FRANKLIN - The aroma of jambalaya simmering in black iron pots and a warm breeze blowing from the Bayou Teche created a steamy South Louisiana setting for a cooking competition here recently.

Held during the annual Festival Sur La Teche hosted by the Franklin Jaycees, the event was part competition and part excuse for family and friends to enjoy themselves while raising money for service projects in the St. Mary community.

Despite rain during the morning of the competition, several participants turned out to test their seasoned skills in cooking the popular Acadian rice dish.

With the only rule being that the recipe include chicken and sausage, the diversity of Cajun cooking came alive. Judges were tempted by jambalaya for those who like it hot, one for those who like it moist, and the winning entry, with perfect seasoning, texture, appearance and overall taste.

"It was prepared by first place winners, brothers Al and Greg Thibodaux. Al works with the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Department and Greg at a local carbon plant. Representing the Centerville Knights of Columbus, this was their first time entering a jambalaya contest."

According to Greg, winning cooking skills are developed by "trial and error." The two agreed that their $50 cash prize would be donated back to the Jaycees to go to charity.

Second place winner, with a moist combination full of homemade pork sausage, was Herb Breaux of Bellevue Plantation in Irish Bend, near Franklin. Breaux says his cooking at the family camp explained how he ended up competing.

"I'm a raised cane farmer and there's no soap on T.V. today, so here I am," he said.

Ronald Louviere and Harvey Hebert entered their own spicy version of jambalaya with ground meat added and walked away with the third place trophy. They agreed that the challenge is what motivates them. They love to cook for crowds and enjoy meeting people while cooking.

Judges agreed that, as with many good things, the less you taste the same, the better, but all had a first place quality about them. Among those deciding the winners were Mrs. Millie Touchet, retired food service manager from Rummel and St. John high schools; and Kenny Guillot of the Franklin Jaycees.

According to Donnie Lafargue Jr., festival public relations chairman, the cooking contest is in its first year, but the festival, formerly called "Bucktown," has been held for over 35 years.

The following recipe is from Greg and Al for their first place jambalaya. They cook from memory, and after sitting down to try to remember what they did, here's what they came up with.

### CAJUN JAMBALAYA

- 8-10 onions, chopped
- 2 pounds sausage, sliced
- 3 pounds boneless chicken filets, cut in bite-size pieces
- 2 bell peppers, chopped
- 1/2 red pepper, Louisiana Hot Sauce and Tony Chachere's seasoning to taste
- 4 cups long grain rice, uncooked
- 1/2 cup cooking oil

Cover bottom of an 8 quart roaster with cooking oil. Heat on high until oil is hot. Add onions and brown, adding water as necessary to prevent sticking or burning. Add chicken and cook about five minutes. Add bell pepper and sausage, cook five more minutes. Add additional water as necessary. Add rice and stir thoroughly. Bring mixture to a boil, cover and lower heat. Allow mixture to simmer, stirring about 1/2 hour or until rice is cooked.

Winners, back row from left, are Herb Breaux, Harvey Hebert and Greg Thibodaux. Front row, from left, are Ronald Louviere and Al Thi. Photos by Alex Ro