

WINE DINNERS

THE ACF OF GREATER EL PASO

PRESENTS

THE SECOND ANNUAL EPICUREAN FOOD AND WINE DINNER



Jerry Rubin and Chef Mark Spelman



Summer Granita of Melon and Ginger



ACF Chef's Association of Greater El Paso

By Bobby Lee Lawrence Photography by Russell Bamert

The next time you are struggling with selecting a restaurant for dinner, close your eyes and imagine the perfect dining experience; a multi-course dinner with seven of the area's best chefs, each preparing their signature dish for you.

This dream dinner was recently brought to reality by the El Paso Chapter of the American Culinary Federation and hosted by Chef Jose Luis Garcia at the El Paso Country Club. It was attended by El Paso's who's who, and was a culinary experience like no other. These annual dinners are open to the public and benefit the ACF's scholarship fund. Keep an eye out for the next announcement and plan to attend, as the evening will be unforgettable.

For those of you who are not familiar with the ACF, it is non-profit and its charter is to provide guidance, education and assistance to local chefs on their journey to certification, as well as to individuals who are just entering the culinary profession. Led by President Mark Spelman (CEC) and Vice President Rick Webb, the organization continues to be a force in the culinary community of El Paso and works with local charities for the betterment of the community. We, as restaurant goers, greatly benefit from the organization's activities.

To whet your appetite, let me take you on a tour of this year's dinner:

The evening began with an offering by Chef Rick Webb, Director of the El Paso Community College Culinary Program. He created Quenelle of Pacific Scallop and American Sturgeon Caviar in Saffron



Chef Mark Spelman



Guests Enjoying The ACF Wine Dinner

Essence with a light Carrot Lavosh. The Scallop Mousseline was perfectly flavored so as not to overpower the dish. The bed of Black Thai Rice with Golden Raisins and Roasted Peanuts added a very interesting element to the presentation.

Our host, Chef Jose Luis Garcia, Executive Sous Chef at the El Paso Country Club, prepared the second course. His innovative offering was Cherry Wood Smoked Breast of Mallard Duckling over warm Fennel and Leek Salad with a Mission Fig Port Wine Reduction. This excellent sauce really brought all the flavors together.

The third course was prepared by Chefs Ron Finron and Freddy Garabay, who served Roasted Beet and California Apple Salad with Candied Pecan Vinaigrette over Micro Greens, accompanied by Matyag Blue Cheese. This unusual dish fit very well with the previous entrée of duck.

Natalia Herrera, currently associated with Helen of Troy, and working with Chef Mark Spelman, prepared the fourth course, Seared Torchon of Foie Gras over Savory Bread Pudding with Flame-Grilled Peaches in Balsamic-Apple Consommé. The flavors of the foie gras, savory bread pudding and flame-grilled peaches melded very well. The balsamic apple consommé surrounding the foie gras was magnificent; it was light, flavorful and the perfect complement to the rest of the dish.

Now, it's time to cleanse the palate and prepare for the rest of the exciting meal. Chef David Dean, from the Socorro School District, created a delicious Intermezzo, Summer Granita of Melon and Ginger. The granita combined flavors of honey-



Quenelle of Pacific Scallop



Seared Torchon of Foie Gras



Pan Roasted Filet of Monk Fish in Panchetta



Capriccio Southwest Chopped Salad



A Fine Tasting of Sweet Tantalizing Tidbits

dew melon, lime and ginger, with a touch of Champagne, and was accented by black sesame Florentine, the perfect, refreshing explosion of flavors on the palate.

Just when you think you have consumed the best these chefs have to offer, Chef Jesus Lugo, of La Cuesta Restaurant and Cantina, raised the bar even higher. He created course five, Pan Roasted Filet of Monk Fish in Panchetta over Wilted Baby Spinach and Roasted Tomato Confit, accompanied by Ravioli al Quattro Formaggio with Penna Anisette. The ravioli consisted of four complementary cheeses: mozzarella, fontina, asiago and cream cheese. This dish was definitely a winner.

Next a Southwestern flare. For the sixth course, Sous Chef Suzanne Roy prepared Capriccio and Southwest Chopped Salad with Spicy Cornbread Cracker and Fried Stuffed Olives, a medley of roasted bell peppers chopped into a salad and served with spicy cornbread crackers and fried Chevre-stuffed olives. This was layered over chilled carpaccio. The peppers were cut Brunoise (small dice) making all the ingredients, such as the grilled corn, Granny Smith apple, red onion and carrots, appear the same size. The Balsamic vinegar and olive oil dressing was the perfect touch.

Now for the grand finale: Chef Mark Spelman, President of the El Paso Chapter of ACF presented an absolutely spectacular array that he called Tantalizing Tidbits: A Fine Tasting of Delectable Sweets. From the banana nut fritters, hazelnut bavaois, Guinness Stout Ice Cream to the pistachio almond mousse, each taste brought a new and exciting burst of flavors. What a great way to end an evening of culinary experience like no other!

Let your imagination drift off to a world where all these talented chefs combine their skills to prepare your next meal. This place would be close to culinary heaven, I'm sure.

Don't let next year's event pass you by. If your love of food and wine is as intense as mine, I'll see you there next year to enjoy the most spectacular culinary experience. 🍷

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Mickey and Felipa Solis with Chef Jesus Lugo



Tom Thomas and Dr. Rhodes from EP Community College



Chef Mark Spelman at work with a sous chef



Ice carving by Chef Jose Luis Garcia from El Paso Country Club