

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK ANNUAL CHEFS' DINNER



Chef Gema Cruz prepares salad at the 2022 Chefs' Dinner.

COURTESY SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

Chefs collaborate to give kids healthy meals

By Tara Fatemi Walker

SANTA CRUZ » Would you like to savor the creative talents of renowned local chefs, and simultaneously provide nutritious meals to Santa Cruz County children? The annual Chefs' Dinner, Oct. 25 at Holy Cross Hall, raises money for The Food Bank's award-winning Food for Children initiative. A tasting menu features local wine paired with small courses from six chefs who donate their time and talent.

"I am grateful for the partic-

ipating chefs and all the other volunteers who create a delicious and successful evening," says Food Bank CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez. "I also want to thank everyone who purchases a ticket. You will enjoy an amazing evening with exquisite food and wine."

Jeff Terpstra, in charge of front-of-house, volunteers for many reasons. "It's a powerful, fun event. The Food Bank is one of the best 'bang for the buck' charities, the dollars raised really make a difference. What I marvel at is the multiplier, how one donated dollar can bring

in three meals that meet nutritional requirements. That's incredible leverage of the market and of donor money — makes me proud to be a volunteer."

Chef Tabitha Stroup, who operates Friend in Cheeses Jam Co., is participating for the first time and creating two appetizers. One she's considering is small creamer potatoes roasted with Big Sur salt and olive oil, topped with crème fraiche and pickled chive blossoms. "Whatever I do will be seasonal, locally sourced, and creative."

Stroup said the event aligns

with her values. Her second business, Terroir in a Jar, helps farmers decrease food waste and increase revenue by transforming "ugly, unsold produce" into private-labeled preserves, culinary vinegars and shrubs. "I chose to participate because — as is clear from Terroir — I believe that food is love and that accessible food is a human right. The Food Bank reaches an underserved demographic. They provide nutritious, meaningful meals for people that are vulnerable, and they do it with grace and with honor."

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MILK STREET

Eggplant-stuffed pita sandwiches show power of a quick pickle

By Christopher Kimball
Milk Street

One pillar of Milk Street's approach to cooking is contrast — we pair tangy flavors with sweet, and creamy textures with crispy ones. And that's why we often use quick pickles in our cooking; they cover many of those bases at once.

In this recipe from our book "Tuesday Nights Mediterranean," which features weeknight-friendly meals from the region, we tuck quick-pickled sliced onion and tomato into vegetarian pita sandwiches inspired by an Iraqi-Israeli hand food called sabich.

Traditionally, fried eggplant is stuffed into a pita bread along with tomato-cucumber salad, hard-cooked egg, hummus and amba, a pickled mango condiment. For our much-simplified version, we broil slices of za'atar-seasoned eggplant, and briefly soak sliced red onion and tomato in vinegar and salt with a little sugar to substitute the sweet and sour amba.

The briny vegetables balance the savory meatiness of roasted eggplant, and their crispiness

adds textural interest to what otherwise would be a soft filling. A harissa-spiked tahini sauce adds spice and richness.

Other items you may want to tuck into the sandwiches to make them more sabich-like: sliced hard-cooked eggs, hummus, parsley leaves and cucumber pickles.

And don't worry about the amount of oil brushed onto the eggplant. Three tablespoons may seem excessive, but the oil adds both flavor and richness while helping with browning.

Charred eggplant pita sandwiches with spicy tahini

- Start to finish: 30 minutes
Servings: 4
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
 - 3/4 teaspoon white sugar
 - Kosher salt and ground black pepper
 - 1 small ripe tomato, cored and chopped
 - 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
 - 1 1/2 pounds eggplant, cut into twelve 1/2-inch-thick rounds
 - 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive



MILK STREET VIA AP

Charred eggplant pita sandwiches with spicy tahini.

- oil
- 4 teaspoons za'atar
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 to 3 tablespoons harissa paste

Two 8-inch pita rounds, each cut into half-rounds

Heat the broiler with a rack about 6 inches from the element. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil

and mist with cooking spray. In a small bowl, stir together the vinegar, sugar and 1/4 teaspoon salt until the sugar and salt dissolve. Stir in the tomato and onion; set aside while you prepare the eggplant.

Brush both sides of the eggplant slices with the oil, then sprinkle with the za'atar, along with salt and pepper. Lay the slices on the prepared baking sheet and broil until well charred and a skewer inserted through the center meets no resistance, about 12 minutes, flipping the slices halfway through.

Meanwhile, in another small bowl, whisk together the tahini, lemon juice, and 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Whisk in the harissa and 3 tablespoons water; set aside.

When the eggplant is done, set the baking sheet on a wire rack. To fill each sandwich, open a pita half and spread 2 to 3 tablespoons tahini sauce inside. Place 3 eggplant slices in the pita, followed by a quarter of the onion-tomato mixture.

For more recipes, go to Christopher Kimball's Milk Street at [177milkstreet.com/ap](https://www.177milkstreet.com/ap)

Quick Bites

SANTA CRUZ

Chili Cook-Off seeking contestants

Registration is open until Oct. 20 for teams to enter the annual Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Chili Cook-Off, which takes place Oct. 28. Cash prizes will be awarded for Best Chili (amateur and professional), People's Choice, Most Tasted, and Best Theme. Two chili types are eligible: ones with meat, and vegetarian. The entry fee is \$75, and each team receives two Boardwalk All-Day Rides Wristbands, two event T-shirts, and a complimentary parking pass. For information including the official entry form and rules, visit beachboardwalk.com/chili-cook-off/. A portion of proceeds from this year's event will benefit Shared Adventures (sharedadventures.org).

CAPITOLA

Busy Bees expands hours

Busy Bee's Café & Catering (1200 41st Ave. Suite B in the Begonia Plaza with New Leaf, 831-435-6411, [busybeescater.com](https://www.busybeescater.com)) recently expanded its hours. It's now open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday through Sunday (it was previously only open Saturday and Sunday). Busy Bee's menu includes breakfast items like burritos, bowls with eggs and other ingredients atop greens or potatoes, biscuit sandwiches, and freshly baked cinnamon rolls. Lunch items include sandwiches on homemade bread, and avocado toast. Follow the business on Instagram @busybeescater.

SANTA CRUZ

Eat pie for a good cause

Pie for the People (pieforthepeople-santacruz.org) is holding its next fundraiser from 1-3 p.m. Sunday at the Homeless Garden Project farm on Shaffer Road at Delaware Avenue. Proceeds benefit Santa Cruz County Black Health Matters Initiative (learn more about the organization at scsbhmi.org). Attendees are encouraged to bring a savory or sweet vegetarian pie, plus a \$5-or-more donation per person. "If baking isn't your thing, just bring an extra donation," say event organizers. Pie for the People, on Instagram @pieforthepeople, raises money for local nonprofits by hosting seasonal community pie potlucks.

CAPITOLA

New outdoor deck at Left Coast Sausage Worx

Left Coast Sausage Worx (107 San Jose Ave., 831-295-1194, [leftcoastsausageworx.com](https://www.leftcoastsausageworx.com)) now has an outdoor dining deck for customers to enjoy. It used to have a temporary outdoor dining area, but most of it was destroyed in January's severe storms. The venue serves gourmet local sausages, hot dogs (including veggie options), fresh local bread, local spicy mustard, sauerkraut and more. Current hours are noon to 5 p.m. Friday-Monday.

SANTA CRUZ

Elks Lodge Oktoberfest on tap

The Santa Cruz Elks Lodge (150 Jewell St.) is hosting its annual Oktoberfest fundraiser from 3-7 p.m. Sept. 23. Tickets at [eventbrite.com/e/santa-cruz-elks-oktoberfest-tickets-702864274967](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/santa-cruz-elks-oktoberfest-tickets-702864274967) are \$15-25 and include live music and a dinner featuring German food. Attendees can purchase Discretion Brewing beer. The event is free for kids under 10. Proceeds benefit the California-Hawaii Elks

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ON NUTRITION

Tips for kids' school lunches

Before I ever dreamed of having kids of my own, I was a consultant for the



Barbara Intermill

New Mexico Department of Education in Santa Fe. My job? To make sure the schools in our state were meeting federal guidelines

for feeding wholesome meals to kids.

Then I had kids of my own, who often chose to take their lunch to school rather than buy it.

That was when my knowledge of foods that can optimize a child's

health came face to face with getting my kids to eat those foods.

If you're one of those parents, a good starting place is to know what kids actually need nutritionally. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program is required to follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (www.dietaryguidelines.gov). The recommendations change every five years based on current nutrition research.

Based on the 2020-2025 guidelines, five food components are required to meet a child's nutritional goals: fruit, vegetables,

grains, meats and other protein alternatives, fluid milk or other dairy alternative.

That's the nutrition side.

The challenge for schools, as well as parents, is to provide a variety of these foods in such a way that kids won't throw them in the trash.

Let's just say it's a learning process.

Children, like adults, have different tastes and appetites. They may also have special dietary needs.

With that in mind, here are a few ideas that may help:

Consider the form. Most kids like fruit but might toss a fresh orange or ap-

ple unless it's cut into bite-size pieces. I guarantee it's worth the time. Younger kids also like fun finger fruits such as blueberries or strawberries. Or you can rely on the convenience of single-serving cans of water or juice-packed fruit.

Some kids love vegetables, some not so much. The goal here is persistence. If tomatoes make them gag, slice a few strips of red bell pepper along with their favorite dipping dressing. Baby carrots are durable and agreeable with most kiddos. And don't forget that beans are an amazing vegetable as well as protein source (my grandkids

love bean burritos).

Kids balk at "brown bread"? There are other ways to get whole grains into junior. Corn tortillas or popcorn, for example. Or cereal bars and crackers made with whole grains. And there really is such a thing as whole-grain white bread, according to the Whole Grains Council. Just be aware that "made with whole grain" is not the same as "100% whole grain."

Instead of soggy sandwiches, pack tuna or other spreads separately (with an ice pack) along with a bag of crackers. Or make graham cracker sandwiches with peanut or

sunflower butter. Frozen on-the-go yogurt pops can also help keep lunches cool.

Lastly, remember that children learn about food like they learn other subjects — through consistency and repetition. Don't give up. It's worth it in the long run.

Barbara Intermill is a registered dietitian nutritionist and syndicated columnist. She is the author of "Quinn-Essential Nutrition: The Uncomplicated Science of Eating." Email her at barbara@quinessentialnutrition.com.

Chefs

FROM PAGE 1

For HOME Restaurant chef/owner Brad Briske, the Chefs' Dinner will be his third. He's said he's always willing to pitch in and do whatever course is needed. This year, he'll contribute a salad/vegetable dish. "I am excited because it's what we strive to achieve at HOME, with beautiful organic lettuce picked the day before plus local vegetables simply prepared to be pure and exactly what they are."

One reason he participates: "Feeding the community is what feeds the restaurant. What I mean by that: We have done every community event that we've ever been asked to do. The community is what supports and feeds us, feeds our family, through the restaurant ... it allows us to keep doing what we love."

Briske said he believes that food is medicine, and



Salads on display at the 2022 Chefs' Dinner.

PHOTOS COURTESY SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

good-quality food can make people happier and healthier. "It's wonderful that there is an organization like The Food Bank that works hard to feed people in the community that can't be fed."

It will also be Tom McNary's third time at this event. McNary is currently cooking at La Posta while chef Rodrigo Serna is on paternity leave. "When Patrice (Boyle, La Posta's owner) asked, I jumped at the chance," says McNary. "I am happy to donate my time and efforts to a cause that helps bring healthy food to the community as a whole — especially children," he adds.

Chef Nick Sherman (of Trestles and the soon-to-be-opened Cavalletta) is also making a course. When asked why he is volunteering for the second consecutive year, Sherman replies, "Most importantly, it feels good to help raise money for such a worthy cause. Part of it is nostalgia. Santa Cruz is my hometown. Years ago, I assisted a chef with this dinner before I moved to Napa. Now I've moved back and opened my own restaurant, so it's come full circle."

Gabriella Café's chef Gema Cruz is also participating for the second consecutive year. "It's a great honor," says Cruz. "This is a widely recognized event

IF YOU GO

What: 21st Annual Chefs' Dinner from Second Harvest Food Bank

When: Oct. 25, 6-9 p.m. (Champagne reception at 6 p.m., dinner and auction at 7 p.m.)

Where: Holy Cross Hall, 170 High St., Santa Cruz

Details & Tickets: Visit thefoodbank.org (early purchase is recommended; the event always sells out). Proceeds benefit The Food Bank's Food for Children program.

that raises money, which provides lots of food to very deserving people." Although subject to change, Cruz plans to cook her signature mole for the event. Mole is a very popular dish at Gabriella.

Jesikah Stolaroff of Vim Dining and Desserts is creating the dessert. "This is the first year I've been able to volunteer. I've been interested in participating in the past, but starting and building my restaurant as head chef and owner has required me to be onsite to maintain an integrity of the standard of my food."

She said she values the giving-back philosophy behind this fundraiser: "Chefs volunteering time to cook nourishing and delicious food for attendees that then pay it forward to help provide food to others." Stolaroff is excited about contributing. "This is a fantastic organization. I love that the event brings chefs together — we all have a shared goal: feeding people. And it's a celebration and appreciation of food, not only enjoying it, but also helping to fill the gap to support food security. Everyone is deserving of nourishment and the amount of food insecurity in this country is unacceptable, especially for children."

Anthony Kresge has volunteered for many years. He usually creates a course, but this year Kresge is serving as captain of the chefs. He is a liaison between the kitchen and the front-of-house (with the aforementioned Jeff Terpstra at the helm) at the event and helps chefs menu-plan in the weeks leading to the dinner. "I am honored to be the chef captain," says Kresge. "I wanted to open up an opportunity for another talented chef. I can still be part of the dinner's goal and collaborative culture and play an important part."

Terpstra has been involved since the beginning. The first two years he attended with his wife, who was part of the dinner's organizing committee. At the



Chef Nick Sherman prepares food at the 2022 Chefs' Dinner.

time, he worked at the Aptos/La Selva Fire District, which helped with The Food Bank's holiday food drive, so he was familiar with the nonprofit. Terpstra became a server for five years. "Then, the front-of-house person stepped down, and I stepped in," he says. "I've been doing it ever since!"

Terpstra supervises the volunteer servers and set-up crew. "They are a great, diverse group — sometimes including contractors, nurses, doctors, lawyers and bankers." Certain volunteers come early on event day and set up tables — which can get complicated with the number of courses. "It all has to work, look good, and be consistent." He also trains waiters on how to do everything efficiently. "It takes some time, and we get in a cadence."

Padilla-Chavez looks forward to seeing the chefs, volunteers and attendees on Oct. 25. "Your compassion and generosity will help ensure that every child in Santa Cruz County has access to nutritious meals. Together, we are The Food Bank, and we nourish our community."



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