

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

BBQ with a Cali flair comes to Keizer

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

For the last five years, Orlando Cepeda, along with his wife, Kelly, have run a catering service that specializes in Santa Maria-style BBQ.

Now, Cepeda is bringing his specialty BBQ to Keizer in the form of a new restaurant. El Vaquero Santa Maria BBQ, which is located at 4907 River Road N, will be having their grand opening on Sept. 8.

"We are beyond excited to bring our unique flavor to Keizer," Cepeda said. "We want to show folks what Santa Maria BBQ is all about." Cepeda admitted that the COVID-19 pandemic has been rough on the catering business, but he believes that this new restaurant will be a great addition to his company.

"I ran a restaurant back in California and I swore I would never do it again. But this was too good of an opportunity to pass up," Cepeda said.

The inside of the restaurant will feature artwork from the Santa Maria Valley. While Cepeda plans to have El Vaquero be a sit-down establishment, he also seeks to provide a laid-back experience for his patrons.

"It's not going to be a walk



Orlando and Kelly Cepeda are planning to open El Vaquero on River Road Sept. 8. The restaurant is an extension of the catering business they've owned for years.

KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

up and order kind of a place. We want our food to be extremely fresh and not served in a to-go box," Cepeda said. "But we're going to make it less expensive too. We don't want our meals to be overpriced."

Unlike the majority of BBQ joints, El Vaquero does not use BBQ sauce for their dishes. They instead rely on

the natural flavor that comes with cooking their meat with red oak wood. Santa Maria-style barbecue centers around beef tri-tip, seasoned with black pepper, salt and garlic before grilling over coals of red oak wood.

Cepeda also plans to serve items such as smoked chile verde, chicken, brisket, fish tacos and sweet bread, which is

a cowboy delicacy according to Cepeda.

"There is a lot of different kinds of Latin infusion with Santa Maria BBQ," Cepeda said. The menu will also feature side dishes such as mac

and cheese with pulled pork and tri-tip salad. Cepeda was born in Portland but moved to the Santa Maria Valley when he was a youngster.

He got into being a BBQ pit master at an early age and many of his recipes were passed down from members of his family.

"I have been doing this for 35 years and I have been eating this food for my entire life," Cepeda said.

But for Cepeda, it's not just about the high-quality food. It's about building a relationship with his clients and giving them a fantastic dining experience.

"We obviously want the food to be wonderful, but for us, it's also all about making sure our customers have a wonderful experience," Kelly said.

"We want it to be like having Sunday dinner with the family," Cepeda added.

The restaurant will be open from 11-8 p.m. and will be closed on Mondays. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, El Vaquero will only be allowing 25 people in the restaurant at a time. However they will be providing to-go service and plan to eventually start offering call-in delivery service.

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In the Navy

McNary High School alum Jake Wyer (2017 graduate) headed to the boot camp for the U.S. Navy in early August. Jake and went to Southwestern Oregon Community College (SWOCC) on a swimming scholarship and graduated with his associate's degree last year.

He will be an electronics technician for the next six years.

Jake was seen off to duty by sister Chelsea, brother-in-law Byron, brother Brock and sister-in-law Ivy (Brock is in the Navy as well).

Watercolor submissions wanted for art show

Keizer Art Association is seeking entries for its virtual September show, *Watercolor*.

Intake for the show runs through Aug. 26. The Watercolor show will be available via the associations website, keizerarts.com. The Keizer Cultural Center, home of the art association and its Enid Joy Mount Gallery is still closed to the public due to COVID-19. The show will be on the association's web site from Aug. 27 to Sept. 29.

This show has two categories: two dimensional and youth art (ages 4-14).

Artists can visit keizerarts.com to download an entry form. Entires are limited to four pieces of work per artist. Each entry form must be signed and can be emailed to Bob Curtis at bcurtis97304@gmail.com. There are no entry fees for the Watercolor show.

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By Charles Preston

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