

AA Chili Cook Off for Lifebox Guide



Welcome to the AA Chili Cook Off for Lifebox!

The AA (Anesthesiologist Assistant) Chili Cook Off for Lifebox is a fun and exciting way to support safe anesthesia practices around the world while building a team and connecting with the community, local businesses, and your fellow anesthesia colleagues!

As anesthesia students, you understand better than anyone that safe anesthesia depends on preparation, teamwork, training, and reliable monitoring. Yet millions of anesthesia providers around the world work without access to the tools considered standard of care in U.S. operating rooms, including pulse oximeters and capnographs.

This guide provides an overview of Lifebox, the AA Chili Cook Off, and how to run your event.

Between now and the 2026 AAAA Conference,
we have set a goal to raise at least \$50,000.

We're here to support you with every step of the way!

Your contact at Lifebox for the Cook Off is Alissa Cecala.

You can reach Alissa at alissa.cecala@lifebox.org with any questions.

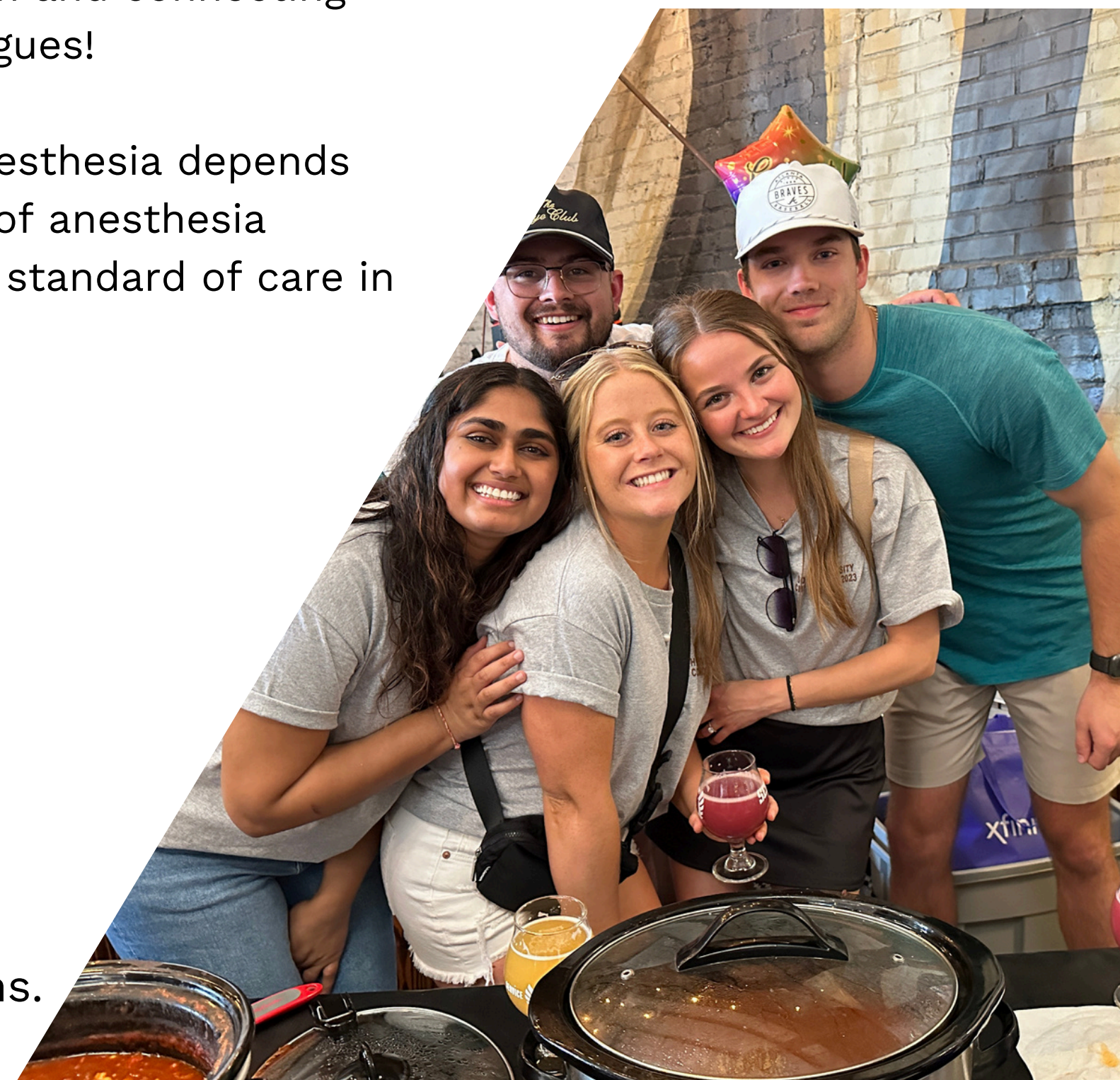


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About Lifebox

Lifebox is a global nonprofit dedicated to making surgery and anesthesia safer worldwide.

Founded by leaders behind the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist — including Dr. Atul Gawande — Lifebox works in partnership with local healthcare organizations and providers to sustainably improve patient safety in low- and middle-income countries.

Since 2011, Lifebox has:

- Worked in 116 countries
- Trained more than 14,000 healthcare providers
- Distributed over 37,000 pulse oximeters
- Supplied hundreds of capnographs worldwide
- Helped make surgery safer for 248 million patients

Lifebox focuses on practical, high-impact solutions that save lives immediately while strengthening health systems long term.



Why This Work Matters

One third of human disease requires surgical treatment. Surgical care can treat conditions, from a lifesaving cesarean section or cancer treatment, to injury and infection.

Yet safe surgical care remains out of reach for much of the world.

Many hospitals lack basic monitoring equipment that anesthesia providers rely on every day to keep patients safe.

Lifebox works to close these gaps by providing essential equipment alongside training.



**5 OUT OF 7
PEOPLE**
LACK TRUE ACCESS
TO SAFE SURGERY

**4 MILLION DIE
ANNUALLY**
FROM COMPLICATIONS
ARISING FROM SURGERY

**HALF OF
THESE DEATHS**
ARE PREVENTABLE

The Smile Train-Lifebox Capnograph

Despite being universally mandated in high-income countries, capnographs are nearly entirely absent from low-resources settings.

The Smile Train-Lifebox Capnograph tackles this major gap in anesthesia safety by making available an affordable, user-friendly, high-quality device with sturdy construction and long battery life. The device meets robust specifications for the monitoring of both pediatric patients and use in low-resource settings.

Lifebox began working to close the capnography gap in 2023, and has supplied over 520 devices across 26 countries to date.



The Lifebox Pulse Oximeter

A pulse oximeter is a minimum standard for safe anesthesia. Yet operating rooms across the world still lack this essential device—putting millions of lives at risk.

Lifebox works to address this gap— distributing oximeters alongside training. Lifebox has delivered over 37,000 pulse oximeters to date.

The Chili Cook Off is one of the important ways we secure resources to help fund the provision of capnographs and pulse oximeters to the thousands of anesthesiologists in low- and middle- income countries, who lack access to these essential tools.

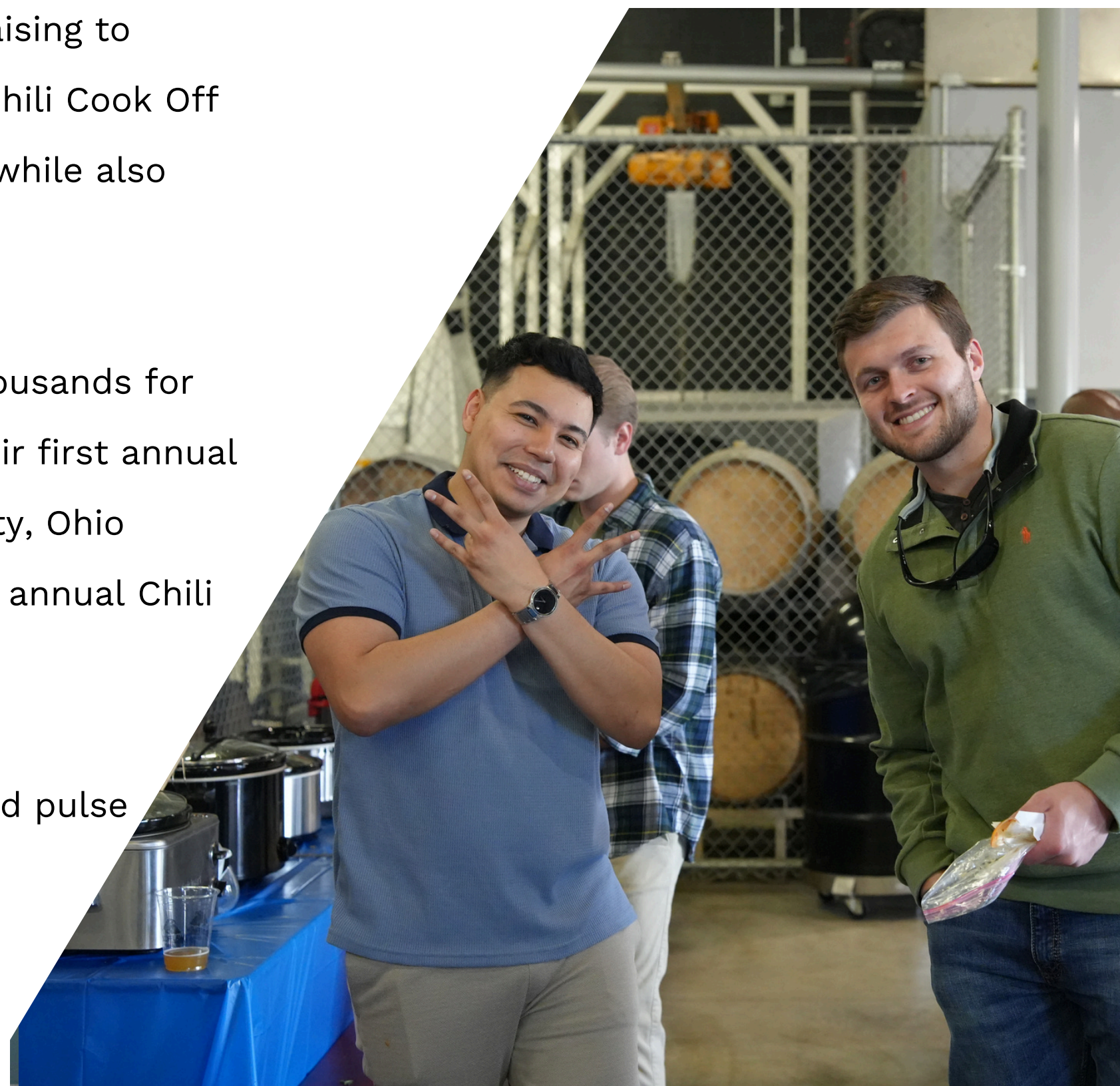


History of the Chili Cook Off

When Lifebox was founded in 2011, South University in Savannah began fundraising to support Lifebox's work. A few years later, South University hosted their first Chili Cook Off for Lifebox. This event has raised critical funds for Lifebox's anesthesia work while also bringing students and faculty together to have some fun.

Since then, South University has hosted a Chili Cook Off every year, raising thousands for safe anesthesia. In 2023, Emory University joined South University, hosting their first annual Chili Cook Off, and in 2024, Indiana University, Case Western Reserve University, Ohio Dominican University, and Northeast Ohio Medical University hosted their first annual Chili Cook Offs.

Chili Cook Off events have helped Lifebox supply hundreds of capnographs and pulse oximeters to hospitals in need globally.



About the AA Chili Cook Off Competition for Lifebox

All anesthesiologist assistant programs are invited to join the Chili Cook Off Competition to bridge critical gaps in global anesthesia safety!

Participating programs hosting events between AAAA conferences will compete to raise the most funds to equip anesthesia providers around the world with Lifebox Pulse Oximeters and Smile Train-Lifebox Capnographs.

The 2025-2026 competition will begin March 30, 2025, following the 2025 AAAA conference. Participants in this year's competition will have until the 2026 AAAA conference to complete their event and fundraising.

The winner will be announced at an online event following the 2026 AAAA conference and will receive a prize from Lifebox.



Why host a Chili Cook Off for Lifebox?

- Raising funds for Lifebox gives students the opportunity to contribute to safe and accessible healthcare around the world!
- It's a fun bonding activity that brings programs together.
- Spreads awareness of the anesthesiologist assistant profession.
- Improves students' teamwork and collaboration skills.
- Positions students for charitable outreach through their careers.
- Participation demonstrates commitment to global health leadership and patient safety advocacy.
- Participants may include participation in CVs, applications, and portfolios.

How to sign your program up and get started

1. Email [Alissa Cecala](#), Lifebox's Individual Giving Manager, and inform her that your program would like to host a Chili Cook Off event for Lifebox.
2. Alissa will create a webpage for your team to collect donations. She will send you the webpage, and your team can request any customizations/edits depending on your plans. The page can be edited at any time.
3. As you plan your event, keep Alissa informed on the event date, location, and fundraising goal. Alissa will use the information to update your team's webpage and market your event to Lifebox supporters.



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

You can run the event in any way that works for your program, but here are some tips from Emory University and South University:

1. Set a date/time

- Consider school breaks, events, and holidays – try to steer clear of all three
- Three hours is the ideal time frame, but allow extra time for clean up

2. Securing a location

- You can host your Chili Cook Off wherever you would like!
- Breweries attract attendees, but this may not be ideal for every program
- Choose a location that can accommodate your attendees and the chili set up. It is great to have a TV or projector to display information about Lifebox. [Here's](#) a presentation you can use.



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

3. How to raise money

- Charge a fee for competing
- Charge an entrance fee
- Host a raffle and/or auction
- Seek sponsorships from local businesses. See the next slide for more information on this.
- Email friends, family, colleagues, and faculty asking for donations. You can use [these templates.](#)
- Share your fundraiser and event on social media! You can use [these templates.](#)
- Share your fundraiser and event in your school newsletter. You can use [this copy.](#)
- Hand out and post up [Lifebox flyers.](#)



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

4. Getting sponsors

- Choose sponsors that have a connection to anesthesia and surgery!
- Connect with local businesses and offer to help promote their business.
- Ask friends/family about possible connections that could help sponsor. You never know who other people may know!
- It's typically most effective to call or go in person to businesses rather than emailing them.
- [This template](#) can be used as a form for potential sponsors.
- [This template](#) can be used to request sponsorships/raffles over the phone.
- [This template](#) can be used to request sponsorships/raffles over email.
- These templates are just suggestions. You can set up sponsorship levels any way you see fit!



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

5. How to run a silent auction

- Gather a list of large ticket items, like a spa treatment package, usually donated from sponsors
- Generate flyers with a brief description of what each item is and it's retail/expected value, along with the minimum stating bid amount
- Items that can not be displayed in person should have a link provided to a web page containing images or videos that better exhibit the item/experience
- Each item should have its own auction sheet with a blank list with spaces provided for bidders to write their name and bid amount
- Once enough time has passed, the highest bidder for each item should be announced and they are provided with the item in exchange for payment in the amount of their bid



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

6. How to organize a raffle

- Gather all small to medium ticket items and arrange them into themed groups of smaller items or smaller groups of larger items
- Sell raffle tickets, which can be found in party stores, for a set amount for each ticket so that people can purchase as many tickets as they would like
- Provide small buckets/baskets for people to add their purchased tickets in front of the items they would like to have a chance to win
- After a set amount of time, a raffle ticket should be randomly drawn from the bucket and the winner announced on a stage
- Winners will receive the items they won when all groups of items are raffled off



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

7. The Chili Cook Off itself

Entrees:

- Try and get family members, friends, or staff to enter for the cook off
- Secure a donor to sponsor a team to make a batch of chili - it's a great way to raise more money
- We recommend aiming for at least seven teams
- Teams should cook a family-sized, full crock-pot amount

Judging:

- Ballot systems work great
- Have everyone that paid to be part of the event get a ballot and choose their favorite chili (and possible other categories such as hottest chili, best name, most creative, etc)
- Small dixie cups work great for tasting chili

Condiments:

- Don't buy too much!
- We recommend cheese, sour cream, and crackers

Awards:

- Certificates for 1st-3rd place contestants
- Could also offer food baskets, gift cards, or other prizes



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

8. Taking payments

- Get in touch with [Alissa Cecala](#) if you'd like to use a Square reader to send payments directly to Lifebox's account
- Once you receive the Square reader, Alissa will send you the Lifebox account log in information. You will need to let her know when you are logging in, so she can send you a verification code.
- If you do not want to use a Square reader, QR codes to your fundraising page are also highly effective for taking payments.

9. Other Ways Donors Can Give

- Supporters can also make donations by check, through donor-advised funds, with retirement assets, stocks, and more.
- Checks can be sent to 495 Henry Street #1001, Brooklyn, NY 11231.
- Lifebox's EIN # is 46-2266526.
- Visit <https://www.lifebox.org/support-us/ways-to-give/> to learn more.



How to organize your Chili Cook Off

10. Marketing

- Social media ([here](#) are some templates)
- Flyers ([here](#) is a template)
- Emails ([here](#) are some templates)
- Put an article on the event in your school or program newsletter ([here](#) is some copy)
- Tell students and teachers to market the event at their clinical sites.
- Share the [link to the Lifebox mailing list](#) for people to sign up for updates



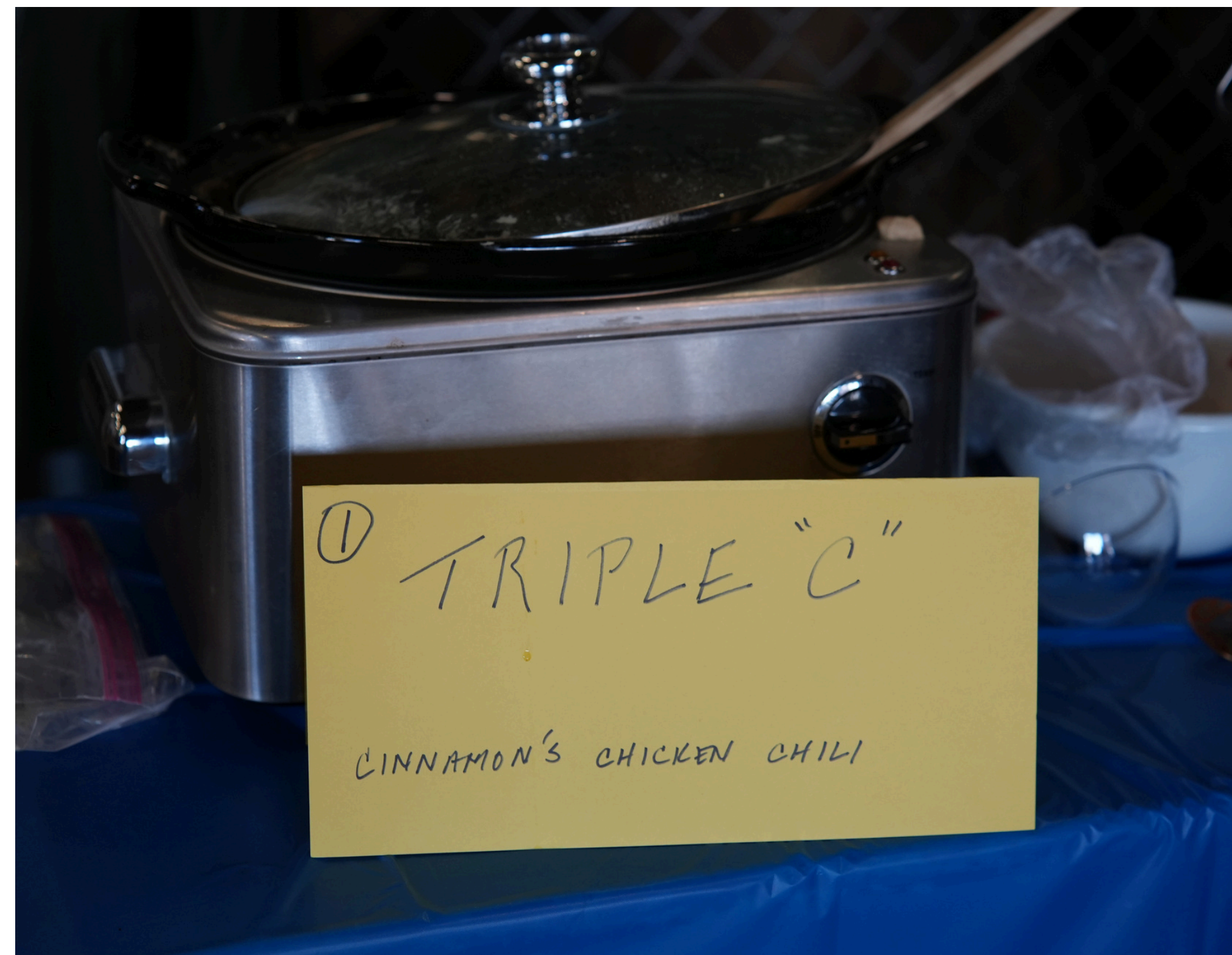
How to organize your Chili Cook Off

11. Day of set up

- Work with the venue to plan set up ahead of time
- Keep the entrance table separate from the chili and raffle to keep everyone spread out

12. Post Event

- Thank all of your donors and supporters for their generosity!
[This template](#) can help you get started!
- Evaluate your event so your program can produce an even better event next year and share any tips with Lifebox!



Other tips and tricks

- Assign roles/committees for the silent auction/raffle, organizing chili teams, creating and reaching out to a sponsor prospect list, social media and email marketing, etc
- Begin reaching out to sponsors and advertising the event as soon as possible
- Create incentives for people to make donations, ex: \$100 donation = 2 free entry tickets
- Offering two free raffle tickets upon entry to the event encourages more participation
- Try meeting and having an “email-a-thon” to contact businesses and donors
- When seeking sponsorships or raffle/silent auction items, calling or going in person is typically more effective
- Try getting a faculty member or sponsor to match gifts up to a certain amount to inspire increased giving.



Lifebox Branding

- Please try to incorporate Lifebox branding in your event and materials if possible-- this really helps Lifebox gain recognition and visibility!
- Lifebox's branding guidelines can be found [here](#), and you can download our logo [here](#).



The Chili Cook Off Cookbook

- Each year, we will develop a little cookbook of winning Chili Cook Off recipes to share with donors!
- We realize not everyone wants to share their recipes, so please check with your competitors if they consent to having their recipe included in the book.
- When you receive the recipes from the winning teams, please share them along with any relevant photos to [Alissa Cecala](#) to add to the book.



Building a Chili Cook Off Tradition

Many programs choose to make Chili Cook Off events an annual tradition — giving each class the opportunity to contribute to safer surgery worldwide.

Creating continuity helps your program:

- Build leadership experience across classes
- Strengthen community and shared purpose
- Grow fundraising success year over year
- Establish a lasting impact on global patient safety

Even small steps today can create a tradition that lasts for years.

Simple Ways to Build Continuity:

- Pass leadership to a new student leader each year
- Save event templates and email drafts
- Share results during orientation
- Celebrate participation publicly within your department

Suggested Timeline:

- Identify new leader at the end of the 2026 Chili Cook Off
- Begin early planning for the next Chili Cook Off at least 6 months ahead of your event



Helpful resources

- [Lifebox Flyer](#)
- [Event Flyer Template](#)
- [Social Media Templates](#)
- [Email Templates](#)
- [Newsletter copy](#)
- [Banner template](#)
- [Slideshow](#)
- [Form for potential sponsors](#)
- [Sponsorship/Raffle Request Call template](#)
- [Sponsorship/Raffle Request Email template](#)
- [Thank you template](#)
- [Lifebox Brand Guidelines](#)

FAQ

Can those that donate auction items receive tax-deduction?

We can provide a letter with our 501(c)(3) information thanking the donor for their donated item(s), but whether or not it will be tax-deductible will be up to the donor, their accountant, and the IRS.

What do I do with checks?

If someone wants to donate by check, that's great, we can handle checks! Please do the following: Send Alissa (alissa.cecala@lifebox.org) a short email with program name, contact person, number of checks, name on the check, and amount then send the check(s) to 495 Henry Street, #1001, Brooklyn, NY 11231

What if people give me cash?

Please convert all cash received to credit card donations, money orders, or checks.

Should kids be charged admission?

This is up to you, but you might want to consider allowing children under 12 free entry.

How can we take payments at the event?

Lifebox can provide a Square card reader for the event. Contact Alissa (alissa.cecala@lifebox.org) with the best address to send one to.

By hosting a Chili Cook Off for Lifebox, you are helping ensure safer anesthesia for patients around the world.

Your leadership today helps shape a safer future for global anesthesia and surgery tomorrow.

Thank you for making anesthesia and surgery safer for patients everywhere.

Contact Information

Lifebox contact:

Alissa Cecala

Individual Giving Manager

alissa.cecala@lifebox.org

For tips from the Chili Cook Off Founder:

Dr. Stacie Wong

alohadoc@comcast.net