

SOURCE: Desert–Sun Online (Palm Springs, CA)
AUDIENCE: 42,851 [provided by Nielsen//NetRatings]
DATE: 01–18–2009
HEADLINE: Desert dining bash planned in first valleywide Restaurant Week

Source Website

Monica Torline The Desert Sun January 18, 2009

Coachella Valley restaurateurs are coming together in an unprecedented way to create one large–scale dining event that could give them a needed boost in sales this summer.

Planning has started for the Palm Springs Desert Resorts Restaurant Week 2009. Organizers want 100 eateries to participate in the 20–day event in which each would prepare a special three–course, prix fixe menu.

Why don't we join forces and do something together? Michael Estrada, managing partner of the restaurant group that owns The Falls restaurants and Matchbox, said of the spirit behind the effort.

We have the ability, we think, to get much additional sponsorship and make it an event people will travel for, he said.

Restaurant week events came to the desert scene last year.

Palm Springs Restaurant Week debuted in June. It was so successful that organizers announced before the last table was bussied that they were planning the next event, while some participating restaurants extended the prix fixe deals beyond the event's run.

Palm Desert held its own event in October and included restaurants from nearby cities.

Concerned that multiple restaurant weeks throughout the year would dilute the impact for consumers and create more competition, restaurant leaders approached each other about a valleywide event.

If you have eight restaurant weeks a year, it would become a nonevent, said Tony Bruggemans of Le Vallauris in Palm Springs.

He and his brother, Paul Bruggemans, were skeptical when they considered joining the Palm Springs week in 2008. They wondered if a prix fixe menu and an event like that would be up to Le Vallauris standards.

Over the course of the week, an average of 60 customers came every day for the event, and many of them opted to order something off the regular menu. Sales increased more than 150 percent at Le Vallauris.

We are spokesmen for it now, he said with a big smile and hearty laugh.

Secret shopper'

Kim and Michael Crandal of La Quinta wanted to sop up all of Palm Springs Restaurant Week. So they stayed at Korakia Pensione, an inn downtown, and dined at six restaurants.

There was a definite positive vibe' going on around town, the couple wrote to The Desert Sun. The sidewalks were uncommonly busy, and conversations at tables around us centered on where they were going to try next or where they had been the night before.

Kim Crandal, co–author of Savor a Taste of the California Desert Signature Restaurant Recipes, was a member of the planning committee. She wanted to employ secret shopper tactics to see the event from a

consumer's point-of-view.

The waiters were excited. People were excited, she said. It was great to see our desert shine like that.

She plans to eat out all 20 nights during this summer's event. If we live here, we need to support our local businesses, she said. We need to do that as consumers.

Toughing it out

Many valley restaurants, hotels and small businesses work hard during the winter months of the high season, when it's a deluge of business. They know things can slow to a trickle in the summer months, or the shoulder season.

With that in mind, expect some hotels to share in Restaurant Week as well.

It's a way for us to band together as one destination, said Josh Herman, director of marketing at ***Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa***.

The Rancho Mirage resort is working on packaging deals with Restaurant Week for locals but also to entice the drive-in market. Herman said one idea is to give guests a credit off their room when they bring in a receipt from a business participating in Restaurant Week.

It's a much bigger reason to come to town. Restaurant weeks are typically very locally based, but this gives us a shot to get that L.A. couple to come in for the weekend, he said.

An event this large could provide a nice kick-start to the summer for Bernard Dervieux, owner and chef at Cuistot.

Dervieux hasn't signed on for the June event but would like to based on his experience in Palm Desert's inaugural event. Business at Cuistot increased about 10 percent, he said. A restaurant week creates energy.

IMPORTANT NOTE: New guidelines regarding the mydesert.com terms of service – as of Friday, Nov. 21

In your v

Copyright (C) MyDesert.com. All rights reserved. Users of this site agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights (Terms updated March 2007)

Highlights: Rancho Las Palmas, Resort & Spa