

Plano restaurants among participants in Restaurant Week

By Felicia Tsung
 Staff Writer

This year, several Plano restaurants are among more than 130 North Texas restaurants set to participate in KRLD Restaurant Week presented by Central Market.

From the week of August 17-23, diners can enjoy a three-course meal at participating restaurants for \$35 per person (not including tax, tip or drinks.) A portion of the profits will be given to the North Texas Food Bank in Dallas and Lena Pope Home in Fort Worth.

"Restaurant Week is just another great way for us to support the charity while introducing each of my restaurant concepts to new patrons," said Kent Rathbun, executive chef and owner of Plano restaurant Jasper's.

Serving gourmet backyard cuisine, Jasper's will be offering items from its regular menu, packaged in a way for diners to enjoy a more extensive experience. Nicola's Ristorante Italiano, also in Plano, will give patrons choices in appetizers, salads and entrées, among them savory Italian flatbread, garlic-tomato mussels and tender veal medallions.

"We always expect a very good turnout during Restaurant Week," said April Marquart, catering sales manager of Nicola's. "It's always a great time for people to go out and experience restaurants, old and new."

Eager restaurant goers can get an early taste of select restaur-

ants' special menus the week before during Preview Week for \$40 per person. A portion of the meal will still benefit both the North Texas Food Bank and Lena Pope Home.

Main sponsor Central Market will be offering its Fourth Course promotion. Customers who purchase more than \$25 in store will receive a coupon for a free fourth course at participating restaurants. Several restaurants will also be extending their participation with Restaurant Week for one or two additional weeks.

"Who wouldn't want to make an impact and work to pursue a hunger-free community? Every dollar provides four meals and with 100 restaurants giving back

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\$7 for each meal, we are definitely making a difference," Rathbun said.

Twelve years ago the idea for Restaurant Week came to Marianne Howells, who worked at KRLD, when she was reading the New York Times. New York City was hosting a week of set-rate dining at high class restaurants around the city in order to promote tourism. However, Howells saw this as a perfect opportunity to raise money for a good cause, and after getting in contact with the North Texas Food Bank and local restaurants, KRLD Restaurant Week was born.

Since its beginning, the number of participating restaurants has grown from 25 to over 130 and its profits have increased incrementally. Establishments

are chosen for Restaurant Week by invitation only.

"We choose restaurants that are thoughtful about their food and their wine. We don't want to really just be known as a value-thing to do. We also want to be known as a great food and wine experience," Howells said. "One of our biggest missions is to expose diners to all these great restaurants."

Both the North Texas Food Bank and Lena Pope Home have been hit hard by the economy this year. According to Jan Pruitt, CEO of the North Texas Food Bank, their agencies have seen a 35 percent increase in new people arriving at their doors. This past year, the organization distributed 11 million more meals than before. Pruitt is worried that the economy will also affect the number of people able to go out during Restaurant Week.

"What we say is that this is a really good night to treat yourself. We think this is a high-value proposition for the community," Pruitt said. "You're getting a good deal for yourself, you're keeping our restaurants busy and you're helping someone who needs your help."

Last year, Restaurant Week raised around \$450,000 for the two organizations. Howells hopes that around 90,000 people will go out for Restaurant Week this year, helping them reach their goal of \$500,000.

Reservations can be made either by directly calling the establishment or by going to www.OpenTable.com and speci-



fyng "Restaurant Week" in the reservation. Diners are encouraged to make reservations as soon as possible.

The following restaurants in Plano are participating in Restaurant Week: Coast Global Seafood, Jasper's, Loft 610,

Nicola's Ristorante Italiano, Roy's, Steve Field's Steak and Lobster Lounge, Zea Woodfire Grill. Their contact information and a full list of participating restaurants is available www.krld.com.