

Tribal members win at Rez Kitchen Tour

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal member Ray Nelson, 27, and Carl Hoover (Cahvilla descendant), 47, lead cooks for Spirit Mountain Casino's Cedar Plank Buffet, won the inaugural Rez Kitchen Tour held Nov. 19-20 at Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City.

The tour showcased dishes inspired by Native American cuisine and created by chefs from eight of nine of Oregon's federally-recognized Tribes.

Spirit Mountain Casino entered two teams.

Each team of two had two hours to prepare two dishes of their own design. One dish had to include salmon, a staple among Northwest Indians, and the other was chef's choice, Nelson said.

Nelson prepared a bacon-wrapped salmon roulade. In this dish, the salmon is rolled around cream cheese infused with lemon zest and cucumber zest, and surrounded by strips of wild boar bacon.

Hoover prepared a pumpkin seed and hazelnut-encrusted elk tenderloin. The tenderloin was coated with pumpkin seeds and seared with pear butter sauce and yucca root.

Use of the yucca root was no coincidence, Hoover said, in that he comes from Palm Springs in the Yucca Valley in California where the root is commonly used in cooking.

"Obviously, they were up to the challenge," said Richard Burr, Casino executive chef, speaking not only of Nelson and Hoover, but also of Jake Johnson and Tribal member Manuel Diaz, who took third in the competition. "They did quite well."

"I thought it was great," Hoover



Photo courtesy of Spirit Mountain Casino

This bacon-wrapped salmon roulade, created by Tribal member Ray Nelson and Carl Hoover (Cahvilla descendant), helped the Spirit Mountain Casino Cedar Plank Buffet duo win the inaugural Rez Kitchen Tour held in November at Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City.

said. "I got to meet a lot of people. I got to meet a couple of people from my Tribe in the Palm Springs area. Overall, it went smoothly."

Four hundred people attended the event on Sunday when they tasted each of the chef's offerings and voted for their favorites.

To Nelson, working in another Tribe's kitchen was something like "going into the visiting team's locker room when you're playing sports."

Still, he said, "It was neat to see all the different ideas from all the chefs."

As lead cooks at the buffet, Nelson and Hoover oversee the kitchen, ensuring they are using quality food and that the preparation is top notch, along with maintaining

scheduling and planning requirements.

Among his successes at the buffet, Nelson came up with the idea for the new Mongolian grill entries that are "doing quite well," according to Burr, as well as heading up the buffet's sushi program. Look for it Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

According to Nelson, cooks are always coming up with new recipes.

"On a daily basis," he said, "you have to come up with something new. The competition was based on what we have to do every day. It's all about the passion of the food. You want to make the best you can, have new things all the time. You want to be creative with the dish. It's your art."

"I'm making dishes at home. I sometimes take pictures of the things I do at home and bring them to work and ask the guys, 'What do you think?' When you do it as your career, you do it 24 hours a day."

Nelson graduated from the two-

year Western Culinary Institute in Portland, earning an associate degree in culinary arts and a Cordon Bleu certification. He did his internship at the Eiffel Tower in Las Vegas under chef Jean Joho. He helped open Boa Steakhouse in Caesar's Palace and later, the restaurant Tao in the Venetian Hotel, both also in Las Vegas.

Boa and Tao each earned special recognition in a city of great restaurants. Nelson also has cooked for celebrities and heads of state including former presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

Hoover, who has been cooking professionally for 32 years, has been featured on the Food Network and the Travel Channel, and has been featured in the pages of The Worlds Healthiest Spa Cuisine cookbook, California CEO magazine and Spectacular Spas.

The Legends team of chef de cuisine Jake Johnson and sous chef Manuel Diaz not only won third place at the tour, but also won a feather for the best use of indigenous ingredients. Their dishes included wapato (a form of potato), local nuts and wild huckleberries.

Guest judges included:

- Siletz Tribal member Chef Jack Strong, who works at Salish Lodge in Snoqualmie, Wash.;
- Clifford Shippentower (Umatilla), who owns Wolf Song Fisheries. Wolf Song makes traditional foods including dried and smoked salmon and processes huckleberries;
- And Rob Pounding, chef and owner of Black Fish Café in Lincoln City.

The event was sponsored by Chinook Winds Casino Resorts, Siletz Tribal Business Corp. and Indian Land Tenure Foundation. It was principally funded by a \$45,000 grant from Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

The Rez Kitchen Tour will return next year at a location to be decided by the Tribal Tourism Working Group. ■

Unmarked grave sites

If anyone knows the location of an unmarked grave or knows the name of someone who was buried at the Grand Ronde Cemetery and their grave has not been marked, contact Mike Larsen, Facilities Manager, at 503-879-2407. ■

Festival of Trees



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elders Julie Duncan, left, and Louise Coulson look at a decorated tree that is on display as part of the Festival of Trees at the Elders' Activity Center on Tuesday, Dec. 8. The trees are going to be sold during a silent auction at the center on Saturday, Dec. 19, and the proceeds will go to the Grand Ronde Food Bank.

Tribe to host Community Jobs Forum

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The Grand Ronde Tribe will host a Community Jobs Forum from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, for greater Grand Ronde community members in the Tribal Education Building's Room 126.

On Dec. 3, President Barack Obama hosted a discussion to explore avenues for job creation, and the White House is asking for input from across the country to identify opportunities and obstacles on the ground in the form of Community Jobs Forums.

The local forum will be part of the effort in asking Americans to take stock of what's working and what's not, along with other communities, and work it into an official report for the President at the end of the process in January.

Questions to be asked and discussed are:

1. From what you've seen, or seen reported about the President's Jobs Forum and the administration's approach to job creation overall, what seems relevant to our community?
2. What parts of our local economy are working or thriving? What businesses and sectors are expanding and hiring?
3. What parts of the local economy are not working or thriving? What businesses and sectors have been hit the hardest? What are people struggling with the most?
4. What are the opportunities for growth in our community? What businesses and sectors seem poised to rebound? What do you see as the "jobs of the future"?
5. What are the obstacles to job creation in our community? What could make local businesses more likely to start hiring?
6. What other issues should the president consider?

For more information, contact Tribal Human Resources Department Director Walter Kalinowski at 503-879-2111. ■