBQ  
The Brickyard Brewing Co.  
/Brickyard catering**  
432 Center St., Lewiston

Lewiston's Brickyard restaurants may have WNY's Best Stew/WNY's Best Chili in 2024, but these menu staples sure didn't begin with a bang.

"The Brunswick stew is kind of like a stew that a lot of barbecue places use," co-owner Eric Matthews said. "You're using everything that's basically on

your menu thrown into a stew. We basically do the same thing. All our cut-off ends of brisket, everything we save, and then we make a stew the next day.

"Unfortunately, it started out like maybe the first couple of months (two decades ago) as being the leftovers, or things like, when you're slicing a turkey and you get down to the end and you have an inch of turkey left, you use that for the stew.

"But now, we just use whole ingredients, because we go through about, in the summertime, probably 15 to 20 gallons a week. And then wintertime, probably 10 gallons a week of each (stew and chili). We have to actually smoke brisket to use it in the stew. So, it's actually grown in popularity quite a bit."

He added, "The chili, same thing: We use all of our ingredients in house. The only thing we add is a little bit of ground beef. Obviously, it's in our hamburger patties, but we don't have any ground beef on the menu. But, yeah, we use everything. Everything's from scratch.

"The chili is the best on the third day, if you want my opinion. So, we try to stagger it so we're saving it. We usually make it every two days and it



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goes from there."

Chef Tyler Miller said the kitchen staff has been "tweaking" the stew and chili flavors a little bit as of late, with the goal of "adding more flavor, a little more power."

With the former, "The stew is turkey – it's our house-smoked turkey, brisket, and our pork, all in there with potatoes, carrots, kitchen-cut tomatoes. Very simple, basic, but full of flavor," Miller said.

For the chili, meanwhile, "We use a ground pork and beef blend, and we also use our house-smoked pulled pork in it, as well. Kidney beans and all the other classic chili favorites."

Patrons have taken notice of the enhanced offerings. "So, this is the bowl," Miller said as he showed off the new serving unit. "The bowl we actually just changed to this larger portion, because people were

ordering two cups or two bowls of our last size; so, we had to double the bowl portion to suffice everybody's needs."

And, of course, there is the contest titles.

"It means a lot, especially with the changes we've been making towards trying to improve it," Miller said. "I mean, it's definitely a good result. ... No better results than that, really."

**WNY's Best Soup**

**Villa Coffee House**  
769 Cayuga St., Lewiston  
**Bistro Avera**  
555 Center St., Lewiston  
(opening in 2024)

How good is the soup at the Villa Coffee House? It was named WNY's Best – despite not being on owner/chef Stephen Pusateri's current menu.

Talk about making a lasting impression.

"I'm honored to be considered to have some of the better soups around," Pusateri said.

"Our soups were always made with minimal ingredients and made to bring out as much flavor of those ingredients as possible. Maybe the simplicity of them was what made them desirable?"

"Soup is all about the layering of flavors. Choosing ingredients that complement each other and cooking in a way that help them enhance each other. You don't have to add 15 ingredients to make it taste good; oftentimes, soup just needs thoughtfulness and patience.

"And sometimes taking a simple soup and garnishing will help take it to another level."

Pusateri's patrons can look forward to having his soup again when the chef's second Lewiston restaurant, Bistro Avera, opens this year.

"We will definitely offer soup at times at Avera, but we will take a more seasonal approach to it," he said.

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