

Biker Information Guide

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Biker Billy hosts a syndicated television cooking show

"Biker Billy Cooks with Fire"



Back to Basics

I spent the last three out of four weekends doing shows at motorcycle rallies and events spread across the country from Colorado to New Jersey, not quite coast to coast but pretty darn close to it. I noticed some changing trends among riders and at events. They all seem to be due to one major factor, but I suspect a more subtle reason, too.

If you haven't already guessed that the main factor is the cost of fuel, then where exactly have you been? I really want to know, because either the gas there is cheap or the medication you're on is strong, mind-altering stuff, and I need to stay out of your way on the road. With gas at four dollars and up per gallon, and diesel more than that, the way folks are approaching the motorcycle rally and travel scene is changing.

I am not sure I have seen so few trailers at events since the 1980s; ditto for large pick-up trucks and other tow-capable vehicles. In the 1990s, guys would hide their towing rigs out of town so it would look like they earned the t-shirt that said: "Rode Mine to (fill in the blank)," but that's not the case anymore. Over the years, big towing vehicles and trailers had become another status symbol, just more bling, and folks proudly drive them into the rally town. Now the ching ching of the gas pump seems to have sidelined that trend. More people are riding their bikes to the events and leaving the bling ching rigs at home.

This is also apparent in the clothes I saw folks wearing—more real riding duds and less streetwalking chic. Lots of people really looked like they rode to the rally. It also showed in the things I saw people buying from vendors. I saw more folks carrying newly bought saddlebags this past weekend than in a month's worth of events last year. Seems like they want the ability to pack stuff better on their bike.

I also notice fewer folks who looked like they were weekend profilers, shopping for a new costume wardrobe to look the biker part. I remember watching one guy try on several t-shirts and check himself out in a mirror with his wife watching. You would have thought he was buying a Gucci suit, and if you looked closely at their highly styled hairdos, it seemed there never was a helmet on those heads, not even wind through their hair.

Along the streets I also noticed that the bar-hopping, custom-trailer-riding bikes seemed to be a lower percentage than in recent years. There were more baggers and more of what I would call real riding bikes—the kind that are ridden hard and put away wet. Even some of the clean shiny ones had the telltale signs of having been through the hotel parking lot bike wash. You can never get all the bugs and road film off every surface of a bike with

a hotel parking lot quickie.

You could also see it on the faces of many folks: the raccoon-mask suntans from riding with sunglasses, and the line across the forehead where the helmet or do-rag blocked the sun.

But setting aside all the physical signs that screamed that high gas prices are making folks ride instead of tow to the event, there was a subtle, more telling and optimistic sign that could be seen. It was in people's moods and attitudes. It was in the look in their eyes. They rode their bikes to the rally. It may have been initially motivated by the high cost of fuel, but it delivered an interesting effect.

Instead of being bitched off about gas prices—and make no mistake, Americans are very mad and want our government and the tree huggers to step aside and let us drill, build refineries, and produce energy here at home—folks were enjoying the ride. I believe many folks were reconnecting with the core of what got them hooked on motorcycles in the first place—The Ride! Seems they were tuned in to the rally as a place to ride to and around, enjoying the pure freedom of the wind and the road. They had started to move back to the basics of what our lifestyle is about: riding pure and simple. The party is great, the shopping is fun, and the entertainment is enjoyable, but the riding is the foundation for it all. Eat Hot and Ride Safe and by all means enjoy!

Doubly Warm Roasted Green Chile Salsa

If you love the taste of roasted green chile peppers, this salsa is for you. As the name implies it is warm in both temperature and fire. If you want more fire, add a little cayenne pepper or a few dashes of your favorite hot sauce. After a cold winter ride I enjoy the double warmth this stuff gives me as it thaws me from within

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped roasted Anaheim peppers (8 or 9 medium chiles)
- 2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried cilantro
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup water

Heat the oil in a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add the roasted peppers and onions and sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the onions are golden brown. Add the cilantro, black pepper, salt, and water and reduce the heat to low. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Puree the mixture in a blender or food processor equipped with a chopping blade for 30 seconds to 1 minute until no large pieces of pepper remain. Serve warm.

Makes about 3 cups

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