



# 2018 CHILI CRAWL



The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership held its 9th annual Chili Crawl event over three hours on Saturday, February 10th, 2018. Participants paid a \$10 entry fee to taste 15 unique chili recipes prepared by downtown businesses (including restaurant and home-cooked categories), submit their votes for the winner, and receive a commemorative T-shirt.

This year's event was capped at exactly 100 tickets and sold out five days in advance of the event. Pre-sale tickets were new in 2018. All previous events sold out on the day of the event, since tickets were not offered in advance. The majority of participants visited all of the stops, with the average business collecting 92 tickets. Businesses on the edge of the participating area received fewest participants and experienced the least positive traffic or sales impact. The event was successful in attracting new customers into businesses, with 94 percent of participants visiting at least one new business, with an average of 6 new businesses visited during the event (these statistics are representative of both local and out of town visitors). For businesses, this resulted in an average of 42 new faces walking through the door during the event, or nearly half of all participants visiting for the first time. Participants also included locals and outside visitors, with customers traveling from 24 different zip codes including five states and six separate Wisconsin metropolitan areas. An estimated 65 percent of participants live within Fond du Lac County (participants not providing a zip code were allocated based on overall respondent averages).

A follow up survey of business participants found that more than 90 percent of all businesses felt that the event was well-promoted and positive for downtown. Additionally, more than 80 percent of businesses experienced a noticeable increase in foot traffic, in many cases substantial increases, while just over one-third also saw an increase in sales. There was not a direct correlation between the introduction of special promotions and an increase in sales.

Just under half of participating businesses were open additional hours in order to participate in the event - an average of 3 additional hours. Nearly 80 percent of participants reported hiring additional staff (or recruiting volunteers) for the event, typically requiring two additional individuals – this is a change from prior years when few businesses added staff. Additionally, slightly over half of businesses offered some type of special during the event. The cost of participating ranged from \$20 to \$200 per business, including marketing materials and chili-making supplies.

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