

Rancho Cielo Celebrates its 15th Annual Culinary Round Up Strolling Dinner

By Adam Joseph, Rancho Cielo

On Sunday, Feb. 23, Rancho Cielo (RC) will celebrate its 15th Annual Culinary Round Up (CRU). More than 20 chefs from some of the area's finest restaurants—including Lucia Restaurant and Bar at Bernardus Lodge & Spa, Roy's at Pebble Beach and The C Restaurant + Bar at InterContinental The Clement Monterey—will work side-by-side with RC's Drummond Culinary Academy (DCA) students to prepare an unforgettable and delectable strolling dinner at the Portola Hotel & Spa.

Additionally, over a dozen wineries, breweries and other purveyors will be serving libations, including Alvarado Street Brewery, Bernardus Winery, Folktale Winery and Doc Pepe's Lab.

According to Bert Curtino, local celebrity chef, co-founder of the famed Sardine Factory, and longtime RC and DCA supporter and student mentor, CRU has evolved substantially over the years into something much more than a successful fundraiser for Rancho Cielo.

"The whole key to the event is bringing our local professional chefs to work with the young students from the Drummond Culinary Academy in executing whatever they're going to be serving," Cutino says. "We always hope that the chefs get attached to the students, so they might hire them when they graduate. Since [CRU] began, that's what we really look forward to."

Cutino is thrilled to celebrate CRU's 15th year; he's watched it blossom and grow at an exponential rate. It's important to note that all the restaurants and chefs representing them at CRU donate their supplies and their time, as do the wineries, breweries and other participants.



"It's amazing to see how many restaurants participate every year," Bert Cutino (pictured, far right) says. "It just gets bigger and bigger. All these amazing chefs want to support (Rancho Cielo) students."

Amidst the collaboration between our brightest DCA students and a gathering of Monterey County's most esteemed chefs, CRU is also a time when Rancho Cielo showcases its harmonious blend of education, vocational training and life skills—leading to a life students can look forward to after graduation and opportunities opened to earning a living wage.

One of last year's student speakers, Salinas native Kaitlyn Davis, overcame numerous barriers throughout her life before finding her passion in the DCA program.

"I think, hands down, this is the best decision I ever made for myself," Davis said. "Rancho Cielo has taught me that anything is possible. The staff taught me to work hard and stay determined. Every day is different, and I love the opportunity to create new things."

Following CRU in 2024, Davis was invited to the Ted J. Balestreri National Restaurant Association Dinner in Pebble Beach and awarded a scholarship to further her culinary training.

Attendees of CRU can count on a stellar raffle, as well as silent and live auctions to be jam-packed with over 30 glimmering items, exciting experiences, and epicurean dreams to participate in, with all the proceeds benefiting Rancho Cielo youth.

Among the incredible auction items are two nights at Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur (including dinner for two at Sierra Mar Restaurant) paired with a two-night stay at Cavallo Point—The Lodge at the Golden Gate in Sausalito (including dinner for two at Sula)—and an exclusive evening of fine dining at Rancho Cielo for 18 guests, where local celebrated guest chefs will work with DCA students

to prepare a unforgettable evening of five-star dining.

On top of the 15-year milestone celebration of CRU, 2025 also marks Rancho Cielo's 25th anniversary—since 2000, the organization has been serving youth in our community. RC will be celebrating throughout the year, culminating in an anniversary bash in October, date to be announced.

Don't miss the 15th Annual Culinary Round Up on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, at the Portola Hotel & Spa in Monterey. Details and tickets are available at ranchocieloyc.org.

Rancho Cielo is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that invests in all young people facing challenges for success through diploma education, vocational training, counseling and life skills development in a safe and affirming environment. 🌱