

County farmers, local chefs pair for benefit dinners

By Lisa McKinnon

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Food trucks may come and go, but another dining trend is focused on building a more permanent link between sustenance and location.

It's called field-to-fork dining, and several dinners organized around that theme are slated to take place this summer and beyond in Ventura County.

They include a gathering that will benefit the organization House Farm Workers! when it takes place July 16 at the UC

Hansen Agricultural Center in Santa Paula.

Each of the meal's five courses will be prepared by a local chef who has partnered with a local farmer to create a seasonal dish. Wines will be provided by California vintners.

Participating will be John Fonteyn of Rio Gozo Farm, Phil McGrath of McGrath Family Farm, Chris Sayer of Petty Ranch, Steve Sprinkel of Gozo Farm and Jason Tamai of Tamai Farms.

They will team with chefs Todd Aarons of Tierra Sur, Olivia Chase of The Farmer & The Cook, Kate Dunbar of Pe-

tite Rêve Cafe and Tim Kilcoyne of The Local Cafe and SideCar Restaurant.

Farmworkers and their families will join other diners at the event, which will begin at 4 p.m. with master gardener-led tours of the farm site. A brief program and wine tasting will take place at 5, followed by dinner from 6 to 8 p.m.

The deadline to purchase tickets is Wednesday. Tickets, \$125 per person, may be purchased online by visiting <http://bit.ly/iGAHzm>.

Also on the schedule is the first in the "Dinner at the ..."

series of events organized by Totally Local VC as a way to showcase area chefs, ingredients and vintners during meals staged not at farms but at three Ventura landmarks.

The inaugural gathering from 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Ventura City Hall will include dinner by chef Rachel Main of Main Course California, dessert by Dunbar of Petite Rêve Cafe, plus tastes of Ventura Limoncello and wines by Old Creek Ranch Winery.

The series continues at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 11, when chef Jason Collis of Jonathan's at Peirano's

teams with baker Shannon Wright and a local winery for dinner in Serra Cross Park. And at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 6, Main and Dunbar will reconnect with diners during a five-course meal paired to local wines in the McGrath Bros. Great Pacific Pumpkins patch.

Tickets are \$90 per event, with a 10 percent discount for series-ticket purchases.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit FOOD Share and the Serra Cross Conservancy. Call 643-1131 or visit the website at <http://www.totallylocalvc.com/dinner-at-the>.

Host of partners made 'From Field to Fork' a success

On behalf of the event planning committee, I wish to thank everyone who participated in the July 16 "From Field to Fork" fundraiser at Hansen Agricultural Center in Santa Paula.

More than 150 diners gathered on a beautiful summer evening to enjoy a five-course gourmet meal while raising money to support the efforts of House Farm Workers! A project of the Ag Futures Alliance Farm Worker Housing Task Force, House Farm Workers! promotes construction of safe, decent and affordable housing for Ventura County's critical agricultural labor force.

The committee wishes to express particular appreciation for the chefs, farmers and winemakers who provided the food and beverages: chefs Tim Kilcoyne of The Sidecar Restaurant and The Local Cafe in Ventura, Olivia Chase from The Farmer and the Cook in Ojai, Nic Manocchio from Crowne Plaza and C-Street Restaurant in Ventura and Todd Aarons of Tierra Sur in Oxnard.

Also Kate Dunbar of Petit Rêve Cafe in Ventura; farmers Phil McGrath of McGrath Family Farms, Chris Sayer of Petty Ranch, Jason and Aaron Tamai of Tamai Farms, John Fonteyn of Rio Gozo Farms, and Steve Sprinkel of The Farmer and the Cook; and beverage providers Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards, Vino V Wines, Old Creek Ranch Winery, Herzog Wine Cellars and Ventura Limoncello Co.

**GAIL
WELLER BROWN**

GUEST COLUMNIST

“Without them, Ventura County's rich agricultural landscape would not be tended and its crops would not be harvested.”

the hard work and dedication of our young volunteers from the Santa Paula High School Future Farmers of America: Veronica Lemus, Arturo Servin, Lucia Marquez, Kayla Hendren, Lauren Shield and Keyana Orr. They were instrumental to the success of the event, helping with setup, serving meals, busing tables and washing dishes.

Other contributors included the Wine Rack, Ag Innovations Network, Farm Bureau of Ventura County, Ventura County Master Gardeners, Ventura Rental Party Center, Amoretti, The Greek at the Harbor, Kangen Water and Cole Farms.

The committee also wishes to thank David Cruz, an award-winning television and radio journalist, who served as master of ceremonies. David, who currently hosts a bilingual talk show on KOXR-AM, interviewed chefs, farm owners and

Tamai of Tamai Farms, John Fonteyn of Rio Gozo Farms, and Steve Sprinkel of The Farmer and the Cook; and beverage providers Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards, VINO V Wines, Old Creek Ranch Winery, Herzog Wine Cellars and Ventura Limoncello Co.

Our event would not have been possible without our principal sponsors: Houweling's Hot House, Reiter Affiliated Companies, Limoneira and the Ventura County Star. We are very grateful for their support.

We also wish to thank our hosts, the staff of the UC Hansen Fund and Hansen Agricultural Center. Director Jose De Soto and staff members Louise Rangel, Larry Manning and Patricia Verdugo Johnson went out of their way to make sure we had everything we needed for a comfortable and successful dining experience.

We also must recognize

Cole Farms.

The committee also wishes to thank David Cruz, an award-winning television and radio journalist, who served as master of ceremonies. David, who currently hosts a bilingual talk show on KOXR-AM, interviewed chefs, farm owners and farm workers, encouraging them to share their stories in a way that informed, enlightened and entertained the crowd.

And finally, we wish to acknowledge Ventura County's farm workers, many of whom were honored guests at the event. Without them, Ventura County's rich agricultural landscape would not be tended and its crops would not be harvested. Their hard work contributes greatly to the quality of life we all enjoy.

Gail Weller Brown of Oxnard was planning committee chairwoman for the "From Field to Fork" fundraiser.