

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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HOT FUNDRAISER IN FIRST FIREHOUSE

Food, Wine And Laughter For The Fund For Homeless Women

By Wanda Sue Parrott

AS THE WORST FIRE SEASON in California history winds down, fall fundraising season activities heat up.

The 2015 last-quarter charitable-giving season kicks off with a benefit in Monterey's famous old downtown firehouse-turned-restaurant, Montrieo Bistro.

The Fund for Homeless Women will receive 100 percent of money raised on Thurs., Oct. 1, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. on the second floor of the glamorous Montrieo Bistro, 414 Calle Principal, Monterey.

Guests who gather for the gala will be treated to award-winning wines and appetizers by world-famous British-born chef Tony Baker, known for his national TV commercial for the Ove Glove. Local culinary celebrity Baker won the 2007 Gilroy Garlic Festival's "Professional Chef Cookoff" iron chef formal competition and other distinguished achievements since then.

Interested in attending? Here's a taste of what's on the menu.



Combined History And Hunger

While mixing and mingling, enjoying a sweet treat from Monterey Meringues, and participating in a special live auction item to be announced at the event, you will occupy space once used by on-duty firefighters who dined from metal lunchboxes. Their fare probably included coffee in thermos bottles and wax-paper-wrapped sandwiches ala peanut butter and jelly, meatloaf, ham and cheese, or tuna salad.



Today, the second floor where on-call firemen stayed is venue of many elegant private affairs like political parties, wedding receptions or the fundraiser for The Fund for Homeless Women, a field-of-interest fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County. The fund supports programs and services for the estimated 413 homeless women of the Monterey Peninsula, according to the 2015 Point-in-Time Homeless Census.

Homeless women who grub for food by “dumpster diving” find *ceviche* (raw fish basted with lemon) about as exotic an appetizer as they can get, and if they survive without food poisoning, it is probably the main entrée of their day.

What appetizers will Chef Baker serve? Divulging that secret would spoil the fun, but if the menu posted by the old fire-engine entrance on the ground floor is any indication, gourmet-all-the-way will treat even the most-gauche food lover like me. In essence, you needn’t be sophisticated to benefit from this benefit!

Non-Gourmet’s Guide To Culinary Culture

Montrio’s window menu sent me to online dictionaries, where I learned from Wikipedia that a bistro is “in its original Parisian incarnation, a small restaurant, serving moderately priced simple meals in a modest setting. Bistros are defined mostly by the foods they serve. French home-style cooking, and slow-cooked foods like cassoulet, a bean stew, are typical.” Montrio Bistro is glitzy and serves Americanese with a French accent.

I am a mustard-ketchup-mayonnaise-minded diner, so had to research terms such as “charmoula butter,” “mushroom-truffle nage,” and “bone marrow butter,” accents for entrees titled Sweet Corn Ravioli, Prime Chateau Sirloin and Prime Rib Eye Steak, all prepared and served where fire engines once parked, pointed streetward, for rapid exit in emergency.

Now the red brick façade is flanked by a black wrought-iron grapevine fence enclosing a patio area for street dining. The double engine-exit doors are painted deep forest green. At night, the interior glitters and glows like a terrestrial firmament where the language is fluent *Foodese*:

For instance, “Charmoula” is a French term derived from the Arabic “Sermula” that means a North African sauce for fish, usually containing olive oil, garlic, lemon juice and coriander. When mixed with melted butter, it becomes a dip for lobster, other meats or vegetables.

“Nage,” according to Wikipedia “is the term used in the USA for a flavored liquid used for poaching delicate foods, typically seafood. A traditional nage is a broth flavored with white wine, vegetables, and herbs, in which seafood is poached. The liquid is then reduced and thickened with cream and/or butter.”

Bone marrow butter is self-explanatory!

If you feel unsophisticated like me, don’t let that stop you from attending this elegant fundraiser. The appetizers will be good, and good food tastes great by any name, such as cheese-and-crackers or chocolate-dipped-strawberries.

The eloquence of this evening will help offset the awfulness many homeless women might otherwise face when wondering what to eat and where to sleep.

How To Help Homeless Women

The Fund for Homeless Women, “Dedicated to shelter, safety and community,” is made up of contributions from community members concerned for the plight of homeless women, particularly many older, single women in danger every night, for whom few options for safety and secure housing exist.

The Fund raises money distributed to local service providers through a grant process administered by the Community Foundation for Monterey County. The Fund’s goal is to grow the Endowment to \$5 million to fund development of low-income housing for homeless women.

The Friends of Homeless Women was established by the Fund to raise resources for the Fund and to increase awareness of causes for homelessness and challenges confronting local women without shelter. The group meets the last Wednesday each month, 10 a.m., St. Mary’s by the Sea Episcopal Church, 146 17th St., Pacific Grove, to educate themselves about local resources available for homeless women.



Many participants are inspired to raise donations for the Fund for Homeless Women for development of additional services.

For information about Friends of Homeless Women, contact Kathy Whilden at wildini@aol.com .

Contributor's Caveat

Remember childhood stories about firemen sliding down poles to get from the second floor to their trucks on the ground-floor level when a fire alarm sounded? They were true. Today, there is a winding stairway in Montrieo Bistro, but no elevator service between floors one and two. Forget taking a fire pole.

Only 100 tickets are available for the Oct. 1 Friends of Homeless Women fundraiser in the firehouse-cum-bistro. They are \$50 each and are going fast! Pre-order your ticket online at www.eventbrite.com (Fundraiser in Support of the Fund for Homeless Women) or by calling Reverend Michael Reid at 831-915-7799. Do it now! See you there!

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