

Spirit Mountain Casino chef nets award

Burr honored by American Culinary Federation for advancing his profession

By Jolene Guzman

Polk County Itemizer-Observer

Spirit Mountain Executive Chef Richard Burr didn't know he was starting a career when he accepted a job washing dishes at age 17.

He took the position in a Tumwater, Wash., restaurant 39 years ago as a way to earn credit toward graduating from high school.

Burr, 56, wanted to be a dentist.

He steered his education toward dentistry, but kept working in restaurants. In a fateful step early in his career, Burr accepted a chef's position and never turned back. He's thankful he stuck to a career that he said "snuck up on me."

"I think I'm a lot happier than most dentists I've met," Burr said.

Most dentists don't have as many medals and awards as Burr, either. He has a case in his office containing an international gold medal from the 1992 Culinary Olympics and numerous American Culinary Federation awards and honors.

A career spent mentoring students and employees and judging competitions, from the high school to professional level, has just earned him another award.

The American Culinary Federation Western Region honored Burr, a certified executive chef, and two other chefs with President's Medallions at the Western Regional Conference held Feb. 6-8 in Albuquerque, N.M.

Western Region Vice President William Franklin said medallions recognize chefs who dedicate time, knowledge and skills to judging, teaching and advancing the culinary profession.

A maximum of five President's Medallions can be awarded each year in the Western Region and only 25 are awarded nationally. Not tied to any specific competition, they recognize overall career achievement.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Spirit Mountain Casino Executive Chef Richard Burr talks with Michael Chapple as he cooks mushrooms at the Cedar Plank Buffet in the casino on Tuesday, Feb. 23. Burr was awarded a President's Medallion by the American Culinary Federation Western Region. The medallion recognizes chefs who dedicate time, knowledge and skills to judging, teaching and advancing the culinary profession.

"It's quite a prestigious recognition," Franklin said.

As executive chef at Spirit Mountain Casino, Burr oversees five restaurants, three "quick bite locations," an employee dining room and hundreds of employees. If that isn't enough, he judges and counsels aspiring chefs of all ages, as well as his own employees.

Burr, who spent part of his childhood in Oregon, is happy to be back in the Northwest.

Burr said his position at the casino, which he started at seven years ago, is far from boring. He has created dishes at the request of performers such as Willie Nelson and Natalie Cole, but also can be caught doing what got him started

— washing dishes.

Burr said his favorite activity, though, is cooking.

"I enjoy creating food that makes people smile," he said.

Franklin, who is a certified master chef, has judged alongside Burr in numerous competitions. He said he was glad to see Burr honored for

decades of sharing his talent and judging that of others.

"He is certainly a strong craftsman," Franklin said. "He loves and is passionate about what he does."

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Trust fund training sessions scheduled

Frank Gallo of UBS Investment Consultants will present investment training sessions for Tribal parents and guardians of Tribal Rabbi Trust Funds and Minors' Custodial Trust Fund participants on April 5-6 at the following times and locations:

- 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 5, at the Eugene satellite office, 711 Country Club Road, Suite 1A.
- 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, at the Grand Ronde Education Building, Rooms 126 A-B, 9615 Grand Ronde Road.
- 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, at the Portland satellite office, 4445 S.W. Barbur Blvd.

For more information, contact Tribal Treasury Manager Rick Andersen at 503-879-1454 or rick.andersen@grandronde.org. ■

Casino hosting Breast Cancer Awareness Bingo

Spirit Mountain Casino will host a Breast Cancer Awareness Bingo event at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 24.

There will be half-price bingo packets for all who attend wearing pink with a special prize awarded for most creative pink attire.

There also will be six free games for non-cash prizes and a raffle for a 26-inch flat screen LCD TV. A catered meal will feature sandwiches, assorted vegetables, dessert bars and drinks.

The event is sponsored by the casino and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde with proceeds going to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and Willamette Valley Cancer Foundation.


Packet sales will begin at 4 p.m. with doors opening at 5 p.m.

For more information, contact Tribal Cancer Navigator Jasen Henderson at 503-879-1395. ■




Native Youth Wellness Day

March 19

1 - 6:30 p.m.
@ Spirit Mountain Casino
Middle and High School Students



Contact:
Shannon Simi
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503-879-1489

Thank you for respecting Grand Ronde's Tribal community and our culture by not displaying gang affiliation or by bringing drugs, alcohol or weapons to this event.

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