“Being here has opened a lot of doors for me and has helped me pursue my dream.”
- Jolie Culinary Academy Student

Pictured: Rancho Cielo’s Chef Esteven “EJ” Jimenez stands amongst his students and DCA Program Director Mark Bruszer during the 10th Annual Culinary Round Up (L) and (R) RC Emeritus Board Member Bert Cutino calls him up to the podium during the presentation to commend him.

**Chef Esteven “EJ” Jimenez Named 2019 Chef of the Year**

*American Culinary Federation Monterey Bay Chapter*

Drummond Culinary Academy Chef Esteven “EJ” Jimenez has been named the 2019 ACF (American Culinary Federation) Monterey Bay Chapter Chef of the Year.

The award honors a professional culinarian, and eligibility is based on the candidate’s professionalism, education and mentorship of students and/or culinarians.

According to Chef Paul Lee, treasurer of the ACF and Rancho Cielo’s former Drummond Culinary Academy director, comments about Jimenez by the selection committee mentioned his efforts “not only teaching students to be good cooks and find their calling in the community, but also making them better citizens.”

Jimenez, who has a long history working in restaurant settings, became Rancho Cielo’s Executive Chef/Instructor in 2017. Prior to that, he oversaw all culinary aspects of Pacific Grove’s Aqua Terra Culinary Inc. and was the executive sous chef at Ventana Big Sur. Jimenez first started serving food in high school as a volunteer at a homeless shelter. He later went on to graduate from the California School of Culinary Arts in Pasadena.

“I feel like it (his culinary career) kind of picked me,” said Chef EJ, noting his work over the years building teams in various kitchens.

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Still, Chef EJ felt like he was missing more of the community involvement aspect, noting that as the son of migrant farm workers from the San Joaquin Valley, he understands the mindset of many students that attend the Drummond Culinary Academy.

“I’ve been a believer in this program a long time,” said Jimenez. “People need something to belong to, and if they don’t have a good outlet, they’re likely to find an unhealthy one,” he added, noting the positive reinforcement he always received from his parents. “Not everybody has that environment growing up.”

Besides culinary instruction, in any given day, Jimenez will teach foundational things ranging from personal hygiene and self-care skills to courtesy, having mutual respect and learning timeliness.

“He gives us a lot of skills and advice about how to grow in this kind of environment,” said student Jazmín Mendoza, 21, noting that attending the Culinary Academy has led to her receiving an apprenticeship at Aqua Terra. Mendoza’s brother Pedro, 23, is also a Culinary Academy student. Pedro attends classes on campus at the John Muir Charter School to achieve his high school diploma in addition to culinary training.

Jimenez will be honored at the 45th Annual President’s Gala and Chef of the Year Dinner on May 19th at the InterContinental, The Clement Monterey. Tickets will be available March 19th from the ACF website: www.montereybaychefs.org.

**Silver Star Youth Program** Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot and Reveal

Rancho Cielo’s Silver Star Youth Program has been busy the last few months applying the five R’s of sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot and Reveal.

The program was chosen along with 11 other area schools to participate in the 2019 Wally-Waste-Not Award Program. Sponsored by Salinas Valley Recycles (Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority), the initiative encourages the implementation of 26 different activities that improve waste reduction and recycling.

“It’s a program where teachers can have an educational action plan to divert recyclable waste into recyclable containers,” explained Silver Star Youth Program Probation Aide Alan Katz (pictured top-left). “It’s all centered around what can be done to promote awareness about the waste that goes to the landfill.”

Prior to starting, the Rancho Cielo campus underwent a waste assessment to provide insight about what areas could be improved in terms of reducing waste, recycling and reuse.

“We all have to pick up after ourselves — I find myself sorting trash more now,” said Silver Star student Nayali Hernandez, 17 (pictured bottom-left). “If we separate different items like bottles, plastic and foil, it’s more helpful and they can use it for recycling.”

Ultimately the Silver Star Program hopes to receive a $2,000 grant from Salinas Valley Recycles if certain activities are completed that will result in better sustainability practices.

The tasks include encouraging a school-wide practice of double-sided printing, copying and student work and participating in a charity reuse collection program. The former falls under the category of “Reduce” while the latter qualifies under “Reuse.” Other activities include creating an organized system for collection of recyclables with a student group monitoring it and conducting a waste assessment during lunch to separate all the food and milk waste.

Hernandez took part in creating a poster that featured colorful artwork and tips on smart recycling.

“They need to document what they do,” said SVSWA Estela Gutierrez, noting that for each activity a photo is submitted.

All grant activities must be completed by March 30th and participating schools will receive their $2,000 check by Earth Day, which is April 22nd.

“We’ve implemented activities like recycling foil trays and paper goods,” said Katz. “We installed a coffee cup holder for staff encouraging them to use ceramic cups, and we had a campus clean-up.”

Katz noted that it’s the ongoing desire of Rancho Cielo’s probation staff to create resources for teachers and staff members to draw from for future activities.
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Chef Dylan Miller

The C Restaurant at the Intercontinental The Clement Monterey
Chef Matt Bolton

Carmel Valley Ranch
Chef Tim Woods
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Drummond Culinary Academy
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Chef Christina Morales

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Chef Cal Stamener

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Chef Andre Adam
Chef Paul Lee

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Chef Mo Tabib

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Richard Simon

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Chef Pablo Melin

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