

Lifestyle

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# Barbecue Pit Stop

Just a year old, Fat Angel eats up awards in barbecue competitions.

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One of Fat Angel's signatures is a jalapeño pepper stuffed with barbecue sauce and cream cheese, wrapped in bacon, and smoked.



Steve Raab, Loren Berkheimer and Scott Readlinger are on fire as Fat Angel grabs numerous awards at recent Barbecue competitions.

Barbecue competitions may be under the radar, but there are 30 to 40 active teams in New Jersey, with names like Lo'-N-Slo' and Up In Smoke (both from Ringoes), Southern Pride Roasters (Middlesex), and Pig Assassins (Ocean County). The 10th Annual New Jersey State Barbecue Championship, held in North Wildwood in July, drew pitmasters from Virginia to Massachusetts, plus plenty of local talent.

One of Jersey's most successful new teams is Fat Angel, formed in 2007 by insurance broker pals Steve Raab, from Chatham, and Scott Readlinger, from Madison. In its first eleven competitions, in five states, Fat Angel has racked up 25 top-ten finishes—including three first-places in brisket, one in pork ribs, and one in chicken. Four of those top tens came in North Wildwood in July, including eighth overall team.

The Martha Washington of Fat Angel is Loren Berkheimer, a freelance web designer from Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Loren and Steve met at Lafayette College eight years ago and later pitched in for Vermont's Lost Nation barbecue team. They wed this summer. Loren, involved from the start, is Fat Angel's culinary director. Steve and Scott are co-pitmasters.

Barbecue competitions are group efforts. Part of the team tends the smoker all night, making sure the temperature remains at a constant 225 degrees. The day shift finishes the cooking, boxes the entries for judging, and serves the hungry hordes. Fat Angel tips its hat to Magic Hat Brewery of Vermont, which provides cases of ale for each meet. The team chose its name from a list of Magic Hat brews.

Winners are determined by blind tastings by a panel of judges following KCBS rules. KCBS stands for Kansas City Barbeque Society, the sanctioning body of competitive 'cue.

Fat Angel has expanded into on-site catering for parties of all sizes, and is looking to open a catering kitchen with storefront in the Brielle area early next year. It will compete in the Bridgeton King Pig BBQ event in Bridgeton, September 19th and 20th, then the Diamond State BBQ Championship in Dover, Delaware, in late October. ([lostonationvt.com/fatangel/team\\_angel.htm](http://lostonationvt.com/fatangel/team_angel.htm)).

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