

DINING

Chefs help fight hunger

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

Looking for the area's best restaurants?

You'll find them all in one place from 7-10 p.m. on Sunday, April 29, at the Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation strolling dinner in Somerset Collection South, Troy.

It's one of 100 Share Our Strength events held every spring.

Area chefs and restaurateurs fight hunger with taste annually by participating in the Share Our Strength (SOS) event. Sponsored nationally by American Express and locally hosted by Mercedes-Benz and other area businesses, it is the nation's largest culinary benefit in which restaurants share their strength in the fight against hunger and poverty.

The dinners raise much needed money for each area's local anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts. One hundred percent of the \$75 per ticket sales and all proceeds of the event go directly to fight hunger.

Revealing statistics

Hunger affects nearly 35 million Americans. Local statistics

What: Share our Strength's Taste of the Nation strolling dinner

When: 7-10 p.m. Sunday, April 29

Where: Somerset Collection South, Troy (Big Beaver and Coolidge roads)

Why: Area chefs and restaurateurs fight hunger with taste in this annual event. It is the nation's largest culinary benefit in which restaurants share their strength in the fight against hunger and poverty. One hundred percent of the \$75-per-ticket sales and all proceeds of the event go directly to fight hunger.

Tickets: Call the Food Bank of Oakland County at (248) 332-1473 or Gleaners Community Food Bank at (313) 932-3535.

are staggering. About 32 percent of Detroit residents live below the poverty level and nearly 30 percent of Michigan's children, under 12 years of age, go hungry or are at-risk.

Funds raised through Taste of the Nation allow everyone to make a difference for people working to attain economic independence and self-sufficiency.

Last year's metro-Detroit event raised more than \$200,000 and facilitated the founding of The Variety Produce Rescue Program (VPRP), which regularly supplies fresh produce and vegetables to area food banks and anti-hunger organizations. During its first year of operation, VPRP, the first of its kind in Michigan, rescued more than 1 million pounds of produce that

would have otherwise gone to waste.

Money raised from this year's SOS event will benefit four local charities: Gleaners Community Food Bank, Food Bank of Oakland County, Forgotten Harvest and Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute. Food Gatherers and Hunger Action Coalition will benefit on a state level.

What is SOS?

Share Our Strength is one of the nation's leading anti-hunger, anti-poverty organizations that began in the basement of a row house on Capitol Hill in 1984. Today, it mobilizes thousands of culinary professionals to organize events such as Taste of the Nation, among its other creative partnerships with a range of

industries.

As a result, SOS has raised more than \$90 million since its founding through the simple philosophy: It takes more than food to fight hunger. The "more" can be defined as a belief that it takes each one of us, sharing our strength to make a difference.

Tempting tastes

This year, Unique Restaurant Corporation's corporate chef Jim Barnett is culinary chair for Detroit's Taste of the Nation. Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon and Glen Thompson of Merchant of Vino in Farmington Hills serve as co-wine chairs. They will bring together more than 50 of the area's top chefs and wine purveyors for the event.

Chef/proprietor Steve Allen of Steve & Rocky's in Novi said he will be serving a warm, slightly smoked and poached Atlantic Salmon with a side of Vidalia onion and asparagus salad. This dish is a spin-off of a popular Steve & Rocky's lunch item.

Need a wine to pair with Chef Steve's salmon? Locate the Artisan Producers from Napa wine table hosted by McLean Wine Company or check out how this dish matches with a wine from



For charity: Sous chef Jeff Evans (left) and owner/chef Steve Allen of Steve & Rocky's restaurant in Novi, show a seafood dish they'll make for the Share Our Strength fund-raiser on April 29.

Australia, or for that matter, just about anywhere in the world. Wine purveyors will be anxious to offer you a pour.

Chef/proprietor Luciano Del Signore of Livenia's Fonte d'Amore is a perennial participant in children's charities and those that fight hunger.

He will prepare Strozzapretti alla Norcini. Strozzapretti is a handmade two-inch coiled pasta. Norcini is a sauce made with homemade Italian sausage,

white wine, tomatoes and black truffles, with a touch of cream to complement the truffles.

"I like this preparation," Chef Luciano said, "because it has a great balance of flavors and texture. It's a feel-good dish."

You can try your hand at matching a wine with this dish from a "Flavors of Italy" wine table hosted by AHD Vintners, based in Troy, the distributor for the famed Italian wines imported by Winebow.

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