



Shawn Hanlin



John Hui

Photos by Brent Merrill



Richard Burr

## Spirit Mountain Casino's Executive Chef Heads 'Chefs Of The West' Team

■ Richard Burr brings out the big knives in a contest where everybody wins.

By Ron Karten

This is only for folks who like to eat.

OK, now that we've got the audience thinned down to a manageable 4,800 or so Tribal members and other assorted interested parties, imagine that five of the best chefs in the country have gotten together to make the best meal they can just for you.

Come on back. This is not just fantasyland. You've got to stick with me on this one.

And just to be certain that these five great chefs are not dogging it, imagine that they're in the Tribes' casino kitchen because they are practicing to reach the next level in chesery — the Master Chef designation. There should be no doubt that in terms of taste and eye-appealing presentation, we, the folks who like to eat, are in store for maybe the best meal we've ever experienced.

For 124 of the casino slot machines' highest rollers and their guests last month, this exact scenario was set in motion. The chefs — Richard Burr, Chief Executive Chef at Spirit Mountain Casino, Shawn Hanlin, Executive Chef and Director of Dining Services at Holiday Park Plaza in Portland, Mial Parker, Chef Instructor at the Art Institute of California in Los Angeles, Randy Torres, Executive Chef at Bear Creek Golf Club in

Temucle, California and John Hui, Executive Pastry Chef at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas — put together a four course meal in preparation for the Florida Restaurant Association International Service Expo and American Culinary Federation 2003 Culinary Arts Salon in Orlando, Florida, slated for the next week in September.

All are members of the American Culinary Federation at the Certified Executive Chef level, one step down from Master Chef, the top of the line. "There are only about 50 of them in the whole country," said Burr.

"The tables were set up real nice," said invitee Loraine Lawis of Salem. "The service was very accommodating and sweet. And the food was very good. One course was too spicy for me, but a lot of people liked it." She referred to the "Chilled Vegetable Shooter," composed of "grilled summer vegetables with a jalapeno jack crunch and chili onion."

And maybe she was still thinking about how that shooter looked as she went on, "the food was presented very attractively."

Then she started telling about the

dessert, "warm peach cobbler and lavender honey mousse and chocolate walnut cake with vanilla bean sauce and strawberry balsamic syrup," according to the menu, which was clearly in her opinion head and shoulders above the rest of the meal, and possibly above

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**-Richard Burr**

anything that has ever existed.

She invited her sister, who is debilitated with arthritis, and her sister's husband, both from Yachats on the coast, to join her. After dinner and a night at the lodge, said Lawis, they thought they might come back again.

"These events cater to our premium players," said Tribal member Tammy Cook, Executive Host at the casino, and one of the organizers of the event. "This is what makes our casino successful."

Burr has been executive chef at the casino only since June, but already, he has in mind a project of similar appeal come pow-wow time.

"I don't have all the answers, but I'm committed and look at it like a challenge when they say, 'Richard, can you do this?' The latest thing is

to spit-roast a side of buffalo... to me that sounds like it would be awesome, to take something old and bringing it back to the forefront... with some of our cultural pow-wows, it would be a perfect thing to bring into those occasions."

Casino Maintenance Supervisor Lou Younger already has the specs down, and shows on a napkin just how simple such a spit would be to construct, "but I just need approval to do it."

"We're trying to concentrate on some of the most exciting flavors and eye-appealing presentations," said Burr, back again at the Chefs of the West dinner held here last month. "We're trying to create a very memorable meal experience, one that you won't forget."

Over the years, Burr has won nine gold medals for his cooking skills, including one as a member of the 1992 U.S. Culinary Olympic Team. He also is a certified judge for the American Culinary Federation. He has owned his own diner — Maggie's between Roseburg and Eugene — and has held executive chef level jobs across the country.

At the casino, Burr oversees the food end of Legends, the buffet and the kiosks around the casino. "It's amazing the food that flows through here," he said. "I concentrate on quality." ■