

Waiver must be signed to eat Skookum burger

SKOOKUM continued
from front page

French fries, which is included in the challenge.

In Chinuk Wawa, Skookum, when pronounced with the emphasis on the first syllable, means "strong or tough or impressive," says Tony Johnson (Chinook), Education Coordinator for the Tribe.

"If you emphasize the second syllable," Johnson says, "it means a monster, or any kind of supernatural creature."

"I thought you said it was going to be a plate," said a shaken Chuck Daugherty (Siletz), 18, who had accepted the challenge. He lives in town with his stepfather, Tribal Elder Ron Rife.

Daugherty works as a bus monitor for the Tribal pre-school and had come in off the afternoon school run. The day seemed like any other rainy, Feb. 25 Wednesday.

Then Grand Ronde Station and Convenience Store Manager Christian Tinney emerged from the kitchen with a Skookum burger that completely filled a blue tray and stood maybe 5 inches tall.

Before he could start, Daugherty had to sign a waiver. Anybody attempting this feat is required to sign a waiver holding the restaurant and the Tribe harmless in the event that one eats him or herself sick.

It says, in part, "I, Challenger, acknowledge that there are risks of personal injury, illness and medical expenses, which may result from participating in this challenge. I am participating voluntarily in the Skookum Burger Challenge and assume all of these risks."

Daugherty signed the sheet.

Then the challenge began. Even while presenting the brave face of all who attempt the impossible, Daugherty's hands shook as he contemplated how to pick up the burger.

Before the Skookum burger ar-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Chuck Daugherty, right, and his friend Jeffry Martinez check out the Skookum burger before Daugherty attempts to eat all of it at the Mək Mək Haws restaurant in Grand Ronde Station on Wednesday, Feb. 25.

rived, when it was still just an idea to Daugherty, a challenge being prepared in another room, Daugherty kept thinking, "I can handle it."

"I was thinking about doing it," he said, "and then I saw the great shirt," referring to the "I ATE THE SKOOKUM BURGER!" T-shirt that goes to any individual who can actually eat it in the allotted time. The prize also comes with a refund of the \$20 cost of the burger, plus, Assistant Manager Margie Holmes (Cherokee) added, "Your picture in the paper."

"And (the shirt) was my size (XX-Large)," Daugherty continued, "so I thought it was meant to be."

Goaded into making a prediction at 4 p.m., five minutes before the contest began, Daugherty said he would finish in 45 minutes.

Requesting a knife and receiving

one, Daugherty cut the burger into quarters.

He put the knife down and approached the beast, dangerous even when quartered. He pushed his fingers around and under one-quarter of the monster, picked it up off the tray and said, "This is for my people."

He was accompanied at the table by a friend, Jeffry Martinez, who commented on Daugherty's eating credentials.

"When we go to the coast," Martinez said, "he usually eats a lot more than me."

"He's been to McDonald's and done five double cheeseburgers, so he can do this," Holmes said.

"If I win," said the first-time food contender, "I want you to change the name of the restaurant to 'Chuck' Mək Haws."

The meal began.

In truth, defeat etched its way into the lines on Daugherty's young face even before he began. It was not the burgers or the eggs, cheese or even onions, which he does not like, but the mass of fry bread that was insurmountable. It looked to be double, maybe triple, the weight of the Kremlin.

Officially, he took 10 minutes completing the first quarter; not a bad pace if he had any stomach left for eating what still looked like a city block's worth of food.

"The fry bread is pretty heavy," he said, getting to his exit line. "I will be back to do this."

"Are you kidding?" Holmes said.

"He's going home and eat dinner after this. He's a kid."

Daugherty picked up the knife and cut the second quarter in half.

"You know when I stop talking trash, I'm in trouble," Daugherty said.

The conversation turned to bulimia. Daugherty felt a need to use the bathroom. Tinney said that vomiting or otherwise ejecting the food during the hour would not be allowed.

"Too much fry bread," Daugherty said again.

"Don't blame it on the fry bread," Tinney said.

"I blame it on you," Daugherty said.

"I know I can't finish it," Daugherty admitted 35 minutes in, with a good bit of the second half of the second quarter gone. He rooted in between the pieces of fry bread. "I don't want to make myself sick," he added.

Thirty-six minutes in, Daugherty stood for a cigarette.

"I'll give you five minutes without penalty," Tinney said.

Outside of the convenience store, Daugherty smoked and at the same time jumped around as a way of inducing the Skookum burger already in his stomach to settle.

Forty-one minutes in, Daugherty was back at the table, going after the last of the second quarter, but he was standing up now.

One minute later, well within his initial prediction, Daugherty threw in the towel.

"I can't do it," he said.

"You can take it home," Tinney said.

"I don't even want it," Daugherty said.

Martinez, however, had an eye on the leftovers. He started whaling on the third quarter of the monster, like a tag team wrestler in with a vengeance.

"I feel like I need a lot more training," Daugherty said as his friend ate. "To step up my game."

Will he be back?

"Oh yeah," he said. "With reinforcements, too."

Daugherty said he plans to go one-on-one with a friend, each facing the six-pound monster in a challenge match.

Later, word came out of Mək Mək Haws that they were cutting the size of the fry bread to the circumference of a coffee can.

"It will be piled a little higher, but we're also cutting the price to \$10," Tinney said.

With the score Skookum Burger: 1, Community: 0, the challenge, newly refined, remains. ■

Grand opening



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Grand Ronde Station Assistant Manager Margie Holmes, left, looks on as Michelle Haines of Grand Ronde decides which wind chime she wants as she picks out a door prize during the grand opening of the Mək Mək Haws restaurant in Grand Ronde Station on Friday, March 6. A door prize winner was drawn every 10 minutes.

CULTURAL GATHERINGS

- MARCH 20-21: 7TH ANNUAL AGENCY CREEK ROUND DANCE. Tribal Gymnasium, 9615 Grand Ronde Road. GRAND RONDE, OR. 1-800-422-0232.
- MARCH 21: 16TH ANNUAL INDIAN EDUCATION POWWOW. Siuslaw Middle School, 2525 Oak St. FLORENCE, OR. 541-997-2514, ext. 5403.
- APRIL 18: 3RD ANNUAL DANCING FOR GENERATIONS' INI MIYA'C CHILDREN'S POWWOW. Native American Student & Community Center, Portland State University. PORTLAND, OR. 503-467-1258.

If you or anyone you know has information on cultural events happening, Smoke Signals would be glad to list it in our Cultural Gatherings. Please e-mail news@grandronde.org or write to Smoke Signals, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347.