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## Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest draws FFA competitors *Winners to be announced March 22*



Starting at the University of Florida next year as a junior, Dakota Horlocker stands next to the start of his charcoal fire to barbecue chicken on Sunday (March 20). He is the vice president of the Chiefland High School Senior FFA Chapter. He will be learning more at UF in the College of Agriculture.

Story and Photos By Jeff M. Hardison  
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**FANNING SPRINGS** -- Members of FFA from the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties found the Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest to be as challenging, fun and exciting as other similar contests.

This year there were no 4H contestants -- they were all FFA members. Among the yearly 4H barbecue events is the Annual Levy County 4-H Pat Hartley Chicken Barbeque Contest. Pat Hartley, a former sheriff of Levy County, created an endowment sponsorship of the Levy

County 4-H Chicken Barbecue Contest. That contest is held as a part of the Levy County 4-H Round-Up, which is usually near the start of the school year.

Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest is named in honor of Loran Brookins, current and longtime president of the Suwannee River Fair Youth Livestock Show & Sale.



Hannah Quincey places dishwashing fluid in a container. Part of the contest is keeping sanitary conditions. Quincey is a past first place winner in the Mr. Loran's Barbecue Contest.

**Burlyenne Mejeris holds a chicken that is seasoned and ready for the fire.**



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**Sam Mills focuses on the next part of his barbecue procedure. Mills placed second last year.**

**J.W. Ripley stands near his cooking area. All of the cooks performed well on Sunday.**

The 2016 Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest was Sunday afternoon (March 20).

Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest this year heralded one Senior Division contestant and four Junior Division competitors.

The judges this year were Katie Trimm and William "Ken" McIntosh. The superintendent for the event this year was Holly Houghton.

In the Senior Division (14-18 years old) it was Dakota Horlocker as the lone contender. In spite of him being the only competitor Superintendent Houghton said the young man must cook to a First Place level for the judges to award him that distinction.

Making barbecue chicken in competition with others in the Junior Division (8-13 years old) this year were Hannah Quincey, Sam Mills, Burlynnne Mejeris and J.W. Ripley.

Judges Trimm and McIntosh checked everything from the start of the fires to the conclusion of chicken barbecuing.

The level of inspections for this barbecue cooking contest is extensive.

It starts with the fire. Was skill demonstrated in starting the fire? Was the method for lighting it safe? Was extra fuel needed? Was the person skilled in controlling the fire? Was there excessive smoke or flame? Was it too hot or too cold, or appropriate for barbecuing chicken? Were excessive heat control measures used to reduce the heat to an appropriate temperature?

Horlocker, 18, is the most accomplished senior division barbecue chicken chef from among the contenders in Fanning Springs on Sunday.

He started his charcoal without using one drop of lighter fluid.

His father Shane Horlocker taught him how to use a charcoal chimney. With this metal cylindrical device, a barbecue cook can start charcoal with just a few small pieces of paper.

Horlocker is vice president of the Chiefland High School FFA Senior Chapter. The 18-year-old senior begins at the University of Florida next year -- starting as a junior, having already earned his Associate of Arts degree by dual enrollment with the College of Central Florida.

The young man not only completed the first two years of college, but he is in the top 10 academically in his graduating CHS Class of 2016.



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As for his mastery of barbecuing, Horlocker said he loves to go to hunting camp with his father and to cook in the outdoors.

All of the competitors in the Mr. Loran's BBQ Contest this year enjoyed a new place to compete. They were under a pole barn type of structure, where in the past they were out on the grass next to the main building. This offered the young cooks less exposure to the sun.

Superintendent Houghton said the winners will be announced at the awards ceremony on Tuesday evening (March 22). Marti Smith, who has long been the go-to person for information about the Suwannee River Youth Livestock Show & Sale, mentioned last week that she is glad to see the award ceremony happening closer to the time when the contests were held.

Other aspects for judges to consider in this barbecue contest on Sunday included: Equipment and Utensils (Practical? Efficient? Complicated? Timely? Appropriately arranged? Cleanup of work area and equipment?); Appearance and Cleanliness of Person and Equipment; Preparing Chicken for Cooking; Skill in Barbecuing; Appearance of Chicken; Degrees of Doneness; Texture; Flavor (Chicken, Sauce); Aftertaste; and Preparation (participant on time, registration form complete, project record sheet complete).

Everyone downwind from the event must have been thinking about chicken barbecues, because all five of these competitors did an excellent job from start to finish. President Brookins was on hand to watch the young cooks compete for the winning titles.