

He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."

Mark 6:31

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# Serving up Heavenly Feast

Priest-chefs offer their best recipes for charity

By **PATRICIA BARTOS**  
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Eight priests will serve as celebrity chefs when the Little Sisters of the Poor host their "Heavenly Feast" fund-raiser on Oct. 25.

The dinner will be held in the new Cardinals' Hall at St. Paul Seminary in Crafton and will feature the priest-chefs manning stations set up throughout the hall.

The sisters hosted a tasting recently at Common Plea Catering Center in Pittsburgh's Strip District, where the company's kitchen, headed by master chef John Brush, prepared dishes from recipes submitted by the priests. The company will cater the fall event.

Featured "chefs" for the Heavenly Feast will be Fathers Sam Esposito, Joe Sioli, Larry DiNardo, Nick Vaskov, Tom Sparacino, James Farnan, Jay Donahue and Brian Welding.

Bishop David Zubik will serve as honorary chairman.

Several of the priests joined in the working lunch as Common Plea owner John Barsotti welcomed comments to help fine-tune the dishes.

"John's been a dear friend of the Little Sisters forever," said Mary Lou McLaughlin, a volunteer who is helping to coordinate the event.

Barsotti said, "I'm sort of excited to have celebrity priests doing the cooking and sharing with us recipes from their childhood."

The diners sampled Father Joe Sioli's bacala in bianco, or white wine sauce. He learned to cook from his Italian grandmothers and his mother, who had her own catering business in New Jersey.

"I learned from practical experience," he said.

Friends and family also often request his pasta Amatriciano," featuring red sauce, onions and pancetta.

Well-known locally for his kitchen wizardry, Father Esposito offered up three complete menus for consideration.

The kitchen prepared his chicken piccata and a fennel and oranges salad, while his baked greens dish of swiss chard, pecorino romano, potato and pancetta also won admirers.

Father Welding's colorful beet and chevre cheese salad with balsamic vinegar dressing was on the menu, as was his vegetarian orrecchiette San Matteo — the kitchen



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKO

**Fathers Nick Vaskov, front, and Tom Sparacino sample some of the dishes prepared from recipes favored by priest-chefs in the diocese. The tasting is in preparation for the Heavenly Feast event to benefit the Little Sisters of the Poor in October.**

staff's favorite, Barsotti said.

Father Sparacino said the secret to his hearty sausage and peppers with polenta is "good Sicilian-style sausage."

Father Vaskov's bigos, or Polish hunter's stew, is the national dish of Poland, "savory and sour and delicious," he said. His mizeria, or Polish cucumber salad, was also light and tasty with sour cream and cider vinegar.

Father Tom Kunz will be back in Rome completing studies for his doctorate and will miss the fund-raiser, but he contributed his taglietelle al limone recipe as a light but substantial summer option (see box).

Father Donahue's kitchen talents are modest, he said, focusing mainly on enchilada recipes he learned while serving for seven years in Mexico City.

He will serve as sous chef for Father Farnan, his pastor at St. Mary in Glenshaw.

Topping off the Heavenly Feast evening will be a cookie table featuring Father DiNardo's ricotta cheese cake and homemade wine from Father Bob Miller, pastor of St. Benedict the Abbot in Peters Township.

"It's going to be great," said Sister Judith Meredith. "The priests were so open and embracing of the celebrity chef idea."

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## Taglietelle al limone

- 1 large lemon (zested and juiced)
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup half and half
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
- salt and fresh ground pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 pound taglietelle (or spaghetti)

Zest lemon and put aside. Melt butter in sauce pan, add half and half and stir. Add lemon zest and continue to stir. Just before mixture comes to a boil, remove from heat. Allow to sit for about 30 minutes. Add salt and fresh ground pepper to taste.

Cook pasta to al dente and drain. (Tip: keep about 1 cup of pasta water.) Place cooked pasta back into pot, add lemon zest mixture and mix together with parmesan cheese, juice from the lemon and chopped fresh parsley. If needed, use some of the pasta water to help mix.

— Submitted by Father Tom Kunz