

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



COURTESY TARA FATEMI WALKER

Volunteer Ray Mosier loads food for a Second Harvest Food Bank distribution at LiUNA Local 270.

Food Bank celebrates its volunteers

By Tara Fatemi Walker
Correspondent to the Sentinel

With over 13,000 pounds of fresh produce and dry goods arriving at its Watsonville facility every week, the proverb “Many hands make light work” is pertinent for the Second Harvest Food Bank. All the items need to be sorted and packed before they are given to community members in need.

The Food Bank works to alleviate food insecurity in Santa Cruz County and volunteers play an integral role in accomplishing this goal. “Without volunteers, Second Harvest truly couldn’t function,” says Mary Casey, chief human resources officer. “Volunteers are embedded in every aspect of food banking.”

They sort and pack food into bags and boxes for distribution and help distribute food at sites throughout the county. Some help staff Food Bank events, some help maintain the facility

and others do clerical work. “We are a relatively small organization, with about 50 staff members, serving all of Santa Cruz County,” says Casey. “If you consider all the work that volunteers do, it equates to something like 10-15 additional full-time staff members — which is just amazing.”

“Nourishing the community takes a village,” says CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez. “We are fortunate that Santa Cruz County is filled with people who want to give back.”

As mentioned, positions include volunteering in the warehouse and volunteering out in the community. And 90-year-old Ray Mosier does both. A volunteer for 22 years, Mosier was named a “Hunger Fighter of the Year” at last month’s Food Bank Awards Dinner. Every Wednesday before 8 a.m., he travels from his Santa Cruz home to the Food Bank in Watsonville. He helps load a vehicle with fresh pro-

duce and other food (bread, beans, etc.), then delivers it to LiUNA Local 270 in Santa Cruz, then sorts it for weekly distribution. From 10 a.m. to noon, people visit the center — about 15-30 individuals each week — and select food for themselves and their families. It’s estimated this distribution helps feed up to 50 people each week.

When Mosier was retiring, he happened to visit the union during a Food Bank distribution. He immediately stepped up to volunteer and has done it ever since. “I enjoy the camaraderie,” he says. “Plus, it’s a need that has to be taken care of. People need help.”

He also visits the union every weekend, where he completes preparation tasks (assembling boxes, etc.) to make the Wednesday distributions go more smoothly. “It’s like what they say: If you enjoy what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life. Every Wednesday when

I wake up, I think, I get to go volunteer today!”

Ann Bornstein, 89, started volunteering six years ago. She volunteers about 75 hours each month for the Development Department, using her computer skills and more. Bornstein says that as she approaches her 90th birthday, to be able to do all of this is a real blessing.

Leticia Medina-Kohrs is officially a volunteer with the Walnut Avenue Family & Women’s Center, but her volunteer service intersects with Second Harvest’s contributions. Every week, she helps with a farmers market-style distribution at the center, where individuals enrolled in the Family Support Services program come to pick out fresh produce and non-perishable food.

“I help set up tables with food that the Food Bank delivers,” she says. “I enjoy seeing the families partake in the bounty.” She also assembles several bags of

FOOD BANK » PAGE 2

Quick Bites

SANTA CRUZ

The Picnic Basket reopens after expansion

After five months of extensive renovations, The Picnic Basket (125 Beach St., 831-427-9946, thepicnicbasket.com) has reopened — with greatly expanded offerings (like a frittata panini with housemade sweet chile jam, and a Southwest Bowl with sweet potato, quinoa, pinto beans, and more) and seating options. Other improvements include a very spacious interior. The new Grab & Go marketplace features local beer and wine (including Birichino), non-alcoholic beverages, and prepared food items like Chia Seed Pudding and Tahitian Vanilla Bean Pudding made by The Penny Ice Creamery. Also available are fresh salads, sandwiches and other items prepared in-house daily. The new retail section has an assortment of goodies like mushroom jerky and Fishwife tinned seafood. Hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

APTOS

Café Sparrow will permanently close on Sunday

Café Sparrow (8042 Soquel Drive, 831-688-6238, cafesparrow.com) is closing. The last day open is Sunday. The announcement on social media included, “Due to the inflation of the world it is not a feasible task anymore” and thanked the community for its support. The French restaurant first opened in 1984. In 1989, Bob and Julie Montague bought it, and in 2022, the Montagues’ daughter Bailey and her husband Donnie Suesens (who first worked at Café Sparrow in 2013) took it over. Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, and 5 p.m. to closing nightly.

SANTA CRUZ

Chocolate expands weekend hours

Chocolate (1522 Pacific Ave., 831-427-9900, chocolatesantacruz.com) is now open later on Friday and Saturday nights. “We will seat arriving guests through 10 p.m.,” says owner David Jackman. “That means we will be taking reservations until 9:45 and seating walk-ins until 10.”

SOQUEL

41st Ocean Breakfast & Grill adds dinner service

41st Ocean Breakfast & Grill (2623 41st Ave., 831-316-7021, 41stOceanGrill.com), recently added dinner service. Current hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday-Sunday. The restaurant, located behind Café Cruz, opened last October and formerly only served breakfast and lunch. Dinner options include Chicken Roasted Bell Pepper Sandwich and Mushroom Steak Plate. From 4-9 p.m. Saturdays it offers Taco Night. Breakfast includes omelets and Biscuits & Gravy, and lunch includes burgers.

SANTA CRUZ

New hours at The Crepe Place

Starting May 1, The Crepe Place (1134 Soquel Ave., 831-429-6994, thecrepeplace.com) will have extended hours plus expanded brunch service, which will begin at 10 a.m. Thursday through Monday. New hours will be 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, Monday and Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday

BITES » PAGE 2

MILK STREET

Don’t roll vegetarian ‘meatballs’! Smash them for better flavor

By Christopher Kimball
Milk Street

Keftedes are Greek meatballs, sometimes made with a mixture of chickpeas and sardines. For our vegetarian version, we substitute the sardines with feta cheese, which gives the keftedes a deeply savory note while keeping them meat-free. Based on the chickpea and sardine keftedes from “Smashing Plates” by London chef Maria Elia, this version is just as flavorful. In this recipe from “Tuesday Nights Mediterranean,” which features week-night-friendly meals from the region, we flatten portions of the chickpea mixture into patties directly in the skillet, instead of shaping them into balls. This creates more surface area for browning and speeds the cooking. To begin, we whisk an egg with paprika, cinnamon, cumin, salt and pepper, then add the chickpeas, mash-

ing them with a potato masher until they are broken down but not completely smooth. Feta and herbs are mixed in, and the mixture is shaped into balls and transferred to the refrigerator to chill for 15 minutes, which helps them hold together in the skillet. Once smashed into a nonstick skillet, let the delicate keftedes cook undisturbed until they form a golden brown crust, and flip them only once. These chickpea patties are great with a simple salad, or tuck them into pita with vegetables such as onions, tomatoes, cucumber and radishes. Serve with yogurt-tahini sauce and lemon wedges.

Chickpea and Feta Keftedes

Start to finish: 45 minutes
Servings: 4 ½ cup whole-milk plain yogurt

- ¼ cup tahini
- 6 teaspoons lemon juice, divid-

ed, plus lemon wedges to serve

- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin, divided
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1½ teaspoons sweet paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Two 15½-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (½ cup)
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh mint, flat-leaf parsley or a combination, plus whole or torn leaves to serve
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil, divided in a small bowl

Stir together the yogurt, tahini, 4 teaspoons of lemon juice and 1 teaspoon of cumin.

Transfer 1 cup of the mixture to a large bowl. Into the remaining yogurt mixture, stir the remaining 2 teaspoons lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; set aside for serving. To the large

bowl, add the egg, paprika, cinnamon, the remaining ½ teaspoon cumin, ¾ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper, then whisk to combine. Add the chickpeas and mash with a potato masher until broken down but not completely smooth. Add the feta and herb(s), then mix well. Form into 12 evenly sized balls (each about a scant ¼ cup); place on a plate and refrigerate for about 15 minutes. In a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of oil until shimmering. Add 6 of the balls, spacing them evenly apart (return the remainder to the refrigerator), then flatten each with a metal spatula into a 2- to 2½-inch patty. Cook until golden brown on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side, gently flipping them once. Transfer to a platter and tent with foil. Wipe out the skillet and repeat with the remaining oil and patties. Top the keftedes with whole or torn herb(s) and serve with the yogurt-tahini sauce and lemon wedges.



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ON NUTRITION

Questions about blood type diet and peanuts

A college student in Illinois writes, "I've always been interested in nutrition and one of the things I see popping up all the time is something called the 'Blood Type Diet.' I know that losing weight has nothing to do with your blood type and you can lose weight with any diet. But there's another part of this diet regarding lectins that I've always wondered about. "The author (of this book) claims if we eat foods that are wrong for



Barbara Intermill

our blood type, these lectins cause clumping of red blood cells. This supposedly leads to disease and illness later in life. Numerous foods are claimed to be healthy for people with certain blood types and bad for other blood types. "Some of my favorite foods are supposedly bad for me because I am blood type A. I love tomatoes, cashews, avocados, mangoes, coconut and yogurt. But according to the blood type diet, they are all bad for me, and can cause agglutination which leads to possible disease and illness. "Maybe you can debunk this or point me in the

right direction to somebody who can explain this." — Grant L. I appreciate your confusion, Grant. This diet was popularized back in 1996 with a book called "Eat Right 4 Your Type" by neuropathic physician Peter D'Adamo. Dr. D'Adamo states that if you eat lectins that are not compatible with your blood type, you can experience serious health effects. Trouble is, there have been no valid studies to prove this hypothesis. One study in 2013 searched all the available evidence and found no particular benefit of this type of diet. Another study in 2014 re-

ported that any health effects seen with these diets was not related to blood type. In other words, eating healthier food is good for us no matter what our blood type. Lectins are real, however. And some can be toxic such as those found in raw legumes such as beans, lentils, peas, soybeans and peanuts. But who wants to eat raw beans anyway? Boiling them in water deactivates these proteins. Here's another twist. Some lectins are actually being studied for their ability to kill off dangerous viruses and fight disease. My advice to you:

Unless you have another reason to avoid the healthful foods you love, I wouldn't base my choices on blood type. John M. in Lynchburg, Virginia asks, "A recent column mentioned the benefits of many foods including nuts. My question concerns peanuts. I understand peanuts are not from a tree, but grow underground. We normally have them in our house. Do these provide any of the benefits of tree nuts? Or were they called peanuts to eliminate the rather backwoods sound of Goober Peas?" You're right, John. Despite their name, pe-

nuts are legumes, not nuts. They are higher in protein than tree nuts and do provide similar health benefits. And according to the Peanut Institute, 98-100% of lectins are destroyed by boiling or roasting. I'll save goober peas for another column.

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.

Bites

FROM PAGE 1

and Saturday.

CORRALITOS

Alfaro Family Vineyards hosts dinner with HOME

Alfaro Family Vineyards (420 Hames Road, 831-728-5172, alfarowine.com) is hosting a Winemaker's Dinner with HOME Restaurant on May 26. The \$150 cost is all-inclusive. The menu will feature wine and food pairings with creations by chef Brad Briske. Get tickets at alfarowine.com/shop-within-ca/ols/products/winemaker-dinner-may-26th.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Tickets on sale for wine pairing series

Wines of the Santa Cruz

Mountains has announced details for this year's Taste of Terroir series, with six events scheduled from May through November at various wineries. Tickets range from \$85-\$195 depending on the event, and Wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains club members receive a discount. Dinner events begin with a wine reception highlighting a subregion of the Santa Cruz AVA or a particular grape variety, where attendees have the opportunity to speak with winemakers, followed by a multi-course farm-to-table dinner with wine pairings. Two tasting salon events feature small bites or lunch instead of dinner. The first program, May 11 at Wrights Station Winery, features vintages from seven local wineries plus Italian cuisine from chef Nick Sherman of Trestles and Cavalletta. Visit winesofthesantacruzmountains.com/2024-tot-dinner-series for details and tickets to all events.

SCOTT'S VALLEY

Popups at Steel Bonnet Brewing Co.

A few food trucks are appearing at Steel Bonnet Brewing Co. (20 Victor Square, 831-454-8429, steelbon.net) in the near future. Scrumptious Fish & Chips pops up from 4-8 p.m. Friday and at the same time May 10, The Griddler appears from 4-8 p.m. Saturday and again 3-8 p.m. May 5, and Food from Parker Presents... Oysters! is there from 5:30-7:30 p.m. May 1. Other food vendors include Cali Caracas (Venezuelan) from 4-8 p.m. May 3 and May 11.

SANTA CRUZ

Charlie Hong Kong reduces plastic use

Charlie Hong Kong (1141 Soquel Ave., 831-426-5664, charliehongkong.com) has discontinued using small plastic containers for to-go hoisin and chili garlic sauce. This went into effect on

Monday, which was Earth Day, "to honor our commitment to the health of our customers and the health of our planet," says restaurant owner Carolyn Rudolph. The pump containers of sauce will remain for customers to add to their food. "We are beginning with baby steps, as we take on the ubiquitous use of plastic to-go containers," adds Rudolph. "We are grateful for our community's patience. To provide nourishment for our community is a privilege. Charlie Hong Kong thanks our customers for their continued support over the last 25 years."

SOQUEL

Tickets on sale for Bargetto Winery event

Bargetto Winery (3535 N. Main St., bargetto.com) is hosting Pinot & Paella from 4-6 p.m. May 19. Guests will enjoy paella and award-winning Pinot Noirs. Cost is \$77 per person, with a discount for

Wine Club members. Reservations are required. To book or ask questions, contact 831-475-2258, x10 or nfalcon@bargetto.com.

APTOS

Temporary change in service at Marianne's

From April 22-May 5, Marianne's Ice Cream (218 State Park Drive, marianneicecream.com) has closed the interior of its shop due to construction on the building. During this time, customers can order ice cream from a Cookies N Cream SJ food truck in the parking lot. There will be 12 Marianne's flavors available plus quarts and novelty items. Hours are noon to 11 p.m. daily.

SCOTT'S VALLEY

Food trucks at Skypark Friday

The 2024 monthly Scotts Valley Food Truck

Friday series is launching from 5-8 p.m. Friday at Skypark (361 Kings Village Road). Participating food trucks will be Taquizas Gabriel, Kuki's Bowls, Epoch Eats, Mattia Pizza, Pesce Veggie, S.C. Eatery, Cracked Cookies, and Aunt LaLi's (soon to be Uncle Josh's Rollin Snack Shack). The Scotts Valley Educational Foundation is hosting a beer/wine garden to raise money for Scotts Valley's public schools. Local band Identity Problem and Brenda's Face Painting will appear. Leashed dogs are welcome. For seating, there are picnic tables or attendees can bring lawn chairs and/or blankets. Visit facebook.com/events/725616609769264.

Quick Bites, compiled by Tara Patemi Walker, is your weekly helping of Santa Cruz County restaurant, food, and drink news. Send items to sentinelfood@gmail.com (Sunday 7 p.m. deadline for that week's column).

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Food Bank

FROM PAGE 1

non-perishable items (like peanut butter, beans, etc., all donated by Second Harvest) and sets them aside for Family Support Services participants who can't make it on the distribution's day and time. Finally, she uses Second Harvest donations to fill about 10 bags for families enrolled in another program: Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center's offsite Early Education Center. An Early Education Center liaison comes to the center weekly and picks up the bags to deliver to the families (which include infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or pre-K-aged kids). Medina-Kohrs loves it when she can, on occasion, save

special kid-friendly treats for these.

Medina-Kohrs retired from UC Santa Cruz and started volunteering a little over a year ago. She likes giving back to the community and highly values the services and resources that Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center and the Food Bank provide.

All of Second Harvest's volunteers, and their families, are thanked with an annual party hosted by the Food Bank. Last year's included pony rides, bounce houses and a DJ. This year's is on April 28.

"We're shining a light on our wonderful volunteers in honor of National Volunteer Month, but it's important to acknowledge the vital work they do all year long," says Food Bank CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez. "We are so grateful for these hard-working individuals who help us feed our most vulnerable community members."

Current challenges

Officials say the lines at Food Bank distributions have been getting longer.

"Many of us expected that as we came out of the pandemic, we'd see the de-

mand for food assistance go back down," says Casey. This hasn't happened. "The impact of rising food costs, the rising cost of gas, etc., on top of the already incredibly challenging cost of living in this area (means) people continue to have to make difficult choices between paying for child care, for rent, for medical bills, for insurance — and healthy food."

As a result, the Food Bank is seeing higher numbers of participants, and the nonprofit hopes to have higher numbers of volunteers especially in the summer months.

Although the Food Bank utilizes volunteers all year long, the summer is an especially challenging time. "With students out of school and many families taking vacations, we typically see a decline in volunteerism," says Casey. But the need is actually greater in the summer than at other times of the year. "This is when we tend to see an upswing in produce coming into our warehouses that needs to be processed and packed, as well as an upswing in need." The need is due to factors like school lunches not being available and peo-

ple being laid off from seasonal jobs.

One of the most crucial needs is for volunteers to work at the Food Bank on weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Each day, 15-20 volunteers help pack the food to be distributed that afternoon or the following day. "It's a great energy: we have music playing, we cook food in-house for snack — it's a lot of fun," says Casey. Some people come every week; others drop in when they can. There is no minimum commitment. "Everyone is welcome; you can sign up for one shift, or 15!"

There are many ways to be of service, including evening or weekend shifts. "We also have opportunities for a wide range of ages: youths 13 and older can volunteer as long as we have a parental waiver on file and children ages 10-12 can volunteer alongside a parent," says Casey. "We try hard to ensure the Food Bank is accessible to all; it's the community's food bank."

Go to thefoodbank.org/volunteer-now to learn more about volunteering. Learn more about volunteers by visiting the Food Bank's Instagram @secondharvestsantacruz.

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