New skillet prepared for Abbeville's giant omelette

Don Begneaud of Begneaud Manufacturing, left, talks Tuesday with Emery “Bichon” Toups at Begneaud Manufacturing. Toups visited the company to get a look at the new skillet being made by Begneaud for the Abbeville Omelette Festival.

Jan Risher
jrisher@theadvertiser.com

LAFAYETTE
Where do you put 52 pounds of butter, 50 pounds of chopped onion, 75 chopped green bell peppers, four gallons of green onion tops, two gallons of parsley, two gallons of cooking oil, six gallons of milk, three boxes of crawfish and 5,020 eggs?

Answer: In a really big skillet.

For 19 years, Abbeville has pulled its old skillet out of the cupboard to make the dish that is the centerpiece of the city's annual Giant Omelette Celebration. But this year a new stainless steel skillet with a 12-foot diameter is set to make its debut at the festivities set for Nov. 6 and 7.

Begneaud Manufacturing, a Lafayette-based precision sheet metal shop, expects to be finished work on the one-ton skillet this week.

It's not the first skillet Begneaud Manufacturing has ever made, but it is certainly the biggest. “We've still got to flip it over and put a few more braces in the skillet,” said Mike McWilliams, who has done much of the welding work on the project.

Festival organizers are just hoping the eggs won't stick.

Emery “Bichon” Toups, premier grand maitre of Confrérie de Abbeville, the organization that puts on the Giant Omelette Celebration, says event organizers are trying to decide whether or not to do a smaller scale omelet test run with the new skillet once it is complete.

“I don't know if we're going to have a test run or not, but by omelet time, we'll have it down pat,” said Arlene White, president of Confrérie de Abbeville.

Toups first contacted Begneaud Manufacturing in February about building a new skillet.

Want to know more?
For more information on Abbeville's Giant Omelette Celebration: www.giantomelette.org

The old skillet which has been used for the last 19 festivals was beyond repair, but it will not be forgotten. “We're going to take the old one and paint it and put it downtown somewhere,” Toups said.

Don Begneaud, CEO and owner of Begneaud Manufacturing, took a look at the old skillet and began drawing up plans for a new one on computer: Six sheets of stainless steel were laser cut to fit in dove-tail joints to make the skillet.

The festival organization is paying for the stainless steel; Begneaud Manufacturing is donating its time to build the giant skillet. According to Begneaud, the finished product is estimated to be valued at between $8,000 and $10,000.

"Doing projects like this is part of my commitment to my community. Abbeville is part of that. It's my commitment to give back to the community where I grew up — this is home," Begneaud said.

Abbeville's Giant Omelette Celebration was inspired by Bessieres, France's Easter Omelette Festival, which dates back to the days of Napoleon.

In 1984, Toups and other Abbeville Chamber of Commerce representatives thought the omelet festival idea would be a good tie-in to Abbeville's French heritage. They used 5,000 eggs for the omelet the first year; they've added one additional egg to the recipe in each year since.