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## Fund-raising Texas chef gets a taste of New Mexico

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MICHELLE PENTZ GLAVE | The New Mexican  
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Like a true Texas cowpoke, Tim Love rode into the Española Farmers' Market on Columbus Day to the cheers and waves of the 20-some farmers huddled under plastic-wrapped booths.

And despite the relentless downpour of frigid rain, one called out, "Welcome to New Mexico!"

Kids swarmed the posse of horses, showing off their oversized, gnarled sugar beets, carrots, apples and squash entered in the day's "biggest and oddest vegetable"

contest.

You'd think the heroes of the day were Love --an award-winning chef hailing from the Fort Worth Stockyards -- and his sidekick, Santa Fe's world-famous author of Southwestern cuisine, the Coyote Café's Mark Miller. But once the Food Network cameras started rolling and the unassuming Love got started chatting with each grower, asking questions, chomping on chicos and chiles, listening to descriptions of the area's specialty produce and how to prepare each, it became clear: The stars of the day were the local farmers.

Sure, Love had come to Española on this October "trail ride" as part of his eight-day quest to raise money for Spoons Across America, a James Beard Foundation-supported program that educates kids on healthy eating, nutritious cooking and the back-to-basics idea of using the dinner table for family time.

But in his good-natured, aw-shucks way, Love emphasized that it was the farmer -- supplying all the produce, chile, chicos (dried field corn) and some jams for the Oct. 11 fundraiser dinner at the Coyote Café -- who mattered most.

"I think it's a wonderful concept," said Sabra Moore, market manager. "It encourages people to buy local fresh fruits and vegetables. And I'm really happy they came to this small market, because it is probably the most traditional market in the north. We have a lot of elderly farmers whose families have been doing this for centuries."

If the schoolchildren had showed up -- their organizer canceled at the last-minute -- Love would have talked about where our produce comes from, what it means to eat a nutritious meal and how farmers manage to coax tiny seeds into giant pumpkins -- along the lines of the 486-pounder Jeff Sandoval lowered in on a crane for the market's biggest-vegetable contest.

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- Columns
- Weather
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- Residents Guide
- Supplements
- Spirituality / Support
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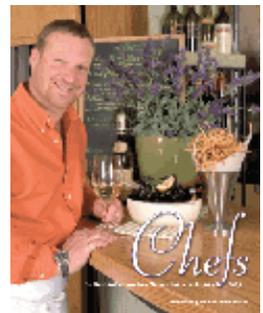
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- Blogs

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No matter. The folks present imparted their wisdom and basked in their moment in the limelight. With luck, their faces will surface in the Food Network one-hour special, slotted to air sometime in the spring.

Even though the "trail drive" amounted to no more than a quick horseback ride from the trailers across Española's North Railroad Avenue over to the tented farmers' market, a gaggle of local children jumped up and down and squealed at the clip-clop of horses.

Conversations hummed in Spanish, English and Spanglish.

Dixon jam-maker extraordinaire Sylvia Ernestina Vergara presented Love with a gift basket of fragrant red apples while Love and Miller sampled and praised her chokecherry and pear preserves.

"This one would work beautifully as a glaze for that antelope," Miller said, slurping Vergara's prized apple-cider syrup and referring to the evening's upcoming Spoons Across America fundraiser menu at his restaurant.

Under the Martinez Farm tent, at least 20 friends and family crammed in behind a pickup, proudly telling the chefs about the huge, shiny red onions their sprightly, white-haired grandma Eufelia Martinez has cultivated "since I was little."

"So you've been growing these just for a few years?" Miller teased.

Marveling at Sandoval's beanbag-sized pumpkin, Love jested to his cowboy compadres: "OK, boys, load that thing up!" Then, "Hey, how do you get something like that, anyway?"

"Los Alamos," Miller said, winking, and everyone laughed.

At Eppie and Jesús Martinez's stand, the chefs dipped their fingers into red chile powder for a taste and crunched chicos from the couple's farms in Nambé and Chimayó. "Mmmm, smoky," Love said, surprised.

Chewing on the dried chiles, Miller expounded on the virtues of chile posado: "It's roasted, skinned and then dried so there's more caramelization -- kind of an apple flavor."

Ted and Carmen Martinez showed off their colorful autumn chile-and-gourd ristras and photos of their Chamita homestead, while Ted talked about his farming "a pastime to keep my health," he said.

Gene and Rosina López offered sweet Gold Red apples from their Gene López Orchards in Lyden, while another couple couldn't believe their luck when Love bit into a large, fleshy poblano and asked, "How many ya got in there? I'll take 100."

"Tim understands history and tries to work with local people," said Miller, a friend of six years who considers Love a fellow champion of Western cooking. "His food is about the style of cooking here; it emphasizes nice, robust flavors."

It's understandable that Love felt at home among the Española-area growers. Living off the land is close to this 32-year-old father-of-three's heart. Love, a Denton, Texas native, grew up spending summers on his dad's Tennessee farm where he cultivated his own garden -- and a love of cooking.

In June 2000, Love opened his own restaurant in Texas' Fort Worth Stockyards, the much-acclaimed Lonesome Dove Western Bistro. His specialty? "Urban Western cuisine," a hybrid of modern technique and historic Western staples, yielding lots of braised and grilled meats, and such exotic combinations as prickly-pear cactus gumbo with rabbit and wild-boar sausage and rattlesnake cakes.

Soon after, the James Beard House invited Love to come out to New York and cook his pioneering fare. That's how Love found out about Spoons Across America -- and he turned the visit into the first annual trail drive fundraiser with all proceeds benefiting Spoons Across America.

In February, Love spearheaded a Spoons event in his own neighborhood, inviting a group of 15 10- to 12-year-old, primarily Mexican immigrant children to join him for a six-week program that culminated in a four-course Valentine Day's dinner for 100.

"We planned the menu, used our math skills, wrote the invitations, folded the napkins and set the table, prepped and cooked everything from scratch, and then served the guests," Love recalled. "The sense of pride was just incredible."

Love was so inspired, he decided to lead a second trail drive. He hopes the buzz generated will prompt others to start Spoons affiliates in their communities.

"What I like about Spoons is it's all about teaching and prevention," Love said. "If kids participate -- harvest and cook their food -- they want to eat it. I mean, I feel the same way. If it ain't fun, I'm not gonna do it."

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The roasted tenderloin that follows is one of the signature dishes at Love's Lonesome Dove Western Bistro in the Fort Worth Stockyards:

#### ROASTED GARLIC-STUFFED BEEF TENDERLOIN

WITH WESTERN PLAID HASH AND SYRAH

DEMI-GLACE

(Serves 4)

4 (8 ounce) beef tenderloin fillets

10 garlic cloves, roasted

1 cup red pepper, julienned

1 cup red onion, julienned

1 cup green cabbage, julienned

1 cup red cabbage, julienned

2 cups veal stock, reduced

by half\*

1 cup Australian syrah

2 russet potatoes

4 cups peanut oil

1/4 cup minced jalapeño

Kosher salt and cracked

black pepper to taste

1/2 cup olive oil

First make a demi-glace: Put 1/2 cup of the wine in a saucepan and bring to a boil. After half of the liquid has evaporated, add the veal stock\* and reduce by reduce it by two-thirds. Keep warm.

Make a small slit in the side of each tenderloin with a paring knife and stuff with one large clove of garlic for each. Set aside.

Prepare the hash: On a mandolin, or by hand, julienne the potatoes to 1/8-inch strips and rinse in cool water to remove a bit of the starch.

Pour peanut oil into a 4-quart saucepan and heat to 325 degrees. When oil reaches temperature, carefully drop potatoes in oil, stirring frequently. Cook for approximately 4 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove potatoes from oil and place in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper.

Pour 1/4 cup olive oil into a large, hot iron skillet or flat grill. Add peppers, cabbage, onions and remaining cloves of garlic. Cook until cabbage is wilted, adding salt and pepper to taste. Add remainder of wine to cabbage mixture and simmer. Reserve and keep warm.

Prepare the steaks: Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Add 1/4 cup olive oil to a hot sauté pan. Season meat by liberally rubbing salt and pepper into the top and bottom of each steak. Place all four steaks in the pan, sear on high for 1 1/2 minutes on each side, then place in preheated degree oven for 4-8 minutes for medium-rare to medium.

To plate: Place potatoes in center of plate and put the cabbage on top. Place tenderloin on top of cabbage and warm pour demi-glace over each steak.

\*Good quality veal stock can be found in the freezer section of Kaune Foodtown and Whole Foods Market -- or you can make your own. There's a good recipe at <http://www.wchstv.com/gmarecipes/brownvealstock.shtml>.



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