
Guest Blogger: Charlie Howard



Since July 2008, Charlie Howard has led strategic product marketing, product management and marketing communications for the iconic Gold Star Chili brand. Howard continues to strengthen customer loyalty through new promotions and build upon existing community sponsorships such as Gold Star Chili's role as the Official Chili of the Cincinnati Bengals.

Prior to joining Gold Star Chili, Howard served for six years as a senior director of marketing and communications for the Cincinnati Museum Center, and for nearly 15 years as a vice president and partner of J. Malsh & Company, a full-service marketing agency headquartered in downtown Cincinnati. Howard has held vice president and director of marketing positions at Diddy & Brand Sales Promotion, Inc., and a corporate marketing manager position for Clipay Corporation.

CHARLIE HOWARD'S POSTS:

[SoapBlog 3 - The chi of chili](#)

POSTED BY: CHARLIE HOWARD, 4/2/2009

Chi...the essential force of life that in Chinese philosophy is thought to be inherent in all things; an all-encompassing universal life force that flows in and around our body and connects and energizes all things; a life force to feed and maintain our physical being.

Did you ever notice that the first three letters of chili are, chi? Here in Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati-style chili is chi, an omnipresent force that sustains us. Without our chili, life as we know it would cease to exist. That's because Cincinnati-style chili is not just a unique food group, it is one of the defining characteristics of living in the Greater Cincinnati area. It's an essential part of our way of life. To prove that point, here's a slice of that life; direct quotes from chili lovers all around town; eastside, westside, northern burbs and south bank...

"Cincinnati-style chili is about the total experience: quick, friendly, neighborhood service; hot, simple, flavorful food; and somewhere to go with friends, the team, late at night, when you're hungry and don't want typical fast food."

"A tasty experience that most of the country will not understand. Totally unique to our city. It is the most Cincinnati thing about Cincinnati! "

"Cincinnati Style Chili; it's a way of life here. We walk in like we own the place. It's what we do (sometimes more than once a week). It's a quick fix. It's consistent. It's satisfying. It's a bright spot in the day. It's a common bond. It's a part of the culture and sometimes a part of a white shirt."

"The perfect bite of Cincinnati chili has spaghetti coated with chili and then a combination of melted and a crown of un-melted cheese. The first taste is "yum" and then you taste the cheese and then you taste the spices. Your stomach gets full before you want the meal to be over."

"Cincinnati's pride. Gets us through Cincinnati winters. Friday office lunch."

"Rich in history. Part of Cincinnati heritage. Tradition. Family. Where relationships are strengthened."

"You can't say that you've been to Cincinnati unless you have tried the chili."

"Our tradition of eating chili when we return from any out of town journey is the perfect way to say welcome home. MMMMMMM! Delicious!"

"Cincinnati's own comfort food."

"Addictive, in a good way."

"People all over the United States have heard about this chili and come from far and wide to try it."

Without it, Cincinnati just wouldn't be the same."

"The quirky essence of Cincinnati."

"Cincinnati Chili: More than food, Cincinnati chili is a way of life that is best when served inside a parlor with steamed up windows and an aroma that has seeped so deeply into the pores of the building."

You don't find people talking that way, expressing that kind of passion and emotion about chicken wings, burgers or tacos. That's because wings, burgers and tacos are everybody's food, anyplace in the country. Cincinnati-style chili is uniquely, Greater Cincinnati's. It's part of our chi and that's why Greater Cincinnati is Chilitown USA.

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[SoapBlog 2 - How to speak chili](#)

POSTED BY: CHARLIE HOWARD, 4/1/2009

Two CC, no Mo, heavy O.

Three-way, inverted and sloppy.

Phony coney.

In this town, Greater Cincinnati, Chilitown USA, we even have our own language. If you're not from around here, let me translate.

Two cc, no Mo, heavy O - Not rap lyrics but rather; two cheese coneys, no mustard, heavy onions. Three-way, inverted and sloppy - Nothing that will get you in trouble with the vice squad; spaghetti, chili and cheese with the cheese on the bottom and extra, extra chili on top. Phony coney - Not a new kind of cell phone plan; bun, chili, cheese, but hold the hot dog.

Here in Cincinnati, when someone says "cracker bomb" there's no need to duck and cover. Any local can tell you that it's a crispy oyster cracker filled with hot sauce and self-administered as a "Cincinnati appetizer" while waiting for one's chili. "Dry" isn't the weather forecast; it's a 3, 4 or 5-way served with more spaghetti, less chili. And when Cincinnati-style chili fans want the best of both worlds, they order a "Spagoney." Instead of a hot dog, load up a warm steamed bun with spaghetti, then add chili, onions and/or beans and then pile on the shredded cheddar. Natives think of it as a 4-way "traveler." Only in Cincinnati!

And along with our own lingo, Chilitown USA has its own etiquette. For example, 3-way plates are oblong, not round. That's so they can be turned to face the diner length-wise, allowing the meal to be slowly, precisely consumed front to back, cutting bite-size portions of chili, cheese and spaghetti with the fork. And never, never twirl your spaghetti onto your fork. Nothing says "outsider," "rookie" or "Clevelander" like twirling your spaghetti. Just a warning so you won't have to deal with the ridicule. Bibs are optional, but most of us prefer to go without. That's why, this being Cincinnati, the chili eater's best friend is the Tide® stick, perfect for after lunch touch-ups before heading back to the office.

So what can you say about a town that has its very own hometown dish, its own special language to converse about it and definite "rules of engagement" for its consumption. I say, "There's no place like home"...Cincinnati Ohio, Chilitown USA.

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[SoapBlog 1 - In Cincinnati, we are what we eat](#)

POSTED BY: CHARLIE HOWARD, 3/31/2009

What's one of the first things you do when you're back in town after an extended time away? If you are like thousands of Greater Cincinnatians, you head straight to a Cincinnati-style chili parlor.

What's one "must-do" when you're entertaining out-of-town visitors? If you're like thousands more

Greater Cincinnatians, you take them out to sample our local chili.

For "natives" Cincinnati-style chili is in our blood, figuratively and literally; we've been eating the stuff all of our lives. It's not just food; it's a fix, an addiction, a craving that has to be regularly satisfied. If you're a "transplant," you're not really considered a true Cincinnati until you finally embrace, and then become a passionate advocate for our unique hometown dish. Our preferred brand of Cincinnati-style chili is one of our most strongly held opinions, nearly impossible to change. A staunch fan of "gold and red" would never be seen ordering at the counter of "yellow and blue" and vice versa. Someone raised in and on "Dixie" wouldn't be caught in either.

But whatever our preferred brand, one thing we all agree upon is that we love our chili. We're passionate about it. It's one of the signature characteristics that define us as a community and the way we feel about our chili is the way we feel about our town. It's about tradition and for countless Cincinnatians eating chili with family and friends is one of their earliest and longest standing traditions. It's about pride; pride in our city and its hometown dish. It's about neighborhoods and whether it's eastside, westside, Northside or across the river, nearly every neighborhood has its own unique chili parlor. More than 200 of them in Greater Cincinnati. More than anyplace else in the country; the world.

There's a new billboard as you cross the I-75 Brent Spence Bridge into downtown Cincinnati. Its message proclaims, WELCOME TO CHILITOWN USA.

Finally, a nickname for our town that tells visitors something about all of us. We are what we eat and here in Greater Cincinnati, we have a passionate, inexplicable and emotional connection to chili, spaghetti, cheese, beans and onions; served on an oblong plate so that it can be eaten front to back, cut not twirled; usually with a cheese coney on the side.

Want to know why Cincinnati is a great place to live? Chilitown USA says it all.