

Arts, Beats and Eats

Restaurants add flavor to festival

BY CHRISTINA FUCIO
STAFF WRITER

For most of his tenure as owner of Southfield's Beans and Cornbread, Patrick Coleman wasn't a big fan of restaurant festivals. Participating in those events, he said, seemed like a step down.

But the annual Chrysler Arts, Beats and Eats changed his mind.

"We think of our restaurant as a sort of boutique restaurant. I've always thought that that was unbuttoned-like to be involved in one of these food fests," Coleman said.

"I just like how well Arts, Beats and Eats is run. Plus, our clientele is attending this festival so I just feel that it's important to be there."

The local patrons at his soul food eatery have attracted the likes of Mike Tyson, Keith Richards, Queen Latifah and various sports stars.

Beans and Cornbread is one of about 50 restaurants that will serve up samples of its food at this year's Arts, Beats and Eats, which takes place Friday through Monday in

downtown Pontiac.

ABE producer Jon Witz explained that variety is the key to choosing the restaurants that participate in the festival, now in its fourth year.

"Our overall goal is to have a unique presence with a lot of different restaurants. We target restaurants that can bring different cuisines to the table."

Who's cooking?

Each year, Witz said, the Chrysler Arts, Beats and Eats organizers mail applications to potential participants. Once the applications are returned, they sift through the pile and choose between 45 and 50. Special consideration is given to cultural and ethnic diversity, he added.

"We approach probably 200 restaurants and 25 percent will accept our invitation," he said. "In the process, an additional 20 or 30 restaurants will call us. Out of the ones that call us, we select some of them as well."

This year's list includes BD's Mongolian Barbeque of Royal Oak, Ann Arbor, Novi and Rochester; Benihana; Hunter

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House Hamburgers in Birmingham and Detroit; Korby's Koney Island; Mesquite Creek Steakhouse of Clarkston; Picano's of Troy; Shula's Steak House of Troy; Rainforest Cafe in Auburn Hills; and others.

Witz described his event as "unique" because, unlike other food festivals, Chrysler Arts, Beats and Eats features "100 percent restaurants and caterers as opposed to food vendors that have their own trailers and tour fairs and so forth."

Although festival admission and the concerts are free, there is a small price for the food. According to Witz, items will cost between \$1 and \$4.50.

Beans and Cornbread is going to feature its Baby Sister's Backyard-Style Rib Tips.

"Baby Sister" is actually a term of endearment for the youngest sister in an African-

American family. When I was growing up, a woman rented from my grandmother and we called her "Baby Sister." She made awesome ribs," Coleman explained.

"A lot of the food items at the restaurant we had named after women whom we have cooked in our lives — Mam's Meatloaf, and a couple of other items there were made by women."

Although choosing which dishes to offer is a tough decision, Coleman explained that participating in Chrysler Arts, Beats and Eats should be well worth the effort.

"I've attended the festival in past years and it seems to be pretty well run. There's always been a huge amount of participation. It's a nice vehicle for us to showcase the restaurant to some individuals who have never been to this restaurant."

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