

32nd Annual Scottsdale Culinary Festival

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The 32nd Annual Scottsdale Culinary Festival will bring the finest in epicurean delights to the Valley this month. What many may not realize is that this long-standing Scottsdale tradition also raises thousands of dollars for local arts organizations.



As the nation's longest-running culinary celebration, the Scottsdale Culinary Festival has attracted foodies and celebrity chefs for years. But between all of the star-studded dinners and Champagne brunches also lies a Valley institution that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local arts and arts education programs. In 2009, the festival presented the nonprofit Scottsdale League for the Arts with more than \$354,000, money which was then used to help fund cultural organizations around the Valley.

The Scottsdale League for the Arts is a volunteer organization made up of individuals who invest their time and effort to raise funds for local art. Since 1992, the League has contributed more than \$3.1 million to local organizations like the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Phoenix Boys Choir and Phoenix Symphony. Recipients for the 2009/10 season—a donation of approximately \$225,000 in total—include Childsplay, Free Arts of Arizona, West Valley Arts Council and Desert Foothills Theatre, who lists the Scottsdale League for the Arts as one of its top program sponsors.

When selecting recipients, the Scottsdale League for the Arts takes into consideration a list of specific criteria. Fundable organizations need to be a certified not-for-profit company that directly provides services in the arts or provides art education. The Scottsdale Culinary Festival serves as the League's main source of funding.

This year's event will be a "fresher festival" thanks to a new partnership with Singh Farms, a 20-acre family-run farm in Scottsdale known for its sustainable practices and whose produce is the highlight of several area menus like Petite Maison and Ahnala at the Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino. In October 2009, Singh Farms and the Scottsdale Culinary Festival planted a vegetable garden on the grounds of the Scottsdale Center for the Arts. Managed by Ken and Lee Singh, the garden will provide fresh herbs and produce to be used at the 2010 culinary event.

In addition to providing organic crops for the Scottsdale Culinary Festival, produce harvested from the garden also will be donated to the Vista del Camino community center. The City of Scottsdale-run community center provides a variety of services to Valley residents to prevent homelessness, meet the basic needs of individuals and families in crisis, relieve economic and emotional stress, and assist individuals to maintain self-sufficiency.

Epicurean stars and personalities on the roster for this year's event (which takes place April 13-18) include Chef Carla Hall from season five of Bravo's "Top Chef," Executive Chef Akira Back from Yellowtail Japanese Restaurant & Lounge at Bellagio Resort and Casino, Alex Stratta from Alex at the Wynn Las Vegas, Celestino Drago from Santa Monica, as well as local chefs Payton Curry of Caffè Boa in Mesa, Mel Mecinas of the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North and more. You can catch these culinary masters and others at different events throughout the week including the Bubbles & Bliss überchic tasting event, the Wine & Chocolate Experience at Camelback Inn, and the Eat, Drink & Be Pretty Party at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts. Other staple festival events like Cooks & Corks and the Great Arizona Picnic round out the lineup for the 2010 event.

For more information visit www.scottsdaleculinaryfestival.org.